

Research Statement:

**A STUDY OF
URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS AND
COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING**

The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government
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for further information please contact:
David J. Wright
Director, Urban and Metropolitan Studies
Phone: 518-443-5007
Fax: 518-443-5705
email: wrightd@rockinst.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Issue: The body of academic literature on minority neighborhoods in America is heavily focused on detailing the characteristics of urban underclass communities. Consequently, the prevailing image of minority inner-city neighborhoods is a stereotype of uniform distress, deviance and danger. Although these types of neighborhoods are widespread, the conventional picture of minority neighborhoods in America is incomplete and misleading. In fact the nation's metropolitan areas host an array of black and Hispanic neighborhoods, differing in size, type, character, and condition. Much remains to be learned about these predominately minority, working-class and middle-class neighborhoods, about the effect of such places on their inhabitants – particularly on children and families – and about the efforts of residents to improve their communities. This proposal lays out a research agenda for filling the gaps in knowledge about majority-minority neighborhoods, both urban and suburban.

Project: The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government's Urban and Metropolitan Studies Program proposes to significantly extend its multi-year, multi-site Urban Neighborhood and Community Capacity Building Study. The Study will establish a rich data set combining secondary socio-economic data with new primary data from agency records, community surveys and key informant interviews, all linked through Geographic Information Systems technology to the boundaries of a set of low-, moderate-, middle-, and higher-income majority-black and majority-Hispanic neighborhoods in 16 metropolitan areas across the nation. Neighborhoods will be identified and profiled according to the presence or proximity of desirable and undesirable locational features, the relative quality of public services, the strength of social capital, and how these translate into measures of neighborhood effects, in terms of outcomes and context, for residents. Measures of these will include agency data on educational quality, health status, income and wealth concentrations, and mobility. The Study – through overview and case study reports, monographs and press conferences – will: (1) lay the foundation for an informed discussion of majority-minority neighborhoods in metropolitan areas; (2) raise awareness about the number, conditions, and prospects of majority-minority neighborhoods that are *nonpoor*; (3) distinguish among *neighborhood effects* on residents – especially on children and families – among community types in our taxonomy; (4) highlight the attributes of stability and progress in majority-minority neighborhoods; and (5) suggest appropriate intervention strategies for securing these attributes and, by extension and translation, dealing with the problems of the nation's poorest majority-minority neighborhoods.

Policy Implications¹: Majority-minority neighborhoods are home to all types of nonprofit, government and private sector programs. Some of these neighborhoods have proven more responsive than others to external inputs, due perhaps to certain neighborhood attributes, such as the presence of distinctive architecture, quality public services or community capital. Other neighborhoods continue to face increased obstacles to change due, perhaps, to their lack of opportunity structures that facilitate employment, civic engagement, or political mobilization among their residents. Important policy

¹ Our complementary studies of comprehensive community initiatives will aid us in shaping the policy questions for this study. (We are conducting a national assessment for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development of the Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community program and an evaluation of the Neighborhood Preservation Initiative, a comprehensive, community-based effort sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts to preserve working-class neighborhoods in nine cities.)

questions abound: Do predominantly black or Hispanic neighborhoods that are working-class and middle-class foster bonds of community among their residents, who then promote and preserve stable, non-deviant environments? Are there demonstrable differences in outcomes and context for residents of such neighborhoods versus others? How central is a civic infrastructure -- social capital -- to the abilities of these communities to stave off deterioration and to develop? How is it built or encouraged? Can these communities offer new insights as to the proper role of public policy in the development and/or maintenance of civic engagement, institutional infrastructures, and social capital among the residents of the poorest majority-minority residential areas? What is the level of need for bridging mechanisms that incorporate majority-minority neighborhood residents into larger social, economic, and political environments? What examples of these mechanisms exist and how do they work? Knowledge of conditions and the trajectory of neighborhoods can usefully inform the consideration of these and other questions critical to the well-being of American cities.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The nation's metropolitan areas host a complex array of predominately-minority neighborhoods, differing in size, type, character, and condition. Most are segregated. A number of them, however, are undergoing racial and ethnic shifts. Many are fragile and threatened; others are vibrant and thriving. Some lack a strong institutional infrastructure, while others have high levels of social capital in the form of churches, businesses, neighborhood associations, schools and community development corporations. Some are old. Some new. Some are backsliding, others trending up. In short, majority-minority neighborhoods are neither monolithic nor static. They are diverse and changing.

The body of academic literature on minority neighborhoods in America, especially concerning majority-black communities, is heavily focused on detailing the characteristics of urban underclass areas, however, as is the popular media. Consequently, the prevailing image of majority-minority inner-city neighborhoods is a stereotype of uniform distress, deviance and danger. Although examples of such neighborhoods are widespread, the conventional picture of majority-minority neighborhoods in America is incomplete and misleading.

The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government's ongoing Urban Neighborhoods and Community Capacity Building Study is an effort to learn more about the diversity of majority-black and majority-Hispanic neighborhoods, and about the efforts of their residents to improve their communities. The Study, which is being conducted in the nation's largest metropolitan areas, focuses especially on working- and middle-class majority-minority neighborhoods – those we sometimes think of as the flip side of underclass ghettos. The goals of our multi-year study are five-fold:

- To identify and study the diversity of predominately-minority neighborhoods throughout the United States, especially those that are working-class and middle-class.
- To determine the characteristics distinguishing working-class and middle-class predominately-minority neighborhoods from their poorer and richer counterparts.
- To distinguish among *neighborhood effects* on residents – especially on children and families – among community types in our taxonomy.
- To identify and analyze factors that enable some predominately-minority neighborhoods to stave off the problems of concentrated distress that are often associated with cities.
- To identify public policies that can help to ensure the stability of nonpoor predominately-minority neighborhoods, support the efforts of stakeholders to improve them, and help to turn around poor neighborhoods.

Holding true to the notion of social scientist as informant, the Urban Neighborhood and Community Capacity Building Study seeks to improve our understanding of the residential areas in which blacks and Hispanics live, especially those in metropolitan areas. At the same time, it seeks to engage both the social science and philanthropic communities in a balanced and informed conversation about the contemporary conditions and trajectories of majority-minority neighborhoods.

Past research has led to a number of models that seek to predict and/or explain neighborhood changes fueled by one or a combination (of varying intricacy) among demographic, social, economic, environmental and political factors. Taken together, these models indicate a set of *attributes* important to establishing a

neighborhood's character or profile, and hence its condition and trajectory. These include a set of characteristics that make a given neighborhood more or less desirable, such as the age and architectural distinctiveness/attractiveness of the housing stock; the level and perceived quality of public services, including perhaps most importantly public schools and safety; proximity to desirable locational features and distance from undesirable ones. Other attributes include such things as selected socio-demographic characteristics of neighborhood residents that may affect population increase or decline, and measures of economic security, such as employment base and transportation access.

Recent research on neighborhoods has begun to point in the direction of social capital as an important source of neighborhood change and stability. Adding to the socio-demographic, economic, and environmental attributes of neighborhoods discussed above, researchers are studying the civic culture of neighborhoods, which are emphasized because neighborhoods are where the bonds of community are built. Although social scientists are far from knowing if social capital is *the* answer to neighborhood stability, the identification and assessment of the institutional and political, as well as socio-political, attributes of neighborhoods may help to better explain the dynamic process of neighborhood change, condition, and character.

