

**What prevents, or could
increase, informal social
control in neighbourhoods?**

**LSE/CASE Seminar
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The Families and Neighbourhoods Study (FANS)

Aims:

- Examine parents' perceptions of their neighbourhood
- Examine parents' perceptions and expectations of their neighbours
- Link perceptions with extent of social cohesion/involvement in local activities

Funded by the NSPCC

The relevance of informal social control

- Delinquency, criminal behaviour and child abuse all linked with higher social disorganisation, typified by few shared norms and values, low collective efficacy
- Antisocial outcomes are more likely when the behaviour of community members is not effectively controlled (formal and informal control relevant)
- Informal social control can potentially reduce disorganisation more effectively than formal control

Links with the Respect Task Force Objectives

- Highlighting respect for others and respect for the community
- Supporting parents to accept responsibility for the impact the behaviour of their children has on others
- Helping communities to set and own standards of behaviour in their neighbourhoods
- Ensuring the culture of respect extends to everyone, young and old alike

Respect not a new idea

“Lead the people with governmental measures and regulate them by law and punishment, and they will avoid wrongdoing but will have no sense of honour and shame.

Lead them with virtue and regulate them by the rules of propriety, and they will have a sense of shame and *set themselves right.*”

Confucius.

Topics covered in this presentation

- Extent of expectations of informal social control by neighbours in four different neighbourhoods, and shared norms
- Risk and protective factors in the neighbourhood that are associated with more or less informal social control
- Would parents themselves intervene? And if not why not? (from qualitative interviews)
- Children's views (from focus groups)

The study areas

- **Loftham** – disadvantaged inner city area, large Bangladeshi population
- **Midchester** – disadvantaged part of mid sized town, distant from any large cities
- **Seaville** – disadvantaged coastal rural community
- **Chapelhope** – advantaged suburb of large city

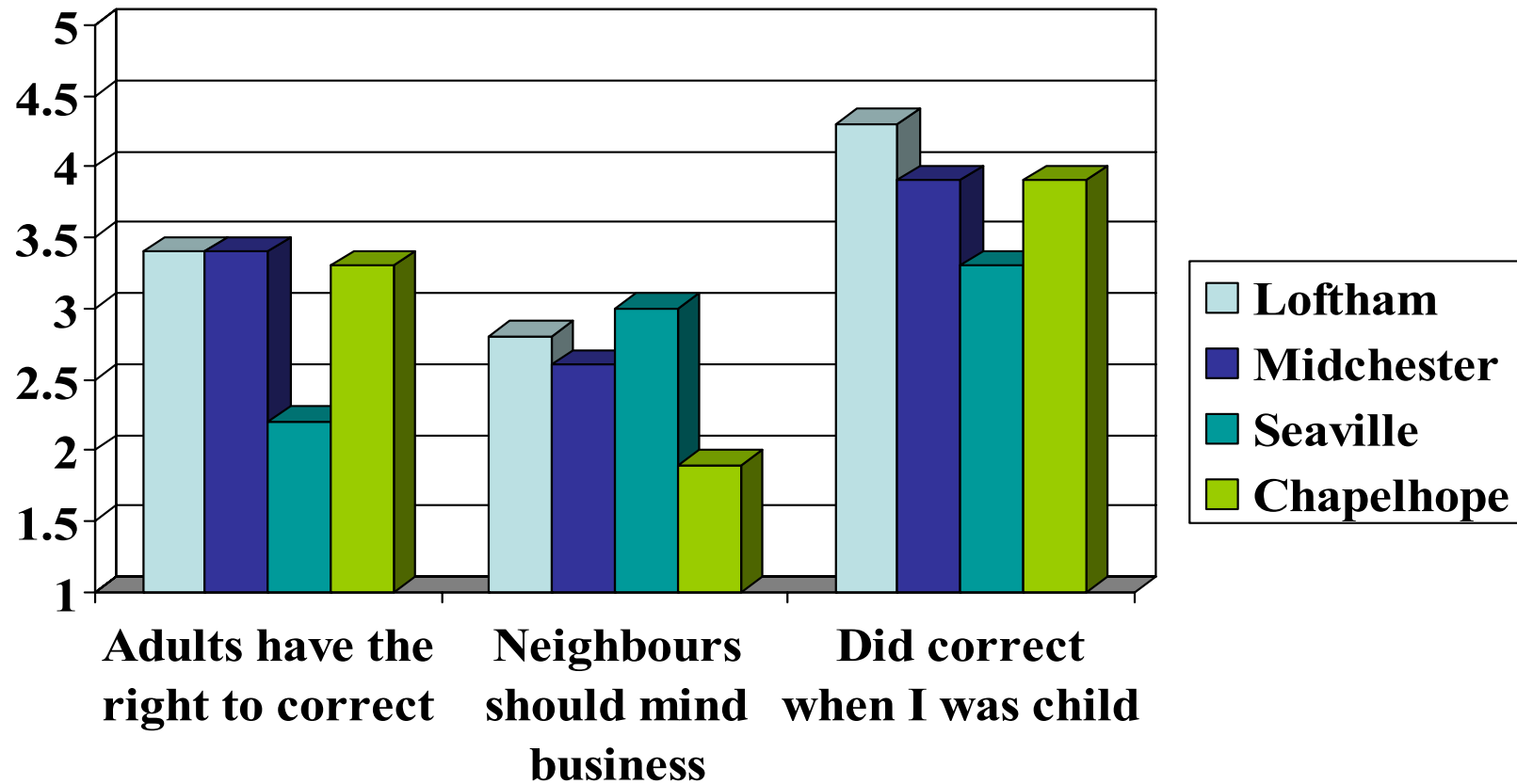
Who was interviewed?

