

FEAR IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPACT OF CRIME

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Residents in four Chicago neighborhoods were surveyed to determine the relationship between fear of crime and official crime rates. Several anomalies were found. Citizens' perceptions of dangerous areas in their neighborhoods match, for the most part, official records of crimes committed there. However, assessments of neighborhoods' specific crime problems and personal risks do not consistently correspond with official statistics. The authors argue that citizens' perceptions of crime are shaped not so much by the neighborhood conditions reflected in the crime statistics, but rather by the level of incivility in their communities. Indicators of incivility are conditions, more frequently confronted, indicating that community social control is weak. These include abandoned buildings, vandalism, drug use, and loitering teenagers. The authors demonstrate the correspondence between levels of fear and concern about incivility. They suggest that fear of crime is triggered by a broad range of neighborhood conditions, and argue that attempts to understand and control that fear should look beyond serious crime incidents as the sole source of the problem.

Fear of crime is a major social problem in urban America. Surveys tell us that close to 50 percent of the adult urban population are afraid to be out at night in their own neighborhoods. The media use dramatic stories to tell us that fear of crime has crippled the ability of individuals to lead normal, productive lives. Federal, state, and local government agencies have implemented programs to reduce the fear of crime among selected populations. Some commentators have gone so far as to label the fear of crime one of the principal causes of the decline of city life.¹

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1. For example, in an editorial appearing in the August 16, 1979, edition of the *Chicago Tribune*, the writer stated that "fear of crime has made life in the inner city so unbearable as to threaten the health of an entire city—especially a city like Chicago with a large and growing black population."

Following previous research (e.g., Biderman et al., 1967; Garofalo, 1977a; Rifai, 1976), we propose that fear is affected not only by the incidence of crime, but also by what we call the level of incivility.² Our data indicate that fear of crime is exacerbated by signs of disorder, or incivility, perceived by neighborhood residents; however, these various signs of incivility may have little to do with the actual amount of serious crime.

This article describes the distribution and perceptions of crime in four Chicago neighborhoods, and examines the relationships of official indicators of crime to measures of attitudinal reactions to crime. While there is some evidence (LeJeune and Alex, 1973; Skogan, 1977) that victims of crime are more fearful of crime than are other persons, we concentrate here on neighborhood residents without regard to their possible history as victims. Each of the four neighborhoods discussed has a unique history and population; likewise, each has unique problems related to crime.

CRIME AND FEAR AT THE NEIGHBORHOOD LEVEL

Fear of crime is not evenly distributed throughout the city. Just as some neighborhoods have more crime than others, residents of some neighborhoods perceive themselves as more at risk than do people who live in other areas. While a broad group of studies concerning the relationship between crime and fear has focused on the effects of general crime conditions in a community on an individual's perceptions of crime (see DuBow, McCabe, and Kaplan, 1979, for a general review of this literature), most often, these comparisons have been made at the city level, examining differences in fear among residents in high-crime cities versus differences in fear among residents in cities with lower crime rates. There have been few studies, however, that look at these differences within cities (however, see Reiss, 1967; Conklin, 1975). Attitude surveys of residents within neighborhoods are even less common (however, see Biderman et al., 1967).

Related to the difficulties of comparing crime with people's feelings about crime is the problem of measuring crime itself. By now, the conclusions from the first victimization surveys are widely accepted: These surveys are more accurate estimates of the incidence of crime than are official police statistics, because of the tendency of the *Uniform Crime Reports* to underestimate the actual incidence of crime. This largely results from the nonreporting of certain crimes by victims and witnesses; furthermore, police tend not to record certain offenses (Schneider et al., 1977; Seidman and Couzens, 1974; LaFave, 1965). However, victimization surveys are not more accurate estimates than *UCR* statistics of the amount of crime that people are aware of; people are more likely to hear about crime in their city

2. Albert Hunter coined this term during an informal session of the Reactions to Crime project.

through news reports of *UCR* figures; and to the extent that the amount of crime in a city affects perceptions, then these perceptions will probably be more strongly related to official crime statistics than to more accurate estimates of the incidence of crime. Garofalo (1977b, 1979) presents data showing that fear indicators do in fact correspond more closely to *UCR* data than to victim survey data.

In the analyses that follow we attempt to show that these indicators of reported crime interact with neighborhood residents' perceptions of incivility in forming perceptions of crime problems in the neighborhood. We have measured incivility in terms of people's perceptions of the problems of abandoned buildings, vandalism, kids hanging around on street corners, and illegal drugs in the neighborhoods. The level of incivility in each neighborhood creates a sense of danger and decay which increases individuals' perceived risk of victimization. Our findings indicate that reported neighborhood-level crime rates and perceptions of incivility interact to increase fear and concern.

THE FOUR CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOODS

The evidence we use to explore the relationship between crime, perceptions of crime, and incivility is from three principal sources: (1) field observations in each neighborhood over fourteen months in 1976-77, (2) telephone surveys of random samples of residents in each neighborhood conducted in the fall of 1977, and (3) official crime rates in the neighborhoods for 1976 for the crimes of rape, assault, robbery, and burglary. Interviews designed to provide street-level knowledge of neighborhood characteristics and problems were conducted with residents, officials, and community leaders in each neighborhood. In addition to the qualitative information from the field observations, we compared the demographic characteristics of the neighborhoods using data provided by respondents to our telephone survey (Table 1).

Lincoln Park

Two areas of Lincoln Park are included. Wrightwood is largely a conservative middle-class area of older whites working in trades or middle management. A number of younger families with children left in the 1960s in search of suburban schools, but there is a new influx of younger people similar in economic status to the older, more established residents. Most residential structures are two- and three-unit buildings. There is very little new development and virtually no vacant property. Sheffield is a very old community that has been almost completely gentrified in the last ten years. Many formerly single-family residences have been converted into multiple-family houses, although most remain one-family dwellings restored by af-

TABLE 1. Demographic Characteristics of Four Chicago Neighborhoods^a

	<i>Lincoln Park</i>	<i>Wicker Park</i>	<i>Woodlawn</i>	<i>Back of the Yards</i>	<i>Chicago</i>
Percent employed	71.8	54.8	44.4	62.2	65.5
Percent earning over \$20,000	29.3	12.8	16.4	14.8	22.5
Percent earning under \$10,000	22.6	32.4	29.2	19.6	24.0
Mean number children	.63	1.28	.83	1.30	.93
Percent black	8.1	14.7	95.9	21.0	39.6
Percent Latino	12.8	32.1	0.0	16.6	7.5
Age groups (persons over 10) (percent)					
11-20	4.0	12.3	6.0	9.0	5.6
21-40	69.0	56.0	43.0	51.0	56.9
41-60	18.0	23.0	28.4	28.0	24.9
61+	8.0	8.0	22.0	12.0	12.6
Percent own homes	22.4	35.0	16.9	42.8	35.6
1970 population ^b	21,329	43,081	53,814	64,761	3,369,359
1975 population ^c	20,773	37,216	46,759	58,859	3,094,143
Δ (percent)	-2.6	-13.6	-13.1	-9.1	-8.16

^aExcept as noted, all data are estimates from neighborhood surveys.

^bFigures are from the 1970 Census.

^cEstimates from CAGIS (1978).

fluent professionals. Real estate and rental prices are among the highest in the city. In 1975, residents succeeded in having Sheffield designated a historic district and placed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Residents and police agreed that crime in Lincoln Park is not extremely serious. In one of the two police districts that serve the area, reported crime declined 10 percent from 1975 to 1976, and the other showed lower crime rates than did all but four other districts in the city. Since a great number of the residents work and their homes are thus empty during the day, it is not surprising that daytime burglary was the crime described as most prevalent by residents. Police said that auto theft is also a serious problem in the area. Other crime concerns mentioned by residents were prostitution and activities of youths hanging out on the streets. Residents were also fearful of blacks living in a housing project nearby.