Consequently, our Study focuses on the structures of civic engagement in majority-black and majority-Hispanic neighborhoods, be they prosperous or poor. Do predominantly black or Hispanic neighborhoods that are working-class and middle-class foster bonds of community among their residents, who then promote and preserve stable, non-deviant environments? How central is a civic infrastructure -- social capital -- to the abilities of these communities to stave off deterioration and to develop? How is it built or encouraged? Can these communities offer new insights as to the proper role of public policy in the development and/or maintenance of civic engagement, institutional infrastructures, and social capital among the residents of the poorest majority-minority residential areas?

We will also focus attention on whether there are discernible differences in the outcomes and context afforded to residents of different neighborhood types in our taxonomy. We will mine agency records and other sources of data for measures of health outcomes, such as infant and child mortality and morbidity, birthweight, immunization and the like, and educational outcomes, through school report cards for those facilities within neighborhoods selected for study [we will verify neighborhood enrollment versus magnet school formats and private schools through key informant interview].

Our orientation towards deriving policy lessons from an exploration of these attributes is key to the Urban Neighborhood and Community Capacity Building Study. Majority-minority neighborhoods are home to all types of nonprofit, government (local, state, and federal), and private sector programs: neighborhood preservation initiatives, empowerment zones, comprehensive community initiatives, and other types of stabilization/revitalization efforts. Many of these neighborhoods are low-income, but a significant number are moderate- or middle-income. Some of these neighborhoods have proven more responsive to external inputs due to certain neighborhood attributes, e.g., high rates of home ownership or the presence of neighborhood associations. Other neighborhoods continue to face increased obstacles to change due to their lack of opportunity structures that facilitate employment, civic engagement, or political mobilization among their residents. Answers to important questions, however, remain. How has public, and even private, policy strengthened *or* weakened the capacity of majority-minority neighborhood residents to stave off conditions of distress? What is the level of need for bridging mechanisms that incorporate majority-minority neighborhood residents into larger social, economic, and political environments? What examples of these mechanisms exist and how do they work?

These questions are vital. But, the dearth of research on the histories, patterns of development, and socio-economic, political, and institutional structure of moderate- and middle-income majority-minority residential areas makes them difficult questions to answer.

The Urban Neighborhood and Community Capacity Building Study is an attempt to better understand what is going on in America's majority-minority neighborhoods. Taken as a whole, the Study, still at a relatively early stage, is *taxonomic* -- What are the main neighborhood types? It is also *longitudinal* -- How have they evolved? It is *multi-disciplinary*, looking at both statistical data on socio-economic conditions and trends and observational data on political and social conditions and institutions. And, it is *policy oriented* -- What are the implications for public policy that emerge from the study of nonpoor, majority-minority neighborhoods, especially those located within the bounds of cities?

Already, through the use of a range of data (national, local, and observational), a variety of techniques (field research, statistical and spatial analyses), and a wealth of scholars (sociologists, political scientists, and economists), this study has begun to yield important information about the prevalence, size, location, age, and socio-economic characteristics of majority-minority residential areas, particularly those that are majority-black.

BACKGROUND

The study of black residential areas began in earnest at the end of the 19th century. Early black neighborhood research consisted of studies describing the characteristics of what urban historians referred to as "the one big ghetto," meaning the large areas of black settlement that emerged in cities as a result of the Great Migration of blacks from the rural agrarian South to the industrial urban centers of the North and Midwest. The best studies of this period were both comprehensive and, as in the case of DuBois' study of the Seventh Ward in Philadelphia, able to discern heterogeneity.

Following DuBois, scholars like E. Franklin Frazier, St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton increasingly examined characteristics such as quality of residence, birthplace of inhabitants, type of employment and churches attended that enabled black residential areas to be distinguished from one another. What stands out most about works of this *genre* are a concern about the diversity of black residential areas and an effort to explain it.

Over time, however, the literature on black residential areas moved away from this type of research. Beginning in the late 1960s, studies increasingly singled out a particular kind of black residential area to review -- economically depressed and socially distressed urban ghettos. As the concentration of urban distress intensified, many black residential areas in central cities became increasingly characterized by endemic joblessness and lawlessness. Studies of black ghetto poverty proliferated over the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s and not without reason.

Research on black urban poverty showed that although poverty overall was generally stable for the population as a whole and for blacks as a subgroup, the number of blacks living in these "extreme poverty" tracts increased and the proportion of the black population residing in these poorest black census tracts stood at around 25 percent as of the 1990 Census.

A second and substantially smaller sub-group of the literature has focused on the formation of the black middle-class, more directly on black suburbanization. Studies of the relatively recent increase in black

suburbanization suggest that the process of black suburbanization has not produced a dramatic turnaround in community conditions in the form of markedly better housing, safer environments, greater access to jobs, and the like. Nor has suburbanization led to an appreciable decline in the levels of residential segregation between blacks and whites.

The condition of majority-minority neighborhoods is more complex than the treatment afforded them in contemporary academic and popular discussions. The majority of residents living in predominately-black neighborhoods in the nation's metropolitan areas live neither in impoverished inner-city communities nor in suburbs. Little is known about the full diversity of majority-black and majority-Hispanic neighborhoods, the affect of such places on their residents, the attributes that set some on the path to prosperity, or how community-improvement efforts might best be secured.

Conceptual Foundations for the Proposed Study – Theory and Practice in Measuring Neighborhood Effects on Residents

A number of social scientists have sought to offer explanations for how and why black poverty areas, suburbs and other residential areas have formed. Operating at a theoretical rather than empirical level, the body of literature on residential choice and neighborhood location offers four models to interpret how economic, social, demographic, and political factors interact and influence the formation of black residential areas:

- Ecological models posit that the process of response and adjustment to both internal and external phenomena influence the composition of the resident population and the desirability and consequent trajectories of residential areas.
- Demographic models attempt to explain how changes in population (e.g., fertility rates, age of first marriages, and deaths) affect the residential choices that influence the in- and out-migrations of people from residential areas, which in turn influence their population composition and trajectories.
- Socio-cultural models emphasize the importance of shared value systems among residents of particular residential areas based on the idea that individuals will choose not to live in a neighborhood which is unfamiliar or antithetical to their belief system. This category includes “self-segregation” theories, “discrimination” theories, and “class” theories. Self-segregation theories posit that individuals choose to live with others who are like themselves. Discrimination theories, meanwhile, posit that institutional practices prevent certain individuals and groups from expressing their residential preferences by limiting which options are available. Class theories account for the formation and endurance of majority black settlements within and outside of cities as a function of socio-economic status, with segregation of individuals and groups caused by the distribution of incomes.
- Political-economic models consider residential formation and change to be dictated by political and economic forces. According to these theories, particular neighborhood formations such as predominantly black residential areas are the result of power differentials among blacks *vis-a-vis* other racial and ethnic groups.

Taken together, these models indicate a set of demographic, social, economic, environmental and political *attributes* important to establishing a neighborhood's character or profile, and hence its condition and trajectory. These include a set of characteristics that make a given neighborhood more or less desirable, such as the age and architectural distinctiveness/attractiveness of the housing stock; the level and perceived quality

of public services, including perhaps most importantly public schools and safety; proximity to desirable locational features and distance from undesirable ones. Other attributes include such things as selected socio-demographic characteristics of neighborhood residents that may affect population increase or decline, and measures of economic security, such as employment base and transportation access. These models and the factors related to them are the conceptual underpinning for the set of census data and other variables listed in our study proposal as elements in “neighborhood profiling.”

