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Why Neighborhoods Matter: The Importance of Geographic Composition

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Neighborhoods are the places where the everyday practice of life occurs.[1] They are geographical units that are essential to people's lives—people connect these living environments to their identity and, thus, neighborhoods become personally meaningful. For these reasons, magazines feature neighborhoods based on the activities, restaurants, or personalities of the people who live there. The media often set the context of news stories in a neighborhood. Travel literature promotes neighborhoods to visit. Real estate marketing highlights houses for sale by neighborhood.

Essentially, neighborhoods create and form communities. Residents share the same experiences. They suffer or revel in the availability and quality of local housing, schools, jobs, businesses, health care, and human services. They experience the effects of crime that occurs within neighborhood boundaries. Neighborhoods create the background for people's life stories. They leave lasting impressions on residents about what life is like and what social problems exist in a living community.

Because neighborhoods play such an integral role in forming community and social networks, many studies analyze social problems in relation to the neighborhoods where they occur. In particular, crime studies use the concept of a neighborhood to help understand why crime occurs in some places but not others. Many of these studies, however, have primarily used a sociological perspective of the neighborhood, which does not account for geographic aspects of the area. The geography of the neighborhood provides a framework within which to observe and analyze the problems that occur. With a geographic framework, the neighborhood becomes the focal point for residents, business, visitors, and the government to take action and resolve problems using immediate and practical solutions.

Geographic information systems (GIS) have played a major role in identifying that framework by delineating the boundaries of neighborhoods and making them practical, useful units of geographic space. GIS helps users understand the dynamics of problems within, between, and across neighborhoods. It facilitates drawing more accurate, scale-appropriate representations of the designated space.

With online mapping services, residents of a neighborhood can create a virtual representation of the geography that makes up their neighborhood. They can discreetly carve out their "territory." This creates a sense of belonging to an area, which can serve as

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a mechanism to rally other residents together, draw attention to their issues, highlight what the neighborhood has to offer, or represent the area as a collective in a political arena.

Even with the advantage of modern GIS technologies, neighborhood boundaries are difficult to define. Difficulties arise because of the scale and complexity of the interactions within neighborhoods and the lack of data to represent which locations are within neighborhood boundaries. Thus, a range of boundaries may define the same neighborhood, varying because of the factors and data used to create each neighborhood map.

For example, residents of neighborhoods define boundaries based on people with whom they have regular contact or their perceptions of activity that occurs within a set of local markers. Resident-defined neighborhoods can be too small for sampling. Local governments create neighborhood boundaries based on streets to facilitate the deployment of services and maintenance. These boundaries are often much too large and incorporate several neighborhoods. Other local government services, such as the police, create boundaries that represent neighborhoods as patrol areas. These boundaries can consist of a conglomeration of many neighborhoods and can be too large. In many instances, these conglomerations often incorporate neighborhoods that do not interact with each other. When multiple neighborhoods that do not interact are conglomerated, conflicts of interest can emerge because one neighborhood has different needs and problems than the other or resources are spread too thin across a large area.

Beyond the issue of delineating a neighborhood is the use of technology as a mechanism for promoting the sense of a neighborhood. Online tools and other resources promote the idea of the "neighborhood" to connect residents with the people, businesses, organizations, and other resources around them. The Socioeconomic Mapping and Resource Topography (SMART) system and the web site EveryBlock are two such examples. The SMART system can be used to identify resources in a neighborhood to combat juvenile problems and EveryBlock provides a full scope of the activities and resources in a given neighborhood.

This issue of *Geography and Public Safety* looks at topics, definitions, and technologies that demonstrate that neighborhoods matter. It shows how to use data about neighborhoods to combat crime and other public safety problems. Articles bring the abstract idea of a neighborhood into a concrete set of ideas for practice. The articles by Marc Buslik, Phil Canter, and Mark Warren highlight how multiple delineations of neighborhood boundaries make it more difficult for the police to serve the public adequately. John Markovic discusses why neighborhoods matter when implementing community policing. Also, an article by Jim Zepp highlights how residents of various neighborhoods participated in a government contest to create web sites that helped citizens of Washington, D.C., better communicate information about their neighborhoods to others.

Defining a neighborhood works to conserve the community. Creating that sense of community and solving neighborhood problems requires initiative by the local residents, community organizations, and businesses because they are the ones who understand how to craft an agenda of real and doable work. Geography, as recognized and implemented through technology, can serve as a solid framework from which that agenda can be appropriately scaled and crafted.[2] Ultimately, using geographic techniques can help maintain and improve a community's quality of life. Increasing neighborhoods' quality of life is vital. If neighborhoods flourish, people's lives will likely flourish with them. Conversely, if they deteriorate, then lives will also deteriorate.

Notes

[1]De Certeau, M. *The Everyday Practice of Life*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002.

[2]Berry, W. *Another Turn of the Crank*. Berkeley, California: Counterpoint Press, 1995.

Not In My Neighborhood: An Essay on Policing Place

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Place matters. Routine activities theory shows that three factors cooperate in a kind of triangle to create a criminal event. This crime triangle includes vulnerable victims, motivated offenders, and insufficient guardians at a particular location (or "place"). Many police rely on this theoretical foundation to design and implement crime-prevention and tactical efforts.

Place also matters to the police. This article describes how the police use place (i.e., geography) as a concept and as a practical component of resource deployment. It discusses the somewhat nebulous concept of a "neighborhood;" how that term has different meanings for criminologists, researchers, and the police; and how police can incorporate the views of citizens and elected officials to deploy resources more effectively.

A Police Captain's Perspective

As a captain in the Chicago Police Department, I appreciate that Chicago has an important role in creating the history of place as a criminological concept. Although Guerry [1833] (2002) and Quetelet [1833] (1984) presented the first sociological perspective on place, it was the "Chicago School" of sociology that provided an empirical analysis of how place and crime bore a meaningful correlation (Shaw and McKay, 1942). Other research also confirms Chicago's role in the study of place and crime (Thrasher, 1927; Maltz et al., 1991; Maltz, 1995; Sampson, Raudebush, and Earls, 1995). Without presuming scholarly equivalence to these works, I offer my personal perspective as a police officer on place and crime.[1]

This is not a fresh perspective of neighborhood effects on crime. My experiences and views are not that different from what research and policing have given us in the last 40 or so years. I recognize that poverty, joblessness, racism, gangs and drugs, political corruption, police misconduct, and societal neglect correlate to crime rates. In this article, I want to explore how neighborhoods affect crime and disorder. This essay is about the term "neighborhood."

What Is a Neighborhood?

Researchers use the term neighborhood based on the needs of their research. For researchers, a neighborhood can be defined by many variables—for instance, a neighborhood can refer to the area lying within a census tract, ZIP Code, or physical boundary; or the citizens who fall into a demographic category (e.g., those who have a certain income level or socioeconomic status). Although many subjectively identified independent variables may be associated with a neighborhood, the geography of the neighborhood remains constant throughout the analysis. These criteria help researchers ascribe a dependent variable to that piece of the larger community and learn about characteristics of the people who reside there.[2]

On the other hand, police must dynamically interpret geography and place when considering a neighborhood as a level of analysis in order to translate the variables that define a neighborhood into a physical location that needs help with crime prevention or requires police resources. The police are far less concerned with the criteria for defining a neighborhood than with the *results* of those criteria: crime, fear of crime, calls for service. These results must then translate into practice —for example, where to send the troops, how to respond to community concerns, or how to answer an elected official's requests.[3] Essentially, while criminologists are interested in the factors that create a neighborhood and lead to crime, police think about a neighborhood as a "place" to deploy resources. For this reason, police perspective of "place" is less prone to subjective interpretations and decisions.

This does not mean that a sense of "place" is not important for police. Criminology theory helps to define what police do, how we do it, and where we do it. But place now has a role in everyday policing, as a unit of geographic analysis. David Weisburd (2008) discusses how police should interpret the concept of place and shows that, for police a criminologist's view of a neighborhood is simply not an accurate description of geography. A scholarly perspective defines a neighborhood as a piece of geography that is usually too big, or in some cases too small, for police purposes.

To better understand how police view a neighborhood, readers should remember the elements of routine activity theory's "crime triangle:" the victim, the offender, and the place. Whether through problem solving in a community policing environment, a more direct problem-oriented approach, hot spot policing, or intelligence-led policing, law enforcement officers use place or geography to focus limited resources on what needs attention.

