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# VARIATIONS IN URBAN HOMICIDE ♣

## Chicago, New York City, and Global Urban Policy

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\* This essay is based on a study sponsored by a Harry F. Guggenheim Foundation funded study of why Chicago and New York City's homicide trends have differed. Data have also been drawn from a study of the history of gangs in Chicago and an eleven nation study of children in organized armed violence.

In the United States during the 1990s, some cities saw drastic drops in violence while others did not. Detroit, Washington DC, and New Orleans, for example, remain among the most violent cities in the world. On the other hand, San Francisco, Houston, Boston, and San Diego have seen rates of violence plummet to European-like lows. Entering the 1990s, Chicago and New York City had similar homicide rates. However, by the middle of the nineties the two cities sharply diverged with Chicago's murder rate hovering at three times New York's rate or roughly equivalent to homicide rates in Mexico City or Moscow.

Notions that policing strategies largely explain variation in rates of violence have been skeptically greeted by criminologists (Blumstein and Wallman 2000). However, no plausible explanation for the stark divergence in U.S. urban homicide rates has been credibly presented. One reason for this may be the narrowness of criminological investigations. In fact, very few studies, in the US or internationally, look at variation in violence between cities, instead focusing on national-level analyses (e.g. Gurr 1989). This essay seeks to supplement the criminological thinking on homicide by adding insights from studies in urban and globalization research.

First, we will review several literatures relating to violence. Second, we describe the methods of a study of homicide in the 1990s in Chicago and New York City and present its qualitative and quantitative data. Finally, we discuss some implications of our study for policy on urban violence through-out the world.

## Literatures

### **American Criminology**

Both poverty and income inequality have been found to be related to homicide in quantitative studies, although the criminological literature is filled with debate on the topic (see Patterson 1991 for a review). Few studies look at differences between cities, content with a national or regional "level of analysis" (e.g. La Free 1998). When cities do come into play (e.g. Short 1997; Blumstein and Wallman 1999; Reiss and Roth 1993) the central variable is often "city size." However, the crime drop in the 1990s has not fit into the previous patterns of higher homicide rate in larger cities, as Monkonen (2001) has pointed out. Thus the criminological literature has not adequately addressed the stark 1990s divergence in city homicide rates — why the sharp declines in New York City, Boston, Houston, and San Francisco, but not Chicago, New Orleans, Washington D.C., or Detroit?

Analyses by US scholars have also generally avoided contextualizing US violence internationally, except to place US rates of violence as markedly higher than other western countries (e.g. Zimring and Hawkins 1997). For example, both Gurr (1989) and Monkonen (2001) have consistently compared US violence to lower European rates and Lane (1997) has produced a comprehensive and textured longitudinal study of murder in the U.S. However nearly all studies of violence globally use national-level analysis (Gurr and Harff 1994; Gurr 2000),

Some US cities have rates of violence similar to the more violent cities in the Third World. For example, Rio de Janeiro, a city often labeled as exceptionally violent, has

homicide rates of approximately 40/100,000 similar to Detroit, Washington D.C. or New Orleans. Buenos Aires, a thousand miles to the south of Rio, has rates more like New York City and less than 1/4<sup>th</sup> the rate of Rio or Sao Paolo. Within Brazil, Rio de Janeiro, Recife, and Sao Paolo are among the world's most violent cities, while Brasilia and Porto Alegre have much lower rates. While some Latin American cities, like Caracas, San Salvador, or Bogota have often seen rates of violence of more than 80/100,000 — or on a par with New Orleans in the early 1990s — others like Santiago de Chile have rates under 5/100,000 or more like Tokyo or London. In other regions of the world, comparative data is scarcer, but Varshney's (2001) work looking at differences in ethnic violence between Indian cities suggests that urban homicide rates in South Asia may also vary widely.

Within the US, politicians and some criminologists (Kelling and Coles 1999) have claimed that police tactics have been responsible for drops in homicide rates. They cite the "compstat" computer program in New York City and some version of "zero tolerance" to "broken windows" and petty crimes as decisive in the unprecedented drop in crime in that city.

Other criminologists have been more skeptical, pointing to patterns of decline in homicide that preceded the introduction of various policies and to similar drops in violent crime in cities that have not carried out "zero tolerance" policies (Blumstein and Rosenfeld 1998). One careful meta-analysis argues that one *central myth* in law enforcement is that "police have a substantial, broad and *independent* impact on the nation's crime rate" (Eck and Maguire 1999, 249). Other contextual variables, like community action, employment trends, etc, accompany police actions and the relative weight of each is difficult to discern.

Other explanations for the "crime drop" have been touted, but appear to have little generalizability. For example, Sampson's notion of "collective efficacy," based in the Chicago School tradition of neighborhood-level analysis (e.g. Park 1940; Bursik and Grasmick 1993) appears to explain incremental change in Chicago, but does not account for trends in homicide in New York or other cities that saw a precipitous crime drop (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). Is it reasonable to assume that neighbors banded together suddenly and so much more effectively in New York City than Chicago and caused a sudden drop in crime in virtually all that city's neighborhoods *at once*? And Monkkonen's (2001) notion of murder "cycles," works well for describing changes in New York City, but begs the question as to why Chicagoans didn't also tire of violence and set off a downward spiral.

