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BLOCK ASSOCIATIONS, CRIME, AND THE POLICE

by

SUSANNE M. TUMELTY

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1987

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

16 JUN 87
date

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Executive Officer

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The City University of New York

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This dissertation had its beginnings in a Methods Of Social Research class taught by Charles Kadushin, Delmos Jones, and Irwin Katz. It began as a proposal for the Citizens Committee for New York, Inc., which, at that time, was interested in the relationship between block associations and crime in the neighborhood. When the Citizens Committee decided not to go ahead with the study, I decided to adopt it for my dissertation. My thanks, therefore, to everyone in that class. We, as a group, wrote a proposal, designed the questionnaire, and pretested it. They got me off to a wonderful start.

Judy Flynn, the former Executive Director of the Citizens' Committee for New York generously shared her organization's mailing list of block a ɔcia ɔns and permitted me to do on-site interviews of her personnel. Phil McGuire of the Office of Management Analysis and Planning of the New York City Police Department and Martin Oling of the New York City Department of City Planning went out of their way to get me crime and census data that made this study work.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

At the height of New York City's fiscal crisis in 1976, the then Mayor Abe Beame called on the people of New York City to form grass-roots, voluntary self-help groups that would supplement the city's decimated services. During this time of "urban crisis," decentralization emerged as one of a number of proposed new solutions for old problems. According to Yates, (1976) decentralization involves

> ...efforts to redistribute political and/or administrative power and to involve new participants in the process of public decision making.(p.144)

Among the different types of decentralization described by Yates (1976), block associations fall under the heading of self-help organizations. Block associations are organizations of people who live on facing sides of one block. A more ideological definition of a block association found in a booklet provided by the Citizens Committee for New York tells us that a block association is

> ...people coming together where they live and work. Rich and poor, black and white, tenant and landlord, merchant and consumer, young and old. Everyone who wants to make their neighborhood a better place to live...Residents on your block will develop a new pride in the block. You will realize a sense of community. Also, your association - if it has the will and energy - can contribute to improve services on your block and to the quality of community life in general. (Berkowitz, 1982, p.3)

Block associations are hardly a new idea. Some residents can trace existing organizations back to block parties held before World War II,

some associations in Brooklyn arose as homeowners' associations to protect newly purchased homes (Yates, 1973). During the turbulent 60's, block associations became mechanisms for political activism (interview with President of Block Association), and by the 1970's Block associations had sprung up all over New York, many in transitional neighborhoods. Perlman noted that

> ...the seventies spawned a plethora of grass-roots associations involving local people mobilized on their own behalf around concrete issues of importance in their communities (1976).

By the time Mayor Beame made his appeal to his constituents, it appears that a movement to create local level organizations was already underway. In fact, the Federation of Citywide Block Associations,a City agency was established to deal with block associations and a private organization, The Citizens Committee for New York,

> was founded by Senator Jacob Javits and a coalition of New Yorkers in November 1975 in direct response to the city's fiscal crisis. Its goal is to improve the quality of life by promoting, encouraging, and supporting grass-roots volunteer self-help activities...(It) maximizes the effectiveness of self-help activities through support of block associations, through provision of incentive grants to neighborhood groups, and through publications that describe approaches for addressing urban issues...The Citizens Committee is the catalyst that spurs the people of New York to help themselves through a comprehensive and flexible program of support, (Citizens Committee for New York, November 9, 1982)

While there is some evidence to support the idea that these organizations are defensive and conservative in the service of protecting existing property and property values, it must be noted that block associations existed even in the poorest areas of the city where there are few property values to defend (Yates, 1973). These voluntary

groups organized around the issues of maintenance and improvement of quality of life in their neighborhood, adopting a strategy of self-help. They turned to voluntary collective action to solve everyday problems of garbage collection, housing maintenance, and crime, with some associations providing alternative services (Yates 1973, 1976).

There is a widely held belief that community organizations are important elements in social change (Wandersman & Rich, 1983). In fact, Franklin Thomas, president of the Ford Foundation, describes block associations as "an anchor for any community. They allow the 98% who care to reassert control over the few who would stand on the corner and menace them." (Citizen's Report, Fall 1984). However, Jones (1979), while he agrees that neighborhood organizations can realize positive results, argues that "a political movement which overemphasizes the local community is likely to be counter productive to progressive social changes." He has also observed a "general lack of outreach between organizations and their constituencies and a narrowing of participation in decision making "(Jones et al, 1982).

Despite the limitations implied by the differential characteristics of membership (Sills, 1968; Hyman & Wright, 1971) and a tendency to oligarchy (Michels,[1915] 1959; Smith & Freeman, 1972) the block association emerges as a category of voluntary association having significant advantages for dealing with urban problems. Yates' analysis (1976) of decentralized community structures concluded that block associations had a higher impact on community conditions that did other structures because of several characteristics of block association:

1. Task orientation for block associations is flexible and allows block leaders to choose whatever tasks are appropriate to their skills and resources.

2. Many of the problems attacked by block associations are usually uncomplicated and their solution relatively clear cut.

3. Their small scale implies that block associations deal with limited constituencies that tend to articulate similar, if not common, needs and interests.

During the time of fiscal crisis in New York City crime had emerged as a primary social problem. It has been argued that crime weakens a community and creates a cycle of crime, isolation, out migration, and more crime (Conklin, 1975; Wilson, 1975). Lewis et al (1979) have concluded that this response comes from reacting to crime in individual ways - buying guns, triple locks and door chains, watch dogs, fear of the streets. This individual response is seen as detrimental to the community because it breaks down the social support and control functions of the community (Podolefsky and DuBow, 1981). In reaction to this individual response to crime, CACP (Community Anti-Crime Program, a project of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, called for

> ...the mobilization of community and neighborhood residents into effective self-help organizations to conduct anti-crime programs within their communities...To encourage neighborhood anti-crime efforts that promote a greater sense of community and foster social controls over crime occurrence. (1977, p.58).

This collective response is compatible with the Durkheimian argument that crime brings people together and strengthens social bonds. Durkheim (1915) conceptualized crime as functional to society by providing an occasion for people to unite against a common enemy.

Given a context of collective response to crime, it seems logical that crime prevention became an important concern to block associations. These grass roots groups have usually addressed crime from a social justice point of view (Figge, 1983) which asserts that the primary means by which crime might be reduced is the improvement of the society in which crime occurs. This view is similar to the social control perspective which sees the community as the context in which events occur, that is, a set of institutional relations through which local solidarity is maintained (Lewis & Salem, 1981). Both orientations echo the literature which suggests that neighborhood/community revitalization, improvement, and stabilization are general goals of these organizations (Lavrakas & Herz, 1982). To the extent that crime is perceived as a problem, anti-crime goals become part of grass-root activities (Skogan & Maxfield, 1981; Lavrakas & Herz, 1982; DuBow & Podolefsky, 1982). On the other hand, DuBow and Podolefsky (1982) argue that concern with crime is not the major reason for most individuals' involvement in community groups. While the issue of crime, per se, has not been identified as a primary force in the emergence of grass-roots organizations, community involvement has been identified as crucial to crime reduction. A recent major survey concluded that

> ...the crucial components in any effort to reduce crime are the active involvement of community organizations and residents; a rethinking of the role of law enforcement agents; and greater cooperation among citizens, police officials, and city administrators. (Figge, 1983, p.145)

In Washnis'(1976) analysis of citizen involvement in crime prevention, three specific advantages of block associations are

identified:

1. To increase communication and understanding between citizen and law enforcement officer so that police are motivated into doing a better job and residents into assisting them.[1]

2. To reduce crime by making it more difficult for criminals to operate in a particular area due to the increased eyes and ears available to the police.

3. To develop a sense of community and comradeship among residents with a consequential reduction in the fear of crime.

Finally, there must be a consideration of the role of the police in the collective response to crime. Washnis (1976) suggests that block associations motivate the police. Fowler and Mangione (1982) conclude that cooperation between police and community is essential. The role of the police in the collective response to crime falls within the contemporary concept of police-community relations. Police-community relations as conceptualized by Earle (1970) involves the effort of both sides to understand each other working toward a common goal. Brandstatter and Radelet (1968) imply that this community-relations concept should be a total orientation and should not be confined to a special unit or bureau, but rather should permeate the department. Neiderhoffer and Smith (1974) suggest a class pattern in the relationship between the police and the community. The upper classes may be patronizing toward the police and may have actual little contact

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1 Based on Washnis' conclusion that police performance is largely influenced by the degree citizens themselves are concerned and insistent on quality service.

with the police; the middle class accept the police as a "faceless functionary," seen only when absolutely necessary; the lower class (a label applied to inner city residents) have constant contact with the police, who act as "doctor, counselor, social worker, and friend (p.8)." They have concluded that police relations with the upper and middle classes are neutral to good, but with the lower classes they are frequently hostile, "aggravated by misunderstanding and mutual recriminations (p.8)." Radelet points out that the prevention and control of crime is a superordinate goal[2] and input must come from both the police and the community.

This study is a look at block associations in New York City. We are interested in their structure, their effectiveness, and more specifically their relationship to crime and to the police. The two points of view presented above are food for thought. Are block associations as good as many believe them to be? Do they really reduce crime in their neighborhoods?

In order to answer these questions, we interviewed a sample of presidents of block associations in four boroughs of New York City. The methodology for this study can be found in Appendix A. Simply gathering the lists of block associations brought serendipitous findings about the actual number of block associations in New York City. There aren't

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2 Superordinate goals are defined by Sherif (1965, p.258) as goals that encompass all parties caught in dispute or conflict, which cannot be fulfilled by the resources and energies of the parties separately, but require concerted efforts of all parties involved...The effects of superordinate goals are cumulative rather than a one shot affair.

nearly as many as we thought there were, nor are there anywhere near the numbers claimed for New York City. (Appendix B contains a discussion of these findings.) All of which raised the question of why block associations were formed in the first place and how some of them, at least, managed to survive.

CHAPTER TWO

BLOCK ASSOCIATIONS IN NEW YORK CITY - WHY?

The literature suggests that voluntary organizations such as block associations are formed in response to multiple issues; the collective response to crime is carried out in these multi-issue groups (Sills, 1968, 1985; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981; Lavrakas & Herz, 1982; Dubow & Podolefsky, 1982).

The present study supports the multi-issue view. Responses to the question, "Why was your block association started?" showed that 63% of the respondents indicated more than one key issue which resulted in the founding of their association. In an analysis of all respondents (including those who named but one issue), 73% indicated quality of life and 56% indicated crime as a founding concern. When respondents are asked to indicate the most important factor, crime had a slight edge, with 40% of the respondents indicating crime compared to 36% indicating quality of life (Table 1). When we look at just those groups that are multi-issue groups, 66% reported that crime was one of the issues, 67% indicated neighborliness, and 87% indicated quality of life (Table 2). Since many respondents mentioned as an aside that they considered crime to be a quality of life concern and the numbers indicate a very high concern with crime, the concern may be even higher than our figures indicate. In fact, when a score is computed for salience[3] (Table 1 and

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3 Salience is computed by dividing the n for the most important issue by the n for all issues.

Table 2), that is, a score for that element which stands out conspicuously, crime jumps out with 72% of all respondents noting the salience of crime. In the multi-issue groups, 57% of the respondents noted crime as salient. Regardless of which way we look at the data, it is clear that concern with crime emerges as a major issue in the formation of block associations.

TABLE 1

IMPORTANCE AND SALIENCE OF DIFFERENT FACTORS IN THE FOUNDING OF BLOCK ASSOCIATIONS

	ALL ISSUES[4]	MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR	SALIENCE
CRIME	56% (54)	40% (39)	39/59 72%
NEIGHBORLINESS	46% (45)	9% (9)	9/45 20%
QUALITY OF LIFE	73% (71)	36% (35)	35/71 49%
OTHER	*[5]	14% (14)	
		100% (N=97)	

4 This category of "All Issues" represents multiple responses. That is, 56% for the category of crime is 56% of N=97; 46% is 46% of N=97; and 73% is 73% of N=97.

5 *These percentages add up to more than 100% since respondents were permitted more than one choice.

TABLE 2

IMPORTANCE AND SALIENCE OF DIFFERENT FACTORS IN THE FOUNDING OF BLOCK ASSOCIATIONS FOR THOSE GROUPS THAT INDICATED MULTI-REASONS FOR THEIR FOUNDING

	FACTOR IN FOUNDING	MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR	SALIENCE
CRIME	66% (40)	38% (23)	23/40 57%
QUALITY OF LIFE	87% (53)	30% (18)	18/53 33%
NEIGHBORLINESS	67% (41)	11% (7)	7/41 17%
OTHER	*[6]	21% (13)	
		100% (N=61)	

CHARACTERISTICS OF BLOCK ASSOCIATION LEADERS

Sill's analysis of voluntary organizations (1969) suggests that these associations are characteristic of urban societies since population density provides more opportunity for interaction. He also suggests that membership is not random - whites are more likely to participate than blacks; there are significant socio-economic differences, whether measured by income, home ownership, occupation or educational level (Sills, 1968, 1985; Hyman & Wright, 1971).

1. ETHNICITY

The data on the block associations in this study, at first, appear to support Sill's conclusions - 58% of the respondents (presidents of block associations) are white, 27% are black and 6% are hispanic.

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6 *These percentages add up to more than 100% since respondents were permitted more than one choice.