A neighborhood for researchers, residents, businesses, or visitors, therefore, becomes a vague and potentially confusing element to police. The police look not at what constitutes a neighborhood—those previously mentioned independent variables of demographics and more—but at the output of how those variables interact and produce an effect that requires the need for police resources. This output—or dependent variable—might include the crime rate or the community's sense of well-being (their quality of life).

Understanding a Police Perspective of a Neighborhood

To illustrate the police perspective, one can look at maps of the city of Chicago and see how various types of boundaries are represented. This will help show the difficulty of providing a practical definition of a neighborhood in policing.[4] Neighborhoods as a conceptual entity are not monolithic or static. They change over time both by boundary and by demographic. They are organic—they grow, divide, merge, decline, regenerate. These ideas are examined in the discussion of four maps (Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4):

Figure 1 shows Chicago's police districts[5] and officers' individual beats. With 280 beats, the department can, in most cases, respond to local community concerns quite well—assuming a certain homogeneity across an individual beat. This homogeneity, however, is not a given. Nor is this concern unique to the Chicago police. Beats are designed to help average police workloads. They may include pieces of multiple census tracts, ethnic groupings, and other demographic variations and they can encompass large areas.

Chicago is often called a "city of neighborhoods." These neighborhoods have been formalized into 77 "community areas" that are used to identify local history and characteristics. The Portage Park community, for example, surrounds a large park of the same name. The police department does not formally use these "community area" boundaries, nor do these boundaries represent political boundaries for the purpose of formal city services. Although these pieces of geography can be as small as informal neighborhoods, they remain too broad for police patrol needs. Figure 2 shows how little police districts and community areas coincide geographically.

As Figure 3 shows, Chicago is additionally divided into 50 political subdivisions, called wards. Each ward is represented by an elected

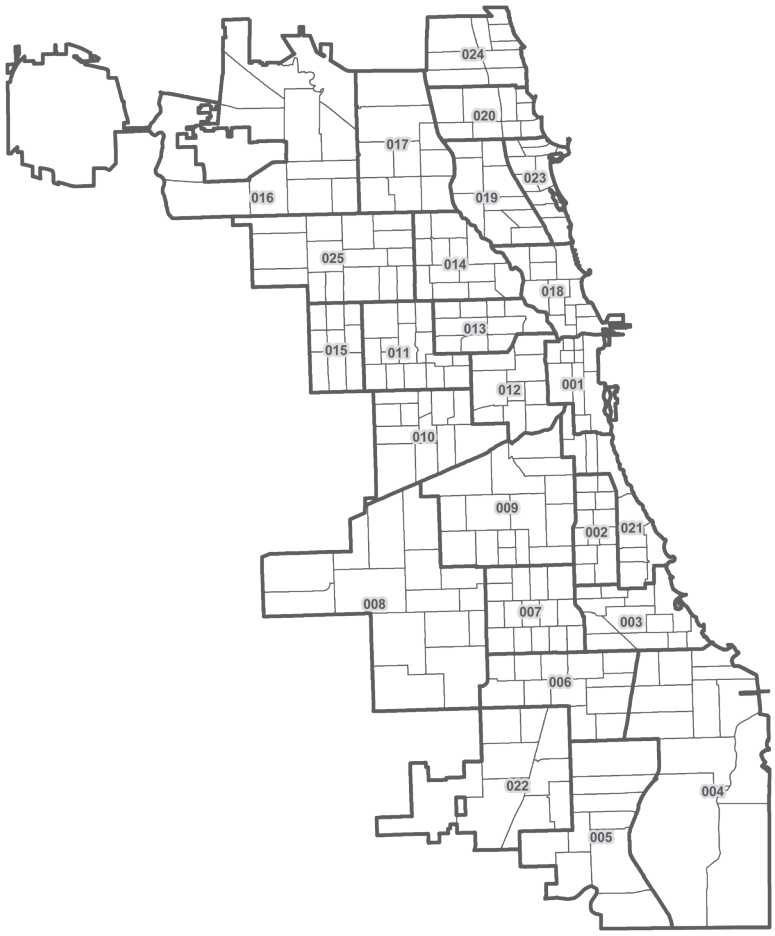

Figure 1. The Chicago Police Department's districts and police officers' beats.

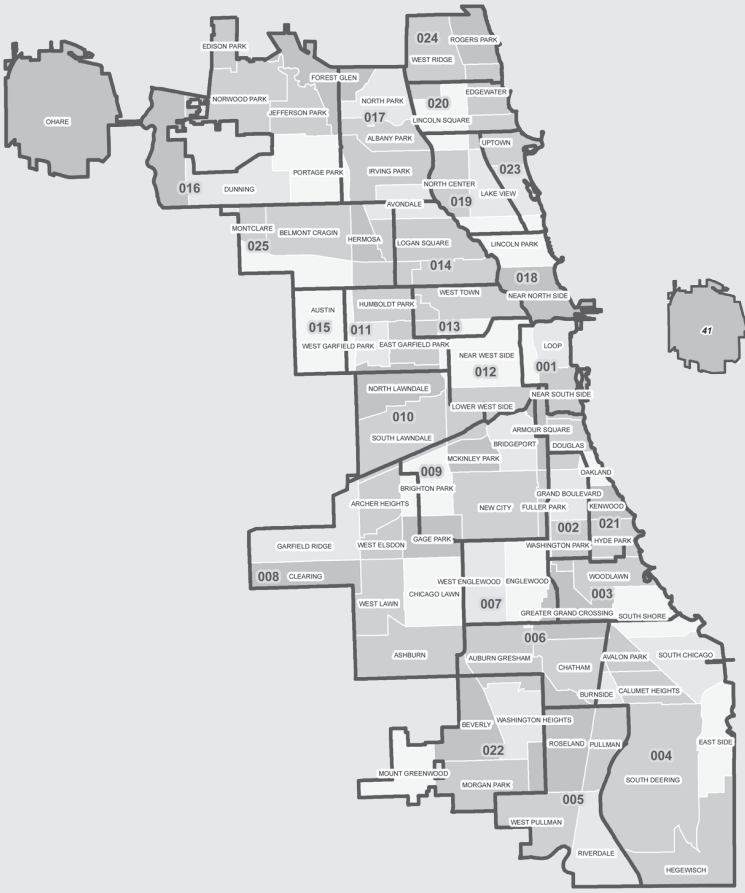

Figure 2. The Chicago Police Department's districts and community areas correspond little geographically.

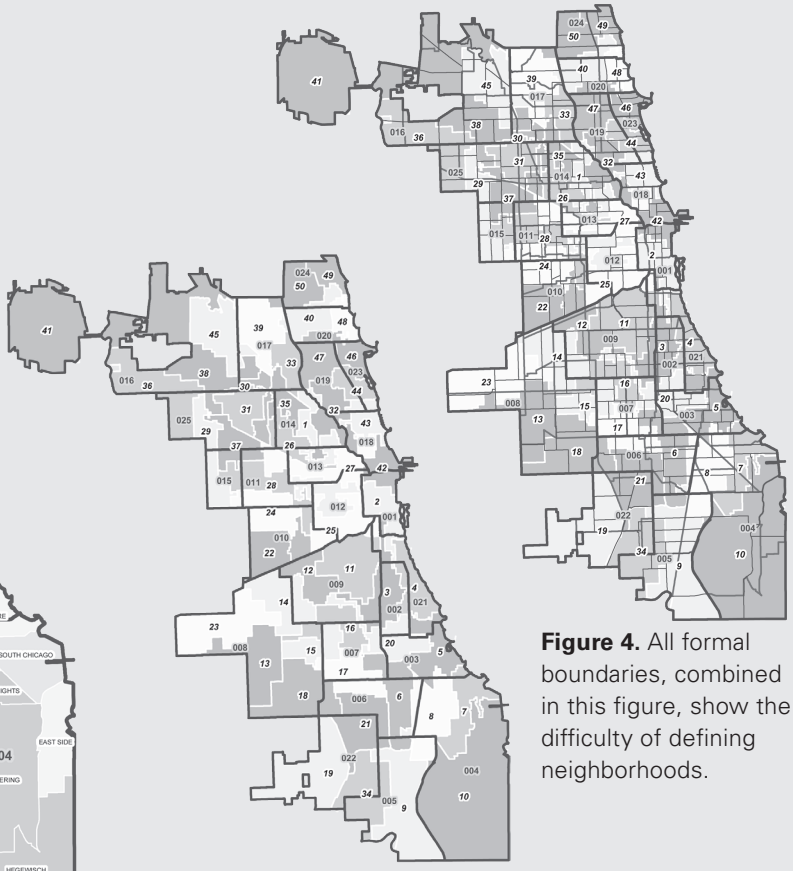

Figure 3. Chicago is divided into 50 political subdivisions called wards.

