A SOCIAL AUTOPSY OF DISASTER IN CHICAGO

HEAT WAVE

SECOND EDITION

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There are more elements to the collective production of isolation than we have explored thus far. After examining the demographic trends, cultural changes, housing arrangements, and gender patterns that help explain why certain individuals died in the heat, we can assess whether there are any broader community- or neighborhood-level conditions that contribute to the vulnerability or security of city residents. It is to this matter, and specifically the question of how an urban area's ecology affects the health and welfare of its residents, that the social autopsy turns next.

CHAPTER TWO

Race, Place, and Vulnerability

Urban Neighborhoods and the Ecology of Support

On 21 July, while Chicago still simmered from its week of treacherous heat, a team of researchers led by the U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention arrived in the city to conduct an urgent epidemiological investigation into the risk factors for heat-related mortality. The project was ambitious for a quickly planned inquiry; yet, as one city official who helped coordinate the research explained, "the CDC is an extraordinarily powerful and rich organization, and when they come they bring an army." The case-control study design called for researchers to compare matched pairs consisting of one heat wave decedent and one survivor of similar age who lived nearby, either on the same street or in the neighborhood. Holding constant the age and location of the subjects, the epidemiologists would be able to determine a set of individual-level factors—such as living alone, having a medical problem, or owning an air conditioner—that affected a person's capacity to survive the heat. The scientific challenge was to locate the personal characteristics that proved most consequential during the catastrophe. But the "main objective," lead researcher Jan Semenza and his collaborators would later write, "was to identify public health strategies for reaching people at risk and preventing deaths in future heat waves."[1]

With roughly seven hundred heat wave victims scattered around Chicago, the CDC team had to select a random sample of decedents large enough to generate reliable findings but not so great as to overwhelm their resources. The research staff—which included roughly eighty participants—decided to visit and inspect the residences of 420 pairs of victims and controls; interview a friend, relative, or neighbor who knew the decedent well enough to answer questions about their social networks, medical conditions, and daily routines; and complete a standard survey questionnaire for each case. "It was a gigantic operation," Se-

menza explains. "We had to do more than eight hundred interviews and we obviously couldn't do them ourselves. We drummed up support from all kinds of agencies. We got all different kinds of people who were willing to go out into the streets. And it's hard to get through this questionnaire, especially with the relative of a decedent. It was a painful job." The team acquired death certificates, police reports, and a list of the names and addresses of persons older than twenty-four years of age who had died between 14 and 17 July and whose death certificates listed heat or cardiovascular disease as a primary, contributing, or underlying cause of death.[2] The official records led the researchers to the doors of the decedents' former residences; once there, they searched for a matching person (or case) by tossing a coin to determine their direction and walking from unit to unit until the paired individual emerged.

Using this method, the CDC completed the research for 339 matched pairs, or 678 persons, as well as an additional 33 unmatched decedents between 21 July and 18 August. After conducting a statistical analysis of the survey responses, the CDC team honed in on a series of risk factors that heightened the probability of death during the crisis, and the findings were ultimately published in the most prestigious medical journal in the United States, the *New England Journal of Medicine.* Among the most significant conclusions were that city residents were more vulnerable if they did not leave home daily, had a medical problem, were confined to bed, lived alone, or lacked air-conditioning, access to transportation, and social contacts nearby.[3] These findings were disseminated to an international audience of public health agencies and medical practitioners, and they have been influential in shaping morbidity and mortality prevention strategies in U.S. cities where heat waves are common.

What the epidemiological study did not do, however, is move beyond the population risk factors to identify the social environmental conditions that elevate or reduce the probability that residents would survive the heat. By studying matched pairs culled from the same location, the CDC researchers ruled out the possibility that their study would capture neighborhood or regional differences in heat wave mortality or the broader social context of the catastrophe.[4] If there were risks of living in an impoverished, institutionally depleted, or politically neglected neighborhood or region, the CDC analysis would not help to identify them. The CDC study directs the attention of public health agencies to the particular set of individuals who are most vulnerable to heat-

related problems, but not to the places where such problems are likely to be concentrated. In recent years, a number of scholars have called attention to the ways in which the social ecology and political economy of urban areas affect the health and welfare of residents during normal times,[5] but few have asked whether such conditions alter health risks in extreme events. There were clear spatial patterns in mortality during the heat wave. Yet (as we will see in chapters 4 and 5) much of the official and journalistic discourse about the event, such as the summary statements that "all community areas in the city were affected" by the disaster, render these trends invisible.

Sociological theories and qualitative research techniques make it possible to conduct a different kind of epidemiology. Rather than ending an investigation with individual-level information, we can add a layer of regional or social ecological analysis to the study of urban health—for both extreme events and everyday, typical situations. Demographers and geographers can use census tract or neighborhood-level data to assess the extent to which place-specific conditions—such as land-use and development patterns, segregation, violence, and microclimate—influence health risks in disasters. The geographer Karen Smoyer, for example, shows that in the 1980 St. Louis heat wave "low-mortality tracts were predominantly in the cooler, more affluent and more stable south and west sections of the city"; whereas the high-mortality tracts were concentrated around the relatively warm central business district and the declining neighborhoods with low housing density and depleted population bases. These findings are largely consistent with the few studies of the geography of heat wave vulnerability that preceded Smoyer's work, which show significant associations between disaster mortality and neighborhood poverty, low-quality housing, lack of vegetation, and concentrated urban heat island effects.[6]

The spatial distribution of mortality in the 1995 Chicago disaster shared some characteristics with heat waves in other cities, but with a distinctly local pattern.[7] The map of the Chicago community areas that experienced the highest heat-related death rates (fig. 23) shows that the community areas hit hardest are concentrated on the South and West Sides of the city, the historic Black Belt where the city's African Americans have been concentrated and segregated.[8] This map is particularly striking because it illustrates a block of high-death areas, beginning at Burnside in the south and banking west before it reaches the most affluent areas on the North Side where residents had less difficulty protecting themselves from the heat. Although several predominantly

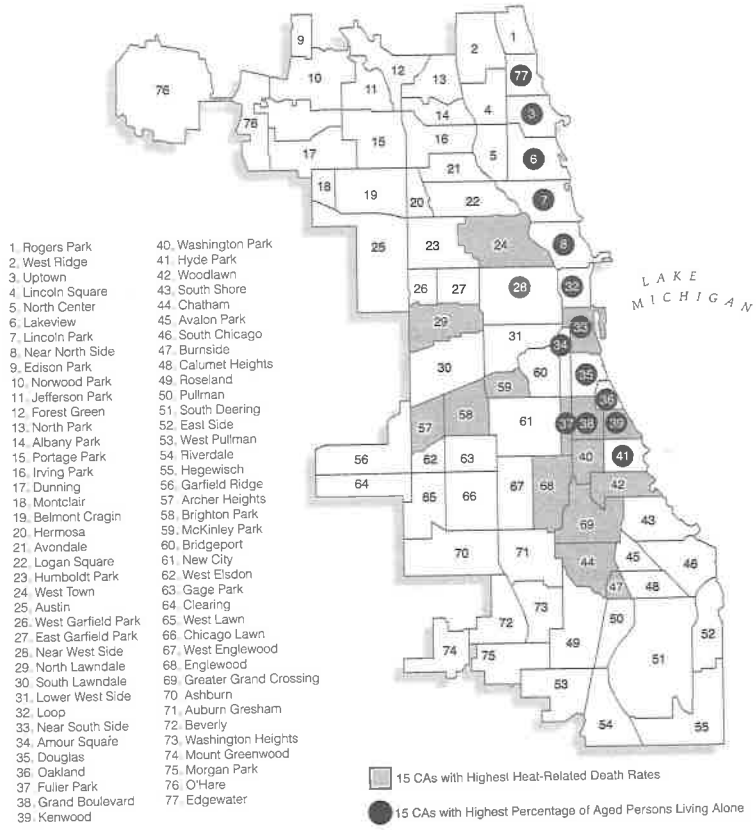

Figure 23. Chicago community areas with the highest heat-related mortality rates and highest proportion of elderly persons living alone. The top quintile is represented on the map.

African-American community areas had exceptionally low heat wave mortality rates, there was a clear clustering of deaths in Chicago's segregated black regions.

The heaviest concentration of high-death areas is in the region immediately south of the Loop, beginning at the Near South Side, progressing south into the old Black Belt and beyond to the newer African-American communities, such as Woodlawn and Chatham, east and farther south; another pocket with high mortality rates starts west of the Loop in the Near West Side area, extending through the western portion of the city. As figures 24 and 25 show, both of these large regions are notable for their high levels of poverty and violent crime.[9] Another cluster of heat-related mortality is on the Near Southeast Side, which,

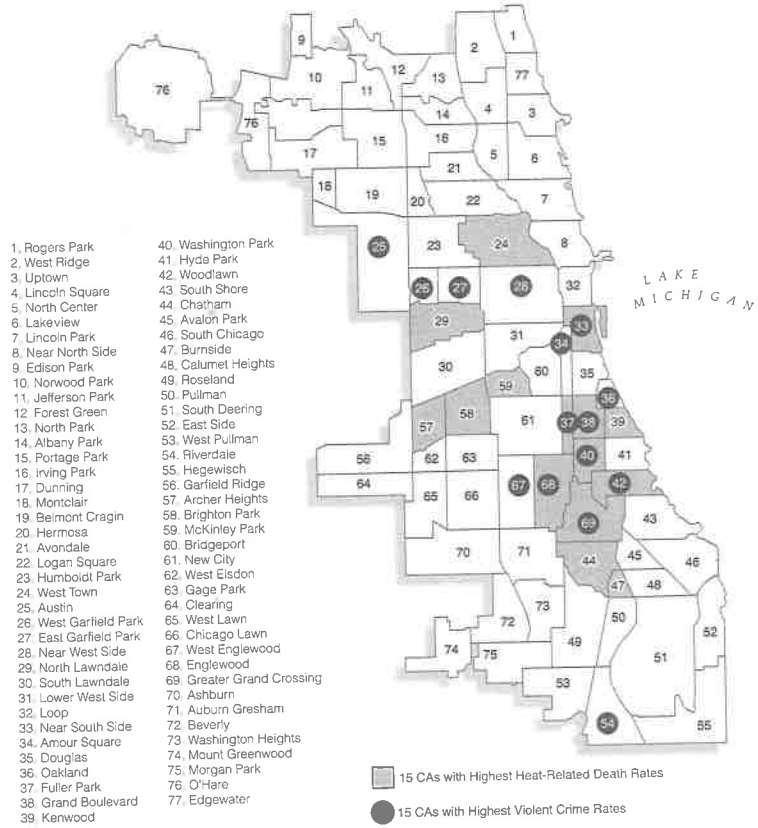

Figure 24. Chicago community areas with the highest heat-related mortality rates and highest violent crime rates. The top quintile is represented on the map.

as figure 23 shows, is distinctive for its concentration of seniors and elderly people living alone. Table 3, which shows the community areas with the highest heat wave death rates, is equally striking. Of the fifteen community areas with the highest death rates during the heat wave, ten contain populations that are between 94 and 99 percent African American, and another is 77 percent black.[10] The four remaining community areas are distinctive for other reasons. West Town, which is a largely Latino and Puerto Rican region, faced elevated heat mortality risks because it has more Chicago Housing Authority senior public housing units than any other community area in the city. Archer Heights, McKinley Park, and Brighton Park, the three contiguous community areas on the Southwest Side, were especially vulnerable both

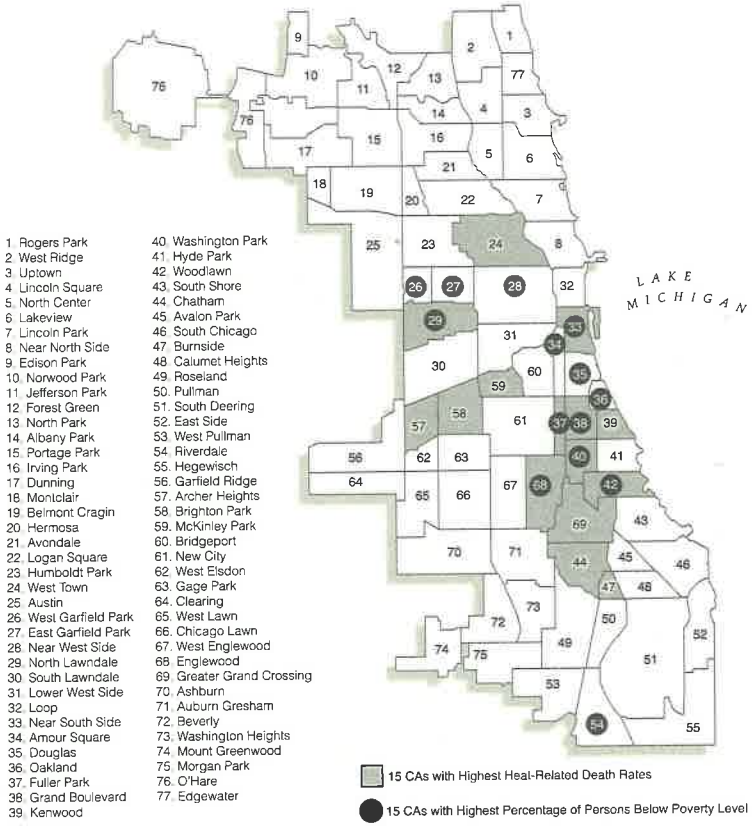

Figure 25. Chicago community areas with the highest heat-related mortality rates and highest proportion of persons below poverty level. The top quintile is represented on the map.

because the red-brick and blacktop buildings ubiquitous in the region intensify the indoor heat,[11] and because the historically Polish communities concentrated there (especially in McKinley Park and Brighton Park) have aged in place while new, mostly Latino residents move in, leaving the white elderly culturally and linguistically isolated from the emergent populations.

The maps illustrate a clear correlation between heat-related mortality and certain community area conditions, and Illinois researchers used statistical research similar to Smoyer's to further investigate the sources of these varying death rates. After the disaster Tiefu Shen and his colleagues at the Illinois Department of Public Health found that, relative to other regions, community areas with high levels of violent

Table 3. Chicago Community Areas with the Highest Heat-Related Death Rates

Community Area	Heat-Related Deaths per 100,000 Population	Percent Population Black	Percent Population 65+	Percent Population Lost, 1960–90	Overall Violent Crime, Rank, 1994–95 (77 CAs)
Fuller Park	92	99	19	64	1
Woodlawn	73	96	18	66	8
Archer Heights	54	0	21	13	56
Gtr. Gr. Crossing	52	99	18	39	15
Washington Park	51	99	11	56	2
Grand Boulevard	47	99	14	55	3
McKinley Park	45	0	13	21	46
North Lawndale	40	96	9	62	18
Chatham	35	99	19	16	30
Kenwood	33	77	15	56	31
Englewood	33	99	11	50	13
West Town	32	10	9	37	38
Brighton Park	31	0	15	15	50
Burnside	30	98	6	0	21
Near South Side	29	94	13	34	5
Chicago	7	39	12	22	—

Data based on 521 heat-related deaths located by Illinois Department of Public Health (1997), Chicago Fact Book Consortium (1995), and City of Chicago, Department of Public Health (1996).

crime and high proportions of elderly residents were significantly more likely to experience heat wave deaths.[12] The group did not examine whether there was also an association with the proportion of community area residents living below the poverty line, so the study yielded no information about place-based deprivation and vulnerability. Public health colleagues were convinced that there were reliable and significant differences in the neighborhood-level mortality risks, but they left it to others to explore and explain them.

