

The Information Game:
Police-Citizen Cooperation in Communities with
Criminal Groups

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Submitted to the Department of Political Science in Partial Fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

Criminal groups—gangs, mafias, and drug cartels, among others—likely cause more deaths than interstate war, insurgency, and terrorism combined. This violence and the lack of accountability for perpetrators present a major challenge to states' central mandates of providing public safety and administering justice. States fall short of their mandates, in part because they struggle to gain cooperation from citizens. This study is about what I call The Information Game: the competition between the police, which want citizens to come forward with information about violence, and criminal groups, which want citizens to stay silent.

I present cycle of silence theory, which posits that collective misperceptions prevent communities from reaching their full potential of police-citizen cooperation. Akin to terrorism, fear generated by criminal group violence makes retaliation appear to be more likely than it is. The violence has the underappreciated but potent second order effect of pushing citizens who are willing to cooperate to hide their disposition from others. Cooperation thus appears to citizens to be less of a norm than it is. I also take new methodological approaches—namely, fielding the first large-scale virtual reality experiment—to test realistically and ethically strategies aimed at promoting cooperation. The results show that providing access to anonymous tip lines, creating awareness of community cooperation norms, and in some circumstances, exposing citizens to police officers of the same ethnicity increase citizen information-sharing with the police.

Employing a multi-method research design, this study draws on original surveys in Baltimore, Maryland (N=650) and Lagos, Nigeria (N=1,025) as well as proprietary survey data of criminal justice experts (N=2,700) and citizens (N=109,000) in 113 countries provided by the World Justice Project. I pair the quantitative analysis with first-hand observation as well as interviews with more than 150 citizens, state authorities, and criminal group affiliates.

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A project of this magnitude with many moving parts requires becoming very

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Introduction

Sitting in a patrol car at a busy West Baltimore intersection, the police officer was describing to me the banalities of his job: too much paperwork, too many “bullshit calls,” and too much waiting for something to happen. That evening, something would happen. Six blocks from us, an apparent routine drug deal ended with the dealer shot and killed. Minutes later, the officer’s radio interrupted our conversation, dispatching him to the scene. There, the car’s patrol lights flashed over a young man laying on the pavement in front of a corner store, which are seemingly ubiquitous in Baltimore’s low-income neighborhoods.

As the first officer to arrive, it meant that he, in police-speak, “owned the scene.” He cleared the area to establish a perimeter around the victim. A group of customers-turned-witnesses huddled in the store as crowds began to amass in the street and patrol cars swarmed to the scene, bringing with them the smell of burning tires. A woman repeated “oh my gawd, oh my gawd, oh my gawd” in shock. Inside the yellow tape of the crime scene, a sergeant stood next to me scanning the assembled crowd. “I bet my whole salary for one year,” he said, “that five people here know who shot him. They know who he’s beefin’ with. They know what’s up.” He lamented, however, that few would come forward.

The sergeant’s lament seemed to play out. A police canvas of the houses around the scene came up empty with residents either politely declining to talk or not answering their doors.

Often, citizens' reluctance to talk about crime in their communities is misattributed to residents not wanting to talk. Through years of fieldwork studying police-citizen cooperation in Baltimore and elsewhere, however, one crucial dynamic stood out to me more than any others: it is not that people do not want to come forward. Rather, they want to but understandably feel constrained from doing so—constrained not just by distrust in the police, as is commonly understood, but also by an intense fear of what the consequences might be if they do.

The climate of fear, perpetuated by criminal groups like Baltimore's drug crews, makes it all the more courageous when witnesses do come forward. At the West Baltimore homicide scene, a mother, who was buying groceries in the store during the shooting, did just that. "I'm tired of this shit. Shit been going on too long," she said to herself as she followed an officer to his patrol car to be taken to the station.

By coming forward, this mother overcame the fear that many in this West Baltimore community feel. But, it not enough for the police to rely on individual acts of courage to get the information they need to address the insecurity and lack of justice that communities with criminal groups endure. Courageous acts, by definition, are uncommon acts. If police, in partnership with community safety advocates, are to bring safety and justice to those communities, they have little choice but to find another way.

Criminal group violence remains a persistent threat to the rule of law in communities around the world. Five times as many people die from homicides—much of them at the hands of criminal groups—than all the deaths from war between countries, civil war, insurgency, and terrorism *combined*. Moreover, state authorities struggle to hold criminal groups accountable for the violence. Police in cities like Baltimore, New Orleans, and Detroit make arrests for just roughly one-third of homicides that take place.¹ The quasi-impunity that criminal groups enjoy is even more striking in

1. "Crime in the United States, Uniform Crime Reports," FBI, 2017, accessed February 19, 2020, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2017/crime-in-the-u.s.-2017>.

the developing world where authorities have fewer resources. Wracked by cartel violence, Mexico, for instance, convicts someone in less than five of every 100 homicides committed in the country.

Police-citizen cooperation is a linchpin for curtailing criminal group activity. Given its importance, police and community safety advocates seek to promote cooperation with citizens but at the same time criminal groups seek to compel their silence in a competition that I call “The Information Game.” In many places, communities fall well short of what citizens themselves want, which leads to the fundamental questions of this study: What constrains citizens from sharing information with the police? And, how can police and community safety advocates promote information-sharing?

CYCLES OF SILENCE, NOT CODES OF SILENCE

When citizens refrain from cooperating with the police, it invites a variety of explanations and sometimes speculation.

One particularly prominent explanation in communities with criminal groups—ranging from loosely-organized streets gangs to hierarchical mafias—is that citizens have adopted so-called “codes of silence.” According to this theory, citizens with information about violence voluntarily choose to remain silent. Even if they had the opportunity to share information without consequences, they would not. It is their culture, their mentality, their way of life to refrain from sharing information with the police, the theory’s proponents argue. Underpinning one strand of the theory is the notion that citizens support criminal groups over the police, because citizens see the criminal groups as advocates and benefactors for their communities.

Code of silence theory is problematic from both a normative and an empirical perspective.

Normatively, the theory is problematic in that it partly shifts blame for violence

away from the state and criminal groups onto citizens themselves. In positing that citizens support criminal groups, the theory enables the state to shirk responsibility for bringing the rule of law. Given that citizens are seen as voluntarily holding back the information needed to address criminal group violence, they are thus seen as contributing to the persistence of said violence. Moreover, the theory implies that criminal groups are generally net benefactors to their communities despite being the source of much of the violence. By pointing to supposed support from communities, the groups can claim that citizens want them and thus accept the violence.

The notion of codes of silence has especially pernicious normative implications in the United States where it has taken on discriminatory undertones. Observers point to “no snitching” codes to explain limited cooperation in predominantly black communities. Likewise, the notion of a code has been used to explain the persistence of the mafia in Italian-American communities. If code of silence theory is to be accepted, when black Americans or Italian-Americans are hurt or die amid criminal group violence, it becomes less the fault of the state or the groups themselves but the people who live in the communities.

Empirically, code of silence theory posits that criminal groups enjoy significantly more support in communities than they in fact do. As I will demonstrate with this study, few citizens believe that the groups provide substantial benefits to their communities. Criminal groups may claim to advocate for the social or political interests of communities, but citizens generally recognize that the groups’ central aim is illicit economic gain. Citizens also view the groups as unreliable security providers and a barrier to economic prosperity. This empirical reality undercuts the proposition that citizens hold back information out of support for the criminal groups.

Contra *codes* of silence theory, I propose what I call *cycles* of silence as a more potent explanation for citizens refraining from sharing information with the police. Cycle of silence theory’s central claim is that levels of police-citizen cooperation in

communities fall below what they would be if criminal group violence did not generate collective misperceptions among citizens.

Along these lines, this study makes three central contributions:

First, the study demonstrates systematically that criminal groups induce silence from communities in part by inflating the perceived risk of police-citizen cooperation. Akin to terrorism, criminal group violence generates an emotional response of fear in citizens, and this fear makes the likelihood of retaliation against cooperators appear greater than it is. That citizens are concerned about retaliation from criminal groups is well recognized by scholars and observers. That criminal groups significantly inflate retaliation risk, as this study shows, is not well recognized. The real and inflated risk makes many citizens inclined to refrain from sharing information with the police.

Second, this study identifies and measures systematically an important second order effect of the violence that has received little attention from observers and scholars. The violence pushes citizens that are willing to cooperate to hide their disposition from others in the community; and, citizens hiding their willingness to share information with the police creates the impression that norms in favor of cooperation are less widespread in communities than they actually are. Citizens in communities with criminal groups, like people generally, look to the behaviors and attitudes of others to decide what is appropriate in a given situation. Thus, the less citizens perceive community cooperation norms exist, the less they are inclined to come forward.

The cycle of silence's self-reinforcing nature presents a particularly potent constraint to cooperation. The chain of events from criminal group violence ultimately leads to lower cooperation in communities. Without information, authorities struggle to contain the violence, which reinforces the inflated retaliation risk. And, so the cycle goes on.

Third, the study identifies strategies that can potentially reverse cycles of silence. Cycle of silence theory points to strategies that increase the perceived safety and

norms of cooperation to boost information-sharing from citizens. Along these lines, I add to a small body of literature to test potentially promising strategies experimentally. I use realistic video vignettes—including a virtual reality vignette—of three strategies: police providing anonymous communication platforms for citizens, community safety advocates creating awareness of others cooperating, and exposing citizens to in-group police officers (i.e., those of the same race or ethnicity). The results indicate that the anonymity and cooperation awareness boosts information-sharing and exposure to officers of the same ethnicity does so in select circumstances.

From a policy perspective, these strategies cannot be treated as substitutes for oft-necessary structural reforms that are needed to build trust between police and communities. The strategies are more like complements to such reforms. With improved cooperation from citizens, police can better address violence and this violence reduction can build trust for citizens that authorities have the capacity and willingness to bring security to their communities.

In this study, I focus on the “why” and the “how” of police-citizen cooperation, which is fundamentally distinct from the “should” of cooperation. That police and community safety advocates can promote cooperation does not necessarily mean that they should do so. Indeed, illegitimate governing regimes could use cooperation to strengthen their grip on power and cooperation potentially puts citizens in harm’s way. These considerations, among others, mean that the ethics of encouraging cooperation is not a given. As I discuss in this study’s conclusion, promoting police-citizen cooperation may be ethical only if certain conditions are met.

In addition to the central contributions, this study also makes a host of smaller but important contributions.

First, it presents evidence undercutting the code of silence theory. The theory permeates popular culture and to some extent policymaking circles, making it particularly important to demonstrate its limited validity. Second, I conduct a case

on criminal groups in Africa, which is an understudied issue on the continent. The preponderance of the political science literature on criminal groups centers on Latin American cases with a dearth of cases from other contexts. Third, I show that even though citizen distrust of the police reduces information-sharing, the police are still seen as the “least bad” security providers and thus cooperation remains viable amid the distrust.

My overall claim is not that cycle of silence theory is the only explanation for limited police-citizen cooperation. Indeed, concerns about citizen lack of trust in the police is a widely understood constraint to cooperation. That trust is widely understood and recognized as a cooperation constraint is reason to look elsewhere to identify what less-recognized constraints could be operating in communities with criminal groups.

Theory, as political scientist John Mearsheimer once described, is like a flashlight that guides the researcher in a dark room. Modifying this analogy, I would suggest that it is more like an ultraviolet light (sometimes called a “black light”) that crime scene detectives use to illuminate key pieces of evidence that cannot be easily seen in regular light. Like an ultraviolet light, theory focuses one’s attention on the key dynamics that help explain what happens and why. In this case, I argue that cycle of silence illuminates heretofore underappreciated dynamics surrounding police-citizen cooperation.

GENERALIZABILITY ACROSS CONTEXTS

My research design takes a multi-method approach that prioritizes what social scientists term “generalizability.” I aim to generate and test a theory on the constraints to police-citizen cooperation and strategies to overcome those constraints that apply in as many communities as possible. In doing so, the goal is to show that cycle of silence

theory and its derivative strategies help explain cooperation dynamics in the types of places I focus on for this study—ethnically or racially diverse urban communities with a criminal group presence.

I prioritize generalizability because communities around the world endure criminal group violence. That criminal groups are a global phenomenon, however, does not mean that one can assume theories and strategies derived from one context necessarily apply in others.

Most studies on policing focus on either economically-developed contexts. Impressive efforts are underway to shift the Western-centric approach to policing studies, notably the forthcoming *Metaketa* on community policing in six developing countries by Graeme Blair and co-authors.² More commonly, theories on police-community relations are created and tested in developed countries and then assumed to extend to developing contexts. Such assumptions however are unwarranted. In their seminal study “In Search of Homo Economicus,” the evolutionary biologist Joseph Henrich and his co-authors show that cultures around the world have widely differing preferences and behaviors in certain situations.³ Those differences could extend to police-community relations dynamics unless shown otherwise.

With this prioritization in mind, I collected data for this study over the course of more than two years of fieldwork, I conducted two original surveys, one in Baltimore, Maryland (N=650) and another in Lagos, Nigeria (N=1,025). Both surveys evaluated issues surrounding police-citizen cooperation, featuring survey experiments using professionally-produced video vignettes. I pair the survey results with interviews of more than 150 citizens, law enforcement officials, and criminal group affiliates across the two cases. My qualitative research also includes extensive first-hand observations such as accompanying dozens of police patrols in Baltimore, Lagos, and elsewhere.

2. Graeme Blair et al., “Meta-Analysis Pre-Analysis Plan: Community Policing *Metaketa*,” 2018,

3. Joseph Henrich et al., “In Search of Homo Economicus: Behavioral Experiments in 15 Small-Scale Societies,” *American Economic Review* 91, no. 2 (2001): 73–78.

Moreover, I analyze proprietary survey data collected by the World Justice Project (WJP) for its Rule of Law Index.⁴ WJP shared with me a survey of more than 2,700 criminal justice experts⁵ as well as a survey of more than 109,000 citizens across 113 countries.⁶

Leveraging this data, I maximize generalizability in three ways.

First, I build cycle of silence theory by drawing on qualitative evidence from my early work in Baltimore and Lagos, analyzing the World Justice Project survey data, employing country-specific data when relevant, and using anecdotal evidence from around the world. This approach means, importantly, that I do not just develop cycle of silence theory solely in the communities where I test my theory. Partially out-of-sample testing in this way is important from a research design perspective given that it helps guard against the theory being “overfit”—that is, specific—to the contexts where it is tested.

Second, I test cycle of silence theory in both Baltimore, an economically-developed context, and Lagos, an economically-developing context. In doing so, I eschew the assumption that the theory applies across both types of environments but rather test that it does so.

By looking at a case in the United States and Nigeria, this study also breaks down subfield boundaries within the political science discipline. The discipline, divided between American politics and comparative politics subfields, creates what I would consider an artificial separation between the study of the United States and other countries from a comparative perspective. Political scientists that study the United States usually do not study other countries and political scientists that study other countries usually do not study the United States.

Third, Baltimore and Lagos are difficult cases in which to promote information-

4. Juan Carlos Botero and Alejandro Ponce, *Measuring the Rule of Law*, SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 1966257 (Rochester, New York: Social Science Research Network, November 30, 2011).

5. *Criminal Justice Qualified Respondents Survey* (World Justice Project, 2017).

6. *General Population Poll* (World Justice Project, 2017).

sharing. Both cities have major gaps in trust between their respective police forces and citizens. If the study tested the strategies in cities with high-levels of trust between police and citizens, it would provide relatively weak evidence that they would work elsewhere. Testing them in low-trust environments provides more confidence that the strategies would work in the types of communities affected by criminal group violence. In other words, if police and community safety advocates can promote cooperation in Baltimore and Lagos, they are more likely to be able to promote it elsewhere.

This study also makes a methodological advance given that it constitutes the first use of virtual reality (VR) in a large-scale survey experiment. The Lagos survey includes an experimental vignette in which respondents witness a street gang fight through 360° video—a lightweight form of virtual reality. VR vignettes mitigate the logistical hurdles and potential ethical concerns that often restrict the scope of randomized controlled trials. And, traditional mediums used in survey experiments which present respondents with text, audio, or two-dimensional video vignettes provide a less immersive environment. With greater immersion, VR vignettes can better elicit emotions, rendering respondents more likely to report attitudes and behaviors that would reflect their actions in real-world scenarios.

PUTTING THE STUDY IN PERSPECTIVE

By focusing on the relationship between police and citizens, this study portrays a particular aspect of life in communities affected by criminal group violence. The study having a clear focus is necessary. The limits of human cognition and the limits of language make it impossible to write a truly comprehensive portrayal of life in these communities. That said, it is worth emphasizing that, even though communities with criminal groups endure violence, the violence does not define them. They have a rich social tapestry; and others who come from the communities have written about that

tapestry with a power and an understanding that I cannot match.

A study that discusses violence risks exoticizing communities by feeding into misinformed stereotypes that they are crime-ridden and hyper-violent. There is no way to guarantee that readers will not misinterpret this work. This concern is particularly pronounced with respect to racial stereotypes, but as I show, the problem of criminal groups does not discriminate by race or ethnicity. In Baltimore, they are active in both white and black communities and in Lagos they are active in Yoruba and Hausa communities, among others. Indeed, criminal groups are active in communities around the world from the Americas to Asia. I see the best guard against misinterpretation is to let those that I speak to for this study speak for themselves. As often as possible I present views with direct quotes and engage in minimal summarization and reinterpretation. Doing so, I believe, provides dimensionality and nuance to the issues discussed.

The violence in communities with criminal groups should not be exoticized; nor, however, should the violence be ignored. Criminal groups take a profound human and economic toll on communities. Ultimately, I hope that by shedding light on police-citizen cooperation, the study can inform efforts by those in communities to improve relations between the two side. The chasm between police and citizens is arguably most wide in communities with criminal groups yet that is where the cooperation is needed most.

Just as one has to be cautious of negative stereotypes of communities, so does one have to be cautious of negative stereotypes of police. Police corruption and malfeasance is a fundamental problem in some municipalities. However, that some officers may have ill-intent does not mean that the ill-intent applies universally, which is often assumed. In some ways, stereotyping police officers based on the worst of those that wear the uniform is little different than stereotyping any group based on the worse of those in that group.

The result is that officers genuinely attempting to fulfill a public safety duty are painted with the same brush as their corrupt colleagues. It is unfair to well-meaning officers, and if they will be painted with the same brush, it takes away an incentive to maintain their higher standard.

The Information Game is about the competition between the police and criminal groups for citizen support, but through the course of fieldwork, it became evident to me that there is greater mutual understanding among the actors than often perceived.

The police want the community to come forward with information but that does not mean that they begrudge citizens who hold back. Even a Baltimore homicide detective explained to a *Baltimore Sun* reporter that, if he was a witness, “It would be hard for me to come forth. I would be hesitant. [...]It’s not that I don’t want to help, but you don’t know what the repercussions are.”⁷ They understand that citizens have to live in their communities and safeguarding their personal well-being is their first priority.

Even between police and criminal groups, there is a mutual respect that exists. Underneath the enmity toward each other, there is also empathy. On one side, gang affiliates recognize that the police are doing their jobs. As one Baltimore dealer put it, the police “have every right” to try to stop him from dealing.⁸ On the other side, police acknowledge that the criminal groups affiliates, especially the younger ones, are often used and manipulated. In Lagos, police recognize that criminal kingpins employ “area boy” street gangs for violence when it is convenient for the kingpins and leave the area boys to fend for themselves when it is not.

Social scientists like myself tend to, either implicitly or explicitly, portray ourselves

7. Justin George, “Shoot to kill: some Baltimore neighborhoods condemned to endure a shocking degree of violence,” *Baltimore Sun*, October 6, 2016, accessed October 9, 2016, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/investigations/bal-shoot-to-kill-part-two-story.html>.

8. BWI196 2017. The identity of interviewees—except for public figures—are anonymized to maintain minimal risk to subjects. Each interviewee is assigned a six-digit code, which includes the International Air Transport Association code for the city’s nearest airport—for example, “BWI” for Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport—combined with a randomly generated three-digit number. Citations also include the year that the interview took place.

as dispassionate observers by rarely expressing personal sentiments in our work. This portrayal, in some respects, is a fiction. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, not to develop sympathies through the course of research. I find this reality especially true with the type of embedded fieldwork that I conducted for this study. Thus, I will state my perspective upfront.

For me, I hold sympathies for those police officers that genuinely attempt to bring public safety to communities despite, in some cases, seemingly suffocating bureaucracies and a dearth of resources. I even hold sympathies for many criminal group affiliates given that they are often pushed into criminality by structural circumstances and manipulated by others.

My greatest sympathies, however, lie with the citizens who live in communities afflicted with criminal group violence. Nothing that I write in this study should be taken as casting judgement on citizens' decisions on cooperation. Nor, should it be taken as a recommendation on what citizens should or should not do. Those decisions are for citizens themselves—and for citizens alone—to make.

ROADMAP

This study proceeds in eight chapters.

In Part I on Theory, Chapter 1 looks at the prevalence of criminal group violence and the importance of police-citizen cooperation. I lay out the contours of The Information Game including the main players, criminal groups and police. The police, along with community safety advocates, seek to encourage citizens to come forward with information to address the violence and bring perpetrators to justice. The criminal groups seek to have citizens hold back what they see and know from authorities.

Chapter 2 lays out the threshold framework for explaining cooperation in commu-

nities. In the chapter, I lay out the cycle of silence theory, which posits that inflated retaliation risk and the underestimation of community cooperation norms reduce citizens' willingness to come forward. I also lay out the shortcomings of code of silence theory to explain a lack of cooperation, highlighting that communities often hold antipathy toward criminal groups.

Chapter 3 outlines strategies that police and community safety advocates can employ to reverse the cycle of silence. I focus on three strategies aimed at promoting cooperation: facilitating cooperator anonymity, creating awareness of others cooperating, and exposing citizens to in-group police officers (i.e., the same race or ethnicity). In the chapter, I describe the study's empirical strategy, which pairs original survey data with in-depth interviews and first-hand observation. The chapter situates Lagos and Baltimore relative to each other, highlighting their contrast in levels of economic development while at the same time constituting difficult cases for promoting cooperation due to deep distrust of the police.

In Part II on Baltimore, Chapter 4 describes how The Information Game plays out between the Baltimore Police Department and drug crews. With an original survey and qualitative evidence, I show that a climate of fear leads residents in Baltimore's high-crime communities to overestimate retaliation risk and underestimate others' willingness to cooperate. The end result is that, despite the potential for greater cooperation in absence of the collective misperceptions, fewer people share information than otherwise would. I further provide evidence that there is limited support for the theory that a "no snitching" code constrains cooperation.

Chapter 5 lays out the results of a survey experiment in Baltimore testing cooperation strategies. The experiment uses randomly-varied local news reports to test the three cooperation promotion strategies: rendering a tip line anonymous, creating awareness of others cooperating, and exposing individuals to police officers of the same race. The results point to increases in information-sharing for the anonymity

and cooperation awareness strategies. Importantly, the experiment was conducted after Freddie Gray’s death in police custody, which made Baltimore a particularly difficult case in which to promote cooperation.

In Part III, I turn to Lagos to test the extent to which the theory and findings apply in an economically-developing context. Chapter 6 describes The Information Game in the city between the Nigeria Police Force and “area boy” crews. Using an original survey of more than 1,000 shopkeepers in Lagos’s markets, I show that area boy violence leads Lagosians to overestimate retaliation likelihood and underestimate community cooperation norms, which in turn reduces information-sharing.

Chapter 7 uses a virtual reality vignette to test strategies for promoting cooperation in Lagos. I provide evidence that police and community safety advocates can promote information-sharing with anonymity and cooperation awareness as well as, among respondents who *ex ante* trust the police, exposure to co-ethnic officers. The use of virtual reality allows for conducting the tests in a more immersive manner than traditional survey experiments and avoid the logistical and ethical hurdles that sometimes accompany real-world interventions.

Finally, the study’s conclusion discusses the results from Baltimore and Lagos together. I wrestle with the normative considerations of under what conditions, if any, are police and advocates justified in encouraging cooperation from citizens. The conclusion also discusses policy implications that could potentially be implemented at a local-level as well as lays out a number of questions for further research.

The Online Appendix includes additional details and expanded analysis.

Part I

Theory

Chapter 1

The Information Game

War is war. It doesn't matter if you're in Vietnam or Southie.

Patrick Nee, leader of South Boston's Mullen Gang¹

Violence at the hands of criminal groups does not receive the attention from the media or political science scholars that wars, terrorism, and other forms of political violence does. According to the Media Cloud database, which includes 71 million articles, English-language news sites around the world publish more than three stories mentioning armed conflict for every one story mentioning criminal groups.² The relative inattention to criminal groups is not limited to the media. Indeed, political scientist Nicholas Barnes finds that top academic political science journals published just one article on organized crime for every forty-two articles on political violence.³

The imbalance between the study of dynamics surrounding criminal and political

1. Patrick Nee, Richard Farrell, and Michael Blythe, *A Criminal and an Irishman: The Inside Story of the Boston Mob-IRA Connection* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Steerforth, March 14, 2006).

2. Using Media Cloud, I identify 545,391 articles mentioning gangs, mafia, and organized crime and 2,032,830 articles mentioning armed conflict, insurgency, and terrorism. See (“Media Cloud,” MIT Center for Civic Media and Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society, 2019, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://mediacloud.org>).

3. Nicholas Barnes, “Criminal Politics: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Organized Crime, Politics, and Violence,” *Perspectives on Politics* 15, no. 4 (2017): 967–987. Barnes reviews articles published between 2000 and 2016, identifying just nineteen articles on organized crime compared to 799 articles on political violence.

violence belies the scale of the impact that criminal groups have. As I detail in this chapter, more than five times as many people die from homicides as they do from interstate war, civil war, insurgency, and terrorism *combined*.

With this study, I contribute to our understanding of the dynamics surrounding violence committed by criminal groups. In doing so, I focus on a critical mechanism that shapes if and how such violence persists, the state's ability (or lack thereof) to gain cooperation from citizens. Authorities rely on information from citizens residing in communities hit by criminal group violence. The information is necessary to intervene in incidents before they happen and it is necessary to identify, locate, and arrest perpetrators after the incidents occur. Given the value of information, the police attempt to gain cooperation from citizens, but just as much, if not more so, criminal groups attempt to incentivize citizens to remain silent.

This competition between the police and criminal groups over citizen cooperation is The Information Game. Without winning The Information Game, the state and community safety advocates likely will continue struggling to address the criminal group violence that saddles communities from São Paulo's *favelas* to Paris's *banlieues*.

This study is built on a foundation of relevant literature from political science, sociology, and psychology. In lieu of a single literature review, I draw on relevant literatures throughout the study. Frequent reference to the literature in this way helps demarcate between, on the one hand, aspects of my theory and empirics that are pre-established and, on the other hand, aspects that are original to this study. With this in mind, it is worth highlighting at the outset that, even though political science has focused on political violence, the discipline has far from ignored criminal group violence and police-citizen cooperation altogether. Thus, I begin with a brief overview of the political science scholarship on the three central components of this study: criminal groups, police, and citizen cooperation with state authorities.

Political scientists have looked at the roots of criminal group governance and vio-

lence. David Skarbek documents how prison gangs wield influence not just in prisons but also in communities.⁴ Angelica Duran-Martinez, Benjamin Lessing, Guillermo Trejo, and Sandra Ley, among others, identify factors associated criminal group violence in Latin America.⁵ A smaller subset of the political science work on organized crime takes an international perspective, with for instance Peter Andreas evaluating cross-border smuggling in the United States and efforts to curtail it.⁶

Similar to the limited study of criminal group violence, political science has only recently turned to the study of state responses to the violence. Micheal Crabtree finds that political science journals publish roughly forty articles per year on policing, and few of those articles make it into the discipline's top journals.⁷ Joe Soss and Vesla Weaver note that political science's American politics subfield "has been diverted from serious political analysis of policing and related criminal justice operations by its steady focus" on national electoral politics and policy.⁸ Nonetheless, Americanist literature on policing and incarceration is growing with foundational works such as those by Ariel White who connects brief incarceration spells to reduced voting.⁹

As American politics scholars turn to the study of policing so are comparative politics scholars. Policing studies in this subfield often evaluate the effectiveness of

4. David Skarbek, "Governance and Prison Gangs," *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 4 (2011): 702–716; David Skarbek, *The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System* (New York: Oxford University Press, July 1, 2014); David Skarbek, "Covenants without the Sword? Comparing Prison Self-Governance Globally," *American Political Science Review* 110, no. 4 (2016): 845–862.

5. Angélica Durán-Martínez, *The Politics of Drug Violence: Criminals, Cops and Politicians in Colombia and Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, January 12, 2018); Benjamin Lessing, "Logics of Violence in Criminal War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 8 (2015): 1486–1516; Guillermo Trejo and Sandra Ley, "Why Did Drug Cartels Go to War in Mexico? Subnational Party Alternation, the Breakdown of Criminal Protection, and the Onset of Large-Scale Violence," *Comparative Political Studies* 51, no. 7 (2018): 900–937.

6. Peter Andreas, *Smuggler Nation: How Illicit Trade Made America* (New York: Oxford University Press, June 1, 2014).

7. Michael Crabtree, "Introduction: The Comparative Politics of Policing," *Comparative Politics Newsletter*, 2018.

8. Joe Soss and Vesla Weaver, "Police Are Our Government: Politics, Political Science, and the Policing of Race–Class Subjugated Communities," *Annual Review of Political Science* 20, no. 1 (2017): p. 3.

9. Ariel White, "Misdemeanor Disenfranchisement? The Demobilizing Effects of Brief Jail Spells on Potential Voters," *American Political Science Review* 113, no. 2 (2019): 311–324.

interventions in reducing violence including Lessing’s work on state-led crackdowns in Latin American drug wars,¹⁰ Trejo and co-authors on the effect of transitional justice processes,¹¹ Enrique Arias and Mark Ungar’s study of Latin American community policing programs,¹² Christopher Blattman and co-authors on police patrols in Bogotá, Colombia,¹³ and Blattman’s work on cognitive behavioral therapy for “criminally-engaged men” in Liberia.¹⁴

A smaller subset of studies look at how these interventions affect other rule of law outcomes. Gustavo Flores-Macias and Jessica Zarkin measure the deleterious consequence of law enforcement militarization on state capacity and human rights.¹⁵ In Liberia, Robert Blair and co-authors evaluate the effect of “confidence patrols” showing that the patrols significantly increase crime reporting,¹⁶ and similarly Sabrina Karim finds that household visits from police officers increases citizen preference for the police as security providers.¹⁷ In arguably the most ambitious effort to-date, the Community Policing Metaketa Project, led by twenty-four scholars, evaluates the effect of policing interventions on crime levels, crime reporting and several other outcomes across six economically-developing countries.¹⁸

10. Benjamin Lessing, *Making Peace in Drug Wars: Crackdowns and Cartels in Latin America* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

11. Guillermo Trejo, Juan Albarracín, and Lucía Tiscornia, “Breaking state impunity in post-authoritarian regimes: Why transitional justice processes deter criminal violence in new democracies,” *Journal of Peace Research* 55, no. 6 (2018): 787–809.

12. Enrique D. Arias and Mark Ungar, “Community policing and Latin America’s citizen security crisis,” *Comparative Politics* 41, no. 4 (2009): 409–429.

13. Christopher Blattman et al., “The impact of hotspot policing and municipal services on crime: Experimental evidence from Bogotá” (April 7, 2016).

14. Christopher Blattman, Julian C. Jamison, and Margaret Sheridan, “Reducing crime and violence: Experimental evidence from cognitive behavioral therapy in Liberia,” *American Economic Review* 107, no. 4 (2017): 1165–1206.

15. Gustavo A. Flores-Macías and Jessica Zarkin, “The Militarization of Law Enforcement: Evidence from Latin America,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 2019, 1–20; Gustavo Flores-Macías, “The Consequences of Militarizing Anti-Drug Efforts for State Capacity in Latin America: Evidence from Mexico,” *Comparative Politics* 51, no. 1 (2018): 1–20.

16. Robert A. Blair, Sabrina M. Karim, and Benjamin S. Morse, “Establishing the Rule of Law in Weak and War-torn States: Evidence from a Field Experiment with the Liberian National Police,” *American Political Science Review*, 2019, 17.

17. Sabrina Karim, “Relational State Building in Areas of Limited Statehood: Experimental Evidence on the Attitudes of the Police,” *American Political Science Review*, 2020, 1–16.

18. Blair et al., “Meta-Analysis Pre-Analysis Plan: Community Policing Metaketa.”

More broadly, political science’s state-building literature speaks to why citizens do or do not cooperate with state authorities. To explain variation in citizen-state cooperation, some scholars point to broad historical processes including war as Charles Tilly¹⁹ and Jeffrey Herbst²⁰ have done or colonization as Joel Migdal has done.²¹ These works are primarily concerned with variation in cooperation across countries and thus make it difficult to use them to draw inferences about differences in cooperation at the community-level as I hope to do in this study. Other state-building literature, most notably Margaret Levi on taxation, drills down to individual-level cooperation decisions, but do not consider the role of third-party actors in influencing those decisions.²² More recent state-building scholarship evaluates how third-parties establish themselves where the state has a limited capacity to compete for control with third-parties.²³

By focusing on police-citizen cooperation in communities with criminal groups, my study considers the role of a third-party actor that aims to prevent citizen cooperation. Thus, the literature on how states gain and lose citizen support in political conflicts is highly relevant. Political scientists have looked at such competition in many different contexts including Timur Kuran with respect to protest movements,²⁴ Roger Petersen with respect to political resistance,²⁵ as well as Stathis Kalyvas,²⁶

19. Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in *Bringing the State Back In*, eds. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169–191.

20. Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, March 2000).

21. Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

22. Margaret Levi, *Of Rule and Revenue* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1989).

23. Thomas Risse and Eric Stollenwerk, “Legitimacy in Areas of Limited Statehood,” eprint: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-041916-023610>, *Annual Review of Political Science* 21, no. 1 (2018): 403–418.

24. Timur Kuran, *Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997).

25. Roger D. Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

26. Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, May 1, 2006).

Eli Berman and co-authors²⁷ and Andrew Shaver and Jacob Shapiro²⁸ with respect to civil war and insurgency. This literature helps inform my study to the extent to which people, caught amid conflict, have similar emotional and behavioral reactions. Importantly, however, one has to consider the difference between features of criminal and political competition with the state to understand police-citizen cooperation decisions in communities with criminal groups.²⁹

Building on the existing scholarship, my study aims to shed light on the constraints to, and strategies for promoting, police-citizen cooperation in communities faced with criminal group violence—arguably, where such cooperation is needed most.

This chapter proceeds in four sections.

Section 1.1 compares the relative intensity and widespread nature of criminal group violence. Criminal groups are a major driver of homicides in communities in both economically-developed countries as well as developing countries. Compounding the problem of violence, as discussed in the section, is that the authorities struggle to hold perpetrators accountable. Often, criminal groups “get away with murder,” which perpetuates further violence and leaves a vacuum of justice for victims.

Section 1.2 discusses the importance of information from citizens in preventing violence and holding criminal groups accountable. Citizens are often exposed to criminal group violence given that the violence is geographically concentrated, open and rapidly escalates. And, police-citizen cooperation plays a central role in addressing it given that police rely on information from citizens to intervene in incidents before they happen and identify, locate, and arrest perpetrators after they happen.

Section 1.3 introduces The Information Game, the competition between crimi-

27. Eli Berman et al., *Small Wars, Big Data: The Information Revolution in Modern Conflict* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, June 12, 2018).

28. Andrew Shaver and Jacob N. Shapiro, “The Effect of Civilian Casualties on Wartime Information: Evidence from the Iraq War” (HiCN Working Paper 210, February 2016).

29. On the differences, see for example Stathis N. Kalyvas, “How Civil Wars Help Explain Organized Crime—and How They Do Not,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 8 (2015): 1517–1540.

nal groups and police for cooperation from citizens. In communities with criminal groups, citizens have the information; the police want them to share it; and, criminal groups want them to hold back what they know. In this section, I define criminal groups as associations of individuals that use violence, or the threat of violence, for illicit economic gain. The key distinguishing feature between criminal groups and state authorities, I argue, is legitimacy—that is, the consent of citizens to the state’s authority.

Section 1.4 discusses the consequences of criminal group violence. The violence has a severe impact on communities ranging from the deaths of innocent bystanders to the blunting of socio-economic mobility for children. That criminal groups engage in violence and do so with quasi-impunity from state sanction undermines central *raison d’être* of the state to provide public safety and justice. Furthermore, that criminal groups prevent citizens from cooperating with the police erodes the state’s authority.

1.1. CRIMINAL GROUP VIOLENCE

To gauge the relative impact of criminal group violence and political violence, I compare the number of deaths. Deaths are far from the universe of violence that criminal groups perpetuate. What journalist and author Jill Leovy calls “almosticide,” non-fatal shootings and assaults, are even more common;³⁰ and, criminal groups engage in a wide variety of other activity underpinned by violence or the threat thereof such as extortion, kidnapping, sexual assault, labor racketeering, and human trafficking.

Deaths provide a useful metric for comparison for three reasons. First, they are arguably the most severe consequence of violent acts, making them particular important to consider. Second, killings occur in both political and criminal violence,

30. Jill Leovy, *Ghettoside: A True Story of Murder in America* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, October 27, 2015).

which provides a common benchmark to compare the relative consequences of each category. Third, violence data are notoriously unreliable, but deaths are likely the most reliable metric recorded by authorities.

Figure 1.1 shows the average number of deaths per year from homicides³¹ relative to interstate war,³² terrorism,³³ and intrastate conflict (i.e., civil war and insurgency)³⁴ for each continent.³⁵ Annually between 2003 and 2015, there were on average about 290,000 homicides, 42,000 deaths from intrastate conflict, 15,000 deaths from terrorism, and 700 deaths from interstate war. In other words, there are five times as many homicides around the world each year as there are deaths from all forms of political violence combined.

Moreover, as Figure 1.1 demonstrates, homicides are more widespread. Whereas the political violence is concentrated in particular regions, namely the Middle East and North Africa as well as South Asia, homicides are a global phenomenon. I calculate a Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) score to demonstrate this contrast. The HHI, in this application, indicates the level of geographic concentration of a given violence type with possible values ranging from 0 to 10,000. Higher HHI scores represent high geographic concentration with 10,000 indicating that a violence type has a 100% concentration in a region.³⁶ With an HHI score of 2,162, homicides have a score of less than half the political violence types, which average score of 5,088,

31. “Intentional homicide, counts and rates per 100,000 population,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017, accessed September 13, 2017, <https://www.unodc.org/gsh/en/data.html>.

32. Therése Petterson, Stina Högladh, and Magnus Öberg, “Organized violence, 1989–2018 and peace agreements,” *Journal of Peace Research* 56, no. 4 (2019): 589–603.

33. “Global Terrorism Database,” Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2018, accessed November 22, 2018, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>.

34. Petterson, Högladh, and Öberg, “Organized violence, 1989–2018 and peace agreements.”

35. The data are from 2003 to 2015, the years with available estimates of deaths in all categories. Note that the datasets counting terrorism and intrastate conflict likely count deaths from the same event. That there is likely double-counting in the non-homicide categories reinforces the central argument that deaths from homicides greatly outnumber deaths from political violence.

36. For more on the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index, see Stephen A. Rhoades, “The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index Note,” *Federal Reserve Bulletin* 79, no. 3 (1993): 188–189. Among other applications, anti-trust regulators in the United States use HHIs to evaluate the market share of firms. See for example Charles R. Laine, “The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index: A Concentration Measure Taking the Consumer’s Point of View,” *The Antitrust Bulletin* 40, no. 2 (1995): 423–432.

indicating that criminal group violence is more than twice as geographically diffuse.

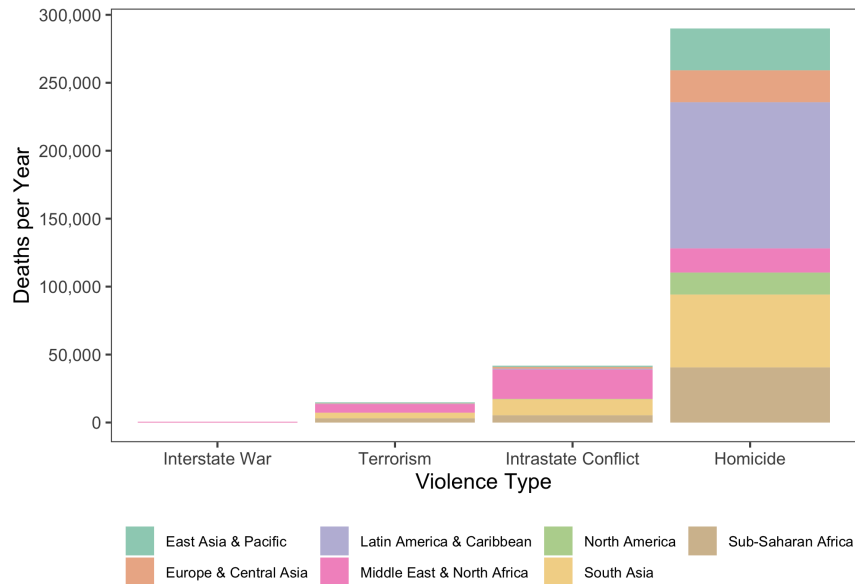


Figure 1.1: Average Annual Deaths by Violence Type

Average annual deaths between 2003 and 2015 from homicides outpace the deaths from all forms of political violence fivefold—interstate war, intrastate conflict, and terrorism. Thus, if just one-fifth of the homicides were the result of criminal group violence, they would equal the number of deaths from interstate war, intrastate conflict, and terrorism combined. *Sources:* Homicides: “Intentional homicide, counts and rates per 100,000 population,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017, accessed September 13, 2017, <https://www.unodc.org/gsh/en/data.html>; Interstate and intrastate conflict: Therése Pettersson, Stina Högladh, and Magnus Öberg, “Organized violence, 1989–2018 and peace agreements,” *Journal of Peace Research* 56, no. 4 (2019): 589–603; Terrorism: “Global Terrorism Database,” Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2018, accessed November 22, 2018, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>.

1.1.1 Criminal Groups and Homicide

How much do criminal groups account for homicides? Only sparse data exist that directly measures the proportion of homicide that is related to criminal group violence. The sparsity of data is due in part to gaps in collection by authorities and in part due to, as discussed in Section 1.3.1, disagreements over what constitutes a criminal group. That said, the statistics above reveal that just one-fifth of recorded homicides would have to be related to criminal groups in order for the number of deaths to be

equal to that of all forms of political violence.³⁷ Correlational analyses—paired with qualitative evidence—suggests strongly that criminal groups account for at least that proportion of homicides, if not substantially more.

Homicides rates are highest in countries, as the world map in Figure 1.2 indicates, with a well-known criminal group presence.³⁸ The three countries with the highest homicide rates—El Salvador, Jamaica, and Venezuela—have prevalent gang problems. El Salvador is home to the notorious *maras* (gangs) Barrio 18 (18th Street) and Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13). Venezuela’s economic crisis has given rise to so-called *megabandas* (mega-gangs) with more than 100 affiliates.³⁹ Jamaica, for its part, has a constellation of gangs, known locally as *posses*, that wield significant influence, especially in the government-constructed garrison communities of the country’s capital Kingston.

To estimate the relationship between homicides and criminal groups, I leverage a survey of 2,700 criminal justice experts in 113 countries conducted by the World Justice Project (WJP).⁴⁰ With the data, I create a composite indicator criminal organization power in the countries using five variables rated by the experts: (1) the level of criminal organization influence with government officials, (2) the level of criminal organization influence with police, (3) the likelihood that police accept bribes from criminal organizations, (4) the likelihood that those police who accept bribes are not held accountable, and (5) the likelihood that criminal organizations or

37. Political scientist Nicholas Barnes comes to a similar conclusion, finding that deaths due to criminal organizations outpace deaths from direct conflict, relying on data from the Geneva Declaration report. See Barnes, “Criminal Politics.”

38. Homicide data are from the Igarapé Institute’s Homicide Monitor. I use the data for the most recent available year for each country. See “Homicide Monitor,” Igarapé Institute, 2018, accessed November 21, 2018, <https://homicide.igarape.org.br>.

39. James Bargent, “Mega-Gangs’: The Latest Criminal Collective in Venezuela,” InSight Crime, March 27, 2017, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/brief/mega-gangs-latest-collective-venezuela-organized-crime>.

40. *Criminal Justice Qualified Respondents Survey*. The data, which underlies WJP’s Rule of Law Index, was provided to me for this project. For more on the survey methodology, see Botero and Ponce, *Measuring the Rule of Law*.

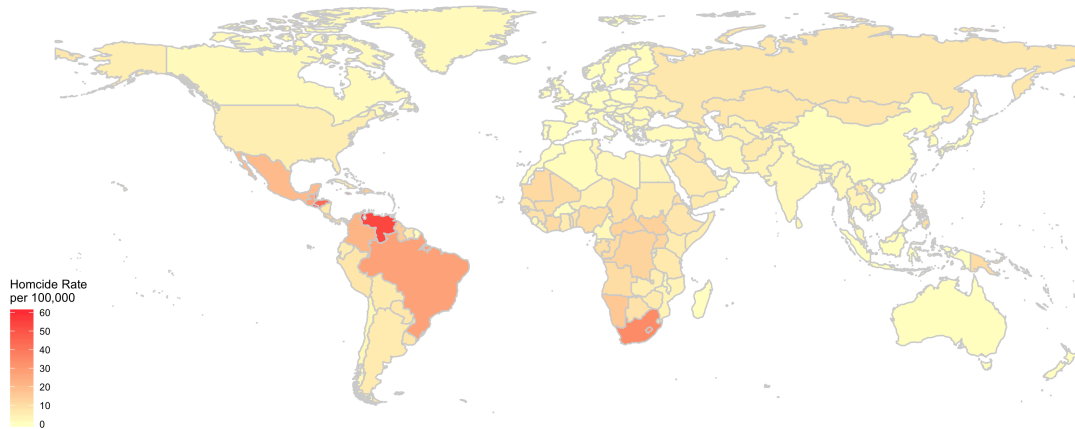


Figure 1.2: Homicide Rates Worldwide

Countries known to have a strong criminal group presence—namely El Salvador, Jamaica, and Venezuela—have the highest homicide rates. *Source:* “Homicide Monitor,” Igarapé Institute, 2018, accessed November 21, 2018, <https://homicide.igarape.org.br>.

police threaten journalists.⁴¹

I standardize and combine the variables into a single score using inverse-covariance weighting; with this procedure, variables that are least correlated with the others have the most influence on scores, because they provide the most new information to the index.⁴² In countries that score zero on the index, criminal organizations have an “average” level of influence. Countries that score one or two standard deviations below the average have a “low” and “very low” influence, respectively; vice versa, one or two deviations above the average indicate “high” and “very high” influence.

The result, displayed in Figure 1.3, compares countries’ criminal organization power with their homicide rates. The size of the points indicate total number of homicides and the color of the points indicate region. As one might expect, regions such as Europe generally have both low criminal group influence and low homicides; whereas a cluster of Latin American countries have high homicide rates along with

41. Of the 113 surveyed countries, 110 countries have data on all variables in the index. Countries with missing data are dropped from the index.

42. Michael L. Anderson, “Multiple Inference and Gender Differences in the Effects of Early Intervention: A Reevaluation of the Abecedarian, Perry Preschool, and Early Training Projects,” *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 103, no. 484 (2008): 1481–1495.

high criminal group influence. In all, the upward sloping trend line signifies a strong positive association between criminal groups and homicides.

A simple multivariate regression model—controlling for government regime type, gross domestic product, and infant mortality—suggests that the criminal group presence at least partially drives the trend rather than country characteristics. According to the model, a country with one standard deviation higher rating of criminal influence is associated with 38% ($p < 0.01$) more homicides. To put it in substantive terms, the analysis predicts that a country where criminal groups have a high amount of power—say, Lebanon—has 38% more homicides than a country where criminal organizations have an average amount of power—say, Malaysia.⁴³

For the select few countries with public data categorizing the motives, victims, and perpetrators of homicides, the data point to criminal group involvement. In Jamaica, which has the second highest homicide rate globally, an estimated 44% of murders are gang-related with another 40% of murders related to robbery and other types of criminal activity that plausibly involve gangs.⁴⁴ And, if anything, government data attributing violence to criminal groups likely underreport the extent of violence related to criminal groups, given that to do so requires undertaking the sometimes laborious process of establishing evidence-based ties between criminal organizations and the suspect or victim.

That homicides tend to spike in countries when criminal groups engage in conflict is further evidence of the extent to which they drive homicides. In what journalist and author Ioan Grillo terms a “cocaine-fueled holocaust,” drug-related violence in Mexico claimed an estimated 83,000 lives between 2007 and 2014.⁴⁵ To put the death

43. The models use robust standard errors as well as regional “fixed effects” to consider the influence of criminal groups within regions. Without control variables, a one standard deviation increase in the criminal influence rating is associated with a 62% ($p < 0.01$) increase in homicides.

44. *Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends, Contexts, Data* (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, March 2014).

45. Ioan Grillo, *Gangster Warlords: Drug Dollars, Killing Fields, and the New Politics of Latin America* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, January 19, 2016), p. 12.

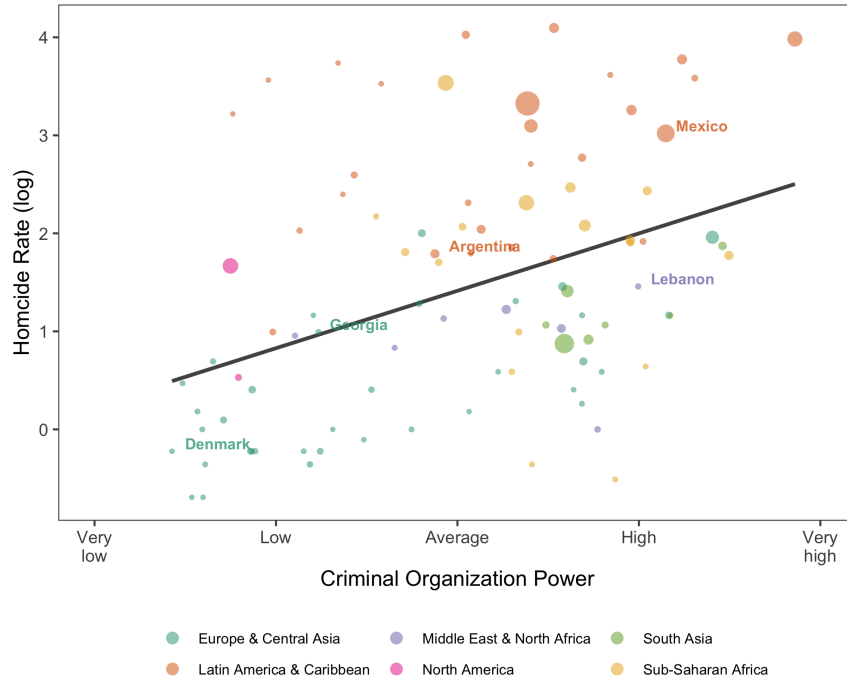


Figure 1.3: Criminal Organization Power and Homicide Rates

Homicides are associated with the presence of criminal groups. The size of the points represent the total number of homicides in a given country. *Source:* Criminal organization power: *Criminal Justice Qualified Respondents Survey* (World Justice Project, 2017); Homicide rate: “Homicide Monitor,” Igarapé Institute, 2018, accessed November 21, 2018, <https://homicide.igarape.org.br>.

toll in perspective, during this same time period, terrorist attacks are believed to have killed 2,868 people in all of North America and Europe.⁴⁶

Criminal group violence is not limited to developing contexts. St. Louis, Missouri, for instance, has a higher per capita murder rate than Kingston, Jamaica and Cape Town, South Africa. St. Louis is by no means anomalous; in the United States, Baltimore, Detroit, and New Orleans all rank among the world’s fifty most deadly cities.⁴⁷ According to 2012 U.S. Department of Justice assessment, 86% of major U.S. cities have a gang presence.⁴⁸ Much of the violence can be attributed to their

46. “Global Terrorism Database.”

47. “Los Cabos, la ciudad más violenta del mundo; Caracas segunda y Acapulco tercera,” Seguridad, Justicia y Paz, 2018, accessed April 5, 2019, <http://www.seguridadjusticiaypaz.org.mx/ranking-de-ciudades-2017>.

48. *National Youth Gang Survey* (National Gang Center, 2012).

activity with, for instance, Chicago’s police department estimating that 85% of the city’s gun murders are gang-related.⁴⁹ Moreover, 41% of shooting homicide victims from a Chicago community were from a social network that comprised just 4% of the community’s population—further evidence that group-based dynamics at least in part drive the violence.⁵⁰

1.1.2 Quasi-Impunity for Violence

State authorities struggle to hold criminal groups accountable for the violence that they perpetrate. This lack of accountability increases violence mainly through two mechanisms. For one, prospective perpetrators are more likely to engage in criminal activity if they are unlikely to be punished for it. The economist Gary Becker famously theorized that an increased probability of punishment is a central facet of crime reduction. The probability of getting caught deters those considering criminal activity more than the severity of the punishment that one receives once caught.⁵¹ The lack of accountability also incentivizes extra-legal retribution. The family, friends, and associates of a victim are more inclined to take “matters into their own hands” or support vigilante justice if the state itself cannot bring perpetrators to account.⁵²

Homicides involving criminal groups are particularly difficult to solve. A major report attempting to understand the United States’ declining homicide “clearance rate”—essentially, a measure of the proportion of murders that the police solve—

49. James Bueermann and Thomas Manger, *Reducing Violent Crime in American Cities* (Police Foundation and Major Cities Chiefs Association, 2016).

50. Andrew V. Papachristos and Christopher Wildeman, “Network Exposure and Homicide Victimization in an African American Community,” *American Journal of Public Health* 104, no. 1 (2014): 143–150.

51. Gary S. Becker, “Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach,” in *Essays in the economics of crime and punishment*, eds. Gary S. Becker and William M. Landes (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1974). See also Murat C. Mungan, “The certainty versus the severity of punishment, repeat offenders, and stigmatization,” *Economics Letters* 150 (January 1, 2017): 126–129.

52. Nicole E. Haas, Jan W. de Keijser, and Gerben J. N. Bruinsma, “Public support for vigilantism, confidence in police and police responsiveness,” *Policing and Society* 24, no. 2 (2014): 224–241; Benjamin Sherman Morse, “Policing and the Rule of Law in Weak States: Evidence from Liberia” (Doctoral Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2019).

highlights that murders “involving drugs and gangs” are the most difficult type of killing to solve by a wide margin.⁵³ In some respects, the circumstances surrounding the violence drive these differences. Intimate partner and family killings, for instance, by definition have a narrower set of suspects linked to the victim. They also are generally crimes of passion in which the perpetrators take limited steps to hide their action. In contrast, criminal group homicides are more likely—albeit, not exclusively—to be premeditated with perpetrators that do not necessarily have known ties to the victim.

Quasi-impunity is common in countries wracked by criminal group violence. In Trinidad and Tobago, which has a persistent gang problem, police failed to solve 83% of the country’s 2018 murder cases.⁵⁴ Similarly, according to the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, the impunity rate in the country surpasses 90%.⁵⁵ Perhaps most startlingly are the lack of homicide convictions in Mexico, Latin America’s second largest country. Between 2010 and 2016, nobody has been charged for an estimated 95% of the murders that took place in the country, according to Mexico’s central statistics bureau.⁵⁶ In some Mexican states, as shown in Figure 1.4, essentially no homicides are solved. Take, for instance, the northwestern state of Sinaloa—seat of the eponymous drug cartel formerly headed by Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán. In 2012, more than 99% of Sinaloa’s murders went without arrests of suspects.⁵⁷

To evaluate the relationship between criminal groups and impunity, I leverage data

53. Thomas Hargrove, Elizabeth Lucas, and Isaac Wolf, *Murder Mysteries* (Scripps Howard, 2010), p. 22.

54. Chris Dalby and Camilo Carranza, “InSight Crime’s 2018 Homicide Round-Up,” InSight Crime, January 22, 2019, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/insight-crime-2018-homicide-roundup>.

55. *Sistema de medición de la impunidad en Guatemala* (Comisión Internacional contra la Impunidad en Guatemala, 2015).

56. Angel Arturo, Paris Martinez, and Daniela Rea, “Solving a Murder in Mexico is the Exception, Not the Rule,” Animal Politico, 2017, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.animalpolitico.com/kill-murder-mexico/homicides-unpunished-mexico.php>.

57. Roberto A. Ferdman, “98% of murders in Mexico last year went unsolved,” Quartz, July 18, 2013, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://qz.com/105952/98-of-murders-in-mexico-last-year-went-unsolved>.

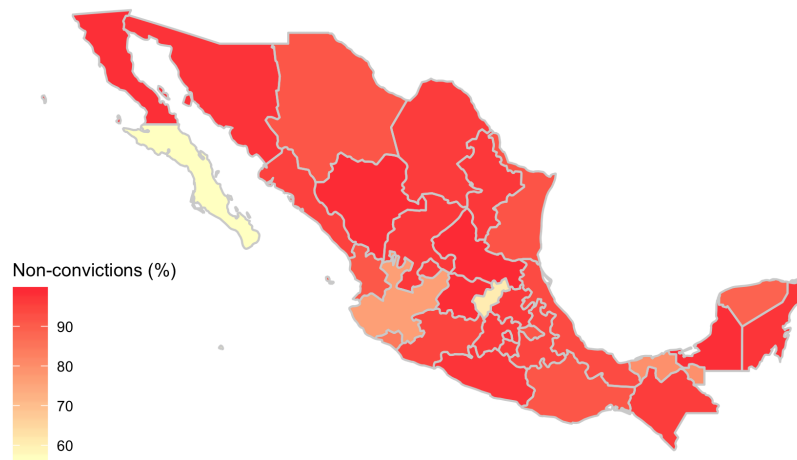


Figure 1.4: Percent of Homicides without Convictions in Mexican States

Mexico, which has experienced intense cartel violence, struggles to convict perpetrators of homicides. Many Mexican states fail to convict a perpetrator in more than 90% of cases. *Source:* Angel Arturo, Paris Martinez, and Daniela Rea, “Solving a Murder in Mexico is the Exception, Not the Rule,” *Animal Politico*, 2017, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.animalpolitico.com/kill-murder-mexico/homicides-unpunished-mexico.php>.

on conviction rates from fifty-one countries reported to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).⁵⁸ From the data, I calculate the homicide-to-conviction ratios in each country and compare it to the measure of criminal organization power.⁵⁹ Using the same control variables as the model with homicides as the outcome, a multivariate regression shows the higher the levels of criminal organization power, the fewer perpetrators the state convicts. One standard deviation greater criminal organization power—for example, moving from Senegal where groups have average

^{58.} *Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends, Contexts, Data.*

^{59.} The homicide-to-conviction ratio is calculated by dividing the average number of individuals convicted for homicide by the average number of homicides between 2011 and 2015 in countries with a population of greater than one million that have made the data available. Convictions include convictions for homicides that took place prior to the reporting period and thus some countries have a conviction-to-homicide ratio of greater than one. I restrict the sample to countries with a population of over one million. I also the observations from the United States and the Turkey due to reliability concerns in the UNODC dataset.

power to Mexico where groups have high power—is associated with 46% ($p < 0.05$) fewer convictions.

The impunity for criminal groups appears to be becoming more acute. In the United States, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) collects reasonably reliable, albeit imperfect, data on homicide clearance rates. Figure 1.5 shows that American law enforcement is solving fewer crimes in recent decades across the board, but the clearance rate for murders classified as “gang-related” have plummeted at a much faster rate. Whereas non-gang clearances outpaced gang clearances by around only 7 percentage points (pp) in the 1990s, by 2017, investigators solved just 28% of gang-related homicides compared to 69% of non-gang-related homicides—41pp disparity.⁶⁰

Some of the variability over time could be an artifact of changes in how law enforcement classify gang-related homicides. Even so, the data are more likely to overstate the gang-related clearance rate. Clearance rates include homicides that are considered solved by “exceptional means.” In these cases, authorities determine that they have gathered sufficient information to make an arrest, but the suspect cannot be arrested, because law enforcement “encountered a circumstance outside of [their] control” such as the death of a suspect.⁶¹ Given that suspects in gang-related cases are more likely to be killed, usually by a rival group, police departments can boost their clearance rates by using the exceptional means classification on deceased suspects in a process sometimes called, as journalist Kevin Rector documents, “putting bodies on bodies.”⁶²

60. “Data & Docs,” Murder Accountability Project, 2018, accessed November 13, 2016, <http://www.murderdata.org/p/data-docs.html>. Note that these data are based on the Supplemental Homicide Report, which does not update for arrests made after the reports are submitted. It also includes additional homicides obtained via the Murder Accountability Project (MAP). MAP estimates that between 5% and 10% of homicides reported as unsolved were later cleared. Regardless, in relative terms the data show a clear gap between gang-related and non-gang related homicides.

61. “Offenses Cleared,” Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2010/crime-in-the-u.s.-2010/clearances>.

62. Kevin Rector, “‘Bodies on bodies:’ Baltimore police increasingly accusing the dead of murder,” *Baltimore Sun*, May 23, 2018, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/crime/bs-md-ci-cleared-by-exception-20180430-story.html>.

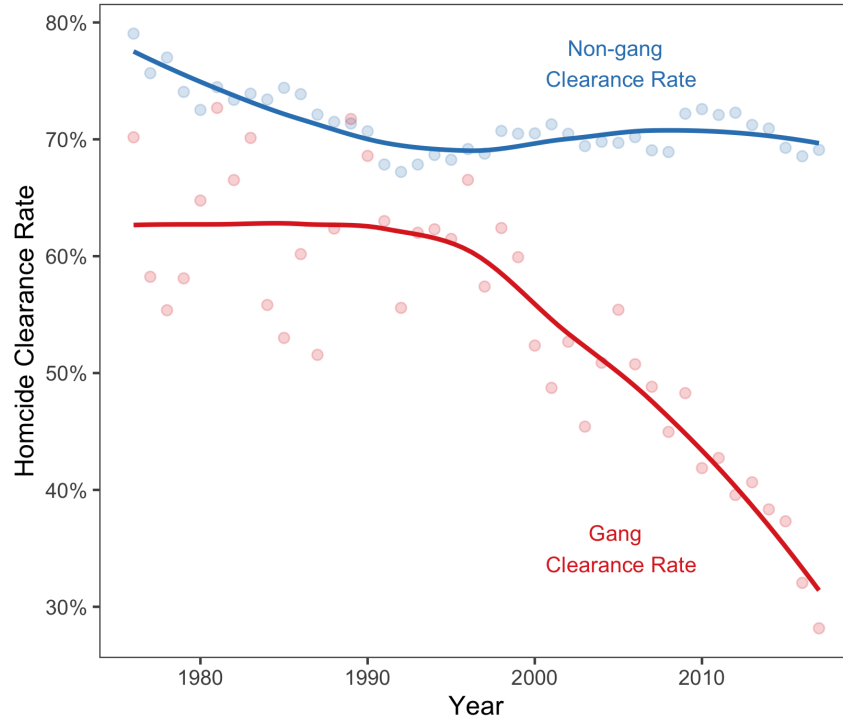


Figure 1.5: Homicide Clearance Rates in the United States

Clearances for gang-related homicides have dropped significantly faster than clearance for homicides that are not gang-related. Homicide clearance data is from the FBI’s Supplemental Homicide Report. *Source:* “Data & Docs,” Murder Accountability Project, 2018, accessed November 13, 2016, <http://www.murderdata.org/p/data-docs.html>.

1.2. CITIZEN INFORMATION

Declining homicide clearance rates have perplexed observers. The decline has come amid major technological advances in crime fighting centered around the “forensic revolution.”⁶³ Police have a wealth of new tools, most notably DNA testing, which—first implemented in the late-1980s—identifies perpetrators from biological materials. Despite these advances, growing divides between the police and communities that they serve have contributed to the increasing impunity that perpetrators enjoy. “If there is a distrust of the police themselves and the system,” as a former New York

⁶³ Thomas Hargrove, “Why Are American Cops So Bad at Catching Killers?,” The Marshall Project, April 2, 2015, accessed November 13, 2016, <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2015/04/02/why-are-american-cops-so-bad-at-catching-killers>.

homicide detective puts it, “all of these scientific advances are not going to help us.”⁶⁴ Gaining information from citizens, in other words, remains an imperative for solving cases of criminal group violence.

1.2.1 The Information Imperative

Law enforcement officials have long recognized the importance of information from citizens. O.W. Wilson, former superintendent of the Chicago Police Department and among the first evangelizers of police professionalism, wrote in 1950:

Public cooperation is essential to the successful accomplishment of the police purpose. Public support assists in many ways; it is necessary in the enforcement of major laws as well as of minor regulations, and with it arrests are made and convictions obtained that otherwise would not be possible.⁶⁵

Scholars, policymakers, and community organizations have regularly echoed Wilson’s view to the extent that it has become a law enforcement maxim. The seminal 2004 U.S. National Research Council Report on policing argues that if citizens contact the police “when they need help and help them identify offenders; crimes that are investigated as a result are more likely to be solved than if citizens are reluctant to call.”⁶⁶ Along these same lines, a major report from the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), the national membership organization for U.S. police agencies, states that “the effectiveness of police operations often depends at least in part on the

64. Martin Kaste, “Open Cases: Why One-Third Of Murders In America Go Unresolved,” NPR, March 30, 2015, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2015/03/30/395069137/open-cases-why-one-third-of-murders-in-america-go-unresolved>.

65. O. W. Wilson, *Police Administration* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950). Originally quoted in Andrew McCall, “Resident Assistance, Police Chief Learning, and the Persistence of Aggressive Policing Tactics in Black Neighborhoods” (October 24, 2018).

66. *Fairness and Effectiveness in Policing: The Evidence* (Washington, DC: National Research Council, July 17, 2003).

public's willingness to provide information to and otherwise help the police."⁶⁷

This perceived need for close cooperation with communities drove the rise of community policing and problem-oriented policing models in which police attempt to work closely with citizens to address crime. Police in American cities that have made dramatic gains in solving homicides credit improved cooperation from communities as the lynchpin to their success. During the 1990s, the police department of Durham, North Carolina cleared just 39% of cases but doubled its clearances to 78% by the 2000s. The city's then police chief Jose Lopez emphasizes that they were able to buck the national trend in declining clearance rates by bringing forward more witnesses through community engagement.⁶⁸

It is worth noting that Durham has been the exception and not the rule. The reforms necessary to implement successful community policing efforts are often costly and years-long or decades-long endeavors. The key takeaway from Durham's experience is that cooperation from citizens, regardless of how it comes, improves the police's ability to solve crime.

Information from citizens helps deter future violence by increasing the probability of accountability for perpetrators. It also can directly prevent violence. When citizens notify authorities of impending violence or report in-progress incidents, it allows police to prevent or mitigate the damage. The focused deterrence strategy where authorities and community members intervene prior to an expected violent incident is regarded as one of the most effective strategies for reducing violence.⁶⁹ Such interventions require that police and community safety advocates have information about who is at risk of becoming a perpetrator and who is at risk of becoming a victim.

67. Craig Fischer, ed., *Legitimacy and Procedural Justice: A New Element of Police Leadership*, March 2014 See for example Carlos Carcach, *Reporting crime to the police* (Canberra, Australia: Australian Institute of Criminology, 1997).