Figure 4. All formal boundaries, combined in this figure, show the difficulty of defining neighborhoods.

city council member called an alderman. Wards are redrawn based on decennial federal census data to provide equitable ethnic and racial representation. Police districts and wards crisscross over each other so that one district commander may work with multiple aldermen or an alderman may work with multiple district commanders to serve the needs of citizens. Even wards provide no better sense of serviceable neighborhoods. These sorts of boundaries are not exclusive to Chicago. Figure 4 highlights all of these formal boundaries. This map shows the difficulty police have when defining neighborhoods, applying crime-prevention services, and deploying resources to an area.

The purpose of presenting these maps is not to suggest that police are not interested in other definitions of neighborhood boundaries. Understanding these boundaries helps police create effective partnerships with communities. But police strive to deploy resources to resolve the effects of crime on neighborhoods, not the effects of neighborhoods on crime.

Discussion

Defining neighborhoods involves working with the boundaries provided by police administrators, government, and communities to create a working model for deploying police resources. To achieve this goal, the research community should continue to help the police understand what neighborhood characteristics can be used to inform the police planning process. For example, they might determine answers to questions such as the following:

- How are crime rates affected if a community adds video cameras to neighborhood streetlight poles rather than just posting Neighborhood Watch signs?
- How do foreclosure rates affect crime?
- Do communities with high gang membership rates attract different types of crime?

Unfortunately, random patrol equals random results. So what to do? Police should use geographic information systems to determine where to provide focused patrol "missions" to the areas that show the greatest need.

Police must examine how geography affects policing today. Static geography used for responses and reporting can now be made more dynamic because of near-real-time information about police workloads and community needs. Is this the only useful form of police deployment decision-making? Of course not. But incorporating dynamic geography when making resource deployment decisions helps a department become more responsive to each neighborhood's dependent variables. Ratcliffe (2008) informs us that this tactic is a useful component of intelligence-led policing, a broad, strategic approach to making deployment decisions for the provision of public safety.

This answer is simple and almost painfully obvious. Still, police struggle with decisions of resource deployment based on need. I would suggest that the police listen to researchers and citizens when

trying to understand what elements define a neighborhood. The differences in definitions of neighborhood are not a conflict, but a complement to each perspective.

Notes

[1]This article is an opinion editorial and does not represent the viewpoints of the Chicago Police Department. Additionally, the circumstances described using the Chicago Police Department as an example are far from unique. Rather, Chicago is used here as a generalized example of the difficulties police across the country face and work to resolve.

[2]For example, researchers might look at the variable of Neighborhood Watch signs and how these signs affect the behavior of residents and visitors (Wilson and Brown, 2009).

[3]In particular, a police department operating under a community policing philosophy will account for a wider range of inputs to the deployment process. Decision-making will incorporate feedback from the community rather than being based solely on a police perspective.

[4]It will also highlight the confusion that demographers, policymakers, criminologists, and even citizens may have when attempting to define a neighborhood.

[5]The Chicago Police Department divides the city into 25 patrol districts for deployment and administrative purposes. Detective and specialized units operate citywide or by grouped (i.e., multiple-district) geographical distributions. Within each district are from 9 to 15 beats. Each beat is staffed by one or two police officers 24 hours a day. The beat is both a unit of analysis and a response unit. Workload variations based on the time of day require additional patrol units within a district. Chicago's district is equivalent to the New York Police Department's precinct and the Los Angeles Police Department's division.

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Policing Neighborhoods in Baltimore County

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Introduction

Police protect and preserve the quality of life of neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are building blocks for communities.[1] Because neighborhoods are such an integral part of communities, problem-solving and community policing efforts must focus on the neighborhood and the people who interact with it. Similarly, police must work with the community to jointly improve the quality of life in local neighborhoods.

However, the physical area of a "neighborhood" remains relatively undefined. Neighborhoods are not clearly demarcated by a boundary, and residents may have differing opinions about what streets and local landmarks are a part of their neighborhood.

This article will discuss the sources that the Baltimore County Police Department uses to define polygons that approximate neighborhood areas in a suburban jurisdiction. Most of these sources of information are in the form of digital maps that include attributes on neighborhood characteristics (names, contact people, addresses, etc.). In addition, this article will examine several operational

and tactical applications used by Baltimore County police to provide services at the neighborhood level. Although "neighborhood" and "community" are frequently used in the same context, "neighborhood" describes a relatively small geographic entity that contains a group of people who have common lifestyles and share common values.

Baltimore County's Neighborhood Master Plans

Plans for community improvement and safety often focus on neighborhoods. Master or comprehensive plans developed by urban planners usually have a strong emphasis on neighborhood planning and preservation. For example, the Master Plans for Baltimore County[2] emphasize the importance of community conservation and public safety, using the neighborhood as a foundation for future growth. Goals include protecting citizens from crime in their homes and communities. To accomplish these goals, police need to have close interaction with key community leaders to control crime and reduce fear.

The Baltimore County police use community policing strategies to accomplish such goals. In community policing, line officers consistently serve the same geographic areas and populations. The officers gain a measure of familiarity with local citizens that promotes trust and mutual respect. Consequently, the neighborhood as an area unit becomes an important geosocial entity to police.

Defining "Neighborhood" Boundaries

The "neighborhood," although conceptually difficult to define, is recognized as a functional unit by social scientists. Models such as concentric zone, sector, and multiple nuclei theories help explain city structures and seem to confirm the importance of neighborhoods. These models found that cities have neighborhoods that tend to group together according to socioeconomic status.

Residential neighborhoods can have well-defined boundaries set by artificial or natural features or by planning elements such as recreational facilities, open space, or parks. McKeever (1968) provides a definition of a neighborhood as a "geographic area within which residents may all conveniently share common services and facilities required in the vicinity of their dwellings." So, although neighborhoods can be somewhat defined by sociological models, they have a spatial dimension as well. What follows are some examples of how Baltimore County has geographically defined neighborhoods.

Elementary school model. Urban planners sometimes define the extent of a neighborhood by a population served by an elementary school. Baltimore County's development model suggested using elementary schools to define the boundaries of a neighborhood. The area of a neighborhood is defined by the walking distance to an elementary school.[3] Although this criterion seems overly simplistic in its definition and delimitation of neighborhood, it attempts to demonstrate how a group of homes within a social, economical, and political construct identifies with a local institution.

Name model. Some areas in Baltimore County associate certain names with a neighborhood. The names of neighborhoods are often referenced by the media or may appear in the real estate section. One real estate source in Maryland, MD HomeTownLocator, lists populated areas by name for Baltimore County. The web map associated with this source uses points rather than polygons to show the approximate locations of these areas (maryland.hometownlocator.com/md/baltimore/).[4] These sorts of neighborhood boundaries are transitional and fluid, merging or overlapping into neighboring areas.

Census geography model. Census geography can also be used to define neighborhoods. Baltimore City Planning used national census data from 2000 to identify more than 225 neighborhoods (www.livebaltimore.com/neighborhoods/list/). The Baltimore County Police Department then provides selected crime statistics for each of these neighborhoods.

Many of Baltimore's neighborhoods have neighborhood associations that may have assisted planning officials in defining neighborhood boundaries using census blocks.

Baltimore County "Neighborhoods"

Although tangible boundaries that define a neighborhood can be elusive, the advantages for police in delimiting geographic features corresponding to neighborhood entities can be significant. Once neighborhoods have been identified, they can direct tactical and operational responses to neighborhood crime and public safety problems.

The Baltimore County government does not maintain information on neighborhood boundaries, but instead provides a digital map corresponding to boundaries identified as community associations. The government uses this map for direct mailing, particularly in regards to zoning or environmental issues. In turn, police analysts have used this map to help develop beat boundaries.