Low crime rates notwithstanding, according to residents, Lincoln Park does contain pockets of criminal activity. This is verified by official police data. Table 2 compares the reported crime in Lincoln Park as a whole with that in the areas in the neighborhood singled out by residents and with the citywide crime rate. The perceptions of residents regarding Armitage Avenue and the El stop accurately reflected the relative incidence of crime. The average numbers of burglaries and rapes per block along the section of Armitage described by residents as dangerous were substantially higher than those in the neighborhood as a whole, while the number of assaults was only slightly higher than that for the entire Lincoln Park area. The Clybourn corridor, in contrast, was seen by residents as far more dangerous than the crime data suggest. Rates for assault, burglary, rape, and robbery were considerably lower for this four-block area than for the entire Lincoln Park neighborhood. Part of the fear residents expressed about this area may be attributable to the corridor's desolate surroundings: vacant lots and factories. The second part of Table 2 compares crime rates per 1,000 population in Lincoln Park with rates for the entire city.³ These data show that the crime rates for Lincoln Park were higher than those for the city, especially for burglary and rape.

Despite the relatively high rate of reported crime in Lincoln Park, the level of fear was low. Most residents said they were not afraid to walk on their block or in their neighborhood at night. Many residents conveyed the general impression that a certain amount of inconvenience and crime is the price one pays for living in the city.

Wicker Park

This is a neighborhood of lower working-class families. A high percentage have incomes below the poverty level, according to the 1970 Census; in 1970, 12 percent were receiving public assistance. Housing is primarily two- and three-story apartment buildings, with two senior citizens' high rises. In an area known as Old Wicker Park, homes described as mansions are being gentrified by young professionals. Population has changed greatly since the early 1960s, primarily because of an influx of Latino immigrants. There is some friction between Anglo and Spanish-speaking residents. Within the Spanish-speaking community there are reports of animosity between Puerto Rican and Mexican groups.

This area is plagued by a great many problems, but in 1976 and 1977 arson was foremost among them. There were competing explanations among residents for the large number of fires. The most provocative theory

3. Rape rates are based on the female population of the city and of each neighborhood, and represent the number of rapes per 1,000 women. Rates for other offenses are based on the total population of each neighborhood and of the city. Population data are 1975 estimates from the Chicago Area Geographic Information Survey (see CAGIS, 1978).

TABLE 2. Lincoln Park: Block Means for Neighborhood and Danger Zones (mean number of offenses per block^a)

	Rape		Assault		Robbery		Burglary	
	Mean per Block	Total Offenses	Mean per Block	Total Offenses	Mean per Block	Total Offenses	Mean per Block	Total Offenses
Lincoln Park area	.28	24	.99	84	1.64	139	9.66	821
Danger zones								
Armitage (2000N-800-1400W)	.71	5	1.29	9	1.71	12	15.00	105
El stop (2000N-1000W)	2.00	2	4.00	4	4.00	4	19.00	19
Clybourn corridor (2000N-1200-1400W and 2100N-1300W)	.00	0	.75	3	.50	2	3.75	15
Crime Rates per 1,000 Population								
	Rape ^b		Assault		Robbery		Burglary	
	Rate	Total	Rate	Total	Rate	Total	Rate	Total
City	.73	1179	3.58	11070	5.68	17577	12.50	38661
Lincoln Park	2.21	24	4.04	84	6.69	139	39.52	821

^aData are collected by Chicago Police Department for each city block. The rates express the average number of offenses per block. The means are reported as a way of comparing the frequency of crime in different areas.

^bRates per 1,000 women.

offered was that well-connected business people, city politicians, and insurance companies are conspiring to burn everything down for profit.

Various areas in Wicker Park were singled out as dangerous or troublesome. Many people mentioned the taverns on one main thoroughfare as dangerous. Residents pointed to a busy business intersection as a center for prostitution. Two streets were often cited as dangerous places for drugs, robbery, and purse snatching. Senior citizens mentioned that the danger of robbery is particularly great between their high rises and a supermarket a few blocks away. North Wicker Park, a higher-income area with fewer bars and other hazards, was considered to be much safer. These concerns are borne out by the crime data presented in Table 3. The average number of all four crime types per block was lower in North Wicker Park than elsewhere in the neighborhood. Together, three of the four areas cited by residents as dangerous accounted for 40 percent of all burglaries and 55 percent of the robberies. However, another area (on Schiller Street), singled out as a section plagued by robbery, did not compare with the other danger areas. The frequency of robbery in these six blocks was only slightly higher than the average frequency per block in the neighborhood. In general, however, residents were able to isolate the problem areas in their neighborhood. Their perceptions of the frequency of serious crime were quite accurate.

The bottom of Table 3 compares the neighborhood offense rates per 1,000 population in Wicker Park with the citywide averages. Wicker Park residents were about twice as likely to be victims of the four crimes, compared with the citywide average.

Although we were not able to assess the perceptions of Wicker Park residents with respect to their principal concern, arson, the available data suggest that respondents' expressed fears regarding other crime problems were largely justified.

Woodlawn

Woodlawn is a lower-class neighborhood, described by some residents as a ghetto slum. The demographic data in Table 1 indicate that the population in Woodlawn is about 96 percent black, and that the neighborhood suffers from a high rate of unemployment. Woodlawn has a higher proportion of respondents over age sixty than do the other neighborhoods; and, except for Lincoln Park, Woodlawn has the smallest proportion of residents between the ages of eleven and twenty. The population had a net drop of 13.1 percent between 1970 and 1975. Throughout the rest of the city, Woodlawn has acquired a reputation as a dangerous, high-crime area, but most residents interviewed did not seem to agree. Much of Woodlawn's reputation seems to have developed as a result of gang warfare in the 1960s, which has largely diminished, according to area residents.

Many residents considered Woodlawn no more crime ridden than other parts of Chicago, but the police data for the rest of the city show that this

TABLE 3. Wicker Park: Block Means for Neighborhood and Danger Zones (mean number of offenses per block^a)

	Rape		Assault		Robbery		Burglary	
	Mean	Total	Mean	Total	Mean	Total	Mean	Total
	per Block	Offenses	per Block	Offenses	per Block	Offenses	per Block	Offenses
Wicker Park	.20	20	2.83	280	4.71	466	9.17	908
South Wicker	.21	13	3.78	238	6.24	393	10.73	676
North Wicker	.19	7	1.17	42	2.03	73	6.44	232
Danger areas								
Division (1200N from 1600-2400W)	.33	3	6.67	60	9.89	89	19.00	171
Damen & Milwaukee North & Pierce	.25	1	4.50	18	13.00	52	10.00	40
(between Damen & Western)	.30	3	4.40	44	11.50	115	14.70	147
Schiller St. (1400N 1600-2200W)	.29	2	2.29	16	5.14	36	7.86	55
<i>Crime Rates per 1,000 Population</i>								
	Rape ^b		Assault		Robbery		Burglary	
	Rate	Total	Rate	Total	Rate	Total	Rate	Total
City	.73	1179	3.58	11070	5.68	17577	12.50	38661
Wicker Park	1.01	20	7.52	280	12.52	466	24.40	908

^aSee note a below Table 2.

^bRates per 1,000 women.

TABLE 4. Woodlawn: Block Means for Neighborhood Danger Zones
(mean number of offenses per block^a)

	Rape		Assault		Robbery		Burglary	
	Mean per Block	Total Offenses	Mean per Block	Total Offenses	Mean per Block	Total Offenses	Mean per Block	Total Offenses
Woodlawn	0.43	66	2.68	412	6.57	1012	8.51	1310
Danger areas								
King Dr. area	1.29	9	5.86	41	20.86	146	20.14	141
63rd St. area	0.66	23	4.14	145	12.29	430	9.74	341
62nd-63rd St.	0.40	6	4.00	60	9.27	139	10.93	164
63rd-64th St.	0.85	17	4.25	85	14.55	291	8.85	177
<i>Crime Totals at High Danger Spots</i>								
	Rape		Assault		Robbery		Burglary	
Intersection area, King Dr. & 63rd St. 6300-6400S, 800E 6200-6400S, 1300E	4		9		71		38	
	3		16		61		24	
	4		26		49		51	

Crime Totals at Safe Spots

	<i>Rape</i>	<i>Assault</i>	<i>Robbery</i>	<i>Burglary</i>
Woodlawn Gardens 6230S. Cottage Gr. (6200S-700E block)	1	1	7	9
Jackson Park Terr. 6040 S. Harper (6000S-1400E)	0	0	0	2

Crime Rates per 1,000 Population

	<i>Rape</i>		<i>Assault</i>		<i>Robbery</i>		<i>Burglary</i>	
	<i>Rate</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Rate</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Rate</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Rate</i>	<i>Total</i>
City	.73	1179	3.58	11070	5.68	17577	12.50	38661
Woodlawn	2.68	66	8.81	412	21.64	1012	28.02	1310

^aSee note a below Table 2.