In the years following the heat wave, however, no official or scientific report did revisit the issue of place-based risks, and subsequent public discussions and policy debates about heat-related health risks have not moved beyond individual- or population-level conditions. A smattering of quantitative evidence about heat waves in Chicago and St. Louis has shown that certain community area characteristics, such as poverty, high senior populations, lack of vegetation, and high crime, are associated with high heat wave mortality rates. But although demographers have ample data to examine these conditions, no studies have explained how neighborhood environments imperiled or protected residents during the extreme summer climate, and no qualitative research has identified significant contextual conditions that lie outside the

scope of standard statistical data sets on urban regions.[13] Part of the reason for this absence is that community studies designed to identify the mechanisms through which neighborhood conditions affect the health and security of residents require intensive fieldwork and deep engagements with local residents, institutions, and public places. Without such research it would be impossible to learn whether community-level practices that fall outside the scope of quantitative studies—such as the ways in which residents use sidewalks and public spaces, the role of commercial outlets in stimulating social contact, the strategies through which residents protect themselves from local dangers, and the role of community organizations and institutions in providing social protection—affected the mortality rates.

The enormous amount of personnel, resources, and time that would be necessary to replicate the scale of the CDC heat wave study at the community area level makes it impossible to conduct an identical analysis.[14] Yet smaller-scale projects that focus on particular areas can deepen our understanding of the relationships among place, health, and risk during extreme events as well as normal times. Blending the CDC's case-control method with techniques honed by generations of urban sociologists, I turned my attention to a matching pair of neighboring Chicago community areas that have strong demographic similarities but drastically different heat wave mortality rates. The comparative case study would lack the large scale and predetermined variables of the CDC epidemiological inquiry, and it would no doubt be difficult to establish all the connections between the neighborhood social environments and the specific contexts in which residents died alone. But deep and intensive scrutiny of the two community areas would introduce novel ways of understanding place-based vulnerability or protection and, in turn, generate insights into how the social and ecological conditions that are unmeasured in conventional surveys affect the capacity of residents to survive the heat.[15]

MATCHING PAIRS

Like the CDC epidemiologists, my first challenge was to find a matching pair of cases that experienced different outcomes during the disaster. Since previous studies of place-based conditions that influenced heat wave mortality highlighted the significance of poverty, crime, elderly inhabitants, and lack of vegetation, I searched for two residential areas with similar compositional makeup on each of these measures and population levels high enough to generate reliably contrasting death rates.[16] One set of neighboring community areas on the West

Table 4. Characteristics of North Lawndale and South Lawndale

Condition	North Lawndale	South Lawndale	Chicago
Senior poverty level	26%	22%	16%
2× below poverty level	71%	62%	41%
Poverty level	44%	22%	18%
Population aged 65 years or older	4,029	3,965	334,046
Seniors living alone	956	1,256	106,792
Percent aged 65 years or older	8.5%	4.0%	12%
Percent seniors living alone	24%	31%	32%
"Minority" population	99% (96% black)	94% (85% Latino)	58%
Heat-related deaths	19	3	521
Heat wave death rate	40/100,000	4/100,000	7/100,000

Source: Chicago Fact Book Consortium (1995) and Lawlor, Almgren, and Gomberg (1993).

Side appeared to provide such a contrast: North Lawndale, which experienced 19 heat-related deaths for a rate of 40 per 100,000 residents; and South Lawndale (colloquially known as Little Village), which had 3 deaths and a rate of less than 4 per 100,000 residents—ten times fewer than North Lawndale. The two areas share more than a name. In the 1990s North and South Lawndale had similar microclimates and almost identical numbers and proportions of seniors living alone and seniors living in poverty. The community areas, then, naturally controlled for the weather and the subpopulation of people thought to be most at risk of heat wave death.

According to most observers, the obvious difference in the populations of the community areas was the ethnoracial composition of the residents. In North Lawndale 96 percent of the population was African American, whereas in Little Village 85 percent of the official population was Latino. Public health researchers had found that Chicago's African Americans faced the greatest risk of mortality in the heat wave, while Latinos were most likely to survive; after the heat wave, government officials, journalists, and scholars alike puzzled over the question of why, despite high levels of poverty and risk, Latinos fared so much better than blacks and whites.[17]

Though the areas are easily distinguishable to those who know them, an outsider who sees North and South Lawndale on paper would have little reason to believe that they would experience such great mortality disparities during the heat wave. As table 4 shows, the two Lawndales had almost identical numbers and proportions of seniors living alone and seniors living in poverty. In Little Village 1,256 seniors, or 31 per-

Table 5. Reported Overall Violent Crimes: Districts 10 and 11, 1994–95

Violent Crimes	11th District	10th District	Chicago
Number	4,714	2,973	218,894
Victimization rate	10/100,000	4/100,000	8/100,000
City rank (out of 77 community areas)	18	59	—

Source: City of Chicago (1996). The Eleventh Police District contains much of North Lawndale, and the Tenth includes Little Village and a slice of North Lawndale.

cent of the elderly population, lived alone, compared with 956, or 24 percent of the elderly population, in North Lawndale. Each of the areas also had distinctive risk factors. Although both had high levels of poverty relative to the rest of Chicago, North Lawndale, where 71 percent of local families earned below twice the poverty level and 44 percent lived below the line, was worse off than South Lawndale, where the poverty rates were 62 percent and 22 percent.[18] As table 5 shows, North Lawndale also had higher levels of violent crime; but it is important to note that in 1994 and 1995 its crime rate was not in the top quintile of Chicago's high-crime areas. The risks specific to Little Village stem from its high population of the people whom policy makers and scholars call cultural or linguistic isolates, who fit the demographic profile of the Chicago residents most likely to die in the heat. Roughly 46 percent of the seniors in Little Village were white "old-timers" who aged in place when the younger generations left, whereas only 2 percent of the seniors in the mostly African-American North Lawndale were white.[19]

To date, the most prominent explanations of the variance in death rates between the two areas, and between African Americans and Latinos more generally, have focused on the ethnoracial composition of the groups.[20] The two most popular cultural arguments that attempt to explain the variance in death rates are, first, that Latinos are acculturated to the heat and have strategies for coping with it because many have recently lived in hot Latin American climates. One of my Latino informants summed up this position when he told me that "people south of the border are more used to the heat. You have to realize that in the south of Mexico or Cuba or Puerto Rico the average temperature is about eighty-five or ninety degrees." The second cultural explanation is that Latino seniors benefit from strong multigenerational and extended family ties that facilitate close contact during normal times as well as crises. As another informant opined, "Among the three big groups that we have in Chicago—the Caucasians, the African-Americans, and the Latino people—the Latino group tends to be the less isolated group. . . . Latinos are the ones that probably get a little bit closer to their own families."

The primary "racial" argument, which I heard from a large number of Chicagoans when I discussed the heat wave with them, is that there is something about the physiology of Latinos that protects them from the heat.[21] "I guess naturally we are more equipped to resist the heat," one of my Latino informants told me. "I would say that there is something in our skin or our genes that makes us a little bit more comfortable with the heat." Another informant, this one a white woman who works with seniors regularly, added that Latinos' "metabolism and body chemistry . . . lends itself more to coping with high temperatures." None of these arguments provide a persuasive account of the differences in heat wave mortality between North Lawndale and Little Village. The racial argument is rooted in mythology rather than science. Not only is there no credible scientific evidence that Latinos have genetic or physiological traits that allow them to withstand the heat, there is also no distinct Latino "racial" type that unifies the heterogeneous groups having Latin-American ancestry, including residents of Little Village.

Cultural arguments concerning adaptation to the heat and family ties are also unsatisfying. For although social scientists and service providers often distinguish among ethnically organized cultures of care, there is little evidence that these caring practices and routines are inherent features of a group's identity. The claim that older Latinos are strongly connected to friends and family through multigenerational networks and extended family ties might be persuasive at first glance, especially given the important traditional role of the grandparent in Latino communities. But there are at least two reasons to treat it with caution. First, recent surveys of Mexican-American seniors have found that the native-born Mexican-American elderly are significantly more likely to live away from and out of regular contact with their children than are foreign-born Mexican-American seniors.[22] Clearly, ethnicity alone cannot explain this difference, but variations in the social environment in which Mexican Americans live can account for much of the cultural change. Second, many scholars argue that African Americans also have, or have had, both strong multigenerational family networks, extended family ties, and highly-respected and well-integrated grandparent figures.[23] Again, ethnicity alone cannot explain differences in support networks for the elderly.

The other claim, that some groups are acculturated to the heat because their members once lived in a warm climate, would likely be as

applicable to Chicago's older African Americans, the majority of whom were born in the southern region of the United States and have ancestral roots in Africa, as it would be for any other group in the city. Yet, as we have seen, older African Americans experienced the highest death rates of all ethnoracial groups. Finally, both the "racial" and ethnic arguments about the differences in community area mortality rates overlook a crucial part of the heat wave story: *the social environment of Little Village protected not only the area's Latino population, but the culturally or linguistically isolated white elderly, who were at high risk of death as well.*

Together, these findings show that if in Chicago social connections proved to be more tenuous in North Lawndale than in Little Village, or among African Americans more generally, we will have to explain why this is the case and not simply attribute the differences to ethnicity or "race." For if it is true that the social support practices vary within groups as well as between them, a strong cultural argument about networks of care and support requires taking a closer look at the social environments of the two community areas.[24]

VARIATIONS IN THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OF POVERTY

It takes only a few minutes of observation in the two community areas, or even a casual drive on Cermak Road, the border between the neighborhoods with the railroad line to the west, to see that the two Lawndales are, as numerous residents on both sides of the tracks told me, "totally different worlds." Most residents and outside observers differentiate the areas by the ethnoracial characteristics of the two distinctive local groups, but the differences extend far beyond the identities of the populations. To begin, North Lawndale and Little Village differ in their *ecological characteristics*—what Robert McKenzie called the "spatial and temporal relations of human beings as affected by the selective, distributive, and accommodative forces of the environment," or the spatial distribution of people and institutions that organize a local area. The two areas also differ in their *social morphological conditions*—which Marcel Mauss defined as "the material substratum of societies, that is, the form they assume in settling across the land, the volume and density of their population, the manner in which it is distributed as well as the ensemble of things that serve as the basis for collective life."[25] The social ecology of a community area is the foundation for local social life, the soil out of which social networks grow and develop or, alternatively, wither and devolve.[26] Thus, urban regions such as North Lawndale and Little Village can be distinguished not only by the identities of their

inhabitants, but also by the structure and texture of their social and physical environments.

The prevailing U.S. tradition of thinking about urban poverty, however, involves focusing on poor people and their individual characteristics rather than on places and their social ecological features. This logic is most apparent in the culture of poverty arguments about the ways in which the practices of poor people contribute to the production of their own deprivation, but it informs more liberal theories as well. Yet there is also a rich heritage of research on city neighborhoods that highlights the spatial context of social order in the city.[27] Although most contemporary urban scholars argue that high population density undermines social cohesion within neighborhoods, Jane Jacobs draws a distinction between *high density* and *overcrowding*, which suffocates residents and stifles community life. According to Jacobs, density and public activity are necessary preconditions for vigorous neighborhood social networks. Residents of city neighborhoods without comfortable and secure streets and sidewalks, without places that draw people out of their homes and into the public, are more likely to suffer from literal isolation and social distance.

This chapter argues that place-specific social ecology and its effects on cultural practices account for much of the disparity in the heat wave mortality rates for the two Lawndales. The local social environment has a strong impact on older residents, for whom health problems that limit mobility can make it difficult to access places out of the neighborhood. In North Lawndale, the dangerous ecology of abandoned buildings, open spaces, commercial depletion, violent crime, degraded infrastructure, low population density, and family dispersion undermines the viability of public life and the strength of local support systems, rendering older residents particularly vulnerable to isolation. In Little Village, though, the busy streets, heavy commercial activity, residential concentration, and relatively low crime promote social contact, collective life, and public engagement in general and provide particular benefits for the elderly, who are more likely to leave home when they are drawn out by nearby amenities.[28] During the heat wave, these local conditions directly affected residents of the two community areas by constraining (in North Lawndale) or creating (in Little Village) the possibilities for social contact that helped vulnerable Chicagoans to survive.

AN ABANDONED COMMUNITY

Despite a recent resurgence of economic development, the major streets and the majority of the residential areas in North Lawndale bear

the marks of decades of abandonment by factories, businesses, and residents, and of the devastating fires sparked in riots after the death of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. The physical landscape of North Lawndale's largest thoroughfares and many of its residential streets is dominated by boarded or dilapidated buildings, rickety fast-food joints, closed stores with faded signs, and open lots where tall grass and weeds, broken glass, and illegally dumped refuse give testament to the area's decline. North Lawndale lost roughly 50 percent of its housing stock (which fell from 30,243 units to 15,686 units) and about 60 percent of its population between 1960 and 1990, and the social and ecological consequences of these changes have been devastating for the residents who remain.[29]

The decay of the local infrastructure has gone hand in hand with the decline of the community's manufacturing, commercial, and residential presence. In the early twentieth century North Lawndale was a magnet for Polish and Czechoslovakian immigrants, many of whom benefited from or were attracted by the major employers clustered around the local railways, such as the Western Electric Company; Sears, Roebuck and Co.; and the McCormick Reaper Company (International Harvester, which later became Navistar International Corp.) nearby. The population doubled from 46,226 to 93,750 between 1910 and 1920 when Russian Jews arrived en masse. By 1930 the community area was bursting with residents and retailers and had reached a population density two times above the general city rate. Roosevelt Road became a commercial and cultural core of Chicago's Jewish community, and sixty synagogues, many of which exist as churches today, sprouted up around it. Douglas Park to the south, Garfield Park to the north, and Franklin Park to the east offered refuge from the tightly packed streets. Grand houses and apartment buildings made of limestone and brick provided a touch of elegance to the residential blocks.

Jews remained the majority group in the area during the 1930s and 1940s, but most local residents rented their homes instead of buying them and the community never established deep roots in the area. In 1939, for example, 81 percent of the housing units in North Lawndale were tenant occupied.[30] In 1940 only 380 African Americans lived in North Lawndale, but when the second wave of black migration from the South brought thousands of African Americans to the West Side of Chicago during the 1940s, whites throughout the city grew anxious about an incipient "invasion" that would transform and stigmatize their neighborhoods. Once the stream of African-American migration reached North Lawndale, more than seventy-five thousand white residents abandoned their neighborhood. Roughly one hundred thousand blacks replaced them during the 1950s alone.

