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## **The Difference that Citizenship Makes: Civilian Crime Prevention on the Lower East Side**

At the December 1997 meeting of Manhattan's 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct Community Council, a group that brings together police officers and the public to discuss crime, the leader of a block association that serves a mostly white middle-class block stood up to encourage others to become more involved in neighborhood crime prevention. She suggested that they join the precinct's block watch program, in which they would help to prevent and report crimes on their blocks, and she promised that by signing up they would be "treated with much more credibility" by the precinct. Crime is persistent and entrenched, she acknowledged, but citizens should take responsibility for improving their own lives and neighborhoods, and not rely on the police to fight crime: "it's not their [the precinct's] fight, it's our fight." In contrast to this appeal for civic duty and civilian-police cooperation, Angela Mendez,<sup>1</sup> a tenant association president from a section of the precinct with mostly poor black and Latino residents, became active in crime prevention only because she believed the police did not do an adequate job of controlling crime. She blamed the precinct for neglecting poor and minority areas in favor of wealthier white blocks, and she argued for her right to equal law enforcement. Angela did not want to devote her spare hours to crime prevention, but she felt that high crime rates and police neglect left her no choice.

At a time when leaders of both major political parties ask Americans to serve their country and their communities as volunteers, and when prominent scholars such as Robert Putnam worry that Americans are turning away from a tradition of civic participation that builds vibrant communities and a stronger nation (Bellah et al. 1996; Etzioni 1996; Putnam 2000), civilian crime prevention offers ways to understand and evaluate community participation, citizenship, and locality in the United States. As Susan Hyatt has observed, the growth of new ideologies of volunteerism in the United States has accompanied late twentieth-century welfare-state retrenchment, as "good citizens," not the state, increasingly are called upon to build and maintain the public sphere (Hyatt 2001). In this paper I draw on fieldwork conducted during 1997-1998 in Manhattan's 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct, located on the city's Lower East Side, to examine how civilian crime prevention reflects and produces citizenship, race and class difference, and spatialized belonging at the boundary of the state and the civil sphere.<sup>2</sup> Civilian policing occupies only a small slice of civic participation in New York City, but an ethnographic investigation of participants' discourses and practices of citizenship and place illustrates larger processes of volunteerism and citizenship in a city where policing is a major locus of public debate about the proper role of the state. Why

did the women cited above differ in their approaches to crime prevention, and what can their and others' participation tell us about what it means to be a good citizen at and across the boundaries of race, class, and place?

After presenting civilian crime prevention institutions, I investigate participants' varying, and often conflicting, discourses on participation, examining why some, most often white, invoke an ideal of active participatory citizenship, while others, generally poor people of color, turn to a discourse of rights. I then examine civilian crime prevention as a "political economy of citizenship," wherein inequalities in the state's distribution of crime-fighting resources dialectically (re)produce participants' differential race- and class-inflected citizenship practices and ideals. Understanding these processes requires an analysis of crime prevention as deeply spatialized, as producing and reflecting localized modes of belonging and difference. Drawing on a growing ethnographic literature that connects crime prevention and urban space to the promises and limits of citizenship and democracy (Davis 1992; Smith 1996; Caldeira 2000; Low 2001; Merry 2001), I examine how participants simultaneously develop both exclusivist spatial practices and expansive social geographies through their participatory attachments to place.

### **Civilian Policing on the Lower East Side**

The 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct, a geographical and administrative unit of the New York Police Department, is located on Manhattan's Lower East Side, within the area known as the East Village. The precinct covers .79 square miles, extending from East Houston Street on the south to 14<sup>th</sup> Street on the north, and from Broadway on the west to the East River on the east. The Precinct Station House, familiar to television viewers as the setting for *NYPD Blue*, is on a centrally located residential street. According to the precinct website (New York City Police Department 2000), the 2000 census recorded 71,503 people in the precinct. Within these geographical boundaries the police administrative unit Public Service Area (PSA) #4 serves the large public housing developments lining the East River.<sup>3</sup>

The Lower East Side boasts notable racial and class diversity, but the population is geographically segregated: to the west many residents are white and middle or upper class, while the eastern section includes large Puerto Rican and African-American populations, mostly working-class and poor, and several high-rise public housing developments. The 1990 census recorded as white 70% of residents to the west of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, 75% in the middle (1<sup>st</sup> Ave. to Ave. B), 45% to the east (Ave. B to D), and 24% in public housing east of Ave. D (Abu-Lughod 1994a:34). Typical of gentrifying urban neighborhoods (Zukin 1991), the Lower East Side has changed rapidly since the 1970s recession, when a growing arts scene began to draw young professionals and commercial businesses, and the black and Latino populations began to decline (Abu-Lughod 1994a:34). At the time of this study the neighborhood had a widespread—and widely marketed

(Mele 2000)—reputation for a Bohemian arts and social scene (the musical *Rent*, set here, was a hot ticket on Broadway), escalating rents, trendy bars and restaurants, leftist politics, and a brisk drug trade (Tiefenbacher 1995; Smith 1996; Jacobs 1998). Since 1988 riots in Tompkins Square Park crystallized hostilities among the New York Police Department (NYPD), homeless and youth activists, gentrifying professionals, and old-guard liberals, crime prevention and public space have become key frameworks through which Lower East Side residents debate and enact citizenship.