On a larger geographic scale, Baltimore County police analysts use a variety of sources, such as:

- Maryland state tax assessment data
- Aerial photography
- Federal census blocks and census block groups
- Patrol and community outreach officers[5]
- Preliminary and recorded subdivision plats[6]
- An atlas, showing maps of the area
- Windshield surveys.[7]

Much of the data used by police analysts to approximate neighborhood boundaries is in the form of digital maps or attribute tables that can be overlaid on a digital map using a Geographic Information System (GIS). Analysts overlay map layers from different sources to create polygons called "reporting areas" (Figure 1). These reporting areas are statistical units that correspond to neighborhoods or contain areas of similar land use such as a high school or shopping

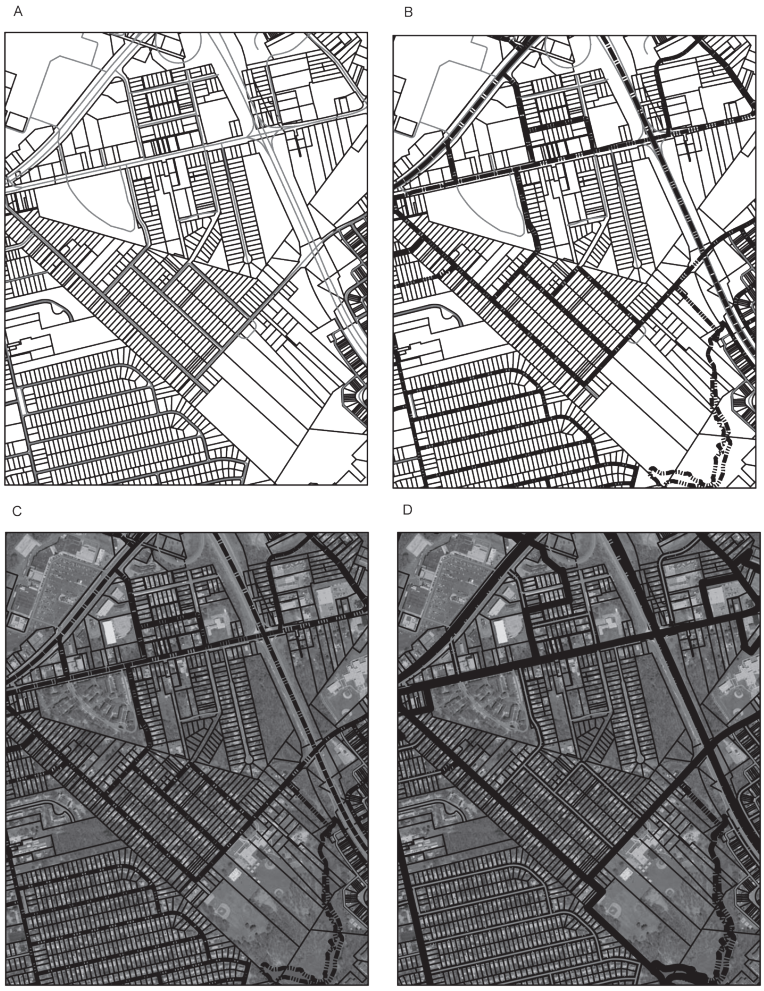

Figure 1 Analysts overlay map layers from different sources to help identify neighborhoods. A: Shows property tax parcels and streets. B: Shows census 2000 blocks overlaid onto parcels and streets. C: Introduces aerial photography to the layer. D: Shows reporting areas corresponding to neighborhood "boundaries."

center. These reporting areas are the smallest polygons that Baltimore County police use to report statistics on crime, arrests, and calls for service. Police posts (i.e., beats) in Baltimore County comprise one or more reporting areas. This reduces the possibility of police posts being split between neighborhoods and communities.

Neighborhood Policing in Baltimore County

Police analysts in Baltimore County can provide law enforcement data for a single housing unit or address. To understand what types of crime occur where, police find it useful to know the number and types of calls by address. But this address-specific information does not always provide the best view of crime in a community or neighborhood. Statistics aggregated to reporting areas that approximate neighborhood areas can provide a different perspective and perhaps a better understanding of problems in and around a neighborhood. This section describes a number of systems Baltimore County police have employed to better police neighborhoods.

Census data. When citizens request crime and call information, police analysts provide that information by reporting area. Because census geography is used as a guide in creating reporting area boundaries, precinct commanders have detailed statistical summaries of neighborhood-level demographic, housing, and socioeconomic information for their command areas. Census, crime, and arrest data have been used to develop a multivariate "juvenile risk indicator" to determine whether Police Athletic League (PAL) centers were located in the appropriate neighborhoods. PAL

centers are staffed by Baltimore County police officers and recreation coordinators who work with neighborhood volunteers to enhance youth's moral development through enjoyable activities. Police management have used the "juvenile risk indicator" to help determine which communities had the highest risk of juvenile crime. As a result, one PAL center was relocated to a community that had a greater need as indicated by the index.

Public safety indicators. Police analysts have also developed indicators to assess the health and viability of neighborhoods. These indicators consist of four measures that are based largely on social disorganization, anomie, and strain theories. Since studies have shown that crime and delinquency tend to increase in socially disorganized neighborhoods, analysts reason that the presence of crime and delinquency may be indicators of distressed neighborhoods having inadequate social controls. Every 3 months, police analysts rank reporting areas by the number of violent crimes, selected calls for service,[8] drug arrests, and the resident location of juvenile offenders. Reporting areas in the top 5 percent for each of the four measures are mapped and distributed to commanders for attention. Neighborhoods that are in the top 5 percent for two or three of the four measures are identified as "transition" areas. Transition areas are usually targeted by police commanders for problem-solving programs. Neighborhoods that are consistently in the top 5 percent for all four indicators are sometimes targeted for more aggressive programs, such as use of eminent domain and demolition.

Crime reports and maps. Police commanders often need crime statistics summarized for each neighborhood for community outreach or neighborhood association meetings. The Baltimore County Police Department created a web-based application called Street Level Access Program (SLAP) that enables any officer to produce summary statistics by neighborhood from the department's regional tactical crime analysis database. Crime statistics are summarized in tabular form and can be easily copied into a spreadsheet for graphing.

In addition, police departments in the Baltimore region worked with the U.S. Department of Justice to create a public domain crime mapping application called the Regional Crime Analysis Geographic Information System (RCAGIS). The RCAGIS program uses an Environmental Systems Research Institute[9] mapping platform to create tactical crime maps by neighborhood based on simple queries. Crime information produced by SLAP and RCAGIS helps commanders view the geographic distribution of crime and the details associated with thematic points.

Early warning programs. Tactical crime analysts in Baltimore County have developed "early warning" programs to alert them to unusually high counts of burglaries, motor vehicle thefts, or street robberies reported in high-crime neighborhoods. The early warning system identifies neighborhoods with crimes that exceed a threshold value over a given crime cycle (expressed as y number of crimes over x number of days). Thresholds and cycles are computed individually for high-crime neighborhoods. These calculations help determine whether a post car alert needs to be issued. Post car alerts are sent by e-mail to officers patrolling neighborhoods affected by crime. A post car alert includes detailed information about crimes occurring in neighborhoods. They contain neighborhood contact information, so police can disseminate information about a crime problem to appropriate parties. Neighborhood contacts are also used for the department's autodialing system, an automated dial-out system that alerts households about a crime problem in their neighborhood. Precinct commanders also use e-mail trees to send information about a crime problem in a neighborhood. In addition, the department is using web technology to make it easier for the public to find out about crime problems in their neighborhoods.

Concluding Remarks

The Baltimore County Police Department's emphasis on neighborhood public safety has reinforced the public trust, contributing to lower crime rates and improving citizens' quality of life. Police commanders across the country should understand the importance of maintaining good communication with neighborhood residents. They must ensure that community leaders and neighborhood associations know that the department is accessible. Police should also understand that good community outreach helps to disseminate information that can reinforce crime prevention, lead to arrests, and reduce crime.

Ultimately, as law enforcement strives to strengthen community policing strategies, they should focus on seeing neighborhoods as important geosocial entities. Police can successfully address problems by focusing limited resources at the neighborhood level.

Notes

[1]Urban planners refer to neighborhoods as "local communities" because neighborhood interactions encourage community growth. See McKeever, J. Ross, ed., *The Community Builders' Handbook,* Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 1968.

[2]*Baltimore County, Maryland 1989–2000 Master Plan and Baltimore County, Maryland 1999–2010 Master Plan,* Office of Planning and Zoning, Towson, Maryland.

[3]See *A Comprehensive Plan for Baltimore County,* 1975.

[4]The best way to approximate these sorts of neighborhood boundaries is to survey residents, but this method can be time consuming and expensive. Survey results may produce a general consensus regarding the central area of a neighborhood but the boundaries of a neighborhood may become less-defined the further one moves from the neighborhood "center."

[5]Police officers can help identify areas designated for Citizen on Patrol (COP), Neighborhood Watch programs, and community and neighborhood associations.

[6]Recorded subdivision plats identify a parcel's land use, roads, and metes and bounds; the latter usually used to delimit a neighborhood boundary.

[7]Police analysts use windshield surveys to confirm street addresses, neighborhood boundaries, and neighborhood names.

[8]These incident types include calls for service/situation-found codes relating to gang activity, code enforcement complaints, parking complaints, etc.