This step is inductive and we believe necessary to make a contribution in a field in which the preponderance of urban neighborhood research has tended to be theoretical and scholarly more so than applied, and has concentrated on distressed neighborhoods. In essence, this contribution is to build a baseline – to define and describe a sizable sample of predominantly minority working- and middle-class neighborhoods in a way that combines statistical and field research by resident social scientists.

The subsequent step in our research plan is rooted most strongly in three disciplines – political science, sociology and the new subfield of economic sociology. It is indeed a multidisciplinary approach which is consistent with past field network studies we have done and now have in process and represents what we believe is our comparative advantage. In the proposal we describe a methodology to operationalize a condition which has been extensively commented on in recent years in discussions of how to help urban neighborhoods and is widely believed to be a key factor for understanding them. We refer to community capacity, or some would say social infrastructure, which has become increasingly a key aspect of our continuing urban neighborhood research.

Recent research on neighborhoods has begun to point in the direction of social capital as an important source of neighborhood change and stability (recent work by Rohe and Tempkin and by Sampson are especially interesting in this regard). Adding to the socio-demographic, economic, and environmental attributes of neighborhoods discussed above, researchers are studying the civic culture of neighborhoods, which are emphasized because neighborhoods are where the bonds of community are built. Although social scientists are far from knowing if social capital is the best explanatory variable of neighborhood stability, the identification and assessment of the institutional and political, as well as socio-political, attributes of neighborhoods may help to better explain the dynamic process of neighborhood change, condition, and character.

Recent work by Bill Rohe and Ken Tempkin (who were field researchers in our Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community assessment), that rests in part on the Pittsburgh Neighborhood Survey conducted by Roger Ahlbrandt, is suggestive of the aspects of social capital we propose to examine in our study: Attachment/Identification, Neighboring, Organizational/Associational Infrastructure, and Political/Civic Engagement. The more recent Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods conducted by Felton Earls and Robert Sampson, is highly suggestive as well. As noted, our intent is to systematically examine the prevalence, nature and capacity of community organizations and civic engagement among targeted low-, moderate- and middle-income majority-black (and subsequently majority-Hispanic) neighborhoods.

Key informants and other centralized sources will be used to establish a beginning point for field work intended to develop and employ a taxonomy of civic infrastructure. Questions about history and effect will be posed both to key informants and to respondents to neighborhood surveys. Measures of the other attributes of social capital identified above, particularly those involving senses of attachment and neighboring, will be obtained through neighborhood interviewing. Questions would be based upon, or designed to dovetail with, prior surveys as much as possible in the interest of building cross-study continuity and using resources

efficiently.² We do not mean we would seek to “replicate SIPP,” for example, but instead pull selected questions out of SIPP that are on our topic and which have the benefit of having been field-tested.

The theory and practice of measuring neighborhood effects on residents, meanwhile, is relatively new and has been undergoing rapid development. In fact, a two-volume set is just hot off the press reflecting the current state of a multi-year effort undertaken by the Social Science Research Council, with support from the Rockefeller and Russell Sage Foundations, to focus on neighborhood effects, particularly concerning poor families and children. We will scour this and other sources to continue to refine our approach, reflecting what is being learned in the field as we proceed.

The variables and attributes identified in our study proposal rest on a body of research and theory on how neighborhoods impact families and children that live within them. In the main, this prior work – like the new volumes from the Social Science Research Council noted above – is directed toward understanding the consequences of concentrated poverty.

In developmental psychology, neighborhood influences are part of ecological models (Bronfenbrenner 1989) that view individuals in the context of a series of ecosystems – the nuclear family, extended family, peer group, neighborhood, community, and institutions such as the school or the work place, [based on the] premise that individuals cannot be studied without a consideration of the multiple ecosystems in which they operate. Research on the effects of neighborhoods on child and adolescent development has been hampered by the absence of data combining information at the individual, family and neighborhood levels; [need] to elucidate the ways in which residence in low-income and affluent neighborhoods affects the cognitive and behavioral development of children and adolescents.³

Determining whether and how living in city neighborhoods of varying types might affect families and children with varying background characteristics differently is a complex undertaking. Neighborhoods may have direct effects on children or indirect effects through their families, peer groups, and local organizations. The effects can be a result of constraints posed on opportunities, institutional resources, information, social networks and social relations. Social influence processes may shape expectations, norms, and values. Threats to safety and physical aspects of the environment may produce high levels of stress.⁴

Jencks and Mayer (as cited by Brooks-Gunn, et al.) provide a taxonomy of ways in which neighborhoods might affect child development. (1) “contagion” theories, based primarily on the power of peer influences to spread problem behavior, (2) theories of “collective socialization,” in which neighborhood role models and monitoring are important ingredients to a child’s socialization, (3) “competition” theories, in which neighbors (including classmates) compete for scarce neighborhood resources, and (4) theories of “relative deprivation,” in which individuals evaluate their situation or relative standing vis-a-vis their neighbors (or classmates). In the case of all but child behavior problems, neighborhood effects are generally

² Korbin and Coulton’s recent study provides a similar opportunity, with questions covering: availability of resources and services; participation in neighborhood activities; social interactions with neighbors; willingness to intervene with children and expectations regarding reactions to intervention; neighborhood quality; neighborhood stability; direction of neighborhood change; neighborhood disorder and fear of violence; and neighborhood identity. Items were pretested to determine their clarity and feasibility.

³ Jean Brooks-Gunn, Greg J. Duncan, Pamela Kato Klebanov, and Naomi Sealand, “Do Neighborhoods Influence Child and Adolescent Behavior?” (February 1992).

⁴ Claudia J. Coulton, “Effects of Neighborhoods in Large Cities on Families and Children: Implications for Services,” prepared for University Seminar, Children and Their Families in Big Cities, Columbia University School of Social Work (May 1994).

quite powerful and often rival family effects. To the extent that economic characteristics of neighborhoods effect child development, it appears that the absence of affluent neighbors is much more important than the presence of low-income neighbors. This result appears to support neighborhood theories based on “collective socialization,” in which neighborhood adult role models and monitoring are important ingredients to a child’s socialization, rather than “contagion.”⁵

This extended excerpt from Gephart provides a useful summary of the state of knowledge concerning neighborhood effects:

“Community-level analyses suggest that forms of disadvantage other than poverty, such as the concentration of single-parent families, female-headed households, crime, and substandard housing, may constitute the most potent sources of risk for children and adolescents. There seem to be commonalities and differences in the community contexts of risk for young children and adolescents. Community contexts that are low in social organization are associated with high levels of child maltreatment, crime, and delinquency, but not with health or academic outcomes.

“Community analyses also suggest that the structural and demographic features of neighborhoods and communities are likely to affect child and adolescent outcomes indirectly, through a set of community-level social and cultural processes such as community monitoring, the number and quality of social ties, organizational participation, and value consensus. The few studies that have examined peer processes have found them powerful in predicting adolescent outcomes and have suggested that such processes may mediate the effects of community-level social organization.

“Few studies have examined the contextual effects of neighborhoods and communities on children and young adolescents. In the existing studies, the characteristic of neighborhoods most often found to influence children’s intellectual and behavioral outcomes is the presence of affluent or middle-class neighbors.

“Many more studies have reported effects of neighborhoods and communities on adolescent and early adult outcomes. The most consistent finding across studies is the effect of middle-class, affluent, or professional-managerial neighbors on educational outcomes.