The 1990s brought dramatic crime reduction in New York City and other major U.S. cities, as well as conflicts over police brutality. Until the late nineteenth century, American policing had been decentralized, executed by private security forces, militias, vigilante groups, and state law enforcement (Brown 1975). Policing became centralized and professionalized during the early 1900s (Shearing 1992), but this concentration of crime control in the state began to give way in the late 1960s and 1970s with the privatization of policing—private forces now outnumber public police (Shearing 1992)—and the growth of “community policing,” a movement that some consider “the most important development in policing in the past quarter century” (Skogan 2004a:xvii). Community policing emphasizes prevention, local beats, decentralization, community responsiveness, and community involvement.<sup>4</sup> The civilian participation component of community policing takes various forms, from Neighborhood Watch to community advisory boards to auxiliary police forces.<sup>5</sup> Much of the growing literature on community policing asks whether the government effectively and equally meets “the needs” of the public. Instead, I focus on how questions of public needs and entitlements come together, are expressed, and simultaneously are forged through the practices, discourses, and spatiality of civilian crime prevention.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct, civilian crime prevention takes a variety of forms. The Precinct Community Council is a volunteer-run organization that meets monthly to offer precinct residents an opportunity to express their crime-related concerns to precinct officials. Although the board is civilian, it is recognized and promoted by the precinct. In 1997–1998, Council meetings typically attracted forty to fifty attendees, and the Council’s children’s Christmas party drew approximately 1,000. Volunteer block associations, active on some but not all blocks (there are approximately twenty listed by the precinct, but four or five were especially active), address local crime, business development, and housing. Tenant associations form in some high-rise and tenement buildings, often those plagued by crime, and while some receive training and resources from the NYPD, others are more independent. Each public housing development has at least one official tenant patrol, which aims to deter crime by monitoring people entering and leaving the buildings. Block watch, analogous to Neighborhood Watch, trains residents

to identify and report criminal activity; in 1998 there were approximately 155 block watchers in the 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct, and the precinct was actively recruiting.

Auxiliary police officers are the civilians whose duties and training most closely approximate the police, and whose activities blur the lines between civilian and cop, volunteer and worker. Often referred to as “the eyes and ears of the police,” auxiliary police officers patrol the precinct on foot or in a patrol car, wearing uniforms nearly indistinguishable from police officers’. They train and operate out of the precinct house, and the police department funds them. Auxiliaries’ primary purpose is to observe and report suspicious activities, but they lack enforcement power and carry no guns, only nightsticks. Auxiliary officers also help out at the precinct station house and work “details,” public events at which they provide crowd control and assistance. In order to join the ranks of the auxiliary police, recruits must enroll in a free fifty-four-hour training course and pass written and physical examinations. Auxiliaries are expected to serve ten unpaid hours per month, but many log more. In 1997–1998 there were approximately twelve active 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct auxiliary officers, with seven more enrolled in the training course, and the program was growing rapidly. The public housing PSA#4 auxiliary police, who trained separately, numbered approximately 25 at the conclusion of this study, with 12 more in training.

### **Citizenship Discourses**

James Holston and Arjun Appadurai have called for an anthropological analysis of citizenship in which we recognize that “in addition to the legal, [citizenship] concerns the moral and performative dimensions of membership which define the meanings and practices of belonging in a society” (Holston and Appadurai 1996:200). By tracing civilian crime prevention participants’ civic discourses of active duty vs. rights, I suggest that recent scholarly attention to declining civic participation in the United States, for example by Robert Putnam (2000), overlooks the racialized and classed dimensions of ideologies of participation. Teresa Caldeira, in her study of violence, urban space, and citizenship in São Paulo, discovered that the “talk of crime is not only expressive but productive” (Caldeira 2000); similarly, I show that divergent discourses of crime prevention and participation produce real and often overlooked social effects.

Many civilian crime-prevention participants, disproportionately white and middle- to upper-class, discussed their participation in terms of citizenship and duty, referring to themselves and others as “citizens” and characterizing their efforts as fulfilling “civic duty” or “civic responsibility.” The notion that their involvement constituted citizenship, in turn, led them to criticize uninvolved residents as undeserving of state resources. Thus, they created a social category of civilian crime fighters as good citizens, constructing social and moral difference in evaluations of who and what constitutes a proper citizen.

Joan Goldstein<sup>6</sup> is president of a very active block association located in the wealthiest section of the precinct. Under her leadership the group maintained close ties with precinct officials, reporting suspicious activity, donating to precinct charity drives, inviting police officers to block parties, and attending Community Council meetings. Joan, a middle-aged Jewish artist, characterized her participation as part of her “responsibility” as a “citizen.” She considered her involvement to be an obligation, “part of being a member of society”: “I think we all have responsibilities as citizens to do more than complain.” Joan often remarked that the police alone could not achieve crime prevention: it required citizen cooperation. She criticized some residents for shirking their civic responsibility by failing to participate. Like Joan, Lynda McCarthy—an Irish-American, middle-aged EMT for the fire department—became involved and recruited others because she considered it her “civic duty.” Lynda tried to involve young people in crime-prevention activities, and she actively fostered a “sense of community” on her block and in her neighborhood: she enjoyed working with other “civically-minded people.” A young woman whom Lynda recruited considers crime prevention an individual responsibility: “if people want a better block or precinct, they need to take some action themselves.” This, she believed, led to results: “action talks, not money, in this precinct. Not even who’s got the biggest mouth, [it’s] who gets involved.”