[9]See www.esri.com.

Neighborhoods Matter: A Situational Policing Perspective

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Effective community policing must respond to the needs of distinct neighborhoods and communities. In *Defining the "Community" in Community Policing*,[1] Daniel W. Flynn comments on the challenges of community policing that larger police departments serving diverse populations face.

> *[A typical jurisdiction] is composed of a collage of various areas or neighborhoods comprising assorted socio-economic groups, ethnic groups and groups of particular types of businesses or industries. Thus, for the purposes of community policing, it becomes necessary to subdivide the jurisdiction into several smaller communities to tailor problem-solving efforts to the communities' unique problems. Ideally, successes in each of the smaller communities will combine to create a synergistic effect resulting in jurisdiction-wide crime reductions, enhanced public safety and improved public satisfaction with the police.*[2]

Flynn's perspective suggests that collaborations between police and residents should be tailored to specific neighborhood needs and attentive to the dynamics of neighborhoods as they change over time. Police must consider both geographic and cultural aspects of neighborhoods, and respond to specific contextual and situational factors in a community that may inhibit or induce crime. These include protective factors, such as community organizations that promote prosocial values, and risk factors, such as tensions between different socioeconomic or ethnic groups within the neighborhood.

This article examines situational policing, a recent extension of the community policing concept that identifies individual types of neighborhoods, and considers how police can work across these differences to both strengthen neighborhoods and reduce crime. It also discusses the policy implications associated with identifying and policing distinct neighborhood types.

Situational Policing and Neighborhood Focus

The concept of situational policing was introduced by James Nolan, Norman Conti, and Jack McDevitt in 2004.[3] Building off an underlying conceptual model and with financial support from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, Nolan and colleagues' current work uses a comprehensive assessment, or process model, designed to help reduce crime and make neighborhoods safer. The process model does this by first identifying and understanding neighborhood types and then taking appropriate and necessary steps to develop strong neighborhoods.

Situational policing recognizes that communities are dynamic and developing entities. It supports the idea that police can help move communities through developmental stages, eventually leading to interdependent partnerships among residents, community and civic organizations, and the police. In some neighborhoods, police must stabilize the area before the residents can begin to organize. In other neighborhoods, police can rely on existing social capital and collective efficacy.[4]

Beyond assessing a neighborhood's crime and disorder problems, situational policing calls for an assessment of underlying factors that contribute to a particular neighborhood's cohesiveness (or lack thereof). Thus, situational policing requires sophisticated analysis that extends beyond traditional crime analysis. To support a situational policing approach, police must be prepared to assess a neighborhood's capacity to organize itself and work with the police. In particular, this includes law enforcement's ability to assess a neighborhood's unique culture, key community stakeholders (e.g., clergy, local politicians, and business owners), demographics, and capacity for collective efficacy.

Neighborhood Types

Nolan and colleagues are developing analytic tools that police can use to tailor community policing strategies to each neighborhood type. To date, the researchers have developed a community questionnaire that they are administering to residents in Cleveland; Morgantown, West Virginia; Pittsburgh; and Wilmington, Delaware. The project plans to create a comprehensive guidebook that will introduce the concept of situational policing to law enforcement practitioners, document the skills needed to assess and respond to the needs of individual neighborhoods, and provide specific tools and strategies that will help agencies implement situational policing approaches.

Situational policing stresses that individual neighborhoods vary in their degree of readiness to engage in collective action and in their ability to work effectively with police. Nolan and colleagues posit four neighborhood types, which vary along two dimensions: (1) the level of crime/disorder in the neighborhood, and (2) the degree to which a neighborhood depends on the police or has established interdependence (i.e., is capable of collaborating with the police). Each neighborhood type requires a different police response. The dimensions, the resulting neighborhood types, and the corresponding policing style types are depicted in Figure 1.

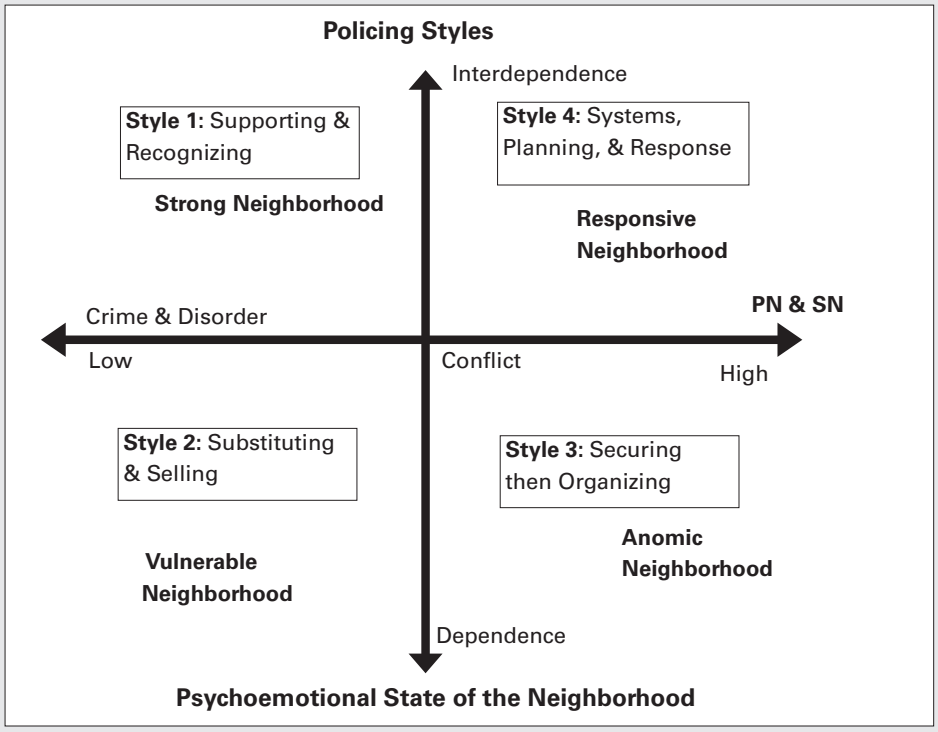

Figure 1. This figure represents the four neighborhood types defined by situational policing and the police response most appropriate for each neighborhood type.

Strong neighborhoods. Strong neighborhoods have a high degree of interdependence and low levels of crime. Residents in strong neighborhoods show a willingness to partner with each other and readily engage with community and civic organizations, including the police, in achieving shared goals. Police provide support while recognizing the strengths and social capacities that exist within the neighborhood.

Vulnerable neighborhoods. Vulnerable neighborhoods experience low levels of crime and disorder and low levels of interdependence and collective efficacy. Without a clear sense of neighborhood or the capacity to act collectively, residents of these areas tend to rely on police to provide formal social control. Because residents do not have a shared sense of belonging, incivility or disorder (e.g., congregating youth or illegal parking) can escalate into more serious disturbances and crime problems if left unchecked. Policing in these neighborhoods involves focusing on disorder issues as a means of sustaining a neighborhood's status as a low-crime area.

Anomic neighborhoods. Anomic neighborhoods are characterized by high rates of crime and disorder and low levels of collective efficacy. Residents of anomic neighborhoods depend on police for formal social control. Yet, because of high crime rates and historically tense relations with police, many residents of anomic neighborhoods consider the police ineffective. These residents are not sufficiently organized to help police fight neighborhood crime and disorder problems. Police responses in anomic neighborhoods may involve traditional reactive responses to crime. But officers should also support community organizing efforts and outreach as mechanisms to build trust and restore confidence in the police.

Responsive neighborhoods. Responsive neighborhoods have high levels of crime and disorder and high levels of collective efficacy. These neighborhoods tend to have high rates of poverty and other risk factors (such as single-parent households and underperforming schools). However, they have the advantage of strong "social capital" in the form of established churches, block clubs, and civic associations with high levels of community participation. Community stakeholders in these areas provide support for the neighborhood and effectively partner with the police. Police in responsive neighborhoods can capitalize on the social capital already in place and lend their expertise and resources to support public safety and crime reduction.

Neighborhood Stages

Nolan and colleagues suggest that neighborhoods can transition through or be trapped in various states of police dependency. A neighborhood may exhibit the characteristics of one of three development stages:

Dependence. Dependent neighborhoods need direction and leadership. Residents generally share the belief that police are competent, efficient, and able to provide the necessary services to promote public safety.

However, these neighborhoods lack strong community leaders, so the police may need to actively work to establish leaders and strengthen community organizations to begin promoting higher levels of collective efficacy.

