A Community Policing Project in Taiwan: The Developments, Challenges, and Prospects of Neighborhood Watch

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Neighborhood Watch is a community crime prevention program organized mainly by local residents to maintain order and deter crime. Neighborhood Watch is an important element of community policing in Taiwan. Relying on previous research, this study illustrates the implementation process of Neighborhood Watch in Taiwan. Starting in the 1970s, Neighborhood Watch in Taiwan evolved through several stages, shifting from a focus on moral alignment to community building and crime prevention. The central pillar of Neighborhood Watch is civilian patrol groups commonly organized by either the government at all levels as part of their civilian defense scheme or neighborhood patrol squads staffed by local volunteers. The organization and resources associated with Neighborhood Watch elucidate the government’s intention to integrate the program into community policing as an effective tool for building community safety and strengthening crime prevention. It is reasonable to predict that the Taiwan government and police are likely to continue their support for the operation of Neighborhood Watch as part of collective efforts to build healthy and safe communities.

Keywords: Neighborhood Watch; Taiwan police; civilian patrol squads; community policing; Taiwan

INTRODUCTION

Neighborhood Watch has received much attention in recent years due to its crime prevention value, which strengthens informal social control for community safety (Garofalo & McLeod, 1989; Rosenbaum, 1987). Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention scheme organized mainly by residents within specific communities to keep peace and safety and discourage crime and disorder within their neighborhoods. It is usually launched as part of the community-oriented policing that has been the dominant theme of policing around the world over the past few decades (Kang, 2015). Indeed, the evolution of Neighborhood Watch is at pace with the development of community policing in many countries, as the operation of Neighborhood Watch is often an indicator of the effectiveness of community policing. The purpose of this study is to analyze the implementation of Neighborhood Watch in Taiwan through the introduction of relevant policies and the organization and resources of policy implementation. Although past studies have introduced community policing in general (Kuo, & Shih, 2018; Wang, 2007) and Neighborhood Watch programs in Taiwan in particular (Lee et al., 2000), none of them have analyzed the implementation of Neighborhood Watch with a focus on policy analysis. This study attempts to fill this gap in the literature.

Since 2005, community safety has been designated as one of the six top priorities of community development under the Taiwan Healthy Community Six Star Project. Neighborhood Watch became an important element of community policing after that point. Using the lens of policy analysis, this study focuses on policy implantation in the Stages Model of the Policy Process (Jones, 1970; Lasswell, 1971; Anderson, 1974; Brewer & deLeon, 1983; Ripley, 1985; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). The development of Neighborhood Watch in Taiwan could be analyzed by drawing upon Matland’s (1995) ambiguity-conflict model of policy implementation. In addition to the traditional two campaigns of top-down and bottom-up approaches, Matland’s model stresses the importance of a policy’s ambiguity and conflict level when evaluating the
implementation process and identifying suitable methods. Taiwan’s Neighborhood Watch has a low degree of ambiguity as it closely focuses on the core mission of crime prevention in policing. It also can be characterized as having low levels of conflict, given that there is a common consensus among the public in terms of policy goals and operational approaches. The character of low-ambiguity and low-conflict points to a top-down approach or administrative implementation (Matland, 1995) as an appropriate way of carrying out Neighborhood Watch in Taiwan. Such policies are referred to as “programmed decisions” (Simon, 1960). The central principle in administrative implementation is the outcome, which is mainly determined by resources. When adequate resources are available for the program, the desired outcome is likely to be achieved (Matland, 1995). According to Van Meter and Van Horn’s Policy Implementation Model (1975), factors influencing policy performance include inter-organizational communication, enforcement activities, the characteristics of the implementing agencies, the environment, and the disposition of implementers. Due to space limitations, this study focuses on analyzing organizational personnel and resources. Although this study does not cover the entire process of policy implementation, the findings of this study have implications for future research.

The first generation theory of policy implementation centered on a top-down approach. Scholars have identified policy goals, organizations (agency and personnel), resources, and the external environment (e.g., economic, social, and political conditions) as key factors influencing policy implementation (Edwards, 1980; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). The following discussions highlight how such an approach has been adopted in implementing Neighborhood Watch in the country, with a focus on policy function, organization, and resources.

This article is divided into five sections. The first section briefly introduces community policing strategies in the United States (U.S.). The second section documents the evolution of community policing and Neighborhood Watch in Taiwan since the 1960s in terms of legal mandates, policy developments, and organizational arrangements. The third section introduces the two most popular models of civilian participation in Neighborhood Watch efforts. The fourth and fifth sections focus on the implementation of Neighborhood Watch programs across various localities. These sections provide more information on the function, organization, and resources associated with policy implementation of Neighborhood Watch. Past studies on Neighborhood Watch in Taiwan are discussed whenever appropriate. The final section summarizes the major issues discussed in previous sections and suggests directions for the future development of Neighborhood Watch in Taiwan. This study extends our understanding of community policing programs in a non-Western democracy and sheds light on efforts to improve crime prevention in local communities.

THE COMMUNITY POLICING STRATEGY

Community policing is an organizational strategy of the police aimed at reforming police decision-making processes and agency culture. The key elements of community policing include community-based crime prevention, the reorganization of police patrol, the enhancement of police accountability, and the decentralization of police command structures (Skolnick & Bayley, 1988; Skogan, 2006). Strategies have three primary aspects: the establishment of long-term goals, identifying courses of action, and the allocation of resources to achieve them (Kelling & Moore, 1988). Organizations with relatively macro strategies can observe their employees’ thoughts and behaviors to unify their internal strategies. The long-term goals and operations of private organizations center on their capability of earning revenues. Police agencies are public institutions that need to take public interests into account. Public interests tend to vary over time and from area to area. It is thus proper to analyze the development of organizational strategy from a historical and regional perspective. The following material briefly describes the development of community policing in the U.S.