68. Hargrove, Lucas, and Wolf, *Murder Mysteries*.

69. Thomas Abt and Christopher Winship, *What Works in Reducing Community Violence? A Meta-Review and Field Study of the Northern Triangle* (U.S. Agency for International Development, February 2016).

Crime reporting is one of the most important ways that police rely on citizens for information. Without reporting, whether from the victim or a third-party witness, authorities become significantly less likely to hold perpetrators accountable. The lack of accountability may come from the police not being aware that a crime occurred or it may delay their response and investigation.

Evidence suggests that crime reporting is crucial for solving homicide and extortion, crimes that are committed by criminal groups. To demonstrate the relationship, I draw on the WJP General Population Poll of more than 109,000 citizens in cities across 113 countries. The data measure crime victimization,⁷⁰ whether or not the crime was reported as well as, according to the respondent, whether or not the perpetrator was arrested and whether or not the perpetrator was convicted. Figure 1.6 displays the reporting rate as well as arrest and conviction rate for each crime type by country in the sample. There is a clear positive relationship in all categories.

Importantly, these relationships hold when analyzing the data at the individual-level. When homicide and extortion incidents are reported to the police, it substantially increases the likelihood of arrest and eventual conviction of the perpetrator. When homicides were reported, respondents indicate that the police were 52 percentage points (pp) more likely to arrest a suspect, and the perpetrator was 37pp more likely to be punished compared to when the incident went unreported. Similarly, when extortion was reported, a perpetrator was 40pp more likely to be arrested and 28pp more likely to be punished for the crime.

The importance of information in contexts where criminal groups compete with police is analogous to contexts where insurgent groups compete with militaries. In his seminal text *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, French military officer-turned-scholar David Galula emphasizes that states must learn information from the population,

70. Among other crimes, the survey asks respondents if a relative or person living in their household was murdered in the past three years, and they indicate if they or anyone living in their household had been extorted.

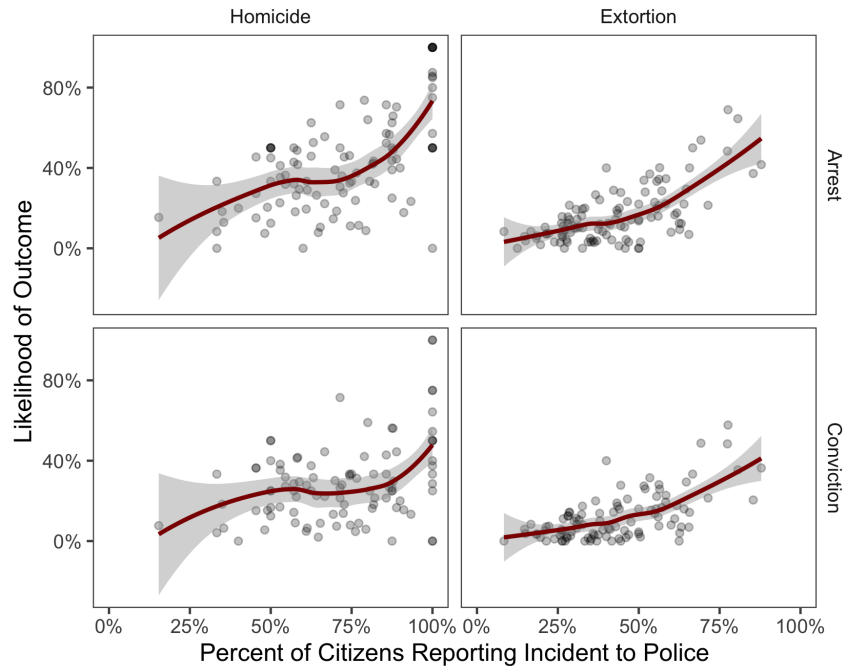


Figure 1.6: Crime Reporting and Perpetrator Accountability

Countries with higher rates of reporting homicide and extortion have higher rates of arrest and convictions for perpetrators. These results are consistent with individual-level descriptive statistics. When individuals report homicide and extortion, it increases the likelihood of arrest and conviction. *Sources: General Population Poll (World Justice Project, 2017).*

not just from captured insurgents, to win.⁷¹ Applying this logic, Eli Berman and co-authors, through rigorous testing, confirm the importance of gaining cooperation from the population for defeating insurgencies.⁷² In particular, Andrew Shaver finds that the tips to a hotline operated by British forces in Iraq reduced insurgent violence.⁷³ In short, although criminal group and insurgent competition may be different in important ways, information remains central to both types of conflict.

71. David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 1964).

72. Berman et al., *Small Wars, Big Data*.

73. Andrew Shaver, "Information and Communication Technologies, Wartime Informing, and Insurgent Violence" (HiCN Working Paper 215, April 11, 2016).

1.2.2 What Do Citizens Witness?

Citizens make up the largest proportion of communities, rendering them a valuable source of information for the police. As represented in Figure 1.7, any given citizen is less likely than a criminal group affiliate to be exposed to violence. However, citizens being the largest proportion of communities increases the likelihood that at least some citizens witness violent incidents. A similar dynamic exists with respect to anti-terror efforts. Those in the terrorist groups themselves may have the most exposure to the groups' activities. Nonetheless, citizens remain an integral component of efforts to prevent attacks. Hence, security officials attempt to harness the power of the crowd, encapsulated with the commonly-heard refrain “if you see something, say something.”⁷⁴

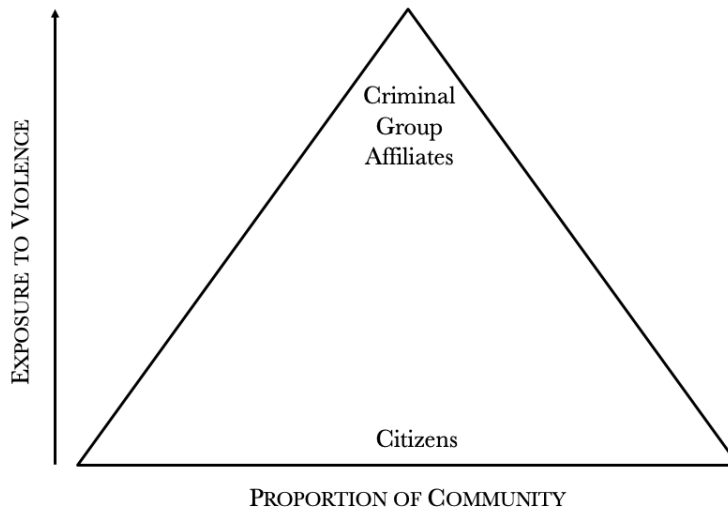


Figure 1.7: Violence Exposure Pyramid

Citizens make up the largest proportion of communities. Thus, even though any given citizen is less likely to be exposed to violence than a criminal group affiliate, at least some citizens are likely to be exposed. This exposure, combined with their relative objectivity compared to criminal group affiliates, make them a valuable information source for police.

The concentration of violence in some urban communities increases the likelihood

74. “If You See Something, Say Something®,” Department of Homeland Security, December 10, 2014, accessed November 11, 2018, <https://www.dhs.gov/see-something-say-something>.

that citizens in those communities witness violence. Homicide data collected by the *Washington Post* in fifty major U.S. cities suggests that homicides occur in high population density areas. Taking census-designated “blocks groups” as the unit of analysis, which encompass roughly six-by-six square blocks, reveals that on average 1,321 people live in the block groups where the recorded homicides took place. In other words, homicides occur in areas where the population density is equivalent to the average population density of Chicago, Philadelphia, and Miami.⁷⁵

It is not uncommon for criminal group violence to unfold in broad daylight, which further increases citizen exposure. A simple online news search for “daylight shootings” reveals that they occurred in New York, Washington, DC, Philadelphia, Toronto, and Vancouver, among other cities in a one week period.⁷⁶ For a systematic estimate of the proportion of shootings that take place during daylight hours, I analyze ShotSpotter data of more than 122,000 incidents of gunfire across eleven U.S. cities compiled by Jennifer Doleac’s Justice Tech Lab.⁷⁷ The ShotSpotter systems automatically detect gunshots, estimating the location and time of the shots. On average in each city, one-fifth of shootings happened between dawn and dusk.⁷⁸

Aside from directly witnessing violence, citizens may also learn about it second-hand from through their social networks. “The streets talk,” as the saying goes, meaning that people exchange information about events and developments in their community. And, this talk is increasingly taking place online. Given that online social networks generally have just a few degrees of separation among users, citizens especially young citizens often gain awareness of conflicts among criminal groups.⁷⁹

75. Steven Rich, Ted Mellnik, and Wesley Lowery, “Homicide Database: Mapping Unsolved Murders in Major U.S. Cities,” *Washington Post*, June 6, 2018, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/investigations/unsolved-homicide-database>.

76. Google News search with search string “daylight shooting” conducted on April 6, 2019.

77. “ShotSpotter data on gunfire incidents,” Justice Tech Lab, 2020, accessed April 7, 2020, <http://justicetechlab.org/shotspotter-data>.

78. The detection systems were set up at different times in the municipalities with the earliest shot detected in 2006 in Washington, DC and latest shot detected in 2018 in Peoria, Illinois.

79. A 2016 Facebook study finds that every person on the social network is connected with everyone else by just an average of 3.57 intermediary friends. See Smriti Bhagat et al., “Three and a half

On these platforms, rivals trade insults, threats, and signs of disrespect that precedes violence. A former Chicago gang member put it this way to a journalist: “If they cut off all the social media sites, I ain’t gonna lie, it’ll stop some killing.”⁸⁰ Information about these dynamics are crucial for community safety advocates, and if need be the police, to intervene before violence erupts.⁸¹

In the middle of the Figure 1.7 pyramid are citizens that have a higher degree of socio-economic proximity to criminal groups. This category of individuals are less numerous than citizens but have more exposure to violence. For those in this category, perhaps a family member is an affiliate; perhaps they purchase illicit products or services from the groups; or, perhaps the criminal groups informally regulate their means of income such as the underground sex work industry. Sicilians in this position are known as *initsu*—those who in scholar Diego Gambetta’s words, “share with the mafia some degree of opportunistic compliance and understanding.”⁸² Citizens with proximity to criminal groups are less numerous in communities, but their proximity makes them more likely to witness or learn about violence. For this reason, police often work with—and sometimes coerce sex workers, addicts, and others—to glean information. “Out here,” a San Antonio police officer put it to me during a patrol, “you can get a ton of information from prostitutes.”⁸³

At the top of the pyramid are criminal group affiliates themselves. They generally have the most exposure to criminal group activity but are the least numerous part

degrees of separation,” Facebook Research, February 4, 2016, accessed November 21, 2018, <https://research.fb.com/three-and-a-half-degrees-of-separation>.

80. Josh Saul, “Chicago’s murder rate keeps rising and the gangs can’t be stopped,” *Newsweek*, December 15, 2016, accessed December 20, 2016, <http://www.newsweek.com/2016/12/23/chicago-gangs-violence-murder-rate-532034.html>.

81. The strategy of intervening before the gang violence unfolds was pioneered in Boston with “Operation Ceasefire.” On the effectiveness of the strategy, see Anthony A. Braga, David M. Hureau, and Andrew V. Papachristos, “Deterring Gang-Involved Gun Violence: Measuring the Impact of Boston’s Operation Ceasefire on Street Gang Behavior,” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 30, no. 1 (2014): 113–139.

82. Diego Gambetta, *The Sicilian Mafia: The Business of Private Protection* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, February 1, 1996), p. 16.

83. SAT643 2017.

of the community. Law enforcement authorities often attempt to penetrate a group’s inner-circle by “flipping” key members into becoming informants or by using electronic surveillance.⁸⁴ Surveillance, however, is often resource-intensive and police generally can track only a small fraction of affiliates with the technique. Flipping affiliates also comes with hazards. Criminal informants might use information to manipulate law enforcement into weakening rival groups and creating new opportunities for their own group.⁸⁵ Citizens, for their part, generally have less of a vested interest in their cooperation—aside from reducing violence—and thus provide a more objective source of information.

1.3. THE INFORMATION GAME

Given the importance of information from citizens, police—along with community safety advocates—encourage citizens to share information while criminal groups attempt to have citizens hold back what they see and know. This competition for cooperation is what I call “The Information Game.”

1.3.1 The Players

Defining criminal groups is not as straightforward as it might seem. Myriad terms such as “gangs” and “organized crime” are used to describe criminal groups. For each one of these terms, there are few universally-accepted definitions and attempts by academics and policymakers to arrive at a common definition have largely failed.⁸⁶ One scholar

84. These techniques are widely used for cases prosecuting under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act in the United States.

85. Alexandra Natapoff, *Snitching: Criminal Informants and the Erosion of American Justice* (New York: NYU Press, April 8, 2011).

86. See, for example, Parker Asmann, “Defining Organized Crime: A Primer (and a Friendly Kerfuffle),” InSight Crime, November 15, 2018, accessed November 19, 2018, <https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/how-to-define-organized-crime-latin-america>.

has amassed 176 definitions for “organized crime” alone.⁸⁷ The varied and evolving definition of what constitutes a “gang,” for instance, has divided criminologists into divergent camps. Some suggest that the term should be abandoned altogether, others suggest that definitional pluralism should be embraced, and still others argue that scholars should rely on their intuitive judgement—the “I know a gang when, I see one” approach.⁸⁸

I do not attempt to resolve the definitional muddle but rather provide a simple overarching definition that is in line with commonly-understood conceptions of criminal groups. Thus, I consider a criminal group to be *an association of individuals that uses violence, or the threat of violence, for illicit economic gain*.⁸⁹ The range of popular terms used to describe criminal groups fall under this definition. Common terms can be organized from roughly the most to least organized type of criminal group as follows: mafias, cartels, cabals, drug trafficking organizations, syndicates, gangs, street gangs, posses, cliques, sets, and crews, among others.⁹⁰

Regardless of where they fall on the organizational spectrum, criminal groups exhibit the three core characteristics embodied in the definition: (1) an association of individuals, (2) use of violent coercion, and (3) pursuit of illicit economic gain. These criteria, as represented in Figure 1.8, differentiate criminal groups from other types of non-state actors in politics and society.

A criminal group is an “association of individuals” in that it consists of more than

87. Klaus von Lampe, “Organized Crime Defined,” Organized Crime Research, 2019, accessed April 9, 2019, <http://www.organized-crime.de/OCDEF1.htm>.

88. Richard A. Ball and G. David Curry, “The Logic of Definition in Criminology: Purposes and Methods for Defining “Gangs,”” *Criminology* 33, no. 2 (1995): 225–245.

89. The definition simplifies the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organization Crime’s definition of an organized criminal group: “a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences [...] in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit.” *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, 2000.

90. Gangs and organized criminal groups, a United Nations report remarks, “frequently overlap and it is often difficult to draw a distinction between them due to the heterogeneity and dynamics of the phenomena in different regions. Much of the debate centres on the degree of organization or sophistication in the operations of the group and how such groups use violence.” *Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends, Contexts, Data*, p. 42.

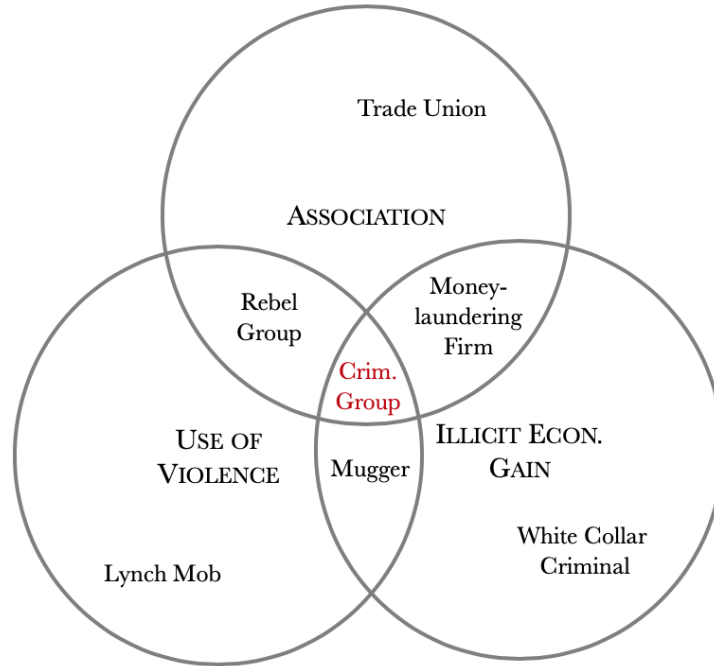


Figure 1.8: Distinguishing Criminal Groups from Other Non-state Actors

Criminal groups fall in the center of the Venn diagram. They are distinct from groups that fall outside the diagram or fall into just one or the two categories. Examples types are shown in each area of the diagram.

one individual who engage in an activity over a sustained time period. The association characteristic distinguishes the groups from actors that generally act alone such as a street mugger. An association also implies a degree of durability, which distinguishes the groups from *ad hoc* groupings that may form for an individual act such as a lynch mob. Durability is an important component of criminal groups’ ability to wield influence in communities. It allows for imposing the threat of future consequences—or at least the perception of consequences—which influences how citizens behave in relation to the groups in the present.

A criminal group “uses violence, or the threat of violence,” as the means to achieve its ends. Criminal groups target persons or target property with threats. The threat might never be made explicit with groups often relying on their reputation for having the will and capacity to inflict pain. The reliance on violence and coercion distin-

guishes criminal groups from actors that use non-violent means to achieve their ends. A trade union, for instance, may threaten to expel members that do not follow their rules, but it would be unusual, at least in economically-developed countries, for the union to engage in violence. Albeit the threat of expulsion and other types of coercion can be a potent tool, it is fundamentally distinct from the use of and threat of violence.

A criminal group seeks “illicit economic gain.” Having economic gain as their core purpose separates criminal groups from ideologically-motivated actors such as terrorist and rebel groups. Terrorist and rebel groups may extort citizens or engage in drug trafficking that on the surface makes them appear no different than a mafia or gang. Unlike criminal groups, however, these actors are engaging in the activity to advance an ideological agenda. For them, illicit gain is an economic means to an ideological end whereas for criminal groups illicit gain is the end in itself.⁹¹

In practice, many actors are driven by a combination of ideological and economic motivations, and there are numerous cases of ideologically-oriented actors morphing into criminal groups. Take the case of one of Rio de Janeiro’s most powerful gangs *Commando Vermelho* (Red Command). The group, originally known as *Falange Vermelho* (Red Phalanx), was born in the 1970s during Brazil’s period of military rule. The group was originally a left-wing militant organization that aimed to protect prisoners living under harsh condition and partially financed its efforts through bank robberies and other activities. In these early stages, Red Command was arguably an ideological actor, but it eventually became deeply entrenched in drug trafficking, abandoning its ideological activities in all but name only.⁹²

This dynamic makes the economic motivation perhaps the thorniest of the three

91. For more on the differences between organized crime and civil war, see Kalyvas, “How Civil Wars Help Explain Organized Crime—and How They Do Not” and Paul Collier, “Rebellion as a Quasi-Criminal Activity,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44, no. 6 (2000): 839–853.

92. “Red Command,” InSight Crime, March 27, 2017, accessed April 9, 2019, <https://www.insightcrime.org/brazil-organized-crime-news/red-command-profile>.

criminal group criteria to measure. The fact that one cannot rely on the stated preference of the group or its leaders complicates matters. As I discuss in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.3), criminal groups have an incentive to present themselves as ideologically-motivated in order to garner support from communities. Thus, one has to consider the revealed preferences of the group—that is, what the group does and not what it says. If a greater proportion of the group’s activities, even if illicit in nature, are taken to advance an ideological agenda, it falls outside the illicit gain criterion. If a greater proportion of a group’s activities are directed toward illicit gain with limited investment toward advancing their stated ideological agenda, it meets the criterion.

In *The Information Game*, criminal groups compete primarily with state’s law enforcement agencies, which for short-hand I refer to as “police” in this study. Defining law enforcement agencies is not a definitional minefield as the case with criminal groups. Few would argue with a simple definition of a law enforcement agency as *a government organization responsible for controlling crime and maintaining public order*. Myriad agencies that fall under this definition including police departments, sheriff departments, prison bureaucracies, and entities charged with prosecuting suspects. Law enforcement agencies may be divided along functional lines such as the drug enforcement or geographic lines such as municipal police departments. The United States alone has more than 15,000 law enforcement agencies operating—the equivalent of about 300 agencies for every state in the country.⁹³

Even though there is definitional clarity on what constitutes police, at a more abstract level, there is disagreement with respect to whether or not the police are distinct from criminal groups. By the definition of criminal groups laid out above, some argue that the state, and by extension the police, are little different. Police are associations of individuals; they use the threat of violence in enforcement practices; and, they enforce the collection of taxes, fines, and revenue to facilitate economic gain

93. Brian A. Reaves, *Local police departments, 2013: Personnel, policies, and practices* (National Criminal Justice Reference Service, May 2015), p. 2.

for the state. This view makes its way into the public sphere. As DeRay McKesson, a Black Lives Matter activist, tweeted after a incident of police violence, “The police are another facet of organized crime. & I say that without hyperbole. We literally watched Slager kill #WalterScott.”⁹⁴

Scholars too have analogized the state to a criminal group. The political scientist Charles Tilly famously compared states’ national security function to mafia-like “protection rackets.” The state, he theorizes, creates an external threat to its population and then extracts wealth in the form of taxes to protect them against the created threat.⁹⁵ Similarly, Mancur Olson characterizes the state as a so-called “stationary bandit,” which aims to extract income through taxes.⁹⁶ More recently, scholars have coined the term “extractive policing” to describe the targeting of minority neighborhoods with criminal fines to fill city coffers in the United States.⁹⁷

What then distinguishes the state and its police from criminal groups? The answer, in short, is legitimacy. The state, as Max Weber famously formulates it, has “the monopoly of the *legitimate* use of physical force within a given territory [emphasis added].”⁹⁸ At its core, legitimacy of law enforcement agency derives from citizens accepting it as having the right to enforce laws.⁹⁹ Thus, the police are differentiated from criminal groups only to the extent to which communities consent to being policed by them. As long as the state maintains the consent of the governed community, the police—as the state’s representatives—remain fundamentally distinct from criminal

94. DeRay Mckesson, “The police are another facet of organized crime. & I say that without hyperbole. We literally watched Slager kill #WalterScott.,” @deray, Twitter, December 5, 2016, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://twitter.com/deray/status/805894722052976640>.

95. Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” p. 169.

96. Mancur Olson, “Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development.,” *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (1993): p. 568.

97. Mary Fainsod Katzenstein and Maureen R. Waller, “Taxing the Poor: Incarceration, Poverty Governance, and the Seizure of Family Resources,” *Perspectives on Politics* 13, no. 3 (2015): 638–656; Mari Harris and Stephano Radaelli, “Paralysed by Fear: Perceptions of crime and violence in South Africa,” *South African Crime Quarterly*, no. 20 (2016).

98. Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), p. 1.

99. This conceptualization draws on Justice Tankebe, “Public Cooperation with the Police in Ghana: Does Procedural Fairness Matter?,” *Criminology* 47, no. 4 (2009): p. 1265.

groups.

As I argue in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.1), perceived unfairness and ineffectiveness erodes citizen perceptions of the police's legitimacy in communities with criminal groups. At the same time, if citizens consent to the state's rule as a whole, they tend to consent to the police as legitimate security providers. Despite significant shortcomings in police fairness and effectiveness, the consent generally gives the police the minimal necessary level of legitimacy that makes them distinct from criminal groups. Thus, instead of considering the police and gangs as one in the same, a better conceptualization might be to consider police as legitimate gangs.

1.3.2 Police-Citizen Cooperation

A citizen can cooperate with the police in many ways, but given its importance, I focus on a particular category of cooperation, information-sharing. I define information-sharing as *a citizen voluntarily sharing with the police information related to criminal groups*. Criminal groups and police compete to influence citizens' cooperation decisions. On the one hand, police want citizens to share what they see and know about violence. On the other hand, criminal groups want citizens to refrain from sharing information with the police. In other words, criminal groups want citizens to engage in a form of forbearance.¹⁰⁰ A citizen refraining from talking with the police, on its own, is not necessarily evidence of forbearance. Only citizens with information that they deem potentially valuable but decide not to share falls within this category.

The outcome of this competition is zero-sum. Citizens refraining from sharing information is a win for criminal groups and loss for the police; and vice versa, citizens cooperating is a win for the police and a loss for criminal groups. Moreover, citizens generally do not make a binary decision of simply sharing all the information that they have or not sharing any information at all. Rather, citizens may choose to

100. On forbearance, see Alisha C. Holland, "Forbearance," *American Political Science Review* 110, no. 2 (2016): 232–246.

share just a little of what they know—that is, hold back some but not all of what they know. A witness of a shooting, for instance, may call the police in order to diffuse the situation while at the same time not providing a description of the suspect.

Information-sharing in communities with criminal groups is analogous to similar concepts found in social science. Scholars of civil war and insurgency often refer to the various types of information-sharing as “informing” or “collaboration.”¹⁰¹ Psychologists refer to reporting crime, or an emergency more generally, to the authorities as a “detour intervention.”¹⁰² Sociologists sometimes refer to information-sharing as “indirect informal social control.” The cooperation is indirect, because the police are being called upon to intervene; it is informal because a citizen initiates the act; and, it is social control, because the behavior attempts to bring order.¹⁰³ The differences are largely a matter of terminology in that they describe roughly the same process of citizen information-sharing.

I am interested in *voluntary* information-sharing. Even in democratic societies, the police have the tools to coerce information from citizens. The police might leverage material witness laws to detain witnesses, harass witnesses with nuisance arrests or intrusive searches, or threaten to spread rumors about the witness, among other tactics; police might also lean on extra-legal coercive tools such as torture in some contexts. Using these tactics, however, are generally antithetical to liberal polities and can yield unreliable information.¹⁰⁴ The unethical and potentially ineffective nature

101. Jason Lyall, Yuki Shiraito, and Kosuke Imai, “Coethnic Bias and Wartime Informing,” *Journal of Politics* 77, no. 3 (2015): 833–848 define informing as “the transfer of sensitive and timely information from civilians and potentially disgruntled insurgents to counterinsurgent forces about the identities or activities of armed groups during wartime.” On “collaboration,” see Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*.

102. John M. Darley and Bibb Latané, “Bystander intervention in emergencies: Diffusion of responsibility,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 8, no. 4 (1968): 377–383.

103. Barbara D. Warner, “Directly Intervene or Call the Authorities? A Study of Forms of Neighborhood Social Control Within a Social Disorganization Framework,” *Criminology* 45, no. 1 (2007): 99–129. The behavior is referred to as “public social control” in for example Jr Robert J. Bursik and Harold G. Grasmick, *Neighborhoods and Crime: The Dimensions of Effective Community Control* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, January 7, 2002).

104. Studies show, for instance, that torture extracts low-quality information. See Mary Lowth, “Does torture work? Donald Trump and the CIA,” *British Journal of General Practice* 67, no. 656

of these tools, thus, make them less viable approaches from a policy perspective.

1.4. THREATENING THE RULE OF LAW

Homicide statistics do not elucidate the human and economic toll that criminal group violence takes on communities—damage that often manifests in immeasurable ways. The violence also cuts at the heart of states’ *raison d’être*. States have core mandates to provide public safety and to administer justice, which is undermined by criminal group violence and quasi-impunity that perpetrators enjoy. That criminal groups persistently coerce citizens into silence is particularly problematic for the state. In doing so, the groups have established a parallel, extralegal structure of authority in communities, which in turn undermines the state’s own authority. Taken together, the consequences of the violence and quasi-impunity threaten the rule of law in communities.

1.4.1 Community Impact

A common perception exists that those killed in criminal group violence are themselves criminal group affiliates or in some way associated closely with criminal activity. This perception may be accurate insofar as criminal groups are less likely to target citizens for violence than their rival groups, but it fails to account for unintended violence against citizens.

Especially with gun violence, bystanders are at risk. Take the case of Julien Gonzalez, a two year boy from Chicago, who was killed leaving his birthday party. Members of the local Maniac Latin Disciples gang ambushed a nearby teenager, accidentally striking the teenager with some of the at least ten shots fired.¹⁰⁵ Or, take

(2017): 126.

105. Megan Crepeau, Anna Sporre, and Jeremy Gorner, “Prosecutor: 2-year-old boy killed after gang leader gives order to shoot: ‘Bust, bust, bust,’” *The Chicago Tribune*, October 23, 2018, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-met-arrest-boy-killed->

the case of Deborah McClendon, a Philadelphia grandmother shot and killed after picking up take-out food for her granddaughter.¹⁰⁶ More broadly, a study of drive-by shootings in 1990s Los Angeles, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, estimated that 47% of those shot at and 23% of those killed were bystanders.¹⁰⁷

The violence also has less severe but nonetheless pernicious effects on citizens' social and economic health. Studies have found a correlation between high homicide rates and, among other metrics, lower economic growth, higher rates of hunger, higher infant mortality, and lower standing on the United Nations' Human Development Index.¹⁰⁸ Other costs are more hidden but still problematic. A study of Naples, Italy finds that killings reduce the value of nearby housing,¹⁰⁹ and a study of Mexico estimates that every 100 additional organized crime-related deaths per 100,000 people correlates with 25% higher car insurance rates.¹¹⁰ In other words, even though citizens do not perpetrate the violence, they pay for it—literally.

Another important yet largely hidden cost of the violence is lost productivity. The World Health Organization has developed a metric “years of life lost” (YLLs) that estimates the number of years a person who died would have lived. Using this metric, a 2018 study in *The Lancet* medical journal estimates that deaths from interpersonal violence results in roughly 20 million lost years of lost productivity due to victims no longer being able to contribute to the economy.¹¹¹ The violence also reduces the

20181022-story.html.

106. Dann Cuellar, “Grandmother killed after being caught in crossfire while getting food,” 6abc Philadelphia, May 18, 2019, accessed March 13, 2020, <https://6abc.com/5306278>.

107. H. Range Hutson, Deirdre Anglin, and Michael J. Pratts, “Adolescents and children injured or killed in drive-by shootings in Los Angeles,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 330, no. 5 (1994): 324–327.

108. Eleanor Sohmen, *Paying Crime: A Review of the Relationship between Insecurity and Development in Mexico and Central America* (Migration Policy Institute, December 2012). The UN Human Development Index is a composite index of social economic development in countries.

109. Michele Battisti et al., “Shooting down the price: evidence from mafia homicides and housing market volatility,” January 24, 2019, 49.

110. Eduardo Guerrero-Gutiérrez, *Security, Drugs, and Violence in Mexico: A Survey* (North American Forum, 2011), p. 57.

111. Kyle J. Foreman et al., “Forecasting life expectancy, years of life lost, and all-cause and cause-specific mortality for 250 causes of death: reference and alternative scenarios for 2016–40 for 195 countries and territories,” *The Lancet* 392, no. 10159 (2018): 2052–2090.

economic output of geographic areas. A study using electricity consumption to proxy for economic output indicates that Mexican municipalities that were battlegrounds in cartel turf wars experienced sharp decreases in output,¹¹² and another study in Mexico found that violence reduced earnings and the number of hours citizens were able to work.¹¹³

Occasionally, studies attempt to calculate a precise dollar figure to encapsulate the costs—figures that should be taken with a grain of salt, considering the limited available data. A World Bank analysis, for instance, puts the costs of violence in Central America at \$6.5 billion, which amounts to 7.7% of the region’s gross domestic product (GDP).¹¹⁴ By the same token, an investigative report estimates that, for gun violence in the United States, the direct costs such as incarcerating perpetrators amounts to \$8.6 billion annually and the indirect costs such as victims’ loss wages amounts to \$221 billion. If accurate, these figures would mean that gun violence is nearly as costly as Medicaid spending (roughly, \$250 billion) and costs each American more than \$700 annually.¹¹⁵

Children in communities afflicted by criminal group violence arguably bear the highest costs. The violence lowers the ceiling on children’s socio-economic mobility. American children growing up in an area with higher murder rates lowers their income later in life.¹¹⁶ A study of five million American families finds that children who are raised in high-crime neighborhoods have significantly less earning potential.¹¹⁷

112. Gustavo Robles, Gabriela Calderon, and Beatriz Magaloni, “The Economic Consequences of Drug Trafficking Violence in Mexico” (August 2015).

113. Andrea Velásquez, “The Economic Burden of Crime: Evidence from Mexico,” *Journal of Human Resources*, March 8, 2019,

114. *Crime and Violence in Central America: A Developmental Challenge - Volume II* (World Bank, 2010).

115. Mark Follman, “Gun violence costs America \$229 billion a year—more than \$700 for every man, woman, and child,” *Mother Jones*, April 15, 2015, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/04/true-cost-of-gun-violence-in-america>.

116. Patrick Sharkey and Gerard Torrats-Espinosa, “The effect of violent crime on economic mobility,” *Journal of Urban Economics* 102 (November 1, 2017): 22–33.

117. Raj Chetty and Nathaniel Hendren, “The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility: Childhood Exposure Effects and County-Level Estimates” (May 2015).

The ceiling on mobility is likely driven in part by the violence lowering academic achievement: analyses in contexts ranging from Chicago¹¹⁸ to Mexico¹¹⁹ find that criminal violence reduces student test scores.

1.4.2 Public Safety, Justice, and State Authority

By failing to stem criminal group violence, states fails to provide public safety—one of its foundational *raison d'être*. Considering the absence of government exemplifies its purpose in this regard. “Worst of all,” writes Thomas Hobbes in his 1651 treatise *Leviathan*, life in a society without government is marked by “continual fear and danger of violent death.” Life is, he continues, with the now famous phrase “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”¹²⁰ Building on Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau posits in his 1762 *The Social Contract* that the “civil state” is justified in imposing legal restrictions on its citizens, because it provides security for those same citizens.¹²¹

Echoing this thinking, states of many different types—democratic and authoritarian, rich and poor, socially liberal and socially conservative—have adopted public safety as a core mission. Indeed, 170 state constitutions in force—that is, in 87% of countries—mention public order and public safety as part of the governing mandate. Some constitutional drafters write this mandate in general terms. The preamble of the U.S. Constitution reads, “We the People of the United States, in Order to [...]insure domestic Tranquility.” Others make explicit the role of the police to provide the order such as South Sudan’s, which reads, “The mission of the Police Service shall be to [...]prevent, combat and investigate crime, maintain law and public order, protect

118. Julia Burdick-Will, “School Violent Crime and Academic Achievement in Chicago,” *Sociology of Education* 86, no. 4 (2013): 343–361.

119. Brenda Jarillo et al., “How the Mexican drug war affects kids and schools? Evidence on effects and mechanisms,” *International Journal of Educational Development* 51 (November 1, 2016): 135–146.

120. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Or, The Matter, Forme & Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civill* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1904), p. 84.

121. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract: Or, The Principles of Political Rights* (G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1893).

the people and their properties.”¹²²

Moreover, states’ struggle to hold criminal groups accountable for violence erodes another core *raison d’être*: the administration of justice. Just as security is a central justification for the state in Rousseau’s “civil state” so too is justice.¹²³ When criminal groups evade state punishment for a violent act, the state fails to provide just recourse for the victim. Almost every constitution—amounting to 192 constitutions or 98% of countries in the world—places justice as the responsibility of the state. Indeed, in addition to ensuring order, the U.S. Constitution’s preamble highlights the government’s aim to “establish justice” and similarly South Sudan’s constitution presents the role of the state as “laying the foundation for a [...]society based on justice.”¹²⁴

When criminal groups prevent citizens from cooperating with the police using violence or the threat thereof, they are exercising authority. Authority is the likelihood that, as Weber defines it, “certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed.”¹²⁵ The balance of authority in communities takes the shape of a zero-sum proposition. The authority that criminal groups gain, the state loses; and, vice versa, authority that the state gains, criminal groups lose. By consistently preventing police-citizen cooperation, the groups become an extralegal power base in communities that challenges the state’s own authority.

Having an authority other than the state in a community is not, on its own, problematic. Communities have many bases of non-state authority such as religious institutions, social clubs, labor unions, and civil society organizations, among other organizations. Nor, even is it necessarily problematic for a non-state actor to rely on the potential to produce violence; private security firms do just that. It is, however, under the state’s purview—indeed, it is the state’s mandate—to maintain a monopoly

122. “Constitute,” The Comparative Constitutions Project, 2019, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.constituteproject.org>.

123. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*.

124. “Constitute.”

125. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1978).

on the legitimate use of violence, which makes criminal groups' *modus operandi* a fundamental challenge to the state's authority in ways that non-violent institutions are not. As I expand on in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.3), criminal groups generally lack the broad support of communities; and, without the consent of citizens, the group cannot claim to be a legitimate alternative to state authority.

All in all, the toll that criminal groups have on communities and the undermining of the state's mandate, makes, from an academic perspective, studying the violence—and the mechanisms that allow it to persist—important. And, from a policy perspective, it makes the state winning The Information Game essential. Information from citizens is necessary for police to prevent criminal group violence and reduce the quasi-impunity that perpetrators enjoy. In the next chapter, I theorize how criminal groups prevent police-citizen cooperation with terroristic fear.

Chapter 2

Cycles of Silence

In September 2006, gunmen opened the doors of the Sol y Sombra discotheque in Uruapan, in the western Mexican state of Michoacan, and threw five human heads [of rival drug dealers] onto the dance floor. As frightened partygoers looked on, the gang left a scrawled message at the scene, announcing the arrival of a new, breakaway drug cartel called La Familia Michoacana, and walked out as coolly as they had entered.

News report on cartel violence in Mexico¹

At a shooting scene in southwestern Washington, DC, a woman inspected bullet holes in her SUV. “This is the second time my shit been hit by these mothafuckas,” she announces to no one in particular. “I’m getting sick of this shit,” she emphasizes. Her car was not the only one hit. Dozens of shots were fired during a nighttime shootout in a housing complex parking lot, and a palpable frustration among the residents was in the air. Standing next to a private security guard surveying the scene, we watched as an old woman quietly pointed out shell casings to an officer. The police “can talk to everybody,” the guard tells me, “they ain’t gonna say nothing.” They might tell their neighbors, he adds, but not the police.²

Perhaps no question is more vexing to law enforcement than, what holds back

1. Will Grant, “Mexico’s gruesome killings,” BBC News, May 15, 2012, accessed March 26, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-18063328>

2. DCA077 2017.

witnesses from coming forward? Many observers have tried to answer this question. A 2004 *Chicago Tribune* article, headlined “Silent witnesses let killers dodge justice,” presents two possible explanations for witnesses’ silence: they do not come forward because they “fear gangs that intimidate witnesses or simply comply with a street culture that despises a rat.”³ As I discuss in this chapter, these explanations—one of fear and one of culture—have their proponents in academic and policymaking circles.

Although often lumped together, the explanations have divergent implications. On the one hand, if a “street culture”—what I term a code of silence—constrains cooperation, it suggests that witnesses have little desire to cooperate with the police. According to the theory, citizens might refrain from coming forward, because, among other reasons, they support criminal groups. If true, the theory implies that citizens voluntarily, as the headline states, “let killers dodge justice.” On the other hand, if it is fear of one’s safety that constrains cooperation, it suggests that witnesses want to come forward but the potential consequences prevents them from doing so. In this scenario, citizens do not so much “let killers dodge justice” but are coerced into remaining silent.

In this chapter, I lay out a fear-based explanation, cycle of silence theory. According to the theory, terroristic fear generated by criminal group violence makes citizens perceive retaliation risk to be greater than it is. Retaliation risk, both real and inflated, reduces cooperation directly, as one would expect. But, the violence also has a less well-recognized second order effect of leading citizens, who are willing to cooperate, to hide that willingness from others, further reducing cooperation in communities. Cycles of silence reinforces themselves considering that the police rely on information from citizens to reduce violence.

Cycle of silence theory builds on the existing scholarship in two important respects.

First, that fear causes citizens to refrain from cooperating is unsurprising and

3. Rex W. Huppke, “Silent witnesses let killers dodge justice,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 24, 2004, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-0405230348may23-story.html>.

well-known. However, I show that, akin to terrorism, fear leads citizens to perceive retaliation to be more likely than it is. The emotional response of fear helps explain how criminal groups can reduce police-citizen cooperation despite rarely engaging in retaliatory attacks.

Comparisons between criminal groups and terrorist organizations are not new. Journalists at times use the term “terror” when describing criminal group tactics.⁴ Criminologists debate the ways in which criminal groups and terrorist organizations are similar⁵ and the ways in which they are different.⁶ Scholars also wrestle with whether or not criminal group violence constitutes terrorism.⁷ By theorizing and measuring how criminal groups inflate citizens’ perceptions of retaliation risk, I layer this comparison with another dimension.

Second, showing that citizens hiding their cooperation willingness reduces information-sharing incorporates an important and underappreciated secondary effect of violence into theories on police-citizen cooperation. Citizens hiding cooperation will in this way limit the social proof in communities that willingness to come forward is a safe and normatively-accepted disposition. Although the potency of social influence is widely-recognized, it has yet to be applied in the context of police-citizen cooperation.

4. See for example Delphine Schrank and Goran Tomasevic, “Terror of gang violence drives migrant caravans northward,” Reuters, November 21, 2018, accessed March 25, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-honduras-violence-idUSKCN1NQ1HR>.

5. See for example Siddik Ekici et al., *Countering Terrorist Recruitment in the Context of Armed Counter-Terrorism Operations* (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2016) and G. David Curry, “Gangs, Crime, and Terrorism,” in *Criminologists on Terrorism and Homeland Security*, eds. Brian Forst, Jack R. Greene, and James P. Lynch (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 97–112.

6. See for example Scott H. Decker and David C. Pyrooz, “Street Gangs, Terrorists, Drug Smugglers, and Organized Crime,” in *The Handbook of Gangs* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015), 294–308.

7. Some scholars characterize criminal group attacks as terrorist. See for example Lessing, “Logics of Violence in Criminal War” and Brian J. Phillips, “Terrorist Tactics by Criminal Organizations: The Mexican Case in Context,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12, no. 1 (2018): 46–63. Phil Williams, for his part, suggests that the use of the terrorist label, at least in the context of Mexico, is “exaggerated and unconvincing.” See Phil Williams, “The Terrorism Debate Over Mexican Drug Trafficking Violence,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 2 (2012): 259–278.

As a result of cycles of silence, the level of cooperation in communities is lower than its potential if citizens had full awareness of retaliation likelihood and the willingness of others to come forward. Ultimately, without awareness, citizens in communities with criminal groups make decisions to share less information than they would have otherwise.

This chapter proceeds in three sections.

Section 2.1 lays out the theoretical framework through which I analyze citizen cooperation decisions. I rely on a threshold model that puts citizen perception of the community's willingness to cooperate at the center of the theory. Threshold models are useful because they allow for theorizing how collective misperceptions reduce community cooperation willingness.

Section 2.2 lays out the contours of cycle of silence theory, centering around citizen perceptions of retaliation risk and community cooperation will. Just as terrorist attacks generate fear of further attacks, criminal groups rarely have to retaliate in communities, because their public violence and "focal point" retaliatory attacks similarly inflate risk.

Section 2.3 counters code of silence theory, a prominent alternative explanation for limited cooperation in communities. The theory posits that citizens voluntarily refrain from sharing information with the police in part because criminal groups provide important security and social functions in communities. As I argue, however, the theory is largely misguided considering that criminal groups tend to focus on illicit economic gain, are unreliable security providers, and provide only token economic benefits to communities.

2.1. A THRESHOLD FRAMEWORK

This study adapts threshold models as the theoretical framework through which to analyze citizen cooperation with the police. Threshold models are a useful frame for this study—and for studies of human behavior generally—given that they take into account the role of an individual’s environment in their decision-making process. People generally do not make decisions in a vacuum absent the influence of others. Whether individuals are conscious of it or not, the structure of a decision is set by those around them who influence their choices. Thus, without taking into consideration the aggregate of individual decisions in a community, it is difficult to fully grasp why an individual makes a decision that he or she does.

The threshold framework, in the context of The Information Game, looks at citizens’ willingness to share information primarily as a function of whether or not citizens perceive a sufficient number of others in a community would also share information. The framework has two moving parts: The first part is “community cooperation will,” which refers to *the proportion of the community that are willing to share information with the police*. The second part is “cooperation thresholds,” which refers to *the level of community cooperation will citizens require before they would be willing to share information with the police*.⁸ A threshold, in other words, is the switching point where a citizen assesses that the benefits of information-sharing exceed its costs.

Although this study presents the first application of a threshold framework to police-citizen cooperation, the framework has broad applicability. The models were introduced, in the 1970s, by economist Thomas Schelling,⁹ who sought to explain how

8. Thresholds can also be considered equivalent to “antecedent opinions” where high thresholds equate to strong antecedents. Sunstein and Furth-Matzkin show that exposure to the majority opinion moves opinions on government policy toward the majority unless “antecedent opinions are fixed and firm.” See Meirav Furth-Matzkin and Cass R. Sunstein, *Social Influences on Policy Preferences*, SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 2816595 (Rochester, New York: Social Science Research Network, December 7, 2016).

9. Thomas C. Schelling, *Micromotives and Macrobehavior* (New York, 2006).

communities become segregated, and by sociologist Mark Granovetter,¹⁰ who looked at how riots form. Since the original Schelling-Granovetter formulation, scholars have applied the models to explain decisions ranging from fans destroying property at college basketball games in the United States¹¹ to participation in anti-Soviet resistance movement in the Baltic region.¹² In this later context, prospective resistance fighters think to themselves, as political scientist Roger Petersen articulates, “I will rebel if X percent of others also rebel.”¹³

2.1.1 Community Cooperation Will

Uncertainty is the fundamental decision-making challenge that citizens in communities with criminal groups face. Citizens generally have a preference for their personal safety and community safety more broadly. Cooperation comes with the potential trade-off of improving community safety while risking personal safety. If human cognition allowed for observing and processing an infinite amount of information, citizens could predict with perfect accuracy if their cooperation would improve community safety without threatening their personal safety. Uncertainty comes into play, however, because personal experiences, discussions with their social network, media reports, and other channels only expose citizens to a minuscule amount of the universe of relevant information. And, from this minuscule amount of information, the limits of human cognition allow for processing and retaining only a small portion of the information.

The uncertainty is why citizens in communities with criminal groups, as humans do in many contexts, rely on cognitive heuristics—that is, easy mental shortcuts—to

10. Mark Granovetter, “Threshold Models of Collective Behavior,” *American Journal of Sociology* 83, no. 6 (1978): 1420–1443.

11. Jean Marie McGloin and Zachary R. Rowan, “A Threshold Model of Collective Crime,” *Criminology* 53, no. 3 (2015): 484–512.

12. Petersen, *Resistance and rebellion*. Chong, for his part, applies thresholds to participation in the U.S. civil rights movement. See Dennis Chong, *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, June 18, 1991).

13. Petersen, *Resistance and rebellion*, p. 22.

judge what is the appropriate action or belief to adopt in any given circumstance.¹⁴ In a sense, people make a judgement about what is the “best bet” with the limited information available to them.¹⁵ A particularly potent cognitive heuristic is social proof: the idea that people see a behavior or attitude as correct if others have adopted it as well.¹⁶ Demonstrative of its potency, scholars have observed that people are more likely to recycle,¹⁷ pay taxes,¹⁸ and vote,¹⁹ among other behaviors, if they are aware of others doing the same.²⁰

Social proof’s primary function in The Information Game is signaling to citizens the appropriate disposition to adopt with respect to sharing information with the police. Citizens take their perception of others’ willingness to share information as a guide to whether or not they should themselves. If others are believed to be willing to come forward, a citizen becomes more inclined to cooperate. However, if few others are believed willing to come forward, a citizen becomes disinclined to cooperate.

Citizens’ level of awareness of others cooperating influences cooperation decisions in part by shifting citizen judgements about the perceived risk of cooperation. Higher community cooperation signals that others have shared information with the police

14. See for example Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, “Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases,” *Science* 185, no. 4157 (1974): 1124–1131.

15. Paul Slovic, *The Perception of Risk* (London: Earthscan, April 3, 2000), p. 41.

16. Robert B. Cialdini, *Influence: Science and Practice* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, August 8, 2008), p. 99.

17. Robert B. Cialdini, “Crafting Normative Messages to Protect the Environment,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 12, no. 4 (2003): 105–109.

18. George Loewenstein, Cass R. Sunstein, and Russell Golman, “Disclosure: Psychology Changes Everything,” *Annual Review of Economics* 6, no. 1 (2014): 391–419.

19. Alan S. Gerber and Todd Rogers, “Descriptive Social Norms and Motivation to Vote: Everybody’s Voting and so Should You,” *Journal of Politics* 71, no. 1 (2009): 178–191.

20. Different academic disciplines use different but analogous terms to describe social proof. It is known in its original psychology conceptualization simply as “social influence” or “conformity.” See Solomon E. Asch, “Studies of independence and conformity: I. A minority of one against a unanimous majority,” *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied* 70, no. 9 (1956): 1–70. Political scientists call the influence that other legislators have on each other and the influence elite opinion has on citizens as “cue-taking.” See Adam Zelizer, “Is Position-Taking Contagious? Evidence of Cue-Taking from Two Field Experiments in a State Legislature” (2018) and Martin Gilens and Naomi Murakawa, “Elite Cues and Political Decision-Making,” in *Research in Micropolitics*, eds. Michael X. Delli Carpini, Leonie Huddy, and Robert Y. Shapiro, vol. 6 (Elsevier, 2002), 15–50. Communication scholars call it “social conventions.” See Damon Centola et al., “Experimental evidence for tipping points in social convention,” *Science* 360, no. 6393 (2018): 1116–1119.

and have remained safe doing so. In other words, the awareness of others being willing to cooperate—even without knowing who those community members are—offers social proof that cooperation is potentially safe. Others would not be willing to come forward if not, the thinking goes from the citizen perspective. Furthermore, more community members being seen as willing to cooperate potentially makes it more difficult for criminal groups to identify and retaliate against those that do cooperate, thus increasing “safety in numbers”—a dynamic Petersen shows in the context of resistance movements.²¹

In addition to the safety mechanism, perceived community cooperation willingness might increase citizens’ inclination to reciprocate contributions made by other community members. As the Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom famously documents in the context of natural resource usage, individuals are often willing to contribute to the responsible use of a resource as long as others also do the same.²² In the context of communities with criminal groups, citizens might see sharing information as contributing to a public good of safety in their community and become more inclined to cooperate when others are seen willing to do so.

2.1.2 Cooperation Thresholds

Each citizen in a community has a perception of the proportion of others in their community willing to cooperate. And, at every proportion of perceived community cooperation will, a citizen has some judgement of the costs and benefits of sharing information. Per the social proof dynamic, the net benefits from cooperation increase as a greater share of the community is willing to come forward. Only when a given proportion of community cooperation results in the perceived benefits exceeding the perceived costs does a citizen become willing to cooperate. This proportion of the

21. Petersen, *Resistance and rebellion*.

22. Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

community is the citizens cooperation threshold.

Where citizen set their thresholds depends on any number of perceived costs or benefits. On one end of the spectrum, some individuals may require just 5% of others being willing to come forward before they are. These “first-movers” might include community safety advocates, generally risk-tolerant individuals, those that have a community status protecting them from retaliation (e.g., pastors), or the like. On the other end of the spectrum, some individuals may have high thresholds, perhaps requiring 95% of the community being willing to come forward. These “late-movers” might include populations who are particularly vulnerable to retaliation.

For some citizens, the threshold might not matter. They might have a threshold of 0%, so they would be willing to cooperate even if no others would, whereas others may have a threshold above 100%, meaning that they would not be willing to cooperate if the entire community were.

In aggregate, the distribution of citizens’ cooperation thresholds determines the level of information-sharing in any given community. Figure 2.1—adapted from models by Granovetter²³ and Kuran²⁴—shows a hypothetical community’s cooperation equilibrium, assuming that citizens had full awareness of retaliation likelihood and community cooperation will. The figure’s vertical axis indicates community cooperation will—that is, the proportion of the community that is willing to share information. The horizontal axis indicates the threshold values, the proportion of the community that any given citizen requires is willing to cooperate before being willing themselves.

The blue “propagation curve” indicates the cumulative proportion of citizens with thresholds at or below the given threshold value. The goal from the perspectives of the police and community safety advocates is for the community to reach its full cooperation potential. The full cooperation potential, as I conceptualize it here, is the

23. Granovetter, “Threshold Models of Collective Behavior,” p. 1426.

24. Kuran, *Private Truths, Public Lies*, pp. 64-71.

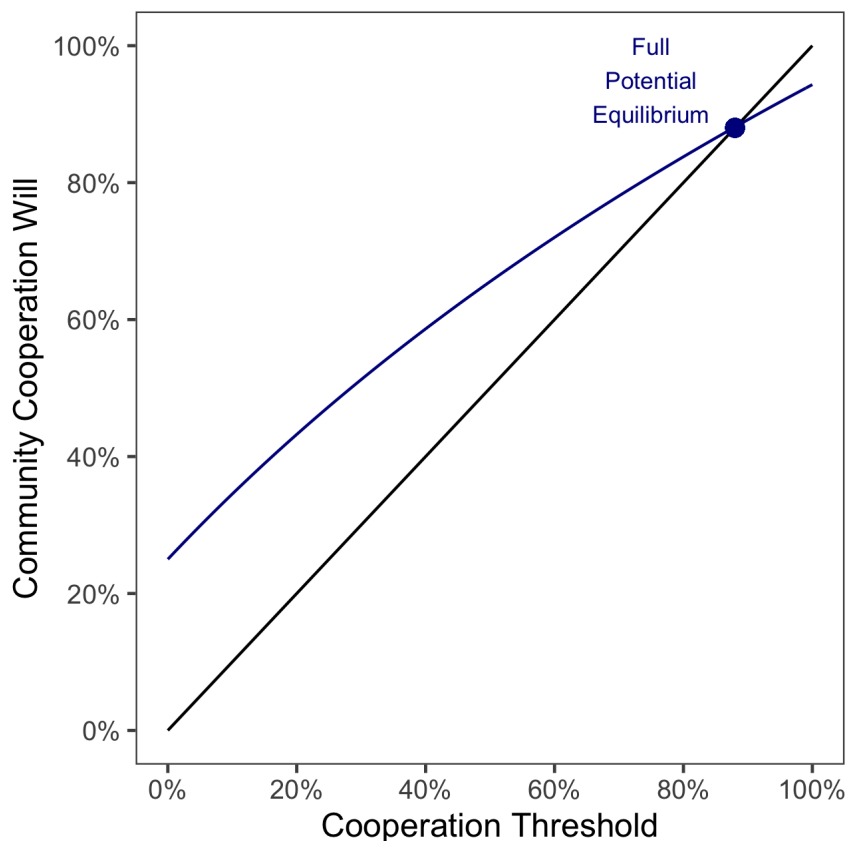


Figure 2.1: Full Potential Cooperation Will in Communities

A community reaches its full cooperation potential where the cumulative distribution of cooperation thresholds equals the threshold value. The intersection of the propagation curve in blue with the equality diagonal in black indicates the potential level of cooperation will that a community can reach with thresholds at that distribution.

point where the community maximizes the amount of cooperation will given its distribution of thresholds, assuming citizens have full awareness of retaliation likelihood and community cooperation will. The community reaches this equilibrium when the share of citizens at or below a given threshold equals the proportion of the community willing to cooperate. On the figure, the intersection between the propagation curve and black “equality diagonal” represents the full cooperation equilibrium.

The hypothetical community in Figure 2.1 has the potential to reach 90% of the community being willing to cooperate. To show how the equilibrium is reached, assume that the initial expectation among community members is that nobody else

is willing to cooperate. Where the propagation curve intersects the left vertical axis is the proportion of the community willing to come forward even if nobody else does. In this case, 25% of the community have 0% thresholds and thus would be willing to cooperate when no others are. As indicated by the propagation curve, roughly 50% of citizens have thresholds at or below 25%, so 50% of the community would now be willing to share information. Subsequently, all those with thresholds at or below 50% now would be willing to share information.

The level of cooperation continues to rise until the proportion of the community at or below a given threshold equals that threshold value. In this case, 90% of the community has a threshold at or below 90% so that amount represents the community's full cooperation potential. The result means that only about 10% of community members would not be willing to share information. Importantly, if the propagation curve exits at the top of the graph, thereby never intersecting the diagonal, it indicates that the community can reach 100% cooperation will. In this case, the distribution of thresholds are such that all the community would be willing to share information even if not all others were willing to do the same.

2.1.3 Partial Cooperation

Survey evidence, along with anecdotes, suggest that communities often do not reach their full cooperation potential.

The underreporting of crime by victims is a well-known problem,²⁵ with more than half of violent crimes in the United States going unreported to the police.²⁶ According to the World Justice Project (WJP) survey of citizens in 113 countries, 59% of attempted extortion incidents were not reported.²⁷ Underreporting is particularly

25. Min Xie and Eric P. Baumer, "Crime Victims' Decisions to Call the Police: Past Research and New Directions," *Annual Review of Criminology* 2, no. 1 (2019): 217–240.

26. Lynn Langton, Christopher Krebs, and Hope Smiley-McDonald, "Victimizations Not Reported to the Police, 2006-2010," *Special Report, National Crime Victimization Survey*, 2012, 18.

27. *General Population Poll*.

problematic in places with criminal groups. In Mexico, the 2017 crime victimization survey found more than 6.7 million extortion incidents whereas less than 6,000 cases were brought to the justice system that same year.²⁸ In El Salvador, MS-13 and Barrio 18 extract “protection” fees from the population, yet, according to a Christian charity worker, the payments remain “shrouded in silence: people are threatened and forced to leave their homes in silence, since it is safer than filing a [police] complaint.”²⁹

Like victims, witnesses also underreport crime. According to one study, citizens call 911 for just 12% of shootings in high-crime neighborhoods of Washington, DC.³⁰

As one would expect, in places with terrorist and insurgent groups, authorities face a similar problem. Scholar Annette Idler finds in her study of Colombia’s border with Venezuela and Ecuador that citizens often remain silent. As a cleric in Ecuador put it, “Here, absolute silence reigns. You will never get anything out of anyone... People won’t tell you anything. People know who is helping [the guerrilla] with medicine, who facilitates support, which authorities are involved in these things. But they won’t tell you.”³¹

In this same vein, journalist Ioan Grillo describes failures to arrest the Jamaican drug lord Christopher “Dudus” Coke:

Jamaican police officers did try and build up charges against Dudus [...].
But their problem was that they could not get any witnesses; people
were either too loyal or too scared; anyone who testified against Dudus in
Jamaica risked imminent death.³²

28. “National Survey of Victimization and Perception of Public Security (ENVIPE) 2017,” National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (INEGI), 2018, accessed April 8, 2020, <https://en.www.inegi.org.mx/programas/envipe/2017>.

29. Edgardo Ayala, “Gang Violence Drives Internal Displacement in El Salvador,” Inter Press Service, October 7, 2016, accessed October 9, 2016, http://www.ipsnews.net/2016/10/gang-violence-drives-internal-displacement-in-el-salvador/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=gang-violence-drives-internal-displacement-in-el-salvador.

30. Jillian B. Carr and Jennifer L. Doleac, “The geography, incidence, and underreporting of gun violence: new evidence using ShotSpotter data” (April 2016).

31. Annette Idler, *Borderland Battles: Violence, Crime, and Governance at the Edges of Colombia’s War* (New York: Oxford University Press, January 25, 2019).

32. Grillo, *Gangster Warlords*, p. 335.

This assessment lays bare competing explanations of why people hold back information: “too loyal” or “too scared.” The central thesis of this study is that fear, as posited in cycle of silence theory, much more than loyalty to criminal groups, as posited in code of silence theory, underpins citizens’ reluctance to cooperate.

Put into the threshold framework, the code of silence theory suggests that there is little cooperation will in communities given citizen support for criminal groups. Per this theory, citizens are voluntarily holding back information. This support would lower the distribution of cooperation thresholds such that the cumulative proportion of the community willing to cooperate equals a lower threshold value. In this scenario, the support for criminal groups means that the propagation curve in Figure 2.1 intersects the equality diagonal at a lower point. In contrast, per cycle of silence theory, which I detail in the next section, suggests that citizens generally want to come forward but risk inflation and the hiding of social proof creates an equilibrium of cooperation will below the communities’ full potential.

2.2. CYCLE OF SILENCE THEORY

Figure 2.2 lays out how criminal groups constrain cooperation. Fear is the primer that initiates the cycle. Criminal groups engaging in public violence against each other and retaliation incidents spark fear in citizens in a similar fashion that terrorism does. The fear, as an emotional response, inflates the perceived likelihood that cooperators face retaliation. The retaliation risk—both real and inflated—reduces information-sharing directly. That retaliation risk reduces information-sharing is well-recognized by scholars and observers. What is less well-recognized is the inflation of the perceived risk, which allows criminal groups to wield influence over communities despite rarely engaging in retaliation.

Also little-recognized is that the violence has a secondary effect: it reduces cit-

izens' perception of the willingness of others in their community to come forward. The risk drives those who are predisposed toward cooperation to hide their disposition from others. In doing so, citizens are less aware of cooperation norms, which leads to a collective underestimation of the proportion of the community willing to share information with the police. In other words, it leads to norm deflation. Given the potency of social proof in influencing cooperation decisions, the underestimation reduces information-sharing as citizens shape their attitudes and behaviors to be in line with those believed to be held by the community at large.

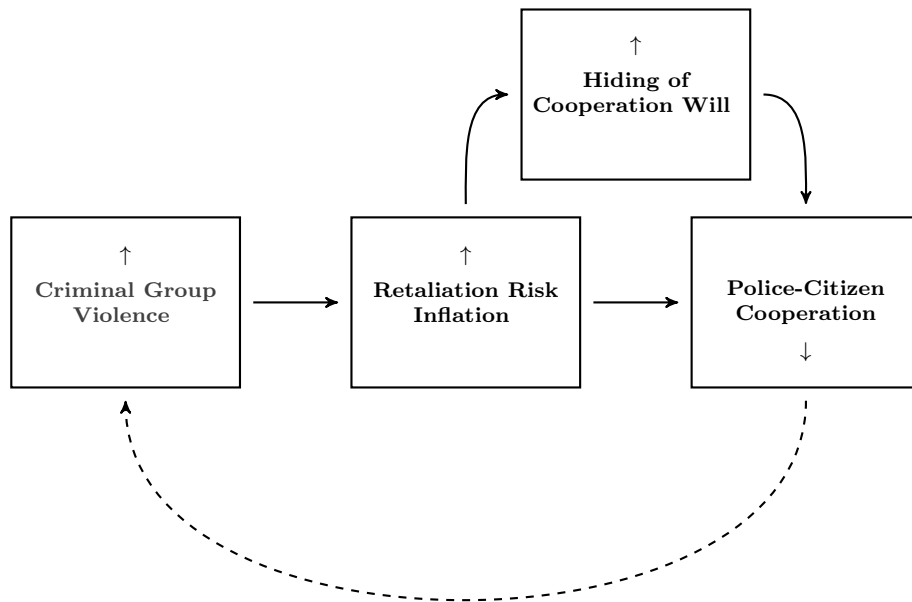


Figure 2.2: Cycle of Silence

Cycle of silence theory helps explain why citizens refrain from cooperating with the police. Fear from violence increases the perceived and real retaliation risk against cooperators. The risk in turn pushes those that are willing to cooperate to hide their disposition from others, creating a collective underestimation of cooperation will in communities. The perceived retaliation risk and underestimated cooperation will reduce police-citizen cooperation. With limited cooperation, criminal groups have the space to engage in further violence, which reinforces the cycle of silence. The arrow between police-citizen cooperation and violence is dashed to indicate that I assume, rather than empirically test, this link.

As discussed in Chapter 1, information from citizens is critical for preventing violence and holding perpetrators accountable. Without information from citizens, police struggle to prevent crimes and arrest perpetrators. In the absence of arrests,

police unintentionally communicate to criminals that further violence will be met with little or no punishment, as for instance political scientists Carol Kohfeld and John Sprague, among others, have found.³³ The violence in turn reinforces the perceived risk of retaliation. For the purposes of this study, I largely assume the link between reduced cooperation and further violence, as represented by the arrow in Figure 2.2 being dashed. I do so, because focusing on this link would simply repeat a largely evident hypothesis.

In all, the goal of cycle of silence theory is to elucidate key variables that reduce police-citizen cooperation. The arrows displayed in Figure 2.2, however, are by no means the only influences at work; an arrow arguably could be drawn that points from every variable to every other variable given the myriad potential mechanism through which they influence each other.

Cycle of silence theory should not be misconstrued to imply that citizens base their cooperation decisions on irrational beliefs.

The rational-choice paradigm, in its traditional forms, assumes that a citizen acts as a *homo economicus* (“the economic man”) with the ability to predict the consequences of their behavior and act accordingly. From this perspective, citizens perceiving risk as higher than it is would be considered at best “boundedly rational,” because limitations to information access and human cognition lead to the misperception.³⁴

It is unclear, however, if bounded rationality sufficiently considers the role of emo-

33. Carol W. Kohfeld and John Sprague, “Demography, Police Behavior, and Deterrence,” *Criminology* 28, no. 1 (1990): 111–136.

34. Herbert Alexander Simon, *Models of Man: Social and Rational* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, January 1, 1957). The concept of bounded rationality is used to explain—implicitly or explicitly—collective misperceptions that exist in many contexts outside of communities with criminal groups. Examples of collective misperceptions are myriad. Americans perceive that crime is rising even though it is on the decline. See Jane Esberg and Jonathan Mummolo, “Explaining Misperceptions of Crime” (2018). Saudi men underestimate others’ support for women joining the workforce. See Leonardo Bursztyn, Alessandra L. Gonzalez, and David Yanagizawa-Drott, “Misperceived Social Norms: Female Labor Force Participation in Saudi Arabia,” June 2018, 66. Relatedly, U.S. state representatives overestimate their constituencies’ conservatism. See David E. Broockman and Christopher Skovron, “Bias in Perceptions of Public Opinion among Political Elites,” *American Political Science Review*, March 2018, 1–22.

tion in rational decision-making. Personal safety sits at the base of humans' hierarchy of needs, so rational choices would be decisions that are expected to maximize safety.³⁵ Fear, for its part, furthers the safety imperative. As Petersen highlights in the context of political conflict, it helps civilians caught amid war avoid danger by triggering fight or flight responses.³⁶ In the context of police-citizen cooperation, fear inflates the perceived retaliation risk, which makes citizens less likely to share information. A citizen refraining from cooperating largely eliminates retaliation risk. From this perspective, emotions are in a sense strategically rational.³⁷ Looking at retaliation risk in isolation, citizens perceiving inflated risk arguably becomes *more* rational than having an accurate risk perception, because it eliminates the likelihood of retaliation.

It could be argued, from a rational choice perspective, that retaliation risk inflation nonetheless is irrational given that it pushes citizens to protect themselves against retaliation at the expense of protecting themselves against other risks. Criminal group violence has collateral damage that often harms citizens and the community, as discussed in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.4). And, information from citizens is an important component for addressing the violence. Retaliation risk inflation preventing citizens from coming forward increases the risk that they will face collateral damage. However, considering that violence is at the root of risk inflation, one would expect that the violence to inflate not just retaliation risk but also the collateral damage risk. The collateral damage risk inflation might have the countervailing effect of pushing citizens toward information sharing. Thus, when taking into account both types of risk, risk inflation does not necessarily lead to an irrational choice of non-cooperation.