Conflict. Residents of conflicted neighborhoods have different expectations and assumptions about their roles in the neighborhood and the competency and effectiveness of local government entities, including the police. Neighborhoods in conflict include "up-and-coming neighborhoods" characterized by gentrification and displacement and declining neighborhoods with high rates of mortgage foreclosures and property abandonment.

Interdependence. Interdependence is the optimal state in which conflicts among members of a neighborhood are resolved. In interdependent neighborhoods, community members stand ready to work together with each other, the police, and other government entities toward common goals.

Policy and Practical Implications

Situational policing is grounded firmly on existing theories and has practical appeal. However, the situational community policing perspective is relatively new and untested. The perspective raises questions about whether situational policing can be generalized across and beyond urban neighborhoods. As this perspective emerges, a number of key policy and practical questions may arise, including:

- What level of collective identity needs to exist before a geographic area can develop a shared sense of neighborhood?
- Do certain geographic areas or neighborhoods have residents who prefer to remain independent?
- Do most residents in certain areas actually prefer dependent and reactive police services over active partnership?
- Are residents in neighborhoods that lack collective efficacy capable of or willing to change?

Conclusion

The situational policing perspective provides a theoretical framework for understanding neighborhood dynamics and their effect on crime. Rather than looking at crime patterns in isolation, it encourages analysts to assess the characteristics of a neighborhood that promote or inhibit collaboration with the police. Rather than imploring police to attack the "root causes" of crime, this perspective encourages a practical problem-solving approach that focuses on the unique characteristics of neighborhoods and how police can help make them stronger. As such, it provides a common frame of reference to help crime analysts, urban planners, government officials, and community groups to work more collaboratively. This promising theoretical perspective should be tested further by academics and analysts in applied settings.

Notes

[1]Flynn, Daniel W., *Defining the "Community" in Community Policing*. Washington, D.C.: Police Foundation, 1998.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Nolan, James J., Norman Conti, and Jack McDevitt, "Situational Policing: Neighbourhood Development and Crime Control," *Policing and Society* 14(2)(2004):99–117. www.informaworld.com/10.1080/10439460410001674965.

[4]High collective efficacy describes a situation where effective informal social control stems from a strong sense of belonging, shared expectations, and a willingness to get involved for the sake of the neighborhood.

Applying Community Tapestry Data to Public Safety

By Phil Mielke
Redlands Police Department
Redlands, California

When fire chiefs in central Virginia wanted to design a hurricane evacuation plan, they needed a data collection system to help them understand the characteristics of neighborhoods in their community. To collect and organize this information, they used Environmental Systems Research Institute's Tapestry Segmentation system.[1] This system contains Community Tapestry data, a complex statistical digest that breaks the U.S. population into 65 discrete

segments based on socioeconomic and demographic composition.

Community Tapestry data were crucial in creating a central Virginia hurricane evacuation plan because they identified the needs of specific demographic groups. But these data can also work to help police create crime prevention strategies or enhance public safety. This article illustrates how Community Tapestry data provide precise, critical information about neighborhoods and how that information can meet the needs of crime analysts, fire squadrons, and law enforcement.

Making a Plan

When fire departments plan evacuations or police departments plan outreach for crime prevention strategies, department decision-makers need the following information:

- What is the makeup of the community?
- Where do certain groups live?
- What is the most effective way to get a message to these community groups?

The Tapestry Segmentation system examines similarities in community groups by statistically compiling decennial U.S. Census data. It then matches these data with statistics on consumer spending on insurance, food, media, vehicles, and other lifestyle categories. The U.S. Census assesses many variables that analysts can compile and then use to determine accurately whether the population groups they represent are growing. These variables include the following:

- Population by age and sex
- Population by race and ethnic origin(s)
- Household composition, marital status, and living arrangements
- Patterns of migration, mobility, and transportation
- General characteristics of housing
- Economic characteristics of housing
- School enrollment and graduation rates
- Employment status, occupation, and industry
- Household, family, and personal income(s).

Analyzing Community Data

When mapping demographic data for observation, analysts may concentrate on one specific variable in attempting to understand the makeup of the community. Many demographic variables are difficult to communicate simultaneously. At these times, the Tapestry Segmentation system can help. Community Tapestry data give a common language to neighborhood characteristics and help analysts understand these geographic groups better.

Community Tapestry segmentation methodology takes two approaches to grouping and understanding the demographics and the geography under consideration. It uses LifeMode grouping, which is based on lifestyle and life-stage comparisons, and Urbanization grouping, which examines a group's proximity to urban centers and metropolitan areas. LifeMode groups have similar characteristics related to income, age, or education level. Urbanization groups have similar geographic characteristics like population density and closeness to economic centers of commerce.

The Tapestry Segmentation system separates census data into 11 LifeMode groups and 12 Urbanization groups. These groups are then compiled into 65 distinct market segments.[2] Some segments are defined more by their level of Urbanization; other segments are defined more by their LifeMode.

Using Community Tapestry Data to Develop an Evacuation Plan in Central Virginia

Community Tapestry's segments came into play when the fire chiefs in central Virginia wanted to identify neighborhoods that had a potentially high risk for special needs during an evacuation. For instance, older couples or older persons living alone may have low mobility and health concerns that could prevent or delay evacuation, such as the need for special equipment or prescription medicines. Similarly, large families with many children may have a different set of needs, such as a need for childcare assistance and car seats.

Many variables are relevant to planning an evacuation. These can include automobiles, health behaviors, pets, and leisure activities. Urban groups, for example, are less likely to have cars to use in an evacuation, and pet care will be necessary when relocating a population with a higher than average potential to have pets. Also, fire departments must plan for the possibility that some groups might have difficulty receiving the message that an evacuation is necessary because some families may not speak English at home, and elderly persons may be less likely to answer the door when responders come.

These sorts of variables are easily identified using the Community Tapestry data. Indexes might tell decision-makers that the "silver and gold" tapestry segment is significantly more likely to require prescription filling for blood pressure medication or insulin, or that they are far more likely to have a dog than a cat (based on food purchases).

Not only did the central Virginia fire departments need to develop a plan for evacuating the community, they needed to know how to spread the word. Reaching out to individual groups for evacuation and relocation requires understanding the media that each group consumes. The "young and restless" population segment does not read newspapers as often as the "cozy and comfortable" segment. The "urban fringe" segment listens to a different set of radio stations than the "silver and gold" segment. These differences mean that announcements must be planned accordingly. Tapestry Segmentation's market potential index can help responders determine which communication media various populations are more likely to use, including Internet service, mobile phones, personal digital assistants, radio, cable or broadcast TV, and newspapers.

Conclusion

Although working with Community Tapestry data can be helpful, officers and decision-makers should be careful to understand the role that demographics should not play in public safety. Methods that enable analysts and chiefs to broadly

understand lifestyle and consumer choices for the purposes of outreach and disaster planning help give context to strategic decision-making efforts, as in the case of central Virginia's hurricane evacuation plan. However, these data should not be used to imply that certain tapestry segments are more likely to produce criminals.

Having a common language to describe tapestry segments is integral to understanding issues that communities face, but these are broad methods for describing neighborhoods and their spending trends. Where tapestry segments can help law enforcement better understand the communities they police and create plans to meet those communities' needs, they should not be overemphasized in identifying areas for deploying resources for crime prevention.

Notes

[1]For more information about Tapestry Segmentation, visit www.esri.com/tapestry or call 1.800.447.9778.

[2]ESRI's Community Tapestry system was originally created to help businesses determine the best areas in which to market their products—to find their customer base and decide how to market to various groups of consumers. Because of this, groups in Community Tapestry are referred to as market segments.

TECHINCAL TIPS

Improving Responses to Citizens' Questions about Community Safety

Jim Zepp
Training and Technical Assistance Director
Justice Research and Statistics Association

When citizens hear that a nearby home has been burglarized or that a neighbor was mugged, they want information about the individual incidents and to find out whether these crimes are part of a larger trend in their community. Frequently, new residents may want to know how safe their neighborhood is for their family and possessions. Many people turn to the Internet to obtain this information.

In recognition of these needs, most law enforcement agencies have put some form of public crime data on their web sites; however, publishing crime information with the same formats and area boundaries used for internal staff reports may not be an effective way to communicate with the public and may hinder citizens' understanding of their communities' relative safety. Most citizens are not familiar with crime statistics terminology (e.g., the difference between calls-for-service and reported crimes) and the geographic areas (i.e., precincts, districts, beats) that police use to identify neighborhoods. Furthermore, community members searching for crime data often need comparison reference points so they have some context for understanding the significance of this information. This article discusses how police can better communicate with citizens and presents some online sources that help public users find crime information fast.