^bRate per 1,000 women.

neighborhood ranks higher for all four offense types. Table 4 shows that the numbers of rapes and robberies per 1,000 population were considerably higher in Woodlawn. The differences between the neighborhood and the citywide rates for burglary and assault were not quite as great, but the rates per 1,000 in Woodlawn were still almost two and one-half times those for the city.

Respondents mentioned two sections, two main thoroughfares, of Woodlawn as especially dangerous: Most residents were afraid to visit these areas, especially at night. All age groups interviewed noted serious problems on these streets, especially muggings, robbery, and purse snatching. Table 4 shows the average number of crimes per block for these danger areas and for the rest of Woodlawn. Together, these two streets accounted for 48.5 percent of the rapes in Woodlawn, 45 percent of assaults, 57 percent of robberies, and 37 percent of burglaries in the entire neighborhood. These data suggest that residents accurately perceived specific areas where crime problems were especially severe.

In general, people in Woodlawn believed the areas surrounding their own homes were relatively safe. Since a large proportion of crime in Woodlawn appears to be concentrated along two streets, residents were probably correct in believing that crime may be high in some places in Woodlawn, but not on their block.

Back of the Yards

Back of the Yards occupies a large area on the city's near southwest side. It is a stable, working-class community including a mix of ethnic white, Spanish-speaking, and black families. Latinos get along well in the community and are accepted by whites. Most black families in the community live in the southern areas. Compared with the other three neighborhoods examined here, Back of the Yards has the highest percentage of homeowners, and most families plan to stay. Back of the Yards has a larger proportion of children between the ages of eleven and twenty than do the other neighborhoods except for Wicker Park. Although it is a middle-income working-class area, Table 1 shows that this neighborhood has the lowest proportion of families earning less than \$10,000 annually, and, relative to other neighborhoods, the second highest proportion of employed. The population has declined somewhat since the 1970 level of 64,761, about 9.1 percent.

Residents were somewhat fatalistic about crime. They said that although they are aware of crime, there is not much to be done about it—it exists everywhere, in all cities and suburbs.

This low-key treatment of crime as a local problem was encouraged by one of the most important influences in the area, the Back of the Yards Council (another community organization started by Saul Alinsky). It was

TABLE 5. Back of the Yards: Block Means for Neighborhood Danger Zones
(mean number of offenses per block^a)

	Rape		Assault		Robbery		Burglary	
	Mean per Block Offenses	Total Offenses	Mean per Block Offenses	Total Offenses	Mean per Block Offenses	Total Offenses	Mean per Block Offenses	Total Offenses
BOY area	.08	26	.54	178	1.07	353	2.78	915
Danger zone 47th-Ashland (4600-4700S, 1500-1600W)	.00	0	1.75	7	8.25	33	3.00	12
<i>Crime Rates per 1,000 Population</i>								
	Rape ^b		Assault		Robbery		Burglary	
	Rate	Total	Rate	Total	Rate	Total	Rate	Total
City	.73	1179	3.58	11070	5.68	17577	12.50	38661
BOY	.84	26	3.02	178	6.00	353	15.55	915

^aSee note a below Table 2.

^bRate per 1,000 women.

the stated policy of Joe Meegan, long-time executive director of BOYC, that stories about neighborhood crime should not be covered in the council's weekly newspaper in order to keep area news positive, to reduce residents' fear of crime, and to promote neighborhood stability. Compared with other neighborhoods, there were no serious crime problems in Back of the Yards. The major perceptions of crime concerned shoplifting in area stores, primarily at the large neighborhood department store. People identified the majority of shoplifters as juveniles, and indicated that adult professional shoplifters were from areas outside the neighborhood. The BOYC conducted a program against shoplifting by encouraging store owners to prosecute offenders.

Because the block-level crime reports from the police department were available only for serious crimes, we were unable to assess the reports of Back of the Yards residents concerning the problems of vandalism and shoplifting. For the sake of comparison with other parts of the neighborhood, we did isolate data for our four serious offenses in the area surrounding the major department store (Table 5). There were no rapes in this area in 1976, and only twelve burglaries. The average number of assaults and robberies per block around the store was somewhat higher than the corresponding average for the entire neighborhood. It seems likely, however, that the concentration of people around a large department store would reduce the number of assaults and robberies per person to a level considerably below that for the neighborhood as a whole.

Summary

Field observations enabled us to compare neighborhood residents' perceptions about general crime problems in their area with official police reports on the frequency of serious crime. In most cases, it appears that residents in the four neighborhoods have a reasonably accurate picture of the crime problem they face. Informants accurately single out the relatively dangerous areas in their neighborhoods, but there remain some unanswered questions. Why were residents of Woodlawn seemingly unconcerned about the extraordinarily high rate of reported crime in their neighborhood? Why did people in Wicker Park seem to live in fear when the rate of serious crime in that area, while higher than the citywide average, was below that in Woodlawn?

CRIME AND FEAR: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FOUR NEIGHBORHOODS

This section applied more systematic evidence from our telephone surveys to examine the salience of the crime problem among a sample of

residents in each neighborhood. Because we also administered our questionnaire to a random sample of people throughout the city of Chicago, we can compare the perceptions of people in other parts of the city with those of residents in the four neighborhoods.

We took two distinct approaches in our telephone surveys to measuring people's perceptions of crime. The first approach related to the relatively general set of attitudes about how much of a problem certain crimes represent. For each of four offense types—burglary, robbery, assault, and rape and sexual assault—we asked respondents to indicate whether they thought this was a big problem, some problem, or no problem at all in their neighborhood. Note that this question asks people to use their own criteria in assessing the crime problem. The second set of indicators was more specific. We asked people to estimate, on a scale from one to ten, the likelihood that they would become victims of each of the four crime types.⁴

In analyzing perceptions of crime in this way, we assumed that three concepts—actual incidence of crime, concern about crime, and perceived chance of becoming a victim—are linked. We did not assume that people's perceived risk of crime is *directly* linked with official crime rates but that the two are related to an intervening variable, general concern about the crime problem. In other words, people make the judgment that a certain level of crime is a problem, and this judgment influences their assessment of risk.

In the following analyses, we examine the correspondence between these three concepts for our selected neighborhoods. The figures for each offense type compare the actual rates of reported crime, expressed concern, and average estimates of perceived risk for each neighborhood. If perceptions of crime are linked to aggregate crime rates in an individual's immediate surroundings, then concern and perceived risk should be higher for those neighborhoods with higher rates of reported crime.