These characterizations of civilian crime prevention echo the language of active citizenship that pervades brochures and other literature published by crime prevention organizations. Recruitment and training materials, in particular, encourage participants to view their activities as fulfilling the duties of citizenship. For example, an NYPD training manual defines a blockwatcher as “a concerned public spirited citizen who observes criminal activity in his or her neighborhood and reports that information to the Police Department” (New York City Police Department 1997a:2). The 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct auxiliary police training protocol informs recruits that their efforts not only will build skills, “but will strengthen your foundation as a citizen as well.” They are told: “You are setting yourself apart in the finest tradition that an individual may aspire to—volunteering in service to your community, city, state and nation” (New York City Police Department 1997b). Indeed, in official discourse the word “citizen” stands in for “civilian,” in an illustration of how Americans dissociate citizenship from paid work, as if monetary exchange contaminates citizenship. A program offering civilians a free short course on the police is called the “Citizens’ Police Academy”; a neighborhood newspaper in upper Manhattan titled its front-page article about Precinct Community Councils “Citizen Cops”; the subtitle of a book about the New York City auxiliary police is “The Citizen’s Approach to Public Safety” (Greenberg 1984); and the first auxiliary police program in the city (founded in 1916) was called the Citizens’ Home Defense League.

Such conceptual connections linking crime-related volunteerism to citizenship and moral duty extend citizenship beyond a formal status or legal category into what Michael Walzer terms “active citizenship” (1989), which assumes individual participation in and attention to governance. Participants’ association of civic duty with volunteerism reflects the ongoing—and perhaps increasing (cf. Hall 1999)—importance of voluntary associations to American citizenship. Since Tocqueville (1980) observed the significance of voluntary associations to the structure of public life in the United States, volunteerism has been cited as a defining feature of American culture and democracy, and as an ideal of American citizenship (cf. Bellah et al. 1996). Robert Putnam, for example, argues that American volunteerism is an index of civic and public health, “part of the syndrome of good citizenship and involvement” (Putnam 2000:132). Some civilian crime fighters partake of this vision of American civic tradition insofar as they invoke the ideals of voluntary participation and civic duty.<sup>7</sup> In civilian crime prevention it is at the intersections of civil society and the state, of good citizenship and the duty to “get involved,” that voluntary participation takes shape as a way of organizing identity, community, and access to resources.

Questions of participation intersect with race and class in civilian policing, as poor participants of color often characterized their efforts less as a matter of active citizenship than as an exercise in asserting rights. In contrast to active citizenship, Walzer (1989) designates “passive citizenship” as the view that citizenship entails the right to state protection. Some 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct civilian crime prevention participants, generally poor people of color who live toward the east of the precinct, advance a vision of their involvement as a corrective to unjust police neglect. This rights-based discourse reveals important limits to active citizenship as an organizing principle in American civil society, and it shows that Walzer’s framing of “passive citizenship” overlooks the ways that rights-based notions of citizenship can lead to social and political action.

Angela Mendez, a thirty-something Latina administrative assistant, founded and led a tenant association on her poor and crime-ridden block in the southeastern corner of the precinct. After a stray bullet wounded her young son and drug buyers injured several people in her apartment building, Angela took action. She asked the police for help, but she said they did not respond, ignoring the endemic problems her neighborhood faced. When the police eventually reported to a crime scene, Angela and her neighbors felt treated like criminals. Precinct officials encouraged Angela to attend Community Council meetings, but she found them ineffective. She thought the tenants would have a better chance of gaining NYPD attention if they formed a tenant association, but she subsequently became convinced that the group could accomplish good on its own, without the police.

Despite numerous negative interactions with the NYPD, and contrary to what many would expect in an era when minority communities in New York City fre-

quently protest police brutality, Angela Mendez and her fellow tenant association members pressed for *more*, not less, police presence in their neighborhood. This was not a naïve appeal: residents cited evidence that recent NYPD quality of life campaigns disproportionately targeted people of color, and they recognized the risk that increased police presence would generate flashpoints in police–community relations.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, Angela and her neighbors hoped for *more* quality of life arrests on their blocks because they believed that the law was enforced unequally across the precinct, with police ignoring minor infractions in poor neighborhoods.<sup>9</sup> Angela speculated that the police believed that poor people of color deserved to—and wanted to—live in undesirable conditions, and she thus placed her circumstances within a larger framework of race- and class-based discrimination.

Angela’s effort to fight crime provided her with skills and contacts that landed her a new job and increased her visibility in the neighborhood, expanding her “social capital,” in Putnam’s sense of the aspects of social life, such as networks, norms, and trust, which effectively promote mutually beneficial action (Putnam 2000). For Putnam, civic engagement and social capital go hand-in-hand. But despite Angela’s participation-based gains in social capital, she stated that she gladly would abandon her volunteer work if neighborhood conditions improved, if the police would only “pay more attention” to her community’s condition. Angela’s boss, Donna Ellaby, a white middle-aged director of a nonprofit tenant advocacy agency, agreed with Angela that it should be the *police*, not volunteers, who control crime, since community members are busy and the police are “the ones with the good pension and salary.” To Angela and Donna, the mere fact of civilian participation in crime prevention indicated that the state had failed, that an uneven distribution of resources had left poor and minority sections of the neighborhood lacking adequate police attention and equal access to full citizenship. As Steven Gregory found in his study of Corona, Queens, minority activists’ frustration that their concerns were ignored by public officials “undermined their confidence in the established mechanisms of citizen participation” (Gregory 1998:188). Angela’s and Donna’s reluctance to hold civilians responsible for the work of the police also echoed sentiments expressed by urban people of color in England who, in interviews with sociologists, explained why they declined to join Neighborhood Watch: “I would not give up any of my time for something the police get paid for”; “To me it’s the police’s job” (McConville and Shepherd 1992:100).

