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Neighborhood Social Ties and Informal Social Control: When do Neighbors Call the Police or Directly Intervene?

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ABSTRACT AND ARTICLE INFORMATION

Social disorganization theory posits that neighborhood social ties facilitate residents' engagement in distinct forms of informal social control important for crime reduction, including private, parochial, and public controls (Bursik & Grasmik, 1993). Yet research examining how social ties contribute to various forms of informal social control is rare, despite a recent resurgence in efforts to clarify these measures (see Warner, 2014). The present study examines whether neighborhood social ties influence *direct informal social control* (i.e., residents' perceptions that their neighbors will stop a crime themselves or will get another neighbor to help) and *indirect informal social control* (i.e., residents' perceptions that their neighbors will call the police) within ordinary least squares regression. Findings indicate that previous studies, which have relied on *global* measures of informal social control, have concealed more nuanced relationships regarding social ties and forms of informal social control. More specifically, neighborhood social ties were positively related to direct informal social control at low levels of disadvantage, but were negatively related to direct informal social control in neighborhoods with high concentrated disadvantage, while social ties were positively related to indirect informal social control regardless of disadvantaged context. Findings point to the importance of including more specific measures of informal social control in current and future residential surveys.

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Extant work stemming from social disorganization theory and the systemic model has examined how neighbors' engagement with other residents, often referred to as social ties, are related to residents' efforts to intervene in neighborhood problems and prevent neighborhood crime, known as informal social control (Elliot et al., 1996; Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson, 1997; Sampson et al., 1997, 1999; Silver & Miller, 2004). Bursik and Grasmik's (1993) systemic reformation of social disorganization describes three distinct forms of informal social control facilitated through systemic networks (i.e., neighborhood social ties). Both *private* networks, which are comprised of primary group interactions among friends and family members, and *parochial* networks, which constitute larger interpersonal relationships, are directly exerted by family and neighborhood residents to control crime, while indirect crime control occurs through *public* networks in which residents evoke formal third party agencies, such as the police, to intervene on their behalf (Bursik & Grasmik, 1993). Existing work suggests that neighborhood social ties and neighborhood structural characteristics (i.e., concentrated disadvantage) influence the form of informal social control that residents use (Pattillo, 1998; Warner, 2007; Wilkinson, 2007). Yet, extant literature that examines how social ties are related to participation in these forms of informal social control is rare (see Gau, 2014; Warner, 2007, 2014; Wickes et al., 2017). Instead, much of the previous work on social ties and informal social control has sought to understand how social ties are related to a *global* inclusive measure of informal social control (i.e., collective efficacy; Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson, 2006), ignoring important nuances regarding how residents respond to crime and other neighborhood problems.

In addition, previous work has found that social ties are inconsistent in delivering informal social control and crime reduction (Browning, 2009; Browning et al., 2004; Pattillo, 1998; Suttles, 1968; Warner & Rountree, 1997; Wilkinson, 2007). Scholars note that this inconsistency is likely dependent upon neighborhood context or more specifically, concentrated disadvantage (Bellair, 1997; Browning, 2009; Clinard & Abbott, 1976; Pattillo, 1998; Warner & Rountree, 1997). However, it remains unknown whether social ties within specific neighborhood contexts may foster distinct forms of informal social control among residents.

The present study seeks to understand how residents' perceptions of their neighbors' responses to crime may be influenced by neighborhood social ties and neighborhood structural characteristics (i.e., concentrated disadvantage, residential mobility).

More specifically, the present study utilizes data that can be compared to previous work on the relationship between social ties and traditional measures of informal social control and that contain unique measures of distinct forms of informal social control to answer the following questions: 1) How are neighborhood social ties and neighborhood structural characteristics related to *direct* (i.e., residents' perceptions that their neighbors will directly intervene to prevent crime) and *indirect* (i.e., residents' perceptions that their neighbors will call the police) forms of informal social control, and 2) how does concentrated disadvantage moderate the relationship between neighborhood social ties and these two forms of informal social control? Understanding residents' complex and various responses to crime and neighborhood problems may improve policies for cultivating more effective informal social controls and improve crime reduction strategies.

Literature Review

Social Disorganization and the Systemic Model

Social disorganization theory posits that neighborhood structural characteristics, including residential instability, poverty, and racial and ethnic heterogeneity (Shaw & McKay, 1942), contribute to neighborhood "disorganization" or the failure of a community "to realize the common values of their residents or solve commonly experienced problems" (Bursik, 1988, p. 521; see also Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920). The systemic reformation of social disorganization (i.e., the systemic model) further develops these processes, explaining that neighborhood social ties facilitate residents' ability to police themselves by engaging informal social control to reduce crime (Bursik & Grasmik, 1993).

Neighborhood structural characteristics are thought to contribute to disruptions to social ties, impeding on informal social control. More specifically, residential instability disrupts neighboring relationships by making it difficult for residents to maintain ties (Bursik & Grasmik, 1993). Similarly, concentrated disadvantage interferes with residents' ability to socialize and supervise young children and teens, while racial and ethnic heterogeneity impedes resident cohesion due to divergent norms and traditions. In sum, the systemic model posits that disruptions to social ties inhibit a community's ability to engage in informal social control and to achieve community goals, therefore contributing to "disorganization" (Bursik & Grasmik, 1993, 1996).

Bursik and Grasmick (1993) defined three forms of informal social control that residents engage in within the systemic reformation of social disorganization. Private controls include primary group interactions with close friends and family who reside within the neighborhood. Parochial controls are similar in that they include informal relationships, but they are made up of larger, less-personal networks of neighborhood residents who may share less-intimate connections through group membership, such as involvement in schools, church, political organizations, and other neighborhood associations. Finally, Bursik and Grasmick (1993) define public controls as controls that emphasize the community's ability to secure public goods and services allocated by agencies outside of the neighborhood, such as calling upon the police to intervene in neighborhood problems.