35. A.H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943): 370–396; Douglas T. Kenrick et al., "Renovating the Pyramid of Needs: Contemporary Extensions Built Upon Ancient Foundations," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 5, no. 3 (2010): 292–314.

36. Roger D. Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

37. This perspective draws on Ronald De Sousa, *The Rationality of Emotion* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: A Bradford Book, March 14, 1990) and Nassim Nicholas Taleb, "How to be Rational about Rationality," INCERTO, August 21, 2017, accessed April 13, 2019, <https://medium.com/incerto/how-to-be-rational-about-rationality-432e96dd4d1a>.

2.2.1 Violence and Terroristic Fear

Emotion—that is, a complex reaction to a given situation—plays an important role in inflating risk perception.³⁸ Specifically, per the cycle of silence theory, the emotional response of fear among citizens increases the perceived risk of cooperating. Lab-based psychology studies show that, whereas anger lowers people’s perception of risk levels, fear raises the perceived risk of a given situation.³⁹ Thus, when an event triggers fear, it heightens people’s prioritization of security—a phenomenon that scholars have observed with respect to political resistance in places ranging from the Baltics⁴⁰ to Zimbabwe.⁴¹ Cycle of silence theory posits that this link between fear and heightened perceived risk also applies with respect to police-citizen cooperation in that fear drives risk inflation.

The source of the fear in communities with criminal groups is likely, in social science vernacular, “overdetermined,” meaning that it stems from multiple causes that are not easily separated and measured. Among the myriad plausible factors, I argue that criminal groups engaging in public violence including severe incidents of retaliation are important generators of the fear that inflate risk.

Criminal group violence, even though it does not generally target citizens, generates fear among citizens nonetheless. Criminal groups often became ensnared in battles with each other or the state; and in doing so, they use spectacular levels of brutality in an attempt to communicate strength and willpower. Take, for example, in 1992, the Sicilian mafia, known as Cosa Nostra, assassinated two of the country’s top anti-mafia prosecutors with massive bomb blasts. Or, in 2006, *narcotraficantes* (drug traffickers) rolled five decapitated human heads on the dance floor of a bar in

38. Paul Slovic et al., “Risk as analysis and risk as feelings: some thoughts about affect, reason, risk, and rationality,” *Risk Analysis* 24, no. 2 (2004): 311–322.

39. Jennifer S. Lerner and Dacher Keltner, “Fear, Anger, and Risk,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81, no. 1 (2001): 146–159.

40. Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*.

41. Lauren E. Young, “The Psychology of State Repression: Fear and Dissent Decisions in Zimbabwe,” *American Political Science Review* 113, no. 1 (2019): 140–155.

Mexico's Michoacan state as a signal of strength to a rival group.⁴² Such acts generate fear that leads citizens to prioritize safety. A study finds that citizens in Mexico's areas hit hardest by drug-related violence increase citizens' general risk aversion.⁴³ The public violence may be directed at rival criminal groups but it is often done in full view of citizens.⁴⁴ Even if the violence does not target citizens, it plausibly raises the question for them, if criminal groups can do this to each other, what can they do to us?

Citizens also rely on "focal point" retaliation incidents that do occur to judge retaliation risk. People use focal points in general as a way to judge likelihood under conditions of uncertainty.⁴⁵ And, given the uncertainty of consequences for cooperation, citizens look to prior incidents of retaliation to judge the likelihood that they would face retaliation. Importantly, criminal groups need only to engage in such incidents rarely but in a severe manner to generate fear. For example, author Mark Galeotti describes the brutal retaliation incidents during the *suchya voina* (bitches' war) fought in Russia's mid-twentieth century gulags. Suspected informants, he writes, "would have their heads cut off and laid before the guard posts."⁴⁶

The fear generated by criminal group's public violence and focal point retaliation incidents make direct threats unnecessary. A Chicago police sergeant puts it this way: "It's not that a gang has to necessarily go to [citizens] and say, 'Don't say anything.' It's just a given."⁴⁷ The brutality of criminal group violence makes retaliation

42. Grant, "Mexico's gruesome killings."

43. Ryan Brown et al., "Impact of Violent Crime on Risk Aversion: Evidence from the Mexican Drug War," 2017, 43.

44. Similarly, small-scale criminal groups attempt to show strength including by identifying with broader gang structures in order to prevent their rivals from preying on them—a dynamic scholars label "Big Gang Theory." See Marcus Felson, *Crime and Nature Crime and nature* (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2006) and James C. Howell, "Menacing or Mimicking? Realities of Youth Gangs," *Juvenile and Family Court Journal* 58, no. 2 (2007): 39–50.

45. For more on the concept of focal points from a game theoretic perspective, see Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, May 15, 1981).

46. Mark Galeotti, *The Vory: Russia's Super Mafia* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, May 28, 2019).

47. Huppke, "Silent witnesses let killers dodge justice."

appear as “a given” for citizens. Moreover, the “it” is said for them by other citizens who amplify the brutality of incidents through word-of-mouth conversations. “Gossip about crime,” write scholars Wesley Skogan and Michael Maxfield in a seminal study *Coping with Crime*, “seems to magnify some of its more fear-provoking features.”⁴⁸

Criminal group tactics are so potent in part because they are akin to terrorism. Insurgents and terrorists engage in suicide attacks, as the U.S. military’s counterinsurgency manual reads, despite having “little military value” because they “create fear and uncertainty within the populace” and “inflate perceptions of insurgent capabilities.”⁴⁹ Along these lines, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), based in Northern Ireland, weighed these considerations in determining how to respond to those believed cooperating with British authorities. At a planning meeting on what to do about a suspected perpetrator, an IRA militant reportedly put it in the following terms: “if you are going to kill her, put her on the fucking street. What’s the sense of killing her and burying her if no one knows what she was killed for. Better to send a lesson to the locals who might consider becoming touts in the future.”⁵⁰ In all, the brutality of incidents such as these leads to common refrains such as “snitches get stitches!”⁵¹

Violence is the critical mechanism driving the fear that ultimately boosts risk inflation. As political scientist Marika Landau-Wells finds, how people classify risk influences how they think the risk should be mitigated or eliminated.⁵² There is significant variation in whether or not people accurately judge risk. It is not that

48. Wesley G. Skogan and Michael G. Maxfield, *Coping with Crime: Victimization, Fear, and Reactions to Crime in Three American Cities* (Northwestern University Center for Urban Affairs, Reactions to Crime Project, June 1980), p. 392.

49. Luz. E. Nagle and Bolaji Owasanoye, “Fearing the Dark: The Use of Witchcraft to Control Human Trafficking Victims and Sustain Vulnerability,” *Southwestern Law Review* 45 (January 1, 2016): 561.

50. Patrick Radden Keefe, *Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland* (Anchor, February 26, 2019).

51. dlee, “Urban Dictionary: snitches get stitches!,” Urban Dictionary, December 3, 2004, accessed November 21, 2018, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=snitches%20get%20stitches%21>.

52. Marika Landau-Wells, “Dealing with danger: Threat Perception and Policy Preferences” (Doctoral Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2018).

people overestimate all risks. Rather, they tend to overestimate risks that involve intentional violence.

In a recent study, Jeffrey Friedman asked Americans rank the relative mortality rates of 100 risks.⁵³ Using Friedman’s data, I code the risks to distinguish those that involve intentional violence from those that do not. Figure 2.3 shows the difference between the actual relative rank of a risk with one being the risk with the highest mortality and 100 being the risk with the lowest mortality. A pattern emerges showing, on the one hand, that individuals appear to judge the relative mortality of many non-violent risks (indicated with gray in Figure 2.3) such as disease and natural disasters with reasonably good accuracy or in fact underestimate their mortality. These results suggest that people would not necessarily overestimate the risk of health hazards like the coronavirus.

On the other hand, with the exception of certain types of warfare, respondents showed a tendency to overestimate the mortality of risks involving intentional violence (indicated with red in Figure 2.3). More than twice as many violent risks were overestimated compared to the number of violent risks underestimated. Strikingly, the study’s respondents overrated gang violence by more than any other risk. Whereas gang violence was the fifty-first most deadly risk among the 100 options, respondents ranked it as the fourteenth most deadly risk—a thirty-seven position gap and the largest overestimation between respondent perceptions and the expert-estimated mortality of the risks.

There are some important distinctions between my study and Friedman’s study, which evaluates the relationship between Americans’ risk assessments and policy positions. The Friedman study measures risk from gang violence generally rather than citizen perceptions of retaliation risk in particular—the later being the more relevant risk perception with respect to citizen cooperation decisions. He also surveys the

53. Jeffrey A. Friedman, “Priorities for Preventive Action: Explaining Americans’ Divergent Reactions to 100 Public Risks,” *American Journal of Political Science* 63, no. 1 (2018): 16.

U.S. population as a whole rather than focusing on those residing in communities with criminal groups. However, that his study shows gang violence to be the single most overestimated risk of the 100 evaluated risks—and that Friedman’s study was done completely independently of mine—provides suggestive but strong evidence in support of the claim that criminal group violence inflates perceived retaliation risk.

2.2.2 Risk Inflation

Regardless of how the risk becomes amplified, the risk inflation reduces cooperation thresholds and thus reduces citizen willingness to share information with the police.

Before proceeding, it is important that I specify precisely what I mean by the term “risk.” Mathematically, risk is a simple concept: it is the measure of the likelihood of a hazard—that is, an adverse consequence—multiplied by the severity of that hazard.⁵⁴ Technically-minded analysts such as insurance actuaries generally assess risk by systemically incorporating as much data as possible and developing a model to determine the likelihood and severity of hazards. People, however, do not have the level of information, resources, or time to make these assessments. Rather, they rely on what are known as “risk perceptions”—in effect, intuitive judgements about the likelihood and severity of a given hazard.⁵⁵ In this context, citizens judge the likelihood that they will face retaliation and the severity of that retaliation if they cooperate with the police.

Of risk’s two component parts, this study focuses on citizen perceptions of the probability of retaliation. Generally speaking, probability outweighs severity in a person’s decision-making calculus—a characteristic risk scholars call “probability dominance.” People are much more concerned about the likelihood of a negative event occurring—say, losing a \$5 wager—than they are in the severity of the event—say,

54. *Risk Perception: Theory, Strategies, and Next Steps* (Campbell Institute, 2014).

55. Paul Slovic, “Perception of Risk,” *Science* 236, no. 4799 (1987): p. 280.

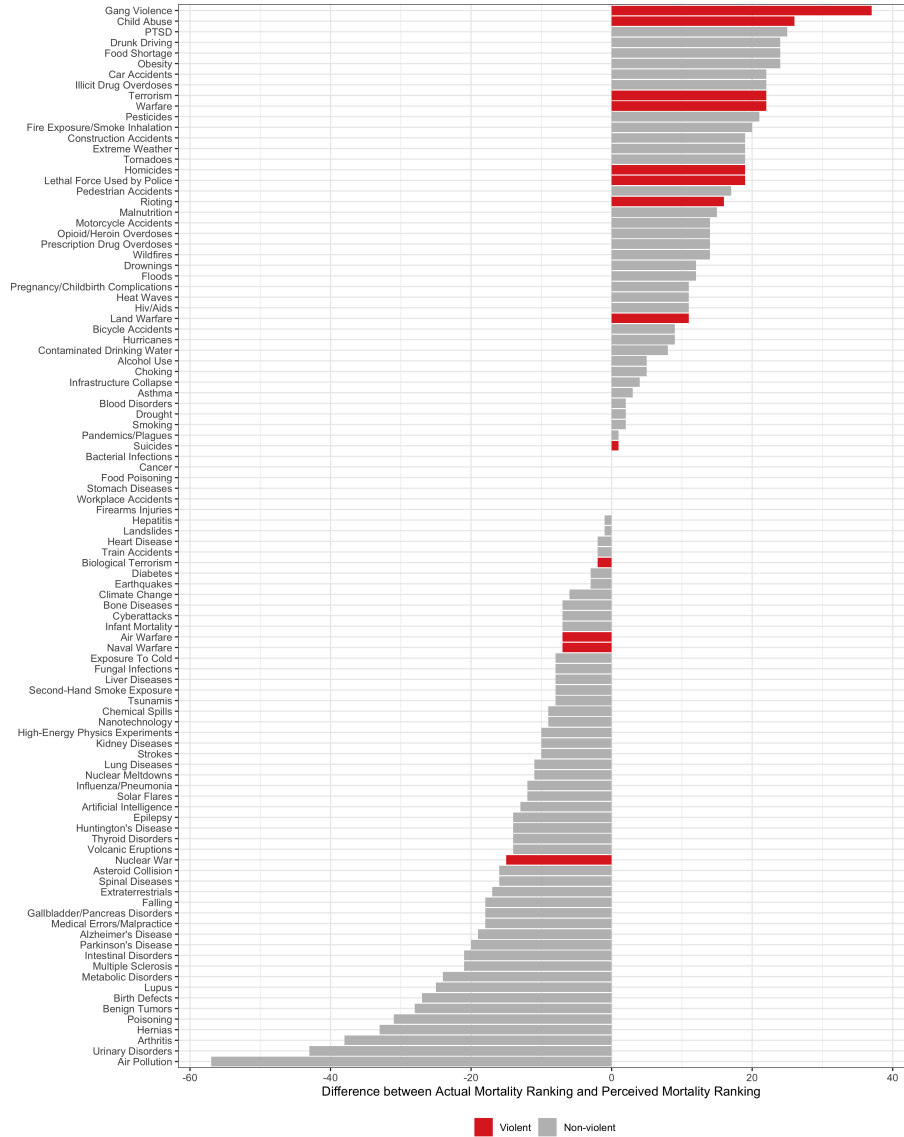


Figure 2.3: Violence and Risk Perception

Americans tend to overestimate risks that involve intentional interpersonal violence more than risks that do not. In particular, gang violence is the most overestimated risk, according to a ranking of 100 risks. The figure displays the difference between expert-estimated mortality rankings of risks and perceived rankings. A ranking of one is the highest mortality risk. *Source:* Jeffrey A. Friedman, “Priorities for Preventive Action: Explaining Americans’ Divergent Reactions to 100 Public Risks,” *American Journal of Political Science* 63, no. 1 (2018): 16.

losing a \$20 instead of a \$5 wager.⁵⁶ People adopt behaviors that limit a negative event from occurring regardless of if the event is of low, moderate, or high severity.

56. Slovic et al., “Risk as analysis and risk as feelings.”

Accordingly, one would expect that citizens, when faced with the potential for a negative event resulting from a cooperation decision, would adopt attitudes and behaviors that prevent the event from occurring—even if not necessarily severe.

Cooperators facing the potential for retaliation by the criminal groups is a widely-cited risk that drives a reluctance to share information with the police. Alex Kotlowitz, a Chicago-based journalist, provides anecdotal evidence in this regard: “One woman I interviewed has a job supporting victims who have been asked to testify in criminal cases, and yet when her teenage son was shot five times she urged him not to work with the police. She worried that he’d be shot again if he did.”⁵⁷ Similarly, radio journalist Sarah Koenig of the *Serial* podcast, observed, “We watched a capital murder case in which witnesses were visibly scared.”⁵⁸

Scholars also cite perceived retaliation risk as limiting cooperation. One study from Mexico finds that *narcotraficantes* (drug traffickers) control of an area limits the inhabitants’ willingness to come forward with information.⁵⁹ In this same vein, economists George Akerlof and Janet Yellen incorporate retaliation risk into their model explaining limited police-citizen cooperation in American communities with gangs. The tendency for citizens to avoid risk can be observed in a variety of circumstances. Civilians, for instance, caught amid civil war often avoid cooperating with any armed actor until one side emerges with sufficient control to protect them against reprisals.⁶⁰

That citizens refrain from cooperation to avoid retaliation is understood; less understood is the extent to which the perceived retaliation likelihood matches the actual retaliation likelihood. Evaluating the gap in perception provides an understanding of

57. Alex Kotlowitz, “Solving Chicago’s Murders Could Prevent More,” *New Yorker*, September 20, 2016, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/solving-chicagos-murders-could-prevent-more>.

58. Sarah Koenig, *A Bird in Jail Is Worth Two on the Street - Transcript*, 4.

59. Alberto Díaz-Cayeros et al., “Living in Fear: Mapping the Social Embeddedness of Drug Gangs and Violence in Mexico” (November 4, 2011).

60. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*; Nathan Constantin Leites and Charles Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority* (Santa Barbara, California: RAND, 1970).

how criminal groups, who often are less-organized and have less resources than the government, are able to force silence on communities. For the most part discussions of retaliation implicitly or explicitly assume that the perceptions match the reality. The perceived retaliation risk is, in Koenig's words, "well supported,"⁶¹ and, according to Kotlowitz "well founded."⁶² To say that retaliation risk exists is not incorrect insofar as there is in fact a risk of retaliation and *any* risk is problematic for cooperators; at the same time, the general statements such as these mask risk inflation.

Anecdotes of cooperators that appear to face little or no consequences for cooperating do not receive the attention that cases of retaliation do, so it is necessary to examine existing reporting closely to identify such cases. Take an anecdote in reporter Paul Murphy's book about crime in Japan. A witness testifies against extortion by a yakuza gang, considered among the most organized types of criminal group in the world:

The jailing of Mr. Miyazawa was a big blow to the yakuza in Nagano, if only because the evidence against him was almost entirely generated by the company director who was brave enough to record their conversations as well as give evidence. The verdict showed the fallibility of the yakuza/rightist business model. If people stand up to them they start to appear weak. Despite his repeatedly expressed terror of Mr. Miyazawa, the company director still testified in court. And while he gave evidence behind a screen, the defendant obviously knew who he was and where he worked. He would be easy to track down.⁶³

Despite the blow to the group from the witnesses' testimony, there is no indication—at least recorded in Murphy's chronicling of the story—that the witness faced reprisal.

61. Koenig, *Episode 04*.

62. Kotlowitz, "Solving Chicago's Murders Could Prevent More."

63. Paul Murphy, *True Crime Japan: Thieves, Rascals, Killers and Dope Heads: True Stories from a Japanese Courtroom* (Routland, Vermont: Tuttle Publishing, August 2, 2016).

Along these same lines, there are many cases where criminal group affiliates remark that cooperators exist or even are common but at the same time give little indication that they face punishment. In one study of St. Louis “street offenders,” many offenders claim that “everyone else” cooperates except for them.⁶⁴ If retaliation were as common as perceived, then “everyone” would be likely to face reprisals, but there is little indication of widespread reprisals. These observations begin to sow cracks the common view that the perception of retaliation risk matches the reality of the risk. In many cases, criminal groups appear not to retaliate against those that come forward and are known to come forward with information—albeit, the evidence on this point is far from systematic.

Figure 2.4 illustrates how the inflated retaliation risk lowers cooperation will in communities. Citizens perceiving retaliation being more likely it is means that they are inclined to adopt higher cooperation thresholds. That is to say, they are likely to require more people be willing to cooperate before they are comfortable doing so themselves. The higher cumulative thresholds lower the propagation curve, shown by the dashed red curve in Figure 2.4. The new propagation curve intersects with the diagonal at a lower point, indicating that community cooperation will equals a lower threshold value.⁶⁵ Whereas without risk inflation in this example, 90% of the community would be willing to cooperate, with risk inflation, just above 60% of the community would be willing to come forward.

2.2.3 Norm Deflation

In addition to directly reducing cooperation, the violence has an important second order effect. It reduces citizens’ propensity to share information by pushing those that support cooperation to hide that support. Those that might otherwise express a

64. Richard Rosenfeld, Bruce A. Jacobs, and Richard Wright, “Snitching and the Code of the Street,” *British Journal of Criminology* 43, no. 2 (2003): p. 298.

65. For simplicity, I assume all citizens overestimate retaliation but there would be a distribution of the magnitude of the misperception.

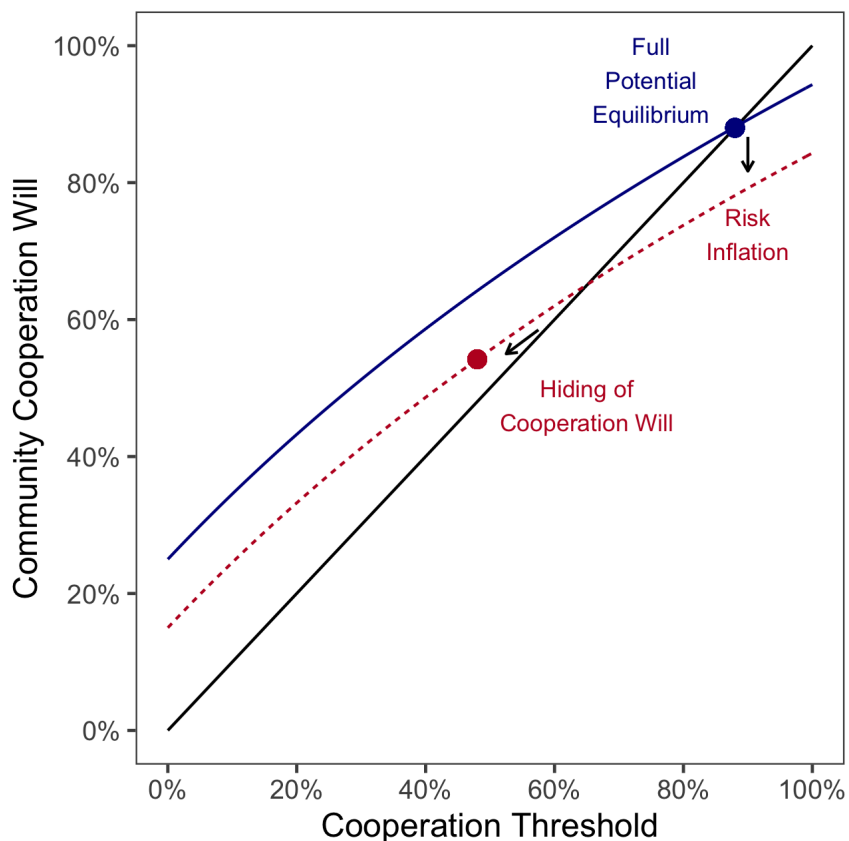


Figure 2.4: Cycle of Silence Effect on Community Cooperation Will

The cycle of silence reduces cooperation in communities via two mechanisms. Risk inflation raises citizen thresholds, which lowers the propagation curve. Real and inflated retaliation risk also forces citizens that are willing to cooperate to hide their willingness. The hiding of cooperation will leads citizens to underestimate the willingness of others to come forward, which further lowers community cooperation.

will to share information with the police instead keep that disposition to themselves. Hiding one's willingness to cooperate rationally appeals to citizens, because it is less risky than being open about information-sharing. An individual willing to cooperate might avoid telling all but trusted friends and family and moreover might hold back public praise for cooperators.

At the same time, the hiding of cooperation will makes it difficult for citizens to discern the true level of support for cooperation in their communities. In this way, it deflates perceived norms favoring cooperation. Because cooperation will is

hidden, citizens become more likely to underestimate the willingness of others in their community to share information. Figure 2.4 shows how the underestimation reduces the level of cooperation will in communities. Given the hiding of cooperation will, the level of social proof no longer equals the proportion of the community willing to cooperate based on the distribution of thresholds. Citizens with thresholds at or below the *underestimated* level of community cooperation willingness, rather than at the *actual* underlying level of cooperation will, have sufficient social proof to be willing to cooperate.

For the hypothetical community depicted in Figure 2.4, citizens underestimate community cooperation will by roughly 10 percentage points (pp), so they perceive that 50% even though 60% of the community has thresholds at or below 60% (taking into account risk inflation). Thus, only 55% would be willing to cooperate given that this is the proportion of the community with thresholds at or below 50%. This lower level of community cooperation becomes the new equilibrium. I call this new equilibrium, (represented with the red point) that take into account the risk inflation and hiding of cooperation will, the partial cooperation equilibrium.

The dynamic of citizens self-censoring an attitude or behavior creating downward pressure on broader support for an attitude or behavior manifests itself in many contexts. Political scientist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann observed a “spiral of silence” in which, among other factors, social isolation led those with minority public opinions to hide their views.⁶⁶ When facing severe repression, people may go even further than self-censoring by engaging in what political scientist Timur Kuran calls “preference falsification.”⁶⁷ Those living under authoritarian regimes feign support for the regimes, which helps explain how communist governments eastern Europe tamped down dissent despite, as their rapid overthrows revealed, unpopularity.⁶⁸

66. Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, “The Spiral of Silence a Theory of Public Opinion,” *Journal of Communication* 24, no. 2 (1974): 43–51.

67. Kuran, *Private Truths, Public Lies*.

68. See for example Susanne Lohmann, “The Dynamics of Informational Cascades: The Monday

Similarly, scholar Annette Idler finds, in her decade-long study of Colombia's border regions with Venezuela and Ecuador, that citizens hide their discussions of non-state armed groups. One citizen from Lago Agrio, Ecuador, put it this way: "You always have to be careful because talking openly about the paramilitaries or the guerrillas produces risks. It's not that we don't talk about this, but only with caution and certain norms because we are in a conflict zone."⁶⁹ In this same way, when it comes to citizens in communities with criminal groups, few topics are more sensitive than willingness to cooperate with the police, which helps explain the prevalence of self-censorship in the context of this study. Citizens do not want to be among the few that are known to support cooperation with the police as it exposes them to undue risk.

With those willing to cooperate hiding their disposition, it potentially leads to apathy among other citizens. If individuals believe that few others are willing to come forward, it makes the prospect of cooperation appear less useful. Citizens might come to the view that if only a small number of people in their community are willing to share information with the police, there is little that their contribution would do. In this way, the norm deflation creates a sense of hopelessness.

2.3. LIMITS OF CODE OF SILENCE THEORY

The crux of cycle of silence theory is that many citizens want to come forward but violence-induced fear prevents them from doing so. A prominent alternative explanation, code of silence theory, makes the fundamentally distinct proposition: citizens do *not* want to share information with the police in the first place. The code—variously

Demonstrations in Leipzig, East Germany, 1989–91," *World Politics* 47, no. 1 (1994): 42–101. Today, such preference falsification is believed to exist among Chinese citizens who tend to hide their disapproval of the regimes to avoid reprisal, according to one study. See Junyan Jiang and Dali L. Yang, "Lying or Believing? Measuring Preference Falsification From a Political Purge in China," *Comparative Political Studies* 49, no. 5 (2016): 600–634.

69. Idler, *Borderland Battles*.

described as a rule,⁷⁰ culture,⁷¹ or mentality—is believed to have its roots in many factors. One of the those factors is view that citizens support criminal groups, because the groups are seen as better protectors of communities’ political and social interests as well as providers of public services than the state.

Within the threshold framework, codes of silence imply that the support for criminal groups significantly raises citizen thresholds such that citizens would require much broader community cooperation will before they were willing to come forward themselves or perhaps raise threshold so high that citizens would not support cooperation regardless of the level of community will.

The most well-known manifestations of the code are the so-called “no snitching” culture and *omertà* code against sharing information. In his seminal work on Italy’s Sicilian mafia, social scientist Diego Gambetta highlights the presence of *omertà* in communities, which he defines as “the capacity for maintaining silence under adverse conditions.”⁷² In the United Kingdom, Stephen Clayman and Layla Skinns highlight a no “snitching” attitude that appears to permeate among the country’s youth. Similarly, legal scholar Randall Kennedy posits that many black American abide by a code of silence, as evidenced by the popularity of the film character “Super Fly,” a drug dealer who was seen as having, in Kennedy’s words, “stuck it to The Man.”⁷³

In many places, codes of silence do not have a distinct name, but scholars and observers nonetheless posit that people refrain from coming forward to the police due to support for criminal groups. In their study of Mexican cartels, economists Tommy Murphy and Martin Rossi argue that it is a “stylized fact”—meaning an empirical reality—that “drug lords have great support in the local communities in which they operate,” because they facilitate improved socio-economic outcomes.⁷⁴

70. Hargrove, “Why Are American Cops So Bad at Catching Killers?”

71. Jim Redden, *Snitch Culture: How Citizens are Turned into the Eyes and Ears of the State* (Venice, California: Feral House, 2000).

72. Gambetta, *The Sicilian Mafia*, p. 35.

73. Randall Kennedy, *Race, Crime, and the Law* (New York: Pantheon, April 29, 1997), p. 27.

74. Tommy E. Murphy and Martín A. Rossi, “Following the poppy trail: Origins and consequences

Sociologist Martin Sanchez-Jankowski posits that “local patriotism” partly underpins community support for Latino gangs in the United States.⁷⁵ Scholar George Borganier situates community support for Los Angeles’s Bloods and Crips gangs within black empowerment ideology promoted by the Black Panthers and other nationalist organizations.⁷⁶

Beyond the scholarship, the notion of a code of silence has taken on a “folk theory” aspect to it, meaning that it has permeated popular culture. Even high-level policymakers subscribe to the theory. Moscow’s former mayor Gavriil Popov, for instance, noted that in the mid-1990s the mafia “fulfill[ed] the role of Robin Hood, distributing wealth.”⁷⁷ False or exaggerated folk theories are important to counter, in their own right. They can establish themselves in the public discourse and potentially lead to discrimination against communities to which they are applied and lead to misguided policymaking.

Code of silence, as a folk theory, is problematic given that it implicitly—and sometimes explicitly—places blame on limited cooperation, and by extension criminal group violence, on citizens themselves. If citizens in fact supported criminal groups, state authorities could point to the support as an excuse for why they fail to address the violence and criminal groups could point to the support in order to suggest that the violence is, in some way, accepted by communities. The perpetuation of a code of silence folk theory is particularly acute in the U.S. context where it has taken on racial implications. “Americans,” scholar Ibram Kendi, writes, “have talked constantly about a no-snitch black culture hampering police investigations, leaving violent criminals on the streets.” But, pointing to data from the National Crime Victimization Survey, Kendi shows that reporting rates of violence against white and black victims are

of Mexican drug cartels,” *Journal of Development Economics* 143 (March 1, 2020): 102433.

75. Martin Sanchez-Jankowski, *Islands in the Street: Gangs and American Urban Society* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1991).

76. George Borganier, “Fanon’s Children: The Black Panther Party and the Rise of the Crips and Bloods in Los Angeles” (Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2011).

77. Galeotti, *The Vory*.

almost identical, undercutting the notion of a, in his words, “uniquely black cultural hostility to snitching.”⁷⁸

In most contexts, however, the empirical reality shows weak support for the claim that citizens support criminal groups. When citizens consider a balance of what the groups provide and what they cost, they often conclude that the groups are a net detractor from the community. Even though criminal groups attempt to position themselves as advocates for communities’ social or political well-being, citizens recognize that their illicit profit-seeking motives drive their behavior. Moreover, some criminal groups may claim to provide security for communities, but citizens tend to see them as unreliable and illegitimate security providers. Finally, the economic benefits and services that the criminal groups provide the community are often either token or forced on citizens.

That criminal groups behave in a profit-seeking manner, providing limited charity and extorting communities should be of little surprise. Criminal groups are in the business of making a profit; and, as Benjamin Lessing highlights, unlike rebel groups, they have little interest in replacing the state.⁷⁹ Thus, they have little incentive to go beyond token service provision as it detracts from their central purpose of illicit economic gain.

Implicit in this argument is that citizens see the police as less problematic than criminal groups. As I discuss in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.1), citizens in communities with criminal groups tend to view the police (and the state more generally) with skepticism but at the same time see them as the least bad option for security provision in their communities.

78. Ibram X. Kendi, “It’s Time for Police to Start Snitching,” *The Atlantic*, May 14, 2018, accessed November 14, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/05/quis-custodiet-ipsos-custodes/560324/>.

79. Lessing, “Logics of Violence in Criminal War.”

2.3.1 Criminal Groups as Community Advocates?

The first mechanism through which criminal groups might garner support from communities—and thus engender a code of silence—is by advocating for the social and political interests of citizens. Their primary purpose of financial gain, however, undermines their attempt to claim the mantle of social and political causes.

Criminal groups might advocate for a cause with which citizens identify, perhaps based on race, ethnicity, or geographic area. This mechanism, in many ways, assumes that the criminal groups are socially embedded in the communities where they operate. This may be true in some cases but closer examination suggests that it is not necessarily the case. Criminal groups seek to expand their control over illicit markets, which requires establishing themselves in communities beyond where they originate. And, as criminologist Frederico Varese’s account of mafias in Italy, Russia, China, and the United States finds, criminal groups are often forced out of their communities by infighting, pressure from rival groups, or prosecution by the state. The result is that the groups have to establish themselves in new areas where they can—as outsiders.⁸⁰

Perhaps in part to make up for the limited social embeddedness that criminal groups have in many communities, they attempt to position themselves as promoting, or purporting to promote, broader political and social causes. However, whether embedded into the community or not, the groups’ primary motive of financial gain supersedes the causes. This prioritization of financial over broader political or social gains generally undermines the goodwill from citizens that the groups attempt to garner.

Take, for instance, South Boston gangster James “Whitey” Bulger, who is said to have been a “hero” to the Irish-American community.⁸¹ Bulger backed the Irish

80. Frederico Varese, *Mafias on the Move: How Organized Crime Conquers New Territories* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, February 24, 2013).

81. Cassy Arsenault, “Whitey Bulger in Southie: A Complicated Legacy,” NBC Boston, October 30, 2018, accessed March 21, 2020, <https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/james-whitey-bulger-in-southie-south-boston-a-complicated-legacy/56752>.

Republican Army (IRA) with financial support and weaponry. His support, however, appeared to be less than genuine. Another South Boston gangster, upon asking for Bulger's blessing to supply the IRA, noted:

Somehow [Bulger's] response seemed shallow and insincere. I think he liked the legitimacy a political cause gave him; I sure know he didn't give a hoot about my people. He gave me his blessing, but it was all just lip service.⁸²

Similarly, Bulger promoted a narrative that he protected South Boston from drugs while at the same time charging "rent" to drug dealers operating in the area.⁸³ The continued circulation of drugs in South Boston likely signaled to citizens Bulger's prioritization of financial gain, often using violent means, over the political and social causes he claimed to support. Symbolizing the resentment that built up toward Bulger, upon news of his 2018 murder in prison, a man at a South Boston bar put it to the *Guardian* newspaper in simple terms: "Satan is waiting."⁸⁴

For their part, the Bloods and Crips gangs, along with their predecessor crews, were born in late-1960s and early-1970s Los Angeles when racial tensions were high. Amid this milieu, some early Crip affiliates professed to support an empowerment agenda, "the spirit that the Crips were created [in] the climate of the Watts Riot...Black people being awakened to...freedom and tired of being treated like slaves...the spirit of self-determination."⁸⁵ Randall Kennedy argues that these perceptions persisted

82. Nee, Farrell, and Blythe, *A Criminal and an Irishman*, p. 145.

83. Mitchell Zuckoff, "FBI in denial as Bulger breaks drug pact in Southie," *Boston.com*, July 23, 1998, accessed November 17, 2018, http://archive.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/1998/07/23/fbi_in_denial_as_bulger_breaks_drug_pact_in_southie.

84. Sarah Betancourt, "'Satan is waiting': South Boston residents on 'Whitey' Bulger's death," *The Guardian*, October 31, 2018, accessed March 21, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/oct/31/james-whitey-bulger-south-boston-residents>.

85. Danifu Bey, *P.O.C.C. Block Report Radio*, *JR Valrey*, Los Angeles, California, November 2005. Originally quoted in Barganier, "Fanon's Children," pp. 63-4. Note that the Crips co-founder Stanley "Tookie" Williams argues that the Crips had little ideological motivations at their founding and were primarily interested in self-protection. See Stanley Tookie Williams, Barbara Becnel, and Tavis Smiley, *Blue Rage, Black Redemption: A Memoir* (New York: Touchstone, November 13, 2007).

with some black Americans, decades later, believing that gangs “represent rebellion” against a white-dominated “system” that marginalizes them.⁸⁶ Despite the professed ideological motives of the early members, the profit motives of the Bloods and Crips were laid bare by their widespread drug trafficking enterprises and violent turf battles.

Perceptions that predominantly-black communities view of Bloods, Crips, and other gangs as a resistance to an oppressive system overlook the reality that many black Americans support greater state intervention—whether through stronger law enforcement and enhanced social services—to dismantle the groups. Political scientist Michael Fortner documents how a “black silent majority” in New York pushed for the Rockefeller Drug Laws that severely increased penalties for narcotics violations, a central source of income for criminal groups.⁸⁷ Like their counterparts in New York, Washington, DC residents saw gangs—and drug crews, in particular—as, a black nationalist group put it, “black-face traitors” rather than advocates for their communities.⁸⁸

Criminal group attempts to build political or social credentials play out in myriad places beyond the United States. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Brazil’s *Comando Vermelho* (Red Command) began as a left-wing self-protection association in Brazil’s prisons.. The group steeped its activities in revolutionary language. According to a Brazilian journalist, “The vocabulary of crime found new words. Robberies were ‘expropriations,’ or ‘taking back.’ A gang became a ‘collective,’ and was baptized with a name like ‘liberation group.’”⁸⁹ To this day, the gang subscribes to the motto “Peace, Justice, and Liberty” and its leaders profess to be “the resistance.”⁹⁰ Despite such rhetoric, the group’s widespread drug trafficking and violence make clear that

86. Quote by Robert Wideman in Kennedy, *Race, Crime, and the Law*, pp. 26-27.

87. Michael Javen Fortner, *Black Silent Majority: The Rockefeller Drug Laws and the Politics of Punishment* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015).

88. James Forman Jr., *Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2017).

89. Brazilian journalist Carlos Amorim, quoted in Grillo, *Gangster Warlords*, p. 66.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Red Command's members have largely abandoned its ideological foundations in favor of organized crime.

In Asia, Japan's yakuza attempt to garner popular support by adopting ultra-nationalist causes. In the lightly populated Chino City, the yakuza used *gaisensha* (propaganda vehicles), which are vans and trucks fit with loudspeakers that blare nationalist and militaristic messages, often disparaging critics of Japan's imperial endeavors. From a code of silence perspective, such defense of Japanese culture and history might garner genuine support for the yakuza. The yakuza propaganda vehicles, however, were in large part an extortion tools. Murphy explains, one yakuza boss was known for "threatening to plague businesses with the hullabaloo from his propaganda vehicles if they didn't pay up."⁹¹

2.3.2 Criminal Groups as Security Providers?

Providing security is a second mechanism through which criminal groups might garner support, but they generally prove to be unreliable security providers.

Chapter 1 makes clear the role criminal groups have in violence, meaning that in communities with criminal groups, the state generally fails to provide order and security. Thus, at times to fill the vacuum, the groups attempt to position themselves as security providers for communities. Take for instance, Mexico's *La Familia Michoacana* (The Michoacán Family).⁹² Announcing its presence, the cartel published in ad *La Voz de Michoacán* promising to protect citizens of the state against the rival Zeta cartel. "Our sole motive is that we love our state and are no longer willing to see our people's dignity trampled on," the ad reassured the population. It went on to promise to "eradicate from the state of Michoacan kidnapping, extortion in person and by telephone, paid assassinations, express kidnapping, tractor-trailer and auto

91. Murphy, *True Crime Japan*.

92. The group later morphed into the Knights Templar cartel.

theft.”⁹³

In select circumstances, criminal groups do provide a modicum of order, generally over individuals in the groups themselves or within close proximity to it. Yakuza prohibit their members from engaging in robbery or other types street crimes.⁹⁴ A San Antonio, Texas police officer recognizes that some gas station owners tolerate drug crews operating out of their business locations, because, in the officer’s words, “The dealers are kinda like security for them keeping the other riff raf in line.”⁹⁵ Some groups go beyond providing law enforcement function, and even attempt to administer justice. Russian *vory v zakone* (thieves in law) reportedly established “courts” for judging people (only non-affiliates of the groups) that allegedly broke their self-established legal code.⁹⁶

However, criminal groups generally prove to be unreliable security providers and often become predatory toward the population that the purport to protect. *La Familia*, according to Michoacan shopkeeper “presented itself as the answer, a way to protect us. We thought it would. But we fell into a trap. Nazario and his mob were just as bad as the Zetas. And the payments we made would turn into extortion.”⁹⁷ In his study of American street gangs, Sanchez-Jankowski recounts how the Pink Eagles gang of New York increasingly failed to provide protection against robberies and assaults and thus lost support of the community. “[W]hen the police came requesting information about gang members,” Sanchez-Jankowski writes, “they were given it.”⁹⁸

Figure 2.5 shows suggestive evidence of a systematic relationship between the presence of criminal groups and community insecurity. I combine the country-level estimates of criminal organization power⁹⁹ with the WJP’s population survey mea-

93. Grillo, *Gangster Warlords*, p. 259.

94. Murphy, *True Crime Japan*.

95. SAT643 2017.

96. Svetlana Stephenson, *Gangs of Russia: From the Streets to the Corridors of Power* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, October 15, 2015), p. 152.

97. Grillo, *Gangster Warlords*, p. 260.

98. Sanchez-Jankowski, *Islands in the Street*, p. 203.

99. I discuss the measurement of criminal organization power in Chapter 1.

sure of perceived neighborhood safety. To measure the latter, I take the average of respondents' perception of neighborhood safety on an ordinal scale from "very unsafe" (1) to "very safe" (4) in each of the available countries. The data show a clear negative correlation between respondents' rating of the safety of their neighborhoods and the power of criminal groups, which suggests that the groups provide more insecurity than security.

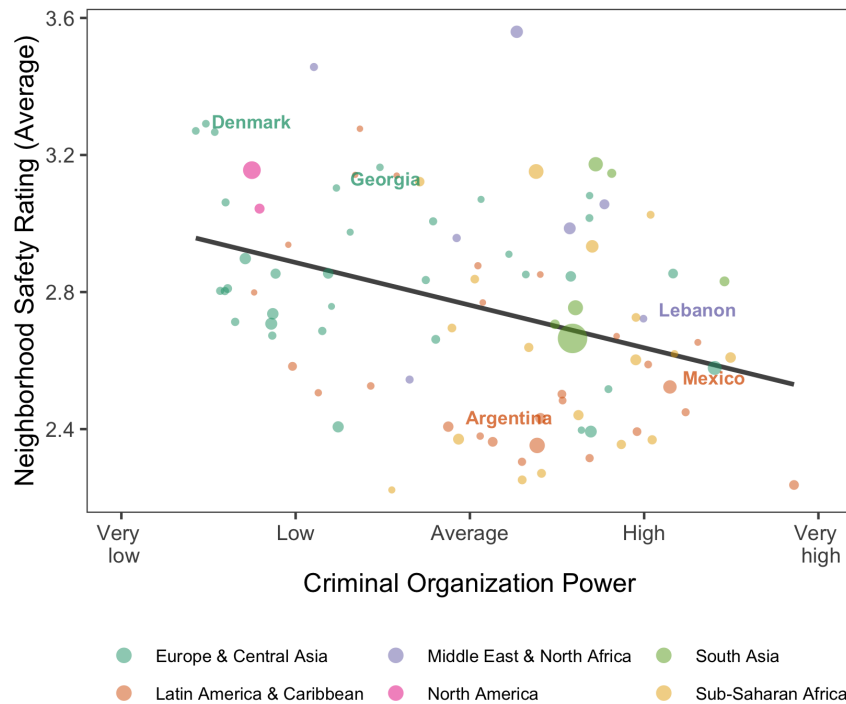


Figure 2.5: Criminal Organization Power and Community Safety

Citizens rating of neighborhood safety is negatively associated with the presence of criminal groups. The size of the points represents the total population of a given country. *Sources: General Population Poll (World Justice Project, 2017); Criminal Justice Qualified Respondents Survey (World Justice Project, 2017).*

2.3.3 Criminal Groups as Economic Benefactors?

Criminal groups might also garner support by providing economic benefits, generally through a form of public service provision. The services that they provide, however, are usually token in nature or forced upon the community in an extortive manner.

Many groups actively attempt to cultivate an image as Robin Hoods that give back to their communities. In Russia, author Mark Galleotti describes the “mythical” image that Chechen gangsters nurtured:

The *abreg* is a self-sufficient and wily figure, a Caucasus Robin Hood, who often gathers a gang of like-minded daredevils around him, raiding the rich, feeding the poor, protecting the weak and dismaying the corrupt.¹⁰⁰

In Mexico, *narcocorridos* (drug ballads) praising cartel leaders often appear on radio and online. They are made to appear as organic tributes but cartels often either pay or coerce singers into performing them.¹⁰¹ One *narcocorrido*, titled “El Más Buscado” (The Most Pursued Man), praising El Chapo includes lyrics such as:

*He came down from the mountains with an objective
And he sold oranges when he was a poor little boy
With his faith well placed, he set out on his path
Without fear of his life, without fear of danger
....
His people admire him for being a battle-hardened veteran
And for being humble despite living the high life
....
They keep offering \$5 million
For someone to turn him in or snitch on him
....
With money and men, he continues supporting us
A powerful machine keeps working¹⁰²*

100. Galeotti, *The Vory*.

101. Ioan Grillo, *El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, November 13, 2012).

102. Ariel Nuno, [English lyrics] Ariel Nuño - “El Mas Buscado (Chapo Guzman)” (10 best narcocorridos 5/10) (April 16, 2014).

Likewise, in Italy, the Camorra mafia boss Raffaele Cutolo, known as *'O Professore* (The Professor), reportedly declared himself “king of the Camorra,” justifying his declaration with the claim, “I take from the rich and give to the poor.”¹⁰³

The self-promotion may be accompanied by token service provision. In 2018, El Chapo’s former security chief, for instance, distributed Christmas gift packages with household supplies.¹⁰⁴ Ironically, *La Familia*’s former leader, Nazario, known as *El Más Loco* (The Craziest One) opened drug rehabilitation centers for addicts as the cartel ran a massive drug trafficking operation.¹⁰⁵ Italian-American mafia bosses in Chicago, for their part, would distribute Italian sausages during Christmas time.¹⁰⁶

The token nature of service provision is often insufficient to prevent cooperation. Scholar Svetlana Stephenson describes how a Russian gang leader provided benefits to the community:

Khaider gave struggling pensioners and families free potatoes and cabbages (taken from vegetable warehouses controlled by the gang). He also tried to ensure that the local apartment blocks were secure and installed metal doors in the entrances. Children’s play areas were set up in the courtyards.

However, despite this, Stephenson notes that citizens agreed to cooperate against the gang, as long as they could do so anonymously:

At the gang’s trial in 1999–2002, local witnesses only agreed to give evidence after being guaranteed witness protection. They gave evidence via

103. Marco Jacquemet, *Credibility in Court: Communicative Practices in the Camorra Trials* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

104. Yaqui, “Christmas Sinaloa Style: Dispenses Delivered with the name of “El Cholo Iván,”” *Borderland Beat*, December 24, 2018, accessed April 27, 2019, <http://www.borderlandbeat.com/2018/12/christmas-sinaloa-style-dispenses.html>.

105. Grillo, *Gangster Warlords*, p. 262.

106. Robert Lombardo, “Organized Crime in Chicago,” C-SPAN, June 9, 2013, accessed March 22, 2020, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?313185-5/organized-crime-chicago>.

video link; their voices were changed, and many wore wigs, false mustaches, and beards in order to change their appearance.¹⁰⁷

That citizens testified anonymously suggests that it was fear of retaliation, rather than the service provision, holding them back from coming forward in the first place.

Moreover, criminal groups coerce citizens into accepting their “services,” blurring the line between service provision and extortion. Figure 2.6 shows the relationship between criminal organization power in a country and percent of respondents in the WJP’s population poll indicating that they or someone in their household had been extorted in the past three years. There is a clear positive correlation between the strength of criminal groups and the proportion of the population facing extortion.

A common pattern is that the groups collect fees from businesses under the explicit or implicit threat against the businesses, and the “service” becomes a *post-hoc* justification for the collection. In his study of Chicago gangs, sociologist Sudhir Venkatesh describes one such case:

Michael told me that T-Bone [a gang member] often settled customer disputes for them. “Why would he do that?” I asked. “Because we pay him to!” Michael said. “*I mean, we don’t have a choice.*” Michael explained that he and Kris paid T-Bone 15 percent of their weekly revenue [emphasis added].¹⁰⁸

Gambetta similarly describes the implicit threat in mafia contract enforcement, usually in the form of debt collection:

[T]hose who enlist Mafiosi to sort out their disputes to retrieve stolen property, or to protect their cartel from free riders and competitors do not

107. Stephenson, *Gangs of Russia*, p. 153.

108. Sudhir Venkatesh, *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets* (London: Penguin Books, December 30, 2008), pp. 87-8.

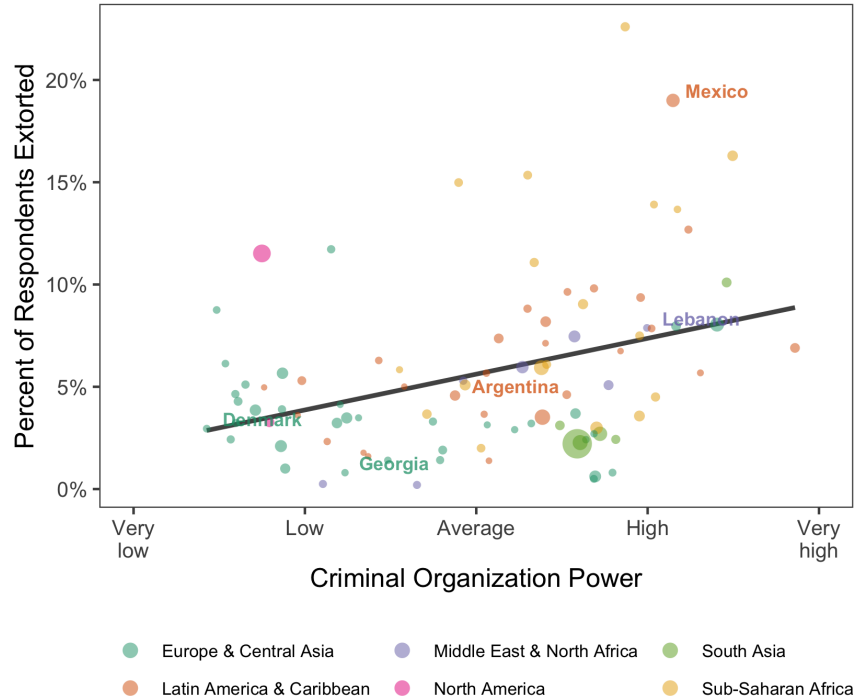


Figure 2.6: Criminal Organization Power and Extortion

The proportion of citizens reporting extortion is positively associated with the presence of criminal organizations. The size of the points represents the total population of a given country. Only countries with a population over one million are shown. *Sources: General Population Poll (World Justice Project, 2017); Criminal Justice Qualified Respondents Survey (World Justice Project, 2017).*

perceive that protection as bogus. *They may feel dissatisfied because they are forced to pay often for a service they seldom use, as with insurance, or because they pay extortionate prices for it, as they do for other monopoly goods [emphasis added].*¹⁰⁹

Albeit distinct from pure extortion given that the criminals do provide a service in these cases, the anecdotes suggest that businesses often patronize the criminal groups not because they *want* to but because they *have* to.

109. Gambetta, *The Sicilian Mafia*, p. 3.

This chapter has laid out cycle of silence theory to explain a key dynamic preventing police-citizen cooperation. Communities are unable to reach their full cooperation potential, because violence generates risk inflation and leads citizens to underestimate community cooperation will. Although scholars and policymakers have long-recognized that citizens' retaliation risk perceptions constrain cooperation, cycle of silence theory goes beyond these claims. It explains how the perceptions become inflated and theorizes about the important second order effect of violence limiting social proof—both of which reduce citizen propensities to cooperate with the police. This theory stands in contrast to code of silence claims that citizens do not want to come forward, in part because they support the criminal groups. In the next chapter, I turn to theorizing potential strategies that can overcome the constraints to cooperation as well as describe the study's empirical strategy.

Chapter 3

Winning the Game

*Some confess to giving in out of fear, others boast about having important strings to pull. These are very common attitudes; but I think that if everyone was ready to collaborate with the police and carabinieri, to report and to name names, this racketeering would not last long. I myself have had eight people arrested. If 200 businessmen talked, 1,600 mafiosi would be in handcuffs. Don't you think we would have won?*¹

Libero Grassi, martyr of Italy's antimafia movement

Libero Grassi did not, at first glance, appear to stand out among Palermo's business community. A greying and bespectacled Sicilian in his sixties, Grassi owned a clothing factory producing underwear and pajamas. But, starting in 1984, he did something extraordinary: he began refusing to give *pizzo* (extortion fees), which Cosa Nostra, Sicily's Mafia, collected from businesses in the region. The *mafiosi* said to be collecting the fees, according to Grassi, "for their poor friends in jail."² When Grassi refused, the mafia turned to its extortionary playbook: he was met with threats, robbed, and his dog was nearly killed. In many cases, such harassment would be enough to bring around a defiant businessperson.³

1. Alison Jamieson, *The Antimafia: Italy's Fight against Organized Crime* (Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, November 10, 1999), p. 36

2. Marlise Simons, "Milan and the Mafia: Who Has a Line on Whom?," *New York Times*, July 1, 1991, accessed March 25, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/07/01/world/milan-and-the-mafia-who-has-a-line-on-whom.html>.

3. Jamieson, *The Antimafia*, p. 35.

Grassi was different, however, and his response was almost unheard at the time. Not only did he report the extortion to the police, in 1991, he went public with his refusal, penning his now famous “*Caro estortore* (Dear extortionist)” letter published in Sicily’s largest daily newspaper *Giornale di Sicilia*. “I want to warn our unknown extortionist,” he wrote, “to spare threatening phone calls and the expense of purchasing fuses, bombs and bullets, as we are not available to make contributions.” He went on, “I built this factory with my own hands, I have been working for a lifetime and I do not intend to close.”⁴

The public defiance was a bridge too far for the mafia. His brazen act was seen as threatening their extortion racket, a source of income and means to wield influence with the population. Despite his letter catapulting him to national fame, Grassi remained largely isolated with no other businesspersons coming out in public support. From the threshold framework, that no others joined Grassi suggested that few in Palermo had thresholds of just one other person. With Grassi isolated, the mafia shot and killed him on a Palermo street less than a year after he published his letter. With his killing, Grassi became the focal point retaliation incident that reinforced Sicilians’ fear of the mafia.

It would not be until fifteen years later with the advent of the *addiopizzo* (goodbye extortion) movement that Palermo would finally begin to loosen the mafia’s grip. As discussed later in the chapter, the movement, led by entrepreneurs-turned-community safety advocates, attempted to leverage safety in numbers to defy mafia demands. Instead of a single business refusing, as Grassi had done, they brought together more than 100 business that simultaneously refused to make the payments.

The movement, which a *mafioso* characterized as a disaster for his extortion enter-

4. “La ‘lettera al caro estortore’ di Libero Grassi: così nacque la lotta antiracket in Sicilia,” *la Repubblica*, August 29, 2018, accessed March 25, 2020, https://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/08/29/news/la_lettera_al_caro_estortore_di_libero_grassi_cosi_nacque_la_lotta_antiracket_in_sicilia-205171175.

prise,⁵ eventually grew to one-fifth of Palermo’s shops declining to pay⁶ and greater reporting to the police of extortion attempts.⁷ This movement is a quintessential example of a cooperation awareness strategy at work. That *addiopizzo* grew from 100 to one-fifth of shops suggests that many from Palermo had thresholds of 100 and seeing that others were willing to cooperate against the mafia led others to do the same.

In this chapter, I theorize about cooperation strategies, including cooperation awareness as done with *addiopizzo*, to reverse the cycle of silence and thus loosen criminal groups’ grip on communities. I look at the question, how might the police and community safety advocates promote police-citizen cooperation? Promoting cooperation is particularly difficult in communities with criminal groups. Not only does the violence perpetuate the cycle of silence, but citizens in these communities tend to have limited trust in the police.

The question of *how* to promote cooperation is fundamentally distinct from the question, *should* the police and community safety advocates promote citizens sharing information in the first place? Governments do not necessarily prioritize the interests of their citizens, and even if retaliation is rarer than perceived, it does happen as shown in Libero Grassi’s case. Given these realities, in the study’s concluding chapter, I identify necessary conditions required for state authorities to be on solid ethical grounds in soliciting information. I highlight three conditions: citizens see the state as legitimate, authorities prioritize the safety of cooperators, and citizens have input in the process.

This chapter proceeds in three sections.

Section 3.1 discusses why citizens in communities with criminal groups, despite

5. *Values against violence by Guido Palazzo, Professor of University of Lausanne - Conference ESSEC* (ESSEC Business School).

6. “Trends in extortion payments by companies to Italy’s Mafia - Price of protection,” *The Economist*, June 14, 2018, accessed November 22, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/business/2018/06/14/trends-in-extortion-payments-by-companies-to-italys-mafia>.

7. Antonino Vaccaro and Guido Palazzo, “Values against Violence: Institutional Change in Societies Dominated by Organized Crime,” *Academy of Management Journal* 58, no. 4 (2014): 1075–1101.

having low-trust in the police, look to the police to address criminal group violence. Often, citizens in these communities have particularly high levels of distrust in the police, because police tend to use more heavy-handed tactics, which at times turns into misconduct and the persistence of criminal group violence indicates that the police by definition are ineffective. That said, cooperation is still possible in these environments, because citizens see the police as the least bad security provider available to them.

Section 3.2 lays out the theoretical basis for three cooperation strategies aimed at reversing the cycles of silence: facilitating anonymous information-sharing, creating cooperation awareness among citizens, and exposing citizens to police officers of the same race or ethnicity. These strategies are not new, but there is limited evidence testing whether or not they in fact boost cooperation. Accordingly, this study adds to the small body of literature that speak to these strategies.

Section 3.3 details my empirical strategy. I derive testable hypotheses from the cycle of silence theory, discussed in Chapter 2, and the cooperation strategies laid out in this chapter. I also discuss the multi-method approach that I take combining quantitative survey data along with observation and interviews. I lay out the utility of the study's two central empirical cases—Baltimore, Maryland and Lagos, Nigeria. They contrast with respect to economic development but both present difficult cases given strong distrust of the police increases the generalizability of the findings.

3.1. COOPERATION DESPITE DISTRUST

Police-citizen cooperation can occur even in environments where citizens have low trust in the police, because of citizen prioritization of safety over suspect rights, compartmentalization of trust among some officers (even if they distrust others), and the lack of viable alternatives for security provision. Usually, citizens hold one or some combination of these three factors, which is necessary for cooperation strategies

to work. To be clear, I do not argue that distrust of the police has no effect on citizens' willingness to come forward. Rather, I aim to provide the theoretical basis for explaining how cooperation strategies can still boost cooperation despite the low levels of trust. In short, distrust of the police, as reams of studies have found, may *reduce* cooperation; but, I argue that the distrust does not *preclude* cooperation altogether.

Trust boils down to citizens having confidence that, if they cooperate with the police, the police will pursue a positive outcome in line with citizens' expectations.⁸ Trust is generally incorporated into discussions of policing as a component of police legitimacy, which is the central focus of policing literature and policymaking today. The concept of legitimacy suggests that citizens are less likely to cooperate if they do not trust the police to be either fair or effective.

While I do not dispute these central claims, I argue that even in environments with low trust and thus low legitimacy, police and community safety advocates can engage in strategies, at least in the short-term, that boost cooperation without directly improving the perceived fairness and effectiveness of the police.

3.1.1 The “Legitimacy Turn” in Policing

Scholars and policymakers alike have looked to police legitimacy, and by extension trust in the police, as the central explanatory variable for citizen propensities to cooperate. Since the early 1990s, the sociology literature—and later the political science literature—has increasingly focused on legitimacy to understand citizen compliance and cooperation with the police in what criminologist Justice Tankebe has coined the “legitimacy turn” in academic literature.⁹ Scholar Tom Tyler, the progenitor of the “legitimacy turn,” argues that only if citizens view the police as “appropriate, proper,

8. Susan Rose-Ackerman, “Trust, Honesty, and Corruption: Reflection on the State-Building Process,” 2001,

9. Justice Tankebe, “Viewing Things Differently: The Dimensions of Public Perceptions of Police Legitimacy: Public Perceptions of Police Legitimacy,” *Criminology* 51, no. 1 (2013): p. 104.

and just” will they “defer to decisions and rules, following them voluntarily out of obligation.”¹⁰

According to legitimacy theory, citizens expect police to be fair and effective and falling short of that erodes the police’s legitimacy. Per the theory’s fairness component, citizens want confidence that, if they cooperate with the police, the information will not be used to abuse suspects or contribute to the subjugation of particular social groups. Per the theory’s effectiveness component, citizens expect that, if they cooperate with the police, the information will be used to address the violence in some way.

The literature on the relative importance of fairness versus effectiveness is mixed. In economically-developed contexts, citizens tend to emphasize fairness whereas in economically-developing contexts citizens tend to emphasize effectiveness.¹¹ Tom Tyler and co-authors find that fairness is the central driver of legitimacy in the United States.¹² A recent slate of high-profile police use-of-force incidents in the United States have sparked, in the words of scholar Richard Rosenfeld, a “legitimacy crisis”¹³ that has reduced cooperation, especially among black Americans. Testing the theory, another study finds that the 2004 police beating of Frank Jude, a black Milwaukee man, reduced 911 calls in black communities for almost a year.¹⁴

10. Tom R. Tyler, *Why People Obey the Law* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, March 2006). Legitimacy is one component of the related concept in sociology of “legal cynicism,” which posits that citizens do not share information with the police because they see the police as illegitimate, ineffective, and ill-prepared to address crime. See Robert J. Sampson and Dawn Jeglum Bartusch, “Legal Cynicism and (Subcultural?) Tolerance of Deviance: The Neighborhood Context of Racial Differences,” *Law & Society Review* 32, no. 4 (1998): 777.

11. One study finds that crime reporting also varies by the severity of the crime. See Roger Tarling and Katie Morris, “Reporting Crime to the Police,” *British Journal of Criminology* 50, no. 3 (2010): 474–490. Another study finds that reporting varies by victim type. See Kristina Murphy and Julie Barkworth, “Victim Willingness to Report Crime to Police: Does Procedural Justice or Outcome Matter Most?,” *Victims & Offenders* 9, no. 2 (2014): 178–204.

12. Tom Tyler and Jeffrey Fagan, “Legitimacy and Cooperation: Why Do People Help the Police Fight Crime in Their Communities? | National Police Accountability Project,” *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law* 6 (2008): 45.

13. Richard Rosenfeld, *Documenting and Explaining the 2015 Homicide Rise: Research Directions* (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, June 2016).

14. Matthew Desmond, Andrew V. Papachristos, and David S. Kirk, “Police Violence and Citizen Crime Reporting in the Black Community,” *American Sociological Review* 81, no. 5 (2016): 857–876.

However, a path-breaking study by Tankebe suggests that the importance of fairness does not necessarily “travel” to economically-developing contexts.¹⁵ In Ghana, he shows that perceptions of legitimacy are tied to effectiveness. In a similar vein, Robert Blair and co-authors find that police patrols in Liberia increase reporting of crime.¹⁶ At its most pernicious, the ineffectiveness is tied to collusive relationships between state authorities and criminal groups in which financial and political arrangements prevent parts of the police from taking action or even aid the criminal groups in their activities.¹⁷

It would be difficult to understate the prominence of legitimacy theory, and its derivative strategies, in not just the scholarly literature but also policymaking circles. In a major report, the U.S. National Research Council concluded that improving legitimacy is the key factor in “enhancing cooperation with the police.”¹⁸ It has led scholars and policymakers alike to call for structural reforms to police departments. In this vein, under Barack Obama’s administration, the White House released the influential Task Force on 21st Century Policing report that put “building trust and nurturing legitimacy” as its first pillar for police reform.¹⁹

15. There are exceptions to findings that fairness is more important in developed contexts and effectiveness is more important in developing contexts. Tammy Kochel and co-authors find that, in the developing context of Trinidad and Tobago, effectiveness does not increase cooperation. See Tammy Rinehart Kochel, Roger Parks, and Stephen D. Mastrofski, “Examining Police Effectiveness as a Precursor to Legitimacy and Cooperation with Police,” *Justice Quarterly* 30, no. 5 (2013): 895–925. Conversely, studies of London show that confidence in police effectiveness boosts the likelihood of reporting. See Ben Bradford and Jonathan Jackson, “Cooperating with the Police as an Act of Social Control - Trust and Neighbourhood Concerns as Predictors of Public Assistance,” *Nordisk politiforskning* 3, no. 2 (2016): 111–131. Another study finds a correlation between effectiveness and reporting in sixteen industrialized countries Heike Goudriaan, James P. Lynch, and Paul Nieuwebeerta, “Reporting to the police in western nations: A theoretical analysis of the effects of social context,” *Justice Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (2004): 933–969.

16. Blair, Karim, and Morse, “Establishing the Rule of Law in Weak and War-torn States: Evidence from a Field Experiment with the Liberian National Police.”

17. Barnes typologizes these collusive relationships into two categories: alliance and integration. In his words, “the category of alliance refers to contexts in which organized crime maintains formal or tacit agreements that limit enforcement and allow both the state and organized crime to mutually benefit. Integration, meanwhile, refers to the highest form of collaboration in which organized crime is directly incorporated into the state apparatus, allowing criminals to engage in violent and illegal activities with impunity.” See Barnes, “Criminal Politics.”

18. *Fairness and Effectiveness in Policing*, p. 6.

19. Charles Ramsey and Laurie Robinson, *Final Report* (The President’s Task Force on 21st Cen-

3.1.2 Police as the Least Bad Option

Communities with criminal groups tend to have low levels of trust in the police. In addition to highlighting retaliation risk, Yellen and Akerlof contend that in Los Angeles residents see police procedures as “often unfair” and “punishments do not always fit the crimes.”²⁰ Similarly, in addition to retaliation risk, Díaz-Cayeros and co-authors note that widespread corruption in Mexico’s police undermines cooperation.²¹ In *Ghettoside*, journalist and author Jill Leovy follows homicide detectives in South Central Los Angeles and documents how perceived police apathy toward minority communities in the United States has historically meant police solve fewer murders in those areas—an outcome that has not gone unnoticed by residents in those communities.²²

Police ineffectiveness at its most extreme takes the form of police-criminal group collusion. In some places, individual officers or segments of the police force collude closely with criminal groups. A Honduran asylum seeker in the United States suggests that the police are “part of the gangs” considering that “many get a percentage from the drugs they sell.”²³ The collusion happens in developed contexts too. A Chicago reporter describes one such case of “dirty cops” who ran a protection racket of drug dealers in the city’s South Side. The dealers paid “a tax” to the sergeant in exchange for protection against law enforcement raids and the targeting of rival dealers.²⁴

tury Policing, May 2015).

20. George A. Akerlof and Janet L. Yellen, “Gang Behavior, Law Enforcement, and Community Values,” in *Values and Public Policy*, eds. Henry J. Aaron, Thomas E. Mann, and Timothy Taylor (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1994).

21. Díaz-Cayeros et al., “Living in fear.”

22. Leovy, *Ghettoside*. See also Wesley Lowery, “Ain’t nobody been locked up. And they ain’t trying to solve nothing,” *Washington Post*, August 30, 2018, accessed November 18, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/aint-nobody-been-locked-up-and-they-aint-trying-to-solve-nothing/2018/08/30/5a7c8530-9b39-11e8-b60b-1c897f17e185_story.html.

