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# "Cameras Don't Kill People": Community-based Organizations and the Expansion of Surveillance Systems in St. Louis, Missouri

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## ABSTRACT

While the number of police-operated cameras continues to grow, those who are purchasing surveillance cameras today are, more often than not, ordinary citizens. As more Americans install personal security cameras, police departments are increasingly gaining access to the footage they produce through novel video sharing partnerships. Although police use of private cameras has become the subject of contentious debate, our understanding of these systems and how they are used by the police remains quite limited, largely focusing on either utopian or dystopian narratives. Drawing on interviews with community-based organizations in St. Louis, Missouri, that have installed neighborhood surveillance systems, this dissertation seeks to provide some insight into the rise of private camera systems and video sharing partnerships with the police.

First, I explore what compels and motivates community organizations to install cameras and how they negotiate public criticism and conflict that arises. Second, I examine how community cameras are used in partnership with the police. Third, I examine the ways in which community camera systems are connected to purposes beyond direct law enforcement. By examining these questions, the overarching goal of this dissertation is to understand why residents of community organizations are contributing to the expansion of camera networks in public spaces and what this involvement could mean for the future of urban surveillance.

The findings from this dissertation suggest that resident demands for cameras, perceptions of police inadequacies, and memetic pressures are key factors driving the implementation of community camera systems. I find participants navigate conflict in varied ways but can be loosely captured in two distinct approaches: some vehemently

counter criticism while others seek to evade conflict and implement their systems with greater caution and hesitancy. Additionally, while most organizations try to use their camera systems to support local police, local law enforcement officials are characterized by participants as fairly absent partners. The results presented also suggest that cameras implemented by community organizations function as a form of electronic fortification aimed at keeping out individuals and groups who might pose a threat. At times, however, participants fluctuated between using their cameras to protect against perceived dangers and reformulating these systems for more 'welfarist' and 'caring' purposes.

# CHAPTER ONE
# INTRODUCTION

## The Rise of Public-Private Camera Networks

In the United States, surveillance cameras have become a ubiquitous feature of urban life. Large-scale camera networks now blanket many American cities, including Baltimore (La Vigne, Lowry, Markman, & Dwyer 2011), Chicago (La Vigne et al. 2011), Newark (Caplan et al. 2011), Philadelphia (Ratcliffe et al.2009), San Francisco (King et al, 2008) and Washington DC (La Vigne et al. 2011). While the number of police-operated cameras continues to grow, those who are purchasing surveillance cameras today are, more often than not, ordinary citizens. In particular, personal doorbell surveillance cameras such as Amazon's *Ring* and Google's *Nest* have become a staple in neighborhoods across the country. These private camera networks now represent a substantial portion of the video surveillance infrastructure in cities today and have dramatically intensified the monitoring of urban life (Bridges 2021).

Many local police departments are using unique approaches to access private camera systems and the footage they produce. In 2016, the city of Detroit first popularized police use of private camera networks with its Project Green Light (PGL) program. Characterized by local officials as a "public-private partnership," PGL gives Detroit businesses and local neighborhood groups the option of purchasing cameras and voluntarily sending live feeds into the city's surveillance hub known as the real-time crime center (RTCC) (Herberg 2017). Program participants sign onto third-party agreements and must commit to paying up to $4,000 for installation plus a monthly subscription fee for data plans (City of Detroit, 2022; Gross 2018). Sworn and unsworn

officers monitor each PGL location in the real-time crime center, which include fast food restaurants, commercial strips, apartment complexes, churches, and convenience stores (Smith 2021). In the last several years, Chicago, New Orleans, New York, Newark, and Atlanta all have promoted similar surveillance programs that allow businesses and even individual homeowners to purchase cameras and send their footage directly into police headquarters (see Amnesty International 2021; ACLU 2021; Schwenk 2020; Williams 2021).

Another way law enforcement agencies are encouraging camera ownership is by subsidizing private cameras for residents and business owners. In DC, for example, the local government has funded more than 18,000 cameras for its residents through its private security camera "incentive program"— an expenditure that amounts to more than $2 million (Delgadillo 2019). Participants of the program are given $500 vouchers to purchase their own camera systems so long as they agree to register them with the city's police department. With this initiative, police can search databases comprised of registered cameras and contact the owner to obtain any footage of incidents that occur. Even more popular are police-sponsored "video-sharing partnerships" with *Ring.* An increasing number of police agencies across the country have partnered with *Ring*, including those in Indiana, New Jersey, California, to provide free or discounted cameras to residents (Ng 2019). These partnerships allow the police to easily send alerts and request videos directly from users of Ring cameras with one tap on a phone through Ring's public social network, *Neighbors* (Harwell 2019).[1]

[1] While Ring owners are supposed to have a choice on providing police footage, in some giveaways, police require recipients to turn over footage when requested (Ng 2019).

Police programs where residents register cameras aren't the only way communities can get involved with community surveillance. Private citizens groups, neighborhood associations, and business improvement districts are also helping to expand surveillance infrastructure in cities. For example, reporters at *Wired Magazine* and the *New York Times* uncovered that the cryptocurrency tycoon Chris Larsen spent about four million dollars financing a camera system that covers Union Square, Japantown, the Tenderloin, and Fisherman's Wharf (Fussell 2020; Bowles 2020). Each of these cameras are owned, operated, and monitored by local neighborhood coalitions and community groups. If someone is looking to acquire footage from the cameras, including the police, they must ask the respective neighborhood coalition for it. Many of the cameras in these districts, however, are being made accessible to the police. It is estimated that the business district in Union Square now links 350 cameras into police headquarters (Andersen 2018).

The pooling together of city-owned cameras with privately owned cameras into a more unified public-private camera network represents a dramatic expansion of the police's surveillance apparatus. For example, Detroit's Project Green Light launched in 2016 with cameras at eight gas stations; as of 2021, there are 733 cameras located in a diversity of public places, such as outside liquor stores, restaurants, healthcare facilities and places of worship (Kaye 2021). Even more impressively, the public-private surveillance camera network in Chicago grew from 10,000 to 30,000 between 2011 and 2021, according to the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois (ACLU of Illinois 2011). It has been estimated that, with the exception of Montana and Wyoming, departments from every state are participating in Amazon's Ring network (Lyons 2021).

In an op-ed piece for *The Guardian*, Scholar Lauren Bridges (2021) characterized Ring doorbell cameras as "the largest civilian-installed surveillance network" that the US has ever witnessed.

Popular discourse on the rise of surveillance technology in urban spaces tends to center on either utopian or dystopian thinking (Fyfe 2004). Law enforcement leaders and tech corporations often fall on the utopian side, portraying cameras a cost-effective and rational make residents safer by increasing law enforcement's ability to "virtually patrol" communities. Fears of both perceived and real increases in crime have prompted the police and elected officials to continue to rely on surveillance camera technology, even if there isn't always clear evidence it is effective at deterring or solving crimes (for a full discussion on the debate around camera effectiveness see Taylor 2010). For decades, governmental policy and populist law and order rhetoric has framed cameras as way to 'fight' crime with fewer police resources (Webster 2004, 2009; Wilson & Sutton 2003; Bannister 1998). Moreover, in a society increasingly preoccupied with risk (and also with safety) (Beck 1992; Giddens 1999; Feeley & Simon 1994), cameras are seen as a means to monitor security risks and control potentially dangerous people and groups as they move about the city (Marx 1988; McCahill 2008; Norris & McCahill 2006; Lyon 2003; Ericson & Haggerty 1997, Rule 2007).

The dystopian side of the debate, by contrast, tends to consist of critical scholars and civil rights advocates who worry about privacy violations, the intensification of surveillance, and the growing reach of tech giants in local law enforcement (Davis 1990; Kaika & Swyngedouw 2000; Joh 2014). Foucault's 'Panopticon' and Orwell's 'Big Brother' are widely-cited concepts used to depict the increasing ubiquity of surveillance

cameras in urban areas (Norris & Armstrong 1999; Fyfe & Bannister 1996; Lyon 1994; Reeve 1998). Scholars Jon Fyfe and Nicholas Bannister (1996) described Glasgow's *City Watch* camera program as an oppressive "disciplinary network" of "unrelenting observation" (p. 39). A spokesperson from Amnesty International stated that the network of city-owned and privately-owned cameras has effectively turned New York into "Orwellian surveillance city" that is ripe for police misconduct and abuse (Amnesty International 2021). Ring doorbells have garnered substantial controversy in the media due to their increasing affordability and accessibility, Amazon's close partnerships with local law enforcement agencies, and the company's ability to outfit their cameras with ever-more sophisticated capabilities (e.g., facial recognition) (Ng 2022).

Some civil rights activists warn of increasing state control, as cameras installed by private individuals and groups serve as a kind of backdoor for police surveillance. While more surveillance camera coverage may provide the police with a valuable tool to investigate crimes, the sheer number of systems accessed by the police today has led to concerns about overreach. For example, the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), a leading nonprofit defending digital privacy rights in the US, claimed that the San Francisco police unjustly tapped into a camera network implemented by the Union Square Business Improvement District to monitor Black Lives Matter protesters in the summer of 2020 (Maass & Guariglia 2020). According to records obtained by EFF, the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) "received real-time live access to hundreds of cameras as well as a "data dump" of camera footage amid the ongoing demonstrations against police violence" (Maass & Guariglia 2020).

Moreover, beyond the deputizing of private individuals for police surveillance, more camera ownership also means citizens can engage in their own community surveillance practices. Personal surveillance cameras, now capable of streaming footage onto social media and crime reporting platforms, have been critiqued for helping to foster a "culture of suspicion" premised on paranoia, hypervigilance, pitting neighbors against each other, and racial panic (Andrejevic 2005; Chan 2008; Larsson 2017; Mols & Pridmore 2019). A host of news media outlets have suggested that private cameras are now frequently used in white and newly gentrified neighborhoods to post and share photos of people of color (often Black men) deemed "suspicious," "threatening," or "not belonging" (Ishisaka 2019; Haskins 2019). As argued by Kurwa (2019), this continual digital circulation of stereotypes about criminal activity can, in turn, reinforce the "policing of race in residential space" (p. 111).

## Purpose of the Study

With the rise of private video surveillance, the role of the public in policing is at an important juncture. Although civil and digital rights groups brought considerable attention to the rise of private cameras and public-private camera networks (Amnesty International 2021; ACLU of Illinois 2011; Chasnhof 2014; Maass & Guariglia 2020), research on the adoption and operation of these systems remains limited. To shed light on the growing 'private side' video surveillance infrastructure in American cities today, I draw on original interview data collected in St. Louis, Missouri. This dissertation focuses on one aspect of private surveillance networks that has become increasingly controversial in the St. Louis region: local community and business organizations who have purchased

cameras and are often voluntarily providing the police access to their footage (see Chasnhof 2014; Rivas 2019). To date, the camera processes and practices of neighborhood groups and coalitions is largely invisible to outsiders. This dissertation, therefore, seeks to contribute to existing discussions on how technologies have empowered citizens to carry out new surveillance and policing practices (Spiller & L'Hoiry 2019a; Mols & Pridemore 2019). Specifically, this research asks the following three questions:

(1) What compels and motivates community-based organizations to implement camera systems? If conflict arises during the implementation process, how is it negotiated?

(2) How –and in what ways—are camera systems installed by community organizations used in partnership with the police? Do they support the task of policing?

(3) Are the camera systems implemented by community-based organizations connected to goals beyond direct enforcement? If so, how and in what ways?

## Significance of the Study

The results from this dissertation have important implications for theory, research, and policy. First, the findings presented provide an in-depth and empirically grounded understanding of the camera practices of community-based organizations. Second, the findings can be used to inform policies, as they highlight some of the people and processes that drive the implementation of private cameras in urban communities, and to what consequence. Although many civil rights groups (e.g., the ACLU, EFF, etc.) have

sought to understand the drivers and impacts of private surveillance systems, scholarly work on the subject is sparce. This gap can largely be attributed to the rapid growth of public and private surveillance measures in cities today and persistent methodological and data-related challenges (Brayne 2017, 2022; Lyon, Haggerty & Ball 2012). With a focus on community groups that have installed their own camera systems and created video sharing relationships with the police, this research offers some key entry points that civil rights activist groups might be able to concentrate their efforts on. This work is also applicable for anti-surveillance activists who wish to formulate resistance strategies. Third, the findings could be used to aid in the development of a conceptual framework explaining rise of camera ownership in the US, especially among community-based groups.

## Outline of Chapters

The remainder of this dissertation unfolds in six chapters. In chapter two, I describe the theoretical frameworks and empirical literature that informs the dissertation and situates the analysis. I draw on critical sociological and criminological research to examine current theoretical and empirical understandings of camera systems in urban areas. Due to my focus on community-based organizations, I dedicate much of this literature review to outlining scholarship that brings attention to the involvement of local non-state entities in installing and building out neighborhood camera systems.

In chapter three, I delineate the research design and methods used. I describe the study setting, the sampling strategy employed, the sample, and the types of camera initiatives implemented. I also detail data collection and analytic techniques employed. Finally, I discuss the limitations and strengths of the dissertation.

In chapter four, I introduce what drives community organizations to implement cameras to begin with. I find that localized fear of crime, 'trigger crimes' (Innes 2001), and concerns about police performance often served as a catalyst for the implementation of camera programs, which suggest that the neighborhood groups I examined are 'responsibilizing' themselves. The results presented also suggest that, in a context where CBO leaders are searching for their own solutions, they often look outwards and mimic other organizations who have adopted cameras, a process DiMaggio and Powell (1983) refer to as mimetic isomorphism**.** The second part of this chapter examines how participants navigate concerns and public criticism around cameras. The findings presented here suggest community organizations address conflict in two distinct ways: some participants overtly resist conflict that arises while others tread with greater caution and hesitancy. These strategies are important to recognize because they suggest implementing private camera systems requires a considerable degree of self-justification and ongoing negotiation.

In chapter five, I provide insight into how and in what ways cameras installed by community-based organizations are used in partnership with the police. The results presented here suggest that the vast majority of camera operations, including collaborations with the police, are citizen-led rather than police-initiated. Participants describe feeling obligated to take on the bulk of the responsibility for camera operations, including picking up the slack when efforts made by local authorities fall short, in order to make their communities safer. The second half of this chapter highlights various tensions and barriers community organizations face in establishing cooperative police relationships. While the community groups I spoke with seek to establish themselves as

willing partners, local law enforcement appear less interested in these efforts. The implications of these findings are discussed.

In chapter six, I explore the ways in which surveillance cameras are linked to goals and purposes beyond direct enforcement. The findings presented in this chapter suggest that surveillance cameras are much more than a tool to 'fight against crime' and support the task of policing. There was a common discourse among participants that camera surveillance could help better ensure protection from external threats and make borders of neighborhoods more impenetrable from potentially dangerous 'outsiders.' However, the results presented in this chapter also suggest that community organizations remain ideologically committed to social welfarism and, at times, try to employ their camera systems in ways that align with social-centered ideologies. Drawing on the work of David Lyon (2001) and Dawn Moore (2011), I make the argument that community surveillance efforts can function as both 'control' and 'care.' This chapter ends with a discussion of theoretical implications.

In chapter seven, I draw from my research findings to highlight theoretical and policy implications. I identify and elaborate on the implications of the findings for the work of anti-surveillance activists, civil rights advocates, and government officials wishing to better regulate or minimize the spread of private camera ownership and public-private camera networks. I also explore how the findings can be used to provide a more holistic framework for understanding camera surveillance as an increasingly ubiquitous, normalized, and routine organizational practice among community-based groups. Finally, I offer some suggestions for future areas of research.

# CHAPTER TWO
# REVIEW OF KEY LITERATURE

The primary aim of this review is to outline the people and processes that drive the implementation of surveillance cameras in public spaces. This chapter is split into three sections. In the first section, I provide insight into the origins of camera networks as a crime-fighting tool employed and operated by the state. In the second section, I give an overview of the two dominant neo-Marxist approaches used to explain the rise of public participation in community surveillance and camera networks: neoliberal "responsibilization" and "social ordering" strategies. Together, these perspectives offer insight into how non-state actors become drawn to implementing camera systems. Lastly, in the third and final section of this review, I draw on an emerging body of research that goes beyond traditional neo-Marxist perspectives to highlight the more conflict-oriented and contested aspects of camera system implementation and use.

## Surveillance Cameras as a Governmental Crime Control Technology

Surveillance systems are core aspect of modern crime control (Haggerty & Ericson, 2000). Law enforcement leaders often frame cameras as 'force multiplier' that increases the presence of the police by providing additional 'eyes on the street' (La Vigne et al. 2011). For example, in a study conducted by Norris (2005), an officer equated a twenty-camera system to having twenty patrolling officers "constantly taking notes" day and night (p. 254). Similarly, in Camden, New Jersey, the camera network there was viewed by police as a tool to "virtually patrol the community" due to its perceived ability to "catch" criminal events in real time as well as "recall events after the fact" (Wiig 2018,

p. 11). The all-encompassing, panoptic nature of video surveillance is also appealing to law enforcement officials who want to extend their ability to control criminal behavior and improve feelings of safety among the general public. Cameras, especially when connected to police surveillance centers (e.g., real time crime centers) filled with police personnel, imposes a kind of "disembodied surveillance" (Lyon 2001): it simultaneously watches over and ensures the safety of "law-abiding" citizens and deters "would-be-criminals" from breaking the law out of fear of being caught by authorities (see also Koskela 2000).

Numerous scholars have also noted the emergence of a "new penology" (Feeley and Simon 1994) in crime control that emphasizes the use of surveillance technology to prevent threats and dangers before they take place (Ericson & Haggerty 1997; Feeley & Simon 1994; McCulloch & Wilson 2015; Zedner 2007, 2009). As argued by Zedner (2007), in society today, "the post-crime logic of criminal justice is increasingly overshadowed by the pre-crime logic of security" whereby security measures are more aimed at minimizing risk (p. 262). Most notably, the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York City and the resulting "War on Terror" helped to justify the widespread implementation of camera systems to 'preemptively' monitor any threats, especially those that might harm critical infrastructures (e.g., airports, public transportation systems and power stations) (McQuade 2016; Ball & Webster 2007; Lyon 2015; Lyon & Haggerty 2012; Norris, McCahill & Wood 2004). In the post-9/11 period, the police at both the local and national level have shifted more technological resources and surveillance measures to focus on pre-emptive intelligence gathering (Bloss 2007) and better identify individuals and groups deemed 'risky' and could pose a 'threat' to public safety (Graham 1998;

Norris 2003; McCahill 1998, 2002; Norris & McCahill 2006, 2008; Ericson & Haggerty 1997; Marx 2002; Lyon 2002).

The governmental appeal of camera systems has been further reinforced by a growing number of surveillance technology companies who try to sell their products and services as a simple crime prevention solution (Ball & Snider 2013; Norris & Murakami Wood 2009; Webster 2009; Lyon 2001; Graham 1998). As argued by Hayes (2012), profit-making corporations involved in building and selling surveillance technology are deeply "embroiled in the politics of fear that sustains their bottom line" (p. 172) and, as a result, constantly look to manipulate the security market for their own commercial gain. Across the country, large and small police departments alike have procured sophisticated surveillance technologies made and sold by corporations, ranging from body cameras to facial recognition software (for a full discussion on the influence of technology corporations on policework see Joh 2014). The term "security-industrial complex" (Hayes 2012, Rohde 2013) is often used by critics to highlight the symbiotic relationship between the state and corporations: one in which governments rely on private sector technologies to address crime problems and, in return, the private sector profits from supplying technological goods and services to law enforcement agencies. This deepening of state and commercial security interests is considered one of the most powerful forces driving the diffusion of surveillance technology in urban areas (for a full discussion see Hayes 2012).

While the above discussion highlights the process that drive camera investments made by government and political leaders, in the next section I shift attention to neo-Marxist accounts that explore the increasing use of camera systems among non-state

actors, citizens, and community organizations. First, I begin by outlining previous work on neoliberal governance and strategies of "responsibilization" within the context of public–police relations and community surveillance measures (Garland 2001). Next, I discuss the popularity of camera systems as a de facto urban renewal measure that businesses and city governments can leverage to construct more 'orderly' urban landscapes that are attractive to visitors, developers, and investors (Coleman 2004; Coleman & Sim 2000; Fyfe & Bannister 1996; Wiig 2018).

## Traditional Neo-Marxist Accounts of Surveillance

*Surveillance Cameras and Neoliberal "Responsibilization" Strategies.* Over the past several decades, many Western-style democracies have engaged in what David Garland (1996) calls neoliberal "responsibilization strategies" that aim to shift responsibility for crime prevention away from the state and onto citizens. At the heart of these strategies lies the notion that policing something that is "everybody's business" rather than sole responsibility of law enforcement officials (Shearing 1994, p. 8). Thus, the citizenry— that is, residents, landlords, employers, businesses, universities, and security firms— should take more responsibility for minimizing risk, disorder, and the likelihood of victimization (Goddard 2012; Loader 2000). Citizens must not only "police themselves" but also assist law enforcement by monitoring their own communities and reporting any suspicious or criminal activity to local authorities (Chan 2008; Ericson & Haggerty 1997: Larsson 2017; Reeves 2012; Purenne & Palierse 2016).

In parallel, community participation in crime control has been driven by a "police-in-crisis" discourse, which first surfaced in the mid-1990s and continues to

circulate today. In many communities, especially in urban areas, public concern about crime and feelings of insecurity led to a perception that police officials were unfit to ensure protection (Crawford 2008; Garland 2001). As law enforcement struggled to meet the expectations of the public, voluntary and personal forms of policing and security were presented as a viable solution. In particular, the growth and popularity of "public-police partnerships" and "community policing" models helped to normalize the idea that citizens should undertake their own policing activities in their day-to-day-lives and work alongside the police as "coproducers" of safety (Crawford 1999). Most notably, government officials in the US have successfully mobilized communities to take on policing roles through neighborhood watches and other community-led safety projects. Consequently, what exists today is a more diffuse and fragmented policing landscape in which a myriad of private and voluntary actors carry out policing activities and functions either in isolation or at the behest of the state (Crawford 1999; Loader 2000).

Like other policing tasks, purchasing surveillance systems has increasingly become the responsibility of citizens in the neoliberal era (Monahan 2006, 2009). Especially in a time of economic austerity and dwindling police resources, departments are often unable (or unwilling) bear the financial burden of installing camera systems in urban areas (for a discussion on the costs of building out camera networks see Piza, Gilchrist, Caplan, Kennedy & O'Hara 2016). Accordingly, the state has sought to 'free' itself from the responsibility for surveillance measures, often by encouraging civil society and the private sector to install their own camera systems (Monahan 2009; Goold, Loader & Thumala 2010; Loader 1999). Citizens are often told by government officials to

purchase technological solutions, such as home security packages, to protect their property and to prevent personal victimization (Monahan 2006, 2009; Reeves 2012).

For police and government officials, increasing camera ownership is, of course, incredibly appealing: it is a relatively easy and straightforward way to ask citizens to play an active role in crime prevention in their communities. Simply by installing cameras on homes and businesses and along neighborhood streets, residents can be involved in observing, documenting, and reporting crime and other "suspicious activity" to local authorities (Larsson 2017). It may be no surprise, then, that surveillance camera ownership and video-sharing with the law enforcement is now a key component of community policing today (Amnesty International 2021; ACLU of Illinois 2011; Chasnhof 2014; Maass & Guariglia 2020; Herberg 2017; Harwell 2019; Ng 2019).

Beyond increasing personal camera ownership, the state has also been able enlist public participation in the construction and operation of larger scale surveillance through more formalized 'public–private' camera partnerships (McCahill 2002; Coleman 2004). With the growth of neo-liberal forms of urban governance, it is not uncommon for public area camera systems to be provided through loose coalitions of local 'partnerships' involving police forces, local community organizations, citizens groups, local businesses, and other private security agencies (Norris & Armstrong 1999; Goold 2004; Webster 2004). For instance, camera networks in the cities of Hollywood, California, Baltimore, Maryland, Tampa Bay, Florida and Memphis, Tennessee were each built through public-private camera partnerships that comprised of retailers, business owners, and local government agencies (Nieto 1997). The first public area camera system built in

Hollywood, California was monitored 24 hours-a-day by local volunteers and the Los Angeles Guardian Angels, a non-profit crime prevention organization (Nieto 1997).

*Surveillance Cameras as Social Ordering.* In many cities, the growth of private authorities and entities involved in the construction of camera systems has led to the privatization or 'commodification' of public space (Coleman 2004). Public-private camera partnerships are often underpinned by desires to revitalize public urban space for the purposes of consumption and leisure (Bannister et al. 1998; Davis 1990; Fyfe & Bannister 1996; Coleman 2005; Coleman & Sim 2000; Reeves 1998). Especially for cities struggling with reputations of violence and disorder, camera systems often function as a de facto urban renewal measure that businesses and city governments can use to better control 'undesirable' behavior and construct 'clean' and 'welcoming' landscapes that are attractive to potential visitors, developers, and investors (Coleman 2004; Fyfe & Bannister 1996; Wiig 2018).

Several studies published over the last couple decades highlight the use of street cameras to reinforce social order and ensure the flow of investment. For example, Fyfe and Bannister (1996) argued that the *CityWatch* camera project implemented in Glasgow emerged amid a widespread concern that crime problems were causing business to relocate away from the city center. Glasgow's business elites, according to the authors, were committed to implementing technological methods to help "purify space of 'troublesome others' [such as] the underclass, the homeless, the unemployed" (Fyfe & Bannister 1996, p. 43). Coleman and Sim (2000) similarly describe Liverpool's camera network as primarily involving powerful members of the "City Centre Business Partnership" who were looking to enact zero tolerance crime control policies aimed at

addressing “nuisances,” “anti-social behavior” and low-level disorder caused by “underclass populations.” According to the authors, the intended purpose of the camera system was to better sort consumers from so-called “undesirable” populations (e.g., poor people, unhoused people, youth of color, etc.) whose identity and presence in the city center did not fit with the “new, consumer-friendly” Liverpool (Coleman & Sim 2000, p. 626).

Of particular concern among scholars is the growth of business improvement districts (BIDs) involved in the construction and financing of camera systems to control ‘nuisance’ behavior (see Coleman 2004; Lippert 2012; Walby & Hier 2012). Scholars Graham and Marvin (2001) call BIDs “malls without walls” (Graham and Marvin, 2001) due to their dogmatic pursuit of removing perceived threats to the middle-class consumer experience, an approach to security often referred to as “fortress urbanism” (Davis 1990). Like all BID activities, BID-led camera systems often center on creating “a consumption environment free of refuse and risk for consumers to pass through unscathed” (Lippert 2012, p. 169). More critical scholars suggests that street surveillance systems installed by BIDs have had an exclusionary effect, effectively sealing-off more affluent commercial enclaves from the urban poor (Lippert & Walby 2012; Walby 2006).

As argued by Smith (2007), camera networks in cities today can be conceptualized as a “coercive strategy pioneered by powerful ruling groups in a bid to exert some form of control over public space users” (Smith 2007, p. 291). The aforementioned studies in Glasgow (Fyfe & Bannister 1996) and Liverpool (Sim & Coleman 1998, 2000) confirm this assertion. Both street camera systems emerged from a strategic alliance between local government and prominent business leaders to make the

city more appealing to investors by minimizing opportunities for crime and disorder. Scholars have noted how the police, in particular, often politically benefit from being tied to business-led camera projects because they can give the *appearance* of safety and don't need to work in a strict crime-control sort of way (Coleman & Sim 1998). For example, as Wiig (2018) argued in his exploration of the camera network built in Camden, New Jersey, city officials were able to leverage the surveillance system to sell itself as an attractive place for visitors and developers regardless of if the initiative actually addresses local crime problems. While the surveillance system in Camden did not impact crime rates, it did, according to Wiig (2018), "succeed in signaling the potential and willingness for change and investment on the part of the city and county governments" (p. 147). This framing enabled the police to acquire a degree of legitimacy even as crime rates did not change across the city (Wiig 2018).