However, the data do not indicate that whites are more likely than blacks to participate. Rather, when these percentages are compared to the actual ethnic distributions in New York City, the respondents emerge as a true representation of the New York City population.[7] The

TABLE 3

RESPONDENTS' RACE COMPARED TO RACIAL PLURALITY OF THEIR PRECINCT

	RESPONDENTS' RACE/ETHNICITY	ETHNICITY OF SAMPLED PRECINCTS-1980 CENSUS
WHITE	58%	60%
BLACK	27%	25%
HISPANIC	6%	15%
MIXED/OTHER	9%	0
	100%	100%
	N= (97)	(12)

Further, respondents appear to be representative of their precincts. As shown in Table 4, in those associations which are in precincts with a white majority (more than 50%), 86% of the respondents are white, where

---

7 Our data indicate that, not only are the presidents representative of the ethnic populations in New York City, but the block associations themselves are evenly distributed in the twelve precincts that we studied. There is no difference in the distribution (number) of block associations when we run the number of block associations in the precinct against total population of the precinct, precinct median household income, precinct education levels, percentage of individuals in the precinct below the poverty level, percentage of people in the precinct receiving public assistance, and the ethnic plurality of the precinct.

the plurality is black (more than 49%) 79% of the respondents are black. In those precincts that are more than 43% Hispanic, the under-representation appears again for the Hispanics - only 15% of those respondents are Hispanic. In fact, in one precinct that has a Hispanic plurality, not one of the respondents is Hispanic. There are several possible explanations for this. One can be the difficulty in getting a true count of Hispanics from the census. Another possible explanation follows Yates' conclusions that on racially mixed blocks, the leaders are drawn from the older racial or ethnic group (1973). For our non-representative respondents, that is those respondents who race is different from that of the precinct majority/plurality, a striking 93% have lived in their neighborhood for more than 5 years and 63% of these respondents have lived in their areas for 10 years or longer. Of the Hispanics in our sample, 67% have lived in their neighborhoods less than 10 years. Since Hispanics are a relatively new wave of immigrants, Yates conclusions seem to be appropriate. In sum, 76% of the respondents are representative of the ethnic population of their precincts. A look at the non-representative respondents, that is those respondents whose race is different from the precinct plurality/majority, shows that 56% have lived in their neighborhoods for more than 10 years, data which again supports Yates conclusions. That is, they represent a prior ethnic composition of their neighborhood. The one Hispanic precinct that has no Hispanic respondents does have an Hispanic population of more than 50%. However, it also has a substantial black population and is bordered by an fairly affluent white community. In that precinct, one

respondent is white with an annual income in the $20,000 - $35,000 range, is a college graduate and has lived in the neighborhood for 10 years. One respondent is black, is not a high school graduate, has an income under $10,000 and has lived in the neighborhood for 22 years. The third is "mixed" (black/white), a college graduate, has an income under $10,000 and has lived in the neighborhood for 48 years. This mix of block association presidents matches the checkerboard pattern of the neighborhood itself.

TABLE 4

ETHNICITY OF BLOCK ASSOCIATION PRESIDENTS ACCORDING TO THE MAJORITY ETHNICITY OF THE PRECINCTS IN WHICH THEIR ASSOCIATIONS ARE LOCATED

	MAJORITY WHITE	MAJORITY BLACK	MAJORITY HISPANIC
RESPONDENTS ETHNICITY			
WHITE	86%	4%	33%
BLACK	5%	79%	27%
HISPANIC	4%	4%	20%
MIXED	2%	13%	20%
MD	3%	0	0
	100%	100%	100%
	N= (58)	(24)	(15)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C 0.47571 Sig.: 0.00001

2. SOCIAL CLASS

Wandersman et al (1985) found that most people who took part in local voluntary groups were not necessarily middle class. Our findings

dispute this (Table 5 and Table 6). Generally, the respondents are what Sills refers to a "higher status" - determined by education, income, occupation - (1985, p.83) - 90% are at least high school graduates, 71% have at least some college, 40% are at least college graduates, and 16% have graduate degrees. For those respondents who gave us income information, 75% earn more than $20,000 per year. Only 21% of the respondents earn less than $20,000 per year and of these, 1/3 have an annual income of less than $10,000. There is an obvious relationship between income and education.

CORRELATION SIGNIFICANCE: * .050 ** .010 *** .001

	INCOME	EDUCATION
INCOME	1.000	.242**
EDUCATION	.242**	1.000

No one who earns mores than $35,000 annually has less than a high school degree. On the contrary, of those who earn more than $20,000 a year (n=60), 95% are, at the least, high school graduates, and 50% are, at the least, college graduates. For those respondents with an income of over $50,000 per year, 60% hold a graduate degree (Table 5).

TABLE 5

INCOME OF BLOCK ASSOCIATION PRESIDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR LEVEL OF EDUCATION

	EDUCATION				
INCOME[8]	LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL GRAD	COLLEGE GRAD	GRADUATE DEGREE	
LESS THAN $20,000	25%	60%	15%	0	100% (N=20)
$20,000 - $34,999	10%	51%	32%	7%	100% (N=31)
$35,000 - $49,000	0	48%	26%	26%	100% (N=19)
$50,000+	0	20%	20%	60%	100% (N=10)

N=80
Kendall's Tau C 0.40375 Sig.: 0.0001

TABLE 6

RACE OF BLOCK ASSOCIATION PRESIDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR INCOME

	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	MIXED	
LOW UNDER $20,000	20%	50%	10%	20%	100% (N=20)
MIDDLE $20-34,999	58%	32%	7%	3%	100% (N=31)
HI $35,000+	75%	14%	7%	4%	100% (N=28)

N=79
Kendall's Tau C -0.34081 Sig.: 0.0002

---

8 Tables 5 and 6 are based on respondents who gave financial information. There is an interesting difference by race for respondents who refused to give this information: 23% of the Whites refused, while

As indicated, the whites are middle to high income, with minority middle income persons making a strong showing. As a whole, block leaders, including non-whites, are middle class as shown above. When compared with the neighborhood (precinct) from which they come, these leaders are higher in class considering both their education and income levels. Educationally, 51% of the respondents have a higher level of education than the "median years of school completed" for their respective precincts and an additional 21% have the same level as their precinct, thus accounting for 72% of the respondents. Of the respondents who gave us income information, 70% have a higher income than the "median family income" for the precinct, with another 10% falling in the same income range as the precinct family median, accounting here for 80% of the respondents. For the minorities, this may represent the presentation of community goals and recruitment of community leaders in terms of middle class values. We should not expect to find lower status minority representation in voluntary associations since, as Piven(1966) suggests

> ...low income people are overwhelmed by concrete daily needs. Their lives are often crisis ridden, deflecting from any concern with community issues. They have no belief in their ability to affect the world in which they live, and so they are not easily induced to try to affect it (p.75).

As for occupation, 69% of the respondents are in high status occupations, while 31% have low status occupations. When we look at

---

only 11% of the Blacks and none of the Hispanics refused.

occupational status by race (Table 7), blacks, whites, and hispanics all have a high percentage of respondents in high status occupations.

TABLE 7

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF BLOCK ASSOCIATION PRESIDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR RACE

	HIGH STATUS OCCUPATION	LOW STATUS OCCUPATION	
WHITE	78%	22%	100% (N=54)
BLACK	65%	35%	100% (N=26)
HISPANIC	60%	40%	100% (N=5)
MIXED	29%	71%	100% (N=7)

N=92

Kendall's Tau C 0.23299 Sig.: 0.0087

However, for those respondents who have mixed ethnicity, the reverse is true. Even though 71% of this group are, at the least, high school graduates, (71%) are in low status jobs and 57% earn less than $20,000 per year. This may suggest a high motive to gain status in another way - through their position as president of the block association. It may follow that this desire to maintain individual status may be a factor in keeping an association active.

While we may speak of goals of block associations in the abstract, it is generally recognized that voluntary associations are established around the goals set by a single individual who has a major impact on the organization (King, 1956; Yates, 1976). In some cases, associations are only one individual with a typewriter and some letterhead (Jones, Montbach,& Turner, 1982).

Of the respondents in this study, 73% indicated that the Block Association's founders are still active in the organization. Of the founders, 47% are still president and an additional 26% are still members.

TABLE 8

CURRENT ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL WHO FOUNDED THE ASSOCIATION

STILL PRESIDENT	NOT PRESIDENT/STILL MEMBER	NOT MEMBER	DON'T KNOW
48%	26%	11%	15%

In 74% of the organizations in this study, the founder still plays a role. We may presume that the influence of the founder is still strong and that the founder's goals are still an important part of the organization. It has been proposed (Wandersman, Florin, Chavis, Rich, and Prestby, 1985; Heller, Price, Reinharz, Riger & Wandersman, 1984)) that the origin of the organization (Who started it? Why was it started? Is the founder still involved?) is closely related to the stability of the group. A closer look at the role of the founder takes us to the topic of stability of these associations.

CHAPTER THREE

STABILITY

The question of effectiveness of block associations is closely related to the structure and the stability of the organization. One of the most critical factors for block associations is that of survival. Yates (1973) found that "more than 50% of the block associations in his study performed simple tasks, such as block clean-up, but failed to reach a new level of activity and ...declined." Wandersman et al (1985) found that, at the end of one year, 53% of the original block associations in their study had become inactive. At the data gathering stage of this study, we were shocked to find that of the original 488 organizations in our sample, believed by the Citizens' Committee to be viable organizations, a mere 25% of the organizations actually existed. We had no information on 30%, and we were able to say that the additional 45% did not exist. This high level of mortality may illuminate the intrinsic nature of local level organizations in urban society. Local level, grass-roots organizations may be intrinsically ad hoc in nature. Most of the groups come into existence around specific problems, generally a single specific problem. What happens next?

Yates (1973,1976), in discussing reasons for block associations becoming inactive or going out of existence altogether, suggests several circumstances that contribute to this "failure". Since many of the problems attacked by these local level groups are uncomplicated, their

solutions are clear-cut. Once the problems are solved, the associations tend to disband. The present study supports this view. Many of the former presidents of disbanded or inactive associations that we interviewed for the present study indicated just this reason for their inactivity. Once the group had solved the problem around which it had been organized, there was no longer a motive to continue.

Yates has also suggested that since many of the simple problems do not stay solved, association members lose interest, and the tasks that once addressed "uncomplicated problems with clear-cut solutions" become a chore and no longer provide a sense of accomplishment for the group. If they do move on to more complex problems, they may find their efforts less effective. Another reason for "failure", perhaps the most important suggested by Yates, is that many block associations become heavily bureaucratic, develop elaborate committee structures, and must invest their energies in maintaining the organization. Sills (1968), dealing with the issue of stability in terms of goal preservation and displacement, discusses two sources of goal displacement for voluntary associations:

> 1. In order to establish their goals, organizations establish a set of procedures or means. In the course of following these procedures, however, the subordinates or members to whom authority and functions have been delegated often come to regard them as ends in themselves, rather than as means toward the achievement of organizational goals. As a result of this process, the actual activities of the organization become centered around the proper functioning of organization procedures, rather than upon the achievement of the initial goals.
>
> 2. A second source of goal displacement lies in the strict

> enforcement of organizational rules and the slavish carrying out of organizational procedures. The sentiments that are developed to buttress the rules and perform the procedures often become more intense than is technically necessary; following the rules and carrying out the procedures become ends in themselves.

And Perlman (1976) questions whether "groups observed in 1976 will still be around in 1980?" She too sees the group becoming a victim of the "iron law of oligarchy (Michels, ([1915] 1959)."

Wandersman et al (1985) have made a strong case that block associations should become more bureaucratized.

> To survive, organizations must have a structure and must be able to mobilize effectively: to set goals, administer rewards, and mediate between the individual needs of members and the tasks required of the organization. Leadership, decision-making structures, representation and organizational climate are all important in effectively mobilizing resources. (p.69)

At the end of one year, these researchers found that only eight of the original block associations in their study were still active. By comparing the findings of interviews of officers from active organizations with interviews of officers from inactive organizations, Wandersman and his associates (1985) noted the following characteristics of successful block associations:

- -Members had more personal skills.
- -The organization had a committee structure.
- -Organizations had by-laws that specified the duties of everyone in its formal structure.
- -There was a significant core of active members.
- -The association had a budget and fundraising strategy.
- -Leaders had more links with larger community organizations.
- -President had formal ties with presidents of other neighborhood organizations.
- -Goals and tactics were generated by the leaders and presented to the members for a vote

Based on our initial impressions, we are not so certain that a

necessary condition for long term survival is the addition of more bureaucratic structures and procedures. In any case, this structure could be arrived at in two stages: at the first stage, we contend, the stability of most organizations is dependent on the activities of a single individual; (we have already determined that to be the role of the founder). At the second stage, the stability may be built into the overall structure of the group. Organizational stability may be achieved only after a transformation takes place in the group and that transformation has to do with the bureaucratization of the organization. An alternate model for survival is simply that the original founder is replaced by one or more equally energetic individuals; no bureaucracy is needed for this kind of organization.

There is a general concern in the literature for the life of the organization (Yates, 1973, 1976; Perlman, 1976; Heller et al, 1984; Wandersman et al, 1985; Jones and Tumelty, 1986). It is generally accepted that these community groups do not last long, or as Perlman (1976) puts it,"..some believe the life span of any community group is five years..."

Based on our attempts to reach and interview the presidents of the associations, we have concluded that, from our original list of block associations, approximately 45% on our list do not even exist and we believe this to be a conservative figure. This is discussed in Appendix A. We were able to complete interviews with the presidents of 70% of those active associations. Our data indicate that, generally, these organizations do not last. Only 24 % of the organizations have been in

existence longer than 11 years, 30% have been around for 6-10 years, and 46% are fairly new, having been in existence for 1-5 years.

THE FOUNDER

Our data support the relationship between the founder and the stability of the group, particularly as the group moves to our proposed second stage - away from the activities of one individual. Of the respondents, 74% indicated that the Block Association's founder is still active in the organization. Of the founders, 48% are still president and an additional 26% are still members. The longer an organization lasts, the less likely it is that the founder remains in the role of president, or that in fact, remains a member of the organization (Table 9). We expect that these changes can be explained, in part, by the natural sequence of events; for example, people die, move out of the neighborhood, or just get tired of being involved. We don't have information about 15% of the founders, and of these, 92% are in organizations that have been in existence longer than five years. We suggest that time is the culprit for this lack of information. However, over time, there is a systematic decrease in the number of founders who remain associated with the organization. When the founder steps aside, new people and new ideas move in and the organization takes on a new life. If this does not happen, the organization ceases to exist and becomes a "non-response" in our survey.

TABLE 9

CURRENT ROLE OF THE FOUNDER ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF YEARS THE ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE

YEARS IN EXISTENCE	ROLE OF FOUNDER				
	STILL PRESIDENT	STILL MEMBER	NO LONGER MEMBER	DON'T KNOW	
1-5 YEAR	65%	36%	36%	13%	100% (45)
6-10 YEARS	22%	40%	18%	47%	100% (29)
11-25 YEARS	13%	24%	46%	40%	100% (23)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C 0.33510 Sig. 0.0001

STRUCTURE

The second proposition concerns the conditions under which these organizations survive. That is, the necessary condition for long-term survival may be the addition of more bureaucratic structures and procedures.

Holding regular meetings is an indication of formality since ad hoc groups meet only when there is a special need. Thus, the frequency of meeting and a consistent rate of attendance are an indication of a more formal structure. For the organizations in our sample, the majority (61%) reported that they held meetings once a month. However, when we look at the life span of these organizations, the longest lasting groups tend to hold meetings either monthly or every few months rather than on a more ad hoc basis (Table 10).