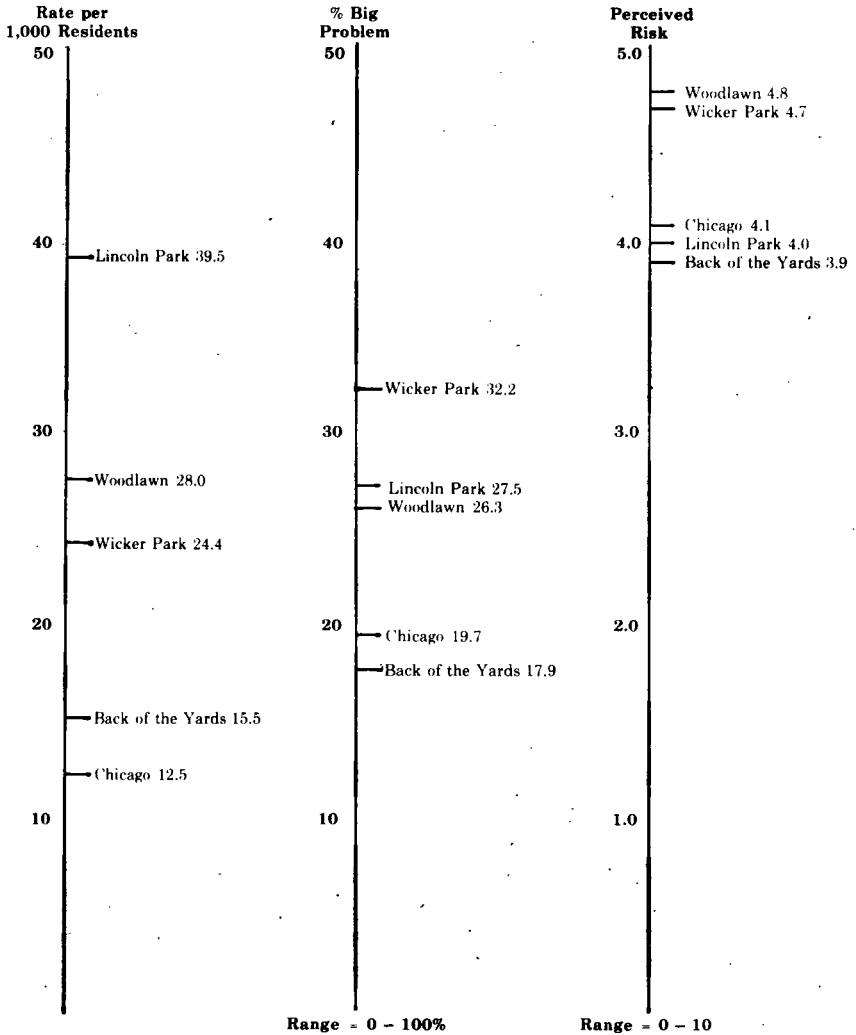
Figures 1 through 4 show scales for each of the three indicators for each crime type. The crime data are the same aggregations of block-level statistics presented earlier.

Burglary

On this variable (and, as we shall see, on the others as well), the ordering of the neighborhoods is slightly askew from the reported crime rates.

4. The following are the perceived risk and concern questions, as they were phrased for burglary: *Perceived Risk*: Think of a row of numbers from zero to ten. Let the zero stand for no possibility at all of something happening, and the ten will stand for it being extremely likely that something could happen. How likely do you think it is that someone will try to get into your own house or apartment to steal something? *Concern*: What about burglary in this neighborhood in general? Is breaking into people's homes or sneaking in to steal something a big problem, some problem, or almost no problem for people in your neighborhood?

FIGURE 1. Burglary



Consistently, respondents in Wicker Park expressed more concern over burglary than did respondents in other areas, although the crime rate in this neighborhood was below those in both Lincoln Park and Woodlawn. In the other three neighborhoods, there is a better match between the actual reported incidence and concern.

Again, the perceived risk scale shows that, contrary to actual crime rates, respondents in Wicker Park thought they had a higher chance of being burglarized than did respondents in either Lincoln Park or Back of

the Yards. On this scale, however, they are exceeded by Woodlawn, which also conflicts with actual rates. The absolute values of estimated risk on all neighborhoods seem rather high. But, while most people placed their chances of being burglarized at just below the midpoint on the scale, this does not necessarily mean that they saw their chances of being victimized as close to 50-50. It only means that they felt they were about as likely as most people to have their homes burglarized. Collectively, respondents living in Wicker Park and Woodlawn estimated their chances of being burglary victims as somewhat higher than did people in other neighborhoods in our sample in other parts of the city.

Robbery

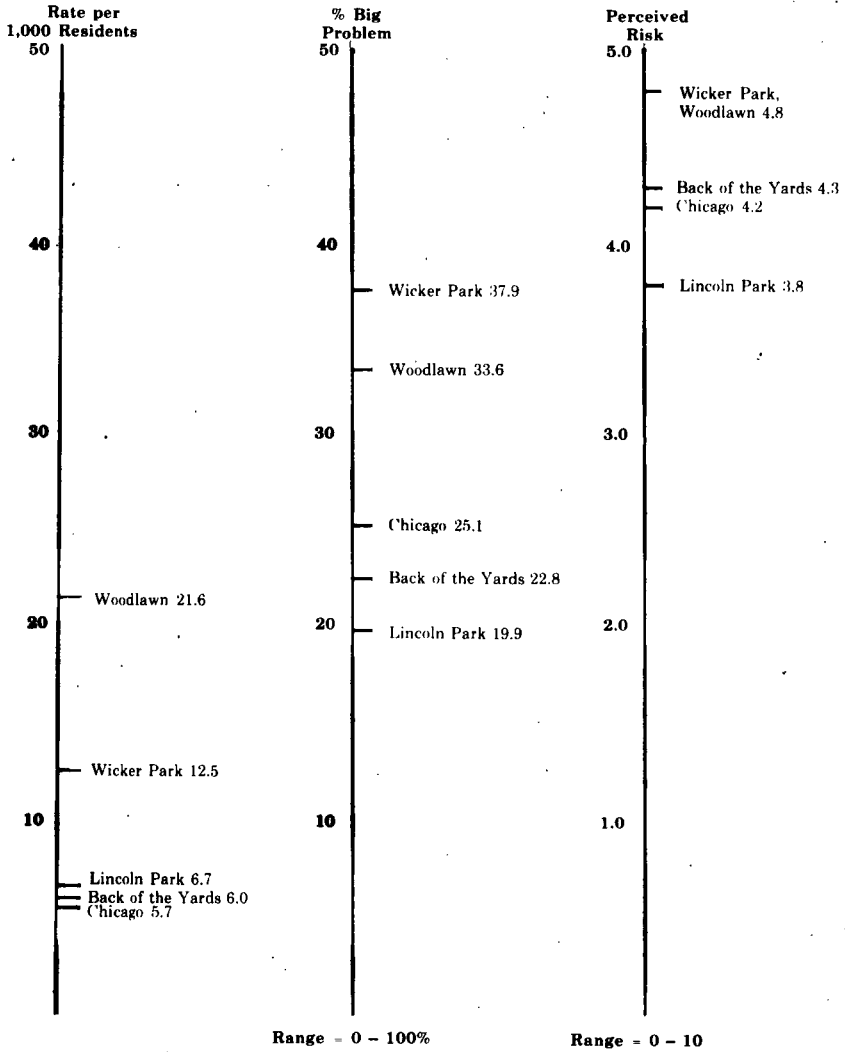
Figure 2 provides robbery figures. Again we see that Wicker Park residents were far more concerned about crime than were our other respondents, relative to the reported rates. In Woodlawn there were 21.6 robberies per 1,000 residents; there were only 12.5 per 1,000 in Wicker Park. Nevertheless, Woodlawn and Wicker Park residents expressed almost equal concern about robbery, and their estimates of risk were nearly equal. Although the official reports show Wicker Park a distant second to Woodlawn, Wicker Park residents were most likely to think that robbery is a big problem. On the other hand, while Lincoln Park and Back of the Yards were slightly above the citywide rate of robberies per capita, both were slightly below the citywide average score for concern.

It is interesting to note that the perceived risk of robbery in all neighborhoods is about the same as that for burglary. Even though burglary is much more common, people estimated their chances of becoming victims as about equal for the two offense types. The indicator of concern about robbery shows that more people in each neighborhood saw it as a bigger problem than the more common offense of burglary. This is consistent with previous research that has found that robbery, as a personal crime involving confrontation and often violence between offender and victim, is more likely than burglary to generate fear in victims and among people who hear of the robberies (Skogan, 1977).

Aggravated Assault

Aggravated assault is even less common than robbery (Figure 3). Once again, Woodlawn and Wicker Park cluster together as high-crime areas, well above Lincoln Park and Back of the Yards. Relatively few people in Lincoln Park and Back of the Yards saw assault as a big problem. On the other hand, once again about twice as many people in Wicker Park expressed concern over assault as did those living in Woodlawn, although residents of the two areas had about equal estimates of their chances of being

FIGURE 2. Robbery



assaulted. The four neighborhoods cluster closely in their mean estimates of risk. Wicker Park residents again were most apt to see this crime as probable; that group was followed closely by those living in Woodlawn and Back of the Yards. There was considerable variation among the neighborhoods in the incidence of assault, but there was not much difference in people's perceived risk of being beaten up. The perceived risk of assault for all neighborhoods—slightly below that for robbery—accurately reflects relative frequency of the two offense types.