The rise and fall of drug markets as a reason for declines in crime has also been cited by scholars, beginning with Andy Hamid's prescient work (1990). Both Blumstein and Wallman, and Johnson et al (2000) explain much of New York City's decline in homicide by the "maturing" of drug markets. Accordingly, their analysis would predict declines in violence in Chicago to take place a few years later than declines in New York City, since crack entered the Chicago market a few years later than it did in NYC. In Chicago, gang truces in 1991 and 1995 were widely believed to be efforts to stop the fighting to create a better "business" climate, but none of the valiant truce efforts succeeded for long and high rates of violence persisted (Venkatesh 2000; Popkin et al. 2000). While all U.S. cities apparently experienced peaks and declines in violence corresponding to the intensity of crack wars (Blumstein and Wallman 200), drug market cycles fail to explain drastic drops in some cities and only small declines in others.

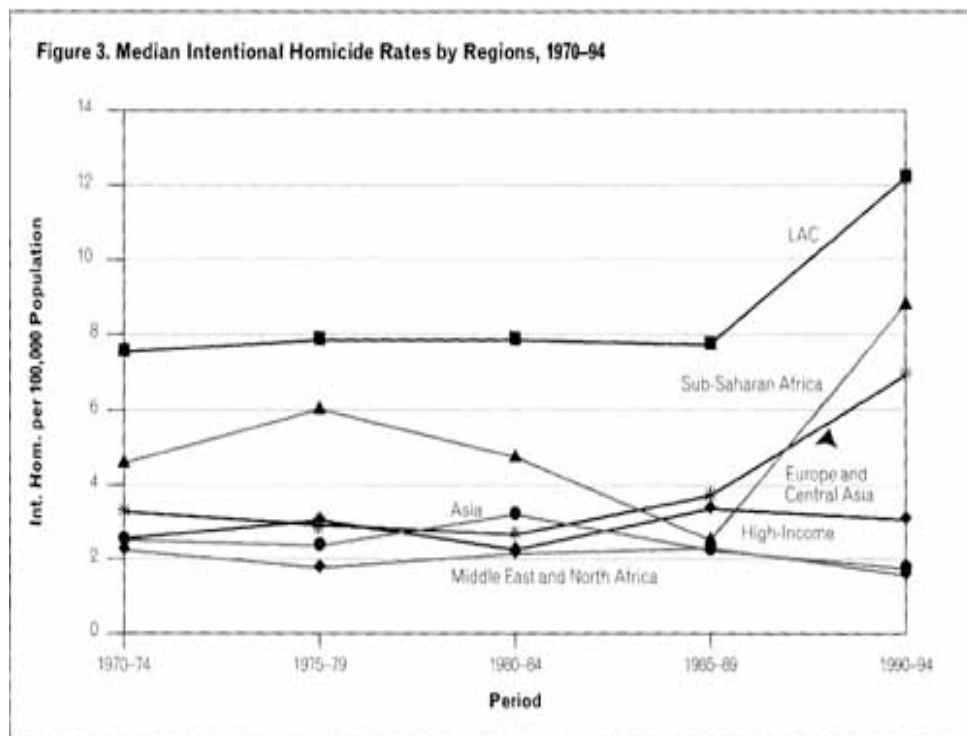
At this point the frustration with the US criminological literature should be apparent: there are more questions than answers and variation between cities has not been adequately addressed. Perhaps the reasons for the variation are more complex, and require analysis that

takes into account the varied effects of global trends on different urban centers. In order to understand urban variation in violence, we need to detour and explore literatures on housing, human rights, and economic development.

### Globalization, urban political economy, housing, and human rights

Internationally, violence has been on a steady incline over the past decade, from about 6 per 100,000 in 1990 to 8.8/100,000 in 2000 (Krug et al 2002 ). This steady incline goes in the opposite direction from the U.S. pattern of overall declines in the late 1990s. but, like the U.S., violence varies widely by place, with cities in South America, the Caribbean, Africa, and more recently, Eastern Europe, the most violent, and urban centers in the Middle and Far East, Europe and Australasia the least violent (Fajnzylber 1998)

### Chart One



World Bank

Ted Gurr’s Minorities at Risk project has argued that since the fall of the Soviet Union, ethno-religious violence has been more prevalent than East/West or class conflicts. This “explosion” of ethno-religious conflicts, however, Gurr argues is not just a recent one but “a continuation of a trend that began as early as the 1960s” (Gurr and Harff 1994, 13). While Gurr is discussing explicitly ethnic, communal, or religious conflicts, his description of rising violence by ethnic groups also fits the patterns of large increases in homicide in most cities in the United States at the end of the 1960s. A quick glance at Georgakis’ *Detroit. I do mind dying* (1975) shows the relationship between the devastation of de-industrialization, the failure

of the civil rights movement and sky-rocketing rates of African American violence at the end of the 1960s in Detroit (see also Sugre 1996).

Lane (1999) argues that violence in the US, and by extension elsewhere in the world, has risen with the decline of industrial-era discipline and how changes in the structure of employment affected single males, particularly from oppressed ethnic groups. For Lane, like Gurr, racial oppression is key to understanding violence. Gurr (2000), however, in his more recent studies, has found that the process of democratization and pluralism have reduced ethnic violence at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His conclusions are disputed by Snyder (2000), who argues conversely that democracy has produced more ethnic strife. Gurr's quantitative analysis of a reduction in the number of conflicts, however, is not challenged.