Since the mid-19th century, policing in the U.S. has evolved through three stages: the political era (1850 to
1920), the professional or reform era (1920-1980), and the community policing era (1980-current) (Kelling & Moore, 1988). The rise of community policing in the U.S. in the 1980s can be attributed to several broad factors, including the increase of crime and disorder, the deterioration of police-minority community relations, the Civil Rights movement, and the concentration of minorities in cities. Broadly speaking, community policing represents a redirection of police strategy toward more sensitive community outreach, with the goal of acceptance and mutual assistance and cooperation (Skolnick & Bayley, 1986). Although Kelling and Moore’s (1988) work provided useful information on the evolution of policing in the U.S., their study largely ignored the role of racial minorities and their communities in these historical developments (Williams & Murphy, 1990). In this sense, community policing is practically useful for recognizing the role of racial minorities in U.S. policing and, thus, the potential for repairing a strained relationship between the police and minority communities due mainly to police abusive and discriminatory treatments against racial minorities.

Moreover, the traditional policing strategies of preventive patrol, rapid response, and criminal investigation techniques were found to be ineffective in curbing and solving crime. For instance, the Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment found that variation in the number of police cars did not affect crime rates, suggesting that traditional police deployment strategies could be reconsidered, like shifting from a focus on routine preventive patrol to targeted areas and offenses and service needs (Skolnick & Bayle, 1988; The Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment). Another issue is the rising fear of crime, which is largely a product of perceived incivilities and signs of disorder, calling for greater attention to disorder and quality of life issues at the neighborhood level. The emergence of community policing is thus a result of social, political, and policing factors in the country.

Despite its popularity around the world, community policing means different things to different police departments. Although an industry-wide common definition of community policing is lacking, scholars have summarized some key elements of this strategy. Bayley (1989), for example, summarized the core principles of community policing that involve community-based crime prevention efforts, proactive servicing rather than emergency response, public participation in the planning and monitoring of police actions, and shifting command responsibility to lower rank levels. Based on different emphases embedded in community policing, Mastrofski and colleagues (1995) proposed three different models: broken window, community building, and problem-oriented policing. The broken window model emphasizes the need to address minor crimes and disorders to prevent more serious crimes in neighborhoods. The community building model stresses victim assistance, crime prevention, and establishing stronger rapport with minority communities in particular. The problem-solving model focuses on utilizing problem-solving approaches to proactively address underlying causes of crime problems. It should be noted that these models are not mutually exclusive and could be utilized simultaneously by the same police agency. While community policing remains popular in the U.S., the 9/11 terrorist attacks have greatly shaped the landscape of law enforcement in the country. Referred to as the new policing era (Oliver, 2007), post-9/11 policing carries important additions to traditional policing, such as the launch of various antiterrorism measures involving greater coordination in intelligence-gathering and sharing, intensified surveillance of high-value threats to public security, and enhanced enforcement of immigration laws by local police departments. Indeed, the relationship between federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies has been greatly strengthened and more coherent strategies, tactics, and operations have been implemented to prevent possible threats to public security (Oliver, 2007). Working closely with local police, citizens can serve as the best defenders of their community, a role that is similar to the idea of Neighborhood Watch.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY POLICING AND NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH IN TAIWAN
The development of policing in Taiwan can be divided into three phases, including authoritarian (before 1987), transitional (1987-2000), and democratic (after 2000) policing (Cao, Huang & Sun, 2014). Under martial law imposed by the authoritarian regime, the primary function of the Taiwan police before 1987 was to protect the interests of the regime rather than to serve the people. With the democratic transformation, the police finally started to change their core tasks and strategies. Beginning in the 1970s, Taiwan has witnessed a steady increase in its college-educated population, GDP, and civil organizations, paving the way for political reforms. Before martial law was lifted in 1987, policing was geared toward the maintenance of social control, and such focus was shifted to law enforcement in highly urbanized areas (Zhang, 2018; Chen, Li, Zhu, Zhang, & Hong, 2018). Starting in 2000, the National Police Agency conducted regular surveys of public attitudes of crime, order, and police services. Comparisons of survey results across jurisdictions have pushed police agencies to improve their attitudes toward the police during encounters and respond to people’s requests, greatly enhancing the service function of the police (Chen, Li, Zhu, Zhang, & Hong, 2018).

The rise of community policing in Taiwan can be attributed to a few important studies, such as Xu (1988) and Chen (1992), both of which discussed the four basic elements of community policing proposed by Skolnick and Bayley (1988). In 2002, Yeh and colleagues translate the concept of community policing into Chinese, leading a widespread discussion of the concept among academics and practitioners and pushing the development of Taiwan policing to consider local characteristics (Zhang, 1999). Western-trained scholars have contributed to the development of community policing in Taiwan. Between 1985 and 1989, the Executive Yuan introduced The Five-Year Policing Construction Plan and between 1990 and 1995 The Subsequent Policing Construction Plan, which followed traditional professionalism as the main focus. An evaluation of the subsequent plan found that although it has a positive impact on officers’ attitudes, its influences have not been similarly positive with regards to public opinion or crime, traffic, and fire statistics (Sang, & Zhang, 2014). Along with community awareness, police agencies sought ways to modify their strategies to cope with social changes. The Executive Yuan published Policing Rebuilding Plan in 1998 and Policing Enhancement Plan in 2004 to reflect the worldwide trend in community policing and meet the demand of service-oriented policing (Zhang & Huang, 2003; Zhang & Sang, 2014). In 2005, the Executive Yuan launched The Operational Plan for All Counter-Crime and The Community Health Six-Star Plan to integrate crime prevention and community law and order needs in the hope of installing anti-crime and order efforts to the community level (Chen, 2006).