Rape and Sexual Assault

Figure 4 compares the four neighborhoods with respect to the rates and perceptions of rape and sexual assault. (The questions about perceived chance of victimization were asked of women only, while both men and women responded to the concern question.) Rape is much less common than the other offense types we have discussed. Woodlawn and Lincoln Park showed the most rapes, well above the rates for the other two neighborhoods and for the city as a whole.

FIGURE 3. Assault

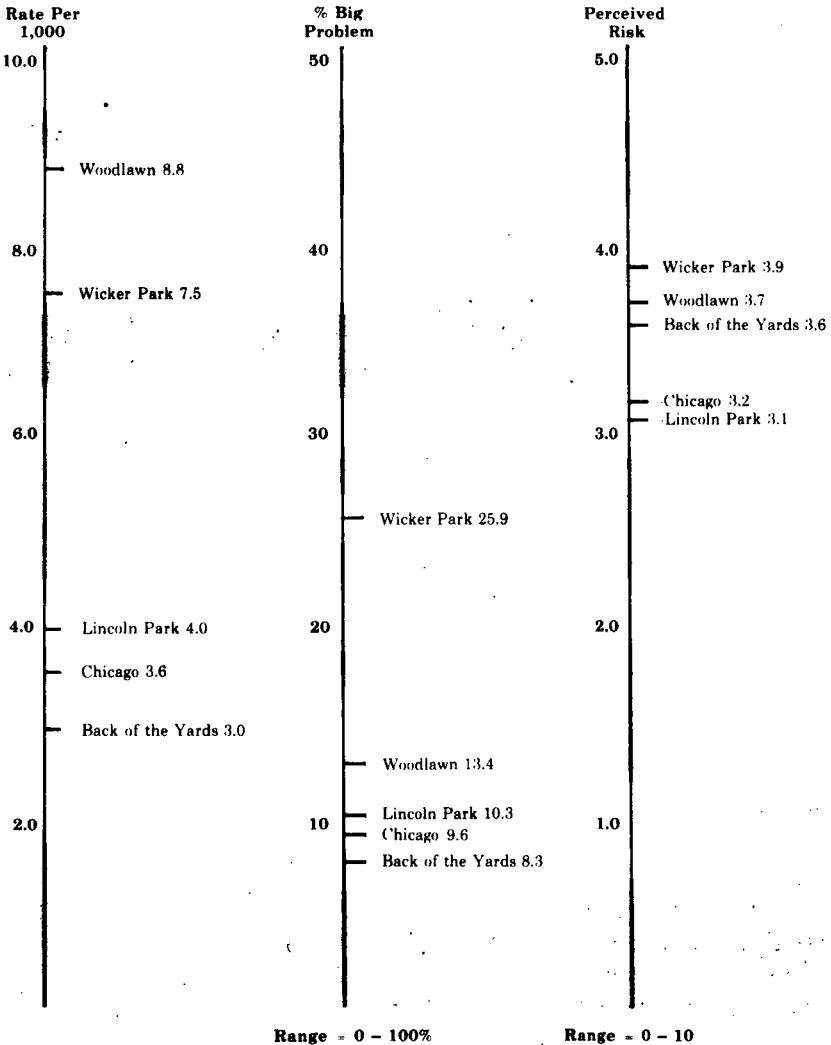
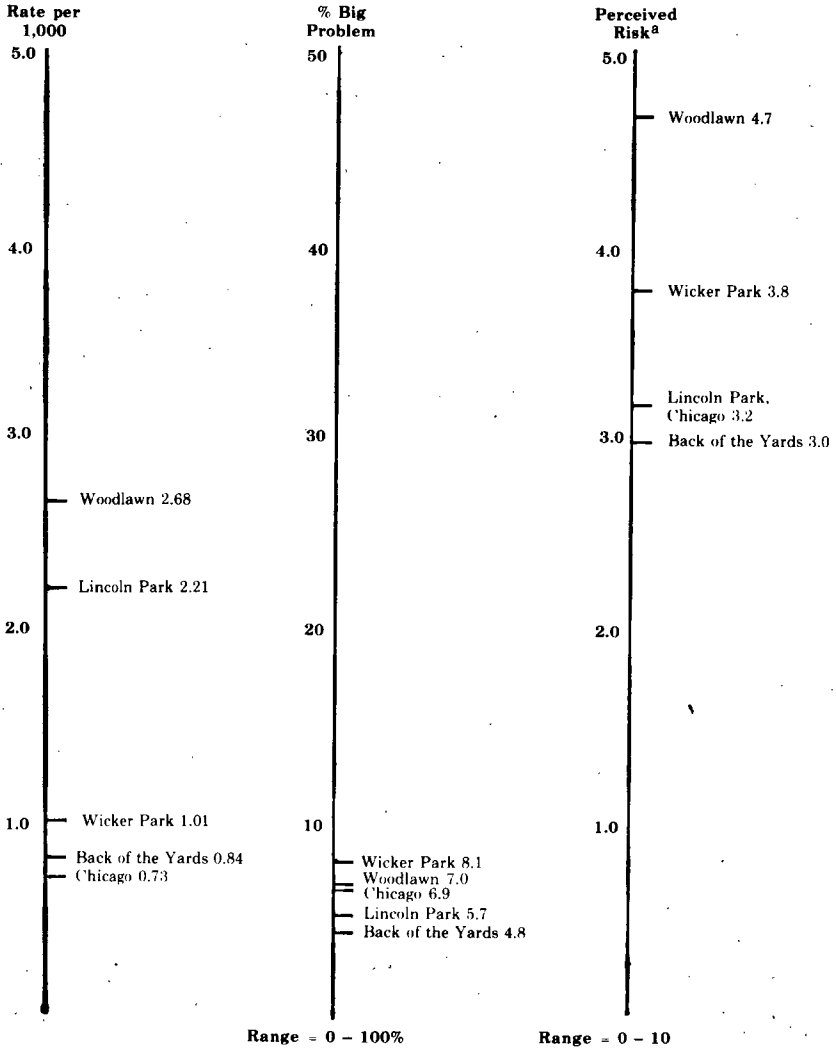


FIGURE 4. Rape and Sexual Assault



^aWomen respondents only.

While few respondents expressed much concern over rape and other sexual assaults—the level of concern was lower than for any other offense type examined here—the difference between perceived risk and concern is greater for this offense than for any other. Although this is the least common of the serious offenses examined here, and although overall concern coincides with low probabilities of victimization, women still estimated their chances of being attacked at a level close to that for other offenses. The

variation across neighborhoods is most interesting. Fewer women in Lincoln Park and Back of the Yards estimated that they would be victims of a sexual assault than did women in the other neighborhoods, despite the fact that the rate was higher in Lincoln Park than in all other neighborhoods except Woodlawn.

There are some regularities in the ordering of the neighborhoods across the four crime types. The Woodlawn area is consistently high in objective crime rate, being second to Lincoln Park only in burglary. Wicker Park is just below Woodlawn in all offenses except rape. Despite this consistent ordering for official crime rates, residents of Wicker Park expressed more concern about all crime types than did people living in other neighborhoods. The average perceived risk in Wicker Park is highest for assault, and either just below or equal to that for Woodlawn in the other offense types. The differences between Woodlawn and Wicker Park on the attitudinal items are not great, but they are consistent across scales. On the other hand, residents of Lincoln Park had lower estimates than did residents of other areas of the chances of victimization except for rape and sexual assault; and, except for robbery, in each case Back of the Yards was lowest on the proportion of residents seeing crime as a big problem. These attitudes are consistent with the objective rates of crime in these two neighborhoods.

In sum, this analysis has shown that official crime rates and perceived risk are not related in any simple way. There appear to be some consistent relationships between the intervening variable, concern, and people's perceived risk of crime, but the measures of concern do not appear to be related to objective crime rates. This suggests that either our indicators of crime and attitudes about crime are invalid, or that other, as yet unmeasured, variables are affecting people's perceptions of crime.