Global Informal Social Control

Despite these theoretical distinctions, most extant work has relied on traditional *global* measures of informal social control (i.e., collective efficacy) that do not distinguish among specific forms of informal social control. Instead, neighborhood surveys ask respondents whether they think that their neighbors would respond "in various ways" (Sampson et al., 1997) by "doing something about" (Elliott et al., 1996) or "something to stop" (Warner, 2003) a neighborhood issue. Although scholars have speculated that these items include all actions ranging from "informal intervention to the mobilization of formal controls" (Sampson, 2006, p. 154), they have been criticized for capturing perceptions of direct informal involvement alone (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003; Warner, 2007, 2014) and are incapable of distinguishing among unique forms of informal social control (Gau, 2014; Wickes et al., 2017). However, as the literature suggests, informal social control varies in its expressed forms, each with their own conceptual distinctions and unique policy implications (Gau, 2014; Warner, 2007, 2014; Wickes et al., 2017). In addition, the ways in which each form of informal social control is intertwined with the others is concealed within global measures of control (Warner, 2007). For example, the responsiveness of police has been shown to be positively related to residents' willingness to confront issues themselves (Silver & Miller, 2004) likely due to perceptions that they will be formally supported in their actions. On the other hand, an overreliance on police and mobilizing of formal public social control agents may lead to a reduction in neighborhood social ties, contributing to a weakening of informal engagement in private and parochial controls (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Clear & Karp, 1999; Lynch & Sabol, 2001). Therefore, although they are likely

correlated, various forms of informal social control are distinct, making it necessary to use more specific measures in order to unpack these relationships (Sabol et al., 2004; Warner, 2007, 2014; Wickes et al., 2017).

Social Ties and Informal Social Control

Previous work surrounding informal social control has heavily relied on the inclusion of a *global* measure (Elliot et al., 1996; Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson, 1997; Sampson et al., 1997, 1999; Silver & Miller, 2004). More specifically, much of the available work on social ties and informal social control was estimated using the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN; 1994) data, which include a measure of collective efficacy, or a combination of social cohesion and trust and residents' perceived likelihood "that their neighbors could be counted on to intervene in various ways" given five crime and deviance scenarios (as cited in Sampson et al., 1997, p. 919; Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson, 2006). Relevant to the current study, Morenoff and colleagues (2001) found that friendship and kinship ties (i.e., the combined average number of friends and relatives that respondents reported were living in their neighborhood) were positively related to respondents' perceived likelihood that their neighbors would engage in collective efficacy, although they were not directly predictive of homicide rates.

Other studies have only examined residents' tendency to engage in indirect informal social control, the majority measuring calls to the police. These studies have produced mixed findings. For example, in their sample of over 3,000 neighborhoods in the Netherlands, Goudriaan and colleagues (2006) found a positive effect of social cohesion on crime reporting, when social cohesion was captured, in part, by the extent to which residents know and have contact with others in the neighborhood. However, ethnographic work by Carr (2003) examining a neighborhood in Chicago indicated that social ties are not necessary for engagement in indirect informal social control, such as calling the police.

Few studies have examined the relationship between neighborhood social ties and various forms of informal social control. One example of such work is an ethnographic study by Pattillo (1998) that includes residents of a Southside Chicago neighborhood called Groveland. The study found that social ties contribute to an increase in residents' willingness to intervene in neighborhood problems themselves (direct informal social control) but a decrease in residents' willingness to engage police to solve community problems (indirect informal social control) (Pattillo, 1998).

Warner (2007) examined the effects of neighborhood social ties and neighborhood structural characteristics on individual-level engagement in

various forms of informal social control, using hierarchical linear models and data on 66 neighborhoods in a Southern state. She found that neighborhood social ties, measured as the average number of friends and relatives that residents reported living in their neighborhood, increased respondents' willingness to "insist that" their neighbors "stop the behavior" or their willingness to "talk it out until a mutually satisfactory solution is found" (direct informal social control) in response to a disagreement or unwanted behavior (e.g., loud music, allowing their dog to be out unleashed, unruly children, etc.). The same was not true concerning respondents' willingness to let "someone else, like a landlord or police officers, resolve the issue" (indirect informal social control; Warner, 2007). A later study by Warner (2014) using the same data, further examined the direct informal social control responses of 'talking it out' and the additional outcome of "giving in" to a neighbors' request and did not find a significant association between social ties and either outcome.

A study by Gau (2014) examined distinct forms of informal social control, using survey data from 282 residents in a mid-sized city in Florida, and found important distinctions. However, this study focused on the effect of individual-level reports of social cohesion on individual-level engagement in forms of informal social control. More specifically, social cohesion was significantly related to respondents' perceptions that they *and* their neighbors would tell a rowdy group of teens hanging out in their neighborhood to quiet down or go home and the likelihood that their neighbors would break up a fight happening in their neighborhood (both measures of direct informal social control), as well as the likelihood that their neighbors would call the police to report a suspicious person or event outside of their home, call the police to report a neighborhood problem, or tell police if they had information about a crime (all measures of indirect informal social control; Gau, 2014). However, respondents' perceptions of their own likelihood of engagement in indirect informal social control (i.e., informing the police) was not significantly related to social cohesion. The inclusion of multiple measures of informal social control within the 2012 survey is promising. However, the response rate was only 19% (Gau, 2014). Therefore, the inclusion of multiple forms of informal social control within additional large-scale survey projects is needed in order to further examine these nuanced relationships.

More recent studies by Wickes and colleagues (2017) and Hipp and Wickes (2018) used the Australian Community Capacity Study, in which respondents were asked whether they felt that specific issues, including drugs, public drinking, loitering, and

racial motivated assaults, were a "big problem," "some problem," or "not a problem" in their neighborhood. Those who reported items as a "big problem" were asked follow-up questions that gauged whether they had taken action or done something about the issue, including options such as calling the police, contacting a government agency, discussing with neighbors, or intervening directly. The survey also includes measures of residents' perceptions of informal social control and collective efficacy. Wickes and colleagues (2017) found that individual-level social ties were significantly related to residents' likelihood of engaging in both parochial (measured as contacting a community group, discussing with neighbors, and intervening directly) and public (measured as contacting a formal agency) forms of informal social control in response to items that they considered a "big problem." They also found that respondents living in neighborhoods with high levels of social ties were slightly more likely to engage in parochial forms of informal social control than those living in areas where social ties were not present. Hipp and Wickes (2018) examined perceptions of neighbors' likelihood of engaging in informal social control and direct actions they take in response to neighborhood problems and found that residents' perceptions of collective efficacy contribute to their own future engagement in informal social control and vice versa, indicating that assessments of collective efficacy and tendencies to take action are reciprocal and are dynamic factors, as opposed to being static features of individuals and neighborhoods.

In sum, the literature to date on the relationship between social ties and distinct forms of informal social control is limited. In large part, this is due to the limited number of datasets that include measures of distinct forms of informal social control. Additionally, when distinct measures of informal social control are present, other limitations exist, including being limited to a couple US cities or studies outside of the US, low survey response rates, and issues with the measurements themselves. In addition, other included measures have restricted prior studies. For example, social ties is commonly measured as the number of friendship and kinship ties that respondents report residing in their neighborhood (Warner, 2007, 2014), while a more 'active' and dynamic measure of social ties is preferred for capturing the frequency or degree of engagement among resident ties (Sampson, 2012). Finally, previous measures have asked about residents' responses to minor acts of deviance or disturbances in the neighborhood (e.g., loud music, unruly children; Warner, 2007, 2014) or rowdy teens and suspicious persons (Gau, 2014) but have not included residents' engagement in unique forms of

informal social control given more severe crime scenarios.

