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An Examination of Neighborhood Watch
in Missoula, Montana from 1983 through 1986


by

Frederick M. Schaffer, Jr.

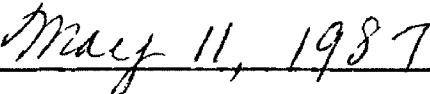
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I. INTRODUCTION, HISTORY

Introduction

Community crime prevention may be viewed as a process that has evolved over the last twenty-five years. The most generally recognized crime prevention programs are Block Watch, Operation ID (property engraving), Crimestoppers and McGruff (the bloodhound puppet who tells children about crime and prevention). Education, recreation and employment programs for teenagers, as well as community redesign and inner city economic development have also been classified as community crime prevention strategies.

What follows is an examination of the Neighborhood Watch crime prevention program in Missoula, Montana. The assessment is based upon an analysis of the three benefits most commonly associated with the program: community building, crime reduction and cost effectiveness. A brief review of community crime prevention literature provides the background material to define the hypothesized results of Neighborhood Watch. Recent research, however, suggests the practical benefits of Block Watch to be largely unsubstantiated. The methodology to measure program results in Missoula follows the procedures used in two established analyses of Neighborhood Watch. For this examination of

Missoula's program, baseline data is compiled from personal and phone interviews, census data, police department crime reports and from the City budget.

History

Block Watch/Neighborhood Watch, is a program that brings citizens together with police to address residential crime, specifically burglary. Neighborhood Watch grew out of the social objectives of the sixties. The program was a strategy introduced by the National Sheriffs Association in 1972 to give citizens the opportunity to participate in the law enforcement process. Henig suggests that three events triggered the creation of Neighborhood Watch: the gradual alienation of police from the community, the failure of police to control crime, and the riots that occurred in U.S. cities between 1964 and 1968.¹ But while the program was a response to the social and political environment, the Neighborhood Watch concept had its roots both in 1960's community oriented criminal justice theory and common sense burglary prevention practices. Complementing the "across the hall" or "over the back fence" informality of this approach to community crime prevention is a more formal set of surveillance and property protection practices to reduce the opportunity for burglary.

Neighborhood Watch is well known because of its wide-spread sponsorship by law enforcement agencies and

community organizations; because of its coverage in the media; because of its popularity as expressed in national polls; and because of its success at reducing neighborhood crime.² Neighborhood Watch is supported as a strategy to reestablish the sense of community that may be lacking in the modern urban and suburban environment. In contradiction to anonymity and isolation, Neighborhood Watch is a voluntary, self-help program by which a community can supposedly rebuild the processes of informal social control.

Philosophical Background

One problem criminal justice scholars were concerned with during the 1960's, and since, was the reported sense of isolation, fear and retreat behind locked doors brought about by rising crime. Addressing this trend, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals in 1973 reported that "...although these prophylactic measures may be steps in self protection, they can lead to a lessening of the bonds of mutual assistance and neighborliness."³ Community disintegration is the subject of recent research. Crime, incivility, distrust, fear and isolation are believed to occur when informal social control processes that maintain order erode.

The concept behind informal social control which relates to crime prevention was described by Jane Jacobs in 1961:

The first thing to understand is that public peace ...is not kept primarily by the police, necessary

as they are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves.⁴

The principle of informal social control, according to Rosenbaum, shaped the development of community crime prevention strategies like Neighborhood Watch, the "hope" being that a model bringing neighborhood residents together would strengthen community cohesion and rebuild a sense of informal social control.⁵ The expectation was that the "watch model" would reduce the fear of crime and the trend toward isolation by increasing neighborhood solidarity.

The Neighborhood Watch strategy pairs the informal social control-community building concept with a formal set of surveillance and property protection practices which are intended to reduce the opportunity for criminal activity to occur. The opportunity reduction model is derived from research which suggests that physical factors contribute to crime and if these factors are altered, the opportunity for crime may be reduced.

Defensible space theory and crime prevention through environmental design are built on the premise that there must be natural surveillance for residents to watch the neighborhood in order to reduce the opportunity for crime.⁶ As explained by Rosenbaum,

Neighborhood Watch, one could argue, was historically built on research showing an inverse relationship between surveillance opportunities and crime rates. Through social rather than

physical means Watches seek to encourage intentional surveillance rather than merely create natural surveillance opportunities.

Neighborhood Watch was designed to incorporate surveillance behavior into a community so that residents could be the "eyes and ears" for the police. Ostensibly, residents watching send a message to criminals that the risk of apprehension is high in the neighborhood. Associated with watching, residents are encouraged to take individual measures to protect themselves and their property. Accordingly, this response should reduce the opportunities to engage in personal and property offenses in a particular neighborhood.⁸ The surveillance and personal property protective measures of the opportunity reduction model suggest that fear of crime would diminish as residents protect community, family and property.⁹

To summarize, Neighborhood Watch combines the two fundamental perspectives on community crime prevention. Informal social control theoretically prevents residential crime through building a sense of community by integrating neighbors. While surveillance and personal property protective measures (giving a residence an "occupied-at-the-moment" look and properly securing all doors, while the homeowner is away) help reduce the vulnerability to residential burglary. This individual response to crime control hopes to prevent property victimization.

Program

To organize a Watch in an urban or suburban area, residents, in cooperation with the local Neighborhood Watch board or law enforcement agency, plan an initial meeting. At the orientation meeting, a local crime prevention officer describes the local crime problem, discusses neighborhood surveillance, and explains how to report suspicious or criminal activity as well as the proper ways to lock or secure home and property. Interested residents decide upon block captains and co-captains, who are then screened by the law enforcement agency. After clearance, block captains sign-up residents for the home security audit which is administered by a police officer. When a qualifying number of surveys have been performed, members buy signs to identify their blocks as part of Neighborhood Watch. In order to maintain the interest and education of block leaders, quarterly meetings are held at which guest speakers discuss pertinent subjects. Most watch programs assess members yearly dues (in Missoula dues are \$2.00) to cover newsletter printing and associated program expenses. To sustain interest among block residents, block leaders host functions such as potlucks or rummage sales. At these meetings, members discuss local crime problems, their perceptions of the problems and what they think can be done about them.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW, INFORMAL HYPOTHESIS