On the other hand, what emerges from Lane, Gurr, and Snyder is evidence for variation in ethnic conflict and level of violence, though none of these scholars takes cities as the prime unit of analysis. While some countries have been able to overcome high levels of violence — e.g. Lebanon and Northern Ireland — others, like Colombia, Haiti, and South Africa, have not. How democratization, development, and discrimination is handled in a given state, region, or city, apparently matters.

While the direction of causality is in question, areas with persistently high rates of violence also appear to be home to institutionalized groups of armed young men. Some of these men are in gangs, others in para-military “death squads,” others in drug cartels, and still others in fundamentalist militias. While in Lebanon such groups were disarmed by Syria (Khalaf 1998), elsewhere the failure of armed young men to give up their guns has meant continued violence (see Hagedorn in press). The weakness of the state, as in Iraq, Colombia, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Haiti, and other countries permits the flourishing of various types of armed groups who often sustain themselves through the underground economy.

The international literature on the underground or informal economy (e.g. Portes et al 1989) argues that off the books economic activity has not declined with “industrialization,” as was predicted by modernization theorists. In parallel with Lane and Gurr's arguments, Portes, Castells, and other urban scholars argue that the demoralization brought about by the failure of modernity and the institutions of the state has led to the burgeoning of the underground economy, and one might add, violence. For example, independence in Jamaica did not result in a steadily modernizing state, but the creation of “posses” or groups of armed young men fighting for power alongside political factions (Gunst 1995). Indeed, Castells' (1997) discussion of the black hole of the ghetto and Wacquant's (1999) notion of an outcast ghetto implicitly link the inequalities of a globalized information economy to violence in both the “Fourth World” and First World ghettos.

For all these theorists the power of global corporations and the new economy has rendered states less important and weakened their social welfare functions. Globalization, though it does not mean the complete demise of the state, has as its heart neo-liberal policies that move investment from social welfare to the military and police. International Monetary Fund policies have forced reductions in public sector spending often to pay on a rising foreign debt (eg Sassen 2001). To sum up, according to the influential *Slums of the World* Report, “the main single cause of increases in poverty and inequality during the 1980s and 1990s was the retreat of the state” (2003).

In the United States and some other advanced countries, social welfare cuts have weakened the safety net for the very poor and a law enforcement build-up has been underway for more than two decades. The various wars on drugs, gangs, and terror all mean increased

reliance on incarceration and a technological and physical build-up of the repressive apparatus of the state. The prison in the US has been conceptualized by Wacquant (2000) as an extension of the ghetto and the continuation of racist methods of social control of Black people.

Internationally, the world is becoming urbanized at startling rates. Mike Davis (2004) reports that in 1950 there were 86 cities over 1 million, today there are 400. The report *Slums of the World* points out that today nearly one billion people live in what can be characterized as slums. In many of these areas, like the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, the townships of Soweto, or hills in Port au Prince, the state's security functions are taken over by various groups of armed young men (e.g. Dowdney 2001).

The spatial literature on globalizing cities is far too vast to fully review here. Changing abstract and social spaces of the city have been explored by a set of urban theorists, beginning with Lefebvre (1996) and Harvey (1973). For Castells, Sassen, and others, the city has become the most important unit of analysis as the global economy valorizes some areas and marginalizes others. What is important for our analysis is that within cities and regions, the methods of re-dividing space vary, and this variation may have an effect on social behavior, like violence.

Within cities, slums and ghettos are created, but as the more affluent population also grows, space needs to be reclaimed from the poor.<sup>1</sup> Marcuse (2000) finds the "citadel and the ghetto" as the ideal form for globalizing, divided, cities. Walls of segregation (Caldiera 1999) mark the global era whether through ethnic cleansing or merely making the city safe through gentrification and support for the "revanchist" state (Smith 1995). The process of urban renewal is familiar in the US and world wide through policies like the Area Removal Acts in South Africa, that led to increased violence and the creation of institutionalized gangs in the Cape Flats (Pinnock 1989). Displacement is one urban process that has been consistently linked with disorder in US criminological theory (e.g. Skogan 1990).

The UN argues that moving populations for reasons of economic development is inevitable, but human rights must not be sacrificed. For example, Principle 8 of the UN Guidelines on Rights of Internally Displaced People states: "Displacement shall not be carried out in a manner that violates the rights to life, dignity, liberty and security of those affected." Ethnic cleansing and other forcible measures to sanitize areas for dominant groups are universally abhorred as violent violations of human rights. Forced displacement due to gentrification, economic development, and for "crime prevention" reasons may also be violations of human rights and can lead to unintended consequences that include increased violence.

## Methods

Homicide rates for Chicago and New York for the past 35 years were compiled as well as trends in homicide for US cities presented in Uniform Crime Reports. Chicago's homicide rates were geo-coded through use of the Chicago Homicide data set. Homicide data was graphically integrated with data on the displacement of Chicago public housing tenants from the Chicago Housing Authority and various advocacy groups.