23. Tamaryn Nelson and Hajar Habbach, ““If I went back, I would not survive.” Asylum Seekers Fleeing Violence in Mexico and Central America,” *Physicians for Human Rights*, October 9, 2019, accessed March 26, 2020, <https://phr.org/our-work/resources/asylum-seekers-fleeing-violence-in-mexico-and-central-america>.

24. Jamie Kalven, “Code of Silence,” *The Intercept*, October 6, 2016, accessed October 10, 2016, <https://theintercept.com/series/code-of-silence/>.

The following passage from sociologist Elijah Anderson's seminal ethnography of Philadelphia's inner-city weaves together the many facets of distrust in the police in these communities:

A great many residents have little trust in the police. Many assume that the police hold the black community in low repute and sometimes will abuse its members. As a result, residents are alienated from the police and police authority. With this attitude many people are afraid to report obvious drug dealing or other crimes to the police, for fear that the police might reveal their names and addresses to the criminals. It is thus better, many say, "to see but don't see." [...]In the inner-city community there is a generalized belief that the police simply do not care about black people. [...]If a black man shoots another black man, the incident will not be thoroughly investigated."²⁵

The multifaceted nature of the distrust highlights a trifecta of citizen concerns surrounding misconduct, ineffectiveness, and corruption.

Given the distrust of the police in communities with criminal groups, how then is cooperation even possible? I argue that three factors allow for cooperation despite the distrust: citizen prioritization of security, citizen compartmentalization between trusted and distrusted officers, and a lack of reliable alternative security providers. In short, citizens see the police as the best of an unattractive set of options to bring order and security to their communities.

First, when preferences for security and suspect rights come into conflict with each other, citizens generally prioritize their security. If citizens see the criminal groups as threatening community security, concerns over suspect rights become less likely to preclude cooperation. Tyler himself, along with co-author Jason Sunshine, find that

25. Elijah Anderson, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, September 17, 2000), pp. 320-1.

concerns about security come to the fore for citizens when they are faced with the threat of violence. They conducted two surveys in New York City on neighborhood security—one before and one after the September 11 attacks. In the survey after the attacks, they find that citizens put a greater emphasis on instrumental concerns about security than they did in the prior survey.²⁶

Anecdotal evidence suggests that citizens become increasingly tolerant of violations of suspect rights when criminal group violence increases. As Martin Sanchez-Jankowski observed in Los Angeles:

The African-American community turned on the gangs after drive-by shootings and other forms of indiscriminate violence continued. They supported waves of police sweeps that led to 1,300 arrests and the sweeps involved civil rights violations perpetrated by the police but the community did not speak out due to the gangs' violence.²⁷

Such episodes suggest that increased violence forces those in communities with criminal groups to prioritize security even if it comes at a cost of violations to suspect rights.

Using the World Justice Project (WJP) survey data of citizens in 113 countries, introduced in Chapter 1, I look at the role of threat increasing the prioritization of security beyond the anecdotal evidence. In the survey, the more than 109,000 respondents indicate what they believe should be their country's top policy aim over the next ten years from a list of ten options including crime reduction and improving human rights.²⁸ The gap between crime prioritization and rights prioritization increases for respondents living in less secure environments. For every ten respondents who rated rights as their top priority, fourteen respondents rated crime as their top priority

26. Jason Sunshine and Tom R. Tyler, "The role of procedural justice and legitimacy in shaping public support for policing," *Law & Society Review* 37, no. 3 (2003): 513–548.

27. Sanchez-Jankowski, *Islands in the Street*, p. 206.

28. *General Population Poll*. Overall, 7% of respondents indicated that they saw crime reduction as their top priority and 4% rated improving human rights as their top option.

among respondents who believe their neighborhood is “very safe.” In contrast, among respondents who believe their neighborhood is “very unsafe,” twenty-six respondents rated crime as their top priority for every ten who rated rights as their top priority, a 45% increase in crime prioritization versus the very safe neighborhoods.

Second, citizens compartmentalize their trust in police officers. They may have deep distrust for many officers or segments of the police force but do not necessarily distrust all officers. Because the police may have a corrupt officer or corrupt unit does not mean that citizens see the entire police force as corrupt. That some officers can be trusted means that, in citizens’ minds, there is a chance the police will use information effectively to address violence. Trust in some officers facilitates information-sharing, independent of the citizens’ broader trust in the police as a whole. Along these lines, scholar Erin Kearns finds that, in the context of counter-terrorism investigations, citizens develop interpersonal trust with individual officers, which makes those citizens more likely to share information.²⁹

Figure 3.1 suggests that only rarely do citizens project distrust and concerns about corruption of segments of the police across the police universally. The WJP survey data reveals that only an average of 10% of respondents indicated that they had no distrust of the police with most respondents (52%) saying that they have “some” trust in the police. By the same token, on average, just 13% of respondents in each country believed that all police officers engaged in corrupt practices with the plurality of respondents (49%) indicating that “some” were corrupt.

Finally, despite the perceived lack of effectiveness, citizens maintain the view that the police are the least unreliable security providers relative to the alternatives. Figure indicates that, despite the low clearance rates as discussed in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.1), citizens believe that authorities have at least a minimal degree of ef-

29. Erin Marie Kearns, “If You See Something, Do You Say Something? The Role of Legitimacy and Trust in Policing Minority Communities in Counterterrorism” (Doctoral Dissertation, American University, 2016).

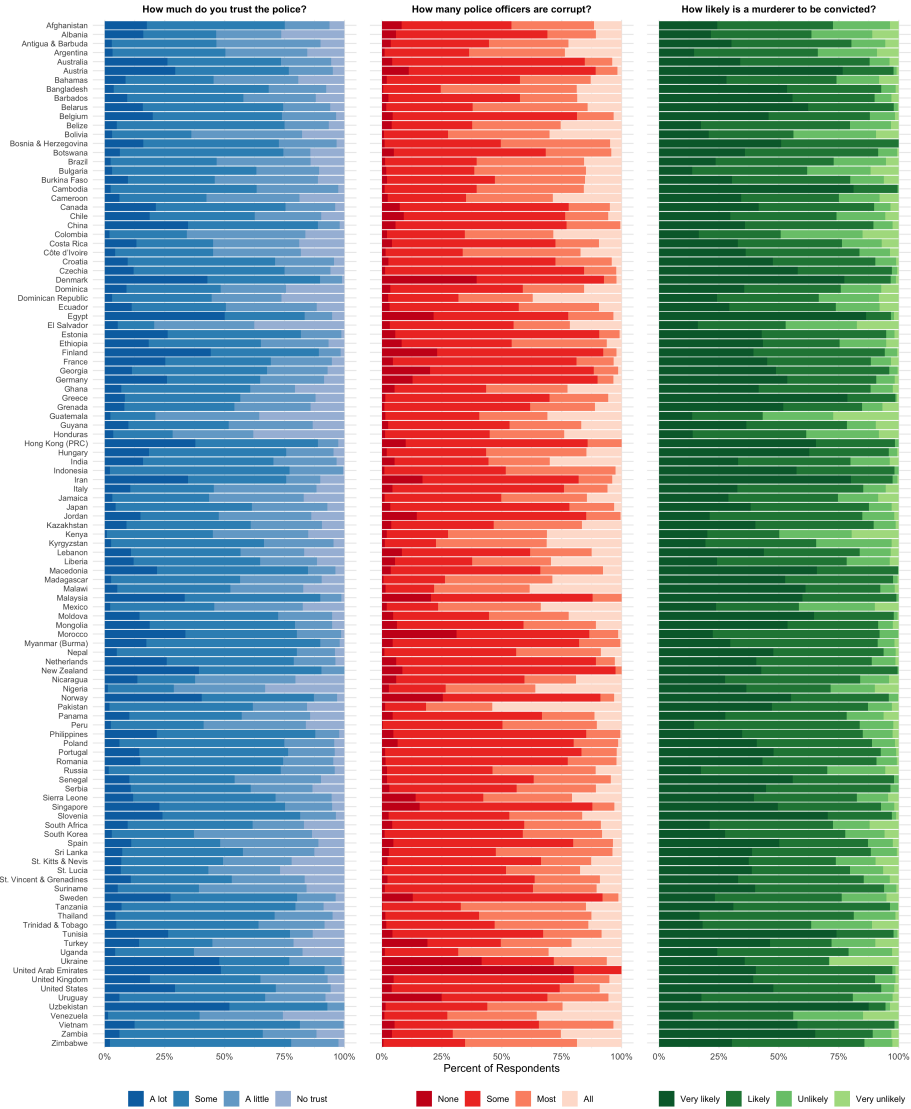


Figure 3.1: Citizen Perceptions of the Police

Citizens compartmentalize their distrust (left) and perceptions of police corruption (center). On average, each country had 10% respondents who did not trust the police and 13% of respondents who believed all police were corrupt. Despite low clearance rates for murders, citizens also generally see the police at least minimally effective (right) with the average response being that 40% of respondents in a given country indicating that it is very likely a murderer in their neighborhood will be convicted. *Source: General Population Poll (World Justice Project, 2017).*

fectiveness. A belief in at least minimal police effectiveness is necessary in order for there to be a potential benefit of cooperation. From a visual inspection of the data, it is evident that respondents in countries with a strong criminal group presence are

less sanguine about the prospects of convictions for homicides. However, they still view the police as at least minimally effective. For instance, 16% of respondents in El Salvador believed that the police are “very likely” to prosecute and convict a homicide perpetrator in their neighborhood. The percentage may be low but it indicates that citizens could see sharing information as potentially leading to improved security.

When evaluated against the alternative options for providing security, the police, despite their significant shortcomings, look to be the most viable option. Citizens generally have four courses of action that they can take to address insecurity. They can attempt to address it themselves. Citizens however are not usually equipped to take matters into your own hands, when facing violent groups like gangs, which makes doing so a high risk endeavor. Alternatively, citizens can seek protection from criminal groups. But, as discussed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.3), the groups themselves tend to be unreliable security providers given that their central motive is illicit economic gain, not public safety provision.

Vigilantes also present themselves as alternative security providers, but they struggle to maintain independence within the competition between state authorities and criminal groups: they either become subsumed into formal police institutions, so providing them information is little different than providing it to the police, or the vigilante groups descend into predatory behavior that makes them little distinguishable from criminal groups.

A description of *dvorniki* (yard keepers), who acted as vigilantes in early twentieth century Russia, illustrates how many vigilante groups take on a predatory nature:

The *dvorniki* were very much a mixed blessing. While there were many incidents of them raising the alarm and assisting the police, they were also often insalubrious characters themselves. In 1909, the head of Moscow’s detectives suggested that *dvorniki* (yard keepers) themselves accounted

for or assisted in fully 90 per cent of thefts from locked premises.³⁰

This pattern where vigilantes, even despite initial good intentions, become predatory is not limited to Russia.

In present-day Mexico, *autodefensas* (self-defense groups) have seized on Mexican tradition of community self-policing to create armed militias ostensibly aimed at protecting citizens from cartel violence. In some cases, they have had success, but in other cases, they have engaged in abuses and drug trafficking. The *autodefensas* provide the cartels with, according to anthropologist Chris Kyle, “a semi-legitimate wing that extends their reach.”³¹

3.2. COOPERATION STRATEGIES

Effectively addressing violence is one pathway through which police can boost trust. To reduce violence without voluntary cooperation from citizens, state authorities are presented with two normatively-problematic and counterproductive options. Either, they might force citizens to share information through coercive means. Or, as political scientist Andrew McCall elucidates, they might engage in more aggressive and indiscriminate tactics against communities to root out the criminal groups. Even if these approaches are effective, they would likely undermine trust in the police through pathways other than effectiveness.³²

This reality gives the police little choice but to rely on voluntary information-sharing from citizens to improve their effectiveness without undermining trust in them. With cooperation from citizens, police can begin to reverse the cycle of silence laid out in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.2). Police can use that information to address

30. Galeotti, *The Vory*.

31. Jeremy Kryt, “Vigilante Armies Are Fighting Mexican Drug Cartels, but Whose Side Are They Really on?,” *The Daily Beast*, July 21, 2019, accessed March 27, 2020, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/in-mexico-vigilante-armies-are-fighting-drug-cartels-but-whose-side-are-they-really-on>.

32. McCall, “Resident Assistance, Police Chief Learning, and the Persistence of Aggressive Policing Tactics in Black Neighborhoods.”

criminal group violence; the violence reduction lowers the perceived risk of retaliation; the reduced risk results in citizen hiding of cooperation will less; the reduced risk and hiding of cooperation will encourages more information-sharing; and, so on.

This is not say that reversing the cycle of silence is a simple task. The cycle's inertia puts police and community safety advocates at a disadvantage due to how people process threats psychologically.³³ Fear makes new information that implies risk more salient than information that implies safety. Studies on perceived threats on topics ranging from immigration³⁴ to terrorism³⁵ consistently find that people “tune-in” on information implying higher risk.³⁶

The risk inflation, even when corrected for, may continue to reduce citizen cooperation propensities. Experiments by political scientist Emily Thorson show that “belief echoes” continue to shape people's attitudes even *after* individuals recognize misinformation to be false.³⁷ Relatedly, experiments by Jane Esberg and Jonathan Mummolo show that correcting people's overestimation of crime rates is sensitive to how the corrections are presented. When a correction is embedded in a news articles, people only partially update their belief.³⁸

This section lays out three strategies aimed at overcoming the persistent cycle of silence: facilitating cooperator anonymity, creating awareness of others' cooperation will, and exposing citizens to police officers of the same race or ethnicity. These strategies are not new, but there is limited evidence testing whether or not they work.

33. I consider these tendencies rational considering that they help maximize the likelihood people avoid risks.

34. Shana Kushner Gadarian and Bethany Albertson, “Anxiety, Immigration, and the Search for Information,” *Political Psychology* 35, no. 2 (2014): 133–164.

35. Jennifer L. Merolla and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister, “Threat and Information Acquisition: Evidence from an Eight Country Study,” *Journal of Experimental Political Science* 5, no. 3 (2018): 167–181.

36. See also Slovic, “Perception of Risk.”

37. Emily Thorson, “Belief Echoes: The Persistent Effects of Corrected Misinformation,” *Political Communication* 33, no. 3 (2016): 460–480.

38. Esberg and Mummolo, “Explaining Misperceptions of Crime.”

3.2.1 Cooperator Anonymity

Police and community safety advocates have turned to anonymous communication platforms as a means for reducing perceived retaliation risk. These platforms such as telephone tip lines are widespread around the world, but their effectiveness in promoting cooperation has yet to be tested experimentally. Based on the cycle of silence theory, I would expect anonymity to make citizens more willing to share information. Anonymous communication with the police makes cooperation less risky and thus reduces citizen thresholds—that is, the proportion of the community that a citizen requires be willing to cooperate for the citizen to be willing to share information.

Tip lines reduce the perceived risk of cooperation, because it becomes more difficult for criminal groups to retaliate if they do not know the cooperator’s identity. Importantly, anonymous communications platforms shield cooperators identities from the police themselves, which essentially eliminates the possibility of authorities revealing their identity to groups purposely or inadvertently.

As discussed above, citizens tend to compartmentalize police officers among trusted and untrusted as well as corrupt and uncorrupt. By sharing information anonymously, it reduces the chances that the cooperator’s identity gets into the hands of untrusted or corrupt officers. As one El Salvadorian asylum-seeker put the concern cooperators have in his country, “If you denounce a gang member, the police pass your information to the gang, and they make you disappear.”³⁹

In Japan, a journalist describes similar collusion among elements of the police the *yakuza*:

[P]olice accept favors from *yakuza* such as free sex in their brothels or free drinks in their bars. Occasionally there is evidence of more serious bribery.

For example, in 2013, details emerged in a trial of *yakuza* members of how

39. Nelson and Habbach, ““If I went back, I would not survive.” Asylum Seekers Fleeing Violence in Mexico and Central America.”

the president of a chain of sex clubs in Nagoya City bribed four current and retired police officers with cash and Mercedes Benz cars in return for information on police investigations into his brothels.⁴⁰

By keeping their identity out of the hands of the police, even those that are trusted, cooperators have more assurance that their identities will not become known to criminal groups.

Even if officers do not collude with criminal groups, prospective cooperators see anonymity as important to prevent the unintentional revealing of their identity, which could occur through a number of pathways. In the United States, a cooperator might attempt to report criminal activity through 911 believing that they can do so anonymously. In some municipalities, one can request anonymity through 911 but in other cases operating procedures make doing so difficult. In New Orleans, Louisiana, for instance, the police are required to visit a 911 caller even if that caller requests otherwise.⁴¹ For cooperators that come forward in investigations, a detective might repeatedly visit a cooperator's home seeking to solicit further information, which might signal that the person is cooperating with authorities.

Legal proceedings might also lead to a cooperator's identity becoming public. The prosecution could accidentally reveal a cooperator's address as occurred in one Los Angeles gang-related case.⁴² Or, the court might force the prosecution to reveal a cooperator's identity. Indeed, the Sixth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees those accused of having the right "to be confronted with the witnesses against him." In practical terms, the amendment means that prosecutors potentially have to disclose the source of information used in trials and anonymous testimony is not allowed.⁴³

40. Murphy, *True Crime Japan*.

41. Ethan Brown, *Snitch: Informants, Cooperators, and the Corruption of Justice* (New York: PublicAffairs, November 27, 2007), p. 218.

42. Miguel Cruz, "El barrio transnacional," in *Redes transnacionales en la Cuenca de los Huracanes*, eds. Francis Pisani et al. (Mexico, D.F: Porrula Miguel Angel S a, April 2007).

43. Note that some countries such as the United Kingdom do allow for anonymous witness testi-

Anonymous tip lines are prevalent with Crime Stoppers being the largest anonymous program in the world. The mission of Crime Stoppers, a network of non-profits, is to manage citizens sharing information with the police anonymously. The program, which was first established in Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1976, has grown to have a global presence. Indicative of the demand for anonymous tip lines, Crime Stoppers tip lines have been established across the United States and in twenty-five countries such as Jamaica, South Africa, and Australia, among others.⁴⁴ Originally established as telephone tip lines, anonymous communications platforms generally reflect technological advancements more generally with platforms existing that allow for submitting tips via telephone, SMS, the internet, and mobile applications.⁴⁵

Organizations that implement anonymous communication platforms report increased information-sharing, which is suggestive evidence that they work. The Boston Police Department estimates that an anonymous text message-based tip line led to thirty arrests in one year.⁴⁶ Crime Stoppers states that, as of March 2020, more than 746,000 arrests have been made in the United States as a result of the platform, including more than 16,000 for homicides.⁴⁷ By the same token, Crime Stoppers’s international umbrella organization claims that “every 14 minutes, a crime is solved somewhere” from tips received on their platform.⁴⁸

Anecdotal evidence further points to the importance of anonymity in bringing forward cooperators. A cooperator in St. Louis—interviewed by Stephen Clayman and Layla Skinns—explains:

[M]e being kept anonymous was, you know, top of the list because I’d

mony when testifying is seen as putting the witness at serious risk.

44. “Regions,” Crime Stoppers International, 2019, accessed May 3, 2019, <https://csiworld.org/regions>.

45. In the United States, for instance, one can contact the national Crime Stoppers tip line via 1-800-222-TIPS or online at CSUSA.org.

46. BOS07 2016.

47. “Crime Stoppers USA 1-800-222-TIPS,” Crime Stoppers USA 1-800-222-TIPS, March 19, 2020, accessed March 27, 2020, <http://www.crimestoppersusa.org/>.

48. “Our work,” Crime Stoppers International, 2018, accessed August 11, 2018, <https://csiworld.org/our-work>.

obviously be afraid because I'd probably be identified as one of the people that could have told the police [...] if my anonymity was essential as one of the top like priority on the list then definitely I would do it because it's just, it's something, it's like your duty to do it, you have to, you just have to, I would definitely.⁴⁹

Such cases demonstrate that anonymity can be the difference between cooperation and non-cooperation in communities with criminal groups.

Similar patterns in contexts of insurgency back anonymity's importance. British forces during the mid-twentieth century Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya, for instance, would cover cooperators with hoods as they identified suspected insurgents to protect them from reprisal.⁵⁰ More recently, in their study of the Iraq insurgency, Jacob Shapiro and Nils Weidmann find that the expansion of mobile phone technology increased tips to counterinsurgent forces.⁵¹ It did so, because, the authors surmise, mobile phones provide a degree of quasi-anonymity that other methods of information-sharing do not—albeit, mobile phones alone are not fully anonymous given that the phone number of callers can be tracked.

3.2.2 Cooperation Awareness

Risk inflation, as discussed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.2) pushes those that are willing to cooperate to hide their willingness to share information with the police from others in their community. Without awareness of cooperation norms, citizens have less social proof that cooperation is the appropriate action to take in a given situation.

49. Stephen Clayman and Layla Skinns, "To snitch or not to snitch? An exploratory study of the factors influencing whether young people actively cooperate with the police," *Policing and Society* 22, no. 4 (2012): p. 473.

50. David Bonner, *Executive Measures, Terrorism and National Security: Have the Rules of the Game Changed?* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., January 28, 2013).

51. Jacob N. Shapiro and Nils B. Weidmann, "Is the Phone Mightier Than the Sword? Cellphones and Insurgent Violence in Iraq," *International Organization* 69, no. 2 (2015): 247–274.

Reams of evidence point to the potency of social influence in domains other than police-citizen cooperation, which suggests cooperation awareness has the potential to be a potent strategy. Citizens, for instance, tend to underestimate others' tax compliance, but when made aware of true levels of compliance, they become more likely to pay their share.⁵² Social influence interventions have also shown to increase voter turnout,⁵³ promote electricity conservation,⁵⁴ water conservation,⁵⁵ and encourage adoption of online security measure,⁵⁶ among other domains.⁵⁷ The domains may differ, but the use of social influence remains remarkably similar: they create awareness of how individuals behave and people adjust their own behavior to move closer in line with the community behavior.

Surprisingly given the potency of social influence, police generally do not implement cooperation awareness strategies in a systematic way. A police spokesman might publicly thank citizens for providing tips as happened, for instance, after a 2018 shooting investigation in the small city of Danville, Illinois. The city's public safety director asked citizens with information to call and within a week the arrested a suspect who had fled the city based on a tip to the area's Crime Stoppers. "That came

52. Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (New York: Penguin Books, February 24, 2009), p. 66. See also Loewenstein, Sunstein, and Golman, "Disclosure."

53. Alan S. Gerber, Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer, "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment," *American Political Science Review* 102, no. 1 (2008): 33–48.

54. Rishie K. Jain et al., "Can social influence drive energy savings? Detecting the impact of social influence on the energy consumption behavior of networked users exposed to normative eco-feedback," *Energy and Buildings* 66 (November 1, 2013): 119–127; Hunt Allcott, "Social norms and energy conservation," *Journal of Public Economics*, Special Issue: The Role of Firms in Tax Systems, 95, no. 9 (2011): 1082–1095.

55. Syon P. Bhanot, "Isolating the effect of injunctive norms on conservation behavior: New evidence from a field experiment in California," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, December 11, 2018,

56. Sauvik Das et al., "Increasing Security Sensitivity With Social Proof: A Large-Scale Experimental Confirmation," in *Proceedings of the 2014 ACM SIGSAC Conference on Computer and Communications Security - CCS '14* (Scottsdale, Arizona, USA: ACM Press, 2014), 739–749.

57. In addition, Furth-Matzkin and Sunstein find that awareness of majority support for a given policy increases the approval of that policy. See Furth-Matzkin and Sunstein, *Social Influences on Policy Preferences*.

from individuals stepping up anonymously,” the director emphasized to the media.⁵⁸

Take also the praise from an Alabaman police chief after receiving tips about a shooting:

When we got here the victim and the shooters were both gone. We didn't have a whole lot of information, not a lot of physical evidence. The neighborhood came out and told us what they saw. What they heard. They gave us vehicle description. They gave us a suspect descriptions. They helped us out and gave us a start to have a successful homicide investigation.⁵⁹

This praise signals to others that community members have come forward. But, by and large, the cooperation awareness is done *post hoc*, and rarely do officials undertake systematic efforts to increase perceived community cooperation norms.

Police might rarely engage in cooperation awareness strategies, because community safety advocates potentially are better positioned to promote awareness. Research suggests that “reference groups”—that is, groups the recipient of a message belongs to or cares about—carry the most weight with individuals.⁶⁰ Community leaders' social proximity to citizens likely garners more trust than the police have, and citizens likely perceive community leaders as having less of a direct interest in promoting information-sharing, which makes them more credible sources.⁶¹

58. Jacqueline Francis, “Anonymous tips lead to arrest in Danville homicide investigation,” WRSP, September 19, 2018, accessed May 4, 2019, <http://foxillinois.com/news/local/anonymous-tips-lead-to-arrest-in-danville-homicide-investigation>.

59. Jamiese Price, “Hueytown police chief thanks community for helping solve homicide case,” <https://www.wbrc.com>, January 15, 2017, accessed April 9, 2020, <https://www.wbrc.com/story/34264109/hueytown-police-chief-thanks-community-for-helping-solve-homicide-case>.

60. See for example Leon Festinger, “A Theory of Social Comparison Processes,” *Human Relations* 7, no. 2 (1954): 117–140. As Margeret Tankard and Elizabeth Palluck elucidate, “feeling a sense of comfort, friendship, and resemblance with characters in edutainment programs facilitates individuals' acceptance of messages conveyed by the characters.” See Margaret E. Tankard and Elizabeth Levy Paluck, “Norm Perception as a Vehicle for Social Change,” *Social Issues and Policy Review* 10, no. 1 (2016): pp. 195-6.

61. For more on effective sources of rumor correction, see Adam J. Berinsky, “Rumors and Health Care Reform: Experiments in Political Misinformation,” *British Journal of Political Science* 47, no. 2 (2017): 241–262.

The supposition that community leaders are effective reference groups may be particularly true for those of the same race or ethnicity as the citizens. Scholars have shown that those of the same race or ethnicity serve as a potent reference group for individuals in both the United States, as Alberto Alesina and Eliana La Ferrara find,⁶² and in Africa, as Evan Lieberman and Gwyneth McClendon find.⁶³

Given the relevance of reference groups in this context, community-based programs like neighborhood watch and block watch programs might be useful ways to create cooperation awareness in communities. Albeit not direct implementations of awareness strategies, the programs enlist citizens to patrol communities and report crime to the police. They began proliferating in the 1960s, and according to some estimates, more than 25% of people in the United Kingdom and 40% in the United States live in areas with neighborhood watch.⁶⁴ Their presence might create cooperation awareness in communities, but the goal of the programs is for citizens to deter crime by having a visible presence in the neighborhood. Thus, evaluations of the programs focus on their effect on incidence of crime and violence as the central outcome.⁶⁵ This focus makes it difficult to determine if the programs affect citizens' willingness to come forward, especially in communities with criminal groups.⁶⁶

Italy's anti-mafia *addiopizzo* movement, discussed at the outset of this chapter,

62. Alberto Alesina and Eliana La Ferrara, "Who trusts others?," *Journal of Public Economics* 85, no. 2 (2002): 207–234.

63. Evan S. Lieberman and Gwyneth H. McClendon, "The Ethnicity–Policy Preference Link in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Comparative Political Studies* 46, no. 5 (2013): 574–602. See also James Habyarimana et al., "Why does ethnic diversity undermine public goods provision?," *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 4 (2007): 709–725.

64. Trevor Bennett, Katy Holloway, and David P. Farrington, "Does neighborhood watch reduce crime? A systematic review and meta-analysis," *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 2, no. 4 (2007): 437–458.

65. Studies find that neighborhood watch tend to reduce crime rates where they are implemented. See Bennett, Holloway, and Farrington ("Does neighborhood watch reduce crime?"); Paul Liu and Marco Fabbri, "More Eyes, (No Guns,) Less Crime: Estimating the Effects of Unarmed Private Patrols on Crime Using a Bayesian Structural Time-Series Model," 2016, 18; and, Morse, "Policing and the rule of law in weak states."

66. An important exception is the forthcoming Metaketa on community policing, which evaluates the role of neighborhood watch programs on reporting Blair et al., "Meta-Analysis Pre-Analysis Plan: Community Policing Metaketa."

illustrates how community safety advocates can promote cooperation awareness. The Sicilian mafia regularly demands *pizzo* (extortion payments) from businesses, and, chafing under the demands, a group of young professionals in Palermo organized like-minded businesspersons to fight the practice. First, they anonymously plastered leaflets around the city and wrote unsigned letters to the newspaper denouncing *pizzo* payments. The group then secretly recruited businesses to join the movement, and once they reached a critical mass of 100 signatories, the willing shopkeepers simultaneously hung signs declaring their refusal to pay.

That shopkeepers did not come out publicly until 100 others were willing to do the same suggests that those shopkeepers had thresholds for public cooperation at 100 or below. This “safety in numbers” made the shopkeepers more comfortable coming forward. One Sicilian businessperson encapsulated this sentiment, “The mafia never forgets. [...]But for Sicilians like me, if more of us continue to speak out and take a stand against their ways, the safer we will be.”⁶⁷ Similarly, a mafia expert noted that “this idea of grouping people is very smart, because Mafia guys have problems in attacking large groups. [It] puts Mafia guys in a difficult situation.”⁶⁸

Ultimately, the movement grew from the initial 100 people to now one-fifth of Palermo’s shops declining to pay.⁶⁹ Importantly, it also emboldened citizens to share information with the police; reports to the police of extortion attempts increased by 46% between the movement’s 2004 founding and 2011.⁷⁰

The *addiopizzo* movement shows the potency of social influence in police-citizen cooperation, but there is one important difference between the movement and cooperation awareness campaigns to address violence. Whereas refusing to pay an extortion demand reveals by the nature of the act who is defying the criminal group, shar-

67. Nina dos Santos, “Sicilians turn on mafia, saying no to ‘pizzo’,” CNN, 2017, accessed August 13, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/08/04/europe/sicilians-mafia-pizzo/index.html>.

68. Vaccaro and Palazzo, “Values against Violence,” p. 35.

69. “Trends in extortion payments by companies to Italy’s Mafia - Price of protection.”

70. Vaccaro and Palazzo, “Values against Violence.”

ing information about violence can be done anonymously. Thus, those that convey awareness of citizens' willingness to come forward with information need not reveal *who* is willing to cooperate but rather simply that people in the community *are* willing to cooperate. This distinction makes cooperation awareness strategies compatible with anonymous communication platforms. Community safety advocates can convey that others are willing to come forward anonymously—rather than specifying who is willing to do so.

The theorized effect of cooperation awareness boosting cooperation goes against collective action theory.⁷¹ According to the theory, whereas social proof implies that citizens see their willingness to cooperate as a complement to others' willingness, collective action implies that citizens should treat cooperation as substitutable.⁷² Citizens might feel that they do not need to share information if others come forward, because from a collective action perspective, the main benefit of information-sharing is community security. And, as a public good, community security is “non-excludable” given that the whole community would benefit from the security.⁷³ Thus, citizens should be inclined to, in economic terms “free ride” on others' cooperation to get its benefits without shouldering the risks that come with sharing information.

The collective action theory would predict that, contra my proposition, cooperation awareness reduces citizen propensities to share information. These theories however do not appear to bare out in many real-world contexts. As discussed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.1), Elinor Ostrom famously documented in her studies of collective action how social dynamics help overcome the free-riding problem in small-scale communities. People, she observes, contribute to—or, use less of—an environ-

71. Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, January 31, 1971).

72. For an example of substitution in the context of protest movements, see Davide Cantoni et al., *Are Protests Games of Strategic Complements or Substitutes? Experimental Evidence from Hong Kong's Democracy Movement*, Working Paper 23110 (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, January 2017).

73. And use of the security by citizens does not hinder use by others (i.e., it's non-rivalrous), which in addition to non-excludability, is the second criteria for something to be considered a public good.

mental resource *conditional* on the expectation of others reciprocating.⁷⁴ In a similar vein, citizens are willing to cooperate if others are willing to do the same, because cooperation appears to be safer and more normatively-accepted in such cases.

Parallel to collective action logic, some psychologists might argue that cooperation awareness creates a “bystander effect” effect, a social psychology theory that attempts to explain passivity of witnesses during emergency situations. The effect posits that people are less likely to intervene if they believe others are intervening already. If others have come forward with the information, it might appear to citizens that cooperation of their own is unnecessary.⁷⁵

Like collective action, the bystander effect is not as problematic for cooperation awareness as the theory might suggest. The archetypical case that is said to demonstrate the bystander effect is the 1964 murder of Kitty Genovese in New York City. Based on a *New York Times* report, thirty-eight witnesses were said to have seen the murder but did not call the police.⁷⁶ Later studies, however, revealed that significantly fewer witnesses saw the crime and some of those present did take action including by calling the police. Although just one example, it is demonstrative of the willingness of individuals to cooperate even if others are assumed to be doing so. And, the effect’s posited potency has been further eroded in additional social psychology studies, showing it does not manifest in the real-world as regularly as the theory predicts.⁷⁷

74. Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*.

75. The original proponents of the bystander effect John Darley and Bibb Latané write, “if others are known to be present, but their behavior cannot be closely observed, any one bystander can assume that one of the other observers is already taking action to end the emergency. Therefore, his own intervention would be only redundant—perhaps harmfully or confusingly so. Given the presence of other onlookers whose behavior cannot be observed, any given bystander can rationalize his own inaction by convincing himself that “somebody else must be doing something.” See Darley and Latané, “Bystander intervention in emergencies.”

76. Martin Gansberg and A.M. Rosenthal, “37 Who Saw Murder Didn’t Call the Police; Apathy at Stabbing of Queens Woman Shocks Inspector,” *New York Times*, March 27, 1964, accessed March 28, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/03/27/archives/37-who-saw-murder-didnt-call-the-police-apaty-at-stabbing-of.html>.

77. In a meta-analysis, Fischer et al. find that the bystander effect becomes attenuated by many factors including when witnesses perceived the situation to be dangerous, perpetrators are present,

3.2.3 Exposure to In-group Police

Exposing citizens to police officers from the same racial or ethnic group is the third strategy tested in this study. The presence of officers from citizens' racial or ethnic in-group might boost cooperation by increasing citizen trust. Particularly relevant to communities with criminal groups, exposure to an in-group officer might increase prospective cooperators' confidence that the police will protect them from retaliation by, for instance, safeguarding their identities.

As discussed in the previous section, the race and ethnicity literature indicates that people tend to trust those from their own race or ethnic group more than someone from a different race or ethnic group. Race or ethnicity thus potentially make an officer part of the reference group for citizens.⁷⁸ The role of race and ethnicity in building trust is domain-general in that it crosses into many contexts.⁷⁹ Perhaps most relevant, individuals of the same race and ethnicity are important reference groups for civilians on insurgent battlefields. Jay Lyall and co-authors, for instance, show that civilians caught in the Afghan war are more likely to share information with counterinsurgents of the same ethnicity.⁸⁰

Despite its potency in across domains, the literature is not clear cut on whether or not race and ethnicity boosts trust between police and citizens. On the one hand, a body of literature suggests that citizens are more likely to cooperate with in-group

and the costs of intervention are physical. See Peter Fischer et al., "The bystander-effect: A meta-analytic review on bystander intervention in dangerous and non-dangerous emergencies.," *Psychological Bulletin* 137, no. 4 (2011): 517–537.

78. Note that "reference group" refers to an individual who may be in a citizen's in-group or more generally someone about whom the citizen cares.

79. Lieberman and McClendon, "The Ethnicity–Policy Preference Link in Sub-Saharan Africa"; Alesina and La Ferrara, "Who trusts others?"; Habyarimana et al., "Why does ethnic diversity undermine public goods provision?" The preponderance of literature indicates an important role of race and ethnicity in building trust, but recent studies show mixed effects of ethnicity in trust and reciprocity. See for example Henar Criado et al., "Ethnicity and Trust: A Multifactorial Experiment," *Political Studies* 63, no. 1 (2015): 131–152 and Shelby Grossman and Dan Honig, "Evidence from Lagos on Discrimination across Ethnic and Class Identities in Informal Trade," *World Development* 96 (August 1, 2017): 520–528.

80. Lyall, Shiraito, and Imai, "Coethnic Bias and Wartime Informing."

police. A study by Joshua Cochran and Patricia Warren finds that black Americans rate interactions with white police officers more negatively than interactions with minority officer.⁸¹ Likewise, political scientist Travis Curtice finds that, in Uganda, citizens prefer to report crimes to co-ethnic officers.⁸²

On the other hand, Scott Decker and Russell Smith show that minority recruitment by police departments—spurred in part by riots in the 1960s—had little effect on black Americans’ evaluation of the police overall.⁸³ Another study by Robert Brown and James Frank finds that black police officers are more likely than white officers to arrest black suspects.⁸⁴ These studies appear to reflect the experiences of some black Americans. Sean Yoes, a journalist and podcast host, emphasizes:

Brother I’m here to tell you, as an older brother, black cop will sweat you quicker than a white cop will in a lot of situations. That’s just reality of law enforcement in America for real. From Baltimore to LA.⁸⁵

Beyond the United States, Robert Blair and co-authors find that minority police officers in Liberia are more discriminatory against minorities.⁸⁶ One would expect from these studies that harsher treatment by in-group officers would reduce citizen propensities to share information with in-group officers.

Given the mixed results, it is important to explore mechanisms that might influence why exposure to in-group officers may or may not increase information-sharing from citizens. One such mechanism is citizens’ level of *ex ante* trust in the police.

81. Joshua C. Cochran and Patricia Y. Warren, “Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Differences in Perceptions of the Police: The Salience of Officer Race Within the Context of Racial Profiling,” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 28, no. 2 (2012): 206–227.

82. Travis Curtice, “Police and Co-ethnic Bias: Evidence from A Conjoint Experiment in Uganda” (2019).

83. Scott H. Decker and Russell L. Smith, “Police Minority Recruitment: A Note on Its Effectiveness in Improving Black Evaluations of the Police,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 8, no. 6 (1980): 387–393.

84. Robert A. Brown and James Frank, “Race and Officer Decision Making: Examining Differences in Arrest Outcomes between Black and White Officers,” *Justice Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (2006): 96–126.

85. Taya Graham, Sean Yoes, and Stephen Janis, *The Lingering Consequences of Zero Tolerance*.

86. Robert A. Blair et al., “Policing Ethnicity: Lab-in-the-Field Evidence on Discrimination, Cooperation, and Ethnic Balancing in the Liberian National Police” (SSRN Research Paper 2772634, Rochester, New York, 2016).

Those that already see the police as fair to their racial or ethnic group may be more inclined to cooperate after exposure to an in-group officer. If a citizen already distrusts the police, then they may see the co-ethnic or co-racial officer simply as a part of an unfair system; thus, individual officers—even if from the same race or ethnic group—will do little to boost cooperation. But, if they see the police as fair, then this perspective creates the space for citizens to evaluate officers on an individual basis.⁸⁷

3.3. EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

In this section, I specify testable hypotheses from code of silence theory and the derivative strategies for promoting cooperation. To test the hypotheses, I adopt a multi-method approach, combining large-scale survey data with interviews and first-hand observation. I also contextualize my two case studies, Baltimore, Maryland and Lagos, Nigeria. The two cases provide contrasting contexts given that the former is in an economically-developed country and the latter is in an economically-developing country. At the same time, inhabitants in both cities tend to have low levels of trust in the police, making them difficult cases in which to promote police-citizen cooperation. If cooperation strategies work in cases with a severe lack of trust in the police, they likely work elsewhere.

3.3.1 Hypotheses

Table 3.1 lays out the hypotheses derived from the threshold framework. The hypotheses are categorized into those that test the cycle of silence theory, which explains why citizens refrain from sharing information with the police, and those that test strategies for promoting cooperation. With respect to the cycle of silence, *Hypothesis 1a*

87. Notably, Curtice has a contrasting result from Uganda in which he finds that the positive effect of co-ethnicity on willingness to report crimes is reduced when citizens *ex ante* trust the police and authorities. See Curtice, “Police and Co-ethnic Bias: Evidence from A Conjoint Experiment in Uganda.”

states that citizens overestimate the likelihood that cooperators face retaliation and *Hypothesis 1b* states that citizens underestimate the willingness of others in their community to share information with the police. I expect the amount of retaliation overestimation and community cooperation underestimation to be statistically and substantially significant.

Per cycle of silence theory, terroristic fear initiates the cycle by inflating the perceived likelihood of retaliation. Accordingly, *Hypotheses 2* states that fear of violence is positively associated with greater overestimation of retaliation likelihood.

Hypothesis 3a and *Hypothesis 3b* evaluate the relationship between the collective misperceptions and the study's central outcome: citizens' willingness to share information with the police. *Hypothesis 3a* states that citizens' overestimation of retaliation likelihood reduces the amount of information they are willing to share with the police. Similarly, *Hypothesis 3b* states that citizens' underestimation of community cooperation norms reduces the amount of information they are willing to share. Ultimately, the combination of these effects means that communities are unable to reach their full cooperation potential.

The remaining hypotheses turn to strategies for promoting cooperation. *Hypothesis 4* states that rendering a tip line anonymous increases the amount of information citizens are willing to share with the police. *Hypothesis 5* states that creating awareness of other community members cooperating increases the amount of information citizens are willing to share. Finally, *Hypothesis 6* states that citizen exposure to police officers of the same race or ethnicity increases the amount of information citizens are willing to share. Given that hypotheses related to the strategies are tested experimentally, I register pre-analysis plans for both the experiments in Baltimore and in Lagos, which are publicly available on OSF Registries.⁸⁸

The main alternative explanation discussed in this study is code of silence theory.

88. The Baltimore registration has ID# 20190604AE and the Lagos registration has ID# 20180608AA. See "OSF Registries," <https://osf.io/registries>.

In many ways, the outcome that code of silence theory predict are mutually exclusive with the outcome that cycle of silence theory predict. Code of silence theory predicts that the cooperation strategies would have little or no effect on citizen propensities to share information with the police. Since code of silence theory's central proposition is that citizens voluntarily hold back information, improving the safety and norms of cooperation should not be particularly influential in citizen decision-making. Citizens would not be inclined to cooperate regardless given that, per the theory, their support for the criminal groups is holding them back. Thus, if the cooperation strategies work, it suggests that in fact citizens are *not* voluntarily refraining from cooperation.

3.3.2 Most Different, Least Likely Cases

I study communities in two cases for this study: Baltimore, Maryland and Lagos, Nigeria.

In an ideal research world, I would have the opportunity to select communities for study systematically from the universe of communities with criminal groups around the world. Unfortunately, data scarcity and logistical hurdles make doing so difficult, if not impossible. Data to measure criminal group presence at the granular level of communities do not exist and would be a Herculean effort to collect worldwide. For major fieldwork endeavors as my research approach calls for, pragmatic factors also limited the number of viable cases. For this study, limiting factors included financial, security, logistical, and other considerations. Despite pragmatic considerations driving case selection, communities in Baltimore and Lagos are auspicious environments in which to generate a generalizable theory with respect to police-citizen cooperation.

Figure 3.2 contextualizes the cases within the broader research design at the country-level, municipal-level, and community-level.

At the country-level, the United States is an economically-developed country whereas Nigeria is an economically-developing country. If the tests confirm cycle

Table 3.1: Study Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Description
CYCLE OF SILENCE THEORY	
H1	Risk Inflation Citizens (a) <i>overestimate</i> retaliation likelihood and (b) <i>underestimate</i> community cooperation.
H2	Terroristic Fear Fear of violence is associated with increased overestimation of retaliation likelihood.
H3	Cooperation Will Citizens' (a) overestimating retaliation likelihood and (b) underestimating community cooperation reduces information-sharing with the police.
COOPERATION STRATEGIES	
H4*	Anonymity Rendering a crime reporting tip line anonymous increases information-sharing.
H5*	Cooperation Awareness Creating awareness of community members cooperating increases information-sharing.
H6*	In-group Police Exposure to police officers of the same race or ethnicity increases information-sharing.

Asterisks indicate that I test the hypothesis using an experimental design and registered pre-analysis plan. The pre-analysis plans for the Baltimore experiment (ID# 20190604AE) and the Lagos experiment (ID# 20180608AA) are posted on OSF Registries.

of silence theory and the cooperation strategies in both cities, it suggests that they “travel” to high- and low-income environments. Along the dimension of income, the countries have the characteristics of “most different” cases.⁸⁹ The phrase “most different” should not be taken literally. The United States is not the world’s richest country nor is Nigeria the world’s lowest income country, but they are substantively

⁸⁹. For more on the utility of most different cases, see Jason Seawright and John Gerring, “Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research a Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options,” *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2008): 294–308.

different along this dimension. According to World Bank data, the United States has an average per capita income of roughly \$60,000 compared to Nigeria’s per capita income averaging roughly \$2,000.⁹⁰

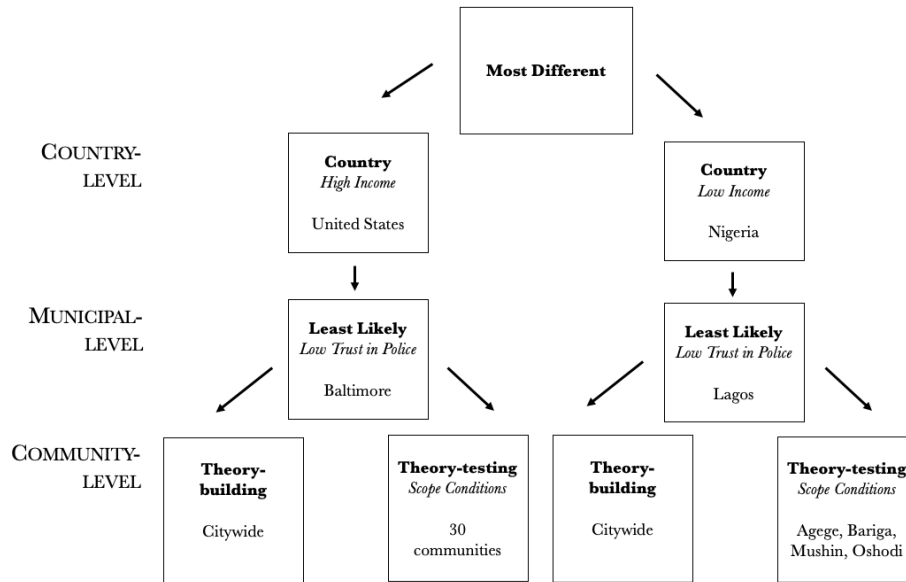


Figure 3.2: Case Contextualization

The cases of Baltimore and Lagos facilitate building and testing a generalizable theory. The United States and Nigeria are “most different” at the country-level with respect to economic development. Within their respective countries, they have the characteristics of “least likely” cities where cooperation strategies are unlikely to work due to low trust in the police. The theory-building at the community-level is citywide, and the communities for theory testing are selected based on meeting the scope conditions. The lack of complete overlap between theory-building and theory-testing communities allows for partial out-of-sample testing.

Within the countries, I move down to the municipal-level to consider where Baltimore and Lagos are situated with respect to levels of trust in the police. As I discuss in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6, respectively, Baltimore and Lagos have the characteristics of “least likely” cases. The *a priori* expectation, from a legitimacy perspective, would be that deep-seated distrust of the police makes strategies to promote cooperation unlikely to succeed. If strategies can promote cooperation where citizens hold a strong distrust of the police, they can likely work in other contexts where the distrust

90. *World Internal Security & Police Index 2016* (International Peace Science Association, 2017).

is not as acute. Having cities which are “hard-to-pass” tests makes it more likely that the strategies can work in other contexts. As political scientist Jack Levy puts it, “The inferential logic of least likely case design is based on the ‘Sinatra inference’—if I can make it there I can make it anywhere.”⁹¹ In same same vein, if the strategies can work in Baltimore and Lagos, they can likely work elsewhere.

At the community-level, I increase generalizability by conducting partially out-of-sample testing. My theory-building research is conducted without restriction to particular communities, so it has a wide scope. I then systematically test the hypotheses, derived from the theory, in particular communities. In an ideal research world, there would be no overlap between the communities where I build the theory and the communities where I test the theory. The breadth of my theory-building means that the design includes some overlap, but it is still partially out-of-sample given that theory-building was done in communities beyond those where the theory is tested. This partially out-of-sample testing protects against “overfitting” my theory to the characteristics of particular communities and then confirming the theory in those same communities.⁹² Moreover, as shown in the theory chapters, I supplement the theory-building with extensive quantitative and anecdotal evidence from around the world, further guarding against fitting the theory to theory-testing communities.

The communities selected for theory-testing have high population density, racial or ethnic diversity, and a criminal group presence. I focus on high-density communities for two reasons: criminal groups traditionally thrive in urban areas (albeit, not exclusively); and, in urban areas, the state is more likely to have the will and capacity to compete for authority compared to rural areas where states, especially in economically-developing contexts, have little presence. Racial or ethnic diversity

91. Jack S. Levy, “Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 1 (2008): 1–18.

92. For more on the logic of out-of-sample testing, see Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994).

allows for evaluating which aspects of the theory apply broadly across racial and ethnic groups and which do not. Most crucial is the condition that the communities have a criminal group presence. Indeed, it is in these communities where The Information Game is played. Thus, citizens are put in the position where they have to decide whether or not they will share information with the police about criminal group violence.

These three community features constitute the scope conditions for the study, which can be thought of as the boundaries of the theory's generalizability. That is, in general, the theory likely applies in areas that meet these conditions; and, although it may apply in areas outside of these conditions—for example, in rural areas—I do not develop nor test the theory in those contexts.

3.3.3 Multi-method Approach

Whereas my case selection aims at maximizing generalizability, I use a multi-method approach—combining techniques from qualitative and quantitative social science traditions—to maximize the study's internal validity.⁹³ That is, I use a multi-method approach to maximize the likelihood that the conclusions I draw are the correct conclusions. In other words, my case selection aims to increase the geographic areas to which the study's central claims apply and my multi-method approach aims to increase confidence that the findings support the central claims. In taking this approach, my research design draws on prior multi-method studies, in particular work by Fotini Christia.⁹⁴

It is necessary to take a multi-method approach given that the questions I investigate present significant challenges. They are not conducive to drawing convincing answers from a single social science method. Specifically, I rely on three components

93. Jason Seawright, *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, September 8, 2016).

94. Fotini Christia, *Alliance Formation in Civil Wars* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

to evaluate my central theoretical claims: the logic of the theory, systematic quantitative analysis, and qualitative evidence. I attempt to combine these components in a way that complement and reinforce each other. Each of the components' strengths fill in the weaknesses of the others. In this way, a theoretical claim is like an entablature supported by a colonnade of columns. Just as the entablature can remain standing despite fissures in any one column, a theoretical claim can remain valid despite the limitations of any one method.

In practice, this approach collecting data in three phases.

First, for exploratory and theory-building work, I rely on interviews and first-hand observation for building the theory and hypotheses. Qualitative inquiry better allows for uncovering the nuances and breadth of potential explanations, which are crucial in the early stages of research. In Baltimore, I accompanied police patrols, attended the Baltimore Police Department's Citizen Police Academy, as well as interview citizens, state authorities and drug crew affiliates in the city. In Lagos, this phase involved accompanying Nigeria Police Force (NPF) on patrols to observe first-hand witness interactions with the police as well as conduct interviews with citizens, state authorities, and local street gangs. I combined this research in Lagos and Baltimore with anecdotal evidence from other parts of the world and analysis of the extensive World Justice Project data discussed in the theory chapters.

Second, turning to quantitative data, I use original surveys in Baltimore and Lagos to test the proposed hypotheses among large segments of populations in way that would not be feasible relying on qualitative data alone. In Baltimore, I conduct an online survey of residents in thirty communities in the city. In Lagos, I include a module on police-community relations as part of an in-person survey in four of the city's market areas. Both surveys gather observational and descriptive data as well as include survey experiments to test cooperation strategies.

Finally, I turn back to interviews and observations to validate and contextual-

ize the survey responses. These additional interviews are useful for illustrating the nuances of the findings. Whereas the interviews in the initial phase of the research were with citizens, state authorities, and criminal group affiliates, for this phase of the research, I primarily focus on interviews with citizens in Baltimore and Lagos. Citizens themselves make police-citizen cooperation decisions, which puts them at the center of The Information Game.

Paramount throughout the research process was that all those involved in the study faced minimal risk. I consider the safety for myself, research staff, and survey respondents as well as interviewees *the* top priority. I took guidance on ethics from the literature on fieldwork in “difficult places” including works by Elisabeth Wood,⁹⁵ Romain Malejacq and Dipali Mukhopadhyay,⁹⁶ as well as Kate Cronin-Furman and Milli Lake,⁹⁷ among others. Operating on a “safety first” principle, maintaining minimal risk standard stood above all else. Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s institutional review board, the Committee on the Use of Humans as Experimental Subjects (COUHES), reviewed and approved the research. I treated the COUHES protocols as a baseline standard and regularly took steps beyond what was mandated to minimize risk.

Next, I move to the study’s empirics in Baltimore to test the cycle of silence theory and its derivative cooperation strategies. In many ways, the Baltimore and Lagos empirical portions of this study are designed to stand on their own. That is to say, they are of roughly equal rigor, and the findings of one case are not necessary to

95. Elisabeth Jean Wood, “The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones,” *Qualitative Sociology* 29, no. 3 (2006): 373–386.

96. Romain Malejacq and Dipali Mukhopadhyay, “The ‘Tribal Politics’ of Field Research: A Reflection on Power and Partiality in 21st-Century Warzones,” *Perspectives on Politics* 14, no. 4 (2016): 1011–1028.

97. Kate Cronin-Furman and Milli Lake, “Ethics Abroad: Fieldwork in Fragile and Violent Contexts,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, April 12, 2018, 1–8.

support the findings of the other case. Conducting both cases, as discussed above, provides generalizability for the theory to economically-developed and economically-developing contexts.

Part II

Baltimore

Chapter 4

The Game in Baltimore

They'd firebomb my house for that shit. They Molotov cocktail motherfuckas out here for talkin' [to the police]. They'll get you.

South Baltimore resident¹

In Spring 2019, Baltimore's newly-minted mayor Jack Young toured the city's Broadway East neighborhood in the wake of a double homicide.² Alongside the police commissioner and a coterie of aides, the mayor implored residents to send tips to the police. "We can't put police on every corner," he said, "people need to step up to the plate." He went on, "This 'stop snitching' mentality in the city of Baltimore has got to stop."³ Diagnosing the problem as one of the residents' "mentality" feeds into the common view that Baltimoreans have little desire to come forward with information.

Blaming the lack of cooperation on residents' "mentality" fails to recognize the crucial dynamic in communities hit with violence: often citizens *want* to share information but fear prevents them from doing so. A former dealer, now living in a South Baltimore recovery house, shares his view on whether or not witnesses have an

1. BWI515 2017.

2. Young, the Baltimore City Council president, became ex-officio mayor on April 2, 2019 when then-mayor Catherine Pugh took a leave of absence amid corruption allegations.

3. Phil Davis, "'The city is functioning': Ex officio Mayor Jack Young tours Baltimore neighborhood that saw double homicide," *Baltimore Sun*, April 17, 2019, accessed January 17, 2020, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-young-crime-walk-20190417-story.html>.

obligation to come forward:

Sure, we all do. The neighborhood is not gonna get no better if we don't. [...]If I hear gun fire, I'm not looking out my window. If they don't got a problem shooting a police officer like you see on TV, they don't have a problem shooting anybody. I'm a caring person and would like to help everybody I can [but] I wouldn't be a witness.⁴

These views underscore the importance of looking beyond the surface when evaluating why Baltimoreans may not talk to the police. Citizens refraining from cooperation due to a “no snitching” code of silence or due to fear of the consequences result in the same outcome of non-cooperation; but, they constitute fundamentally distinct explanations for the behavior and come with distinct implications.

The goal of this chapter is to explore why Baltimoreans, at times, refrain from sharing information with the police. The story that emerges is one in which the level of police-citizen cooperation is significantly lower than what residents themselves want it to be.

The cycle of silence helps explain why communities do not reach their full cooperation potential: the violence perpetrated by the city's drug crews creates such fear that residents come to see retaliation as more likely than it is. The real and perceived retaliation risk pushes those who are willing to cooperate to hide their disposition from others, so Baltimore's residents come to see cooperation norms to be lower than they are. Both the retaliation risk inflation and cooperation norm deflation reduce residents' willingness to share information.

To say that retaliation risk in part prevents Baltimoreans from coming forward would surprise few observers. Indeed, even those that argue a no snitching code exists often attribute it partly to fear. What is less well recognized, however, is that drug crews make retaliation appear significantly more likely than it is and that this

4. BWI196 2017.

perception makes the community's cooperation norms appear weaker than they are. The violence-induced collective misperceptions have a significant, underappreciated impact on constraining cooperation.

Section 4.1 provides background on highlighting how citizens become exposed to violence from drug crews and how critical this information is for police efforts to curb violence in the city. The section also derives what one would expect to see from applying the cycle of silence theory in Baltimore.

Section 4.2 lays out the methodological approach for the Baltimore case. The empirical evidence for the case is built on extensive interviews and first-hand observation. I pair the qualitative data with analysis of the Baltimore Community Safety Survey, an original survey of residents in Baltimore's thirty communities with the highest levels of violence.

Section 4.3 evaluates the differences between the relatively high levels of underlying support for cooperation compared to reported levels of cooperation will. The analysis reveals that citizens underestimate the willingness of others to come forward, and this underestimation is in part driven by citizens hiding their support for cooperation. Forcing cooperators behind closed doors, violence by drug crews and focal point incidents of retaliation create a climate of fear in communities that contributes to citizens overestimating retaliation risk.

Section 4.4 discusses the shortcomings of attributing limited cooperation among Baltimore residents to a code of silence. For one, the concept of a no snitching code was created to apply to those involved in illicit activity, not the vast majority of residents who are not. Moreover, contra the code of silence theory, the descriptive evidence makes evident that Baltimoreans show little support for criminal groups and thus are unlikely to refrain from cooperation voluntarily. Residents do not see the drug crews as being advocates for political or social causes nor providers of security and economic benefits.

Ultimately, these findings on what holds back police-citizen cooperation in Baltimore have important implications for strategies to promote information-sharing. In Chapter 5, I evaluate the effectiveness of strategies derived from cycle of silence theory, demonstrating that they can work despite deep-seated distrust of the police in Baltimore among some segments of the city’s population.

4.1. BACKGROUND: “THE GREATEST CITY IN AMERICA”

Baltimore fits well within the scope condition for this study—outlined in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.3)—given that it has racially-diverse urban communities with a criminal group presence.

Situated on the Patapsco River estuary about 40 miles northeast of Washington, DC, Baltimore is a quintessential American port city. In the industrial era, its geography attracted industry, and the industry attracted migrants giving it a diverse make-up. At its peak, according to the 1950 census, Baltimore had 950,000 residents but has since contracted amid the broader de-industrialization of American cities in the second half of the twentieth century. Today, Baltimore has roughly 600,000 people as the contraction abates in speed but nonetheless continues.⁵

Parts of Baltimore have undergone a post-industrial revival with economic success stories scattered throughout the city. Perhaps most prominently, the city transformed its dilapidated Inner Harbor with attractions centered around the National Aquarium, making it what the Urban Land Institute called “the model for post-industrial waterfront redevelopment.”⁶ Continuing these development efforts, in 2000, then-Mayor

5. Adam Marton, “Baltimore population continues to decline,” Baltimore Sun, 2017, accessed February 19, 2020, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-city/bal-baltimore-population-continues-to-decline-20170322-htmlstory.html>.

6. “Inner Harbor wins 2009 Heritage Award from the Urban Land Institute,” Greater Baltimore Committee, May 15, 2009, accessed February 19, 2020, <https://gbc.org/inner-harbor-wins-2009->

Martin O'Malley launched a campaign to brand Baltimore as "America's Greatest City," which can be seen in bold white lettering on the city's benches.

The marketing slogan, however, belies the social challenges facing many of Baltimore's communities where the city's economic revitalization has not reached. Arguably chief among these challenges is violence, and it is difficult to imagine the city's left-behind communities joining the renewal without curbing that violence.⁷

4.1.1 Baltimore's Drug Crews

A major source of Baltimore's violence is the city's robust drug trade. A 2006 federal report estimated that Baltimore hosted 60,000 people addicted to heroin alone.⁸ Such estimates should be taken with a grain of salt, but if correct, 60,000 would equate to one addicted person for every ten residents.

The popularity of certain drugs shifts over time—fentanyl is steadily replacing heroin—but the involvement of criminal groups in the drug trade has remained a constant. The trade offers a lucrative source for illicit economic gain, which, as discussed in Chapter 1, is the central purpose of criminal groups. According to a Baltimore Police Department (BPD) officer, a typical "dope shop" earns about \$3,500 in revenue per day, which would amount to \$1.3 million per year.⁹

A "dope shop" is run by a drug crew that generally has between five and twenty individuals. And those in the crew might fulfill one of a number of roles: "cooks" prepare the product for sale; "touters" announce the product on the street; "lookouts" surveil the area for police; "money men" collect the payment from the buyer; "runners" move the cash to a stash; and, "hitters" or "pitchers" hand the product to the buyer;

heritage-award-from-the-urban-land-institute/.

7. By the same token, economic opportunity for those in these community is an important condition for addressing the violence. Both the violence and the lack of economic opportunities go hand-in-hand. See for example (Chetty and Hendren, "The Impacts of Neighborhoods on Intergenerational Mobility: Childhood Exposure Effects and County-Level Estimates").

8. Carter Yang, "Part I: Baltimore Is the U.S. Heroin Capital," ABC News, January 7, 2006, accessed March 3, 2019, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=92699>.

9. BWI340 2016.

“shooters” provide security; and, a “street lieutenant” oversees the operation.¹⁰

A common misconception is that the crews operate only in black communities. However, there are number of primarily white crews engaged in the drug trade. The white gang Dead Man Inc/Power Over All (DMI/POA) has a visible presence in South Baltimore’s Brooklyn neighborhood, for instance.

Even when the crews claim an affiliation with broader criminal gangs such as DMI/POA, the Crips, or Bloods, they largely operate independent entities. The relationship among the crews—sometimes called “sets”—in a gang is akin to them competing as rival teams in the National Football League (NFL) rather than working together on the same team. As a BPD intelligence officer explains, “it’s drugs before the gang for these guys,” emphasizing that financial gain is a higher priority than advancing a broader gang’s interests.¹¹

4.1.2 Living amid Violence

The atomized nature of the city’s drug trade renders it ripe for violence—violence to which residents are regularly exposed with little choice on their part. This exposure means that information from residents is a valuable piece of the puzzle for bringing perpetrators to justice and potentially preventing incidents before they occur.

In 2017, Baltimore reported a homicide rate of 55 per 100,000 people, placing it just behind St. Louis for the highest murder rate in the United States.¹² Some neighborhoods are particularly hard hit. One area of the city consisting of a few square block with 651 residents has had to endure twenty homicides between 2007 and 2017. On a per capita basis, the area has an annual homicide rate comparable to the most dangerous cities in the world.¹³

10. BWI340 2016; D. Watkins, *The Cook Up: A Crack Rock Memoir* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, May 3, 2016), p. 59

11. BWI488 2017.

12. “Crime in the United States, Uniform Crime Reports.”

13. The population data is from *American Community Survey 5-year Estimates* (U.S. Census

The violence has varied roots. In some cases, rival crews may attack each other to expand their share of the drug market in what a West Baltimore community advocate calls, “territorial entrepreneurship.”¹⁴ In other cases, internal struggles within gangs may drive the violence.¹⁵ Reflecting the persistence of the violence, Baltimore has been given a set of monikers that are decidedly less inviting than “The Greatest City in America” slogan: Bodymore, Murdaland, and Clip City, and among others.

Aside from a small group of vigilant citizens who are, in the words of a retired BPD officer, “looking out the window” for criminal activity, Baltimoreans attempt to avoid exposure to the violence as much as possible.¹⁶ The openness and rapid escalatory nature of drug-related violence, however, makes it difficult for residents to avoid it as much as many try.

The drug trade is, in some areas, set amid the milieu of communities’ socio-economic life. A crew will set up “open air drug markets,” as they are commonly known, in broad daylight at an intersection, in a park, outside a corner store, on a busy block, or within a housing community, among other other places with high foot traffic. Residents often have to pass by as the activity takes place while the crews’ “touters” announce their products to effect of, for example, “XOs, XOs, XOs...we got ’dem new thangs” and “ninos, ninos, ninos.”

The connection between the drug trade and violence means that those with social proximity to the crews are particularly well exposed. Some residents may be “barricaded in their homes” as one officer in a specialized operations unit put it, but those that are proximate to the trade—perhaps as users or sex workers—become

Bureau, Retrieved from Social Explorer, 2017). The homicide data is from Rich, Mellnik, and Lowery, “Homicide database.”

14. BWI390 2016.

15. Yvonne Wenger, “Mayor Rawlings-Blake says gang power struggle fueling violence,” Baltimore Sun, July 15, 2015, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-city/bal-mayor-rawlingsblake-says-bgf-gang-in-midst-of-internal-power-struggle-20150715-story.html>.

16. BWI753 2017.

more likely to witness incidents.¹⁷ Another officer explains that those proximate to the trade constitute “who is out at 4:00am in Baltimore.” He emphasizes, “It’s not a nun out there. You’re getting junkies and prostitutes a lot of the time.”¹⁸

Even if residents know to avoid open air drug markets, the violence may take on a rapidly-escalating nature that makes it difficult to avoid. At a West Baltimore peace rally, a couple in attendance recounted how their nephew was shot and killed in a store trying to stop someone from stealing a bottle of water on the Fourth of July. By the couple’s telling, the person taking the water, a member of the Crips, mistook their nephew who was wearing red for the holiday, as “repping” the Bloods.¹⁹ All those in the store had no choice but to witness the killing.

As happened with this incident, the use of guns as the weapon of choice in killings makes it particularly easy for the violence to escalate. Indeed, more than three-quarters of Baltimore’s homicides were committed with a gun.²⁰

Those in communities that do not witness the violence directly may learn of information useful to an investigation second-hand. “The streets talk,” as one BPD officer puts it.²¹ A citizen of a South Baltimore neighborhood similarly emphasizes that, “it’s like family [in the neighborhood], everybody knows everything.”²² A former affiliate of Baltimore’s Black Guerrilla Family gang describes one incident to demonstrate the speed at which information about violence travels:

My friend got shot[...] I found out what happened after six hours. I asked a junkie what’s up and he just told me. They were fighting, the guy started beating him with the gun, then [my friend] said that all you got, the guy shot him. The junkie saw it all. Somebody gonna see it all. [...]I

17. BWI009 2017.

18. BWI488 2017.

19. BWI067 2017; BWI233 2017.

20. In 2014, 76% of homicides were committed with a firearm.

21. BWI572 2017.

22. BWI342 2017.

heard it from four or five people.²³

The number of witnesses—both first-hand and second-hand—in these cases and others like it provide a reservoir of information. It is often essential for detectives to learn this information, even if not completely accurate, in order to gain the initial leads needed to solve a case.