“Across several studies, researchers have found the presence of middle-class, affluent, and professional-managerial neighbors positively related to educational attainment and negatively related to school dropout, over and above the effects of family status and background. These results suggest that neighborhoods influence children and adolescents through the resources they have to offer. Possible explanations for the benefits of middle-class neighborhoods include: the presence of adult role models committed to the labor force; the presence of peers whose families share values and have high educational aspirations; the number and quality of neighborhood and community organizations, including schools; a

⁵ Jean Brooks-Gunn, Greg J. Duncan, Pamela Kato Klebanov, and Naomi Sealand, “Do Neighborhoods Influence Child and Adolescent Development?” in *American Journal of Sociology* (September 1993), Vol. 99, pp. 353-395.

variety of amenities such as playgrounds, recreational facilities, and libraries; and the availability of supervised youth activities.

“Studies of neighborhood effects on problem behavior and delinquency have a longer history and are based on stronger theory. The combined results of community and contextual analyses of problem behavior and delinquency provide support for key ideas in social disorganization theory. Taken together, they point to the importance of community resources and organizations, social networks, and shared values in affecting the development of children and adolescents.”⁶

Other neighborhood variables are suggested by researchers as potentially impacting upon residents. These include the density of people residing in an area, the availability of public transportation, or placement of public buildings, parks, known drug-sale sites, and the like which, by influencing networks of family members and peers, could produce direct and indirect effects on an individual’s behavior.⁷

Noting similar factors in the use of community facilities, with probable negative consequences for developing community ties in high-risk areas, research by Coulton and Korbin and Coulton has highlighted several related elements: an impoverishment factor, incorporating poverty rate, unemployment, vacant housing, population loss and female-headed households; a child care burden factor (the ratio of children to adults, males to females and the percent of the population that is elderly, and believed to reflect the amount of adult supervision and resources that may be available for children in the community); and an instability factor, representing the degree to which the area may be characterized by movement of residents.⁸

The set of contextual and outcome variables identified in our study proposal follow on the foundation of the conceptual research enumerated above. We intend to measure a set of outcomes for children and families in the selected study neighborhoods, including educational outcomes and health. School-based performance data will be obtained from the respective state education departments for those school facilities located in our study neighborhoods. We will geocode and name all such schools identified and obtain corresponding performance data; we have verified the availability of that data from the National Council of Chief State School Officials and the appropriate state departments. The listing and interpretation of schools will be further informed by key informant interviewing with respect to whether the schools are neighborhood-based or magnet-based admissions; whether there are significant private alternatives used by sizable proportions of neighborhood families. Agency records will be utilized to gather data on measures of vital public health: births and deaths; deaths by cause; immunization; illness/injury; teenage pregnancy; access to health professionals.

Neighborhood Definition

Defining neighborhood boundaries has long perplexed urban scholars. Rather than consensus, decades of theoretical inquiry and empirical research have produced nearly as many typologies and methods

⁶ Martha A. Gephart, “Neighborhoods and Communities as Contexts for Development” in *Neighborhood Poverty, Volume I, Context and Consequences for Children*, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Greg J. Duncan, and J. Lawrence Aber, editors (Russell Sage Foundation, 1997), pp. 1-43.

⁷ Brooks-Gunn, et al.

⁸ Claudia J. Coulton, Jill E. Korbin, Marilyn Su, and Julian Chow “Community Level Factors and Child Maltreatment Rates” in *Child Development*, (1995), 66, pp. 1262-1276.

for defining neighborhoods as there are studies on the topic. Indigenous and grounded definitions are essential to our research. It is also critical to our approach to use such definitions rather than census tracts as proxies for the concept of neighborhood. The selection of neighborhoods to study, while important, should be kept in perspective, however. Neighborhoods are the unit but not the object of our analysis. Establishing their definition is a necessary means for, though not the purpose of, our study.

Throughout the literature, various definitions of neighborhood that have been advanced involve social cohesion that results from interaction and proximity. But it is the hard job of drawing lines for this spatial dimension of geographically bounded community that is pivotal to the definition of neighborhoods for any inquiry like ours. Robert Chaskin, for example, says that “Neighborhood...is clearly a spatial construct denoting a geographically bounded unit in which residents share proximity and circumstances that come with it.”⁹ Korbin and Coulton put the matter simply: “The concept of neighborhood implies local communities that are bounded spatially.”¹⁰ Specifying spatial boundaries can be anything but simple however. As indicated below, we are doing this with our eyes wide open, with grounding in the literature, and with the idea – as stated above – that however difficult it is you can’t study neighborhoods without bounding them.

Claudia Coulton says geographic boundaries can be phenomenological, interactional, statistical or political. By phenomenological she means each resident has a *sense of the boundaries* that are personally meaningful. This is also a big point for us, although as indicated below our approach draws on several different approaches in the literature. There is a lot of history of bounding spatial neighborhoods based on the perceptions of residents.¹¹ One can use the consensus of residents as the basis for drawing geographic boundaries for neighborhoods, but it is important to recognize that these perceptions vary even for individuals depending upon the context and, along with that such a consensus may change over time.

There are three other basic approaches. Neighborhood boundaries can also be based on patterns of social interaction of residents, such as friendship patterns and daily activities tied to spatial locations. Statistical definitions of local community areas are a third approach. Census tracts have been most widely used to date (for example, by White, 1987; Kassarda, 1993; Galster & Mincey, 1993; Panday & Coulton, 1994) though concerns have been raised (by Tienda, 1991, among others) about the degree to which these units resemble space that is meaningful to residents. Block groups have also served as proxies for neighborhoods in some studies (Taylor, et al., 1984; more recently by Korbin and Coulton, 1996), subject to much the same concern as tracts.

Some cities have designated neighborhoods for planning purposes that take into account local sentiments on natural boundaries, and had those designations supported by the Census Bureau. These too

⁹ Robert J. Chaskin, *Defining Neighborhood: History, Theory, and Practice* (Chicago: Chapin Hall, University of Chicago, 1995), p. 1.

¹⁰ Jill Korbin and Claudia Coulton, “Evaluating Change in the Community Context: Developing a Reliable Measure by Aggregating Perceptions of Neighborhood Residents. Final Report to the Foundation for Child Development,” Case Western Reserve University, (March 1996).

¹¹ Examples of research relying on resident, as well as indigenous researcher, perceptions include Roger S. Ahlbrandt, Jr., Margaret K. Charny, and James V. Cunningham, “Citizen Perception of their Neighborhoods,” *Journal of Housing* 7 (1977), pp. 338-341; St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1945); W.E.B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996); Albert Hunter, *Symbolic Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960) and S. Milgram, J. Greenwald, S. Kessler, W. McKenna, and J. Walters, “A Psychological Map of New York City,” *American Scientist* 60 (1960), pp. 194-200.

have been used in research (e.g., Galster & Hesser, 1982). Political units such as wards, districts and towns offer still a fourth approach to defining community areas, but they can seldom be equated to “neighborhoods” with a sustained social meaning.