TABLE 10

NUMBER OF YEARS THE ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE ACCORDING TO THE SCHEDULE OF GENERAL MEETINGS

YEARS IN EXISTENCE	HOW OFTEN GENERAL MEETINGS: MONTHLY	EVERY FEW MONTHS	YEARLY	AS THE NEED ARISES
1-5 YEARS	44%	55%	14%	64%
6-10 YEARS	29%	20%	72%	27%
11-25 YEARS	27%	25%	14%	9%
	100%	100%	100%	100%
N=	(59)	(20)	(7)	(11)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C -0.07525 Sig. 0.1816

As we follow the figures in Table 10, we can see the effect of time. As the organization passes Perlman's critical five year point, certain changes can be noted. At that point, we see fewer organizations holding regularly scheduled meetings. We conclude that this indicates a move away from activity and we predict that, as time passes, the organizations in those categories will cease to function. The two transitional categories of "yearly" and "as the need arises" somewhat diminish in the longer lasting organizations, indicating the possibility of a more structured schedule of meetings. However, even though there is an indication of change, the table is not statistically significant.

As for attendance, it seems that the category of "20-30" people for the usual attendance at meetings is the important category (Table 11). Of our sample, 42% indicated the "20-30" category. When we look at a characteristic that appears to be an indicator of a more bureaucratic structure ("How often regular meetings are held), as it relates to attendance at these meetings, we see that there is no significant difference. There is a fairly even distribution of attendance categories over the monthly schedule of meetings, but this does change as the organization adopts a more ad hoc approach. The groups that hold yearly meetings have a substantial number of people in attendance. For some of these groups, the yearly meeting is a social event - a block party or a community Christmas party. While there are more people in attendance, we do not consider these events to be association "meetings". We our interested in consistency in attendance, rather than the number in attendance. While the respondents have indicated that these numbers are "the regular attendance at meetings," and the one category (20-30) has emerged as the mode of the distribution, the relation between longevity and attendance is not significant (Table 12).

TABLE 11

THE SCHEDULE OF ASSOCIATIONS' REGULAR MEETINGS ACCORDING TO THE ATTENDANCE AT THOSE MEETINGS

REGULAR MEETINGS HELD	USUAL ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS			
	1-14	15-19	20-30	30+
MONTHLY	59%	65%	61%	60%
EVERY FEW MONTHS	17%	21%	25%	16%
YEARLY	6%	7%	2%	16%
AS THE NEED ARISES	18%	7%	12%	8%
	100%	100%	100%	100%
N=	(17)	(14)	(41)	(25)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C 0.00085 Sig. 0.4955

TABLE 12

NUMBER OF YEARS THE ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE ACCORDING TO THE REGULAR ATTENDANCE AT GENERAL MEETINGS

HOW LONG EXISTS	NUMBER IN ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS			
	1-14	15-19	20-30	30+
1-5 YEARS	59%	50%	44%	40%
6-10 YEARS	18%	29%	32%	36%
11-25 YEARS	23%	21%	24%	24%
	100%	100%	100%	100%
N=	(17)	(14)	(41)	(25)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C 0.08099 Sig.:0.1835

Committees themselves are not an indication of more formality since committees can also be ad hoc, serving as long as there is a need and then going out of existence. But a structure of standing committees is an indication of more formality. The decision patterns are very difficult to interpret. The ad hoc type of organizations often reveal two patterns. Either a single person decides what is to be done and enlists the assistance of others, or discussion takes place within small groups until everyone agrees. What does seem to reflect more formality is the institution of voting.

In our sample, 68% of the organizations have a committee structure. Over time, there is a consistent decrease in the number of organizations that maintain the committee structure (Table 13). This may simply suggest a stabilization in the group. That is, as the group becomes more stable, it moves away from the idea of many ad-hoc or "committees for everything" to a more streamlined efficient committee structure. On the other hand, this may suggest that the organizations' power is in the hands of a few, thus supporting the oligarchial model.

TABLE 13

NUMBER OF YEARS IN EXISTENCE FOR THOSE ASSOCIATIONS THAT HAVE A COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

YEARS IN EXISTENCE	PERCENT THAT HAVE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE
1-5 YEARS	48%
6-10 YEARS	30%
11-25 YEARS	22%
	100%
	N=(65)

N=65
Kendall's Tau C -0.05782 Sig. 0.2869

A committee structure, while certainly an important element in the majority of the organizations in our sample, is not significantly related to the longevity of the organization.

Four percent of the associations indicated that they never had any votes. For the other 96%, this figure doesn't change significantly according to the number of years the organization has been in existence. Falling right in line with the issue of voting, 85% of the organizations have elected officers and neither does this figure change significantly according to the number of years the organization has been in existence.

Most of the organizations in our sample have committees and voting but we have not found a strong relationship between these variables and the longevity of the organization. Even when we examined the voting constituency, while there are some changes over time, they are not significant (Table 14).

TABLE 14

NUMBER OF YEARS THE ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE ACCORDING TO WHO THE ASSOCIATION ALLOWS TO VOTE

HOW LONG EXISTS	WHO IS ALLOWED TO VOTE		
	NO VOTE	REGISTERED MEMBERS	ANYONE PRESENT
1-5 YEARS	50%	45%	48%
6-10 YEARS	50%	26%	33%
11-25 YEARS	0	29%	19%
	100%	100%	100%
N=	(4)	(51)	(42)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C -0.03188 Sig. 0.3509

While there is no significant difference in who is allowed to vote, with 53% indicating registered members[9] and 42% indicating that anyone present at the meeting can vote, there is a noticeable change over time. As the organizations pass the five year period, there is a decline in those groups which require that only registered members vote. Only 4% of these associations have no vote at all, but none of the organizations in our sample that have lasted beyond 10 years indicated that they had no voting. As far as these issues relate to a movement toward bureaucracy, having a mechanism for voting and having only registered members vote appears to be indicative of more structured groups, but longevity is not significantly related to voting.

When asked if the organization had dues, 71% said "yes," and we have found that the relation between having dues and longevity is significant (Table 15). This dues structure can be interpreted as a commitment to the organization rather than an element in bureaucracy. However, when we tried to determine the number of paid members, the respondents were not so forthcoming with information, with 29% of the respondents refusing to give this information.[10] When we combine the 29% refusal and the 29% "no dues", we are left with only 42% of the

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9 This includes dues and non-dues paying members of the organization, just as long as they are registered members.

10 During the interviewing process, the author noted that respondents were cagey about giving financial information. In this case, it seems that they were protecting their organizations' treasury from prying eyes.

sample to comment on in terms of the amount of dues each organizations charges, so in this case the n becomes too small to have any meaning.

TABLE 15

NUMBER OF YEARS THE ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE ACCORDING TO WHETHER THE ASSOCIATION HAS DUES

	DUES	
HOW LONG EXISTS	YES	NO
1-5 YEARS	39%	64%
6-10 YEARS	35%	18%
11-25 YEARS	26%	18%
	100%	100%
N=	(69)	(28)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C -0.19386 Sig. 0.0252

When asked "How many additional people are active in the organization?" only 7% of our respondents indicated "few or none." In our sample, the number of additional people active in the organization had no effect on how long the organization lasted.

Having elected officers is seen as a step toward stability for organizations. In our sample, 82% of the organizations had elected officers with no significant differences over time. In each of the temporal categories, at least 80% of the respondents indicated that their groups had elected officers.

Of the organizations in our sample, 70% have an executive committee. While the actual number of members on the committee is not

of consequence to longevity, 81% of these executive committees have more than three members, and none of the longest lasting organizations has less than four members on the executive committee.

The schedule of meetings for these executive committees may indicate a move to bureaucracy (Table 16). As groups move from being "new" (1-5 years) to the middle range (6-10 years), there is a drop off in monthly scheduled meetings for the executive committee. The executive committees of those groups that have lasted more than 10 years meet more often than the other groups. Even though this is not significantly related to how long the organization has been in existence, it is possible to conclude that this is a factor in the bureaucratization of the organization. On the other hand, one could also conclude that those in power wish to remain in power, again suggesting an oligarchial trend.

TABLE 16

NUMBER OF YEARS THE ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE ACCORDING TO THE REGULAR MEETING SCHEDULE FOR THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

YEARS IN EXISTENCE	HOW OFTEN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETS			
	MONTHLY	EVERY FEW MONTHS	YEARLY	AS THE NEED ARISES
1-5 YEARS	42%	39%	40%	43%
6-10 YEARS	26%	44%	60%	36%
11-25 YEARS	32%	17%	0	21%
	100%	100%	100%	100%
N=	(31)	(18)	(5)	(14)

N=68
Kendall's Tau C -0.06488 Sig. 0.2721

In sum, we have examined the following variables as being indicators of a more bureaucratic structure: how often general meetings are held, attendance at meetings, having dues, having a vote, who is allowed to vote, having elected officers, committee structure, having an executive committee, and the meeting schedule for the executive committee. Our data do not support the current literature which suggests that these variables combine to form a bureaucratic structure which is then related to the longevity of the organization. Further, only of these variables is significantly related to the longevity of the block association and that item is "having dues."

FINANCES

The financial status of a group is an essential aspect of the organization's ability to participate in activities and perform tasks, and it is, therefore, one of the most important items which cause the transformation of groups into formal structures. In order to carry out even the lowest level of activities, a groups must have some financial resources. For example, they need to pay for the flowers and shrubs for block beautification, or for the brooms and garbage bags for a block "clean-up." The proposal writing skill is an important one, but only 43% of the respondents indicated they their groups had members with this skill and only 38% had actually received grants.

Fund-raising is another source of finance for the block association, but only 58% of the associations in our sample had fund raising events and there is no significance for fundraising over time (Table 17).

TABLE 17

NUMBER OF YEARS IN EXISTENCE FOR ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE FUND RAISING EVENTS

YEARS IN EXISTENCE	PERCENT OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE FUND RAISING	
	YES	NO
1-5 YEARS	46%	46%
6-10 YEARS	37%	25%
11-25 YEARS	17%	29%
	100%	100%
N=	(56)	(41)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C 0.05952 Sig. 0.2908

We have examined fund-raising, dues, proposal writing skills, and receiving grants in relationship to the longevity of the organization. None of these financial variables is significant.

COMMUNICATIONS

Apart from those items which deal with structure, another important indication of structural capacity has to do with communication ties. The more ad hoc a groups is, the less likely are minutes to be kept, and if they are kept, they are not usually well organized. Many researchers who have worked with organizations, for example, generally offer to organize the files of the group as a way of contributing to the organization's operation. Moreover, it has been suggested that information is a necessary requirement for effective functioning,

especially when activities involve city agencies or other organizations (Appendix B).

We have three indicators of communication abilities - minutes, letters, and newsletters. Eighty seven percent of our respondents said that their associations kept minutes, 84% said they send and receive letters, and 53% said that their associations have newsletters.

TABLE 18

ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION IN BLOCK ASSOCIATIONS ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF YEARS THE ASSOCIATIONS HAVE BEEN IN EXISTENCE[11]

COMMUNICATION ELEMENTS	YEARS IN EXISTENCE			
	1-5 YEARS	6-10 YEARS	11-25 YEARS	
MINUTES	47%	29%	24%	100% (84)
NEWSLETTER	51%	23%	26%	100% (51)
LETTERS	42%	31%	27%	100% (81)

Table 18 Shows that each of the three categories which are believed to be necessary for communication in block associations diminish over time. When we compute an index for communication, which includes having a newsletter, sending and receiving letters, and keeping minutes and we then run this index against longevity, we can again see that, while there are indeed some changes, none of them are significant (Table 19). Appendix B contains a discussion of the problems of communications for

11 These categories add to more than 100% because the respondent was permitted more than one response.

community groups as they related to the larger organizations, specifically the local Community Board.

TABLE 19

NUMBER OF YEARS THE ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE ACCORDING TO THE SCORE ON THE COMMUNICATION INDEX

	NUMBER OF COMMUNICATION ELEMENTS		
YEARS IN EXISTENCE	0-1	2	3
1-5 YEARS	60%	29%	53%
6-10 YEARS	25%	47%	19%
11-25 YEARS	15%	24%	28%
	100%	100%	100%
N=	(20)	(34)	(43)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C 0.02423 Sig. 0.3914

ACTIVITIES

Closely related to the effectiveness of the organization (and therefore, to its stability and longevity) is the ability of the organization to carry out a range of different activities. The larger the range, the more effective the organization. Our respondents have given us information on the following activities: regular programs to deal with crime, regular programs to deal with other area problems, and other events scheduled by the association. These "other events" are generally social, but they are scheduled events for the members of the block association and as such should be considered within the range of activities of the group.

Seventy-two percent of our respondents have reported that they have programs to deal specifically with area problems. However, these responses indicate that the groups have strategies rather than formal programs for dealing with non-crime area problems. These strategies can include letter writing campaigns, working through the local Community Board, or contacting City agencies. Another 86% have "other neighborhood programs" such as block beautification, clean-ups, and recreation programs, and 54% have sponsored events such as flea markets, block parties and trips (usually to Atlantic City). Forty two percent of our respondents said that their groups had programs to deal with crime. Rather than compare each of these characteristics separately to the longevity of the organizations, we computed an index for activity which included having a strategy/program for dealing with area non-crime problems, "other neighborhood programs", "sponsored events," and programs to deal with crime problems. Most of the block associations do something, even if it is only a summer block party. This idea of activity is crucial since it is probably the activity that justifies the existence of the organization. Since we expect to find at least some activity in all associations, it is not surprising that activity is not significantly related to longevity (Table 20).

TABLE 20

NUMBER OF YEARS THE ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE ACCORDING TO THE SCORE ON THE ACTIVITY INDEX

YEARS IN EXISTENCE	SCORE ON ACTIVITY INDEX	
	LOW	HIGH
1-5 YEARS	49%	44%
6-10 YEARS	33%	28%
11-25 YEARS	18%	28%
	100%	100%
N=	(43)	(54)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C 0.08162 Sig. 0.2261

SKILLS AVAILABLE TO THE ORGANIZATION

Areas of the city differ in terms of educational level, occupation, and experience. Thus, the relative stability of the organizations may vary on the basis of the pool of personal resources that the groups can draw on. On the other hand, a whole level of organizations have developed in recent years with the purpose of providing technical assistance to organizations. This latter point leads to the suggestion that the stability of some local level associations may be due not only to the skills of the members but also to the degree of outside assistance they can draw on to provide the skills necessary to achieve an effective level of operation. Since block associations depend, for the most part, on the voluntary labor of their participants we need to know the level of skills available to their members.