Moderating Effect of Neighborhood Context

Prior research not only suggests that neighborhood social ties and neighborhood structural characteristics influence the form of informal social control in which residents engage, but that these variables may interact to facilitate various forms of informal social control. Namely, scholars have questioned the consistency of social ties to operate towards informal social control due to disadvantaged context (Bellair, 1997; Browning, 2009; Clinard & Abbott, 1976; Warner & Rountree, 1997).

Previous work has suggested that disadvantaged context and social ties may interact to impact how residents choose to intervene (Anderson, 1999; Carr et al., 2007; Duneier, 1999; Pattillo, 1998; Shaw, 1930; Suttles, 1968; Venkatesh, 1997, 2000; Whyte, 1937; Wilkinson, 2003, 2007; Williams, 1989). For example, Rountree and Warner (1999) found that the effectiveness of women's ties for crime reduction increased in contexts with few female-headed households. In addition, Wilkinson (2007) found that youth's inclination to mobilize indirect informal social control varied according to how well respondents knew one another. When adults were closely immersed with "offenders," they were perceived as more likely to directly intervene in a scenario and less likely to enact the police. However, in situations dealing with "outsiders" or less connected neighbors, adults were perceived as more likely to call the police. Similarly, Pattillo's (1998) ethnographic study of Chicago's Groveland neighborhood found that dense networks produced a decline in resident's willingness to call the police since residents are tied to illegitimate as well as legitimate networks. As one respondent explained, "I didn't wanna give this young man's name [to the police] because his mama is such a sweet lady" (Pattillo, 1998, p. 765).¹ Therefore, concentrated disadvantage may moderate the relationship between social ties and forms of informal social control. More specifically, social ties may operate according to social disorganization theory within economically advantaged settings (Bursik & Grasmik, 1993), but may be associated with an increase in direct informal social control and a reduction in indirect informal social control in disadvantaged neighborhoods due to familiarity among residents, as well as insulation of illegitimate networks.

Present Study

Extant studies within the neighborhoods and crime literature have been limited in that they have relied on a general or *global* measure of informal

social control. This global measure has specifically hindered previous work in its ability to understand the relationship between social ties, neighborhood structural characteristics, and distinct forms of informal social control. Therefore, the present study aims to add to the field by contributing to a deeper understanding of the relationship between neighborhood social ties and distinct forms of informal social control by 1) examining how neighborhood social ties are related to distinct forms of informal social control and 2) examining whether concentrated disadvantage moderates the relationship between neighborhood social ties and distinct forms of informal social control.

Method

Data

Data for the present study include surveys of 704 residents from 30 neighborhoods in Baltimore, Maryland, as well as census items matched by neighborhood identifier. The survey data used for the present study are part of a National Institute of Justice funded study examining the relationships among physical deterioration, crime rates, residents' attitudes, and neighborhood structure. Neighborhoods were selected using stratified sampling in order to capture equal segments of neighborhoods that experienced a large change in violent and property crime, a small change in violent and property crime, and a change in one type of crime, but not the other prior to the study. Once selected, eight census blocks within each neighborhood were randomly chosen for inclusion. Addresses were selected from both sides of the street block using simple random sampling from a list of telephone numbers merged from three separate phone listings until a quota of at least 4 and no more than 16 interviews were completed per block. All interviews were conducted by telephone, using Computer Automated Telephone Interviewing (CATI; Taylor, 1999a).

Survey data were collected from the head of the household and included information on different aspects of their neighborhood, such as physical appearance, problems, and crime and safety issues; respondents' level of satisfaction with and involvement in their neighborhood; and respondents' demographic information. The overall response rate was 76% (see Taylor, 1999b, for more information on data collection methods).

The rationale for choosing these data is directly related to the present study's purpose, which is to examine the relationship between neighborhood social ties and distinct forms of informal social control. First, these data include items on respondents'

reports of their neighbors' likelihood of engaging in distinct forms of informal social control not included in other neighborhood surveys. Second, although data collection took place in 1994 and the age of these data may be viewed as a study limitation, they suit the purpose of the study since, in addition to including specific measures of various forms of informal social control, these data allow for a comparison of results from previous work that has examined the relationship among social ties and traditional global measures of informal social control, including the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN) data, which was widely used to examine this and other neighborhood relationships and was collected the same year (see Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson, 2006). Finally, these data overcome the noted limitations of previous work (e.g., low response rate), include a more dynamic measure of social ties, and include a more severe crime scenario than has been included in the literature thus far. Therefore, these data fulfill multiple needs not met by other data, and their analysis will be able to inform whether more specific measures of informal social control should be added to current and future residential surveys.

Measures

Dependent Variables

Direct Informal Social Control.

Respondents were prompted to, "Suppose a suspicious person was trying to break into a neighbor's home" and asked to respond to two follow-up questions that capture two forms of direct informal social control. First, respondents were asked, "Do you think any of your neighbors would personally try to stop the person?" A second follow-up question asked, "Do you think any of your neighbors would get another neighbor's help to stop the person from breaking into the house?" Both measures capture informal ties to close and distant neighbors and friends as theorized as a part of private and parochial controls by Bursik and Grasmik (1993). For both measures, "yes" responses were coded "1," and "no" responses were coded as "0." Both items were aggregated to the neighborhood-level by calculating the mean of all responses for residents in each neighborhood.²

Indirect Informal Social Control. A third follow-up question to the same scenario, prompting respondents to "Suppose a suspicious person was trying to break into a neighbor's home" asked, "Do you think any of your neighbors would call the police?" This item captures residents' perceptions of their neighbors' level of engagement in indirect informal social control as defined here as calls for resources outside of the neighborhood (i.e., police) to solve neighborhood problems and as similarly defined

by Warner (2007). Bursik and Grasmik (1993) referred to this form of informal social control within the systemic reformation of social disorganization as public controls capable of mobilizing outside resources. Responses to this item were also coded "1" for "yes" and "0" for "no" and were aggregated to the neighborhood-level by taking the mean of responses for each neighborhood. Respondents' perceptions of direct informal social control show greater variation across neighborhoods (stopping a crime themselves: range = 0.38 to 0.76; getting another neighbor to help: range = 0.43 to 0.85) compared to indirect informal social control (range = 0.92 to 1.00). See Table 1 for descriptive statistics.