*Private Cameras and State Control.* It is important to note that while much of responsibility for surveillance camera ownerships has shifted away from the state onto the public, officials have sought to ensure that private camera systems still serve government interests (Webster 2009). As David Garland (1996) emphasizes, efforts to hand over or off-load state crime control functions seek to compel individuals, community groups, and the commercial sector to amplify governmental control. Like other policing tasks, citizens' surveillance activities are often intentionally nested within and operate through the state. For example, Sarah Wakefield's (2004) study on the camera network in London found that police officials "routinely solicited stills of suspected offenders" from private camera operators and frequently commandeered their feeds to identify serious offenders and those who were wanted for failing to appear at

court (Wakefield 2004). Similarly, Norris and McCahill's (2006) study in London indicated that police frequently accessed private camera systems implemented by local businesses to target and arrest "suspected" and "known criminals." In his book, *The Surveillance Web*, Mike McCahill (2002) described how a privately owned control room in London was often "co-opted" by the police to find and apprehend suspected drug dealers. Therefore, as argued by Graham (1996), rather than a reduction in state authority, private camera systems are best characterized as a network of 'Little Brothers' that government officials draw upon to extend their surveillance capacity and influence (but see also Reeves 2017).

In the context of urban camera networks, scholars have tended to spotlight the more problematic and concerning aspects of public–private partnerships, such as the power relations behind their construction and operation (Coleman 2004; Coleman & Sim 2000; Fyfe & Bannister 1998). In the final section of this review, I turn to a small but growing body of research that suggests cohesive and well-functioning camera 'partnerships' between the police and the public may be more complicated and fraught than these traditional frameworks posit. Below I elaborate on two key themes this literature: (1) processes of "enrolling "the participation of both public and private surveillance actors and (2) processes of "enrolling" the opposition (e.g., camera critics).

## Contemporary Perspectives on Urban Camera Networks

While much has been learned both theoretically and empirically from Neo-Marxist accounts that focus on oppressive forms of technological surveillance, these perspectives tend to lack insight on the nuances of camera development and use. For

example, scholars such as Lyon (2001) and Haggerty and Ball (2005) have suggested that existing studies focus far too much on types of watching that depict an overly technocentric and dystopian image of surveillance. This deterministic and control-oriented focus can detract from the development of a more layered and ultimately richer understanding of how contemporary camera systems emerge and operate (McCahill 2006). In the following section, I draw on a small body of research that focuses on the more contested and complicated processes at play as non-state actors attempt to plan and co-construct camera systems with the police.

*"Enrolling" Surveillance Actors.* In their study of camera systems in France, Germain, Douillet, and Dumoulin (2012) found that the successful development of a camera system is determined, in part, by the ability to "enroll" willing surveillance actors that are willing to carry out the project. As the authors note, "this approach prevented them from overrating technological determinism and thus allowed them to show that the use of technology is likely to enlist a number of actors: its users, first, through buy in arrangements, but also its detractors, through the weakening of opposition" (Germain et al. 2013, p. 143). In respect to buy-in arrangements, Germain and colleagues (2012) analysis of the camera system in the City of Grenoble contextualize the struggles of garnering support from camera users (in this case, the police). When the system was first being developed, initial opposition to paying for a large-scale camera project by the police officials led to a "cost-reduction" approach, which entailed installing cameras only in a small area and for just the purpose of catching auto thefts (Germain et al. 2012). At police headquarters, officers struggled to make use of the software that was intended to aid in the detection of auto thefts by sending an alert when people stood next to vehicles

for long periods of time. Instead, the system quickly became cumbersome when it alerted officers for other reasons, leading the officers to conclude that the cameras were pointless for their work. They soon stopped viewing the video images and eventually became opponents of the system, which ultimately led the camera initiative to collapse (Germain et al. 2012).

Several studies in London during the early 2000's also affirm the difficulty of successfully enrolling willing police partners. For example, Goold's (2004) study of several video surveillance systems found that while many top police officials in London publicly embraced the efforts of local authorities and community partners to install camera systems, local law enforcement often had little say over its design, placement, or operational procedures. This lack of collaboration during the setting-up phase, according to Goold (2004), made police officials much more reluctant to want to actively participate in carrying out camera operations. In another study, McCahill and Norris's (2006) found that a lack of a clear management structure and formalized procedures made it difficult for the police in London and privately hired camera operators charged with monitoring feeds for local businesses to work together. Constant quarreling, petty disputes, and distrust between the "private" and "public" side of camera operations created a "hostile" atmosphere in the control room (McCahill & Norris 2006).

Other writers have found that non-state actors are also not always willing or eager to be involved with the implementation of camera systems either. For example, Walby and Hier's (2012) study of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) involved with implementing cameras in cities across Canada shed light on the range of viewpoints that local actors can hold. While some BIDs were supportive of cameras and took charge of

video surveillance operations, others were more resistant to and critical of the idea. The authors found that the more "reluctant" BIDs were uninterested in becoming "stewards" of public video surveillance systems as a means of pursuing "clean and safe" spaces that are attractive to consumers and investors. For example, the Orillia Business Improvement District was very critical of downtown revitalization efforts taking place. One member of the ODMB believed that cameras would "detract from the heritage character of downtown Orillia" and that the money would be better spent on other district improvements, such as lighting. The presence of these "reluctant" partners, Walby and Hier (2012) argue, suggests that not all community groups are easily or willingly drawn into implementing camera schemes. While some "reluctant" partners lead to camera projects being rejected outright, some business leaders that did not support public video were, as Walby and Hier (2012) put it, "drawn into a network of agencies implementing camera systems on city streets" (p. 2103). This research suggests that examining how reluctant partners make sense of or make peace with implementing camera projects that they oppose is key to understanding the development of camera systems.

*"Enrolling" the Opposition.* As already noted above, Germain, Douillet and Dumoulin (2012) argue that the successful development of a camera system is dependent not only on garnering internal support among camera users but also enrolling "allies beyond the initial circle of technology promoters, including former opponents" (p. 294). In many cities, the implementation of cameras has fueled resistance from privacy and civil rights groups, who fear that unchecked surveillance camera networks could be misused and abused. Germain and colleagues (2012) suggest that the enrolment of new allies as a condition of cameras expanding within cities. As the authors state, "To become

a municipal safety policy tool that goes further than the experimentation or localized setting-up stage, [camera systems have] to interest enough people, beyond the initial circle of promoters" (Germain, Douillet & Dumoulin 2012, p. 296). In order to, Germain and colleagues (2012) identified two mechanisms through which support for camera programs was strengthened during the consultation process: by either weakening the opponent's arguments against cameras or by involving opponents in the legal monitoring of the cameras system itself. For example, in the French cities of Lyon and Saint-E'tienne, support for camera programs was consolidated by asking opponents of surveillance systems to be part of an "ethics committee" charged with developing ethical guidelines for the cameras. After the ethics committee was set up, many opponents agreed to join, which "flipped" them from opponents into active participants involved in regulation and oversight activities. According to Germain and colleagues (2012), newly appointed committee members felt that being involved was a way to provide adequate supervision but, through their engagement, they became actors within the system. This maneuver, according to the authors, not only weakened the opposition to cameras but also fed the "enrolment of new allies" who were willing to support the implementation of cameras. After the committee was set up, some of the former opponents serving on the ethics committee even ended up voting in favor of future camera expansion projects (Douillet & Dumoulin 2015).

Other scholarship, on the other hand, suggests that local groups who oppose camera expansion can become key "disruptors" in the development of street camera systems (La Vigne et al. 2011; Hier et al. 2007). These forms of opposition can, at times, stymie the development of camera systems. For example, a study by Hier et al. (2007) in

the City of Peterborough, Ontario, documented the efforts of the *Stop the Cameras Coalition* (STCC) who sought to stop the installation of cameras on downtown streets put forth by local business associations. STCC supporters were able to thwart the proposed camera initiative through a diversity of tactics, including the circulation of petitions and hosting public debates about camera surveillance. STCC also produced a report on camera ineffectiveness, camera abuses, and civil liberty concerns to generate opposition to the surveillance system proposal. Hier and colleagues (2007) argue these sustained efforts effectively challenged the "pro-surveillance" message promoted by local government officials and local business leaders and, in turn, resulted in the stopping of camera expansion in Peterborough. In another city examined— Brockville, Ontario— local news media were framed as responsible for halting the construction of a large camera system. In their reporting, journalists accused the police being naïve for thinking a technological "quick fix" could adequately address local crime problems. 'Big Brother' discourses were also leveraged to highlight how cameras may destroy close-knit communities in Brockville, leading residents to become less trusting and more paranoid. Collectively, these stories provoked high levels of public concern about video surveillance, which ultimately resulted in the surveillance camera proposal in Brockville being withdrawn.

## Summary

In the above discussion of the empirical literature, I first highlighted the role of the government in the implementation of camera systems in urban areas. Historically, their involvement has been quite direct, promoting and funding the installation of state-

operated and owned camera networks in public areas. Most notably, the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the resulting "War on Terror" spurred the installation of camera systems to 'preemptively' monitor threats to critical infrastructures (McQuade 2016; Ball & Webster 2007; Lyon 2015; Lyon & Haggerty 2012; Norris, McCahill & Wood 2004). Over the past couple decades, however, the government's involvement has become more indirect and increasingly focused on promoting private ownership of camera systems, often via the discourse of "responsibilization" and "partnership." More critical scholars have emphasized the local political and economic interests behind the construction of camera systems in urban areas, suggesting that cameras are often used to by the police and business leaders to reinforce social order and remove 'undesirable' people that might undermine the flow of capital (Coleman 2004; Coleman & Sim 2000; Fyfe & Bannister 1996). As argued by Coleman (2004), camera systems, should be "understood less for its 'crime prevention' potential and more for [their] success in reinforcing a long-established scrutiny and criminalization of the activities of the least powerful inhabitants of urban areas" (p. 199).

This review ended by outlining an emerging body of perspectives that highlight some of the more contested and conflict-oriented aspects of developing camera partnerships. According to this scholarship, traditional neo-Marxist frameworks rarely reflect the realities of public-private surveillance networks as potential chokepoints where multi-sector collaboration can break down and fall apart. The research reviewed above indicates that there can be external opposition to surveillance systems (e.g., from the media and governmental watch groups) as well as reluctance from "within" camera partnerships (e.g., business leaders and the police). The police and private camera users

don't always see eye-to-eye on surveillance approaches (McCahill & Norris 2006) and law enforcement can be hesitant to utilize camera systems that they had little involvement in developing (Goold 2004). Walby and Hier's (2012) notion of "reluctant partners" suggests that private business groups, at times, also resist being involved in camera initiatives. Thus, the successful implementation of camera systems appears dependent upon the collective buy-in of both police and non-state actors willing to engage in surveillance work as well as the "weakening of opposition in the political field" (Germain, Douillet & Dumoulin 2012, p. 296). In particular, addressing and attenuating external conflict appears to be a critical yet often overlooked aspect of the adoption process, especially in more controversial contexts of limited camera regulation and oversight.

For this dissertation, I argue that there is far more to learn about the development of camera initiatives in cities today. This gap can partially be attributed to the fact that the growth private camera ownership—as well as data sharing partnerships with the police—is still quite a new phenomenon. In such a quickly evolving camera landscape, researchers simply have not been able to keep pace. Drawing on semi-structured interviews conducted with a myriad of local organizations involved in the construction of camera projects in St. Louis, Missouri, this dissertation seeks to better understand the 'private side' of surveillance systems in public spaces. More specifically, this research asks:

> (1) What compels and motivates community-based organizations in St. Louis to implement cameras? If conflict arises during the implementation process, how is it negotiated?

(2) How –and in what ways—are cameras installed by community-based organizations used in partnership with the police? Do they support the task of policing?

(3) Are the surveillance cameras implemented by community-based organizations connected to goals beyond direct enforcement? If so, how and in what ways?

By examining these questions, the goal of this dissertation is to understand why community-based organizations are contributing to the expansion of camera networks and what this involvement could mean for the future of surveillance in urban areas.

# CHAPTER 3
# RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodological approach used to examine the dissertation's research questions. Given the plethora of community-based groups and neighborhood coalitions now involved in building out camera networks in urban areas, especially in commercial strips and centers, a more in-depth qualitative understanding of the 'private' side of these systems is needed. By conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews I was able to explore the views of leaders of various community-based organizations—including taxing districts, neighborhood associations and community development corporations—who have overseen the installation of cameras in St. Louis, Missouri. These conversations enabled a deeper understanding of the adoption process and how the cameras are used in practice. More specifically, this research asks:
(1) What compels and motivates community-based organizations to implement cameras? If conflict arises during the implementation process, how is it negotiated?
(2) How –and in what ways—are cameras installed by community-based organizations used in partnership with the police? Do these cameras support the task of policing?
(3) Are the cameras implemented by community-based organizations connected to goals beyond direct enforcement? If so, how and in what ways?

In the following sections, I delineate the research design and methods used to investigate these research questions. I describe the study setting, the sampling strategy employed, the sample, and the types of camera initiatives implemented. I also detail data collection and analytic techniques. Finally, I discuss the limitations and strengths of the dissertation.

## Study Setting

The study setting for this dissertation is St. Louis, Missouri. The City of St. Louis is part of the largest metropolitan area in Missouri; however, the population has been decreasing for decades. According to the United States Census, St. Louis had a residential population of 293,310 in 2021 (United States Census 2021). This equates to an approximate 60% decline from 1950, when the population was at its peak of 856,796 residents (Barker 2022). Most notably, the city experienced an exodus of almost 30,000 Black people between 2010 and 2020 (Henderson 2021). St. Louis, however, remains racially diverse, with Black and white residents each making up approximately 46% of the population, respectively. According to the Census, one fifth (20%) of the population lived below the poverty level in 2021 (United States Census 2021).

St. Louis is one of the most racially segregated cities in the US (Gordon 2008; Rothstein 2017). A 10-mile-long east–west street —colloquially known as the "Delmar Divide"— splits the city racially and economically into north and south regions (Harlan 2014; Handzic-Smith 2021). The city's predominately Black north side has experienced high levels of divestment and vacancy for decades (Gordon 2008). Unlike neighborhoods north of Delmar, majority white neighborhoods south of Delmar have been well-resourced and experienced substantial commercial development. The Central Corridor in particular—the city strip just south of Delmar—is considered the city's economic hub, with thriving medical, biotech, and tech sectors. Nearly all the major urban amenities—including universities, entertainment venues, arts districts, and hospitals— are also located in the Central Corridor.

Locally, the "Delmar Divide" is often used to describe the city's persistent socio-spatial inequities in education, health care, housing values, job opportunities, economic development, and violence (see Gordon 2019; Johnson 2020). According to recent estimates, the median home value above Delmar Boulevard is about a quarter of the median value of the homes that fall below it ($78,000 compared to $310,000) (Harlan 2014). There are also marked socio-spatial differences in education: 67% of residents south of Delmar hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to just 5% of residents to the north (Purnell et al. 2014). Violent crime is also disproportionately concentrated in north St. Louis, especially homicides and gun violence. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, St. Louis saw a dramatic increase in homicides, reaching a total of 262 deaths (Heffernan 2021). Approximately 90% of those homicides involved a gun (Nieto, Mclively & Garner 2022). As discussed in the next section, the highly segregated nature of St. Louis and these racialized patterns of divestment and investment have had implications for the development of camera systems in the city.

*Surveillance Landscape.* Camera surveillance has long been central to St. Louis's crime control strategy. The St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department (SLMPD) is one of about a dozen departments nationwide that have a Real Time Crime Center (RTCC). The RTCC, which opened in 2015, provides the SLMPD with access to hundreds of cameras (as well as other surveillance technologies) across the city. Within the center, police officers can monitor a wall of digital screens displaying camera feeds and communicate with officers on the ground (St. Louis Metropolitan Police 2011) (see Figure 1). While the police have invested substantially in their own cameras that feed into the RTCC, much of their surveillance capacity comes from their use of private cameras (Chasnoff

2014; Rivas 2019a, 2019b). Since the RTCC's inception, the department has been federating in private cameras into their surveillance network. According to recent estimates, the RTCC is linked to a network of over 1,400 privately-owned cameras (Herffernan 2021), many of which feed in "real-time" to the center (Rivas 2019a). The city's surveillance network, therefore, is a fairly decentralized patchwork of state and non-state cameras (Chasnoff 2014).

**FIGURE 1: ST. LOUIS METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT'S (SLMPD) REAL TIME CRIME CENTER (RTCC)[2]**

Geographically, the camera landscape in St. Louis is unequally distributed along race and class lines. A joint investigation by the St. Louis American and Type Investigations released in 2019 showed that cameras that feed into the RTCC are primarily clustered below Delmar Boulevard, in areas that are whiter and more affluent

[2] Source: St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department (SLMPD)

(Rivas 2019). By contrast, the predominantly Black area north of Delmar has been described as a "camera desert" because so few police-accessible surveillance systems exist. Much of this so-called surveillance "inequity" (Rivas 2019) has been attributed to the police department relying on already-existing infrastructure purchased by commercial districts and other private entities located in central and south St. Louis. The Northside, on the other hand, lacks the private funding and necessary technological infrastructure (e.g., fiber optic cables) to support camera investment (Rivas 2019a). Rebecca Rivas, the author of the surveillance camera study, asserts that the city's heavy reliance on federating in private cameras into the RTCC—rather than the department buying their own—has effectively created "a taxpayer-funded security monitoring service for parts of the city that can afford cameras" (Rivas 2019a). Thus, it is important to emphasize, that studying camera systems in St. Louis necessarily means studying camera implementation in whiter spaces, areas of more privilege, and areas of greater governmental and private investment (relative to other areas of the city).[3]

In 2014, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Missouri issued a report warning of the dangers of the city's growing network of unregulated public-private surveillance cameras. The report claimed that the combining of public and private cameras makes accountability and transparency difficult, if not impossible (Chasnoff 2014). The Coalition Against Police Crimes and Repression—St. Louis, a grassroots organization focuses on public safety, has also voiced concern about the rapid expansion of surveillance cameras in the city, claiming that most of the private systems are not overseen by adequate policies that protect citizens digital rights and privacy (Rivas

[3] This dissertation, therefore, cannot speak as well to the implementation of cameras in Black and Brown communities in St. Louis that have experienced legacies of divestment.

2019). When the RTCC opened in 2015 and began federating in cameras from across the city, city leaders were harshly criticized for not drafting a meaningful privacy policy (Chasnoff 2014; Cooperman 2015; Rivas 2019b). Despite repeated calls to create more oversight since the RTCC opened, there are only a few regulations as to who can install and operate surveillance systems in public spaces, making it relatively easy for non-state actors and entities to implement cameras and link them to the RTCC.

Over the last five years, however, there have been renewed efforts from political leaders to increase accountability. The St. Louis Board of Alderman —the legislative body that creates, passes, and amends local laws, and approves the City's budget every year— first attempted to regulate surveillance technology use with the introduction of Board Bill 66 in 2017. This bill proposed that city entities provide a "surveillance plan" every year with details about how they use their cameras, including whether they cause harm to communities of color (Anthony 2018). Although the bill was drafted at a time when other US cities were adopting similar oversight measures, it failed to pass due to opposition from several aldermen who felt it would make the process of installing cameras in their wards too long and cumbersome (Rivas 2018). After a series of similar failed surveillance bills over the course of the following years, the ACLU of Missouri became more actively involved in pushing forward Board Bill 31 in 2021. Board Bill 31 proposed requiring Aldermen to approve any "new" or "significantly expanded" surveillance technologies. City departments would also need to submit a plan for any proposed surveillance measures, including information on data collection practices and potential civil rights violations. The proposed bill could have also applied to the city's taxing districts that use sales or property tax revenue to buy cameras and link them to the

RTCC. These attempts to establish more oversight garnered substantial backlash from police officials, who argued such strict measures might impede the department's ability to use surveillance technology to combat violent crime, which was rising at the time (Heffernan 2021). The 2021 bill, which was being debated during the time of interviewing, eventually died in the aldermanic Public Safety Committee in 2022.

Taken together, the surveillance camera landscape in St. Louis provides an interesting place to examine the implementation of cameras and explore the research questions posed by this dissertation. There appear to be numerous neighborhood groups located in more affluent and whiter areas that have implemented cameras and are giving police access to their footage. Additionally, the degree of controversy over this development among privacy groups and news media journalists along with continued (but failed) attempts to regulate the use of camera technology in public areas suggests a considerable degree of conflict and criticism is also at play.

## Sampling Strategy and Sample Characteristics

This dissertation draws from interview data collected in 2021. To recruit participants, I employed criterion sampling – a purposive sampling technique that involves participants meeting specified conditions in respect to the phenomenon under study (Patton 2002). Participants considered for the dissertation were those who were involved in community-based organizations and had implemented (or were in the process of implementing) their own surveillance camera(s). This sampling strategy allowed for a somewhat diverse sample of community-based organizations in St. Louis who have implemented cameras, but in somewhat different organizational contexts. A strength of

this sample is that it includes a more heterogeneous group of organizations, which allows for a more comprehensive understanding of what is driving private camera ownership (i.e., some of the commonalities and uniting forces).

Initial contacts for participants were made through the professional acquaintances of two of my advisors as well as a personal contact. Snowball sampling was then used to further the sample through referrals from these initial contacts. Snowball sampling is a common practice in qualitative research as it offers the researcher credibility in recruitment of participants through pre-existing and trusted referrals (Wright, Decker, Redfern & Smith 1992). Correspondence with referrals was conducted over email. Overall, I found CBO leaders were eager to participate in the study and provide referrals. During the referral process, I did not have any refusals to participate. Due to the limited number of organizations in St. Louis that have implemented camera programs, I reached saturation simply by interviewing all available organizations given to me by referrals. To my knowledge, I interviewed all but two organizations (both located in the Central Corridor) that have installed camera systems in the city. In total, twelve different neighborhood organizations are represented. These include: three business improvement districts (BIDs), four community improvement districts (CIDs), three neighborhood associations (NAs), and two community development corporations (CDCs). Before turning to the details of the sample, below I provide a general overview of these three types of organizations.

*Business and Community Improvement Districts (BIDs and CIDs)*. A business improvement district (BID) is a self-taxing district that collects revenue within its boundaries to pay for amenities or services such as beautification, security, and marketing

(Mitchell 2001). A community improvement district (CID) is a form of BID that also provides infrastructure and community services. The services provided by BIDs and CIDs are supplemental to those already provided by the local government. BID and CID revenue is generated from a tax assessment on commercial property owners (and in some cases, residential property owners). The management of a BID or CID is the job of a paid administrator, usually occupying the title of an executive director. CIDs and BIDs also have boards comprised of people living and working within the district's boundaries. CIDs and BIDs typically hold regularly scheduled board meetings that are open to the public.

*Neighborhood Associations (NAs)*. A neighborhood association (NA) is a group of residents or property owners who organize activities within a neighborhood. An association typically has elected (but unpaid) leaders and generates revenue through voluntary dues and fundraising. Neighborhood associations typically provide community-based solutions to address specific local problems and needs within a neighborhood. Communities may start a neighborhood association for various reasons, including building a sense of community, helping to improve the quality of the neighborhood, and engage in economic redevelopment projects (Chaskin & Greenberg 2015). Neighborhood associations are led by a board of directors, which is overseen by a president and other volunteer staff (usually a vice president, treasurer, and secretary). Like business and community improvement districts, neighborhood associations hold regularly scheduled board meetings that are open to the public.

*Community Development Corporations (CDCs)*. Lastly, community development corporations (CDCs) are non-profit organizations that plan and implement community

revitalization efforts in a specific area, and often focus on the development of affordable housing and vacant buildings. CDCs can also be involved in a wide range of community services, such as improving safety and providing social programs. CDCs can have paid staff, board, and are run by an executive director. CDCs hold regularly scheduled community meetings that are open to the public. CDCs are typically funded by federal grants (from agencies such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Community Development Administration) and other public and private sources.

Although this dissertation incorporates four different types of organizations, they are quite similar entities. Each are community-based, non-profit organizations that function within geographically defined boundaries (e.g., a neighborhood, commercial district, etc.) with the goal of improving the social, physical, and economic well-being of the area. BIDs, CIDs, NAs, and CDCs are all framed in the literature as playing an "intermediary role" that links the neighborhood to government officials (e.g., the police, elected alderpersons, and other local government officials) to better address local problems and needs. Henceforth, I use the term community-based organizations (CBOs) as a catchall term when discussing these organizations collectively.

In total, I spoke with 14 leaders from the 12 community-based organizations. For most organizations (10), I conducted one interview. For two organizations, Northgate Neighborhood Special Business District and Lakeview Neighborhood Association, I spoke with 2 members. Participants are overwhelmingly white and female. Of the 14 CBO members I interviewed, 9 are female (64%) and 12 are white (86%). The female participants consisted of 7 white women and 2 Black women. All five males (56%) are white. A methodological strength of this sample is that it includes a more representative

group of community-based organizations involved in implementing camera systems in St. Louis. Moreover, the sample size falls within the 9–17 interview range that has been identified by scholars as adequate for obtaining saturation (Hennink & Kaiser 2022). Other researchers have found that 11–12 interviews are typically needed (Boddy 2016; Guest, Namey & Chen 2020). While this small, focused sample of community groups in St. Louis may limit generalizability outside of the region, I found high levels of consistency in reported themes. A descriptive table of participants and their respective organizations can be found in Table 1.

All but one of the community-based organizations are within the Central Corridor or South St. Louis (i.e., south of the 'Delmar Divide'). The remaining organization is a CDC located just outside the city limits in a neighborhood in North County. This camera project was considered due to its considerable size and for being in a majority Black area. Table 2 provides some basic information about the neighborhood within which each of the respective CBOs are located, including racial demographics, poverty level, and crime rates. [4] The violent crime and property crime rates represent index crimes per 1,000 residents for the year 2021. Because some organizations operate within large geographic boundaries, the neighborhoods they serve are listed separately. Most of the camera systems examined are located in well-resourced, majority white areas with relatively low levels of crime. Thus, it is important to reiterate that this study is overwhelmingly an

[4] The demographic data for city neighborhoods came from the Planning and Urban Design Agency in the City of St. Louis (City of St. Louis Planning and Urban Design Agency 2020). The crime data for city neighborhoods came from the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department (St. Louis Police Department 2020). The crime data for the one neighborhood in the study located in St. Louis County came from St. Louis County's Crime Map (St. Louis County 2022) and the demographic data came from the 2020 US Census. Racial demographics presented do not include bi-racial populations. The violent crime rate is a combined measure of aggravated assault, rape, murder, and robbery. The property crime rate includes arson, burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. Poverty level estimates come from the City of St. Louis and are based off the zip code in which the organization is located (City of St. Louis 2022).

analysis of—and a story about— private camera ownership in economically advantaged urban areas. Due to a lack of investment in camera systems on the Northside of St. Louis, this phenomenon cannot (at least currently) be well studied in higher crime and majority Black areas with legacies of divestment.