INCIVILITY AND FEAR

So far we have looked only at people's perceptions of serious crime. The offenses examined here are all rare events. They may be more common in certain neighborhoods, but even in those areas with relatively high rates per capita, an individual's chance of being victimized on any given day is slim. This suggests that the concern people express may not necessarily refer as much to the incidence of the most serious offenses as to other factors in the neighborhood. While relatively few people are victims of serious crime, many urban residents witness behavior that, while not necessarily classifiable as criminal, is nonetheless disconcerting. Loud boisterous groups of teenagers or skid row denizens may be perceived as more dangerous than muggers and purse snatchers who take pains to be inconspicuous. Also, abandoned buildings and empty streets may generate more fear than do the private residences where violent personal crimes most often occur.

Biderman et al. (1967) and others (Garofalo, 1977a; Rifai, 1976) have recognized that some of the factors that affect fear of crime are only indirectly linked to actual criminal offenses:

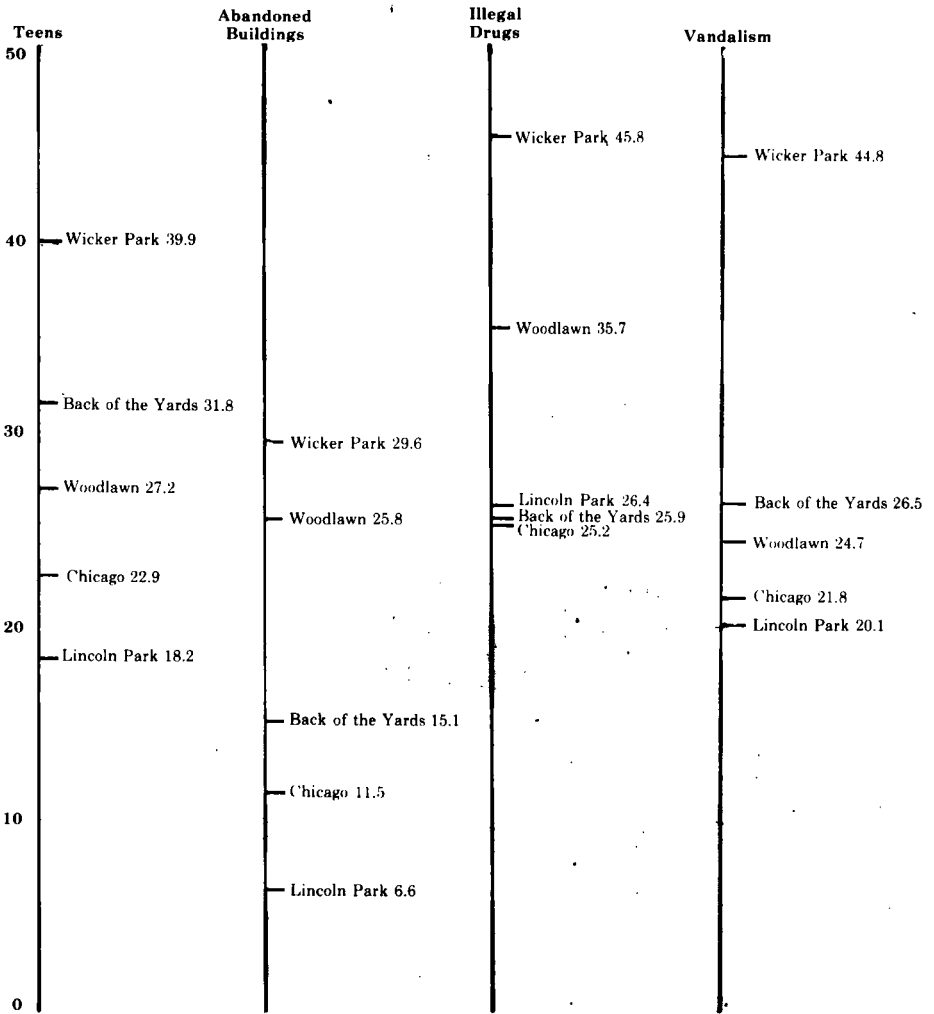
We have found that attitudes of citizens regarding crime are less affected by their past victimization than by their ideas about what is going on in their community—fears about a weakening of social controls on which they feel their safety and the broader fabric of social life is ultimately dependent (Biderman et al., 1967:160).

These are problems of incivility in urban neighborhoods that may or may not be related to the occurrence of serious crime. To evaluate the effects of such events and circumstances, we asked respondents to tell us about what are commonly believed to be problems of urban incivility. Each respondent was asked whether she or he thought each of the following conditions was a big problem, some problem, or almost no problem: groups of teenagers hanging out on the streets, abandoned or burned-out buildings or storefronts, people using illegal drugs, and vandalism (manifested, for example, in graffiti or broken windows).

Figure 5 shows what proportion of respondents in each neighborhood thought each of these conditions was a big problem. The respondents from Wicker Park scored higher than did respondents in other neighborhoods on each of these questions, much higher than the citywide average, and substantially higher than the next highest neighborhood. Abandoned buildings seemed to be of least concern to most people, although here too, concern in Wicker Park was highest. The problem evoking most concern in all neighborhoods was illegal drugs, although Lincoln Park and Back of the Yards were close to the citywide average of 25 percent. Not surprisingly, Lincoln Park residents expressed little concern over young people, while Wicker Park respondents again expressed the most concern. Back of the Yards residents also thought that groups of teenagers hanging around were a big problem; this corresponds with information from field observations that the only real crime problem in this neighborhood is shoplifting, which is often committed by juveniles. Back of the Yards residents were also above the citywide average in expressing concern over abandoned buildings and vandalism. The latter is usually a youth-related problem, and the concern over abandoned buildings probably accurately reflects patterns of population movement in that neighborhood.

What is most significant about Figure 5 is that Wicker Park stands so far above the other neighborhoods in every category; this community also expressed more concern over each of the categories of serious crime. Although Wicker Park had lower official crime rates than Woodlawn in every category, and lower rates than Lincoln Park for rape and burglary, residents of this community consistently expressed more concern over the problem of crime than did residents of the other communities.