Galster and Chaskin have come up with different typologies. Galster (drawing on Birch, et al., 1979) notes four gradations of “neighborhoods,” each with a different physical and social meaning: (1) a one-block radius around the home in which children are allowed to play, (2) an area over which there are relatively homogeneous housing values and populations where one feels “socioeconomic brotherhood” or, if this second level cannot be defined because of heterogeneity, (3) an area defined by neighborhood names, school district lines, or major transportation arteries, and (4) entire suburbs, townships, or submetropolitan regions.¹² Chaskin offers a similar typology: “the face block is bounded by the first streets that separate a resident’s home from the aggregation of homes beyond; the residential neighborhood implies some consensus regarding boundaries on the part of residents; and the boundaries of an institutional neighborhood have been in some way made official, codified and recognized by certain organizations and institutions.”¹³

These various typologies are helpful but not wholly satisfying, even to their creators. Galster concedes that his “particular definition of discrete neighborhoods, like all others, is arbitrary.” Chaskin, meanwhile, seconding Peter Rossi’s suggestion that the search for a universal definition of neighborhood may be a kind of search for the Holy Grail, concludes that “there is no uniform or universal way of defining the neighborhood as a unit, and the attempt to construct one is not likely to be fruitful.”¹⁴ Korbin and Coulton note that their ongoing work will seek to improve on their methodology for defining boundaries, in part by better-addressing resident perceptions. Hunter admonishes that “debates between this or that typology [or process] must ultimately rest upon utilitarian questions – *is it useful, and does it work?*” (emphasis added)¹⁵ When applied in the context of understanding the differences and distinctions among areas of majority-black residential settlement, our method of identifying and bounding neighborhoods seeks to affirmatively answer both questions.

Our concept of neighborhoods is essentially ecological. We mean this in the sense that we are selecting areas that share broad social, economic, and life cycle characteristics. Overall, it can be said that our method of specifying the boundaries of neighborhoods is a blend of this perceptual approach and what can be called the institutional approach: we begin with officially recognized boundaries, especially neighborhood-based census borders or those specified otherwise by official demographers, and then we refine them based on resident perception, which is itself ecological.

We worked our way through this stage of our design based on our pilot research in Southeast Queens and elsewhere in New York, as described below. Our working approach is predicated on the idea that people conceptualize their neighborhood in physical, socioeconomic, and symbolic terms based on things like types of residents, housing styles and history. Consequently, we employ a process of neighborhood definition “grounded in the perceptions of people who are living and investing in them.”¹⁶

¹² George C. Galster and Garry W. Hesser, “The Social Neighborhood: An Unspecified Factor in Homeowner Maintenance?” in *Urban Affairs Quarterly* (December 1982).

¹³ Chaskin, 1995, p.34

¹⁴ Chaskin, 1995, p.27

¹⁵ Albert Hunter, “The Urban Neighborhood: Its Analytical and Social Contexts,” *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 14(3)(1979), p. 281.

¹⁶ George Galster, “What is Neighbourhood? An Externality-Space Approach,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 10, pp. 243-262.

In sum, as now expanded to other metropolitan areas, our method is to specify neighborhood boundaries first through consultations with Planning Department officials, information from historical and government documents, and then through field visits and interviews with local residents, with the object of drawing boundaries that have the greatest degree of resonance among these sources. The field associates are asked to indicate:

- The street boundaries for the neighborhood, identified through a process of interacting with local residents and other appropriate local experts;
- The decade within which it became majority-black (or majority-Hispanic, in the subsequent round);
- Its physical location on a map as well as whether it is inner-city, outer-part-of-city, inner-suburb or outer-suburb; and
- Whether its trajectory is declining, stable or improving (based on population size, employment/unemployment levels and visible evidence of housing/commercial projects).

The processes of bounding the neighborhoods and labeling their median income level according to our taxonomy are methodologically distinct and sequential. First, the boundaries for neighborhoods are established as outlined above. Then, GIS is used to draw corresponding spatial features and link data accordingly. [Census data was obtained at the block group level, with a “splitting factor” – calculated through GIS-aided techniques to determine transformed road density and population density – employed to split and aggregate data to match neighborhood boundaries.]

One such attribute is the median household income of the neighborhood. Income levels are not static across the country – people tend to earn more and have a higher cost of living in some places than in others. We established a relational rather than an absolute-value categorization of income because we wanted to allow for this variation, include suburbs and urban areas, yet offer a consistent technique across our study areas. We have a relative measure of income differentiating low from moderate, middle and high in a way that employs standard percentages against a fluctuating median. The cut points were determined empirically based on observation of actual distributions of categorized neighborhoods. A series of statistical tests (scatterplots, Pearson Product Moment Correlations and factor analysis) suggested that observed variation among majority-black areas in the New York PMSA was traceable to a single factor and that median household income was the best measure of that factor.

We do not propose to study neighborhoods in isolation. Field associates will provide a summary analysis and description of the neighborhood and metropolitan-area/regional/ neighborhood economies, noting particularly any differences in the relative importance of the public sector, nonprofit sector and small business/entrepreneurial sectors as sources of employment, and the degree to which residents work and satisfy their consumer needs in or near the neighborhood. Field associates will compare study neighborhoods with contiguous neighborhoods on racial composition, ethnicity and income classification, as well as describe the social, economic and political factors that led to the study neighborhoods’ income and racial status. The study quite explicitly intends to measure mobility in and out of neighborhoods, and longitudinal changes in neighborhoods as seen through 1980 and 1990 decennial census data, and projected data for 1997.

Pilot Research

The Urban Neighborhood and Capacity Building Research Study was shaped initially by pilot research conducted in New York State in predominately-black residential areas in and around its large cities. The southeastern section of New York City's Queens County served as the main area for the pilot research. Southeast Queens was chosen for three reasons -- reputation, population size, and diversity. Anecdotal information, supported by census data, was used to get preliminary ideas about the character of southeast Queens and its residents, most of whom are working-class and middle-class blacks. A majority of southeast Queens' census tracts are middle-income.

Today, more than half of Queens County's black population resides in its southeastern corridor. As of the 1990 census, southeast Queens was 88 percent black, with a population of 241,000. Southeast Queens is also interesting because it has a diversity of black residential areas with different characteristics and histories. The area is comprised of twelve neighborhoods: Baisley-Rochdale, Cambria Heights, Hollis, Jamaica Center, Jamaica Estates, Laurelton, Queens Village, Rosedale, St. Albans, South Jamaica, South Ozone Park, and Springfield Gardens, which vary in size and age. Some of its neighborhoods are big, as large as nineteen census tracts. Though greater than half of southeast Queens' neighborhoods were majority-black prior to 1970, some are newly emergent areas of black settlement.

The pilot study of majority-black neighborhoods in southeast Queens combined field research, statistical analysis, and an examination of spatial relationships. The process in Queens began with the delineation of the outer boundaries of our overall study area. The starting point was census tract geography, mapping tracts with black populations equal to or greater than 50 percent to establish perimeters.

The next step in the process entailed the identification (i.e., name and location) of neighborhoods within the study area. Similar to the work of other researchers, our field researchers gathered information on the neighborhoods and their boundaries from two important sources – field observation and key informant interviews.¹⁷ Observations in the area by the central staff with field researchers through field trips, including walking and windshield tours, were used to make initial determinations of neighborhoods within this area of Southeast Queens. Attention was paid to the presence of physical and institutional barriers cutting off neighborhoods from each other. Information regarding the socioeconomic demarcations that separate neighborhoods, however, was derived from interactions with neighborhood residents. We spoke with long-term residents, merchants, and school officials to modify these initial determinations of neighborhood boundaries. Next, we met with demographers in the Population Division of the New York City Office of Planning, and in the same vein also talked to elected representatives from the area to refine our neighborhood boundaries.

The delineation of boundaries through direct observation and key informant interviews involved continuous revision and on-going boundary drawing sessions with residents, city planning officials and other experts. In the end, while the boundaries we identified for the neighborhoods in Southeast Queens are not official, they reflect what is understood by us to be the way residents view and commonly refer to the areas in which they live. Furthermore, following the advice of others that “[t]he criteria for boundary selection should reflect the goals and strategies of a given initiative,”¹⁸ and the “need to specify some precise definition of neighbourhood for which objective data can

¹⁷ See, for example, Donald I. Warren, “Explorations in Neighborhood Differentiation,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 19 (Spring 1978), pp. 310-331 and Roger S. Ahlbrandt, Jr., Margaret K. Charny, and James V. Cunningham, “Citizen Perception of their Neighborhoods,” *Journal of Housing* 7 (1977), pp. 338-341.