Occasionally, however, black and Latino civilian crime prevention participants *did* speak about their involvement within a discourse of participation, but in doing so they appealed to images of community that differed subtly from others’. In general, participants of color did not explain their efforts in a language of volunteerism or good citizenship. Instead, many invoked notions of grassroots, community-based activism, wherein they defined “community” not as a generalized

structure of belonging but as a specific community of interest, most often other poor and working-class people of color. For example, Cristina Perez,<sup>10</sup> a 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct Latina auxiliary police trainee, explained her participation as an effort to “help my community,” which she said was “in need”; similarly, Roseanne Dominguez,<sup>11</sup> a Latina auxiliary trainee in PSA #4, the public housing police unit, said that she wanted to “get involved” in order to “give back to my community.” Damaris Malave, another Latina PSA#4 trainee, said that someday she hoped to become a police officer in order to help her community; despite fears of social ostracism for affiliating with the NYPD, Damaris wished to mend torn police–community relations.

I take the uneven distribution of discourses of citizenship among civilian crime prevention participants as evidence first of their differing relationships with the state, and second of struggles to define a gentrifying neighborhood. First, poor people of color generally experienced less success in gaining access to state services, often recounting stories of abuse or mistrust between the police and their families and neighbors. It is understandable that the discourse of “my community” would be more salient among African Americans and Latinos, insofar as their status as members of racially marginalized groups mediated their relation to the state and the police. Their sense of community was, if not directly oppositional to the state, based largely on identities and communities forged through demands for rights and recognition by the state and civil society. For poor and working-class minority participants, race- and class-based identities and exclusions precluded the imagining of a more general “community” of citizens.

Second, in this gentrifying and politically volatile neighborhood the definitions of community—and the inclusions and exclusions implied therein—become laden with particular visions of the neighborhood’s history and trajectory. For white and wealthier participants, the idea of community was inclusive: they almost never used the possessive mode but spoke broadly of “the community.” Such usage reflected a genuine effort on the part of some liberal participants to envision an inclusive spatial, social, and civic neighborhood, to ally themselves with fellow citizens across the boundaries of race and class. This generalized discourse of community, however, elided race and class difference at a time when white middle- and upper-class populations in the East Village were rapidly increasing in tandem with gentrification. In contrast, by employing the possessive pronoun, minority participants refused to be subsumed under a diffuse notion of “community” that concealed difference and inequality. Instead, they asserted difference and revealed a sense of separation, not as individuals (i.e., in an individualist conception of rights), but rather as members of racially and economically disadvantaged groups. In these and other ways, civilian policing discourses underline the ideological weight and social boundaries of “community” in American public culture, especially in relation to law and crime (cf. Greenhouse et al. 1994).



Differing approaches to public participation also suggest that the “American” value of volunteerism widely remarked upon since Tocqueville may, in fact, constitute a narrower tradition, obscuring mediating identities and inequalities even as it appeals to national values.<sup>12</sup> An equally American discourse of citizenship is equal rights and entitlement, which Kimberlé Crenshaw (1988) and Patricia Williams (1987) argue has been especially important to African-American claims to full citizenship.<sup>13</sup> Although there is scant research on race and civilian policing,<sup>14</sup> differences in the degree to which values of citizenship and volunteerism appealed to 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct participants suggest that calls for volunteerism and good citizenship during this time of welfare-state retrenchment disproportionately will resonate with and benefit those who have already achieved basic equality under American citizenship.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Political Economy of Citizenship**

A discursive analysis of citizenship that points to divergent understandings of participation comes into focus when coupled with an examination of how difference and inequality emerge from what I call the “political economy of citizenship.” That is, civic access through crime prevention is differentially distributed among neighborhoods and participants, creating an economy of citizenship that simultaneously reflects and shapes the political horizons and lived experiences of many 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct residents. Participation generated differential access to government services for precinct residents, not only insofar as service delivery corresponded quantitatively to the degree of participation, but more importantly as state actors allocated services in part based on the *type* and perceived *quality* of participation. Civilian crime prevention thus was both a mode of civic distribution that tracked socioeconomic difference—a political economy of citizenship—and a form of governmentality, a mode of security-focused self-governance and institutional action in which embodied practices, state resources, and citizenship discourses converged to construct citizens’ subjectivities and material conditions (Foucault 1991). At stake in citizenship and crime prevention, then, are more than discourses and ideals: citizenship practices tangibly affect the distribution of state resources, the safety of neighborhoods and communities, and the very concrete economic and political shape that difference takes.

Block associations illustrate the political and economic stakes of civic participation. Block associations meet to discuss crime and quality of life concerns (noise, bars, homelessness, prostitution, etc.), block beautification, land use, and social efforts to create community. Some arose from collections of friends and neighbors joining together around neighborhood improvement, while others were encouraged by community affairs police officers. Block associations enjoy both localized power and high levels of NYPD service and resources, and they also serve as pipelines for residents to become active in crime prevention and other issues beyond their blocks.

