

Executive Summary

Passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) raised interest in the possibility of profound, second-order change in the structure of services and the community impact of service organizations operating at the neighborhood level. But to what degree do the presence, character, and interactivity of community groups affect neighborhood change? How do these aspects of *Civic Infrastructure* compare with *Sociocultural Ties* – the bonds and behaviors comprising the other key category of neighborhood social capital – in their relationship to neighborhood improvement?

This study – using random household surveys, key informant interviews, document review and field observation by a network of indigenous researchers – examines the presence, interaction, and proximate impact of community organizations and social attachments within a selected group of 42 majority-African American neighborhoods ranging from low to high in socioeconomic status, and drawn from fifteen large cities across the United States. Measures of *Sociocultural Ties* included: identity and attachment to place, interaction with neighbors, trust, commitment, associational strength, and political or civic engagement. Measures of *Civic Infrastructure* included: prevalence of organizations, programmatic capacity, interaction, government links, resource capacity, organizational capacity, and political savvy.

The study reveals a strong relationship between the two measures of social capital and socioeconomic status. Stronger Sociocultural Ties and weaker measures of Civic Infrastructure are associated with higher levels of neighborhood SES. Relationships between strength in social capital and neighborhood improvement are also seen. Neighborhood improvement is twice as common among Low-SES neighborhoods with moderate or high, as opposed to low, levels of Civic Infrastructure. Neighborhood improvement is between one fifth to one third more common among Moderate-SES neighborhoods with moderate or high, as opposed to low, levels of Sociocultural Ties, and is twice as common among Moderate-SES neighborhoods with high, as opposed to low, levels of Civic Infrastructure.

Connections were also found between the intensity of organizational interactivity and neighborhood trajectory. Improving neighborhoods are more likely to have high levels of organizational interactivity, and declining neighborhoods are more likely to have a low level of interaction. Improving neighborhoods are more likely to be home to organizations interacting at sophisticated stages of work, and interacting at high levels with government, compared to those that declined.

Generally, we found a positive relationship between higher reported amounts of Sociocultural Ties and better neighborhood outcome scores – the stronger the social capital, in the form of attitudes, attachments and interaction with neighbors, the stronger the positive perception of neighborhood.

The relationship between Civic Infrastructure and neighborhood outcomes was less clear. Overall, better neighborhood outcome scores were reported for neighborhoods with lower levels of reported civic infrastructure, with lower satisfaction and the presence of more problems felt by residents reporting the highest levels of Civic Infrastructure. However, when examined separately from the rest of the Civic Infrastructure Index, there are strong positive relationships between higher levels of organizational interactivity and better neighborhood outcomes as measured by neighborhood satisfaction, the absence of problems, safety and social order, and degree of kid-friendliness.

Further research is warranted, but the statistical data and case stories provided by this study point to the combined importance of both Sociocultural Ties and Civic Infrastructure – and the particular role of organizational interaction – as elements in helping neighborhoods to prosper.

Exploring the Reach of Welfare Devolution: Social Capital and Community Change in Majority-African American Neighborhoods

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The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) has led to a period of historic change within America's welfare system, which has been well documented. But the Act also raised interest in the possibility of profound, second-order change in the structure of services and the community impact of service organizations operating at the neighborhood level. Because PRWORA held out the prospect of an unprecedented degree of responsibility and flexibility being devolved to the neighborhood level, with new opportunities for collaboration among services and provider organizations, it represented a chance for community organizations to extend beyond their own past success to a broader agenda of neighborhood-level social and economic reform, and the potential for significant neighborhood improvement.

This paper explores the presence, interaction, and proximate impact of community organizations – as well as social attachments – in a purposive sample of majority-African American neighborhoods drawn from fifteen large cities across the United States, and varying from low to high in socio-economic status (SES). In particular, the paper discusses:

- The strength of social capital, in the form of *sociocultural ties* and *civic infrastructure*, within a selected group of 42 low-, moderate-, middle-, and high-SES majority-African American neighborhoods;
- The prevalence and character of nonprofit organizations supplying their communities with the ability to: attract, manage and deploy funding; identify issues and engage stakeholders in working through them strategically; provide needed services; and access sources of resources and political power within and beyond the neighborhood;
- The extent to which these organizations work together and take collective action, and the stage of work – ranging from issue identification, planning, management through evaluation – at which joint efforts occur;

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- Whether, to what extent, and when these organizations work with federal, state or local government;
- The relationship between levels of strength in social attachment or civic organization, as well as the extent of organizational interactivity, with neighborhood improvement or decline;
- The relationship between the presence of neighborhood-based nonprofits, interaction among such groups, and levels of satisfaction and participation in community efforts among residents of these neighborhoods.

Much has been written about the increased role that nonprofit organizations play in many fields of domestic policy and the central role they play in many fields of human services (Salaman, 1995; Rifkin, 1995; Boris & Steurle, 1999). Researchers have noted that many government programs are increasingly being carried out by nonprofit organizations, with employment in the nonprofit social service industry having grown at a faster rate than did employment in the private sector, state and local government, and state and local government employment in public welfare (Nathan in Burlingame, Diaz & Ilchman, 1996). Nathan and his colleagues conclude that the rising importance of nonprofit organizations in fields such as human services and community development has been closely related to the rise of federal devolutionary policy instruments such as block grants, waivers, and deregulation.

The intensity level of inter-relationships between government and nonprofit organizations has also been the subject of research. Coston (1998) presents a model distinguishing government/nonprofit relationships on the basis of the symmetry of power involved, ranging from repressive relations characterized by high asymmetry in power to collaborative relationships where power is shared more evenly among partners. Survey results on the extent, developmental stage and timing of collaboration between governments and nonprofits have also been reported (Rich, Giles & Stern, 1998).

Smith and Lipsky (1993) observe that this rising reliance by government on nonprofit service providers has resulted in unprecedented involvement of government in the affairs of nonprofit organizations. This involvement, and an environment where nonprofits increasingly must compete with and act like for-profit organizations has lead some observers to question whether the role of community-based nonprofits as promoters of community values and civil society is in jeopardy (Alexander, Nank & Stivers, 1999)

A second stream in the literature has concentrated on interorganizational relationships among nonprofits. Network or network-like forms are said to enhance competitive positions and organizational effectiveness in ways that traditional governance mechanisms of markets and hierarchies cannot (Stone, 2000; Provan & Milward, 1995; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994). The advantages offered by formal or informal networks of organizations include greater flexibility and adaptability to change; efficient and reliable information, especially in circumstance in which critical information is more qualitative than quantitative; and reciprocity that can promote long-term stability and reduce uncertainty (Gulati, 1995a, 1995b; Powell, 1990). Several attempts have been made to distinguish between degrees or levels of intensity of cooperation

(Himmelman, 1996, Gray & Wood, 1991, Winer & Ray, 1994, Gray, 1989). Research has also focused on determinants, outcomes, and critical success factors of collaborative alliances (Mattessich & Monsey, 1997; Bush, Harris & McClusky (1997); Gray, 1989; Himmelman, 1996; Winer & Ray, 1994).

A third stream in the literature focuses on ‘comprehensive community initiatives’ and ‘community building,’ characterized as movement toward more holistic and comprehensive responses to needy families and children in a community context and which in many cases preceded the most recent version of federal welfare reform (Wright, 1998; Walsh, 1997; Kingsley, McNeely & Gibson, 1997; Rich, 1995; Stone, 1996). Related research has explored the broader role of neighborhood based nonprofits as an element of civic infrastructure, and influence on the level and quality of the organizational ability of neighborhoods to act in their interest by addressing issues, identifying priorities, solving problems and making instrumental links to economic, human, physical, political resources both internal and external to the neighborhood (Temkin & Rohe, 1998; Chaskin, 1998).

The fact that African Americans are so highly concentrated geographically makes it all the more important to understand how race and space connect through careful study of the condition, character, and the effects of majority-black neighborhoods. Roughly 10 percent of the nearly 60,000 census tracts comprising the U.S are majority-black, but those tracts are home to over half of all nonhispanic blacks in the country.

There are also interesting differences in social organization among African American communities. Controlling for educational and income differences, African Americans belong to more associations on average than whites. This has been the case historically because African Americans are more likely than comparatively situated whites to belong to both religious and ethnic organizations and no less likely to belong to any other type of group (Putnam 2000).

Faith-based organizations are particularly central to social capital and civic engagement in the African American community. The church is the oldest and most resilient social institution in black America, not least because it was traditionally the only black-controlled institution of a historically oppressed people. African Americans in all social strata are more religiously observant than other Americans. The black religious tradition distinctively encourages mixing religion and community affairs and invigorates civic activism. Both during and after the civil rights struggle, church involvement among blacks has been strongly associated with civic engagement, in part because the church provides a unique opportunity for blacks to exercise civic skills (Harris 1999; Pattillo-McCoy 1998; Higginbotham 1993; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990).