A detailed overview of the camera systems implemented by CBOs is displayed in Table 3. Information about the camera systems came from participants as well as information provided online by the organization (e.g., CBO websites, meeting minutes, etc.). The diversity in size of camera systems implemented by CBOs can be seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage. As a strength, the range of camera programs examined here is more representative of the kind of piecemeal camera infrastructure that exists in urban areas today. While many of the larger camera initiatives have received the most media attention (see Rivas 2019), smaller programs are very common and represent a significant part of the overall trend. Half of the implemented camera programs examined (5 of the 10) installed 5 cameras or less. Collectively, the data presented here can account for these smaller camera initiatives as well as larger ones. Three of the systems examined comprise of 150 or more cameras. A possible disadvantage of this size variation is that not all systems can be treated equally in terms of scope and impact. That is, larger systems have a larger surveillance footprint and more surveillance "power" than smaller ones.

**TABLE 1: DESCRIPTIVE TABLE OF PARTICIPANTS AND CBOs**

| *Organization Name* | *Year Founded* | *Mission/Goals* | *Participant* | *Participant's Title* | *Live in the Area* | *Paid Staff* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cherrywood Community Improvement District | 2016 | Improve economic development, safety, and security; enhance services, amenities, and physical improvements | Nicole (female, white) | Executive Director | Yes | Yes |
| Northgate Neighborhood Special Business District | 2007 | Improve neighborhood safety and advancement; reduce criminal behavior; promote neighborhood wellbeing. | Sean (male, white) | Executive Director | No | Yes |
| | | | Zoe (female, white) | Victim Advocate | No | Yes |
| Bricktown Special Business District | 1994 | Historic preservation; provide enhanced security and safety to people and property in the district; offer crime/safety education and resources | Jeremy (male, white) | Commissioner and Camera System Manager | Yes | No |
| Evergreen Neighborhood Association | 1977 | Facilitate the preservation and redevelopment of the neighborhood; preserve historic character while enhancing overall livability; beautification; improve safety | Brian (male, white) | Public Safety Manager | Yes | No |
| Brookside Community Improvement District | 2010 | Improve safety; beatification; community development | Ella (female, white) | Executive Director | Yes | Yes |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fairlawn Special Business District | 2008 | Provide enhanced security; beautification | Olivia (female, white) | Executive Director | Yes | Yes |
| Hillcrest Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation | 2013 | Promote and improve the quality of life by attracting investment; provide affordable housing; develop vacant buildings; eliminate nuisance properties | Alice (female, white) | Property Manager | Yes | Yes |
| Parkway Community Improvement District | 2000 | Provide resources to make the district cleaner and safer | Marie (female, Black) | Executive Director | No | Yes |
| Lakeview Neighborhood Association | 1975 | Enhance the quality of life in the neighborhood; provide and promote neighborhood events; invest in streetscape improvements | Samuel (male, white) | President | Yes | No |
| | | | Nora (female, white) | Vice President | Yes | No |
| Midland Neighborhood Association | 1970 | Historic preservation; beatification; create and maintain a secure community | Ryan (male, white) | Vice President | Yes | No |
| Oak Ledge Community Improvement District | 2017 | Beautification; improve public safety; support business community and economic development; coordinating CID-led events | Amelia (female, white) | Executive Director | Yes | Yes |
| Rosedale Community Development Corporation | 2009 | Economic development; increase community ownership; promote equity; provide affordable housing | Kayla (female, Black) | Camera Project Manager | No | Yes |

**TABLE 2: DESCRIPTIVE TABLE OF CBO NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT**

| *Organization Name* | *Neighborhood(s) in which Organization is Located* | *Percent White* | *Percent Black* | *Percent Below Poverty Line* | *Violent Crime Rate* | *Property Crime Rate* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cherrywood Community Improvement District | Crestwood | 49% | 29% | 22% | 4 per 1,000 residents | 14 per 1,000 residents |
| Northgate Neighborhood Special Business District | Northgate | 57% | 21% | 20% | 8 per 1,000 residents | 18 per 1,000 residents |
| Bricktown Special Business District | Bricktown | 75% | 16% | 19% | 9 per 1,000 residents | 32 per 1,000 residents |
| Evergreen Neighborhood Association | Evergreen | 78% | 11% | 19% | 4 per 1,000 residents | 25 per 1,000 residents |
| Brookside Community Improvement District | Fairlawn | 58% | 22% | 20% | 8 per 1,000 residents | 26 per 1,000 residents |
| | Bluff Hills | 56% | 29% | | 6 per 1,000 residents | 25 per 1,000 residents |
| Fairlawn Special Business District | Fairlawn | 58% | 22% | 20% | 8 per 1,000 residents | 26 per 1,000 residents |
| Hillcrest Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation | Inglewood | 74% | 13% | 17% | 6 per 1,000 residents | 20 per 1,000 residents |
| | Fairlawn | 58% | 22% | | 8 per 1,000 residents | 26 per 1,000 residents |
| | Lakeview | 66% | 22% | | 3 per 1,000 residents | 16 per 1,000 residents |
| Parkway Community Improvement District | Parkway | 43% | 44% | 18% | 49 per 1,000 residents | 70 per 1,000 residents |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lakeview Neighborhood Association | Lakeview | 66% | 22% | 15% | 3 per 1,000 residents | 16 per 1,000 residents |
| Midland Neighborhood Association | Midland | 90% | <1% | 15% | 1 per 1,000 residents | 51 per 1,000 residents |
| Oak Ledge Community Improvement District | Central Gardens | 21% | 61% | 32% | 29 per 1,000 residents | 39 per 1,000 residents |
| | Roswell | 31% | 50% | | 12 per 1,000 residents | 22 per 1,000 residents |
| Rosedale Community Development Corporation | Rosedale | 18% | 71% | 24% | 16 per 1,000 | 44 per 1,000 |

**TABLE 3: CBO CAMERA SYSTEMS**

| Neighborhood Organization Name | Camera Type | Overseer of system | Number of cameras | Police Access |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cherrywood Community Improvement District | TBD | TBD | TBD | TBD |
| Northgate Neighborhood Special Business District | Mounted street cameras, system monitored by organization | SBD Executive director and camera manager | 293 | Cameras feed directly into the RTCC |
| Bricktown Special Business District | Mounted street cameras, system monitored by organization | SBD Commissioner | 16 | Cameras feed directly into the RTCC |
| Evergreen Neighborhood Association | Mounted street cameras | NA Public Safety Manager | 1 | Camera feeds directly into RTCC |
| Brookside Community Improvement District | Mounted Street cameras, system monitored by organization | CID Executive Director | 3 | Two of the three cameras feed directly into the RTCC |
| Fairlawn Special Business District | TBD | TBD | TBD | TBD |
| Hillcrest Neighborhoods Community Development Organization | Personal outdoor cameras | CDC Property Manager | 4 | Residents placed with cameras choose whether to supply footage to the police |
| Parkway Community Improvement District | Mounted street cameras, system | CID Executive Director | 14 | Cameras feed to RTCC |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | monitored by organization | | | |
| Lakeview Neighborhood Association | Mounted street cameras | NA President | 4 | Cameras feed directly into RTCC |
| Midland Neighborhood Association | Doorbell cameras | NA President | 150 | Residents placed with cameras choose whether to supply footage to the police |
| Oak Ledge Community Improvement District | Personal cameras | CID Executive Director | 5 | When a crime incident occurs, residents placed with cameras must supply footage to the police |
| Rosedale Community Development Organization | Doorbell cameras | CDC Camera Project Manager | 250 | When a crime incident occurs, residents placed with cameras must supply footage to the police |

*Camera Systems.* The camera systems installed by CBOs can be split into two different types: police-accessible street camera systems and personal outdoor camera systems. Of the 12 organizations examined, 6 camera systems are mounted street cameras and 4 are personal outdoor camera systems while two have yet to purchase cameras (see Table 2). Street camera systems implemented by CBOs feed directly into the city's Real Time Crime Center (RTCC). Most of the street camera systems are accessible by the CBO as well, insofar as members of the organization can also access the camera feeds directly (see Table 3). By contrast, the personal outdoor camera systems are not connected to police headquarters. With these systems, the CBOs provides cameras to residents (renters, homeowners, or businesses) at either no charge or a subsidized rate. The video feeds are only accessible to residents who have been placed with a camera. Three of the four personal outdoor camera systems supplied to residents consist of Ring doorbell cameras. The fourth organization that implemented personal outdoor camera systems allowed participating residents to choose which type of camera they wanted to procure (Ring or otherwise). The remaining 2 organizations were still in their developmental stages and had yet to determine a specific camera system to install.

## Data Collection and Interview Guide

Participants received a consent form via email prior to the interview that described the purpose of this dissertation, assured confidentiality, and indicated that participation was voluntary and could be declined at any time (see Appendix A). All materials, including the consent form and interview guide, were approved by the University of Missouri-St. Louis Institutional Review Board (IRB approval number

2056002). At the time of the interview, I read through the consent form with each participant and provided an opportunity for the participants to ask questions. Verbal consent was given from all participants prior to beginning the interview. It is worth noting that all interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, participants were given the option of conducting their interview over Zoom, a video communication software. All but three participants indicated they preferred Zoom. For the participants that chose Zoom, I sent a password protected link that the participant used to log into our interview. Fortunately, there were no logistical issues when scheduling interviews. Participants told me that they were accustomed to using Zoom due to conducting months of online meetings for work and/or personal reasons during the pandemic. There were some typical but mundane interruptions that occurred (e.g., technological glitches, participants tending to their pets or children during the interview, etc.) but these were rare and brief.

The three interviews conducted in person took place at the participant's location of choosing. One interview was conducted in a co-working space that the participant used as an office. Once at the office, the participant escorted me to a private room where the interview was then conducted. Another participant chose to meet at a coffee shop down the street from her organizations' offices. We conducted the interview in the back patio of the coffee shop, removed from other patrons that were there. The last participant invited me to come to his office building. The office was an open layout with no private rooms (staff workstations were separated by folding partitions). The office also doubled as a police substation for bike patrol. Although I was hesitant to conduct the interview with other staff members nearby and law enforcement officers overhearing, the

participant assured me that he was comfortable with conducting the interview in their presence. All three participants that I conducted in-person interviews with chose not to mask. Therefore, I was able to see and read their facial expressions.

For the interviews, a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix B) was used. This style of guide is advantageous because it allows for the examination of pre-established topics of interest while also having the flexibility to probe, ask clarifying questions, and engage with new lines of inquiry brought about by the participant (Creswell 2005; Denzin & Lincoln 2000). The interview guide started with background information about the participant. I first asked more generalized questions about the participants involvement in their respective organization (e.g., *"Can you describe how you became involved in your organization? What drew you to it?"*). I then turned to questions about neighborhood safety to get an understanding of how participants view crime in their communities and the types of initiatives employed to address high priority safety issues (e.g., "*Can you discuss some of the top safety concerns that your neighborhood faces? Have these safety concerns changed over time? Can you describe what your organization has done in the past to address public safety issues? Are there any key initiatives you can point to?*).

The next set of questions dove more deeply into understanding participants' experiences with implementing cameras at their respective organization. These questions asked participants to describe the origins of their camera program and discuss what led the organization to adopt cameras (e.g., *"Were there primary reasons or motivations for wanting to implement cameras? Were there particular issues the community was hoping to address?").* Participants were then asked to and to describe, in their own words, what

the adoption process looked like (e.g., "*Who was primarily involved? Were there any community meetings to involve residents?"*). Subsequently, participants were asked to elaborate on how they thought the implementation process went, including discussing any issues that arose (e.g., *"Was the implementation process easy or did you run into challenges? Was there any push back or hesitancy? If yes, from whom? What were the concerns? How did you and the organization address those concerns*?*")* Participants were also asked to discuss if there had been any challenges that emerged post-camera implementation and to describe what, if anything, has been done to address those concerns.

Questions at the end of the interview guide shifted to cameras practices. Participants were asked to describe, to the best of their knowledge, how the systems they implemented are being used (e.g., *Do you know how or in what ways the cameras are primarily used? Are there any examples you can point to?).* Participants were also asked to reflect on how they personally feel the camera program is going and to describe their views on neighborhood groups taking on the responsibility for surveillance initiatives. The interview protocol ended on a positive note, asking participants discuss what they are most excited about for their respective organization moving forward.

While conducting interviews, I was less concerned with accuracy and the specific details of each camera program than how participants framed and relayed their experiences. I was most interested in understanding CBO leaders' views, attitudes, and opinions about cameras. By collecting semi-structured interviews, I gained a deeper understanding as to how various CBOs made sense of, characterized, and navigated the camera initiatives they are a part of. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour

and a half, with the average interview lasting approximately an hour. Pseudonyms were used during the transcription of the interviews, including participant and organization names, so no explicit identifying information remained. All place markers (street names, parks, institutions, etc.) have also been changed to help protect anonymity. Participants were informed of this at the time of the interview.

As an "outsider" (i.e., researcher not involved in community-based organizations) seeking to explore a sensitive topic, I was initially concerned that it might be difficult to establish rapport and trust with participants (Patton 2001). However, I found the CBO leaders I spoke with to be quite candid and willing to share their personal views on and experience with cameras. Framing the questions using relatively neutral language (e.g., refraining from using terms like "surveillance" and "monitoring") and asking open-ended questions about the participant's background and general activities of the organization helped to assuage any reluctance to talk freely. The snowball sampling technique, with referrals from other CBO leaders, was also a way of overcoming any reluctance to disclose challenging or frustrating experiences. By using initial contacts as referrals, I gained credibility among participants with whom my contacts connected me with. Most participants demonstrated a strong interest in the study, sometimes verging on enthusiasm. In the two instances participants showed concern, I reiterated that participation is voluntary and that they could decline to answer any questions they felt uncomfortable answering. In addition, all participants were given the opportunity to review and/or omit any part of their interview from the study. It is worth noting that no participants declined to answer any questions or chose to withdraw their participation.

Interviews were audio recorded over Zoom with the participants' permission (no video recording was used). My password-protected university-issued Zoom account was used to protect privacy and confidentiality. I transcribed each of the interviews verbatim in a Word document to maintain accuracy, facilitate a more thorough examination of statements, reduce bias, and help avoid any 'intuitive gloss' (Heritage 1984, p. 238) to respondents' actions or statements. Per agreement with my research participants, all data have been anonymized to protect the identification of individual persons, places, and institutions. However, due to the small number of community organizations in St. Louis that have implemented cameras, it is not possible to fully ensure confidentiality will be maintained. Participants were made aware of this at the time of the interview.

## Data Analysis

All data were analyzed through thematic coding using an abductive approach (Timmermans & Tavory 2012). With this strategy, themes are generated in an iterative manner during the data collection process. First, I went through each transcript and identified and labeled phenomena using an open-coding process, drawing upon predefined categories that had been derived from the literature and my primary research interests (e.g., "motivations to adopt cameras", "challenges during implementation", "CBO-police relations," "camera uses and practices", etc.). This coding process allowed me to immerse myself in the data and identify recurring themes, patterns, and key topical areas. After initial coding, focused coding was then utilized to catalog larger segments of data related to the initial themes that were most frequently identified. For example, community support for cameras was commonly discussed as a motivation for

implementing cameras. Consequently, during the focused coding process, "community support" was defined and subsequently coded along multiple dimensions (e.g., perceived reduction in police manpower, narratives of under-policing, feelings of crime insecurity, etc.).

During data analysis, I also went through each transcript to code phenomena beyond the original research questions. This step allowed me to uncover overarching themes as well as new themes not thought of in my research design. For example, I found that participants were particularly susceptible to inter-organizational mimicry, or organizations copying other organizations (DiMaggio & Powell 1983). CBOs mimicking other CBOs, in turn, became a key theme in understanding the adoption of cameras in St. Louis. Once identified as significant, the already collected data was then re-visited for evidence of this previously overlooked theme among the accounts of other participants. In subsequent interviews, I also more deeply explored participant's relationships with other organizations and how they learned about implementing cameras. I likely would not have found and explored this theme with selective coding based on the original interview questions alone, reiterating the importance of an iterative analysis technique to uncover surprising findings and new theoretical insights (Timmermans & Tavory 2012). Additionally, I used Spradley's (1980) technique of taxonomic analysis to further code emerging themes in the data. For instance, within the theme of navigating conflict I coded two different approaches that emerged in the data: *undermining the opposition* and *downplaying and distancing*. Through this coding process, I was also able to explicate the various strategies CBO leaders used when faced with conflict (e.g., *exaggeration opposition, appeals to a higher purpose*, etc.). In turn, this more selective coding allowed

for the creation of an overarching core category ("resolving conflict"), which encompasses the different strategies that were coded.

The transcribed data were also abductively analyzed to identify significant themes based on existing theoretical concepts in the literature to see whether the data collected align with those concepts, and, if need be, determine how current theoretical frameworks might be revised to better account for new themes (Timmermans & Tavory 2012). To this end, I drew upon existing concepts in the neo-Marxist literature to guide the analysis. For example, David Garland's (1996) work on responsibilization was used to situate the rise of CBO camera programs as partly a response to perceived gaps or failures in the performances of police actors.

Writing analytic memos also helped with analyzing the data abductively. Memo-writing provided an analytical space to make comparisons between my data and existing concepts and frameworks already identified in the surveillance literature. While memoing, I more deeply probed the data by examining how participant's quotes fit into or counter existing conceptual categories developed by scholars (e.g., 'responsibilization,' 'public-private partnership' 'social ordering,' etc.). For example, counter to notions of 'public-private partnership' in responsibilization frameworks, participants described the police as a fairly absent surveillance partner (see chapter 5). This ultimately led me to conceptualized public-private camera relationships as a form of "coexistence" (Meerts 2019) rather than collaboration. As another example, CBOs engaging in 'caring' surveillance practices problematizes existing social ordering perspectives and offers an important theoretical extension (see chapter 6). In these ways, I was able to more clearly explicate how my data builds upon and expands existing

theoretical frameworks. For the entire coding process, I used the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA (Kuckartz & Rädiker 2019).

## Sample Strengths and Limitations

Since the sample of participants came from organizations in the St. Louis region, they do not represent organizations in other urban areas. In addition, because of the limited number of camera systems in St. Louis implemented by CBOs, the sample was limited to 12 initiatives. Moreover, these camera initiatives are in certain types of places (wealthier and whiter), which is a function of the St. Louis context. Cameras are, by and large, not being installed in the Northside for reasons described earlier (and likely others). A far larger and more diverse sample would be needed to explore meaningful differences between types of groups and across difference neighborhood contexts (e.g., Black and white neighborhoods). Yet, the point of qualitative research is to investigate understudied phenomenon and to provide novel insights into people's personal beliefs and experiences. This research explores relatively new territory in its focus on the personal views and perspectives of leaders of community organizations that choose to take responsibility for installing camera systems. My sample offers a unique opportunity to understand more about the various local groups that are contributing to the broader surveillance network in St. Louis.

Another strength of qualitative analysis is its potential for theory building or expanding existing theoretical frameworks. Investigations into camera ownership among local organizations remains an underdeveloped theoretical area in surveillance studies. This dissertation identifies an array of CBOs in St. Louis who oversee the deployment of

cameras and offers novel insight into the people and processes that sustain them. This focus, in turn, enables a reexamination of established theorizations used to understand camera surveillance, such as those forwarded by neo-Marxist criminologists and sociologists. Future research could further test some of the concepts found in the analysis in the form of replication studies or quantitative research.

# CHAPTER 4
# THE CAMERA ADOPTION PROCESS

Researchers have long emphasized a need to understand the local contexts in which surveillance systems are constructed (Fussey 2004, 2007; McCahill 2002). Yet little is known about the conditions that fuel private camera ownership, especially among community groups. In the first part of this chapter, I answer the question: What compels and motivates community-based organizations (CBOs) in St. Louis to implement their own cameras? In the analysis below, I suggest that camera ownership among CBOs is best characterized as response to demands from vocal residents who are concerned about the ability of the police to ensure adequate levels of safety. CBOs have not been encouraged to start camera initiatives; rather, they have chosen to take on the responsibility for monitoring, recording, and ultimately policing their own communities. Additionally, the results suggest that isomorphic processes are also at play. I find that CBOs are prone to adopt cameras because similarly positioned organizations have chosen to do so, a process DiMaggio and Powell (1983) refer to as mimetic isomorphism. This institutional mimicry helps explain the rise of camera programs among CBOs as partly a contagious, self-reinforcing diffusion process. Together, these findings offer new theoretical insight into what drives the implementation of camera systems by the public.

In the second part of this chapter, the analysis shifts to how CBO leaders attenuate and ultimately resolve conflict around their decision to install cameras. As discussed in previous chapters, the growth of camera systems, especially their concentration in relatively white and affluent neighborhoods, has garnered substantial criticism from civil rights groups in St. Louis (Chasnhof 2014; Rivas 2019). The findings presented here

suggest that CBOs who implement cameras are not immune to criticism and must find ways to justify their actions. Below, I elaborate on the two primary ways in which participants resolve conflict: undermining the opposition and downplaying and distancing involvement in surveillance work. This typology of strategies suggests the process of installing cameras is not always a smooth or uncomplicated process; rather, it can require a degree of active (and even ongoing) negotiation and legitimization by CBO leaders.

## Motives for Implementation

*Community support*. A key force driving the implementation of cameras was the strength of community support for cameras. Because almost all CBOs (10 of the 12) are funded by revenue from the community (e.g., by taxing those that live or work in the area or collect membership fees), residents have considerable power in deciding what kinds of public safety measures they want to see implemented. As Amelia, Executive Director of the Oak Ledge CID, told me, when it comes to the organization's public safety activities, "the community is the one that drives what happens" and cameras are no exception. Many participants were quick to note that much of the community support for cameras comes from more involved and vocal residents, such as those who attend monthly neighborhood meetings. As Nora of the Lakeview Neighborhood Association told me, initiatives carried out by community organizations are "driven by the passion of people volunteering" which can have a "large influence on a volunteer-based organization." Typically, Nora tells me, it's "who speaks the loudest and makes the effort to do some kind of action" that drives the organization's activities. Samuel, President of Lakeview Neighborhood Association, echoed these sentiments:

> So, you get people that, you know, the old adage is decisions are made by those who show up. And so, people that feel like safety as an issue are going to come to these meetings.

And those who do come to meetings, Samuel said, tend to hold "one main idea of public safety" which is "a cop on every corner" and cameras. Similarly, Amelia of the Oak Ledge CID, described those involved in her organization's security committee as "self-selecting":

> Our security committee—all our committees—are self-selecting, right. People that sign up to be part of a public safety committee are oftentimes the ones that, you know, are most comfortable with the traditional law enforcement. Cops and cameras.

Because CBO often need to only consult with those actively involved in the organization, wider hegemonic consultation was never secured nor necessary prior to starting a camera initiative. The few organizations that sought to get more community involvement, struggled to do so. As Amelia at the Oak Ledge CID told me:

> We posted like a little survey [about public safety approaches], you know. I got some input on that, but, yeah, we weren't able to get kind of a lot of input from that process. And, like, we put together something ambitious like, we're going to like do all these surveys and get all this feedback and then have a safety plan, you know, the people's community safety plan. And that [plan] will allow us to use all [the] money for that. And through transitions of the board chair at the time, who like kind of said that he would help take a lot of that on, [it] like kind of dipped and it never really came together. We were never really able to get community input.

Thus, while Amelia had hoped to get more of an input from the community about public safety measures that the CID would take on, plans to do so never came together. Consequently, CBO leaders are often left consulting with already involved community members – the exact population that tends to advocate for increased patrols and surveillance cameras.

Much of the community support for cameras stemmed from perceived inadequacies of the police. Among the organizations I spoke with, there was a common belief that cameras could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the police, who

were widely viewed as under-resourced and understaffed. For example, according to Zoe, Victim Advocate of the Northgate Special Business District, what spurred her organization to invest in cameras was a sudden loss in district officers. Back in 2014, local government officials reduced the number of police districts in the city of St. Louis from nine to six, which combined Northgate Neighborhood into one police district with several other surrounding neighborhood areas. Zoe told me that this district reduction spurred fears about a loss of officer manpower. Community members, in response, felt the need to be more proactive and compensate for future (perceived) security deficits. As she recalls:

> A bunch of like property owners got together, and they were like well, how can we solve this issue of, like, we need more security because [the police are] going to give us less security.

This passage suggests that Northgate SBD was drawn to cameras because residents wanted some semblance of control in a soon-to-be under-resourced policing landscape. This sentiment aligns with Davis's (1990) argument that perceptions of insecurity can become "a function of security mobilization itself" (p. 224). In the absence of visible patrol officers, cameras appear as the next best measure for enhancing security. Nora, Vice President of the Lakeview Neighborhood Association, also framed feelings of insecurity and concerns about police performance in the neighborhood as the impetus for starting a camera initiative. Nora described two shooting incidents in Lakeview that cause people "got really freaked out." Shortly after the incident, residents started to fundraise money for cameras to gain more control over the area:

> [When] any [shooting] incidents like that happen, people want immediate response. And so, um, and so I think that there were a few people that had in mind that, well, one way that I can have control over the situation is to fundraise for cameras….So I guess they felt like, I think they felt like they need to do something. They needed to have control over the situation. You know, they might have been frustrated with what they felt like the

> police response was. I don't think the police response was bad, but, you know, the police can only do so much, and they have to have evidence. So, I think that triggered to them like, oh well, evidence. If we have cameras, we could show this stuff. We could record any of this stuff happening and it could be used in cases.

This passage illustrates how high-profile crimes, coupled with perceptions that the police are incapable of effectively controlling serious crime problems, can lead to a sense of increased community responsibility. High-profile incidents or 'trigger crimes' (Innes 2001) often spur the quick adoption of new technologies because they are perceived as a necessary response to a dire circumstance. Although the Lakeview Neighborhood Association may not be able to control what the police do or how they respond to incidents, purchasing cameras allows them to exercise some degree of crime control where they live (in this case, by collecting their own evidence). Equipped with their own cameras, the community could do their part to help make police work easier and ostensibly better. The perception that cameras could be used to alleviate deficiencies in policing was echoed by many participants I spoke with. For example, as Sean, Executive Director of Northgate SBD told me:

> We have 300 cameras [and] it didn't cost them [the city] a penny…. [and] police patrols that they don't pay for, you know. These are things that the people that live in these taxing districts did. They did one of the most un-American things ever heard of: they tax themselves at a higher rate so they can have this supplemental stuff. You know, we don't have a bike unit like downtown does. We don't have twenty officers, two sergeants and lieutenants that are strictly assigned to the Northgate. You give us that, yeah, that would be great, but we have to pay for this, you know?

Sean's comment here indicates that when the general public's demands and expectations regarding the scope and effectiveness of the police function and operations are not met, cameras are presented and introduced as a viable solution or alternative. To a significant extent, cameras have become widely seen as a technological substitute for a dwindling number of officers. As Sean stated in our interview:

> We don't have policemen down here patrolling like we used to, but we've got a good network of cameras. They're not patrolling but they're on. They're viewing what's going on and giving us information.

As a former police officer, it makes sense that Sean holds this camera-for-police substitution logic. Cameras are often framed by law enforcement officials as an added 'set of eyes' on the street. For Sean, he and his staff can help fill the gap left by police by using their surveillance system as a kind of supplementary digital patrol. Marie, former police officer and current Executive Director of the Parkway Community Improvement District, similarly described cameras as a kind of "force multiplier" that can be used to bolster the police in a time of law enforcement staffing shortages.