The police department and other city offices self-consciously distributed more resources to active blocks, and everyone knew that this was how things worked. A 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct Community Affairs Officer said that police officers count block associations as much-needed community allies, and they deserve attention and services in return. One block association held a barbecue to honor precinct police officers, and they donated to the Community Council Christmas party; some groups occasionally met with the precinct commander in private to express specific concerns; and some invited police officers to attend their regular meetings. This contact generated friendships and professional connections that streamlined and personalized police services, and it also produced webs of obligation between individual police officers and civilian groups. At a Community Council meeting, a representative from the District Attorney's office encouraged block association members to leverage their organizational status to reduce crime on their blocks, telling them that prosecutors and judges "take more seriously" the complaints of block associations during sentencing hearings for non-violent criminals. Such state responsiveness to the demands of active block associations incorporates civilians into the sphere of the state and affords them influence in defining crime reduction priorities.<sup>16</sup> It also buttresses emergent modes of governmentality based on the diffusion of security and surveillance into the close spaces and social intimacies of urban neighborhood life.

The police also reward volunteers in the block watch program, in this case by privileging them for crime reporting priority. According to Community Affairs Officers and block watchers, it is NYPD policy that block-watcher-generated 911 calls categorically receive emergency response priority. Block watchers defended their preferential treatment by citing their training as crime reporters and the time they invested in crime-prevention activities; thus, they coupled a notion of rewarded volunteerism with that of expert knowledge in the techniques of security and surveillance. The police department mentioned priority 911 calls while recruiting block watchers, and one block watcher publicly encouraged others to join by testifying that they would be "treated with more credibility" by the police. Call priority both recruited volunteers and rewarded them, and participants justified their privilege with the language of proper training and good citizenship.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct and PSA#4, the public housing police, also devote extra resources to block or tenant patrols. A (now defunct) block patrol in the central area of the 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct requested and received increased police patrols on their block as part of their day-to-day operation during the 1990s. A PSA#4 Community Affairs officer stated that they dispatch auxiliary police officers each night first to those buildings with tenant patrols, as a way of rewarding and supporting volunteers. Not only NYPD officials but also many individuals active in crime prevention considered it only fair that participants should benefit from their efforts by receiving increased state resources; conversely, they expressed

little sympathy for residents who complained about crime conditions or police conduct but did not become involved.

Lest it seem that the frequency or intensity of civilian participation alone determines the distribution of government resources, however, one must ask why it is that Angela Mendez and other active crime-prevention participants living toward the east of the precinct received fewer police resources. This cannot be explained by level of participation, since they actively formed tenant associations and conducted informal block patrols, and they aimed to secure increased state services. To assess differential service access it is necessary to move beyond participants' discursive stances or degree of involvement to examine the ways that they achieved legitimacy and recognition in the eyes of precinct officials.

I found that city agencies granted more resources to those crime-prevention organizations that built and maintained the closest and most institutionalized ties with the precinct, regardless of levels of participation on the part of volunteers. These organizational ties were especially strong between the precinct and the auxiliary police, the Community Council, and Block Watch, all of which were operated partly out of the precinct headquarters, and all of which incorporated participants into policing structures and logics through training and oversight (cf. Skogan 2004b). In contrast, the police granted less time, power, and attention to informal block patrols, small tenant associations, or groups of parents working to keep their own children out of crime.

Differential resource distribution is not only a by-product of institutionalization, however: acquiring city resources requires civilian crime-prevention participants to display cultural indicators of legitimacy. These include "proper" behavior at public meetings (e.g., "not complaining," "respect"), organizational letterheads and other trappings of professionalism, and stable leadership with personal ties to police officials. For example, a District Attorney's representative told block associations that their crime concerns would carry more weight if they sent complaint letters on proper letterhead, a marker of organizational legitimacy. One Community Council board member said that attendees at meetings on the eastern side of the precinct often came late, did not pay attention, spoke loudly or disrespectfully, and left immediately after their own complaints were aired. She viewed this behavior as demonstrating a lack of commitment and respect, and she therefore considered their crime concerns to be less of a priority, irrespective of the higher crime rates on their streets. For many volunteers and police officers, crime-related protest and complaint did not count as legitimate forms of participation. In fact, precinct officials and some volunteers deflected public criticism of the police by arguing that people do not deserve to complain unless they "become part of the solution," as one auxiliary captain put it. Thus, some forms of civic participation generate police hostility, while other "appropriate" efforts to curb crime reap increased access and resources.

The concentration of police resources in precinct areas with high levels of “legitimate” civilian crime prevention protects, encourages, and rewards some volunteers. However, given the fact of limited police resources it also exacerbates unequal service by concentrating civilian and police resources, disproportionately benefiting the white middle class.<sup>17</sup> One can explain the link between citizenship expectations and the distribution of resources either as a post hoc justification for privileging civilian groups already endowed (by virtue of their privilege) with power and access to authorities or, more generously, as a mechanism by which residents with greater organization, time, and money gathered resources. Regardless, in contrast to the notion of volunteerism as democratizing that characterizes Putnam’s and most communitarian accounts, in this case the ideology of volunteerism obscures, and even exacerbates, inequality. But in this respect civilian policing does not depart from the logics and lived experiences of American citizenship (which too often is narrowly understood to be intrinsically equalizing). Rather, ethnographers should follow historians in analyzing the ongoing exclusions that are characteristic of, not exceptions to, the operations of American citizenship, especially exclusions along social axes such as gender, race, and class (Smith 1997; Kerber 1998).