Internationally, urban homicide rates were garnered from a variety of UN, public health, and local government sources. We note that there is no comprehensive longitudinal international urban homicide data set.

Fourteen interviews of current gang members, who had been personally involved with organized armed violence, were conducted with a special emphasis on understanding the effects of displacement and gentrification on violent gang activity. Other interviews, talks, and unpublished material on the history of gangs in Chicago were used to supplement the interviews with current gang members. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and entered into HyperResearch™ a qualitative software program where they were coded and analyzed. These respondents were also chosen for their childhood histories of participation in organized armed violence, so they are not representative of gang members as a group.

**Table One**

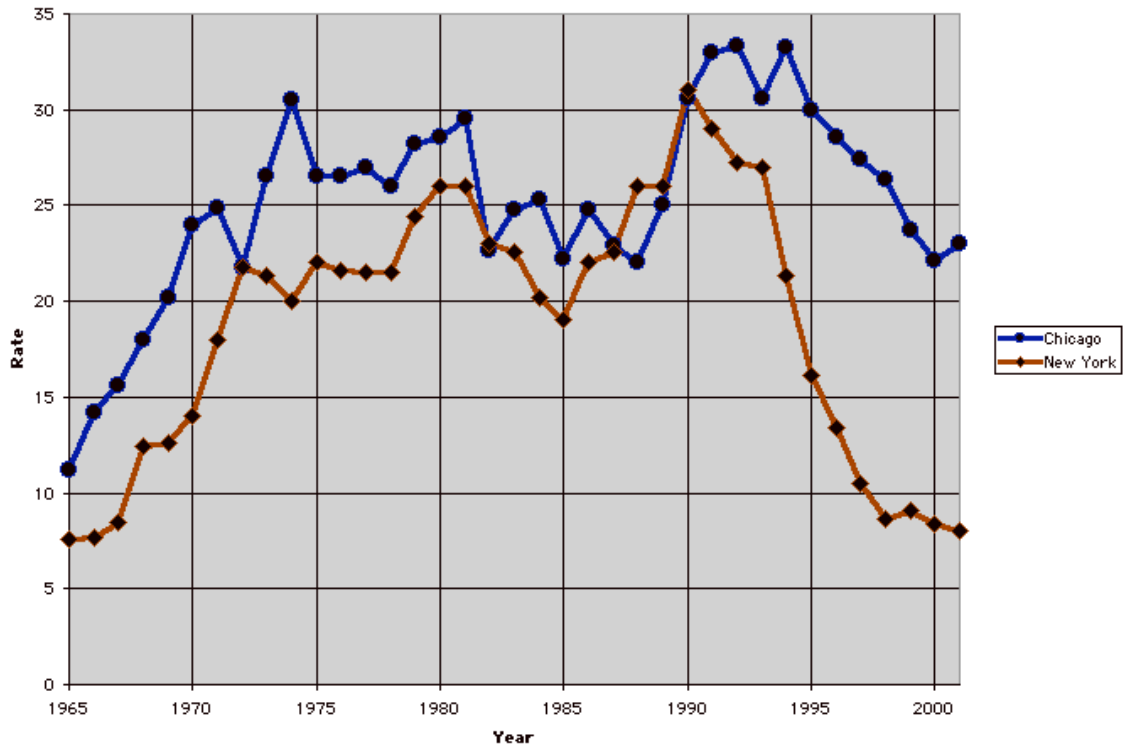
Gender	Present Age	Gang	Location	Ethnicity
1. male	21	Unknown ViceLords	West side	African American
2. male	23	Vice Lords	West Side	African American
3. male	21	Vice Lords	West Side	African American
4. male	23	Black Gangster Disciples	South Side	African American
5. male	20	Black Gangster Disciples	South Side	African American
6. male	28	Black Gangster Disciples	South Side Displaced	African American
7. male	19	Black Gangster Disciples	South Side Displaced	African American
8. female	18	Black Gangster Disciples	South Side Displaced	African American
9. female	21	Black Gangster Disciples	South Side Displaced	African American
10. male	21	Satan's Disciples	North Side Gentrification	Mexican
11. Male	22	Satan's Disciples	North Side Gentrification	Mexican
12. male	20	Satan's Disciples	North Side Gentrification	Mexican
13. Male	35	Maniac Latin Disciples	North Side Gentrification	Mexican
14. Male	28	Latin Kings	North Side	Puerto Rican

## Chicago and New York City

## Trends in homicide

Chicago and New York City have had parallel rates of homicide since the end of Prohibition, but in the 1990s there was a marked divergence.

Chart Two



Chicago and New York City do not markedly differ in criminological variables that are typically correlated with violence:

- rates of poverty — both cities have 19% of their residents below poverty, tied for 25<sup>th</sup> in the nation;
- income distribution between and within race is similar as shown in the table below:
- New York is the U.S.' third most segregated metropolitan area for Black people and Chicago 5<sup>th</sup>;
- Chicago has 15.6 % of its Black males between 15-24 years old; NYC, 15.8;

**Table Two      Distribution of Income in NYC and Chicago**

<b>2000 Census</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Middle Class</b>	<b>Affluent</b>
<b>ALL</b>			
<b>NYC</b>	31.1	26.2	42.7
<b>Chicago</b>	29.2	30.4	40.5
<b>BLACK</b>			
<b>NYC</b>	43.5	29.7	26.8
<b>Chicago</b>	51.5	28.2	20.3
<b>HISPANIC</b>			
<b>NYC</b>	52.5	28.4	19.1
<b>Chicago</b>	39.9	36.0	24.1

Certainly, minor differences in these variables cannot explain the sudden change in homicide in one city and not in another. So what factors do differentiate Chicago and New York City in the 1990s?