Neighborhood Watch has a long history in Taiwan that can be traced back to more than half a century ago. In 1965, Executive Yuan, Taiwan’s highest administrative agency, promulgated Present Social Policy Based on the Principle of People’s Livelihood, which highlighted community development as one of the seven most important dimensions of social policy in Taiwan (Zhang, 1986). Within the broad theme of community development, Neighborhood Watch was initially regarded as a mechanism of strengthening the construction of community morals (Criminal Investigation Bureau, 2019). The goal was to develop community consciousness and consensus about common values, beliefs, and interests. Therefore, community watch focused on enriching community residents’ moral life and promoting friendly relations among family members and neighbors. Back then, the primary purpose of the government policy was to build strong neighborhoods through programs like Neighborhood Watch by cultivating shared values and social capital among community residents.

The government’s intention to formalize the role of Neighborhood Watch in community building and crime prevention became evident in 1973 when the “Ministry of the Interior” issued the Guideline for the Implementation of Neighborhood Watch. Aimed at promoting friendly relationships among neighbors to collectively advance the common interests of the neighborhood, the guideline shifted the principal focus of community development from moral alignment.
to collective efficacy. Four primary components, including crime prevention, fire prevention, emergency assistance, and environmental sanitation, were identified and given great attention. Police-community cooperation relied mainly on the function of residents sharing information with the police.

Based on Taiwan government’s directives, the Taiwan Local Government and Taipei City Government issued respectively The Plan for the Implementation of Neighborhood in 1973. The Taiwan Local Government expanded the four key themes by adding two more items into its plan for Neighborhood Watch—first, to respect the elderly and love the youth and, second, preserve public peace (Tsai, 2003). The Local Government also asked its local city and county police forces to coordinate their Neighborhood Watch efforts with Civil Affairs Bureaus. The Taipei City Government furthered its commitment to Neighborhood Watch by announcing a pilot guideline of establishing neighborhood civilian patrols, which gradually became the most noticeable program associated with Neighborhood Watch. Throughout the 1970s, the function of Neighborhood Watch not only maintained early spiritual construction but also went deep into the household’s daily life.

After a decade of experimenting with citizen patrol programs, in 1984 the Ministry of the Interior laid out concrete guidelines for establishing civilian patrols around the country. More than a decade later in 1996, the “National Police Agency” (NPA), the highest police authority in the country, published its Plan for the Implementation of Civilian Coordination and requested all local city and county police departments to work with villages, neighborhoods, communities, and condominiums to establish civilian patrols. During the 1980s and 1990s, along with the rise of community policing, the government shifted its focus of Neighborhood Watch from cooperative ideas to concrete strategies or actions. Similar to community policing efforts in major U.S. cities (see Skogan & Hartnett, 1997), the police departments played a leading role in establishing various arrangements for crime prevention in local neighborhoods.

A few high-profile criminal cases that happened in 19961 shocked the entire country, causing serious concern about the government’s capacity for maintaining a safe society. To address public concerns, in December 1996, the Executive Yuan held a national meeting on public safety and invited scholars and practitioners to discuss how to maintain law and order on the island. One of the recommendations proposed by panel experts was to strengthen the use of Neighborhood Watch as a strategy for crime prevention. Neighborhood Watch was again a favored approach for the government to improve community safety.

In 1997, the “Ministry of the Interior” submitted its Plan for Strengthening Police Force and Emphasizing Hot Spots to and was approved by the Executive Yuan, which requested the establishment of a centralized maintenance system of community safety. The NPA accordingly drafted The Establishment of a Centralized Community Safety Maintenance System - The Restart of Neighborhood Watch, which was approved by the Executive Yuan and implemented in March 1998. According to this project, local communities needed to implement the Electronic Joint Defense for Households, Connection of Police-Citizen Alarm Systems, and Closed-Circuit Television Systems. With the advancement of surveillance technologies, Neighborhood Watch in Taiwan shifted its focus from establishing civilian patrols to enhancing police-community joint defense for public safety (Chang, 2001).

Like community policing strategies and programs in the U.S. (Skolnick & Bayley, 1988), crime prevention efforts in Taiwan, including Neighborhood Watch, emphasized the participation of residents as co-producers of public safety. The Executive Yuan’s commitment to neighborhood- and institutional safety in Taiwan was further confirmed when the Taiwan

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1 Two murder cases are particularly shocking. On November 21, 1996, the then Taoyuan County Executive Bang-you Liu and seven others were bloody gunned down in an execution style at Liu’s official residence in Taoyuan. Several days later on November 30, Wanru Peng, the then director of Democratic Progressive Party’s (DPP) Women Affairs Division was reported missing and later found murdered. Both incidents, which have stirred public outcry for safety improvements, remain unsolved.
Healthy Community Six-Star Project was launched in 2005. This project extended community construction to six public domains, including industrial development, health and welfare, community safety, humanities and education, environmental protection and ecology, and environment and landscape. Community policing has been widely accepted as an essential part of community development. The governance of public safety demonstrated a successful transition from the public–police joint defense, where the police played a leading role, to community-police partnerships, where residents shouldered a greater portion of crime prevention efforts.

Currently, Taiwan’s Neighborhood Watch follows the community safety principle prescribed in the Taiwan Healthy Community Six-Star Project introduced in 2005. Based on the constitution and Local Autonomous Law, local governments carry out relevant rules and regulations passed down by Taiwan government, but they have the authority to regulate Neighborhood Watch under the Local Autonomous Law. For instance, in 1999 Taipei City issued The Compensation Plan for Injury and Death of Neighborhood Watch Members on Duty, The Management Plan of Neighborhood Watch Posts and Entrance Control, The Standards to Render Monetary Awards to Exemplary Members of Neighborhood Watch, and in 2002 The Implementation Regulations on Neighborhood Watch Teams. In 2011, the Taizhong City Government issued The Management Plan of Neighborhood Watch Teams, The Implementation Plan of Neighborhood Watch, and in 2020 The Planning and Advising Meeting of Neighborhood Watch. In 2015, Taoyuan City Government announced The Plan of Subsidizing the Operating Cost of Neighborhood Watch. Some of these regulations were revised later to facilitate better management. The NPA continues to mobilize community residents and groups for building up a healthy and safe living environment. Neighborhood Watch has become a common element of community policing programs with civilian patrols being the long-lasting pillar of the strategy. The following section introduces the two most common models of Neighborhood Watch patrols.