Community Oriented Policing Information

What citizens generally want to know is whether their neighborhood has a high crime rate or a low crime rate relative to the rest of the city (or town) and whether crime is going down or increasing. Simply reporting that "there were 40 burglaries last year, which was a 6-percent increase over the previous year" provides only some of the information needed to fully answer citizens' questions about crime in their area. Specifically, it does not tell them how their neighborhood compares to other communities or to the city or metropolitan area as a whole. Since most individuals believe that any crime is unacceptable, without further context, citizens can be dissatisfied with the police, regardless of law enforcement efforts.

Additionally, short-term crime statistics can be misleading because minor fluctuations can occur in the numbers of annual crimes in a community. Showing trends of at least 5 years gives a more complete picture of how public safety conditions are changing. Furthermore, when the actual numbers of incidents are low (less than 100), yearly percentage-change statistics can give an inflated sense of what is happening.

These public communications problems are largely avoidable if a department's staff members think carefully about what a citizen may want to know and how police agencies can facilitate access to this information. Today, computerized databases and mapping software available to most law enforcement agencies can make publishing crime data in multiple formats much less labor intensive. For example, organizing crime data by the days of the week and daily periods (e.g., daytime, evening, and night) can give citizens a clearer sense of when threats to safety are more likely to occur. Also, interactive web technologies allow police to integrate crime data with safety and quality-of-life information from other public or private agencies, including the locations of schools, parks, senior centers, bus stops, transit stations, businesses, and other facilities.

In the approach to making crime data accessible to the general public, police should follow the principles that are the basis of community oriented policing—when officers establish positive relationships with community members, it improves residents' cooperation and understanding of the local crime conditions. This strategy has been almost universally adopted by law enforcement. Dissemination of police data to the public should be equally community oriented.

The benefits of adopting a community-friendly approach can include better relations with residents and community organizations. If citizens have ready access to community oriented crime data, they will make fewer information requests that consume valuable police staff time. Also, if residents have a clearer understanding of crime issues, this can facilitate conversations with police about appropriate solutions. Police managers can then use the information to allocate resources better. What follows is a discussion of some examples of community oriented police information.

Online Crime Data for Communities

Community-friendly web sites make information accessible in a variety of formats. The San Francisco Police Department's CrimeMaps web site, (www.sfgov.org/site/police_index.asp?id=23813), offers an easy search tool. Users can find information by type of offense, search within a 90-day period, or search by address or proximity to landmarks. They can view crime maps for a specific neighborhood, ZIP Code, or police district. Maps can also show mass transit routes, schools, and Neighborhood Watch areas. Results can be displayed as a data table or graphics chart. The web site's crime information is updated daily. See Figure 1.

Large cities are not alone in providing community-friendly police data. Even relatively modest-sized communities and agencies offer online, interactive access to local crime information. Beaverton, Oregon, has a population of 76,000. Its police department's web site (beavertonpolice.org/crime/maps_stats.aspx) has a crime maps and statistics section that offers flexible access to crime incident data. Users can search by crime type, date range, and location (including neighborhoods). The web site is current within a few weeks of when crimes occur.

Other web developers and Internet services such as Google are now promoting programming tools or creating web sites that obtain data from public agencies and publish it using new applications. Called "mashups," these applications help visitors better understand and use data by offering innovative capabilities and often integrating information from multiple sources.

An impressive mashup example is EveryBlock (www.everyblock.com). EveryBlock currently collects a wide range of public records and local news articles from 15 major U.S. cities. The information is presented in data tables, bar charts, and maps, each of which can be displayed at various levels of detail (including individual neighborhoods). EveryBlock strives to provide residents with information about relevant concerns in their community. The easy-to-use interface requires little technical knowledge to find specific information. Despite managing large volumes of frequently changing data, this web site is supported by a staff of only six. See Figure 2.

Figure 1. The San Francisco Police Department's web site offers crime maps showing communities and Neighborhood Watch areas along with other information layers.

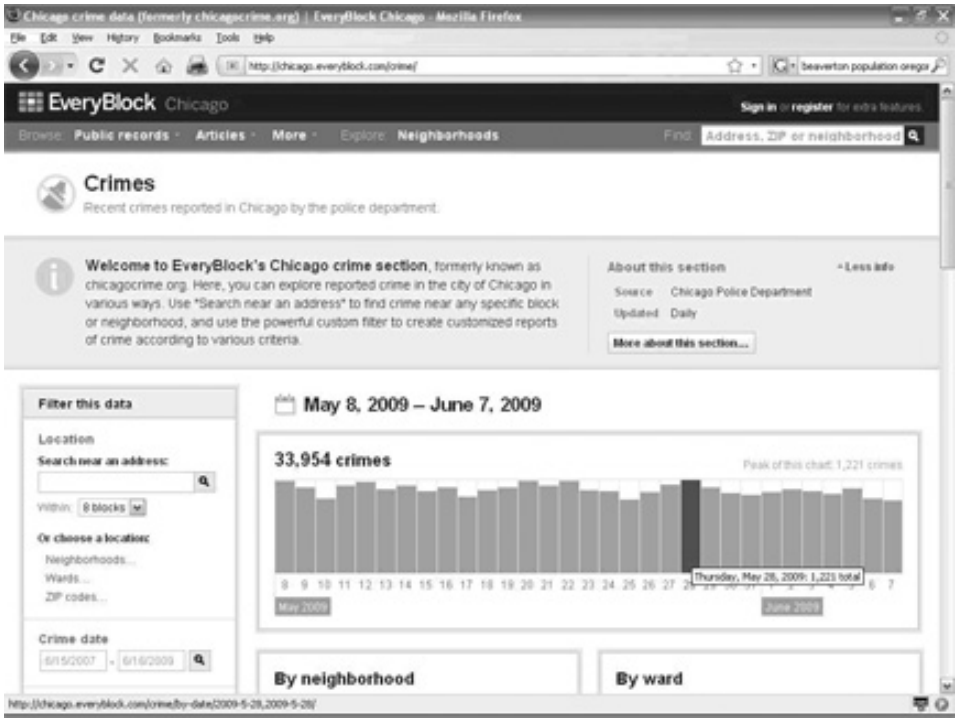

Figure 2. Chicago's EveryBlock web site uses graphics to effectively display data in different dimensions and enables users to easily drill down to details.

Government Participation

A new philosophy suggests that citizens can be significant partners in information dissemination, not merely passive consumers. Some government leaders are exploring the potential of interactive web technologies that are developed by third parties. The District of Columbia government, for example, has sponsored two competitions called Apps for Democracy (www.appsfordemocracy.org/). These challenged citizens to develop web applications using datasets that the city made available for public use. Prizes were awarded to the best submissions.

What was most interesting about these submissions was the difference between the agencies' and the citizens' perspectives in how information was used. Government agencies tend to view information according to their organizational responsibilities and how they are structured, while citizens want data formatted for their information needs. One submission, for example, helped pedestrians plan trips by combining crime, transportation, and accident data. A second helped homebuyers concerned with safety discover crime rates in potential new neighborhoods by integrating vacant real estate locations and crime data. A third helped pedestrians plan safe routes home from bars. It displayed maps of local bars and overlaid these with violent crime incidents (shown by day, evening, or night).

With the release of the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Data.gov web site, which provides public access to a wide range of datasets from various agencies, the Federal Government hopes to repeat the success of the Washington, D.C., mashups experiment. They hope the citizens will use the information to create new data applications and analysis tools.

Conclusion

Working with citizens will improve law enforcement's ability to analyze data and present it in a useful format for the general public. Police agencies should begin exploring the opportunities for improving community relations by providing interactive web applications that include crime and public safety reports and neighborhood-level data. As we move into the next generation of web sites, the public will consider static dissemination of information in fixed report formats and categories unacceptable. If approached creatively, a community-friendly, interactive web site can be an effective and productive asset to a department's community policing strategy.

The Socioeconomic Mapping and Resource Topography (SMART) System

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Since 2005, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), in connection with other federal agencies and partners, has been developing the Socioeconomic Mapping and Resource Topography (SMART) System (http://smart.gismapping.info). SMART is an online geographic information system that creates maps depicting the following:

- Areas with high rates of crime and delinquency
- Government and community resources that help prevent and control crime and delinquency.

OJJDP uses SMART to show how technology can do the following:

- Provide federal leadership
- Enhance interagency cooperation and coordination
- Empower communities
- Emphasize evidence based and proven practices.