When we asked the leaders if their members had all the skills they needed to be an effective organization, 69% said yes. We asked the respondents about specific occupations of their members - law, administration, education, architecture, computer science. These are occupations that we deemed to be particularly useful to participants in voluntary organizations since they imply a high level of special skill. Included in this was a question asking if any of the groups had members who work for the City of New York. This question was included because it seemed to us that anyone who works for the City may have a better understanding of how the established system works. Based on these occupational elements, we computed an occupational index for these organizations[12] and found that there was very little difference between the scores - 32% had a low score on the index, 36% a mid score and 32% a high score. In Table 21 we can clearly see the changes on the occupational index over time. The highest percentage of low scores and the lowest percentage of high scores apply to the new groups. For the longest lasting organizations, we see a reverse pattern (sig. 0.0009).

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12 The occupational index was based on the respondents' knowledge of the following occupational categories for members of the organization: education, administration, law, architecture, computer science, and working for New York City. The occupational score is computed on the number of these elements for each case.

TABLE 21

NUMBER OF YEARS THE ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE ACCORDING TO THE SCORE ON THE OCCUPATIONAL INDEX

YEARS IN EXISTENCE	OCCUPATIONAL INDEX[13]		
	LOW	MID	HIGH
1-5 YEARS	61%	52%	26%
6-10 YEARS	26%	31%	32%
11-25 YEARS	13%	17%	42%
	100%	100%	100%
N=	(31)	(35)	(31)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C 0.27963 Sig. 0.0009

There is a significant relationship between occupational index and the question, "Do your members have the skills necessary to be an effective organization?" (Table 22). That is, for those organizations that have a high score on the occupational index there is also the perception that they have all the skills necessary to being an effective organization.

13 The score on this index indicates the number of occupations for each case.

TABLE 22

MEMBERS HAVING THE SKILLS NECESSARY TO BE EFFECTIVE ACCORDING TO THE ASSOCIATIONS' SCORE ON THE OCCUPATIONAL INDEX

SKILLS NECESSARY TO BE EFFECTIVE	OCCUPATIONAL INDEX		
	LOW	MID	HIGH
YES	45%	71%	90%
NO	55%	29%	10%
	100%	100%	100%
N=	(31)	(35)	(31)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C 0.39282 Sig. 0.0001

Sixty percent of our groups said they need outside assistance, but this is not statistically related to the occupational index. Here the difference is apparent for the groups that said they did not need outside assistance. For these groups that said "no," 40% were from new groups but only 24% were from the longest lasting groups. This may indicate that those who have had the most experience in voluntary organizations recognize the limitations to citizen participation.

We have computed an index for skills which includes: members have skills needed to be an effective organization and occupational skills. This index of skills is significantly related to the longevity of the organization (Table 23). In the new groups, only 15% have a high score on the skills index, while in the longest lasting groups the score is 46%. The stronger the skills of the group, the more likely it is to stay in existence.

TABLE 23

NUMBER OF YEARS THE ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE ACCORDING TO THE LEVEL OF SKILLS AVAILABLE TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

YEARS IN EXISTENCE	INDEX OF SKILLS		
	LOW	MID	HIGH
1-5 YEARS	62%	58%	32%
6-10 YEARS	23%	29%	34%
11-15 YEARS	15%	13%	34%
	100%	100%	100%
N=	(26)	(24)	(47)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C 0.24423 Sig. 0.0026

ECOLOGY

Areas of the city differ in terms of educational level, occupation, and experience. The density of problems in some parts of the city are greater than in others. The demographic and ecological context of the associations have a great deal to do with the nature of the structure that develops and the formation of goals and purposes. Using census data[14] we computed an index of demographic elements that indicate a higher social class. The index was computed as on the following characteristics:

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14 This census data - 1980 Census Data by Precinct - was prepared by the Population Division of the New York City Department of City Planning with the assistance of the New York City Police Department Office of Management Analysis.

- Households receiving public assistance
- Median family income
- Education
- Male unemployment rates
- Households below the poverty level

This census data has been matched to each case in the original data set, giving us a contextual basis for analysis. This demographic data was coded so that a high score on the index is an indicator of higher social class. We have conceptualized the optimal outcome as the smallest number of households receiving public assistance, the lowest unemployment rates, the lowest percentage of households below the poverty level, the highest levels of income, and the highest levels of education. Thirty five percent of our associations are in areas with a high social context, 37% have a "mid" score on the social context index and 27% are in areas with the least desirable social context.

A look at this index over time shows that, indeed, those associations which last the longest exist in the most desirable social context but this is not a statistically significant finding (Table 24).

TABLE 24

NUMBER OF YEARS THE ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE ACCORDING TO THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE PRECINCT IN WHICH THE ASSOCIATION EXISTS

YEARS IN EXISTENCE	LOW	MID	HIGH
1-5 YEARS	52%	47%	41%
6-10 YEARS	30%	33%	27%
11-25 YEARS	18%	20%	32%
	100%	100%	100%
N=	(27)	(36)	(34)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C 0.10362 Sig. 0.1222

The ecological context of each precinct in our sample can be determined by examining the following characteristics: crime problems, other area problems, the respondent feeling safe in his neighborhood during the day and at night, and respondents' perception of the safety of the neighborhood. Sixty six percent of our respondents indicated a positive perception of their neighborhoods when asked if both they and their neighbors felt safe out alone in the neighborhood during the day and at night, 35% identified a low number of crimes as problems in their neighborhoods, and 40% said that their neighborhoods had low levels of other non-crime problems, such as sanitation, street repair, street lighting (Table 25). The pearson correlation matrix for these three variables indicates a strong relationship among the three (Table 26).

TABLE 25

PERCENTAGE OF ASSOCIATIONS WITH DESIRABLE ECOLOGICAL OUTCOMES

ECOLOGICAL ELEMENT	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
POSITIVE PERCEPTION OF NEIGHBORHOOD	66%
LOW NUMBER OF CRIME PROBLEMS	35%
LOW NUMBER OF AREA NON-CRIME PROBLEMS	40%

TABLE 26

PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS: PERCEPTION OF NEIGHBORHOOD, CRIME PROBLEMS, NON-CRIME PROBLEMS

	CRIME PROBLEMS	NON-CRIME PROBLEMS
PERCEPTION	.3648 P= .0001	.2382 P= .009
CRIME PROBLEMS		.4072 P= .0001

N=97

We computed an ecological index based on these elements with the most desirable outcome having high positive perception of neighborhood safety, low number of crime problem in the neighborhood, and a low number of non-crime problems in the neighborhood. There is no difference over time in the distribution of these scores for ecology (Table 27). There is, however, another way of looking at this. Since there is no difference for the ecology of the neighborhood as it relates to longevity, block associations should be able to exist in even the worst neighborhoods.

TABLE 27

NUMBER OF YEARS THE ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE ACCORDING TO THE SCORE ON THE ECOLOGICAL INDEX

YEARS IN EXISTENCE	SCORE ON ECOLOGICAL INDEX		
	LOW	MID	HIGH
1-5 YEARS	53%	46%	44%
6-10 YEARS	26%	24%	40%
11-25 YEARS	21%	30%	16%
	100%	100%	100%
N=	(19)	(46)	(30)

N=95
Kendall's' Tau C 0.00066 Sig. 0.4970

THE STRUCTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION

In Chapter One we have discussed the belief that, in order to survive, block associations must become more bureaucratic. We have not found that to be the case. Only two of the variables are significantly related to the longevity of the organization, and they are:

1. The role of the founder
2. The skills available to the organization.

In light of these findings, we should take another look at the associations' founders. We have already noted that 74% of the founders of the associations in our sample are still active in the organization (48% are still president and 26% are still members). This suggests the following model: one person, whom we refer to as the founder, recruits members of the community to form a block association, usually around the

goals determined by the founder. If the members have a high level of skills as described in our skills index (Table 19) or the founder remains active in the organization, the block association will remain as a viable association (Table 28). In those organizations where the founder is no longer active, skills are essential for the continuity of the group.

TABLE 28

THE NUMBER OF YEARS THE ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE ACCORDING TO THE SCORE ON THE SKILLS INDEX CONTROLLING FOR THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE FOUNDER

	FOUNDER					
	ACTIVE			NOT ACTIVE		
SKILLS	LOW	MID	HIGH	LOW	MID	HIGH
YEARS IN EXISTENCE						
1-5 YEARS	62%	65%	41%	100%	20%	0
6-10 YEARS	31%	28%	28%	0	40%	0
11-25 YEARS	7%	7%	31%	0	40%	100%
	100%	100%	100%	100	100%	100%
N=	(13)	(29)	(29)	(3)	(5)	(3)

N=71		N=11	
Kendall's Tau C:	Sig.:	Kendall's Tau C:	Sig.:
0.20710	0.0187	0.74380	0.0031

While it is likely that many of these organizations will acquire some of the trappings of bureaucracy along the way, clearly it is not the bureaucratic trappings that are the mainstay of the association.

We move on to look at the effectiveness of these groups in one special area - neighborhood crime prevention.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRIME AND THE POLICE

Sometime during the 1960's crime emerged as a predominant public issue (Furstenberg, 1971). According to O'Keefe (1985), a measurement of the importance of issues through public opinion polls showed crime to be one of the top three issues. This has not changed much from the poll results of the late 1960's in which crime was ranked as the most serious problem facing our society (Furstenberg, 1971). Indeed, we have noted the salience of crime in our sample of block Associations in New York City (Tables 2 and 3).

During the last 20 years, the rate of property crime in large cites had more than doubled and the rate of violent crime has tripled (Roehl & Cook, 1984). By the mid 1970's there was a general consensus that police departments alone were unable to deal with "crime's massive scale" (Community Crime Prevention, 1983; Washnis, 1976). The popular belief that "more police" would have an impact on crime is not supported in the literature (Rosenbaum, 1986; Wilson, 1975; Levine, 1975).

Concurrent with this explosion in criminal activity, most major urban areas, including New York City, were caught in a fiscal crisis and suffered a severe manpower cutback in their police departments, seriously limiting their effectiveness (Tabb, 1982; Heinzelmann, 1983).

Attempts at improving the criminal justice system arose in response to these problems. Roehl and Cook (1984) have concluded that these

changes/improvements, such as improved law enforcement practices, more efficient prosecution, changes in courts, correctional reform, have not had much of an impact on serious crime.

Citizen participation in crime prevention emerges from the recognition of the limitations of the criminal justice system. A U.S. National Advisory Commission report states,

> Criminal justice professionals readily and repeatedly admit that, in the absence of citizen assistance, neither more manpower, nor improved technology, nor additional money will enable law enforcement to shoulder this monumental burden of combating crime (Rosenbaum, 1986 p.21).

The question then becomes, "What role does the citizenry play in crime prevention?" Roehl and Cook (1984) cite the recognition that crime and its control are closely linked to the social dynamics of the neighborhoods and communities. They support the Dubow and Emmons (1981) "Community Hypothesis":

1. Neighborhood residents can be mobilized by community organizations to participate in collective crime prevention projects.

2. Involvement in these activities creates a stronger community because people will take greater responsibility for their own protection and local problems, and interactions among neighbors will be increased, both formally, through the activities of crime prevention projects, and informally, as a byproduct of these activities.

3. A stronger sense of community and increased social interaction leads to more effective social controls.

4. Aside from the direct effects of community crime prevention activities in reducing crime or the fear of crime, these activities may also reduce crime or fear of crime by rebuilding local social control in the neighborhood.

The literature is rich in diverse approaches to the issue of citizen participation in crime prevention. Podolefsky and Dubow (1981) suggest that there are two approaches to citizen participation in crime prevention - the social problems approach and the victimization prevention approach. They conceptualize the social problems approach as "the result of the world view in which crime is seen as the result of social and economic conditions" (Podolefsky, 1983). Their conceptualization of victimization prevention comes form the victimization perspective, described by Lewis (1981), which defines crime as event that happens to a person rather than an activity of an individual. In other words, this approach is directed at keeping the individual from becoming a victim rather than at attacking the social causes of crime. Podolefsky (1983) found that most community crime prevention programs initiated at the city level with federal funds take the victimization approach. Hartnagel (1979) examines the issues in terms of fear of crime and neighborhood cohesion, social activity, and affect for the community. Dubow and Podolefsky (1982) as well as Lavrakas and Herz (1982) conclude that most people are involved with community anti-crime activities, not because of concern for crime, but rather as a function of their membership in a neighborhood organization.

While the theory is that the call for citizen participation in crime prevention is a result of viewing the police as over-burdened, under-staffed, and unsuccessful in crime control, almost every activity for citizen participation is proposed as a cooperative effort between

the community and the police. Washnis' (1976) analysis of citizen involvement in crime prevention states

> ...To increase communication and understanding between citizen and law enforcement officer so that police are motivated into doing a better job and residents into assisting them.[15]

Fowler and Mangione (1982), in their study of a multi-dimensional crime prevention program in Hartford, Connecticut found that increased community activity does not by itself produce crime reduction. Heightened police activity is also necessary. The Neighborhood Preservation Crime Prevention Act of 1983 states that its basic goals are "to foster jointly functioning police/community program, utilizing volunteers in a given neighborhood."[16]

In assessing the relation between various anti-crime activities and crime, there are two separate issues to consider. One is the objective crime rate and the other is the subjective perception of crime. Anti-crime activities may affect one or both of these factors. Zelditch (1959) defines a rate as "the number having the attribute during a specified time period per some specified number of the population." The usual reported crime "rate" for New York City is actually not normed on

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15 This is based on Washnis' conclusion that police performance is largely influenced by the degree citizens themselves are concerned and insistent on quality service.

16 This is quoted from a brochure distributed by the New York City Police Department entitled Funding for Community Crime Prevention.

the population[17], but on the annual change in the absolute number of different kinds of crimes committed, as collected by the police department from the daily "blotter." Whether or not this is a truly "objective" figure is another matter, but these figures remain the best estimates of crime that one can obtain. Since precincts differ considerably in the size of their population, the absolute number of crimes per precinct can however be a highly misleading figure, though it is indeed the number reported in the press. Thanks to the cooperation of the New York City Police Department's Office of Management Analysis, we were able to compute a true population crime rate for each precinct in our sample, as follows: felony complaints/population * 1000, resulting in a crime rate per 1000 people for each precinct[18].

In many ways, citizens do not in any case respond to official figures on crime rates but rather to their subjective perception of whether the crime rate is high and whether their neighborhood is safe.

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17 The New York Times publishes the Crime Rate for New York City annually. This is a report of the number of crimes in each crime category for each precinct as well as for the entire city. The rate is based solely on the yearly percentage change for each category. This rate has not been computed on population statistics.

18 The Office of Management Analysis of the New York City Police Department was kind enough to provide us with the annual Crime Statistics Report. In addition, this office of the NYPD also provided us with a census report which had been prepared for them by the New York City Department of Planning. This census report contains the population and socio-economic characteristics for each police precinct in New York City. Our crime rate is based on the population numbers from the census report and the reported felonies from the Crime Statistics Report.