The writings of C. Eric Lincoln and Evelyn Higginbotham have been especially illuminating on the central role played by the Black church. According to Lincoln, a sociologist of religion:

Beyond its purely religious function, as critical as that function has been, the Black church in its historical role as lyceum, conservatory, forum, social service center, political academy, and financial institution, has been and is for Black America the mother of our culture, the champion of our Freedom, and hallmark of our civilization (1989).

Through history, according to Evelyn Higginbotham, the black church “housed a diversity of programs including schools, circulating libraries, concerts, restaurants, insurance companies, vocational training, athletic clubs – all catering to a population much broader than the membership of individual churches. The church...held political rallies, clubwomen’s conferences, and school graduations.” (1993) Recent academic work (see particularly DiIulio) and the very applied, practical experience of Reverend Floyd Flake and his Allen A.M.E. church in Southeast Queens, attests to the fact that the Black church continues to play much this same role in many communities today.

Studies have also illustrated the importance of the Black church in social-capital networks for job attainment in the African-American community. One study, for example, found the frequency of church attendance is one of the strongest predictors of whether inner city black youths will become gainfully employed. Since the youths’ religious beliefs were found to have almost no impact on employment, the findings suggested that it is the social networking aspect of churchgoing, not the religious aspect, that lay behind these youths’ economic success (Freeman 1986).

One of the strongest cultural patterns in African American neighborhoods is that of extensive help systems. The family’s effective environment is composed of a network of relatives, friends and neighbors. The social network acts to provide emotional support, economic supplements, and most importantly, to protect the family’s integrity from assault by external forces (McAdoo 1978; Hill 1971; Billingsley 1968).

A key feature of this organization is kinship. In almost all studies of the interpersonal lives of urban African Americans, kinship relations and fictive kinship relations are cited as important features of the web of connections that constitutes social organizations and that provide mutual aid and support (e.g., Pattillo-McCoy 1999; McAdoo 1979; Taylor 1979; Allen 1978; Martin and Martin 1978; Valentine 1978; Martineau 1977; Stack 1974; Hays and Mindel 1973; Hill 1972; Feagin 1970; Whitten and Szwed 1970; Hannerz 1969; Billingsley 1968). Such communities are organized around kin and friendship networks that respond creatively to the economic marginality imposed on their residents by the larger political economy. Primary relationships are maintained because of their importance in the mutual exchange and aid that they provide for residents. Networks are dense, and are usually tied spatially to the immediate neighborhood (Oliver 1988).

Some research suggests that a class schism is developing in the African American community; one that reflects patterns of differential association between classes, as well as the ability of middle- and upper-class African Americans to join their white counterparts in the suburbs. Among the mobile, one would expect to find network structures that ramify outward toward different racial groups and different institutional domains – so called “weak ties” with professional colleagues, co-workers, and friends that afford access to greater and more varied resources than the dense, tightly bound networks of inner-city residents (Oliver 1988).

In Chicago, for example, blacks who live in extreme poverty – Wilson’s “Truly disadvantaged” – were substantially less likely than blacks in low-poverty areas to have a current partner or best friend. If the extreme poverty resident did have a partner or best friend, that partner/friend was

substantially less like to have completed high school or to have steady work than the partners and friends of blacks in less destitute neighborhoods. The data suggest “that not only do residents of extreme-poverty areas have fewer social ties but also that they tend to have ties of less social worth, as measured by the social position of their partners, parents, siblings, and best friends, for instance. In short, they possess lower volumes of social capital.” (Wacquant and Wilson 1990)

Based on the literature and our own experience in studying these communities, we would expect church-related organizations to be especially prominent and important in majority-African American neighborhoods relative to other communities. Block and neighborhood associations, as well as other neighborhood-based nonprofits, are significant sources of social capital – as are kinship and fictive kinship networks, and would be expected to play a relatively more important, compensating role in lower and moderate-SES communities.

DATA AND METHODS

All neighborhoods experience internal and external sources of change, such as economic growth or decline, ethnic transformation, or trends in family formation. But every neighborhood is not affected by these sources of change in the same way or to the same degree. Successful neighborhoods are able to build a strong sense of community and leverage it into a collective movement, capable of marshalling residents or forming alliances with actors outside the community as needed to influence decisions that affect the neighborhood’s character over time. Neighborhoods with high levels of social capital – with strong *sociocultural ties* among residents and the *civic infrastructure* to turn this commitment into effective collective action – are expected to respond effectively to the forces of change and maintain or even enhance their condition. Conversely, areas with comparatively low levels of social capital might be expected, in relative terms, to succumb to the forces of change and experience decline

From the literature, as discussed above, we expected the character and spatial concentration of social capital to vary by socioeconomic status, with increased levels of some forms of measured social capital possibly associated with increases in SES. Because social capital can be used at least in part to compensate for a lack of financial capital, however, it would stand to reason that it may well appear to be more abundant where financial capital is comparatively scarce. Consequently, we did not expect that higher-SES neighborhoods would necessarily have more measured social capital than low-SES neighborhoods in the study. Rather, we sought patterns in the association of social capital with differing levels of SES. And we sought to test whether measured social capital was present at higher levels in those neighborhoods that we identified as having positive trajectories.

As was evident in the views of some of the more hopeful observers of the Personal Responsibility Act, connectivity among groups and organizations, both within a neighborhood and from it to external sources of support, may be central to how well communities fare over time. Some relationships may only be exploratory or advisory in nature and confined solely to the formative phases of a program, such as identifying key stakeholders, assessing community needs, and developing a vision to guide the program. Others may extend deeper into the life cycle of programs and involve joint/shared participation in funding, implementation and/or

evaluation (Rich, 1998). Consequently, we gathered data on interorganizational relationships within the study neighborhoods, and the extent to which they vary in intensity, depth and timing.

The study examines whether community organizations in each neighborhood typically do not work together, work on separate activities with limited interaction, work together on an irregular or ad hoc basis, work together regularly and consistently, or take collective action and share power. Data was gathered on levels of interaction in this same way for each of the following program areas: Employment and Training; Affordable Housing; Economic Development; Health Care; Adult Education; Youth Development; Child Care; Family Support/Self-Sufficiency; Senior Services; Homeless Assistance; Public Safety/Crime Prevention; Transportation; Neighborhood Improvements (streets, landscaping design); Community Organizing/Advocacy; or other.

The study also reports on the phase of work where multi-organization interaction typically occurs: identifying community needs; developing project/program concept; developing plan/budget; inclusion of key stakeholders; identifying/securing funding; initial project/program implementation; ongoing project/program management; or monitoring and evaluation. And, it reports on the extent to which neighborhood groups/organizations/ associations are involved in collaborative or contract work with state/local government, according to these separate categories of program area and phase of work.

We also sought data on the presence and character of organizational collaboratives in the study neighborhoods. By “collaboration,” we mean a well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The relationship typically includes: a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards (Mattessich and Monsey, 1997).

We determined to collect data in a group of study communities through random household surveys, key informant interviews, document review and field observation on neighborhood housing stock, property use, architectural styles, public services, retail and recreational services, kinship networks, and civic organization, among other defining features. Our theory was that the ability of neighborhoods to exert and retain desirability, or market demand, relative to other communities due to their possession of such features is a contributing factor in determining how well they fare over time. We hoped to be able to identify, possibly isolate, the relative influence of these factors.

Working through a network of indigenous researchers based in and deeply knowledgeable about the metropolitan areas under study, profiles were constructed on a selected group of communities covering neighborhood identification characteristics, history, economic security, housing characteristics, community development activity, neighborhood conditions, the presence or proximity of selected locational features, and neighborhood civic life. Field associates identified and described the organizations/associations/groups serving the study areas, setting forth what entities are present; what they do, which are regarded by key informants as important in shaping the neighborhood’s character and condition in the past and at the present; the intensity and timing of their organizational interactivity, as well as relationships with government.

A community survey of 100 households selected at random in each neighborhood generated additional detail on neighboring patterns, social networks, civic organization, public services, and facility use, among other topics.² The result was a richly detailed and textured picture of the range of circumstances experienced among majority-black neighborhoods in the U.S.

Table 1:	Study Cities and Neighborhoods
	Atlanta: Carey Park-Almond Park, Hunter Hills, Niskey Lake-Kimberly, West Manor
	Baltimore: Berea, Middle East, Perring Loch
	Boston: Codman Square, Mattapan
	Buffalo: Fruit Belt, Hamlin Park
	Chicago: Pill Hill, Prairie Shores, West Garfield Park
	Cleveland: Lee-Miles, Moreland, South Collinwood
	Denver: Clayton, North Park Hill
	Detroit: Chene, Rosedale Park, University
	Houston: Glenwood Forest, Pine Island, Shepherd Park Terrace
	Kansas City: Battle Flood, North Town Fork Creek
	New York: Cambria Heights, Ocean Hill, Vernon Park
	Philadelphia: East Mount Airy, Hartranft, West Oak Lane
	San Francisco: Longfellow, North Richmond, Paradise Park
	St. Louis: JeffVanderLou, Mark Twain, St. Louis Place
	Washington, DC: Central Northeast, Colonial Village, Kingman Park

Defining Sociocultural Ties

The community survey questionnaire captured data on elements comprising one of the two key components of social capital: *Sociocultural Ties*. The sociocultural elements of social capital that we tested are identity, attachment, needs met, interaction with neighbors, trust, commitment, associational strength, and political or civic engagement, as described below.