Table 6. Population in North Lawndale, 1950–90

Year	Population	Population Change (%)	Population White (%)	Population Black (%)
1950	100,489	—	87	13
1960	124,937	+24	9	91
1970	94,772	−24	3	96
1980	61,523	−35	2	97
1990	47,296	−23	2	96

By 1960 North Lawndale had completed one of the most rapid and complete ethnoracial transition processes in U.S. urban history, turning over from almost 90 percent Caucasian to more than 90 percent African American in a single decade (table 6).[31] Although the composition of the population had changed, local factories and tertiary businesses continued to provide tens of thousands of working-class jobs to area residents. "Most people here could walk to work," one long-time resident told me. "Sears, Harvester, Western Electric, those companies were on the main line." There was no shortage of poverty within North Lawndale's black community, but the predominantly industrial economy generated enough demand for labor to support Lawndale families, and it paid workers enough to animate the area's public and commercial life. "It was a regular neighborhood then," long-time resident Ernie Stewart recalled. "We had lots of stores, meat markets, laundries, everything."

TURNING OVER

The fate of the area began to change in the late 1950s and 1960s, when the first stages of Chicago's industrial decline undermined the foundations of North Lawndale's economy. International Harvester, which once employed fourteen thousand laborers, left the community at the end of the 1960s. Sears, Roebuck, and Co. closed down the original Sears Tower (fig. 26) on Homan Avenue and moved its world headquarters, along with roughly seven thousand jobs, from Lawndale to the Loop in 1974. The catalog distribution center, which it left behind, stayed in the area and provided work for some three thousand employees until 1988, when Sears took it out of the neighborhood. Western Electric gradually shifted its facilities out of Lawndale and trimmed its labor pool until the Hawthorne plant, which had employed forty-three

Figure 26. An open lot near the original Sears Tower in North Lawndale. Photo by Caitlin Zaloom.

thousand people, shut its gates for good in 1984. By 1970, 75 percent of the businesses that had been in the area in 1950 were gone, and in the 1980s and early 1990s North Lawndale experienced little economic growth. The impact of these losses extended into other sectors of the labor market as well, undermining the economic foundations of local banks, small businesses, food stores, restaurants, and entertainment facilities. The loss of this second-tier commercial economy deflated the area, removing not only jobs but goods, resources, and places for socializing and congregating as well. Lawndale residents lacked *places to go* in the neighborhood as well as *places to work*. "The stores closing down affected everything," a long-time resident told me. "There's not very much in the streets for people to do here anymore."

The collapse of North Lawndale's commercial institutions and local economy was devastating for the public life of the area.[32] As Jane Jacobs argues, a substantial quantity of stores and other public places sprinkled along the sidewalks of a district is the basic requisite for establishing public safety through informal social control. Commercial institutions draw residents and passersby out into the sidewalks and streets, inviting foot traffic and promoting social interaction among consumers, merchants, and people who simply enjoy participating in or observing public life. Moreover, Jacobs explains, stores and restaurants bring "storekeepers and other small businessmen [who] are typically strong

proponents of peace and order themselves; they hate broken windows and holdups; they hate having customers nervous about safety," and they therefore play a vital role in preserving the quality of the public areas surrounding them.[33] Streets and sidewalks are the city's "most vital organs," but if they lose their animating institutions they break down, becoming instead the sources of violence, insecurity, and fear. By 1970 the loss of factories and stores had undermined the basis of collective life in the area, and in the next three decades the situation would only grow worse.

With few jobs, stores, or other public amenities to attract them to the area and a depleted infrastructure after the 1968 riots, the more mobile North Lawndale residents fled the area—almost as quickly as the local Jewish population had a few decades before. Between 1970 and 1990, roughly one-half migrated outward, leaving behind empty homes as well as the neighbors who were either committed or condemned to stay. The area entered a cycle of withdrawal and decline that the political scientist Wesley Skogan has characterized as a typical pattern of decay: "When communities become unpleasant to live in, and encounters leave people feeling uneasy and unsafe, many residents will try to leave. . . . Families and members of the middle class tend to leave first, often to be replaced by unattached and transient individuals. Those who cannot leave physically, withdraw psychologically, finding friends elsewhere or simply isolating themselves."[34] As these residents left, North Lawndale's community experienced transformations similar to those that Chicago's white population had undergone in previous generations: families and extended kinship networks were spatially separated as children or parents went to other African-American neighborhoods in the segregated city, suburban areas, or out of the metropolitan region. By the 1990s, members of African-American families that had once lived in North Lawndale were dispersed throughout the region, and their distance from one another limited their capacity to support the elderly.

In 1995 most of Chicago's poor black neighborhoods looked nothing like the crowded Rust Belt ghettos prevalent in the postwar years, and neither family nor extended family networks were rooted in local ecologies that facilitated close contact as well as they did during the 1950s and 1960s.[35] Migration and dispersion have changed the nature of family ties, with relatives communicating by phone or making occasional visits to one another rather than living in the area. Proximity matters during crises because it is easier and more convenient for people to provide emergency or casual support to their relatives if they

Figure 27. "Bombed Out": an empty lot in the residential area in North Lawndale. Photo by Caitlin Zaloom.

Figure 28. Another empty lot in once-prosperous North Lawndale. Photo by Caitlin Zaloom.

Figure 29. Ogden Avenue, once a major commercial artery in North Lawndale. Photo by Caitlin Zaloom.

live nearby; moreover (as we saw in chapter 1), it is particularly important for seniors because family members are more likely to check up on the elderly when they reside in the same area. The spatial fragmentation of family networks heightened the vulnerability of older African-American residents throughout Chicago during the heat wave.[36] In North Lawndale, the dangerous social ecology produced by decades of continuous abandonment and neglect rendered local seniors even more at risk (figs. 27, 28, and 29).

THE VIOLENCE OF EVERYDAY LIFE

The depleted physical infrastructure of North Lawndale has affected every aspect of neighborhood life. When I asked residents to describe the major streets that anchor their neighborhood, "bombed out" was the phrase that recurred most. As the editor of one of the community newspapers explained, "North Lawndale looks like a war zone. It has been bombed out. There's not very much infrastructure." Sarah Jones, who has lived in North Lawndale for more than forty years, used similar language to characterize the streets. "Sixteenth Street is almost null and void. Ogden Avenue has nothing. This used to be a car-dealing community. Now we only have one left." A few blocks down from her, another long-time resident drew a similar picture: "You ain't got no

houses. You got nothing but lots. . . . All this land you lookin' at and you don't see people. You ain't even got no store open. And Roosevelt [Road] used to be full of stores." Her perception is well founded. According to one local development organization, more than 40 percent of the land in North Lawndale was vacant in 1990. A woman in her thirties complained about the difficulties of living in an area that has so few resources and so little public life: "There's no grocery store, no Walgreens, no pharmacy, nothing for us here. . . . On this street, from here to Twenty-sixth Street [the major commercial artery of Little Village], Twenty-sixth Street is the only place you can see life. All of the places here are deserted."[37]

During the heat wave, as in their everyday lives, older North Lawndale residents had few incentives to leave their homes and seek relief or social contact in public places. The area lacked the social and commercial attractions that draw people—especially the elderly—outdoors.[38] Unable to pick up many desired products on foot, residents had to drive or be driven several miles to the closest suburb to get staples such as fresh vegetables and medications that are easily available in other parts of the city.[39] Darcy Baker is similar to many others in the neighborhood in that, as she explained, "I never shop in this area." Few older residents walk to do their shopping or to take in the local street life, and the sidewalks are often devoid of foot traffic during the day as well as at night. During an interview, a nurse who runs a geriatric clinic at a nearby hospital argued that local dangers and the lack of decent food stores represented a genuine public health crisis in the community. "There's a high incidence of obesity and all of the things associated with that—hypertension, diabetes, renal failure. Nutrition is a big issue in this community. And I think it's lack of exercise and also poor diet [that are responsible]. I spend a lot of time with counseling. People say it's not safe to walk. And so I don't know how I can tell them to walk when they don't feel safe. They don't want to go out of their house. And a lot of them say, well, the things that they like, like vegetables, are expensive and hard to find. . . . The food is a big issue."[40]

North Lawndale's older residents not only lack animated public spaces and basic resources that pull them into the streets, they also face a range of local social and spatial pressures that push them to remain at home. A booming informal economy in illicit drugs has replaced the formal commercial economy that once supported the neighborhood, and the violent conflicts among young dealers and gang-bangers who battle for territory and market share have made North Lawndale a dangerous region, day and night. In 1995, a group of residents in one

of the neighborhood's many criminal hot spots told me, drug dealers occupied several corners in the area. "They were up and down this block, all day long," a neighbor emphasized. Although residents generally felt safe around the local youths whom they had known all their lives, they fear getting caught in gang cross fire when there is trouble.

And there is often trouble. According to statistics from the Chicago Police Department and processed by the Chicago Department of Public Health, in 1994 and 1995 there was roughly one violent crime for every ten residents of North Lawndale.[41] The local police district, whose central office is close to the northern border of the area and whose territory encompasses parts of East and West Garfield Park as well, was considered "one of the hottest [most dangerous] areas around" by all the officers I met. One day, as a group of officers derided the Los Angeles Police Department for botching the O. J. Simpson investigation and explained that their experience handling homicides would have assured a conviction, a local sergeant told me that "one year of work in the Eleventh [District] is a career of training." "After working here," another veteran officer continued, "you're ready for anything."

During one of my visits to the District 11 police station, Officer Fred Handler, a veteran who had earned several advanced degrees while working on the force, brought me over to a computer terminal and showed me the crime statistics for the surrounding area. Even he was surprised to see the extent of the action. We decided to check the district's arrest figures going back from that day to the year before. District 11, which contains a little less than one hundred thousand residents, had been the site of more than twelve thousand narcotics arrests, for an average of roughly thirty-three per day, during that year alone—and this is an area where residents accused the police of letting dealers do their work with impunity and local alderman Michael Chandler complained that "open market drug sales are allowed here by police and the mayor." Turning back to the computer, Fred clicked in to see the reported activity during the heat wave. The temperatures between 12 and July 1995 were hot enough to reduce the action, or at least the arrests, in the region,[42] but there were still 134 narcotics arrests, and reports of 178 batteries, 95 thefts, 51 robberies, 50 assaults, and 2 homicides in the Eleventh District (fig. 30).

Crime levels this high make it impossible for the overwhelming majority of the people who live in North Lawndale and want nothing to do with drugs and violence to feel secure. "Of the people who live here, 97 percent of them are not involved in any way in guns, drugs, or anything," Alderman Chandler told me. "It's just that the 3 percent

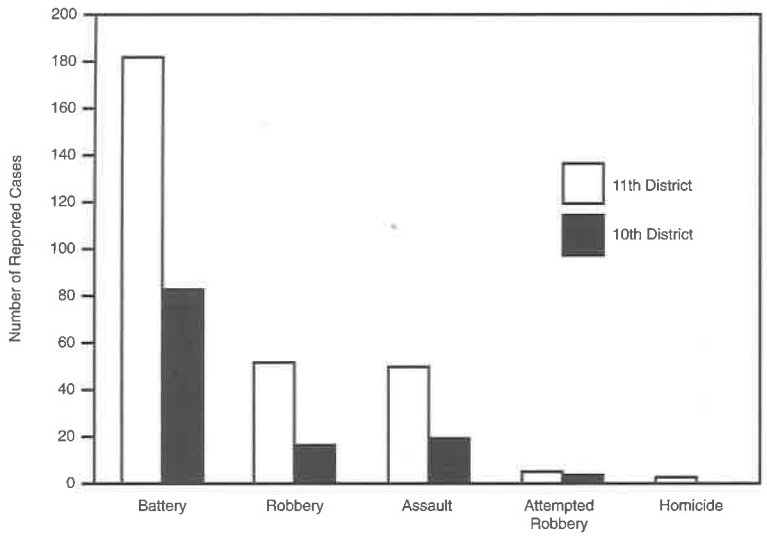

Figure 30. Reported crimes per one hundred thousand residents: Police Districts 10 and 11, July 12–19, 1995. Source: Chicago Police Department.

that are involved, they are going to walk all over us unless we organize and do something positive." Fighting against local drug dealers and other law breakers would be easier if they all lived in North Lawndale themselves. But, as one resident told me, "a lot of the guys who are selling rocks and blows [slang for crack and heroin] around here don't come from the neighborhood. There's nothing we can do to them."

Another reason that it is difficult for North Lawndale residents to fight the violence and the drug trade and establish more security in their neighborhoods is that the social ecology of the area attracts and fosters dangerous underground activity. Social scientists have long argued that young people who have no formal jobs or sources of respect in mainstream society will be lured into the drug trade, which offers income, community, and social recognition.[43] But street-level drug dealers also come to North Lawndale because the spatial conditions in the area facilitate their work. The open corners and fields, empty lots with tall grass and high cover, abandoned buildings with free spaces, and dark streets with poor lighting create relative security for dealers at the same time that they instill insecurity among residents. The economic, political, and physical abandonment of North Lawndale—processes that current residents were not responsible for or had no control over—has made the area a hub for an underground market organized around violent struggles over management decisions and territorial

control. The spatial conditions in the area account for much of the danger that North Lawndale inhabitants experience in their daily lives, and exert strong pressures on the most precarious and insecure residents to seek protection by staying at home.[44] "Safety is the major issue here," a resident told me, and the neighbors' own understanding of the significance of space motivates and directs local organizing.

The proximity of North Lawndale residents to the unruly world of drug trafficking means that, as one woman explained a few weeks after two young people had been killed on the street next to her home, "Everybody's afraid of being caught in other people's problems. They might be driving around and doing drive-by shootings. And even if you're not in the gangs . . . you're afraid of a shooting like this."[45] Darcy Baker, who has lived in North Lawndale for more than forty years, told me that in her neighborhood the problems were particularly bad in the mid-1990s. "If you were standing here [in 1995] you'd see someone selling drugs on every corner . . . groups of people. . . . There were dealers standing in front of your home, hiding drugs in your yard. We spent all our money planting flowers and putting grass down, and they were hiding their drugs *in front of our house*. . . . There were bullets coming down our block. You couldn't sit out any longer. We used to sit outside all night and just talk and do whatever. But that's changed."

"EVERYBODY HERE IS VERY CAUTIOUS"

As much as the North Lawndale community tries to maintain a peaceful and stable neighborhood, action in the streets that residents cannot thwart on their own undermines the basis for the kinds of collective life that might have protected isolated residents from the heat. Elijah Anderson has observed that "the awareness of this constant danger fosters anxiety and skittishness even among decent people,"[46] the most vulnerable and fearful of whom protect themselves by staying at home. The cautiousness one finds among all local residents, and the fear apparent in others, restricts the public activity of the area for the elderly as well as for the younger and healthier people who are best positioned to support them.[47] "Fear prevents people from going out," Alderman Chandler explained. "That's real."

