



Illustration by Stephanie Dalton Cowan

# NEIGHBORHOOD INEQUALITY AND PUBLIC POLICY:

## What Can Milwaukee Learn from Chicago and Boston?

BY ROBERT J. SAMPSON

It is an honor to deliver the annual Boden Lecture at Marquette Law School and in the great city of Milwaukee—otherwise known as Brew City or Cream City, depending on your perspective. I like both beer and yellow bricks, but having grown up in Utica, New York, home of the West End Brewing Company and Utica Club Ale, I rather like Brew City for a moniker. That is especially so since your beer is better tasting than what I remember from the suds of my youth—Schlitz notwithstanding!

On a more serious note, I am genuinely honored to be here, and I thank Dean Joseph Kearney for his masterful job orchestrating my visit and realizing a vision that connects Marquette so closely with the city. I also genuinely consider Milwaukee one of the great American cities, despite having spent most of my years on the East Coast and in that other city on the lake down I-94 a bit. Milwaukee has large challenges, to be sure, but there are many assets, and I am optimistic that social science research, new forms of data, and university–city partnerships can make Milwaukee better.

My road map for the lecture is as follows. I begin with an overview of what neighborhood inequality looks like in Chicago, based on a large-scale project that I have directed for the past 20 years. I focus on the “big picture,” but with enough detail that you can get a concrete idea of how inequality works on the ground. I then turn to a project in Boston, which is taking advantage of some newer forms of data that provide additional leverage in understanding cities and which explicitly involves a city-university partnership. Finally, I address Milwaukee’s challenges and potentials that may benefit from the lessons that have emerged from Chicago and Boston. ▶▶



Robert J. Sampson

**Robert J. Sampson** is the Henry J. Ford II Professor of Social Sciences at Harvard University and also serves as director of the Boston Area Research Initiative. He previously was a professor at the University of Chicago. Sampson is internationally known for his work on crime, disorder, neighborhood effects, civic engagement, inequality, and the social structure of the city. His book, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* (University of Chicago 2012), has been widely hailed as a landmark in urban social science. This is a lightly edited version of Professor Sampson’s Robert F. Boden Lecture at Marquette Law School in September 2015. We intersperse a number of reactions to the lecture and follow (page 22) with an article about Marquette University’s work under President Michael R. Lovell in its own neighborhood on the near west side of Milwaukee.

Let me be clear: I am not here to assert that Chicago or Boston is somehow better. Rather, I have intensely studied both cities and believe that some of what we have learned has general import. Nor am I here to claim an instant policy cure. Instead, I aim to give you as much information as possible on the fundamental nature of urban social problems so that we may better ask the right questions and, by working together, design better public policies that build on that knowledge. As the social psychologist Kurt Lewin wrote more than 50 years ago, “There is nothing more practical than a good theory.” I agree: Theory and ideas can shape the direction that policy takes.

## Neighborhood inequality in Chicago

Much of what I have learned about neighborhood inequality is presented in my book, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*. My thesis is reflected in the very title: Chicago, like all cities, is a mosaic made up of very different and highly unequal neighborhoods. These neighborhood differences are surprisingly persistent and have effects on a broad

variety of life outcomes—hence, the enduring neighborhood effect. The main empirical vehicle for my effort is the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN), an original longitudinal study of children, families, and neighborhoods. Although Chicago is a great

and now gentrification of Cabrini Green on the near north, inequality by place is everywhere to be seen. It is no small irony that one of the major streets in Chicago is called “Division Street,” but Chicago is not alone in its division. In fact, in the book I went as far as to argue that what is truly American is not so much the individual but the neighborhood inequality. Having toured Milwaukee, it is clear to me that neighborhood inequality is alive and well here, too. Whether crossing from the north and Milwaukee’s Lindsay Heights or Brewers Hill to the downtown area’s Third Ward, or crossing the 16th Street viaduct into Latino neighborhoods on the near south side, the tale of multiple cities seems more pertinent than ever.

It is not just impressions. Taking a bird’s-eye view, I also demonstrate in the book the deep structure of neighborhood stratification that has persisted in Chicago across decades and up to the present day. Key dimensions of neighborhood difference that I studied include poverty, affluence, unemployment, and family structure. Racial segregation is unfortunately part of this story, as the spatial isolation of African Americans produces exposure to multiple strands of resource deprivation, especially poverty and single-parent families with children. Again this is not limited to Chicago. Nationwide, close to a third of African-American children born between 1985 and 2000 were raised in high-poverty neighborhoods, compared with just 1 percent of white children. Crucially, income does not erase place-based racial inequality—affluent blacks typically live in poorer neighborhoods than the average lower-income white resident.

The great neighborhood divide extends to the fundamentals of well-being. Violence, poor physical health, teenage pregnancy, obesity, fear, and dropping out of school are all unequally distributed. What many have come to call “mass incarceration” has a local face as well: Only a small proportion of communities have experienced America’s prison boom, whereas others are relatively untouched. I was taken aback to learn that the highest incarceration rate among African-American communities in Chicago was more than 40 times higher than the highest-ranked white community. This is a staggering difference of kind, not degree. And it does not go unnoticed, even by children. In one neighborhood, I came across a wall behind a school with sketches of the grim faces of black men behind prison bars. An open book and diploma were drawn underneath—hope, to be sure, but against a backdrop of despair. ▶▶

**Chicago, like all cities, is a mosaic made up of very different and highly unequal neighborhoods.**

American city, to be great is hardly to be flawless. Quite to the contrary, and to the dismay of city boosters, some of the worst excesses of American life, such as inequality, violence, racial segregation, and corruption, are rife in Chicago. But this stark inequality and the diverse urban environments of the city make it an ideal site for social scientific inquiry.