²This was achieved by the use of random addresses at the block group level generated by Survey Sampling, Inc., which were then mapped according to the boundaries of the study neighborhoods. In New York and Philadelphia, the surveys were administered by telephone. Elsewhere, the surveys were administered in-person by members of the field team in each city. Having 100 surveys per neighborhood was the goal. One hundred surveys were completed in all but 12 study neighborhoods including: Moreland, Cleveland – 99; South Collinwood, Cleveland – 97; Clayton, Denver – 99; North Park Hill, Denver – 99; Chene, Detroit – 69; Rosedale Park, Detroit – 82; University, Detroit – 74; Ocean Hill, New York City – 98; Vernon Park, New York City – 99; West Oak Lane, Philadelphia – 98; Longfellow, San Francisco – 41; and Paradise Park, San Francisco – 38.

Our goal was to first determine which variables define the component categories of sociocultural ties, and then determine which of these elements can be used to define social capital. A principal components analysis (PCA) was carried out to determine whether the individual variables defining these categories were indeed measuring a common concept.³ Each category was successfully defined, though the categories of “identity” and “needs met” were not found to be significant elements of social capital. In the assessment of the sociocultural aspects of social capital, attachment and trust exhibit the strongest influence.

Attachment

Neighborhood Attachment is measured by the extent to which residents report that: they feel at home in their neighborhood, they are proud to be a resident there, they feel a sense of community with their neighbors, and they think of themselves as similar to other people in their neighborhood. The PCA indicated that these variables are good measures of attachment and are a strong component of the sociocultural aspect of social capital.

Interaction with Neighbors

Of the possible variables that could be used to measure neighboring or interaction with neighbors, PCA demonstrated that the most accurate indicators are the amount of people a resident socializes with 3-4 times a year, how many neighbors they consider to be close friends, how many of their closest friends live in their neighborhood, how often they visit with their neighbors, and how often neighbors loan things to one another. The PCA shows that interaction with neighbors is a defining element of the sociocultural component of social capital. However, the variables representing this category did not load as high as the other defining categories, indicating it is the least strong aspect of the sociocultural component.

Trust

This element is defined by the extent to which residents strongly agree on whether they: depend on neighbors to watch their house while they are away; feel comfortable about asking a neighbor for a ride when their car is not working; have a close-knit neighborhood; have neighbors that can be trusted; and that they would talk to someone in the neighborhood if they were bothered by conditions in the neighborhood – and strongly disagree that they: have neighbors that generally don’t get along with each other, and that people in the neighborhood don’t share the same values. All of these variables were determined to be part of a common definition of trust. However, questions on shared values and talking about problems in the neighborhood were not found to be significant in an overall sociocultural definition of social capital.

Commitment

³ A second and related purpose was to use PCA as an exploratory method to assist in reducing the number of variables to the minimum needed to explain the maximum amount of variation in the data. In general for this analysis and that of the civic infrastructure aspect discussed below, a benchmark of over 30 percent explanation of variation by the factors was determined sufficient due to the large number of variables and possible responses, different subpopulations (neighborhoods/cities) and differences in interviewer techniques. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was checked and always sufficient.

The level of commitment in a neighborhood is an integral component of social capital and closely related to trust (although the variables for commitment and trust do separate out in the PCA). The significant variables in this category are the extent to which people are willing to: help their neighbors; solve neighborhood problems together when they arise; think of neighborhood plans or activities as something “we” were doing rather than “they” were doing; work with others on something to improve the neighborhood; and intervene if young people were skipping school and hanging out on a corner, spray painting graffiti on a local building, showing disrespect to an adult, or if the fire station closest to their home was threatened with budget cuts. All of these variables are consequential in the measure of sociocultural ties, with the last (fire station threatened) being least significant.

Associational Strength

The neighborhood residents’ perception of the strength of associations/organizations in their neighborhood is defined by whether a neighborhood organization is identified and how satisfied the residents are with the organization making their neighborhood a better place to live. These variables are good measures of this category and exhibit strong influence in measuring the socio-cultural element.

Political or Civic Engagement

The civic engagement component of social capital is measured by participation in community or neighborhood activities and organizations. A higher level of civic engagement is defined by the extent to which residents report that someone in their household belongs to at least one organization that deals with neighborhood issues; spends at least some of their total volunteer time on activities related to their neighborhood; and in the past year has attended a public hearing, town hall meeting or city council meeting, communicated with an elected public official, or participated in block groups, neighborhood associations, community action groups, or neighborhood safety or block watch clubs. Each of these variables tested as good measures of political/civic engagement. However, the overall PCA on sociocultural definition found these variables to be less important than other categories like trust and attachment.

Identity

Strength of neighborhood identity is defined by the extent to which residents name their neighborhood, recognize common neighborhood boundaries, and hold traditional neighborhood events such as festivals, picnics or parades. The analysis did not reveal that neighborhood identity was a strong factor in defining social capital.

Needs Met

This variable was defined by the extent to which neighborhood residents reported they did their shopping, recreation and religious activities in their neighborhood or went outside of the neighborhood for goods and services. Residents were also asked to identify the presence of various types of services in their neighborhood. The analysis indicates that these variables are

related and taken together represent a common concept (“needs met”), but none are integral elements to a definition of social capital.

Defining the Civic Infrastructure Component

Responses from field associate reports were used to construct measures of each neighborhood’s civic infrastructure. Seven aspects of this component were defined using PCA: prevalence of organizations, programmatic capacity, interaction, government links, resource capacity, organizational capacity, and political savvy.

Prevalence of Organizations

The relative presence of entities (organizations, groups, clubs) working on behalf of each neighborhood was classified based on the average number reported. Low prevalence is defined by four or less entities and high prevalence as more than fourteen entities. In the PCA test, prevalence of organizations was shown to be a significant aspect in measuring the civic infrastructure component of social capital.

Programmatic Capacity

This variable was measured by how many programmatic functions the above organizations provide the neighborhood. Two or fewer functions defined the neighborhood as having low programmatic capacity, and high was defined by over nine functions. Programmatic functions include faith-based, neighborhood/civic, health, community development, education, social service in general, children/youth, block club, housing, safety, community center, and business development. Our analysis showed that the amount and types of functions neighborhood organizations provide are an important element in the definition of civic infrastructure.

Interaction Between and Among Organizations

Interorganizational interaction is measured by whether the neighborhood’s organizations work on separate activities with limited or no interaction, work together on an ad hoc basis, or work together regularly, consistently and/or collectively. A measure of interaction between and among organizations is a significant element in a definition of civic infrastructure.

Government Links

The amount of interaction neighborhood organizations have with government is defined by whether they work on separate activities with limited or no interaction, work together on an ad hoc basis, or work together regularly and consistently. The PCA demonstrates that interaction by neighborhood organizations with the government is a strong aspect of civic infrastructure.

Resource Capacity

This variable was defined by the presence of a dedicated development staff, and the organization's effectiveness at raising funds from government and philanthropic sources, based on detailed information on a few key organizations in each neighborhood. The PCA indicated that these variables are good measures of resource capacity and are a strong element in the civic infrastructure component of social capital.

Organizational Capacity

The variables measuring organizational capacity are growth, decline or stabilization of the organizations in the last five years, and whether the leadership and management of the group have been stable. Information on the key organizations in the neighborhoods provides the data for this category. The PCA reveals that the variables are good measures of organizational capacity. In the broader PCA test for the overall civic infrastructure component, the organization's level of growth proved to be a stronger influence than the stability of management.

Political Savvy

The political know-how of the key organizations in the neighborhoods is defined by how much attention and support the organization receives from public officials, how effective public officials perceive the work of the organization to be, and the level of political activity of the organization. The latter is measured by the regularity of the organization's participation in fifteen activities such as testifying before government officials, sponsoring or organizing town hall meetings, voter registration drives, political protests, anti-business boycotts and endorsing electoral candidates. The analysis demonstrates these are good measures of political savvy and in the overall PCA this category is a significant component to a definition of civic infrastructure.