Independent Variables

Neighborhood social ties are captured with items tapping into the helping and sharing networks among residents (Bellair, 2000; Browning, 2009; Lynch & Sabol, 2001). These items represent 'active neighborhood ties' since they include engagement in neighborhood social ties and not just the number of ties to family and friends (Sampson, 2012). More specifically, social ties are captured using a four-item scale ($\alpha = .78$).³ Respondents were asked, "During the past year have you:" 1) "visited inside a neighbor's house on your block" (81.5% of respondents), 2) "worked together with other neighbors on your block to improve its appearance" (57.7% of respondents), 3) "run a shopping errand for a neighbor on your block" (50.2% of respondents), and 4) "borrowed tools or household items from a neighbor on your block" (42.4% of respondents)? Responses were coded "1" for "yes" and "0" for "no." Responses for each individual were averaged across all four items to achieve an individual measure. Individual scores were then aggregated to the neighborhood-level by taking the average across respondents within each neighborhood. *Neighborhood social ties* ranges from 0.42 to 0.71 (mean = 0.58; $SD = 0.07$).

Concentrated disadvantage is a standardized five-item scale ($\alpha = .86$) that was created by averaging the standardized z-scores of 1990 census items.⁴ Items include 1) the proportion of residents who are 25 and over with less than a high school education (.74), 2) the proportion of residents living in poverty (.78), 3) the proportion of residents who identify as Black (.61), 4) the proportion of residents receiving government assistance (.94), and 5) the proportion of single-headed households (.94). All items loaded on a single factor (factor loadings noted in parentheses). Concentrated disadvantage ranges from -1.15 to 1.88 (mean = 0.00; $SD = 0.80$) across neighborhoods. On average, 59% of residents from each neighborhood do not have a high school education (age 25 and older), and 12% receive government assistance.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Item	Mean/%	SD	Min.	Max.
Dependent Variables				
<i>Direct Informal Social Control</i>				
Stop crime themselves	54%	0.12	0.38	0.76
Get another neighbor to help	61%	0.11	0.43	0.85
<i>Indirect Informal Social Control</i>				
Call the police	98%	0.03	0.92	1.00
Independent Variables				
<i>Neighborhood Social Ties</i>	0.58	0.07	0.42	0.71
<i>Concentrated Disadvantage</i>	0.00	0.80	-1.15	1.88
Less than HS education	59%	0.20	0.18	0.90
Poverty	16%	0.11	0.00	0.43
Single-headed households	15%	0.09	0.02	0.37
Black	42%	0.38	0.01	0.99
Government assistance	12%	0.10	0.01	0.34
<i>Residential Mobility</i>	0.00	0.87	-1.64	2.58
Renting	44%	0.18	0.14	0.9
Not in same house	47%	0.09	0.31	0.71
Controls				
<i>Neighborhood Crime Rate</i>	11.91	9.33	2.61	41.69
<i>Neighborhood Population</i>	3.90	2.17	0.76	9.26
<i>Lack of Police Response</i>	7%	0.05	0.00	0.17
<i>Fear of Retaliation</i>	59%	0.17	0.24	0.90

Residential mobility is a two-item scale ($\alpha = .73$), constructed by averaging the standardized z-scores for the 1990 census proportion of residents who lived in a different house five years prior to the survey and who rent their home or apartment (both factor loadings = .89). Residential mobility ranges from -1.64 to 2.58 (mean = 0.00; $SD = 0.87$). Both the proportion of those who rent (44%) and proportion of those who were living in a different house five years prior to the survey (47%) include nearly half of all respondents.

Additional Controls

Neighborhood crime rate is included as a control since it is related to both neighborhood structural characteristics and informal social control. The total crime rate for each neighborhood was calculated by averaging the rates for violent crime (including homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault) and property crime (including larceny, burglary, and motor vehicle theft) across three years (1990-1992) and dividing by 1,000 residents.⁵ The total crime rate ranges from 2.61 to 41.69 crimes per

1,000 residents (mean = 11.91) within each neighborhood.

Neighborhood population relative to 1,000 residents is also included as a control since involvement in social ties is likely related to neighborhood size.⁶ The number of residents may restrict the degree of interaction among neighbors. On the other hand, larger neighborhood populations may reduce the opportunity for neighbors to get to know one another on more intimate levels and could also reduce participation in social ties and informal social control (Wirth, 1938).

Lack of police response is included since it is likely to interfere with resident's perceptions of indirect and direct informal social control (e.g., contribute to a reduction in indirect informal social control due to a lack of trust in police to respond; contribute to a greater reliance on direct informal social control). This two-item scale ($\alpha = .92$)⁷ combines the responses of residents who answered that police would not respond to a residential burglary, as well as that police would not respond to a second scenario involving teens making noise late at night.

“No” responses were coded “1” and aggregated to the neighborhood-level.⁸

Fear of retaliation is included as an additional control since it has been found to influence whether or not adults intervene to stop unwanted behaviors (Wilkinson, 2007). Fear of retaliation includes residents’ responses to the question, “Do you think... these teenagers would hurt your neighbor, damage his or her property, or anything like that” (if they tried to intervene)? “Yes” responses were coded “1,” and the proportion of residents who felt that teens would retaliate was calculated for each neighborhood. On average, 59% of residents feel that teens would retaliate in some way if neighbors asked them to stop making noise late at night.⁹

Missing Data Analysis

All 30 neighborhoods are included in the analysis. Key study variables, apart from direct informal social control measured as respondents’ perceptions that their neighbors are willing to engage in informal social control themselves, are missing five or fewer percent of cases (ranging from 0% to 5.3%). Mean imputation was utilized as the preferred corrective method for missingness of these proportions (Lodder, 2013; Raymond, 1986; Tsikriktsis, 2005). In the case of direct informal social control, complete case analysis was used since prior work on missing data has found that imputation of dichotomous items has no clear statistical advantage and in some cases (linear imputation with rounding, for example) can produce *more* biased estimates when compared to complete case analysis (Allison, 2000, 2001; Horton et al., 2003).