4.1.3 Importance of Cooperation

Police rely on information from the community to solve crimes. Sociologist Peter Moskos, who became a sworn Baltimore police officer for a year, quotes a sergeant emphasizing this reliance: “We can’t do anything without the public. They know who’s dirty and who’s not. They know who’s shooting who. We don’t know. They live here.”²⁴ Crime scene and material evidence are important components of solving crimes, but they can do little to prevent them; and, as *Baltimore Sun* reporter Justin Fenton concluded as part of a feature piece on the city’s homicide unit, “witnesses remain the most important piece of the puzzle.”²⁵

Perpetrators, for instance, share guns, so simply having fingerprints on the weapon is insufficient to tie a suspect to a murder in a way that an eyewitness can, according to a high-ranking BPD detective.²⁶ Similarly, video evidence from security cameras cannot capture faces well and thus require a witness to confirm the identity of a suspect. “Without a witness,” a BPD intelligence officer summarizes, “most of the violent crime cases aren’t going anywhere.”²⁷

Thus, information from citizens, even if they are not direct witnesses, can be

23. BWI850 2017.

24. Peter Moskos, *Cop in the Hood: My Year Policing Baltimore’s Eastern District* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, August 23, 2009), p. 80.

25. Justin Fenton, “Murder witness tells detectives victim ‘wouldn’t want me to say a thing’,” *Baltimore Sun*, December 28, 2015, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/investigations/bal-homicide-embed-part-three-story.html>.

26. BWI546 2016.

27. BWI488 2017.

essential to solving a case, especially in its early stages. David Simon, a former *Baltimore Sun* reporter and creator of *The Wire* television series, recounts how a tip led to an identification of a suspect while he was embedded with the city's homicide unit:

The Lexington Street murder, a dispute over a small narcotics sale, is solved on a reconvaass of the shooting scene, when [Detective] Worden's photographic memory matches the face of an old man who answers a door in the 1500 block with the face of a bystander he saw hanging out on a corner the night of the murder. Sure enough, the old man admits to being a witness and identifies the shooter from a photo array.²⁸

Witnesses such as this are insufficient to crack a case alone but they can significantly advance investigations. A description of the suspect is, in the words of a patrol officers, "not good enough but it gives me more to work with [and] are very useful."²⁹

Figure 4.1 indicates that, in communities where there is a high volume of 911 calls for drug activity, there is also a high volume of arrests. I show this correlation not to endorse drug arrests but rather to emphasize the fact that the police rely on reports from residents to address criminal activity, which may or may not escalate into violence.

The direction of the causality—whether calls lead to arrests, or vice versa—goes both ways. The cycle of silence theory, by design, is endogenous in that cooperation through calls leads to arrests, arrests reduce fear, and reduced fear give respondents greater confidence to call. All in all, the correlation suggests that cooperation between citizens and police can contribute to addressing drug crew activity. A simple multivariate regression indicates that 10% more drug-related 911 calls-for-service is

28. David Simon, *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, August 22, 2006).

29. BWI919 2017.

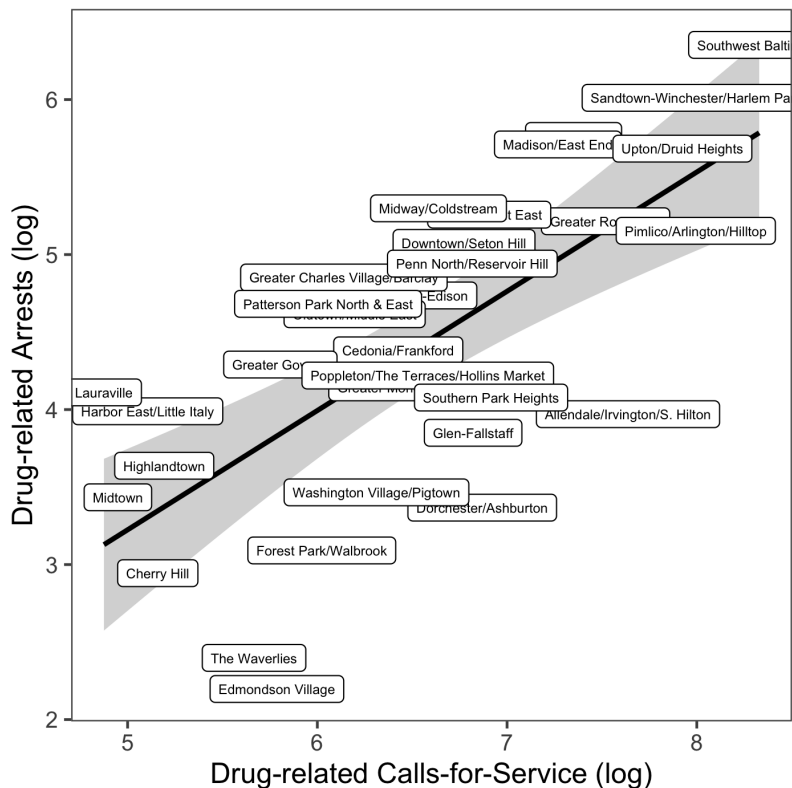


Figure 4.1: Drug-related 911 Calls and Arrests

Calls-for-service related to drug activity are positively associated with the number of drug-related arrests in the study’s sample communities. The association provides suggestive evidence that police-citizen cooperation increases police’s ability to address drug crew activity. Sources: Arrests: “BPD Arrests,” Open Baltimore, 2019, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://data.baltimorecity.gov/Public-Safety/BPD-Arrests/3i3v-ibr7>; Calls: “911 Police Calls for Service,” Open Baltimore, 2019, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://data.baltimorecity.gov/Public-Safety/911-Police-Calls-for-Service/xviu-ezkt>.

associated with 6% more drug-related arrests.³⁰

4.1.4 Theoretical Expectations

Much anecdotal evidence suggests that Baltimoreans, at times, refrain from cooperating with the police. “People with blood on them after homicides scenes will say they

30. The regression controls for homicide rates, percent of the population that is black, percent of the population with a high school education, and percent of the population between eighteen and twenty-four years old. A naive regression model (i.e., without controls) indicates that 10% more calls for services is associated with 8% more arrests. The data include arrest and calls from 2017.

don't see anything," one patrol officer gripes.³¹ Detectives express nostalgia for the old days when they would return to their office after a homicide, as Fenton puts it, "to find a fistful of tips waiting for them."³² John Riddick, a former homicide detective, looks back with a similar nostalgia:

There was a time when we would receive a call about a murder in a local neighborhood and the post Officer would have neighbors whom he could always rely upon. These individuals respected the Officers and would voluntarily provide specific details about the case, to include the who, what, when and why pertaining to the case. In present times, if you ask a post Officer if they know anyone who would talk to them about a murder case or who are the key players on their post, they can't tell you.³³

This sentiment may reflect, as nostalgia often does, an exaggeration of the "good old days" but nonetheless today police struggle to convince residents to share all that they can.³⁴

What explains Baltimoreans refraining from sharing information with the police? If cycle of silence theory is a useful explanation, residents would want to cooperate but hold back from doing so due to the perceived risk of retaliation. A young South Baltimore mother, pondering what she would do if she saw a shooting victim, embodies this tension: "If something happen[s], I wanna call but I don't want my name out there." Raising one hand, she says "The right thing would be to call," and then raising the other hand, "but what about this side."³⁵

Cycle of silence theory would predict the following patterns in Baltimore: First, residents overestimate the risk that cooperators face retaliation, in part due to fear

31. BWI724 2017.

32. Fenton, "Murder witness tells detectives victim 'wouldn't want me to say a thing'."

33. John F. Riddick, *The Boogeyman of Baltimore* (My Story, April 5, 2015).

34. A particularly stark example of the non-cooperation occurs when Baltimore detectives visit shooting victims in hospitals only for the victims to say improbably that they "shot themselves." See BWI900 2016; BWI990 2016; BWI135 2016.

35. BWI947 2017.

brought on by criminal group violence. Second, residents underestimate the willingness of others in their communities to share information with the police. The underestimation occurs partly because the perceived retaliation risk pushes those who are willing to cooperate to hide that will from others. The risk inflation and norm deflation prevents communities from reaching their cooperation potential. In other words, it pushes the level of cooperation below the equilibrium that would be predicted if collective misperceptions did not exist, and there were full awareness of the level of community cooperation norms.

4.2. METHOD: BALTIMORE COMMUNITY SAFETY SURVEY

I take a multi-method approach, relying on two sources of data: qualitative evidence and a systematic survey. The data collection process involved three stages. I began with qualitative work to explore police-citizen cooperation dynamics in Baltimore and to build the theory. With the exploratory and theory-building work in hand, I implemented the Baltimore Community Safety Survey, an original survey of 650 residents in thirty Baltimore communities. During and after the survey data collection, I conducted additional interviews and observation to contextualize and validate the findings. All fieldwork in Baltimore took place intermittently between June 2017 and November 2019.

4.2.1 Interviews and Observation

In total, I interviewed sixty-one individuals in Baltimore for the study. The interviews ranged from informal conversations to formal semi-structured interviews. To learn the perspectives of all sides of the cooperation process, I include input from citizens, state authorities (mostly, police), as well as those either affiliated or formerly affiliated with

drug crews in the city. As represented in Figure 4.2, I conducted the majority of my interviews with citizens given that they are the most relevant actors for understanding cooperation decisions. Many individuals are interviewed more than once, which I count as a single interviewee. In every interview, I attempted to record in writing the interviewee responses as faithfully as possible, so that I could highlight them in the study with minimal interpretation and summary.

The majority of the interviews (fifty-three) were done in the exploratory and theory-building phase, as copious input was essential to gain a broad view of the dynamics among citizens, police, and drug crews in the city. During this phase, the central goal of the interviews was to gain a better understanding, to the extent possible, of police-citizen cooperation from the perspective of the relevant actors. The remaining eight interviews were done during and after the survey to validate particular findings from the survey. For the research's validation and contextualization phase, I conducted a greater proportion of interviews with citizens considering that the goal of this phase was to validate the quantitative survey of residents and put their responses into context, which makes them the relevant actors to interview.

To determine the number of individuals that should be interviewed, I evaluated the extent of new information that was learned from each interview. I continued interviewing up to the point where the interviews revealed limited new information or limited new perspectives related to the study's central questions. Many of the individuals were interviewed on more than one occasion. Prior studies indicate that saturation in which few new themes become introduced occurs around a dozen interviews.³⁶

For contacting citizen and drug crew affiliates, I used chain-referral sampling, sometimes called "snowball sampling."³⁷ For citizens, the process entailed approaching

36. Greg Guest, Arwen Bunce, and Laura Johnson, "How Many Interviews Are Enough?: An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability," *Field Methods* 18, no. 1 (2006): 59–82.

37. Jean J. Schensul and Margaret D. LeCompte, eds., *Essential Ethnographic Methods: A Mixed Methods Approach* (Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press, October 1, 2012), p. 291-2.

individuals on the street, building a rapport with them, and conducting the interview at a mutually agreed upon time and place. From there, I would work with the interviewees to set up additional interviews. Contacting drug crew affiliates entailed roughly the same process except that I took the precaution of working with ex-affiliates no longer active in criminal activity as the initial interviewees. To qualify for an interview, individuals had to be at least eighteen years old and living in Baltimore.

Interviewing state authorities involved establishing contact with members of the police department and other relevant agencies to conduct an initial interview and begin the chain-referral process. Through this process, I interviewed individuals in BPD's units dealing with public affairs, gang intelligence, and plain-clothed operations, among others. Interviews initiating the snowball process for all actor categories were done through multiple persons which allows for comparing and triangulating views from different social networks.

The snowball sampling, a non-systematic approach to recruitment, allowed me to explore various aspects of police-citizen cooperation from contacts of interviewees in a way that would have been more difficult with a rigid protocol. I use the interviews to complement rather than substitute the systematic analysis of the survey so as to avoid inferential concerns.

In addition to interviews, I engaged in extensive observational work. I accompanied BPD patrols in all nine of city's police districts. These "ride-alongs" involved following officers on their shift as they responded to 911 calls. I also completed the BPD's Citizen Police Academy in which citizens attend lessons from various units in the department to provide background on the department's operation and structure. In addition to the police observations, my observational work included attending neighborhood meetings in communities hit by criminal group violence in east, west, south, and northeast areas of Baltimore as well as attending various community events and block parties hosted by community organizations with which I had built

relationships.

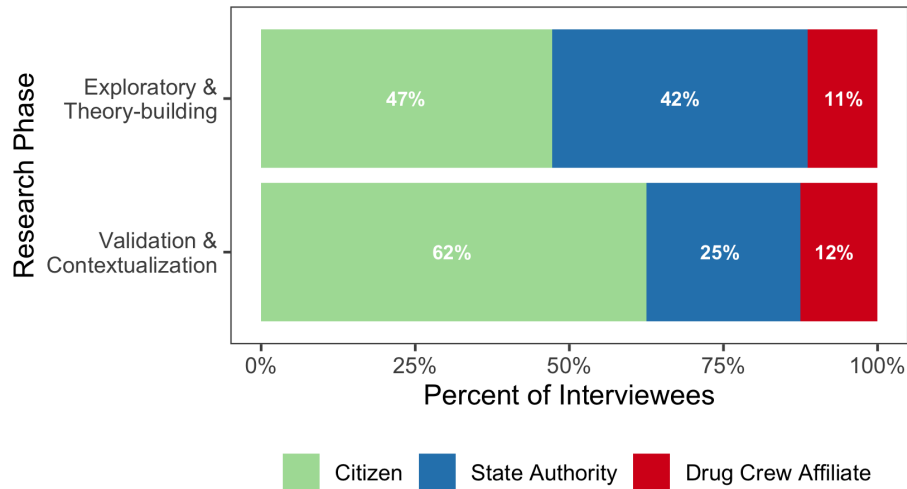


Figure 4.2: Baltimore Interviews

Interviews were conducted in the exploratory and theory-building as well as validation and contextualization phases of the research process. Sixty-one individuals including citizens, state authorities, and drug crew affiliates were interviewed.

4.2.2 Survey Background

My central data collection instrument was the Baltimore Community Safety Survey (BCSS), in which I surveyed 650 residents in thirty of Baltimore’s fifty-five communities.³⁸ With 349,000 residents in the sample communities, they cover more than half of Baltimore’s total population of roughly 620,000 residents. I identified sample communities, shown with blue borders in Figure 4.3, that fit the study’s scope conditions of racially-diverse urban communities with a criminal group presence.

To proxy for criminal group presence, I include only communities with a homicide rate above 20 or more per 100,000 residents. Figure 4.3 displays the average annual homicide rates in each community.³⁹ The average homicide rate for these communities stands at 61, and Midway/Coldstream—the community with the highest level of

38. Baltimore community boundaries are designated by the city’s Planning Department.

39. Average annual rates between 2007 and 2017. See Rich, Mellnik, and Lowery, “Homicide database.”

violence in the sample—has a homicide rate of 128 per 100,000 people, which would rank it as the second most deadly city in the world behind only Tijuana, Mexico.⁴⁰

To be eligible, a community must also have a population density of at least 5,000 people per square mile of land area. The sample is restricted to communities with high population density given that a key scope condition for the study is an urban environment. Baltimore, like most cities, has communities that, although are within the city limits, have a low population density. Selecting communities with relatively high population densities avoids surveying in primarily suburban-like environment, which would be outside the scope conditions of the study. Each community in the sample has just over 11,000 people and is less than a square miles, so the average community in the sample has a population of 12,461 and is one square mile in land area. By comparison, the density levels render the communities slightly more dense than the average density of the city of Chicago.

The communities meet the scope conditions' racial diversity criterion. No community in the sample is racially homogenous and every community has at least a small proportion of black, white, and hispanic residents. The majority populations in communities are black, but the sample includes majority white communities. I generate a racial diversity score for each community based on the share of black, white, hispanic, and other racial groups in each community.⁴¹ The score indicates the likelihood of any two randomly-selected residents in the community being from different racial groups. A score of 1 denotes that every resident belongs to a different racial group. The average diversity score across the communities is 0.3, which indicates that there is a 30% chance that any two residents will be from a different racial groups, fulfilling the scope condition's diversity criterion.

40. "50 of the most dangerous cities in the world: Tijuana, Caracas, Cape Town," USA Today, August 14, 2019, accessed February 22, 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/picture-gallery/travel/news/2019/07/24/most-dangerous-cities-world-tijuana-caracas-cape-town/1813211001>.

41. This score is equivalent to a measure scholars term "ethnic fractionalization." For more on the measure, see Alberto Alesina, "Fractionalization," *Journal of Economic Growth* 8, no. 2 (2003): 155–94.

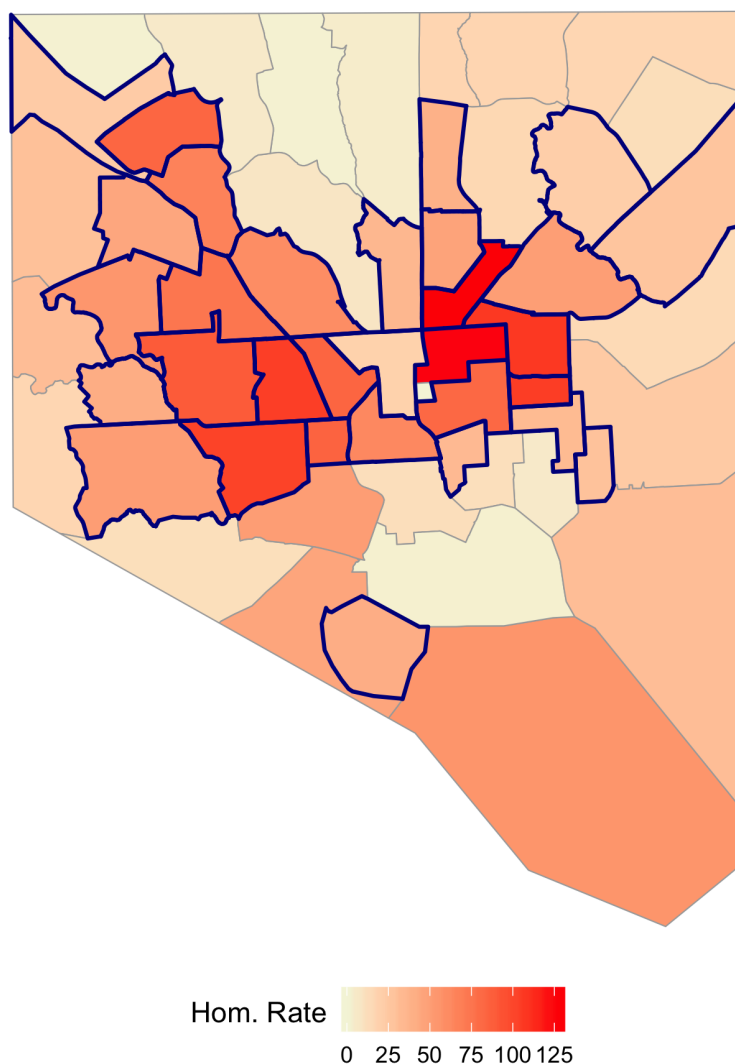


Figure 4.3: Baltimore Survey Sample Communities

The sample communities (outlined in blue) have among the highest homicide rates in Baltimore. Communities selected for the survey were those with homicide rates greater than twenty and a population density of more than 5,000 people. *Sources:* Homicides: Steven Rich, Ted Mellnik, and Wesley Lowery, “Homicide Database: Mapping Unsolved Murders in Major U.S. Cities,” *Washington Post*, June 6, 2018, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/investigations/unsolved-homicide-database/>; Population data: *American Community Survey 5-year Estimates* (U.S. Census Bureau, Retrieved from Social Explorer, 2017).

Within these communities, 650 residents completed the survey, which ran intermittently between June and September 2019. (The sample size was determined based on a power analysis for the survey experiment discussed in Chapter 5 and specified

in the study’s pre-analysis plan.) The initial sampling frame was a Baltimore-based research firm’s database of city residents, which the firm built by recruiting respondents in-person throughout the city. The panel included 5,432 city residents in the sample communities and 581 respondents successfully completed the survey after an email invitation, rendering an 11% response rate. A further sixty-nine respondents were recruited through the research firm’s Facebook page to supplement the panel respondents.⁴²

4.2.3 Measurement and Analysis

In order to evaluate cycle of silence theory, four main outcomes require estimation: (1) the difference between residents’ perceived likelihood that cooperators face retaliation and the rate of retaliation against cooperators, which I use to evaluate *Hypothesis 1a*; (2) the difference between residents’ perception of the proportion of others willing to cooperate and the proportion of residents who report willingness to cooperate, which I use to evaluate *Hypothesis 1b*; (3) the fear of violence, which I use to evaluate *Hypothesis 2*; and, (4) the amount of information loss due to risk inflation and community cooperation underestimation, which I use to evaluate *Hypothesis 3a* and *Hypothesis 3b*, respectively.

First, with respect to retaliation likelihood, respondents indicate the proportion of residents in their community that they judge are attacked as a result of sharing information with the police. The question is as follows:

RETALIATION (PERCEIVED): Let’s say 10 witnesses in [community name] talk with the police. How many of the 10 witnesses would the drug crews find and attack for talking?

The survey does not ask respondents to try to provide a percentage point likelihood

42. All respondents who successfully completed the survey received a \$5 Amazon gift card. The median survey time was 15 minutes.

Table 4.1: Survey Respondent Demographics

Variable	Value	N	%	Σ %
GENDER	Female	445	68.5	68.5
	Male	205	31.5	100.0
	<i>All</i>	650	100.0	
AGE	18-24	31	4.8	4.8
	25-34	162	24.9	29.7
	35-44	192	29.5	59.2
	45-54	115	17.7	76.9
	55-64	99	15.2	92.2
	Over 64	51	7.8	100.0
	<i>All</i>	650	100.0	
EDUCATION	Less than high school	9	1.4	1.4
	High school	97	14.9	16.3
	Some college	231	35.5	51.8
	Bachelor's degree	187	28.8	80.6
	Post-graduate	126	19.4	100.0
	<i>All</i>	650	100.0	
PUBLIC ASSIST.	Yes	96	14.9	14.9
	No	546	85.0	100.0
	<i>All</i>	642	100.0	
RELIGION	Christian	396	60.9	60.9
	Muslim	10	1.5	62.5
	Other	244	37.5	100.0
	<i>All</i>	650	100.0	
RACE	Black	394	60.6	60.6
	White	194	29.9	90.5
	Hispanic	13	2.0	92.5
	Other	49	7.5	100.0
	<i>All</i>	650	100.0	

The demographics variables shown are used as covariates. For community-level analyses, the demographic variables are weighted to match the proportions of individual types in those communities.

directly. People generally struggle to think in terms of percents and find it easier to think in terms of ratios such as “X number out of 10” as this question does. To estimate retaliation in the community, respondents report if they have shared information in the past, and then those who have done so indicate if they have faced retaliation as a result:

RETALIATION (ESTIMATED ACTUAL): Have any of the following things happened to you, because you talked to the police? Select all that happened to you, if any: ...The drug crews attacked me

From there, the difference between the mean perceived retaliation likelihood and the reported retaliation rate indicates the extent to which, if at all, retaliation is overestimated in each community.

Second, for estimating perceived versus reported community cooperation willingness, the process is essentially identical. Respondents indicate the proportion of residents in their community that they perceive would share at least a little information upon witnessing a shooting:

COMMUNITY COOPERATION (PERCEIVED): 10 residents, who are at least 18 years old, witness the shooting. In general, how many of the 10 witnesses would talk with the police about what they saw?

Respondents also answer how much if any information they would share:

COMMUNITY COOPERATION (ESTIMATED ACTUAL): If you saw the crews shooting at each other in [community name], would you talk with the police about what you saw?

To calculate whether or not a misperception exists is a matter of taking the difference between, on the one hand, the mean proportion of the community perceived willing

to share information and, on the other hand, the percent of respondents who indicate that they would share information.

Given that the above estimates require a representative sample, and the survey is an opt-in format, I undertake a simple weighting procedure known as “raking.” The procedure entails creating a weight for each respondent so that it is in line with the demographics of the sample communities based on U.S. Census estimates.⁴³ I generate the weights using the community population proportion and three key demographic variables that are potentially correlated with risk perception and cooperation will: gender, age, and race. Table 4.1 shows the individual-level descriptive statistics for the respondents, which are weighted to match the demographic characteristics of the communities.

For *Hypothesis 2*, I use a four-point estimate of respondents’ fear of being hit by a stray bullet in their community to serve as a proxy for the notion of “terroristic fear.”⁴⁴ I conduct a basic multivariate regression with the fear measure as the independent variable and the respondents’ bias with respect to retaliation likelihood as the outcome. The model controls for gender, age, education, use of public assistance, religion, and race. I log the fear measure for interpretability so that the model shows the extent to which a percent change in fear is associated with a percentage point change in risk inflation.

The key outcome of interest for the cycle of silence theory is the estimate of the amount of information that citizens refrain from sharing due to the risk inflation and cooperation will underestimation, as stated in *Hypothesis 3a* and *Hypothesis 3b* respectively. I estimate the effect of percentage point change in perceived retaliation likelihood and perceived community cooperation will using a multivariate regression. For the cooperation will outcome, surveyed residents indicate how much if any infor-

43. *American Community Survey 5-year Estimates*.

44. The survey question reads, “Do you worry about being hit by a stray bullet in your community? If so, how often do you worry?” The response options include “often,” “sometimes,” “rarely,” and “never.”

mation they would provide to the police after witnessing the hypothetical drug crew shooting. The response options are a five-point scale with the options for the amount of information including “none,” “a little,” “some,” “most,” or “everything.”⁴⁵

For ease of interpretation, I log the responses for cooperation will (and multiply them by 100), so they can be considered the percent decrease or increase in the amount of information shared given a one unit change in the independent variables. The model controls for the same variables as used in the fear model in *Hypothesis 2*. With that estimate in hand, I then calculate the loss in the amount of information respondents on average indicate that they would share with the police using the estimates of retaliation overestimation and cooperation norm underestimation. Figure 4.4 shows the distribution of responses for cooperation will.

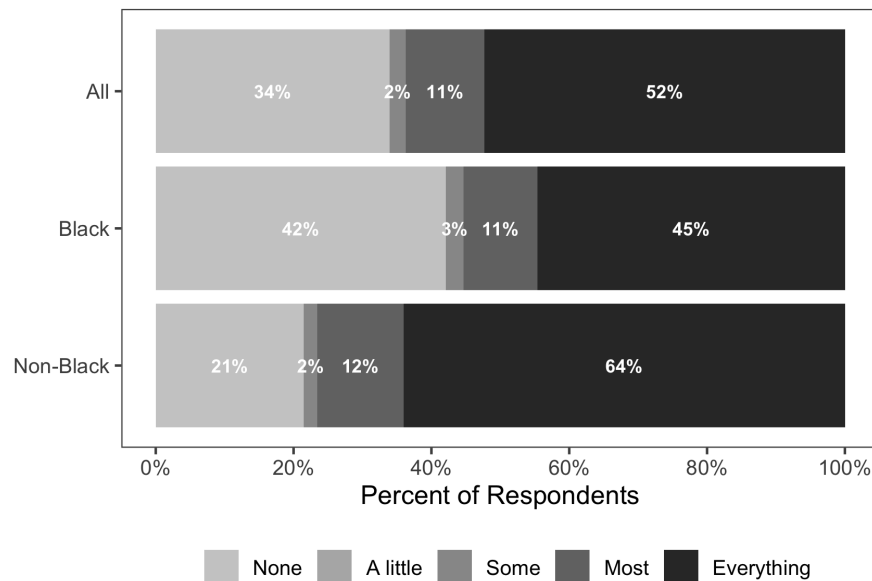


Figure 4.4: Respondent Cooperation Will

There is significant variation in residents’ willingness to share information with the police for both black and non-black respondents. This variable is used at the outcome to estimate the level of information loss due to risk inflation and norm deflation, as stated in *Hypothesis 3a* and *Hypothesis 3b* respectively. No respondents selected the response option that they would share “a little” information.

45. Estimating a respondents’ overestimation (or underestimation) of retaliation risk requires a community-level estimate of retaliation likelihood. Thus, I leverage the estimates weighted using multilevel regression and poststratification (MRP) discussed in Section 4.2.4.

4.2.4 Community-level Threshold Analysis

In assessing *Hypothesis 3a* and *Hypothesis 3b*, I take the additional step of analyzing cooperation threshold distributions within the sample communities. Analyzing thresholds allows for evaluating the extent to which, if at all, risk inflation and norm deflation constrain cooperation at the community-level. The goal, in other words, is to evaluate if the collective misperceptions result in communities falling below their cooperation potential in the way that I theorize in Figure 2.4 of Chapter 2. Specifically, the methods that I lay out relate to how I build Figure 4.10 in the results section below, which assesses the theory in two Baltimore communities: Southern Park Heights and Belair-Edison.

This analysis first requires estimating respondents' thresholds—that is, estimating the proportion of the community that each respondent requires cooperate in order for them to be willing to do so. The scenario to measure the thresholds is the same as used to measure community cooperation. The respondent answers the question, “If you saw the crews shooting at each other in [community name], would you talk with the police about what you saw?” The survey then asks respondents if they would share information when 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80% or 100% of the community are willing to come forward.⁴⁶ I stagger the measure of the threshold amounts by 20 percentage points, because respondents likely cannot make intuitive distinctions at more precise rates.

At each threshold value, I estimate the proportion of residents in the community willing to share at least a little information about the hypothetical shooting. With the thresholds measured, I calculate the propagation curves for each community. The propagation curves are the cumulative distribution of the community willing to share

46. The survey logic is designed such that it incorporates respondents' replies to their perceived level of community cooperation. If a respondents, for instance, indicate that no others would share information but they would do so, the survey does not pose threshold questions, because the respondent's threshold is zero.

information with the police at each of the six threshold values.

The observed propagation curves indicate the thresholds given the respondents' perceived retaliation likelihood. As I argue, however, citizens would be more inclined to cooperate given awareness of the estimated actual retaliation rate. So, I next calculate how much higher the propagation curves would be if respondents had awareness of the actual rate. In effect, I analyze the extent to which the retaliation overestimation increases respondents' thresholds. The higher the perceived retaliation rate, the higher the proportion of the community respondents require cooperate before they are willing to come forward themselves. And, with their higher thresholds, fewer citizens are willing to come forward at any given level of community cooperation.

To calculate the influence of risk inflation in this regard, I run a regression model estimating by how much a 1 percentage point increase in perceived retaliation overestimation reduces the proportion of the community willing to cooperate. Using the responses to the questions outlined in Section 4.2.3, the model takes the average perceived retaliation rate among the respondents in each community as the independent variable; and, it takes the average proportion of the community willing to cooperate as the dependent variable.⁴⁷ I then multiply the model coefficient for retaliation likelihood by each community's percentage point retaliation overestimation. This outcome indicates how much higher the propagation curves would sit if respondents had full awareness of the estimated actual retaliation rates.

I assume the loss from the overestimation applies equally across individuals with all threshold levels, which shifts the propagation curve but does not change its shape. The assumption that the overestimation's effect applies equally is an abstraction from the empirical reality given that there is likely to be heterogeneity in the downward shift at the various threshold values. I make the assumption in order to simplify the

47. The model controls for demographic characteristics that could potentially be associated with retaliation overestimation: gender (percent of community that is female), age (percent of the population that is between eighteen and twenty-four years old), education (percent of the population with a high school diploma), median income, and race (percent of the community that is black).

analysis and render it more intelligible—a worthwhile trade-off given the complexity of the analysis as it stands.

I also estimate the loss, if any, from norm deflation at the community-level. Given cooperators hiding their disposition to share information, citizens underestimate the willingness of others to come forward. The threshold theory expects that communities reach a cooperation equilibrium when the cumulative proportion of the community has thresholds equaling the threshold value. This dynamic is represented by where the propagation curve intersects the equality diagonal in Figure 2.4 of Chapter 2. With norm deflation, however, citizens underestimate the willingness of others to come forward, and thus the level of community cooperation falls below the equilibrium.

Estimating the loss from norm deflation requires calculating two values. The first value is the proportion of the community willing to cooperate given respondents' perceived level of community cooperation. This estimate is the proportion of the community with thresholds at or below the perceived level of community cooperation. The second value is the proportion of the community that would be willing to cooperate if respondents had full awareness of the cooperation willingness in the community. This estimate of community cooperation with full awareness is where the propagation curve intersects the equality diagonal. The difference in cooperation between the two values is the estimated loss due to norm deflation.

Taken as a whole, the combined loss from risk inflation and norm deflation means that communities fall below their full potential of cooperation to a partial cooperation equilibrium.

An important feature of the threshold analysis is that I conduct it at the community-level. Instead of estimating one outcome for all communities, I estimate this outcome for each of the thirty communities. Community-level analyses present challenges. With a sample size of 650 spread between thirty communities, there is just an average of twenty-two respondents in each of the communities. I use multilevel regression

and poststratification (MRP) to mitigate bias from the small sample size. The technique has become an increasingly popular tool in polling. Researchers perhaps most commonly employ the technique to estimate public opinion across the fifty U.S. states from national-level polls that originally aimed to measure opinion nationwide.⁴⁸

Analyses estimating community-level outcomes are relatively rare in part because it is costly using standard techniques. With the average population for the communities in the sample being roughly 12,000, in order to conduct a survey with a margin of error at 5% using a simple random sample, it would require sampling approximately 370 respondents in each community. Thus, to cover all thirty communities would involve conducting a survey of 11,100 respondents. If each survey cost just \$15 each (a low estimate), the total would be more than \$166,000. Dedicating this amount of funding to the survey of this nature arguably would be an inefficient use of resources.

MRP estimates an outcome of interest for each community by first implementing a multilevel model. The model in this context leverages data from respondents with similar demographic characteristics—namely, gender, race, and age—as well as community characteristics. Along with providing the homicide rate and population density, Table 4.2 shows the demographic characteristics of survey respondents compared to the community demographic characteristics enumerated in the U.S. Census’s American Community Survey.⁴⁹

As shown in the table, the characteristics of the survey respondents approximate, but they are not identical to the characteristics of the communities themselves. MRP helps correct the community-level imbalances.

The basic idea behind a multilevel model is that, say, a white male between the ages of 25 and 34 living in Greater Rosemont has some similarities to a white male

48. Jeffrey R. Lax and Justin H. Phillips, “Gay Rights in the States: Public Opinion and Policy Responsiveness,” *American Political Science Review* 103, no. 3 (2009): 367–386; Christopher Warshaw and Jonathan Rodden, “How Should We Measure District-Level Public Opinion on Individual Issues?,” *Journal of Politics* 74, no. 1 (2012): 203–219.

49. *American Community Survey 5-year Estimates*.

Table 4.2: Community Descriptive Statistics

Community	Scope Conditions			% Female		Median Age		% Black	
	Hom. Rate	Pop./sqm	Diversity	Census	Survey	Census	Survey	Census	Survey
Allendale/Irvington/S. Hilton	51	7,317	0.18	54.22	63.64	36	35-44	90.28	90.91
Belair-Edison	50	10,756	0.26	58.01	51.16	33	35-44	85.65	60.47
Cedonia/Frankford	27	9,195	0.33	55.50	77.55	36	45-54	80.57	72.00
Cherry Hill	41	7,731	0.23	55.08	57.14	30	25-34	87.47	85.71
Clifton-Berea	107	10,853	0.12	54.15	85.71	40	35-44	93.66	85.71
Dorchester/Ashburton	45	9,504	0.08	54.17	70.00	39	35-44	95.95	95.00
Downtown/Seton Hill	63	8,834	0.67	47.94	61.54	30	35-44	29.02	38.46
Edmondson Village	41	9,725	0.08	53.50	91.67	38	35-44	95.76	91.67
Forest Park/Walbrook	55	7,532	0.10	55.15	69.57	40	35-44	95.06	82.61
Glen-Fallstaff	23	9,479	0.52	54.66	86.49	41	45-54	63.06	70.27
Greater Charles Village/Barclay	35	16,851	0.66	48.42	66.67	32	25-34	33.44	40.00
Greater Govans	39	13,118	0.18	56.33	56.00	38	35-44	90.01	76.00
Greater Mondawmin	74	7,808	0.11	57.00	66.67	39	35-44	94.00	83.33
Greater Rosemont	90	11,509	0.06	53.35	68.00	35	45-54	96.81	96.00
Harbor East/Little Italy	34	15,792	0.63	50.35	50.00	33	45-54	52.09	50.00
Highlandtown	29	18,254	0.49	47.20	74.07	33	35-44	10.55	0.00
Lauraville	22	6,922	0.57	51.25	79.55	43	35-44	53.94	34.09
Madison/East End	105	20,555	0.22	53.71	25.00	32	25-34	87.89	100.00
Midtown	20	18,588	0.61	52.05	63.64	34	35-44	30.90	36.36
Midway/Coldstream	128	14,087	0.15	52.01	40.00	39	35-44	91.80	60.00
Oldtown/Middle East	82	10,613	0.23	54.95	78.57	31	25-34	87.22	71.43
Patterson Park North & East	33	27,221	0.64	51.69	52.78	32	35-44	32.18	16.67
Penn North/Reservoir Hill	60	7,549	0.28	52.48	81.82	38	35-44	83.99	72.73
Pimlico/Arlington/Hilltop	83	9,698	0.09	54.95	69.23	46	45-54	95.21	84.62
Poppleton/The Terraces/Hollins Market	85	14,459	0.31	52.81	75.00	31	25-34	81.59	50.00
Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park	104	15,527	0.08	54.36	70.00	37	45-54	96.08	90.00
Southern Park Heights	67	13,981	0.13	54.83	61.11	42	45-54	93.32	72.22
Southwest Baltimore	102	12,350	0.43	51.73	82.35	34	45-54	73.57	76.47
The Waverlies	47	11,343	0.45	55.92	80.00	36	45-54	71.83	46.67
Upton/Druid Heights	84	16,675	0.16	53.91	59.09	32	25-34	91.64	86.36

The sample communities were selected based on the homicide rate (measured in annual homicides per 100,000 people) and population density (measured in population per square mile) as well as evaluated for racial diversity to meet the study's scope condition. The MRP technique uses poststratifies on gender, age, and race.

of same age in Greater Mondawmin and the other communities. So, when estimating the outcome for the person in Greater Rosemont, the model incorporates the outcome data from similar persons in other communities. The model does not simply take an average across communities but rather combines residents' individual characteristics with community-level data to account for differences between Greater Rosemont and the other communities in the sample.⁵⁰

In the final stage of the process, the estimate is weighted by the proportion of the population for each demographic combination of gender, race, and age in each community.⁵¹ The poststratification renders the analysis more representative of the communities. The small samples in each community is thus balanced to match the demographics of the community itself. The weights are not based on the average gender, race, age within each community as done with raking—for example, the proportion of the community that is female, the proportion of the community that is white, and the proportion that is between 25 and 34. Rather, the MRP weights are based on the combination of each demographic category—for example, the proportion of the community that are white females between 25 and 34.

The demographic characteristics remain the same for the estimate of all outcomes, but I use varying community-level characteristics depending on the outcome. For community-level estimates of perceived retaliation, I include median income (scaled), percent of the population with a below high school education, and shootings per capita (scaled) to incorporate socio-economic characteristics and proxy for the level of criminal group violence. For estimates of perceived community cooperation will, reported cooperation will, and citizen cooperation thresholds, I use the same commu-

50. The multilevel model can be thought of as “partial pooling.” It is “pooling,” because, by incorporating outcome data from outside the community, which brings the estimate for the community closer to the average of all communities in the sample. It is “partial,” because it still accounts for community-level difference and does not create a single average across all communities. See Andrew Gelman and Jennifer Hill, *Data Analysis Using Regression and Multilevel/Hierarchical Models* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, December 18, 2006).

51. To identify the distribution of demographic combinations, I use *American Community Survey 5-year Estimates*.

nity characteristics incorporated into the previous models. In addition, I include the number of 311 calls as well as 911 calls for drug activity—both scaled—to proxy for the frequency of interactions between police and community residents.

4.3. RESULTS: BALTIMORE’S CYCLES OF SILENCE

The results are in line with the cycle of silence hypotheses as laid out in Chapter 3 (see Table 3.1). Respondents on average overestimate the likelihood that cooperators face retaliation (*Hypothesis 1a*) and underestimate the willingness of others to cooperate with the police (*Hypothesis 1b*). A strong association between fear of violence and retaliation overestimation suggests that the collective misperceptions are at least in part driven by the emotion of fear (*Hypothesis 2*).

These dynamics mean that, according to study’s estimates, residents are less willing to share information than they would be if they had awarenesses of the estimated actual retaliation likelihood (*Hypothesis 3a*) and the estimated actual community cooperation will (*Hypothesis 3b*).

A danger with reporting percent and percentage points outcomes is that I give a false impression of making highly precise estimates. These percentage point estimates should be consumed keeping in mind the inherent uncertainty that surrounds survey measures. As discussed in the methods section, I ask respondents simple, straightforward questions and in “real life” circumstances surrounding cooperation decisions, innumerable other factors will come into play.

4.3.1 Inflating Risk

Consistent with *Hypothesis 1a*, the difference between the perceived and estimated actual retaliation reveals an average 48 percentage point (pp) overestimation. Using the survey weights, the average perceived likelihood of retaliation against cooperators

is 51% ($SE = 2.1\%$) whereas the actual estimated retaliation rate is 3% ($SE = 1.7\%$). Figure 4.5 shows the distribution of respondents' judgement of the likelihood of retaliation with the dashed line indicating the average of the perceived likelihoods and the solid line indicating the estimated actual likelihood.⁵²

For the purpose of this study, I use the weighted estimate of 3%, which is rounded up from 2.6%, as the average retaliation rate across communities. Without the weights, the average retaliation rate in communities is 1.9% ($SE = 1.06\%$). The weighted retaliation rate—as well as the unweighted rate—are likely higher than the retaliation rate faced by cooperators in the sample communities. In the survey, 123 respondents indicated prior cooperation, so a single retaliation incident boosts the estimated rate by a significant margin. Nonetheless, I use the higher weighted rate for the analysis since it represents a conservative estimate with respect to my hypothesis positing that citizens overestimate retaliation likelihood.

From an inferential perspective, a greater concern is that I calculate the retaliation rate to be lower than the actual rate of retaliation.

One way this could happen is the survey not capturing a significant number of those facing retaliatory attacks, because they were killed in the attacks. This potential could create a problem known as “undercoverage” in survey methodology terms whereby the survey fails to include certain types of residents in the sample. This possibility cannot be dismissed altogether, but it is unlikely that the results are skewed due to a large number of cooperators having been killed. For one, when a known cooperator, especially a witness is killed, it is usually covered in the media and there appear to be few media reports of retaliatory attacks.⁵³ With the exception of focal point attacks, when retaliation does happen, the crews often target the property of

52. The difference in the estimates is statistically significant with a p-value below 0.01, as calculated using Welch's t-test.

53. On an example report of a retaliatory attack, see for example Adam May, “Mother of eight fatally shot in front of children,” WBAL, June 15, 2017, accessed February 29, 2020, <https://www.wbaltv.com/article/mother-of-eight-fatally-shot-in-front-of-children/10026919>.

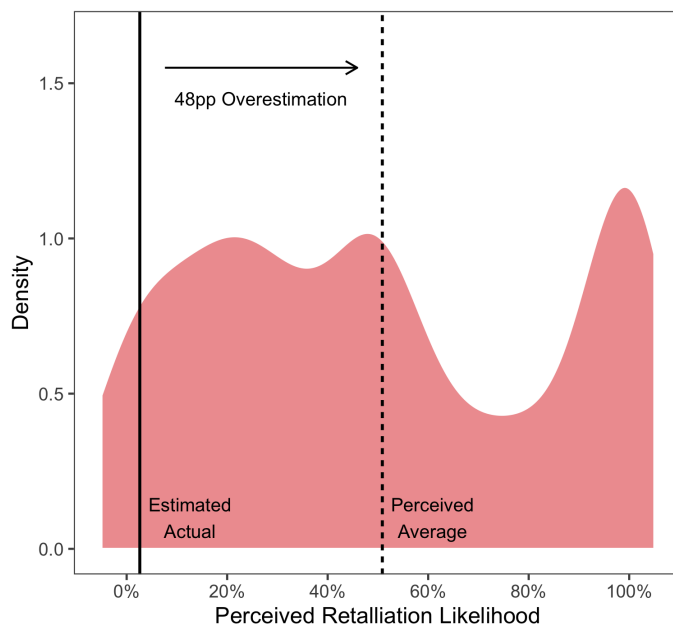


Figure 4.5: Retaliation Overestimation

Residents overestimate the likelihood of retaliation against cooperators who share information about drug crews by 48pp. This plot shows the distribution of respondent perceptions of retaliation likelihood, which on average are 51% as represented by the dashed line. This perception compares with an estimated actual retaliation rate of 3% as represented by the solid line.

cooperators instead of the persons. An East Baltimore community leader explains how a crew might go after a cooperator:

[A dealer says,] I'm going to deal in your store and you are not going to call the police. Do you know how much damage can be done in 3 minutes?—if the police even show up in 3 minutes. If I call, I'm playing Russian roulette. And, the moment the police leave, guess who's coming back—with vengeance. They come in and start tearing stuff up and take stuff.⁵⁴

In whatever form the retaliation takes, it is unlikely that the survey is failing to detect 48pp of retaliation cases which would be needed to make it equal to the perceived

54. BWI206 2017.

retaliation likelihood.

In addition to undercoverage, another potential problem is “underreporting” in which cooperators who faced retaliation do not want to indicate it directly on the survey. Doing so might bias the retaliation estimate downward by failing to account for respondents who were attacked by criminal groups in some way for sharing information. As with undercoverage, it is difficult to demonstrate conclusively that underreporting is not occurring.

That said, I include a list experiment—a commonly-used methodology for sensitive survey questions—so respondents can indirectly report retaliation.⁵⁵ The list experiment, in short, asks respondents to indicate the number of items that apply to them from a list rather than specifying particular items. This way, the respondent, in most cases, is not revealing whether or not they faced retaliation.⁵⁶

The list question does not show more respondents indicate that they faced retaliation indirectly than did so directly. As mentioned, the unweighted retaliation rate measured with the direct question was 1.9%. With the list experiment question, the estimate rate was slightly negative, which is effectively a measured retaliation rate of zero. List experiments are from a panacea for underreporting, especially when analyzing a subset of respondents as done here, but nonetheless the results are consistent with the hypotheses that retaliation rates are lower than they are perceived to be.

Furthermore, the qualitative evidence points to the existence of significant risk inflation. Those with first-hand experience in the drug trade recognize that retali-

55. E.g., Graeme Blair and Kosuke Imai, “Statistical Analysis of List Experiments,” *Political Analysis* 20, no. 1 (2012): 47–77.

56. Using the technique, respondents are provided a list of items that may or may not be true for them. Half of respondents receive a list with three non-sensitive items, and they indicate how many of the three items are true for them. The remaining half of respondents receive the same list of three non-sensitive items plus an additional sensitive item, and indicate how many of the four items are true for them. The sensitive item for the retaliation question is having faced retaliation in the past, and the sensitive item for the cooperation question is cooperating in the past. The difference in the mean responses between the group with the sensitive item versus the group without the sensitive item indicates the proportion of respondents for which the item is true. Importantly, respondents do not indicate which of the items are true for them, which preserves some anonymity to their responses.

ation for cooperating with the police is far from a given. A former East Baltimore crew leader D. Watkins notes in his memoir how he would see a “known collection of snitches” living openly in his neighborhood without reprisal. In particular, he emphasizes that women would “get snatched up by the cops, snitch on you, and easily be accepted right back into society.”⁵⁷ Watkins’s observations suggest that many times those who cooperate with the police, and importantly those that are *known* to cooperate, avoid retaliation.

Along these lines, experienced BPD officers rarely come across violent retaliation incidents. A gang specialist noted to me that, in his more than a decade working to contain criminal groups, he has only seen one case of potential retaliation when a robbery victim was attacked perhaps—albeit, the officer expressed uncertainty about the cause—for identifying those who robbed him in a police line up. The most common scenario the detective suggests is that perpetrators threaten cooperators but do not “actively try to take them out.”⁵⁸

The evidence further suggests that, per *Hypothesis 2*, drug crew violence inflates retaliation risk by creating a climate of fear. Drug crew violence, which including occasional retaliation incidents, produces an emotional response that I term “terroristic fear” among citizens. As discussed in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2.3), given that risks involving violence generate more fear than non-violent risks, people tend to overestimate these types of risks to a greater extent. Gruesome incidents of intra-drug crew violence, even though not targeting citizens, leads to citizens ask themselves, “if they can do it others, what stops them from doing it to me?” A South Baltimore woman recounts one such incident:

Most people won’t call the police because they don’t wanna get shot. They’ll kill your kids around here. They don’t give a shit. On 6th street we heard a gunshot, and see a guy limping down the street. [...]His whole

57. Watkins, *The Cook Up*.

58. BWI488 2017.

side is peeled off [near his rib]. Later we hear it's a big ass gun [he was shot with]. He's sitting there and nobody cares. Everybody minding their own business. Somebody might call 911 on the sly and say this guy need some help. For this guy, it was over some drug dealing and gang shit.⁵⁹

Sometimes the police themselves might unintentionally reinforce terroristic fear by emphasizing the brutality of criminal groups with hopes of galvanizing the public to come forward with information. But, if fear inflates perceived retaliation risk, such methods might backfire.

Figure 4.6a shows the correlation between respondents' fear of violence—measured by a four-point scale of their perceived likelihood of being caught in the crossfire of a shooting—and the overestimating of retaliation. Every 10% increase in a respondent's fear of being hit by a stray bullet is associated with a 1.8pp increase in the respondent's overestimation of retaliation likelihood.⁶⁰ This is not to simply say that there is a relationship between fear of violence and retaliation likelihood, which could be driven by retaliation being more likely for those exposed to crime. Rather, it shows that fear of crime is associated with the extent to which retaliation is *overestimated*, which suggests that violence inflates perceived retaliation risk.

The crews also occasionally engage in focal point retaliatory attacks that create widespread fear. These incidents of violence are akin to terrorist tactics in that they are meant to be highly visible and public. Given their fear-inducing effect, crews rarely have to carry them out. The most prominent focal point retaliatory incident in Baltimore is the 2002 firebombing of the Dawson family house in East Baltimore. A family of seven was killed in a firebombing attack after the mother contacted the police to report drug dealing and other crimes in her neighborhood.

59. BWI373 2017.

60. The average fear level is 1.5 on the four-point scale between 0 and 3, which means that a 10% is substantially significant. The average of 1.5 maps to respondents indicating that they “rarely” and “sometimes” fear being hit by a stray bullet.

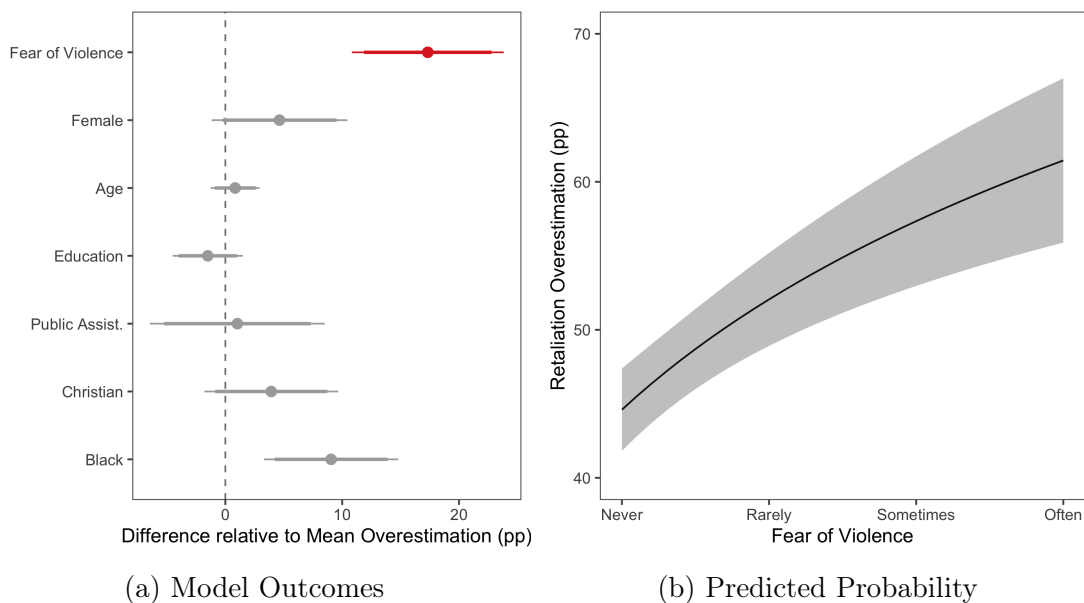


Figure 4.6: Fear and Retaliation Overestimation

Respondents that have higher fear of crime also tend to overestimate retaliation likelihood by a greater extent. The predicted probability plot shows the percentage point change in retaliation overestimation with all control variables set to their mean value.

The firebombing has become associated with the consequences for sharing information with the police. According to a BPD officer, the incident “still haunts” the city.⁶¹ In a South Baltimore neighborhood, a women describes to me a group of teenagers—in her words, “West Baltimore motherfuckas”—dealing near her house. “They sit in next to my yard and stash their shit” in a car, she explains. When I ask if she plans to call the police, she alludes to the Dawson family attack: “Shit no, they’d firebomb my house for that shit. They Molotov cocktail motherfuckas out here for that. They’ll get you.”⁶²

The fear becomes further amplified through the rumors that spread within communities. As a young female resident put it to me, “Shit gets exaggerated on the street. One person tries to make the story cool as shit and then the next person adds something and next thing you know it’s some off the wall shit.”⁶³ D. Watkins

61. BWI324 2016.

62. BWI515 2017.

63. BWI373 2017.

labels this phenomenon, “The Fifth [N-word] Syndrome,” suggesting that a story becomes greatly exaggerated by the time it reach the “fifth” person.⁶⁴ This dynamic means that, even if individuals do not witness violence first-hand, they may have oft-exaggerated images of the violence painted for them, which could have a similar effect on risk inflation.

4.3.2 Forcing Silence

Regardless of how it comes, the retaliation risk—both real and inflated—pushes citizens who are willing to cooperate to hide their willingness from others. As a result, Baltimoreans gain the impression that norms surrounding talking with the police are weaker than they in fact are. This norm deflation is evident from the survey results. On average, respondents estimated that 28% ($SE = 1.7\%$) of other residents in their community would share at least a little information about a shooting with the police; in fact, 62% ($SE = 2.8\%$) of respondents stated a willingness to come forward. The difference, consistent with *Hypothesis 1b*, amounts to a 34pp underestimation of community cooperation will.

Illusory superiority potentially makes the cooperation underestimation greater than it is. Illusory superiority, in essence, is a “cheap talk” problem in which people tend to ascribe higher levels of a perceived positive quality to themselves relative to others.⁶⁵ People, for instance, might claim that they pay their taxes while underestimating their neighbors’ tax compliance. In the context of police-citizen cooperation, respondents might say they would be willing to cooperate but not actually do so if the opportunity arises. To evaluate this proposition in the context of cooperation, I compare respondents’ reported willingness to cooperate to their stated prior cooperation behavior.

64. Watkins, *The Cook Up*.

65. Vera Hoorens, “Self-enhancement and Superiority Biases in Social Comparison,” *European Review of Social Psychology* 4, no. 1 (1993): 113–139.

If respondents who say they would cooperate in fact have cooperated more in the past, it indicates that cooperation will is associated with actual cooperation. Indeed, respondents who stated a willingness to cooperate are 2.3 times more likely to have reported cooperating in the past.⁶⁶ This comparison does not eliminate the possibility of “cheap talk” altogether but indicates that it is not driving the results in their entirety.

More probable than cheap talk is that respondents underestimate community cooperation, because residents are generally hesitant to reveal that they share information with the police.

Figure 4.7 indicates the number of cooperators out of 100 who reveal to others that they shared information with the police. Categories indicating with whom they shared information range from socially proximate, namely family members, to the less proximate, namely co-workers. On average, just 14% of cooperators tell family members that they shared information with the police. Twelve percent tell friends of their cooperation. Cooperators are more hesitant to reveal that they cooperated to those with whom they have less social proximity. Just 2% and 1% of cooperators reveal to their neighbors and co-workers, respectively, that they shared information.

The desire to keep prior cooperation—and one’s willingness to cooperate—private is evident from Baltimoreans’ quotidian interactions with the police. Residents often avoid public interactions with the officer but at the same time contact them by phone out of public view. An officer describes a liquor store owner on his beat who declines to talk to him face-to-face but will call 911 to report dealers conducting business in his store. The owner worries that the dealers will “do something stupid,” according to the officer, if they see him talking with the police.⁶⁷ Another officer describes a similar dynamic with a resident:

66. According to the results, 25% of those who stated a willingness to cooperate also cooperated in the past whereas 11% of those who said they are not willing to cooperate indicated prior cooperation.

67. BWI705 2017.



Figure 4.7: To Whom Cooperators Reveal Information-sharing

Cooperators generally do not reveal that they shared information with the police, particularly with whom they have limited social proximity. This dynamic contributes to residents perceiving cooperation norms in communities to be lower than they in fact are.

We'll see kids sitting on a [row house] stoop. You need homeowners permission to tell them to leave. You knock on the door and ask homeowner if it's okay for them to be there, [and] they have to say 'yes' with them right there. But, they will say 'no' privately to me.⁶⁸

Even during canvassing of nearby homes after shootings—a practice discussed at the start of this chapter—residents might decline to talk to the police at their door but will sometimes take an officer's business card and call later with information.

Cooperation with the police carries a stigma to it in part because it is seen as

68. BWI129 2017.

putting the associates of the cooperator in danger. A South Baltimore woman explains her expectations of the social reverberations from talking with the police:

You affect everybody's life if you go tell the police about it. You get their homeboy locked up so they gonna go after their mother on the Eastside and Westside. But [here] they go strictly for that person snitching. [...]I'd stay right to myself. God don't put me on this earth to get shot. If my friend give information, I say I don't wanna be part of none of your drama. I'd rather stay away from it. They gonna find out who snitch.⁶⁹

Importantly, the woman does not claim that her friend would be engaging in normatively wrong behavior by cooperating, only that her friend might be putting others in danger. It is the perceived risk that creates the stigma around cooperation.

4.3.3 Constraining Cooperation

Turning to *Hypothesis 3a* and *Hypothesis 3b*, I estimate the association between perceived retaliation likelihood and respondents' willingness to share information as well as the association between perceived community cooperation norms and their willingness to share information. I use these estimates to evaluate the magnitude of the loss in information-sharing resulting from the collective misperceptions. The magnitude of the loss from risk inflation is the difference between the predicted the level of shopkeepers' information-sharing at the perceived retaliation likelihood and the actual estimated retaliation likelihood. The magnitude of the loss from norm deflation is the difference between the predicted level of respondents' information-sharing at perceived community cooperation will and the actual estimated community cooperation will.

Table 4.3 shows the estimates of changes in information-sharing from 10pp increases in perceived retaliation likelihood and community cooperation. I include

69. BWI285 2017.

multiple specifications of the models to show that the results are not sensitive to changes in specification. As indicated by Model 1, the most conservatively-specified of the models, if respondents perceive a 10pp increase in retaliation likelihood, they are willing to share roughly 3% less information with the police. If respondents perceive a 10pp increase in the proportion of the community willing to cooperate, they are willing share approximately 8% more information.⁷⁰

Table 4.3: Collective Misperceptions and Cooperation Will

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Change in Info Amount (%)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Retaliation	-3.35*** (0.83)	-5.36*** (0.79)	
Community Coop.	8.26*** (1.36)		10.01*** (1.20)
Constant	59.41*** (16.47)	94.69*** (15.88)	38.29** (16.29)
Robust SEs	✓	✓	✓
Demographic Controls	✓	✓	✓
Community SEs	✓	✓	✓
Observations	637	637	637

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Standardized coefficients, shown in Figure 4.8, indicate that retaliation likelihood and community cooperation norms tend to be more influential in respondents' information-sharing than demographic variables. The effects, which are measured in standard deviations (SDs), reveal the relative magnitude of the independent variables' associations with willingness to cooperate. The perceived community cooperation will has the strongest effect relative to all other variables. The perceived retaliation like-

70. These percent changes are substantial considering that the mean amount of information citizens provide is 2.4 on a five-point scale from 0 to 4. That is between the third ("some") and fourth ("most") levels on the scale. The relatively high baseline from which the increase in information occurs makes the result more substantial than if the mean amount of information was low. A low baseline would mean that a small increase in information-sharing results in a misleadingly high percent change.

likelihood has a stronger effect than all the demographic variables with the exception of age.

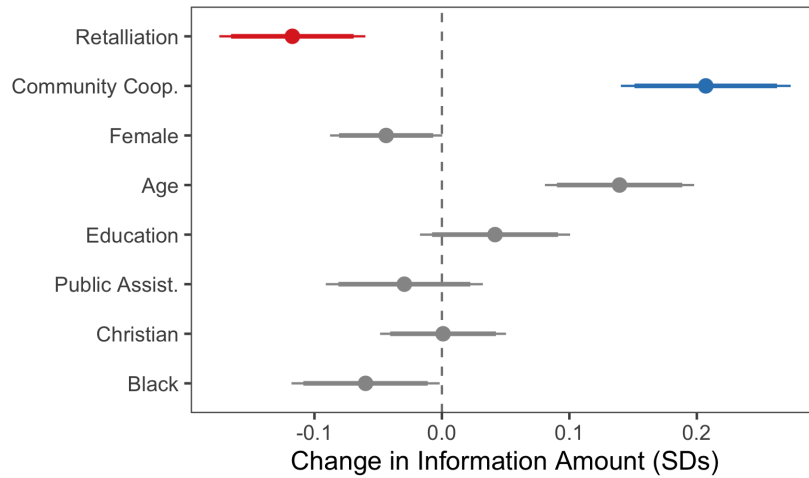


Figure 4.8: Standardized Coefficients on Cooperation Will

Perceived retaliation likelihood and community cooperation will show stronger effects relative to most demographic features on respondents' willingness to cooperate with the police. The effects are represented in standard deviations (SDs) to show relative magnitude.

Using Model 1 in Table 4.3, I calculate the difference between, on the one hand, the predicted amount of information a respondent would share at the average perceived level of retaliation likelihood and community cooperation will, and on the other hand, the predicted amount of information-sharing at the estimated actual level of retaliation and community cooperation will.⁷¹

Figure 4.9 represents the estimated information information loss. On average, shopkeepers are willing to share around 44% less information relative to the amount they would share if they perceived the actual levels of retaliation and community cooperation. More specifically, the average respondent shares 16% less information than they would have if they perceived the estimated actual retaliation likelihood (see Figure 4.9a). Respondents share 28% less information than they would have if they perceived the estimated actual community cooperation will (see Figure 4.9b).

71. All model covariates are set to their mean values.

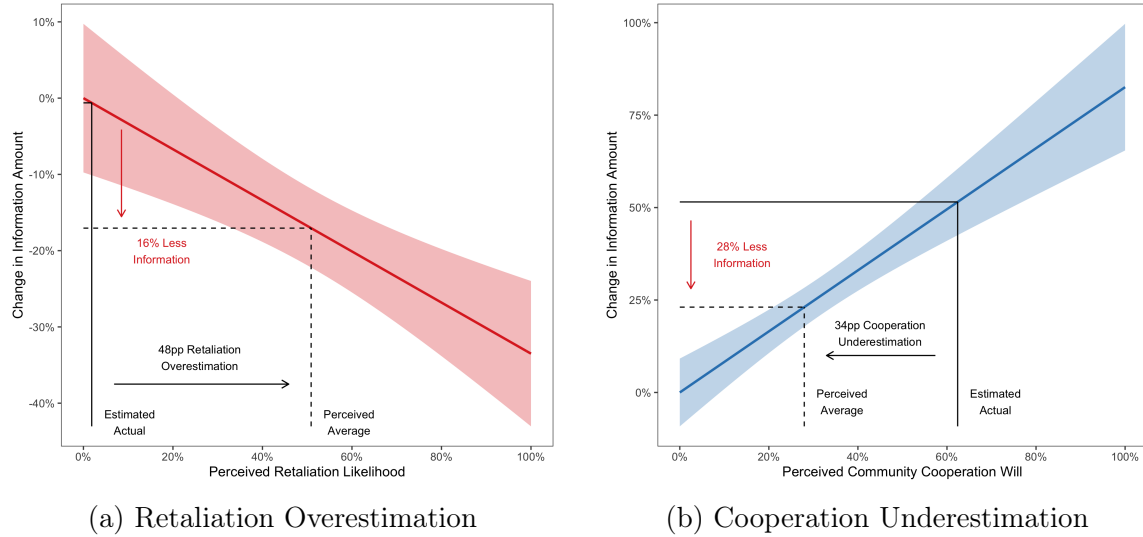


Figure 4.9: Collective Misperceptions and Information-sharing

Collective misperceptions reduce information-sharing. The plots show the predicted percent change in information-sharing based on Model 1 in Table 4.3 with all covariates set to mean values.

4.3.4 Community-level Equilibria

I also evaluate collective misperceptions at the community-level to demonstrate that threshold distributions can shape the extent of the information loss from collective misperceptions. Thresholds are the minimum proportion of the community that residents require cooperate in order for them to do so. The distribution of the thresholds are represented by a propagation curve, which is the cumulative proportion of citizens with thresholds at or below the given threshold value. In other words, a propagation curve indicates how much of the community would come forward at the various threshold values.

To illustrate the influence of threshold distributions, I focus on two communities in the sample: Southern Park Heights and Belair-Edison. Both communities have partial cooperation equilibria below their full potential, as represented in in Figure 4.10. The solid blue curves are where I estimate the curves would be if citizens had awareness of the retaliation rate in their community. The dashed red curves are where the curves

sit as measured by the survey, which takes into account retaliation overestimation.

If a propagation curve intersects the diagonal line, that point marks the full potential of community cooperation, because it is where the share of citizens at or below a given threshold equals the proportion of the community willing to come forward. If the solid blue propagation curves do not intersect the diagonal at any point, as the case in these communities, it indicates that an estimated 100% of residents would cooperate at the threshold where the curve exits the top of the figure. In theory, the communities have a full potential of 100% cooperation, although in practice there would likely be holdouts who would not come forward regardless of the circumstance.

Neither community reaches its full cooperation potential due to the collective misperceptions: retaliation risk inflation and cooperation norm deflation. Rather, their cooperation levels are represented by the red points, which are partial cooperation equilibria. In Southern Park Heights, approximately 57% of the community is willing to share at least a little information with the police when they see a shooting. Thus, the community falls 43pp below its full potential of 100%. In Belair-Edison, approximately 60% of the community is willing to cooperate, putting it 40pp below its full potential.

I first consider the effect of risk inflation—that is, fear inducing residents to overestimate retaliation likelihood—on the loss in community cooperation will. To do so, I implement the community-level estimation procedure discussed in Section 4.2.4, finding that a 1 percentage point increase in retaliation overestimation on average reduces community cooperation willingness by 0.47pp ($SE = 0.22pp$). Thus, Belair-Edison's overestimation of 52pp shifts its propagation curve (represented with the solid blue curve) down by approximately 24pp of community cooperation will (represented with the dashed red curve). Similarly, Southern Park Heights's overestimation of 55pp shifts the propagation curve down by approximately 26pp of community cooperation will.