Living with fear, and even organizing one's routines around it, is a consequence of residing in high-crime areas with violent drug markets in the streets and a degraded public infrastructure. The impact of proximity to violence is particularly acute for the elderly, who are not only susceptible to street crime, but also vulnerable to serious physical injury as a consequence of an attack. Many of the middle-aged residents of

North Lawndale observed that, as Sarah Jones put it, "seniors here are always afraid to go outside." Yet Mrs. Winter, a North Lawndale resident in her seventies, took a more moderate view when she explained that although "most everybody you talk to [here] is scared, during the day most people don't mind [the danger] too much." A few blocks from her, Ernie Stewart tried to articulate the process of coping with the crime that has become an embedded feature of the local environment: "For me, it's caution, not fear. Everybody here is very cautious." Ernie's cautiousness filters into his daily habits and establishes the borders in which he lives. He feels safe within the few blocks that he considers his neighborhood, but he rarely walks outside of this area; moreover, like most of the local elderly, he rarely walks outside at night. Among his peers, though, Ernie is notably healthy and active, and his willingness to walk even a few blocks from his home makes him more of a risk taker than the other seniors.

Mrs. Freeman, an old-timer in her seventies, was typical of the seniors who felt comfortable in front of their homes and around young people they knew well but did not like to stray far from their own blocks and avoided encounters with strangers. She lived on a street that, like most others in the area, was frequented by drug dealers and users, including many whom she knew. Mrs. Freeman expressed comfort with the kids on her street but concern about their deeper intentions and the company they keep. "The kids around here all know me and they won't mess with me themselves," she declared. "They don't mess with me. They know me like the back of their hands. But they get their friends and they have them do it. They tell them who's got what." Fear of being burgled while she is out of the house further compounds Mrs. Freeman's insecurity. She believes that the local youths watch her and are waiting for an opportunity to break in, and her conviction was strengthened when a neighbor found a local man trying to force open her back door. "It's hard leaving your house," she told me, "especially in this neighborhood. People are looking to see who's out. They'll come and rob you."

Long-time residents of North Lawndale internalize and naturalize their strategies for coping with crime. Newcomers, though, have to be instructed on how to manage the dangers of living in the area, and the advice they receive from local residents carries with it the folk knowledge that grounds residents' protective strategies. Sister Mary, a black nun in her thirties who had come from Africa to work and live in a local church, summed up the tips that she had picked up from her neighbors: "Don't go out at night. Don't walk on my own. Don't stand

somewhere by an empty building. It's risky to be there. It's risky to be here. It's risky. If you want to go to the store you have to come and take me out in the street to go to the store and buy something. . . . And, you know, I believe that whatever can happen at night can happen during the day too. Even the night doesn't make much difference once you are in a place where the people kill."

During an interview, Father Michael, an African priest in his thirties, told a similar story.

> I had no fear until they told me, oh no, it's not safe. These people steal on the corners and so on. They might cause trouble. . . . They would tell me that there would be drive-by shootings. They would fight among themselves, but I would be caught in the crossfire and I would be shot. And some feared even that if you walk they can come and snatch you. I've never experienced that but people have warned me. . . . And those whom I work with, they always tell me to be careful. Don't go through the alley. It can be dangerous. You never know. . . . I've never experienced it but I have had people who have experienced it. I have talked to some and I've seen the news on TV. So I took precaution. But at the beginning I had no idea.
>
> This building, it's been shot at several times. The windows in front, they've just been replaced. They shoot at it, not intending to shoot at the church but they are shooting among themselves and then the bullets come. If we were in the office then you would have had a bullet in your head.

The concentration of gang violence and drug dealing in the area has altered the social and physical landscape, making public life less attractive and viable for everyone who lives there. The degraded physical ecology of the area also imposes a specific set of dangers for the elderly. Old people in all parts of Chicago complain about the difficulties of navigating across broken sidewalks, rickety stairways, and forbidding open spaces left dark by burnt-out street lamps.[48] The fear of falling is a real concern of senior citizens, who know all too well that a stumble from which they once would have recovered could cripple or kill them when their bodies become frail. In North Lawndale, where the city government has done little to repair streets, sidewalks, alleys, and empty lots in the area and poverty prevented many residents from making major repairs on their homes, porches, and stairways, the condition of the physical environment contributes to the local seniors' sense of precariousness and increases the risks of leaving home. The social costs of fear in and of the streets made a brutal ap-

pearance during the heat wave, when the barriers North Lawndale residents established to keep themselves safe became the sources of their demise.

SOCIAL TIES IN THE UNRAVELING NEIGHBORHOOD

The pressures that restrict opportunities for social contact in North Lawndale do not make social cohesion altogether impossible nor render sociability within the neighborhood undesirable: local residents work hard to overcome the burdens of their environment and support one another. There is a considerable variation in residential transience and stability among the blocks within North Lawndale. Some have relatively high levels of home ownership and residential stability, and others have high levels of vacancy, tenancy, and turnover. One notable feature of the more stable (if not less violent) areas that I observed is that the residents, many of whom had lived on their street since the 1950s, were deeply rooted in and engaged with life on the block: they knew not only what the major issues, events, and problems on their street were, but also the people who were involved with them. They rarely had the resources that they needed to adequately address local problems and concerns, but residents of at least certain blocks in North Lawndale had the intimate familiarity with their neighbors and their neighborhood that is typical of those of the most cohesive communities.[49] North Lawndale residents suffered not from lack of knowledge about their neighbors or from disorganization, in the lay sense of the term, but from local pressures and challenges that overwhelmed their capacity to respond.

I made this observation during one of my initial visits to the community, when a long-time resident of a relatively stable block with three empty lots, two abandoned buildings, and a booming drug trade set against rows of solid limestone buildings led us up her street, then sat on her stoop and proceeded to tell stories about the families living in each house around her. "I know everybody on my block," she asserted, and she could account for several generations that she had seen on the street. In fact, keeping close tabs on neighbors and neighborhood activity was one of the strategies that North Lawndale residents used to reduce their vulnerability to violence and other local social problems and to gauge which other members of the community they could trust. The important distinction is that residents have less reason to be attuned to the older members of the community than they do to others, since shut-ins or recluses pose little threat to anyone other than themselves. For many residents, living in the violent area *required knowing*

the scene, but they needed such practical knowledge so that they could *avoid* as well as participate in public life.

Throughout North Lawndale, though, there are two main sources of formal community participation: the church and the block club. Residents joke that the two institutions exist in such great numbers that one would think that their neighborhood would be the most holy and the most organized area on earth. For example, a local directory of services in North Lawndale produced by a community organization in 1998 lists 120 churches around the area and 73 block clubs within it.[50] Why, then, were these institutions unable to protect the most vulnerable residents of the area during the heat wave?

CHURCHES AND BLOCK CLUBS

African-American churches, from the large congregations that number in the thousands to the midsize corner chapels and the storefront varieties with a mere handful of congregants, have long been one of the main anchors of social life in black urban communities in general, and of black Chicagoans in particular.[51] Since the mid-1990s, when welfare reform legislation and other urban policies removed federal support for the urban poor and delegated more responsibilities to local organizations, the church has reemerged in numerous political and academic debates as a possible source of regeneration in low-income black urban communities.[52] There is good reason to look closely at the role that churches play in the social support systems in North Lawndale. For by examining the challenges that religious institutions face when they try to support residents of poor neighborhoods, we can identify potential strengths and shortcomings of faith-based solutions to the problems of urban danger and deprivation.

Not all residents of church-rich areas such as North Lawndale belong to local congregations, and although neighborhood churches often assist people outside of their congregations, it would be difficult for them to actively track down people who need help even if they had incentive to do it. Providing protective and supportive services to people with limited mobility and extreme needs is a difficult job, even for organizations that are explicitly designed to do this. It may be true that, as the Mayoral commission studying the heat wave concluded, service providers are most effective when they are "reaching out to those who are most isolated and fearful through networks they already know and trust."[53] But local organizations such as the neighborhood church cannot do this work effectively unless they, too, have financial and material support.

Other conditions further complicate the task of protecting vulnerable local residents through the churches. North Lawndale residents, like those in all urban neighborhoods, often attend churches in other areas of the city rather than those nearby. Similarly, churches in North Lawndale often had large memberships from other parts of the city. Residents who were most active in the neighborhood had generally gotten to know the leaders of the closest church that was involved in community work, thereby maintaining ties with both their congregations outside of North Lawndale and the local religious leadership. But these local activists, whose vocation or avocation involves supporting and protecting others, are usually not the people who need to be supported and protected by the church. Residents who attended churches outside their neighborhood but were less locally engaged were only loosely connected to church networks near their homes. If the religious community in which they were active was too far away to provide social support during normal times or crises such as the heat wave, it is unlikely that the local church group would know to look out for them.

Generally, though, it is the lack of time and resources rather than the lack of social commitment that undermines churches' contributions to the local community. The clergy in most of the churches are not paid to be full-time religious leaders, and the church leadership is made up of people with busy schedules of their own. Religious officials and active members have to work other jobs and take on "the Lord's work" in their spare time. Providing adequate support for people living in extreme poverty, and particularly for older people living alone who need help with shopping, cooking, and cleaning, demands more time and attention than most church networks have to offer.

Churches and church-based networks in North Lawndale did reach out to local seniors and sick people during the heat wave, and their efforts surely protected a number of vulnerable residents. But the conditions in which churches operate in North Lawndale—including the nonparticipation of many residents, the dispersion of different religious communities and leaders, the extreme poverty of the area, and the dangerous environment that undermines public life—make it impossible for these institutions to fill in all the gaps in the city social net.[54] Churches play a major role in supporting neighborhood social, political, and even economic activity, and when they work with other local organizations and state agencies they can be even more effective. But offering sufficient levels of these key support services requires human and financial resources that religious organizations with additional missions find difficult to provide.

The other major institutions that help support local social networks are block clubs, which have long been a core part of Chicago's neighborhood communities but have become even more popular in recent years, as the local government has actively promoted them.[55] Organized by residents as a means of asserting local control and establishing standards for public behavior and property maintenance, block clubs can be a key resource in building social cohesion in neighborhoods. These associations can provide a formal structure that facilitates residents' efforts to check up on one another during emergencies such as a heat wave or to work collectively to address various social problems. "We come together, we network, we make sure we bring the social services to the community and take care of our needs," explained a local leader who has organized many of the North Lawndale block clubs into a larger collective. But block clubs also require certain conditions and human resources to succeed, conditions that are difficult to achieve in neighborhoods with as much turnover, poverty, and violence as North Lawndale.

The most basic resource necessary to build a strong block club is a core group of active residents who are rooted in and committed to their block to the extent that they are willing to spend time and energy fighting threatening characters from the world of the street in order to control their neighborhood. Proponents of community organizing models that encourage residents to "take back the streets" like to tell stories about small groups of old women who have forced drug dealers off of their blocks by sitting outside on folding chairs and writing down the license plate numbers of all the cars that drive through the area. "You only need a few dedicated people, and you can beat back the dope dealers and rebuild your communities," one advocate of neighborhood reclamation programs proclaimed.

Although there are numerous examples of successful campaigns to reclaim neighborhoods,[56] taking back the streets can be difficult work in practice and residents have to be strongly motivated to fight. If they value the territory and they do not live there themselves, dealers will retaliate against the block club, intimidating residents with threats of various sorts and, in a tactic I saw several times during my fieldwork, taking down block club signs to symbolically deny the neighbors' claims to the street.[57] On her stable block, Dorothy Graham told me how she initiated a project to clean up one of the empty lots on the street and turn it into a neighborhood garden.

> The grass and weeds had been, oh, somewhere between three and five feet high, and I went out there with a saw and a mower to cut them

down. You know, I needed to go to the neighbors' and get some of their electrical equipment to get that grass down. It was that high.

Now, I'm working in there, cleaning things up, and then some dumb person walks over and tells me to stop because his gang needed the weeds for its business. He told me, "You shouldn't be cutting that grass."

And I said, "Why not?"

He said, "We need that grass."

They like open, grassy places that are unkempt so that they have a place to hide their drugs. And this way when the police come around and catch them they can't go down and find the drugs.

We had a lot of drugs, prostitutes, and drive-by-shootings then. Like everyone else, I had been complacent. But then we got fed up.

So I looked up at this young man, and I told him, "I don't care what turf you claim, you're in the wrong place when you're here. You got your thing that you need and we have our thing that we need. Right now we need a clean neighborhood and if cutting this down takes something away from you then I apologize but I will continue."

And he looked at me funny, but then he just walked away.

It took commitment to the area as well as courage to stand up to the young man in this way, and had Dorothy not been so invested in the area she might not have been willing to do it.

The trouble with some blocks in North Lawndale is that the high turnover of residents has both depleted the supply of old-timers who have strong emotional and financial ties to the area and unraveled or loosened local social networks, so that neighbors are not as personally attached to one another as they may be in other areas. Urban sociologists and city planners have long argued that residential stability is one of the keys to local social cohesion, and much of the reason for this is that it takes time and shared experience of various events and issues to develop bonds of affiliation, obligation, or reciprocity that are strong enough to motivate collective action or social support.[58] In North Lawndale, where decades of out-migration and economic dislocation have destabilized the community and 77 percent of the homes are occupied by tenants, the conditions that facilitate efforts to build strong block associations exist only on the most stable streets.

Strong block clubs can anchor efforts to establish cohesiveness and assert local control, but since they rarely get the participation of the very old and the young people in the neighborhood who most need support, they have to make a targeted effort to reach out to them. The block meetings I visited were attended and organized mostly by women

between forty and seventy years of age, with a few middle-aged men and younger (twenties and thirties) women participating but no men younger than age thirty-five or very old residents around. Mrs. Winter told me that she had struggled to get her older neighbors to attend block meetings because "people never go out at night and you can't get enough people to neighborhood meetings because they're too afraid." Dorothy, who lives a few blocks from her, has helped to build one of the strongest block clubs in the area. But, she pointed out, "I don't have a regular block club meeting because the seniors can't always get out. . . . They shouldn't be out at night." Block clubs can become good resources for older residents, but only if participants know whom to help and how to do it effectively. In the 1990s even the most vigorous neighborhood associations in North Lawndale were overwhelmed by the pressures of everyday life in the West Side region, and the 1995 heat wave proved too dangerous to control.

SOUTH LAWNDALE: GROWING LITTLE VILLAGE

Cross just one street south of North Lawndale, though, and immediately the landscape changes. Although a statistical snapshot of South Lawndale (Little Village) shows that the community shares with North Lawndale comparable proportions of poor seniors, seniors living alone, and people living below twice the poverty line, the social ecology of the two areas could not be more distinct. The empty lots and abandoned buildings so prevalent in the African-American area give way to dense concentrations of busy sidewalks, active commerce, and residential buildings packed with more inhabitants than they can hold. The public discourse concerning the two areas focuses on the ethnoracial identities of their dominant populations, yet the contrast in the public spaces of Little Village and North Lawndale is equally extreme. Whereas the social morphology of North Lawndale undermines the collective life of the area, the material substratum of busy streets, dense residential concentration, proximate family habitation, and booming commerce in Little Village fosters public activity and informal social support among area residents. Although many residents are concerned about crime in the area and there is an active network of local gangs,[59] in 1994 and 1995 Little Village ranked fifty-ninth out of seventy-seven Chicago community areas in its overall violent crime rate—almost three times lower than the rate for North Lawndale and more than twice as low as the general level for Chicago—and violence had not significantly compromised the quality of public life in normal times.[60] Older residents reap special benefits from these ecological conditions

because the amenities and the vital public spaces that surround them draw seniors out of their homes and into the sidewalks and streets. Once in these public places, the elderly can make social contacts with neighbors, proprietors of nearby stores, community institutions, and service providers that older shut-ins find difficult to establish.