TWO MODELS OF NEIGHBORHOOD CIVILIAN PATROLS IN TAIWAN

Two different forms of neighborhood patrols have been utilized in Taiwan—one patrol is organized by the government as required by law and the other is mainly volunteer organizations launched by residents.

The Civil Defense Forces

Taiwan’s civil defense forces were established based on the Civil Defense Act promulgated in 2003. Civil defense forces have two major roles: disaster prevention and relief during peacetime and supporting military tasks during wartime. Under these two broad roles, these forces are given the tasks of assisting the police in maintaining local social order and undertaking civil self-defense duties.

Civil defense forces are task-oriented groups organized in three primary ways. First, they are formed across the three levels of government administrative hierarchy: municipalities and counties on the top; districts, and towns in the middle; and villages and communities at the bottom. The lower administrative units are required to organize civil defense forces, which collectively become defense groups for higher levels. Second, important public and private establishments and enterprises, such as railroads, highways, ports, airports, telecommunication sites, power, oil refineries, and water plants, are required to organize special defense corps. Finally, in addition to the above arrangements, schools, organizations, companies, and factories with more than 100 employees should be equipped with their own civil defense groups. Organizations with fewer than 100 people shall form defense groups jointly with others located in the same building or industrial park. Relevant agencies within Taiwan Government work collectively to set up policies and regulations related to the organizational structure, training, drill, and duty of defense forces.

As of December 2017, Taiwan’s civil defense forces were comprised of 22 corps, 367 regiments, 2,147 task forces, 2,226 joint groups, and 37 special groups with a total of over 440,000 members (National Police Agency, 2018).
The 22 corps are county- and municipality-level forces, while other units are groups within the lower levels of the government hierarchy. Each corps organizes its squads or stations for civil defense affairs. Among them, the neighborhood civilian patrol squads are directly responsible for the tasks of neighborhood safety patrol and emergency rescue and assistance.

The Neighborhood Patrol Squads

While civil defense forces involve many civilians in defending the country’s stability, the most effective crime prevention tool remains patrol squads voluntarily organized by residents throughout the country. Following Taiwan’s Volunteer Service Act, in 2009 the NPA issued its guidelines to regulate the application, registration, assignment, and evaluation associated with neighborhood civilian patrol squads. Interested neighborhood civilian patrol squads could submit their application for assisting the duty of local police field stations between late November and the end of the year. Before accepting applications, officers assigned to local field stations should tour around their jurisdictions at least 10 days before accepting any application and introduce the program to residents who may be interested in assisting the police in carrying out their duty. Interested groups should submit their application along with bylaws, member rosters, and equipment to be used to the local police field station, which will then forward the application to the district station for approval. Approved neighborhood civilian patrol squads have to submit their rosters to local police headquarters, as well as the NPA, for their record keeping.

When reviewing such applications, police field officers should conduct a background check on all members of the proposed squad. Once the application is approved, the commanding officer of the local field station should take into account neighborhood crime and disorder conditions, as well as the capability of the squad in conducting patrol activity, and issue the patrol plan for the neighborhood civilian squads twice a year (in January and July). The plan will specify patrol routes, locations, and times for the squad to follow. Local field stations should assign officers to assist the neighborhood civilian patrol squads in organizing their assignments, exercising patrol activity, and keeping proper records. With the approval of the district police department, a patrol squad can be dismantled if its members are found to: (1) repeatedly violate patrol regulations and fail to make improvements or refuse to be advised; (2) be prosecuted for a crime; or (3) be unable to carry out assigned duties. The police headquarters at the county/municipal level has the authority to supervise and evaluate whether local district and field stations have effectively utilized, assisted, and evaluated neighborhood patrol squads within their jurisdictions.

As of December 2017, under the assistance of NPA, there were 13,446 neighborhood civilian patrol squads with a total of 152,092 members, including 2,036 squads (84,447 members) in villages and districts, 889 squads (33,335 members) in smaller developments, and 10,521 squads (34,310 members) in apartment complexes for assisting the duty of local police field stations (National Police Agency, 2018).

Comparison of Two Models

However, some members of the neighborhood civilian patrol squads under civil defense forces are also members of local Neighborhood Watch or community safety patrol squads. Both squads thus partially share the same members. The former follows civil defense rules and regulations, with a focus on preventing disaster, preparing for war, maintaining local social order, and undertaking civil self-defense duties. The latter follows the community safety principle prescribed in the Taiwan Healthy Community Six-Star Project introduced in 2005—to assist local Neighborhood Watch or the police—and their functions vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

Under the Civil Defense Forces, members of the neighborhood civilian patrol squads wear uniforms similar to police uniforms, working closely with local police by assisting them in maintaining peace and preventing crime during the Chinese New Year holidays. Members of neighborhood patrol squads can be recruited, trained and dispatched among
villages, neighborhoods, and apartment buildings, as not all these units have patrol squads. Some of these units hire private security companies to conduct crime prevention patrols. Members of village, neighborhood, and apartment building patrol squads wear Neighborhood Watch uniforms (reflective safety vests with logos), which means they could apply for assisting local police and working closely with village leaders.

Members of the neighborhood civilian patrol squads wear police-like uniforms, enhancing the presence of the police and their sense of honor. Based on the Civil Defense Act, the organization, training, and management of the squads are strict, and their members are on average younger than those in village, neighborhood, and apartment building voluntary patrol squads.

Both civil defense and neighborhood patrol squads are staffed by unpaid volunteers. They have government funds to cover expenses for condolences, unit parties, and retreats. If civil defense forces set up neighborhood civilian watch patrols, they can be part of the community safety evaluations and receive funds from the program. Police stations do not actively encourage local civil defense forces to establish Neighborhood Watch civilian patrols due to the heavy demands of the assignments. Yet, some members of civil defense forces engage in neighborhood patrols but not under the name of patrol squads. Previous studies on Neighborhood Watch focused on voluntary services provided by village, community, and apartment building voluntary patrol squads.