To illustrate what I mean, the book begins by taking the reader on a walk down the streets of the city. What is revealed is not one but several cities. In a relatively short walk, we see visual evidence of marked variability by neighborhood, across a wide range of how Chicagoans experience life. From the glittering Trump Tower near the Loop to abandoned lots a bit farther south or the rubble

## Neighborhoods in Chicago and Milwaukee

by Amanda I. Seligman

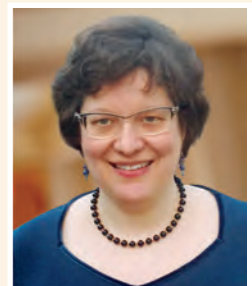
Robert Sampson's *Great American City* abounds with insights for those of us concerned with the future of cities. He describes "neighborhood effects" and encourages cultivation of "collective efficacy." We need to focus on the neighborhood—the level between individuals and the whole city—to understand and effectively intervene in problems, and we should do so by cultivating "community shareholders" who will implement local programs. And Sampson's Boden Lecture urges us to apply his Chicago-based analysis to Milwaukee. A coordinated big data project, like those Sampson led in Chicago and Boston, could underpin transformations of Milwaukee's most-troubled neighborhoods.

Sampson's project rests on a century-old tradition of data about Chicago's neighborhoods. The founders of the Chicago school of sociology understood the city's neighborhoods as a "mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate." To track the social characteristics of each distinctive neighborhood and build a portrait of the city as a whole, they drew a map of "community areas" whose boundaries have been almost entirely unchanged since. They systematically collected demographic, housing, and economic data about each community area. Sampson uses the community areas as a spatial base for portions of his research, such as his examination of leadership networks in South Shore and Hegewisch.

Milwaukee lacks stably classified neighborhoods—and therefore also lacks the kind of longitudinal, neighborhood-based data that Chicago's community area system provides. Although the subtitle of local historian John Gurda's newest book assures us that Milwaukee is indeed a "City of Neighborhoods," Milwaukeeans have never agreed on a standardized set of neighborhood boundaries. The Milwaukee, Menomonee, and Kinnickinnic rivers effectively carved early Milwaukee into "Divisions" (each with its own eponymous high school). Sometimes the term "Side" substituted for "Division," an idea manifested by today's East Side neighborhood. For political purposes, Milwaukee was also divided into numbered wards. Suburban Bay View, annexed into Milwaukee in 1887, functioned as a distinctive neighborhood, but it was not until the 1960s that Milwaukeeans sought to map neighborhoods throughout the city.

Chicago's boundaries were mostly settled by the turn of the twentieth century. In contrast, Milwaukee pursued an aggressive program of annexation into the 1960s. As Milwaukee's expansion ended, scholars at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) described the city's neighborhoods systematically. Following the model of Chicago's Local Community Fact Book series, UWM researchers designated 23 neighborhoods covering the entire city. They published a pair of volumes that provided place-based data drawn from the 1940 through 1970 censuses and assembled an unpublished data set for 1980. Since then, lists and maps of Milwaukee neighborhoods have proliferated. The City of Milwaukee recognizes 16 strategic planning neighborhoods. A popular series of neighborhood posters associated with John Gurda's work has expanded from its original 29 neighborhoods to 37, while the Milwaukee Neighborhood Identification Project maps a whopping 177 different neighborhoods.

Without a standardized neighborhood system, no one has provided foundational longitudinal data about smaller areas within Milwaukee. Yet the absence of a consensus neighborhood system should not prevent us from responding to Sampson's call for a Milwaukee big-data project. At various points in *Great American City*, Sampson draws on conceptualizations of neighborhood beyond Chicago's standard 77 community areas. His analyses also make use of resident-identified neighborhoods and an original set of neighborhood boundaries which his project team mapped. Often, Sampson discusses what might better be called "proximity effects"—the idea that adjacent spaces, however delimited, affect one another. As we apply Sampson's analysis in Milwaukee, we must specify what we mean by *neighborhood* and clarify the purposes of our inquiry before we collect the data and reflect on its significance.



*Amanda I. Seligman is professor of history and urban studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.*

## Neighborhoods and Crime—A Prosecutor’s View

by John Chisholm

Robert Sampson began his Boden Lecture with this statement: “Theory and ideas can shape the direction that policy takes.” One would hope that it works both ways—that the rigorous testing in practice will help refine or shape the theory. Certainly Professor Sampson’s own work is impressive in the depth and scope of its examination of “the physical *and* social infrastructure of a neighborhood.” His results support the theory that, in order to affect the actions of so many of our fellow citizens, we must consider the environment in which they live.

This is our approach in Milwaukee. “Neighborhoods Matter” is the core principle behind two conjoined crime-reduction efforts spearheaded by the Milwaukee District Attorney’s Office and the Milwaukee Police Department: community prosecution and community policing, respectively. Both reflect policy decisions based on decades of practical experience of police and prosecutors, who have encountered a relatively small proportion of troubled people coming from well-known locales that create a disproportionate amount of harm in the community.