### **Institutionalized Gangs and Resistance to Police Suppression**

Around the world, some cities, like Rio de Janeiro, are home to *institutionalized*<sup>2</sup> gangs with high rates of homicide and others, like Buenos Aires, do not have such gangs and have much lower murder rates. In Chicago, the gangs founded in the 1950s have persisted for more than half a century (Spergel 1995), but New York has seen gangs come and go. A Latin King describes the division of his neighborhood by gang which has been lasted for more than forty years

*...if you look at Humboldt Park, you've got two side ends divided by Sacramento and Humboldt Boulevard. The east side of Humboldt Park is primarily Latin Folks, Latin Disciples, the Spanish Cobras, Dragons, Gents, and I don't know who else is over there. [The respondent's Latin Kings are in the west]*

In New York, gangs began dying out in the 1960s and periodically new gangs formed (Schneider 1999). The sales of crack in the late 1980s and 1990s were thus organized and conducted by groups with shallow roots to their communities and narrowly focused on the best way to sell drugs (see Johnson et al 1989; Hamid 1990). Thus when police “cracked” down on the drug crews, they had little support in their communities and were taken off the streets.

*Since the businesses had few neighborhood ties or enduring loyalties to its employees, they were generally unconcerned about the war of attrition waged by NYPD on their work force, so long as they were not prevented from making a profit. Over time, however, as the NYPD ratcheted up pressure on the block through more frequent undercover operations and a greater uniformed presence, the quality of the workforce steadily deteriorated and the businesses incurred daily losses from employee theft and police seizures.*

(Curtis and Wendel 2002, 5)

As Bruce Johnson, Andrew Golub, and Eloise Dunlap (2000, 188) report, “the police...have successfully ‘taken back the streets’ from drug sellers and other disorderly persons in the 1980s.” Nothing could be more different than in Chicago.

Police put pressure on gangs and drug dealers to an unprecedented degree in response to community outrage at levels of violence identical to New York City. But the arrest of leaders of Chicago’s institutionalized gangs not only didn’t end the gangs, but may have backfired and increased levels of violence.

*See, that's another thing that I want to tell you about. They think that they're so smart, taking all the cheese [gang leaders] off of the street, they just fucked up. You left a group with young wild peoples out here, don't got, cause we all was young, we ride, you left us out here with nobody to tell you. Because, back in the days, ask anyone, GDs had structure. The hundreds [far south side] had structure. There wasn't no you could do what you want to do. You could do what you want to do, gonna get your shit split. Then, once they took all the cheese away, it wasn't it. Now, you got outlaws. Everybody their own, you got all types of gangsters out there. It's a bunch of outlaws, because there ain't no order.*

Rather than destroying gangs that had been in place for more than fifty years, the police pressure in Chicago fragmented them and spread the violence from being only inter-gang to also becoming intra-gang. This Gangster Disciple leader explains the history behind it:

*A. But when they was out here, the leaders and coordinators and all that, when they was here, they was feeding everybody, all over the United States. But since they got locked up, Chicago went south, it just went south.*

*Q. So, [the police] have been effective, then?*

*A. Yeah, it was effective and then everybody went on their own thing. There ain't no laws, and there ain't no rules, and the same rules that applied, the stuff they don't want you to do, and the stuff they do want you to do...they still apply, but who out here to tell you what's the plan? Ain't no more gang meetings, you see what I'm saying, ain't none of that. And it's like, everyman for himself now. You know what you is and you know what you have, but don't be doing nothing stupid, but...*

In New York, police pressure apparently had the intended effect of taking the drug crew leaders off the street and reducing violence. In Chicago, the same policies had the unintended effect of fracturing more long-standing gangs and increasing violence. As Dixon and Johns (2001, 45) point out about a similar persisting gang situation in Cape Town, South Africa: “the symbiotic relationship between gang and community cannot be broken by force.” The gangs in Chicago didn’t go away, they split into smaller, more violent, units.

## **Housing Displacement**

In cities around the world, a profound re-division of space is occurring. As the city is being made safe for the affluent and the dominant ethnic or religious group, the methods used to redesign the city vary. In this regard, the spatial and racial policies of Chicago and New York City differ markedly. In the 1960s, both cities saw massive

displacement of African American residents to make room for expressways and high rise housing (Caro 1974; Cohen and Taylor 2000), Coincident in both cities with the 1960s' displacement, deindustrialization, and demoralization was a sharp increase in violence. Poor neighborhoods like the South Bronx in NYC and Lawndale and Englewood in Chicago became depopulated and the housing stock deteriorated or was destroyed by arson (Shill et al 2002) and homicide rates shot up.