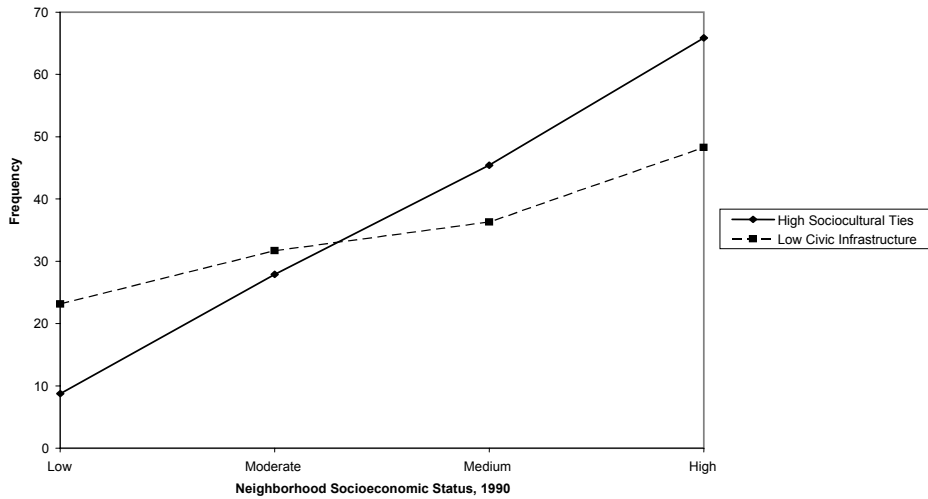
RESULTS

Social Capital and Neighborhood SES

In order to compare levels of social capital in neighborhoods on an equivalent basis, indices were constructed by aggregating each neighborhood's mean value on the measures of sociocultural ties and civic infrastructure described above, and neighborhoods were grouped according to their high, moderate or low rank on each index. The social capital indices were then tested at the neighborhood and individual respondent level for relationships with neighborhood socioeconomic status and trajectory.

In sum, we found a strong, linear relationship between the two social capital indices and socioeconomic status. A higher sociocultural rank and a lower civic infrastructure rank are associated with higher levels of neighborhood SES. Inversely, a lower sociocultural rank and a higher civic infrastructure rank are associated with lower levels of neighborhood SES.

Figure 1: Association of Neighborhood Socioeconomic Status and Social Capital by Type



We also found that different sorts of civic infrastructure are associated with different types of neighborhoods. With respect to SES:

- Advocacy, cultural, employment, health, and housing organizations are more associated with low-SES neighborhoods.
- Community center, community development, education, faith-based, senior, and social service organizations are more associated with moderate-SES neighborhoods.
- Business development and physical environment organizations are more associated with middle-SES neighborhoods.
- Block clubs, children’s groups, homeowners/tenants and neighborhood safety organizations are more associated with high-SES neighborhoods.

Neighborhood SES, Social Capital Levels and Trajectory

The relationship between strength in social capital and neighborhood improvement or decline can be seen most clearly among the low- and moderate-SES neighborhoods in the study. In particular:

- Among Low-SES neighborhoods, neighborhood improvement is twice as common among neighborhoods with moderate or high levels of civic infrastructure as it is among those with low levels of civic infrastructure.
- Among moderate-SES neighborhoods, improvement is between 20 percent and 34 percent more common among neighborhoods with moderate or high levels of sociocultural ties as it is among those with low levels of this aspect of social capital.

- Among moderate-SES neighborhoods, improvement is twice as common among neighborhoods with high levels of civic infrastructure as it is among those with low levels of civic infrastructure.

We also found interesting patterns in the types of organizations associated with different types of neighborhoods, according to socioeconomic status and trajectory.

Looking across all neighborhoods, irrespective of socioeconomic status:

- Children's groups, community centers, community development agencies, education organizations, and housing organizations were more associated with neighborhoods that declined in socioeconomic status from 1980 to 2000.
- Advocacy groups, block clubs, cultural organizations, and employment and training organizations were more associated with stable to improving neighborhoods.
- Improved neighborhoods, by contrast, were most likely to have business development, faith-based, health, homeowner/tenant associations, minority organizations, and social service organizations.

Looking at the association between organizations and trajectory separately for each of the four categories of neighborhood SES in turn, we find that:

- In low-SES improved neighborhoods, one is most likely to find block clubs, faith-based organizations, health, minority, senior services, employment, social service, and homeowners/tenants organizations.
- In moderate-SES improved neighborhoods, one is most likely to find business development, employment, block clubs, housing, minority, neighborhood, advocacy and homeowners/tenants groups.
- Improved middle-SES neighborhoods are more associated with homeowners/tenants, safety groups, minority, neighborhood, social services, and physical environment organizations.
- High-SES improved neighborhoods are most likely to have a minority organization.

Organizational Interactivity

The level of interactivity among neighborhood organizations was incorporated in our composite measure of *Civic Infrastructure*, discussed above. Because of the particular interests raised by welfare devolution and for purposes of this paper, we also separately examined the extent and nature of joint work among neighborhood organizations, and its relationship to community change.

A neighborhood's level of organizational interactivity was considered low if field associates reported that community organizations in the neighborhood typically do not work together or work on separate activities with limited interaction. We considered neighborhood organizational interactivity to be moderate if field associates reported that community organizations in the neighborhood typically work together on an irregular or ad hoc basis. The level of organizational interactivity was considered high if field associates reported that community organizations in the neighborhood typically work together regularly and consistently, or take collective action and share power.

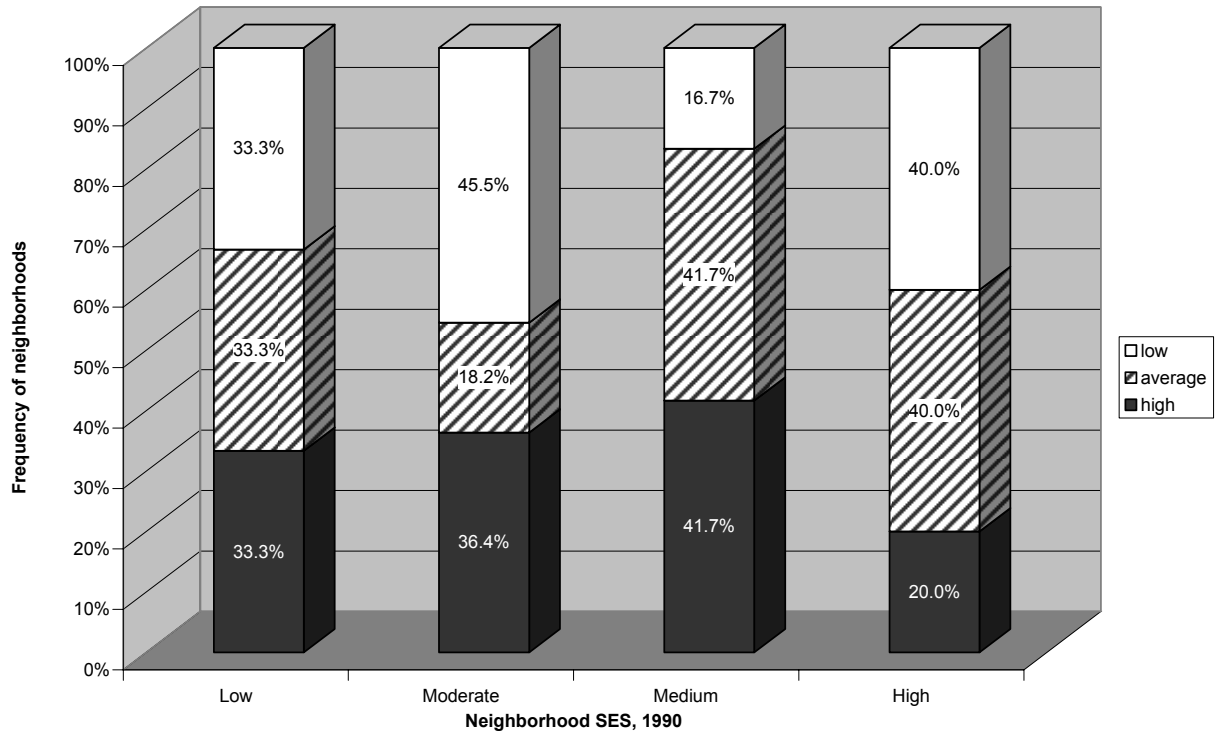
We found some patterning in the level of interactivity of civic organizations in accord with neighborhood socioeconomic status. Generally, with the exception of High-SES neighborhoods – where, as noted above, the compensating value of civic groups is less needed and their presence is less pronounced – the proportion of neighborhoods with high levels of organizational interactivity tended to increase along with the category of neighborhood socioeconomic status.

- Middle-SES neighborhoods are more likely to have a high level of organizational interactivity (42 percent of neighborhoods) than Moderate-SES (36 percent of neighborhoods), or Low-SES neighborhoods (33 percent).
- Assigning numeric values to scale the categories ranging from zero for “don’t work together” up to a four for “collective action,” Middle-SES neighborhoods have the highest level with an average of 2.3 out of a scale of 4, compared to the same average score of 1.8 on this scale for Low-SES, Moderate-SES, and High-SES neighborhoods.
- High-SES neighborhoods are more likely to have a low level of interaction among civic organizations. Although none of the High-SES neighborhoods were reported as having organizations that “don’t work together,” two-thirds were reported to have organizations that only have limited and ad hoc interaction with each other.