- Parents (mainly mothers) of infants (257), 5 year olds (263) and 11 year olds (271)
 - Loftham 309
 - Midchester 300
 - Seaville 80
 - Chapelhope 90

Attitudes and expectations about Informal Social Control

- **Should** neighbours intervene?
- **Would** neighbours intervene if young children were involved in:
 - Delinquent behaviour
 - Antisocial misbehaviour
 - If the child was vulnerable, at risk for abuse or neglect?

Should neighbours get involved? (1 false, 5 true)



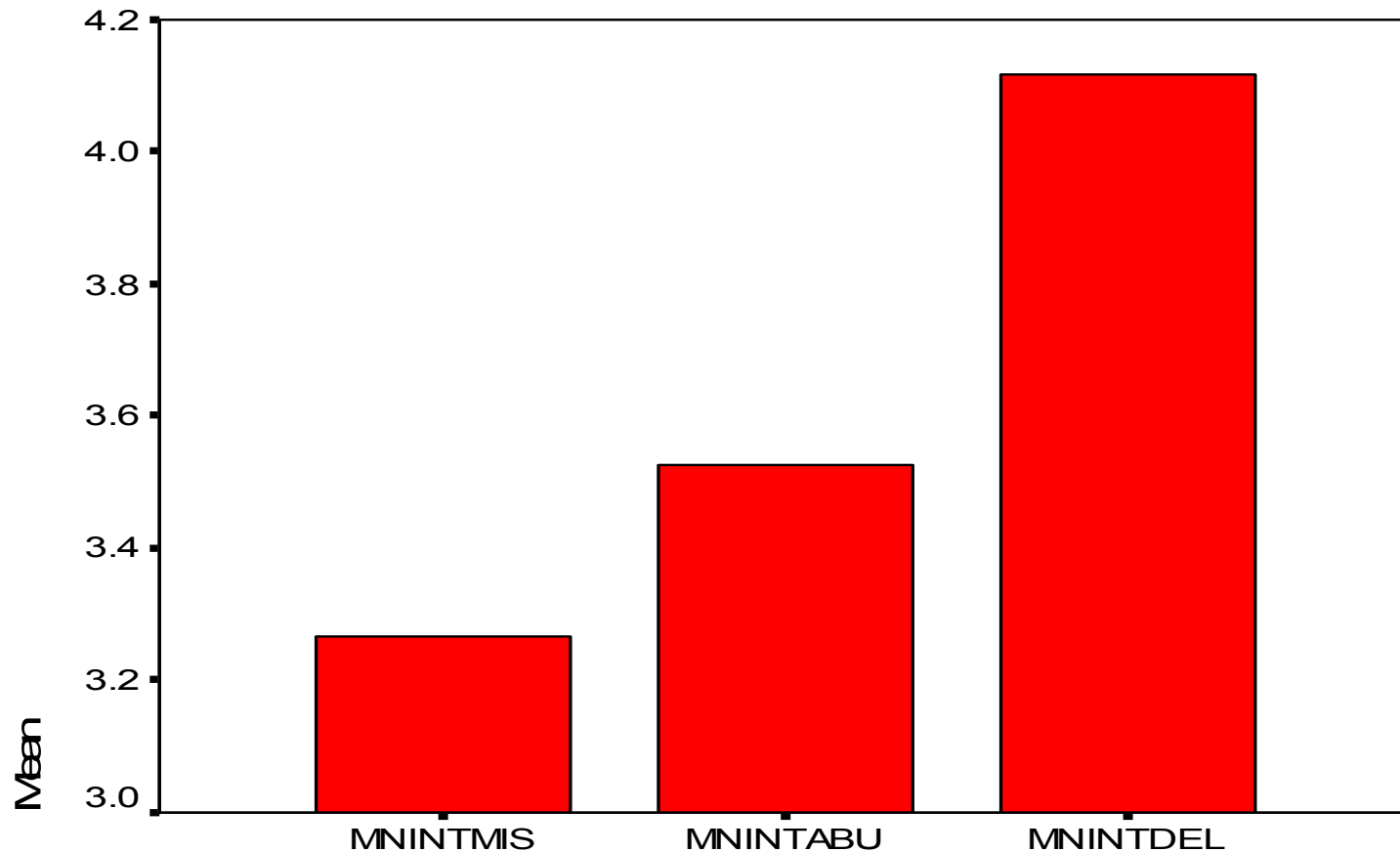
Would neighbours get involved?

Informal Social Control scales

- Is it likely neighbours would intervene with 5/6 year old:
 - For misbehaviour ? (4 items)
 - For delinquency ? (5 items)
 - To assist child at risk ? (5 items)

More intervention for delinquency

Mean item score (range 1-5)