However in 1985, after a struggle over the effects of the fiscal crisis and the Reagan-era gutting of the federal Housing and Urban Development budget, NYC Mayor Koch announced the largest urban housing initiative in the history of the United States- a commitment of \$4 billion dollars to build or renovate more than 100,000 housing units over 10 years. The actual expenditures turned out to be larger- more than \$5 billion and 182, 000 units (Shill et al. 2002). One result was the reversal of the trend of depopulation in areas like the South Bronx, who saw a 11% gain in population in the 1990s and a reversal of its reputation as a US "Beirut" to a "Comeback City (Grogan and Proscio 2000).

Unlike Chicago, NYC's housing program focused on building new housing on the vacant and burnt out land in the South Bronx and elsewhere. Such building programs are "in theory more likely than demand-oriented programs, like housing vouchers, to generate positive spillover effected in distressed neighborhoods" (Schill et al. 530). While housing scholars usually look at the impact of falling crime rates for housing values (Schwartz et al 2003), one "spill-over effect" may have been reductions in crime.

Whatever impact housing investment may have played on crime rates in NYC, the refurbishing of housing in the South Bronx and elsewhere did *not* result in the displacement of residents. Rather, in New York's tight housing market, people wanted to stay in their neighborhoods and wanted to stay even more as they improved. In Chicago, while most tenants wanted to stay in their homes and have them fixed, CHA policy forced them to move.

Rather than reconstruction of housing units in previously devastated neighborhoods, Chicago decided to demolish the high-rise housing projects built in the 1960s. At its peak, the 28, 16-story towers of Robert Taylor Homes housed 27,000 residents and was part of several public housing projects that consisted of the "densest concentration of public housing in the nation" (Cohen and Taylor 188). Rather than build public housing for the over-crowded Black population in "integrated areas, Richard J. Daley had packed public housing into the ghetto and "reinforced the city's racial boundaries (Cohen and Taylor 184).

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the City of Chicago did not invest heavily in new housing, as in New York City. Instead, under Vincent Lane, the Chicago Housing Authority moved monies from renovation to law enforcement, spending \$250 million between 1994 to 1996 on his Anti-Drug Initiative and up to \$80 a year on security alone. Lane's much ballyhooed, and numerous sweeps cost a cool \$175,000 *apiece* (Popkin et al 2000).

Lane's war on gangs did not work, no matter how many sweeps and how much money he spent. Lane was fired and HUD took over the CHA and began plans to dismantle the projects. Coincidentally, now that the land, located near the expanding downtown Loop, was becoming valuable, developers were eager to "help" and make a substantial profit as well.

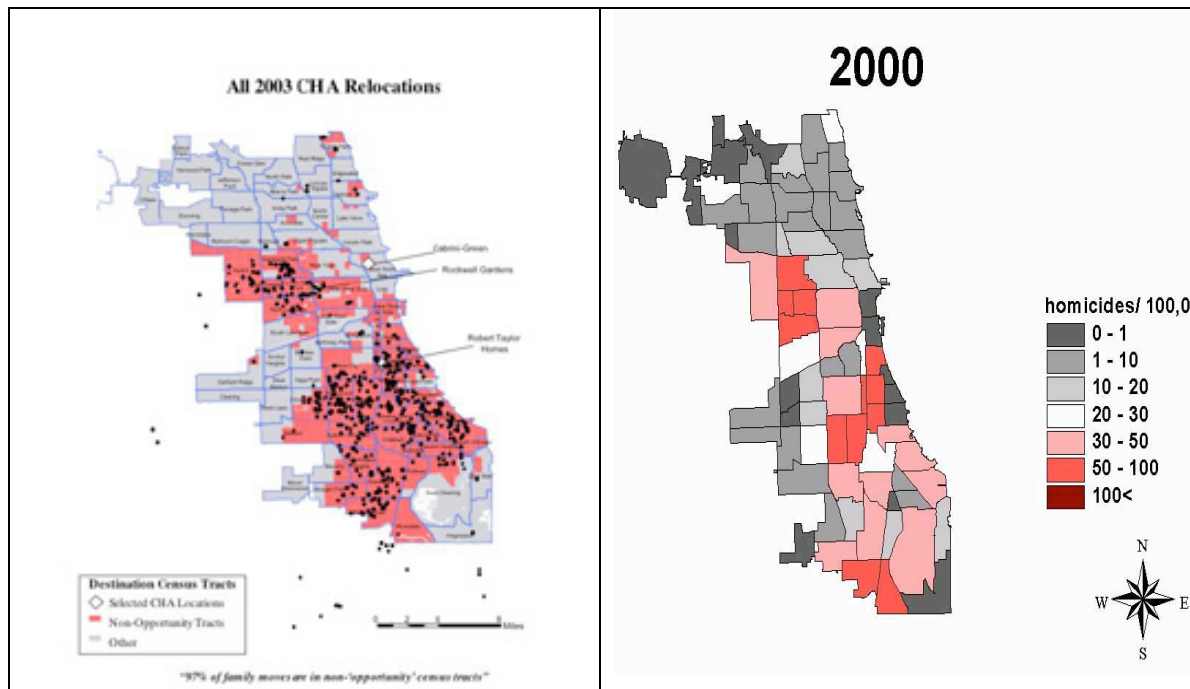
The “Plan for Transformation” (CHA 2000) of Chicago’s public housing reads as the exact reverse New York City’s earlier Ten Year Plan in several respects. The renovating of the South Bronx and other deteriorated ghetto lands in NYC meant making the neighborhoods a more attractive place for current residents to live. In Chicago, demolition of public housing is resulting in the displacement of more than a hundred thousand African Americans. Even with many displaced tenants entering Lawndale and Englewood, both neighborhoods continued in the 1990s to see more than 11% and 18% population loss respectively, the reverse of the South Bronx who *gained* 11% in the 1990s.