Activities and reactions of block associations may be more related to subjective perceptions than to so called objective rates.

To obtain subjective estimates in our study of block associations we asked the respondents what kind of crimes were present in their neighborhoods. Based on this, we computed a "perception of crime" index. We also asked the respondents if they felt safe out in their neighborhoods during the day and at night and if they believed their neighbors felt safe out in the area during the day as well as at night. These responses were computed into a perception of a safe neighborhood.

These indexes can be treated in two ways. First, they can be aggregated to give us the best estimate available of the subjective safety and crime rate of a precinct. To do this, we simply aggregated the indexes of safety and crime rate to the precinct level. This gives us the mean for the precinct for each of these variables. The precinct social context and the precinct crime rate are of course already aggregated at the precinct level. With this precinct data, we can examine the relations between the objective and subjective variables <u>at the precinct level</u>. Second, we can examine the effects of the objective context -- the social context and the crime rate on the subjective perceptions of safety and crime by individual block association leaders.

Let us then first look at these relations at the precinct level. The correlation matrix in Table 29 and regression table in Table 30 examine the relationship between these variables. That is, at the precinct level, does the crime rate equal the perception of crime in the

precinct as rated by "expert" judges. The correlation matrix and the multiple regression are based on the following items:

1. Crime rate.
2. Perception of the number of crimes in one's neighborhood
3. Social class of the neighborhood[19].
4. Feeling safe in the neighborhood

We have included perception of crime and perception of safety as separate items, and, in fact, the correlation shows them not to be significantly related.

TABLE 29

CORRELATION FOR 12 PRECINCTS BETWEEN CRIME RATE, PERCEPTION OF CRIME, SOCIAL CONTEXT, AND PERCEPTION OF SAFETY

	SOCIAL CONTEXT	PERCEPTION OF SAFETY	CRIME RATE	PERCEPTION OF CRIME
SOCIAL CONTEXT	1.0000 .999	.6627 .019	-.0100 .976	-.5101 .090
PERCEPTION OF SAFETY	.6627 .019	1.0000 .999	-.2833 .372	-.1296 .688
CRIME RATE	-.0100 .976	-.2833 .372	1.0000 .999	-.5214 .082
PERCEPTION OF CRIME	-.5101 .090	-.1296 .688	-.5214 .082	1.0000 .999

	Mean	Std Dev	Label
SOCIAL CONTEXT	10.250	3.696	
PERCEPTION OF SAFETY	2.931	.553	
CRIME RATE	91.209	38.744	
PERCEPTION OF CRIME	6.078	1.734	

N=12

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19 The social context is conceptually the same variable used in a previous chapter. The items in the index are: median family income, education levels, percentage of people in the area below poverty, percentage of people in the area receiving public assistance, and the percentage of unemployed males. The desirable outcome for this index is high income, high education, low poverty, low unemployment, and low

The correlation matrix indicates that the only significant relationship at the precinct level is between perception of being safe in one's neighborhood and the social context. The better the neighborhood, the more likely one is to feel safe. This is an expected finding.

There is a non-significant relationship ($r = -.5214$, $p = .082$) between the crime rate and the perception of crime. What we have noted here is that the relationship is inverse. That is to say, the higher the crime rate, the lower the perception of crime.

The multiple regression predicting perception of crime from social context and objective crime rate is significant at the .0311 level. Both social context and crime rate are significant as predictor variables, each adding approximately the same weight to the equation.

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public assistance.

TABLE 30

**** MULTIPLE REGRESSION ****

Dependent Variable: Perception of crime

Variable(s) Entered on Step Number
1.. Social Context
2.. Crime Rate

Multiple R	.73309
R Square	.53742
Adjusted R Square	.43463
Standard Error	1.30375

Analysis of Variance

	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square
Regression	2	17.77326	8.88663
Residual	9	15.29792	1.69977

F = 5.22814 Signif F = .0311
N=12

Variables in the Equation

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	T	Sig T
Social Context	-.241782	.106368	-.515355	-2.273	.0491
Crime Rate	-.023564	.010147	-.526531	-2.322	.0453
(Constant)	10.705236	1.485564		7.206	.0001

We now move to the individual respondent level to examine the relationships. While it may not be obvious, it is entirely possible for the overall atmosphere of the precinct to be related to social context and objective crime, while at the level of the individual members of the block associations this may or may not be the case. Thus, at the individual level we ask if individuals in precincts with different crime rates have different perceptions of crime. That is, how do the characteristics of the precinct effect the perceptions of the

individual. It is reasonable to expect that there is a relationship between the crime rate of a neighborhood and an individual's perception of crime in the neighborhood. We also believe that the social context of the area and the perception of safety are related to the issues of crime and crime perception. On the other hand, since precincts are composed in some cases of quite heterogeneous neighborhoods, it is possible that the correlation we saw at the aggregate level will fail to be important at the individual level.

TABLE 31

CORRELATIONS FOR 97 RESPONDENTS BETWEEN CRIME RATE, PERCEPTION OF CRIME, SOCIAL CONTEXT, AND PERCEPTION OF SAFETY

	SOCIAL CONTEXT	PERCEPTION OF SAFETY	CRIME RATE	PERCEPTION OF CRIME
SOCIAL CONTEXT	1.0000 .999	.2741 .007	-.0767 .455	-.1263 .218
PERCEPTION OF SAFETY	.2741 .007	1.0000 .999	-.0281 .785	-.3042 .002
CRIMERATE	-.0767 .455	-.0281 .785	1.0000 .999	-.1508 .140
PERCEPTION OF CRIME	-.1263 .218	-.3042 .002	-.1508 .140	1.0000 .999

	Mean	Std Dev	Label
SOCIAL CONTEXT	11.000	3.202	
PERCEPTION OF SAFETY	3.000	1.199	
CRIME RATE	88.558	33.788	FELONY PER 1000
PERCEPTION OF CRIME	5.887	3.427	

N=97

We have not run a regreression on the individual respondents since the only significant relationship found in the correlation is between social context and perception of safety. The correlation matrix based on the individual respondents (Table 31) indicates the relationship between the following variables is significant:

- Perceptions of being safe in one's neighborhood are positively related to social context. The better the neighborhood, the more likely one is to feel safe. This is an expected finding.

- Perceptions of safety are inversely related to perceptions of crime. The higher the crime rate, the less safe one is likely to feel.

The relationship between the crime rate and the perception of crime is non-significant (r= -.1508, p=.140). However, the inverse relationship found at the precinct level holds at the level of the individual respondent.

The item of greatest concern to us was the inverse relationship between crime rate and perceptions of crime. It seemed logical to assume that people who live in high crime areas would perceive more crime in their neighborhoods than people who live in low crime-rate areas. A careful examination of our data tell us that this is not the case. When we compare these two items (crime-rate and perceptions of crime) and control for social context, a picture of this complex relationship begin to emerge (Table 32).

TABLE 32

PRESIDENT OF THE BLOCK ASSOCIATION PERCEPTION OF CRIME IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD ACCORDING TO THE CRIME RATE IN THE ASSOCIATION'S PRECINCT CONTROLLING FOR THE SOCIAL CLASS OF THE PRECINCT

	SOCIAL CLASS			
	LOW		HIGH	
CRIME RATE	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
PERCEPTION OF CRIME				
LOW	40%	62%	69%	76%
HI	60%	38%	31%	23%
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	N= (25)	(29)	(26)	(17)

N=54		N=43	
Kendall's Tau C:	Sig:	Kendall's Tau C	Sig:
-0.21948	0.0544	-0.06923	0.3045

The significant relationship between the items appears for respondents in the lower social context. That is, for those who are in the least desirable areas of the city which have a low crime rate, the respondents are likely to perceive a high crime rate. But among respondents in these less desirable neighborhoods who live in high crime areas, there is a low perception of crime. That is, the reverse of what common sense would lead us to expect. Further, when we control for the ethnic plurality, it emerges that all of the lower class black precincts have the anomaly of high crime rate/low perception. As for the precincts in better areas of the city, there is no association between crime rate and crime perception.

We posit the following as an explanation for:

LOW CRIME RATE/HIGH PERCEPTION OF CRIME IN LOWER CLASS AREAS:

At the precinct level, we find that the social context is significantly negatively related to the perception of crime ($r=.510, p=.045$). Therefore, it is not unreasonable for those individuals who live in the worst areas (except for those that have a black plurality) to expect the crime rate to be high. Since they expect high rates, they do not subjectively think they have high crime rates. In fact, just the reverse. People in neighborhoods which have relatively little crime but who live in precincts that are in poor neighborhoods are more upset by what little crime they encounter because they feel inundated by the overall squalor of their area. (They have a tendency to impose local social controls on the offenders.)

HIGH CRIME RATE/LOW PERCEPTION OF CRIME IN BLACK LOWER CLASS AREAS:

Given the history of the black ghetto, and the social conditions present in the ghetto, we believe that certain events that are considered to be crimes by the larger society are part of the normal environment of the ghetto and are not noted as crimes. For example, in a higher class white area in Queens, prostitution on the neighborhood streets would create quite a stir, as would running "numbers" from the local candy store. However, these are facts of life in the ghetto. One of the most reported crimes (which is a factor in the objective crime rate) is car theft (Harlow, 1986). Poor people in areas with a large percentage of their population below the poverty level receiving public assistance do not own cars. That is not to imply that car theft does

not occur in poor areas. It does. However, you are not likely to note it as an area crime if the people in your neighborhood don't own cars.

Now we want to know what block associations can do about crime. We have examined the following variables as they relate to crime perceptions, feelings of safety, social class, the police, and block associations. The relationship between the crime rate, perceptions of crime, and the social context of the neighborhood has been established.

We have already established how the crime rate was computed and we have discussed the relationship between the crime rate and perceptions of crime. The correlation matrix does not show that any of the other items are significantly related to the crime rate. But we are interested in knowing if any of the other characteristics of the community are related to the crime rate. There is a moderate inverse relationship between the crime rate and those organizations that have anti-crime programs, which includes Block Watchers, Operation ID, or civilian patrols, as well as other more passive measures, such as letter writing campaigns and speakers at the meetings. Those organizations in high crime areas are less likely to have formal anti-crime programs as part of their organizational activity (Table 33). This is not what one would generally expect to find, but it may be related to the theory that too much crime may paralyze the potential for citizen action (Lavrakas, 1983). On the other hand, we can say that general anti-crime programs may have an effect on crime in those low crime rate areas that have anti-crime programs.

TABLE 33

BLOCK ASSOCIATIONS' GENERAL ANTI-CRIME PROGRAMS ACCORDING TO THE CRIME RATE OF THE PRECINCT

	CRIME RATE	
HAVING CRIME PROGRAMS	LOW	HIGH
NO	51%	65%
YES	49%	35%
	100%	100%
N=	(56)	(41)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C -0.14199 Sig. 0.0793

The following variables have been run against the crime rate and none of them is significant:

- perceptions of safety in the neighborhood
- effectiveness of the police
- training by the police in security and protection
- police presence[20]
- getting help from the police department through Block Watchers, Operation ID, or Civilian Patrols [21]
- good relations with the police
- general activities in the block association

Perception is strongly (inversely) related to the social characteristics of the neighborhood, as we have seen. Individuals within higher social class precincts have a lower perception of crime

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20 This index of police presence is computed on the respondent knowing more than 2 police officers, police officers attending meetings, and police providing training in security and protection to the members of the block association.

21 This index is computed solely on the three items: Block Watchers, Operation ID, and Civilian Patrols, as they are the most visible in terms of the victimization approach.

than their lower class counterparts (Table 34).

TABLE 34

BLOCK ASSOCIATION PRESIDENTS' PERCEPTION OF CRIME IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD ACCORDING TO THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE PRECINCT IN WHICH THE ASSOCIATION EXISTS

PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME	SOCIAL CONTEXT OF PRECINCT	
	LOW	HIGH
LOW	52%	72%
HIGH	48%	28%
	100%	100%
N=	(54)	(43)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C -0.19981 Sig. 0.0218

Perception of crime is also significantly (inversely) related to members relations with the local police (Table 35.)

TABLE 35

BLOCK ASSOCIATION PRESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD ACCORDING TO THEIR MEMBERS RELATIONS WITH THE POLICE

	RELATIONS WITH LOCAL POLICE	
PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME	GOOD	POOR/INDIFFERENT
LOW	66%	40%
HIGH	34%	60%
	100%	100%
N=	(20)	(77)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C -0.17175 Sig. 0.0166

Perceptions of crime are strongly related to other non-crime problems in the neighborhood (Table 36). This complements the relationship between the social class of the precinct and the perception of crime.

TABLE 36

PRESIDENTS' OF BLOCK ASSOCIATIONS PERCEPTION OF CRIME IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD ACCORDING TO THEIR AREAS' NON-CRIME PROBLEMS

	AREA NON-CRIME PROBLEMS		
PERCEPTION OF CRIME	LOW	MID	HIGH
LOW	64%	38%	19%
HIGH	36%	62%	81%
	100%	100%	100%
N=	(39)	(42)	(16)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C 0.35668 Sig. 0.0005

Those respondents that have low perceptions of crime believe that their members have a good relationship with the local police. Those that have a high perception of crime believe that their members have a poor or indifferent relationship with the police. We have not found a significant relationship between perception of crime and the respondents perception of police effectiveness or police presence in the association. The perception of crime in the neighborhood is also significantly related to other non-crime problems present in the neighborhood (Kendall's Tau C = 0.35668; significance=0.0005). The lower the number of other area problems, the lower the perception of crime.

We have examined the following items against perceptions of crime and the relationship is not significant:

- effectiveness of police
- knowing more than two police officers by name
- having police attend association meetings
- having police train the members of the association in protection and security measures
- having formal crime programs

Perception of being safe in the neighborhood is strongly related to the social context of the neighborhood (Table 37).

TABLE 37

PRESIDENTS' OF BLOCK ASSOCIATIONS PERCEPTIONS OF BEING SAFE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD ACCORDING TO THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE PRECINCT IN WHICH THE ASSOCIATION EXISTS

PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY	SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD	
	LOW	HIGH
LOW	50%	14%
HIGH	50%	86%
	100%	100%
N=	(54)	(43)

N=97
Kendall's Tau C 0.35583 Sig. 0.0001

We also note that perception of being safe in the neighborhood is related to having a good relationship with the local police, but only for those in bad neighborhoods (Table 38). In bad neighborhoods, if the members of the block association have a good relationship with the police department, they are more likely to feel safe. In good neighborhoods, this relationship is not significant. People in good neighborhoods are more likely to feel safer just by reason of being in a good neighborhood.