Of particular interest were the apparent connections found between the intensity of organizational interactivity and neighborhood trajectory (measured as degree of change in neighborhood socioeconomic status between 1980 and 2000). We found that:

- Improving Neighborhoods are more likely to have high levels of organizational interactivity. Field associates reported the presence of organizational interaction in every neighborhood in the study classified as improving – no improving neighborhoods were reported to have organizations that “don’t work together.”

Figure 2: Organizational Interaction and Neighborhood Socioeconomic Status



- Declining neighborhoods, meanwhile, are more likely to have a low level of interaction. Declining neighborhoods are the most likely to have organizations that only have limited to ad hoc interaction with each other (62.5 percent of the declining neighborhoods).
- That pattern was generally consistent, regardless of neighborhood SES. Among the Low-, Moderate-, and Middle-SES neighborhoods studied, those showing improvement from 1980 to 2000 are more likely to have high levels of organizational interactivity. Conversely, Low-, Moderate-, and Middle-SES neighborhoods that declined from 1980 to 2000 were more likely to have low levels of interaction among civic organizations in their communities.
- More than half (57 percent) of the Moderate-SES Improving neighborhoods have organizations that have regular interaction with each other, and all the Moderate-SES neighborhoods with more than ad hoc interaction among their organizations improved in socioeconomic status from 1980 to 2000. Meanwhile, Moderate-SES neighborhoods with organizations that “do not work together” declined.
- Assigning numeric values to scale the categories ranging from zero for “don’t work together” up to four, reflecting “collective action,” Improving neighborhoods had the highest average score, at 2.2, compared to an average of 1.8 for Stable and an average score of 1.6 among Declining neighborhoods on this same scale. Among Low-SES neighborhoods, Improving had the highest average score of 2.3, compared to 1.3 for Stable and 1.0 for Declining Low-SES neighborhoods. Moderate-SES Improving neighborhoods had an average score of 2.1,

compared to 2.0 for Stable. Middle-SES Improving neighborhoods had the highest average score at 2.5, compared to 2.2 for Stable and 2.0 for Declining Middle-SES neighborhoods.

- The exception to this pattern is again seen among High-SES neighborhoods, where a high level of interaction was reported among the organizations in the only declining High-SES neighborhood in the study, and where low levels of organizational interactivity were reported for the one improving High-SES neighborhood in the study.

We examined the phase of work where multi-organization interaction typically occurs. This is to say that field associates reported on whether and where, along a spectrum of increasingly sophisticated activity, neighborhood organizations typically interacted. Steps along this spectrum were categorized as: identifying community needs; conceptualizing projects or programs; developing plans and budgets; ensuring inclusion of key stakeholders; identifying/securing funding; initiating project/program implementation; ongoing project/program management; or monitoring and evaluation.

- We found that in general, the level of sophistication in the stages of work at which organizations interact tended to increase along with the level of neighborhood SES. Among Low-SES neighborhoods, joint work occurs most frequently at the stage of “identifying community needs” and “inclusion of key stakeholders.” For Moderate-SES neighborhoods, joint effort is also common among organizations working on “conceptualizing projects/programs,” “developing plans and budgets,” and “identifying/securing funding.” Among Middle-SES neighborhoods, joint work by civic organizations was common in these stages but also in “initiating project/program implementation.” For High-SES neighborhoods, organizational interaction was also typical during “ongoing project/program implementation” and in “monitoring and evaluation.”
- We again found a connection between organizational interaction and neighborhood trajectory. Interaction among organizations at more sophisticated stages of work was more typical of neighborhoods that improved in socioeconomic status between 1980 and 2000, compared to those that declined. Among Improving neighborhoods, organizational interaction was common when developing a budget, including stakeholders, identifying funding, as well as in monitoring and evaluation. In Declining neighborhoods, organizational interaction was only reported to be typical when identifying needs.
- Taking Low-, Moderate- and Middle-SES neighborhoods as separate groups, in turn, each shows the same pattern: for Declining neighborhoods, joint work is only reported to occur when “identifying needs” and “including stakeholders,” when for Improving neighborhoods, joint efforts are reported as typical in all phases of work, including “ongoing implementation” and “monitoring/evaluation.”

In examining how this organizational interaction varies by program area, we found:

- Among Declining neighborhoods, community organizing is the only program area for which collective action is reported, while field reports noted that organizations interacted on a regular basis in: 38 percent of the neighborhoods for community organizing and in 13 percent

for employment and training, affordable housing, senior services, and neighborhood improvements.

- For Stable neighborhoods, collective action occurs in economic development, health care, youth development, family support, senior services, transportation, neighborhood improvement and community organizing. Field reports noted that organizations interacted on a regular basis in 31 percent of the neighborhoods for neighborhood improvements, 23 percent for community organizing, 15 percent for senior services, and 8 percent for employment & training, economic development, health care, youth development, child care, family support, public safety and transportation.
- Within Improving neighborhoods, collective action occurs in economic development, neighborhood improvements, and community organizing/advocacy. Field reports noted that organizations interacted on a regular basis in all program areas and at a higher frequency than other trajectories. Regular interaction occurs in 37 percent of the neighborhoods for neighborhood improvements, 32 percent for youth development and community organizing, 26 percent for economic development, 21 percent for affordable housing, child care, family support, and senior services, 16 percent for adult education, 11 percent for employment & training, health care, and public safety/crime prevention, and 5 percent for homeless assistance and transportation.
- For Low-SES Declining neighborhoods, there is no collective action in any of the program areas, and regular interaction among organizations was only reported in affordable housing. Among Low-SES Stable neighborhoods, collective action was reported among organizations in youth development, family support, and transportation, with regular interaction reported among one quarter of the neighborhoods for employment & training, health care, family support, senior services, public safety, neighborhood improvements, and community organizing. For Low-SES Improving neighborhoods, collective action was reported only in public safety, with regular interaction among organizations comparatively widespread; reported in 43 percent of the neighborhoods for affordable housing, economic development, senior services, neighborhood improvements, and community organizing; 29 percent for adult education, youth development, child care, family support, and public safety/crime prevention; and 14 percent for health care.
- Among Moderate-SES Declining neighborhoods, there is no collective action in any of the program areas, and regular interaction among neighborhood organizations was only reported in neighborhood improvement and community organizing. For Moderate-SES Stable neighborhoods, no collective action and no regular interaction was reported among organizations for any of the program areas. Within Moderate-SES Improving neighborhoods, collective action was only reported in economic development, while organizations were reported to interact regularly in all of the programs areas: 57 percent of the neighborhoods for neighborhood improvements; 43 percent for public safety/crime prevention; 29 percent for employment & training, economic development, youth development, and community organizing; and 14 percent for affordable housing, health care, adult education, child care, family support, senior services, homeless assistance, and transportation.

- For Middle-SES Declining neighborhoods, collective action was only reported in community organizing, while interaction was reported to be regular among organizations for one third of the neighborhoods for economic development, senior services and community organizing. Within Middle-SES Stable neighborhoods, collective action occurs in economic development, health care, youth development, senior services public safety, transportation, neighborhood improvement, and community organizing. Interaction among organizations is reported to be regular in 40 percent of the Middle-SES Stable neighborhoods for public safety, neighborhood improvements and community organizing; and 20 percent for child care. For Middle-SES Improving neighborhoods, collective action was reported in public safety, neighborhood improvement, and community organizing, while organizational interaction was reported to be regular in 50 percent of the neighborhoods for youth development; and 25 percent of the neighborhoods for child care, family support, and community organizing.
- Among High-SES Declining neighborhoods, no collective action was reported in any of the program areas, and regular interaction only occurs in community organizing. Within High-SES Stable neighborhoods, collective action only occurs in neighborhood improvement, and community organizing. Organizational interaction in High-SES Stable neighborhoods was reported to be regular in one third of the neighborhoods for economic development, youth development, senior services, public safety, transportation, and neighborhood improvements. For High-SES Improving neighborhoods, no collective action and no regular interaction was reported among organizations for any of the program areas.