Chicago’s decision to relocate tenants through housing choice vouchers means that building new housing that could revitalize neighborhoods was not the CHA’s priority. Like in New York City, housing project tenants wanted to stay in their public housing and neighborhoods, but in Chicago they were forced to leave areas and cut kinship, social, and economic networks and ties to local schools.

Robert Taylor Homes alone, which will be completely demolished by 2005, has meant the relocation of not only its 27, 000 residents but also an estimated 10,000 more “non-leaseholders” (Venkatesh 2002). The Chicago Housing Authority reports it intends to tear down 25,000 housing units in ten years. While there are plans for relocation of at best 15% of the residents, 97% of relocated tenants have moved to other segregated “non-opportunity”<sup>3</sup> areas. These neighborhoods, as can be seen below, are also the areas in Chicago of the highest rates of homicide, mostly drug and gang related.

### Chart Three

#### Relocation of Public Housing Residents and High Homicide Areas



These acts of segregation have had some startling, if unintended, effects. Qualitative analysis of our interviews found three factors that interacted in this situation to create elevated levels of homicide: 1. institutionalized gangs; 2. the interruption of the drug market cycle; and 3. displacement of gang members and drug users into existing drug markets.

As we have seen above, the gangs had been fractured by Chicago police pressure. At the same time gangs that controlled drug markets in public housing were forced to relocate into areas already claimed by existing gangs. While Chicago's crack market violence had peaked early in the 1990s, similar to NYC, police fracturing of gang and the displacement of gang drug sellers into markets already claimed by other gangs kept drug markets unstable and violent.

In the course of the last few years, it has been clear that displaced gangs that moved to new turf to sell and began a war (see Venkatesh et al 2004). As some housing projects came down, gang members migrated to other projects, like Harold Ickes Homes and forced their way into that drug market. Popkin et al (2002, 169) explains what happened:

Without security, Ickes was particularly vulnerable to outside gangs. By 1996, the CHA was vacating and demolishing buildings in other developments along the State Street corridor (where Ickes and Robert Taylor Homes are located-ed), displacing their gang members from their usual turf. The dominant Gangster Disciples had been weakened by the conviction of more than thirty of its top warlords on federal conspiracy charges related to drug sales; as a result Ickes did not even have an effective gang to fight off intruders. Without guards opr gangmembers to protect the development from outsiders, Ickes quickly became a battleground.

This displaced Black Gangster Disciple from Robert Taylor Homes tells our study as similar story from his perspective:

*...they building got torn down, and they moved out here, and the people got mad that the low end [Robert Taylor Homes-] people that come down are trying to take over ...and we say "Like, they can't get mad now, because our building got torn down, they moved us, the government moved us out here. Now, they can't stop us, we're going to serve in their set, sell weed or anything..."*

And those gangsters who did set up shop in a neighborhood, found drug sales to be different, and more dangerous.

*A lot of them cashiers [drug dealers] coming down here from the low end, from the projects, they come down to the big city where it's at, but they don't even know they got the mentality of the project, when it's a block like that. You see what I'm saying? They're all used to living in a project, and now it's a block and it's going to change you're whole environment. So, they now they still think like they're living in the projects, getting tooled with some of the other gangsters or either they could be some opposition gang, and now they still think they're living in the project, project mentality. No, ... that's causing wars, niggers is dying. You shooting people out here, shooting niggers, that moved out.*

Other gangs on the west side, are preparing for more wars ahead:

*As the projects come down, they gonna start movin' in, in like our neighborhoods, like our neighborhoods, probably some suburbs. That, that's gonna be a big, when all the projects get moved down, that's gonna be a, I'm talkin' about, man, a real, I'm talkin' about, man, a war, a war that you've never seen before, man. 'Cause niggers from the projects gonna come try to take over niggers' lands and shit and, ain't nobody gonna let it, you know what I'm sayin'. ... 'cause you came from the projects. It's gonna be a lot of people dyin' and getting' shot and getting' hurt, robbed...*

So just at the time when drug markets were about to be settled, police pressure and displacement from neighborhoods kept drug markets volatile, as gang members, with younger and less experienced leadership, forcibly entered drug markets already claimed by existing gangs.

## **Discussion**

What lessons for understanding variations in urban violence can we draw from this two-city comparative study?

**First, extreme poverty as well as income and ethno-racial inequality are necessary, but not a sufficient explanation to understand variations in urban homicide.** Both Chicago and NYC have high rates of segregation and poverty of their African American and minority populations, but their rates of homicide have sharply diverged. While it is true that only cities with large numbers of people in poverty have high rates of violence, there are many cities in Asia and the Arab world that also have high poverty rates but few homicides.