The SMART System allows users to use mapping technology to locate incidents of crime and delinquency and other social indicators. Mapping helps users visualize the data, and they can use the system to perform complex, location-based analysis that ultimately leads to better decision-making. It helps decision-makers identify crime problems early on and provide rapid interventions and responses at the neighborhood level.

SMART users can also use the system to find local resources that prevent crime and provide services for children. The resources depicted in the SMART System include Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, police departments and their jurisdictions (including tribal law enforcement and sheriff's departments), libraries, youth courts, Weed and Seed sites, school boundaries, and the locations of model programs identified by OJJDP (http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/Programs/mpg.html).

Along with creating maps and finding resources, SMART uses tables and graphs to provide large sets of data on socioeconomic factors such as housing, population, crime, health, and mortality. Several hundred data sets are currently maintained within the SMART System. Data sources include the U.S. Census Bureau and Uniform Crime Report data from OJJDP's *Statistical Briefing Book*. These sources include more than 10 years of national crime and delinquency data and information regarding population, economic conditions, race and ethnicity, educational attainment, and housing.

NEWS BRIEFS

Madison Fights Crime Problems with Neighborhood Indicators Program

Local government in Madison, Wisconsin, has funded a neighborhood indicators program in an effort to stop street crime.

The program tracks population characteristics, including age, race, poverty, education, income, and type of housing. Users of the program can compare one neighborhood to another or to the citywide average. Currently, only five neighborhoods are profiled by the program, but the others will be added by October.

Madison police hope that the program will give them a better understanding of area neighborhoods so that they can deploy resources to meet citizens' needs. This information will allow them to see the warning signs of neighborhood stress, so that problems can be addressed quickly, before citizens resort to crime.

To find out more about Madison's Neighborhood Indicators Pilot Program, compare neighborhood indicators, or map a variable, go to: www.planning.wisc.edu/madison/Index.html.

Fort Myers Creates a Crime-Mapping Web Site

The Fort Myers (Florida) Police Department recently created a public web site that allows local residents to find and track crime in their neighborhoods.

Users can select what types of crime they want to see and track where the crimes occur. This may help them know what routes home are safest at night or what crimes they should watch out for on local streets.

"The easier we can provide the information to [citizens], make it more accessible, the better for the public and the better for the police department," Fort Myers police Captain Rich Carr told NBC news.

Fort Myers's crime mapping web site is available at: www.fmpolice.com.

The Washington Post Helps New Renters Find Neighborhood Facts

Moving to a new city or apartment? Public access web sites can help you find out what's going on in your neighborhood.

A recent article in *The Washington Post* names a number of web sites that can help make the transition to a new community easier. They include the following:

- EveryBlock (www.everyblock.com). Provides news stories, crime reports, and other civic information for 15 cities. Information is available by street block.
- NewsVoyager (www.newsvoyager.com). Allows users to search local, international, and college newspapers.
- Outside (http://outside.in). Provides links to news stories from local newspapers, TV stations, blogs, and message boards by city. Stories can also be listed by neighborhood.
- Relocation Essentials (wwwrelocationessentials.com). Provides information on cost of living, tax rates, crime, and school quality. Site users can make comparisons between nearby towns.
- Relocation (http://relocation.com). Gives quotes on mortgages and insurance in a specific town and allows users to search for apartments.

Baltimore County Police Agree to Release Crime Information to Newspaper Reporters

When a dozen youth robbed a man at gunpoint in Towson, Maryland, police e-mailed local residents. Residents sent the message to *The Baltimore Sun*.

But Baltimore County police were upset that *The Baltimore Sun* had received word of the robbery. According to Sergeant Stephen Fink, who sent the e-mail, news media should only receive crime news that was "properly prepared for public information." Fink was dismayed that *Sun* reporters had received the resident e-mail, and warned the public that the Towson Precinct would only provide information to those who kept quiet.

According to a number of policemen, feeding newspapers local e-mails about crime information may make it more difficult to capture an offender. In some cases, they have threatened to take legal action against writers who try to make the information public.

The Baltimore Sun disagrees. It has tried for years to get local police departments to provide regular crime information so that city residents and residents of counties surrounding Baltimore can provide raw crime data to residents who want to know what locations are safe. They cite examples such as the Washington (D.C.) Metropolitan Police Department, which provides an official crime mapping web site for residents.

Writes *Sun* reporter Peter Hermann, "What cops don't like is ceding control of how information is interpreted. It's better for them if they tell us they've arrested a suspect in six break-ins on York Road than for us to piece the attacks together using lists like the Weekly Crime Report and write an article before detectives have caught someone." He says that reporters can now best receive information online, rather than tracking down reports at a police station.

Just recently the Baltimore County police changed their minds. They decided information sharing would best benefit neighborhoods if reporters knew about local crimes too. And Fink added *The Baltimore Sun* to his crime report mailing list.

Do More Police Equal Less Crime?

In response to rising rates of burglaries and larcenies in 2008, the police department in Columbia, Missouri, proposed using a geography-based community policing approach that would place more officers in each neighborhood. Police hoped that extra officers in the streets would arrest or ticket offenders for minor violations, and that the extra attention could deter major crimes.

Although most citizens were invigorated and enthusiastic, some wondered whether greater police presence would actually help reduce crime.

As it turns out, police struggle with this question frequently.

The answer varies based on the amount of crime in an area. A small city tends to have about 1.8 officers per 1,000 residents. Cities with high crime rates, like Detroit, may have as many as 3 officers per 1,000 residents.

Tim Burton, Columbia's police chief, says it is a matter of understanding community needs. "Once you get close to the capacity of officers [a department wants to hire], you can honestly assess what you have available and whether you're properly and adequately serving the needs of the people," he told reporters at the *Columbia Daily Tribune*.

Chicago Web Site Helps High-Poverty Neighborhoods Find Tutors and Mentors

The Chicago web site Tutor/Mentor Connection uses geographic information systems to help Chicago residents find student tutors and mentoring programs in impoverished neighborhoods.

Chicago residents can search for tutoring and mentoring programs in their parts of the city, using an interactive tutoring program locator that highlights programs on a map. Similarly, tutors can use the tool to search for programs that may need their services.

Also, to try to strengthen tutoring and mentoring programs in poor neighborhoods, the web site connects city geographic maps to news stories about crime, poor school performance, and poverty. These maps show locations of businesses, hospitals, churches, or government offices that might help with tutoring and mentoring outreach.

The web site's creators hope that the maps will help local communities find places for new tutoring and mentoring programs and encourage them to create partnerships.

To find out more about Tutor/Mentor Connection, go to: www.tutormentorprogramlocator.net.

Geography and Public Safety Events

Dealing with crime problems in a local law enforcement agency sometimes means reaching out to other local agencies to come up with a solution. The events listed here are good opportunities to learn what mapping professionals and those in related areas are doing, get new ideas, and present your work.

GeoDesign Summit
January 6–8, 2010
in Redlands, California
www.geodesignsummit.com/

Worldwide Public Safety Symposium
January 26–28, 2010
in Redmond, Washington
www.mspublicsafetysymposium.com/

Western Society of Criminology 2010 Conference
February 4–6, 2010
in Honolulu, Hawaii
www.sonoma.edu/ccjs/wsc/conference.htm

Delaware GIS
February 10, 2010
in Dover, Delaware
www.degis.org/

ESRI Federal User Conference
February 17–19, 2010
in Washington, D.C.
www.esri.com/events/feduc/index.html

Redlands GIS Week
February 22–26, 2010
in Redlands, California
www.redlandsgisweek.org/

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences
February 23–27, 2010
in San Diego, California
www.acjs.org/pubs/167_668_2915.cfm

International Conference on Data Engineering
March 1–6, 2010
in Long Beach, California
icde2010.org/

National States Geographic Information Council 2010 Midyear Conference
Match 7–10, 2010
in Annapolis, Maryland
www.nsgic.org/events/2010_midyear.cfm

Where 2.0 Conference
March 30–April 1, 2010
in San Jose, California
en.oreilly.com/where2010/

Association of American Geographers
April 14–18, 2010
in Washington, D.C.
www.aag.org annualmeetings/2010/index.htm

CalGIS 2010
April 18–21, 2010
in Huntington Beach, California
www.urisa.org/calgis/info

Navigator 2010
April 28–30, 2010
in Orlando, Florida
www.emergencydispatch.org/NAVIGATOR/index.php

The NIJ Conference 2010
June 14–16, 2010
in Arlington, Virginia
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/events/nij_conference/welcome.htm

ESRI International User Conference
July 12–16, 2010
in San Diego, California
www.esri.com/events/uc/index.html

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