An independent samples *t* test showed that respondents who are missing direct informal social control, measured as respondents’ perceptions that their neighbors are willing to engage in informal social control themselves (11.6%), tend to be older, White, have lower involvement in neighborhood social ties, lived in the neighborhood longer, are more educated, and less likely to have children living in the household compared to non-missing respondents. This missingness is distributed among neighborhoods, with each neighborhood missing 0% to 32% of cases (0-8 cases). A second independent samples *t* test further compared neighborhoods with four or more missing cases to the rest of the sample and revealed no significant differences on any variables included in the analysis between these two groups. To further account for missing data on this item, a combined measure of direct informal social control, including both residents’ willingness to intervene themselves as well as to get another neighbor to help, was also estimated since the combined measure limits the amount of missing data (4.8%).¹⁰

Analytic Strategy

A series of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models are estimated. The model building strategy takes into consideration the sample size ($n = 30$) and limits the number of covariates included in the first three model estimations due to considerations of adequate statistical power. To start, Model 1 estimates the effect of neighborhood social ties and neighborhood structural characteristics, including concentrated disadvantage and residential mobility, on both direct informal social control measures and indirect informal social control. Next, the squared term for concentrated disadvantage is added to Model 2 in order to estimate whether the relationship between concentrated disadvantage and each outcome is non-linear, as is the case in previous work (Baumer, 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2006; Warner, 2007). In Model 3, the interaction term for concentrated disadvantage and neighborhood social ties (concentrated disadvantage*neighborhood social ties) is included along with the main variables in order to test for a moderating effect of concentrated disadvantage on the relationship between neighborhood social ties and direct and indirect informal social control. For ease of interpretation, all component variables within the interaction terms are mean-centered so that the coefficients represent the effect of each component variable while the other components are at their means (Jaccard et al., 1990). Additional controls are then added to the Model 4 estimations, including neighborhood crime rate, neighborhood population, lack of police response, and fear of retaliation.

Model fit statistics, including *r*-squared, *F*-tests, and root mean square error (RMSE) terms are examined at each stage. In addition, multicollinearity, a common issue with neighborhood-level research, was examined by looking at the bivariate correlations, as well as variance inflation factors (VIFs) within each model. Given the small sample size included in the analysis ($n = 30$), significance is interpreted at the relaxed .10 alpha level.

Results

The results for both measures of direct informal social control are reported in Table 2. The first model estimations (Model 1) include neighborhood social ties, concentrated disadvantage, and residential mobility. For both measures of direct informal social control, the relationship between neighborhood social ties and direct informal social control, as well as the relationship between the neighborhood structural characteristics of concentrated disadvantage and residential mobility and direct informal social control are not significant. Therefore, the analysis proceeds to

Table 2: OLS Regression of Direct Informal Social Control on Neighborhood Social Ties and Neighborhood Characteristics

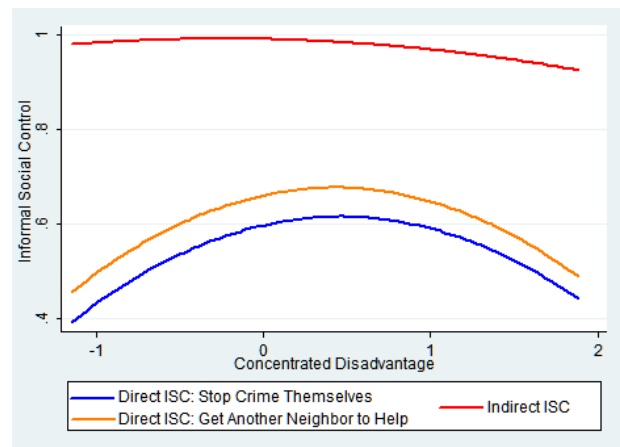
	Direct Informal Social Control							
	Stop Crime Themselves				Get Another Neighbor to Help			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Neighborhood Social Ties	-0.259 (.296)	-0.144 (.258)	-0.295 (.285)	-0.09 (.264)	-0.168 (.299)	-0.044 (.255)	-0.214 (.278)	-0.057 (.284)
Concentrated Disadvantage	0.043 (.027)	0.080*** (.026)	0.053* (.027)	0.074** (.031)	0.036 (.027)	0.075*** (.026)	0.049* (.026)	0.063* (.033)
Residential Mobility	-0.010 (.024)	-0.001 (.021)	0.003 (.024)	-0.022 (.025)	-0.001 (.025)	0.009 (.021)	0.015 (.024)	0.003 (.027)
Concentrated Disadvantage ²		-0.084*** (.027)		-0.071** (.031)		-0.090*** (.027)		-0.063* (.033)
Concentrated Disadvantage* Neighborhood Social Ties			-0.749* (.429)	-0.794* (.435)			-0.956** (.418)	-0.732* (.468)
Neighborhood Crime Rate				0.006** (.003)				0.002 (.003)
Neighborhood Population				0.019** (.009)				-0.003 (.010)
Lack of Police Response				0.013 (.394)				0.201 (.424)
Fear of Retaliation				-0.031 (.154)				0.080 (.166)
Constant	0.545*** (.021)	0.597*** (.025)	0.549*** (.020)	0.464*** (.101)	0.606*** (.021)	0.662*** (.024)	0.612*** (.020)	0.575*** (.109)
R ²	0.105	0.355	0.202	0.541	0.069	0.360	0.230	0.459

Note. * $p = .10$, ** $p = .05$, *** $p = .01$. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported; standard errors in parentheses.

test whether the relationship between concentrated disadvantage and perceptions of direct informal social control is non-linear, as well as whether the absence of significant direct effects for neighborhood social ties is perhaps due to the fact that concentrated disadvantage conditions the effect of neighborhood social ties on perceptions of direct informal social control.

First, the squared term for concentrated disadvantage is added to Model 2 estimations given previous findings (Baumer, 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2006; Warner, 2007). In both cases, the interaction term is negative and significant, indicating a non-linear relationship between concentrated disadvantage and both forms of direct informal social control (perceptions of neighbors stopping a crime themselves: $b = -0.08$; $se = 0.03$; $p < 0.01$; perceptions of neighbors getting another neighbor to help: $b = -0.90$; $se = 0.03$; $p < 0.01$). More specifically, the findings show that low levels of concentrated disadvantage are related to an increase in both forms of direct informal social control, while high levels of concentrated disadvantage are associated with a decrease in both forms of direct informal social control, as shown in Figure 1.

Next, the interaction term for concentrated disadvantage and neighborhood social ties is included

Figure 1: Non-linear relationship between concentrated disadvantage and informal social control.

along with the main variables in Model 3 for both measures of direct informal social control. In both cases, the interaction term is significant, suggesting that the effect of social ties on direct informal social control, measured as perceptions of neighbors preventing crime themselves ($b = -0.75$; $se = 0.43$; $p < 0.10$) and by getting another neighbor to help ($b = -0.96$; $se = 0.42$; $p < 0.05$), is significantly moderated by concentrated disadvantage.