THE CHALLENGES OF NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH IN TAIWAN

Policy Perspective
As mentioned above, Neighborhood Watch in Taiwan in the 1960s stressed the importance of establishing community residents’ moral standards and promoting friendly relationships among family members and neighbors. During times when the nationalist government still strongly advocated for the reunification of China and became the defender of traditional Confucius values, building strong moral consensus and social capital among neighborhood residents served the government and the police well. Taiwan’s successful economic developments in the 1970s and 1980s have drastically improved people’s lives on the island and were also unfortunately accompanied by a noticeable rise in crime and disorder in society. Crime prevention, along with fire prevention, emergency assistance, and environmental sanitation, surfaced as greater concerns for the government and the police. The police relied more on residents as their eyes and ears of local neighborhoods. At that time, Neighborhood Watch was effective in fulfilling the functions of gathering intelligence and assistance from residents.

The development of modern surveillance technologies and the popularity of community policing in the 1990s and 2000s have brought the police and communities even closer. Community civilian patrols and self-directed safety maintenance systems became partners of local police in ensuring or improving public safety. Since then, Neighborhood Watch has usually been combined with one or more community policing projects or as a part of the community safety maintenance system. Furthermore, the development of Neighborhood Watch in Taiwan merged several policy functions, such as social education, crime prevention, and community development (Li, 1991).

Albeit limited in number, past studies have shown that residents displayed generally favorable attitudes toward Neighborhood Watch programs and functions. In a study of the operation and effectiveness of Neighborhood Watch programs in Dazhi community, Taipei, Liu (1998) found that 15% of the residents clearly knew about this campaign, and 50% had some knowledge of its existence. Moreover, 32% of the residents thought the Neighborhood Watch campaign helped improve community safety, 28% of residents thought that the Neighborhood Watch campaign could raise community consciousness, but 54% of residents were not aware of its activities.

Another study using officers’ data found that the implementation of Neighborhood Watch programs was
associated with fewer drug and juvenile crimes, but the programs had no effect on burglary, violent crime, robbery, total crime, or the number of 911 emergency calls (Lee et al., 2000). In October 1998, Gaoxiong City Police Department issued a report on “Crime and Disorder Before and After the Implementation of Neighborhood Watch,” which showed that crime rates decreased significantly in areas with Neighborhood Watch with thefts seeing the most noticeable reduction (Criminal Investigation Bureau, 2019). Utilizing survey and interview data, others found that local residents and patrol squad members supported the crime prevention function of neighborhood patrol for burglary and car and motorcycle theft, and local residents tend to equate neighborhood patrol to crime and order in their community (Zhu, Weng, Zhang, & Zhuang, 2005). Another study of Neighborhood Watch members, local residents, and police offices in Jiayi City found that most respondents support the deterrent effect of Neighborhood Watch on burglary, followed by motorcycle and car theft. Nearly 93% believed that Neighborhood Watch is effective or very effective and only 7% disagreed. Neighborhood consciousness and police-community relations are significant predictors of the perceived effectiveness of Neighborhood Watch (Zhu, 2005).

Using interviews and observations, studies find that the daily operations of Neighborhood Watch teams can enhance the presence of the police, deter potential criminals, and reduce the workload of the police. It seems to contribute to local crime prevention, but it might be merely a psychological effect of the program (Liu, 2011). Neighborhood Watch can hardly fill up the vacancy left by police tasks, but it can improve local residents’ feelings of safety (Hong, 2013), indicating the potential of crime prevention associated with civilian patrol activity, particularly in increasing people’s feeling of safety.

In a study analyzing police and citizens’ attitudes toward the influence of community policing in Taidong County, Zheng (2005) finds that respondents believed Neighborhood Watch can help with crime prevention and community services, such as escorting women and children during night times, harvesting crops, visiting elderly who live alone, and distributing emergency aid supplies. Local residents felt that Neighborhood Watch could enhance their ability to maintain community safety and provide services to people. Using in-depth interviews with members and residents, research finds that Neighborhood Watch could strengthen the quality of life (Wu, 2018), enhance community development (Ding, 2016) and help with community services (Hong, 2013). Huang & Kuang (2012) interviewed officers and members and found that Neighborhood Watch could improve problem-solving, such as local farming and fishing protection concerns.

Nonetheless, some studies asserted that the management and operation of Neighborhood Watch is still political in nature. This is not a complete surprise as scholars have long acknowledged the influences of politics on the organizational styles of local policing (Wilson, 1978). For instance, some organizers have the intention of running for political positions or advancing personal agendas (Lu, 2011). Other local officials and community leaders utilize Neighborhood Watch as mechanisms to meet political ends (Hong, 2013). It appears that the operation of Neighborhood Watch carries political functions for some. If Neighborhood Watch becomes more entrenched in political circles, problems of fairness related to crime prevention, problem-solving, and service provision are likely to surface. Political insiders would be able to garner more resources, creating distrust in Neighborhood Watch, and reducing residential participation.

Organizational Perspective

Neighborhood Watch passed through a stage of social cultivation in the 1960s. After that point, the government began to implement specific plans for community development. The “Ministry of the Interior” issued the Guideline for the Implementation of Neighborhood Watch in 1973, which encouraged community members to engage in collaborative activities to address issues, such as residential burglary crime prevention, fire prevention, emergency assistance, the maintenance of environmental sanitation, and other related interests of residents. These strategies were to use village or neighborhood affairs offices, service committees, community councils, and military service centers to
receive information and to collectively deal with daily problems that concern residents. These institutions were required to promote Neighborhood Watch and to hold household head conferences for establishing close relations among neighbors. In addition, village, district, and neighborhood leaders needed to guide local condominiums to build up mutual corporation organizations. Village or district organizations were also advised to maintain collaborative relationships with local police stations for information sharing. Local government administrative and community leaders were influential in promoting the Neighborhood Watch policy in the 1970s.