Closely connected with the issue of addressing community concerns about crime, insecurity, and policing is the legitimacy that adopting cameras affords CBO leadership. By purchasing cameras for the neighborhood, the heads of these organizations can demonstrate a that they are committed to 'doing something' about crime and responding to residents' demands. For example, Jeremy, Commissioner at the Bricktown Special Business District, told me he believes that there is this notion that cameras are often readily taken up CBOs as a kind of 'automatic' solution to crime problems because it is a "something to do" when community members want the organization to act:

> And that's, I mean, you probably know, I mean that's one of the things about cameras is when there is crime people want to take action. And they want to do something, and cameras are a something for them to do, you know. And that a lot of justification, you know, that's why they get they get done… it's an easy thing to say, oh yeah just more cameras so we can see who did it and that sort of thing… it's something to do and it's something kind of simple, you know, like more cops, more cameras.

Thus, for CBO leadership, implementing cameras occupies a symbolic and legitimizing role. Regardless of its suitability and, despite any hidden consequences, it sends a strong message that CBO leaders are listening to residents and acting on their concerns. In this

way, cameras can be seen as a device for legitimating the CBO itself. Simply by installing cameras, CBOs appear to fulfill their duty of meeting the needs of the community.

*Self-responsibilization*. More indirectly, the decision to implement cameras was framed by participants as an extension of a much longer history in which neighborhood organizations take ownership over their localities. When I asked Nora of the Lakeview Neighborhood Association why organizations like hers are initiating camera programs, as opposed to local officials who are traditionally responsible for such tasks, she told me that the "theme of localization is nothing new" in St. Louis:

> In terms of like the history of neighborhood associations or HOAs or other organized groups trying to have control over their area, that's nothing new. And even in the Lakeview neighborhood or other city neighborhoods, you know, that has always been the case…. we have been going on like this forever. And so, it really gives you this like clear sense of physical space that you can kind of belong to and also then own. And that's where, you know, I think there's always been groups of people that have tried to have control and ownership over their immediate areas. [Neighborhood organizations] they give a geographic boundary that people feel like they can actually make a difference in and have control in.

Nora believes that the clear geographic boundary that comes with neighborhood organizations in St. Louis provides people with a sense that they can take some ownership over public safety concerns. The key difference today, she tells me, is that the affordability and accessibility of cameras today have pushed surveillance systems to the forefront of tools that neighborhood groups can now draw upon. As Nora puts it, cameras make it possible "to observe what's happening to my property or my block or my neighborhood." Similarly, Brian, Security Manager of the Evergreen Neighborhood Association, described a more generalized sense of self-responsibility among neighborhood groups for addressing public safety concerns. In our interview, Brian tells me about persistent problems with public safety and the police's ability to effectively

perform its duties in Evergreen. This sense of under-enforcement has contributed to feelings of greater community ownership when it comes to ensuring community security:

> So, we have a problem in the city where the traffic's not that enforced very well. Just for whatever reason, I'm sure they've [the police] got their reasons but…And so, you know, there's a lot of families here, and if you're crossing the crosswalk you have to be very careful that cars may or may not stop. You know, I know several other people who you know either have been hit, or almost hit the crosswalks because people are just driving too quickly. You know, driving aggressively and racing and things. And then we had someone racing down Meadow Avenue and ran into the historic fence along Evergreen Park. And I think the police forces, you know, are undermanned and overworked and so I know a lot of cars don't have, you know, license plates on them. And so, stuff happens, and they drive off. Whether they hit another car or almost a person than drive off there's not much you can do about it if there's no way to identify them. You know people just simply aren't obeying traffic laws they have no repercussions to not do it. And so, you know it's kind of you know, on us to watch out for ourselves at this point.

For Brian, this sense of resignation that the city does little to ensure traffic safety put greater pressure on the organization to act, or else let the neighborhood, as Brian puts in "fall into decay." Many residents in the neighborhood wanted cameras to address these recurring traffic concerns, but the Evergreen Neighborhood Association could not get city leaders to act and implement them on their behalf. There was common understanding among many participants, including Brian, that the police were probably never going to take the lead and implement surveillance infrastructure within neighborhood areas. Therefore, if residents are asking for cameras, local organizations must figure out how to do it for themselves. As Brain states:

> If you're waiting for the city to do it [implement cameras], it's probably not going to happen, right. The city has got lots of challenges, you know financially and racially….And if you want to live in a city, what we have found over the years, if you want to be in the city and you want to try to make St. Louis something you have to do it yourself. Because it's always happened that way. The city wasn't going to come into Evergreen 50 years ago and do anything with this neighborhood, right. And so yeah, we have to do it for ourselves if that's what we want. You know, I would love to be able to call [local politicians] up and say 'hey [Alderperson], we need a couple more cameras and can they make that happen this year.' Them [the government] taking care of it would be nice, but it's not gonna happen.

Over time, it seems that members of the Evergreen Neighborhood Association must come to accept greater responsibility and self-reliance for their own security and protection, knowing that there is a slim chance local authorities will follow through. This assumption of inaction, Brian tells me, leaves the organization feeling as though they are on their own and must fend for themselves. Despite the Evergreen Neighborhood Association stepping in to implement the neighborhood camera, Brian still believes that it should be the government's responsibility:

> And I think that, if you look at some other neighborhoods like ours, [implementing cameras] was an awful lot of work, an awful lot. It was a headache to get a camera and they [the city] should have just gotten it taken care of.

For other participants, such as Jeremy of the Bricktown Special Business District, there was an awareness that city leaders were probably intentionally trying to get community organizations to take the lead on camera initiatives and relieve themselves from the burden:

> It's kind of a strategy, you know, where [city officials] say, well, let's not get into all this [ourselves]. Let's let the local folks be the initiators and then we'll kind of, will kind of be a partner for once they get things established. I mean, we saw that with the camera project, where, you know, they're like okay, yeah, get your thing going and then we'll come to have a meeting and stuff and you can federate your cameras in.

Taken together, these comments from participants suggest that cameras are not being installed because of direct pressure from state, but rather an indirect sense of duty— one that largely stems from feelings of under-policing and inaction from local government officials. Desires to enact greater local control over safety issues ultimately drove CBOs to take matters into their own hands and install cameras. It appears anxieties about crime and insecurity and a perception of inadequate public policing prompts community organizations to implement their own solutions (Crawford 2008; Garland 2001). Rather

than a welcomed scenario, CBOs taking responsibility for cameras is seen as a necessity to ensure protection.

*Mimetic Pressures.* CBOs emulating other CBOs was another central driving force in the implementation of camera initiatives. In a context where CBO leaders are searching for their own solutions to answer community demands for more safety, I find that CBOs appear prone to look 'outwards' and see what other CBOs are doing with their resources. Amelia, Executive Director of Oak Ledge Community Improvement District, told me in our interview that "cops and cameras" are "standard recipes" in public safety that "everybody keeps turning to":

> Like when I started the conversation regarding public safety it was, you know, are we going to be doing the things everybody else appears to do with their resources? Which is often cops and cameras. And like, you know, regardless of whether the data shows that they are working, like, everybody else is already doing it. So, obviously this is what we do.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) refer to this process as mimetic isomorphism – or the tendency for organizations to replicate existing structures or activities of other similar organizations. Mimetic organizational change has often been thought of as a diffusion process that spreads widely "acceptable" structures and activities from one organization to another (Tolbert & Zucker 1983). By providing a sense of what to adopt and how adopt it, organizations are directed to act in ways that are already deemed appropriate (Scott 1995). Here, it appears, cameras have been adopted based on shared belief among CBOs that they are the "right" thing to do, even in the absence of empirical evidence that it is an effective or efficient crime solution.

This mimicry has been made possible in large part because many CBOs are closely linked to one another and have developed close social ties. In turn, these connections have fostered high levels of inter-organizational sharing and replication of

camera programs across jurisdictions. As Nora of Lakeview Neighborhood Association told me, there have always been people at her organization "that have listened to what other neighborhoods are doing," and that this mentality led her to learn about other camera projects before starting their own.

Over the course of the data collection process, it became increasingly clear much of the mimetic pull towards cameras was driven by long-standing camera programs who functioned as role models for newer adopters. Sean, Executive Director of Northgate SBD, operates one of the largest and most well-funded camera projects in the region. Over the years, Sean has corresponded with many CBOs about developing a camera initiative. In total, seven participants I spoke with were familiar with Sean's camera program and/or had consulted with Sean at some point during the implementation of their camera systems. Jeremy of the Bricktown Special Business District told that once the decision was made to implement cameras in the neighborhood, the "first thing" his organization did was meet with Sean. As far as he and the Bricktown SBD could surmise, Northgate's network was the gold standard of community surveillance programs. The Cherrywood Community Improvement District, who at the time of interviewing was in the initial planning stages of a camera program, had already enlisted Sean as a camera consultant. Nicole, Executive Director of the CID, believed that Sean had "a lot of expertise" and that he "would be really good" at helping her "come up with a plan" for their camera initiative. To a significant degree, Sean has become the de facto consultant, provoking the creation of new camera projects across the city. Some CBOs, like Parkway Community Improvement District, are continually striving to replicate Northgate's camera system. As Marie, Executive Director of the Parkway CID told me:

> Sean in Northgate [has] a phenomenal network of cameras. It is incredible. And we want to get there, right. So that's where our neighborhood wants to be. And Sean utilizes it in a way that's more, you know, the police come to his team all the time because he knows that they know that they have superb cameras, and a superb monitoring station, superb camera access and it's probably capturing whatever angle they need to see. And so, with that, we want that installation in Parkway in pockets where we can install it.

Although Sean had the longest standing camera program and has aided the expansion of camera systems in other jurisdictions, more CBOs have also gained credibility, visibility, and influence in recent years. For example, the camera program in the Bricktown Special Business District has now been in operation for over eight years. Two years ago, when considering the adoption of cameras, Olivia, President of the Fairlawn Special Business District, turned to the Bricktown SBD for guidance on how to start their camera program:

> Our business manager is a commissioner on the Bricktown SBD, and they've been in existence a lot longer and they're a much bigger area. They have a lot of money and they installed cameras. So, he was telling us about their initiative [and] we had a couple of their commissioners come to one of our meetings and explain the process to us. They suggested that we go down to the Real Time Crime Center and talk to them, that would be the starting place. So, um, I did that in 2018. I went down to the real time crime center. They did an analysis of the area, and they gave us recommendations of where they thought cameras would be beneficial. So, then we took it from there.

This passage suggests that diffusion of camera programs largely flows through pre-established and trusted networks of CBO leaders. This ability to simply replicate others has helped to propel the diffusion of cameras across CBOs. As Amelia, Executive Director of Oak Ledge Community Improvement District told me, community organizations rarely "start from scratch" when it comes to developing camera initiatives. Instead, CBOs often pick and choose which parts of other cameras they will emulate:

> When we were first exploring, you know, what we were going to do for public safety in the CID, we met with Ella [Executive Director of the Brookside CID]. She shared like here are my guidelines for cameras. And we met with Sean [Executive Director of the Northgate Special Business District] and he was like here's our like camera handle about who can do what. Like, you know, nobody's 100% starting from scratch. And we're all

> trying to like piece it together, making our own edits at the same time that like works for us on some level.

As suggested here by Amelia, pre-existing models give new or soon-to-be adopters the option of taking the parts of various systems they want to emulate. Emulation, in this respect, is of course incredibly appealing. Imitation not only saves time and effort, but 'following suit' fulfills a key legitimizing function: it allows the organization to establish credibility by conforming to the status quo. To some extent, CBOs imitating other CBOs also helps to explain why participants rarely considered camera effectiveness during the implementation process. If camera installation in and of itself fulfills a legitimizing function before it is even utilized, there is no need for cameras to be evaluated or considered for their effectiveness.

It is worth noting that mimetic isomorphism is also a constraining force*,* to the extent that it promotes conformity and places pressures on organizations to look alike (DiMaggio & Powell 1983). That is, organizational "peers" encourage the adoption of pre-established solutions and, by extension, downgrades experimentation with new approaches (DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Giblin 2006). This means that when organizations search for new public safety approaches, they are likely to choose from a limited range of models already being utilized. Put differently, the symbolic, taken-for-granted appropriateness of cameras can make it harder for other types of approaches to take root because the appearance of legitimacy is seen as necessary for survival. As noted by Samuel, President of the Lakeview Neighborhood Association, since cameras are widely considered as an accepted response, the likelihood that CBOs will give alternatives a chance is significantly reduced:

> These quote "new" or "more progressive" ideas even in a progressive city that's all democrats, supposedly, like it is harder for them to get traction that way and for them to

> get tried out. And again, it relates to, you know, nobody questions the investment in cameras. Like, again, it's like, oh, it's just what you do. Like if you tried some sort of social worker program or like Cure Violence it would be analyzed to death of "did this do anything?" Which is fair, I'm not saying that's bad. But it's like that's one of the differences between a quote "established" or "acceptable" thing to do and some new idea. Which is obvious. That's not some grand observation.

This passage suggests that branching out from "established" activities and structures to "new" and "more progressive" approaches would be more questioned, or as Samuel put it "scrutinized to death." Installing cameras, a decidedly traditional approach to public safety, is seen as a safe bet when compared to new or more progressive options which pose a far greater "risk" to the organization.

The results presented in this chapter thus far suggest that some form of anxiety about safety, ranging from localized concerns about policing levels to 'trigger crimes' (Innes 2001), often generates community support for adopting cameras. The performance of the police department is a point of almost constant preoccupation among participants and their communities, and this mindset often led them to conclude that purchasing their own cameras are the primary way to improve the safety of their neighborhoods. Moreover, in a context where leaders of CBOs are searching to answer to community demands for safety, I find that participants appear to be particularly susceptible to inter-organizational mimicry, or organizations copying other organizations. These mimetic pressures, enabled by close ties between CBOs, create a kind of contagion effect in which cameras quickly and easily spread from one community to the next. Taken together, resident demands for cameras and a tendency for CBOs to mimic one another plays into cameras being readily taken up as a kind of automatic solution to crime and security

problems.[5] Since cameras are seen as a requisite crime control solution and are widely normalized within the institutional environment of CBOs (i.e., require no special justification), they are inherently appealing. Yet as I discuss in the next section, adopting camera systems still involves a degree of active (and ongoing) legitimization by CBO leaders due to the degree of conflict they can produce.

## Resolving Conflict

As noted in chapters one and three, privacy advocates and progressive politicians have raised concerns about the growth of public-private camera networks, including in the St. Louis region (see Chasnhof 2014; Rivas 2019). In this section, I analyze how participants approach and attenuate being implicated in the construction of camera systems. CBO reactions are varied yet captured here in two distinct approaches. In the first approach, what I call *undermining the opposition*, CBO leaders resist and counter criticism as they implement their camera projects. This approach encapsulates three different strategies: *exaggerated opposition, misunderstood opposition,* and *appeals to a higher purpose.* These three strategies are used by participants to combat negative perceptions and public concerns about cameras. In the latter approach, *downplaying and distancing involvement in surveillance work*, CBOs are highly sensitized to the negative reactions and implications of cameras and tread with greater caution. These participants

[5] While not supported by the data, another potential source for this homogenization mentioned by one of my participants is the St. Louis Association of Community Organizations (SLACO), which serves as the umbrella group for all neighborhood associations in the city. It is possible that SLACO serves as a mechanism for professionalization and passing along 'best practices' from one organization to the next, a process institutional theorists call normative isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell 1983). SLATO provides newsletter and conferences for participating members, suggesting that organizational members who are participating in these networks or reading publications are likely to bring the acquired knowledge about cameras into the organization, thereby also leading to isomorphism.

engaged on of two distinct strategies: *avoidance of social disapproval and censure* and *off-loading surveillance responsibility*. In the former, participants are aware of negative implications and seek to find ways to evade public criticism. Particularly notable here is the unease CBO leaders feel over being socially sanctioned. In the latter strategy, participants see cameras as flawed technology with the potential to be used in harmful ways. This mindset, in turn, motivated CBOs to remove themselves and their respective organization from being involved in surveillance work. Both categories of responses—*undermining the opposition* and *downplaying and distancing involvement in surveillance work* —are discussed respectively in the following two subsections.

### Undermining the Opposition

Most participants I spoke with believed in the crime control benefits of cameras. However, these participants were not immune to public criticisms and contestations over surveillance cameras, especially those being voiced by progressive politicians and advocacy groups. Participants in this camp appeared sensitized to potential objections over neighborhood camera systems and sought to engage in strategies to undercut forms of opposition. This more combative approach encapsulates three different types of strategies: *exaggerated opposition, misunderstood opposition,* and *appeals to a higher purpose.*

*Exaggerated opposition.* Of all participants, Sean is undoubtedly the biggest champion of cameras. Sean is an affable guy and former St. Louis police officer who appears eager to show privacy advocates that his—or any other cameras accessible by the police—aren't violating any civil liberties. In our interview, Sean scoffed at critics that

describe the large number of cameras in the city as “overly oppressive” or believe the technology is “being misused” by the police in a “racially biased” way. Sean is not afraid to assert his frustrations with camera critics and has been vocal in the media when it comes to defending community surveillance measures. Sean has been, as one participant put it, “front and center” in the formulation of Board Bill 31, a contentious aldermanic bill that was seeking greater oversight over surveillance systems in the city at the time of interviewing. Sean genuinely believes local privacy watch groups and investigative reporters are having an undue negative impact on the narrative around public-private camera systems. Sean presents camera concerns as not as pervasive or representative of community concerns but stemming from a relatively small and insular group of people who are influencing the public and even local politicians:

> I mean the same people that are on the Privacy Watch STL are with the Coalition Against Police Crimes and Repression. And so, I don't know, it kind of makes it look like there's a lot of organizations but there's a lot of crossover in their mission [and] in their opposition.

Much of the animosity expressed by participants, and in particular from Sean, was about Board Bill 31, the surveillance oversight bill that was up for consideration by the Board of Alderman’s Public Safety Committee. The ACLU and several other local advocacy groups were heavily involved in the drafting of Board Bill 31, which did not sit well with Sean:

> I said to the board of Alderman, are you taking your marching orders from groups like privacy watch STL, Coalition Against Police Crimes and Repression, the ACLU? You're being influenced heavily by these organizations. And then when we want to put up cameras in a certain area I have to come to your board and ask for permission? And if one of those entities wants to oppose it, they can? And they have influence over you, so they can oppose how you vote. You all aren't the board that's overseeing this. You have outside groups that are influencing your decisions.

Sean believes that local advocacy groups have had an outsized impact on Board Bill 31 and are gaining too much influence over the kind of oversight that the Board of Alderman

could be responsible for upholding. In our interview, Sean told me that he thinks those who are most concerned about the social harms of cameras are being strongly "influenced by people who are scaring them" such as local privacy watch groups and investigative reporters. For these reasons, Sean believes that Board Bill 31 is an "unreasonable" measure—one that he believes favors a loud but non-representative perspective on cameras. Alice, Property Manager at the Hillcrest Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation, echoes Sean's claims that concerns about cameras are rare, and when then do surface, emanate from a small number of people that sit on the "far left":

> It's definitely turned to the loudest voices in the way the leadership goes, which is the far, far left…So I see a lot from the neighborhood association. I see a lot on Nextdoor. I see a lot on Facebook groups. There are people that understand that cameras are needed, and then they get dogpiled by these like big brother people. So, it's this—it's a very exaggerated political stance against cameras.

For Alice, in a polarized climate, loud progressives in St. Louis have an inflated position on cameras. She sees the opposition as overly aggressive, asserting that they go out of their way to 'gang up' on those who support camera ownership.

*Misunderstood Opposition.* Other participants claimed that opponents overestimate the technological capabilities of cameras, leading to unnecessary levels of fear. Zoe, Victim Advocate at Northgate SBD, told me she believes that public fears about cameras primarily come from a place of confusion and "misinformation" about how cameras function. Zoe thinks that the people who have concerns "don't really understand what it's like to have a camera network" and, as a result, are fearful:

> I feel like a lot of [the concerns around cameras] has to do with the availability of technology and how extreme some technology can be versus understanding what technology is really being used [for]. Because it can create a lot of like fear or confusion and there's a lot of misinformation out there. Like we had one person tell us like, I don't want cameras pointed in my backyard. Or I don't want cameras pointed into a window

> into my home. And it's like we don't have any cameras pointed like that. All of our cameras are pointed on the street or sidewalk, that's about it. Whether or not they believed us, I don't know. But like they, you know, they have an assumption that they're just everywhere, looking everywhere.

Zoe told me the organization often tries to reverse or mitigate concerns by allowing critics to come visit the office to gain a more accurate understanding of the system and how it operates. As Zoe recalled in our interview:

> We invite Alderman all the time to come to our office and see what we're doing, just so they have a better understanding. Most don't take us up on the offer, but some do. We've had the ACLU into our office at least twice since I've worked there. So anytime someone like kind of raises concerns to us we're like do you want to tour our office? Like, we're not gonna let you see anything private. We're not going to like show you footage of anything but you can come see our setup [and] talk to you about our policies. Most people don't take us up on the offer but occasionally someone will. Or like we invited Alderwoman Smith to come visit when she originally introduced her [surveillance] bill…and we were just like, well, now that you're here, why don't we show you around the office? But, yeah, we're always open like to have people come by.

By having this kind of open-door policy, it appears Northgate SBD seeks to show those who have 'misconceptions' about cameras that the organization has 'nothing to hide' and, by extension, the public should have nothing to fear.

Ella, Executive Director of the Brookside Community Improvement District, was also of the mindset that there is considerable misinformation on how camera systems operate on the ground, and that this misinformation is the primary source of discontent. Ella sees much of the camera 'misinformation' stemming from a small number of loud voices, especially progressive politicians, including the Alderwoman that represents her ward. In our interview, Ella expressed high levels of frustration towards leaders who think that her organization's cameras contribute to a mass surveillance state or are abusively used by the state:

> Why do people feel they're being watched by the police? No one's watching you. No one. Life is not CSI. There's no one sitting at the real time command center just watching someone walk down the street. It is un-freakin real… They think that the police department is profiling. And they're just gonna watch minorities, of [the] Muslim

> community or [the] Black community walk down the street, and they're just gonna follow them with the camera. That is not the case at all. And also, even if it was, we don't have the manpower to even do that. Or the camera capabilities to do that. These cameras can't even do that. What they're thinking of is a TV show.

In this passage, Ella makes the argument that capabilities of cameras have become increasingly divorced from reality. In response, she seeks to demonstrate the incapability of the police to actually engage in rapacious information gathering practices and invade people's privacy as critics suggest. This sentiment aligns with existing research that suggests those on the utopian side of digital surveillance tend to frame the opposition as 'fearmongering fanatics' who are out of touch with how technology is used on the ground (Davis 1996). Ella frames the dystopian critiques presented by progressives as absurd, claiming that local law enforcement doesn't have the capacity to carry out some Orwellian-like scheme.

Alice of the Hillcrest Community Development Organization also saw the opposition as circulating absurd Orwellian tropes, such as cameras being conceived of as part of the 'big brother' surveillance state. In our interview, she told me she is "in awe" of how many people think that the police are spending all their time watching camera feeds:

> And I can't tell you how many times I tell people this [about cameras]. Nobody's going to care. Well, yeah, but I don't want them [the police] seeing. Well, if it's not illegal then it doesn't matter and, honestly, nobody's going to pay attention.

In this passage, Alice makes a clear distinction between the law-abiding citizen and the criminal. In this binary conception, surveillance systems are solely aimed at controlling 'criminals' and that is no deliberate monitoring of law-abiding people going about their daily business. Alice's notion that cameras only monitor criminals helps to dispel the concern that camera surveillance is now 'everywhere.' With this logic, Alice ignores (or

at least downplays) the possibility that individuals other than offenders may be monitored by cameras. Sean, Executive Director of the Northgate Special Business District, also echoed this sentiment:

> I always get this "well I don't want to be in my backyard drinking wine and…." Alderman have said this, you know, "I don't want the police spying on me." And I'm like you're not that important, you know. We're not that unique. We're not that important. They're trying to solve crimes and, you know, as long as you are not a criminal then you're fairly safe. You know, they [Alderman] always say it's the boogeyman. That's what they do constantly, they try to scare people into getting their point across and it works. It scares people.

Here, Sean is expressing a common slogan used to justify video surveillance: 'if you have nothing to hide then you have nothing to fear' (see, for example, Solove 2011; Cofone 2010). The 'nothing to hide' argument suggests that individuals have no reason to fear or oppose surveillance programs, unless they are concerned that it will capture their own illicit activities. This rhetoric can be effective as it helps defend the perception that cameras operate benignly (Norris & Armstrong 1999) and can counteract arguments that surveillance systems are used in illegal or unethical ways (Davies 1996).

*Appeals to a Higher Purpose.* Additionally, some participants made appeals to a higher purpose to dismiss or undermine criticisms that cameras might be abused by the police or invade people's privacy. For example, Alice drew on the often cited 'privacy-for-protection' trade-off in her defense of cameras, which emphasizes the trading of privacy for the benefit of security and safety (for a full discussion see Davies 1996; Taylor 2010). She believes that some loss of individual privacy and surveillance intrusion is a small price to pay for the greater good of safety and protection:

> [Those concerned about cameras] are taking it all back to a personal level, as opposed to an area level. So, when they say I don't want cameras watching me [or] I don't want them to see what I'm doing [or] I think that's against my constitutional rights…. It's [about] bringing it back to me as opposed to your neighbor. It's [about] the safety of others…. Who cares if somebody can see [you] walking your dog? Is that a big deal?

Here, Alice takes the stance that cameras are security assets necessary for 'collective' or 'communal good' even if it evolves some erosion of privacy (Zedner 2006). These appeals to a higher purpose (collective crime control) imply that the maintenance of public safety should be prioritized over the protection of citizens' rights. Given the prospect of increased security, residents should be seemingly unconcerned (or at least less concerned) over issues of privacy and civil liberties. Thus, Alice's rhetoric is focused on convincing others that the social costs of crime are far more important than the individual costs of cameras infringing on or violating individuals' constitutional protections.

Appeals to the maintenance of public safety over the protection of citizens' rights was also used by participants to justify the more limited camera oversight. Sean, Executive Director of the Northgate SBD, placed the safety benefits of cameras over increasing concerns about oversight. Like other practitioners and politicians have done in the past, Sean turned to popular legitimating discourses that frame cameras as a necessary solution to escalating crime problems. Legislative attempts to increase oversight could undermine the potential of the camera system, as he puts it, to "save lives":

> We're trying to be creative [with cameras] and think out of the box to help save a life and you're worried about the Police Department abusing them? We can't wait around for the Board of Aldermen. You guys can't even figure out how to spend $500 million in COVID relief money. This is the third year [of the surveillance bill]. Because people realize, one, are the Board of Alderman really the people for oversight? I mean, are they the best that understands this? And, you know, then there's an argument against based on [whether cameras are] working or because [cameras are] unsuccessful or you spend too much money, and that money should be going elsewhere. And I get that argument, except it's a pretty hollow argument at a time where we had the highest homicide rate last year. Last year was a record. You know, we still have on average 300 people a year that are victims of gun violence, either murder or armed robbery or whatever, aggravated assaults. It's still a problem we have to address.

Here, Sean is capitalizing on law-and-order rhetoric that is popular among police and political leaders to justify the implementation of cameras. The idea that cameras help 'fight crime' guards these systems from criticism by suggesting that camera networks and surveillance practices will automatically guarantee safter cities, regardless of the potential negative consequences. By using this rhetoric, Sean can downplay concerns about oversight by presenting cameras as a necessary tool to deal with a far more 'immediate' or 'imminent' danger to public safety. As a former police officer himself, this position may be no surprise. Police officers tend to think of themselves as being the 'thin blue line' that keeps society from falling into chaos (Reiner 2000). In our interview, Sean tells me that too much oversight prevents efforts (both is own at the police's) aimed at "protecting lives, saving people, and solving crimes." Sean believes that greater governmental oversight by local officials is unqualified and a potential barrier to the more pressing issue of addressing violence in the city. This supposed need for unfettered surveillance suggests that there is no reason to refrain from engaging in surveillance practices if they help protect the public. As Lyon (2001, 2007) argues, fear of crime discourse is one of the easiest ways to placate objections to increased surveillance measures.