During the heat wave the elderly in Little Village were doubly protected from the dangers of isolation. First, the action in and relative security of the local streets pulled older people into public places, where contacts could help them get assistance if they needed it. Second, the array of stores, banks, and other commercial centers in the area provided seniors with safe, air-conditioned places where they could get relief from the heat. Seniors felt more comfortable in and are more likely to go to these places, which they visit as part of their regular social routines, than the official cooling centers that the city established during the heat wave. Older whites who have stayed in Little Village as it has become predominantly Latino were the most vulnerable local residents during the heat wave, yet they, too, were protected by the local ecology. The robust public life of the region draws all but the most infirm residents out of their homes, promoting social interaction, network ties, and healthy behavior.

The differences in the ecological foundations of Little Village and North Lawndale have helped to establish a rigid physical border between the two communities that deepens the ethnoracial divide. Residents of Little Village explained that there is "a fixed line between us and North Lawndale," and political organizers, church leaders, and economic developers similarly noted that "if we plan events near or in Lawndale, people won't come" because "going over there is like going to a foreign land." There is also a symbolic separation of the two areas that maps onto the ethnoracial and ecological differences.[61] In the 1950s, as Albert Hunter has written, white residents of South Lawndale mobilized to change the community name to Little Village and "placed large painted signs on many railroad overpasses which read 'Welcome to Little Village' in "an attempt to distinguish the area from the neighboring community of North Lawndale,"[62] whose stigma they wanted to avoid. As the area turned over from white to primarily Latino after the 1950s, local residents became even more aggressive about marking the territory as distinct from Lawndale. There are numerous signs claiming the area as Little Village, with the largest of them being a giant arch at the east entry to Twenty-sixth Street (or *Calle Mexico*), the main commercial artery of the community, that greets visitors with the words "Bienvenidos a Little Village."

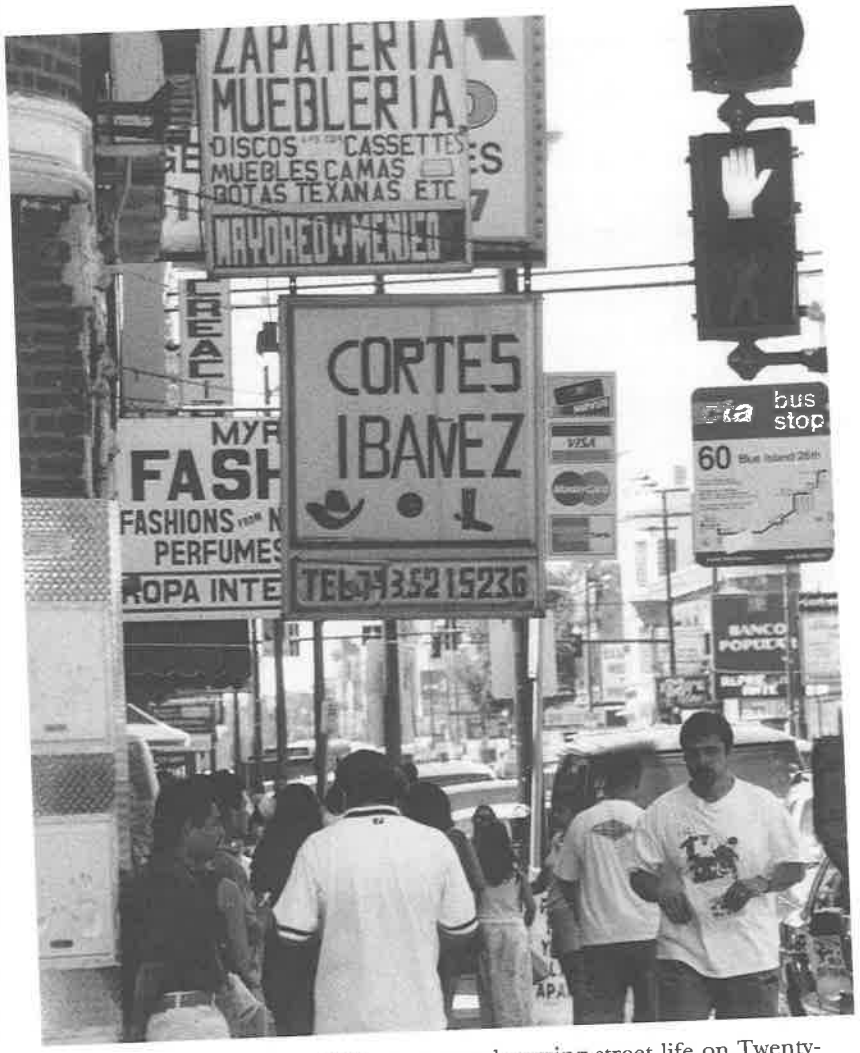

Figure 31. Commercial activity supports a booming street life on Twenty-sixth Street in Little Village. Photo by Rona Talcott.

A visitor need only go a few steps beyond the arch to see that the community, and especially its commercial strips, is bursting at the seams with shops, people, and activity. Twenty-sixth Street (fig. 31), as local boosters and economic developers were eager to tell me, is by some measures the second busiest commercial strip in Chicago, after Michigan Avenue. Just as residents of North Lawndale described their once-flourishing commercial roads such as Sixteenth Street as "bombed out," nearly all of my informants in Little Village used the

word "booming" to convey the feel of Twenty-sixth Street—just ten blocks away—and the area around it. During my fieldwork I observed that, as resident Miguel Ramirez put it, "the streets here are always busy [fig. 32], from early morning to 9:30 P.M. there are people outside"—"more people than there is room," pointed out Daniel Nardini, the editor of a community paper. On weekends the traffic jams from shoppers and visitors to the area are so thick that it can take an hour to travel a few miles. During all but the coldest months, the sidewalks are lined with street vendors (fig. 33) peddling fruits, flowers, *aguas frescas, helados, churros,* and other goods; in fact, they are so prevalent that local business owners worry about losing revenues and have organized a campaign to keep them off the streets.

"Twenty-sixth Street is the heart of the area," explained Ricardo Munoz, the alderman of a ward covering much of Little Village. "It pumps economic vitality into the community and the residents are the blood." According to Frank Aguilar, president of Little Village Chamber of Commerce, stores and businesses on Twenty-sixth Street employ more than fifteen thousand workers, and much of their wages go back into the local economy. The vigorous circulation of people and goods has animated the surrounding streets as well: by the late 1990s stores, small businesses, and local organizations began opening up all over the area, even on largely residential streets. It is apparent that, as Nardini put it, "people are always coming and going and buying things."

South Lawndale has long been a little village of sorts. According to a local historian, the community area is "arguably Chicago's oldest working-class neighborhood, with roots stretching back into the 1830s" even though most parts of the area were not formally annexed by the city government until 1869 and 1889.[63] The ethnic solidarity of the local community facilitated the creation and cultivation of Chicago's famous Democratic political machine, which was founded by neighborhood hero and Chicago mayor Anton Cermak in Little Village's Twenty-second Ward. The community then consisted largely of people of Czechoslovakian, German, and, after 1910, Polish descent, migrants who came to South Lawndale for the same industrial jobs at the McCormick Reaper plant and the Western Electric Company that attracted people to North Lawndale a few blocks away. The community area experienced its first period of major growth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but it boomed after the Douglas Park branch of the city's elevated train network arrived in the area in 1890 (and opened another station in the northwestern corner in 1902), providing better access to downtown and other city regions. By 1920 there were

Figure 32. "The streets here are always busy." Photo by Rona Talcott.

more than eighty-four thousand local residents, with "only a few vacant lots remaining in the southwestern part of the area."[64]

South Lawndale's white ethnic population was caught up in the wave of Chicago residents who took advantage of state-subsidized opportunities to move to the suburbs, and in the process distance themselves from the African Americans who were moving into North Lawndale

Figure 33. Street vendors attract shoppers outdoors. Photo by Rona Talcott.

Figure 34. A family relaxes in the yard on a hot day. Photo by Rona Talcott.

Table 7. Population in South Lawndale (Little Village), 1950–90

Year	Population	Population Change (%)	Population White (%)*	Population Hispanic (%)
1950	66,977	—	98%	NA
1960	60,940	−9	94	NA
1970	62,895	+3	86	NA
1980	75,204	+20	45	74
1990	81,155	+8	27	85

* The Hispanic category was first used in the census in 1980, and most Hispanic residents of South Lawndale were classified as white before this change. In the 1980 and 1990 censuses respondents could count themselves as both white and Hispanic.

and parts of Little Village as well, in the 1950s and 1960s (table 7). The out-migration in Little Village was more gradual than in North Lawndale, though, in part because in 1940 the home ownership rate of 36 percent in Little Village was more than twice the rate in North Lawndale, where only 16 percent of the homes were owner occupied.[65] The relatively slower pace of suburban out-migration from Little Village meant that the area did not open itself to African-Americans to the extent that North Lawndale did, and instead local realtors marketed housing in the area to the city's growing Mexican-American communities as well as to Mexican immigrants. Beginning the mid-1950s, Mexican Americans who had been displaced from their Near West and North Side homes by urban renewal programs and new highways took refuge in Little Village, and by the late 1960s the area had acquired a decidedly Latino identity. In one telling sign of the transformation, the Bohemian Settlement House, which had been founded in 1896 and was a major community institution, changed its name to Casa Aztlan in 1970.[66]

There are at least two reasons that Little Village was spared the fate of North Lawndale and other predominantly African-American communities in Chicago. The first has to do with processes of exclusion and oppression that we conventionally call racism, but which require more analytic specification because the loaded term connotes no identifiable and specific set of social or institutional practices. Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton capture part of the process in their argument that North Lawndale "became a wasteland" while Little Village evolved into "a beehive of commercial activity" because of "the degree of segregation" in North Lawndale.[67] Yet the differences between the two areas—both of which are dominated by so-called minority populations and had few whites—clearly extend beyond segregation. Unlike Afri-

can Americans in North Lawndale and several other Chicago community areas, Latinos in Little Village did not experience the particular constraints of ghettoization, the rapid and continuous abandonment of institutions and residents, or the arson and violence that contribute to the destruction of the local social ecology.[68] The second crucial reason that Little Village developed into a commercial and residential hub is that since the 1960s the area has become a magnet for Mexican and Central American migrants and immigrants as well as for Mexican Americans already in Chicago, groups whose presence in the city has increased dramatically while the population of whites and blacks has declined.[69] The continuous migration of Mexican Americans to this community area has replenished its human resources and regenerated the commercial economy of retailers and small local businesses, such as food stores, travel agencies, health-care providers, and telecommunications companies. While North Lawndale lost more than half of its population between 1970 and 1990, Little Village grew by roughly 30 percent. There are only a handful of abandoned buildings and empty lots in the area, and those that exist are sure to be developed quickly in what *Chicago* magazine has dubbed one of Chicago's "hottest real estate markets."[70] "In Little Village," Frank Aguilar told me, "there is no such thing as an empty lot." In 1995, the year of the heat wave, the commercial vacancy rate was about 2.5 percent, compared with rates four times as high downtown and many times more than that in North Lawndale, where commercial vacancy is common.

"THE STREETS HERE ARE ALWAYS BUSY"

The active street life in Little Village attracts older and younger residents into the public areas where informal interactions and casual observations of others are typical forms of social cohesion. Many of the elderly I interviewed explained that during the heat wave they sought relief in the air-conditioned stores on Twenty-sixth Street, just as they do on ordinary summer days. Not only did elderly residents in Little Village have less to fear on the sidewalks and streets than did their neighbors in North Lawndale: living in a region with busy commercial traffic and active streets, they also had more incentive to go outdoors and walk to places where they could get relief. The rich commercial resources and a flourishing sidewalk culture animated public areas throughout the neighborhood; and there were always people, including seniors with their pushcarts full of groceries and small bags of goods, in the streets when I did my fieldwork. "Street life," as Gerald Suttles argues, "is a vital link in the communication network of the

[neighborhood] and, as a result, governs much of what the residents know of one another."[71] This remains true in Little Village today, where the sidewalks are primary conduits for social contact and control. The relative security of these public areas makes it easier for residents of Little Village—even the older whites—to engage with their neighbors and participate in community events.

But in addition to this instrumental role in facilitating social integration, safe sidewalks, local retailers and grocers, and vigorous public activity provide intrinsic benefits for the health and welfare of local residents, particularly seniors. As Dr. John Herman, a neighborhood physician, explained, "People walk more here. That's healthy. People get more sunshine, so they get more vitamin D and less osteoporosis. They feel better." Health workers in North Lawndale found it difficult to get older residents to exercise because seniors felt vulnerable walking outdoors. In Little Village, though, walking was part of the daily routine for most of the older residents I interviewed, especially during the warmer months. Unlike their neighbors in North Lawndale, many of whom drive to the suburbs or Little Village to shop, Little Village seniors had ample reason to be outdoors. According to the glossy *Business Directory* published by Little Village Chamber of Commerce, there were seventy-one grocery stores of various sizes in the area in 1998, fifteen bakeries, ninety-six restaurants, thirty discount stores, and two department stores. There is also an active and cash-driven market in health and medical services as well as several not-for-profit providers, with dozens of clinics and alternative medical suppliers offering care to residents who have no health insurance. The commercial life is particularly important to local seniors, for it not only draws them out when they need goods or services but also gives them an excuse to leave home when they are feeling lonely or bored.

With one of the largest commercial strips in Chicago and a specialized market for Mexican products, Little Village is, in the words of several local residents, "a kind of self-contained community." As one long-time resident explained,

> We've got a lot of people in Little Village who don't leave Little Village if they don't have to. And that includes older white ethnic groups. For example, our neighbor. Until my wife took her downtown a month before she died, the last time she was downtown was in 1940. She hadn't been there in fifty-five years. She was ninety-two years old.
>
> People stay here because they like walking to the stores. They can get their food here. They can go to the bakery. Little Village has a lot of

> banks [in 1998 there were seven major banks on Twenty-sixth Street alone, and six others in the area, with more on their way], so if they want to save their money they can do that here.

These resources pulled everyone into the streets. As Father Green noted, "Kids are out. Old people are out. People are shopping. The commercial attraction is just phenomenal. There's really no need to get in the car and go anywhere. You can certainly do things within walking distance and people do."