The most vexing problem for law enforcement professionals in major cities is the generational persistence of crime in concentrated locations and among closely associated people. Great attention is devoted to the short-term rise and fall of crime rates, to specific types of crime, to tactics and strategies to combat crime, and ultimately to the byproduct of crime, incarceration. Yet there is a glaring lack of information about the complex underlying conditions that give meaningful context to the “why” of persistent crime. Sampson’s work in Chicago and Boston provides an extraordinary platform for analyzing this “why” and explaining how certain parts of a city and the people residing there are locked into long-term, overlapping, and layered adversity.

It is crucial that policy makers throughout the civic spectrum understand the importance of Sampson’s work. The problems of impoverished neighborhoods are systemic and cannot be resolved through law enforcement action alone. Jeremy Travis, president of the City University of New York’s John Jay College of Criminal Justice, warned in a 2009 speech at Marquette Law School that “the systems of justice are traditionally far removed from the places where crimes occur, where victims and offenders live, where prisoners return after serving their sentences.” Far too often, the other systems and institutions charged with addressing longstanding inequality are too removed from the neighborhood context described by Sampson.

What can be done? One answer is to encourage more collaboration across the civic spectrum and more meaningful “boots on the ground” relationships. We can achieve this result by focusing on neighborhoods in long-term partnerships that involve significant public safety enhancement. Milwaukee’s Clarke Square, Amani, Avenues West, and Washington Park neighborhoods—which long featured historic concentrations of adversity—demonstrate the success of this approach. If we can combine such efforts with economic investment in the neighborhoods, we can see long-term change in their patterns of inequality.

A most promising example of this vision comes from the effort of the Near West Side Partners (NWSP) to revitalize and sustain their business and residential corridor. One of NWSP’s most promising programs is Promoting Assets, Reducing Crime (PARC), a three-year initiative. Promoting assets is, in large part, as simple as a marketing effort aiming to make more people aware of the good things going on. The crime-reduction aspect includes multiagency efforts—including increased involvement of Milwaukee police and the district attorney’s office in the area—to deal with specific and frequent sources of neighborhood problems.

NWSP is described more generally in the article by Alan J. Borsuk beginning on page 22.

This collaborative effort, which couples business and educational leaders with committed residents and law enforcement, exemplifies the concrete application of Professor Sampson’s theories. In his lecture, Professor Sampson noted that nothing is more practical than a good theory. Milwaukee County’s policy makers, myself included, would be well served to keep this central idea of Professor Sampson’s theories in mind when addressing the social and criminal justice issues facing our community.

*John Chisholm is the district attorney of Milwaukee County.*



Even the simple act of mailing a lost letter found lying in the street varies greatly. As part of our larger project, we conducted a field experiment to determine the rate at which strangers mailed back more than 3,000 stamped letters randomly dropped in the streets of Chicago. The rate of return by neighborhood ranged from zero to more than 75 percent. After adjusting for things such as weather conditions, land use, and housing patterns, concentrated poverty predicted lower rates of return. This kind of altruism also correlates with giving CPR to strangers.

Less visible but just as powerful are the long-term legacies of poverty and the consequences of growing up in concentrated poverty for human-capital development. Poverty is surprisingly persistent in the same neighborhoods, even though people move in and out every day. We found persistence over four decades, for example, with the Great Recession only making things worse for the most disadvantaged—a classic form of “the poor get poorer.”

Moreover, we found that early exposure to severely disadvantaged communities was associated with diminished verbal skills later in childhood. We estimated that living in concentrated disadvantage depressed the rate of verbal learning by about four I.Q. points, akin to missing a year of school. Again, Chicago does not appear to be unique. This result was replicated in Baltimore, using an experimental design, and recent research has shown that getting ahead economically is also shaped by where you live. Despite the effects of globalization and the rise of technologies that allow us to work or interact virtually anywhere, recent economic research has found that upward mobility—the odds of a child raised in the bottom fifth of income rising to the top fifth as an adult—is less likely for those who grew up in cities characterized by racially and economically segregated neighborhoods.

In short, social inequality is deeply concentrated spatially, it is multidimensional in nature, and it is persistent even though neighborhoods constantly change. Neighborhood effects thus cut across multiple scales of influence and time, and from the individual level of analysis to the structural organization of the city. The archaeologist Michael Smith has argued that the spatial division of cities into neighborhoods is one of the few universals of urban life, going back even to ancient cities. Neighborhood, in other words, is a near universal theme of human history, and the salience of neighborhood differences has persisted across long time

scales and historical eras despite the transformation of specific boundaries, political regimes, and the layout of cities. The consistency of differentiation from ancient cities to contemporary Chicago suggests the general and enduring process of neighborhood effects.

## Ecometrics and the study of neighborhood processes

Another goal of *Great American City* was to understand the social processes and mechanisms behind neighborhood inequality—the nuts and bolts of *why* and *how* neighborhoods matter. What is the process, for example, by which concentrated disadvantage is translated into crime? Answering this kind of question required new methods for the study of context and new concepts. To meet this challenge, my colleagues and I developed the method of “ecometrics,” i.e., metrics for the study of ecology. The central idea is that neighborhood phenomena demand their own measurement logic and are not stand-ins for individual-level traits. We specifically designed and carried out community surveys, systematic social observation (videotaping of city streets), and interviews with

organizational informants to develop direct measures of theoretically relevant neighborhood processes. I will briefly discuss three kinds of processes we were able to examine using the strategy of ecometrics (further details on these findings may be found in *Great American City*).