### Downplaying and Distancing

In contrast to more forceful strategies of undermining the opposition, other participants sought to work around camera conflict more carefully and cautiously. This approach, called *downplaying and distancing*, was motivated by two different sets of concerns. For some participants, there was a strong desire to evade public criticism,

especially anxieties over appearing too intrusive and invading people's privacy. This concern led participants to engage in a strategy I call *avoidance of social disapproval and censure*. By contrast, other participants maneuvered through the implementation process with greater hesitancy because they themselves were reluctant about being involved in community surveillance projects. These personal reservations ultimately motivated CBO leaders to try and remove their organizations more direct involvement in surveillance work and off-load it onto others. I call this strategy *off-loading of responsibility*. Both strategies are detailed below.

*Avoidance of Social Disapproval and Censure*. Some participants involved in formulating camera initiatives had an awareness of potential criticisms and sought to present their camera systems in ways to not provoke alarm. For example, Marie, Executive Director of Parkway Community Improvement District, was strategic about the timing of implementing her camera system in order to avoid possible scrutiny. Originally, the Parkway CID had planned to start building their network back in 2016. But, according to Marie, that "timeframe [was] really when the ACLU was hot and heavy on organizations installing cameras and watching people and violations of privacy." In addition, a Board Bill was being drafted by city officials that would require city officials to approve any new or significantly expanded city surveillance technologies. City departments would be required to submit a plan for any proposed surveillance measure detailing information on cost, data collection and potential civil rights implications as well as present annual reports to the Board of Aldermen describing how the technology is being used. For the Parkway CID, Marie tells me, there was initial concern that this bill would also pertain to their surveillance activities, which would require much more work

and labor on their part to get it approved and deal with ongoing bureaucratic regulations. Between pressures from the ACLU and Aldermanic surveillance bills being reintroduced for several years on end, Parkway decided to "stay away" from cameras and wait for public pressure to settle down.

Years later, only when Marie finally felt that the requirements were "soften[ing] for community improvement districts in their use of cameras," did the CID begin the installation process. By 'laying low,' Marie tells me that she was able to later implement her cameras without any attention or criticism from the ACLU or government officials. At the time of interviewing, Marie was in the process of implementing more cameras in her district. She told me she is already preparing herself to carefully communicate and tone down their enforcement focus as to not cause any alarm:

> Any concerns that the new [surveillance] board bill or its changes may have we're going to ensure that we talk to people to explain exactly what we just talked about, what we intend to use [our cameras] for. It certainly is not to be that authoritative agency to, you know, arrest everyone and invade privacy.

Here, it seems that Marie and the Parkway CID still feel as though they must pre-emptively communicate their limited and non-punitive approach to cameras to circumvent backlash. During our interview, Marie told me that she has learned to "be careful" with the kinds of words she uses to describe the camera system. She is careful to never uses terms like "surveillance" or "network of cameras," as these terms, according to Marie, give off the impression that the organization is "watching folks" as they go about the neighborhood. Instead, Marie chooses to call them "security cameras," which she believes is a far more neutral term. This intentional use of more muted language suggests that Marie is highly sensitized to the negative conception of cameras and is

doing what she can to prevent the Parkway CID system from gaining any kind of bad reputation.

Jeremy, Commissioner at the Bricktown Special Business District, was also highly concerned with social disapproval and sought to avoid it as much as possible. In our interview, Jeremy told me that he at the SBD were very careful to specify the limited scope of their surveillance system to assuage concerns about mass-monitoring and invasions of privacy:

> You know, I think when we were coming up with the plan, we were careful to note the sort of the limited nature of it and say we're not really… we're going to kind of avoid residential areas and limit the scope of it. And we're really trying to just be really focused on, like I said, those access points, key intersections, hotspots and not try to blanket the neighborhood with cameras.

According to Jeremy, if the SBD had set out to "blanket the neighborhood and put [cameras] on every corner," it would likely be seen as an overstep by residents, reaching too far into the private realm. Most cities, including St. Louis, have cameras monitoring traffic intersections and public areas, but there are few police cameras located within neighborhoods themselves. Jeremy's emphasis on communicating the limited scope of the camera project suggests that CBOs must be cautious in their implementation approach, ensuring they don't engage in levels of surveillance that are inappropriate and go 'too far.'

Jeremy and the Bricktown SBD have also sought to quell concerns that the organization may leverage the camera system to act as private law enforcers. With the public motivating themselves to carry out more policing functions with personal technology, there is a concern that community groups will appropriate the role of the police and perform law enforcement functions that these groups have no prior training or experience with (Spiller & L'Hoiry 2019). For Jeremy, there was an awareness that their

camera system could be seen negatively if their activities are seen as going beyond legitimate citizen involvement, such as the SBD trying to act as 'would-be police officers':

> It goes back to sort of how we pitch the program to the neighborhood and that it would be primarily police reviewing and not us. I mean we do, and we've been careful to note that we do stuff from time to time, but it's something that's really more for—it's a tool for the police, not for us to, you know, pretend that we're police officers or stuff like that.

This passage highlights tensions inherent in community groups carrying out DIY camera projects. To avoid raising concerns, it appears the SBD must negotiate a fine line between being involved in camera operations and crossing over into what may be considered the territory of formal law enforcement officials. Such crossing over may undermine public confidence in the SBD, and this may extend to questions about their legitimacy in helping keep the district safe. Accordingly, the SBD must clearly articulate that their intention is to merely contribute their monitoring and data collection skills to the police.

*Off-loading of Responsibility*. While most CBOs took an uncritical stance towards adopting cameras, not all participants were fully on board with being involved with community surveillance measures. Rather, some participants articulated their own reservations and were acutely aware of the moral and social implications of neighborhood camera projects. Below, I provide a brief examination of two cases in which participants held personal reservations and how they negotiated those concerns within their respective CBO settings.

Amelia, Executive Director of the Oak Ledge Community Improvement District, expressed in our interview that she didn't have clarity around being implicated in community surveillance measures, stating that its "a difficult thing to rationalize."

Amelia conceded that she could "twist" herself into seeing the argument for and against cameras. As she describes it in our interview:

> There's just so much, so much to unpack with cameras. It sits on this weird line, you know. There are reasons that make a lot of sense to me in both camps. And, like I mentioned, that there's a lot of people that feel very strongly about cameras out in the world or public spaces that then are very insistent about cameras. …I think cameras, you know, on one hand, are people watching each other's business, right. And like oftentimes when they're put in a public safety conversation, we're talking about catching people doing bad things. Right, I'm always on the lookout. And then what the bad thing is, is what the state or law enforcement see as bad, right? So, it can get misconstrued, you know. What if all of a sudden law enforcement said we care a lot about finding, you know, purple people. I am just making shit up. Then, you know, all this infrastructure that we have paid for is out there for a different mission or goal. At the same time, I think, cameras are seen as like the least bad public safety effort, because cameras don't kill people. You know, cameras don't, you know, stop and frisk. So like, you know, our board specifically, when we're talking about secondary [patrol] we're, you know, if we hire these cops out of our resources and something happens, you know. What one of them roughs up or does something worse to a kid on the street or the unhoused folks have a hard time living around here. Like, how do we own that impact. And with cameras it's a lot easier to swallow on some level, right. Like all this camera is doing is observing and capturing things that people are doing out in the world, you know, and it will then be digitally used for criminal justice proceedings, which I think sometimes rubs people the wrong way, but like we are not risking anybody's life inherently with this camera itself.

For Ameillia, there was a clear concern that cameras may be adapted and used for law enforcement objectives and, ostensibly, in ways that could be discriminatory. Here, Amelia points to a concern identified in the literature as "surveillance creep"— or the process by which surveillance measures introduced for one defined purpose can quickly develop new applications (Lyon 2007). Amelia told me she was most concerned about cameras being used as an overly punitive tool for "locking up crime doers" and policing immigration. For Amelia, however, cameras were ultimately seen as the lesser evil than adding more police (e.g., secondary patrol). The degree of harm associated with more policing (e.g., use of force, police brutality, officer-involved shootings, etc.) ultimately casted cameras as the better, more benign option. Despite still holding reservations about cameras, Amelia ultimately felt she had to put these personal feelings aside. As she put it,

"I see my role as facilitating what the community wants and parking my own thoughts or feelings about any of these issues." Feeling as though she had only two choices when it came to addressing public safety— "cops or cameras"— Amelia ultimately went with cameras.

Amelia, however, was able to exert some distance between the CID and the camera project through its design. Rather than put up their own CID-controlled system, which would implicate Amelia and her organization more directly in community surveillance, the organization was able to off-load this responsibility by providing grants for residents to procure their own personal cameras. As Amelia stated in our interview:

> I met with Ella [Executive Director of the Brookside CID] and she was like, you know, instead of installing your own camera system for all these different places, just kind of provide grants for people to be able to do it on their own. From my perspective, that got us out of some big headaches, right. I'm not having to deal with publicly owned cameras. I'm not having to deal with all the footage myself as a staff member. We're not the big brother of the street. And on some level, we're not the ones, forcing cameras down anyone's throat. But for the business owners and property owners to whom cameras are important and they think that that's an investment that they want to see in their space, we are providing some resources to help them do that. And it's not a lot of resources. It is a $2,000 reimbursement—up to $2,000 dollars—to install so long as they have paid receipts…[..]…It's a little bit of a way of, you know, we're providing resources to people to make those improvements if they think those are indeed improvements.

By providing camera "resources" for residents, there seems to be this idea that Amelia and the CBO is (or at least feels) less complicit in the expansion of neighborhood surveillance. This program model appears to free the organization from being involved in the day-to-day monitoring of cameras and, as Amelia put it, acting as the "big brother of the street."

Nora at the Lakeview Neighborhood Association was also concerned about being implicated in community surveillance activities that could invite a stronger police presence in the neighborhood. In our interview, Nora told me that many people in

leadership positions at the Lakeview NA felt “uncomfortable” about sponsoring cameras. By “having their name tied to it”, Nora and the Association worried about “pushing away a lot of neighbors” who wouldn't feel comfortable with law enforcement approaches to public safety. She stated that she “would prefer to be an organization that anyone feels welcome to no matter their perspective on how you should address crime.” For Nora, there was a deep concern that starting a camera project would directly implicate the neighborhood association in matters of policing and enforcement, which might exclude people in the neighborhood from participating in public safety conversations.

As our interview continued, it became clearer that Nora’s hesitancy around implementing cameras stemmed from her participation in previous public safety approaches that she felt went “too far” and “had very negative consequences for [her] neighbors.” When I asked Nora to provide examples, she described her unease around the Association’s experiences with citizen patrols:

> You know, when people start to do more like citizen patrols and stuff like that, sometimes they are tracking and making people feel less safe to just be living in their neighborhood. You know, it's even just like the whole like trope or stereotype or reality of like your neighbor that's retired and is home all the time and is watching everyone out the window and all of that. Which can be great, but also is like then people get accused of things when they're not even doing anything wrong…. as those [patrols] get carried out, and, you know, it shifts who feel safe in the neighborhood. Like are my neighbors going to call me for doing minor things because I'm Black and I'm walking down the street?

While the use of citizen patrols in the neighborhood clearly shaped Nora’s fears about the organization brining in community cameras, she nonetheless felt that it was her duty to act on what resident members wanted. In her view, the Association had no choice but to help fundraise resources for cameras because a majority of the members voted to approve the project. Samuel, current president of the Association, also held this sentiment,

articulating that it can be difficult to stop the momentum of projects in community-led organizations:

> You know, community organizations, again, they're volunteer organizations. And a lot of times they don't create ideas, they just act on ideas that were given to them…..And cameras, I think, are seen as a way to—um, I don't know. I think people see cameras as an answer to—or a solution— potentially. And I don't think they are, but some people do and that's fine. And so I think that's what happens is, you know, all you can do is as neighborhood organization, you know, if you don't like an idea, you can try and divert it before it gets momentum, but if it has momentum then it comes to a vote and then the vote happens and there's nothing you can do. You have to do it.

Pressure from residents to implement cameras helped get the project off the ground, despite the leadership at Lakeview Neighborhood Association remaining uninterested in being involved. Samuel and Nora, both longstanding members of the Association, expressed to me that this program was one of the most stressful initiatives they have been involved with. When recounting the implementation process, Nora was visibly upset about how much strain the camera project put on their organization. Although the roll out of project was stressful for the leadership team, it ultimately served as a catalyst for change within the organization. According to Nora, the launching of the system forced the Association to "more seriously evaluate" how, and even if, they engage in public safety initiatives at all:

> The camera project was the impetus for those of us in Lakeview Neighborhood Association leadership to start seriously thinking about what is our role related to safety and crime and kind of removing ourselves from—I don't want to be quoted in this way because I don't want to be like we're anti police, but being strong in like the police is always the response, you know. We shouldn't be watching our neighbors. You know there were people that came to some safety meetings that were like I don't want you calling the cops on my kid just because he's walking down the street and he doesn't normally walk on your block. So, I guess it was the impetus for us to start thinking about what should our role be here and how much should we get involved and some of the [safety] strategies that people want to do. And that's why I guess, and I think I said in my email, is to clarify that the Lakeview Neighborhood Association didn't manage the security [camera] thing. We did donate [the cameras] to an organization because the majority of our members voted to do that. Originally it was proposed for the neighborhood association to manage these cameras and own these cameras and we chose

> not to do that. So, whether that was a good or bad decision [I don't know]. But that was, I guess, the start of us kind of removing ourselves from being owners of some of this work.

When the Lakeview NA decided they no longer wanted to be responsible for the cameras acquired, members of the association that were 'pro-surveillance' formed a separate neighborhood organization called Lakeview Security Initiative (LSI). Lakeview NA agreed to donate the cameras they fundraised for to the LSI, who then took over controlling the system. For Samuel, passing off the camera program was a relief. As he stated, "I'm glad that they're here because Lakeview Neighborhood Association doesn't want to do this kind of stuff." There was a sense that by handing over the camera program to the Security Initiative, the Association had absolved themselves from participating in any surveilling and contributing to, as Nora put it, "a police response" in the neighborhood.

CBOs who showed trepidation for taking on the responsibility for community camera projects highlight that these groups can be quite measured, reflexive, and critical. These findings suggest that CBOs do not embrace a purely "utopian" narrative of cameras; rather, they hold a more complicated view that can result in feelings of hesitancy and reluctance (Fussey 2007). Both Lakeview NA and Oak Ledge CID also provide examples of how organizational obligations to act on resident demands affect camera dissemination, whereby public wishes for camera surveillance, while not shared by CBOs, still becomes mobilized. While both CBOs provided support for camera programs on behalf of the community, they figured out ways to be minimally involved in and (at least feel) less responsible for the administration of the systems. These results align with other scholars who suggest that reluctant partners who don't necessarily want or support camera surveillance are often still drawn into implementing camera systems

due to other competing pressures (Walby & Heir 2012). Rather than fully or enthusiastically taking on camera systems, Ella, Nora, and Samuel strove to minimize their involvement as much as possible.

## Conclusion

In the first part of this chapter, I answered the question: What compels and motivates community-based organizations (CBOs) in St. Louis to implement their own cameras? I suggest that camera ownership among CBOs is best characterized as a response to demands from vocal residents who are concerned about the performance of the police. CBOs have not been instructed by authorities to start camera initiatives: rather, as Spiller and L'Hoiry (2019) state, "they have been immersed into and conditioned to perform policing functions" (p. 299). By and large, it is local support for cameras—stemming from unmet community demands for more and better security (Loader 2002)— that drives the adoption process. That is, it appears that declining faith in the police to ensure protection has helped to cultivate the rise of citizen-led camera initiatives. Each of the camera initiatives examined are CBO-led and driven, emerging independently from "the bottom up" (Spiller & L'Hoiry 2019) without much encouragement from police. Communities taking control of implementing camera systems seems to stem from a longer history in St. Louis whereby neighborhood groups, often out of fear of decay and crime, feel obligated to take more local control.

Additionally, I find that CBOs feel compelled to invest in camera systems simply because neighboring communities had done so, a process DiMaggio and Powell (1983) refer to as mimetic isomorphism. Rather than adopt camera systems in isolation, I find

that CBO leaders in St. Louis operate in close circles and exchange and swap information about camera systems. Imitation is attractive because it fulfills a key legitimizing function, allowing the organization to establish credibility by conforming to the status quo. This mentality, in turn, can trigger over-investments in cameras: as more and more communities introduce camera schemes, the practices of existing groups are used as a template for potential adopters to replicate. When it comes to how CBOs approach public safety, it appears that implementing cameras is now a widely accepted and taken for granted practice.

The inter-organizational transmission of camera projects identified here helps to illuminate why cameras have become a default public safety solution and, in turn, why CBO leaders remain hesitant to try out alternative approaches to public safety. There is little incentive for CBOs to move beyond the traditional measures of 'cops and cameras' when these strategies easily confer legitimacy. Innovation and experimentation with alternatives, by contrast, can bring about more uncertainty and potential risk to the organization. In this respect, CBOs appear to act not all that differently from the police. Researchers have consistently shown that law enforcement leaders assign more importance to commonly accepted practices rather than try to innovate with new structures and strategies (see, for example, Crank 2003; Willis, Mastrofski & Weisburd, 2007).

A related recurring theme is little regard for camera evaluation among participants. It can be concluded that cameras have not been implemented (or justified) by CBOs on the grounds that it is the most effective, efficient, and value-for-money solution to crime. None of the participants had taken meaningful steps to understand or

measure outcomes and to link cameras to actual performance. At minimum, a rational consideration of efficacy would require an examination of the impact of cameras on police enforcement (e.g., arrests, citations, etc.). Yet I did not observe any site drawing upon any data-driven or empirical form of assessment before (or after) the adoption of cameras. Samuel, President of the Lakeview Neighborhood Association, conceded in our interview that he did not even know what it means for a camera program to be successful:

> And I don't know, like yeah. I guess, technically, if you reduce crime by one crime, or if you catch one criminal, I don't know, is that success?

To some extent, wider enabling factors described here—such as community concerns about inadequate policing and mimetic pressures— can help understand why effectiveness appears to be downgraded in the adoption process. For CBO leaders, cameras represent more a symbolic than material resource: they show that the organization is doing *something* about public safety concerns (Norris, McCahill & Wood 2004). Additionally, due to the absence of strong empirical support for the crime-reduction or solving potential of cameras (see, for example, Welsh & Farrington 2009; Piza, Welsh, Farrington & Thomas 2019), it would likely be difficult for CBO leaders in St. Louis to try to justify camera adoption through any formal evaluations.

Despite cameras being viewed as a largely accepted and 'taken-for-granted' solution to crime problems, the results presented in this chapter suggest that CBO involvement in building out surveillance systems still involves a degree of active and ongoing legitimization. CBO leaders are not immune to conflict around their decision to install cameras, whether it be external or internal to the organization. In respect to external opposition, conflict resolution often consists of quite blunt and simple rhetorical

statements (‘nothing to fear, nothing to hide’, ‘privacy versus security’, etc.) (Taylor 2010). Particularly prominent was the dismissal of local civil advocacy groups and progressive politicians who propel ‘Big Brother’ Orwellian narratives. Other participants were more worried about being implicated in the construction of camera systems and, as a result, engaged in more subtle and strategic maneuvers to evade possible criticisms, especially around fears of privacy and CBOs acting as law enforcers in the community.

Although most participants supported community camera projects and defend their use, the data presented here give credence to Walby and Hier’s (2012) notion of ‘reluctant partners.’ Both Nora and Amelia held unease over being implicated in camera systems that might encourage discriminatory policing in the neighborhood and cause potential harm. This unease ultimately motivated them to try and remove their respective organizations from being directly involved in surveillance work. Of course, it is important to emphasize that the critical reflexivity displayed by Nora and Amelia is the exception rather than the rule: most participants were not morally or ethically concerned about actively participating in camera initiatives. Given the persistent demands for cameras by vocal residents and its popularity among other similarly positioned organizations, it is not surprising that few CBO leaders venture to question their investment in surveillance systems.

# CHAPTER 5
# COOPERATIVE PARTNERS? CBO-POLICE CAMERA RELATIONS

While the public have long been involved in policing, especially when it comes to monitoring and reporting suspicious activity to local authorities (Reeves 2012, 2017), surveillance technology has enabled citizens to become more involved as the "eyes and ears" of law enforcement (Spiller & L'Hoiry 2019a, 2019b). This chapter offers insight into the nature of CBO surveillance practices and CBO-police camera partnerships. In the first section, I describe the various ways in which CBOs use their camera systems to support the task of policing. I find that CBO leaders who have retained control over their camera systems engage in a considerable amount of 'surveillance labor' (Lincoln & McGillivray 2019), such as intelligence gathering, combing through video footage, and supplying footage to police. In the second part of this chapter, I highlight important barriers that hamper the development of collaborative CBO-police relations. Despite CBO's taking on labor-intensive camera roles, I found little evidence that the relationship between the police and CBOs have coalesced into effective or well-functioning public-private partnerships.

## CBO's Mobilizing Cameras to Support the Police

Albeit to varying degrees, all CBOs strove to facilitate the movement of video footage into the hands of law enforcement agencies. This transfer of video data to the police occurs actively and passively. Three CBOs I spoke with – Northgate Special Business District, Bricktown Special Business District, and Brookside Community Improvement District—feed their cameras directly into the city's Real Time Crime Center (RTCC). This means that officers who are working in the center can live-review,

pull up, or retroactively review these cameras. Each of these three organizations are also actively involved in the video monitoring and video collection process, and they readily contribute this labor to the police. The Northgate SBD, for example, employs a full-time retired officer named Gabe whose primary task is to monitor the organizations' cameras and pull footage when a crime in the district is reported. Staff at the Bricktown SBD and Brookside CID also monitor their own camera networks and readily supply video footage of crime incidents to the police. Staff at the Bricktown SBD have cut video data on behalf of law enforcement and have, at times, driven footage of crime incidents down to police headquarters. Ella at the Brookside CID singlehandedly monitors three cameras located in the district and will often save footage of crime incidents, such as catalytic converter thefts, onto a zip drive and notify detectives to come pick up the footage at her office.

Being proactive about sharing footage with law enforcement was a focus of CBO camera systems operated by residents as well. Although CBO staff do not directly control the cameras that have been placed with residents in the community, participants described strategies and mechanisms that help ensure footage-sharing with law enforcement. For example, Alice, Property Manager for the Hillcrest Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation, strategically placed cameras with tenants in the CDCs service footprint that she has "really close connections" with, which makes her feel confident that she can rely on them to supply her with footage when crime incidents occur. "I know all of them" Alice discloses in our interview, "I know their history, I know about their families, I know where they work." Because of these close ties, Alice tells me she is trusting that they're in the "mind frame" that they would share video information with her. Ryan, President of the Midland Neighborhood Association, has

encouraged most of the residents that have been placed with cameras from the Association to register them with the police. By being placed on the registry, law enforcement is given the location of the cameras and permission to request video feeds in the event of a criminal investigation.

Other CBOs mandated video footage sharing with the police using contractual measures. For example, Amelia and the Oak Ledge CID crafted a camera policy to ensure resident cooperation in the event of crime incidents. According to the policy, if the police come to residents with a case number, the camera holder must agree to hand over footage to officials. If the resident takes issue with the request, they can bring it to the Board of the CID to weigh in on its validity.[6] Similarly, residents participating in the Rosedale Community Development Organization camera program must agree to keep their cameras on, and should a crime happen, the police have a right to retrieve the footage. As Kayla stated in our interview, she hopes that this agreement will ensure that "if there's something that happens that [the police] know that they can rely on the camera footage that's there." Considering that residents were given a subsidized camera for agreeing to participate in the Rosedale program, it is arguable that there is an element of coercion at play here, especially for residents who are lower income.

The sharing of video data appeared to be most extensive at Northgate SBD. Both the executive director and the camera manager are former St. Louis officers and, while holding these positions, have maintained a constructive working relationship with local

[6] At the time of interviewing, however, Amelia told me she had yet to have a situation occur in which the CID Board had to intervene in supplying footage to the police.

law enforcement.[7] Northgate's camera system appears to be a valuable resource for the police. In our interview, Sean told me the SBD does a considerable amount of 'intelligence gathering' about known offenders who are wanted by the police, which often brings the SBD into contact with law enforcement. For example, Sean described one situation at the Northgate SBD in which their efforts to collect evidence helped to identify a group of youth that had been chronically offending in the district:

> Anytime we have a carjacking down here, for instance, we have a spreadsheet cause we're doing our own intelligence collecting and saying maybe it's the same group of kids that were doing this last summer. Because they're juveniles, [cand] nothing happened to them then. There's been, you know, maybe they sat detention for six months now they're starting to pick up again and we look at video and are like right, yeah, that's what happened the other night. Five kids from East St. Louis came over and tried to do a carjacking. And [we] got great video of these kids. We sent it to the police department [and] one of the detectives says I know who these two guys are— they're from East St. Louis. Now we know the source of that crime.

This passage suggests that the police and Northgate staff are working collaboratively together: their efforts to collect evidence and supply it to the police helped to identify a group of youth that had been chronically offending in the district.

While Sean and the Northgate SBD have the strongest working relationship with the police, each of the CBOs I spoke with took steps to act as an auxiliary to the police via their camera programs. These findings align with existing scholarship that suggests new technologies have fostered a "DIY" (Do-It-Yourself) culture towards policing (Mols & Pridmore, 2019; Campbell, 2016; Huey, Nhan & Broll 2012; Reeves 2017: Sanders & Langan 2018; Spiller & L'Hoiry 2019a, 2019b). In this respect, CBO efforts to supply evidence to the police can be seen as a form of what Lincoln and McGillivray (2019) call 'citizen surveillant labor'—surveillance activities that encourage informing and police-

[7] This already close relationship is bolstered by the fact the offices of Northgate SBD double as a bike patrol substation. When I visited Northgate SBD headquarters, several bike patrol officers came in and out of the office and were all on a first name basis with SBD staff.

citizen alliances. Participants I spoke with do, in fact, characterize their efforts as laborious. As Alice of the Hillcrest Neighborhoods CDC tells me, getting the recordings from tenants, downloading them onto a hard drive, and then passing them along to the police is "a pain in the butt" process that takes considerable amounts of time and energy.

Among the participants I spoke with, there was no sense that they were instructed or even encouraged by local authorities to take on video monitoring responsibilities, including downloading, storing, and delivering camera footage to the police. Rather, it is very much on their own accord that CBOs are helping take out the mundanity and logistics of police officers going through footage themselves or reaching out to collect video images. One way that this surveillance labor can be characterized as is a police 'gift' (Ayling 2007). Most CBO leaders are proactively and voluntarily engaging with law enforcement via their camera networks because they think this may help solve crime. Multiple participants told me that by supplying video evidence to local authorities they hope it will give the police "something to go off of" and help kickstart investigations. This desire to help the police can be both self-serving and altruistic. For example, as Alice of the Hillcrest CDC told me, she hopes her efforts to supply video evidence to the police will not only help crack down on drug activity in her jurisdiction but also "address larger crime problems happening across the city." Alice recounted an incident that occurred the week leading up to our interview, in which hundreds of people participated in a coordinated racing event dubbed 'Circle STL.' Alice believes cameras that are located on busier streets and intersections in her jurisdiction are valuable in helping the police "explain how these types of situations play out."