Although the high population density and active commercial sector imposes certain strains on local residents, including cramped living quarters and traffic congestion, they also foster tight social networks among families and neighbors and support a relatively secure public environment. In sharp contrast with North Lawndale, in Little Village the local ecology has strengthened family and friendship ties that might have been weakened by migration, because proximate conditions encourage and even force social interaction.[72] Latino residents do not necessarily perceive the residential crowding and busy street life as pleasant or desirable. "People here are living on top of each other," Javier Montes told me. "We're crammed into a little bit of space." Lifelong resident Rosa Hernandez, a young woman in her twenties, complained, "I feel trapped in this neighborhood sometimes. I need to get out of here or I start to choke." Further, during one day of my fieldwork, a few minutes after a North Lawndale community leader had explained that open lots and empty space were causing much of his neighborhood's trouble, the director of Little Village Chamber of Commerce opined that "the biggest problem in Little Village is that, basically, there is no room."

Some of the more recent immigrants noted the irony that, as far as they have traveled from home, they see many of their old *compadres* in Little Village. "People come here because of family or friends from the old village or city," said Father Morales, a migrant himself. "They're rarely on their own." Yet these same conditions provide the ecological foundations that enable residents to attend closely to frail, unhealthy, or otherwise needy family members, *compadrazgo* (fictive kin) and friends. One local resident, a man in his thirties and the second of three generations of family members in the area, stated that most of his friends are moving out of their parents' homes, "but they're still very close to the family, as opposed to the kid who graduates from college and then just leaves and disappears and never comes back. I mean, I live two blocks from my mother. My dad lives [a few blocks away]—my parents are separated. So they're here."

Grandparents play a particularly important role in the many Little Village Latino families in which parents are working long hours and have little time for child care or other family activity.[73] Since working-age residents were likely to be toiling in one or more low-wage jobs, they relied on grandparents and other family members to look after children and help with other domestic work. The integration of older family members into the lives of their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren results not only from cultural values dictating that, as one Latino service provider for the local elderly put it, "it's important for these elders . . . that they are still kept around," but also because "they are important for the family because they have something to give." "Families around here can't afford to leave the older folks alone," one of the few Latino clergy members in the area told me. "They need them." Father Green, who works at the largest Catholic church in the area, reported that "it's phenomenal the number of elderly who are waiting outside to pick up the kids and take them home" after school. There is a downside to these conditions. Some of my informants complained that the low-wage economy in which they were embedded made it necessary to turn their mothers into "a kind of slave with no payment." But others had a more sanguine view. "We have to realize that they are more or less getting a kick out of it," Miguel Ramirez explained.

Although there was a gendered structure to the domestic work within Little Village, with grandmothers doing far more unpaid labor than grandfathers, few of the seniors I met in the community complained that they were overworked by their families. Their experiences illustrate how the cultural practice of caring is embedded in an ecology and economy—including the clustered households of multigenerational networks, the busy sidewalks, and the relative security of the neighborhoods—that promote social support even while creating other strains. During the heat wave the synergistic relationship between the cultural dispositions of the dominant local group and the neighborhood ecology allowed residents of Little Village to leave their homes, check up on vulnerable residents, and minimize the impact of the heat.

There are many parts of Chicago in which fear of crime and the degradation of public space has pressured older residents to shut themselves into their homes during the day as well as at night, but in Little Village even the old and frail residents felt comfortable going out ex-

cept late at night. As Jacobs argues, "a well-used city street is apt to be a safe street. A deserted city street is apt to be unsafe. . . . There must be eyes on the street."[74] During the heat wave, older residents of Little Village who would have been vulnerable to the heat had they stayed at home were secure enough in their neighborhood to brave the outdoors, visit local stores or neighbors, and get the care that they needed. As a leader of a local Catholic church recalled, "During the peak hours of the heat you would not think twice about getting outside. You heard these stories of people who were locked into their houses for fear of coming out. That definitely wouldn't be true on a summer day here. The streets, especially in summer, are quite safe. There are isolated incidents. But the streets are vibrant until about ten o'clock at night."

We have already seen that in 1994 and 1995 the violent crime rate in Little Village was roughly three times lower than it was in North Lawndale and two times lower than in Chicago as a whole, setting a general social context in which Little Village residents had less to fear than did other city dwellers. These trends were visible during the week of the heat wave, when the Tenth Police District, which includes Little Village (and a slice of North Lawndale), and the Eleventh Police District, which contains much of North Lawndale, had great disparities in their reported rates of violent crime. Between 12 and 19 July 1995, District 10 reported 83 batteries, 17 robberies, 20 assaults, 1 attempted robbery, and 0 homicides for every 100,000 residents, whereas District 11 reported 181 batteries, 52 robberies, 51 assaults, 4 attempted robberies, and 2 homicides for every 100,000 residents[75] (see fig. 30). Though free from neither crime nor fear, residents of Little Village had good reason to feel safer in the streets than did the inhabitants of most other parts of Chicago.

According to the local residents I got to know, one of the reasons that they can easily manage walking or hanging out in the streets is that there is a clear spatial and temporal order to violence in the area, with most of the action taking place at night and in clusters of blocks that are off the major thoroughfares. In general, one resident explained to a police officer during a community meeting, "most of the violence we have happens at night;" and although several older residents I interviewed told me that they were growing more fearful of gang violence and avoided the streets after dark, many others found even this common self-protection strategy to be unnecessary. As Frank Kruk, a white old-timer who had spent his life in Little Village insisted, "I am not afraid of my neighborhood. We walk in the streets in the middle of the night when we come home." Frank's location within the

community's safer and more middle-class southwestern corner accounted for some of this confidence. The real problems, he explained, are on the north side of the area, where Latino and black youths are closer together and the gangs are more active.

Residents believed that gang activity was on the rise while I was in Little Village, becoming a top priority for the community at precisely the moment when the neighborhood economy had begun to boom and property values to climb. At several community policing meetings I attended, residents complained that they were hearing gunshots after dark and growing concerned that, as one mother remarked, "gangs control the area at night."[76] Yet the ubiquity of "decent" public activities counteracted the threats of danger and disorder, preserving a safe environment during most hours of the day despite occasional instances of violence. "Even though we have gangs, people still feel comfortable in the streets," noted Father Morales, one of the few Latino Catholic religious leaders in the area. "You walk around and you see people sitting on the front steps everywhere." Casual street users provide the watchful eyes that, as Jacobs argues, facilitate neighborhood safety. "We look out for each other in our neighborhood," reported James Grabowicz, another of the white old-timers who had remained in the area. "If something is going on we'll see it and call each other or the police."

CENTRALIZED CHURCHES

In addition to the informal ties that connect Little Village neighbors, powerful church networks provide crucial forms of protection to local residents. Churches contributed to local efforts to protect seniors during the heat wave, but the nature of isolation and vulnerability in Little Village meant that the community's elderly were less at risk for heat-related problems even without religious organizations. With roughly twenty churches in the area, Little Village did not have as numerous a supply of religious organizations as did North Lawndale.[77] But the relative size, wealth, and centralization of these organizations in Little Village allowed the church networks to absorb and support large numbers of local residents. Just as the churches in North Lawndale had difficulty learning about and attending to reclusive seniors, churches in Little Village struggled to integrate older whites who lived alone, even those who were once active members.

The ethnoracial makeup of local religious institutions had turned over along with the neighborhood, and the same buildings that had long anchored the community life for the area's Poles, Czechs, and Slavs became predominantly Latino places where Spanish was the dom-

inant language, services took on a Latin-American style, and cultural events were based on Latino traditions. Although few of the church leaders were Latino, most pastors and administrators spoke fluent Spanish. Many of the churches conducted special services and events in English or Polish for the handful of white members who remained participants in religious life, but church leaders throughout the area expressed concerns that local changes had estranged the old-timers and that the clergy possessed neither the human nor cultural resources required to alleviate the difficulties of aging alone in the neighborhood. "We have plenty of old-timers living alone here," Father Morales explained. "The old-timers more than the Hispanics. And it's a sad story sometimes because we can't bring [the services] to them. Services for that kind are important, but there are limitations and we can't do much unless you have somebody on the staff. It's really hard to do it with volunteers." Like the churches in North Lawndale, most religious institutions in Little Village worked hard to assist local seniors but recognized that the job required time, money, organization, and labor that they could not offer.

As in North Lawndale, churches in Little Village played roles in many realms of neighborhood life, but in the latter community, religious institutions placed special emphasis on helping immigrants and Spanish speakers cope with the pressures and demands of living and working in Chicago. In addition to offering social, political, vocational, and health services and programs similar to those provided by churches in North Lawndale, religious organizations in Little Village offered courses in English as a second language, helped recent immigrants connect with social and economic networks, and counseled newcomers from rural areas who had difficulty acculturating to the urban environment. In a city where the political and community organizations are generally foreign and intimidating to migrants, many newcomers find that the Catholic Church is the most familiar and trustworthy source of stability and support.

The most significant difference between the religious institutions in North Lawndale and Little Village was the relative centralization of the Latino churches, which were predominantly Catholic and structurally tied to and supported by the Archdiocese of Chicago. Although the pastors were mostly white men who had moved to the neighborhood within the last few decades, the church leadership, membership, and support networks were more rooted in community life than were their counterparts in many North Lawndale religious centers. Most church

participants, pastors, and administrators lived in the area, often within walking distance of the churches themselves, providing an ecological basis for place-based projects and facilitating the delivery of various support services. "The church is a center for socializing," Father Morales said. "People make *compadres* at church."

There were, however, costs as well as benefits stemming from the affiliation between neighborhood churches and the broader Catholic Church. Unlike many of the smaller churches in North Lawndale, the Catholic churches in Little Village received substantial resources and support from the centralized archdiocese. These resources proved invaluable during difficult times and helped local religious organizations maintain their services and programs despite the relative deprivation of many of their members. But the archdiocesan support came at a price. Representative of and responsible to a larger religious institution, the Catholic churches in Little Village struggled to be as responsive to the particular and changing demands of local residents as smaller, more grassroots churches were able to be. Some of the Little Village residents I met had left the Catholic Church in favor of evangelical denominations because, they felt, the new churches were more attentive to their needs. When I did my fieldwork, though, these converts were in the minority of the strongly Catholic Little Village religious community.

With large Catholic churches dispersed throughout the area, residents had little difficulty finding a place to anchor their religious or, in some cases, social activities. Most of the churches are busy throughout the week because they run parochial schools and host numerous events and programs. Father James, who presides over a church with several thousand members, explained as we sat outside the church school: "On different nights we can have eight different activities going on outside of the church in our meeting halls. And a lot of people connect to us. Sunday morning we have a Polish mass which is very small. It's in Polish. We also have an English mass that's a bit larger, maybe one hundred people. And two Spanish masses. They are the largest, four to five hundred people." On Sundays the major weekly masses draw more than ten thousand people, most of them Little Village residents, out of their homes and into the local churches. According to Father Green at Saint Michael's Church, "We are the largest Hispanic Catholic church in the archdiocese and we are the fourth-largest parish in the archdiocese. We have about five thousand people who come on Sunday. We have mass every hour and a half from 7:30

in the morning to 4:30 at night. Easter we probably have ten thousand. Ash Wednesday we have fifteen thousand. Everything here is on the same magnitude."

Ultimately, though, it is the severity of the local problems rather than the size of the local churches that most determined the capacity of vulnerable residents to survive emergencies such as the heat wave and withstand the daily pressures of urban marginality. Although there were some areas of commonality, the challenges that stemmed from poverty and transition in the Little Village community were distinct from those that troubled residents of North Lawndale. A greater number of seniors lived alone in Little Village than in North Lawndale, but they suffered from linguistic isolation and status transformation (from becoming ethnic minorities in the neighborhood) more than from the kinds of insecurity, fear of the streets, loss of local resources, and literal isolation that threatened seniors in North Lawndale.

Little Village community leaders have good reason to build formal social networks for local Latino seniors. In the 1990s Latino residents of the area have experienced firsthand what other ethnic groups in Chicago have already witnessed: the rise of interfamily dispersion, suburbanization, and increasing social and spatial distance between seniors and younger generations. Acculturating to social practices and migration strategies typical of most other communities in Chicago, working-age Latinos in Little Village have begun moving to the suburbs, leaving parents and other older relatives behind as they make their go at the American dream. In our interviews, Chicago-area social workers expressed concern that cultural myths about Latino intergenerational family ties had in fact rendered invisible or unstated the indisputable demographic trend toward Latino isolation that they had witnessed in their work.[78] "The older generation of Hispanics are beginning to be left alone by their families," the director of one service agency explained to me. "And because no one likes to talk about it their isolation is all the more dangerous." Protected by proximate family and friendship ties during the 1995 heat wave, Latino seniors in Little Village are unlikely to be so well positioned in the coming generations. Ethnically cultivated dispositions common among Latinos may have helped to keep recent generations of families together in places like Little Village, but the social trajectory and spatial dispersal of Latino families are already threatening such cultures of care.

Like the CDC epidemiologists who conducted the case-control study, when I ended my fieldwork on Chicago's West Side I

searched for ways to determine whether the sources of risk and protection that I had observed in North Lawndale and Little Village were apparent in other parts of the city. In casual observations in other regions I found patterns of ecological decay in high heat mortality areas and relatively robust social morphology in places with better survival rates. Field notes taken in three community areas with high heat death rates, for example, describe the commercial strips and public spaces in terms that would fit the landscape of North Lawndale as well.

> Area 1: A small area with little commercial activity and virtually no retail stores. Most blocks are lined with dilapidated and boarded-up abandoned houses, vacant lots full of rubble or trash, and small storefront churches. [There is] only one commercial strip, but it only includes a check cashing service and a few empty storefronts.

> Area 2: The main commercial strips are rundown, but there are a few small retail stores and old industrial buildings. The streets are wide, and there is little or no street life. There are many empty storefronts, boarded-up buildings, and large lots of empty open space.

> Area 3: Many of the buildings were once used for commercial purposes, but the windows are boarded and the signs are old, faded, and falling apart. The only stores are little groceries and a check cashing service. Besides that there are virtually no shops—only empty lots. The area feels abandoned. One side of the street looked incredibly deserted and bombed out.

Such superficial descriptions should be treated with caution because they do not reflect deep knowledge about the ways that elderly or other residents use the spaces. It was impossible to replicate the intensive ethnographic study in every Chicago community area, but the research hints at a set of ecological contexts and social processes that helped explain how place-specific conditions affected heat wave mortality rates. In addition, it suggests that the widespread ecological impacts of urban abandonment and deprivation have altered the social environments of many Chicago communities in ways that population-level data do not reveal.