¹⁸ Chaskin, 1995, p. 34.

be gathered and analyzed,”¹⁹ we believe our process is sensible and replicable in other areas and by other researchers and practitioners interested in learning more about types of neighborhoods, in our case with the focus on nonpoor majority-minority (as well as other) neighborhoods.

In addition to offering a test-bed for our overall research design, the Queens pilot study was used to develop and test a taxonomy of neighborhoods based on median household income. The categories of majority-black residential areas used in the pilot study and our subsequent research were defined as follows:

- **Low-income** residential areas are majority-black census tracts where the median household income is less than .5 times their PMSA median.
- **Moderate-income** residential areas are majority-black census tracts where the median household income equals .5 to 1 times their PMSA median.
- **Middle-income** residential areas are majority-black census tracts where the median household income equals 1 to 1.5 times their PMSA median.
- **High-income** residential areas are majority-black census tracts where the median household income is equal to or greater than 1.5 times their PMSA median.

Simultaneous with our work in southeast Queens, we used the same combination of techniques -- GIS, statistical analysis, and field research -- in a scan of majority-black residential areas in other parts of New York State: Brooklyn’s Clinton Hill, East New York-Brownsville, and Sunset Park, Buffalo’s Towne Gardens, Hamlin Park and the University District, and Rochester’s 19th Ward and South End neighborhoods. Preliminary results reinforced our main point that, in the case of blacks, the stereotype of the underclass neighborhood of the inner-city does not represent a complete or adequate picture of urban residential life and conditions.

Building on our New York State research, the study team employed census data and input from field research to develop a sample of metropolitan areas for a national study of majority-black residential areas. Based on site visits to different cities and suburban areas, along with meetings with academics and local planning officials, we selected a sample of 16 metropolitan areas representing a range of sizes and geographic regions:

Atlanta	Chicago	Houston	Philadelphia
Baltimore	Cleveland	Kansas City	St. Louis
Boston	Denver	Los Angeles	San Francisco
Buffalo	Detroit	New York	Washington, D.C.

In a recent research paper presented at the invitation of the Joint Center for Poverty Research, Northwestern University/University of Chicago, we drew attention to the prevalence and characteristics of majority-black census tracts among a subset of the 16 PMSAs. In this instance, we conducted a detailed tract-based examination of majority-black residential areas in the nine metropolitan areas in the country with half a million or more African-American residents: Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C.. At the start of the decade, these metropolitan areas accounted for more than one-third of the nation’s nonhispanic black population.

¹⁹ Galster, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 10, p. 245.

As was the case during our earlier research, particularly the pilot research in Queens, New York, we find that most majority-black residential areas among the nine metropolitan areas are not poor. Indeed, 68 percent of nonhispanic blacks live in majority-black tracts and of those who do, better than two-thirds live in majority-black tracts that are not low-income. The socio-demographic characteristics of these places, based on 1990 Census data, bear a striking contrast to the conventional view of distressed, inner-city black neighborhoods. Among the most interesting aspects are the direct, positive relationships between relatively high proportions of public-sector employees and immigrants and relatively high median incomes in these areas. However, rather than explaining trends and patterns among their majority-black residential areas, we used this stage to create a descriptive framework for further analysis of their characteristics at the level of “neighborhoods,” both among our nine PMSA subset and larger sample of 16 PMSAs.

The analysis done to date indicates that there is considerable diversity among, and a lot to learn about, the range and conditions of metropolitan black residential areas. Census data, however valuable, is limited. The next phase of the Urban Neighborhood and Community Capacity Building Study goes from census tracts to neighborhoods, adds a longitudinal perspective to the study, and adds locally-derived data. It will enable us to address various theories of neighborhood change and formation, identify distinguishing characteristics between categories of neighborhoods in our classification, and pay particular attention to the infrastructure of neighborhood civic life: *social capital*.

RESEARCH AGENDA

Our research agenda is oriented towards identifying majority-minority, working-class and middle-class residential areas; looking into their origins and development; analyzing their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics; examining the perceptions and future prospects of their residents; highlighting their strengths and vulnerabilities; and drawing out lessons for assisting public policy with regards to their poorer, more distressed, counterparts.

Our basic method is to combine statistical, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping, and field network research by an interdisciplinary group of social science researchers and a core staff. That is our strong suit -- bringing field and qualitative data to bear to supplement and complement statistical analyses and tying both types of analysis to the consideration of policy options. Central to the research is a network of indigenous researchers familiar with the metropolitan areas under study, particularly residential areas of black and Hispanic concentration. Relying on a uniform set of research questions refined through interaction between field researchers and the central staff, the field researchers will be responsible for applying a uniform analytical framework to conduct key informant interviews, assemble local data, and identify and analyze the factors that are most important for understanding majority-black and majority-Hispanic residential areas. The role of the central staff is to coordinate the work of the field researchers; facilitate the exchange of information among them; ensure that they apply a common approach to a common set of research questions; and synthesize the results from the field.

A. Neighborhood Mapping

Each of our sixteen field teams has been involved in a process of identifying the *boundaries* for all of the majority-black *neighborhoods* in their PMSA, defined through a process of interacting with local residents, planning officials and other local experts. The field associates are asked to identify for each such neighborhood:

- the specific street boundaries for the neighborhood;
- the decade within which it became majority-black;
- its physical location on a map as well as whether it is inner-city, outer-part-of-city, inner-suburb or outer-suburb; and
- whether its trajectory is declining, stable or improving.

The process of determining boundaries for neighborhoods proceeds along the lines of the steps described above, with respect to our pilot study in Queens and the more general discussion of neighborhood definition which precedes.

These indigenously defined neighborhood boundaries will be used first, as the basis for reorganizing data from the 1990 census of population and housing. We are also applying these neighborhood definitions against data from the 1980 census to obtain a longitudinal perspective on the condition and character of majority-black neighborhoods in the Study areas. A preliminary profile of this pool of majority-black neighborhoods will then be drawn, including such variables as the following:

Age
 Class of Worker
 Educational Attainment
 Labor Force Status
 Marital Status
 Occupation
 Tenure
 Poverty
 Commute Time to Work
 Year Structure Was Built
 Family Structure
 Year Householder Moved into Unit
 Additional Sources of Income
 Employment Status - Persons 16-19 Years Old
 Household Income
 Vacancy Rates
 Industry
 Place of Work
 Hispanic Origin by Race
 Workers in Family
 Place of Birth
 Tenure by Race/Ethnicity
 Household Income by Race

B. Neighborhood Selection

After we receive and digest this information on majority-black neighborhoods in the sixteen PMSAs, we will select a group of neighborhoods. The stratification scheme will select neighborhoods to fit the most salient characteristics above. Our current thinking, which may change based on what we learn, is that we will have a study pool of 46 majority-black neighborhoods for this phase of the research, distributed as follows:

- Low-income neighborhoods (three sites)
- Moderate-income neighborhoods
 - suburban established (five sites)
 - suburban emergent (six sites)
 - urban established (five sites)
 - urban emergent (six sites)
- Middle-income neighborhoods
 - suburban established (four sites)
 - suburban emergent (five sites)
 - urban established (four sites)
 - urban emergent (five sites)
- High-income neighborhoods (three sites)

Total: 46 neighborhoods

“Established” neighborhoods are those that are majority-black as of the 1970 Census while “emergent” neighborhoods are those classified majority-black for the first time as of the 1980 or 1990 Census.