CBOs engaging in surveillance labor often comes with an acknowledgment of the police's inability to do these kinds of tasks on their own. By taking on more camera operations, CBOs seek to aid in alleviating some of the mounting demands on public resources and policing capacity. For example, Sean of the Northgate SBD told me that he spends most of their time "connecting the dots for the police department" because the police are "so busy" and don't have the time or manpower to address all the crime incidents that occur in his organization's jurisdiction. During his time at Northgate SBD Sean has seen many crimes go overlooked, uninvestigated or outright ignored by law enforcement:

> You get your car broken into and your laptop stolen, and the police don't come out anymore. They don't do fingerprints. They don't do DNA swabs or any biometrics. They take the report over the phone maybe.

It is perhaps unsurprising that, in a context of perceived limited police capacity, that CBOs feel the need to take a self-help approach and try to strengthen the role of law enforcement. Sean, for example, describes his team as far more efficient and effective at using their camera system to identify criminal suspects than local officials. So much so, he believes Northgate SBD can "solve a crime before it even gets to a [police] detective."

Doing surveillance labor for the police also had clear self-serving purposes. The act of collecting video evidence could be leveraged by CBO leaders to capture the interest and attention of the police in *their locality*. For example, as Jeremy of the Bricktown Special Business District stated in our interview:

> You can kind of produce these little videos and stuff like that and get it to the police [and] that's going to make them more likely to, you know, take an interest in it and stuff and prosecute it.

This admission demonstrates the perceived power of neighborhood cameras to garner a formal criminal justice response, especially in an environment where there is a

(perceived) limited or finite amount of police resources. Cameras, and the footage they produce, represent an important source of power within these organizations, as they build up a unique surveillance capacity that enables them to become more and more involved in – and control over— police work.

## The Limits of CBO-police Partnerships

While CBO surveillant labor may be characterized as a law enforcement resource, police use of this labor is by no means guaranteed. Many participants describe facing technological barriers that impede the video collection and video sharing process with local authorities. These issues include camera connectivity, difficulties backing-up and storing video data, power outages that caused their cameras to go down for extended periods of time, electrical surges that "fried" cameras, and struggles to keep the cameras cleaned and maintained. Each of these technological components can modify the degree to which camera footage will be successfully collected, stored, and used. For example, Amelia at the Oak Ledge CID, described constant problems the organization faces when it comes to upkeeping the camera's placed with residents:

> You know, everyone just thinks it's just a little ding-dong camera but not thinking about where it backs up to and, like, how do you get that [camera] to connect to a different device. All kinds of crazy stuff. So, yeah, most people jump through all those hoops [and] there's still challenges. We just also had, like… there was a couple of our property owners who bought into this camera company and had all these like storage things, and then the company just like discontinued the software that they were using. So now they have to, like, buy all new. You know, just like a totally new system. You know, someone who gets Roku and needs a whole new Fire Stick. Yeah, it's just a mess.

Due to these constant issues, Amelia was not confident that much footage was successfully collected by residents and businesses participating in the camera program. Amelia could only recall one instance when camera footage from one of the CIDs

cameras was successfully collected and stored and subsequently used by the police to identify the identity of a suspect.

Other participants discussed issues with covering the ongoing costs associated with collecting and storing video data. For example, Kayla of the Rosedale CDC, told me that many of the residents placed with Ring cameras could not afford the company's monthly "cloud storage" plans. Without these plans, residents are unable to download, store, and share video footage. Even for participants who were able to collect and store their video data, the footage was not always useful or usable. Depending on the camera angle and the clarity, resolution, and definition of video footage, it may not be possible to identify potential suspects. For example, Alice at the Hillcrest Neighborhoods CDC described an instance in which the footage collected from her tenant's cameras was not enough to identify a suspect:

> Alice: I was in this situation about a year and a half ago, two years ago, where that little baby market, you may know it, it used to be a [convenience store] on McNab. It's right by where [the grocery store] and stuff is. So, the owner there, he got shot. A guy walked in and shot the hell out of him. He's still alive. So, what I was able to do, because we had an idea of who did it, is to use our camera footage from up and down the streets on Noelle, Apple, and Graham to try it and see if we could track the guy. And we did. So, we had cameras at the corner of Rockford and Noelle, which shot directly across from that parking lot, and we watched that gentleman that did it and how he went about it. But we still never caught him.
> Interviewer: Even with all that footage?
> Alice: (Nodding) Because we couldn't track which house he went to. We tracked him walking out and attacking, but we never tracked to where he actually went. So, to this day, we still don't know who did it. We had a good idea, but there was nothing in this camera footage that can prove it. We definitely got to see what happened. If we would have caught him it would have been great because they actually showed him going in, you can see the gunshots, went outside the guy got shot through the window back at him and he got mad and went back inside shot him several more times. So, we were able to see that. So yes, so if they were able to catch that guy, yes, that would have been good for the courts.

Here, Alice is describing a common problem discussed in the literature: video images from cameras rarely capture events in their entirety and are often too low of quality to

permit the proper identification of people (see La Vigne et al. 2011; Carriere & Ericson 1989; Lippert & Wilkinson 2010). While Alice's network of cameras may be able to monitor and record video images of criminal events in the neighborhood, the footage produced did not provide the relevant information to "catch" the suspected person.

The far bigger barrier to CBOs using their camera systems effectively, however, was the police themselves. Numerous participants describe local law enforcement as appearing uninterested in their camera programs. For Kayla and the Rosedale CDC, getting police buy-in was a struggle from the get-go. Per agreement with the CDC, local police were instructed to hand out cameras to residents that live in Rosedale CDC, but officers there never followed through. Kayla is now in the process of reallocating 20 of the Ring cameras to a nearby neighborhood because the police have still not come to collect them. It was clear during our interview that this lack of law enforcement participation was frustrating for Kayla, who had spent a considerable amount of time working to get them involved and interested in the initiative. "I'm like we went through all of that. You guys showed up [to the community meeting]. Was it just for the donuts? You know.  They [the police] came [but] they didn't do anything."

Participants also reported that the police were not always interested in using the footage CBOs supplied them. At times, police interest in camera footage depended on the seriousness of the crime incident. For example, as Jeremy at the Bricktown SBD told me in our interview, he has little confidence that the police are pursuing any lower-level crimes captured by the organization's cameras:

> I can't think of any case when there's been just like a simple car break in and or something like that where [the cameras have] been of use really, to tell you the truth. Unless the person is doing a bunch of them. And part of that is because the police aren't going to do that. They're not going to really pursue that in any event. I won't say joked, I

> won't say I've joked, but I've noted that somebody could break into a car and then take their driver's license and put it up to the camera and it's not gonna do anything.

Due to police disinterest in more minor property crimes, Jeremy and the Bricktown SBD have had to readjust the uses and expectations of their camera program. In our interview, Jeremy told me that his organization now only supplies video footage to law enforcement when it involves "very serious crimes" occurring in the district, such as armed robberies and carjackings, knowing that these are the cases most likely to solicit a formal police response.

It was also not uncommon for CBO staff to have little idea of what was happening on the police side of camera operations. Some participants discussed experiencing radio silence after handing over video footage of suspected criminal activity to law enforcement officials. For example, Alice at the Hillcrest Neighborhoods CDC told me that the police rarely follow-up on incidents that she provides video evidence for. Her more pessimistic side is convinced that the police oftentimes aren't even looking at the footage. Continually not hearing back from law enforcement has ultimately led her to believe that the cameras Hillcrest CDC purchased likely won't resolve the criminal activity that most concerns the organization: suspected drug dealing. Ella, Executive Director of Brookside CID, also expressed frustration around a lack of communication from the police:

> We have a camera at Memorial Park, but I couldn't get a node to talk back to my office, so it has a signal that goes back to the city's cameras that we gave them on Brookside. So, it talks that way... Hopefully, it's still working. I have to contact [the police] and see. And I don't know what's going on with the real time command center, so I haven't asked anything about all the cameras that we purchased for them. And we do the maintenance of it. So, God forbid anything needs to be replaced, we do that. We even insure them if the traffic signal pole gets hit and it comes down and the camera is going to be okay. So, we have things like that that we will take care of, but the real time command center is not communicating with us. Cuz I don't know what's happening in there anymore. It's a mess. That is the nicest way to put it. It's a mess.

While there are many aspects of camera operations Ella can control (maintenance of the cameras, insurance of the cameras, etc.), she has little say over the level of police engagement or collaboration with the CID. Despite difficulties communicating with personnel in the real time crime center, Ella still tries her best to ensure law enforcement officials are using her cameras as a potential resource for crime incidents:

> Ella: When something happens, I'm emailing the captain saying let me know who was assigned to that [case]. Did you let them know we have cameras up? Did they look at the cameras? Because with the rules, they have to delete it every 30 days. So, I say make sure you get the footage before it's deleted because that's the policy that the police department has worked out with the-- what's the groups that they work with?
> Interviewer: the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union]?
> Ella: yeah, yeah. So, every 30 days they delete everything we have. So that's why I'm on 'em. Because you have to let [the police] know this.

Ella taking on the responsibility for ensuring the detectives use the CID-purchased cameras highlights the degree to which CBO leaders take on surveillant labor, often in response to perceived police negligence. But since the start of the pandemic, she tells me that the communication with the police has become even more dire and more difficult to remedy:

> The police don't tell me if they were able to catch the people from the footage I provided. They don't. Like why can't they just say yay or nay? I don't even need to know the details. Like did it help or didn't help? That's what I need to know. But they don't even provide me that…. My board appreciates it if they [know] were helping. Because [the cameras are] not cheap. So, we want to know that we're helping. And then I can be the cheerleader to other business districts saying, "this is why you need to invest in this."

This passage highlights the increasingly strained relationship between the Brookside CID and police. Despite her best efforts, Ella has struggled to formalize longer-term cooperation or communication with law enforcement officials.

For Ella, handing over digital evidence to the police comes with some expectation of reciprocity. As pointed out by Sagar (2004, p. 106), those who voluntarily work on behalf of the police often expect mutually supportive relations and being valued. This

lack of reciprocity appears to come with some reputational consequences for the Brooksude CID camera system. As the passage above suggests, Ella's personal efforts to get the police to utilize the CIDs cameras is rooted in a need to keep up the image or impression that the system is working. Ella feels like this police withdrawal and breakdown of communications might not only undermine support for the camera system in her district, but also her ability to keep promoting community surveillance projects among other CBOs in the area. Of all the participants, Ella is one of the biggest champions of cameras. She has played a key part in getting other CBOs interested in starting a camera initiative. It is clear she wants to believe that her cameras are making a difference so she can continue presenting her initiative in glowing terms.

One implication of these findings is that they do not align with the claim that powerful individuals and groups benefit from a "privileged" relationship with law enforcement officials (Ericson & Haggerty 1997). There is often a concern that police may become beholden to more affluent segments of society, while individuals and communities with more limited power struggle to attain police protection. Rather, the DIY surveillance efforts uncovered here are, at best, underutilized and undervalued by local police. Only one organization, the Northgate SBD, has secured a strong working relationship with the police. It is possible that employing two former officers allowed for more attention and trust from law enforcement, as they could leverage pre-existing personal and professional relationships. In our interview, Sean of Northgate SBD tells me that employing former officers gives the organization more "credibility" in the criminal legal systems:

> It's good to have that law enforcement side [in our organization]. If you're an outsider, it's a tough egg to crack. And so, you have to come in with a little bit of or some sort of credibility among your peers. You know when we hired Gabe, Mel [another staff

> member] was like we don't have to necessarily hire a cop. And I said, no, but there are certain characteristics Gabe brought to the table. Like when he's looking at the video, he understands what criminal behavior looks like and, you know... and if [a criminal is] running this way on camera, what other cameras do I need to pull up? And he has helped build this network. He understands exactly where everything is. So there were a lot of characteristics that Gabe brought to the table and yeah we need that to be successful. And we testify in criminal proceedings and, you know, police officers have that background of doing that, and Gabe certainly does. Somebody has to be the subject matter expert and, you know, jurors like to hear that you're a retired detective.

This passage suggests that collaborative CBO-police partnerships may only be successful if some of its members come from a law enforcement background. Compared to other CBOs, the Northgate SBD, may be seen as more legitimate because they are perceived to be part of the 'extended police family' (Crawford 2013).

Given the considerable challenges that most CBO leaders face when it comes to partnering with the police, one may expect that future collaboration will remain hindered. Surprisingly, the barriers and feelings of frustration expressed by participants do not seem to place a damper on CBOs' desire to enhance the surveillance capacity of the police. In fact, commitment to improving CBO-police relations seemed to be strongest for participants that had the biggest struggles securing police involvement. For example, Alice of the Hillcrest CDC is in the process of shifting over to a cloud-based system which will allow her to download video files more easily from her tenants' cameras and share them with the police. Similarly, Ella of the Brookside CID recently purchased a cloud-based system that permits video recordings from her organization's cameras to be sent directly to the police via a wireless network. This means that when a crime is reported in the district, officers can begin conducting investigations without Ella pulling and physically handing over footage to officials. Ella is also in the process of implementing a grant program that will provide exterior cameras to business and property owners located in the CID. As part of the initiative, Ella intends to give a spreadsheet to

the police department with all the camera locations and who the point of contact is for footage requests. When I asked Jeremy about the Bricktown SBDs future camera plans, he told me that the organization remains committed to "working at the direction of the police" and "improv[ing] police access to the [SBDs] videos."

This continued commitment can, in part, be explained by the fact that many participants don't blame or fault the police for their lack of engagement. Alice of the Hillcrest CDC, for example, believes the police simply do "not have enough man hours," indicating that law enforcement officials are just too overburdened and understaffed to review the video footage she sends with any kind of regularity. Ella at the Brookside CID placed most of the blame on the high level of turnover in the Real Time Crime Center, which resulted in her losing some of her primary and more trusted contacts. Other participants blamed the prosecutor's office, who were seen as preventing the police from "doing their job" by refusing to prosecute cases. As Ella stated in our interview:

> We have a circuit attorney who won't try anything, won't take anything to trial. And then we have a mayor who doesn't support the police and don't believe the police just like the circuit attorney. So of course, criminals are going to have free rein to do whatever they want. And that's what's happening right now in the city of St. Louis…That's the issue because a lot of police officers are not, you know, following up on stuff or going out on that because anytime they write a police report and have the person, but they are throwing it out. So, like what's the point? What's the point if it's not getting prosecuted? So that's the issue of the city until we can bring our alderman or mayor and the circuit attorney together to want to actually work with the police and trust the police again, but you can't do that if you don't bring the police to the table and have them as part of the dialogue. And I don't think that's happening.

In other words, participants like Ella don't see law enforcement as not caring or intentionally disregarding their surveillance labor (e.g., under-policing). Instead, it is broader structural constraints imposed on the police department that is the root cause of their disengagement (of which law enforcement leaders cannot control). It is possible that the CBO leaders I spoke with remain optimistic because most of their organizations

operate in majority white areas of the city where the police already enjoy high levels of trust and legitimacy (Tyler 2005).

Somewhat paradoxically, police disengagement appears to spur CBOs to take on even *more* surveillance labor. Whereas authors such as Wakefield (2005) and McCahill (2008) found that camera networks are becoming more expansive in cities due to strong collaboration between private actors and the police, I find that camera networks in St. Louis are growing *in spite of* low levels of collaboration. Rather than retreat from these activities, building out camera networks and supplying video evidence to law enforcement are central objectives that CBOs appear reluctant to abandon. Put differently, it appears that police inaction has only reinforced a stronger "DIY mentality" among CBOs (Mols & Pridmore 2019; Pridmore, Mols, Wang & Holleman 2019; Spiller & L'Hoiry 2019a, 2019b; Purenne & Palierse 2016).

Such high and willing levels of "responsibilization" (Garland 2001), however, can have significant implications for formal policing activities. The more that CBOs take on camera monitoring and video collection responsibilities the more they may be (unintentionally) absolving the police of these tasks. In our interview, Jeremy of the Bricktown SBD told me he believes that the police have come to rely on their labor to manage most camera operations in the district, including maintenance, combing through footage, and supplying video evidence. He described the police as getting "a good deal" from the Bricktown SBD because they "supply a lot of labor and a lot of money to keep things safe." By investing so heavily in their own security efforts, Jeremy feels as though Bricktown has started to receive less police attention:

> In the state statute it says that, you know, that the city shall not reduce the level of services to that area just on the basis that now you've got an SBD, [a] CID, that sort of thing. That, you're not supposed to do that, but I mean this gets the, you know,

> permission to speak candidly, that it's not that case. I mean I think they know that we're supplementing police services.

It appears that it is a slippery slope between CBOs taking on some of the burden for police services and CBOs becoming the primary executor of it. Researchers have found that neighborhood camera schemes are occasionally being used as a reason to cut back on police patrols (Clark 2008), and it is possible that this is occurring in the St. Louis region. The growth of camera initiatives by groups other than police may leave law enforcement officials to believe communities are able to ensure their own security, leading to what Crawford (2006) calls the 'residualization of policing'—a situation in which the public police function as a kind of back up rather than the chief law enforcer. Therefore, rather than increasing the capacity of the police (e.g., to enforce the law)—which is what Jeremy and many other CBO leaders I spoke with were hoping to achieve by supplying video evidence—such efforts may lead to increasingly *fewer* public police resources being deployed in their locals. In other words, if CBOs undertake their camera roles well and effectively, it is possible that "the police will find they are regarded as increasingly irrelevant" (Ayling 2007, p. 92). Thus, it seems worthwhile to consider how the growth of CBO-led camera initiatives may give the police permission to absolve themselves from surveillance activities.

The results from this dissertation suggest that the police are being regarded as increasingly irrelevant, insofar as CBOs think they can undertake camera functions just as effectively —or more effectively— than the police. Whereas some participants are still seeking to find ways to better integrate the public police into their camera operations, other CBOs are considering moving forward more autonomously and independently. For

example, the Parkway CID is effectively 'designing out' the police from the organization's next camera project. As Marie explains:

> We said, you know what if we have a trained retired officer or a secondary officer sit in the Real Time Crime Center and just watch our Parkway footprint. That's possible, we can do that. And that's one aspect that is probably more cost effective in the long run because we're then utilizing what's already in place. But, you know, in talking with some folks who have knowledge of the Real Time Crime Center there may be some instances of disconnect where yes, that person is supposed to be watching Parkway's cameras but if something's happening somewhere else or maybe if the unit is working short, then we may miss that. And so more it's more of a control thing, because when we install and expense the dollars necessary to put this this monitoring system in place, we want to be able to ensure that we have Parkway being monitored…And you have officers calling to say, you know, can you show me what's happening here and that's for the entire city. And we know that, again, while Parkway is very important, there are many things happening in the rest of the city that might not allow Parkway to be as focused upon as we need it to be.

Due to concerns that the police might not give Parkway adequate attention, Marie appears reluctant to cede any control over surveillance operations to local officials. In her view, giving police that responsibility is too risky, even if it ends up costing the CID more money in the short run. To ensure high levels of monitoring, Marie plans to have a CID-hired officer sit in their own local monitoring station. I asked Marie if she would characterize her system as a kind of "mini" Real Time Crime Center, to which she laughed and then exclaimed, "Right, it is!" Her overarching goal, she tells me, is to maximize CBO control (and, by extension, minimize police involvement) over the entirety of the system:

> Everyone that we put out there— that we deploy into the field— they're on *our* radio channels. *We* can hear them, *we* can talk to them, and *we* can, you know, deploy resources as *we* need.

Therefore, rather than operating in conjunction with the police or using cameras to leverage a police response, the Parkway CID is looking to bypass the police completely and take full ownership over the surveillance network.

These findings align with existing scholarship that suggests technology "enable the public to support the task of policing, as well as empowering the public to work without and beyond the police" (Spiller & L'Hoiry 2019a, p. 288). As Spiller and L'Hoiry (2019b) state, "surveillance technologies increasingly enable individuals and groups to police their properties, their communities, and "others" without the direct input of the police in order to achieve their own forms of policing and justice" (p. 267). For Marie, control over the camera system appears to be an important source of power within the organization, as they can become more self-sufficient in their surveillance and policing operations. In essence, they get the benefits of camera surveillance without being bound to the state and formal police apparatus. It is likely that CBOs designing out the police in the construction of their camera programs and assuming total responsibility will further disperse and fragment surveillance duties (Loader 2002). Moreover, to the extent that cameras are seen and conceived of as a tool to increase control without the public police, such initiatives may actually function to weaken police-CBO relations moving forward rather than strengthen them.

## Conclusion

This chapter provided an in-depth account of how CBO-police camera partnerships play out on the ground. The results presented here suggest that CBOs are performing a "do-it-yourself" ('DIY') style of policing that is becoming increasingly popular in our digital era (Mols & Pridmore 2019; Pridmore, Mols, Wang & Holleman 2019; Spiller & L'Hoiry 2019a, 2019b; Purenne & Palierse 2016). In line with this work, I find that most camera operations appear to be CBO-led rather than police-initiated.

Several participants discussed working hard to assist the police by monitoring camera feeds, collecting footage, and passing along video evidence to officials. Not only are CBOs taking on the bulk of the responsibility for camera operations and surveillance labor, but they also attempt to pick up the slack when local authorities appear to be falling short (e.g., intelligence gathering on crime suspects, hand delivering video evidence to police, ensuring detectives know where CBO cameras are located, etc.).

This examination of CBO-police relations highlights important tensions and barriers not often acknowledged in the surveillance literature. In particular, the results here bring nuance to how the relations between the two spheres are strengthened, weakened, and break down. While CBOs are certainly playing a strengthening role as they try to use their camera systems to support the task of policing, there is very little evidence that a surveillance "partnership" exists between CBO and the police. The results presented here suggest it is important not to gloss over the extent to which participants perceive the police to be underutilizing their surveillance labor. Although the case of Northgate SBD highlights that there can be effective information sharing between CBOs and police, for most participants, there is little evidence that collaboration is a dominant or prevailing reality.

Germain, Douillet and Dumoulin's (2012) notion of a "buy-in" process appears particularly relevant in explaining the dynamics of police-CBO relations. According to these authors, the success or failure of a camera initiative is, in part, determined by police engagement and support for the system (Germain, Douillet & Dumoulin 2012). Despite their best efforts, CBO leaders have thus far been unable to garner much buy-in from the police. For participants like Ella and Jeremy, the police are viewed as a fairly absent and

unwilling partner. Camera relationships for these participants tend to work unidirectionally (CBO to police) rather than bidirectionally. The communication between the two spheres is so limited that many participants feel (and to a certain degree are) quite removed from police activities and operations. As one can imagine, these developments are not entirely conducive to the formation of a 'partnership' approach to crime prevention.

Given this reality, it is hard to argue that CBO cameras in St. Louis are amplifying the power of the police, which is a common concern cited in the literature (see Lyon 2001; Fyfe & Bannister 1998; Reeve 1998). According to participants, their camera schemes, by and large, are not being used to extend the arm of the law on any routine or consistent basis (e.g., catch and apprehend offenders). For scholars who are concerned about private cameras operating as tools of oppressive state power and control (McCahill 2002), the 'breakdown' in relations between the police and CBOs depicted here may be perceived as a good thing. Only for more serious violent offenses (e.g., homicide) and chronic offenders did participants describe the police showing any interest in utilizing CBO camera footage. It is possible that this level of police disengagement is both time and place specific. Interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic when police resources were stretched and officers were experiencing acute levels of stress (see, for example, Stogner, Miller & McLean 2020). To be sure, research that explores the police's perspective is needed to provide a more complete understanding of if, and under what circumstances, law enforcement utilizes CBO camera systems.

One implication of this research is to shift current theoretical thinking about public-police surveillant relations. Much of the existing criminological and sociological

work on public-private camera relationships suggest that law enforcement capitalize on the surveillance efforts of citizens and the private sector (McCahill 2002; Wakefield 2005). Despite CBOs taking on labor-intensive camera roles, I found little evidence that the relationships between the police and CBOs have coalesced into effective or high-functioning public-private partnerships. Rather, participants frame their camera systems as a largely untapped law enforcement resource. While this chapter has given some examples of more coordinated and reciprocal police-CBO partnerships, they are the exception, not the rule. When it comes to conceptualizing CBO-police relationships, I argue that 'coexistence' is a far more accurate term. Meerts (2019, 2020) uses the term coexistence to describe situations in which state and private actors work together on an "inconsistent" or "ad hoc basis" rather than through a more formalized or mutually beneficial relationship. It is possible that the two spheres can come together if both technological barriers and police disengagement are remedied. It remains yet to be seen, however, whether the CBOs will ever overcome these hurdles, particularly given that most of the camera schemes examined were formed in response to perceived police failures.

# CHAPTER 6
# BEYOND ENFORCEMENT: SURVEILLANCE AS 'CONTROLLING' AND 'CARING'

In our increasingly digital era, camera systems have afforded the public the ability to carry out surveillance functions both with as well as without the police (Spiller & L'Hoiry 2019a; 2019b). This chapter explores the purposes and uses of CBO camera systems that lie outside direct law enforcement. As discussed in the literature review, there are often more abstract and symbolic goals tied to cameras, such as the removal of fear or protecting spaces of consumption (Coleman & Sim 2000; Norris & Armstrong 1999). The analysis presented in the first part of this chapter suggests that cameras are linked to desires to "protect" the community from potential external threats and dangers. Here, I argue that camera systems function as a digital form of electronic fortification (Monahan 2006; Davis 1990) and serve the purpose of creating more protected and restricted enclaves.

In the second part of this chapter, I show how CBO surveillance systems can also be used for purportedly "caring" purposes, such as providing forms of social assistance and support. Several participants seem to hold welfarist intentions, and this disposition, at times, leads CBOs to fluctuate between controlling those that pose a "danger" to the community and providing "care" to those in need. Drawing on the work of Lyon (2001) and Moore (2011), I argue that CBO surveillance practices can be multi-dimensional, involving elements of both care and control. This reading of surveillance is important because it permits a more nuanced conceptualization of cameras that challenges what Moore (2011) calls "the traditional, technocentric and control-oriented focus of surveillance studies" (p. 255). Moreover, these findings highlight how the aims and uses

of cameras by CBOs can easily (and somewhat seamlessly) expand into new and unexpected realms post-installation (e.g., surveillance creep).

## Controlling Surveillance

Among many CBO leaders I spoke with, there was a common notion that cameras can ensure communities are protected from external threats. For example, Sean at the Northgate Special Business District discussed being very concerned with so-called "outsiders" coming into the neighborhood to engage in crime. According to Sean, Northgate was particularly fearful of residents in the neighborhood just north of its jurisdiction:

> I go back to this isn't a crime free community. We're trying to keep a bad element out [with our cameras]. This is a community that has a proximate relationship to, you know, look at Peony Avenue. I mean you go from polar opposites when you cross Peony—from housing values to drug addictions, to whatever. Any sort of metric you could say it is complete opposites. And so, you've got an opportunity for the criminal element to naturally go next door [into Northgate]. Northgate isn't Middleton where we're insulated with other communities around us, you know.

For Sean, being situated near a neighborhood marked by persistent poverty, drug use, and homelessness appears to be a major concern. Sean sees those living on 'other side' of Peony Avenue as "bad" people that could come into the district and offend at any time. It is important to note that the area north of Northgate is a majority Black area. Therefore, while Sean did not disclose that he and his organization explicitly try to target people of color, attempts to keep a "bad element out" can be interpreted thusly if communities of color are inherently treated as lurking security threat. This kind of racialized fear of outsiders seems to reinforce the idea that more intensive surveillance is needed in order to ensure community security. In the passage above, Sean argues that suburban areas to the west of Northgate, like Middleton, are more geographically "protected" because they are

not adjacent to majority Black areas. The implication here is that Middleton, due to being buffered by more affluent and white middle-class neighborhoods, doesn't need the same kind of technological fortification that Northgate does.