Program Expectation

Criminal justice scholars, law enforcement agencies and community organizers claim that Neighborhood Watch develops community interaction, controls crime and fear of crime, and is cost-effective. For example, the evaluation of Seattle's Block Watch program shows reduction in residential burglary when target neighborhoods and control neighborhoods are compared.¹ Seattle, also, finds Neighborhood Watch to be a cost-effective strategy to prevent residential burglary.² Other programs, including those in Billings, Great Falls and Missoula, assert that the program reduces residential burglary, and that it does so at minimal cost to taxpayers.³ The criminal justice scholars, Lurigio and Rosenbaum, however, raise questions as to the methods used to evaluate crime prevention programs. They report that many evaluations are "...characterized by weak designs, an under-use of statistical significance tests, a poor conceptualization and definition of treatments, the absence of a valid and reliable measurement of program implementation and outcomes, and a consistent failure to address competing explanations for observed effects."⁴

In contrast to the sound Seattle program and its credible evaluation, Rosenbaum's study of Chicago's Neighborhood Watch program finds the expectations for this

crime prevention strategy problematic. According to the author, "...the three neighborhoods with the strongest evidence of program implementation showed significant increases in fear of crime, perceptions of the crime problem, vicarious victimization, concern about the future of the neighborhood, and likelihood of moving out."⁵

Conflicting results between verifiable programs, plus the use of questionable methods to substantiate many program outcomes, leads Rosenbaum to the question, what is wrong. Does the Chicago case represent poor program implementation or do inconsistent program results suggest failure of the assumptions behind Neighborhood Watch?⁶ Rosenbaum suggests that "...given a very serious effort by experienced organizers to implement the Neighborhood Watch program in one neighborhood, there is some rationale for pointing the finger at the theoretical model guiding these actions."⁷

Theoretical Assumptions and Behavior

As mentioned above, the informal social control and opportunity reduction theories underlie the "watch" model. Rosenbaum isolates five assumptions about neighborhood processes and social behavior inherent in these theories in order to examine the possible causes for variant outcomes among Block Watch programs. Four of the five assumptions essentially relate to informal social control, here referred to as the process of community building. These assumptions

are that: (1) Neighborhood Watch can easily be "implemented" in a community to provide citizens the opportunity to participate in anti-crime activities; (2) anti-crime activities invite "voluntary participation" regardless of social, demographic or neighborhood character; (3) "social interaction and discussion resulting from block meetings bring about consensus, reduce fear of crime and motivate immediate and positive action after meetings"; (4) "...a strategy for community self-regulation stimulates citizens to sustain and strengthen the activity."⁸ The fifth assumption regarding opportunity reduction, here called impact on crime, is that "...teaching citizens how to watch and report suspicious behavior, and to protect personal property reduces crime and fear of crime."⁹

Community Building

Rosenbaum delves into the literature and refutes these four assumptions of informal social control. With regard to the underlying proposition that Neighborhood Watch can easily be "implemented," the author cites the following contrary evidence. First, a 1982 Gallup poll indicates that 80 percent of the nation would "'like to have a Crime Watch program in their neighborhood' and 81 percent would like to join; however, Gallup reports that only 5 percent surveyed belong to a 'local Crime Watch group.'"¹⁰

Despite low citizen interest nationally, some local programs have been successfully implemented. The Detroit

Police Department and Seattle Community Crime Prevention Program initiate, implement and maintain Block Watches in residential neighborhoods. But, these are unique programs. "Systematic" and "coordinated" activities "...do not exist in many places" according to the Preliminary Assessment of Neighborhood Watch, prepared by Garofalo and McLeod.¹¹ And too, Rosenbaum adds that "...because law enforcement and community agencies tend to count successes in terms of quantity rather than quality, Watches that are planned, targeted, and organized are exceptions. Law enforcement and community agencies often help set-up blocks but maintenance beyond the initial meeting is rare."¹²

Evidence concerning the second assumption, that anti-crime activities invite voluntary participation regardless of social, demographic or neighborhood character, refutes the assumption. Numerous studies indicate a general association between political participation and socio-economic class.¹³ Garafalo and McLeod, find participants to be predominately white, have middle or upper incomes, are single family homeowners, and have occupied their homes for at least 5 years.¹⁴

It is further suggested that informal social control is a middle class phenomena. Greenberg observes that culturally heterogeneous, transient, low income neighborhoods are unlikely to develop informal mechanisms for social control.¹⁵ And, within such neighborhoods, the study of

Minneapolis's crime prevention program by Silloway and McPherson reports that, after systematic and coordinated efforts to implement Block Watch, voluntary participation remained low.¹⁶

The third proposition relevant to developing a sense of community assumes that social interaction and discussion resulting from meetings bring about consensus, reduce fear of crime, and motivate immediate and positive action after meetings. Field work indicates that discussions of the local crime problem and prevention practices, establishing a phone tree to inform members of crime or suspicious individuals in the neighborhood and open-ended exchange of thoughts form the content of Block meetings.¹⁷ But, seldom do meetings have a strict format.

Rosenbaum suggests the problematical assumption "...is that local residents will agree as to the nature of the crime problem and then agree that Block Watch is the best way to respond."¹⁸ Rather than developing a common point of view, culturally heterogeneous neighborhoods hold differing views as to the "causes, nature and appropriate responses to the local crime problem."¹⁹ For example, in those areas where crime is viewed as the result of unemployment, drug abuse or poverty, "interested residents would be likely to address these 'root causes' of crime."²⁰ The social problems approach focuses both on youth oriented recreation, employment and education, as well as maintenance and

improvement of the physical and economic environment of the community as it affects adult and youth populations.²¹ On the other hand, in those areas of the neighborhood whose residents perceive crime as perpetrated by youthful vandals, the opportunity reduction approach, which is the basis of the Block Watch, would be the likely crime prevention strategy.

That block meetings reduce fear of crime derives from Schacter's work indicating social interaction provides people with the assurance that something can be done which in turn reduces fear of crime.²² Rosenbaum cites evidence which suggests that meetings can, also, heighten "fear of crime, and may reduce feelings of efficacy and social cohesion."²³ That is, Block Watch participants' discussion of local criminal activity, and home security surveys may increase anxiety and fear. Meetings, then, can produce a variety of responses from reducing to heightening fear of crime.