This selection structure is designed to include a minimum number of low-income and high-income majority-black neighborhoods and, in a relative sense, over-sample moderate- and middle-income neighborhoods which we know are more prevalent and suspect will be of greater policy interest.

B. Neighborhood Profiling

1. Examination of Socio-Demographic, Economic, and Environmental Attributes

The object of this level of analysis will be to produce more comprehensive *profiles* of the majority-black neighborhoods than is achievable from Census and other secondary-level data alone. Neighborhood-level data will be gathered on broad identifying characteristics, neighborhood economic security, housing characteristics, quality of services, the presence or proximity of selected locational features, and neighborhood civic life.

For added context, field associates will be asked to provide a summary analysis and description of the metropolitan-area/regional/neighborhood economy, noting particularly the relative importance of the public sector, nonprofit sector and small business/entrepreneurial sectors as sources of employment. Field associates will also be asked to identify and describe any notable recent or current local/community physical developments undertaken by the public sector or private sector in the neighborhood.

Field associates will be asked to describe any formal role played by the boundaries of the neighborhood in the political life of the city. In particular, whether they match-up or approximate planning or zoning districts, community boards, electoral districts, and the like, and whether such a match was a historic basis for the neighborhood's present boundaries.

Housing characteristics of the neighborhood will be thoroughly explored, including median contract rent and median value of owner-occupied units; number of sales, assessment-sales ratio from local sources; the amount and mix of public housing (e.g., conventional public housing, Section 8 new construction/rehabilitation, Section 8 existing/vouchers; elderly v. family mix); and the presence of distinctive architecture.

Neighborhoods profiles will include an assessment, based on key informant interviews, on the relative quality of public/private services, such as the following:

- Access to public transportation
- The safety of the area
- Public elementary schools
- Public secondary schools
- Private elementary schools
- Private secondary schools
- Parks and recreation facilities
- Police protection
- Supermarkets
- Other retail
- Health services
- Neighborhood appearance
- Housing stock
- Job opportunities
- Day care
- Public transportation
- Sanitation services
- Access to financial institutions

Key informants will be asked how frequently there are problems in the neighborhood associated with:

- Municipal or county services
- Housing and property not being kept up
- Violent crime
- Property crime, e.g., vandalism/graffiti
- Street noise
- Streets in need of repair
- Police
- Traffic
- Lack of street lighting
- Commercial or nonresidential activities
- Trash, litter, junk
- Boarded up or abandoned houses
- Boarded up or abandoned businesses
- Homelessness
- Drug activity
- Gang activity
- Racial or ethnic conflict
- Smoke, odor, gas

With respect to public safety and crime: data on the level of crime in the selected neighborhoods will be sought. Finding sources of crime data at the sub-precinct level is difficult, and precincts do not generally match neighborhood boundaries. Field associates and central staff will act in concert to search for local data in a way that is standardized across the study sites as much as possible. One possible source are the computerized tapes of emergency service calls (these may be geocodable, but are likely to reflect a subset of reported crime – e.g. over-representing emergent and probably violent crime as opposed to non-emergency crime and only those areas with computerized 911 systems). Minimally, field associates will report the general reputation of the neighborhood with respect to crime/public safety; whether key informants report that they have themselves been a victim of a crime, or have close family, friends, acquaintances in the neighborhood who have been victims of crime.

Neighborhood profiles will include information on the presence or proximity of desirable and undesirable locational features, such as:

- Recreation center
- Park
- Public elementary school
- Public secondary school
- Private elementary school
- Private secondary school
- Day care center
- Homeless shelter/group home
- Sewage plant
- Brownfield site
- Community center
- Library
- Police precinct/substation
- Fire station
- Hospital
- Other health facility
- Church
- Bank
- Public housing complex
- Supermarket
- Liquor store

The initial data source for the above will be electronic telephone book listings, which will be sorted, geocoded and mapped by the central staff and then distributed to the field associates for use in windshield surveys and walking tours to ensure accuracy.

These neighborhood profiles will be built up off a variety of data sources. Agency records will be utilized, to gather data on measures of vital public health: births and deaths; deaths by cause; immunization; illness/injury; access to health professionals.

School-based performance data will be obtained from the respective state education departments for those school facilities located in our study neighborhoods. We will geocode and name all such schools identified and obtain corresponding performance data; we have verified the availability of that data from the National Council of Chief State School Officials and the appropriate state departments. The listing and

interpretation of schools will be further informed by key informant interviewing with respect to whether the schools are neighborhood-based or magnet-based admissions; whether there are significant private alternatives used by sizable proportions of neighborhood families, etcetera.

We will seek additional agency records on building permits, occupancy permits and tax records to establish trends on investment and occupancy in neighborhood housing. Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data will be obtained for this purpose as well. As the associates in our network are conducting research in the field, central project staff will join in obtaining and analyzing data from sources identified above.

2. Examination of Social and Personal Capital

We will continue the process of profiling sampled neighborhoods, in this case adding greater breadth and depth of information on key attributes of “social capital,” as well as data on household wealth. This portion of the field research will rely on neighborhood surveying, key informant interviewing, focus groups and other techniques to gather and report information on such attributes of “social capital” as:

(1) *Attachment/Identification*: measured by such factors as the percentage of residents who report that the neighborhood has a name; that it has identifiable and recognized boundaries; that residents have a strong sense of attachment to place -- i.e. feel stronger attachment to the neighborhood than to the city at large; and separately, the degree to which needs like shopping, recreation and the like can be and are accommodated within the neighborhood.

(2) *Neighboring*: measured by what neighbors report as the frequency they borrow/exchange things with one another; visit one another; help one another with tasks, like grocery shopping or repairs; feel they have the ability to rely on neighbors in an emergency; the proportion of respondents who report that a large share of their friends are neighbors, or neighbors that are friends.

(3) *Organizational/Associational Infrastructure*: measured by the number and type of organizations or groups present, such as CDCs, human service agencies, other CBOs, block groups and civic associations; the proportion of residents who report the presence of organizations/groups that deal with neighborhood issues; the proportion of respondents with a household member that participate in same (length, level); that report satisfaction with the effectiveness of such group(s); the degree to which residents report having a sense that there are people in their neighborhood with whom to talk about and work together on issues; and the density or degree/level of interconnection among these people. Also, by the reported presence in the neighborhood of other associations, such as churches, fraternal groups, leagues and the like attended by people from the neighborhood.

(4) *Political/Civic Engagement*: electoral registration; turnout; membership in lobbying/advocacy organizations/associations.

Field associates will also systematically examine the prevalence, nature and effectiveness of community organizations and civic engagement among targeted low-, moderate- and middle-income majority-black neighborhoods. In studying the neighborhoods in the nine-PMSA prime sample, our objective is to establish a taxonomy of the types of organizations and associations present in each, their characteristics, the nature of their activities and level of effect, and how these vary if at all among and between the different types of neighborhoods in our income classification. In addition, we hope this stage of the analysis will

enable us to establish the degree to which institutional infrastructure has an affect that can be measured independently and, in particular, whether it leads or follows neighborhood trajectory.

Key informants and other centralized sources will be used to establish a beginning point for field work intended to develop and employ a taxonomy of civic infrastructure. Questions about history and effect will be posed both to key informants and to respondents to neighborhood surveys.