Marie, Executive Director of the Parkway Community Improvement District, similarly showed a concern about "outsiders" coming into the district to "cause problems." In our interview, Marie stated that the CID's camera system is used primarily to better identify and intervene in the activities of people who come into the district without "any official business":

> If you're coming down for business or if you're coming to enjoy your home or activities that, you know, that you want to do, you're not going to be impacted by folks just coming to cause problems. So that has really helped with investment down there. We've got a dog park down [there] now [a corporation] is building a park. There are businesses that are coming to have their operations run out of some of the buildings down there, they have office space there, two tenant buildings, residential buildings that have really gone up over the last two years and it's growing. And they're having a lot more activity down there engaging the community and concerts and things like that. So, when we talk about our role in assisting with that increase in activity, the cameras that we have down there allows that layer of protection. Again, to be proactive because [there is a] security officer that sits in a station monitoring station evening hours late into early morning doing exactly that. Looking for suspicious activity. Looking for people just hanging out that don't seem to have an official business going on. And then if there is a reason to call for police, they'll call. But usually, they'll send a guide, or they'll send their security partner to go in just kind of engage and say "hey what's happening, how are you doing, how can I help you" or just be that presence down there. And sometimes that presence just makes people feel like, you know what, I probably need to move on. There's nothing here for me to try to upset or hurt someone.

Marie's description in this passage suggests that a key intent of the CIDs cameras is to monitor specific time periods and people that are likely to pose a problem by keeping them under increased surveillance. For Parkway, surveillance targeting occurs not because of any past or current criminal activity but out of concern for *potentially* disruptive behavior. With this type of monitoring, "unofficial" behavior or activities are deemed as "suspicious" and, in turn, immediately criminalizable (McCahill 2002; von Hirsch & Shearing 2000).

The camera system also enables the organization to ensure a particular type of behavior can be defined as dangerous and subsequently *pushed out*. "Suspicious" activity and "people who don't have any official business going on" appear to trigger observation and, when necessary, subsequent intervention by a private security guard. Thus, individuals who are identified as "suspicious" or "unofficial" must deal with the inconvenience, and arguably emotional cost, of having to explain their presence or purpose. For those who are encouraged by the security personnel to "move on" can mean an immediate removal from the district, or what Dean Wilson and Leanne Weber (2008) refer to as "punitive pre-emption." I alignment this this concept, individuals in the Parkway district are excluded simply for their perceived riskiness for causing harm. These findings underscore Norris's (2012) point that camera systems are often less about crime and more about "the power to watch, to deploy, to intervene, to identify and to regulate, often through exclusion" (p. 258). Whether intentional or not, the temptation to surveil and intervene in situations deemed "suspicious" or "unofficial" can translate into a quasi-privatization of public spaces, as camera monitors attempt to prevent certain types of people and street activity (Coleman 2004).

When I asked Marie what kind of behavior she was concerned with in the district, she described recent challenges with "energetic youth" who repeatedly come into Parkway and, as she puts it, "wreak havoc" and "[treat it like] it's their own playground." As our interview continued, it became clearer that curbing disorderly conduct, especially that caused by large groups of young teens on weekends, is deeply tied to the district's commercial interests. Parkway is one of the most commercialized areas in St. Louis, and the area has struggled to bring in visitors and investment. Marie described the camera

system in Parkway as a tool to help "see anything that's going to "cause a problem" to her organizations "stakeholders" and "businesses":

> We [the CID] are really focused on trying to ensure that businesses who are looking to invest in downtown don't allow crime to be the reason that they won't do that. And we're hearing chatter about that, you know. People are, you know, really actively saying, "I was going to you know least this office space and I'm going to look elsewhere now."

This passage suggests that Parkway's cameras function as an 'entrepreneurial tool' (Coleman 2004) aimed at ensuring investments continue to be made in the area. "We [at the CID]," Marie states, "want this idea that Parkway is not safe to change." Marie told me that if the Parkway CID doesn't help "improve the perspective of safety" they "will continue to have problems with people investing in Parkway." In our interview, Marie tells me she keeps "hearing chatter" about people who were going to lease office space in Parkway but decide to look elsewhere because of perceptions of the area as unsafe. As such, Marie tells me that ensuring a perception safety in Parkway as a "non-negotiable" and that the CID remains focused on using the camera system to help "increase the level of safety that people feel" and better "protect the people who are around either working, living or enjoying themselves in Parkway." In this respect, cameras appear closely tied to a commercial management strategy (Coleman 2004): they are simultaneously used make the district a safer place for a specific part of the population (e.g., visitors and consumers) as well as to exclude 'undesirable' groups whose presence might undermine the district's economic well-being.

Like Marie, Ella at the Brookside Community Improvement District also conveyed concern about the perception of St. Louis as unsafe, which she claims "hurts" the image of her district. The Brookside CID has, in her mind, "worked hard" to make the CID "an attractive space that people want to live, work, and play." Ella framed her

organization's cameras one of many elements of a broader strategy to both ensure perceptions a sense of security for those who may wish to live in the district and prevent "bad" people from entering the neighborhood:

> A lot of people who have moved to this neighborhood from out of state I ask them like, "Oh, you know, why did you pick Crescent Hill as an area to live," [and they say] "because of how nice Brookside looks. We thought "how nice this district looks; it must be a safe area." So, this is where we want to live." So that's why a lot of people have moved here. Perception is everything. And I think there's a long way to [go to] get people that sense of security. And then it [that security] keeps the bad guys away. It keeps the bad guys away when they see people care about this area. We keep it clean, we beautify it, we have cameras up, I see a police officer, there's density of people walking around, bad guys are gonna stay away. When you don't look like a cohesive community, and it's not being maintained it's a bad guy's dream.

Here, Ella is attempting to simultaneously increase (the sense of) security for potential visitors as well as detract criminals and criminal activities from entering the district. On the one hand, as noted by Coleman (2004), cameras can be used to "help reinforce the link between orderly urban space and urban renaissance" (p. 28). On the other hand, consistent with the well-known 'broken window' theory developed by James Wilson and George Kelling (1982), cameras can be leveraged to reduce 'crime opportunities.' According to the theory, the physical image of a neighborhood can be improved to heighten the perception of risk for so-called "would-be offenders." In alignment with this thinking, it appears Ella has installed cameras to, in part, create a well-maintained and orderly community that keeps criminals out.

The desire to prevent "criminal threats" from "entering" the neighborhood, however, was not restricted to commercial districts. Ryan, President of the Midland Neighborhood Association, described how residents in his neighborhood see cameras as a buffer against crime and criminals:

> The truth is Midland is one of the safest neighborhoods in the city, if not the safest. The crime per capita is extremely low. We do get our car break-ins and you know our catalytic converter thefts. But there's very rarely any sort of major crimes that happen

> here. Every once in a few years something will happen, and it creates a big uproar. The real, the real thing is that it's not just about the preventing crime but it's also the perception of safety. There's a lot of people that have lived here their entire lives that, you know, they watch the news, they read the newspaper, and it just sounds like that there is a there's death coming, you know, the Hill's way. Or their way. There's an older mentality still that we should be, you know, trying to protect ourselves and build a border... and a lot of [those] people really want to get like more cameras. I'm not talking about cameras for the house [that the association already bought] but like the really expensive police cameras that can track license plates…. But, um, a lot of it's about feeling safe rather than actually doing anything that will actually make you safer.

This passage suggests that some residents in Midland, despite the neighborhood already being relatively safe, are still preoccupied about potential threats and crime risks. Here, cameras function as a kind of target hardening and border surveillance that can be used to create "bubbles of security" (Monahan 2009; Zedner 2003). According to Ryan, it appears the adoption of more surveillance cameras for the purposes of "feeling safe" is likely to continue for the foreseeable future in Midland.

The findings presented in this chapter thus far suggest that camera surveillance is a tool used by CBOs to better fortify against potentially dangerous "outsiders" before any harm results (Wilson & Weber 2008). This heightened securitization of borders can be seen as a kind of electronic fortification or what Kurwa (2019) calls 'digital gated communities.' In the case of the Parkway CID, cameras quite explicitly function as a tool to "socially sort" suspect people and populations (Colman 2004. Lyon 2003). This kind of pre-emptive monitoring, it appears, is driven by a perceived need to increase feelings of safety, remove existing negative connotations, and, above all, ensure continued economic investment in areas that CBOs serve. A key implication of CBO-led camera projects, therefore, is an increased surveillance of space based on the suspicion and exclusion of others.

## Caring Surveillance

The above examples draw attention to the use of cameras for the purposes of border maintenance and neighborhood protection from external threats. Yet several CBO leaders I spoke with also appear to work within a "welfare mentality" and engage in seemingly benevolent forms of monitoring. Especially in more commercialized districts, I find that CBO leaders carry out surveillance practices, which is, in part, resistant to the criminalization of marginalized groups. Excluding people deemed socially undesirable and pushing the problem outside the neighborhood is not always seen by CBOs as the best or most appropriate solution. In our interview, Marie, Executive Director of the Parkway CID, told me that her organization is trying to move away from "heavy-handed response" when it comes to addressing what her constituents call "nuisance" concerns, such as unhoused people living in the district. She has tried to encourage businesses and residents in Parkway to take a more "humane point of view" and not "just mistreat people because of what their circumstance is." In practice, Marie tells me, this shift involves taking a social service centered approach to safety, rather than defaulting to more punitive, law enforcement responses:

> One of the major concerns that's expressed to us is that we have members of the unhoused population sleeping in cubbies on private property. You know, their personal belongings that many people may see as debris. We can't look at it as debris, that's their belongings…The past year with the pandemic we received a call from someone in the CID saying "hey, you know, can you help me with this person whose just kind of set themselves up behind my building on this little street." And they want them gone, right. But we communicate that this is a person, this is a human being and we're going to have our partners like St. Patrick Center or Salvation Army come and work with them, but it's not going to be an immediate grab all their stuff and take them away…. We're doing more to have outreach to help [people] as opposed to call the police and demand that they're taken away. …You know, we [at the CID] just can't always be that— we're not that organization that says okay, yeah, we're going to call the police for everything. We want to try to make sure we're working in the best manner.

Here, Marie seeks to disavow the strict enforcement of unhoused people who are, in general, subject to a great amount of targeted surveillance by law enforcement (Norris & Armstrong 1999). Marie tells me that, based on her experiences in law enforcement, she doesn't think an "authoritative response" is the right approach. Rather than managing vulnerable populations through more policing measures, Marie and the CID want to provide outreach solutions instead. Marie tells me that this 'non-authoritative' approach also extends to how the CID uses its various layers of security infrastructure, which primarily include private security personnel, radio communication, and their growing network of cameras:

> So, it's a balance again for us to ensure that we are not utilizing [our cameras] in a way that would be a policing or authoritative tactic... So, from our perspective it's we've got various layers of security and safety, we've got our ambassadors, we have security officers who are CIT trained so they can de-escalate a situation if they come across someone who has a mental health challenge or some other type of issue that does not require police to come in and just be heavy handed. So not every situation requires a heavy-handed response and so that's how we want to utilize our camera system downtown. We intend to build it out more as a resource to help, to be able to watch for things that are building up. We want to make sure that is used in a way that's more helpful and assisting everyone downtown.

In this passage, Marie shows a clear commitment to manifesting alternative responses to those in crisis by building a security apparatus that is there to "help" rather than control. By adopting a kind of 'social work' orientation, Marie appears to resist the criminalization of those with mental health disabilities in the district. In this respect, Parkway's use of various layers of surveillance does not fully align with the traditional, control-oriented nature of urban camera practices often emphasized by scholars (namely, social exclusion and the abrogation of state supports) (Coleman 2004, Davis 1999, Norris & Armstrong 1999).

Like Marie, Sean, Executive Director of the Northgate Special Business District, was eager to show that he values a social-centered approach to community safety. During my visit to the Northgate SBD's offices, Sean tells me numerous times that he is committed to helping "break the cycle of violence" in St. Louis. During our interview, Sean appeared to be acutely aware that youth are often exposed to several factors which may increase their risk in engaging in criminal behavior later in life:

> No one ever mentions this but we're reaping the whirlwind of 30 plus years of a failed public school system in the city of St. Louis and the kids can't read and they can't write. And I am not blaming the public school system, cause they're doing more today for kids than they ever thought they would. You know, they're feeding them, they're clothing them, they're looking for other social services for kids. But, you know, we talked about the trauma of growing up in urban environment and having kids, you know, who don't sleep regularly, or have anybody telling them to do homework, or taking an interest in what they're doing. So those kids turn out exactly the way they should really. I mean that's the reality of it, and they're left with 'my mom is a drug addict, my dad is a drug addict, I'm gonna try drugs to self-medicate' and it starts all over. And we get 15-year-old kids high on fentanyl. That's scary. Let's address the needs of anxiety and health issues that they have or drug addiction or alcohol addiction. So that when they get out [of prison] there is at least a glimmer of hope and that they turn to something but crime. But I would say ultimately what fueling our crime is drugs and it seems to be drug addiction. I think we're focused on doing one thing and doing it well. We got to [start] treating folks with drug addictions better. We'd see a tremendous decrease in crime, no doubt.

To a significant extent, Sean aligns with a social-centered approach to safety that emphasizes addressing the root causes of crime, noting that those who offend often do so because of difficult life circumstances, such as limited educational opportunities and family structures. He also seems to hold welfarist notions, framing youth as in need of social supports so that they don't turn to drug use and criminal activity. This more benevolent outlook has only been reinforced during Sean's time at the Northgate SBD:

> We deal with the same guys over and over and over and it's always drugs. It's always being unhoused. It's always being put in desperate situations, and you can't break that cycle and they go to prison and come out there getting high the next day. You know, shooting heroin or fentanyl. It's like you had these guys for x amount of time and couldn't you have gotten them on suboxone and got them into a treatment program and fixed this? So, when they get out, they're not driven by a pursuit of getting high or getting drugs.

> You know, that's really what I'm hoping that we see with these advocates who want social services injected more. And thinking more about what public safety looks like.

Again, this passage highlights that Sean does not hold a post-welfare ideology; rather, he appears resistant to 'tough on crime' approaches. To address drug use issues, Sean genuinely believes that "you have the social side figuring out what the real problem is." However, embracing a holistic approach to public safety has not resulted in a total abandonment of more punitive and disciplinary practices and beliefs. Instead, Sean tends to ocellate between controlling offenders and recognizing their social circumstances:

> Just the other day, yesterday, I sent a [video] product to the police department where somebody is innocently walking into somebody's backyard and went into their garage and stole a bike and we got the guy on video. We got him pushing the bike away and we said this crime was committed by this source. Well, this source just spent over a year locked up for walking into some woman's house and stole her laptop and she confronted him in her kitchen at 10:00 o'clock at night and scared the hell out of her, and he did time served. But we know because of cameras and what cameras tell us that that day he got out he was already back up to doing what he was doing that led him to prison or jail because he had no exit strategy, he had no support system, he had no housing, he had no job, he had no economic support. So, he was doing exactly what we said he was gonna be doing, reoffending. If it weren't for cameras, he would be racking up all this crime.

Here, Sean frames offenders as both in need of social support as well as a threat to public safety (Goddard 2012). The use of cameras to track the movements of offender's suggests that these individuals are 'risky' or 'dangerous' and could cause harm at any time. Consistent with a law enforcement-centered preventive model, this kind of future threat conception engenders a strategy of increased regulation and more surveillance. Yet, on the other hand, the returning offender having "no exit strategy" and "no support system" aligns with social-centered orientations that emphasize the root causes of crime. Sean seems to view those returning to the community from jail as both facing problems as well as having the potential to pose problems to the community. Thus, for Sean, there is some intertwining of welfare and risk management logics, whereby the individual is presented as "both risky and needy" (Gray 2013, p. 526; but see also Goddard 2012).

What is more, these findings also suggest that Northgate SBD may be turning more to intimate and personalized forms of watching, or what Moore (2011) refers to as 'therapeutic surveillance.' Over the last several years, Northgate SBD has spent a considerable amount of time and energy tracking and monitoring offenders in the neighborhood that have known mental health disorders. The names of these individuals are placed on a running list written on a dry-erase board that sits in the middle of the organization's office. When Sean told me about some of the people listed, I got the sense that he has an intimate knowledge of who the individuals are. When discussing their backgrounds, Sean was quite empathetic to their circumstances. He described a frustrating pattern of watching offenders with mental health disorders get discharged from a nearby hospital with no "home plan" and "nothing to do but recommit crimes." For criminal cases involving mental illness in the district, Sean tries to attend court hearings and give the judge and prosecutors some "back story" and to make the case that "jail is probably not the best place for these particular offenders." Oftentimes, Sean tells me, he urges the judge to divert people to a mental health court program, which seek to improve services to offenders who have a serious and persistent mental illness, including those offenders with co-occurring substance abuse disorders. By advocating for offenders to be placed on the mental health court docket, Sean stated he hopes these individuals will receive a caseworker, medication, housing, and some stability so they will not "come back to the neighborhood to reoffend."

The surveillance network that the SBD is building out, therefore, is not exclusively technologically mediated or impersonal; rather it contains elements of personal connections and care-based relationships with offenders in the neighborhood. In

turn, these personal ties feed and reinforce more forms of seemingly benevolent surveillance. About a week before my interview with Sean, Northgate SBD hired Greg, a retired homeless mental health outreach worker to "develop stronger relationships" with unhoused people in the district. As Zoe, Victim Advocate of the SBD, describes it:

> Our plan for Greg, because we don't provide like homeless services, is that he develops these relationships with people really well in our neighborhood and then he just hands them off to other organizations. Like he'll convince them like, "okay, are you ready yet to receive some help?" And if they're like yes, he'll be, like, "cool, I'm immediately going to call xyz and get you into their care now. We had a big issue [because] we had all these contacts at places, but they had a big backlog, or they weren't working then, or they were working but they didn't have a place to put someone, and so we would call for their assistance but [they] wouldn't show up or they couldn't help. And so having Greg on staff will make it a lot easier for us to reach out and get people assistance and we're hoping that mitigates some homelessness issues we have in our neighborhood and also help out the person.

Enlisting Greg to get to know unhoused people and 'help' them access supports is a type of surveillance that is about establishing trusting relationships with the Northgate SBD (Moore 2011). Greg's role, therefore, is ripe for the coalescing of welfarist logics with social control practices: he may simultaneously increase the amount of assistance unhoused individual receives and the degree of monitoring they experience from the SBD staff (Goddard 2012).

Like Marie and Sean, Ella at the Brookside Community Improvement District also exhibited a view of crime prevention that is, in part, resistant to punitive and exclusionary surveillance practices. Ella appears to embrace a social-centered framework that focuses on the root causes of crime, especially poverty, rather than overt criminalization:

> We got to address the giant elephant in the room, and that's poverty. And poverty equates to crime. And what are we doing to elevate people out of poverty? We have a lot of people who don't have GED's, who can't read and write that well. But they still should be able to have a skill, they should be able to have training in something that they can make a decent living in. And hopefully, they want to better themselves and they want to get that GED, just getting that hope and purpose and giving them something that they can be a

> part of. And if you don't have a nucleus around you, a family and friends to motivate you or inspire you or build you up in way, what you can be and what you can do to have a better life. You're clueless. And then we as a society don't address the giant elephant in the room—not just the City of St. Louis but in this region, in Illinois too— there's poverty, there's a lot of poverty…. A lot of people have no idea about what's out there, or don't know what's outside the radius of where they live. I used to be involved with St. John High School and I was told a lot of these kids that live in the neighborhood that go to school there have never been to the zoo. It's free and it's not far. I mean, they have never been to the zoo? That is sad. It breaks my heart that they live in this world and they don't know what else is out there. Not just down their street, but outside of St Louis. And we're just… we're failing, failing as a city and as a city if we don't address these issues.

Here, Ella shows an awareness that many young people in St. Louis experience high levels of personal and socio-economic disadvantage and exclusion from mainstream activities, which heightens their exposure to social exclusion, isolation, and offending. Taken together, Ella seems to understand toll of multiple layers of different types of complex disadvantage amounting to what Levitas and colleagues (2007) categorize as "deep exclusion."

In her role as Executive Director of the Brookside CID, Ella presents herself as supportive of a welfarist approach, especially when it comes to handling unhoused populations. For Ella, the cameras she has helped install in Brookside are, in part, intended to address the social conditions unhoused people in the district. As Ella describes in our interview:

> We are having a big issue with the homeless on Brookside. And so, they're going number two in the alley next to the trash corral by Terrace Park. So, we have a corral so you can't see anything because we want to block the dumpster from Terrace Park because that doesn't look attractive. So, someone is going to the bathroom there. And then also we're finding syringes and needles in our Battery Park. So that's why we're going to put up [more] cameras. So that's why we're going to put cameras on the side of Frank's Grill and working with them because it benefits all the businesses that use that trash corral and the district as a whole when we have events. So, we know who's shooting up, who's going to the bathroom. Not to arrest them, but how can I call the police or human services and tell them a problem if I don't know who is doing it? So, we need to catch the person, so we give them the footage and say hey, this is the person. What are we doing to get them in a shelter or mental facility to help them. I mean there's a [social services] place right down the street on Sycamore. So, it's like we can't help people if we don't know who they are.

In this passage, Ella frames her cameras as non-punitive tools intended to help identify drug users in the CID and link them to social supports. In this respect, the camera network in Brookside can be seen as a somewhat benevolent and social-centered initiative. However, as our interview continued, it was clear there are limits to Ella's social-centered ideology. For instance, when unhoused individuals do not take advantage of services and returning to the CID, Ella's commitment to welfarism starts to fade:

> I think we need more programs to help people but the number one issue with the homeless that I deal with is how many of these individuals have been talked to by social workers and they refuse service. I mean, what right do they have to live in someone's doorstep? Going to the bathroom there, shooting up and won't leave. How about the rights of the visitors and the property owners and the residents who live here and the businesses who are trying to pay their staff and pay themselves when someone won't leave? And that person to me is mentally ill and that's the type of life they want to live. Something needs to change with how we handle mental illness in this country and how we handle the homeless who refuse help. I'm all about helping anyone who has bad luck to get on their feet and whatever we need to do to get them in a home and a job and training. I'm all about that. Like bring it on. But when people refuse all that and then they're causing problems in a community. Why do a lot of people think they have the right to be here and this to be their home? This is not their home. Living on a street in a business district is not a home.

While still presenting as sympathetic to unhoused folks' situations, Ella is only willing to help if they are accepting of the social services provided to them. In this respect, her social-welfarist approach in the district appears conditional: if help provided is refused by the unhoused person, their "right" to live in the district is withdrawn. Thus, it seems if unhoused individuals cannot be helped through conventional methods they are no longer deserving of support from the CID. In fact, Ella is very much willing to deny them the ability to exercise their quotidian functions and take a more controlling and punitive stance. This passage also highlights the extent to which Ella privileges business interests and consumption activity over the rights and needs of unhoused people who want to occupy the district as a home. When push comes to shove, she is far more committed to their financial wellbeing and sense of security. Taken together, both risk discourse and

welfarist discourse coexist, in the sense that Ella approaches her surveillance strategies with the hope of providing assistance and rehabilitation, but then can quite easily reformulate unhoused people as a 'problem' when they refuse support and choose to continue living in the CID (Goddard 2012, Moore 2011).

## Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter suggest that CBO surveillance cameras implemented are much more than a tool to help 'fight against crime.' On the one hand, there is a common discourse that surveillance systems could better make neighborhoods more impenetrable from potentially dangerous outsiders. In this respect, surveillance cameras effectively act as electronic guards or gates of communities, under the pretense of keeping out potentially "dangerous" and "suspicious" people (Davis 1990). In the St. Louis region, there is a long tradition of setting boundaries in more affluent and whiter spaces to keep "others" (i.e., Black individuals) out (Johnson 2020; Gordon 2019). In some ways, then, CBO camera systems can be read as simply new digital forms of exclusion and fortification. In some areas, such as the Parkway Community Improvement District, camera systems function more explicitly as an 'entrepreneurial tool' aimed at monitoring and excluding 'risky' people and activities in order to ensure investments continue to be made in the area (Coleman 2004; Fyfe & Bannister 1996).

At the same time, this research shows that leaders of CBOs also extend the function of their cameras (and security approach more broadly) into the realm of social welfarism. Several participants purport to taking a 'softer' and more social-centered approach to public safety. For example, Ella, Sean, and Marie spoke authoritatively about

the complex and multi-faceted personal problems faced by marginalized people living in their commercial districts and in St. Louis more broadly. They each seem to view unhoused people, youth, and individuals struggling with drug abuse as marginalized from socio-economic opportunities and therefore needing access to services and supports. This was based on an acknowledgement that many of the people they engage with in their neighborhoods lived chaotic lives, marred by family circumstance, poorly functioning schools, social isolation, and mental health disorders. Rather than CBO leaders losing faith in rehabilitative ideals, I find that welfarist objectives are becoming increasingly embedded in their local security and surveillance practices (Goddard 2012). Cameras (and other non-technological forms of surveillance) were framed by participants as a way to monitor social problems in the community and seemingly improve their ability to provide 'help.'

Several participants— including Marie, Sean, and Ella— can be seen as invoking two contrasting roles: the "caring role" oriented towards assistance, rehabilitation, and social supports and the "control" role oriented towards punishment, fortification, and exclusion. These participants simultaneously use cameras to support the needs of vulnerable groups as well as to preemptively monitor and exclude anyone who might pose a threat to feelings or images of safety. These observations align with David Lyon's (2001) claim that surveillance can actuate both "care" and "control (but see also Moore 2011). Rather than exclusively one or the other, CBO cameras can be used to monitor populations for purposes of offering protection as well as to enforce deeper or more strict forms of control (Moore 2011). While CBOs engaging in "caring" surveillance practices may seem banal and not inherently problematic, the use of cameras under the banner of

welfarism can easily contribute to deeper forms of monitoring. Researchers, for example, have documented intensive levels of monitoring among individuals seeking public assistance and social services (Eubanks 2018).

This reading of surveillance permits a more multifaceted and nuanced way of thinking about the purposes of cameras, especially in commercial areas where Ella, Sean, and Marie's organizations are located. Rather than an abandonment of welfarism, surveillance practices are seemingly being (re)linked to the reaffirmation of social causes and social remedies. To some extent, when examined alongside other policing of poverty research, the presence of welfarist ideologies may not be all that surprising. For example, in *Down, Out, and Under Arrest: Policing and Everyday Life in Skid Row,* Stuart (2016) describes the rise of "therapeutic policing" and a renewed commitment to a rehabilitative ideal in how law enforcement manage the urban poor. To resolve the discord between acting punitively and showing appropriate levels of compassion, Stuart asserts that officers seek to reformulate enforcing control by demonstrating acts of care. Accordingly, Stuart (2016) questions whether "officer's claims of rehabilitation and support might have simply been post hoc justifications that mask an underlying, more exclusionary intention" (p. 89). That is, rather than truly embody a social-centered approach, officers act compassionately in order make sense of (or counteract) their more controlling forms of enforcement.