TABLE 38

PRESIDENTS' OF BLOCK ASSOCIATIONS PERCEPTIONS OF BEING SAFE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD ACCORDING TO THEIR MEMBERS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LOCAL POLICE CONTROLLING FOR THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE PRECINCT

	SOCIAL CONTEXT			
	LOW		HIGH	
RELATIONSHIP WITH POLICE	POOR	GOOD	POOR	GOOD
PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY				
LOW	77%	42%	14%	14%
HIGH	23%	58%	86%	86%
	100%	100%	100%	100%
N=	(13)	(41)	(7)	(36)

N=54 Kendall's Tau C: 0.25926	Sig.: 0.0136	N=43 Kendall's Tau C: 0.00216	Sig.: 0.4891

In addition, perception of being safe in the neighborhood is significantly related to the presence of the police in the association[22], but only for the lower class neighborhoods (Table 39).

22 Presence of the police in the association is an index consisting of three items: knowing more than 2 police officers, have the police attend association meetings, and having the police train association members in protection and security measures.

TABLE 39

PRESIDENTS' OF BLOCK ASSOCIATIONS PERCEPTION OF BEING SAFE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS ACCORDING TO THE POLICE PRESENCE IN THE ASSOCIATION CONTROLLING FOR THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE PRECINCT

	SOCIAL CONTEXT			
	LOW		HIGH	
POLICE PRESENCE	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY				
LOW	67%	42%	20%	12%
HIGH	33%	58%	80%	88%
	100%	100%	100%	100%
N=	(18)	(36)	(10)	(33)

N=54		N=43	
Kendall's Tau C:	Sig.:	Kendall's Tau C:	Sig.:
0.22222	0.0431	0.05625	0.2668

In those precincts that are low on the social context index, neighbors are more likely to feel safe if there is a police presence in the block association. In the higher status areas, people feel safe as a function of the social context of the neighborhood.

Perceptions of being safe in one's neighborhood was examined against the following variables and not found to be significant:

- effectiveness of police
- police at association meetings
- crime rate
- having general anti-crime programs
- having formal anti-crime programs

Neither having general anti-crime programs nor formal anti-crime programs makes a difference in whether people see the police as effective.

We have examined the following items, controlling for social context, but no significant differences appear:

- police effectiveness by perceptions of crime
- police effectiveness by having police officers at association meetings
- having formal anti-crime programs by perceptions of crime

There is a significant relationship between seeing the police as effective and having good relations with the local police when we control for social context. Those people in the worst neighborhoods are more likely to see the police as effective if they have a good relationship with the police. For the better neighborhoods, this relationship doesn't hold since most of the higher classes see the police as effective (Table 40).

TABLE 40

BLOCK ASSOCIATION PRESIDENTS SEEING THE POLICE AS EFFECTIVE ACCORDING TO THE ASSOCIATION MEMBERS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE POLICE CONTROLLING FOR THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE PRECINCT

	SOCIAL CONTEXT			
	LOW		HIGH	
RELATIONS WITH POLICE	POOR	GOOD	POOR	GOOD
SEE POLICE EFFECTIVE				
NO	62%	27%	29%	39%
YES	38%	73%	71%	61%
	100%	100%	100%	100%
N=	(13)	(41)	(7)	(36)
	N=54 Kendall's Tau C: 0.25377 Sig.: 0.0118		N=43 Kendall's Tau C: -0.05625 Sig.: 0.3084	

In sum, we have found that perceptions of crime are related to the social context, relations with the local police, and area non-crime problems. The strength of the impact of the police is strongest as it applies to the perceptions of individual safety. There are significant relationships between the perceptions of safety and the following items: good relations with the local police, police presence in the association. We have not found that crime rate is related to any of these items. Nor have we found any item related to participation in anti-crime programs and activities.

It appears that the objective crime rate is not the motivating

factor for community participation in anti-crime activities.

The most consistently important item that emerges from this analysis is social context. It seems that the social class of the neighborhood effects not only how people view crime, but also how they evaluate their own safety.

However, the police have a role in effecting the perceptions of individual's safety in the poorest neighborhoods. In those neighborhoods we expect the perceptions of safety to be low. If there is a good relationship with the police or there is a police presence in the association, the respondents are more likely to feel safer. This doesn't hold true for the better neighborhoods, since the residents there tend to feel safer anyway. Generally, it is the quality of the relationship between the residents and the community that is important. These findings are consistent with the theory of police community relations. Radelet (1973), in his discussion of police-community programs has stated that

> ...the relationship between the police and the community is determined not only by what happens in police-community contact, but also by how people perceive what happens (p.31).

In addition, there are strong indications that the subjective characteristics of the neighborhood and the residents have a significant effect on the perceptions of crime.

So the effects that we have found have nothing to do with the objective crime rate. Rather, the social context and police interventions effect the perceptions of one's safety to a greater

extent, and the perception of crime to a lesser extent. But we have not found any community activity, either alone or with the cooperation of the police, that is having an effect on crime.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This study supports the classic literature that suggest block associations are formed around multiple issues (Sills,1968, 1985; Skogan & Maxfield, 1981; Lavrakas & Herz, 1982; DuBow & Podolefsky, 1982). Sills' (1968, 1985) classic analysis of voluntary associations suggests that membership in block association is not random - whites are more likely to participate than blacks; there are significant socio-economic differences, whether measured by income, home ownership, occupation or educational level. Our data do not support the ethnic differences model. We found that the respondents in our sample are representative of the ethnic distributions in New York City. We can, however, apply Sills' (1985) "higher status" label to our respondents, with "higher status" determined by education, income, and occupation. Further, this supports Yates (1976) belief that "middle class residents dominate experiments in decentralization (block associations)." Since almost no block association leaders are paid for their work, it makes it difficult for the poor and working class to participate, since they are not seen as having the personal resources necessary for what Yates (1976) refers to as voluntary altruism. The emergent leaders are identified as professionals, small businessmen, educators, housewives - those who have the time to participate.

Piven (1966) holds that we should not expect to find lower income representation in voluntary organizations since the poor are overwhelmed with trying to survive in a hostile environment and they do not believe in their ability to change the world in which they live.

Severe environmental and economic deprivation limits the very poor local communities from making significant and effective change (Jones, 1979).

Wandersman et al (1985) hold the opposite position. They have concluded that most people who took part in voluntary groups were not middle class. In addition, these authors believe that occupation and education don't have a major effect on membership; and, that obstacles that keep the working class from participating in other voluntary organizations don't apply to block associations. We find it difficult to accept Wandersman's position. First, our responses from block leaders do not show this to be the fact. Second, and we believe the most important reason, is that Wandersman based his conclusions on a study of block associations that were developed by outside organizers (Wandersman & Rich, 1983). Since they were not founded by neighborhood residents in response to some perceived need, it is difficult to accept these authors findings as applicable to true "grass-roots" organizations.

A major issue for block associations has to do with longevity. For the most part, they do not last. We believe that our data support Yates (1976) position which is that since local groups attack relatively

uncomplicated issues with clear cut solutions, their goals are easily met. Once these local groups have solved these simpler problems, they tend to disband. In the interviewing process, we spoke to officers from organizations that were no longer active, or even in existence, and they told us that once the group had accomplished what it set out to accomplish, it no longer had a reason to stay in business.

The current theory holds that organizations must become bureaucracies in order to be effective. Wandersman, Florin, Chavis, Rich, and Prestby (1985) have the following model, which they believe make a block association work. Called Keys to an Effective Organization, the model is as follows:

RESOURCES

Internal - You need enough members with skills and contacts to get the job done.

External - You need adequate assistance in terms of money, information, or supplies from other groups.

STRUCTURE AND MAINTENANCE

Leadership - Elected leaders should be responsive to members' ideas.

Committees - Every interested person should have a chance to participate, and the workload should be widely distributed.

Democratic Decision Making - Everyone should have a say.

Incentives - Members need good reasons for joining and staying involved.

Maintenance activities - Recruiting members, building team spirit, developing new leaders, and fund-raising make an organization strong.

MOBILIZATION

Time and energy - Many members commit themselves fully.

Outside assistance - You need assistance from other community groups.

PRODUCTION

Activities - The organization must produce more than good feelings among members.

OUTPUT

Reaching goals - The group must meet its initial goals and establish a track record.

We have dealt with most of these elements in chapter 3 and have concluded that, except for skills, they are not significant to the longevity of the organization. While these authors make a strong case for the bureaucratized organization, others believe that there are important disadvantages which are also related to bureaucracy. Both Sills (1968) and Yates (1973, 1976) suggest that the bureaucracy becomes the goal. The organizations must then invest their energies in maintaining their structure and cease to be true representatives of the local constituency. We have found that elements of bureaucracy are not related to the longevity of the block association. Rather, it is the influence of the founder and the skills of the members that make for a successful organization. For those organizations in our sample that have lasted the longest and the founder is no longer active, 100% of the members have high skills. The data do not support the bureaucratic model. Nor do they support the belief that the most disenfranchised can have successful block associations. Since members' skills are strongly related to the longevity of the group, it is unrealistic to expect that

those segments of the population which do no have these skills as a rule to be successful in grass roots organizations.

Following along with the idea of bureaucracy, the rigid application of rules is also seen as a barrier to the success of block associations. The "slavish carrying out of organizational procedures" (Sills, 1968) was particularly noted during interviews at a neighborhood outreach organization. In order for any group to apply for funding (regardless of the project), a complicated application was required, including information on the incorporated status (if any) of the group. In discussing the applications for funding with an executive of a community outreach program, I was informed that "these people must learn to conform with rules."[9] Current applications for anti-crime funding require formal staff and budgetary information. These requirements become a barrier to many of the residents in New York City who lack the skills to cope with elaborate requirements.

Many of the block association leaders with whom I spoke indicated some resentment toward the city that should be providing services, but wasn't. One man said, "It makes me mad as hell that I pay taxes in this city, but I still have to fight to get my garbage collected."

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9 There is an interesting aside to the matter of funding through this community outreach group. While the groups must fill out a very complicated form to apply for funds, there is no required evaluation of how the funds were used. There was only one control and that was that no group could get additional money unless they had provided an evaluation of their previous funding.

Yates (1976) has suggested that if block associations move on to more complex problems, they may not be effective.

Crime is certainly a more complex problem and we were interested in how the block associations deal with crime. Our major finding is that the social context of the neighborhood is the most important factor for the respondents' perception of crime and perception of safety in the neighborhood. The better your neighborhood, the safer you feel and the less crime you will perceive. However, if you live in a bad neighborhood, having a good relationship with the local police or having a police presence in your association will change your perceptions of safety. You will be more likely to fell safe. Having anti-crime programs is related to the crime rate, but inversely. That is, the lower the crime rate, the more organizations that have anti-crime programs. Perhaps these programs are contributing to lowering the crime rate. Or perhaps it is related to the theory that too much crime may paralyze the potential for citizen action (Lavrakas, 1983). Other than this one instance we have not found any effect for either general anti-crime programs or more formal anti-crime programs. In other words, in our sample, anti-crime activity has not had an impact on crime. Since we have confidence that our data indicate a true picture of current circumstances, we had to re-evaluate the idea of citizen participation in anti-crime programs. Current evaluation research supports our position that citizen anti-crime activity, for the most part, has little effect on crime.

As we reviewed the literature we were struck by the call for citizens to participate in crime prevention based solely on the belief that this participation would be effective, without any substantial empirical evidence to support this belief. The question of "Does citizen participation make a difference?" was unanswered. In fact, several evaluations of citizens in anti-crime programs recognize the lack of significant findings, yet they continue to advocate the programs in question based on an inherent belief that citizen participation is a good thing (Yin, Vogel, Chaiken & Both, 1977; Roehl & Cook, 1984; Bickman et al, 1977).[10] We also noted that the literature as well as the popular press is filled with case studies of successful citizen participation. But cases studies, while interesting, are not substitutes for empirical findings. Lurigio and Rosenbaum (1986) sum up the problems of evaluation of citizen participation in anti-crime activities.

> Despite all the impressive statistics and laudatory accomplishments attributed to community crime prevention programs, the standard evaluations in the field, which structure the foundation of public opinion about the success of these programs, are seriously wanting...Any claims regarding the successfulness of citizen crime prevention must not be categorically accepted apart from a studious examination of the research designs and the data analysis strategies predicting these assertions. (p.19)

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10 In fairness, some of the evaluations based their conclusions not only on anti-crime activities, but on the achievement of citizens in reaching other organizational goals.

Lurigio and Rosenbaum (1986) present meta-evaluations of crime prevention programs, including three that our respondents reported as being present in their organizations:

1. Operation Identification (Operation ID) - projects that help citizens mark their personal possessions to diminish the risk of them being stolen. There has been an unsatisfactory level of citizen participation in the program. Only 10% of the targeted households participated. At the city-wide level there are no appreciable differences in burglary levels for Operation ID participants and non-participants. Operation ID does not facilitate the recovery and return of stolen property. (Lurigio & Rosenbaum, 1986, p.27)

2. Citizen Crime Reporting Projects (Block Watchers) - Block Watchers programs educate residents to be aware of any sign of criminal behavior in their neighborhoods and to call a special phone number (usually 911) to report the episode. Instead of giving their names, Block Watchers are assigned a special code number to use when making these calls. It has been concluded that the absence of systematic planning to designate the target areas of citizen crime reporting projects has made assessment of the projects "highly problematic." There is a dearth of hard evidence demonstrating that crime reporting projects increase the level of surveillance in an area or the frequency or quality of citizens' reports regarding suspicious or illegal activities. (Lurigio & Rosenbaum, 1986, p.28)

3. Citizen Patrols - Citizen patrols encompass specific patrol or surveillance routines that are executed by private citizens, and are under the auspices of a community organization. Citizen patrols are difficult to document and have not undergone formal evaluation There is evidence to suggest that they might be a potentially effective deterrent to crime under the right conditions. one of the few drawbacks to citizen patrols is the potential of such efforts to evolve into vigilantism. Further research is necessary for a broader understanding of the emergence, operations, and effects of citizen patrols as well as the legal status and legal liabilities of patrol members. (Lurigio & Rosenbaum, 1986, p.26)

All of this suggests that, even though the victimization approach has been heavily funded by agencies of the local and federal governments, this may be the wrong approach to take. Using this approach, which reduces the risk to the individual of becoming a crime victim, is not preventing crime. While it may reduce the risk of a particular individual becoming a victim, the criminal will find another victim. A major official of an agency in New York City told me that these community anti-crime programs "...don't reduce crime. They just move it around the corner."