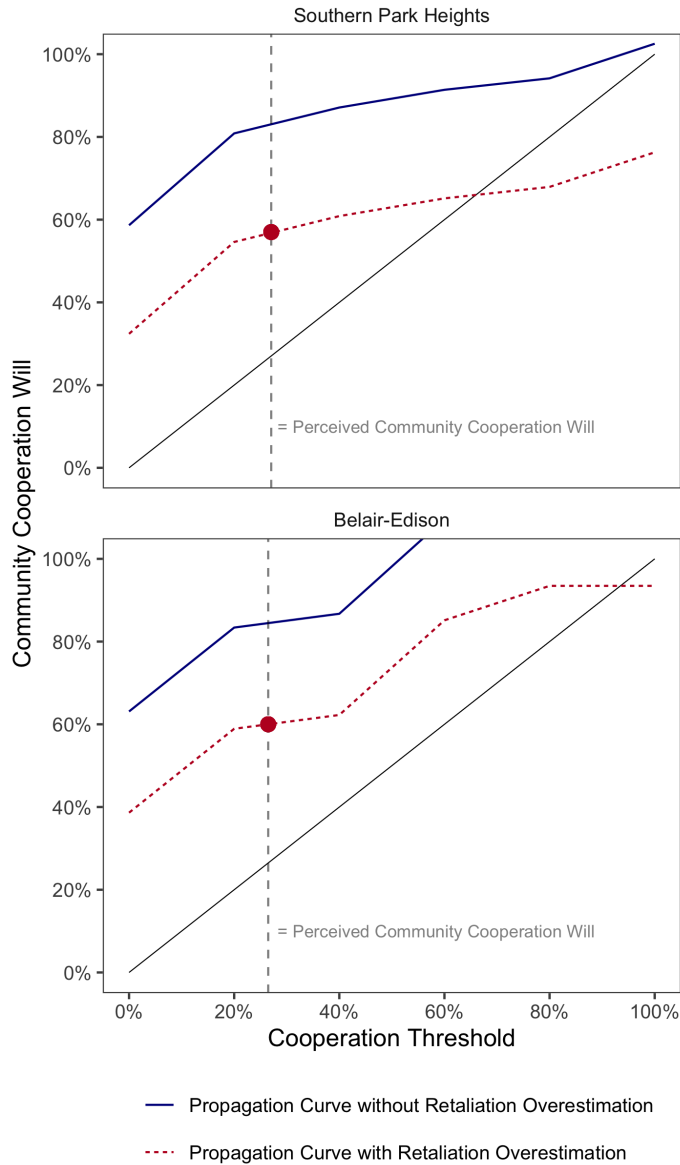


Figure 4.10: Southern Park Heights and Belair-Edison Cooperation Will

Southern Park Heights loses cooperation will due to risk inflation whereas Belair-Air Edison loses it due to community cooperation will underestimation. The solid blue curve and the dashed red curve are the estimated propagation curve without and with risk inflation, respectively. The dashed gray line indicates the perceived level of community cooperation will. The red point indicates the partial cooperation will equilibrium accounting for both risk inflation and cooperation will underestimation.

Demonstrating the role of threshold distributions when considering community-level dynamics, Figure 4.10 reveals that the downward shift has unequal effects on

the loss of cooperation will across the two communities. Assuming that residents had full awareness of community cooperation will but overestimated retaliation risk, the new cooperation equilibria are where the red dashed propagation curves intersect with the diagonal equality line—that is, the share of citizens at or below a given threshold equals the threshold value. In this scenario, 66% of Southern Park Heights residents are willing to come forward. In Belair-Edison, 94% of residents are willing to come forward despite the risk inflation. The variation is given to the fact that, as the shape of its propagation curve shows, Belair-Edison residents generally have lower thresholds than Southern Park Heights residents.

That said, Belair-Edison loses a greater amount of cooperation will than Southern Park Heights from residents due to norm deflation—that is, residents underestimating others' willingness to come forward. Residents in Southern Park Heights and Belair-Edison perceive roughly the same amount of community cooperation will at, respectively, 27% and 26% (represented with the dashed gray line). Due to the steepness of Belair-Edison's propagation curve, it sees a 34pp drop in community cooperation will whereas Southern Park Heights sees just a 9pp drop in community cooperation will.⁷²

Combining the risk inflation and the cooperation underestimation means that the communities have partial cooperation equilibria that fall significantly below the cooperation that could be possible in the absence of the collective misperceptions.

72. It worth noting that unconditional cooperation occurs in both communities. The unconditional cooperation is represented by the propagation curve intersecting the y-axis in Figure 4.10. In Southern Park Heights, 32% of the community would cooperate unconditionally and in Belair-Edison 39% of the community would do so. For these individuals, it is unnecessary for others in the community to come forward in order for them to do so. These groups however constitute the minority in both communities and thus the majority of citizens are influenced by the extent to which others are willing to come forward.

4.4. ALTERNATIVE THEORY: “NO SNITCHING” CODE

A prominent alternative explanation for limited cooperation in Baltimore’s communities with criminal group violence is the so-called “no snitching mentality.”⁷³ Ascribing a lack of cooperation to a “mentality” embodies the code of silence theory discussed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.3). Residents refrain from cooperating, according to the theory, primarily based on a logic of appropriateness rather than a logic of consequence. In this view, residents hold back information, less because they worry about retaliation risk, and more because they think of cooperation as an inappropriate behavior.

Proponents of code of silence theory might recognize that retaliation risk plays some role in constraining cooperation, but the notion that Baltimoreans hold back information due to a code, suggests that residents for the most part are voluntarily choosing not to talk to the police.

The no snitching diagnosis is applied to Baltimore’s black residents, in particular. One officer suggests that, in predominately white neighborhoods, “people here will call if they see something goin’ on.” He emphasizes that “it’s just a different culture up here.”⁷⁴ Simon, in his chronicling of Baltimore homicide detectives, similarly observes that the police gain greater cooperation from white residents, or “billies” as they are called. He sees the relative lack of cooperation as a manifestation of the code: “The code of the street—the ghetto rule that says a man never talks to a police under any conceivable circumstance—just doesn’t mean as much in Billyland.”⁷⁵

The theory, however, does not provide a potent explanation for why Baltimoreans hold back information from the police. For one, the no snitching code was developed to prevent those involved in criminal activity—not the population as a whole—from

73. Davis, “The city is functioning’.”

74. BWI919 2017.

75. Simon, *Homicide*.

cooperating. Thus, those that adopt the code are primarily people in the drug crews themselves rather than the broader population. And, further evidence of the theory's impotency, even in criminal circles where the code is supposedly strongest, it is often broken.

The code of silence theory suggests that one way—albeit, not the only way—a code becomes entrenched in communities is that criminal groups gain the support of citizens. From this perspective, Baltimoreans would look to the drug crews as protecting their communities' interests as well as providing security and economic benefits. The evidence, however, strongly contradicts the theory's predictions in this regard. Despite Baltimore's gangs claiming to have a social and political agenda, residents widely recognize them to be interested primarily in their own financial gain and overwhelmingly see them as a security and economic liability.

4.4.1 The No Snitching Code: Myth vs. Reality

The notion that Baltimore's residents broadly abide by a no snitching code fundamentally misunderstands the origins and purpose of the code.

The widespread perception that Baltimore has an ingrained no snitching code largely began in 2004 with the release of the “Stop Snitchin’” video campaign. The locally-produced video, officially titled *Stop Fucking Snitching Vol. 1*, went viral given its wide underground distribution on DVDs nationwide. Its main aim was to stigmatize criminals talking to the police. “These rats eat up everything,” a man says at the start of the video, “So I need y’all to volunteer information on who the punk mothafuckas is, dog, so I can let the whole mothafuckin’ world know—Chicago, Philly—so there’s nowhere these whores can run at.”⁷⁶

The virality of the video contributed to the belief that Baltimoreans adopted the no snitching code. Part of the confusion lies in the misconstrual that “snitching”

76. Skinny Suge, *stop snitchin part 1 of 4*.

applies to anybody sharing information with authorities. Even Merriam-Webster Dictionary has adopted this expansive definition, denoting a snitch as “a person who tells someone in authority (such as the police or a teacher) about something wrong that someone has done.”⁷⁷ However, scholars and those in communities with criminal groups generally recognize that snitching refers to individuals *involved in criminal activity* sharing information with authorities, usually to alleviate their expected punishment.⁷⁸

This narrow ascription to whom snitching applies reflects how the code is understood in Baltimore. Even Rodney Bethea, *Stop Fucking Snitching*'s co-producer, emphasizes that it aimed to prevent criminals, not citizens, from cooperating with the police:

[The film] was never directed at what they call “civilians.” If your grandmother calls the cops on people who are selling drugs on her block, she’s supposed to do that because she’s not living this lifestyle. When people say ‘stop snitching’ on the DVD, they are referring to criminals who lead a criminal life who make profit from criminal activities. But when the curtain comes down, they want to rat on the other guys that they have been hanging with to get out of their situation.⁷⁹

Most Baltimoreans appear to recognize this distinction. Whereas citizens are not beholden to the code, as a former dealer explains to me, “a rat is a person that does a crime and gives information” to reduce their punishment. The problem is that, in

77. “Definition of SNITCH,” Merriam-Webster, 2018, accessed October 23, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/snitch>.

78. Rosenfeld, Jacobs, and Wright, “Snitching and the Code of the Street”; Natapoff, *Snitching*. Perhaps because Urban Dictionary is crowdsourced and thus is more likely reflect popularized meanings, its top definition of a snitch is in line with this connotation: “a snitch will provide information to the police or feds in order to obtain lenient treatment for themselves and provide information over an extended period of time in return for money or for police to overlook their own criminal activities.” See ekiye, “Urban Dictionary: snitch,” Urban Dictionary, April 12, 2008, accessed October 23, 2018, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=snitch>.

79. Brown, *Snitch*, p. 177.

his view, “these guys want to have their cake and eat it too.”⁸⁰

Even among those involved in criminal activity, where the code supposedly applies, it is broken often. This suggests that a code of silence preventing cooperation is a relatively weak explanation for people holding back information. Apprehended criminals often “sing” to the police to reduce their punishments. “When it comes to drugs, everybody talks,” one officer says.⁸¹ An officer specializing in anti-gang efforts notes that affiliates “like to say that stop snitching stuff but once you got them pinched, they talk.”⁸² Similarly, a former addict emphasizes, “Once they start throwing fifty years at you, fuckers flip quick.”⁸³

The no snitching code among criminals also evaporates when someone seen as particularly undeserving dies in the violence. Simon describes an extraordinary scene when dealers actively supported the police to find the perpetrators in the death of a young girl, telling the police “I hope you catch the cocksucker, man;” and, “Go get his ass;” and “Lock that motherfucker up.” In Simon’s words, “For one February evening the code of the street is abandoned and the dealers and dopers readily offer up to the police whatever information they have.”⁸⁴

4.4.2 Why Crews Lack Resident Support

These misconceptions may be specific to the “no snitching” manifestation of code of silence theory, but as in other places, Baltimore’s criminal groups lack support from the community. And, this lack of support reduces the incentive of citizens to abide by a code and hold back information voluntarily.

Baltimore’s gangs attempt to position themselves as empowering their affiliates and communities, but residents generally recognize the gangs prioritize their financial

80. BWI140 2017.

81. BWI724 2017.

82. BWI488 2017.

83. BWI373 2017.

84. Simon, *Homicide*.

interests over communities' political and social interests. Take for instance Dead Man Inc/Power Over All (DMI/POA), a white gang founded in Maryland's prison system, which has established a street presence in Baltimore.⁸⁵ James "Supreme D." Sweeney, writing in DMI/POA's handbook, emphasizes a self-empowerment mission:

The Mission of DMI is to serve its members by helping to instill values in them, and other ways, to prepare them to make ethical choices over their life in achieving their full potential in order to become a true Dead Man — complete man.⁸⁶

Criminal convictions of the groups' affiliates suggest that it falls well short of these ideals. Sweeney himself is serving life in prison for ordering prison murders. A member of DMI/POA's Brooklyn unit in South Baltimore was also found guilty on racketeering charges, admitting to drug trafficking and ordering a "hit" on a person owing a drug debt. When the DMI/POA affiliate killed the wrong person, the affiliate himself was subsequently killed by the gang.⁸⁷

By this same token, Black Guerrilla Family (BGF)—among Baltimore's largest gangs that acts as an umbrella group for drug crews around the city—traces its founding to the Black Power movement. BGF continues to profess a mission of empowerment, infused with Marxist ideology. *The Black Book: Empowering Black Families and Communities*, an instructional manual used by BGF's Maryland wing for recruitment, argues explicitly that "the family" is not a gang. Rather, it claims to be an "organization" that is "geared towards revitalizing our people and our hoods."⁸⁸ The stated mission of promoting communities' social interests, however, appears subordi-

85. James Sweeney, DMI co-founder, argues that criminal elements ascribed to DMI are relegated POA, albeit indictments against the group are directed at DMI.

86. James Sweeney, *Dead Man Incorporated (DMI)*.

87. "Dead Man Incorporated Gang Member Exiled to 16 Years in Prison for Racketeering, Including Murder," Federal Bureau of Investigation, May 14, 2013, accessed May 7, 2017, <https://www.fbi.gov/baltimore/press-releases/2013/dead-man-incorporated-gang-member-exiled-to-16-years-in-prison-for-racketeering-including-murder>.

88. Brown, *Snitch*.

nate to BGF's profit-seeking motives. As a South Baltimore resident, who recently had his friend killed by BGF, explains, "BGF talks about black empowerment [but] let in people that aren't about that."⁸⁹

A common misconception in the context of Baltimore is that the crews are socially embedded in communities. And, to some extent, they are associated with geographic areas in the city. In Baltimore's southwest neighborhood of Cherry Hill, for instance, the "Up da Hill" crew operates around Cherry Hill Homes public housing complex and "Down da Hill" operates at the base of the hill.⁹⁰

That said, crews from outside the community will often "set up shop" when opportunities arise. It is not uncommon to have a crew, say, originating from West Baltimore selling in South Baltimore. A major bust in late-2013 in Baltimore's Cherry Hill region revealed that many of the thirty-six dealers arrested were from outside the area. Sometimes outside crews use incentives to gain a foothold in communities by, for example, providing drugs to addicts living in the public housing units that they in turn use as a base of operation.⁹¹ At other times, they take over violently. In one case, BGF affiliates from East Baltimore attempted to expand their reach to a South Baltimore neighborhood. According to a friend of a South Baltimore dealer, when the dealer "started bucking" against BGF, the gang "did him in."⁹²

Residents largely do not accept the protection narratives that criminal groups put forward. As shown in Figure 4.11, only 5% of white respondents and 2% of black respondents agreed with the statement that the drug crews "protect the rights and interests of people like me" whereas 79% and 75% of white and black respondents respectively believed that the crews violated those rights.

Furthermore, residents see the drug crews as sources of insecurity rather than as

89. BWI140 2017.

90. Justin Fenton, "Cherry Hill looks forward after resolution of massive federal gang case," Baltimore Sun, April 10, 2016, accessed May 2, 2017, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-ci-cherry-hill-racketeering-case-20160410-story.html>.

91. Ibid.

92. BWI140 2017.

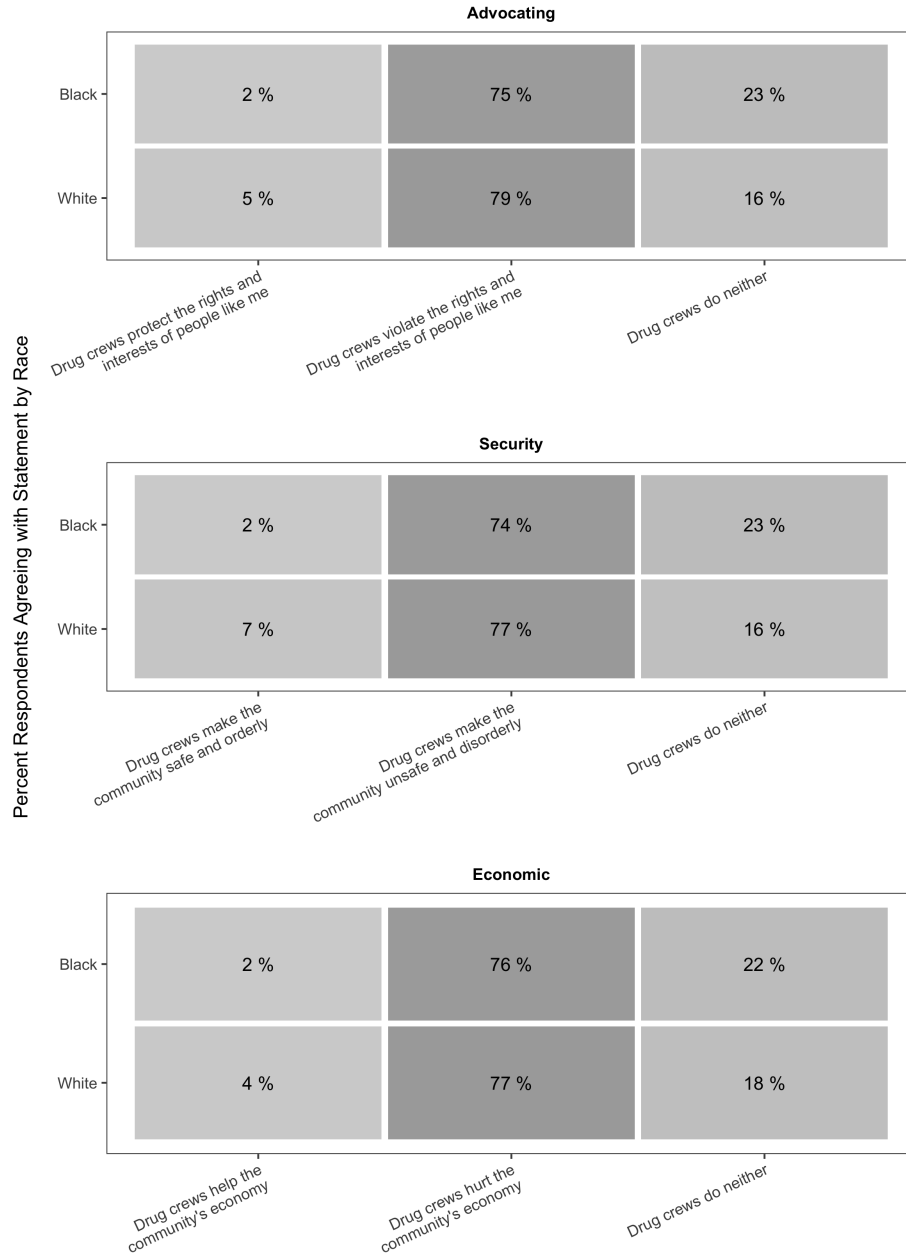


Figure 4.11: Citizen Perceptions of Drug Crew Impact on Community

Resident, both black and white, see the drug crews as providing little benefit to their communities. By overwhelming margins, they do not believe that the crews advocate for their interests, provide security in the community, nor provide economic benefits.

security providers. Just 2% and 7% of black and white respondents, respectively, indicated that the drug crews “make the community safe and orderly.” In contrast, 74% of black respondents and 77% of white respondents indicated that the crews make

their community unsafe and disorderly. Amid looting during the 2015 Freddie Gray protests, Baltimore's gangs received media attention for protecting businesses. Even in this case, however, the gangs were not stopping the looting but rather redirecting it from black-owned business to those with Chinese and Arab owners.⁹³

Beyond security, there are instances of drug crews providing economic benefits to the community in the past, but these benefits are generally token in nature. One former dealer recalled renting busses to take kids from the community to amusement parks.⁹⁴ Two middle-aged men from West Baltimore recalled that, during their youth, a "big time dealer" would pay for "everything" at the neighborhood's recreation center including uniforms, refreshments, and school supplies.⁹⁵ Some crews, for their part, would host public barbecues on the Fourth of July and other holidays.⁹⁶ Crews at times would also make *ad hoc* attempts to care for the children of neglectful addicts. A former dealer describes on such scenario:

[A user's] kid ain't got food so we obligated to take care of him if she take all her money and she blow it. The women [in the neighborhood] snatch the kid up and feed him and we pay. Once we give her a warning, nobody in that sector serves her *at all*. Even if she sick.⁹⁷

It would appear that, in some respects, the crews genuinely took isolated steps to pare back the adverse consequences of their illicit activity.

But, now, even crews' token service provision occurs less and less. One resident explains the change: "It's not like how it used to be. That sort of thing used to be real popular. A lot of stuff change. They just sell drugs and tear it up [these

93. Ron Nixon, "Amid Violence, Factions and Messages Converge in a Weary and Unsettled Baltimore," *New York Times*, April 27, 2015, accessed February 21, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/28/us/amid-violence-factions-and-messages-converge-in-a-weary-and-unsettled-baltimore.html>.

94. BWI213 2019.

95. BWI982 2017; BWI718 2017.

96. BWI963 2019.

97. BWI213 2019.

days].”⁹⁸ Similarly, another South Baltimore woman explains when asked if crews provide services: “fuck no, they trash up the hood.”⁹⁹ The crews “trash up” neighborhoods out of neglect but also purposely to hide their “ground stash” of drugs. By burying the stash in garbage-piled alley, police are less inclined to shift through the garbage during raids.¹⁰⁰

Sometimes it is suggested that criminal groups engage in useful economic activity. In many cases, however, people in the community are forced to accept doing business with drug crew even if they do not want to do business with them. A former East Baltimore dealers describes arrangements with corner store owners:

Drug shops were run out of plenty of stores by owners with roots stretching from West Africa to East Asia and back. A lot of these businesses would fold without guys like us—to think we paid from four hundred to a thousand dollars a week just to operate and they really had no choice but to get paid because we were going to do it anyway.¹⁰¹

As Watkins notes, the store owners “have no choice” but to allow the drug activity to take place. In all, survey respondents overwhelmingly believed that drug crews provide limited material benefits to communities. Just 2% of black respondents say crews help their community’s economy and 4% of white respondents say they do.

The competing theories outlined in this chapter have important implications for designing strategies to promote police-citizen cooperation. If a no snitching code of silence is prevalent in Baltimore, strategies that increase the safety of cooperation should have little resonance with residents. From the code of silence perspective,

98. BWI947 2017.

99. BWI373 2017.

100. BWI206 2017.

101. Watkins, *The Cook Up*.

residents are holding back information, because they want to and thus increasing the safety and norms of cooperation would be immaterial to their decision-making. If cycle of theory is a potent explanation, strategies that increase the safety and norms of cooperation should have resonance with residents. As a discuss in the next chapter, many of Baltimore's residents have a deep-seated distrust of the police, but they still look to them as their primary security providers. The perception of the police as the least bad option for security provision—combined with increasing the safety and norms of cooperation—makes it possible for communities to come closer to their full cooperation potential.

Chapter 5

Baltimore's Quiet Cooperators

Even the police around your house ain't good, I don't want the police near my house. I don't want the police knocking on my door. People in the neighborhood see. We scared, we have no other place to go.

Northwest Baltimore resident¹

After shootings in Baltimore, patrol officers routinely canvass the nearby blocks. They knock on doors asking residents if they saw or heard anything. These “knock and talk” exercises rarely bear fruit, according to officers. One detective recounts having responded to dozens of shootings and only once did someone talk to him during a canvas. In one case, a person was shot on a resident's front steps, and the resident insisted—implausibly, to the officer—that he did not hear anything.²

I accompanied a patrol officer on one of these canvassings in the wake of a West Baltimore shooting homicide. After his superior gave the order for the canvas, the officer muttered to me that the exercise would be futile. He was correct. Of the roughly three dozen doors that he knocked on, just three people answered: the first person shut his door when he saw the officer; the next to answer was a young couple that asked the officer questions about who was shot; and, the third person politely said he did not have anything to share.

1. BWI963 2019.

2. BWI027 2016.

Strategies such as this of soliciting information from residents in plain view fail to take into account the fear that many residents feel. A conversation with a police officer at one's door or in one's house may signal to the drug crews that the resident is sharing information, which could invite reprisals. Even having police in your vicinity can make individuals feel exposed. Baltimore's former police commissioner Kevin Davis learned this reality when, at a homicide scene, he walked into a corner store to use the restroom when the owner rushed to shoo him out. The owner, Davis recalled, "wanted me to get the hell out of her corner store" because she was terrified of being seen as providing him information.³

For this store owner, like many other Baltimoreans, it is not that she does not want to talk but rather she fears the consequences if she does. The rational act a witness can do to minimize retaliation risk is to move on as quickly as possible when an officer approaches them publicly. Residents are willing to cooperate but will only do so quietly out of public view.

The challenge for police and community safety advocates in Baltimore becomes how to develop strategies for promoting safe police-citizen cooperation amid the fear. I test three cooperation promotion strategies that have yet to be experimentally tested in Baltimore: providing cooperator anonymity, creating awareness of community cooperation, and exposing citizens to police officers of the same race.

These strategies take the constraints identified in cycle of silence theory as a point of departure. Anonymous communication channels reduce perceived retaliation risk, because anonymity lessens the likelihood that cooperator identities reach drug crews. Community leaders creating awareness of others sharing information helps reverse the underestimated community cooperation norms. Importantly, these strategies are compatible, because the latter necessitates creating awareness that cooperation generally, not specifically *who* cooperates. Exposure of citizens to officers of the same race

3. George, "Shoot to kill: some Baltimore neighborhoods condemned to endure a shocking degree of violence."

might, for its part, increase citizen trust that the police would protect cooperators.

The chapter proceeds in three sections.

Section 5.1 highlights why promoting police-citizen cooperation is so difficult in a city like Baltimore. Recent high-profile incidents have deepened distrust between many of its residents and the police, most notably, the April 2015 death of Freddie Gray in police custody and revelations of criminal activity by the Baltimore Police Department's (BPD) Gun Trace Task Force. The depth of the distrust in Baltimore suggests that, if strategies can promote cooperation there, they can work elsewhere. I also discuss Baltimore authorities' current strategies for promoting cooperation; despite the importance of anonymity and cooperation awareness, the strategies tend to underemphasize these features.

Section 5.2 lays out the methods used to evaluate cooperation strategies. I include an experiment in the Baltimore Community Safety Survey (BCSS) in which respondents view a professionally-produced fictional local news report of a shooting. In the report, which is experimentally varied to test cooperation strategies, a police commander holds a press conference at the scene and the journalists interview a community leader. I pair the survey evidence with qualitative interviews and observations.

Section 5.3 presents the results. The police commander emphasizing the anonymity of the number that citizens can call to provide tips increases respondents' propensity to share information. The community leader emphasizing that others in the community cooperate with the police also increases information-sharing. When the police commander and officers are the same race as the respondent, it does not result in a statistically significant change in the amount of information respondents are willing to share.

5.1. BACKGROUND: POLICING IN BALTIMORE

Policing in Baltimore has a long—and, at times, turbulent—history. It is often highlighted as the city in the United States with among the deepest divides between the police and communities, with some likening the BPD to a “colonial police force” that is engaged in an “occupation” of Baltimore communities.⁴ This divide makes Baltimore an especially difficult case for promoting cooperation between police and citizens. And, the strategies that BPD has put forward appear to have had success but that success has been uneven and the effectiveness of strategies remain untested.

5.1.1 Deep Distrust

Deep and longstanding distrust of the Baltimore police, especially among the city’s black residents, makes it a difficult environment to promote information-sharing. At the same time, promoting cooperation is possible, because citizens compartmentalize their distrust to certain segments of the police and view the police as at least minimally-effective.

Baltimore constitutes what social scientists consider a “least likely” case, meaning that the conditions in the city make demonstrating the proposed hypotheses difficult.⁵ With respect to this study, it means that strategies test to increase cooperation are unlikely to work. Least likely cases are optimal to select from a research perspective, because if the strategies can promote cooperation in a city hobbled by the distrust, they can potentially work in other places with distrust of the police—a common characteristic of communities with criminal group violence.

Drivers of distrust among residents, especially in primarily black communities,

4. Aaron O’Neal, “Baltimore: A righteous struggle against white power in black face - neocolonialism!,” *The Burning Spear*, April 30, 2015, accessed February 26, 2020, <http://www.theburningspear.com/2015/04/Baltimore-A-righteous-struggle-against-white-power-in-black-face-neocolonialism>.

5. Levy, “Case Studies.”

are two-fold. For one, residents express concerns that the police do not prioritize crime fighting in their communities rather protect more affluent, primarily white, neighborhoods. Additionally, police are seen as taking an overbearing approach that often results in misconduct. This sentiment was summarized in a West Baltimore community group report on the police response to the Freddie Gray demonstrations and riots in 2015: “Over-policed, Yet Underserved.” A West Baltimore pastor explains that, in line with this view, “people want to see dealers arrested but not manhandled.”⁶ Similarly, another pastor in the area explains that residents “want the drug dealing dealt with,” but at the same time, “they don’t like the heavy-handedness of the police.”⁷

Rough treatment by police officers—often, but not necessarily, directed at drug crew members—does happen. Indeed, 98% of survey respondents believe that the police use excessive force against those in drug crews. An affiliate of Dead Man Inc/Power Over All explains, “If somebody runs, the police will beat the shit out of you.” He recounts an incident when the police “kicked the shit out of” his friend for running.⁸ An attitude tinged with cavaliness that some patrol officers display feeds into the popular narrative that misconduct is common. As one officer put it, “ghetto policing is easy policing.” Those in drug crews, he says, “complain about being pushed around, which happens occasionally.” The complaints did not appear to concern the officer, however, who remarked, “They say they’ll call a lawyer, but never do.”⁹

The police in Baltimore are also seen as largely ineffective, which perhaps is even more corrosive to trust than the misconduct. Part of residents’ frustration stems from a perceived lack of responsiveness and caring from the police. A woman from South Baltimore describes one such incident:

So many people get shot around here and you never hear about it. Police

6. BWI762 2016.

7. BWI001 2016.

8. BWI254 2017.

9. BWI129 2017.

never show up. I call police and told them a bullet was in my front door. They never came after calling three times. I had kids in that house. I called 911, 311, all that. Then when they finally came, I gave them the bullet and they said there ain't nothing they can do about it, because I touched it. Well, what the fuck?¹⁰

The frustration also stems from perceived police corruption, which is believed to allow the drug crews to persist. A long-retired dealer describes how corruption would work in the city's criminal justice system before, in his words, "Reagan cleaned up the streets:"

We had a turnkey jailer in West Baltimore named Sid. He smoked cigars like this. [The interviewee places his hand to his mouth.] "I ain't gonna let you see the [court] commissioner. You got \$50? Alright, don't come next week now, I'm gonna raise the price on you." It's like that those days.¹¹

More recently, BPD's Gun Trace Task Force (GTTF) was disbanded for running a criminal enterprise centered around robbing drug dealers and distributing their product. Perhaps most dramatically, a GTTF sergeant conspired to sell drugs looted from pharmacies during post-Freddie Gray rioting.¹²

It is worth noting that concerns over ineffectiveness are at times beyond the control of the police. Given strict rules surrounding evidence, the officers called to the South Baltimore home discussed above might have been right that it would be difficult to prove a case once the bullet has been touched. Moreover, laws governing the length of jail stays for detained individuals means that many suspects often have to be released

10. BWI373 2017.

11. BWI213 2019.

12. Baynard Woods, "Gun Trace Task Force trial testimony reveals cops conspired to sell drugs stolen from pharmacies during the Baltimore Uprising," Baltimore Beat, February 2, 2018, accessed February 27, 2020, <http://baltimorebeat.com/2018/02/02/gun-trace-task-force-trial-testimony-reveals-cops-conspired-sell-drugs-stolen-pharmacies-baltimore-uprising>.

soon after their arrests. The fact that the suspects are back dealing soon after an arrest might perpetuate a perception of ineffectiveness but in reality it is a function of the law.

The distrust that police will treat suspects fairly and take effective action presents a barrier to cooperation, but it does not make cooperation impossible. Revelations surrounding the GTTF led some observers to argue, “When residents try to walk to the store or the bus stop, they are as afraid of the police as they are of criminals.”¹³ Such characterizations overstate the extent of the divide between police and citizens. Citizens do not distrust all officers and believe that the police solve at least some cases of crime. These conditions are necessary to make promoting cooperation possible, because without them, there would be little reason to share information with the police.

Indeed, the vast majority of residents—black and non-black—look at corruption as compartmentalized to certain segments of the police. As shown in Figure 5.1a, 49% of non-black BCSS respondents said that most officers can be trusted and 32% said that around half of officers can be trusted. There is greater distrust among black respondents, but at the same time, more than two-thirds of respondents said half or more of officers can be trusted. None of the 650 respondents in either category said that no officers can be trusted.

Along these same lines, residents believe that, at least in some cases, the police solve violent crimes. As represented in Figure 5.1b, respondents on average believe that police “clear” (i.e., identify the perpetrator) in 31% of homicides. Non-black respondents estimate that 39% of murders are solved and black respondents estimate that 26% are solved. Even though the police may not be as responsive as desired, residents still hold the view that they are at least minimally effective. This view means

13. Baynard Woods and Brandon Soderberg, “In Baltimore, Police Officers Are the Bad Guys With Guns,” *New York Times*, May 14, 2019, accessed February 21, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/14/opinion/police-guns-baltimore.html>.

that there is a potential payoff to cooperation—albeit, not as large as it could be with a higher clearance rate. Ultimately, the distrust may reduce citizens’ propensity to come forward, but it does not impose an unsurmountable obstacle to cooperation.

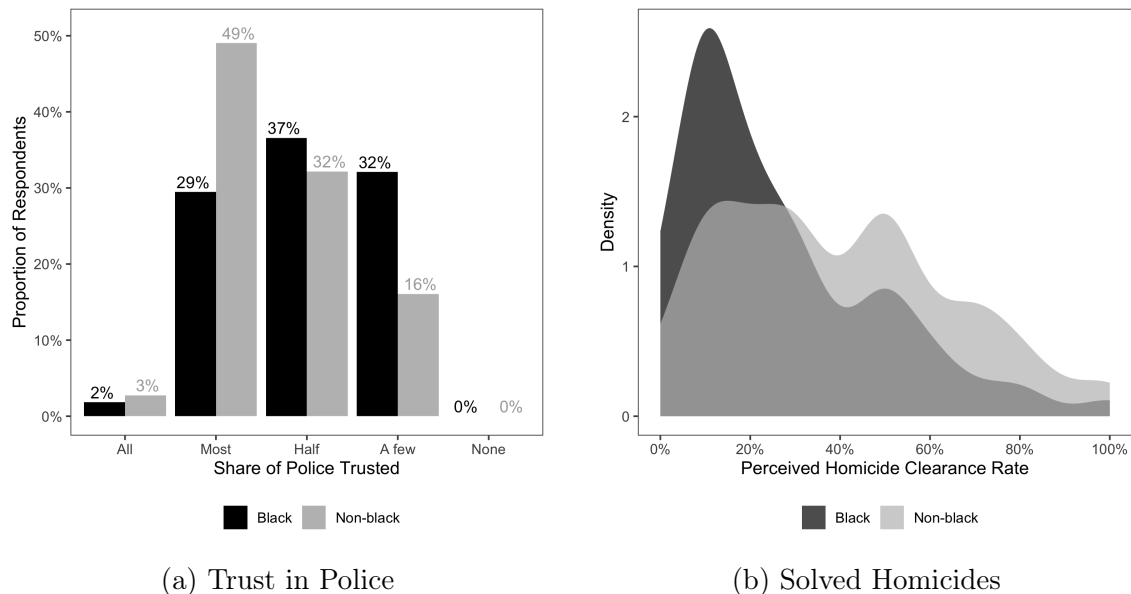


Figure 5.1: Resident Perceptions of the Police

Despite distrust between the police and citizens in Baltimore, the vast majority of residents trust some police officers, and they believe that the police solve a portion of murders. These realities make promoting cooperation possible, because residents judge that there is a chance sharing information will lead to an arrest of perpetrators.

5.1.2 Current Approaches to Cooperation

Baltimore law enforcement officials, recognizing the importance of information from the community, have myriad outreach programs to solicit information. BPD’s programs include its Public Enemy #1 campaign that spotlights what it considers the city’s worst offenders in hopes of receiving tips to locate and arrest the suspects.¹⁴ BPD also has segments such as Cold Case File on the local WBAL radio station to encourage tips about unsolved cases. Among the department’s most prominent out-

14. Carrie Wells, “‘Public Enemy No. 1’ wanted in attack on 73-year-old is captured,” Baltimore Sun, December 8, 2016, accessed December 20, 2016, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/crime/bs-md-ci-public-enemy-20161207-story.html>.

reach effort is its weekly “Wanted Wednesday” series in which it solicits information about suspects using slickly-produced YouTube videos.

BPD, the city government, and civil society organizations provide a plethora of platforms through which Baltimoreans can share information. These include, but are not limited to, 911, 311, text-based tip lines, district command phone lines, specialized unit phone lines (for example, the homicide unit), the Maryland CrimeStoppers tip line, a State’s Attorney’s Office tip line, and recently the BPD mobile phone app. Moreover, officers that, as one patrolman put it, “give a shit” may distribute their personal phone numbers to residents as way to cut down their response times.¹⁵

Organizations actively encourage witnesses to come forward by publicizing the platforms and encouraging residents to share information. However, attempts to solicit information do not appear to emphasize anonymity and cooperation awareness.

Take the case of advertising the Maryland CrimeStoppers tip line. A key feature of CrimeStoppers is that it facilitates anonymity for those providing information. But, many CrimeStoppers billboards posted in the city do not emphasize the tip line’s anonymity feature. *Baltimore Sun* reports on shootings and homicides include the CrimeStoppers number 1-866-7LOCKUP encouraging readers to call if they have information but do not mention callers can be anonymous.¹⁶

In the Cold Case Files and the Wanted Wednesday series, police spokespersons only sometimes emphasize that citizens can submit tips anonymously. Of those 246 suspects featured on Wanted Wednesday between 2016 and 2018, only 30% were in a video where the police officer describing the number for citizens to call verbally emphasized that the caller could be anonymous. Similarly, Baltimore’s 911 system allows users to be anonymous if they request it, but this feature of the service is rarely publicized.

Law enforcement might generate cooperation awareness but it does not appear to

15. BWI572 2016.

16. See for example Dunn (“Six people wounded by gunfire Monday in Baltimore”).

be part of a systematic strategy for promoting cooperation. BPD sometimes thanks communities for providing information leading to an arrest. In a tweet, the department states that they have arrested a Public Enemy #1 “after tips from the community identifi[ed] his location.”¹⁷

Perhaps the law enforcement outreach effort that came closest to leveraging cooperation awareness was the “You’re Not Alone. Together We’re Stronger” campaign launched by the State’s Attorney’s Office (SAO) in early 2019. Despite its title emphasizing togetherness, the campaign’s messaging did not appear to highlight community cooperation. Videos made for the campaign, for instance, stress how witnesses can help convict perpetrators rather than stressing the extent or depth of community cooperation.¹⁸ An emphasis on the importance of cooperation may have a limited effect on promoting awareness of cooperation norms.¹⁹

Community safety advocates have partially filled the vacuum left by the limited law enforcement efforts on creating cooperation awareness. In many respects, this makes sense given that community leaders are much better positioned than law enforcement to create awareness given their perceived objectivity and embeddedness in community social networks. Neighborhood block watch and citizen patrol programs have their stated goal as deterring crime but they also signal that community members are willing to come forward to the police. Block watch groups often post signage stating their presence in particular areas and citizen patrol programs such as the Guardian Angels conduct public walks to make their presence known.

17. “MOMENTS AGO: Baltimore’s #PublicEnemy #1 taken into custody by patrol officers after tips from the community identify his location.,” @BaltimorePolice, Twitter, December 7, 2016, accessed February 27, 2020, <https://twitter.com/BaltimorePolice/status/806709603723526144>.

18. *Together We’re Stronger PSA (Smith)* (Baltimore, Maryland: Baltimore SAO, June 7, 2019).

19. Within a year of the campaign’s launch, the website (www.togetherwearestronger.com, accessed February 10, 2020) stood up to promote the campaign had become defunct.

5.1.3 How to Counter the Cycle of Silence

More consistent and comprehensive implementation of the strategies could bring significant gains in cooperation. The ultimate goal for police and community safety advocates is to reverse the cycle of silence. In reducing the constraints on cooperation posed by risk inflation and the hiding of cooperation will, the strategies can bring communities closer to their full cooperation potential.

The first strategy, emphasizing the anonymity of communication channels, reduces risk inflation. If the police do not know a cooperator's identity, it lessens the chance that the drug crews will learn who shared information. Without a cooperator's identity, officers cannot unintentionally reveal the identity by, for instance, visiting the cooperator's home, judges cannot mandate that the identity be revealed, and corrupt officers cannot share the identity with drug crews.

The second strategy, creating cooperation awareness, corrects citizens' perception that fewer in their community are willing to share information than actually are. Inflated perceived risk makes those that are willing to come forward self-censor their disposition from public view. As a result, many in the community remain unaware that others are willing to cooperate, which renders citizens less willing to do so themselves. A strategy that increases awareness of community cooperation norms in turn encourage broader cooperation. Awareness of others' willingness to come forward signals to citizens that sharing information with the police is normatively-accepted.

The third strategy, exposing citizens to officers of the same race, also potentially promotes greater information-sharing. The logic behind the strategy is that exposure to officers of the same race garners trust among citizens and thus, among other mechanisms, renders them more comfortable coming forward. Reams of scholarly literature, discussed in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.2), demonstrate that people are more inclined to trust those who are in-group members. Considering that race is a salient

feature of the population in Baltimore, it follows that Baltimoreans should be more likely to trust that an officer of their own race would be more inclined to protect cooperators.

5.2. METHOD: EXPERIMENTAL NEWS REPORTS

The strategies are tested using a survey experiment embedded in the the Baltimore Community Safety Survey (BCSS). The experiment involves showing respondents fictional local news reports that are randomly-varied to test the strategies.²⁰ The quantitative analysis is buttressed with in-person interviews and observation to validate and contextualize the findings.

5.2.1 Experimental Vignette

The survey experiment presents respondents with a fictional local television news report professionally-produced in partnership with a Baltimore-based production firm exclusively for this study. To maximize realism, the videos were filmed in a Baltimore neighborhood and have actors from the region. The report depicts a breaking news segment in which a fictional news local station “WBTR-TV 9 Baltimore” covers a quadruple shooting in a residential neighborhood.

The report has three scenes, as shown in Figure 5.2, that all respondents view regardless into which experimental variations they are selected. In the first scene, a news anchor cuts to breaking news of a shooting that took place in a residential neighborhood, showing non-graphic security camera footage of the incident. In the second scene, a police commander holds a press conference during which he encourages witnesses from the community to come forward with information to the police. The final scene is a short interview with a neighborhood association leader who witnessed

²⁰ Chapter 4 (see Section 4.2) includes more on background on the qualitative data collection and BCSS sample.



(a) Scene 1: Shooting Incident



(b) Scene 2: Crime Scene



(c) Scene 3: Witness Interview



[View Vignette](#)

Figure 5.2: Experimental Vignette Scenes

The approximately two-minute fictional local news report includes three scenes. A news anchor reports on a shooting in a residential neighborhood; police officers hold a press conference at the crime scene; and, a witness to the shooting is interviewed for the news report. Experimentally-varied versions of the vignette were produced for each combination of treatment and control condition. All versions of the vignette can be viewed by scanning the QR code or clicking the “View Vignette” link.

the shooting.

This study presents three of the four variations embedded into the news reports. The variations, shown in Table 5.1 are designed to test the three strategies for promoting cooperation: (1) emphasizing the anonymity of a tip line, (2) creating awareness of other community members cooperating, and (3) exposing citizens to in-group police officers (i.e., of the same race).²¹ Each variation has two conditions, making for a 2 x 2 x 2 design for the purposes of this study. A video is produced for each combination of condition, and respondents have an equal chance of receiving any one of the

21. A fourth variation, presented in a parallel study, looks at the effect of police handling suspects roughly.

versions. Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests indicate no statistically significant differences for seventeen of the eighteen comparisons between treatment and control conditions along the demographic controls variables including gender, age, education, receipt of public assistance, religion, and race.²²

Table 5.1: Experimental Vignette Variations

Variation	Condition	Description
ANONYMITY Crime Scene	<i>Treatment</i>	Police commander emphasizes that the tip line is anonymous.
	<i>Control</i>	Police commander does not emphasize tip line anonymity.
AWARENESS Witness Interview	<i>Treatment</i>	Community leader emphasizes that others call.
	<i>Control</i>	Community leader emphasizes that others do not call.
IN-GROUP POLICE Crime Scene	<i>Treatment (Black)</i>	Police commander and officers are black.
	<i>Treatment (White)</i>	Police commander and officers are white.

The study presents three of the four variations embedded into the videos. Each variation has two conditions, and all videos can be viewed online here: bit.ly/2RlmhHu.

In the Anonymity Variation’s treatment condition, the police commander asks viewers to call or text an anonymous tip line, emphasizing that the tip line is “completely anonymous, when a citizen contacts us with info, their name is never known.” In the variation’s control condition, the commander asks viewers to call the police

²². There is imbalance with respect to religion between the treatment and control conditions for the In-group Police Variation.

department's central number, which implicitly is not anonymous. If the theoretical expectations of cycle of silence theory hold, respondents will be inclined to share more information when exposed to the anonymity treatment. If the expectations of code of silence theory hold, anonymity will have little impact on respondents propensity to share information, since it posits that respondents are not interested in cooperating in the first place.

For the Awareness Variation treatment condition, the community leader interviewed signals that others are sharing information. "Whenever things like this happen on the block," he says to the reporter, "folks step up behind the scenes." In the control condition, the witness says that people in the community "stay out of it" when violence happens, signaling limited cooperation. If cycle of silence theory holds, respondents will be inclined to share more information when they become aware of others doing so. If code of silence theory holds, greater awareness of community cooperation should have a null effect.

Finally, in the In-group Police Variation, the police commander and the officers behind him at the press conference are black in the first condition, which is the treatment for black respondents. They are white in the other condition, which is the treatment for white respondents. If in-group exposure increases trust, as hypothesized, respondents will be inclined to share more information when exposed to the officers of the same race.

5.2.2 Measurement and Analysis

After viewing their randomly-assigned version of the news report, the respondent indicates how much, if any, information they would share with the police in the given scenario on a five-point scale ranging from sharing "everything" to not sharing any information. I log the outcome variable and exponentiate the treatment coefficients in order to interpret the treatment effects as percent changes in the amount of infor-

mation shared.²³ It is important to consider the amount of information residents are willing to share, rather than whether or not they are willing to share any information, because often witnesses will come forward while at the same time holding back some information.

Figure 5.3 shows the distribution of responses among all respondents as well as black and non-black sub-groups. Logging outcome variables is useful for interpretability but creates a concern that, if there is low baseline cooperation will, a small increase in cooperation will could misleadingly show a large percentage increase. That said, the distribution makes clear that there is high level of baseline cooperation will. Indeed, on average 57% of respondents indicate that they would share all the information they had with the police about what they witnessed. These statistics suggest that percent increases in information-sharing are substantially significant. If anything, the preponderance of respondents indicating that they would share everything potentially creates a ceiling that blunts the treatment effect.

The models for the analysis interact the treatment variables and include demographic controls for gender, age, education, use of public assistance, and religion.²⁴ Given the interactions, the results reported are the effects, assuming that the other variations are set to their control condition. Robust standard errors are employed, and I conduct sub-group analysis among black and non-black respondents considering that citizen distrust of the police is greatest among Baltimore's black population. While the black population make up the majority of many of the communities in the sample, white residents and minorities other than black also live in the communities. Given that they are exposed to violence as well, police-citizen cooperation decisions are equally relevant to them.

23. It is necessary to exponentiate the coefficients to interpret the treatment effects as percent changes given that the treatments are measured with binary variables and the outcome is log transformed. I use the following formula to calculate the percent changes due to the treatment effect: $100 * (\exp(\beta_{treatment}) - 1)$.

24. The vignette includes a fourth variation testing the exposure to police use of excessive force to be presented in a separate study.

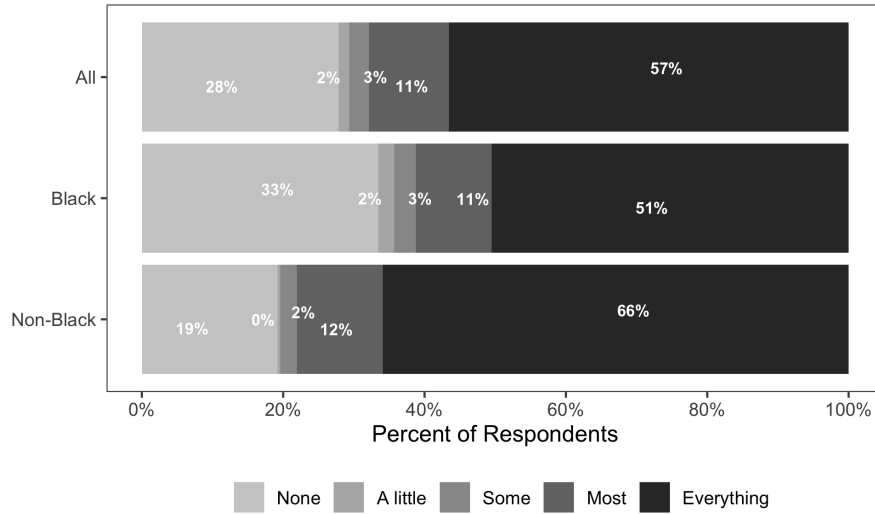


Figure 5.3: Information-sharing Summary Statistics

The modal response for the experiment’s main outcome is “everything.” The high baseline indicates that percent increases in information-sharing from the treatment effects are substantially significant.

There are 650 respondents in the BCSS sample as called for according to a power analysis done prior to the experiment. Power analyses for factorial designs require a sample size large enough to detect effect for the treatment condition with the smallest expected effect size. Unlike with non-factorial experiments that have multiple treatment arms, factorial designs do not require expanding the sample size to test each treatment arm. That said, the strong assumptions required for estimating effect sizes leaves open the possibility that this experiment is underpowered; thus, null results on their own should not be taken as dispositive.

The pre-analysis plan for the experiment is registered on OSF Registries (ID# 20190604AE). The plan was registered prior to treatment assignment.

5.3. RESULTS: COOPERATION IN THE SHADOW OF FRED-DIE GRAY

Amid an environment of distrust between citizens and police, promoting cooperation becomes more difficult but is possible, as the experimental results in Figure 5.4 and Table 5.2 show. When the police commander in the news report emphasizes anonymity and when the community leader emphasizes community cooperation, respondents on average share more information than they do in the control conditions. However, exposure to police officers of the same race does not increase the amount of information respondents share, suggesting that exposure to in-group officers—at least in this way—may not be a particularly effective means to promote cooperation.

Table 5.2: Treatment Effect on Information-sharing

Treatment	Group	% Change	Coef.	SE
Anonymity	All	22.49	0.20**	0.10
	Black	11.46	0.11	0.14
	Non-Black	37.85	0.32**	0.13
Cooperation Awareness	All	23.28	0.21**	0.10
	Black	34.35	0.30**	0.14
	Non-Black	10.37	0.10	0.15
In-group Police	All	-0.59	-0.01	0.11
	Black	-8.78	-0.09	0.14
	Non-Black	21.72	0.20	0.15

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The model is fully crossed, includes demographic controls, and uses robust standard errors. Percent change is calculated using the formula $100 * (\exp(\beta_{treatment}) - 1)$.

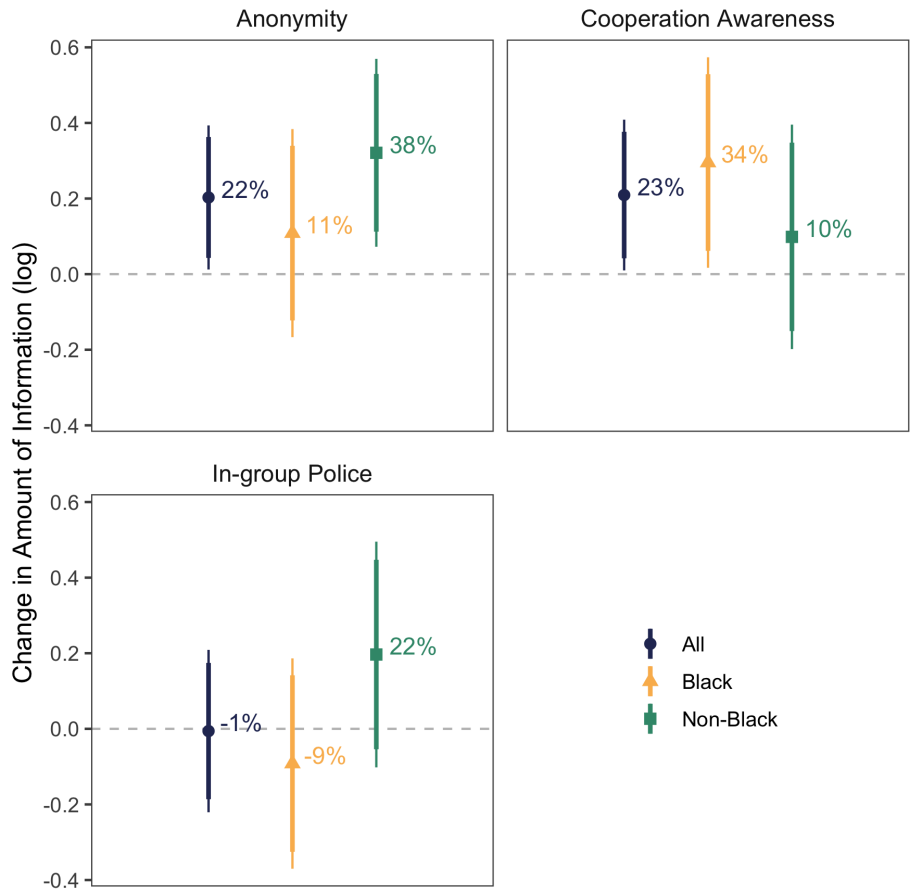


Figure 5.4: Treatment Effect on Information-sharing

The percent change labels are exponentiated coefficients. Anonymity and cooperation awareness increase information-sharing. Non-black respondents are significantly more responsive to the anonymity treatment than black respondents. Black respondents are significantly more responsive to the cooperation awareness treatment compared to non-black respondents. Exposure to police officers of the same race does not have a statistically significant effect on respondent information-sharing. The plot shows 95% and 90% confidence intervals surrounding the coefficients.

5.3.1 Cooperator Anonymity

On average, respondents are willing to provide 22% more information when the police ask them to call an anonymous tip line versus one that is not anonymous. This results are consistent with Baltimore residents’ real-world behavior. They often try to maintain anonymity in their interactions with the police. According to one resident, it is best only call the police on unregistered “throw-away” mobile phones, so the police

cannot trace the caller's identity as could be done with a typical registered phone.²⁵ A South Baltimore resident explains when she called the police while guarding her identity at the same time:

[Cooperators] will keep it anonymous because they can get in trouble for that. They ain't gonna know who you are if you don't give them no name. I've done that before. I've seen this man laying on the ground. [...] We need somebody to get here and they came. [I gave them] no name, no nothing.²⁶

In this instance, the resident called and tried to maintain anonymity by refraining from sharing identifying personal information. Police generally do not seek out the identities of cooperators who want to remain anonymous. Regardless, an anonymous tip line adds a layer of protection for the cooperator, because the police cannot identify him or her even if they sought to.

The results reveal a significant divergence between the effect of anonymity on increasing information-sharing between black and non-black residents. Much of the average increase is driven by the non-black respondents who increase the amount of information they would share by 38% whereas black respondents increase the amount of information they would share by a non-statistically significant 11%.

Black respondents are less inclined to trust that the anonymity feature of CrimeStoppers and 911. Figure 5.5 indicates that black respondents are much less likely to trust that those who provide information to CrimeStoppers and 911 callers can remain anonymous.²⁷ These platforms offer anonymity: CrimeStoppers does not request nor tracks information from those who submit to the platform. And, if 911 callers request

25. BWI671 2017.

26. BWI285 2017.

27. To measure trust in 911 anonymity, respondents were asked, "Let's say someone calls 911 and asks to remain anonymous. How much do you trust that their identity will not become public?" To measure trust in CrimeStoppers anonymity, respondents were asked "Let's say someone provides information to Crime Stoppers. How much do you trust that their identity will not become public?"

that they remain anonymous, the Baltimore City Fire Department, which manages the service, removes the caller’s information.

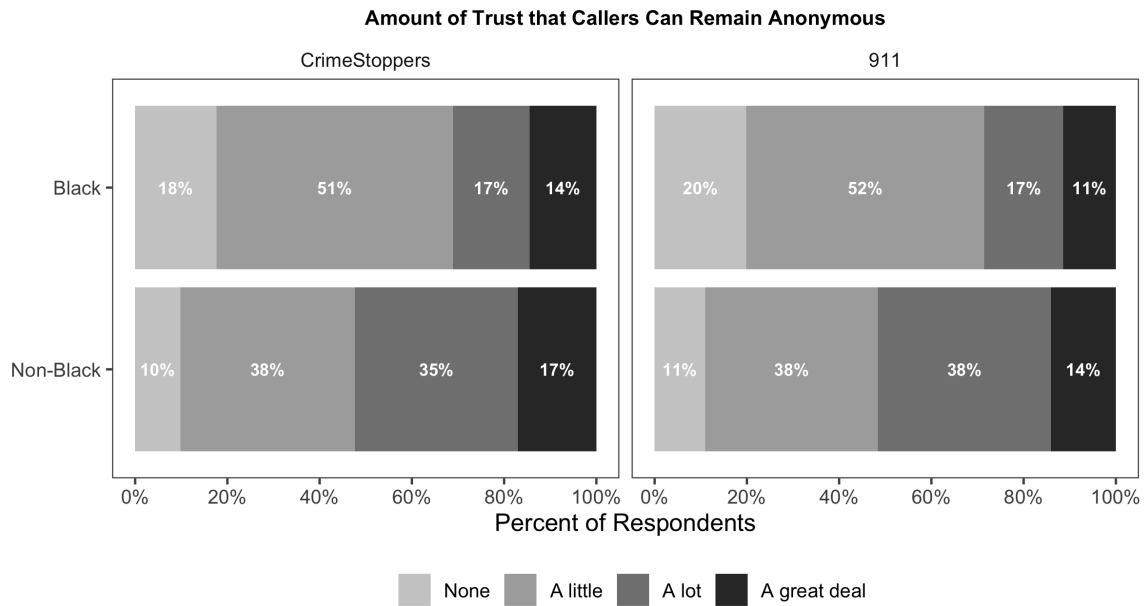


Figure 5.5: Trust in Remaining Anonymous

Black respondents are less likely to trust that those who provide information through CrimeStoppers remain anonymous. Black respondents are also less likely to trust that callers requesting to remain anonymous on 911 in fact remain anonymous.

A black resident of South Baltimore articulates her lack of trust in the anonymity of these platforms:

[CrimeStoppers] is supposed to be anonymous. Me personally, I don't believe it. I've been around situations where somebody gives info and wants to be anonymous and then it comes back that the person talked. You gotta be worried about that for the safety of you and your children. I definitely doubt that 911 is anonymous. Police officers can hear the call in their car.²⁸

Although callers to Baltimore city’s 911 can remain anonymous if they request to do so, popular media in part undergirds the distrust. “We see television,” one community

28. BWI671 2017.

safety advocate explains, “when you call 911 the name pops up.”²⁹

5.3.2 Cooperation Awareness

Like anonymity, cooperation awareness significantly increases the amount of information respondents are willing to share. Figure 5.4 and Table 5.2 show the community leader interviewed in the news report emphasizing others in the community come forward. On average, respondents provide 23% more information when they receive the cooperation awareness treatment.

In a reverse of the pattern with the anonymity treatment, however, the effect of awareness was stronger for black respondents who expressed a willingness to share 34% more information compared to non-black respondents who were willing to share 10% more information at a non-statistically significant level. The stronger effect for black respondents could be due to the fact that the community leader in the news report was a black person, but without experimental randomization of the community leader’s race, it is difficult to draw a firm conclusion.

Community leaders are generally aware of the importance of cooperation norms even if they do not call them such. One way that community leaders attempt to create cooperation awareness is to engage in community walks in which concerned citizens tour the neighborhood with public officials. One community leader in an East Baltimore neighborhood explains:

Community walks lets people know that there are neighbors that are willing to fight to take our community back. We can see places where they are hiding drugs and houses that have been broken into and the using of fear tactics on store owners. [...]people meet and come together. We can do more as a group than as individuals.³⁰

29. BWI390 2016.

30. BWI206 2017.

Although not the central purpose of the walks, when other residents see them occur, they may feel more comfortable coming forward themselves. The results indicate that efforts focused on creating cooperation awareness could have a particularly pronounced effect in promoting information-sharing.

5.3.3 In-group Police Exposure

Exposure to police officers of the same race does not appear to increase respondents willingness to share information by a statistically significant margin, as shown in Figure 5.4 and Table 5.2. Respondents on average do not share more information when the police commander soliciting information at the crime scene press conference is the same race as they are. The effects of the exposure are variable across the sub-groups. Non-black respondents have a modest 9% decline in the amount of information that they are willing to share and non-black (specifically, white in this case) increase information-sharing by 22%—neither of which are statistically significant effects. Even among respondents that *ex ante* trust the police, the exposure to an officer of the same race does not increase information-sharing.

These results are not dispositive, meaning that they do not show exposure to an officer of the same race does not have an effect in this context. Indeed, a higher-powered experiment might indicate that exposure for white respondents does increase information-sharing. That said, in relative terms to anonymity and cooperation awareness, exposure to officers of the same race does not appear to increase information-sharing to the extent that the other strategies do.

Qualitative evidence appears to be consistent with the survey results. As one West Baltimore community organizer put it, when looking at police officers, “people don’t see black or white, they see blue.”³¹ Or, similarly, a West Baltimore pastor explains that a black police officer still “represents the man” to many of his parishioners.³² In

31. BWI024 2016.

32. BWI762 2016.

some cases, black officers are even less respected by black residents. A black sergeant explained to me that at a crime scene that a man on the other side of the police tape shouted “sell out” to him as the sergeant tried to hold the crowd back.³³

These results reinforce that, although residents may compartmentalize officers by trusting some of them more than others, the compartmentalization does not necessarily fall along racial lines. In other words, residents, especially black residents, may not look to an officer’s race in deciding on whether or not to trust the officer. The implication from the results is that prioritizing the race of police officers for promoting cooperation—although may have myriad benefits with respect to policing generally—may not on its own be sufficient to overcome the distrust that some resident feel toward the police.

Most studies on policing focus on either economically-developed contexts or a smaller number developing contexts. Rarely do they look at both contexts in a single study. Thus, having tested the theory and strategies in an economically-developed context, as I have done in this chapter and in Chapter 4, most policing studies would stop here. Too often, theories and strategies on policing that show promise in developed countries are assumed to operate in developing countries. This study, however, goes beyond this practice by evaluating cycle of silence theory and its derivative strategies in an economically-developing country. Doing so allows for understanding what aspects of the theory and which of the strategies generalize beyond the shores of the United States. Accordingly, I next turn to the markets of Lagos, Nigeria where street gangs known locally as “area boys” engage in intense violence and extortion of shopkeepers.

33. BWI665 2017.

Part III

Lagos

Chapter 6

The Game in Lagos

De Nigerians we dem kill for America dis last year lone, e pass twelve, all because they refuse pay protection money. Some na simple taxi driver, one wey dem report for paper only last week, 'e just dey push ice-cream bicycle. Den shoot am to death because 'refuse to pay. (Just last year, twelve Nigerians were killed in America because they refused to pay extortion money. Some were only taxi drivers, and one reported in the newspaper last week pushed an ice-cream cart. They shot him dead because he refused to pay.)

Lagos trader in Wole Soyinka's *The Beatification of Area Boy*¹

Lagos's leaders hold an ambitious vision for their city. World-class infrastructure and a secure environment are to make Lagos, as declared in the state government's official development plan, "Africa's Model Mega City."² Since Nigeria's 1999 transition to multiparty elections, successive Lagos state governors—beginning with Bola Tinubu—have made steps toward realizing this vision. Pockets of the city have experienced rapid economic development. Emblematic of the development is the Eko Atlantic project—a gleaming Dubai-esque mini-city set to house hundreds of thousands on reclaimed land.³

1. Wole Soyinka, *The Beatification of Area Boy: A Lagosian Kaleidoscope* (London: Methuen Drama, 1995).

2. *Lagos State Development Plan 2012-2025* (Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, Lagos State Government, September 2013).

3. "Media - Eko Atlantic," Eko Atlantic, 2018, accessed June 5, 2018, <https://www.ekoatlantic.com/media>.

Despite the advancements, however, the city continues to face major economic and security challenges. Only 11% of households have reached the middle class,⁴ and the Economist Intelligence Unit ranks Lagos the third least livable city on its annual list, behind post-war Libya’s capital Tripoli and 137 others.⁵ Most Lagosians live and work in what residents call “the real Lagos”—that is, in the city’s tightly-packed neighborhoods and marketplaces with limited government services, precariously-constructed buildings, and infrastructure ranging from in disrepair to non-existent.

It is in the real Lagos where street gangs—referred to locally as “area boys”—remain a widespread and persistent problem. These crews often extort shopkeepers and residents, living off of legitimate enterprises in the city’s marketplaces and motorparks. Bloody turf battles between the crews, sometimes involving more than 100 fighters, are not uncommon. Lagos is unlikely to achieve its ambitions without stemming the violence and holding the gangs accountable who engage in it. Given the importance of information from citizens, police along with community safety advocates have few options except building greater cooperation with communities.

Part II of this study evaluates the cycle of silence—and strategies for reversing the cycle—in Lagos. Doing so allows for investigating the extent to which the theory plays out, if at all, in an economically-developing country as well as determining if safety strategies can successfully promote cooperation in this context. If it does, that suggests the dynamics laid out are common human traits rather than context-specific.

The Lagos case is designed to stand on its own rather than as adjunct or corollary to the Baltimore case. I develop the case to have the components of a full-scale, independent empirical analysis for two reasons. Doing so provides a stronger test of the hypotheses than relying on the Baltimore findings, even in part, to demonstrate dynamics in Lagos would. Moreover, as Africa’s largest city—and, a vibrant economic

4. Robert Draper, “Africa’s First City,” National Geographic, January 1, 2015, accessed March 1, 2019, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2015/01/lagos-nigeria-africas-first-city>.

5. *Global Liveability Index 2018* (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018).

and cultural hub—Lagos deserves recognition as an important case in its right rather than being studied vis-à-vis a Western city. Thus, I put the Lagos and Baltimore cases on equal footing empirically.

This chapter proceeds in four sections.

Section 6.1 provides context on Lagos, which has communities, as called for in the study's scope conditions, that are ethnically-diverse and have a substantial criminal group presence. Area boy crews engage in bloody street battles, often in the city's marketplaces. The unpredictable and *ad hoc* nature of the violence means that shopkeepers witness it, making them an important source of information for the police. The theoretical expectations of cycle of silence theory suggest that the violence-induced fear causes Lagosians to overestimate the risk of retaliation, which reduces cooperation directly and through the hiding of cooperation norms.

Section 6.2 describes the methodological approach for the case study. The data collection combines interviews and personal observation with a module from the Eko Community Survey, an original survey of 1,025 shop owners in four Lagos markets that have among the highest levels of area boy violence in the city.

Section 6.3 provides evidence that fear leads shop owners, on average, to overestimate the likelihood of retaliation, and as a result, underestimate the willingness of others in their market to share information. It is well known that retaliation risk prevents police-citizen cooperation. Going beyond this point, this study provides systematic evidence that criminal groups inflate retaliation risk, and this inflated risk subsequently leads to citizens underestimating the extent of cooperation norms in communities—both of which reduce citizen information-sharing with the police.