Once we identify these social ecological conditions we can integrate more standard demographic evidence to consider the significance of related conditions in the city.[79] Table 3, for example, shows that several of the areas, such as Fuller Park, Woodlawn, Washington Park, and Englewood, shared the high levels of abandonment—some lost as much as two-thirds of their residents between 1960 and 1990, and ten

Table 8. Chicago Community Areas with Lowest Heat Wave Death Rates

Community Area	Heat-Related Deaths per 100,000 Population	Percent Population Decline, 1960–90	Percent Population Black	Overall Violent Crime Rank, 1994–95 (77 CAs)
Beverly	0	10	24	70
Ashburn	0	4	10	62
Riverdale	0	5	98	11
East Side	0	11	0	54
Calumet Heights	0	10	93	39
Montclare	0	10	0	61
Auburn Gresham	3	0	99	19
Garfield Ridge	3	16	13	60
West Lawn	4	13	0	65
South Lawndale (Little Village)	4	−33	9	59
City of Chicago	7	22	39	—

Source: Data based on 521 heat-related deaths located by Illinois Department of Public Health (1997), Chicago Fact Book Consortium (1995), and the City of Chicago, Department of Public Health.

of the fifteen areas lost more than one-third—and violent crime that make public life intimidating for elderly residents; and table 8 shows the reverse: in a city that lost more than 21 percent of its residents between 1960 and 1990, all but two of the ten community areas with the lowest heat wave death rates lost less than 11 percent of their population base; the others, which lost 16 percent and 13 percent, were still below the city's rate. Moreover, the three predominantly African-American community areas with exceptionally low death rates, Riverdale, Auburn Gresham, and Calumet Heights, lost only between 0 percent and 10 percent of their residents in the decades preceding the heat wave—a rare pattern among Chicago's African-American regions.

Just as the CDC's epidemiological study identified individual-level risk factors for heat wave mortality, the ethnographic assessment of how community-level social environments affect the capacity of Chicago regions to survive the disaster located a series of place-based, social ecological conditions that heighten health risks during extreme events and normal times. Areas with low mortality rates were distinctive not because of their ethnic or racial compositions. As can be inferred from table 8, of the ten areas with the highest heat wave survival rates three were more than 90 percent African-American, two were officially more than 39 percent Latino, and five were predominantly white. But in most cases they did not suffer greatly from ecological depletion, the

collapse of local infrastructure and commerce, population decline, and high levels of violent crime;[80] and in others, such as Little Village, they gained vitality while the rest of the city declined.

The areas with high mortality levels also had distinctive compositional and ecological features. Previous studies of heat wave mortality have shown that residents of places with high poverty, concentrated elderly populations, poor housing, and low vegetation are especially vulnerable to extreme summer weather; and the Illinois Department of Public Health found that residents of Chicago community areas with high levels of violent crime also faced elevated risks of death in the 1995 disaster.[81] This analysis adds several place-specific risk factors, some of which, such as the quality of public spaces, the vigor of street-level commercial activity, and the centralization of support networks and institutions, concern the social morphology of regions; others, such as the loss of residents and the prevalence of seniors living alone, concern population-level conditions.

The principal contribution of this approach is that it deepens our understanding of the reasons that different community areas and different groups had such disparate experiences during the heat wave. As is typical in contemporary health research and public policy discourse, much of the discussion about the group-specific health outcomes during the heat wave has been cast in ethnic or racial terms, with ethnic difference or cultural variation serving as explanations for ethnic mortality rates. The tale of the neighborhoods suggests that a key reason that African Americans had the highest death rates in the Chicago heat wave is that they are the only group in the city segregated and ghettoized in community areas with high levels of abandoned housing stock, empty lots, depleted commercial infrastructure, population decline, degraded sidewalks, parks, and streets, and impoverished institutions.[82] Violent crime and active street-level drug markets, which are facilitated by these ecological conditions, exacerbate the difficulties of using public space and organizing effective support networks in such areas. There is little evidence that during the heat wave the most isolated and vulnerable residents of places like North Lawndale suffered because members of their community did not care about them. Yet there is good reason to believe that residents of the most impoverished, abandoned, and dangerous places in Chicago died alone because they lived in social environments that discouraged departure from the safe houses where they had burrowed, and created obstacles to social protection that are absent from more tranquil and prosperous areas.

Chicago officials might not have been able to identify the social and

ecological conditions that threatened the health of residents on the city's South and West Sides when the heat arrived in 1995, but they were familiar enough with the typical patterns of health and vulnerability in the region to predict at least some of the spots where the extreme environment would prove most devastating. While Chicago residents and communities improvised their survival strategies to withstand the unbearable climate, city agencies scrambled to mount a political response that would fill in the gaps. A coordinated program for providing emergency medical care and social service support would be essential for a successful public health intervention. But, as the next chapter shows, the obstacles to organizing such a campaign were too great for most city agencies to overcome.

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visible in the political history of the heat wave.

Clark Staten, a retired Fire Department commander who had worked as a city paramedic for twenty years and participated in emergency response efforts during the 1983, 1986, and 1988 heat waves, remembers the 1995 disaster vividly. In 1995 Staten was directing the Emergency Response and Research Institute, a local think tank that evaluates emergency service programs and monitors Chicago's network of emergency care. He explained that many of the paramedics who

Engels's remark that "such a district exists in the heart of the second city of England, the first manufacturing city of the world" has an ironic resonance for the case of Chicago, America's own "Second City" and historic manufacturing center.

52. Most of the twenty-seven hotels surveyed by Keigher (1991, 52–53) "have a formal lobby or living room, but many show remarkably few signs of social life. Few hotels appear to have gone to any trouble to create sociable space and some evidently try to discourage it."

53. Keigher (1991) also found that SRO residents tended to be out of touch with social service workers and medical providers. Many of the residents in her study were interested in receiving support but did not know how and where to get it, and the health-care needs of the residents are "staggering" (Keigher 1991, 49–50).

54. The relationship between alcohol or drug consumption and heatstroke is reported in Kilbourne, et al. (1982). Herbert Simon (1994) found an association between neuroleptic drug consumption and hyperthermic disorders.

55. Rollinson 1990, 194–95. His claim is particularly striking in light of Rollinson's disclaimer that he likely undersampled the most deteriorated hotels, since six SROs refused to grant him access, as well as the most isolated residents, since they would be the most difficult to find and the least inclined to participate in his study.

56. Ibid.

57. Keigher 1991, 51.

58. Rollinson 1990, 200.

59. Hoch and Slayton 1989, 151.

60. Ibid., 161.

61. Keigher 1991, 49.

62. Rollinson 1990.

63. Keigher 1991, 47.

64. According to a *Chicago Sun-Times* list of 45 heat wave victims interred by the Cook County Medical Examiners Office, 33 of the 45 decedents, or roughly 75 percent, were men (*Chicago Sun-Times* 1995, 14).

65. Orloff 1993, chap. 3; Fischer 1982, 253; Hoch and Slayton 1989, 128.

66. Though, as Ann Orloff (1993) shows, it is important to note that men typically have better access to pensions because they have relatively longer and more continuous experience in the formal labor market.

67. See R. W. Connell's *Masculinities* (1995, 21–27) for a critical discussion of the literature on "sex roles." Robert Rubinstein (1986, 20–21) finds that two-thirds of the single elderly men in his sample who had no children also reported "no close family at all," whereas "seventeen of the 29 men with children had generally close relationships with all or some of their children." For an account of how men are excluded from various welfare state programs, see Susser (1993).

68. Rubinstein 1986, 1.

69. Liebow 1967, 214, 218–19. Two compelling anthropological studies that explore the relationships between male violence and hardship are Bourgois (1995) and Lancaster (1992).

70. Gurley, et al. 1996, 1710.

CHAPTER 2

1. Semenza, et al. 1996, 84.

2. The researchers explain that they "included deaths due to cardiovascular causes in the case definition because previous studies had demonstrated an excess of deaths from cardiovascular disease during periods of high heat" (ibid.).

3. Semenza explains that "many people were so isolated that we weren't able to include them in the study. Our estimate of the significance of social isolation in the study is in fact an underestimate because we eliminated the most isolated people from the sample."

4. According to Karen Smoyer (1998, 1813), "by focusing on population-related risk factors and by matching cases and controls by neighborhood of residence, [the design] cancelled out any observable effects of neighborhood characteristics and precluded the evaluation of environmental variables beyond the scale of the household."

5. For a useful review, see Ralph Catalano and Kate Pickett (1999), "A Taxonomy of Research Concerned with Place and Health."

6. Smoyer (1998, 1820) claims that, in general, "the differences between high-mortality and low-mortality tracts were more pronounced during heat waves." She finds that in some years the distribution of heat wave mortality in St. Louis census tracts was random, but that "the mean values of several census tract variables were significantly different between high- and low-mortality tracts" (p. 1820). The problem with these measures is that during less fatal heat waves the number of deaths is too small to generate reliable comparisons across neighborhoods. Smoyer warns that "if relatively few deaths occur, the variation in tract-level mortality rates will be small and tract-level patterns are unlikely to emerge" (ibid.). But the opposite is also true: small differences in the number of heat wave deaths across tracts or neighborhoods may generate exaggerated indicators of the relative risk levels.

Smoyer also notes that two previous studies of heat wave mortality in St. Louis and New York, one led by Henschel and the other by Schuman, found not only a spatial distribution of health risk, but a significant association between place-based conditions and heat wave mortality as well. In addition, Martinez and colleagues (1989) discovered geographical patterns in heat wave mortality among the elderly.

7. See note 12 of the introduction for a discussion of Chicago's community areas.

8. There is an enormous literature on the historical development and social conditions of Chicago's African-American regions. The classic study of the Black Belt is St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis* ([1945] 1993).

9. Despite significant reductions in the crime rates during the late 1990s, the levels of violent crime in poor black areas of the city remain comparatively high, making it difficult for residents to feel safe in the streets. A study by the Epidemiology Program at the Chicago Department of Public Health (1996) showed that in 1994 and 1995 the overall violent crime rate as reported to the Chicago Police Department, a clear underestimation of the true victimization level, showed that there were 19 violent crimes for every 100 residents of Fuller Park, the community area that had the highest mortality levels during the heat

wave. Other community areas with high heat wave mortalities had similar crime levels: Woodlawn, with the second-highest heat mortality rate, reported 13 violent crimes per 100 residents; Greater Grand Crossing reported 11 per 100; Washington Park, Grand Boulevard, and the Near South Side, all among the most deadly spots during the disaster, listed rates above 15 crimes per 100 residents as well, suggesting, as did the Illinois Department of Public Health, an association between the everyday precariousness of life in these neighborhoods and vulnerability during the heat wave. In contrast, Lincoln Park, the prosperous community on the Near North Side, reported two violent crimes for every 100 residents, and a heat wave mortality rate among the lowest in the city.

10. There is, however, an analytical danger in using community area data to document the spatial logic of the heat wave's effects. The large size and overall ethnoracial or class diversity of some of the community areas hide smaller pockets of poverty, crime, and even high heat wave deaths in neighborhoods within them. One cluster of streets in Uptown notorious for its dilapidated SRO dwellings, for example, was the spot of at least seven heat-related deaths, making it perhaps the most deadly location in the city; yet Uptown as a whole was not one of the fifteen areas with the highest general death rates.

11. As Laurence Kalkstein explains in *Lancet* (1995, 858), areas with "black roofs, red brick exteriors, and lack of ventilation . . . are especially unsuited to hot conditions."

12. Shen, et al. 1995.

13. Smoyer (1998, 1822) notes the lack of and need for such qualitative research projects. In her list of important future directions for place-based research on heat wave mortality, "first is to use qualitative methods to unravel the more complex relationships between place and heat wave mortality risk."

14. The best example of a comprehensive effort to use ethnographic research to assess a range of Chicago community areas is the Comparative Neighborhood Study, directed by William Julius Wilson and Richard Taub at the University of Chicago. The project, which began in 1993, employed roughly ten graduate students for several years and covered four community areas. By 2001, the project had produced several dissertations and books about individual areas (including Mary Pattillo-McCoy's *Black Picket Fences* [1999]), but not a broader set of findings based on cross-area comparisons.

15. For a review of methodological debates about the uses of case studies, see the edited volume by Charles Ragin and Howard Becker, *What Is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry* (1992). In this comparative neighborhood study I follow convention by using Chicago community areas as the units of analysis. Although, as Sudhir Venkatesh (2001) and Al Hunter (1974) have argued, community areas are constructions of social scientists rather than indigenous expressions of neighborhood identities, the relatively large size of typical community areas made them useful for this study. The distribution of the seven-hundred-plus heat wave deaths in the seventy-seven Chicago community areas proved more meaningful than the distribution among the census tracts or the neighborhood units constructed by Robert Sampson and colleagues for the Harvard Public Health Study (1997). The two latter units are too small and numerous to generate reliable mortality rates for the acute event. The comparison here therefore borrows from Jennifer Platt's (1992) practice of using conventional cases with uncertain theoretical status but unquestioned practical utility as scientifically constructed objects of scholastic and political importance. Yet after choosing the units of analysis I conducted the research in a style closer to John Walton's (1992) or Michel Wieviorka's (1992), constructing variables, categories, and theoretically grounded observations on the basis of evidence uncovered in the field.

16. Controlling for these conditions allowed me to guard against the possibility that compositional factors on key measures accounted for difference in mortality.

17. Whitman, et al. 1997, 1515–18. Note that the population of Latinos in South Lawndale was likely much higher than the official total, since the community area is a center for migrant workers who are often uncounted by census takers.

18. Some caution is warranted when interpreting the data on earnings in both Little Village and North Lawndale, since much of the local economic activity is in the informal labor market and is generally unreported by workers. Many studies have established that the official poverty line in the United States is a poor indicator of poverty (Citro and Michael, eds. 1995). See Ruggles (1990) for a review of the debates and Federman, et al. (1996) for a discussion of the consequences of being poor. In the American context, families earning significantly more than the official limit suffer from relative deprivations of primary goods such as health care, decent housing, energy, and food. Poverty researchers also debate the question of what counts as a "high-poverty" area at the census tract level. Paul Jargowsky (1997, 10–11) uses the 40 percent poverty rate at the census tract level as the criterion for ghettos, barrios, and slums, but he also reports that the 20 percent census tract poverty rate criterion would capture the bottom quintile of American census tracts.

19. Recent research led by Sampson (1997, 918) suggests that in addition to the proportion of residents who are poor, and the proportion of residents who are old and alone, the collective efficacy of the community—defined as the "social cohesion among neighbors combined with their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good"—should affect the capacity of local residents to survive the disaster. In fact, bringing social cohesion into the equation makes the puzzle of why Little Village experienced such a relatively low death rate even more difficult to solve: according to the measure developed by Sampson and his colleagues, Little Village has a more negative collective efficacy rating than North Lawndale, and should therefore have had weaker social support systems during the disaster.

20. Conventional scholarly wisdom allows analysts to claim that characteristics of groups, as groups, explain the differences among groups. Yet, as Loïc Wacquant (1997a, 224) argues, "'race' cannot be both object and tool of analysis, explanandum and explanans."

21. For a discussion and critique of analogous forms of racial reasoning, see Gould ([1981] 1996).

22. Angel, et al. 1996.

23. See Anderson (1999), Frazier (1939), Pattillo-McCoy (1999), and Stack (1974). Male "old-heads" and grandmothers have been focal subjects of Elijah Anderson's books on social relations in black communities in Philadelphia

(1990, 1999). Anderson (1999, 206) quotes E. Franklin Frazier's account of black families, in which he argues that "the oldest woman is regarded as the head of the family, it has been the grandmother who has held the generations together." Merril Silverstein and Linda Waite (1993) call these findings into question, arguing that there is little evidence for many of the claims about the intensity of social support activities in networks of black seniors.