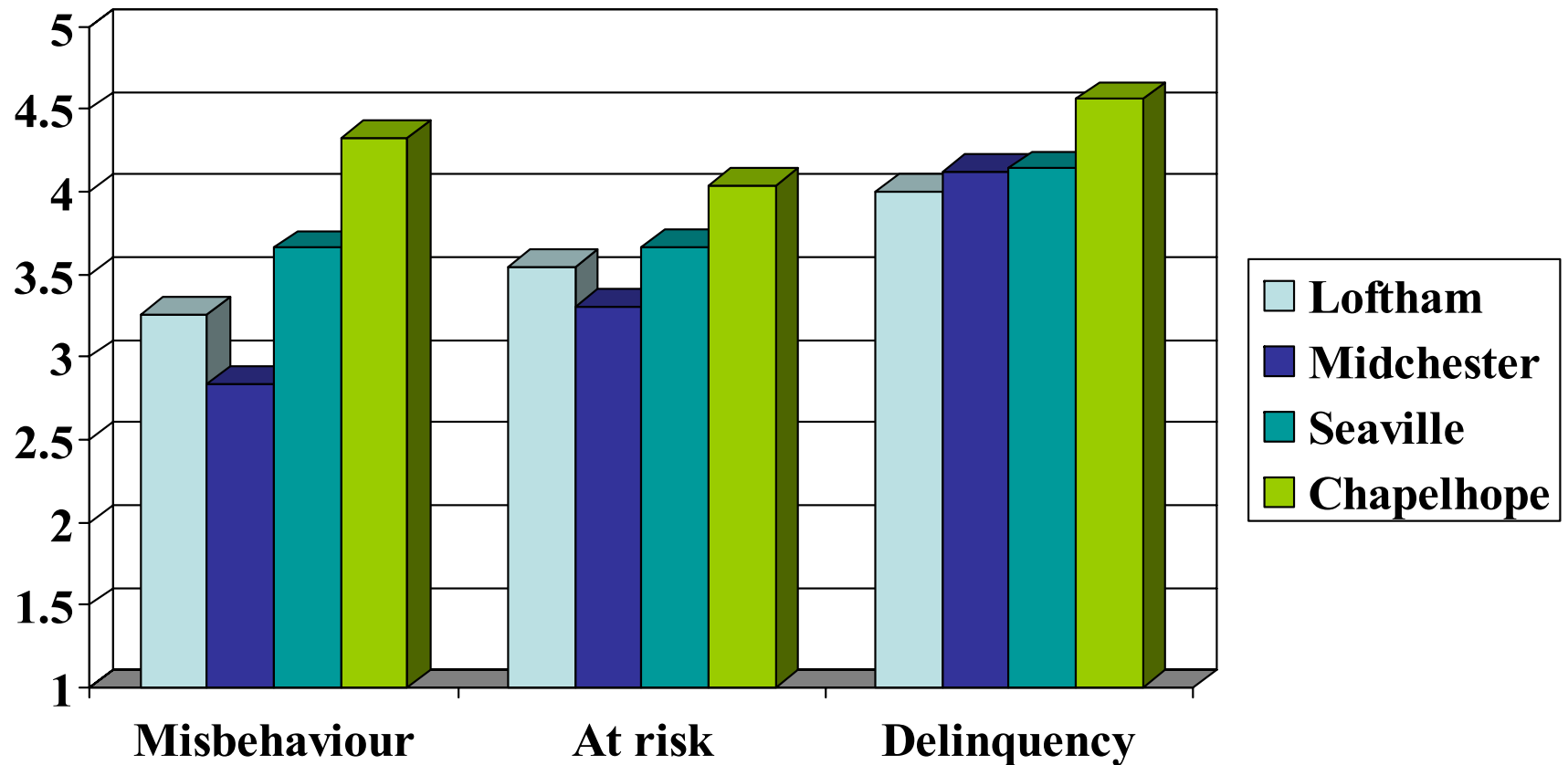


Picking flowers not (much of) a crime!

(1 intervention by adults very unlikely, 5 intervention very likely)

4.3	has a knife	(d)
4.2	taking something from house, garage or garden	(d)
4.1	playing with matches	(d)
4.1	spray paints or writes on a building or car	(d)
4.0	left alone in the evening	(a/n)
4.0	throws rocks at another child	(mb)
3.9	left alone during the day	(a/n)
3.9	shoplifting	(d)
3.8	falls of bike	(a/n)
3.6	throws rocks at a dog	(mb)
3.4	wandering by him/herself	(a/n)
3.1	hits a child the same age	(mb)
2.6	being spanked by an adult in the street	(a/n)
2.5	picks flowers from a garden	(mb)