Section 6.4 discusses the limitations of code of silence theory in Lagos, which would explain Lagosians refraining from cooperation due to support of the area boys. Far from supporting them, however, shopkeepers see the area boys as a threat to their safety and economic well-being. The antipathy toward area boys stems from the fact

that they are generally considered social outsiders, unreliable security providers, and extortionary racketeers.

6.1. BACKGROUND: “THE REAL LAGOS”

Lagos has a number of ethnically-diverse urban communities with a criminal group presence, in particular the city’s marketplaces, which meet the scope conditions for this study as outlined in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.3).

The study focuses on cities given that criminal groups tend to thrive in urban areas. One of the most striking features of Lagos is its sheer size. The city has an estimated 13.7 million inhabitants, according to the United Nations, and will grow to 24.2 million by 2030, which will make it the world’s ninth largest urban center. By comparison, New York City and Newark, New Jersey are estimated to have less than 20 million people combined in 2030.⁶ This urban density is manifest in the city’s crowded marketplaces, the setting of this study, where shops are crowded together in buildings and makeshift stalls line the streets.

Lagos is also ethnically diverse. Situated in Nigeria’s southwest, the Yoruba ethnic group make up the largest portion of the population. But, as the country’s—and, to a large extent, West Africa’s—commercial capital, the relative economic opportunity offered in Lagos attracts Nigerians from hundreds of ethnic groups.⁷ Albeit not representative at the state-level, the Afrobarometer survey recorded nine different ethnic groups in Lagos with the two largest being Yoruba (38%) followed by Igbo (17%).⁸ This ethnic-diversity facilitates testing the salience of reference groups in

6. *The World’s Cities in 2016* (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, September 16, 2016), p. 4.

7. Lagos’s gross domestic product is estimated to be larger than that of all of Kenya. See “Lurching ahead,” *The Economist*, April 13, 2013, accessed December 3, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2013/04/13/lurching-ahead>.

8. *Round 6 Survey Manual* (Afrobarometer, 2015). Note that Nigerian scholar Peter Ekeh argues that the salience of ethnic differences is in part a construct of colonialism. See Peter P. Ekeh, “Colonialism and the two publics in Africa: A theoretical statement,” *Comparative Studies in Society*

policing dynamics as well as generalizing beyond individual ethnic categories.

6.1.1 Lagos's Area Boys

The most important scope condition is the presence of criminal groups, and Lagos scores high by this measure. Area boys, sometimes referred to as “agberos,” are loosely-organized groups of youths. Area boy crews are diverse in size and composition. A crew might be composed of as little as a half-dozen individuals but larger crews reach up to three dozen. Their source of income generally derives from extorting shopkeepers and transportation workers.

The profile of a typical area boy is not dissimilar to street gang affiliates elsewhere: a teenager, residing in a neighborhood with limited economic opportunities, that extracts income through illicit means. Area boys usually range in age from early-teens to late-twenties and mostly all of them are male.⁹ Area boys dress much as criminal groups in the United States and Europe do; they might don a tattered soccer jersey, a mesh tank top, or a faux designer shirt. Perhaps their most telling trait are the scars imprinted on them by machetes or glass bottles during street fights.

Scholars have studied area boys from various lenses. Early works attempted to understand their origins. Political scientist Abubakar Momoh contextualized area boys in an attempt to identify their roots as part of “uneven development” and broader social phenomena in Lagos.¹⁰ Similarly, sociologist Bernard Owumi evaluated how area boys gained a foothold in the city and community reactions to their rise.¹¹

More recent work has situated area boy crews within the broader context of social

and History 17, no. 1 (1975): 91–112.

9. Female “area girls” do exist in small numbers—albeit, they rarely if ever participate in the front line of street battles.

10. Abubakar Momoh, “Youth Culture and Area Boys in Lagos,” in *Identity Transformation and Identity Politics Under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria*, eds. Attahiru Jega (Nordic Africa Institute, 2000).

11. Bernard Owumi, “New Trends and Attitudes toward Crime: The Phenomenon of Area Boys in Nigeria,” in *Urban Management and Urban Violence in Africa*, eds. Isaac O. Albert et al. (Ibadan, Nigeria: Institut français de recherche en Afrique, 1994).

orders in African urban environments. Adrienne LeBas, also a political scientist, evaluated the role of area boys as vigilantes in her study of how informal organizations shape African urban orders.¹² Historian R.T. Akinyele similarly looks at the role of area boys in security production in Lagos's marketplaces.¹³ Security scholar Olawale Ismail, for his part, has looked at how area boys engage in territoriality around spaces.¹⁴

Area boys are not the only type of criminal group active in Lagos. Other types of organizations coexist with area boys in the Lagos's criminal ecosystem, which includes cults, robbery and kidnapping crews, and G-boys. I focus on area boys, because they are the most pervasive type of criminal organizations and have the most direct contact with citizens.

The dynamic makes the area boys the most relevant to citizen decisions about cooperating with the police. Cults, also referred to as confraternities, are violent secret societies that originally formed on Nigeria's university campuses. Extending their reach beyond campuses, they run prostitution rings, internet scamming operations, and arms trafficking networks, among other activities. In many ways, they integrate with and have become indistinguishable from area boys. Robbery and kidnapping crews, for their part, have largely been contained in Lagos and thus citizens are less likely to witness their activity than area boy violence. G-boys, who conduct internet scams, generally do not engage in violence the way other groups do, making them less of a threat to the rule of law than violent groups.¹⁵

12. Adrienne LeBas, "Violence and Urban Order in Nairobi, Kenya and Lagos, Nigeria," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 48, no. 3 (2013): 240–262.

13. R.T. Akinyele, *Nigeria: Contesting for Space, Identity and Security* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Connel & Rex Charles Publications, 2014).

14. Olawale Ismail, "The Dialectic of 'Junctions' and 'Bases': Youth, 'Securo-Commerce' and the Crises of Order in Downtown Lagos," *Security Dialogue*, September 30, 2009.

15. These scams are popularly known as "419" named after the section of the Nigerian criminal code that makes the fraud illegal. On the origins of 419 scams, see Stephen Ellis, *This Present Darkness: A History of Nigerian Organized Crime* (New York: Oxford University Press, July 1, 2016).

6.1.2 Exposure to Area Boy Violence

The intense, open, and unpredictable nature of area boy fights mean that Lagosians are regularly exposed to violence. The violence is intense in that large numbers of fighters are involved and often attempt to kill—rather than simply wound—their opponents. These street battles, often called “riots” in the local parlance, are open given that they often take place in daylight on crowded streets, in motorparks, and even at political rallies. The violence is unpredictable as most citizens do not have forewarning when a fight will break out.

Area boy violence—both in its organized and *ad hoc* forms—sheds light on how Lagosians become exposed to it even if they seek to avoid exposure.

One persistent source of organized violence is factional fighting among kingpins for control of lucrative positions in the city’s main transportation union, the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW). The union has a mandate to collect fees from the city’s public transportation network in which *danfo* (minibuses), *keke* (motorized tricycles), and *okada* (motorcycles) connect motorparks across the city. Thus, the leadership roles in the union yield significant financial rewards. Kingpins use the area boy crews as muscle to take over motorparks forcibly and pressure ranking members to cede them money-making positions.

The fractionalization within the union creates rivalries that can break out into large-scale street fighting, usually surrounding disputes involving finances. These clashes, which generally involve fighters raiding motorparks, unfold over several days, and spread rapidly from one area to another.¹⁶ An Oshodi textile trader who witnessed a major 2015 dispute among NURTW factions that originated in Lagos’s Mushin area but soon moved to Oshodi described the fighting as “brutal” and esti-

16. See for example Evelyn Usman, Bose Adelaja, and Esther Onyegbula, “3 killed, vehicles burnt as NURTW, hoodlums clash in Oshodi,” *Vanguard*, February 25, 2015, accessed January 4, 2019, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/02/3-killed-vehicles-burnt-as-nurtw-hoodlums-clash-in-oshodi> and Emmanuel Udom, “Nigeria: Oshodi Crisis - Police, NURTW Brace for a Fight,” *Daily Independent (Lagos)*, March 5, 2015, accessed June 9, 2018, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201503050926.html>.

mated that more than 100 boys were involved.¹⁷

The factional fighting codifies existing rivalries among the crews, which leads to *ad hoc* violence. Small disputes rapidly escalate, which are largely impossible for citizens to anticipate. A bag salesman describes how such disputes turn violent with little warning:

You will see people gathering, maybe ten to twenty. They will say *waka shagee* (“fuck your mother” in Hausa). [They] don’t want to know who is right and who is wrong, they will just start their own right there. [...] They don’t want to know what happened over there, they just hear that there’s fight, and they just start fighting.¹⁸

Ad hoc violence can also occur when citizens push back against area boy extortion attempts. A Mushin shopkeeper witnessed an incident in which area boys demanded payments from workers collecting trash on the street. When the workers refused to pay, a brawl broke out on the street.¹⁹

Weapons used in fighting—whether organized or *ad hoc*—are usually crude instruments, which contributes to the violence’s intensity. *Cutlass* (machetes) are a popular weapon given that area boys can easily obtain them in Lagos’s markets. With limited resources, area boys also fasten weapons from seemingly benign objects. They break bottles to make shanks or fling shards of window glass. Firearms including AK-47s and *pump actions* (shotguns) also appear in major battles.²⁰ Twenty-nine of the thirty-five, or 82%, of street battles catalogued in major media outlets in 2018 reported the use of firearms.

Area boys also rely on spiritual weapons, further intensifying the violence. Many

17. LOS310 2018.

18. LOS582 2018.

19. LOS957 2018.

20. See for example Ifeanyi Okolie, “4 injured in Mushin NURTW clash,” Vanguard, January 13, 2016, accessed January 4, 2019, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/01/4-injured-in-mushin-nurtw-clash>.

area boys hold traditional religious beliefs in occult power, so they bring magical charms to street battles. The area boys are believed to use the charms to protect themselves from machete blows and bullets or for offensive measures such as paralyzing their enemies.²¹

Citizens tend to view these charms as potent weapons, which intensifies the fighting from their perspective. Area boys might swing the charm at the end of rope over their heads, tie it in an emulate around their neck or arm, carry it in a belt around their waist, or have it as a ring on their finger. “The *juju* (magic) is strong in Lagos,” as one resident puts it.²²

Whereas most Lagosians attempt to avoid exposure, others intentionally seek out opportunities to witness the violence. This category of individual sees the fights as if they are “a show,” as one shopkeeper puts it.²³ And, like other spectacles, witnesses often capture what they see with photos and videos. Given that area boys rarely cover their faces, the media provide a potentially valuable source of evidence for the police.

Diffusion of information about violence from witnesses to their social networks is common, which exposes many to the violence second-hand. Those caught amid a street battle often call or send text messages about what is happening as well as share photos and videos to warn others to avoid the area where fighting has broken out. “If you can get a viewing center, you watch,” explains a female shopkeeper, “we send photo and videos to our friends on WhatsApp so they know it’s not safe.”²⁴

Another woman explains that posted a *snap* (photo) of a fight on Facebook, because in her words, “I want to show how the market is.”²⁵ At times, witnesses send the information to news outlets, which puts into the public domain. More commonly,

21. LOS086 2018.

22. LOS191 2018.

23. LOS072 2017.

24. LOS599 2017.

25. LOS076 2017.

it is distributed within private networks, so even those that do not witness area boy clashes directly may still have information unavailable publicly.

In-person discussions similarly diffuse information about the violence. For younger Lagosians especially, area boys are a subject of gossip. After fights, they will gather to discuss who won, who lost, which side suffered the most casualties, who were the strongest fighters, and the like. In the words of a shopkeeper, “*you go see when people gather and na for there you go hear scores* (when people get together, they talk about the fight’s outcome).”²⁶

6.1.3 “The Police are Not Spirits”

Nigeria Police Force (NPF) officers, from the rank and file to top commanders, see information from citizens as essential for addressing the violence. “The police bring the muscle,” the then-Lagos police commissioner declared in 2018, but, “in terms of intelligence, it’s the community.”²⁷ In this same vein, a junior officer emphasizes, “If people don’t volunteer info, the investigation is very difficult.”²⁸ Citizens themselves acknowledge the importance of cooperation. “The police are not spirits so they cannot know what is happening everywhere,” as a textile trader puts it.²⁹

Police leverage information from citizens to prevent violence and hold perpetrators accountable. The information might allow for a rapid police response to stem bloodshed before it spreads, as an officer from the NPF’s Federal Special Anti-Robbery Squad (FSARS) explains:

If somebody wants to commit crime, the useful info come from citizen. If we don’t get info quickly, there are like ten casualties. If get info quickly

26. LOS709 2018.

27. Statement from NPF Commissioner Edgal Imohimi at the Lagos State Security Summit in April 2018.

28. LOS156 2017.

29. LOS023 2018.

we reduce casualties only two casualties. We shoot up [in the air] and send tear gas.³⁰

After violent incidents have occurred, citizen information can lead to arrests. The lead detective in one of Lagos's 107 police divisions, describes one such case:

There was a rival cult clash and it resulted in killing of two person. A woman who was indoor opened her window and saw the whole thing. It was the woman who provided information about the identity of the suspects. She knew one of them by name and she gave descriptions of others. We acted on it. The one she knew the name we arrested him and he helped arrest the others.³¹

Similarly, citizen information can be useful for locating suspects. One commander describes a case in which he distributed the names of suspects to community members, who in turn gave the officer the suspect's location.³²

Area boys themselves provide information to the police. This information, however, has its limits considering that the crews use the cooperation to advance their interests. According to a crime reporter for one of Lagos's largest newspapers, area boy cooperation goes something like as follows: a crew first reports when one of their own boys has been killed to put police pressure on the rival crew. Doing so allows for the crew to weaken their rival and add a second flank in their effort to exact revenge. The crew continues their own hunt and kills the suspects if it finds their target first.³³ Thus, the end result of the information from area boys is to empower the crew that provided information over its rivals without necessarily reducing violence.

The unreliability of cooperation from area boys leaves citizens as the key source of information for addressing violence. Lagosians however at times refrain from sharing

30. LOS400 2017.

31. LOS788 2018.

32. LOS528 2017.

33. LOS113 2017.

what they know. Victimization surveys of city residents indicate that less than half of victims of robbery and other crimes report the incident to the police.³⁴ Such figures suggest that Lagos's markets fall short of their cooperation potential.

6.1.4 Theoretical Expectations

Cycle of silence theory helps explain why Lagosians at times refrain from sharing information with the police. The theory, as laid out in Chapter 2, posits that a violence-induced climate of fear leads citizens to overestimate the likelihood that cooperators face retaliation. The inflated risk in turn pushes those who support cooperation to hide that support, which results in citizens underestimating the level of community cooperation will. This retaliation risk and limited perceived cooperation norms leads markets to fall below their full cooperation potential.

In the context of Lagos, cycle of silence theory would predict the following causal chain: First, Lagosians perceive retaliation from area boys to be more likely than it is, in part driven by fear amplifiers like public violence and rumors. Second, inflated retaliation risk leads Lagosians to underestimate the willingness of others in their community to come forward. This is so, because the perceived retaliation risk—both real and inflated—pushes the Lagosians that cooperate and support cooperation to hide their disposition. Finally, both Lagosians' overestimation of retaliation and underestimation of community cooperation reduces their willingness to share information.

34. Johnson Ayodele and Adeyinka Aderinto, "Nature of Crime and Crime Reporting of Victims in Lagos, Nigeria," *International Journal of Criminology and Sociological Theory* 7 (December 1, 2014): p. 1; Etannibi E.O. Alemika and Innocent C. Chukwuma, *Criminal Victimization and Fear of Crime in Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria* 1 (CLEEN Foundation, 2005), p. 33.

6.2. METHOD: EKO COMMUNITY SURVEY

Tracking with the study's broader research design, I undertake the Lagos case using a multi-method approach. In the first phase, I employ qualitative evidence—namely, interviews and observation—to build the theory. In the second phase, I subsequently conduct a large-scale survey of shopkeepers in four of Lagos's markets as part of the Eko Community Survey. In the third phase, I turn back to interviews and observation to contextualize and validate the survey findings. All data collection in Lagos took place during eleven months of intermittent fieldwork between July 2016 and May 2018.

6.2.1 Interviews and Observation

In total, I interviewed ninety-eight individuals including citizens, state authorities, and area boys. In the exploratory and theory-building phase, I interviewed sixty-six individuals. As Figure 6.1 shows, the interviewees came from roughly equal parts of each main actor type. The main purpose of these interviews were to get a foundational understanding of dynamics among the actors. To validate and contextualize the survey findings, I interviewed an additional thirty-two individuals, focusing on citizens considering that the purpose of this third research phase was to the shopkeepers' survey responses into broader context.

The process for recruiting interviewees varied. Interviewing state authorities in Lagos generally requires permission from high-level authorities in the relevant agency. For the Nigeria Police Force, this initially required approval from the the head of the NPF, the Inspector General, based in Nigeria's capital Abuja. Once approval was obtained, I would then contact relevant officials for interviews.

For citizens and area boys, I used chain-referral sampling, sometimes called "snowball sampling," to identify recruits, which is a form of respondent-driven sampling.

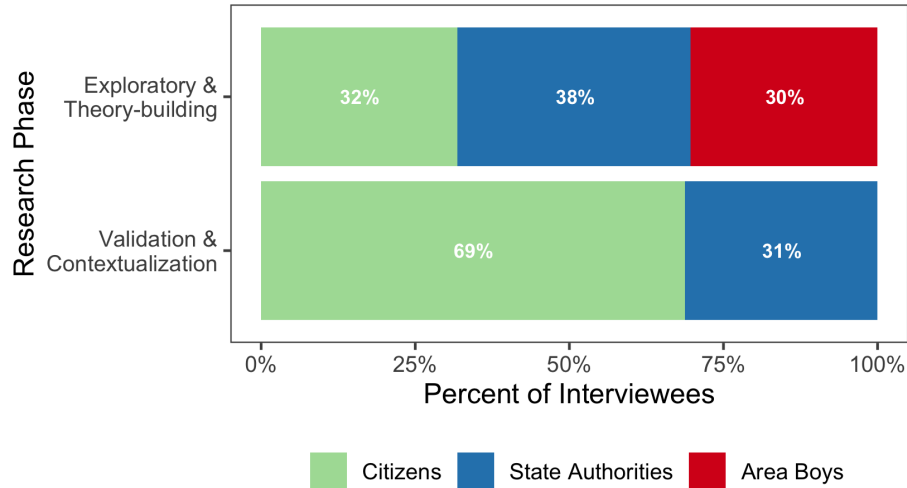


Figure 6.1: Lagos Interviewees

Interviews were conducted in the exploratory and theory-building as well as validation and contextualization phases of the research process. Ninety-eight individuals including citizens, state authorities, and area boys were interviewed.

This process entails making contact with an initial interviewee, who then sets up contact with an additional interviewee with the characteristics required for a given aspect of the study.³⁵ This non-systematic approach to recruiting interviewees was useful as its flexibility facilitated more interviews than would be possible with a stringent approach.

To qualify for an interview, citizens were at least eighteen years old and living in a Lagos community with an area boy presence. The bulk of the interviewees under the state authority classification are police officers, ranging from commanders near the top of the NPF hierarchy in Lagos to rank and file patrol officers. I interviewed individuals from various NPF units including the Federal Special Anti-Robbery Squad (FSARS), Mobile Police (MOPOL), and the Force Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department (FCIID).³⁶ Area boys interviewed, for their part, are either active in fighting or ex-affiliates that no longer regularly engage in violence.

35. Schensul and LeCompte, *Essential Ethnographic Methods*, p. 291-2.

36. Additional state authorities interviewed include officials from the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) and Lagos State Ministry of Justice, among other state agencies.

Interviews ranged from informal conversations to semi-structured discussions in which I asked pre-determined questions and delved deeper into items of interest. The discussions last for as little as fifteen minutes to more than three hours with many individuals interviewed on more than one occasion. I either hand-recorded notes or typed them into a mobile phone. In some cases, a research assistant accompanied me on the interviews and also recorded notes to allow for cross-referencing and comparing the accuracy. Interviews were conducted in English, Nigerian Pidgin English, or Yoruba with a translator.³⁷ A handful of the interviews were conducted in groups while most were done individually.

Given the nature of chain-referral sampling, some interviewees were in the same social network, and thus each interviewee should not be seen as an independent observation. That said, there was often a diversity of opinions among individuals interviewed, and as the number of interviews with additional social networks took place, it became rarer for the interviewees to raise new themes and viewpoints, suggesting that the interviews reached a saturation in terms of providing new information. Prior studies indicate that saturation in which few new themes become introduced occurs around a dozen interviews.³⁸ Moreover, I use the interviews to complement rather than substitute the systematic analysis of the survey to avoid inferential concerns associated with snowball sampling.

Observation consisted primarily of accompanying NPF officers on patrols. During these patrols, which I did in three of the city's police districts, I observed how the police hierarchy operated as well as police-citizen interactions. By virtue of living in Lagos, I also witnessed police actions inadvertently such as seeing a police raid of a known "black spot" with drug activity, observing police activity in preparation for local elections, and observing "hot spot" policing activity in which the police deployed

37. Igbo, Hausa, and individuals from other ethnic groups generally speak English or Pidgin English, which is the language of commerce in the city. Thus, interviews with individuals from these ethnic groups were conducted in English.

38. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, "How Many Interviews Are Enough?"

vehicles and officers at junctions to quell area boy activity.

6.2.2 Survey Background

The survey data were collected as part of the Eko Community Survey (ECS)—“Eko” being the traditional name for Lagos—conducted between March and April 2018 in four market areas of Lagos.³⁹

The ECS included questions on range of broader issues of marketplace social structures, violence, and electoral politics; the results discussed in this study are from a module that focuses specifically on police-citizen cooperation. The survey ran in four of Lagos’s major market areas that are loci of area boy activity: Agege, Bariga, Mushin, and Oshodi (see Figure 6.2).⁴⁰

The markets were selected to fit the study’s scope conditions of ethnically-diverse urban communities with a criminal group presence. Unlike in Baltimore, where there is a wealth of census and crime data to leverage for the sample selection, the selection in Lagos required piecing together existing surveys with qualitative data and subsequently validating the markets’ fit within the scope conditions.

With respect to area boy presence, the crews are, as Lagosians often remark, “everywhere,” but these market areas have reputations as area boy strongholds. Mushin, which has gained the moniker “Moonshine” due to its prevalence of area boys, is seen as the roughest market area in Lagos. Oshodi, a mecca for the West African textile trade, “sends the chill down the spines of many Lagosians and non-Lagosians alike,” according to a 2004 Nigerian newspaper article.⁴¹ Although Oshodi has enjoyed considerable security gains in the last decade, area boys remain active there. Bariga and

39. The ECS is a collaborative project with Leonardo Arriola and Shelby Grossman.

40. Although I sometimes refer to the market areas as “markets” as shorthand, market areas are a conglomerate of many autonomous or semi-autonomous markets. A market generally has signs marking its entrance that lead patrons into a maze of buildings with shops and makeshift stands. At the periphery of the markets are vendors that hawk goods, either doing so on foot or with makeshift stands.

41. Wale Alabi, “OPC Boys Watch Over Oshodi,” *Daily Sun*, January 14, 2004, Originally cited in Akinyele, *Nigeria: Contesting for Space, Identity and Security*, p. 136.



Figure 6.2: Lagos Sample Market Areas

Respondents were sampled in four major markets of Lagos, which meet the scope conditions of this study. They are high-density and ethnically-diverse with high concentrations of area boys.

Agege are seen as more subdued than Mushin or Oshodi, but they nonetheless have reputations for relatively high rates of area boy extortion, theft, and assault.

Table 6.1 shows summary statistics of the markets. The table indicates the percent of ECS respondents in each market that witnessed an area boy fight in the last year. And, as shown, more than 50% of those surveyed in every market indicated that they witnessed a fight in the last year with an average rate across the four markets of 67% of shopkeepers witnessing one. Although comprehensive data do not exist to compare the fights witnessed to other markets, victimization surveys in Lagos suggest that these areas have among the highest levels of crime.⁴²

The market areas are also highly dense. As mentioned in the previous section, Lagos is the most populous city in sub-Saharan Africa with 13.7 million inhabitants,

42. Alemika and Chukwuma, *Criminal Victimization and Fear of Crime in Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria*, pp. 20-21.

Table 6.1: Market Area Summary Statistics

Market	Witness Fight (%)	Total Shops	Ethnic Diversity
Agege	53.7	1,161	0.22
Bariga	62.9	1,098	0.53
Mushin	76.6	2,979	0.49
Oshodi	73.1	6,030	0.53

The four market areas used in the sample meet the scope conditions of being ethnically-diverse urban communities with a high concentration of criminal groups. The data show that shop owners in the markets regularly witness fights among area boys; there are a large number of shops in small geographic areas; and, there is ethnic diversity as measured by the probability that any two shop owners will be from a different ethnic group.

and considering that it is Nigeria’s commercial capital, the market areas are packed with shops. Table 6.1 includes the number of total shops counted in each market area as part of the process for establishing the ECS sampling frame. With an average of 2,817 shops in each market, which cover a small in land area, the areas are highly dense.

The markets also have a high degree of ethnic diversity. In line with Lagos’s broader population, the majority of shop owners tend to be Yoruba with an average of 63% of shop owners across the four markets. Also in line with Lagos’s broader population, Igbo shop owners make up the second largest share with an average of 34.5%.

I generate an ethnic diversity score for each market that indicates the likelihood of any two shop owners being from different ethnic groups. A score of 1 indicates that every shop owner in the market belongs to a different ethnic group.⁴³ The average diversity score for the markets is 0.44, which indicates that there is a 44% chance

43. The diversity score mirrors what scholars term an “ethnic fractionalization” score. The measure is relatively crude, as scholar Daniel Posner highlights. See Daniel N Posner, “Measuring Ethnic Fractionalization in Africa,” *American Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 4 (2004): 849–863. That said, I use it simply as a heuristic tool to describe the degree of ethnic diversity rather than as a causal mechanism in a statistical model where it becomes more problematic.

that any two shop owners in the sample from each market are from a different ethnic group.

Shop owners—the survey’s target population—are surveyed for a number of reasons: they are generally tied to their shop at a particular location which facilitates more accurate sampling; since they cannot easily relocate to outside the market boundaries, their cooperation decisions are akin to people in most communities who cannot easily leave; and, it provides a defined boundary around which respondents can make estimates about others’ cooperation willingness—an important factor for measuring misperceptions.

Given that, at the outset of the survey, there was little reliable data on shop owners in the markets, the sampling frame—that is, the list from which shop owners were selected to receive the survey—was built from scratch. A Lagos-based cartographic firm was commissioned to map the plazas (i.e., buildings or demarcated courtyards) for each market area. Enumerators then conducted a census by counting the number and type of shop in each plaza as well as gathering data on the area boy and security presence at each plaza. From this sampling frame, shops were randomly selected for the owner of the selected shop to be approached.⁴⁴

Ninety-one percent of respondents that interviewers were able to locate and make initial contact with partook in the survey. A number of steps were taken to limit nonresponse error, which protects against a convenience sample of easily-available respondents. If a shop owner could not be located on the first visit given that, say, the shop was closed, an interviewer would visit the shop at a later time. Only if an assigned shop owner could not be located after multiple follow-ups or declined to be surveyed would a new randomly-selected shop owner be approached to take the survey.⁴⁵ Shop owners received a N500 (\$1.50) mobile service recharge card to incen-

44. The ECS sampling strategy was originally developed for the Lagos Trader Project, founded by Shelby Grossman and Meredith Startz.

45. If a physical shop was shared with another business, the owner of that business was also sampled. If the shop had multiple branches the manager of the shop was interviewed.

tivize participation, and survey length was under an hour, lasting fifty-five minutes on average.

A total of 1,025 respondents completed the survey. The sample included respondents from both a range of ethnic categories with 57% of the sample, Lagos's dominant group Yoruba, 40% Igbo, and the remaining 3% from other ethnic categories. The sample skewed female with 62% of respondents identifying as women, which is consistent with prior expectations given the large number of female shop owners in the markets.

The demographic data in Table 6.2 provides a picture of the background of the respondents. Although the sample was restricted to shop owners, their demographic diversity allows for analyzing cooperation decisions from individuals with varying ethnic, religious, and educational backgrounds, among other traits. Based on the modal value for each variable, the typical shop owner has the following profile: a Yoruba female in her thirties, who graduated secondary school and practices Christianity. Residing in Oshodi, the largest of the sample market areas, she runs a small shop—likely selling textiles—without other employees.

Collecting quality data in Lagos comes with significant challenges. To maximize data quality, the ECS co-principal investigators and I recruited, trained, and managed the interviewers. I maintained a daily presence in the market to manage the surveying, conduct mini-trainings, and meet with respondents who sought more background on the survey. I also monitored the collected data daily and held individual trainings with interviewers.⁴⁶ An internal ECS auditor followed up with selected respondents to validate that the surveys took place.

46. Roughly eighteen interviewers, who administered the survey to respondents, were chosen from a pool of 376 applicants—the high number of applicants allowed for selecting well-qualified interviewers.

Table 6.2: Survey Respondent Demographics

Variable	Value	N	%	\sum %
GENDER	Female	635	62.0	62.0
	Male	390	38.0	100.0
	<i>All</i>	1,025	100.0	
AGE	18-30	221	21.6	21.6
	31-40	363	35.5	57.1
	41-50	223	21.8	78.9
	51-60	166	16.2	95.1
	Over 60	50	4.9	100.0
	<i>All</i>	1,023	100.0	
EDUCATION	Primary or less	170	16.6	16.6
	Secondary	508	49.6	66.2
	Vocational	194	18.9	85.2
	University	138	13.5	98.6
	Post-graduate	14	1.4	100.0
	<i>All</i>	1,024	100.0	
EMPLOYEES	0	836	81.6	81.6
	1	83	8.1	89.7
	2	45	4.4	94.0
	3	18	1.8	95.8
	More than 3	43	4.2	100.0
	<i>All</i>	1,025	100.0	
RELIGION	Christian	673	65.7	65.7
	Muslim	339	33.1	98.7
	Other	13	1.3	100.0
	<i>All</i>	1,025	100.0	
ETHNICITY	Yoruba	585	57.1	57.1
	Igbo	408	39.8	96.9
	Other	32	3.1	100.0
	<i>All</i>	1,025	100.0	
MARKET	Agege	136	13.3	13.3
	Bariga	202	19.7	33.0
	Mushin	252	24.6	57.6
	Oshodi	435	42.4	100.0
	<i>All</i>	1,025	100.0	

The typical shop owner in the ECS sample is female and Yoruba, which is expected given the demographics of Lagos's markets. All demographics variables shown are used as covariates.

6.2.3 Measurement and Analysis

In this chapter, I evaluate the the cycle of silence hypotheses presented in Chapter 3 (see Table 3.1). With respect to *Hypothesis 1a*, measuring risk inflation requires estimating perceived versus estimated actual retaliation rates. To do so, respondents first indicate the proportion of shop owners in their market area that they judge are attacked as a result of sharing information. The interviewer lays out ten wooden blocks and delivers the question:⁴⁷

RETALIATION (PERCEIVED): [L]et's say the ten blocks are shop owners in [your market area] that talked to the police [about area boys]. Of them, how many, if any, would the boys attack for doing so?

To estimate the actual retaliation rate, respondents indicate if they have shared information about area boys in the past, and then those who have done so indicate if the area boys retaliated against them:

RETALIATION (ESTIMATED ACTUAL): [Which, if any, of] these things happened to you, because you talked to the police about area boys: ...The area boys attacked you.

From there, calculating whether or not there is a misperception is straightforward. It is the difference between the mean perceived retaliation likelihood and the actual retaliation rate as reported by cooperators.

With respect to *Hypothesis 1b*, for estimating perceived versus actual community cooperation, the process is essentially identical. Respondents indicate the proportion of shop owners in their market area that they perceive would share at least a little information upon witnessing the area boy clash:

47. The interviewer uses blocks to help the respondent visualize proportions.

COMMUNITY COOPERATION (PERCEIVED): [These] ten blocks represent shop owners [in your market area] who saw [an area boy clash]. How many, if any, would be willing to say at least a little of what they saw to the police, in your opinion?

Respondents also answer how much if any information they would share:

COMMUNITY COOPERATION (ESTIMATED ACTUAL): Assume that you see a clash, how much, if any, would you say to the police?

To calculate whether or not a misperception exists is a matter of taking the difference between, on the one hand, the mean proportion of the community perceived willing to share information and, on the other hand, the percent of respondents who indicate that they would share information.

For *Hypothesis 2*, which posits that fear increases perceived retaliation bias, I use a four-point measure of shopkeepers' perceived likelihood of victimization during election time.⁴⁸ The election proxy is a useful measure, because area boys are the primary perpetrators of violence during this period. For the analysis, I conduct a simple multivariate regression with the fear measure—logged for interpretability—and respondents' bias with respect to retaliation likelihood. The model controls include gender, age, education, number of employees in one's shop (a proxy for income), religion, and ethnicity as well as market fixed effects.⁴⁹

Importantly, this model is not just evaluating the effect of fear on perceived retaliation likelihood, but rather the effect on perceived overestimation of retaliation likelihood, which helps explain fear's role in inflating risk.

For *Hypothesis 3a* and *Hypothesis 3b*, I estimate the loss in cooperation willingness due to, respectively, risk inflation and cooperation underestimation. To do so, I

48. The survey questions reads, "During elections, how much do you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?" The response options include "not at all," "a little," "somewhat," and "a lot."

49. I use robust standard errors clustered at the plaza level.

estimate the effect of percentage point changes in perceived retaliation likelihood and perceived community cooperation will using a multivariate regression. For the cooperation will outcome, surveyed shopkeepers indicate how much if any information they would provide to the police after witnessing a hypothetical area boy fight. The response options are a four-point scale with the options for the amount of information including “none,” “a little,” “some,” or “everything.”

For ease of interpretation, I log the responses for cooperation will (and multiply them by 100), so they can be considered the percent decrease or increase in the amount of information shared given a one unit change in the independent variables. The model controls for the same variables as used in the fear model in *Hypothesis 2*. With that estimate in hand, I then calculate the loss in the amount of information respondents on average indicate that they would share with the police using the estimates of retaliation overestimation and cooperation will underestimation. Table 6.3 shows the distribution of responses for cooperation will.

6.3. RESULTS: LAGOS’S CYCLES OF SILENCE

The results are in line with the cycle of silence hypotheses as laid out in Chapter 3 (see Table 3.1). Respondents on average overestimate the likelihood that cooperators face retaliation (*Hypothesis 1a*) and underestimate the willingness of others in their market to cooperate with the police (*Hypothesis 1b*). A strong association between fear of violence and retaliation overestimation suggests that the collective misperceptions are at least in part driven by the emotion of fear (*Hypothesis 2*). The end result is that, according to the study’s estimates, shopkeepers are less willing to share information than they would be if they had awarenesses of the estimated actual retaliation likelihood (*Hypothesis 3a*) and the estimated actual community cooperation will (*Hypothesis 3b*).

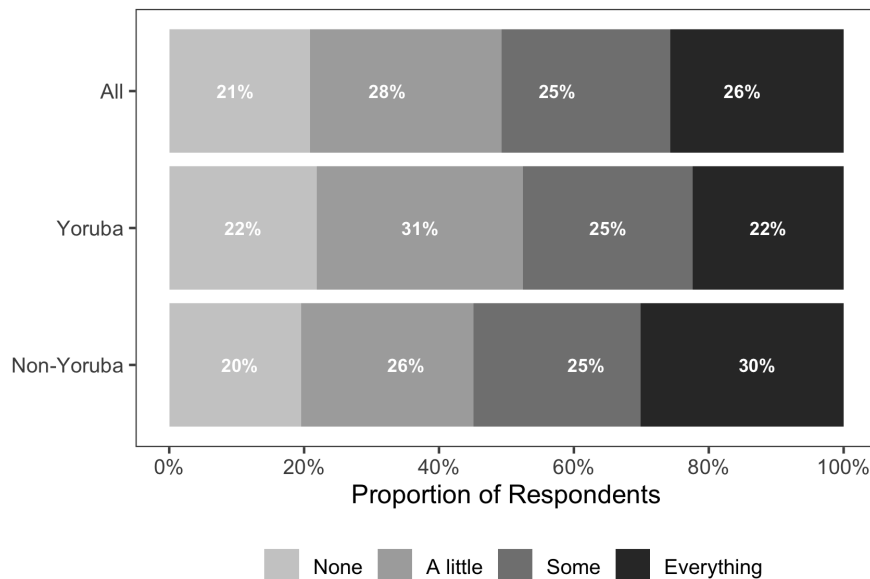


Figure 6.3: Respondent Cooperation Will

There is significant variation in shopkeepers' willingness to share information with the police for both Yoruba and non-Yoruba respondents. This variable is used at the outcome to estimate the level of information loss due to risk inflation and norm deflation, as stated in *Hypothesis 3a* and *Hypothesis 3b* respectively.

6.3.1 Inflating Risk

Consistent with *Hypothesis 1a*, the perceived likelihood of an attack against a cooperator far exceeds its estimated actual likelihood. Figure 6.4 displays the distribution of perceived retaliation likelihood as well as the actual reported rate of retaliation. On average, respondents perceive that area boys attacked 47% ($SE = 1.19\%$) of those who shared information with the police while only 6% ($SE = 2.56\%$) of cooperators reported retaliation. The result is a 41 percentage point (pp) overestimation.⁵⁰

The large magnitude of the risk inflation gives confidence that the estimate is not simply an artifact of the survey design or statistical analysis. Indeed, it could be argued that even the estimated actual retaliation rate of 6% is higher than the actual levels of retaliation. A single retaliation incident significantly increases the

⁵⁰ The difference in the estimates is statistically significant with a p-value below 0.01, as calculated using Welch's t-test.

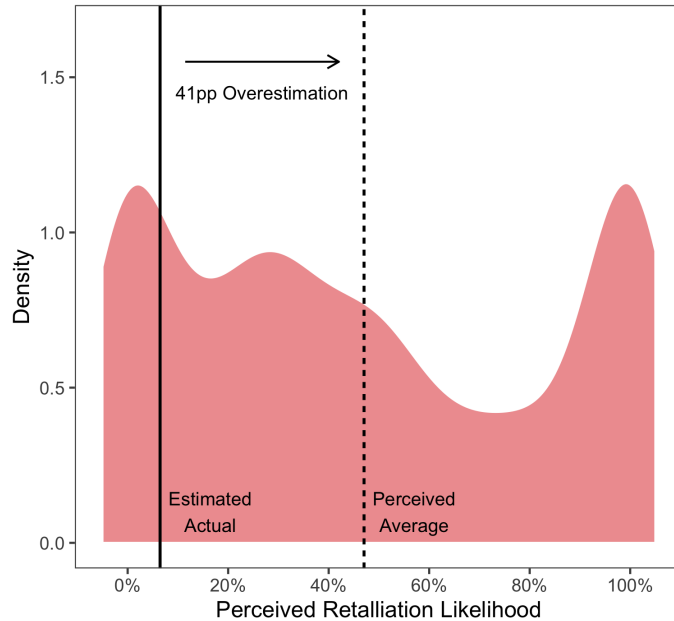


Figure 6.4: Retaliation Overestimation

Shopkeepers overestimate the likelihood of retaliation against cooperators who share information with the police about area boys by 41pp. This plot shows the distribution of respondent perceptions of retaliation likelihood, which on average are 47% as represented by the dashed line. This perception compares with an estimated actual retaliation rate of 6% as represented by the solid line.

overall retaliation rate given that of the 1,025 survey respondents ninety-three indicated talking to the police about area boys and six cooperators reported retaliation incidents. Thus, a single reported retaliation incident increases the retaliation rate by more than 1pp.

A census of all cooperators likely would reveal a lower retaliation rate, but nonetheless I use the 6% rate to measure overestimation given that it is the most conservative estimate relative to my hypothesis.

For the purposes of this study, it is most important to consider ways in which the survey fails to capture a higher retaliation rate than reported. Failing to do so would potentially mean that the estimated respondent retaliation overestimation does not exist. I discuss two plausible validity threats in this regard: respondent

underreporting of retaliation and undercoverage of retaliation victims in the sampling frame.

To protect against retaliation underreporting, the survey includes a list experiment. The list experiment, also known as the item count technique, is a common method used for sensitive topics, which alleviates—albeit, does not eliminate—this problem by allowing respondents to indicate retaliation indirectly.⁵¹ The list experiment, in short, asks respondents to indicate the number of items that apply to them from a list rather than specifying particular items. This way the respondent, in most cases, is not revealing whether or not they faced retaliation.

The list question shows only a modest uptick in the reported retaliation rate, suggesting that respondents did not underreport in the direct question. With the direct question, 6.5% ($SE = 2.56\%$) of respondents reported retaliation compared to 7.5% ($SE = 2.91\%$) of respondents with the list question.⁵²

Undercoverage—that is, the survey sample failing to include shop owners in the target population—also presents a potential problem. The most extreme case of undercoverage would be that shop owners were killed in retaliatory attacks by area boys, which would artificially deflate the survey estimate of actual retaliation. Area boys do attempt to retaliate against cooperators, but the likelihood that a significant number of retaliatory killings of shopkeepers occurred in the market areas appears low. Interviews with the Divisional Police Officers (DPO), the highest ranking police officers in each market area, and interviews with dozens of citizens did not uncover any substantiated instances of retaliatory killings of shopkeepers.

The retaliatory incidents that do occur generally stop short of homicide. They usually involve area boys destroying property and in the most severe cases a physical

51. Blair and Imai, “Statistical Analysis of List Experiments.”

52. List experiments can be sensitive to design effects—that is, the treatment status of the list changes the response to non-sensitive items. The p-value for prior cooperation and retaliation is 1.00 and 0.38 respectively, suggesting the absence of a design effect. See Kosuke Imai, “Multivariate Regression Analysis for the Item Count Technique,” *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 106, no. 494 (2011): 407–416.

assault. A police officer described a case of retaliation where a woman asked a group of area boys fighting in front her kiosk to take the dispute elsewhere. When they refused, she called the police, who arrested those fighting. But after receiving bail, they boys came back and destroyed her kiosk.⁵³ In another incident, a woman recounted that, after cooperating with the police, area boys retaliated by defecating in her shop's pepper-grinding machine.⁵⁴

The climate of fear created by area boy violence, and amplified through rumors, contributes to the risk inflation. Consistent with *Hypothesis 2*, respondents who have a fear of violence are more likely to overestimate retaliation likelihood. Figure 6.5a shows that, for every 10% increase in a respondent's fear of being attacked during elections, the respondent overestimates retaliation by an additional 0.8pp.⁵⁵ Figure 6.5b shows the predicted probability of how fear of crime increases the retaliation overestimation at various levels of fear. In all, that fear is correlated with overestimation—not just baseline retaliation likelihood—suggests that an emotional response is contributing to the overestimation.

Shopkeepers express this fear vividly. Demonstrating with a stabbing motion into his shoulder, a shopkeeper emphasizes that, if he talked to the police, the area boy crew would “*go do me bad something (will hurt me)*.”⁵⁶ Or, in the words of one shopkeeper, “There is not security in Nigeria,” he says, “You can say something [to the police] here and the boys will attack you at the next bus stop.”⁵⁷ Similarly another shopkeeper says, “I see nothing wrong with [cooperating]. It is just out of fear, I haven't spoken to the police in the past out of fear of being attacked by the hoodlums.”⁵⁸

53. LOS788 2018.

54. LOS191 2018.

55. The average fear level is 1.2 on the four-point scale between 0 and 3, which means that a 10% increase represents a substantially significant amount relative to the baseline. The average of 1.2 maps to respondents indicating that they “rarely” and “sometimes” fear being hit by a stray bullet.

56. LOS582 2018.

57. LOS829 2018.

58. LOS080 2018.

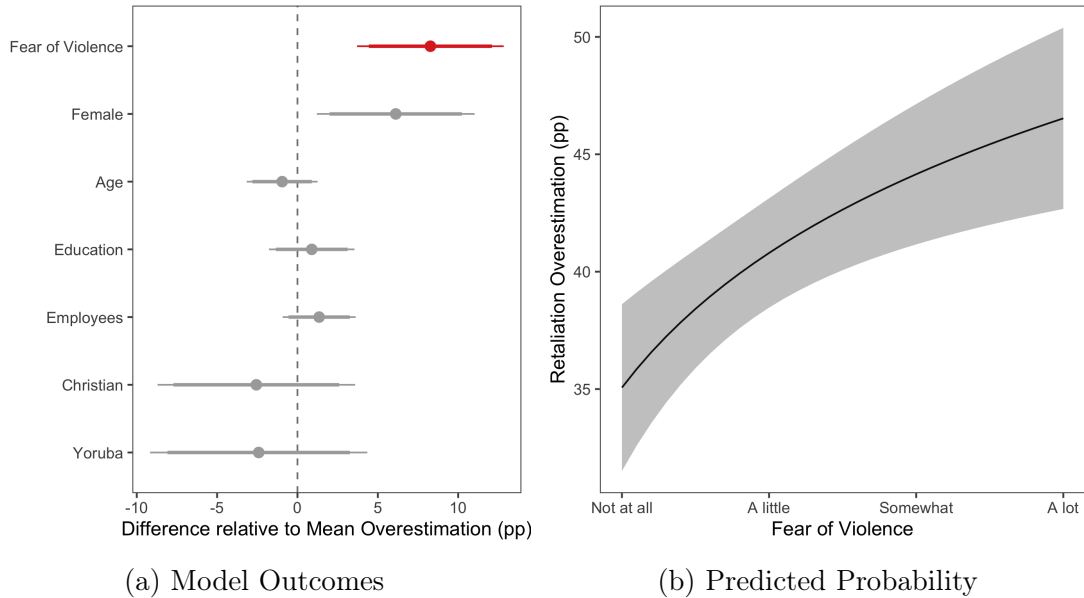


Figure 6.5: Fear and Retaliation Overestimation

Fear of crime is strongly correlated with risk inflation. Fear of being attacked during election time is associated with retaliation overestimation. In other words, respondents that have greater fear of area boy violence tend to overestimate the likelihood that the area boys engage in retaliation by a greater extent than those with less fear. In addition to the control variables, the model also includes market fixed effects. The predicted probability shows the average retaliation overestimation with all control variables set to their mean value.

Retaliation incidents, public violence, and rumors feed into the fear that in turn amplifies the perceived risk of cooperating.

High-profile retaliation incidents, what I refer to as “focal point” incidents, are rare but might occur. When they happen in Lagos, they are directed at those within the area boy crews who are believed to have cooperated with the police rather than directed at citizens. To maximize the effect of these incidents, the attacks are often brutal, akin to terrorism, and meant to signal harsh consequences for others in area boy crews that are considering cooperation. The rarity of such incidents, however, suggests that they cannot fully explain the risk inflation.

Often, focal point retaliation incidents are unnecessary given that the area boys’ public violence instills fear. As a betting parlor clerk puts it, “Their violent way of life, the acts of violence, [...]that is what scares people away from them.”⁵⁹ Even

59. LOS435 2018.

though area boy crews generally target each other during fights rather than citizens, the fighting signals to observers that they are capable of committing violence broadly. Area boys are, in some respects, seen as embodying the violence in the way they act. Describing area boy mannerisms, a textiles shop owner puts it this way: “They may not attack [shopkeepers] but their looks may scare people. Their facial expressions and body language speak volume[s].”⁶⁰

Rumors about fights, which in the words of a textiles trader “spread like wild-fire,” boost violence’s fear-inducing effect.⁶¹ A shopkeeper describes how the violence becomes exaggerated as it passed through social networks:

Somebody can easily come up on their own to say ‘they are fighting’ instead of telling that it’s only a little fight between two boys. Then the person that hears that calls their friends and say ‘the fighting has started in Bariga.’ I will get calls like that but I don’t see any fighting happening.⁶²

If this shopkeeper could not verify that the veracity of rumor, the prudent course in his case—like others who hear rumors—would be to assume it true and incorporate it into his risk calculus.

There is a sense among the non-Yoruba ethnic groups that the rumors are associated with Yorubas in particular. A Hausa and an Igbo shopkeeper, respectively, emphasize this view:

Yoruba people spread rumors well. Area boys dey break bottle, they injure each other, but them no dey too kill. But people fit say na like 50 people don die. Na just rumor. (Yorubas spread a lot of rumors. Area boys break bottles and injure each other, but they usually don’t kill. But Yorubas

60. LOS023 2018.

61. LOS310 2018.

62. LOS023 2018.

will say like 50 people have died. It's just rumors.)⁶³

I heard there was a big fight at the local government. It was just a little thing that was settled by the police immediately but the news was carried wrongly and blown out of proportion. People locked up shop and it was when they got home they heard there was no fight. Yoruba people were screaming and running from Bolade that the area boys were fighting with guns and machetes. Yoruba people are very loud.⁶⁴

Despite this perception, rumors are common across all of the city's major ethnic groups. And considering that Yorubas on average *more* accurately judge retaliation likelihood (see Figure 6.5a), it suggests that they are not particularly susceptible to the rumors.

6.3.2 Forcing Silence

The risk inflation pushes Lagosians who are willing to share information with the police to hide their disposition from others in their community. This hiding of cooperation willingness creates a perception that cooperation norms are lower than they in fact are. This dynamic is evidenced by the fact that Lagosians underestimate others' willingness to come forward. Respondents on average perceive that 38% ($SE = 0.95\%$) of shop owners in their market area would provide at least a little information after witnessing an area boy clash. But 79% ($SE = 1.27\%$) of the shop owners surveyed indicate that they would share at least a little information. The result is a 41pp underestimation of community cooperation.⁶⁵

The qualitative evidence illustrates how Lagosians' hiding their cooperation will

63. LOS709 2018.

64. LOS310 2018.

65. The difference in the estimates is statistically significant with a p-value below 0.01, as calculated using Welch's t-test.

contributes to the underestimation. When Lagosians want to encourage someone else with information to come forward, for example, they do so behind closed doors. "The encouragement," a shop owner emphasizes, "happens privately."⁶⁶ And, those that do come forward hide that they share information so few others know of their behavior. "Of course, [people] will appreciate you but [...] you don't need to let anybody know that you are the one that called the police," explains a liquor store owner.⁶⁷

When cooperators are known to others in the community, praise for coming forward also happens out of public view. An electronics peddler, who has reported area boy harassment on behalf of others, puts it this way: the victims "just thank me privately. Because they know that if I am hailed [i.e., praised] publicly they may find out that I was the person who talked to the police."⁶⁸

I evaluate the potential for illusory superiority making the cooperation underestimation appear greater than it is. As discussed in Chapter 4, illusory superiority, in essence, is a "cheap talk" problem in which people tend to ascribe higher levels of a perceived positive quality to themselves relative to others.⁶⁹ To evaluate this proposition, it is useful to compare respondents' reported willingness to cooperate to their prior cooperation behavior. If respondents who say they would cooperate in fact have cooperated more in the past, it indicates that cooperation will is associated with actual cooperation.

And, indeed, respondents who stated a willingness to cooperate are more than ten times likelier to have indicated that they cooperated in the past.⁷⁰ This comparison does not eliminate the possibility of "cheap talk" altogether, but does provide suggestive evidence that those saying they would cooperate are indeed willing to do

66. LOS435 2018.

67. LOS957 2018.

68. LOS250 2018.

69. Hoorens, "Self-enhancement and Superiority Biases in Social Comparison."

70. According to the results, 11% of those who stated a willingness to cooperate also reported cooperating in the past whereas less than 1% of those who said they are not willing to cooperate indicated prior cooperation.

so.

Having established the inflation of risk and deflation of cooperation norms, the next analytical task is to evaluate whether or not these factors influence respondents' willingness to share information with the police. If they do limit information-sharing, it contributes to the NPF's inability to address area boy violence. The persistence of the violence in turn codifies the fear among citizens which further amplifies the risk inflation. And so the cycle of silence would continue.

6.3.3 Constraining Cooperation

Turning to *Hypothesis 3a* and *Hypothesis 3b*, I estimate the association between perceived retaliation likelihood and respondents' willingness to share information as well as the association between perceived community cooperation norms and their willingness to share information. I use these estimates to evaluate the magnitude of the loss in information-sharing resulting from the collective misperceptions. The magnitude of the loss from risk inflation is the difference between the predicted the level of shopkeepers' information-sharing at the perceived retaliation likelihood and the actual estimated retaliation likelihood. The magnitude of the loss from norm deflation is the difference between the predicted the level of shopkeepers' information-sharing at the perceived community cooperation will and the actual estimated community cooperation will.

Table 6.3 shows the estimates of changes in information-sharing given perceived retaliation likelihood and community cooperation. As indicated by Model 1, if respondents perceive a 10pp increase in retaliation likelihood, they are willing to share roughly 2% less information with the police. If respondents perceive a 10pp increase in the proportion of the community willing to cooperate, they are willing share approximately 5% more information.⁷¹

71. These percent changes are substantial considering that the mean amount of information citizens provide is 1.6 on a four-point scale from 0 to 3. That is between the second ("a little") and third

Table 6.3: Collective Misperceptions and Cooperation Will

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Change in Info Amount (%)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Retaliation	-2.08*** (0.43)	-3.34*** (0.44)	
Community Coop.	5.43*** (0.52)		6.19*** (0.47)
Constant	63.08*** (7.57)	88.54*** (7.52)	52.70*** (7.22)
Robust SEs	✓	✓	✓
Demographic Controls	✓	✓	✓
Market Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓
Plaza Cluster SEs	✓	✓	✓
Observations	977	986	1002
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

Standardized coefficients, shown in Figure 6.6, indicate that retaliation likelihood and community cooperation will are significantly more influential in respondents' willingness to share information than demographic variables. The effects, which are measured in standard deviations (SDs), reveal the relative magnitude of the independent variables' associations with willingness to cooperate. The results show that women are less likely to share information than men while those with higher education levels are more likely to be willing to share information.⁷² Above all, perceived retaliation likelihood and community cooperation will are more strongly associated with willingness to share information than any demographic variable.

Using Model 1 in Table 6.3, I calculate the difference between, on the one hand, ("some") levels on the question's four-point scale from the first level ("none") and the fourth level ("everything"). The relatively high baseline from which the increase in information occurs makes the result more substantial than if the mean amount of information was low. A low baseline would mean that a small increase in information-sharing results in a misleadingly high percent change.

72. There may be cultural factors that explain more limited cooperation from women. Scholars Johnson Ayodele and Adeyinka Aderino interviewed a women from Lagos who describes the dynamic: "In most homes, male household heads will consider it an affront for their wives to report crimes for which they had not given their tacit prior approval to the police." See Ayodele and Aderinto, "Nature of Crime and Crime Reporting of Victims in Lagos, Nigeria," p. 3.

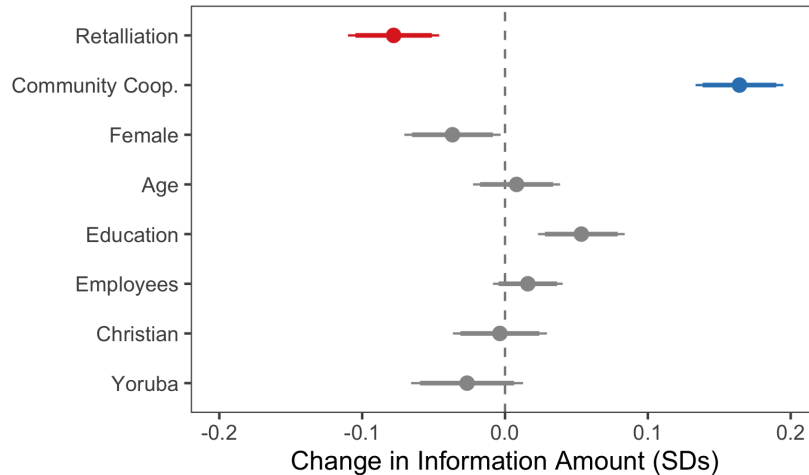


Figure 6.6: Standardized Coefficients on Cooperation Will

Perceived retaliation likelihood and community cooperation will show stronger effects relative to the demographic features on respondents' willingness to cooperate with the police. The effects are represented in standard deviations (SDs).

the predicted amount of information a respondent would share at the average perceived level of retaliation likelihood and community cooperation will, and on the other hand, the predicted amount of information-sharing at the estimated actual level of retaliation and community cooperation will.⁷³

Figure 6.7 represents the estimated information information loss. On average, shopkeepers are willing to share around 30% less information relative to the amount they would share if they perceived the actual levels of retaliation and community cooperation. More specifically, the average respondent shares 8% less information than they would have if they perceived the estimated actual retaliation likelihood (see Figure 6.7a). Respondents share 22% less information than they would have if they perceived the estimated actual community cooperation will (see Figure 6.7b).

⁷³. All model covariates are set to their mean values.

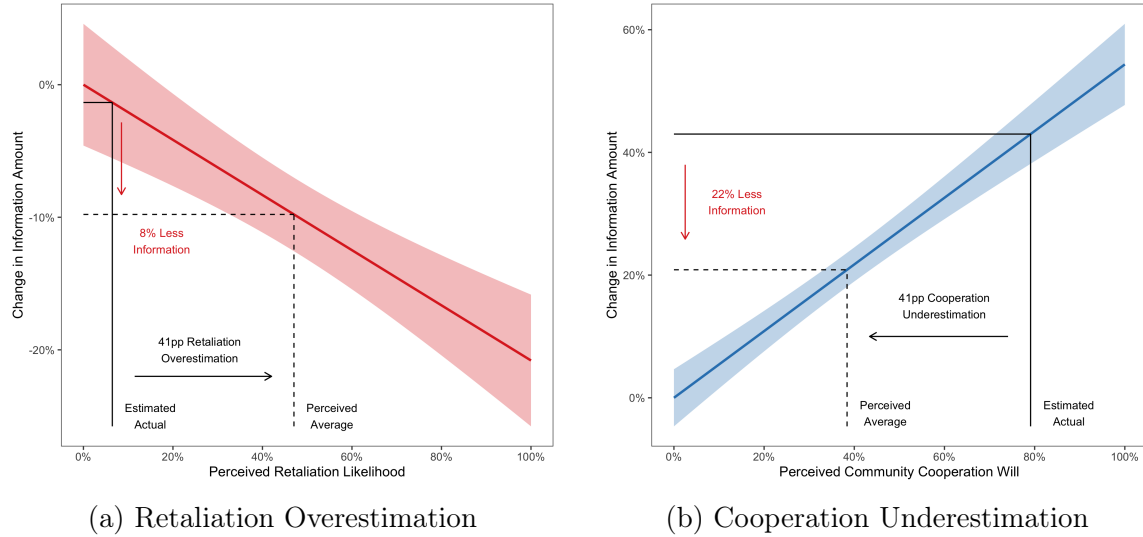


Figure 6.7: Collective Misperceptions and Cooperation Will

Collective misperceptions reduce information-sharing. The plots show the predicted percent change in information-sharing based on Model 1 in Table 6.3 with all covariates set to mean values.

6.4. ALTERNATIVE THEORY: SONS OF THE SOIL?

In contrast to cycle of silence theory, code of silence theory—discussed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.3)—predicts that Lagos’s shopkeepers would hold back information from the police voluntarily. The theory would posit, in this context, that shopkeepers refraining from cooperation with the police is less about fear of area boy violence and more about the area boys garnering support from the shopkeepers.

If the theory held in Lagos, one would expect to see area boys garnering support by being seen as advancing the markets’ interests as well as providing security and economic benefits. From this perspective, shopkeepers’ sharing information with the police would jeopardize those benefits, so Lagosians hold back what they see and know.

The evidence, however, contradicts the code of silence theory in the context of Lagos’s markets. Indeed, shopkeepers hold antipathy toward, rather than support

for, the area boy crews given that the crews are not embedded socially in the markets, are unreliable security providers, and extort shopkeepers.

6.4.1 Lack of Embeddedness

Area boys attempt to position themselves as advocates for the markets and neighborhoods where they reside, but Lagosians tend to view them as outsiders, transient, and criminal.

Area boy crews try to identify geographically with a location by the way they name their crews. A group might call themselves, for example, “The Brown Street Boys.” In this way, they are signaling an embeddedness with the area’s social interests. Often, however, area boys come from other parts of Lagos state or Nigeria and establish only limited ties in the markets where they reside; thus, Lagosians consider many of the crews to be transient. “They don’t have house, they don’t have wife,” as one shopkeeper emphasizes, “They burn down your shop and go to next local government.”⁷⁴

A type of area boy crew known as *Omo Onile* (sons of the soil), which uses claims of land rights to extort citizens, most explicitly attempts to tie their identity to communities. A *Reuters* reporter recounts how an area boy crew extorted a newly-wed husband attempting construct a house for his family:

A group of young men stormed his land and demanded cash to leave peacefully. The same men and other gangs visited his land several times and disrupted the building work, forcing Egharevba, an oil and gas executive, to pay them off with one million naira (\$3,175) over the course of a year in order to finish the construction.⁷⁵

74. LOS829 2018.

75. Eromo Egbejule, “Nigeria gets tough with marauding ‘Sons of the Soil’ in search of land to seize,” *Reuters*, August 24, 2016, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-nigeria-landrights-idUKKCN10Z16C>.

Omo Onile, as the article emphasizes, “roam” Lagos, suggesting that they are not tied to any particular area. In some cases, citizens involved in land disputes bring in *Omo Onile* crews from outside the community to strengthen their hands in the disputes.

For those crews with genuine ties to the community where they reside, often their criminal activity outweighs any mantle they might claim to being advocates for the community, in the minds of most residents. Indeed, as Owumi found in one of the earliest known studies of area boys, the crews’ use of local names might be “suggestive of societal baptism,” but his survey of residents in Lagos and the city of Ibadan reveals that the vast majority of respondents (specifically, 77%) see them as criminals.⁷⁶

Moreover, even when area boy crews do successfully embed themselves in communities, as LeBas notes, they can become co-opted into broader political competition that serves the interests of national-level political figures and parties.⁷⁷ This competition, in the case of Nigerian politics, often manifests itself in committing violence against political rivals. Thus, when community and national-level interests diverge, it pulls area boy crews away from the community socially and politically.

Area boy crews generally do not attempt to, or profess to, advance ethnic causes nor engage in ethnically-chauvinistic behavior, which could plausibly win them support from co-ethnic shopkeepers. The crews’ ethnic composition largely mirror the ethnic composition of the geographic area where they reside. Reflective of Lagos’s demographics, most crews are Yoruba-dominant with Hausa-dominant groups residing in northern Lagos. That said, the crews are not exclusive to the dominant ethnic group, which prevents the crews from taking on an ethnic orientation. An Igbo might join a Yoruba crew and potentially even lead the crew.⁷⁸

76. Owumi, “New Trends and Attitudes toward Crime: The Phenomenon of Area Boys in Nigeria.”

77. LeBas, “Violence and Urban Order in Nairobi, Kenya and Lagos, Nigeria.”

78. LOS957 2018. In such cases, the Igbo area boy would likely have to assimilate in some respects by adopting Yoruba mannerism and language.

6.4.2 Unreliable Security Providers

Providing order and security is one way in which area boys could garner support from the community. Thus, it could be that the Lagosians believe, despite the damage from the fighting, the area boys from their community protect them from outside area boy crews. *Our* area boys are good and *their* boys are bad, the sentiment might go. Area boys, however, appear to undermine security more than provide it due to the violence that their criminal activity generates and their unreliability when tapped as security providers.

For one, at its most severe, the violence between area boys crews leads to the death of innocent citizens. A textiles trader recounts one such incident:

The area boys been dey drag garage where them dey load bus. Them shoot one woman. The area boys were using juju so the bullets no enter them. The woman been dey try run for safety but bullet hit her. The woman been die. (The area boys went to a motorpark and shot a woman. The area boys were protected with voodoo, so the bullets did not hit them.

The woman tried to run for safety but was hit and died.)⁷⁹

It is difficult to verify the shopkeeper's account, but stray bullets killing bystanders during street battles have been reported in Nigerian media sources, suggesting that it does happen.⁸⁰

Shopkeepers also see the area boys as unreliable security providers, because they either do too little enforcement or too much enforcement.

A shopkeeper, who was a market official for his building, describes a case where area boys failed to provide security despite being paid to do so. He recounts that area boys approached him claiming that they were protecting his building's stores, but as

79. LOS709 2018.

80. Udom, "Nigeria."

the shopkeeper tells it, “they never stayed there one night.” When the area boys came for their payment, he resisted. Speaking metaphorically, he told them, “I do not pay someone to sweep the floor that does not sweep the floor.” Ultimately, however, the shops in his building relented and they decided to make regular payments.⁸¹ Despite doing so, a store in the building was burglarized by, the shopkeeper suspects, the same area boys they were paying for protection.⁸²

For area boys that do enforce security, a concern remains that they “*go do more than* (take things too far)” in their enforcement.⁸³ Two shopkeepers characterize this concern:

I don’t call area boys if I’m having problems, because they will complicate issues. Maybe a customer doesn’t want to pay me. I call the boys and they will beat him and take his phone, and I have another set of problems.⁸⁴

If there is a case where you have a problem with somebody and you go to call the area boys, they will just come and destroy things. [...]When you call area boys, once they arrive they may not even care to know what happened exactly; if they beat me and I die, no matter the offense I committed previously, [the person who hired them] will have a murder case hovering around [their] head.⁸⁵

In some sense, area boys in these cases are “effective” security providers, because they are not constrained by laws. But citizens believe that this lack of legal constraints can lead to unintended consequences, often bringing greater insecurity.

81. A female shop owner was designated to collect a fee from each owners in the building and hand it over to the boys on a regular basis. This process prevented the boys approaching each shopkeeper in the building, which would create an even more uncomfortable environment.

82. LOS828 2018.

83. LOS582 2018.

84. LOS250 2018.

85. LOS829 2018.

In addition to area boys' unreliability, Lagosians see them as less legitimate security providers than the police. Lagosians appear to embrace the Weberian notion that the police have a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, despite the NPF's significant shortfalls that I discuss in Chapter 7. This recognition makes citizens disinclined to use area boys as instruments of law and order, even if they are reliable. It is not, in the words of one shopkeeper, "legalized" to use area boys or other groups.⁸⁶ Many Lagosians concur with the view with three shopkeepers putting it in the following terms:

The boys are not agents of government, and you using the boys, you have gone contrary to the laws of the land. You cannot battle legality with illegality. So, you have to revert back to the police.⁸⁷

If you want to treat the issue in lawful way, you still must use the police. No matter how corrupt they are.⁸⁸

You can't take laws into your hands. Because the government has already given them the power to do policing. It has been their duty.⁸⁹

These shopkeepers and many others see an improved police force, not area boys, as the solution to insecurity in the markets.

6.4.3 Area Boy Extortion

The economic fallout from the violence is a potent disincentive for shopkeepers to protect area boys from the police by voluntarily holding back information. Area boys

86. LOS435 2018.

87. LOS080 2018.

88. LOS435 2018.

89. LOS957 2018.

might take advantage of the chaos created by street battles to loot shops. A Mushin artisan describes how his shop was looted:

They came in with axe and other weapons. When they were approaching, I noticed they were coming close to me and I ran away. They entered my shop, spoiled some of my goods and packed some away. I lost goods worth more than N300,000 [\$850]. They are criminals and there is no justification or whatsoever reason why my shop was targeted. They were having a clash among themselves and used that opportunity to break into my shop.⁹⁰

In addition to looting, muggings too occur amid the chaos of fighting; it is not uncommon for area boys to accost bystanders, stealing their phones and other valuables, as they watch the fighting or attempt to scatter.