Similarly, increased cohesion of a neighborhood may produce not only neighborliness but also "collective polarization."²⁴ A strategy to strengthen group identification may cause intergroup discrimination "in favor of one's own group."²⁵ This research suggests that prejudice and hostility toward outsiders could result from crime prevention meetings, if meeting content and discussion are disregarded.

The fourth assumption underlying the community building aspect of Neighborhood Watch, by Rosenbaum, states: "A strategy for community self-regulation stimulates citizens to sustain and strengthen the activity." Assuming implementation of Block Watch, maintenance of local groups is inconsistent. With the passage of time, research shows decline in participation and discontinuation of groups frequently occurs.²⁶ Decline in activity is due to a number of reasons, and researchers in the field stress maintenance of programs. But, because of the single issue focus of Neighborhood Watch, "once the crime problem appears to have dissipated, the reason for the group's existence has also been removed."²⁷

Impact on Crime

Finally, it is assumed that if the community building model were set in motion, this would reduce the level of criminal activity and disorder in the neighborhood, thereby setting the stage for a reduction in fear of crime and other neighborhood improvements. The problematic nature of this assumption, Rosenbaum suggests, is that neither informal social control nor opportunity reduction models indicate how to regulate behavior of residents.²⁸ "First, the social control model suggests that Watch programs will restore a sense of community (through increased social interaction), and this will pressure the criminally inclined to conform to the norms of the community."²⁹ Social control theory does

not suggest the mechanisms by which a Watch group can exercise control over non-members. For non-members or outsiders who feel no pressure to follow the norm, social control processes will have little influence. Perhaps, it has been more accurately observed that the processes of informal social control are the outgrowth of a community itself. According to Dubow and Emmons, "The descriptions of informal social control that are found in the literature---illuminate processes that are the outgrowth of unplanned social forces at work over a long period of time."³⁰

Furthermore, the opportunity reduction model, which places great emphasis on surveillance and target hardening measures, suggests these measures will reduce the opportunity for neighborhood criminal activity. There is no clear evidence on the impact of surveillance. Field trials indicate that it is difficult for citizens to "recognize an incident, to realize it is a crime, and to intervene to provide assistance."³¹ Rosenbaum indicates there is also a body of literature suggesting limitations on property protection devices for controlling crime.³² Furthermore, surveillance and property protection devices may simply move crime around.

Rosenbaum's observation on the limitations of property protection devices suggests the opportunity reduction model fails to consider the motivation of the offender. Opportunity may not be the entire motivating force behind

the crime. Wilson cites evidence indicating that criminal activity is a matter of rational choice, perhaps "genetically activated."³³ From this perspective, surveillance and property protection devices will simply displace crime geographically, temporarily, or the criminal may switch to a different crime. Consequently, while the approach may reduce crime in well organized blocks, if criminal activity is displaced to an adjacent neighborhood the benefit to the entire community is questionable.

Practice: Informal Hypothesis

Critical examination of the literature concerning the assumptions vital to Neighborhood Watch illustrates the nature of the gulf between expectation and practice. In general, Block Watch, as presently conceived, is a problematic strategy for shaping social behavior or preventing burglary. The study of Missoula's Neighborhood Watch program employs the work of Rosenbaum in examining the impact of Block Watch within this community. Though breaking no new ground, by replicating this line of research, the Missoula study adds data to the discussion of the validity and implications of the assumptions that underlie the program. The proposition being examined is whether Missoula's Neighborhood Watch program is effective at building a sense of community and reducing residential

crime. In addition, the impacts of both community building and crime prevention are compared to the costs of the service, to assess the program's cost effectiveness. To assess budgetary impact, the Seattle study method is used. The significance of the study is to assess the program's real benefits. From this information, a better methodology to test program results may be derived, or more directly arguments can be developed that would support continuation, modification, or cancellation of Block Watch.

III. DATA COLLECTION

Scope of Research

In order to measure the present effectiveness of Neighborhood Watch in the City of Missoula, three central aspects of the program are examined. Community building and crime impact are examined in this study using the assumptions of Rosenbaum, reviewed above. An analysis of program benefits versus cost is drawn from the model used in the Seattle study.

History and Location of the Block Watch Study Area

Missoula's Neighborhood Watch began in January 1983. The program was co-sponsored by the Missoula Police Department and Chamber of Commerce. Sanction from Department Administrators underwrote establishment of the program and a \$100 donation from the Chamber provided for its preliminary organization. Reasons given to support organization of the program by the Chamber were that: 1) Neighborhood Watch would promote better police-community public relations; 2) it would be an effective means to treat residential crimes in an era of shrinking public resources and, 3) Block Watch would provide a nationally recognized community crime prevention program enhancing the image of Missoula.¹

The first block of citizens who volunteered to form a group was in the neighborhood adjacent to Paxson school. As of July, 1986, sixteen other block groups have incorporated within the city. Groups have also formed in the County but are not part of this study. Overseeing the City groups is a three member executive board, who are elected by block captains, and the Crime Prevention Unit of the Police Department.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Program Implementation

The first assumption isolated by Rosenbaum is that Block Watch can easily be implemented in a community to provide citizens the opportunity to participate in anti-crime activities. Citizen participation and percent of public budget earmarked for Block Watch are the elements used to assess this assumption. Data to measure citizen participation came both from interviews with block captains and a member of the Watch board, and from the 1980 census. The 1987 City budget provided the figures to estimate the Police Department's funding of Neighborhood Watch.

Participation in Missoula Block Watch is approximately four percent among city residents 25 years and older.³ Participation by Missoulians is comparable to that of five percent which Gallup found in the 1982 survey of citizens

belonging to a "local crime watch group," but less than the 1986 figure of seven percent recently published by the National Criminal Justice Research Service.⁴ The higher national figure may not reflect participation rates in a city the size of Missoula. Yet, the issue is that 80 percent of the people Gallup surveyed indicated they would like to join an anti-crime activity. Assuming a similar percent of Missoula residents would like to join, the actual behavior suggests implementation of Block Watch is not easy.