After that, the Taiwan and local governments all encouraged the development of civilian patrols. In 1996, the NPA rolled out The Plan for the Implementation of Civilian Coordination and asked local police departments to guide villages, neighborhoods, communities, and condominiums to establish civilian patrol squads as voluntary neighborhood groups of crime prevention. In 1998, the NPA implemented the Establishment of Community Safety Maintenance System - The Restart of Neighborhood Watch.

The original project focused on two aspects. The first was the organization of committees for promoting Neighborhood Watch: supervision committees at the Taiwan government level; auxiliary committees at the provincial and municipal levels; planning and guidance committees at the county level; and enforcement committees at the township level. Various levels of committees for advancing Neighborhood Watch were established in the late 1990s. In the past, civil affairs, social administration, and police departments went their own way. These committees consolidated and coordinated efforts for enhancing community safety through Neighborhood Watch.

The second aspect, and perhaps even more importantly, was setting up Neighborhood Watch patrols under community, village, and condominium committees. The enforcement committees at the township level incorporated input from government agencies, like police departments, civil affairs, and social administration, and local neighborhood resources were responsible for the establishment of Neighborhood Watch patrols. Among them, police departments from the NPA to local field stations were instrumental in establishing Neighborhood Watch patrols.

To establish the centralized community safety maintenance system, governments at all levels continued to promote the formation of neighborhood civilian patrol squads after 2006. They were organized either as civil defense forces under the 2003 Civil Defense Act or neighborhood patrol squads after 2011. Both forms of participation were under the direct supervision of local police field stations and subject to routine inspection and evaluation of higher levels of police forces. Respondents argued that police forces at all levels were appropriate platforms for coordinating community crime prevention efforts due to the nature of their mandates, the continuity of their services, and the political neutrality of their enforcement (Huang & Kuang, 2012). The Taiwan police not only served as promoters in the community development model, but also played the role of expert planners in the social planning model (Shi, 2006).

Studies suggested that the operations of neighborhood patrol, like training, relied heavily on support from the local police (Liu, 2011). Not surprisingly, Neighborhood Watch was implemented under the heavy involvement of police agencies. Observers suggested that to maintain the core values of voluntary groups, civilian patrol squads should be organized autonomously by neighborhood residents and the government, with the police serving as supporters and advisers of such activities, while also avoiding too much direct intervention (Zhu et al., 2005). Zhu (2005) reported that local residents and community patrol members preferred Neighborhood Watch organized by the government, whereas police officers preferred community developmental or other groups to organize it. Scholars have suggested that the police-citizen collaboration platform should be the responsibility of the local government, which then authorizes police agencies to carry out relevant tasks (Huang & Kuang, 2012).

How to encourage residents to actively participate in
Neighborhood Watch? Utilizing in-depth interviews of civilian patrol squads in Zhanghua County, Huang & Jiang (2016) found that when local community leaders personally visited households and warmly invited people to participate, residents’ willingness to get involved increased noticeably, suggesting that the leadership style mattered in promoting Neighborhood Watch. Zhu and colleagues (2005) found that police officers from local field stations are the key to having good police-citizen interactions and officers’ devotion became essential to the success of neighborhood patrol. Indeed, a high degree of devotion to Neighborhood Watch by local officials and police officers was the key to maintaining a successful program.

Although the motivation for participating in Neighborhood Watch is mainly social responsibility (Lin, 2011), whether individual volunteers can partake in training and complete duties is a different story. Studies have documented the low attendance rate of Neighborhood Watch members in local community crime prevention meetings. Participating in training has been limited to certain individuals who must be repeatedly reminded by supervisors, suggesting the need to improve organizational commitment (Huang & Jiang, 2016). While people agreed that police agencies should be responsible for the police-citizen collaboration platform, they did not believe that the participation of neighborhood groups should be standardized and legalized due to limited funds and benefits (Huang & Kuang, 2012). One study showed that members who took the initiative to join Neighborhood Watch tended to have greater community conscientious and satisfaction with neighborhood patrol than those who were asked to join by local officials. Therefore, encouraging people to join Neighborhood Watch on their initiative should be helpful with establishing team consensus and subsequently implementing effective training and duty (Zhu, 2005).

In addition, in an examination of the Zhangya community of Nantou County, Ding (2016) demonstrated that although young adults are more suitable for volunteer work associated with Neighborhood Watch, the trend of few children and the migration of young adults into cities has caused a severe shortage of volunteers. The NPA’s (2018) annual report on Neighborhood Watch revealed that the average age of patrol participants was on the rise, leading to a lower deterrence effect of their presence and higher medical and social welfare benefits due to patrol-related injuries. Furthermore, as participants tend to be older residents who are invited to participate by community leaders, their ability to effectively defend the neighborhoods represents a challenge to the issue of organizational personnel associated with Neighborhood Watch.

Resources Perspective
According to the “Ministry of the Interior”’s Implementation Directions Guide to Establishing Civilian Patrols in 1984, the cost of civilian patrols, including patrol members’ subsidies and equipment, was the responsibility of community residents, while the cost of training, exercises, and monetary rewards, was covered by police departments. Eight years later, in 1992, the “Ministry of the Interior” published Management Directions Condominium and Community Security. This particular policy specified that the cost for managing condominiums and community patrols would be shouldered by residents under a common agreement. By 1995, the government further issued the Condominium Administration Act Building Administration Division, which specified that the manager or management committee shall conduct the repair, management, and maintenance of shared areas or designated shared areas, and the expenses incurred shall be paid from the common fund or shared by the unit owners according to their shares of the shared areas. Since then, the common fund system for condominiums was adopted (Condominium Administration Act, 1995).