This suggests that society should be addressing the social structures that contribute to crime. For our immediate concern, it suggests that crime prevention is far beyond the scope of the block association. This supports Yates (1976) contention that moving to more complex problems has an impact on the stability and longevity of the groups since these more complex functions cannot be addressed at this local level.

As for the role of the police in the community, we have concluded that it is the quality of the relationship between the police and the community that is important. In addition, having an active police presence in the community organization is likely to make people feel safer than their circumstances warrant. Our data support the idea of police-community relations as conceptualized by Earle (1970).

> Police-community relations is an art. It is concerned with the ability of the police within a given jurisdiction to

> understand and deal appropriately with the community's problems; it involves the idea of community awareness of the role and difficulties faced by the police; and it involves the honest effort of both the police and the community to share in the common goal of understanding the problems of both with conscientious effort for harmony and cooperation. (p.6)

This is in line with the current New York City Police Department Community-relations policy.

All of this suggests that anti-crime activities of the block association do not have an impact on the rising crime rate. However, they may make people feel safer in an unsafe environment. But feeling safer is really not enough.

It seems to us that it is unrealistic to try to make block assocations mini-bureaucracies. We believe that at the point at which they become more bureaucratic, they become significantly less representative of the local constituency. Further, we contend that Yates' (1973) model holds. That is, block associations can deal with simple problems that have clear-cut solutions. Anything more complex is beyond the scope of their expertise. If they develop a structure to deal with more complex problems, they fall victim to bureaucracy and, as we have said, they become less representative of the local groups and more closely aligned with the larger institutions. We do not believe that given the current social environment, block associations can have an impact on crime prevention through anti-crime programs. We suspect that they may get more attention to their area crime problems by making demands on city agencies in the name of their association. This usually results in a short term intervention, and as soon as the block

association quiets down, the attention of the police and other agencies is turned to other problems. Without a way to address the social issues that bring about an environment of crime, the police will remain in a position that makes it difficult to for them to have an impact on crime. Their role as law enforcers is not enough to lessen the crime rate. Crime is a multi-dimensional problem and it is unlikely that it can be successfully addressed in a uni-dimensional approach.

Block associations are important to the quality of life in the neighborhood. Even if all they do is sponsor a yearly block party, their presence give neighbors a chance to reinforce neighborhood values through social interaction.

If block associations are ineffective in crime prevention, why does everyone believe that they are successful and good? It all has to do with the subjective perception of what's going on. For those people in good neighborhoods, their perceptions of safety are high and perceptions of crime are low, based on the social context of their neighborhoods. Any activity of the block association is happening in a positive environment and there is no reason to believe that the block association is not somehow contributing to that positive environment. For those people who live in the least desirable neighborhoods where the perceptions of safety are expected to be the lowest, the perceptions of being safe in their neighborhood are changed for the better by the activities of the police within the block association. Since the block association is the vehicle for this positive change (even though the

change is related only to perceptions of conditions and not to the reality), the block association is seen as good and as an effective element of social change.

Block associations are guardians of community values, and as such are essential to quality of life in the city. To try to make them more than this destroys them. More, it destroys people's belief in the integrity of the neighborhood.

APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY

Since our study looks at the relationship between block associations and neighborhood crime, we first randomly selected 12 police precincts as the geographic areas to be studied. Three precincts were chosen within each of 4 boroughs of New York City. Staten Island was not included.

In order to identify block associations in New York City, the Federation of Citywide Block Associations was called at a published telephone number. The respondent at that number advised the caller that the organization no longer existed (and had not for approximately three years). He referred us to the Citizens Committee for any information concerning block associations. We contacted the Citizens Committee for New York City. They generously provided us with their mailing list which contained approximately 3,700 neighborhood associations. We were also made aware that the community boards in each borough maintained lists of block associations in their districts. We obtained copies of the community board lists from the Office of the Mayor and then contacted the individual boards to make sure we had the most recent list of block associations for their districts.

A master list of block associations was compiled by extrapolating only block associations from the list provided by the Citizens

Committee. We added to this master list by including block associations from the Community Boards' list that were not on the Citizens Committee list. This resulted in a master list of 488 block associations which included the name of the organization, the name of an officer (presumably the president), and the address of the officer. There were no telephone numbers on the list. We used the following three step method to contact the officers of the block associations:

1. The phone number for each person identified as an officer of the block association was checked in the telephone directory.

2. For all those individuals for whom a listing did not appear, New York Telephone information was utilized. It should be noted that directory assistance will inform a caller if a person has an unlisted phone number, although they will not reveal the phone number

3. For the remaining group, for whom there was no phone book listing and no information listing, a letter was sent requesting they respond with a number where some official involved with the organization could be reached.

RESULTS

For those organizations for whom we had phone numbers, we made every attempt to contact the officer of the association. If we received no answer to our initial phone call, we made repeated callbacks at different times of the day and evening over the seven days of the week.

Beginning with a list of 488 names of organizations assumed to be Block Associations, the first step in the process was to make contact with the individual listed as the "president" of the group. At the completion of the first step, we had failed to make contact with 115 of the 488 groups. That is, for 115 names on the list, no telephone

listing was obtained either from the phone book or from information, and there was no response from the individual to whom the letter was sent, nor was it returned by the Post Office.

Those groups from which a response to the letter was received fell into a range of categories. The first category was postal responses resulting from the attempt to deliver the letter. These postal responses included "moved:no forwarding address," "returned -attempted not known," and "returned-no such address." There were 39 such non-delivery responses. At this point in the procedure, we had found it impossible to make contact with a total of 154 of the 488 organizations. We concluded, therefore, that most of these do not exist.

Of the remaining names (334), some response was received. Beginning with the most positive response, interviews were completed with 97 presidents of block associations. An additional 21 refused to be interviewed. We were informed that an additional 20 were active associations block associations, however, we were unable to contact any officer to be interviewed. Twenty four people on the list reported that their groups were presently inactive. Thirty seven were reported to be defunct. If we encountered an unlisted phone number, a letter was sent asking how to contact the President of the block association. We received no response form 38 of the unlisted phone numbers. Even after a rigorous callback schedule, we received no answer to 65 calls. Five unreturned messages were left on answering machines. Eleven of the people we contacted told us they were not members of a block association

and had no information about the block association. Three of the individuals on our list were deceased. Thirteen of the respondents told us that their organizations were not block associations.

Based on these outcomes, we came to the following conclusions about our list of 488 block associations:

- 117 exist
- 215 do not exist
- 143 no information

STATUS OF BLOCK ASSOCIATIONS

Not a block association	13	
Completed interviews	97	EXIST - 117
Active	20	
No phone or mail contact	115	
Non-delivery by Post Office	39	NOT EXIST - 215
Inactive	24	
Defunct	37	
Refused	21	
Not member/no info	11	
Unlisted	38	NO-INFO - 143
No Answer	65	
Answering machine	5	
Deceased	3	

We did not expect to find that so many of these block associations had such a short life span. We deal with this issue in our study to the extent that longevity relates to stability of the association. However, we believe that the lack of existing block associations has implications far beyond the issues that we plan to consider here. For instance,

claims have been made about large numbers of active block associations in New York City (Perlman, 1976; the Citizens Committee for New York, 1982). Since it appears that block associations do not exist in large numbers, why maintain the myth?

Are There Really 10,000 Block Associations in New York City?

by Delmos J. Jones and Susanne M. Tumelty

The importance of organizations at the neighborhood level is increasingly being emphasized. This focus on neighborhood organizations is related to urban fiscal crisis; one of the tactics used by government to cope with fiscal stress is the use of neighborhood organizations to deliver services (Levine 1984). At the time of New York City's fiscal crisis in 1976, for example, Mayor Abraham Beame called on the people of the city to form grassroots, voluntary, self-help groups to supplement the city's decimated services.

Levine, however, sees the allocation of service-delivery responsibility to neighborhood organizations as a promising development for better citizenship, "not just a way of delivering services but a more continuous way of getting day-to-day involvement of individuals and neighborhoods in government." Current efforts to utilize community organizations in the delivery of public goods and services is sometimes referred to as coproduction (Levine 1984, Percy 1984, Warren 1984, Brudney, 1984).

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An exaggeration of the number of neighborhood groups that exist gives an illusion of social and political progress.

It is well known that policies designed to solve problems often have unintended consequences, and one of the reasons has to do with the nature of the mechanisms used to implement them. This article will focus primarily on the question of the number of local organizations that actually exist. Serious consequences would result if the number and distribution of functioning organizations are insufficient to institute coproduction. These consequences will be discussed in relation to political decentralization in New York City, which places a heavy reliance on local organizations as a means of increasing citizen participation.

Our research indicates that there are not as many block associations in New York City as many believe to exist. Moreover, there are important political implications of the exaggerated claims, and these implications are highlighted when looked at in the context of decentralization.

Political decentralization in New York City was designed to deal with a serious problem of political alienation: the widening gap between government and citizens. The findings of a study of four decentralized community boards, carried out between 1979–81, established that citizen participation takes place only to the degree that there is widespread involvement in local organizations.

The relationship among city government, the community boards, and the citizenry in the context of decentralization works as follows: information about planned projects is passed from the city to community boards, and most of the communication that takes place between the board and the citizens of a community district is through local organizations. When an issue that citizens are concerned about is scheduled to come before the board for discussion, information about the issue is usually sent to local organizations on the board's mailing list; it is the responsibility of these organizations to relay this information to its members and to the people of the community. Community members can then appear before

the board to express their opinions. This procedure seems more than adequate since it is widely believed that there is an average of one block association for every three city blocks.

Estimates about the number of organizations in New York City vary, but most are very high. Boyte (1979) noted that "since mid-decade . . . several thousand block clubs have formed in New York City, addressing issues that range from rents to health care and crime control." Others have noted that there are about 10,000 local community groups and block associations in the city (Perlman 1976).

There are two major lists in New York City containing the names of organizations. Each community board has a list of groups within its particular district. The Citizens Committee of New York City has a list of local organizations that includes approximately 3,700 names. These two lists were used in an effort to draw a sample for a study of neighborhood groups, specifically block associations.

From the two lists 488 names, believed to be block associations, were selected. Thirteen turned out not to be block associations, and this left 475 names. During the process of trying to make contact with these groups, only 138 active groups were located. (This included 98 completed interviews, 19 who reported they were active but were not interviewed, and 21 who refused to be interviewed.) We assume that 40 of these groups *may* have been active. We can say with a high degree of certainty that 215 of the remaining 337 were inactive. With considerable effort it was impossible to obtain *any* information on the remaining 122 groups.

The lists used in this study, particularly the community boards', are the primary means by which the boards communicate with the citizenry. Of the 488 names on the lists, mailings may be going to a sizable number of people (at least 44 percent and possibly as high as 77 percent) who have no desire to receive them, nor any means or mechanism to disseminate or communicate the information to others.

The results clearly indicate that there are not as many organizations at the local level in New York City as many have believed. We were unable to discover any empirical basis for any of the large estimates cited earlier in this article. We suggest that an exaggeration of the number of organizations that exist in New York City, combined with claims about what local organizations can accomplish under the present social and economic conditions, give only an illusion of social and political progress.

The number of local organizations that exist has important implications for those policies that rely on these organizations for their implementation. Decentralization in New York City is predicated on the ideal that every neighborhood of the city should have a viable organization in communication both with its community board and with the residents of the local community. To the degree that this is not the case, the primary goal of decentralization is not achieved.

Other studies confirm that the mortality rate of local organizations is very high (Wandersman et al. 1985). Yates (1976), for example, found that more than half failed to move beyond the simple block cleanup stage and most subsequently disbanded. A limited range of local problems can be solved by block associations, and after that there is no longer any reason for them to remain in existence. This is what was reported by members of some of the "defunct" groups we interviewed.

A great deal of the rhetoric about empowerment stresses the organizational strength of the local level.

> To maintain itself, a block association must continually acquire energy and resources from its members and from other organizations such as churches, public agencies such as police departments, private foundations, and city government (Wandersman et al.).

And Boyte (1979) has noted that the

> citizens' movement was given momentum and coherence by the emergence of multi-issue, enduring organizations of a new sort that saw themselves as lasting instruments of the people.

Yet local level groups are organizationally unstable unless they are linked to more stable groups, and this is the whole idea behind the "block booster" idea currently being advocated by Wandersman et al. (1985).

It has long been noted that serious contradictions emerge when these kinds of ties are established. Ventriss and Pecorella (1984) note that neighborhood organizations that establish external relationships tend to become more like these larger organizations. If the stabilizing role of larger and more substantial organizations is acknowledged, more attention should be paid to them, and questions can be raised about who they are and what are their political motivation. Are they always, "lasting instruments of the people?" Or may they be instruments of domination? While we can talk about grassrooting the system (Perlman 1976), we can also talk about bureaucratizing the grassroots.■

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BOARD_____ PCNT.____ BOROUGH_____ Supervisor ID ____Interview No.___
Hello, my name is _____. I'm calling for the Center for Social Research at the City University of New York. We are doing a study of local organizations in New York City and how they work. Is your organization a block association?
IF NO, Could you tell me something about your organization?
Does your organization oversee or coordinate smaller organizations?
IF YES, GET DETAILS
IF NOT A BLOCK ASSOCIATION OR INCLUDES MORE THAN ONE ASSOCIATION, TERMINATE INTERVIEW: We may be back in touch with you. Thanks, [etc. !]

IF A SINGLE BLOCK ASSOCIATION CONTINUE:
I got your name from a list of organizations and their officers. You are listed as president of _____. Are you still president? (If respondent asks where you got the list, say it was compiled by the Center for Social Research at CUNY.)

IF THE RESPONDENT IS NO LONGER CONNECTED WITH THE RUNNING OF THE ORGANIZATION ASK:
Could you tell me the name of the current president and how I could reach this person?

IF RESPONDENT IS STILL THE PRESIDENT OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER CONTINUE:
Would you be kind enough to answer some questions about your organization? It will take about 20 to 30 minutes?