Figures 2 and 3 provide a visual representation of these relationships. Within the figures, each line represents the effect of neighborhood social ties on direct informal social control when concentrated disadvantage is “low” (at its minimum), “moderate” (at its mean), and “high” (at its maximum). In both figures, the relationship between neighborhood social ties and direct informal social control is positive when concentrated disadvantage is “low.” However, at “high” levels of concentrated disadvantage, the relationship between neighborhood social ties and perceptions of direct informal social control is negative.

Figure 2: Moderating effect of concentrated disadvantage on the relationship between neighborhood social ties and direct informal social control, measured as neighbors stopping a crime themselves.

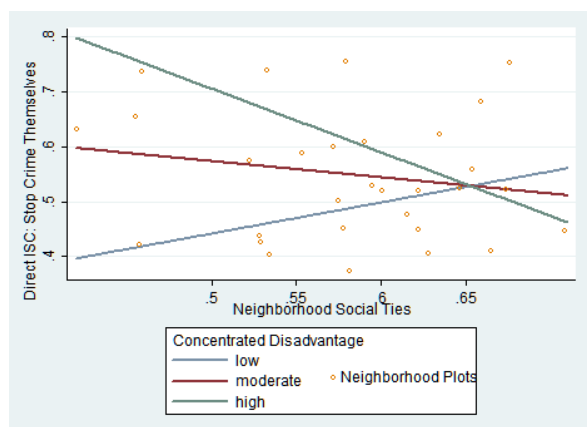
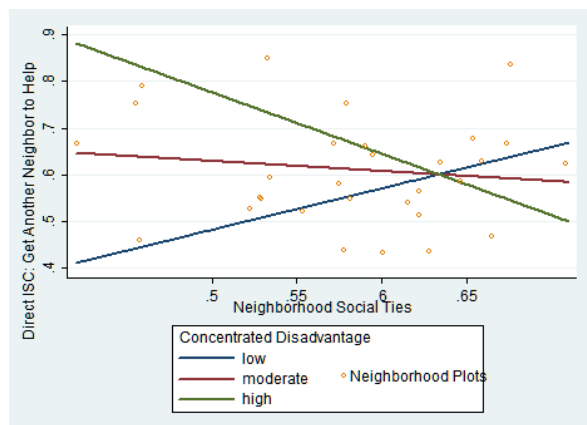


Figure 3: Moderating effect of concentrated disadvantage on the relationship between neighborhood social ties and direct informal social control, measured as neighbors getting another neighbor to help.



Model 4 (Table 2) adds additional controls to each model predicting direct informal social control. The interaction terms remain significant in the final

models after the addition of these controls, as does the squared term for concentrated disadvantage. As is the case in previous models, residential mobility is not significantly related to direct informal social control in either model. Crime rate ($b = 0.01$; $se = 0.00$; $p < 0.05$) and neighborhood population ($b = 0.02$; $se = 0.01$; $p < 0.05$) are significantly related to neighbors stopping a crime themselves but are not related to getting another neighbor to help.

Table 3 presents the results for indirect informal social control. Results for Model 1, including neighborhood social ties, concentrated disadvantage, and residential mobility, show that only concentrated disadvantage is significantly related to indirect informal social control ($b = -0.01$; $se = 0.01$; $p < 0.05$), while the coefficients for neighborhood social ties and residential mobility are not significant.

In Model 2, the squared term for concentrated disadvantage is once again added alongside the main variables, this time, to predict perceptions of indirect informal social control. Neighborhood social ties is significantly related to indirect informal social control ($b = 0.12$; $se = 0.06$; $p < 0.10$) within Model 2. The squared term is also significant, meaning that the relationship between concentrated disadvantage and indirect informal social control is non-linear ($b = -0.02$; $se = 0.01$; $p < 0.05$). More specifically, low levels of concentrated disadvantage are positively related to indirect informal social control; however, high levels of disadvantage are negatively related to residents' use of indirect informal social control, as predicted by social disorganization theory and the systemic model (Bursik & Grasmik, 1993). This relationship can be seen in Figure 1.

The interaction term between disadvantage and neighborhood social ties, added to Model 3, is not significant, indicating that the relationship between neighborhood social ties and perceptions of indirect informal social control is not dependent upon the level of concentrated disadvantage. Finally, Model 4 adds the additional controls to the model. Following the addition of control variables, including fear of retaliation ($b = -0.07$; $se = 0.04$; $p < 0.10$), to the Model 4 estimation, neighborhood social ties is significant and positively related to perceptions of indirect informal social control ($b = 0.14$; $se = 0.07$; $p < 0.10$), as was the case in Model 2.

Multicollinearity was examined, including bivariate correlations and variance inflation factors (VIFs), within all models in order to determine whether it is influencing the coefficients. All bivariate correlations are below the acceptable range (none are extremely high [i.e., greater than .80], and all are under .60). In addition, all VIFs were examined and found to be acceptable (none are high [i.e., 3.0 or above], and all are below 2.5).

Table 3: OLS Regression of Indirect Informal Social Control on Neighborhood Social Ties and Neighborhood Characteristics

	Indirect Informal Social Control			
	Call the Police			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Neighborhood Social Ties	0.094 (.068)	0.115* (.063)	0.089 (.068)	0.143* (.071)
Concentrated Disadvantage	-0.014** (.006)	-0.007 (.006)	-0.012* (.006)	0.002 (.008)
Residential Mobility	-0.008 (.006)	-0.006 (.005)	-0.006 (.006)	-0.005 (.007)
Concentrated Disadvantage ²		-0.015** (.007)		-0.022** (.008)
Concentrated Disadvantage* Neighborhood Social Ties			-0.112 (.102)	-0.001 (.116)
Neighborhood Crime Rate				0.000 (.001)
Neighborhood Population				-0.001 (.002)
Lack of Police Response				0.003 (.105)
Fear of Retaliation				-0.067* (.041)
Constant	0.982*** (.005)	0.992*** (.006)	0.983*** (.005)	1.033*** (.027)
R ²	0.264	0.394	0.297	0.484

Note. * $p = .10$, ** $p = .05$, *** $p = .01$. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported; standard errors in parentheses.

Model specification and goodness of fit characteristics were also examined for each model. The F -test for each final model (Model 4) is significant, indicating that r -squared statistics are reliable. Additionally, RMSE statistics are 0.11 or below within each final model, indicating good model fit.