Expectations of informal social control differ by neighbourhood

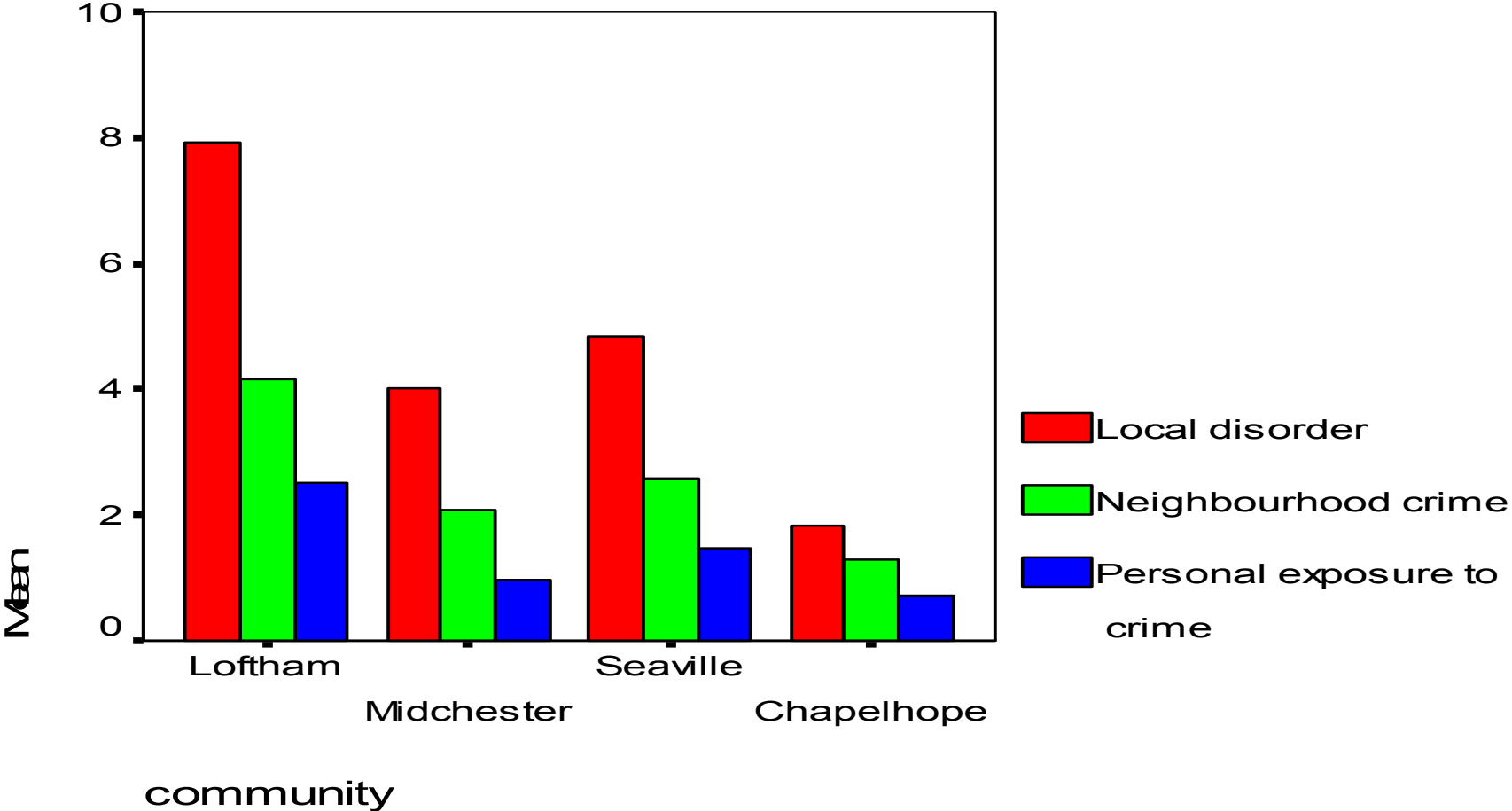


Potential Risk factors - neighbourhood disorder

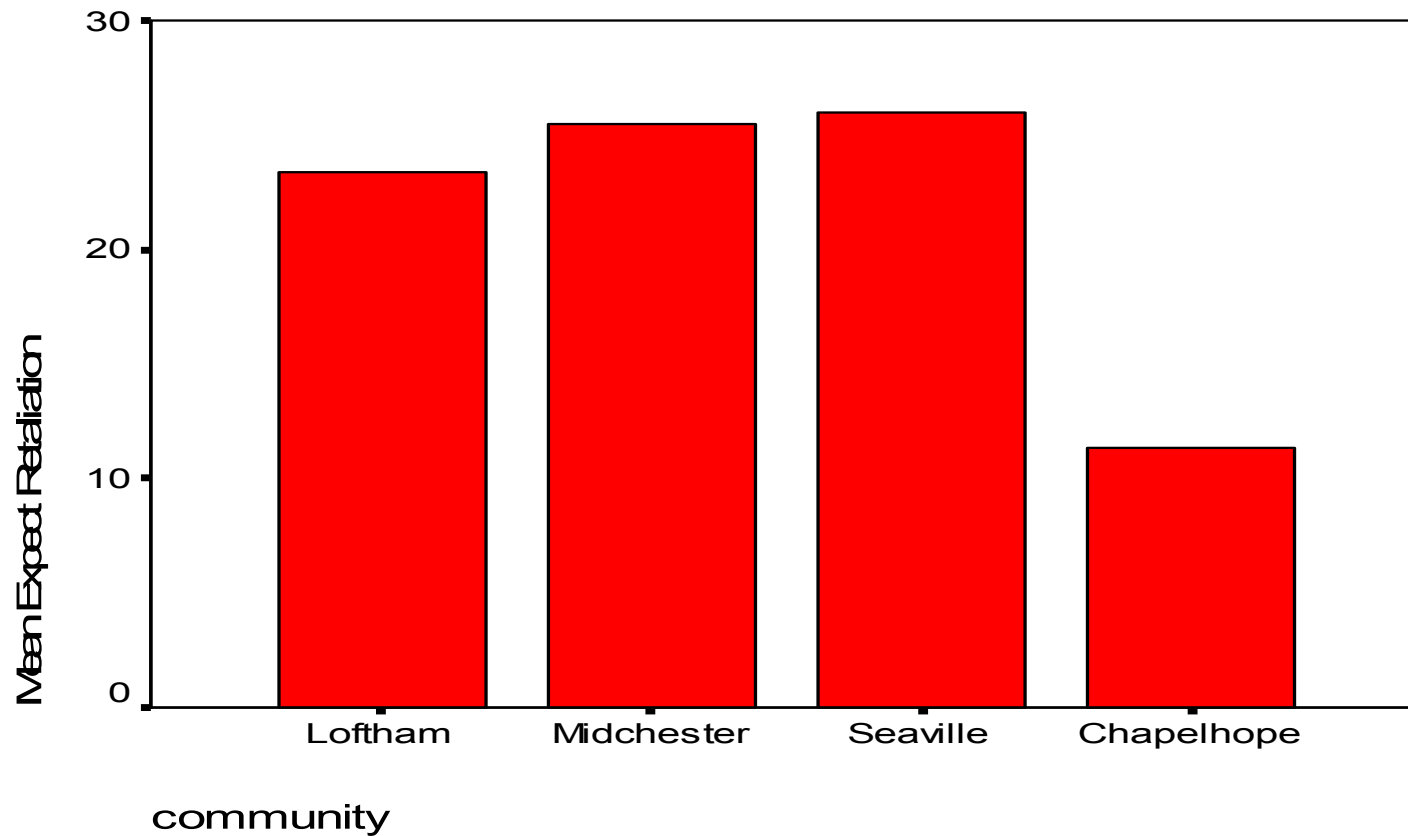
- Neighbourhood crime (0-9)
- Personal exposure to crime (0-12)
- Neighbourhood disorder (0-14)
- Fear of retaliation from children,
from teenagers
from parents (7-35)