Similarly, I think it is necessary to question whether Marie, Sean, and Ella's welfarist aims are simply a means of neutralizing their efforts to enforce control, rather than genuine acts of care. Attempts made by participants in commercial districts to pass people off to social supports, for example, can simply be read as a form of regulation and

exclusion used by economically powerful groups to increase their control over management of public space without appearing punitive. It is possible that contemporary legitimacy concerns and the desire to appear more progressive is encouraging CBOs to infuse their camera practices with welfarist intentions and purposes. Data collection came on the heels of the nation-wide 'defund the police' movement, which raised questions about the effectiveness of enforcement-oriented practices and emphasized a need for social services approach, especially when dealing with vulnerable populations and non-crime issues. Thus, CBO leaders may be turning to social-centered approaches so that they can frame their programs in more socially palpable ways and, by extension, adapt to a changing political climate.

CBO leaders engaging in welfarist surveillance practices also resonates with the longstanding scholarship on the more general and growing 'creep' of video surveillance (Lyon 2007). Recall, surveillance creep is the process whereby surveillance measures introduced for one defined purpose can quickly develop new \applications. The range of camera aims identified here—from caring to control— underscores the extent to which crime-fighting technology, when put into civilian hands, can generate a new practices and behaviors to be monitored. CBO camera systems, especially in commercial districts, appear to be quite fluid and flexible and capable of provoking new forms of watching. This finding maps on to Graham's (1998) contention that once camera systems are installed "their logic is almost inevitably expansionary." Taken together, the results presented in this chapter suggest that more attention needs to be given to benevolent and therapeutic forms of surveillance in community camera initiatives.

# CHAPTER 7
# DISCUSSION

The dissertation described in the preceding chapters explores the adoption, diffusion, and use of camera systems among community-based organizations in St. Louis. Missouri. Existing sociological and criminological theory has provided useful ways of understanding the role of video surveillance in contemporary society. Theorizations based around neo-Marxist positions have been particularly influential, which emphasize neoliberal responsibilization and social ordering perspectives. However, at the outset of this paper, I outlined criticisms of neo-Marxist perspectives for being overly simplistic, deterministic, and control oriented. Accordingly, this dissertation sought to more deeply explore the people and processes that drive community surveillance initiatives. In this chapter, I draw from my research findings to highlight key theoretical and policy implications.

## Theoretical Implications

Neo-Marxist perspectives have been central to understanding the processes that drive the establishment of public area camera systems in two main ways – as part of governmental efforts to 'responsibilize' non-state organizations in engaging in community surveillance and as an urban 'social ordering' strategy. The rise of video surveillance among CBOs in St. Louis is explained in a way that departs from both these framings. First, with respect to responsibilization, Garland's (1996) concept appears to not be an apt description of how CBOs become involved in developing camera programs. The findings presented here suggest that local law enforcement officials have not played

a starring role in creating demand for cameras among CBOs. That is, the groups examined in this dissertation have not been 'activated' or 'enrolled' by local officials to take on camera initiatives. Rather, CBOs adopting cameras is something more akin to communities self-responsibilizing (Lippert 2014). CBO camera schemes are best characterized as a form of DIY policing that is citizen-led rather than police directed (Mols & Pridmore, 2019; Campbell 2016; Huey, Nhan & Broll 2012; Reeves 2017: Sanders & Langan 2018; Spiller & L'Hoiry 2019a). However, these initiatives still align with neoliberal principles, insofar as CBOs feel the need to purchase camera to address perceived police gaps and failures in ensuring protection.

Additionally, while responsibilization strategies are conceived of enabling public-private partnerships, participants describe law enforcement officials in St. Louis as a fairly absent partner (see chapter 5). While additional research is required to fully grasp the particularities and ambiguities of these relations, local police seem to be uninterested in utilizing CBOs surveillance labor. For example, while CBOs often go out of their way to share video information with law enforcement about crime incidents, rarely do police officials respond or provide any follow-up. This indicates that CBO camera programs do not readily take the formation of a "partnership" approach to crime prevention, as responsibilization perspectives often suggest. While there are some examples of cooperation and more formalized partnerships, they are the exception not the rule. Thus, I argue police-CBO surveillance relations are best conceptualized as a form of "coexistence" (Meerts 2020) rather than coproduction.

These findings, therefore, question the assumption that concentrating cameras within more affluent communities and business districts, which tend to be located in areas

that are wealthier and less racially diverse, could compound inequities in policing giving more privileged residents better protection (see Rivas 2019; Holder & Akinnibi 2021). Rather than capturing the attention of law enforcement, I find CBO camera schemes largely operate at the margins of formal policing. Local law enforcement officials are framed as largely uninterested in using these systems. Nonetheless, these systems could compound inequities in safety if they do end up turning out to be effective in garnering a police response.

The results from this dissertation also complicate commercial management and social ordering perspectives traditionally associated with the uptake and use of public area camera schemes. In alignment with social ordering perspectives, the findings presented here suggest that cameras in St. Louis are geared towards social exclusion, fortification, and removing those who might pose threat to the flow of capital (Coleman 2004; Coleman & Sim 2000; Fyfe & Bannister 1996). On the other hand, the findings suggest that CBO leaders involved in the creation of camera programs exhibit a surveillance approach which is, in part, resistant to forms of punishment. For CBO leaders who hold a welfarist perspective, it did translate into new forms of surveillance —digitally and non-digitally— with the purported intent of 'helping' more vulnerable populations. Rather than an abandonment of the rehabilitative ideal, CBO leaders are trying to link their surveillance practices to the welfarist principles and agendas. This does not necessarily mean, however, that more control-oriented or social ordering strategies are rejected or replaced, but rather that welfarist ideologies can simultaneously exist (Goddard 2012; Moore 2011).

Rather than a genuine concern for vulnerable populations, it is possible that this welfarist ideology is a politically strategic maneuver. CBOs may simply be trying to make their camera involvement and actions more palpable at a time when there is a growing appetite for "social-centered" approaches to public safety. Especially in commercial districts, where CBOs are tasked with ensuring economic development and profit (Coleman 2004; Fyfe & Bannister 1996), it remains doubtful that concerns about the welfare of vulnerable populations will ever be separated from desires to increase control and order. These findings suggest that more research is needed on how community camera systems can be both controlling and caring at the same time (Lyon 2003, Moore 2011).

This dissertation offers at least three key suppositions that provide a more nuanced framework for understanding the uptake of camera schemes among CBOs in St. Louis. First, some form of social anxiety and localized fear about crime often drives community demand for camera schemes. 'Police-in-crisis' discourses often served as a catalyst for implementing camera systems. The performance of the police is a point of almost constant preoccupation for CBOs, and this mindset often led them to conclude that purchasing their own cameras is the primary way to improve the level of safety in their neighborhoods. It appears, therefore, that when the general public's demands and expectations regarding the police are not met, cameras are presented and introduced as a solution to this problem.

Second, in a context where CBO leaders are searching for their own solutions to answer the public's demand for safety, I find that potential adopters are prone to look 'outwards' and see what other CBOs are doing, a process DiMaggio and Powell (1983)

refer to mimetic isomorphism. CBOs do not adopt cameras because it is shown to be better than other solutions; they do so because it is widely seen as the 'most appropriate' solution. Several CBOs felt compelled to invest in camera systems simply because neighboring communities had done so. This mentality appeared to trigger a ripple effect. As more and more communities introduce camera schemes, the practices of existing groups are used as a template or model for potential adopters. Processes of mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell 1983), therefore, represent a central force driving the diffusion of camera systems from one organization to the next. Arguably, this mimicry is contributing to a perceived faith in the possibility of narrow technical solutions to solve complex social problems. These findings suggest it might be fruitful for future research to further examine CBO decision-making and behaviors from an institutional perspective.

Third, CBOs taking on the responsibility to create camera programs themselves means they are deeply involved in a process of resolving conflict (see chapter 5). CBO reactions to taking on camera initiatives are captured here in two approaches: some participants resist and strategically counter any conflict while others are highly sensitized to the possible negative implications of cameras and behave more cautiously. In the first, CBO leaders saw significant potential in camera technology and sought to justify and defend their surveillance activities. Conversely, other participants sought to evade or minimize scrutiny from camera critics as much as possible. In addition, some CBO leaders viewed cameras as a flawed technology with the potential to be used in harmful ways. These concerns motivated participants to try to restrict their organization's direct involvement in surveillance work. These different approaches used by CBO leaders to

navigate tensions and conflict highlight the degree to which implementing camera systems necessitates a degree of active (and ongoing) legitimization.

Finally, the findings from this dissertation suggest the need to continue moving beyond traditional neo-Marxist approaches as an overarching theoretical framework. First, these perspectives do not account for instances in which community groups "self-responsibilize" and exert their own agency in the construction of camera programs. The surveillance systems examined here are best characterized as CBO-led and driven initiatives, without much (or any) involvement from the police. Second, as the data presented here have demonstrated, CBO camera initiatives are motivated by concerns about risk, legitimacy, harm reduction, and welfarism. I have critiqued the neo-Marxist perspectives for being too simplistic and drawn on other analytical concepts and processes —such as mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell 1983), public-private coexistence (Meerts 2020), and therapeutic/caring surveillance (Lyon 2003, Moore 2011) — to offer a more grounded (and less deterministic) perspective on the development camera initiatives.

## Implications for Practice and Policy

The involvement of community-based organizations in the construction and operation of camera initiatives are of central importance to both practice and policy. The CBOs examined in this dissertation are beginning to exert a measure of influence over the construction of local camera systems and are playing an active role in future growth, especially in more affluent neighborhoods. An ongoing political challenge and continuing frustration for many digital rights activists is the limited transparency around surveillance

camera practices in an increasingly complicated public-private landscape (ACLU of Illinois 2011; Amnesty International 2021; Maass & Guariglia 2020). This is why exploring the local context is important, especially when it comes to understanding how non-state actors become involved in the construction and operation of camera schemes. Drawing from the findings, I outline several recommendations for those looking to address the increasing role of community and business organizations involved in urban camera networks as well as areas of further research.

*Transparency.* First, what is clear is that increased public transparency is needed in how these groups use cameras and interact with more formal police structures. CBOs assuming high levels of responsibility for camera schemes in public areas represents a notable step towards the fragmentation and dispersion of law enforcement duties (Loader 2002). CBOs can be quite active and autonomous in the domain of camera programs: they often initiate the construction of surveillance systems themselves, finance their development, encourage the forging of data-sharing relationships with the police, and retain much of the control over camera operations. Yet the actual camera practices of these groups remain largely invisible to outsiders, including oversight bodies and government regulators.

*Inclusive and Informed Community Consultation.* The findings from this dissertation also support the need for a more comprehensive community consultation process. Several participants acknowledged that support for cameras tends to come from a small but highly engaged segment of residents, and that wider community consultation or agreement is not secured prior to camera implementation. As a result, the views of 'vocal groups' who already support cameras, such as those who attend community

meetings or sit on the boards of the organization, are taken into consideration. Within this process, as one might expect, the implementation of cameras will not encounter any significant internal debate let alone opposition. Rather, forms of consultation carried out in this manner serve to legitimize public support for cameras (Fussey 2007). It is possible that if residents are informed about camera initiatives being proposed, more concerns will arise. For example, the Fairlawn Special Business District distributed a community survey to collect resident's views about installing cameras before implementation. As a result, many residents spoke out against cameras, which ultimately caused the initiative to be tabled. This suggests that when a more representative sample of residents are afforded the opportunity to offer their perspective, there is far greater resistance to installing neighborhood cameras.

*Community Technology Oversight Boards.* As described in chapter 1, camera initiatives examined in this dissertation were developed and implemented by CBOs (in isolation or collaboration with other CBOs) without direct feedback from other, potentially relevant stakeholders. One possible remedy is to adopt what Piza, Chu, and Welsh (2022) call Community Technology Oversight Boards (CTOBs). CTOBs are a collaborative body comprised of researchers, practitioners, and community leaders who seek to encourage police use of effective and equitable technologies. While this model was designed for law enforcement purposes, it could also hold promise for crime control technologies implemented by non-state actors as well. Critical to CTOBs is the establishment of metrics that evaluate whether a particular technology is "working" (Piza et al. 2021). Several participants mentioned having little idea how their camera programs

are going, if they have been effective, or if they made their communities safer, suggesting a need for more rigorous evaluations is needed.

According to Piza et al. (2021), CTOBs can offer evaluative measures that are "inclusive of additional societal factors— such as the social, political, legal, ethical, and psychological impact on communities—to assess whether a surveillance technology is "working" justly" (p. 216). Ongoing assessments or evaluations of whether cameras are 'working justly' may help overseeing any new purposes or re-tooling of CBO camera systems that may develop (e.g., surveillance creep) (Lyon 1994). For social scientists, the perception among some CBOs that cameras can be used for 'welfarist' purposes should raise concern, as it could expose already vulnerable populations to deeper and ongoing social monitoring. To this end, CTOBs can help to evaluate the impact and consequences of using cameras for purposes beyond their original intent.

In addition, since there is no reason to assume that the demand for cameras in more affluent communities will subside, CTOBs could be leveraged to better ensure that those who are overly surveilled are given greater say (that is, more decision-making power in the community consultation process). Piza et al. (2021) propose that stakeholders involved in CTOBs should include public interest groups with relevant expertise, such as the ACLU, but also individuals and communities most harmed by surveillance technologies. The people most likely to be the subject of surveillance are often the least likely to be involved in decisions over its implementation, thereby creating exclusionary decision-making processes (Fussy 2007). By explicitly including those who are likely to be the most negatively impacted by camera technology (e.g., youth, people

of color, unhoused individuals, etc.), CTOBs may help prevent powerful and already engaged groups from dominating community conversations.

*Policies and Safeguards.* Lastly, due to the controversy surrounding their increasing ubiquity, a CTOB could also offer a meaningful platform for negotiation around camera policies and safeguards to take place. One of the key findings from this dissertation is the extent to which the implementation of cameras by CBOs has become a polarized and divisive issue in St. Louis, especially as more progressive politicians speak out against their use. The surveillance negotiation process described in this paper (see chapter 5) highlights the degree to which the implementation of cameras has become based on disseminating crusading pro-camera messages and weakening any political opposition (Douillet & Dumoulin 2015). Participants looking to justify and legitimize their camera initiatives were prone to drawing on popular tropes and binary frames (e.g., 'nothing to fear, nothing to hide'), to dispel doubt and fend off criticism. On a practical level, the polarizing political rhetoric around cameras and the seeming need to marginalize and attack dissenting voices has become a barrier to implementing much needed oversight. In our interview, Sean of the Northgate SBD told me he would like to work collaboratively with those voicing camera concerns and try and reach a consensus, but dismisses that possibility amid the current political climate in St. Louis:

> [Our camera program] can be done, I hope, to the satisfaction of the biggest critics. But we don't know because we're not sitting down on the same table talking about this. What are your real genuine concerns and fears of this? And the police wouldn't sit down because [some critics] didn't want the police to sit down. You know, I could see the police not wanting to sit down with [people from the ACLU who have] made a career out of bashing the police. That's not going to be a productive meeting.

Due to perceived levels of hostility and disagreement between those who support cameras and those who oppose them, Sean appears to have little faith that he and camera critics

can come to the negotiating table and find common ground. Currently, there are few safeguards in place for business and community organizations who choose to implement and operate their own camera systems. These systems are entirely self-regulated and governed. Only one organization I spoke with, the Northgate SBD, has written formal policies. The district's policies state[8]:

- Cameras must have posted signs to indicate that the area is under surveillance.
- Security cameras will not be positioned in areas where there is a reasonable expectation of invasion of personal privacy. Security cameras will be positioned to record areas determined by the executive director.
- Only the executive director or others designated by the executive director are authorized to operate the security systems. Those with access to video records shall only view them "during the performance of their official duties" and must obey all privacy laws.
- Records are stored and retained for approximately 14 days. There is an exception granted, allowing the executive director to keep and review recordings as long as deemed necessary. The system automatically deletes recordings after 30 days.
- Records may be used to identify persons responsible for criminal activity and to assist law enforcement agencies. Only the executive director or those authorized by the director can release any video record to law enforcement or to any third party other than law enforcement.

While Northgate's policies address several oversight issues, the director is given considerable discretion, not formal regulators. To this end, CTOBs might be a viable avenue for constructing an overarching set of policies aimed at balancing transparency, digital privacy, and community safety.

*Pathways to Disrupt the Diffusion of Camera Programs*. Another practical implication of the findings is that they highlight some of the structural processes that make implementing alternatives to cameras so difficult among CBOs and, in doing so, illuminate some of the conditions under which other public safety approaches may be able to take place. CBOs appear to be highly institutionalized organizations that face

[8] At my request, the Northgate SBD provided me with a copy of their camera policy.

barriers when it comes to implementing solutions beyond the well-accepted strategies of "cops and cameras." I find that information exchanges among CBOs to be powerful, as they successfully propel the idea that cameras are the most 'appropriate' solution and therefore should be adopted (see chapter 4). Due to these organizational dynamics, participants will likely feel compelled to adopt cameras over other (and likely better) public safety strategies. Nonetheless, there are channels for CBOs to move beyond defaulting to cameras as well as some key entry points that anti-surveillance activist groups might be able to concentrate their efforts on. First, although there are clear local pressures that feed the adoption of cameras (e.g., police inadequacy and mimetic processes), there also exists reluctance, skepticism, and indifference among many CBOs about implementing cameras, suggesting that there is room for these reservations to be mobilized. The adoption of cameras is something that CBOs variously embrace, rework, and resist. This suggests there is considerable room from within CBOs for camera initiatives to be potentially dismantled and rejected.

A second, and perhaps more difficult, condition under which other public safety approaches may be able to take root is the establishment of reliable, well-understood, and effective crime prevention measures that could be employed in lieu of cameras. During data collection, I spoke with St. Louis Alderwoman Jasmine Clark, a supporter of the most recent bill that sought to increase oversight of surveillance technology in the city. Jasmine told me she believes that many community and business organizations in the city are choosing to adopt cameras because there is lack of alternatives to ensuring safety and security:

> There has not been an alternative vision in St Louis for crime reduction outside of the traditional arrest-and-incarcerate model and absent that vision there's nothing to, you know, tell constituents when they're having all of this crime happen about how to actually

> solve it. [You need to be] giving them information about a different vision and about why those tools don't work. And so I think it starts with leadership. And if your leadership is not challenging their constituents on some of these beliefs and giving them good information then, you know, you end up asking for the thing that you think is the easiest thing to fix the problem that you have.

It may be that until there are other proven community-based public safety alternatives out there, CBO leaders will remain hesitant about moving away from more traditional approaches. As Samuel of the Lakeview Neighborhood Association told me, there is an appetite to move beyond 'traditional' enforcement approaches, but often these alternatives are not widely accepted as falling under the banner of safety:

> You know, like, I think we should [re-envision public safety]. You know, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting [the same results]. So, like I think Cure Violence and any other number of initiatives that Mayor Jones talked about like, yeah, let's do it. Like why wouldn't we? Or even just do beautification the neighborhood. There was a thing in the *New York Times* the other day, there was some study done that was like just greening spaces and taking care of spaces like green spaces and parks. Like that's like a huge benefit to public safety. So, it's like, how do you convince people that that is public safety, you know?

Numerous participants expressed interest in piloting social worker programs and anti-violence programs, such as Cure Violence, but they currently have insufficient faith in these methods gaining any traction, especially among members who gravitate towards an enforcement-centered approach to public safety. Moreover, CBOs still have not figured out how their organizations, which often operate in small geographical areas, can support violence interrupter programs. As Amelia of the Oak Ledge CID told me in our interview:

> Yeah, I mean Cure Violence is a thing I'm looking at with like so much hope and expectation. And like I would love to be able to partner with them and, and you know, throw all the funding that I can towards that approach for this area. But also, you know, like running those sorts of programs on your own with this like small [commercial] strip is a challenge. It's a challenge.

This passage suggests that more needs to be done to find ways for community organizations to become involved in alternative approaches to safety.

Third, the findings here suggest that if one or more powerful community or business organizations in St. Louis did adopt public safety alternatives, they are likely to spread elsewhere. Reformers and policymakers can use the mimetic nature of organizational adaptation to generate movement away from cameras towards initiatives that have been shown to be more effective in reducing crime and preventing violence. More influential CBOs, such as Northgate SBD (arguably one of the most vocal, politically salient, and well-funded organizations examined), could be an important catalyst for change in the St. Louis region. If powerful CBOs are guided towards more effective public safety alternatives, it might lead other organizations in the network to follow suit.

## Conclusion and Future Research

The CBOs I spoke with are contributing to a growing patchwork of cameras in St. Louis that seems to show little signs of slowing. Accordingly, the development of camera programs by CBOs should be as transparent, democratic, and informed as possible. There is a need for formal written policies that govern the use of CBO cameras, which is currently lacking, as well as rigorous evaluation of current systems. When it comes to the implementation of cameras, more also needs to be done to encourage the use of effective and equitable surveillance practices by CBOs. This is especially pressing considering that community safety efforts stand to become even more influenced by surveillance technology, especially in whiter and more affluent neighborhoods. It is easy for surveillance systems to be implemented quickly and in a way that fails to significantly improve safety, exacerbate inequities, or both.

This examination of camera systems in St. Louis also reveals a further nuancing of the various processes that drive the implementation of private cameras in public spaces, suggesting much more research is needed in this area. This dissertation is limited to leaders of organizations in one Midwestern city; thus, I encourage future research to explore the involvement of other community stakeholders, organizations, and local actors in the creation and diffusion of surveillance systems. As mentioned in the introduction, several investigative journalists have brought attention to state-initiated surveillance programs that give residents free or discounted cameras if they agree to supply footage to officials (see, for example, Hendrickson 2020). Explorations of these camera schemes may provide more insight into the actors and forces driving camera expansion, especially in more residential areas where research is still lacking. Moreover, future research could concentrate on the perspectives of the police and other government officials (e.g., local policymakers, elected officials, etc.). An inclusion of these views would give a more multi-dimensional understanding of the growth of public-private camera systems in urban areas today.

While this dissertation is not intended to be generalizable, it is worth noting some of the local factors that are likely shaping the findings presented. To a significant extent, the desire to implement cameras is an extension of a longer history in St. Louis of wealthier neighborhoods, especially in the city's central corridor and several prosperous residential areas on the south side, fighting for more (and ostensibly better) policing. This "do it yourself" approach to security has become commonplace in St. Louis: many city and neighborhood leaders have concluded that paying for supplemental measures, often in the form of cameras and secondary patrols, is the only way to get adequate policing

(Kholer 2022). Unlike wealthier neighborhoods, more divested areas often can't afford to outfit their neighborhoods with private security measures, which can reify racial and economic disparities. St. Louis is perhaps an extreme example, but this is a pattern that can be found all across the country. It is not uncommon for affluent neighborhoods to buy more forms of protection (technology or otherwise) because they feel as though local law enforcement is not doing enough to address crime and ensure community safety (see Barrett 2022; Hogan 2021; Myers 2022).

Lastly, I recognize that the neighborhood groups I spoke with are seeking to improve community safety, however it may be defined, as part of their organizational mandate. Addressing local demands for safety is a tall order, even in the small geographical areas in which these groups operate. CBO leaders are not only being put in a difficult (and often overwhelming) position of arbitrating over whether cameras should be installed, but also navigating questions of system design, operational procedures, and surveillance practices. The point of this research is not to condemn these types of organizations for implementing camera initiatives; rather, the point is to use the research collected to inform our understanding of why so many communities, especially those that are already relatively safe, are assuming the responsibility for such expensive and labor-intensive projects.

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**APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT**

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Justice

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# Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Community Views on Surveillance Cameras

HSC Approval Number _____

Principal Investigator: Claire Greene, MA_____ PI's Phone Number:_[redacted]

## Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study is to better understand what community leaders think about surveillance cameras. You have been invited to participate in this research because you may have some knowledge about surveillance cameras in St. Louis. Each participant is expected to sit for one interview lasting 45 minutes to 1 hour. Participation in this research is voluntary. Participants are free to decline to respond to any questions that they do not want to answer and may stop the interview at any time.

The primary risks associated with participating in this study are mild boredom, fatigue, or discomfort with answering some of the questions. In addition, because you will be asked questions about your personal background and the organization for which you work, although your name and the name of your organization will not be used in the study, you may risk being identified through the information provided in your interview.

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Claire Greene. The purpose of this research is to understand what community leaders think about surveillance cameras, identify why surveillance cameras are located in some areas of the city more than others, and provide insights on the future of surveillance camera use in St. Louis. You have been invited to participate in this research because you have some knowledge about surveillance camera initiatives in St. Louis.

2. a) Your participation will involve one interview to be held in quiet location or by Zoom virtual conferencing. With your consent, I would like to audio record the interview with Zoom or a digital audio recorder (no video will be recorded). This audio file will be uploaded to a password protected computer, accessible only to the principal investigator. The only identifying information on the audio file will be an identification number which will be assigned to participants. The principal investigator or a professional service will turn the audio file into text. Information that can identify you or others, such the names of individuals, specific places, and organizations, will be removed from the text file and will be replaced with alternate names (i.e., pseudonyms). Only the principal investigator will have access to the text. The digital files containing the audio recordings and the text will be password protected. Approximately 50 participants may be involved in this research at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be 45 minutes to 1 hour. Participants may be asked to participate in multiple interviews.

3. The primary risks associated with participating in this study are mild boredom, fatigue, or discomfort with answering some of the questions. In addition, because you will be asked questions about your personal background and the organization for which you work, there is a risk of a loss of confidentiality.

4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

5. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate in this research study or withdraw your consent at any time.

6. I will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity, and any organization with which you are associated will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this study. I will do all that is legally in my power not to publicly identify you (or anyone you mention) by name. If you choose to participate you have the right to review and/or edit the audio recording. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection) that would lead to disclosure of your data as well as any other information collected by the researcher.

8. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Claire Greene at [redacted] or the Faculty Advisor, Lee Slocum at [redacted]. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research, at 516-5897.

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Can you describe how you became involved in your organization? Perhaps talk about what drew you to it?
a. Can you describe the origins of your organization? Why did the group emerge?
b. Can you discuss some of the top safety concerns of the area in which your organization is located?
c. Have these safety concerns changed over time?
d. Can you describe what the organization has done in the past to address public safety issues? Are there any key initiatives you can point to?
2. Can you describe the origins of your camera program? What originally led the organization to adopt cameras?
a. Were there primary reasons or motivations for wanting to implement them? Were there particular issues you were hoping to address?
3. Can you describe some of the details of your camera initiative? What is in place? How many cameras? The placement of the cameras?
4. Can you describe what the adoption process looked like? Was the process easy or did you run into challenges?
a. Who was primarily involved? Were there any community meetings?
5. Did the organization consider issues of monitoring, data storage or data sharing as you consider implementing cameras?
a. Was there any push back or hesitancy? If yes, from whom? What were the concerns? How did you and the organization address those concerns?
6. Do you have a sense how the camera program is going now?
7. Do you know how or in what ways the cameras are primarily used? Are there any examples you can point to?
8. Have there been any challenges that have emerged since the cameras were put in place. If yes, do you have any examples? Do you know of anything that has been done to address those concerns?
9. Do you get the sense that the program has been successful in what was intended to achieve? That is, has it been effective?
10. If you could go back and do your camera initiative over again, is there anything you wish you had done differently?
11. In your experience at the organization, why do you think there has become such an emphasis on implementing cameras among neighborhood organizations? In other words, why do you think local neighborhood groups like yours have taken upon themselves to install cameras?
12. What are your personal views on local neighborhood groups like yours taking a larger role in initiating camera programs on the local level? Do you think it is a good thing that camera initiatives have become so localized?
13. What is something that you and others at the organization are most looking forward to in the coming year(s)?
14. Is there anything that has not been discussed that you feel is important to this study that you would like to share?