Table I
 Estimated Cost of Neighborhood Watch for
 Fiscal Year 1987 by the
 Missoula Police Department

<u>Direct Cost</u>	<u>Hours Per Year</u>	<u>Hourly Operating Cost (Less Capital Cost)</u>	<u>Cost Per Year</u>
<u>Personnel:</u>			
Officer	260	14.59	\$3,798.40
Clerk	168	8.69	<u>1,459.92</u>
Subtotal:			<u>5,253.32</u>
 <u>Indirect Cost</u>			
Supplies) estimated as 13.6%		\$ 714.48
Purchased Services)	of personnel services ^a		
Total:			<u>\$5,968.00</u>

Source: City of Missoula, Fiscal Year 1987 Budget,
 Police (Missoula, Montana: City of Missoula,
 1986), p. 97

^aThe indirect cost figures were estimated by the Assistant Finance Officer for the City. Interview with Chuck Stearns, Assistant Finance Officer for the City of Missoula, Missoula, Montana, 15 August 1986.

Measuring police budget devoted to Block Watch also suggests dedication is more apparent than real. In Missoula, investment by the department is approximately \$6,000 or .3 percent of the fiscal year 1987 budget, less capital cost (see Table I). Though this figure is imprecise, law enforcement agencies nationwide devote about two percent of the budget to crime prevention. The Missoula Police Department's total crime prevention budget, which includes the Crime Stoppers program, Operation ID and McGruff is approximately \$12,000, or .6 percent of the budget. These figures are estimates because crime prevention is not budgeted as a sole activity. Rather, crime prevention is a function of the Uniform Patrol Unit. This suggests departmental support for citizen-oriented, anti-crime activities is a secondary agenda item, further indicating that Neighborhood Watch is difficult to implement.

Voluntary Participation

The second assumption concerning neighborhood process and social behavior is that anti-crime activities invite voluntary participation regardless of socio-economic standing. To assess this assumption, observation of the areas participating in Block Watch and evaluation of efforts to extend the program throughout the City were considered. Location of Watch groups within the City and program growth

information came from interviews with the officer in charge of the Crime Prevention Unit and from a member of the Watch board.

The predominant number of participating blocks are found along south Higgins Avenue and upper Whitaker Drive. These neighborhoods are comprised mostly of single family housing units. Observation shows participants in Missoula Watch activities are of the middle and upper class.

But, while a few blocks have joined in the middle class Franklin and Willard neighborhoods, neither Northside, Rattlesnake, University area, nor neighborhoods north of Orange and west of South Sixth have groups. No formal drive exists to extend the program by the Department or Watch board. However, informal methods - announcements on KPAX-TV, "Community Calendar", articles in the Missoulian, word-of-mouth - have yielded the incorporation of a few new groups.⁵ Even though drafting of, or volunteering of, new groups averages about five per year, it is difficult to assess efforts to build Block Watch without data from comparable programs outside of Missoula.⁶ An examination of neighborhoods where the program has spread, however, indicates a socio-economic bias of Neighborhood Watch.

The findings here are similar to those of Garafalo and McLeod, though not as extensive. The assessment of programs throughout the nation suggests participants are predominately white, have middle or upper class incomes, and are single

family homeowners who have occupied their homes for at least five years.⁷ It may be deduced from this information that the limited acceptance of the program in middle income neighborhoods, which are those most likely to participate in a voluntary activity, indicates that prospects to implement Neighborhood Watch City-wide are not hopeful. Within the low income neighborhoods of Minneapolis, Silloway and McPherson report that, after systematic and coordinated efforts to implement Block Watch, voluntary participation remained low.⁸ This may further suggest the limits of expansion for Neighborhood Watch in Missoula. Considering this information, participation in Neighborhood Watch, as presently conceived, is probably limited to a portion of the City's middle and upper classes.

BLOCK WATCH MEETINGS

A phone questionnaire conducted with seven of the eighteen City block captains provides the information to examine the third assumption (see Appendix 1 for questionnaire). This assumption states that social interaction and discussion resulting from block meetings brings about consensus, reduces fear of crime, and motivates immediate positive action after meetings.

One question asked block captains to rank four selected aspects of Block Watch from most to least important. The citizens ranked benefits in the following order: 1)

information on burglary prevention practices; 2) neighborhood activity; 3) police/community relations; and, 4) civic responsibility. Second to victimization prevention information the captains ranked neighborhood interaction as a benefit resulting from the program. Unsolicited comments suggest that neighbors who did not know one another became acquainted through the program. This information establishes that for these respondents involvement in Neighborhood Watch led to social interaction.

As to whether block meetings, which provide for social interaction and discussion, bring about consensus, reduce fear and motivate immediate response is the next point for consideration. Respondents agreed when asked about the causes, nature and appropriate response to the local crime problem. The captains volunteered that the problem is the result of teenage vandals, group-home people, and/or renters. That poverty, drug abuse, or unemployment was the root cause of Missoula's crime problem was not mentioned. Interviewees thought the best response was to lock-down personal property. Neither youth programs nor economic development were mentioned as solutions to vandalism.

Turning to reduction in fear of crime as a result of program involvement, respondents said that understanding and installing burglary prevention devices was the basic reason they felt an increase in household and neighborhood safety. Factors mentioned by block captains that added to the sense

of security were: a) the increase in police responsiveness to Watch neighborhoods; b) the opportunity to ask neighbors to watch their home; and, c) the signing of Block Watch neighborhoods. Despite the singularly positive security-response of captains, the questionnaire was not able to determine how much information would increase fear of crime. As well, the sample size was too small to measure with any degree of certainty whether or not meetings helped to reduce fear of crime.

The last element postulated as arising from meetings is that meetings motivate immediate positive action. This was not well covered in this study. Two questions weakly probed the possibility of intergroup discrimination arising from this voluntary, self-selection program. Block Captains mentioned that teenage vandals, group-home people, and renters were responsible for residential burglary, but none indicated an overt incidence of calling the police to simply report a stranger in the neighborhood. Another element of post-meeting activity is application of Neighborhood Watch information. Captains said installation of burglary prevention devices were made after meetings. A comparison between a neighborhood exposed and one unexposed to Neighborhood Watch was not performed. Thus, determining whether installation of devices was the result of neighborhood meetings is not possible.