Disorder/crime higher in disadvantaged areas, especially in city

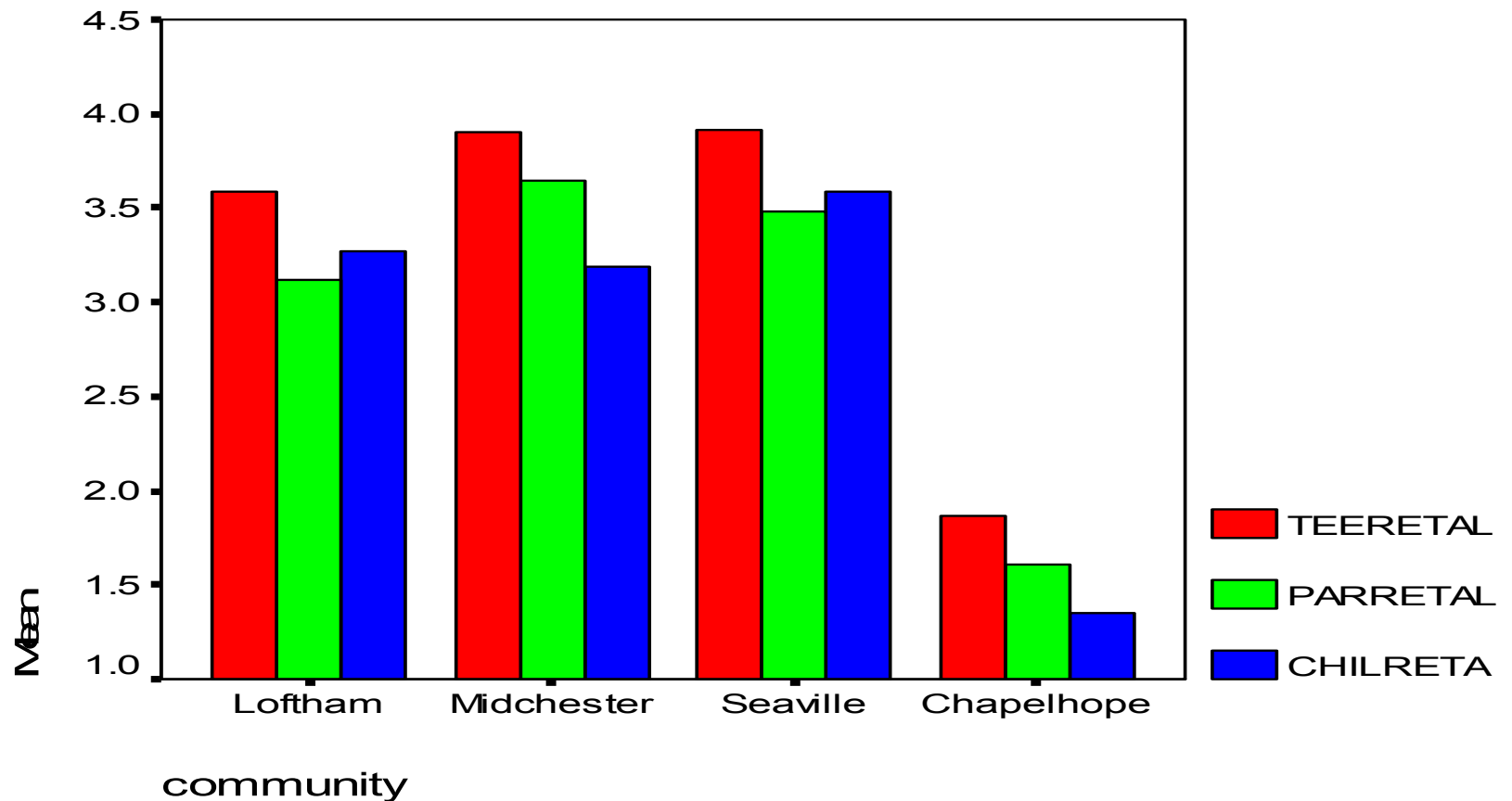
(Disorder 0-14; crime 0-9; personal exposure 0-12)