Measures of the other attributes of social capital identified above, particularly those involving senses of attachment and neighboring, will be obtained through neighborhood interviewing. Questions would be based upon or designed to dovetail with, prior surveys as much as possible, particularly the Pittsburgh Neighborhood Survey conducted by Roger Ahlbrandt and the more recent Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods conducted by Felton Earls and Robert Sampson.

In terms of personal capital, a portion of our neighborhood surveys will be designed to elicit information on household wealth, particularly with respect to level of control over liquid assets. While there have been reports of progress among the residents of majority-minority neighborhoods in terms of education, income, and home ownership, other reports indicate that the rise in the number of black middle-income earners has not translated into a rise in personal wealth; financial reserves available to draw on in time of need. Information about wealth will add important foundation and nuance to our depiction of the economic status of these neighborhoods and their residents.

Here, we intend as much as possible to model our survey questions on a selection from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (1987 panel, Wave 4) and the work of Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro

The household survey would comprise a total sample of 4,000 households selected randomly among the 46 majority-black neighborhoods in the study. Design of the randomization will be contracted to a survey research firm, but the general approach will be to construct the sample so as to be representative at the neighborhood level. The survey will be administered in-person by graduate students under the supervision of the field associates.

C. Majority-Hispanic Neighborhoods

Our analyses of majority-black neighborhoods will be complemented by the addition of a corollary examination of majority-Hispanic neighborhoods in eight targeted PMSAs that contain among the highest concentrations of Hispanic Americans in the nation: Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Oakland, New York and Washington, D.C.

With 48 study neighborhoods selected, we would proceed to replicate for majority-Hispanic neighborhoods the same analytic steps described above for majority-black neighborhoods. We would have the field associates profile selected neighborhoods and then we would follow up with a neighborhood-bounded examination of socio-demographic, economic and environmental factors and social capital. Another survey would be administered to another random sample of 4,000 households among the 48 majority-Hispanic neighborhoods undergoing field study.

D. Economic Clusters and Job Creation in the Inner-City

Research demonstrates that industrial and sectoral clusters are a primary source of economic growth and job creation. Such groupings of firms in like or related fields are rooted together in space and have

evolved relationships with suppliers, customers and each other that are based on familiarity and trust. They tend to fare far better than most American firms competing in the increasingly global economy; workers in such clusters have higher wages/salaries and more job security than most of their counterparts.

Few efforts at job creation or community development in urban areas are tied in the phenomenon of clusters, however. Clusters tend to operate at a regional level, often among firms outside of areas that are typically focused upon by groups involved in community development or in employment and training of inner-city residents. Bridging mechanisms are needed that can network across these barriers of physical (and other) distance.

Central project staff, in consultation with selected field associates and other noted experts, will scan for examples of organizations or processes that are attempting to undertake such an effort. One such group is the Westside Industrial Retention and Extension Network, or WIRE-Net, operating on Cleveland's Westside. Following this survey work, we propose to undertake an active field network investigation of such activity -- canvassing for organizations involved in such work and benchmarking best practices.

E. Intensive Case Studies

Working with the field associates, we would produce intensive case studies on 18 selected majority-black neighborhoods and 16 selected majority-Hispanic neighborhoods from among the overall samples. Case reports would allow for a more comprehensive treatment of local issues and flavor, while central project staff would work to ensure a consistent focus across the sites on major themes. We expect to frame these major themes based upon what is learned through the project and related subject research prior to this stage of analysis.

POLICY SETTING

Public policies have a telling impact on settlement patterns. This has been especially so with regard to suburbanization. Public policy also affects city residential settlement patterns, where, for example, the Community Reinvestment Act, the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit and support for related intermediary organizations in recent years has stimulated the construction of affordable housing. The transformation of parts of the South Bronx, and indeed South Jamaica in our pilot study area are demonstrations of this.

Our complementary studies of comprehensive community initiatives will aid us in shaping the policy questions for this study. (We are conducting a national assessment for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development of the Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community program and an evaluation of the Neighborhood Preservation Initiative, a comprehensive, community-based effort sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts to preserve working-class neighborhoods in nine cities.) Crucial questions need to be raised both as to the character and location of these kinds of interventions. Should attention and support be directed to aid fragile and threatened working-class neighborhoods? Is this where the payoffs will be great? Are existing initiatives operating on an extensive scale in such neighborhoods? Should they build new social capital or build on existing social capital? Knowledge of conditions and the trajectory of neighborhoods can usefully inform the consideration of these and other questions critical to the well-being of American cities.

An obvious and important application of our analysis will be carefully to draw conclusions about the relationship between neighborhood conditions and their trajectory (improving, stable, declining) and the existence, or lack of existence, of different types of social, political, and economic infrastructure.

There are a number of variables we will use in our analysis related to neighborhood infrastructure and to family well being. The crux of our research design is the ability to separately measure and compare the relative influence of a set of neighborhood attributes (i.e., locational features, distinctive architecture, public services) and several distinct aspects of social capital, and to relate both to a set of outcome measures for children and families. We hypothesize, but of course do not yet know, that we will discover independent effects of social capital. Our goal is to more carefully delineate the capacity held by distinct forms of civic infrastructure, learn how especially effective forms are built, and how they may be replicated.

We also think this study could have important policy lessons for “comprehensive community initiatives” by shedding light on neighborhood-level change and change-agents over time and across a cross-section of community types. We have been following the development of CCI’s closely.

A central interest to be addressed in our study is the extent to which public policies have impacted nonpoor majority-minority residential areas (i.e., those that we term moderate-, middle- or high-income), both urban and suburban. Another involves the extent to which policy lessons can be gleaned from these better-off majority-minority residential areas and applied to those that are poor: Can the experience of nonpoor areas point to innovative strategies that can be developed for improving low-income majority-black or majority-Hispanic residential areas, or at least slowing down their decline? We are hopeful that our methodology for studying majority-minority residential areas will help answer these questions and be beneficial to academics, public policy makers and ultimately, to the residents of these communities.

PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION

A. Reports and Dissemination Plans

Research products will include:

- Overview reports on the defining characteristics of nonpoor majority-black and majority-Hispanic neighborhoods. These reports will incorporate analysis of Census, ethnographic and other data derived from intensive study of sample neighborhoods.
- A special report outlining distinct differences in outcome measures and context of neighborhood effects on residents, especially children and families, in low-, moderate, middle- and higher-income majority-black and majority-Hispanic neighborhoods.
- A special report on public sector employment in majority-black neighborhoods. This report would incorporate information from these two sources above, as well as an additional field protocol to be completed by associates.
- Other special reports will focus on nonprofit sector employment, immigration and electoral/civic participation.
- Intensive case study reports with rich detail on illustrative households and organizations.

These publications would be released beginning in the winter of 1997 and continuing throughout the study period.

We propose to hold press conferences and briefings to present findings to the press and interested researchers, as appropriate. We would also present relevant papers on these topics at academic/policy making conferences.

B. Urban Neighborhood Research Council/Publication of Periodic “Briefs” on Urban Policy Issues

We propose to create a council of preeminent urban neighborhood and urban-related researchers from the State University of New York and across the nation. The Council will serve as a vehicle for dissemination of the research of the Urban Neighborhood and Community Capacity Building Study, as well as the work of council members. The Council would meet biannually to hold and sponsor a symposia featuring urban research conducted by affiliates, would publish such selected papers quarterly in a monograph format entitled “Metroview,” and would sponsor a paper competition for undergraduate and graduate students interested in urban or urban-related research. Support requested for the development and operation of the Urban Research Council and “Metroview” would run from spring 1998 through 2000.