The foregoing tends to affirm the assumption that meetings bring about social integration. Without interviewing non-participants, though, it is difficult to infer whether behaviors which distinguish participants from non-participants are due to participation in the program or to pre-existing differences between groups. Criminal justice researchers suggest that an experiment designed only to test participants threatens the validity of research.⁹ This leaves open the question whether introduction of Neighborhood Watch in other neighborhoods would be likely to bring about the hoped for results of achieving consensus, reducing fear of crime and motivating positive action after meetings than it has in Watch neighborhoods.

Activity Maintenance

The fourth assumption about neighborhood processes and social behavior underlying the program is that such a strategy for community self-regulation stimulates citizens to sustain and strengthen the activity. Information on maintenance and expansion came from the Police Department's crime prevention officer, a member of the Watch board, and interviews with block captains.

At present, the Department is withdrawing from its central role. The crime prevention officer suggested Neighborhood Watch would be more effective as an independent community-based organization with informal affiliation to

the Department. Shortage of time and funds, necessary for maintenance and expansion, are the reasons given for the Department's position.¹⁰ This suggests the Department defines its present role toward Block Watch simply as program initiator.

While the Department is apparently drawing back, the executive board and block captains actively maintain established groups. A core group of people, the 18 block captains, maintain the 350 household program. According to interviews with block captains, several maintenance activities are performed. These include: handing out monthly "bulletins," giving literature to new residents, speaking to non-member block residents about Block Watch, hosting semi-annual block get-togethers, and organizing quarterly block captain meetings. The main complaint of those captains interviewed is that the few do the work. This applies to extension of the program. Because organization of new groups is left to the interested in other neighborhoods, few come forward to volunteer. In Missoula, established block groups may become inactive but disincorporation is infrequent. Expansion of the program is apparently slow and confined to middle and upper class neighborhoods. This suggests only modest dedication on behalf of citizens to sustain and strengthen the program. Decline in participation and discontinuation of groups is not as pronounced in Missoula as nationally.¹¹

Impact on Crime

The final assumption of Rosenbaum which directs this examination states: if set in motion, the community building actions implied by this strategy "would reduce the level of criminal activity and disorder in the neighborhood, thereby setting the stage for a reduction in fear of crime and other neighborhood improvements."¹² Assuming implementation of Neighborhood Watch, would the program be capable of controlling crime and disorder? As reviewed earlier, the models underlying Neighborhood Watch are problematic. Neither the informal social control model nor opportunity reduction model suggest how to control individuals who do not conform to social norms. With regard to informal social controls, DuBow and Emmons suggest norms of behavior are an outgrowth of a community itself rather than a set of standards that can be transplanted to another.¹³ The literature also suggests limitations to opportunity reduction strategy and burglary prevention devices for controlling neighborhood criminal activity.¹⁴ Testing the theoretical and practical limitations of the models in the community is beyond the scope of this examination. Rather, this study is concerned specifically with testing results of the Block Watch in certain blocks and comparing these results with similar non-participating blocks to determine the accomplishment of Block Watch in Missoula and the extent to which Missoula confirms program expectations.

Description of Crime Reporting Districts and Crime in Missoula

The Missoula Police Department separates the City into 31 Crime Reporting Districts. For example, districts 3 and 15 include the uptown area, district 34 takes in the County fairgrounds, Sentinel High School and Holiday Village Shopping Center, and district 13 comprises the area about Southgate Mall. Residential neighborhoods include the "northside" represented by districts 2, 4 and 7, the Franklin and Willard School areas are districts 11 and 12, the University-Hellgate High School areas are identified by districts 14, 39 and 52, and the neighborhoods about Highlands Golf Course by district 42.

To facilitate the compilation and comparison of criminal activity within and among different jurisdictions, police and sheriff departments in the U.S. follow a uniform method of reporting crime, the Uniform Crime Report (UCR). The Report keys the index crime into crime reporting districts. The index crimes are homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, theft and motor vehicle theft.

UCR data is available in Missoula for the years 1982 to 1985. As an overview, total index crime for the City fell by 6.5 percent in 1985 after rising slightly from 1982 to 1984 (see Table II). Property crime fell by 7.2 percent in 1985, but the most noticeable statistic is crimes against people, which rose by 12 percent.

Judged simply by index crime, the crime-prone areas are the urban and shopping areas, mentioned above (see Table III for a comparison of index crime in selected urban/shopping areas and residential crime reporting districts). Index crime for urban/shopping areas recorded between 280 and 460 incidents for 1985 with district 13 (the area about Southgate Mall) being the highest. In contrast, residential districts report criminal activity ranging from 4 to 157 incidents, with the "northside" districts recording the most crimes and Highland Golf Course districts recording the least.

Table II
TOTAL OF INDEX CRIME, CITY OF MISSOULA, MONTANA FOR
THE YEARS 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985

CRIMINAL OFFENSE	1982	1983	1984	1985
Homicide	3	3	4	1
Rape	8	12	19	19
Robbery	20	16	19	15
Aggravated Assault	60	72	57	81
Subtotals: Crimes Against Persons	91	103	99	113
Burglary	453	485	390	221
Theft	2,446	2,519	2,686	2,633
Motor Vehicle Theft	124	123	152	156
Subtotal: Property Crimes	3,023	3,127	3,228	3,010
TOTAL	3,114	3,230	3,327	3,123

SOURCE: Missoula Police Department, Uniform Crime Report
(Missoula, Montana: Missoula Police Department,
1982 to 1985)

TABLE III

Index Crime for Selected Urban/Shopping and Residential Crime Reporting Districts, 1985

Index Crime	Urban/Shopping Districts				Residential Districts								
	3	15	34	13	2	4	7	14	39	52	42	61	
Homicide	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rape/Self Defense	19	14	2	8	6	6	15	6	1	1	4	1	
Robbery	3	3	0	2	3	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	
Aggravated Assault	70	40	31	42	21	14	27	5	5	1	3	0	
Sub Total: Crimes Against persons	93	57	33	52	30	20	43	11	6	5	7	1	
Burglary	34	36	10	18	6	9	10	0	2	1	1	1	
Theft	226	212	227	366	73	62	120	36	13	68	11	2	
Motor Vehicle Theft	18	16	11	24	36	3	14	1	0	3	0	0	
Sub Total: Property Crimes	278	264	248	408	115	74	114	37	15	72	12	3	
TOTAL:	371	321	281	460	140	94	187	48	21	77	18	4	

SOURCE: Missoula Police Department, Uniform Crime Report (Missoula, Montana: Missoula Police Department, 1985).