Under the Establishment of Community Safety Maintenance System – The Restart of Neighborhood Watch of 1988, the “Ministry of the Interior” began issuing monetary rewards and subsidies to civilian patrol members under three categories: (1) if the patrol squad has continued to operate over a year, has made contributions to local law and order by lowering incidents of homicide, burglary, robbery, kidnap and
The Community Policing Project in Taiwan has been rated outstanding, great, and good in their performance, with cash rewards of NT$500,000, 400,000, and 300,000 (roughly US$17,000, 13,000, and 10,000) given to the patrol squad; (2) if the patrol squad has effectively carried out their duty with innovative practices that can be a role model of other patrol units, the cash reward of NT$200,000 (US$7,000) will be given to the group; and (3) individual patrol members whose performance has been exemplary will be rewarded NT$30,000 (US$1,000). Cash rewards or gifts would also be given to a squad or individual members during major holidays or for work-related injuries. By February 1998, the number of officers in new patrol squads had increased to 1,015 (Criminal Investigation Bureau, 2019).

In 2005, the “Ministry of the Interior” issued the Subsidy Rule for Community Safety Watch Patrols. Community watch patrols were required to have at least twelve members and were divided into different functional patrol groups, such as domestic violence prevention and disaster reduction. Civilian patrol groups involved in community safety received a subsidy of NT$60,000–100,000 (US$2,000–3,300) for achieving outstanding performance. Later in the same year, the “Ministry of the Interior” extended its financial subsidy to community development associations and condominium commissions. Performance appraisal for promoting community safety and the selection of benchmark communities were made every year.

According to NPA statistics, a total of 7,736 units, including community development associations, condominium commissions, and patrol squads, were subsidized from 2005 to 2014. The project grants have reached more than NT$700 million ($25,000,000) (National Police Agency, 2015). In 2016, 62 communities were rated as “excellent communities” and given a total of NT$2.5 million rewards. In 2017, 32 communities were selected as role models in community safety and rewarded NT$10,000 each. The “Ministry of the Interior” also provided 736 communities with NT$60,000 each to support their community-building efforts (National Police Agency, 2018). No matter the reason for receiving rewards from the “Ministry of the Interior,” the performance of local patrol squads carried a heavy weight in the review and evaluation process.

In December 2017, the “Ministry of the Interior” issued the Act for the Establishment and Administration of the Safety Fund for Police Officers, Fire-fighters, Coastguards, Immigration Officers, Airmen, and Volunteer Forces. Members of neighborhood civilian patrol squads are covered by the act. The fund can be dispersed to cover: (1) necessary family needs if a volunteer lost his/her life; (2) all medical expenses if the volunteer was injured on duty; and (3) emergency needs while on duty.

In addition to providing monetary incentives to communities and residents to encourage participation in Neighborhood Watch, a study of civilian patrol squads in Zhanghua County found that the following strategies were likely to enhance residents’ willingness to be involved in neighborhood civilian patrols: giving cash rewards for information and clues leading directly to arrests for criminal cases; providing individuals of patrol squads and their members with traveling money if perfect attendance was observed; issuing a volunteer honorary card; and setting up patrol offices (Huang & Jiang, 2016). The installment of CCTV systems could aid patrol squads in carrying out their crime prevention function (Zhu et al., 2005). Utilizing modern GPS technology to establish community emergency response systems can also greatly strengthen the capability of local neighborhoods in handling crime and disorder problems (Lin, Wu, & Jin, 2014). As stated above, the government has given rewards and stipends to Neighborhood Watch teams. For example, Zhubei City’s neighborhood patrol has used electronic sign-in devices to ensure patrol consistency and received the benchmark community award in 2010 and 2011 from the Ministry of the Interior (Chen, 2013). The funding sources of Neighborhood Watch come primarily from various forms of governmental meal per-diems and monetary rewards, supplemented by donations garnered by local officials (Zhu et al., 2005). A study conducted in the Zhangya community of Nantou County (Ding, 2016) showed that governmental funding made up mainly...
of matching funds from local councilpersons, the Ministry of the Interior’s community safety funds, county government’s Neighborhood Watch funds, and county police’s rewards for good performance by Neighborhood Watch teams. The regulation on “Small Construction Matching Funds for Council Members” allows funds to support the Neighborhood Watch program, but the budget is not constantly available. Monetary aid from the “Ministry of the Interior” is declining due to government financial challenges. Neighborhood Watch programs need to be registered with the local police to secure financial support from the county government, but the support is on a rotating basis, so a shortage of funds is common. Neighborhood Watch members have expressed their wishes to have legislation for stable budgetary support and a reduction in tedious paperwork for reconciling expenses (Liu, 2011). Some Neighborhood Watch groups also suffered lack of office space to store documents, as well as shortages of essential equipment such as flashlights and batons, which, in some cases, were broken (Huang & Jiang, 2016). Other problems included poor maintenance of surveillance cameras and inappropriate installation locations (Zhu et al., 2005).

Scholars posit that civilian patrol squad success is predicated on sufficient funding (Zhu et al., 2005). Others state that neighborhood patrols could be manipulated by certain people, such as local officials, to seek government funds and to garner political influence (Huang & Kuang, 2012) Thus, the provision of government resources to private groups should be carefully monitored to ensure accountability. The “Ministry of the Interior” has its annual evaluation plan for Neighborhood Watch groups to ensure that, for example, civilian patrol members do not pose as public officials or police officers or wear uniforms or badges that can be only used by officials.

In brief, Neighborhood Watch has been supported with various budgets and awards and evaluated based mainly on the number of new teams and the performance in important neighborhoods. Whether the effectiveness of the program reflects resources allocated to it remains largely unknown. Also, given that there are several monetary stipends and awards, how such support is used by team leaders and the stability of such support remain challenges to Neighborhood Watch programs.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH IN TAIWAN

Neighborhood Watch has a long history in Taiwan that can be traced back to more than half a century ago. The term generally refers to mutual assistance among neighbors or community members. Neighborhood Watch in Taiwan started in the 1960s as a mechanism of building community ethics to cultivate consciousness and consensus around common values, beliefs, and interests among residents, and only later the program foci transferred to common action items, such as crime prevention, fire prevention, emergency assistance, and environmental sanitation. Along with the emergence of community policing, Neighborhood Watch was further integrated into and became an essential element of this worldwide trend in policing.