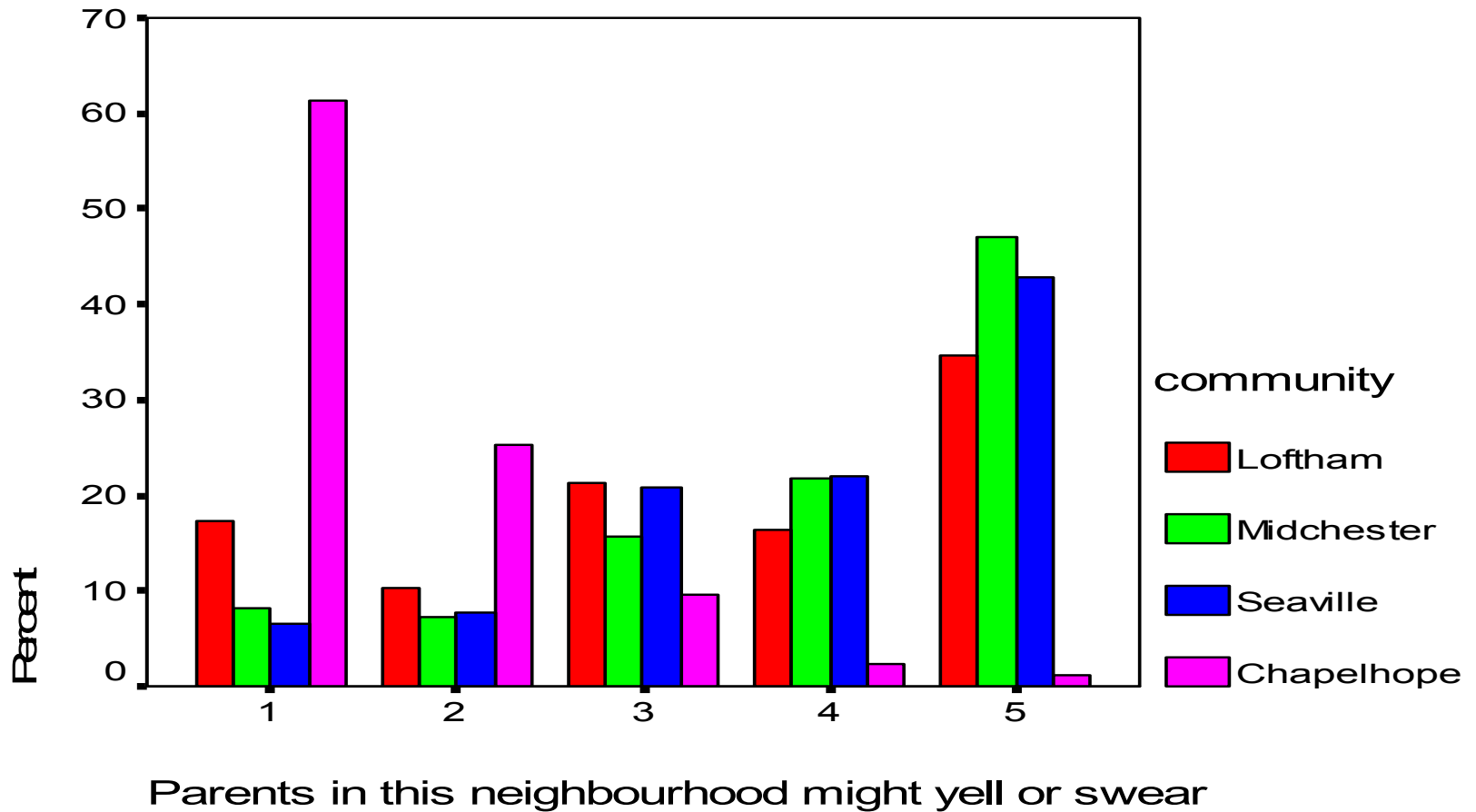
More retaliation expected in all three disadvantaged areas (range 7-35)



More (but not much more) retaliation expected from teenagers (mean item score, range 1-5)



Feel confident about other parents only in the advantaged area (1 false, 5 true)