FIGURE 5. Concern about Incivility

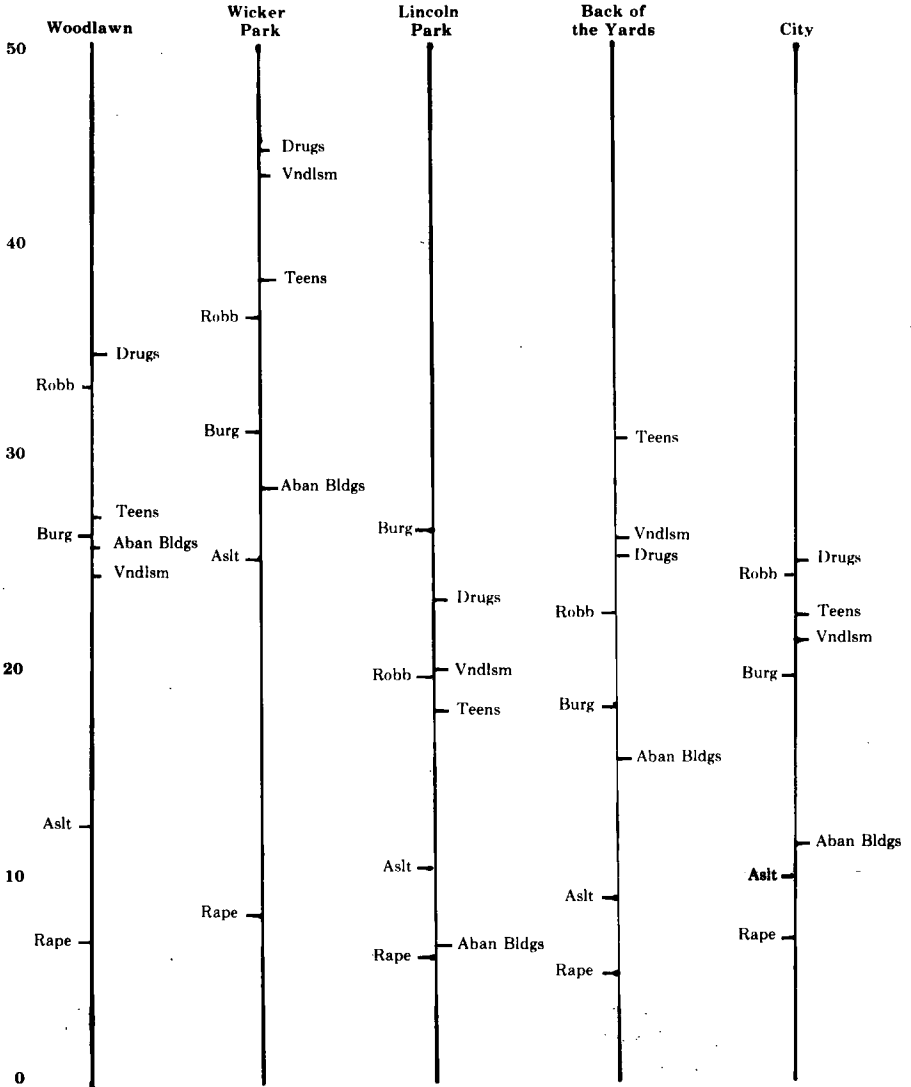


Range = 0 - 100%.

On the other hand, despite crime rates higher than the citywide average, residents of Lincoln Park expressed relatively little concern over problems of crime and incivility. It appears that the two problems, crime and concern, must go hand in hand for them to affect the perceptions of area residents; a low level of incivility may decrease perceived risk in a neighborhood. It is also probably true that incivility and crime are symptomatic of a more fundamental social decline, which affects people's perceptions and feelings of safety.

Another important conclusion to be drawn from the data in Figure 5 is that people generally see the problem of incivility as more important than the problem of crime itself. Figure 6 compares the crime and incivility questions directly. For each neighborhood, two scale scores are presented: The

FIGURE 6. Concern over Crime and Incivility

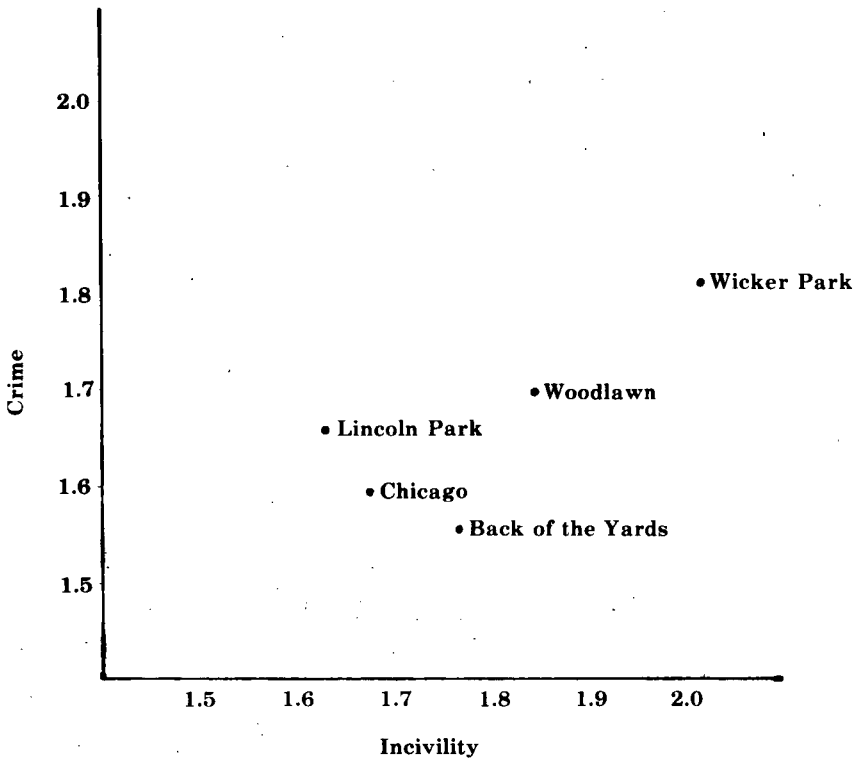


Range = 0 - 100%.

Left of scale: levels of concern over serious crime.

Right of scale: concern about problems of incivility.

FIGURE 7. Covariance between Concern about Crime and Incivility



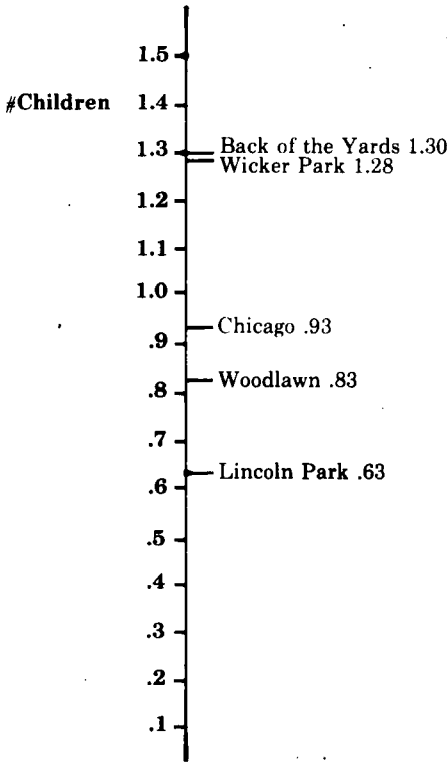
Range = 0-4.

left side shows concern over crime problems, while the right shows concern over the four questions of incivility. In all neighborhoods except Lincoln Park, the four incivility-related problems were of greater concern to residents than were the crimes of assault and rape. Only in Lincoln Park did more people express more concern over serious criminal offenses than over a problem of incivility. Drugs, vandalism, and teenagers were more often mentioned as big problems than were all serious crimes in Wicker Park and Back of the Yards.

Figure 7 shows even more clearly than Figure 6 the relationship between crime and incivility. Given available data, we cannot determine which of the two factors, crime or incivility, is more important, but it does appear that people express greater concern over incivility. Drug use, vandalism, and raucous teenagers were considered to be big problems by more than 20 percent of the respondents in the citywide sample and in all neighborhoods except Lincoln Park.

Since the problems of drug use and vandalism are themselves youth-related phenomena, the data indicate that serious crime may not be so

FIGURE 8. Average Number of Children below Age 18 Living in House^a



^aSource: RTC Survey Estimates.