Discussion

Findings of the present study provide three important theoretical contributions. First, they inform a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between neighborhood social ties and neighborhood structural characteristics and perceptions of three distinct forms of informal social control. These findings indicate that it is necessary to include distinct forms of informal social control in future research (see Gau, 2014; Warner, 2007, 2014; Wickes et al., 2017) and that previous measures of *global* informal social control have concealed important nuances within the relationship between neighborhood social ties (Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson, 2006), neighborhood structural characteristics (Elliot et al., 1996; Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson, 1997, 1999; Silver & Miller, 2004), and distinct forms of informal social control.

Second, findings indicate that residents' engagement in neighborhood social ties is positively

related to perceptions of neighbors' willingness to engage in indirect informal social control, or calling the police, regardless of the level of concentrated disadvantage. This finding is in line with the systemic reformation of social disorganization theory (Bursik & Grasmik, 1993) and the findings of previous work that relies on global measures of informal social control, such as those utilizing the PHDCN (Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson, 2006), but is counter to the findings of Warner (2007) as well as the ethnographic work of Wilkinson (2007) and Pattillo (1998) who found that familiarity among residents was associated with a decline in the likelihood of notifying the police within disadvantaged contexts since residents would protect those they knew from formal consequences by not engaging the police. While Wilkinson (2007) and Pattillo (1998) examined a violent youth sample and Black middle-class residents of a single Chicago neighborhood respectively, the findings presented here apply to a wider sample of residents of various backgrounds and disadvantage, which may account for the divergent findings. Among this more general sample, residents' may be more likely to engage police due to the anonymity that calling the police typically provides, while engagement in direct informal social control requires residents to actively identify themselves and personalizes their objections to

unwanted behavior, something that may be less desirable or risky in disadvantaged settings.

A third important contribution of the present study is that it adds to the discussion regarding the function and inconsistency of social ties to produce informal social control (Bellair, 2000; Morenoff et al., 2001; Warner & Rountree, 1997) and responds to the call brought forward by many scholars to investigate how these nuanced relationships may operate within specific neighborhood contexts (Bellair, 1997; Browning, 2009; Clinard & Abbott, 1976; Warner & Rountree, 1997; Wilkinson, 2007). The present study found a significant interaction effect of neighborhood social ties and concentrated disadvantage on perceptions of neighbors' willingness to engage in both forms of direct informal social control. In less disadvantaged areas, neighborhood social ties are positively related to residents' perceptions of neighbors' willingness to engage in direct informal social control in line with the systemic reformation of social disorganization theory (Bursik & Grasmik, 1993) and previous work utilizing global measures of informal social control (Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson, 2006). However, in areas of concentrated disadvantage, neighborhood social ties are associated with a significant reduction in perceptions of neighbors' willingness to engage in direct informal social control. This is counter to the systemic reformation of social disorganization theory (Bursik & Grasmik, 1993) and previous work utilizing global measures of informal social control (Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson, 2006), as well as counter to the findings of Wilkinson (2007) and Pattillo (1998), who found that familiarity among disadvantaged residents was associated with a greater likelihood of engagement in direct intervention.

One possible interpretation of this finding is that the more that residents in areas of disadvantage interact and engage with one another, the more likely they are to become aware of each other's engagement in deviant and law-violating behavior, contributing to a breakdown of direct informal social control (Suttles, 1968). On the other hand, social ties in less disadvantaged areas provides opportunities for norm clarification and the strengthening of direct informal social control (Suttles, 1968). An alternative explanation, according to negotiated coexistence theory (Browning, 2009; Browning et al., 2004), suggests that a decline in direct informal social control could be explained through an allowance for exceptions to normative behavior brought on by offenders' social capital. More specifically, crime-involved residents may be able to "negotiate" exceptions to criminal behavior through exchanges with norm-abiding residents given the degree of social capital provided to crime-prone residents in more

disadvantaged settings (Browning, 2009; Browning et al., 2004; Cwick & Doherty, 2018). These and other potential explanations should be further examined using data that can both distinguish among forms of informal social control and among the mechanisms that potentially explain these relationships, including negotiated coexistence, social learning, and differential association.

The results also confirm previous findings that concentrated disadvantage and informal social control share a negative, non-linear relationship (Baumer, 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2006). The present study finds that this relationship is non-linear for perceptions of both forms of direct informal social control and indirect informal social control, as found by Warner (2007). Low levels of disadvantage are related to residents' perceptions of their neighbors' willingness to get involved and stop neighborhood crime and their willingness to get another neighbor to help (direct informal social control), as well as their willingness to inform the police of neighborhood crime (indirect informal social control). However, higher levels of disadvantage are related to a decline in residents' perceptions of neighbors' willingness to prevent neighborhood crime in these three ways.

Residential mobility, on the other hand, was not significantly related to any of the measures of informal social control, including both measures of direct informal social control and indirect informal social control. This is contrary to previous work on social disorganization and the systemic model more generally (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993), as well as contrary to Warner (2007, 2014) who found a significant relationship between neighborhood-level mobility and residents' individual-level perceptions of their engagement in indirect informal social control. One of the present study's major findings, that neighborhood social ties are positively related to perceptions of indirect informal social control, is also contrary to Warner (2007). However, several methodological and measurement differences exist between Warner's (2007, 2014) analyses and the present study that likely account for these differences.¹¹

Directions for Future Research

The present study is not without limitations, which should be considered for guiding future research. One limitation of the present study is its sample size and the issue of missing data. Although model fit statistics, including *r*-squared, *F*-tests, and root mean square error (RMSE) terms, indicate that the models provide adequate estimates, small sample size may be limiting the analysis' ability to detect some relationships. Missing data are also a limitation of the present study. While this issue was examined in detail,

the findings should be interpreted with this limitation in mind.

The age of the data may also be viewed as an additional study limitation. However, there are a couple of reasons that these results are applicable today. First, Baltimore was structurally and demographically similar during the period under study to today.¹² Second, technological and societal changes have done little to influence the function and importance of neighborhood social ties for informal social control and other neighborhood processes (see Hampton & Wellman, 2003). Scholars have long recognized these changes and acknowledge that the misunderstanding that engagement with neighbors has somehow declined in importance “is predicated on the assumption that neighborhood is exclusively a primary group and therefore should possess the ‘face-to-face,’ intimate, affective relations which characterize all primary groups” (Sampson et al., 1999, p. 50). Sampson and colleagues (1999) rejected this understanding of neighborhood social ties and highlighted the importance that neighborhood social ties have for facilitating the non-face-to-face connections that support informal social control efforts, while other neighborhood scholars have pointed to technology as a mechanism that increases face-to-face ties (Hampton & Wellman, 2003; Sampson, 2006; Wellman, 2004). In general, the abundance of recent work on the subject of social ties and neighborhood dynamics (Browning et al., 2017; Dempsey et al., 2011; Hipp & Williams, 2020; Kubrin & Weizter, 2003; Liu, 2020; Miletić, 2015; Warner & Berg, 2020) evidences the importance of these relationships and predicates the necessity to continue to study these dynamics today.