### **Localizing Citizenship and Difference**

Understanding the relationship between citizenship and difference in civilian crime prevention requires attention to a politics of place because crime prevention is both a discursive and practical site for demarcating and contesting spatial and civic belonging (cf. Gregory 1998; Caldeira 2000). Space can provide both a locus for ideologies of citizenship and a structuring possibility for the achievement of citizenship. As social theorists and ethnographers have shown, the spatial regulation of criminality has been a key site of governmentality in twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century America, where locality and localism figure prominently in discourses and technologies of governance and belonging (Merry 2001; cf. Certeau 1984; Foucault 1984). In civilian policing on the Lower East Side, where battles over real-estate development and gentrification politicize spatial practices, place becomes tied to citizenship through participants’ crime-related attachments to “neighborhood” and “home,” and through processes by which they identify sections of the neighborhood as safe or dangerous. 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct civilian crime prevention participants considered themselves not just citizens, but *local* citizens who worked to create safer neighborhoods: this locality both shapes participation and emerges from it.

Arjun Appadurai (1996:178-199) suggests that American citizenship is produced in part by balancing a liberal ideal of homogeneous citizenship with the demarcation of governance and the inscription of difference in social and spatial “neighborhoods” (189). In the 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct, participants’ invocations of being “neighbors,” of shared locality, generated solidarity and participation. The Community Council president, for example, urged attendees to come to future

meetings even if they lacked crime-related concerns of their own “because it’s supportive of your neighbors.” Participants emphasized that they cared about their neighbors, that they wanted to help them, and expressions of neighborliness often emerged through shared experiences or fears of crime. Such articulations, and their objectifications in space, are not simply reactive or exclusionary, as suggested by some critics of gated communities and urban security regimes, including Low (2001), but are *productive* of meaningful social relations.

What “neighborhood” meant, of course, varied among participants, and was not predetermined by geography—these are social, not only spatial, relations. For residents of poorer areas, “neighbors” were those who shared experiences of crime victimization and strained police relations. For public-housing residents, “neighborhood” discursively gave way to “the projects” as a spatial and social unit, setting them apart from surrounding tenement residents. Within the rubric of neighborhood, “residence” and “family” further solidified shared experiences. Many Community Council attendees complained that they should not have to endure high crime rates, since they lived in a “residential neighborhood.” The president of a block association suggested that outsiders failed to understand that her neighborhood is “not the East Village theme-park; it’s a residential community.” Children play a special role in this appeal to residential community, forming a discursive space of home and innocence around which participants can rally in their fight against crime.<sup>18</sup> Identification as neighbors spurred civilian crime prevention participants’ senses of common civic duty or shared disenfranchisement.

Geography did not determine the spatiality of crime prevention; instead, the local emerged *out of participation itself*, as individuals’ senses of place and belonging were shaped by their everyday crime-prevention practices. Through participatory attachments to place, participants’ generalized feelings of obligation to, and identification with, localities tended to map directly onto the geographic units served by the crime-prevention organizations in which they participated. Thus, residents active in block and tenant associations generally viewed their blocks or buildings, respectively, as fundamental units of locality.

This participatory attachment to place emerged through several modes of identification. For example, developing neighborhood belonging was partly a process of attaining and demonstrating participation-based knowledge. At a meeting of the St. Marks Place 2-3 [2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues] Block Association, members spoke knowledgeably and regularly about the health of various tree species on the block, hot spots and peak times for drug transactions, the loudest bars and their owners, and the frequency of police beat patrols. Their knowledge, as well as their senses of responsibility, dropped off precipitously when discussion turned to crime problems on adjoining blocks. Such spatial demarcations were not common among block residents who were uninvolved in the block association, suggesting that participation shaped spatial knowledge and responsibility. Likewise,

public housing tenant patrol members' senses of belonging became tightly attached to their own buildings, as they came to know the residents and observed their nighttime comings and goings. Because all residents passed by patrol tables in the buildings' lobbies, patrol members gradually learned their names, and some became friends, discussing family matters, crime, and other topics. Patrol members also grew to know one another, establishing social ties as they passed the hours in conversation, domino matches, or holiday celebrations.

The spatiality of participation, and the social attachments generated therein, also reflect government policy in demarcating spatial governance. A "spatial governmentality" (Merry 2001) inscribes modes of citizenship and belonging that are structured by the race and class inequalities that characterize New York City policing. For example, within PSA#4 the social significance of locality and the structure of participants' sense of belonging vis-à-vis the state emerge from the bureaucratic designation of public housing as a special unit of policing. PSA#4 does not cover a continuous plot of land, but serves public housing units scattered throughout lower Manhattan. Thus, the NYPD delimits public housing services not by geography, but by an assessment of community type. Correspondingly, the geography of citizenship among PSA#4 auxiliary police officers corresponded less to geographical continuity (to "neighborhood") than to housing type and socioeconomic status (to "the projects"), drawing connections among public housing residents across scattered residential developments but structuring differentiation between public housing residents and nearby tenement dwellers. Unlike in the 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct, where the precinct recruited auxiliaries primarily from within the neighborhood, in a logic of local knowledge, PSA#4 police trainers discouraged auxiliaries from patrolling the housing developments in which they lived, concerned that they would encounter hostility or even danger from fellow residents suspicious of the police. Among auxiliary police officers in PSA#4, therefore, local knowledge was not privileged, but potentially dangerous. This interplay of social and bureaucratic identifications among PSA#4 participants illustrates how participatory attachments to place simultaneously can promote identification and difference.