Burglary in Watch and Non-Watch Districts

In Missoula, burglary fell by 43 percent between 1984 and 1985 (see Table II). Selection of several residential crime reporting districts illustrates a significant decrease in burglary through 1984-1985 period (see Table IV). Exceptions can be seen in district 24, which was up 20 percent, and in district 30, no change. The eight starred districts identify districts having Block Watch groups. In those districts, the decrease in crime, during the test period, is greater than in non-watch districts.

The 18 Block Watch groups located in the City are distributed through eight crime reporting districts. District 40 has the greatest concentration of groups, incorporating approximately 40 percent of the blocks in that district. The least number of Watches are located in districts 12 and 13, each having about 10 percent of those districts as Watch members.

To test the impact of Neighborhood Watch groups on burglary, three comparisons between crime reporting districts with and without Watches are made. Selection of the Watch/non-Watch district pairs is based on two criteria: 1) that both districts have similar levels of traffic, and, 2) that both have a similar socio-economic character. The comparisons are between districts 46 and 14, districts 40 and 14, and districts 11 and 24. Because district crime data is not available prior to 1984, pre-Watch burglary comparisons between districts are not possible.

TABLE IV

Burglaries in 18 Selected Crime Reporting Districts
(Averages of Residential Burglaries from
January 1, 1984 through December 31, 1985)

Crime Report From District	Average Burglaries	Percent Change	
	1984/1985	1984 to 1985	
2	18	down	73 percent
4	15.5		59
5	12		40
7	15		50
9	10		43
10	24		50
*11	15		64
*12	15		12.5
*13	30.5		58
14	8		100
*18	5		75
24	9	increase	20 percent
30	9		No change
33	14.5	down	29 percent
*39	4		66
*40	1.5		100%
*42	3		80
*46	8		40

SOURCE: Missoula Police Department, Uniform Crime Report,
(Missoula, Montana: Missoula Police Department,
1984 and 1985).

*Represent crime report districts having Watch
groups.

Districts 46 and 14 are the first pair to be analyzed. Both districts border on South Higgins Avenue. It is assumed the districts have a similar amount of traffic. Average value of owner-occupied homes is \$53,600 in 46 and \$67,800 in district 14.¹⁵ Median income by household is \$17,500 in 46 and \$25,000 in district 14.¹⁶ It should be mentioned that although median income in district 46 is \$17,500, observation of the Watch Blocks suggests member residents' income is above the median. In district 46, about 18 percent of the households are Block Watch members. Table 4 shows the range of reported property crimes for each district. While Watch district 46 illustrates 37.5 percent fewer burglaries in 1984 than district 14, in 1985 no burglaries were reported in district 14. Overall comparison of property crime, during the test period, indicates the Watch district had 11 percent less crime.

The second Watch versus non-Watch set are districts 40 and 14. Comparing these districts, a greater impact on property crime seems evident. Again, both districts are bounded by South Higgins. Home value of \$65,000 and income of \$24,000 are the median in Watch district 40.¹⁷ District 40 has approximately 40 percent involvement in Neighborhood Watch. According to Table V, district 14 had approximately 81 percent more burglary in 1984 than district 40. In 1985, however, neither district recorded an incident.

TABLE V

Crimes Against Property For Selected Watch and
Non-Watch Crime Reporting Districts for the
Years 1984 and 1985

YEAR: 1984

Crime Reporting Districts

<u>Index Crime</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>24</u>
Burglary	10	16	3	16	22	8
Theft	38	40	13	40	61	33
Motor Vehicle Theft	2	4	0	4	4	3
Vandalism	20	16	4	16	19	13
Sub Total: Property Crimes	<u>70</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>106</u>	<u>57</u>

YEAR: 1985

Crime Reporting Districts

<u>Index Crime</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>24</u>
Burglary	6	0	0	0	8	10
Theft	19	36	12	36	31	39
Motor Vehicle Theft	3	1	0	1	3	1
Vandalism	23	24	6	24	13	20
Sub Total: Property Crimes	<u>52</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>70</u>

TOTAL: 1984/1985 Property Crimes	122	137	38	137	161	127
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SOURCE: Missoula Police Department, Uniform Crime Report,
(Missoula, Montana: Missoula Police Department,
1984 and 1985).

The final test is between districts 11 and 24. The districts border one another and are located immediately south of the Clark Fork and east of Russell Avenue. Surrounding traffic is high. Home values run about \$50,000 and median income per household is \$15,600 in Watch district 11 and \$13,800 in district 24.¹⁸ Again, it may be mentioned that observation of Watch Blocks indicate a higher level of income than in surround blocks. About 15 percent of the "Willard" households (district 11) are Block Watch members. In 1984, Watch district 11 experienced 64 percent more burglary than the other, while the following year burglary dropped by 65 percent, and rose by 20 percent in district 24 (see Table V). Overall property crime dropped in the Watch district during the test period and increased by 18.5 percent in district 24. Where the former two comparisons inconclusively demonstrate the presence of Watch groups, this pair suggests an influence from the program. On the one hand, burglary, and property offenses, in general, decreased in Watch district 11 through the period. While in district 24, burglary and property crime increased. Also, surrounding districts (9, 10, 12, 13 and 33) showed decreases in burglary, while incidents in district 24 rose. This suggests another potential influence of Neighborhood Watch - movement or displacement of crime from Watch to a non-Watch district. Yet, reliability of the evidence should be assessed before confirming that the Watch program is the

factor which lowers the incidence of burglary or displaces it.