The first process relates to the theory of *collective efficacy*, which refers to the combination of shared expectations for social control and cohesion among neighborhood residents. Using original surveys administered to more than 10,000 Chicagoans, we measured collective efficacy by asking questions such as these: How likely is it that your neighbors would take action if children were skipping school? If there were a fight in the neighborhood? How much do residents trust their neighbors? Are people willing to help their neighbors? The results show that among neighborhoods that ▶▶

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As part of his visit to Marquette Law School, Harvard Professor Robert J. Sampson took part in an “On the Issues with Mike Gousha” program on September 17, 2015. Sampson is flanked on the left by Gousha, the Law School’s distinguished fellow in law and public policy, and on the right by Professor Charles Franklin, director of the Marquette Law School Poll.

are otherwise similar, those with higher scores on our combined scale of collective efficacy have lower rates of crime. The book also presents evidence that collective efficacy is relatively stable over time and that it predicts variations in future crime rates, after adjusting for things such as concentrated poverty, racial composition, and traditional forms of neighbor networks (e.g., friendship/kinship ties). Dense friendship ties may facilitate collective efficacy, but they are not sufficient. Perhaps more importantly, highly efficacious communities do better on a lot of other things, including birth weight, rates of teen pregnancy, and infant mortality, suggesting a link to overall health and well-being independent of social composition. In most cases, then, whether rich or poor, white or black, I argued that collective efficacy signals a community on a trajectory of well-being. This generalization extends to other far-reaching places, including Australia, England, Tanzania, China, the Netherlands, and Sweden. The evidence across such varied settings suggests that collective efficacy is a basic social property that goes beyond the aggregated composition of individuals to predict lower violence and enhanced public health—transcending poverty, race, and political boundaries.

Second, we were able to use the method of *systematic social observation* (SSO) to study the

so-called broken-windows theory. By driving very slowly around the city and videotaping thousands of streets, we were able systematically to observe and code both physical disorder (e.g., graffiti) and social disorder (e.g., drinking on the street). This methodological innovation permitted us to look at old questions in new ways. For example, is graffiti related to crime? What is disorder? Perhaps surprisingly, we found that how Chicagoans perceive disorder is a function of the composition of the neighborhood by race and class—much more than the objective level of disorder. Moreover, objectively measured levels of broken windows had only a weak link to crime rates once we accounted for concentrated poverty and collective efficacy.

Third, we measured the *social networks* among community leaders to study how communities vary in their social-organizational structure. When we look at the networks among leaders in the entire city, we see the expected concentration of ties at the center, some cliques or clusters, and a bunch of disconnected leaders at the edges. But this pattern masks large differences across neighborhoods. In places such as Chicago’s South Shore community, leaders are far from united—there are many isolates and a few cliques—whereas in places such as Hegewisch, the leadership structure is more cohesive. I would hypothesize that there exist similar divisions

across Milwaukee in both the internal leadership networks and how community leaders are connected to citizens. In some communities, the trust between citizens and leaders may be almost nonexistent. This matters because organizational density and connections predict levels of collective efficacy.

In brief, the theory of the book ties together how neighborhood structural inequality (e.g., concentrated disadvantage and racial segregation) influences social processes such as collective efficacy, public disorder, and the closure of leadership networks, and in turn how these processes predict the well-being of communities. Importantly, I argue, both the physical *and* social infrastructure of a neighborhood matter. We need to be careful not to think about social processes such as collective efficacy or organizational leadership cohesion independently of the structural conditions of everyday life in our neighborhoods, such as poverty and housing quality.

## The Boston Area Research Initiative

I wish now to discuss even more recent work, which extends beyond Chicago all the way to the East Coast. I direct the Boston Area Research Initiative (or BARI), which was founded three years ago to promote an urban research agenda that takes full advantage of next-generation data, with a focus on interdisciplinary study of the greater Boston area. To do this, BARI supports research-policy collaborations that leverage opportunities created by the ongoing digital revolution, which has seen public agencies and private companies (such as Google, Microsoft, and Verizon) collect and archive extensive amounts of data on their operations and the services they provide. Such projects and partnerships increase our understanding of urban issues and provide important scholarly insights into daily life in greater Boston, helping policy makers develop and carry out more-effective policies.

We are capitalizing on the torrent of such “big data” by adapting the methodology of econometrics from Chicago to develop new measures of tapping Jane Jacobs’s famous idea of “the eyes and the ears of the city,” which she proposed after observing the streets of Greenwich Village in the 1950s. In particular, we have examined citizens’ requests for services through the City of Boston’s Constituent Relationship Management (CRM) system, which allows Bostonians to request city services

through three channels—the mayor’s telephone hotline, a self-service website, and a smartphone app called “Citizens Connect.” By working with the City of Boston’s Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT), we translated more than one million records of calls in Boston into a diverse set of measures spanning physical disorder, social disorder, and crime. These “eyes and ears of the city” data are continuously produced by the city and support reliable measurements at multiple time intervals and spatial scales.