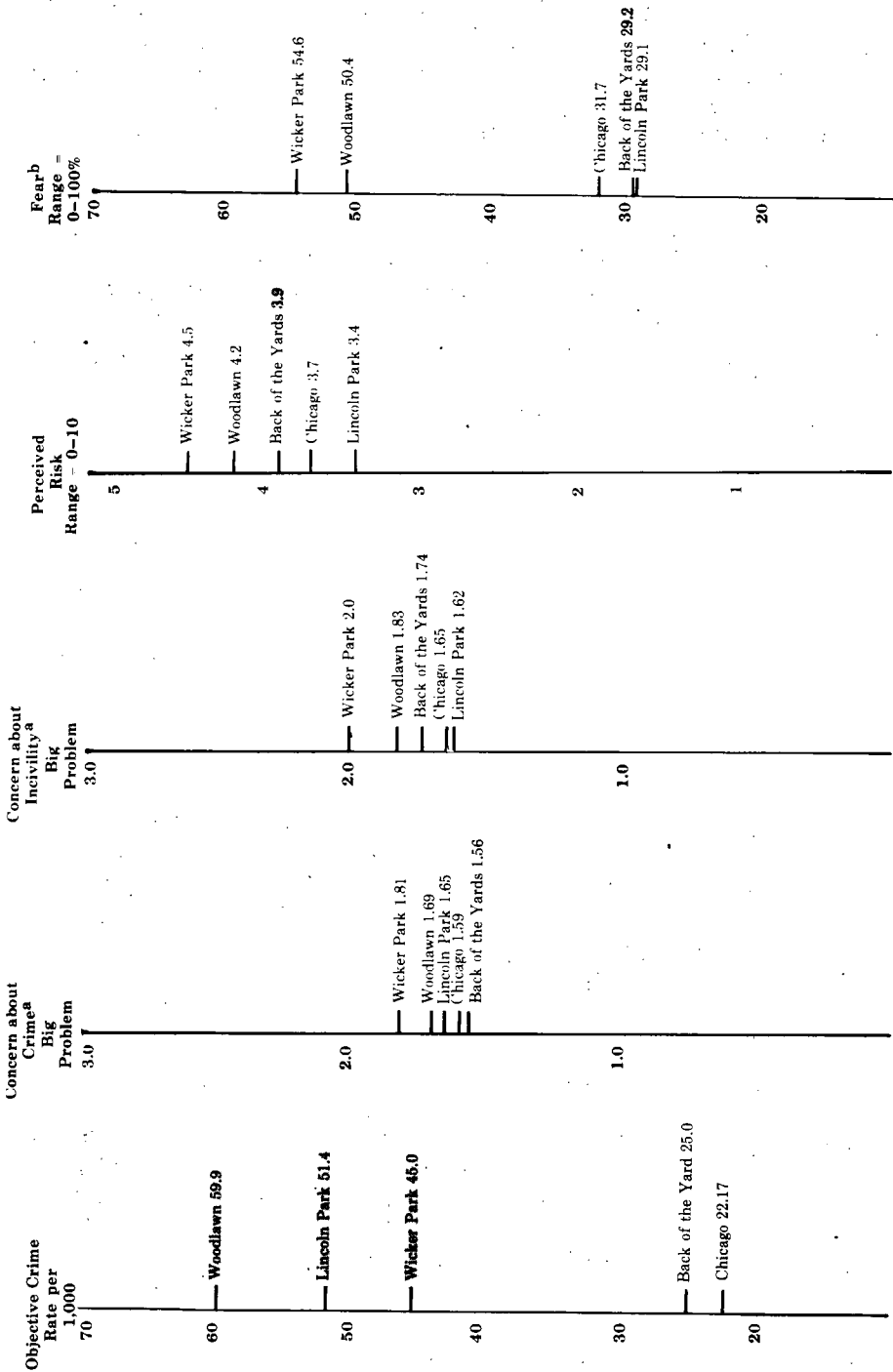
much a problem as are the presence and activities of teenagers. Fear of crime may be directly affected by concern about local adolescents. Data on the number of teenagers living in each area lend some support to this view. Figure 8 shows the average number of children under age eighteen per household in our four neighborhoods. Wicker Park and Back of the Yards had the highest average number of young people and the highest proportion of people expressing concern over youth-related problems. For the two other areas and the citywide sample, problems of vandalism and teenagers were rated below robbery and, for Lincoln Park, below burglary. Although the proportion of people expressing concern over incivility in Woodlawn was also high, it was more closely related to concern about serious crime. Lincoln Park, with the lowest average number of children per household, also showed the lowest proportion of people saying that incivility is a big problem in their neighborhood, as well as the lowest fear of crime.

The four key concepts we have discussed here are official crime rate, concern about crime, concern about incivility, and perceived risk. Figure 9 displays the neighborhood rankings when the separate indicators of these four key concepts are combined. For the sake of comparison, we have included in Figure 9 a scale that measures citizens' feelings of safety in their neighborhood. The survey question asks residents to evaluate how safe they feel being out in their neighborhood at night: very safe, somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe, or very unsafe. Comparing this scale with the summaries of individual variables enables us to summarize the differences across neighborhoods. The most important difference is between the rankings for official crime rates and the four attitudinal scales. The rankings along the incivility scale are identical to those for perceived risk when all crime types and all incivility measures are combined. The rankings on the fear scale differ only in the relative position of Back of the Yards. Wicker Park ranks highest with respect to incivility, perceived risk, and fear, although this neighborhood is behind both Woodlawn and Lincoln Park in the objective measures of crime. Back of the Yards is lower than the other three neighborhoods on objective crime, concern about crime, and fear, but residents in this neighborhood rank higher than Lincoln Park and higher than the citywide average on incivility and perceived risk. Woodlawn is much higher than Back of the Yards on objective crime rates, but only slightly higher on perceived risk and incivility.

The important finding here is that people who are concerned about crime problems are also concerned about problems of incivility and social order. The evidence presented here further suggests that it is the combination of concern with crime and incivility that affects neighborhood fear levels. Levels of perceived risk are greatest where there is a combination of high concern about crime and incivility. The role of objective crime rates is mediated by perceptions of neighborhood incivility. If incivility is not perceived to be a problem, as in Lincoln Park, then it appears that residents can cope with higher crime rates. To a lesser extent, this is also true in Woodlawn. This area had the highest objective crime rate, but was lower than Wicker Park on measures of attitudinal responses to crime. By contrast, in Wicker Park high levels of incivility exacerbated residents' perceptions of crime in their neighborhood. The level of objective crime in this area was exceeded by the rates in two other neighborhoods, but the interaction between crime and incivility in Wicker Park resulted in high levels of concern, fear, and perceived risk of crime.

CONCLUSION

The finding that fear and concern about crime are related to perceptions of uncivil behavior as well as perceptions of serious crime has important implications for policy makers. To the extent that fear can be iden-



^aRange = 0-4; 3.0 = great big problem; 1 = no problem.
^b% who feel unsafe in their neighborhood at night.

tified as a problem independent of crime rates, policy makers should begin to explore ways to reduce fear independent of policies directed at reducing the incidence of crime. Henig and Maxfield (1978-79) have discussed some of the factors that affect fear of crime apart from the crime rate itself, and have suggested possible approaches for dealing with high levels of fear in urban areas.

Furthermore, since our findings suggest that there are neighborhood-specific differences in the relationships between crime, perceptions of incivility, and concern about crime, policy makers should focus on neighborhood-level approaches to reducing crime and fear. Our data have illustrated that even within neighborhoods there is considerable variation in the incidence of serious crime. We have also shown that the perceptions of some neighborhood residents regarding particularly dangerous areas in their midst are often accurate.

These findings imply that the crime problems that concern people most are problems over which traditional criminal justice agencies have relatively little control. Although drug use and vandalism are criminal offenses according to state statutes and local ordinances, strict enforcement of such violations places an enormous burden on law enforcement agencies. Abandoned buildings and groups of teenagers congregating on the streets also draw the attention of the police, but law enforcement is limited in the resources available for dealing effectively with these problems.

If fear of crime is generated by neighborhood characteristics that are not amenable to resolution by traditional policing practices and action by other criminal justice agencies, then we must find other means of mediating the influences of fear. The signs of incivility can be reduced by a variety of activities outside the criminal justice system. Take, for example, abandoned buildings. If the neighborhood is to rid itself of them, there are a variety of activities that might be undertaken. Pressuring the owner, going to building court, and taking direct action are but a few of the things people might do to alleviate this problem.

This suggestion that neighborhoods can attempt to solve the problems of incivility themselves does not reduce the importance of these problems. But the physical characteristics of neighborhoods and the behavior of neighborhood residents that increase fear and concern about crime can, we believe, be ameliorated by local action. There is a long tradition for this in Chicago. The Woodlawn Organization and the Back of the Yards Council have long been active in two of our neighborhoods, where fear is apparently realistic; indeed, in the case of Woodlawn, fear has diminished. Locally based organizations such as these, closely attuned to the needs of specific neighborhoods, can be effective in dealing with incivility and should be encouraged, as has been the case with TWO and BOYC, by federal and local agencies.

Obviously, there are other means besides community organizing to eliminate incivility in a community. The example of Lincoln Park, where

considerable sums of money were spent by individuals to gentrify the community, is another possibility. And it is clear, from Lincoln Park, that incivility plays a large role in residents' concern about crime and feelings of being at risk: Despite a relatively high crime rate, the Lincoln Park residents appear to feel less concern and fear than do other neighborhood residents.

However, concern about crime and fear of victimization are not produced by incivility alone. The actual presence of a high crime rate, in conjunction with incivility, produces concern and fear. Community organizing and reduction of incivility will not replace measures to reduce crime. Only a combination of the two will make our urban communities better places to live.

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