Individuals that are not targeted directly for looting or muggings face indirect economic damage. The fighting temporarily chokes the commercial life from the markets. An Oshodi shopkeeper estimates losing N200,000 (\$570) in business from closing during a 2015 street battle. He closed his shop for a day, but in his telling, struggled to convince customers to return.⁹¹ A book seller estimates that it takes roughly one week for commerce to return to normal levels after a major battle.⁹²

Area boys charging shopkeepers “taxes” further disincentivizes citizens from protecting them.

Perhaps the most common tax is charging shopkeepers for allowing goods to be delivered with the area boys claiming that they are managing the delivery process. An electronics peddler describes a typical scheme: his neighbor owns a small kerosene shop, and soon after she receives shipments, the local area boy crew shows up. They come on *okada* (motorcycles) and demand a payment for letting the delivery go

90. LOS829 2018.

91. LOS310 2018.

92. LOS080 2018.

through. They want N1,500 (\$4.30) per tank—a meaningful cut from her profits. With the demand on the table, the owner either *settles* (pays) them or risks having the crew ransack her shop.⁹³

These extortionary practices are common in the markets with the amount collected depending on the size of the delivery: unloading goods from a forty-foot container costs N50,000 (\$140); a *danfo* (minibus) load costs N6,000 (\$17); and, so on. Another shopkeeper, venting frustration with such payments, describes how he faced extortion:

I was trying to offload my *market* (products). They came in a group of three or four, saying *Owo eda?* (Where's the money?) They said bring N9,000 [\$25]. I was arguing with them. They told the *mallams* [the workers who offload the trucks] to stop and they stopped out of fear even though I was the one paying for the services. After much argument, we settled for N6,000 [\$17]. [...]they don't help you offload or anything. That's like an illegal extortion. They don't maintain roads or do anything for the market. The area boys just wake up everyday, get dressed and come to the market to collect money from people. They just walk up and down the market and collect money. If you have a misunderstanding with them and they go and regroup, it might be deadly for you.⁹⁴

Sometimes the area boys will physically block the offloading by, for instance, sitting on the back of the truck until they receive their payment. If that tactic fails, they likely burglarize the noncomplying shop, as one trader emphasizes, “with no traces.”⁹⁵

Area boys also make *ad hoc* requests for payments. Unlike with the taxes, for these payments, they usually drop the pretense of providing a service. These requests generally are to fund *blasts* (parties) during holidays such as Easter and Ramadan or during a special occasion such as a funeral, wedding, or newborn naming ceremony for

93. LOS250 2018.

94. LOS310 2018.

95. LOS562 2018.

one of the area boys or kingpins. “*Baba* (father), we have come for Christmas money. Give us something,” an Oshodi shopkeeper characterizes their approach.⁹⁶ Failing to contribute comes with an implicit threat. An Agege shopkeeper recounts that the chairs in front of her shop were scattered the day after she refused to contribute to a party fund.⁹⁷

Shopkeepers may foster relationships with area boys but doing so is largely for instrumental purposes. The goal is to prevent repercussions and protect themselves rather than the product of genuine friendship sentiments. As a beverage dealer puts it:

It is good to make friends with the boys. If they will fight, they will say *oga* (boss) you need to close early, there be fight tonight. If I don't close early the fight will spoil something in my shop. Sometimes I *dash* (give) them a bottle of [Chelsea Gin], it is like N500 [\$1.40]. Being friends with them is just to collect information from them, that is all. They are not coming to my wedding.⁹⁸

This shopkeeper, on the surface, may appear to be close with the area boys. But the instrumental nature of such relationships means that they do not translate into genuine support that make shopkeepers inclined to protect the crews from the police.

In all, Lagosians do not look to the area boys to provide security in their markets. The communities do not reach their full cooperation potential however in part due to violence-induced collective misperceptions. The inflated risk perception—and the subsequent hiding of cooperation will—significantly limits the amount of information that Lagosians are willing to share with the police. The risk inflation puts police

96. LOS828 2018.

97. LOS763 2018.

98. LOS501 2018.

and community safety advocates at a disadvantage, but this disadvantage is not insurmountable even in difficult contexts like the markets of Lagos. In the next chapter, I test strategies for reversing the cycle of silence in the markets.

Chapter 7

Fighting Fear in Lagos

Police Is Your Friend

Nigeria Police Force slogan

A Lagos electronics peddler recounts reporting area boy harassment only to have it, in his words, “bounce back” on him. His neighbor was building a house, and the local area boy crew demanded a fee to allow the construction in their territory. They came to the construction site, numbering fifty strong he estimates, and stopped concrete from being mixed. The shopkeeper called the police who came and arrested some of the area boys. Within a few days, however, the crew found out he had reported the incident and confronted him. “They were told by the police that I was the person that filed the report, even saying the police officers name I did it with for them to be arrested.”¹

The neighbor ultimately “settled”—that is, paid—the area boys to let him build his house without further harassment, and the electronics peddler went unharmed. Incidents such as this one feed into Lagosians’ concerns that sharing information with the police can be a risky endeavor. Strategies to promote cooperation require addressing the potential risks. Compounding the difficulty of promoting cooperation

1. LOS250 2018.

in Lagos, the strategies must do so in an environment where citizens deeply distrust the police—a distrust that is not necessarily unwarranted.

Chapter 6 laid out how cycles of silence constrain police-citizen cooperation in Lagos. Fear brought on by area boy violence breeds an inflated perception of retaliation risk that hides cooperation norms and accordingly reduces citizens' willingness to come forward. The goal of this chapter is to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies that police and community safety advocates could implement to promote cooperation. I tested these same strategies in Baltimore, an economically-developed city, so testing them also in an economically-developing city like Lagos, provides insight into whether or not they generalize across differing contexts.

Exploring how police and community safety advocates in Lagos can promote cooperation does not necessarily mean that the conditions exist justifying it; I wrestle with the normative implications of promoting cooperation, more broadly, in this study's concluding chapter.

This chapter proceeds in three sections.

Section 7.1 provides background on policing in Lagos, highlighting why *a priori* one would expect that police-citizen cooperation to be unlikely in the city. In particular, Lagosians hold a deep-seated distrust of the police due to perceived corruption and ineffectiveness. I highlight the disparate strategies that the Nigeria Police Force implement to encourage information-sharing, noting that they struggle to reverse the cycle of silence. I also summarize the theoretical foundations of the three strategies tested for promoting cooperation: providing cooperator anonymity, creating awareness of community cooperation norms, and exposing citizens to co-ethnic police officers.

Section 7.2 describes the virtual reality-based survey experiment used to test the strategies experimentally. As the first study to use virtual reality in a large-scale survey experiment, the study provides a proof-of-concept that the technology allows for

testing hypotheses that potentially would be infeasible or unethical to do as real-world interventions—a common limitation with randomized controlled trials on policing. At the same time, the use of virtual reality provides more immersion than traditional survey experiments using text and other means, so they better elicit the real-world emotions of respondents.

Section 7.3, the heart of the chapter, provides the results from the VR vignette. Emphasizing the anonymity of a tip line and creating awareness that others in a community support cooperation boosts information-sharing. Exposing Lagosians to co-ethnic police officers shows mixed results. On average, it does not increase information-sharing but does so for respondents who *ex ante* believe that the police treat their ethnic group fairly.

7.1. BACKGROUND: POLICING IN LAGOS

Policing any urban environment is complex, policing a megacity with more than 13 million people is even more complex. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is the federal government agency tasked with this mission, and the NPF’s hierarchical structure makes policing particularly difficult in Lagos. Unlike the United States, which has largely autonomous municipal police departments, the NPF is directed from Nigeria’s capital, Abuja. The national command directs personnel deployments, determines policing priorities, and controls the budget.²

The NPF’s Lagos state command, like many of its commands across Nigeria, remains chronically underfunded. A low-ranking officer makes around N50,000 (\$140) a month and it is not uncommon for salary disbursements to be delayed.³ Officers struggle to pay for basic supplies such as fuel for vehicles, which they at times pay

2. State governments including Lagos supplement federal policing budget allocations to pay for operational equipment such as armored personnel carriers.

3. See for example Adelani Adepegba, “Policemen protest delayed salaries, say we borrow to eat,” *Punch Newspapers*, July 11, 2017, accessed March 22, 2019, <https://punchng.com/policemen-protest-delayed-salaries-say-we-borrow-to-eat>.

for from their own salaries. Such structural problems with the force are corrosive to morale, ultimately leading to unprofessionalism and corruption among many—albeit, not all—of its officers.

7.1.1 Deep Distrust

The deficiencies of the NPF make Lagos an unlikely place to be able to promote cooperation. Having characteristics of an unlikely case suggests that, if the strategies work in Lagos, they might also work in other developing contexts where distrust of the police also runs deep.⁴ At the same time, despite the distrust, I argue that promoting cooperation is not impossible, because Lagosians see the police as the least bad security provider among the available options.

Many Lagosians indicate their distrust of the NPF when they laugh with indignation at the NPF's motto "Police Is Your Friend." Citizen concerns about the NPF are borne out in cross-country comparisons. Such rankings should be looked at with caution given measurement, conceptualizations, and comparability challenges. Nonetheless, according to a 2016 policing quality index, Nigeria ranked *last* in terms of internal security behind 127 countries including Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.⁵

Collusion between some NPF officers and area boys is a particularly potent source of concern for Lagosians. The collusion limits the NPF's effectiveness and creates a perception that the police would potentially share cooperator identities with area boy crews.

A crucial line of influence runs between Lagos's political "godfathers" and criminal kingpins who are akin to mafia bosses. Godfathers—members of the political

4. Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, April 15, 2005). If the evidence from Lagos supports the hypotheses in a context where it is unlikely to do so one can make what is known as a "Sinatra inference"—if it works in Lagos, it can work elsewhere. See Levy, "Case Studies."

5. *World Internal Security & Police Index 2016*.

establishment from Nigeria's dominant parties, the All People's Congress (APC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP)—work with the kingpins during elections to mobilize area boy crews on their patron's behalf.⁶ The area boys might break up rival political rallies, create mayhem at a party primary, steal or destroy ballot boxes, provide protection for their favored candidates, or in extreme cases, assassinate an opponent.⁷

Lagosians commonly remark that Bola Tinubu, seen as a godfather among godfathers, won the Lagos governorship, because he had “God behind him and the area boys in front of him.”⁸

Given their position with the political establishment, the godfathers also wield influence over the NPF. Godfathers might put pressure on commanders to release politically-allied kingpins and area boys apprehended by the police. Kingpins and area boys also might wield influence over criminal-involved officers—members of the police who collude with area boys, generally in return for a financial stake in their activities.

The distrust dampens citizen propensities to cooperate with the police. Given the nexus between certain state and criminal elements, why would Lagosians share information with the police in the first place? The answer lies in the fact that Lagosians see the police as the least bad option for security provision. They perceive the police to have at least minimal effectiveness, which means that sharing information has the potential to result in community safety improvements. In the words of one shopkeeper, “The politicians use the area boys for war; they use the police for peace.”⁹

6. For more on godfathers, see Omobolaji Ololade Olarinmoye, “Godfathers, political parties and electoral corruption in Nigeria,” *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 2, no. 4 (2008): 66.

7. *A Pre-Election Report and Advisory on Violence in Nigeria's 2015 General Elections* (The National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria, February 13, 2015). Electoral violence is not limited to Nigeria. For a study of electoral violence in India, see Steven I. Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, November 23, 2006).

8. Akinyele, *Nigeria: Contesting for Space, Identity and Security*, p. 163.

9. LOS957 2018.

According to Eko Community Survey (ECS) findings, 78% of respondents indicate that the police arrest area boys involved in violence at least “sometimes.” Although area boys might be released from arrest at the behest of godfathers, their arrest can provide citizens with a short-term respite from the violence. In more mundane cases, the police show a capacity to address issues involving area boys that shopkeepers bring to their attention. A betting parlor clerk in a major Lagos market describes one such scenario:

I call [the Divisional Police Officer] and I went to meet him at the station and they came to arrest one of the guys. I told him everything. One guy comes and disturb my customers and disturb my staff. I told he must stop and continued. He was arrested and now he acts with his senses. He was extorting money. He would play bet and he would not pay.¹⁰

Often, shopkeepers, as this one did, only cooperate with specific officers that they trust. This pattern suggests that Lagosians compartmentalize officers and do not necessarily see them as universally corrupt. Along these lines, an officer notes that those “close to us”—suggesting a degree of trust—are willing to share information.¹¹

Despite their shortcomings, the police generally are seen as better security providers than the main alternatives. As discussed in Chapter 6, shopkeepers do not look to the area boy crews for reliable security provision. Lagos also has active vigilante groups such as the O’odua People’s Congress. However, these groups struggle to maintain their independence. Either the state co-opts them into its security structure, making them auxiliaries to the police, or vigilantes fall into criminality, making them indistinguishable from area boys.

The OPC, for its part, attempted to integrate into the Nigerian security apparatus but were rebuffed.¹² Communities had welcomed the OPC to Lagos at first, but in

10. LOS435 2018.

11. LOS969 2017.

12. LeBas, “Violence and Urban Order in Nairobi, Kenya and Lagos, Nigeria,” p. 355.

time the group became problematic. R.T. Akinyele, a Lagos historian, documents that the same *baale* (traditional leader) who invited the OPC to Oshodi, came to, in the leader's words, "hate" the group and ultimately lobbied the police to dislodge it. Another *baale* explains how the OPC in Oshodi deteriorated as it expanded its ranks:

At first, I hear good report of [the OPC], but when they started allowing drivers and thieves to join them I do not like that. The ones that started the vigilante operation were good people but when they started allowing miscreants to join, things began to change; to the extent that when husband and wife are fighting they will involve the OPC, when two are eating and one feels cheated, they will involve the OPC—they have turned it to something else.¹³

The story of the OPC in Oshodi is illustrative of how they often alienate the communities where they operate. This leaves the Nigeria Police Force, despite its shortcomings, as the least bad option for security provision in the eyes of Lagosians.

7.1.2 Existing Strategies

The NPF attempt to solicit information from citizens. "Policing," as one officer emphasizes, "is everybody's business." That is why the police, he says, "encourage people within the neighborhood to always, when they see something happen, inform the police."¹⁴ As another officer explains, "We beg [citizens]. You should help, police will help you. It is for [the] betterment of society."¹⁵

The NPF has established mechanisms through which citizens can share information. Lagosians can visit a police station, write a letter, call police officers directly, use Lagos state's emergency management number 112, or make a statement at a police-community relations forum.

13. Akinyele, *Nigeria: Contesting for Space, Identity and Security*, p. 159-160.

14. LOS788 2018.

15. LOS682 2017.

Perhaps the most common mechanism through which Lagosians report crime and provide information is to call police officers directly. The heads of police divisions, Divisional Police Officers (DPOs), often publicize their personal mobile phone numbers in and around their divisional headquarters.

The lack of safeguards for protecting cooperator identities is apparent for each mechanism, however. A cooperator could be spotted entering a police station, many of which are in busy sections of the city. An onlooker could witness the cooperation and inform area boys. Similarly, cooperators could be spotted as they leave a letter in an information box at a police station like the one shown in Figure 7.1. As for the 112 call system, many Lagosians are unaware of it, and those that do know about the number are often uncomfortable using it in part given a lack of clarity on whether or not callers can request anonymity.¹⁶



Figure 7.1: Information Box at an NPF Divisional Headquarters

Information boxes are situated around Lagos for citizens to drop off letters. It is unclear if or how frequently the boxes are used by citizens or checked for letters by the police. The boxes do not easily facilitate anonymous communication from citizens.

When calling a DPO or other high-ranking officer, a cooperator could in theory

16. LOS580 2018.

hide their number for outgoing calls on their mobile phones, so it would not appear. Going through these steps increases the burden of cooperating, especially for those with limited technical savvy, which likely deters information-sharing. Moreover, by law all phone numbers in Nigeria must be registered with the owner's identity, so the police could recover the number from the mobile provider.¹⁷

Police recognize that retaliation risk makes citizens hesitant to come forward and attempt to provide reassurance to witnesses. "When they are scared," an officer explains, "we build confidence in them by saying they are safe. People just have that natural fear. It's an old belief."¹⁸ Given the distrust of the police and the lack of anonymous communication channels, such entreaties are likely to have a limited effect on promoting information-sharing.

The Lagos state government has stood up a host of semi-official structures that potentially create awareness of cooperation norms. The most of prominent of these efforts is the Lagos Neighborhood Safety Corps (LNSC). The corps enlists citizens for, among other duties, patrolling and "gathering information about crimes, crime in progress, suspicious activities and crime suspects."¹⁹ Some districts have other state-sanctioned voluntary policing services such as the Voluntary Police Service (VPS), which, similar to the LNSC, enlist community members to conduct patrols and report suspicious activity to the police.²⁰

7.1.3 How to Counter the Cycle of Silence

The strategies derived from cycle of silence emphasize increasing the safety and norms of cooperation. If retaliation risk is an important constraint to citizens coming forward as the theory suggests, by extension, limiting its perceived likelihood should boost

17. LOS828 2018.

18. LOS575 2018.

19. "Lagos Neighborhood Safety Corps (LNSC)," Lagos State Government, 2018, accessed January 5, 2019, <https://lsstf.lagosstate.gov.ng/lagos-neighborhood-safety-corpslmsc>.

20. LOS519 2016.

cooperation. Lagosians want to ensure that cooperation with the police does not, in the words of a shopkeeper, “bounce back” on them.²¹ By preventing area boys from obtaining the identity of cooperators, retaliation becomes less likely. Thus, providing a channel through which Lagosians can share information with the police anonymously is a potentially potent tool for promoting cooperation.

The risk inflation, as argued in Chapter 6, has the follow-on effect of citizens who are willing to cooperate hiding their disposition. Given the potential for retaliation, those that support cooperation remain out of public view, which in turn gives the community little assurance that cooperation is a normative behavior in their community. Thus, community safety advocates might attempt to increase perceived norms by creating awareness that others support cooperation. At first glance, creating cooperation awareness may appear incompatible with providing anonymous channels for information-sharing. However, citizens need not know *who* is willing to cooperate but only that others *are* willing to cooperate.

Exposing citizens to in-group police officers presents a third strategy for promoting cooperation. The theories discussed in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.2) suggest that people are more trusting counterparts from their own ethnic group compared to those from different ethnic groups. Thus, exposure to co-ethnic police officers might increase cooperation will among Lagosians, because among other mechanisms, it renders them more confident that the police will protect cooperator identities.

Despite their promise, these strategies have only been tested a handful of times experimentally if at all. And, they have never been tested experimentally in Lagos prior to this study.

21. LOS829 2018.

7.2. METHOD: VIRTUAL REALITY EXPERIMENT

For the Lagos case, I attempt to simulate citizens witnessing an area boy fight and then deciding whether or not they would share the information about what they saw. Creating scenarios in which respondents witness the activity first-hand presents challenges. Most significantly, it can be logistically or ethically untenable to test strategies experimentally in the real-world. At the same time, survey experiments using text or other traditional mediums often lack immersion; thus, the vignettes might fail to elicit the real-world emotion of respondents.

To test cooperation strategies in an immersive manner, I use a virtual reality (VR) vignette—the first of its kind for a large-scale field survey experiment.

7.2.1 Measurement and Analysis

For the experimental vignette, each respondent views an approximately two-minute scenario using 360° video—a lightweight version of VR. Respondents view a vignette on a mobile phone screen through specialized glasses, as demonstrated in Figure 7.2, allowing them to see video images in any direction. The vignette is from the point-of-view perspective, so the respondent is looking through the eyes of a Lagos shopkeeper.

The vignette has three scenes, which are laid out in Figure 7.3. In the first scene, the shopkeeper stands in her shop and listens to a Lagos radio personality introduce a text message-based crime tip line.²² The second scene shows a street fight among area boys, in which police officers intervene. In the final scene, the market’s Yoruba *iyaloja*—i.e., market association leader, or literally, “market mother”—visits the shop for a brief discussion with the shopkeeper.

To make the vignette realistic, I worked with a Lagos-based production firm. The

²² Interviewers brief the respondents prior to and after viewing the vignette that the tip line is fictional.



Figure 7.2: Virtual Reality in Use

A member of the Eko Community Survey team displays the use of the virtual reality glasses. Virtual reality allows respondents to view video images from all sides, making the experience more immersive than other types of survey experiment media including text, audio, and two-dimensional video.

video was shot in a Lagos market, actors playing the police officers wear actual Nigeria Police Force uniforms, and the radio presenter is a well-known host at a Lagos FM station. Other aspects reflect the real life experiences of shopkeepers. The fight scene, for instance, shows an area boy breaking a glass bottle on the pavement to use as a weapon—a common occurrence during street battles.

This study presents three of four variations embedded into the vignette, as enumerated in Table 7.1, to test each of the three hypothesized cooperation strategies.²³ Each variation has two conditions, making for a 2 x 2 x 2 design. A video is made for each combination of condition, and respondents have an equal chance of receiving any one of the sixteen videos. Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests indicate no statistically significant differences for all comparisons between treatment and control conditions along the demographic controls variables including gender, age, education, number of

23. A fourth variation, presented in a parallel study, looks at the effect of police handling suspects roughly on cooperation willingness.



(a) Scene 1: Radio Program



(b) Scene 2: Area Boy Fight



(c) Scene 3: *Iyaloja* Visit



[View Vignette](#)

Figure 7.3: Experimental Vignette Scenes

The approximately two-minute vignette, which is from a shopkeeper’s point-of-view, includes three scenes. The respondent listens to a radio message introducing a text message tip line, witnesses an area boy fight, and receives a visit from a Yoruba *iyaloja* (“market mother”). Experimentally-varied versions of the vignette were produced for each combination of treatment and control condition. All versions of the vignette can be viewed by scanning the QR code or clicking the “View Vignette” link.

employees, religion, and ethnicity.

In the Anonymity Variation, the radio announcer emphasizes that the tip line being introduced is anonymous. In the control condition, the radio announcer introduces the tip line, but instead of discussing its anonymity, he discusses the importance of hand-washing. For the Awareness Variation, the radio announcer as well as the Yoruba *iyaloja* emphasize that a number people in the markets have been using the tip line. In the control condition, the radio announcer and *iyaloja* revert to the placebo of emphasizing hand-washing. Importantly, they do not identify particular users of

Table 7.1: Experimental Vignette Variations

Variation	Condition	Description
ANONYMITY Radio/Visit Scenes	<i>Treatment</i>	Radio presenter emphasizes that the tip line is anonymous.
	<i>Control</i>	Radio presenter emphasizes the importance of hand-washing.
AWARENESS Radio/Visit Scenes	<i>Treatment</i>	Radio presenter and Yoruba <i>iyaloja</i> emphasize that others have been using the tip line.
	<i>Control</i>	Radio presenter and Yoruba <i>iyaloja</i> emphasize the importance of hand-washing.
IN-GROUP POLICE Fight Scene	<i>Treatment (Yoruba)</i>	Police officer calls out his partner’s name “Adekunle” while responding to fight.
	<i>Treatment (Igbo)</i>	Police officer calls out his partner’s name “Nnamdi” while responding to fight.

The study presents three vignette variations with two conditions each. A combination of each variation was produced. All videos can be viewed online bit.ly/2RlmhHu.

the tip line in order to determine if the awareness has an effect without specifying who the cooperators are—an essential feature to make the strategy viable.

Whereas the first and second variations take place during the radio program and *iyaloja* visit scenes, the In-group Police Variation occurs during the fight scene. This variation randomizes the responding officer’s ethnicity. With one condition, an officer calls out to his partner using a typically Yoruba name “Adekunle”—the treatment for Yoruba respondents. With the other condition, the officer calls out to his partner with a typically Igbo name “Nnamdi”—the treatment for Igbo respondents.

After viewing the vignette, the interviewer hands the respondent the mobile phone used for the survey, which makes the response more confidential than if the respondent answered aloud. On the phone, the respondent selects the amount of information, if any, that they would send via the tip line from a four-level scale ranging from sending “everything” to not sending any information. I log the outcome variable and exponentiate the treatment coefficients in order to interpret the treatment effects as percent changes in the amount of information shared.²⁴ Figure 7.4 shows that the modal response to the experiment is “everything,” which indicates that treatment effects expressed as percent changes are substantially significant. Indeed, with this distribution, it is possible that increases in information-sharing are artificially lower than they would otherwise be given to the potential for ceiling effects.

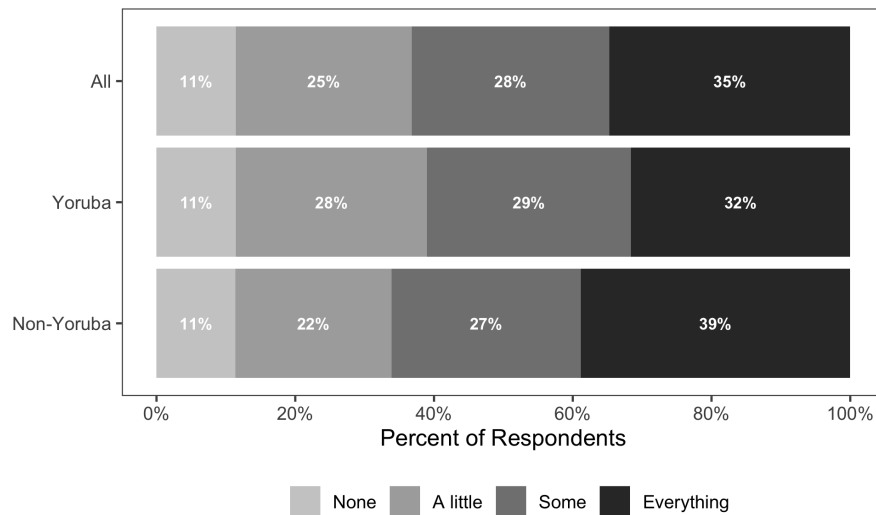


Figure 7.4: Information-sharing Summary Statistics

The modal response for the experiment’s main outcome is “everything.” The high baseline indicates that percent increases in information-sharing from the treatment effects are substantially significant.

The model estimating the treatment effects interacts the treatment variables so the effects assume that other variations are held at their control conditions. In terms

24. It is necessary to exponentiate the coefficients to interpret the treatment effects as percent changes given that the treatments are measured with binary variables and the outcome is log transformed. I use the following formula to calculate the percent changes due to the treatment effect: $100 * (\exp(\beta_{treatment}) - 1)$.

of covariates, the model uses a similar specification as done for evaluating the the collective misperceptions in Chapter 6 with the most conservative specification including demographic controls, market area fixed effects, and robust standard errors clustered at the plaza level.

The pre-analysis plan for the experiment registered on OSF Registries (ID# 20180608AA). The plan was submitted prior to treatment assignment.

7.2.2 Why Virtual Reality?

Implementing a virtual reality-based survey experiment allows for overcoming logistical and ethical hurdles presented by real-world interventions and also more immersive than survey experiments using traditional media.

Conducting a randomized controlled trial (RCT) would be the most realistic way to test the cooperation strategies. Real-world interventions, however, can only be performed upon overcoming ethical and logistical hurdles. Even seemingly benign treatments can inflict unanticipated harm on subjects. At first glance, for instance, randomizing citizen exposure to co-ethnic police officers might appear to entail minimal risk, but as discussed in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.2), in some countries, minority officers can be more discriminatory against minority citizens.²⁵ It is difficult for researchers to predict such consequences.

In addition to unanticipated harms, RCTs are generally costly, time-intensive endeavors. Implementing an experiment with multiple cross-cutting treatment arms as done in this study would be particularly challenging to do as a real-world intervention. From a practical standpoint, doing so likely would have required narrowing the scope of the experiment, limiting the potential insights, or drastically expanding the budget and time involved for conducting the experiment. Given these hurdles, RCTs on policing focus on randomizing police patrols or other strategies within the

25. Blair et al., “Policing Ethnicity.”

relatively narrow scope of interventions.

Survey experiments, for their part, expand the type and the number of interventions that researchers can test. That said, vignettes delivered with traditional media—usually in the form of text or audio—do not necessarily elicit similar emotions that respondents feel in real-world scenarios. The divergence between the survey experiment experience and real-world exposure calls into question if respondents’ answers reflect their actual attitudes and behaviors.²⁶ Such limitations are particularly problematic for this study, because the theory relies in part on emotions—namely, fear of retaliation—as an important driver of citizen decisions on whether or not to cooperate with the police.

I use virtual reality to mitigate this concern with traditional media, although I do not claim that it eliminates the concern altogether. By surrounding viewers with video in any direction, VR expands respondents’ fields of view, which, according to communications psychology literature, is among the most effective ways to increase the viewer’s sense of presence through media.²⁷ This increased immersion elicits more lifelike emotional responses than traditional forms of media.²⁸ Thus, delivering the vignette in VR instead of in text, audio, or even two-dimensional (2D) video makes it more likely to elicit the emotions that shopkeepers feel when they witness an area boy fight.

To explore if the VR platform affected respondent emotions, I embedded a mini-experiment within the survey experiment itself. Thirteen respondents were randomly assigned to view an identical version of the vignette in 2D video, so they would not

26. Jens Hainmueller, Dominik Hangartner, and Teppei Yamamoto, “Validating Vignette and Conjoint Survey Experiments against Real-world Behavior,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112, no. 8 (2015): 2395–2400; Jason Barabas and Jennifer Jerit, “Are Survey Experiments Externally Valid?,” *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 2 (2010): 226–242.

27. James J. Cummings and Jeremy N. Bailenson, “How Immersive Is Enough? A Meta-Analysis of the Effect of Immersive Technology on User Presence,” *Media Psychology* 19, no. 2 (2016): 272–309.

28. See for example Valentijn T. Visch, Ed S. Tan, and Dylan Molenaar, “The Emotional and Cognitive Effect of Immersion in Film Viewing,” *Cognition and Emotion* 24, no. 8 (2010): 1439–1445.

be as immersed in the scenario.²⁹ This process allows for comparing perceived risk, which is partly a function of fear, between respondents assigned to the VR video and those assigned to the 2D video. Respondents viewing the VR video on average reported 33% higher levels of risk relative to the 2D viewers. The small sample size does not permit drawing a firm conclusion, but the result is directionally consistent with respondents having a stronger emotional response from the VR vignette.³⁰

A handful of studies have used VR for social science experiments, but the experiments are generally in a lab environment with respondents from economically-developed contexts and evaluate outcomes such as racial bias in judges' decisions,³¹ the role of empathy in charitable giving,³² and the strength of psychology's bystander effect.³³ As the first use of VR in a large-scale field survey experiment, this study provides a proof-of-concept that VR-based survey experiments are feasible to implement in the field; and, they can be implemented in contexts such as Lagos where respondents had little prior familiarity with the technology.

29. Respondents viewed the control condition for the anonymity and cooperation awareness variations, the treatment condition for the misconduct variation, and the Yoruba officer condition in the police ethnicity variation. The respondents in the 2D condition are compared to respondents that received this version of the vignette in VR during the same time period.

30. Respondents also indicated in interviews that they found the VR experience realistic with one stating, "What I saw there is such a thing that does happen. Most especially here in Mushin because our area is such a rugged area filled with plenty [of] area boys" (LOS221 2018). Another respondent praised the platform, saying, "I give kudos to the producer that invented the Google glass that helps to see what's happening around whether up, down, left and right. It's a wonderful experience" (LOS225 2018).

31. Samantha Bielen, Wim Marneffe, and Naci H Mocan, "Racial Bias and In-group Bias in Judicial Decisions: Evidence from Virtual Reality Courtrooms" (NBER Working Paper No. 25355, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2018).

32. Özgür Güreker and Alina Kasulke, "Does Virtual Reality Increase Charitable Giving? An Experimental Study" (SSRN Research Paper 3072002, Rochester, New York, April 1, 2018).

33. Mel Slater et al., "Bystander Responses to a Violent Incident in an Immersive Virtual Environment," *PLoS ONE* 8, no. 1 (2013).

7.3. RESULTS: GENERALIZABLE STRATEGIES

In line with the hypotheses laid out in Chapter 3 (see Table 3.1), the results suggest that emphasizing the anonymity of a tip line (*Hypothesis 4*) and creating awareness that others use the tip line (*Hypothesis 5*) significantly boosts information-sharing. Citizens being exposed to co-ethnic police officers (*Hypothesis 6*) increases citizen information-sharing, but only for respondents that *a priori* believe the police treat their ethnic group fairly.

7.3.1 Cooperator Anonymity

The experimental results bear out the utility of anonymity. As Figure 7.5 and Table 7.2 indicate, when the tip line in the experimental vignette is anonymous, respondents provide 17% more information on average. The effect is driven primarily by non-Yoruba respondents who share 32% more information compared to Yoruba respondents who share 6% more information. The increase in information-sharing is consistent with the expressed views of many Lagosians. “If the [area boys] know you are the one reporting, you are asking for trouble,” says one shopkeeper.³⁴ Or, as another shopkeeper emphasizes, “area boys cannot attack anybody that spoke to the police except you make it open.”³⁵

Suggestive of demand for an anonymous communication platform in Lagos, shopkeepers often attempt to hide their identity when communicating with police. A textile trader describes how he concealed personal details when reporting an area boy incident to NPF officers:

I didn’t tell [the police officers] my name, I didn’t tell them where I stay, I didn’t tell them anything like that. It was just me and three other people.

34. LOS695 2017.

35. LOS023 2018.

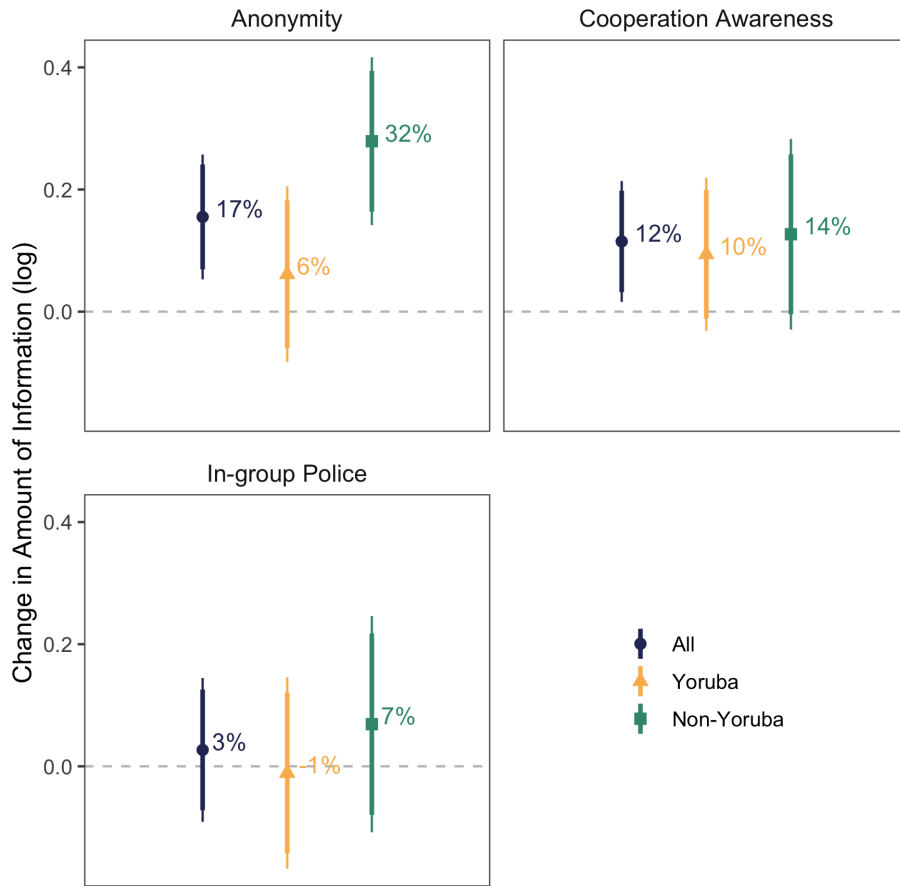


Figure 7.5: Treatment Effect on Information-sharing

The percent change labels are exponentiated coefficients. Anonymity and cooperation awareness increase information-sharing. Police co-ethnicity has a null direct effect. The plot shows 95% and 90% confidence intervals surrounding the coefficients.

I just talk to them like a passerby. If the boys knew it was me they would surely attack.³⁶

Other shopkeepers attempt to use existing reporting channels anonymously by, for instance, calling the city's emergency 112 line without providing their name³⁷ or sending an unsigned letter to a police post.³⁸ The fact that shopkeepers take these measures to conceal their identity when they share information corresponds with the experimental results. Lagosians see the tip line as providing a potentially reliable

36. LOS310 2018.

37. LOS580 2018.

38. LOS770 2017.

Table 7.2: Treatment Effect on Information-sharing

Treatment	Group	% Change	Coef.	SE
Anonymity	All	16.78	0.16***	0.05
	Yoruba	6.31	0.06	0.07
	Non-Yoruba	32.19	0.28***	0.07
Cooperation Awareness	All	12.18	0.11**	0.05
	Yoruba	9.83	0.09	0.06
	Non-Yoruba	13.51	0.13	0.08
In-group Police	All	2.72	0.03	0.06
	Yoruba	-1.09	-0.01	0.08
	Non-Yoruba	7.14	0.07	0.09

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The model is fully crossed, includes demographic controls and market fixed effects, and uses robust standard errors. Percent change is calculated using the formula $100 * (exp(\beta_{treatment}) - 1)$.

anonymization process that they already attempt to undertake.

The concern among many potential cooperators is that, if they share their identity with the police, it will eventually make its way to the area boys. “I wouldn’t give *snap*s (photos) to the police,” explains a photographer who has witnessed numerous area boy street fights, “You don’t know who is your enemy. [...] You don’t know who is who. At the end the [boys] may come to your house.”³⁹ The perception that some police officers may be “the enemy” stems from a commonly-held belief that corrupt officers, usually the rank and file, collude with the area boys. If corrupt officers receive bribes from the area boys, the thinking goes, the officers might turn over the names of cooperators so as not to jeopardize their income source. Such officers, it is said are “like a knife with two sharp sides.”⁴⁰

Some police officers deny altogether that the identity of cooperators leak with one

39. LOS076 2017.

40. LOS957 2018.

proclaiming “it is not possible that [police] would expose someone.”⁴¹ Others concede that the leaks occur as a result of “loose talk.” An NPF commander admitted that sometimes his rank and file officers will talk in a restaurant, “so-in-so person is at such-and-such-location,” he says as he demonstrates with his phone up to his ear. The problem is that, he explains, “They say it loudly. People can hear. That’s what happens.”⁴² Whether intentional or unintentional, the leaking of identities to area boy crews puts cooperators in a difficult position.

7.3.2 Cooperation Awareness

As indicated in Figure 7.5 and Table 7.2, respondents on average provide 12% more information when the radio presenter and *iyaloja* emphasize that others are using the tip line. Some shopkeepers explain that awareness of others sharing information makes cooperation appear safer. A Lagos bag salesman emphasizes that, if his neighbors cooperate, he would be more comfortable identifying an area boy: “*I go talk say na this person. Na because no be only me, that is why. I no go fear.* (I will say who it is, because it will not only be me doing it. I won’t be scared.)”⁴³

Safety is an important mechanism but not the only one through which cooperation norms promote information-sharing. Having social proof also makes shopkeepers feel more obliged to come forward. “When you are talking to the police and you see that everyone is involved,” a textile trader says, “you will be inspired to do even more.”⁴⁴ Similarly, as another shopkeeper puts it, “Seeing neighbors will move me. I’d like to contribute to the solution.”⁴⁵

Lagosians reliance on others’ attitude and behaviors for making cooperation decisions is consistent with their use of social proof in other domains. Shopkeepers look

41. LOS682 2018.

42. LOS325 2018.

43. LOS582 2018.

44. LOS023 2018.

45. LOS695 2017.

to their neighbors with respect to business matters, for instance. Vendors noticing a product that *move market* (sells well) are likely to supply it themselves.⁴⁶ Social proof also influences shopkeepers' security risk judgements. When they see their neighbors running or locking their shops, it is a signal that doing the same is the safest course of action in case a fight is unfolding. There is, as a textile trader explains, "no need to call [the] town crier" when an area boy fight breaks out, because seeing people running is sufficient.⁴⁷

An artisan describes how shopkeepers take their queue from others in these situations:

When people are running you know there is problem. [...] If I see other shop owners lock shops, I may also join them to lock shop. I will ask around about what is happening and if they say area boys are clashing, I will look at how serious the situation is and if it is really serious, I will close my shop and go home.⁴⁸

The artisan's action is suggestive of social proof's potency. Other people running is sufficient for him to lock his shop *before* knowing whether or not the severity of the fight warrants closing the shop.

There are also more subtle instances of shopkeepers using social proof to judge risk. A man who had his betting parlor burglarized recounts that he subsequently noticed the heavy-duty padlocks on some of the other shops, so he installed one himself. That others were using the padlocks made him conclude that it was the safest course of action.⁴⁹ Similarly, a boutique clothing store owner explains how he learned to minimize burglary risk from others' behavior. A nearby shop was burglarized, but the victim exclaimed to clothing store owner how he avoided substantial losses: *You*

46. LOS562 2018.

47. LOS709 2018.

48. LOS829 2018.

49. LOS435 2018.

think say I be mumu wey go put money for shop? (You think that I am senseless person who leaves cash in my shop?) “With that,” the clothing store owner concluded, “you can take a cue from that knowing that keeping money in your shop is risky.”⁵⁰

7.3.3 In-group Police Exposure

Exposure to co-ethnic police officers boosts cooperation only when citizens *a priori* trust the police to be fair to their ethnic group. Figure 7.5 and Table 7.2 indicate that exposure to a co-ethnic police officer, counter to the original hypothesis, only increases information-sharing by roughly 3% on average—effectively a null result.

However, exploratory analysis suggests that distrust in the police’s fairness to the respondents’ ethnic group masks a more substantial effect. Figure 7.6 shows the results of the model with the same specification as used for the main experiment results, but also including respondents’ perception of police fairness to their ethnic group.⁵¹ On average, when respondents are exposed to a co-ethnic officer and see the police as fair, they provide 38% more information. Yoruba respondents provide 65% more information and non-Yoruba respondents provide 21% more information.⁵²

The central implication of these results is that, if a citizen views the police as unfair to their ethnic group, exposure to a co-ethnic officer is not enough to overcome that perception. For these Lagosians, they do not see Yoruba or Igbo officers, they simply see police officers, who are part of an unfair system. Conversely, when a citizen sees the police as generally being fair, it in effect removes the blanket belief and citizens make judgments based on individual officers. Without the blanket belief of unfairness in place, citizen-police co-ethnicity can substantially boost information-sharing.

50. LOS828 2018.

51. The ECS survey included a question, “Which group treats those with your same ethnic background more fairly?” with response options that include “area boys,” “police,” “about equal,” or “neither.”

52. The non-Yoruba result does not rise to the level of statistical significance at the 0.05 level. This outcome may be the result of there being very few Igbo police officers and Igbos make up the preponderance of the non-Yoruba respondent pool.

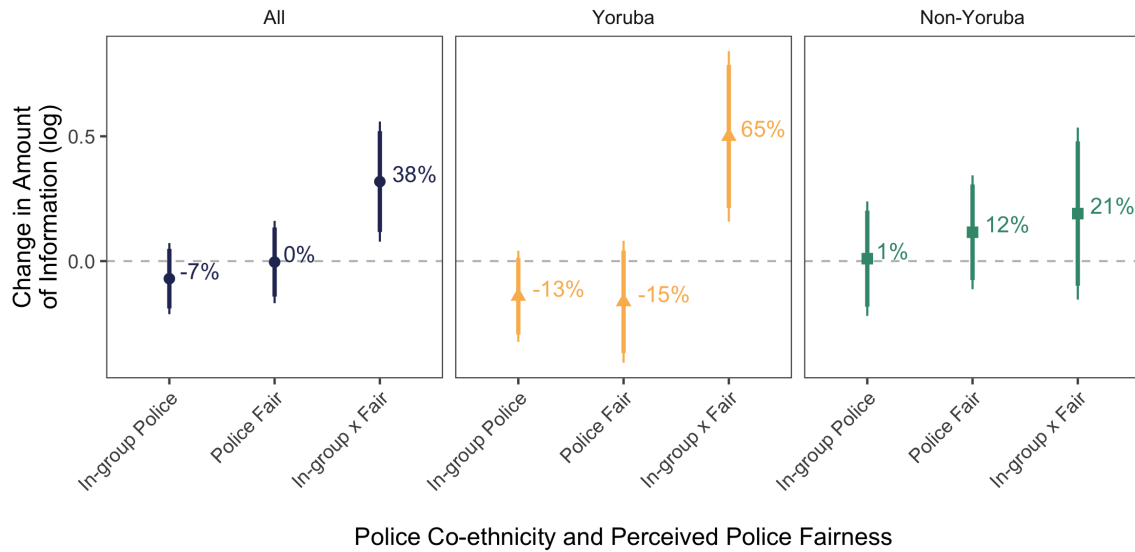


Figure 7.6: Co-ethnicity and Police Fairness

The percent change labels are exponentiated coefficients. Respondents who perceive *ex ante* that the police are fair to their ethnic group provide more information when exposed to a co-ethnic police officer in the experimental vignette. The co-ethnicity treatment does not have a statistically significant effect on respondents who do not believe the police are fair. The heterogeneous effect is stronger for Yoruba respondents compared to non-Yoruba respondents. The plot shows 95% and 90% confidence intervals.

These results track with the mixed views that Lagosians express about the ethnicity of police officers. Some shopkeepers emphasize that co-ethnicity does not matter much in their information-sharing decisions,⁵³ and some shop owners go as far as to say that those from their own ethnic group are *less* trustworthy. A Yoruba herbalist exclaims:

People from other tribes are more likely to help solve your problems compared to police officers from my ethnic group. People from my tribe don't care. Rather, they will still take money from you!⁵⁴

But some indicate greater confidence in co-ethnic officers, as one shopkeeper puts it:

If you have your own tribe, you will have confidence in reporting the case.

There are cases that I find, because the [detective] belong to [...]another

53. LOS080 2018.

54. LOS250 2018.

tribe, he will turn the case useless like he can't file case or turn it against you to help the people in his tribe.⁵⁵

Ultimately, the findings suggest that co-ethnicity between police and citizens can boost information-sharing but it does so largely among those that already hold trust in police fairness, indicating that the strategy alone is insufficient to gain cooperation in communities with deep-seated distrust of the police.

In conclusion, this chapter evaluated strategies for boosting information-sharing in Lagos. The results demonstrate these strategies can help reverse the cycle of silence in not only developed contexts such as Baltimore but also developing ones such as Lagos. And, the strategies can do so in an environment where citizens have a deep-seated distrust of the police. An important implication of these results is that they provide counterevidence to code of silence theory, which suggests that citizens hold back information voluntarily due to support for criminal groups. If that were the case, then there should be little reason that increasing safety and norms boost cooperation. These strategies however appear to do just that.

55. LOS828 2018.

Conclusion

The Information Game plays out in communities with criminal groups around the world. Without information from citizens, police struggle to address violence, giving criminal groups the space to operate with quasi-impunity.

This study aims to provide an understanding of what prevents citizens from coming forward with information and what strategies encourage police-citizen cooperation. I have evaluated these questions in two contexts, the markets of Lagos to the neighborhoods of Baltimore. These communities are very different with respect to their economic development but similar in that citizens hold deep-seated distrust of the police. Despite the differences, the core aspects of cycle of silence, and the strategies that I derive from it, manifest in both contexts.

Similar findings in Baltimore and Lagos suggest that common dynamics embodied in cycle of silence theory play out in a wide range of communities with criminal groups. The dynamics cut across continents, nations, cultures, as well as races and ethnicities. There is very little that is uniquely American or uniquely Nigerian about the dynamics laid out in this study. The implication is that emotion and social norms remain important core drivers of human behavior.

In this concluding chapter, I summarize the findings from Baltimore and Lagos. I also wrestle with the question, under what conditions, if any, is it appropriate for police and community safety advocates to encourage information-sharing from citizens? After contemplating the conditions of when encouraging cooperation might

be appropriate, I turn to policy implications, looking at steps that can be taken to improve police-citizen cooperation. Finally, I discuss the many important and related research questions that this study raises but does not answer.

DIFFERENT CONTEXTS, SIMILAR OUTCOMES

Table 7.3 lays out the results for each hypotheses in both Baltimore and Lagos side-by-side. The magnitudes should not be interpreted in relative terms such that the effects in one case are viewed as “more” or “less” to the other case. Rather, the comparison should be used to evaluate the directional consistency of the results across contexts.

The story that emerges from these contrasting contexts is one in which citizens want to come forward but do not feel safe doing so. The cycle of silence dynamics that allow criminal groups to silence communities are remarkably similar in Baltimore and Lagos and some of the strategies for boosting cooperation work in both contexts.

In both Baltimore and Lagos, retaliation risk appears higher than it is and community cooperation norms appear weaker than they are. In Baltimore, retaliation likelihood is overestimated by 48pp and in Lagos it is overestimated by 41pp. The inflated risk drives those that support cooperation with the police into the shadows; thus, the proportion of the community willing to come forward is underestimated by 34pp in Baltimore and underestimated by 41pp in Lagos.

Similarly, a relationship between violence-induced fear and risk inflation exists in both contexts. In Baltimore, moving from the lowest to highest level of perceived likelihood of crime victimization increases a respondent’s retaliation overestimation by 18pp. Similarly, in Lagos, fear of victimization increases overestimation by 8pp.

These collective misperceptions contribute to cycles of silence by reducing information-sharing. In Baltimore, risk inflation leads to a 16% loss and cooperation underestimation leads to a 28% loss in the amount of information respondents are willing to

Table 7.3: Results Summary

Hypothesis		Results		
		Average	Balti- more	Lagos
CYCLE OF SILENCE THEORY				
H1A	Retaliation Overestimation	44pp	48pp	41pp
H1B	Cooperation Will Underesti- mation	-38pp	-34pp	-41pp
H2	Terroristic Fear	13pp	18pp	8pp
H3A	Effect of Retal. Overestimation	-12%	-16%	-8%
H3B	Effect of Coop. Underestima- tion	-25%	-28%	-22%
COOPERATION STRATEGIES				
H4	Anonymity	20%	22%	17%
H5	Cooperation Awareness	18%	23%	12%
H6	In-group Police	1%	-1%	3%

The average effects fall in line with the hypotheses except for *Hypothesis 6* on exposure to police officers of the same race or ethnic group. The magnitude of the effects cannot be directly compared considering contextual and analytical differences between the two cases. Nonetheless, the direction of the effects provide support that the findings generalize across contexts.

share. In Lagos, risk inflation results in a 8% loss and cooperation underestimation results in a 22% loss in the amount of information respondents are willing to share.

Moreover, the cooperation strategies that attempt to reverse the cycle of silence increase citizen information-sharing. In particular, when an individual has access to an anonymous communication channel, they are apt to provide more information with increases in Baltimore and Lagos of 22% and 17%, respectively. When people

become aware of others in their communities sharing information, they too become more willing to share information themselves. In Baltimore, a community leader creating cooperation awareness increases information-sharing by 23% and in Lagos it increases information-sharing by 12%. The strategy of exposing citizens to in-group police officers, for its part, shows a null effect. However, in Lagos, citizens who *ex ante* trust the police provide 38% more information when exposed to a co-ethnic Nigeria Police Force officer.

These results push back against the theory that a code of silence is the central barrier to cooperation in communities with criminal groups. Residents hold back information from the police, codes of silence theory goes, in part because criminal groups garner support from the community. However, in both Baltimore and Lagos, citizens hold antipathy, not support for, the main criminal groups operating in their communities—drug crews in the case of Baltimore and “area boys” in the case of Lagos. Support for the groups is undercut by their primary goal of illicit economic gain, their unreliability as security providers, and the fact that they provide only token economic benefits and services to communities.

ETHICS OF ENCOURAGING COOPERATION

That this study points to *how* state authorities and community safety advocates can successfully encourage cooperation does not necessarily mean that they *should* encourage cooperation. This question involves considerations that are specific to societies; thus, I do not profess to answer the question definitively. Given that the question of “if” implicitly underpins broader discussions of the “how” of cooperation, it deserves consideration nonetheless.

The Information Game presents an ethical dilemma.

On the one hand, the police have an obligation to encourage cooperation. As laid

out in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.4), the state has core mandates to provide security and administer justice and thus allowing criminal group violence and quasi-impunity for perpetrators to persist would be ethically problematic. Addressing criminal group activity, without resorting to coercive and indiscriminate tactics, necessitates successfully encouraging citizens to share information voluntarily. These realities suggest that a lack of encouragement is in some respects unethical, because it signals that the state is either uninterested in fulfilling its mandate or prefers to do so through heavy-handed tactics.

On the other hand, scholars and observers raise two central concerns about the encouragement of police-citizen cooperation. First, at the societal-level, state authorities might use information from citizens—or, what communications scholar Mark Andrejevic terms “lateral surveillance”⁵⁶—to strengthen authoritarian, corrupt, and abusive governing regimes. Encouraging cooperation with the police, in this view, is essentially enlisting citizens in the state’s efforts to subjugate populations.

As discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6, distrust of law enforcement in the United States and Nigeria is not unjustified in some respects. High-profile misconduct incidents and scandals such as the Gun Trace Task Force present major barriers to building bonds between the Baltimore Police Department and communities. And, in Lagos, corruption remains a major problem among many Nigeria Police Force officers. In more extreme cases, authoritarian governments could use police-citizen cooperation to maintain their grip on power. In Cuba, for instance, Fidel Castro enlisted large numbers of citizens into so-called Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. As the “eyes and ears” of the regime, the committees, which were set up on each square city block and many rural counties, have as their main purpose cooperating with authorities and are particularly attuned to reporting political dissent.⁵⁷

56. Mark Andrejevic, “The Work of Watching One Another: Lateral Surveillance, Risk, and Governance,” *Surveillance & Society* 2, no. 4 (2004).

57. “Cuba - Political process,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2020, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Cuba>.

In this vein, scholars and activists argue today that promoting police-citizen cooperation in the United States also is fundamentally illiberal and contributes to the subjugation of minority groups. Scholar Joshua Reeves argues that the United States has a “spy-and-snitch culture” and encouragement to “see something, say something” are part of a trend toward “citizen responsabilization” that should be resisted.⁵⁸ In this same spirit, media in the United States has urged a decoupling of—rather than closer—police-citizen cooperation. In the shadow of 2014 police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, Truthout, a social justice-oriented news site, called on readers in an editorial, “Don’t Call the Police”⁵⁹ and, around this same time, *Rolling Stone* published a story asking readers to imagine a “cop-free world.”⁶⁰

The second concern about promoting police-citizen cooperation is that sharing information potentially puts citizens at risk. As emphasized in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.2), non-cooperation can be a rational choice by citizens. In encouraging cooperation, police and community safety advocates are asking citizens to take on the risk of facing retaliation in order to lower the risk of collateral damage from criminal group violence to themselves and the community. If the potential benefits of increasing community safety do not outweigh the retaliation risk, they are in effect asking citizens to suspend their rational self-interest.

How can these concerns be balanced against the need for police-citizen cooperation to address violence and quasi-impunity in communities? I propose three principles as foundations for guiding when it is ethical for police and community safety advocates encourage information-sharing. These principles should be thought of as necessary conditions but not necessarily sufficient. There very well may be other gen-

58. Joshua Reeves, *Citizen Spies: The Long Rise of America’s Surveillance Society* (New York: NYU Press, 2017), p. 169-70.

59. Mike Ludwig, “A New Year’s Resolution: Don’t Call the Police,” Truthout, December 26, 2014, accessed March 22, 2020, <https://truthout.org/articles/a-new-years-resolution-don-t-call-the-police>.

60. José Martín, “6 Ideas for a Cop-Free World,” *Rolling Stone*, December 16, 2014, accessed March 22, 2020, <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/policing-is-a-dirty-job-but-nobodys-gotta-do-it-6-ideas-for-a-cop-free-world-199465>.

eral conditions that I do not contemplate or conditions that are specific to particular communities.

The first principle required for justifying the promotion of cooperation is that citizens consent to the authority of the state. Regardless of the form of government, promoting cooperation is justified only if citizens consent to state authorities enforcing the law. If citizens do not consent to the state, then it is broadly speaking an illegitimate government. The illegitimacy of the government means that it cannot justifiably enforce the law and thus cannot justifiably solicit information from the public to do so. As discussed in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.1), citizens in communities with criminal groups often have limited trust in the police which erodes their legitimacy. At the same time, it does eliminate the legitimacy of the police as citizens generally still consent to the police as their best option for security provision. Going by Weber's defining feature of statehood as having "the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force," that citizens look to the police in this way often makes them the most legitimate authority in communities.⁶¹ This pattern is not necessarily universal with some communities potentially eschewing the state altogether; but, generally speaking the police—despite their shortcomings in carrying out their mandates—remain the most legitimate security providers, in the eyes of citizens.

The second principle is the police prioritizing the safety of cooperators while also using the information to improve community safety. The police have an obligation to make a good faith effort to use the information provided by citizens to reduce violence in communities. They also have an obligation to take all reasonable steps that minimize the risks posed to the cooperators who provided the information. What those steps look like vary across contexts, but the principle remains the same: the police should not put those who share information in harm's way. In practice, this involves putting in place standards that minimize the likelihood of exposing coop-

61. Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 1.

erator identities unintentionally. Anonymous tip lines are one way to do so. Other steps might include protocols restricting detectives from visiting homes of cooperators unannounced to avoid revealing their identities.

Such protective measures will mean that, in some circumstances, authorities are unable to get as much information as they might otherwise. But, in the long-run, safe cooperation will ultimately mean more cooperation from the community. Most importantly, from an ethical perspective, authorities can only justify soliciting information from citizens, who come forward despite the potential risks to themselves, if the authorities do not exacerbate that risk against the cooperator's wishes.

The third principle is citizen input. Citizens in this context have what scholar—and, to many, polemicist—Nassim Taleb calls “skin in the game.”⁶² Having skin in the game puts them on solid ethical and pragmatic grounds for evaluating strategies. Ethically, since they likely will bear the brunt of the consequences—both positive and negative—from strategies, they have the most standing in weighing the potential costs against the benefits. From a pragmatic point of view, citizens from the community can also leverage local knowledge, which makes them well positioned to anticipate effects of the strategies that may be specific to their community. What this input looks like will vary by context but it is essential to encouraging cooperation in an ethical manner.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

If these conditions are met, what then can be done in practice to promote police-citizen cooperation?

For sure, structural reforms to improve police legitimacy are often necessary and important. The higher levels of distrust, the lower the ceiling of how much cooperation

62. Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *Skin in the Game: Hidden Asymmetries in Daily Life* (New York: Random House, February 27, 2018).

the police can expect from citizens. At the same time, such reforms are long-term, costly endeavors and thus are unlikely to meet communities' immediate needs to reduce violence. The reforms involve addressing entrenched cultural and institutional problems in law enforcement agencies. The political will for engaging in the reforms may not exist; and if the will does exist, reforms generally take years and even decades to build trust in communities that have historically fraught relationships with the police.⁶³

In the United States, the federal government uses what are known as “police consent decrees” to mandate reforms of municipal police departments to improve legitimacy-based outcomes. Given that most of the decrees have been implemented recently, it is too soon to evaluate whether or not they in fact improve citizen trust in the police. However, even supporters of the decrees note that they are burdensome and expensive, which is indicative of the difficulty of instituting structural reforms.⁶⁴ The consent decree mandated for Cincinnati, Ohio is held up as an example of a successful reform project but, according to some accounts, it took five to ten years just to convince the city's police department to “buy into” the reforms.⁶⁵

The findings of this study point to a number of policy implications that police and community safety advocates could use to promote cooperation and thus police effectiveness. In doing so, they can kickstart broader structural reform efforts aimed at improving community trust in the police. It is worth emphasizing that these implications are *not* recommendations but rather presented as considerations to inform local-level policy. The goal is for this study to provide knowledge for local actors to

63. As social science literature shows, building trust to promote cooperation generally requires an iterative process of multiple positive interactions between the actors. See for example Robert Axelrod and Richard Dawkins, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

64. “Without consent decrees, who will police the police?,” *The Economist*, January 28, 2019, accessed March 26, 2020, <https://www.economist.com/democracy-in-america/2019/01/28/without-consent-decrees-who-will-police-the-police>.

65. Alana Semuels, “How to Fix a Broken Police Department,” *The Atlantic*, May 28, 2015, accessed March 26, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/05/cincinnati-police-reform/393797>.

consider in their decision-making. The implications include:

1. Police and community safety advocates might engage in fear reduction measures. This might mean rapidly cleaning up scenes of criminal group violence to encourage daily life to return to as it was before the incident. Sometimes public officials emphasize the viciousness of criminal groups in hopes of galvanizing the community against them but doing so might have an unintended consequence of increasing fear and thus reducing cooperation. Authorities and community safety advocates might instead consider focusing public communications on efforts to counter the criminal groups rather than on the groups' brutality. Such approaches could potentially reduce risk inflation and in turn increase police-citizen cooperation.
2. Expanding access and awareness of anonymous tip lines can boost information-sharing. Many cities such as Lagos remain without anonymous tip lines; they may want establish them if the conditions are appropriate. Cities with reliable anonymous communication channels may want to do more to emphasize their anonymity. In Baltimore, for instance, Wanted Wednesday videos could place a greater emphasis on the anonymity of communications, 911 could be advertised as anonymous if a caller requests, and CrimeStoppers could coordinate with the *Baltimore Sun* to mention anonymity in its note on the CrimeStopper's tip line at the bottom of news articles.⁶⁶
3. Systematic cooperation awareness campaigns have promise in terms of improving police-citizen cooperation. Community safety advocates have a central role

66. The *Belfast Telegraph* provides an instructive example of a news site including an anonymity emphasis when providing the phone number: "If someone would prefer to provide information without giving their details they can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers and speak to them anonymously on 0800 555 111 which is 100% anonymous and gives people the power to speak up and stop crime." See "Police investigating hate crime after arson and 'UVF' graffiti painted at former UDR base," *Belfast Telegraph*, July 19, 2019, accessed March 27, 2020, <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/police-investigating-hate-crime-after-arson-and-uvf-graffiti-painted-at-former-udr-base-38328715.html>.

to play in implementing such campaigns, as done for instance in Italy's *ad-diopizzo* campaign and social influence campaigns in many other domains. Community groups might consider ramping up their efforts toward demonstrating the levels of underlying cooperation will in communities to counter citizens' underestimation of community cooperation norms. Police departments too might want to highlight systemically when tips lead to solving cases if they can do so while maintaining the anonymity of cooperators.

4. Public officials, the media, and community leaders might consider striking the term "snitch" from quotidian vocabularies. I explain in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.3) how the term has been misappropriated to disparage citizens that cooperate with the police. There should be a clear delineation between individuals who are involved in criminal activity that share information with the police, usually to gain leniency, and citizens who step forward, usually to improve public safety in their community. The term originated to describe the former but has expanded to encompass the latter as a form of social control against cooperating with the police. To eliminate the conflation, the most effective strategy might be ceasing use of the word altogether.
5. Researchers, in partnership with law enforcement and community safety advocates, might consider testing the effectiveness of proposed strategies using virtual reality (VR). VR offers a more realistic way than traditional survey experiments to evaluate cooperation strategies. And, with the technology, the testing can be done more feasibly and ethically than implementing a full-scale randomized controlled trial (RCT) in many cases. Most RCTs to-date on policing involve variations of randomizing police patrols and contacts with citizens but with VR one can go significantly beyond the limitations placed on real-world experimental interventions. Importantly, the technology allows for testing the

potential unintended consequences of strategies prior to their implementation.⁶⁷

By and large, these steps are low hanging fruit. They may not address structural shortcomings that generate limited trust in police, but they do provide a basis to furthering those reforms, particularly with respect to making the police more effective.

RESEARCH EXTENSIONS

The historian Daniel Boorstin described education as learning about what you did not know you had not known. Along these same lines, this study is about answering important questions related police-citizen cooperation but just as much about discovering new, important questions for inquiry. It brings to light areas that deserve further exploration.

First, to what extent do cycle of silence dynamics exist in contexts beyond the scope conditions of this study? Similar dynamics might exist in rural communities but that conclusion cannot be assumed given this study's focus on urban communities where, among other differences, the state tends to have greater policing capacity. With the growing presence of criminal groups online, these dynamics might play out in cyberspace as well. Moreover, this study draws on the counterinsurgency literature, and it raises the question of whether or not the findings also apply in contexts with active insurgent and terrorist groups. Do civilians, for instance, caught amid civil war overestimate retaliation likelihood?

Second, what might the criminal group response be to improved cooperation in communities where they operate? One possibility is that they attempt to reduce citizen incentives for cooperation by engaging in less violence and extortion.⁶⁸ In

67. On how exposure to co-ethnic police officers can have unintended consequences, see Blair et al., "Policing Ethnicity."

68. On regimes reform politically to control protest movements, see James DeNardo, *Power in Numbers: The Political Strategy of Protest and Rebellion* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, June 21, 1985).

response to the *addiopizzo* movement, the mafia began providing more services for their payments, rendering the payments less extortionary in a sense. Another possibility is that criminal groups attempt to ramp up cooperation's risks by increasing the likelihood of retaliation.

Third, do anonymity protections increase the willingness of witnesses to testify in court? This study has focused on the reporting and investigative stages of police-citizen cooperation, but in liberal societies convictions often rely on eyewitness testimony. While most countries do not allow anonymous testimony to protect suspect rights, a select few countries such as the United Kingdom allow witnesses to testify anonymously if they are seen to be at risk. This policy raises interesting questions as to whether or not witness anonymity increases cooperation just as anonymous tip lines do.

Fourth, how can cooperation awareness strategies most effectively correct for norm deflation? This study tested just one of potentially numerous variations of awareness strategies. In both the Baltimore and Lagos cases, a community leader provided the messaging that others were willing to share information about criminal group violence. What characteristics of individuals render them the most credible conveyors of cooperation norms? Moreover, what characteristics of cooperators generate the strongest normative influence? This study showed that citizens used large surrounding communities as reference groups but perhaps those in smaller geographic areas such as citizens' blocks are even stronger reference groups. Or, perhaps it is better to think of reference groups in terms of social, rather than geographic, proximity.

Finally, what individual characteristics are associated with citizen cooperation propensities? What demographic characteristics and experiences render someone more likely to be a "first-mover" with low cooperation thresholds? Similarly, what makes for "late-movers" with high thresholds? This study touches on these questions but does not explore them fully.

The problem of criminal group violence is not going away; indeed, it is liable only to worsen as the global population becomes concentrated in cities—an environment where gangs traditionally thrive.⁶⁹ This fact adds an urgency to understanding what prevents police-citizen cooperation and how to promote it. The more criminal groups become entrenched in communities, the more difficult it will be to build partnerships between citizens and police. If these trends hold, winning The Information Game becomes increasingly important. Losing it means that gangs, mafias, and other types of criminal groups will engage in even more violence and do so with even more impunity.

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