In a recent paper, we used these data to study the dynamics of broken-windows theory. Although we found that forms of public disorder are clearly evident and on the minds of citizens, we also discovered that the drivers of future crime were not the usual suspects like graffiti or panhandlers, but what we called “private conflicts.” Things such as tenant-landlord troubles, partner disputes, and restraining-order violations tend to cluster in specific neighborhoods and even houses, with their consequences spilling out into public spaces. Our results support a *social escalation model* where future disorder and crime emerge not from public cues but from private disorder within the community. The large-scale digital data allowed us to detect private behaviors that would be difficult to measure using traditional methodologies such as a survey.

Our concerns are not just to test academic theories. We make all of our data public and have compiled the econometric measures so that any citizen or policy maker can map selected neighborhoods on multiple dimensions in a user-friendly format. Users can also zoom in on specific streets and potentially link other forms of data at the address or building level (see <http://worldmap.harvard.edu/boston/>). Furthermore, BARI is promoting a growing partnership with the leading actors in city government, nonprofits, and private sector organizations in the Boston area. The core idea is to share data and ideas to improve urban governance. ▶▶

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## Policy implications for Milwaukee

I want to be sure to address the policy implications of our work in Chicago and Boston for Milwaukee's current challenges. For years, Milwaukee suffered a long exodus of manufacturing and people, severely eroding its economic and social base. As has been in the national news, Milwaukee also suffered from a spate of violence in the summer of 2015, with homicide rates up significantly over 2014. What might not be equally visible is that the sort of neighborhood economic inequality I have been talking about is increasing and is deeply implicated in the area. In fact, in looking at the most recent data, I came across a rather startling statistic. Of all the large metro areas in the United States, Milwaukee is ranked first in the segregation of the poor. Economic inequality and the isolation of the poor are generally on the rise, but the problem appears more pronounced here. The deterioration of housing in

many of Milwaukee's neighborhoods is clearly evident as well.

But rather than just counsel despair, I think it is fair to say that Milwaukee has several strengths that can be harnessed to effect social change. Moreover, the kinds of findings and methods I have described offer a general framework for thinking

about the city and a set of concrete possibilities for policy intervention. After outlining this policy framework, I highlight the assets that Milwaukee can draw upon in implementing a new vision for urban change.

Simply stated, the policy focus should be on integrating person-based and place-based interventions. Let me elaborate.

The spatial foundations of inequality imply that policies should aim to change either the neighborhood context of individuals or the places themselves. The person-based approach to reducing spatial inequality focuses on individual residential mobility—attempting to move individuals out of poor communities and into middle-class or even rich areas. One strategy involves giving housing vouchers to encourage residents to move away from areas of concentrated poverty, as occurred in

the famous Moving to Opportunity (MTO) experiment. Another variant is to tear down poor communities and disperse their residents, as occurred in the Robert Taylor Homes and Cabrini Green projects in Chicago. The front-page headline in the *New York Times* reporting long-term results on the MTO study and another study of moving across neighborhoods laid bare the dominant policy takeaway: “Change of Address Offers a Pathway out of Poverty” (May 4, 2015). I call this the “move out” approach.

Instead of moving out, the goal of *place*-based interventions is to intervene holistically at the community level and renew the existing but disinvested and often-troubled neighborhoods in which the poor live, with an infusion of new resources. When poor individuals are asked about problems in their communities or why they want to move, the answers typically revolve around issues such as getting away from violence, drugs, gangs, and poor-performing schools. Logically, this consistent finding suggests that what poor residents want in their neighborhoods is what everyone wants, and that living among the poor is seen as a problem by residents only insofar as it means the denial of valued resources like safety and quality education. In theory at least, people can stay in place at the community level but still “move up” or realize improved lives and access to resources through place-based intervention.

Although both person- and place-based interventions have a mixed record of success, the data on persistent inequality point to the need for creative thinking on sustained interventions. It is surprising how few neighborhood policies take the long view; most interventions are single-site or time-constrained, with outcomes measured locally and in the short run. We need durable investments in disadvantaged urban neighborhoods to match the persistent and longstanding nature of institutional disinvestment that such neighborhoods have endured over many years. I have written elsewhere about strategies to improve communities that are logical candidates for retooling, with an emphasis on sustained investments. Candidates include:

- Violence reduction integrated with community policing and prisoner-reentry programs that foster the legitimacy of criminal justice institutions. Recent experimental-based research shows that “hot-spot” policing and situational crime-prevention strategies targeted to small ecological areas (about two blocks in size) reduce crime. Moreover, crime is not simply displaced elsewhere—instead, there is a spatial diffusion of safety. ▶▶

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## Collective Efficacy in Milwaukee's Zilber Neighborhood Initiative

by Susan Lloyd

Rob Sampson is one of those academics from whom we can learn much as we seek to end urban poverty. From his recent book, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*, to his Boden Lecture, Sampson has given us the theory and data we need, as practitioners and policy makers, to address some of the “large challenges” of urban poverty.