CONTACT DATA: INITIAL RESPONDENT

_____

Name Office Organization Phone

CONTACT REPORT: Time Remarks

First Attempt:_____

Second Attempt:_____

Third Attempt:_____

Fourth Attempt:_____

CONTACT DATA: SECOND RESPONDENT

_____

Name Office Organization Phone

CONTACT REPORT: Time Remarks

First Attempt:_____

Second Attempt:_____

Third Attempt:_____

Fourth Attempt:_____

DESCRIPTION OF THE ORGANIZATION

1. How long has your association been in existence? _____[yrs.]

2. How long have you been a member? _____[yrs.]

3. How long have you lived in this neighborhood_____[yrs.]

4. What are the boundaries of the area covered by [name of organization]?

5. Within which police precinct(s) is it located? _____

6. Within which community board(s) is it? _____

7. How often do you have general meetings?

   Once a month or more _____ (1)
   Every few months _____ (2)
   At least once a year_____ (3)
   When the need arises_____ (4)

8. What is the usual attendance at these meetings? [get number]_____

9. Does [name of organization] have dues?

   Yes_____ (1)
   No _____ (2)

   IF YES:
   How much are they? _____
   How many paid members do you have this year?
   _____

10. Who can vote at meetings?

    Dues paying members only.....____(1)
    Registered members of the organization____(1)
    Anyone who attends the meetings.....____(1)
    Other[specify]_____(1)
    Never have any votes.....____(1)

11. Do you have elected officers? Yes ____ (1) No ____ (2)
    IF YES: How many? _____

12. How many people are on the executive committee? _____

13. How often does the executive committee meet?

Once a month or more _____ (1)
Every few months _____ (2)
At least once a year _____ (3)
When the need arises _____ (4)

14. Besides the executive committee how many people are really active and involved in the [name of organization] ongoing programs?_____

15. Does [name of organization] have fund-raising events?

Yes _____ (1)
No _____ (2)

IF YES:
What events have you sponsored within the last year?

_____

16. Does [your organization] have a newsletter?

Yes _____ (1)
No _____ (2)
IF YES:
Who gets it? (Record All That Apply)

Local shops and businesses..... ____ (1)
Residents..... ____ (1)
Association members..... ____ (1)
Mailing list of meeting attenders.. ____ (1)
Politicians and other key outsiders ____ (1)
Other. What?_____ (1)

17. Who is the individual who started your organization?

_____

What role does that person play now, if any?

Still president..... _____ (1)
Still member..... _____ (2)
No longer a member..... _____ (3)
Other ..... _____ (4)

18. Do your members have all the skills you need to be an effective organization?

Yes ____(1)
No ____(2)

If YES, give examples:

_____
_____
_____
_____

If No, what kinds of skills do they need?

_____
_____
_____
_____

19. Have you found a need to gain outside assistance?

Yes____ (1)
No ____ (2)

If YES, what kind?

_____
_____
_____
_____

If NO, why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____

20. Among your membership do you have individuals with any of the following occupations?

		YES(1)	NO(2)
(1)	Law	_____	_____
(2)	Administration...	_____	_____
(3)	Education.....	_____	_____
(4)	Architecture.....	_____	_____
(5)	Computer Science	_____	_____
(6)	Other (specify)	_____	

21. Among your membership, do you have anyone who is experienced in writing grant proposals?

Yes____(1)
No ____(2)

22. Among your membership, do you have anyone who works for the City of New York?

Yes___(1)
No ___(2)

If YES, which agency?

_____

23. Do you generally have a consensus on most decisions?

Yes___(1)
No ___(2)

24. Does your organization have a committee structure?

Yes ___(1)
No ____(2)

25. Are minutes of your meetings kept?

Yes____(1)
No ____(2)

If Yes, how far back do the records of the minutes go?

Less than 1 year.....____(1)
1 - 2 years.....____(2)
2 - 3 years.....____(3)
3 - 4 years.....____(4)
more than 4 years.....____(5)

26. Does your organization send and receive letters?

Yes___(1)
No ____(2)

Where are these letters kept?

President.....____(1)
Secretary.....____(2)
Central Office...____(3)
Other(specify)_____(4)

How well are they organized?

Very well .....____ (1)
Moderately.....____ (2)
Not at All.....____ (3)

27. Would you say your organization has access to the information that it needs to function?

Yes___(1)
No ___(2)

If NO, why not?

_____

2R. Have you ever heard of the Citizen's Committee for New York City?

Yes ____ (1)
No ____ (2) GO TO NEXT PAGE

IF YES:
Has the Citizens Committee given your organization any of the following kinds of help in starting or organizing your group?

____ (1) Money

IF YES: How much? [list up to five possible awards]

	Amount	Purpose	When
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____

And have they also given you help with any of the following:

____ (1) Literature and pamphlets
____ (1) Help in writing your own material
____ (1) Help in planning and carrying out programs
____ (1) Help in promotional activities

Has your organization received any grants or cash awards from any other sources?

Yes ____ (1)
No ____ (2)

IF YES:

From who?

	Source
1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____
4.	_____
5.	_____

└──> IF NO:

Has your organization ever won any grants or cash awards?

Yes _____ (1)
No _____ (2)

IF YES:

From who?

Source

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

29. Which of the the following led to the formation of [name of organization]?

1. Do something about crime in the neighborhood ....._____ (1)
2. Improve neighborliness on the block ....._____ (1)
3. Need to improve quality of life in the neighborhood _____ (1)
4. Other. What?_____(1)

30. Which ONE factor was most important? _____
CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA

Now I would like to know a little about your area and its residents.

31. I am going to read you a list of different types of residents. In your opinion are there few, some, or many of each type.
In the boundaries covered by your organization are few, some, or many of the residents black?

	Few (1)	Some (2)	Many (3)
Black	___	___	___
White	___	___	___
Hispanic	___	___	___
Asian	___	___	___
Other groups [What?] ...	___	___	___

_____

32. Here are some ways people describe their neighborhood. Please tell me if it is Not At All Like it is, Only A Little Like it is, Pretty Much like it is, Exactly like it is in your neighborhood.

A lot of people in this area are friendly and helpful: is this —
Not at all like it is ____ (1) Only a little like it is ____ (2)
Pretty much like it is ____ (3) Exactly like it is ____ (4)

Most people around here know their neighbors well: is this —
Not at all like it is ____ (1) Only a little like it is ____ (2)
Pretty much like it is ____ (3) Exactly like it is ____ (4)

The people in this neighborhood often share things to help each other out.
Not at all like it is ____ (1) Only a little like it is ____ (2)
Pretty much like it is ____ (3) Exactly like it is ____ (4)

33. Would you say that your neighborhood is on the way up on the way down or pretty stable?

On the way up ____ (1) On the way down ____ (2)
Pretty stable ____ (3)

34. How safe do you feel or would you feel being out alone in your neighborhood during the daytime, do you feel or would you feel very safe, reasonably safe, somewhat unsafe, or very unsafe?

Very safe ____ (1) Reasonably safe ____(2)
Somewhat unsafe ____ (3) Very unsafe ____(4).

35. What about at night? How safe do you feel, or would you feel, being out alone in your neighborhood at night? Very safe, reasonably safe, somewhat unsafe, or very unsafe?

Very safe ____ (1) Reasonably safe ____(2)
Somewhat unsafe ____ (3) Very unsafe ____(4)

36. How safe do your neighbors feel, or would they feel, being out alone in your neighborhood during the daytime? Very safe, reasonably safe, somewhat unsafe, or very unsafe?

Very safe ____ (1) Reasonably safe ____(2)
Somewhat unsafe ____ (3) Very unsafe ____(4)

37. How about at night? If your neighbors are out alone at night, do they feel or would they feel very safe, reasonably safe, somewhat unsafe, or very unsafe?

Very safe ____ (1) Reasonably safe ____(2)
Somewhat unsafe ____ (3) Very unsafe ____(4)

38. Does the area covered by your organization have any of these problems?

	Yes (1)	No (2)
(1) Sanitation	____	____
(2) Abandoned buildings .	____	____
(3) Undesirable businesses	____	____
(4) Absentee landlords ..	____	____
(5) Homeless in street ..	____	____
(6) Youths hanging out ..	____	____
(7) Heavy traffic	____	____
(8) Noise	____	____
(9) Poor street lighting.	____	____
(10) Other [specify]	____	____

_____

39. Which ONE problem is most serious in your area? ____

40. Which problem is the second most serious one? ____

41. Can you give me an example of what you are doing about either?

_____

42. How effective would you say [this activity] is in alleviating [the problem]?

Very effective ____ (1) Somewhat effective ____ (2)
Somewhat ineffective ____ (3) Very ineffective ____(4)

43. Let's think about other activities: For example, beautification through tree plantings, providing recreation facilities, and so on --- can you give an example of things you have done?

_____

_____

44. Would you say that it is easy, fairly easy, somewhat difficult or very difficult to get volunteers to work on the kinds of programs we have been talking about?

Easy ____(1) Fairly Easy ____(2) Somewhat Difficult ____(3)
Very difficult ____(4)

Why?_____

45. **Does the area covered by your organization have any of the following crime problems?**

	Yes (1)	No (2)
(1) Street muggings	____	____
(2) Muggings in buildings .	____	____
(3) Rape	____	____
(4) Murders	____	____
(5) Burglaries	____	____
(6) Robberies	____	____
(7) Arson	____	____
(8) Car thefts	____	____
(9) Vandalism	____	____
(10) Narcotics	____	____
(11) Gambling	____	____
(12) Prostitution	____	____
(13) Disorderly youth	____	____
(14) Youth gangs	____	____
(15) Other [Specify]	____	____

46. **Which ONE problem is most serious in your area?** ____

47. **Which problem is the second most serious one?** ____

48. I will read the list of crime problems to you again. Are there any items on this list that you <u>do not consider</u> to be a crime.

Yes____(1)
No ____(2)

If Yes, which item.....____ (1-15)

Why?_____
_____
_____
_____

49. Does your organization have regular programs to deal with these [first and second most serious] problems?

Yes ____ (1) No ____ (2)

IF YES:
Could you briefly describe the program(s)?

_____

_____

IF NO: GO TO QUESTION 53

50. Would you say that it is easy, fairly easy, somewnat difficult or very difficult to get volunteers to work on the kinds of crime prevention programs we have been talking about?

Easy..... ____(1)
Fairly Easy..... ____(2)
Somewhat Difficult. ____(3)
Very difficult..... ____(4)

Why? _____

51. How effective would you say these programs have been in alleviating [first problem]?

Very effective ____ (1)
Somewhat effective ____ (2)
Somewhat ineffective ____ (3)
Very ineffective ____ (4)

52. How effective would you say these programs have been in alleviating [second problem]?

Very effective ____ (1)
Somewhat effective ____ (2)
Somewhat ineffective ____ (3)
Very ineffective ____ (4)

IF NO PROGRAMS:

53. How do you deal with these problems?

_____

_____

54. Have you had anyone from your local police precinct help you with:

Instructions in building security measures such as locks, gates, door surveillance and so on? Yes ___ (1) No ___(2)
Instruction in street safety measures? Yes ___ (1) No ___(2)
Advice and guidelines in setting up civilian patrols? Yes ___(1) No ___(2)

IF NO TO ALL OF THE ABOVE
Why not?

_____

55. Does a representative of your local precinct regularly attend your association's meetings?

Yes ___(1) No ___(2)

If YES:
Is the regular Police Department representative the Precinct Commander, the crime prevention officer, the community affairs officer, or someone else?

the precinct commander?	___ (1)
the Crime Prevention Officer?	___ (1)
the Community Affairs Officer?	___ (1)
Other	___ (1)
Don't know	___ (8)

Are the committments made by this police officer(s) consistently, sometimes, or rarely followed through by the precinct?

Consistently ___ (1) Sometimes ___ (2)
Rarely ___ (3)

56. Do you know by name any [other] police officers in your precinct?
Yes___(1) How many? _____ No ___(2)

57. How effective is your local police precinct in responding to emergency situations? Are they usually very effective, somewhat effective, somewhat ineffective, or very ineffective?

Very Effective ___(1) Somewhat effective ___(2)
Somewhat Ineffective ___(3) Very ineffective ___ (4)

In investigating and following-up on crimes reported to them.

Very Effective ___(1) Somewhat effective ___(2)
Somewhat Ineffective ___(3) Very ineffective ___ (4)

In cracking down on illegal operations and establishments.

Very Effective ___(1) Somewhat effective ___(2)
Somewhat Ineffective ___(3) Very ineffective ___ (4)

58. In your opinion, do the members of your organization have very good, fairly good, indifferent or poor relations with the local police precinct.

Very good ____ (1) Fairly good ____ (2)
Indifferent ____ (3) Poor ____(4)

59. Does your organization receive help from organizations and individuals other than the police with respect to anti-crime programs?

Yes ____ (1) No ____ (2)

IF YES: Who?

_____

_____

60. As a result of crime prevention programs and activities do the people in your area feel less vulnerable to crimes , more vulnerable or about the same.

Less _____(1) More _____(2) Same _____(3)

61. Do you think anti-crime programs have led to more or less social, racial or religious tensions in the city, or have they had no effect?

More tension ____(1) Less tension ____ (2) No effect ____(3)

62. Do you regularly work with any of the following organizations:
IF YES: About how many different ones?

	Yes(1)	No (2)	How many
Community Board(s)....	____	____	_____
Churches and Temples..	____	____	_____
Neighborhood and civic Associations.....	____	____	_____
[Other] Block Associations.....	____	____	_____

63. We are interested in getting a good list of block associations in your neighborhood. Could you please give me the name of the Block Associations you work with,and if you can, the name of the president or some other officer and how we might reach them by 'phone if we need to. We will not use your name in calling these people, but we would like to have as good a coverage of Block Associations as we possibly can.

	Block Association	Name of President	'Phone Number
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____

DEMOGRAPHICS

IF NOT CLEAR:
[Just for the record, are you:]

64. Female ____ (1) Male ____ (2)

65. What is your usual occupation? _____
(GET PRECISE ANSWER)

66. Can you tell me your zip code and the year you were born?

Zip code: _____
Year of Birth: _____

67. What is your marital status?
DO NOT READ LIST. CHECK ONE

Married ..... ____ (1)
Separated ..... ____ (2)
Divorced ..... ____ (3)
Widowed ..... ____ (4)
Living with a partner. ____ (5)
Never married..... ____ (6)

68. What is the highest grade in school you completed:
DO NOT READ LIST: CHECK ONE

Elementary grade school ..... ____ (1)
1 - 3 years high school ..... ____ (2)
High School Graduate ..... ____ (3)
Some College ..... ____ (4)
College graduate ..... ____ (5)
Some Graduate School ..... ____ (6)
Graduate Degree ..... ____ (7)

69. Which of these categories best describes your combined household income? (READ CATEGORIES UNTIL RESPONDENT AGREES, THEN PLACE CHECK MARK)

Under $10,000 ..... ____ (1)
$10,000 to $19,999 .... ____ (2)
$20,000 to $34,999 .... ____ (3)
$35,000 to $49,999 .... ____ (4)
Over $50,000 ..... ____ (5)

70. How would you best describe the racial or ethnic make-up of members of your household: (RECORD VERBATIM ANSWER)

_____

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

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