**Second, the persistence of groups of armed young men in cities like Chicago seems to be strongly related to persisting high rates of violence.** The favelas of Rio de Janeiro and the Cape Flats of South Africa are home to hyper-violent institutionalized gangs. Gangs in both of these cities, like Chicago, have settled in defensible spaces, hard to access neighborhoods that are difficult for the state to control. Prisons in Brazil, Puerto Rico, and the US among other countries has become a wing of institutionalized gangs, often housing the leaders in a relatively safe environment, making a policy of incarceration less effective.

Groups of armed young men, militias, gangs, para-militaries, and drug cartels, are emerging as key social actors in areas of cities and some countries where the state has limited authority. As globalization frays the safety net and states rely on repression against marginalized populations, armed groups are likely to proliferate and reach for local power. Even in strong, western states, legitimacy is being sacrificed to the reliance on police or military *power*, in Arendt's (1969) sense, and social control is carried out by "wars" on drugs or crime. Still, police have ceded control at times of public housing to gangs both in Chicago (Venkatesh 2000; Popkin et al 2000) and Los Angeles (Vigil 2000). Regardless of the tactic used, it is clear that institutionalized gangs in some cities are powerful social actors and can't be either ignored or crushed.

**Third, draconian measures by police and the state are effective only within given conditions.** New York City's round-up of violent drug traffickers in the mid 1990s contributed to the reduction in violence, since the drug crews had shallow roots in their communities. These actions, however, could not be replicated in Chicago — not because police were not sufficiently tough or computer-assisted — but because Chicago's gangs had institutionalized within their neighborhoods for the past 50 years.

Police states or military dictatorships, like in Argentina in the 1970s, have successfully suppressed dissent and lead to low rates of street crime. However, the military take-over at about the same time in Brazil led to the creation of powerful and violent drug factions that have since institutionalized in Brazil's favelas. Repression, or even the much-emulated magic bullet of the NYPD's "zero tolerance" policies, may simply not work or even backfire in some cities, especially those with institutionalized gangs.

**Fourth, the drug economy and other illegal ventures can be more or less violent depending on urban policy.** In both Chicago and New York, gangs of different types are the main actors in the underground economy. Globally, the drug business is the most profitable player in today's vast informal economy that is a product of inequalities reinforced by neo-liberal policies. The world is fast urbanizing, and marginalized and oppressed young people look to gangs for both identity and survival, similar to the way, in decades before, they looked to the guerrillas or left wing movements. Drugs and other illegal enterprises provide profits that support gangs and encourage their institutionalization, but do *not* inevitably, and in all cases, lead to violence.

Given the uneven development of globalization, the underground economy has become a way of life in the world's cities. Public policies aimed at eliminating the informal sector or the drug economy have usually met violent resistance from those dependent on illicit goods and services.

**Finally, housing policy can have a major effect on controlling or exacerbating urban violence.** Globalization has meant a re-division of urban space that has world-wide implications for controlling violence. The accumulation of wealth in the new information cities has caused elites to build walls of segregation between them and the urban poor. Ethnic cleansing, the building of security walls, and other processes of forced migration have also reified existing tensions between ethnic and religious groups. Both the displacement of minority populations and the erection of physical or policy walls have exacerbated ethnic tensions, as in Jerusalem or Bosnia. On the other hand, policies of separation can lead to peaceful co-existence, as in Belfast or Beirut, especially when accompanied by agreement from both parties and the disarmament of the militias.

Miloon Kothari, the United Nation's highest-ranking expert on housing issues recently visited Cabrini-Green, a Chicago housing project slated for demolition. There he stated that "evictions of public housing residents in the United States clearly violate international human rights, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights." CHA tenants thus qualify as "Internally Displaced Peoples" or "IDPs" and are entitled to protection by the UN (Coalition to Protect Public Housing 2004).

Not only does forcible displacement qualify residents for protection under UN Guidelines for IDPs, but their eviction into areas of highest violence in Chicago threatens their lives and security. Chicago's long history of violence and segregation its African American population, from race riots, to bombings, to restrictive covenants has added a new chapter: forcible eviction of poor African American tenants from their homes in areas claimed by whites into segregated, high violence neighborhoods.

Chicago and New York City differ on the extent of both investment in affordable housing and forcible displacement of poor African Americans. Cities around the world who wish to reduce violence or maintain low rates would be well served by policies of providing adequate

housing for poor ethnic or religious minority communities. The data in this study suggest local officials resist the temptation to involuntarily displace poor residents who “get in the way” of gentrification or the desires of the majority group for “safe,” segregated social space.

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<sup>1</sup> Defensible spaces (Newman 1972), a concept developed to explain spatial engineering for crime prevention, may also be used to explain why some armed groups become entrenched in spatially ghettos, barrions, and favelas.

<sup>2</sup> To say that a gangs has *institutionalized* is to say that it persists despite changes in leadership (e.g. killed, incarcerated, or "matured out"), has organization complex enough to sustain multiple roles of its members (including roles for children), can adapt to changing environments without dissolving (e.g. police repression), fulfills some needs of its community (economics, security, services), and organizes a distinct outlook of its members (sometimes called a gang "subculture").

<sup>3</sup> A "non-opportunity area is defined as areas with poverty rates higher than 23.49% and more than 30% Black population. The major receiving communities in Chicago each have poverty rates in excess of 40% and are more than 95% Black.