Sampson's discussion of crime is but one example of research and analysis usefully applied. Considering both theory and evidence to explain crime rates, Sampson discounts the popular “broken windows” model of crime in favor of a “social escalation” model, saying that unresolved personal conflicts (such as between father and son, husband and wife, landlord and tenant), not signs of disorder (such as graffiti or broken windows), are the more likely source of increased crime. The social escalation model helps make the case that problem-based policing and restorative justice programs are smart allocations of limited public resources.

More generally—and more locally—Sampson's theory of collective efficacy, depending on the shared expectations for social control and cohesion among neighborhood residents, provides the framework for several practical initiatives underway in Milwaukee. The federally funded Building Neighborhood Capacity Program, augmented by matching grants from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and Northwestern Mutual Foundation, focuses on resident engagement. The program organizes residents in very distressed neighborhoods to identify and address local concerns, and it then builds on their relationships to plan and undertake community improvement projects. The restored Moody Park in the Amani neighborhood, and the resident-led Friends of Moody Park to maintain it, illustrate collective efficacy in action.

Sampson's insights and research results also influenced the development of the Zilber Neighborhood Initiative. The initiative was started in 2008 by Joseph J. Zilber, a Marquette lawyer from the class of 1941. It is a \$50 million philanthropic program to support resident leadership development, community planning, and local action in three Milwaukee neighborhoods over a 10-year term. The Zilber initiative makes grants to local organizations to develop and carry out plans to improve the quality of community life, support activities that increase neighborliness and strengthen social relationships, and develop the organizational capacity of local nonprofits to stimulate and sustain community action.

Since the start of the Zilber Neighborhood Initiative, the foundation has awarded \$30.5 million in grants to support the revitalization of 110 square blocks on the city's north side and 170 square blocks on Milwaukee's south side. In turn, these grants have attracted \$54.4 million in other investments to the neighborhoods, including \$48.3 million in revenue, \$6 million of in-kind donations, and more than \$100,000 in volunteer service.

In eight short years, these efforts to increase collective efficacy and strengthen community organizations in Milwaukee neighborhoods have produced important results:

- crime reduced
- more than 300 homes and other properties restored to productive use, with nearly \$25 million in commercial-corridor investment alone
- new schools, community centers, and health services attracted to the neighborhoods
- dozens of jobs and businesses created or established in landscaping, snow removal, home repair, health care, elder care, child care, janitorial services, and food services
- hundreds of community gardens and farmers' markets established, improving access to healthy food
- 75 acres of green space restored to public use, including new and refurbished playgrounds, pocket parks, and fruit orchards

Sampson has pointed the way forward, showing the “nuts and bolts of *why* and *how* neighborhoods matter.” We have the opportunity, and the obligation, to heed Sampson's call for “durable investments” in policies that attend to the social processes as well as the physical conditions in urban neighborhoods. The Zilber Neighborhood Initiative is seizing that opportunity.



*Susan Lloyd, Ph.D., is executive director of the Zilber Family Foundation.*

## Collective Efficacy in Clarke Square

by Ian Bautista

When we are intimately involved in work on a daily basis, it is sometimes hard for us to know if real progress is happening. This is why it is so refreshing to hear a nationally respected scholar such as Rob Sampson pointing to Milwaukee's assets as opportunities. More specifically and personally, it is inspiring to know that his studies on the leading edge of community change measurement are very congruent with our work and intended impact at the Clarke Square Neighborhood Initiative ([www.ClarkeSquare.org](http://www.ClarkeSquare.org)).

Six years ago, Clarke Square neighbors and partners from other parts of Milwaukee worked together to create a plan for the neighborhood to move toward prosperity. The neighborhood, comprising a little more than 40 square blocks on the city's near south side and almost 8,000 neighbors, is very dense and pleasantly urban. The neighborhood's plan does not oversimplify the complexity of the community. Neighbors, being experts about their own neighborhood, identified 10 strategy areas that will lead the community to improved prosperity.

This is our work at the Clarke Square Neighborhood Initiative. We work with neighbors and dozens of organizations to build the collective efficacy that Sampson documents. And we seek to ensure that implementing organizations are accountable to our neighbors as they seek to build prosperity together.

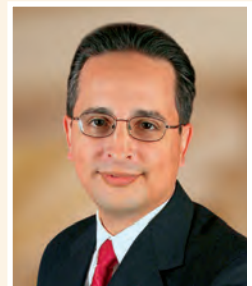
Many of the challenges to which Dr. Sampson points from Chicago and Boston are real daily struggles right here on the near south side of Milwaukee. But in equal measure, he strikes a chord with our Milwaukee neighborhood by mentioning the great opportunities and energy that come along with immigration's positive impact on communities such as Clarke Square. This cycle of renewal through migration is the long-term narrative of Milwaukee neighborhoods such as ours. We are honored to celebrate it and to leverage the infusion of the rich cultures that our neighbors live into economic and social opportunities, through art, commerce, and shared experience.

As the executive director of the Clarke Square Neighborhood Initiative, I was very honored to have the opportunity, along with a group of other civic leaders, to meet, talk with, and learn from Rob Sampson when Marquette Law School brought him to us in Milwaukee this past September.

Many of Sampson's illustrations of how to measure community change reinforced our efforts at the Clarke Square Neighborhood Initiative and the ideas that we have on the proverbial drawing board to pursue in the near future. For example, we have become more deliberate about collecting and analyzing data about the neighborhood so that neighbors themselves understand the data and begin to utilize them for decision making, goal setting, and measurement toward their self-defined standards of prosperity. Thus, in 2015, the Clarke Square Neighborhood Initiative began to work with neighbors to gather observational data about housing conditions in the neighborhood. In discussing the results of these surveys, neighbors have determined that improving housing quality should be a priority for the neighborhood—and thus for themselves.