Because participants' attachments to place significantly corresponded to the geographic boundaries of their volunteer organizations, these attachments suggest the possibility for civic participation to generate boundaries of exclusion and differentiation, to produce a "geography of difference" (Harvey 1996). For example, 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct auxiliary police officers, unlike other neighborhood residents, socially marked the boundaries of precinct belonging. During car or foot patrol, auxiliaries bodily traced precinct boundaries, aware of their limited jurisdiction, and in the course of marking extra-precinct territory as exterior they constructed mental and physical maps of exclusion. One night while I accompanied them on patrol, auxiliary officers in the radio car dispersed skateboarders from the Astor Place cube, a popular teenage hangout. An auxiliary officer told them "there's no

loitering—take it up to Union Square” (in the neighboring precinct). Driving away, the officers chuckled, saying they enjoyed sending the skateboarders beyond their jurisdiction, both to rid themselves of perceived trouble and also to play a joke on the neighboring precinct. Police officers there, they predicted, would return the gesture by sending the teenagers back. Such strategic deployments of place by auxiliary police officers shaped and reflected their loyalty both to the organization they served and to the geographical unit for which they felt responsible.

The spatiality of duty and responsibility also intersected with notions of safety among police officers and volunteers, with consequences for how state services were distributed among precinct residents. I initially assumed that 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct auxiliary police officers patrolled the entire precinct, but in fact they were not allowed to patrol east of Avenue A, a neighborhood boundary that, during the 1990s, often was considered the line between “safe” and “dangerous” parts of the Lower East Side, delineating zones of gentrification, race, and poverty. While acknowledging the bureaucratic anomaly of restricted auxiliary patrol within the precinct, the auxiliary police captain explained to trainees that civilian patrols had no place “over there,” where the police were “busy” with serious criminal activity. This constriction of volunteer policing by prior perceptions of what (race- and poverty-marked) places counted as safe contradicted the claim—endlessly repeated in auxiliary training and recruitment—that auxiliary officers *created* safe places by their uniformed presence. The auxiliary captain had previously told trainees: “in this uniform you bring crime down.” This visual technology of deterrence and security, however, gave way to a spatial logic of difference that also came to mark the boundary between civilian (auxiliary) and state (police officer).

Civilian policing restricted citizenship by spatially differentiating precinct residents’ access to services and by re-charting mental and embodied maps of safety, danger, and belonging. Despite the efforts of many residents on the east side to combat crime, the restriction of auxiliary policing to the area west of Avenue A suggests that they lacked adequate social capital to “challenge and rework the racialized economy of space and its underlying power relations” that constructed their residential neighborhood as dangerous (Gregory 1998:127). To the extent that civilian policing creates meaningful social ties *within* groups at the cost of new social and civic boundaries *among* them, it cautions against communitarian claims, such as those by Etzioni (1993) and Selznick (1992), that localized civic involvement generates sensibilities of participatory citizenship that transcend locality. It also questions whether participation should serve as an index for civic health, as Robert Putnam (2000) and others suggest.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

Carol Greenhouse and Davydd Greenwood have called upon ethnographers to seek the production of nationhood in everyday practices and discourses of citi-

zanship (1998:10). Analyzing civilian policing may contribute less to scholarly debate about volunteerism, locality, and difference than to the very practical and political question of what comprises the role for American voluntary associations as a locus of citizenship and nation. In civilian policing, difference is not incompatible with citizenship; instead, citizenship generates and is shaped by geographical, socioeconomic, and ideological difference, as Mouffe explores in relation to gender (Mouffe 1992). I do not want to suggest that volunteering is a politically bankrupt enterprise, or that appeals to civic participation inherently promote inequality. However, the notion that citizens, as such, should participate in civic life—especially when appeals for participation act as a mode of quasi-privatization during periods of government cutbacks—shifts responsibility for public welfare from government agencies to the people. Calls to citizenship that emphasize participation, when coupled with unequal access to state services, may widen the gap between those who can partake of the moral good of active citizenship and those viewed as merely (and immorally) taking from the state. One would err to assume that any difference that citizenship makes will promote inequality, but civilian policing on the Lower East Side suggests that trying to “make a difference” through voluntary participation can exacerbate inequality in the name of citizenship.

### Notes

For their insightful reflections and generosity I am most grateful to 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct and PSA#4 civilian crime-prevention participants and police officers. For their advice I thank Fred Myers, Noah Zatz, Ayse Parla, Teresa Caldeira, Steven Gregory, Bambi Schieffelin, Faye Ginsburg, and Jonathan Rubinstein, as well as my peers in the 1997 Ethnographic Methods class in the Department of Anthropology, New York University. This article is based on research supported under a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship.

1. This is her real name. At their request, I use pseudonyms for some participants and real names for others. Henceforth, I will indicate only pseudonyms in footnotes.
2. My fieldwork combined participant observation, interviews, and observation. For example, I attended Community Council meetings for one year; completed the auxiliary police training program in the 9<sup>th</sup> Precinct and attended most classes in PSA#4; followed auxiliary police officers on patrol and socialized in their lounge; sat with two public-housing tenant patrols; attended several PSA#4 tenant association and two block association meetings; and interviewed the precinct community affairs officers, auxiliary trainers and supervisors, approximately fifteen auxiliary police officers, over a dozen block association and community council members, and other interested parties. I also attended numerous meetings by city agencies and non-profit organizations engaged in crime prevention.