24. With the exception of the recent inquiries into the effects of neighborhood environments on local residents (see Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, and Aber 1997 and Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997), much of the recent research on urban poverty has obscured the great variation in the social and spatial conditions in poor neighborhoods. As urban scholars including Herbert Gans (1995) and Michael Katz (1993) have shown, most of the social scientific research, policy reports, and journalistic writing on the putative urban underclass failed to specify the people or neighborhoods that count as members or representatives of the group. One effect of this flexible but slippery terminology is that both predominately black and Latino community areas with high rates of poverty, unemployment, crime, or other social problems have been lumped together into the same neighborhood category despite the significant variation among and within poor neighborhoods, and even among poor neighborhoods populated by the same ethnoracial group. When poor neighborhoods are differentiated, such as in Paul Jargowsky's *Poverty and Place* (1997), they are typically given labels such as *barrio, ghetto,* or *slum* that are exclusively based on the ethnoracial identity of the dominant local community and ignore the other social, economic, or spatial features of the local environment altogether. Jargowsky's scheme is an improvement over more homogeneous classifications, yet it, too, implicitly denies the salience of other social conditions.

25. McKenzie 1925, 64.; Mauss [1916] 1979.

26. In a recent article, Dingxin Zhao (1998, 153) makes an analogous argument by showing that the campus ecology of Beijing universities nurtured various forms of networking during normal times and consequently supported social activism during a crisis, the prodemocracy protests in 1989. Zhao claims that ecology determines the structure and strength of social networks as well as the spatial positions and routine activities of people in a community.

27. Many generations of Chicago school sociologists have called attention to the relationship between social ecology and the quality or organization of neighborhood social life. In recent decades urban scholars influenced by European social theorists such as Henri LeFebvre, Manuel Castells, and David Harvey have rediscovered the significance of the spatial life of cities. In the 1990s a number of U.S. social scientists initiated a series of studies to determine whether neighborhoods have independent effects on a range of social and educational outcomes. The early results of these quantitatively based neighborhood effects studies have shown that, although families are the key agents in promoting children's development, neighborhood conditions do matter for different age groups in ways that vary over the life course (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, and Aber 1997).

28. Taub, et al. 1984.

29. Chicago Fact Book Consortium 1995.

30. Hirsch 1983, 192.

31. Ibid., 194.

32. See Sharon Zukin's chapter, "While the City Shops," in *The Cultures of Cities* (1995) for a discussion of how shopping plays a constitutive role in the process of society making. Zukin also explores the consequences of commercial flight and neighborhood decline in Brooklyn and Chicago.

33. Jacobs 1961, 36–37.

34. Skogan 1990, 13.

35. See the Introduction of *All Our Kin* (Stack 1974) for a discussion of the residential density and spatial concentration of the two extended family networks in Stack's study. Orlando Patterson (1998, xi) has criticized books such as *All Our Kin* for perpetuating "what may be called the myth of the 'hood,' the belief that viable informal friendship patterns and communities exist, compensating for the breakdown or absence of more formal institutions. Through sheer, baseless repetition, and through nonrepresentative case studies of a few Afro-American housing projects by urban anthropologists, it has become an accepted belief that large networks of support and natural neighborhood communities are out there waiting to be developed and built on."

36. Jacquelyn Wolf and colleagues (1983, 469) report that "distance from an older person's household is the strongest determinant of frequency of contact with family and friends of black elders, as has been previously demonstrated for white elders."

37. As Neil Krause (1993) reports, social gerontologists have shown that "higher overall neighborhood quality is related to increased contact with family members." In his own work, Krause (1993, 9–10) shows that "deteriorated neighborhoods . . . tend to promote distrust of others and older adults who are more distrustful of others tend to be more socially isolated [in the literal sense]." (It is worth noting that during a period of economic development in the late 1990s, though, a Walgreens with a pharmacy and a Dominick's grocery store opened on Roosevelt Road in North Lawndale.)

38. In *Paths of Neighborhood Change,* Richard Taub and colleagues (1984, 60) show the importance of commercial attractions in pulling people out of their homes and into the public places where social contact is more likely. Taub's group found that Chicago's African Americans prefer to shop outside of their own neighborhoods, partly because they believe that they cannot get high-quality products there.

39. My informants' complaints about the difficulty of finding nutritious food and basic goods in the area suggest that social ecology, and not simply cultural tastes and preferences, contributes to the high levels of obesity and diabetes in North Lawndale and other poor black communities similar to it. The elderly, who are often unable to drive or to pay to be driven out of the area to go shopping, have the most difficult time getting healthy foods. Many of the senior citizens I met stocked up on canned and packaged products so that they would always have something to eat, but did not have fresh foods in their homes as much as they would have liked.

The small stores in the area are full of sugary food with little nutritional value and seldom stock the foods that public health workers, concerned about the high levels of diabetes, obesity, and heart disease in the area, recommend. The products that local stores do carry are significantly more expensive than

they are in larger stores outside the ghetto. "You've got to have a car to stretch your dollar around here," an elderly woman told me during one of my visits to a neighborhood park. "Or you've got to get some special fare cards from the city and take the bus. Stores in this area are expensive. And you're giving away your money if you shop here." "They sell liquor and this and that," a man in his sixties added, "but the prices are just sky high. I haven't been in those small stores other than for a paper."

40. Laurie Kaye Abraham (1993, 139–40) makes a similar argument about the difficulties for the elderly who try to maintain healthy daily routines in violent areas that lack sources of nutritional food. "Complying with health advice is harder for the poor than for the middle class, which has more choices. . . . Urban poverty may refuse to accommodate the simplest healthy habits. For example, during Tommy's second checkup at Lawndale Christian, Dr. Jones told him that he needed to walk regularly so he wouldn't lose his ability. 'I don't want to be no prey,' Tommy answered."

41. City of Chicago 1996.

42. Crime rates tend to go up in summer, when the heat pushes people to spend more time outdoors than they do during other seasons. But when the heat becomes too extreme, crime rates actually decrease because would-be criminals become too lethargic to engage in crime.

43. See, among others, Bourgois (1995) and Sanchez-Jankowski (1991).

44. This is why the major local social movements, such as "take back the street" marches, antidrug sit-ins (in which residents sit out on the streets with active drug markets), neighborhood garden projects, and efforts to board up abandoned buildings and fence in empty lots, focus on reclaiming physical and social space for residents.

45. Residents of nearby neighborhoods report similar concerns. In a survey conducted in May 1994, for example, residents of a public housing project on the West Side found that 40 percent of the residents in one set of buildings, and 11 percent in another, reported that bullets had been shot into their apartments in the previous year. The authors of *The Hidden War* report that "a majority of the residents (63 percent) we surveyed said they felt unsafe if they were outside alone at night, and some (33 percent) felt unsafe even inside their own apartment" (Popkin, et al. 2000, 100–102).

46. Anderson 1999, 118.

47. In his ethnographic study of an area with an active drug market, Elijah Anderson (1999) found that many parents in high-crime areas forced their children to stay at home so that they would not get involved in or be subjected to the dangers of the local street life. Children in these situations become alienated from their peers and their local communities. Protected from the streets, they become vulnerable to the psychological and developmental dangers of confinement and isolation.

48. According to Krause (1993, 16), "a neighborhood may contain physical barriers that tend to restrict contact with others. For example, dark hallways in apartments, broken steps, and crooked walkways may discourage older adults with physical limitations from visiting others."

49. Residents' practical knowledge of their neighbors stands in stark contrast with the social relations in Hampton, the affluent white suburb where M. P. Baumgartner (1988) conducted ethnographic research. Baumgartner found that there was a "scarcity of social knowledge involved in the middle-class relationships" that typified neighborhood connections in Hampton. Residents of the suburb maintained their social distance by avoiding one another whenever possible and established only weak ties to the community.

50. Most but not all of the churches are technically within the North Lawndale community area. See North Lawndale Family Network (1998).

51. On the historical significance of black churches, see Frazier (1961) and Lincoln (1990). On black churches in Chicago, see Drake and Cayton ([1945] 1993), Pattillo-McCoy (1998), and Spear (1967). Despite the rhetorical use of the term the "black church," there is obviously no singular and unified black religious institution. As Omar McRoberts (2001, 8–11) writes, "There has never existed a homogeneous black community or a universal black church to defend it." During the time I spent in North Lawndale, I observed that the churches play several major roles there, including (1) serving as a site for people to congregate during regular days as well as on special occasions and rituals; (2) contributing to various forms of political organizing in the neighborhoods; (3) mediating relationships between residents and government agencies, such as the police and the Department of Health, both of which ran meetings or programs out of church buildings; (4) coordinating economic development programs by bringing residents together with planners, politicians, and developers; (5) organizing community service projects, such as clothing banks and antidrug marches, as well as secular community organizations; (6) providing key services, such as meals, rides to shopping areas, health care, and home visits, to people in need, as well as day care and summer camps for children; (7) helping with the construction and remodeling of local housing; (8) connecting local residents with employers; (9) hosting block club and other neighborhood meetings; (10) offering private educational alternatives to the local public schools; and (11) counseling and consoling residents after traumas as well as celebrating with residents during good times. Clearly, then, the local churches were and are key resources in North Lawndale, and their contributions extend far beyond the sacred realm.

52. Meares 1998.

53. City of Chicago 1995, 4.

54. Omar McRoberts makes similar observations in his research on church-based support services in Four Corners, an African-American region of Boston. For a synthesis of his study, see McRoberts (2001).

55. See Albert Hunter's *Symbolic Communities* (1974, 187) for a discussion of block clubs. Hunter found that the clubs "appear to be more prevalent within the black communities of Chicago."

56. See *From Abandonment to Hope* for one powerful study of neighborhood revitalization (Leavitt and Saegert 1990).

57. With important exceptions, scholars of urban poverty have been insufficiently attentive to the variation in neighborhoods or blocks within larger community areas, and it is important to note that there are some well-organized communities with strong social bonds in areas such as North Lawndale. Some of the best organized communities exist adjacent to some of the most dangerous streets in Chicago.

58. See Sampson, et al. (1997) for a discussion of the significance of residential stability. But in a recent article, Catherine Ross and colleagues (2000, 581) argue that "[i]n affluent neighborhoods, stability is associated with low levels of distress; under conditions of poverty the opposite is true. . . . Stability does not reduce perceived disorder under conditions of poverty, as it does in more affluent neighborhoods."

59. Spergel and Grossman 1997.

60. City of Chicago 1996.

61. In *Primitive Classification,* Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss ([1903] 1963) argue that classification systems represent social formations, although they were not as interested in the political construction of symbolic differences as later sociologists, such as Albert Hunter (1974), who used their theories to analyze symbolic communities.

62. Hunter 1974, 74.

63. Chicago Fact Book Consortium 1995, 110; Pugh 1997.

64. Chicago Fact Book Consortium 1995, 110.

65. Wirth and Bernert, eds. 1949.

66. Pugh 1997.

67. Massey and Denton 1993, 137.

68. In "Three Pernicious Premises in the Study of the American Ghetto," Loïc Wacquant (1997b, 343) argues that a ghetto is an institutional form of "ethnoracial closure and control. In ideal-typical terms, a ghetto may be characterized as a bounded, racially and/or culturally uniform socio-spatial formation based on (1) the forcible relegation of (2) a 'negatively typed' population . . . to a (3) reserved, 'frontier territory,' in which this population (4) develops under duress a set of parallel institutions" that (5) duplicate dominant institutions "at an incomplete and inferior level while (6) maintaining those who rely on them in a state of structural dependency." According to Wacquant, in U.S. cities only African-Americans have been subjected to unmatched levels of each of the five "elementary forms of racial domination: prejudice, discrimination, segregation, ghettoization, and violence."

69. According to 2000 figures from the U.S. Bureau if the Census, the official Hispanic population in Chicago grew by more than 200,000 between 1990 and 2000, while the number of whites fell by 150,000 and the African-American population fell by 20,000. Hispanics also accounted for 69 percent of the new residents in the six-county metropolitan region.

70. McMurray 1995, 33.

71. Suttles 1968, 73.

72. The socially generative role of the social ecology of Little Village operates similarly to the campus ecology in Beijing analyzed by Zhao (1998).

73. Daniel Dohan (1997) has documented some of the ways in which Latino families, particularly immigrants, are strained by labor markets that demand long working days and pay little in return.

74. Jacobs 1961, 34–35.

75. As of 1990, there were 98,554 residents in the Eleventh Police District and 131,852 residents in the Tenth Police District.

76. Residents were particularly worried about the meager resources available to local youths. The only large public park in the area was in the southwestern corner of Little Village, too far away for most kids to reach by foot and too dangerous for youths associated with the wrong gangs. The local schools were severely overcrowded, though several new facilities had opened or were about to open by the time I left in 1999.

77. According to one recent news article, the Archdiocese of Chicago claims that it has roughly eight hundred thousand Hispanic parishioners, about one-third of its total membership (Irvine 2001).

78. Angel, et al. 1996.

79. In this process, the ethnographic research helps to identify the kinds of information that are relevant to solving the analytic problem at hand. Without close observation of local conditions, survey researchers interested in the same issues might not locate the significant conditions.

80. Two areas with high crime rates but low population decline, Riverdale and Auburn Gresham, were among the lowest heat mortality areas. Future research could assess whether population stability buffers the social impacts of high crime on collective life.

81. Shen, et al. 1995; Smoyer 1998.

82. See Paul Jargowsky's *Poverty and Place* (1997), which describes the increasing numbers of such concentrated poverty regions in Chicago during the later decades of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER THREE

1. The Police Department investigates unusual deaths and produces official knowledge about conditions at the scene. The police death report, which contains information about the body, the place of death, any signs of foul play, and the whereabouts of next of kin and neighbors, becomes a crucial part of the decedent's record. Police officers are also in charge of transporting the dead to the morgue when an autopsy is required and coordinating their work with the Medical Examiner's staff.

2. Emergency Net News Service 1995.

3. See the commissioned report on the Fire Department's resources and conducted by TriData Corporation in 1998 and 1999. Motivated by the report, new Fire Department commissioner James T. Joyce added twelve new basic life support ambulances to the city's fleet in 1999.

4. The tensions between firefighters and paramedics date to the early 1970s, when Richard J. Daley upgraded the emergency medical services that firefighters and civilian employees had staffed through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act. Paramedics were excluded from the firefighters' union until the 1980 firefighters' strike, when the union tried to expand its ranks from within. But they continue to receive less furlough time and lower salaries than firefighters, and divisions within the department are legendary. In 1995 the city lost an arbitration dispute with paramedics, who won millions of dollars in back pay for overtime. Firefighters remain the dominant members of the department, particularly at the administrative level.

5. Dematte, et al. 1998 and Semenza, et al. 1999.

6. Raika 1995.

7. Spielman and Mitchell 1995b, 9.

8. Mitchell and Jimenez 1995, 12.