More generally, as Dr. Sampson pointed out, this is not easy work, or an effort that occurs overnight. It requires resources and time to accomplish. We have not arrived yet, but we are journeying to clearer mutual understanding. It is refreshing to know that Milwaukee as a city and as a collective of numerous organizations and neighborhoods is getting serious about data. The city's reinstatement in the National Neighborhood Indicators Project affirms this commitment and inspires neighborhood-level organizations like ours to keep on pushing forward.

As we continue our work, such resources will allow us proudly to point to Clarke Square's "enduring neighborhood effect," in the not-too-distant future, as one of increasing prosperity, in keeping with our neighborhood's long heritage of opportunity.



*Ian Bautista, AICP, is executive director of the Clarke Square Neighborhood Initiative.*

- As incarceration rates begin to ebb and an increasing number of prisoners are released back into society, we also need to direct resources and social support systems (e.g., drug treatment, housing assistance) to both ex-prisoners and the disadvantaged communities that will disproportionately receive them.
- Based on the Boston findings, I would propose adding to the crime-policy list the policing of private conflicts and problem properties. “Hot properties” and maybe even “hot relationships” that are on the cusp of exploding have been neglected. To counter this will require new training for the police and other city officials so that they may mediate disputes, provide referrals for drug/alcohol treatment, and, crucially, work with landlords.
- The fragile landlord-tenant relationship, especially conflicts over evictions, has been shown by my colleague Matt Desmond to be a severe problem in Milwaukee. Thus there needs to be a better integration of community-based social services that recognize the multidimensional nature of poverty, private conflict, and housing trouble, coupled with code enforcement and crackdown on landlord disrepair and illegal eviction practices.

Consistent with the results of our research in Chicago, however, we need to build and nurture collective efficacy—city representatives such as the police or housing officials cannot do it all. Nonprofit organizations are crucial in this regard. But poor residents need to be given a greater stake in their communities—possibly through what Patrick Sharkey and I have conceptualized as “community shareholders,” where residents receive rewards for contributing to the public good. Community shareholder tasks that might foster collective efficacy include

- organized community supervision of leisure-time youth activities
- monitoring and reduction of street-corner congregation in high-crime areas
- parent supervision and involvement in after-school and nighttime youth programs
- adult–youth mentoring systems and forums for parental acquaintanceship.

Federal or large-scale interventions are needed, too—local collective efficacy is not enough. In many cities,

programs such as Choice Neighborhoods and Promise Neighborhoods are, to date, relatively small scale and unevaluated, but they may prove useful in informing the next generation of place-based interventions. Educational reform and support for healthy child development in high-risk, poor communities are crucial to these efforts, as seen, for example, in the implementation of the Harlem Children’s Zone in New York City.

A policy option that more explicitly integrates a person- and place-based approach is to give cash assistance or reduce the tax rate for those in compounded deprivation—that is, poor residents who also live in poor or historically disinvested areas. Cash assistance or tax relief along the lines of a negative income tax could be combined with job training or public works job creation. The logic behind this idea is that poor individuals who have lived for an extended period in poor neighborhoods have accumulated a set of disadvantages very different from poor individuals who have otherwise been surrounded by the resources of better-off neighborhoods. African Americans, more than whites or Latinos, have historically borne the brunt of differential exposure to compounded deprivation, in Milwaukee as elsewhere.

But this inequality can be addressed, and communities potentially preserved, even with a policy targeted at all qualified persons regardless of race. The reason is that the ecological impact would disproportionately benefit disadvantaged minorities, and unlike MTO-like voucher programs, such a policy would allow poor residents to remain in place, if desired, while at the same time increasing their available income. Extra income would also lower the neighborhood poverty rate and, in theory, lead to longer-run social investments in the community among stayers. Length-of-residence requirements could be imposed to counteract attempts to game the system by in-movers, and vouchers could remain an alternative for residents wishing to leave. ▶▶

**... we need to build and nurture collective efficacy—city representatives such as the police and housing officials cannot do it all.**

## Milwaukee's potential

There are encouraging trends that give hope to the idea that revitalizing disadvantaged communities through a combination of place-based and person- or property-based interventions such as described above is not naïve. I am not a local, but, from what I have observed, I would submit that there are many capacities in Milwaukee that have not been fully tapped. These include strong community foundations and universities, committed local leaders, and a latent collective efficacy among city residents (e.g., organizational capacities, reservoirs of informal social control) that may otherwise have been suppressed by the cumulative disadvantages built up after repeated everyday challenges. I have witnessed

collective efficacy in action in disadvantaged communities in Chicago and am certain it exists here, too.