Conclusion

Findings support the need to incorporate items that capture distinct forms of informal social control into future research and data collection efforts (Gau, 2014; Warner, 2007, 2014; Wickes et al., 2017). Including measures that ask residents to consider their own responses as well as their neighbors’ responses to various crime scenarios and neighborhood problems, items that capture various measures of engagement in social ties, and appropriate neighborhood correlates would make it possible for future work to provide a more complete understanding of these relationships that could guide future informal social control efforts and crime prevention strategies.

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Endnotes

¹ Pattillo's (1998) ethnographic study examined a Black middle-class community. However, Sampson (2012) found that Black middle-class communities are often structurally comparable to disadvantaged White communities.

² These two items were analyzed separately in order to examine differences among neighbors' willingness to engage in crime prevention themselves or by getting another neighbor to help. However, a measure of combined direct informal social control was also included for comparison.

³ The alpha reliability score was calculated using estimations of tetrachoric correlations, which are preferred for dichotomous items (Lorenzo-Seva & Ferrando, 2012; Uebersax, 2006).

⁴ This method is preferred since it considers each included variable within the combined score equally so that scores reflect "true" differences among variables. Other methods (e.g., factor scores) weight each included variable, making scores less directly interpretable (see DiStefano et al., 2009). Similar results were achieved using both methods.

⁵ Total crime rate was selected since both violent and property crime have been shown to affect informal social control (Miethe, 1995; Skogan, 1986). Models that include violent crime in place of total crime produced substantively similar results and are reported in the Appendix.

⁶ Models estimated using a measure of population density, calculated as the population (number of residents) divided by the size of the neighborhood measured as 10 linear squares on a map, in place of neighborhood population produced similar findings.

⁷ The alpha reliability score for 'lack of police response' was calculated using estimations of tetrachoric correlations, which are preferred for dichotomous items (Lorenzo-Seva & Ferrando, 2012; Uebersax, 2006).

⁸ Residents who indicated that their neighbors would call the police in the case of a residential burglary or in the case of teens making noise late at night ($n = 636$) were asked, "Do you think the police would come and do something about it/the noise?" If respondents answered "no" to either scenario, they were coded as "1." "Yes" responses and "Yes, the police would come, but too late to help" were coded as "0" in order to capture the most conservative estimate of the lack of police response. The proportion of residents who did not believe that the police would come in either scenario (of those who said that neighbors would call) was totaled for each neighborhood. Missing data for this item is 3.6% and is spread evenly across neighborhoods, ranging from zero ($n = 15$) to five missing responses ($n = 1$). Despite similarity between this measure and the measure of indirect informal social control, these items are not significantly correlated ($r = -.085$).

⁹ Fear of retaliation' includes a large amount of missing data (19.9%). Therefore, analyses were conducted with and without its inclusion. In both cases, results are substantively similar.

¹⁰ Models estimating the effect of neighborhood social ties, neighborhood structural characteristics, and the interaction term for concentrated disadvantage and neighborhood social ties (concentrated disadvantage*neighborhood social ties) on the combined direct informal social control measure (includes residents' willingness to intervene themselves and to get another neighbor to help) obtained substantively similar results.

¹¹ The present study captures respondents' perceptions of their neighbors' engagement in informal social control, a neighborhood-level phenomenon, in contrast to Warner (2007, 2014), who examined individual-level perceptions of behavior using multilevel models. Additionally, Warner's (2007, 2014) measures of direct and indirect informal social control, while similar to those included in the present study, include important differences. Namely, Warner's measure of indirect informal social control includes getting a landlord or additional authority to help instead of solely whether residents would engage the police, which is the case with the present study. Finally, the present study captures neighbors' responses to a residential burglary, while previous work (Warner, 2007, 2014) includes residents' response to a disagreement, such as a neighbor playing loud music or a dog being unleashed. Finally, while Warner's (2007, 2014) measure of social ties included the average number of friends and relatives residents reported living in their neighborhood, the present study utilized an "active" measure of engagement in social ties (Sampson, 2012).

¹² The study's timeframe (1990-1994) encompasses a stable period of population growth and economic conditions similar to conditions today. For example, Baltimore continues to be a primarily Black-White city (1990 population: 62.5% Black and 39.1% White [U.S. Census, 1990]; 2018 population: 59.2% Black and 30.4% White [American Community Survey, 2018]). In addition, incarceration rates, crime trends, and racial tensions are similar today compared to in the past. Violent crime rates are returning to their 1990's peaks. In 2015, violent riots followed the controversial death of Freddie Gray that occurred while Gray was in the custody of Baltimore police. That same year, the city's murder rate reached 48.97 per 100,000 residents, surpassing its 1993 peak of 48.77 homicides per 100,000 residents, and remains high today (Baltimore Sun, 2020; Rector & Fenton, 2015).

Appendix

Table 4: OLS Regression of Informal Social Control on Neighborhood Social Ties and Neighborhood Characteristics, including Violent Crime Rate

	Direct ISC: Stop Crime Themselves	Direct ISC: Get Another Neighbor to Help	Indirect ISC: Call the Police
Neighborhood Social Ties	-0.110 (.252)	-0.070 (.279)	0.148* (.068)
Concentrated Disadvantage	0.036 (.033)	0.051 (.037)	-0.002 (.009)
Residential Mobility	-0.020 (.023)	0.004 (.026)	-0.006 (.006)
Concentrated Disadvantage ²	-0.087*** (.031)	-0.068* (.035)	-0.023*** (.008)
Concentrated Disadvantage* Neighborhood Social Ties	-0.924** (.434)	-0.762* (.482)	-0.026 (.118)
Violent Crime Rate	0.041** (.017)	0.013 (.019)	0.005 (.005)
Neighborhood Population	0.020** (.009)	-0.003 (.010)	0.000 (.002)
Lack of Police Response	0.051 (.384)	0.208 (.426)	0.011 (.104)
Fear of Retaliation	-0.033 (.148)	0.084 (.165)	-0.072* (.040)
Constant	0.446*** (.100)	0.571*** (.111)	1.029*** (.027)
<i>R</i> ²	0.568	0.459	0.501

Note. **p* = .10, ***p* = .05, ****p* = .01. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported; standard errors in parentheses.