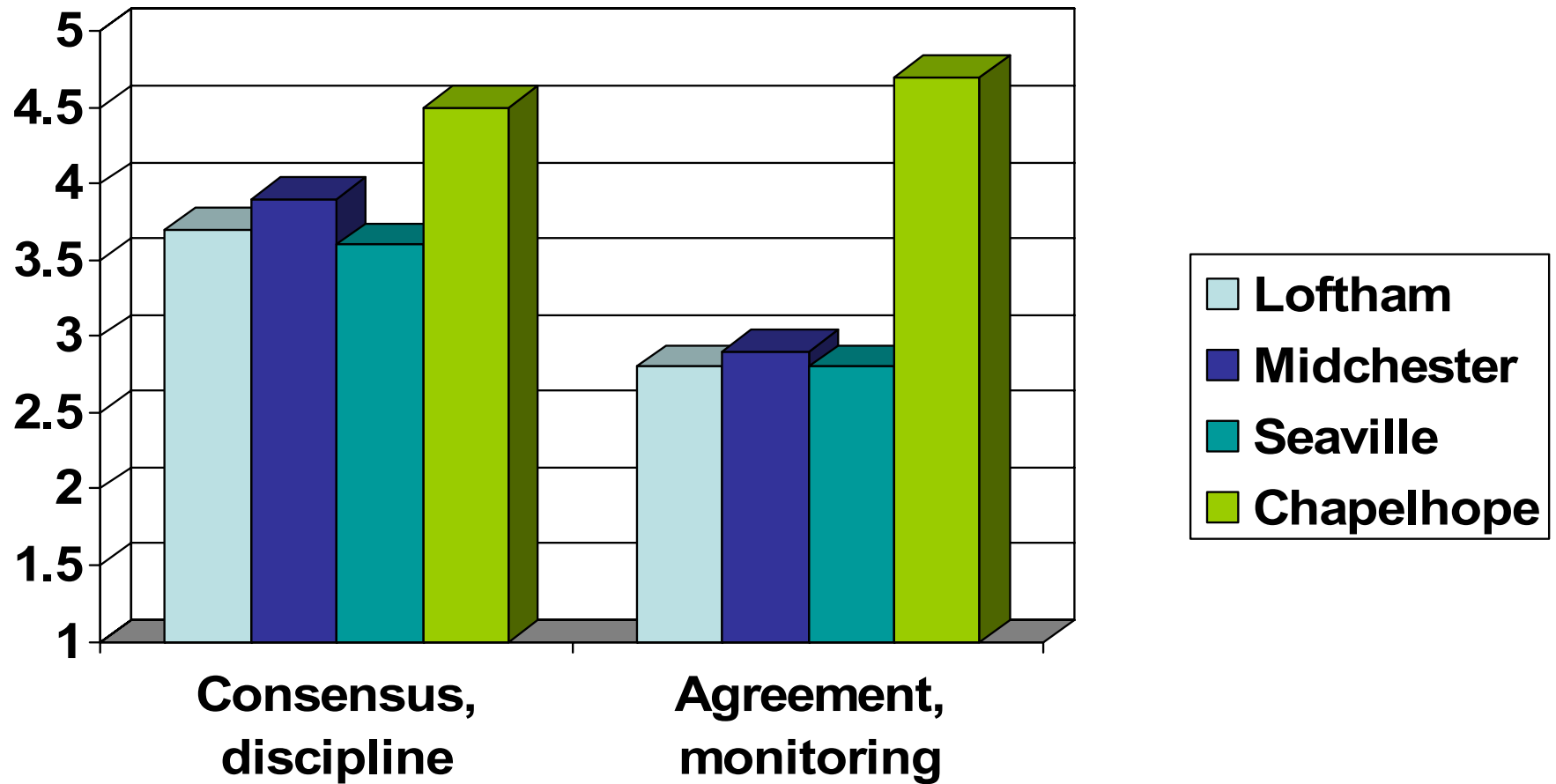


Potential protective factors - Neighbourhood social cohesion

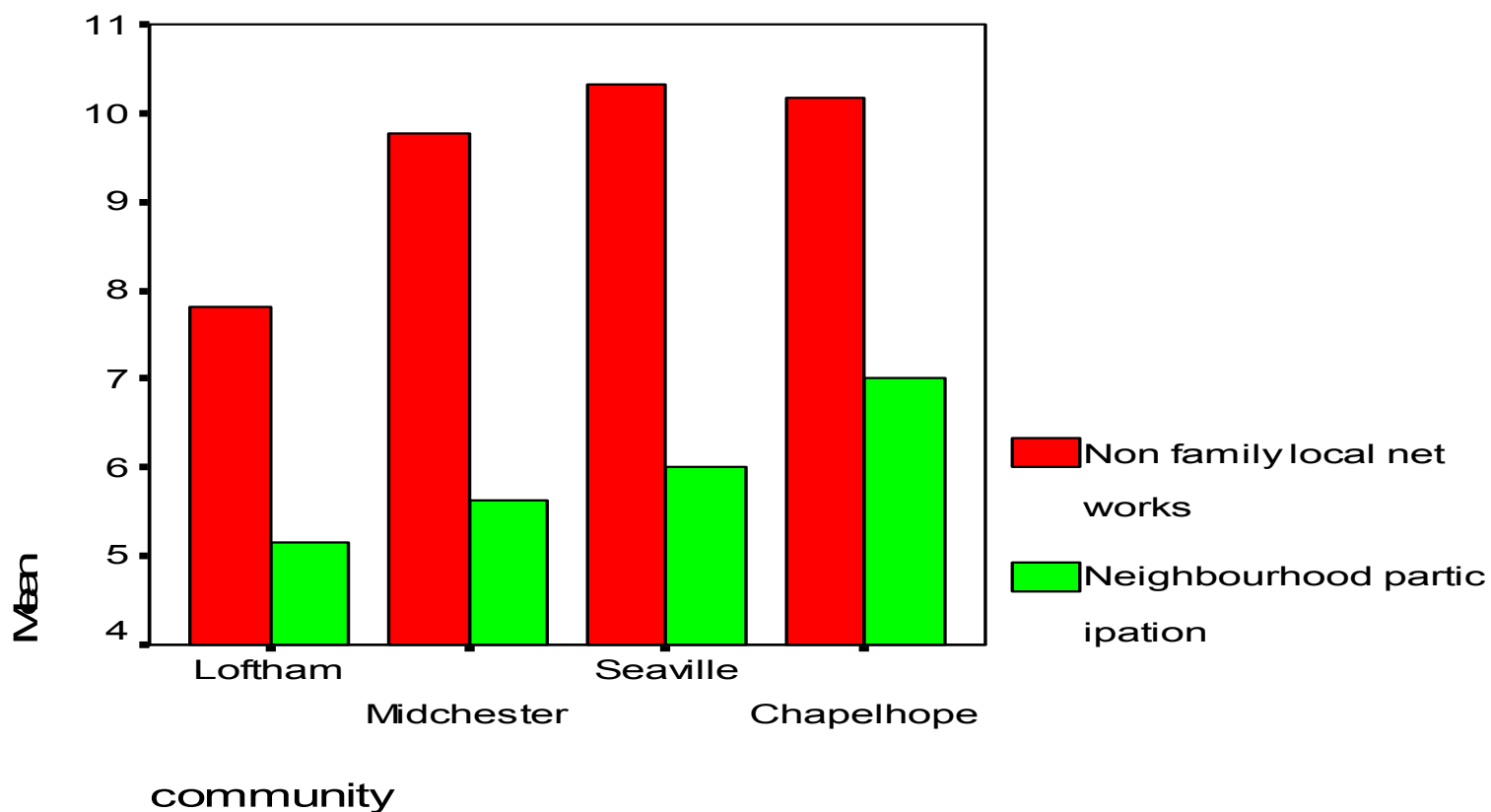
- Shared norms, discipline (3-15)
- Shared norms, monitoring (2-10)
- Non Family local networks (0-14)
- Family local networks (0-7)
- Neighbourhood participation (0-14)
- Local group involvement (0-20)