The further good news is that some of the major challenges to disadvantaged communities have abated. Violence in the United States is down dramatically from the heights of the 1990s, for example, and even with the recent increases in violence, Milwaukee is way down from where it was in the 1990s and is not one of the top U.S. cities in the homicide rate. People are also moving back into cities. Milwaukee's population has increased

since 2010, to the point where it is likely now more than 600,000, and Rustbelt cities such as Milwaukee are quietly experiencing what Richard Florida calls a "brain gain"—the educated and creative class wants to live in cities. Add to this the fact that racial segregation is declining and immigration has revitalized many neighborhoods across the country by reducing housing vacancies and increasing population. I am guessing this

kind of revitalization is occurring in some of Milwaukee's south-side neighborhoods. Taken together, these facts suggest real prospects for meeting the challenge of persistent spatial inequality and increasing the sharing of neighborhoods across race and class boundaries in urban areas (like Milwaukee) that, not too long ago, were thought to be dying.

Finally, I want to emphasize the importance of city–university connections and the process of sharing data to guide local action. A rigorous system of measurement and evaluation is at the core of what I have called ecometrics, and it is the guiding philosophy of the Boston Area Research Initiative. As we have demonstrated with BARI, there is a wealth of new data and technologies that can be harnessed to enhance community. Regularly bringing together scholars, stakeholders in the community, and policy makers also enhances transparency and creates a positive cycle of mutually beneficial interactions. I can report that there is a real hunger for this sort of interface. We held a public conference in 2011, hoping a few dozen people would show up; instead, hundreds did. That transformative event motivated us to found BARI in 2012. In December 2014, we held another conference, addressed by the mayor, which took the next step of data sharing, eventually leading to a formal collaboration that I am happy to share.

In September 2015, the White House and the Department of Treasury announced the formation of MetroLab Network. Our affiliation with this network, as in other cities, is to connect policy makers with researchers to better understand and address key challenges. At the same time, policy makers and practitioners associated with BARI help scholars to learn more deeply how these issues are manifested in everyday life. This, in turn, helps scholars and students refine their theories and analyses of urban dynamics. Over time, these collaborative interactions produce better policies and better-run programs in local governments, as well as more insightful and nuanced research.

I thus urge Milwaukee to join this growing movement to better understand and improve our cities. Considering the number of people and the level of energy that I have encountered during multiple phases of my visit here for the Boden Lecture, I have no doubt that you can and will take the city to a better place. ■

**There are encouraging trends that give hope to the idea that revitalizing disadvantaged communities through a combination of place-based and person- or property-based interventions . . . is not naïve.**

## Public Policy, Yes, but Personal Responsibility, Too

by Tonit M. Calaway

Last year I participated in a panel discussion at the Clinton Global Initiative on Comeback Cities. I heard promising stories about how Detroit, Buffalo, and other cities are tackling the challenges of eroding urban neighborhoods and addressing economically disadvantaged areas with various levels of gentrification. I told them the truth: Milwaukee isn't there yet.

In some respects, the deck is stacked pretty high against success, but my purpose here is not to review the statistics. In fact, as a lifelong Milwaukee resident, born and raised in the heart of the city, I'm committed to seeing a better Milwaukee emerge. Is Robert Sampson's public policy response the solution?

He's certainly right in his backward look—in particular, that “Milwaukee suffered a long exodus of manufacturing and people, severely eroding its economic and social base.” Yet for the future, too, we cannot overlook the importance of manufacturing in the sustainability and viability of our country.

As a community, we should focus our efforts not just on helping students finish high school to continue on to college but also on making education in the trades an equally important priority. There remains great value in the work of manufacturing. It is a better fit than college for some of our smart and talented young adults. Longer term, manufacturers can also offer family-sustaining skilled jobs. Yet as vice president of human resources for Harley-Davidson Motor Company, I can tell you that it is difficult to fill some good-paying manufacturing jobs because we as a society have not focused attention on this opportunity.

Here is my perspective: The responsibility for helping Milwaukee turn the corner lies in more than one place and cannot be solved by public policy alone. Individual members of the community have to stand up and demand different behaviors from each other. Mr. Sampson discussed the theory of “collective efficacy”: I believe it to be the linchpin to changing a community. As members of the community, we all have to be willing to force continued discussion and action plans to address the issues facing Milwaukee, such as poverty, crime, mental health, segregation, and human trafficking—just to name a few.

In addition, our African-American citizens should stand up and demand more of each other. The easiest thing to do is complain about what the city, county, state, or federal government is or is not doing for us. The harder, more helpful action is to work at being part of the solution.

My mother, a retired Milwaukee Public Schools principal, grew up just off 20th and Lloyd streets, on Milwaukee's near west side. She often talks about her parents' neighbors and the impact they had on her life. The people of this neighborhood were not rich, but they were proud people who wanted something better—for themselves and for the greater community. Discipline and expectations came not just from my mother's immediate household. Most of her neighbors would expect good behavior, and, short of that, there was hell to pay from the neighbors—and then again when my mother returned home, because someone had already contacted her parents.

The saying “It takes a village” may be a cliché, but it's accurate. Members of the African-American community care, but many of us are passively letting things get worse without demanding better.

We in the African-American community have to own our faults, celebrate our strengths, and expect nothing but the best for our children. This means that we can no longer tolerate bad behavior from anyone—a family member, a friend, or a friend of a friend. Oftentimes we know who is doing wrong, and we turn a blind eye, even as we expect the police to have eyes on everything.

I know that I also have to step up and do more. I owe that to my mother and the generations before her and to the generations to come. No one is going to care more for our community than we will—no one. It is time we step up our caring and do more than just pay lip service.



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