Organizational Interaction with Government

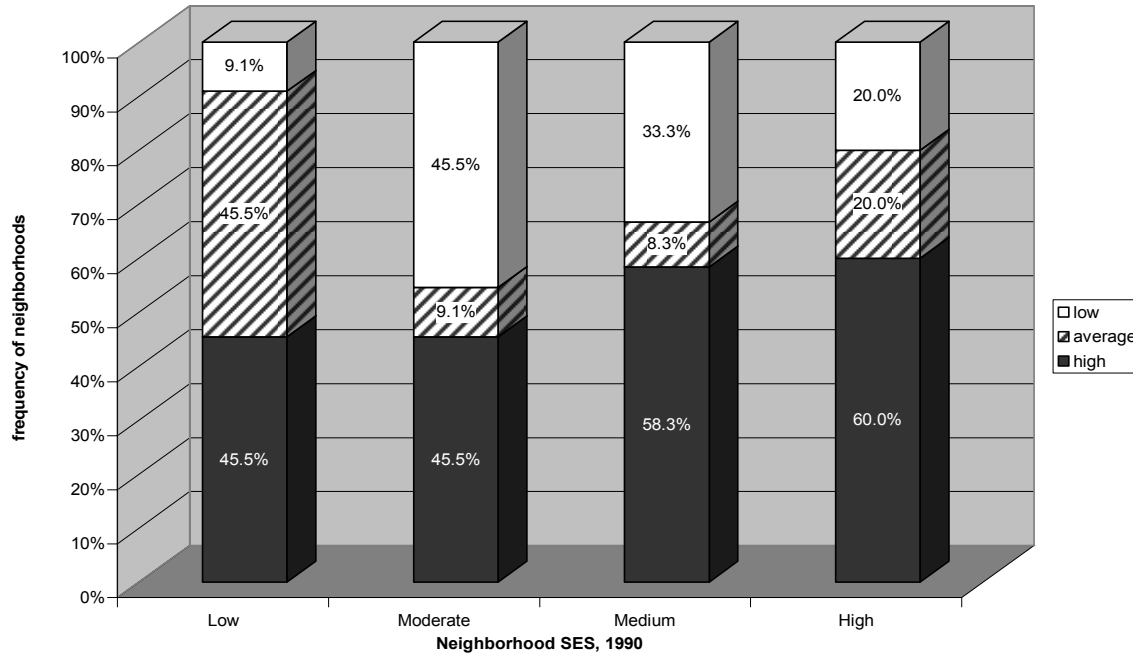
Interaction between neighborhood organizations and government was one of the elements in our composite measure of *Civic Infrastructure*. But, with interest in such interactions heightened by welfare devolution, and for the particular purposes of this paper, we also examined the extent and nature of *Government Links* separately and in more detail.

A neighborhood's level of interactivity with government was considered low if field associates reported that community organizations in the neighborhood typically do not work with government or work on separate activities with limited interaction. We considered links with government to be moderate if field associates reported that community organizations in the neighborhood typically work with government on an irregular or ad hoc basis. Government Links were classified as high if field associates reported that community organizations in the neighborhood typically work with governments regularly and consistently. We found:

- A high level of interaction with government is associated with a higher SES. Low-SES neighborhoods are more likely than others to have an average level of government interaction; however Low-SES neighborhoods have the highest frequency of average-high level of government interaction (91 percent). Moderate-SES neighborhoods, meanwhile, are more likely than those in other SES categories to have a low level of government interaction.
- A high level of interaction with government is associated with Improving neighborhoods. Nearly eight in ten Improving neighborhoods have an average to high level of interaction

with the government. Declining neighborhoods, by contrast, are the most likely to have a low level of interaction between neighborhood groups and the government.

Figure 3: Interaction with Government and Neighborhood Socioeconomic Status



- This pattern varied somewhat according to neighborhood SES. Among Low-SES Declining neighborhoods, organizations had a high level of interaction with the government; Stable neighborhoods were average to high; and Improving have nearly 9 in 10 reporting average to high interaction with government. Within Moderate-SES, Improving neighborhoods have the highest level of interaction with government – over 70 percent reporting their organizations have average to high levels of interaction with government – while Declining and Stable are more likely to have organizations with low levels of interaction with government. Middle-SES Improving neighborhoods are more likely to have organizations with high interaction with government; Declining is most likely to have average to high levels of interaction with government, and Stable is most likely to have low. High-SES Declining neighborhoods had organizations with low levels of interaction with the government and Improving had organizations with high levels interaction with government, with Stable neighborhoods in between.

We also examined the phase of work where interaction between neighborhood organizations and government typically occurs, ranging from: identifying community needs; conceptualizing projects or programs; developing plans and budgets; ensuring inclusion of key stakeholders; identifying/securing funding; initiating project/program implementation; ongoing project/program management; to monitoring and evaluation.

- Within Low-SES neighborhoods, joint work between organizations and government occurs most frequently at the stage of “identifying community needs” and “identifying funding.”

Low- SES neighborhoods are more likely than others to have joint work between organizations and government in identifying funding and initial implementation.

- For Moderate-SES neighborhoods, joint work occurs most frequently at the initial stages of “identifying community needs” and “conceptualizing projects/programs.” Moderate-SES neighborhoods are more likely than others to have joint work between organizations and government in identifying community needs.
- In Middle-SES neighborhoods, joint work occurs most frequently at the stages of developing concepts and developing budgets.
- Interaction between organizations and government in High-SES neighborhoods is mainly in the initial stages of identifying needs and conceptualizing project.
- Improving neighborhoods are more likely than Declining and Stable neighborhoods to have joint work between organizations and government in deeper phases of work: in identifying needs, developing budgets, including stakeholders, but also in initial and ongoing implementation, and monitoring/evaluation.

In examining how neighborhood group interaction and contracting with government varies by program area, we found:

- Organizations in Low-SES neighborhoods are under contract with government in all program areas except public safety/crime prevention. The highest frequency of responses (all over 50 percent) for program areas in which organizations in Low SES neighborhoods are under contract to government are for affordable housing, health care, youth development and child care.
- Organizations in Moderate-SES neighborhoods are under contract with government in all program areas. The program areas where government contracting by organizations in Moderate-SES neighborhoods is most common are affordable housing (55 percent), health care, adult education, youth development, public safety, and neighborhood improvement (each at 36 percent).
- Organizations in Middle-SES neighborhoods are under contract with government in all program areas except neighborhood improvements. Contracts between neighborhood groups and governments are most common in economic development (42 percent) and in planning, public safety, neighborhood improvement and community organizing (all over 50 percent).
- Contracting with government is decidedly less common among organizations in High-SES communities – 20 percent of neighborhoods reported that organizations are currently under contract to government, all within the single program area of health care.

Social Capital and Neighborhood Outcomes

What is the consequence of neighborhood social capital for residents of these communities? To see what difference variation in neighborhood social capital might make, we tested relationships between Sociocultural Ties and Civic Infrastructure indices with several dependent variables that measure neighborhood outcomes. These include neighborhood satisfaction, the presence of problems, safety and social order, degree of kid-friendliness, and level of health satisfaction.

Generally, we found a positive linear relationship between higher reported amounts of Sociocultural Ties and better neighborhood outcome scores – the stronger the social capital, in the form of attitudes, attachments and interaction with neighbors, the stronger the positive perception of neighborhood.

The correlations between Civic Infrastructure and neighborhood outcomes present a somewhat less clear picture. Overall, better neighborhood outcome scores were reported for neighborhoods with lower levels of reported civic infrastructure, with lower satisfaction and the presence of more problems felt by residents reporting the highest levels of Civic Infrastructure.

However, when examined separately from the rest of the Civic Infrastructure Index, there are strong positive linear relationships between higher levels of organizational interactivity and better neighborhood outcomes as measured by neighborhood satisfaction, the absence of problems, safety and social order, and degree of kid-friendliness.⁴