At the turn of the century, the focal concerns of Neighborhood Watch extended to include community order, disaster, and domestic violence prevention. The focus of Neighborhood Watch shifted from cooperative ideas and information sharing to concrete strategies or actions. In the end, Neighborhood Watch became a common feature among some community-oriented policing programs. However, the focus was to establish community safety maintenance systems, such as the setting up of Neighborhood Watch patrols, closed-circuit television systems, campus safety corridors and community security areas, the publication of community safety reports, the provision of consulting services for residential burglary prevention, and enhanced community self-defense capacity. So, in a broad sense, Neighborhood Watch implemented community-based crime prevention programs. In the narrower sense, Neighborhood Watch meant civilian patrol squads deployed within localities.

Neighborhood Watch contributed to crime prevention mainly through two types of arrangements. One
is civilian defense and the other is neighborhood civilian patrol. Both forms have heavy police involvement with police field stations shouldering the responsibility of reviewing, advising, and coordinating crime prevention efforts, and higher police agencies monitoring and evaluating the performance of these volunteer groups.

For the policy itself, the development of Neighborhood Watch in Taiwan combined functions of social education, crime prevention, and community development. Studies indicate that Neighborhood Watch in Taiwan has some positive effects on crime, including fewer drug and juvenile crimes and thefts, and stronger problem-solving in neighborhoods. Research also points out that the function of Neighborhood Watch has been expanded to neighborhood building and problem-solving. The involvement of neighborhood problem solving has given local political figures and officials more leverage in politics. If Neighborhood Watch is influenced by local political forces, then favoritism would prevail, which is likely to weaken people’s trust in Neighborhood Watch teams and lower people’s willingness to participate in the program or cooperate with local teams.

For the organization of policy implementation, leaders of local administrative units and communities were most influential in shaping and motivating Neighborhood Watch policy in the 1970s. By 1996, local police departments played an important role in establishing civilian patrols. Various levels of organizations for promoting Neighborhood Watch were established in the late 1980s. Police agencies from the NPA to the grassroots field stations have played a key role in promoting community safety activities since 2006. While citizens and the police are in favor of police departments serving as coordinating institutions of community safety efforts, overly relying on the police or heavy police involvement also casts doubt on the autonomy of local neighborhoods. Neighborhood leaders were instrumental in influencing the likelihood of a successful Neighborhood Watch program. In practice, problems of inadequate training and performance, as well as lack of volunteers and aging of staff, remain. In fact, as Neighborhood Watch is not an urgent program and rarely involves the use of force, its operation should not be regulated by police agencies. Although the public likes to see the police promote the program, the operation of Neighborhood Watch can be regulated by non-police agencies, with assistance from the police. Such arrangements can save police efforts and time in fighting crime. In terms of organizational personnel, Neighborhood Watch can work toward e-watch and cooperate with private security companies to strengthen its defense capability. Community events should be planned and carried out to enhance neighborhood cohesion and promote voluntary participation in Neighborhood Watch.

With regards policy implementation resources, in the 1980s community residents bore the cost of subsidies and equipment associated with civilian patrols. By the mid-1990s, the common fund system of the condominium had been established to cover the expenses related to Neighborhood Watch. The “Ministry of the Interior” had a set of regulations that permitted the government to grant monetary rewards to Neighborhood Watch groups or individuals with superlative performance. Such a reward system, with some revisions, has lasted into the 2000s, allowing Neighborhood Watch groups or their members to receive financial subsidies after a review by the committee. Due to financial hardship, the government has decreased its support to Neighborhood Watch programs, causing deterioration in staff and surveillance equipment. Local officials thus try to garner resources for Neighborhood Watch in order to strengthen their political influence. Current official evaluations of Neighborhood Watch stress the number of new Neighborhood Watch teams and the document review or oral presentation of model communities. The actual effectiveness of such programs based on resource investment should be better evaluated. Neighborhood Watch needs stable fiscal support, which can be achieved through a joint official and private foundation. Rules and policies ought to be implemented to regulate and audit the use of the program budget. Such regulations can better formalize the operations of Neighborhood Watch and avoid resources being used by community leaders for other political purposes.
In Taiwan, along with the rapid economic and political developments, Neighborhood Watch has been organized and implemented to chiefly address neighborhood needs and demands, particularly residents’ concerns about law-and-order issues. The government’s strong support for Neighborhood Watch in the form of, for example, offering subsidies, has led to the operation of the civil defense forces and civilian patrol squads. The effectiveness of Neighborhood Watch and possible negative effects associated with the program have nonetheless received little systematic research efforts.

The Six-Star Plan that justified the preference for Neighborhood Watch has lost its appeal to Taiwan government in recent years, causing a decline of attention among officials within the “Ministry of the Interior” and NPA. Nonetheless, projects and activities continue with less strategic integration from the top, calling for more reorganizing and planning of relevant policies. The fast development of modern surveillance and artificial intelligence technologies may eventually replace the role of Neighborhood Watch in crime prevention. Therefore, it is essential to equip Neighborhood Watch with technologies and information management, and their connections to police communications, duty and equipment need to be further considered and planned. Yet, the function of enhancing political connections through Neighborhood Watch becomes even more evident in recent years. For example, local village and district leaders use their funds to entertain Neighborhood Watch members, leading to the potential problem of buying political influence among these volunteers. How to maintain an impartial force without political privilege is an important issue that needs to be addressed. In facing this possible transition and challenge, the government and scholars, unfortunately, have not engaged in many discussions about the future of Neighborhood Watch in Taiwan. The development of Neighborhood Watch may have come to a crossroads that requires clear directions and guidelines from relevant parties.

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