Several factors complicate any assessment suggesting Watches either reduce or displace burglary based on the present study. With only two years of baseline data and the relatively small incidence of burglary in residents' neighborhoods, the validity of the figures is questionable. Two years of baseline data on crime negate any attempt to pretest the districts being examined. According to Rosenbaum, without a pretest, validity of the data is questionable. McLeod suggested in recent correspondence that "In a town like Missoula, the number of crimes reported before and after the introduction of Neighborhood Watch will be so small as to prohibit any meaningful statistical analysis."¹⁹ In Missoula, during the test years, the average number of burglaries for the eight Watch districts is 10.25. In Henig's "Assessment of the Neighborhood Watch Program in Washington, D.C.," the average number of burglaries during test years in the sample districts is 1955 burglaries.²⁰ Another study of Block Watch in Lakewood, Colorado, shows the average number of residential burglaries was 1476.²¹ With the relatively small occurrence of burglary in Missoula and absence of a range of baseline data, measuring the impact of Watch groups on burglary is guess work. Nonetheless, Watch district 11 and non-Watch district 24 would be interesting to chart over several years

to test the implication that Watches are reducing burglary and/or displacing crime to its district neighbor.

Another factor interfering with the impact assessment is that burglary decreased significantly outside of Block Watch districts (see Table IV). For the selected non-Watch districts burglary dropped by an average of 62 percent, again, the incidence of burglary and absence of baseline do not allow accurate accounting for the influence of Block Watch.

In addition to the quality of the data available to this study, the first two comparisons are questionable. District 14 is dissimilar to Watch districts 46 and 40. District 14 has more arterial traffic. The district encompasses Hellgate High School and the University. This suggests there would be a greater number of individuals in the crime prone years (18-34 years of age), traversing district 14 than in either of the others.²² This negates the reliability of the two comparisons.

Cost of Neighborhood Watch

Funds for Missoula Neighborhood Watch come from dues paying members (\$2.00 per year) and the Missoula Police Department. In 1985, Block Watch board budgeted approximately \$1,000 for printing, Neighborhood signs, county fair expenses, and miscellaneous. The Crime Prevention Unit of the Police Department will spend in 1987

about \$6,000 on Block Watch (refer back to Table I, p. 19). Departmental funds are spent on informational handouts, household inspections, presentations before civic organizations, recordkeeping and monthly "Bulletin" typing. Calculation of the program's cost is based on the expenditure of public funds. The contribution from members is deleted.

Following the Seattle study's method, there are at least two ways to estimate the efficiency of Block Watch in dollar terms. One is to calculate unit costs of services provided; the other is to relate the program's costs to its crime reduction impact.²³ Both methods are imprecise.

To examine unit cost requires a figure for total services provided. The units represent the households within each newly incorporated Block Watch area. In Missoula, about five new Watch groups are incorporated yearly and 20 households are involved in each area program. For fiscal year 1987, the projected cost per unit of service equals program cost divided by the number of units incorporated per year.²⁴

To estimate program benefit, the unit cost of \$60,000 should be related to the program's impact on crime. Benefits can be viewed both in terms of loss to citizen from stolen items, and savings to the Department from fewer burglary investigations. In 1985, the loss resulting from a residential burglary in the City averaged \$271.²¹ The

Seattle Study estimates that four fewer burglaries per year occur for every 100 units taking part in Block Watch.²⁶ The potential savings in preventing losses to participating residents in Missoula is estimated to be \$3,794. This saving accounts for 63 percent of the program cost expended. Savings to the Department may also be calculated. It is estimated that the average cost of criminal justice resources devoted to a burglary is \$300.²⁷ The potential savings to the system from Block Watch is about \$4,200 assuming the 350 household program produces 14 fewer burglaries per year.

Both saving to the citizen and the criminal justice system are difficult to interpret. Savings to the citizen is a cost only to the victims. The event does not affect the general economy. In the other regard, the potential savings of \$4,200 to the criminal justice system is suspect from two aspects. First, although the Seattle Study suggests 4 fewer burglaries occur per 100 Block Watch households, no study has been able to disprove displacement of crime from Watch to non-Watch neighborhoods.²⁸ Thus, Missoula Neighborhood Watch may not reduce residential burglary or crime in general by 14 incidents. This makes the potential \$4,200 savings questionable. The second aspect to assess is whether program investment has been offset by savings to the tax payer. Assuming a savings to the criminal justice system of \$4,200 for fiscal year 1987,

with a program delivery cost of \$6,000, the program falls \$1,800 short of paying for itself. In other words, there is no marginal cost savings, or hard-dollar savings to the criminal justice system.

IV. SUMMARY

This study of Missoula Neighborhood Watch was examined from three aspects. The intent of these perspectives was to assess program impact on building a sense of community and reducing residential burglary, as well as to determine program cost. Community building was defined by four assumptions which underlie the concept of Block Watch. The criminal justice theorist, Dennis P. Rosenbaum, isolated the assumptions. The assumptions are that: 1) Watches are easily implemented; 2) the program invites voluntary participation regardless of socio-economic standing; 3) meetings produce positive results; and, 4) such a strategy for community self-regulation stimulates citizens to sustain and strengthen the activity. Evaluating the impact of Neighborhood Watch on residential burglary was accomplished by comparing the incidence of burglary between Watch and non-Watch crime reporting districts. The study of Washington, D.C. Neighborhood Watch was the basis for the residential burglary comparison. Finally, Seattle's Neighborhood Watch evaluation was used to assess program cost. None of these quasi-experimental methods adapted to the present study were entirely satisfactory to test whether

the program builds community, reduces residential burglary, or is cost effective.

Rosenbaum's Chicago study and others more strongly refute the assumptions related to community building than does the Missoula study. Difficulty with implementation of Block Watch in Missoula is suggested first by the four percent participation rate among citizens and second, by the limited budgets of the Neighborhood Watch Board and Police Department which in an organizational sense limit the opportunity of residents to participate. The data further indicate that participants tend to be of middle and upper class standing, residing in neighborhoods of low burglary rates and who hold similar perspectives on the cause of crime and that the Watch model is the appropriate response. With regard to the sustainability of Watches, evidence suggests that in Missoula existing Watches tend to sustain themselves, whereas throughout the U.S. decline in participation and discontinuation of groups frequently occur.