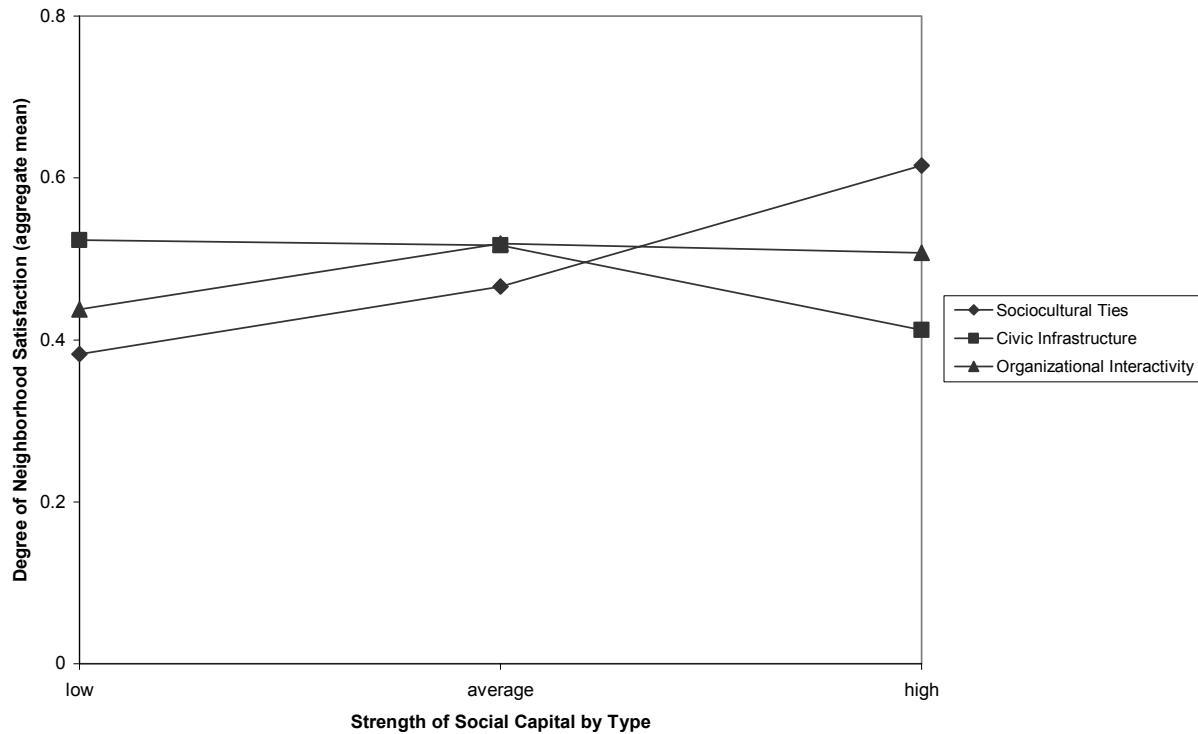
Neighborhood Satisfaction

The level of resident satisfaction with their neighborhood is measured by how strongly they responded to the following eight questionnaire items: “My neighborhood is a good place to live/raise children;” “This neighborhood has a good reputation;” “Most families have lived here a long time;” “People move in and out of the neighborhood a lot;” “This neighborhood has changed for the better in the last five years;” “This neighborhood will change for the better in the next five years;” “I intend to stay many more years in the neighborhood;” and “In general I would rate this neighborhood excellent as a place to live.”

There is a linear correlation between higher general satisfaction and higher sociocultural rank. But the lowest level of civic infrastructure is correlated with the highest level of neighborhood satisfaction. The overall association is that residents in neighborhoods with the highest civic infrastructure are the least satisfied for all of the variables in this category. However, higher levels of organizational interaction are associated with higher levels of neighborhood satisfaction, when examined separately from the other elements of the Civic Infrastructure index.

⁴ There is no evidence of multicollinearity (intercorrelation of independent variables) so the same linear analyses were conducted on the neighborhood outcome categories (satisfaction, kid friendly) while controlling SES as a covariate. The overall conclusion is that controlling the effect of SES has no significant effect on the correlations and linearity of social capital with the dependent categories.

Figure 4: Neighborhood Satisfaction and Social Capital by Type

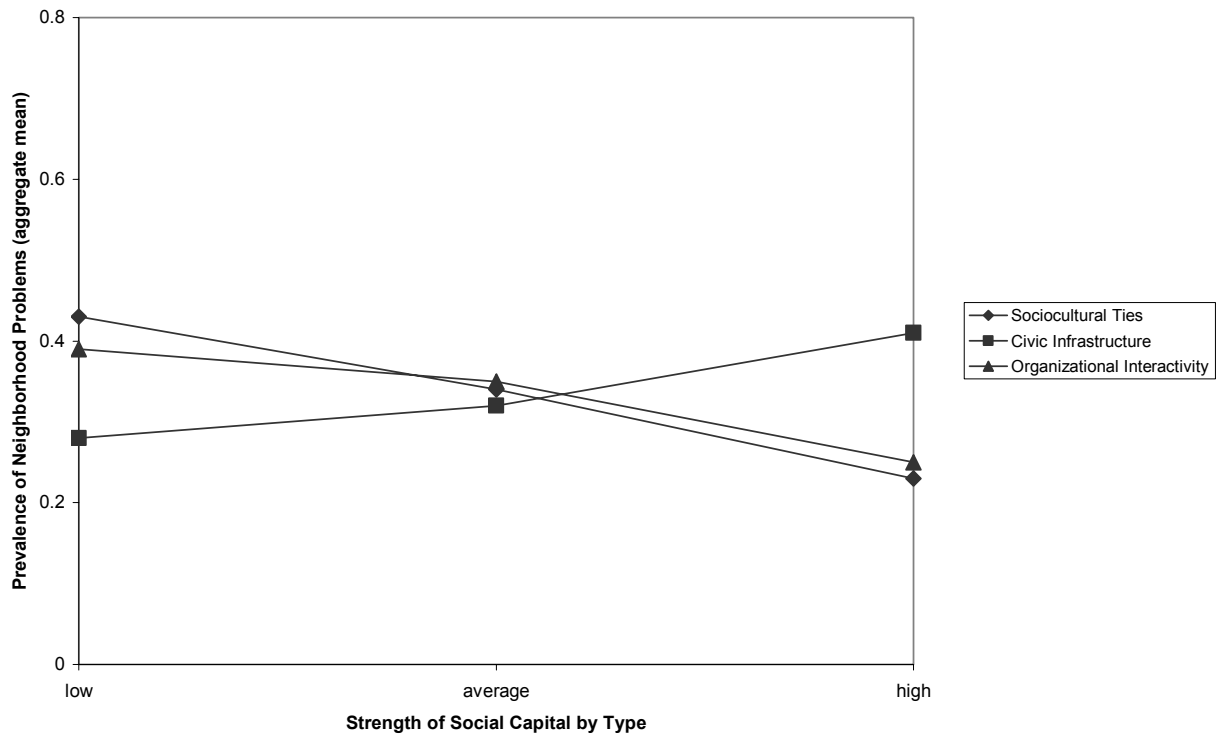


Presence of Problems

Problems in the neighborhood include housing and property not kept up, violent crime, property crime, noise, streets in need of repair, police service, traffic, access to public transportation, street lighting, commercial or nonresidential activities, trash, abandoned buildings, homelessness, drug activity, gang activity, racial or ethnic conflict and smoke/odor. These responses were aggregated and coded into three sets: no problems, some problems and many problems. The post-hoc test shows that there is a significant correlation between a lower presence of problems and higher ranking on Sociocultural Ties.

Neighborhoods with the highest ranking on Civic Infrastructure report having the most problems, however, and they are the least likely category to report no problems. Neighborhoods with the lowest civic group ranking have some problems, while those with a moderate level of organizational infrastructure are the most likely to report having no problems in their neighborhoods. Meanwhile, when examined separately from the other elements of Civic Infrastructure, organizational interactivity has a clear, inverse association with the presence of problems: lower interactivity associated with higher presence of problems, and higher interactivity associated with lower presence of problems in the neighborhood.