Local shared norms, Mean item score

1 – low agreement, 5 high agreement



City – fewer non family networks and Neighbourhood participation (0-14)



Local Informal Social Control, neighbourhood risk and protective factors

	Intervene, delinquency	Intervene, abuse or neglect	Intervene, misbehaviour
Local disorder	-.23	-.16	-.16
Local crime	-.21	-.15	-.16
Exposure, crime	-.20	-.14	-.14
Poor quality neighbourhood	-.33	-.31	-.27
Expect retaliation	-.30	-.37	-.42
Shared norms, monitoring	.29	.40	.37
Shared norms, discipline	.16	.21	.19
Local participation	.13	.18	.14
Local non family networks	.17	.16	.10

Predictors of more informal social control

- Controlling for child age, respondent personality and mental health, family deprivation, personal use of discipline, local crime, personal exposure to crime, and social capital, low **fear of retaliation** (Beta $-.28$, $p < 0.001$) and **more non-family networks** (Beta $.16$, $p < 0.001$) **predict more ISC**

What is related to more fear of retaliation?

- Child older (marginal) 0.10
- Neighbourhood rated poor quality -0.46
- Less attached to neighbourhood -0.14
- More personal experience of crime 0.37
- Low level of local agreement about parenting -0.62

Shared problems in disadvantaged areas, may bring people together with common purpose

“They’re all friendly enough, you know, and I think everyone’s sort of got a common bond because we all live in the same sort of area and I think people seem to think that you’re gonna go through the same problems, especially if you’ve got children, you know, sort of watch out for one another’s children” (Loftham)

Many parents have strong desire to protect other people's children

*“I walked to the bus stop once, just after she [her infant] was born, and there was a little boy in the park no more than eight, and there were two boys about twelve years old pulling him from side to side until he ended up on the floor. **I thought, I'm not having this. The other mothers in the park all ignored him. So I picked this boy up and I told the two other boys to go, and I walked this little boy home.**” (Midchester).*

Expect to be ignored or verbally abused when control attempted

*“You get kids out here of 11 or 12, if they’re arguing or fighting you try to go out and stop them, they’re mouthing back, f’ing and blinding and swearing at you... The other night one of them was trying to smash the glass in the street light... There was an incident recently with two boys fighting, one was beating the other one up, he was on the floor, and a lady came out because he was on the floor crying, **she went over and got told to f’off**, ‘none of your f’ing business’ was what she got.” (Seaville)*

More overt retribution also expected

*“It’s the older kids who cause problems. We had them running round out here, knocking on people’s doors. It worries me and makes me feel nervous about going to bed at night... I get scared what they might do and **I daren’t tell them off in case it makes them worse, they might go and target you then.**”*
(Midchester)

*“The lady opposite... reported the teenagers racing up and down the road on a moped like mad without a helmet and **she got a brick through her window.** It’s nice apart from the kids.”* (Midchester)

When neighbours are known, parenting values are known (and are shared), informal social control more likely

“Everyone knows each other, so my neighbour, for instance, if she saw one of mine doing something silly on his bike, she would shout at him, but I wouldn’t mind because it would be for his own safety.” (Midchester)

Affluent area, confident about shared parenting norms even if neighbours not known well

*“I just think the people, generally speaking, are decent people. **We are all like minded** and I think we all look out for one another’s children as well.” (Chapelhope)*

*“It was within a cul-de-sac and from what I gathered **all my neighbours there were of the same thinking**. We all looked out for other people’s children.” (Chapelhope)*

If only other people didn't have children!

“The kids aren't very nice, put it that way, a lot of the kids aren't very nice in this area any more. I won't walk past them on my own at night time, put it that way.”

“Their teenage kids hang outside here all night. You tell them to keep the noise down and you get abuse back. You hear them screaming round in cars. You report it to the police and they don't want to know. It gets me down and it's a big worry with the children.”

But.... some children are OK

*We text each other and that and we meet each other, mates and that, we just hang around the shops, we stay close to the flats 'cos there are others out there who do you harm. We're not scared or anything but you don't want hassle do you?
(Loftham, male)*

I feel safer when I'm nearer my house because when I walk up to (adjacent neighbourhood) it's a slightly rougher area there (Chapelhope, female)

Children fear other children

(When you are out and about, does anything in particular worry you? Do you get gangs around here?)

Yeah, loads of gangs.

(What are they called, do you know?)

We're called the 'Baby Crew'. These Year 11 boys are called the 'Explosive Crew'... They come and beat us up ...Because we're the 'Baby Crew' and we're better than them, they've just got to face it (Midchester, male)

Yeah we all stick to the same bit [of the neighbourhood] it's cool, we ain't pussies but we don't need the aggro (Loftham, male)

Many children are not becoming part of
their neighbourhoods

*I stay in and watch tele – can't be arsed to
go out. What for anyway? **Nothing out
there** for me. (Loftham ,male)*

What do children want?

- Safe spaces to hang out with friends
 - Parks and shelters
 - Streets that they can use
 - Skateboarding and other sport facilities
 - Facilities not restricted by fees or narrow time bands
- Lighting
- Tolerance

Conclusions

- In theory many families think that neighbours would intervene for the common good – set standards of behaviour in neighbourhoods
- This is limited by personal characteristics and knowledge that neighbours are like-minded.
- Fear of neighbours is the most important limiting factor (may be based on fact or fear of the unknown).
- Parents need to learn to control their own behaviour, as well as monitoring their children
- Local social participation and ‘active citizenship’ could improve knowledge about neighbours but are a challenge for parents, particularly in deprived areas.
- Youth need more facilities and more local involvement.

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