The methodology to assess community building was lacking, however, in that only participants in Missoula Watch were examined. For example, test groups of non-Watch residents were not surveyed for their perspectives on the acceptability of the Watch model to build rapport, develop informal social controls, or to prevent residential burglary. Nor was an effort made to organize a Watch in a

higher crime neighborhood. What is called for is more precise and controlled research to test the implementation of Neighborhood Watch under a variety of neighborhood conditions.¹

Demonstrating the affect of Block Watch on residential burglary was difficult. The absence of baseline Uniform Crime Report data and the small incidence of residential burglary made an appropriate research design difficult to develop. Although the study attempted to test Watch and non-Watch crime reporting districts, the selection of comparable groups was flawed. Despite these problems, the potential influence of Neighborhood Watch on residential burglary prevention was indicated. But, whether crime was prevented or displaced to a neighboring district could not be determined.

The study did indicate that no hard-dollar savings accrued to the Police Department. Although the cost of, or the Police Department budget for Watch, is \$6000, the price is not necessarily the same as the value of the benefits bestowed to the citizens. Worth may be alternatively defined in terms of real cost: the property destroyed, distress to victims, and the sociological effect of increases in rates of burglary on otherwise healthy residential and business areas.² It is possible, however, that with growth of the program and subsequent anti-crime impact, burglary reduction may over-take program cost.

In sum, as exponents of Block Watch have claimed, it was hypothesized that the program would develop community interaction, control crime, and be cost effective. But, in Missoula the program does not appear to be the simple solution to residential crime that many in the field have claimed. Rather than a denunciation of Neighborhood Watch, the foregoing reflects the need for critical thinking about the strategies "that rely on citizen participation to increase informal social control and reduce criminal opportunities."³ Neither does this study suggest Missoula Neighborhood Watch be discontinued, or that citizen participation in crime prevention should be abandoned to rely solely on law enforcement. Yet, "without critical assessment of current theorizing and practice in the field," policies grounded in principles of human behavior are difficult to develop, which in turn make it difficult to "implement programs that are likely to be effective."⁴

Section I. Endnotes

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17. Dennis P. Rosenbaum, "The Theory and Research Behind Neighborhood Watch: Is It a Sound Fear and Crime Reduction Strategy?," Crime and Delinquency (forthcoming), p. 17.
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19. Strategies for Community Crime Prevention: Collective Responses to Crime in Urban America, 1981, cited by Dennis P. Rosenbaum, "The Theory and Research Behind Neighborhood Watch: Is It a Sound Fear and Crime Reduction Strategy?," Crime and Delinquency (forthcoming), p. 18.
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Section III. Endnotes

1. Interview with Kim Laterille, Chamber of Commerce, Missoula, Montana, 14 August 1985.
2. Interview with Susan Baird, Neighborhood Watch-Executive Board, Missoula, Montana, 15 August 1986.
3. Participation in Missoula Block Watch was arrived at by dividing th number of adult Watch members (720) by the number of City residents. The number of adult members came from an interview with Susan Baird, Neighborhood Watch Board, Missoula, MT, 12 August 1985. The figure for City residents was shown in U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of th Census, Neighborhood Statistics from the 1980 Census. Missoula and Missoula County, MT (Government Printing Office, 1982), Washington, D.C., p. 14.
4. "Crime Prevention," 1985, Wall Street Journal, 22 April 1986.
5. Interview with Susan Baird, Neighborhood Watch - Executive Board, Missoula, Montana, 15 August 1986; Interview with Gary Palmer, Missoula Police Department, Missoula, Montana, 15 August 1986.
6. Growth of Watch neighborhoods has averaged 5 per year according to Susan Baird, Neighborhood Watch Board, Missoula, MT, 1 July 1986.
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24. To calculate the cost per unit of service, the program cost of \$5,968 is divided by the number of homes joining per year which is approximately 100.

25. Don A. Crabbe, Board of Crime Control, letter, 3 September 1986.

26. Paul Cirel, Patricia Evans, Daniel McGilles, and Debra Witcomb, Community Crime Prevention Program in Seattle: An Exemplary Project (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 1977), pp. 59-60.

27. Interview with John A. Reed, Missoula County Sheriff's Department, Missoula, Montana, 3 October 1986.

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APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE: Missoula Neighborhood Watch (June, 1986)

Block Captain _____

Area Designation _____

Phone _____

Interview Date _____

-
1. Did police or individuals initiate the program on your block?
____ Police
____ Individuals

 2. What were the reasons for starting the program on your block?
____ An increase in criminal activity;
____ In response to a long standing crime problem;
____ An interest in crime prevention; or
____ Other. Please explain.

 3. How many block meetings are held per year?
____ Meeting per year.

 4. How many people attend block meetings?
____ Most
____ Least
____ Average turn out.

 5. Has active participation on your block:
____ Increased
____ Decreased; or
____ Stayed about the same since the program began.

 6. Does the crime prevention officer contact block captains or resident members after the initial meeting and home security survey?
____ Yes, how frequently? _____
____ No.

 7. Are you aware of any unauthorized acts arising from block groups such as:
____ Unregulated citizen patrols;
____ Ingroup/Outgroup discrimination; or
____ Other actions. Please explain.

____ None.

8. As a result of the program, would you say that crime has:
 Decreased; or
 Stayed the same; or
 Don't know.
9. As a result of Block Watch, would you say that people on your block feel:
 More secure; or
 Less secure; or
 Don't you know.
10. Are attempts made to implement block watches in neighborhoods throughout the urban area of Missoula?
 Yes
 No
 Do not know.
11. How do you generate interest for NW on your block?
 By speaking to non-member residents about the program;
 By hand delivering the newsletter both to members and non-members; or
 What else. Please explain.

12. In your estimation, what are the problems associated with extending the program.
 Please explain.

13. To what factors can criminal activity be attributed in your Neighborhood?
 Please comment.

14. With regard to burglary prevention, have you:
 Engraved household items;
 Installed new locks'
 And, do you ask neighbors to watch when you leave?
15. What are the most valuable aspects of NW?
Please rate the following from most to least important:
 Information on burglary prevention practices;
 Neighborhood activity;
 Police/Community public relations;
 Civic responsibility.

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