3. For a detailed social and spatial geography of the area see Janet Abu-Lughod's "Welcome to the Neighborhood" (Abu-Lughod 1994b).
4. Friedmann (1992), McElroy (1993), Trojanowicz (1994), Bayley (1996), Lyons (1999), Skogan and Hartnett (1997), and Skogan et al. (2004a) outline how community policing is founded on principles of respect for, and cooperation with, civilians and "neighborhoods." Lyons and Skogan and Hartnett offer especially useful comparisons for this study by examining community policing in Seattle and Chicago, respectively, but their discussions of civilian participation are somewhat limited. Although civilian participation and privatization have different origins and consequences, they have in common the incorporation of civilians into crime prevention and control.
5. McConville (1992) and Darian-Smith (1993) present helpful analyses of neighborhood watch, Einstadter (1984) discusses civilian patrols, and Greenberg (1984) provides a history of the New York City auxiliary police force.
6. Not her real name.
7. This relationship between volunteerism and the nation reinforces Susan Hyatt's contention that civil society is not autonomous from the state, but rather is "coupled with the actions and interests of the state" (Hyatt 2001: 205), and it also supports Partha Chatterjee's contention that "civil society" is a historically and culturally specific notion of the boundary separating public from private (Chatterjee 1998).
8. Quality of life initiatives, a centerpiece of the Rudolph Giuliani administration, follow the "broken windows" theory of crime control (Wilson and Kelling 1982), which contends that public indifference to minor crimes promotes an atmosphere of neglect and decay, which, in turn, leads to increased crime. Thus, the NYPD aims to nip crime in the bud by aggressively pursuing perpetrators of minor infractions such as graffiti vandalism, public urination, or open container (Giuliani and Bratton 1994). Several critics have argued that "broken windows" offered a "false promise" of order, pointing to alternative sources of crime reduction during the Giuliani era (see, e.g., Harcourt 2001).
9. Police blot maps, posted at the precinct house, supported their claim, showing higher arrest rates for quality of life infractions toward the west of the precinct despite overall higher crime rates to the east.
10. Not her real name.
11. Not her real name.

12. As Rogers M. Smith warns his fellow communitarians, the narrative of American citizenship often has been an exclusive one: prominent avenues of public service—the military, jury duty, voting, and participation in voluntary associations—at various points in history have been denied to people of color (Smith 1995). Linda Kerber found similarly for women (Kerber 1998).
13. According to Crenshaw, “Because rights that other Americans took for granted were routinely denied to Black Americans, Blacks’ assertion of their ‘rights’ constituted a serious ideological challenge to white supremacy. Their demand was not just for a place in the front of a bus, but for inclusion in the American political imagination” (Crenshaw 1988:1365). She places this in a framework of citizenship as *rights*: “Rather than using the contradictions to suggest that American citizenship was itself illegitimate or false, civil rights protesters proceeded as if American citizenship were real, and demanded to exercise the ‘rights’ that citizenship entailed” (1368).
14. Wesley Skogan’s analysis (1989:441) supports my suspicion that in civilian policing “those who are better off, more educated, home-owning, and long-term area residents more frequently know of opportunities to participate” and actually do so. In New York City the NYPD discovered that early attempts to organize civilian policing took hold more quickly in “more stable, less impoverished areas” (McElroy et al. 1993:188-189). However, Skogan reveals one surprising and unanalyzed result: nationwide, African Americans participate in civilian policing at higher rates than other racial groups, despite their comparatively low socioeconomic status. Sasson and Nelson (1996) suggest that African American participants in Neighborhood Watch offer different understandings of crime and of their own participation than whites.
15. A 1997 Newsweek/NBC News poll addressed class and race variations in attitudes toward volunteering. Although the data illustrate the moral importance of volunteerism across demographic groups in the United States, and the prevalence of civilian policing across groups (44% participate at least occasionally, 15% at least once a week), they also record divergent attitudes toward government responsibility for poverty. A majority of all respondents said it was “very important” to volunteer, but African Americans far outpaced whites (55% to 38%) in thinking that the government, not poor people themselves, “should be most responsible for helping the nation’s poor” (Princeton Survey Research Associates 1997).
16. Wesley Skogan found similarly increased levels of police responsiveness to block association complaints in Chicago (Skogan 2004b).
17. Wesley Skogan found similar race and class disparities in civilian policing participation and resource distribution in Chicago (Skogan 2004b).

18. This resonates with New Jersey's Megan's Law and other crime-fighting measures that appeal to images of innocent children in order to justify tough retribution.
19. That said, some participants, especially those with close ties to precinct officials, experienced an expansion of neighborhood and community through civilian crime prevention. For example, some leveraged their localized crime-prevention experience to become involved at the level of the precinct and/or the city. One white middle-aged woman first became involved in her block association, then began to attend Community Council meetings, and soon was recruited by precinct officials to the citywide Citizen's Police Academy. Attending Community Council meetings on Avenue C, toward the east, forced her to travel to an area that seemed threatening and alien, but soon she began to feel like this, too, was her neighborhood, no longer like "it's one precinct, but it's really two different worlds." She credited civilian policing with putting her problems in perspective and (spatially and socially) expanding her human relationships and responsibilities. Another Citizen Police Academy alumna said that crime prevention organizations are "turning the city into a neighborhood, precinct by precinct."

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