Figure 5: Prevalence of Neighborhood Problems and Social Capital by Type

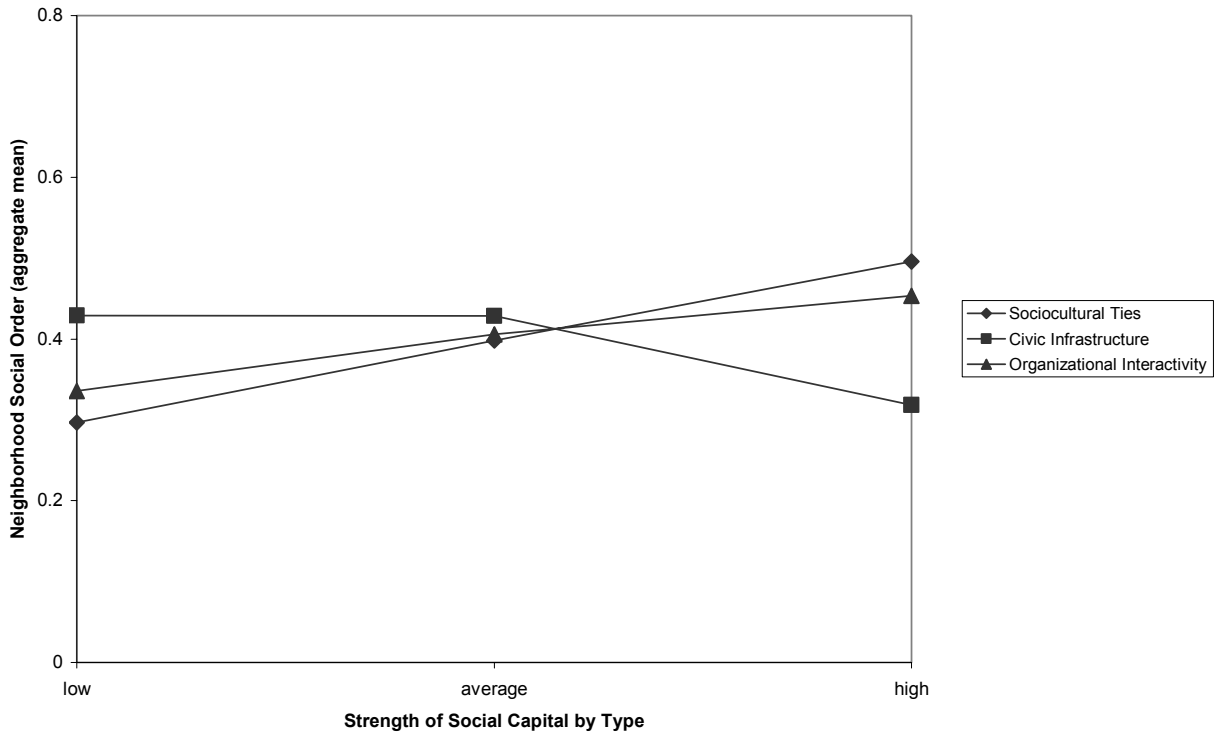


Safety and Social Order

The safety and social order variable was defined by the extent to which residents strongly agree that: their neighborhood is safe for children; they feel safe at home at night and out in their neighborhood alone during the day; they would probably speak with someone who stopped them at night to ask directions; they believe most criminal activity in their neighborhood is committed by people who live outside of the neighborhood; and the police have a good reputation, frequently patrol the neighborhood, respond quickly when called, and are trusted by residents. In addition, a category of social order is measured by the residents' view on whether police harassment is a problem, if young families with children are moving out of the neighborhood, if people in the neighborhood actively supervise their children's behavior and/or are active participants in their children's education.

Results from the analyses indicate that a higher sense of safety and social order is significantly correlated with higher levels of Sociocultural Ties. The significant correlations between Civic Infrastructure and security are that overall, the lowest sense of security is associated with neighborhoods with the highest levels of Civic Infrastructure, and neighborhoods with moderate Civic Infrastructure have the least problems with police relations/issues. When examined separately, however the element of organizational interactivity looks different, and more like Sociocultural Ties: higher organizational interactivity is associated with more safety and social order.

Figure 6: Neighborhood Social Order and Social Capital by Type

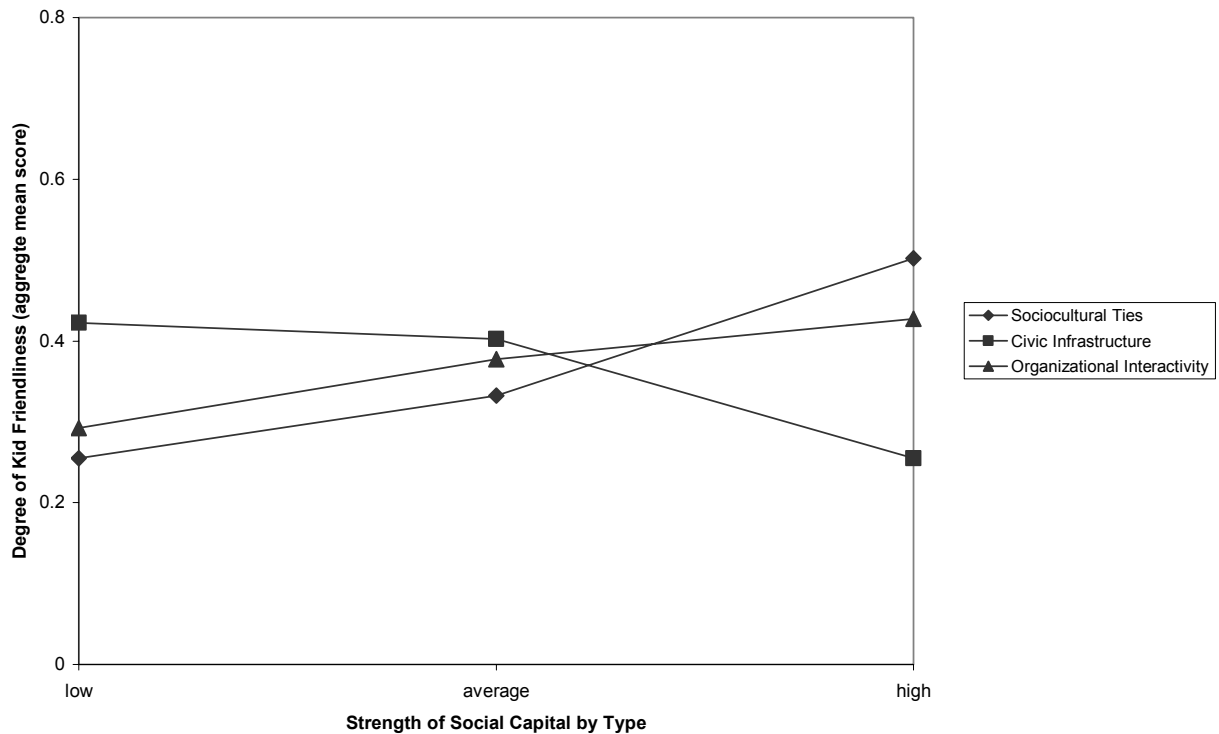


Kid Friendly

The variable “kid-friendly” is defined by the extent to which residents report they strongly agree that the neighborhood is a good place to raise kids, people actively supervise their children and are active participants in their educations, and strongly disagree that young families with children are moving out of this neighborhood.

A more “kid friendly” atmosphere is significantly correlated with higher scores on Sociocultural Ties. Some though less strong, association was found between better scores on “kid friendly” and lower, rather than higher amounts of Civic Infrastructure. When examined separately, the story for organizational interaction was again different than for the other elements of Civic Infrastructure. “Kid friendly” was positively associated with higher levels of organizational interactivity.

Figure 7: Neighborhood Kid Friendliness and Strength of Social Capital by Type

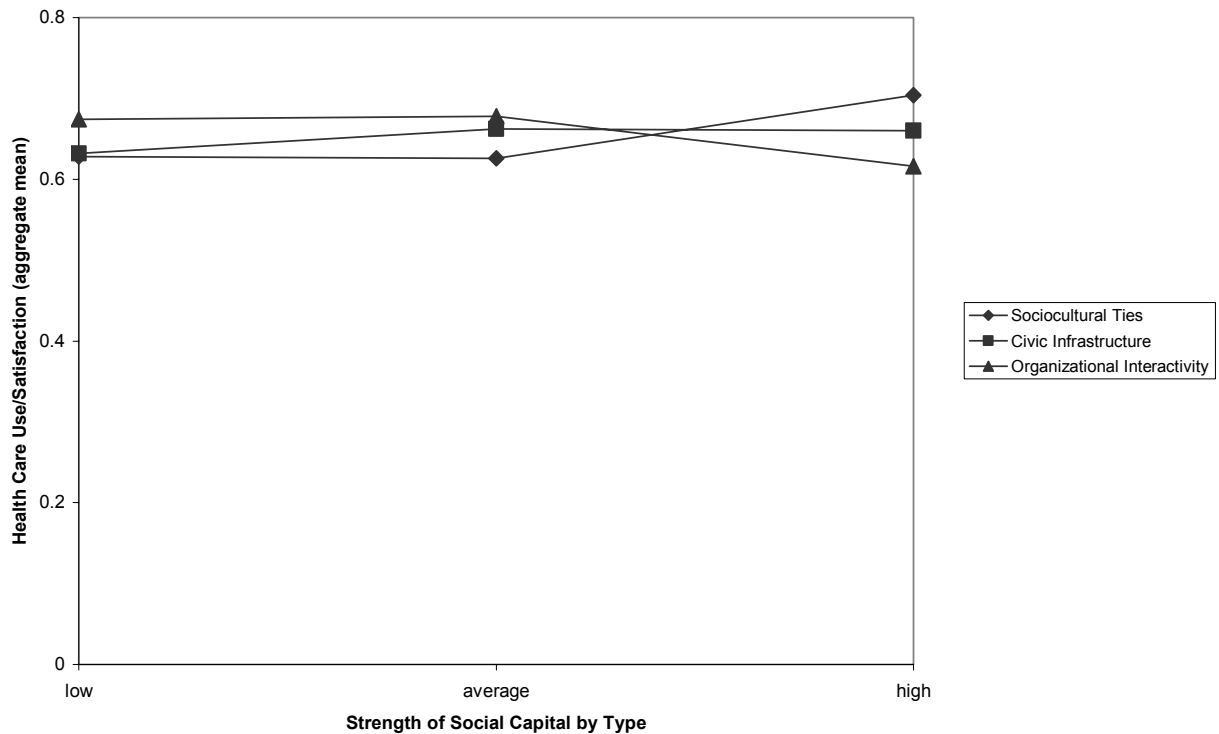


Health Satisfaction

There is a significant correlation between neighborhood social capital and health. The variables in this category are: if the resident has health insurance, used medical services in the past year, feels satisfied with the medical services they received in the past year, use medical services in the neighborhood, and would use a medical clinic or doctor's office within the neighborhood if it were available. The post-hoc tests show that having medical coverage, using medical services, feeling satisfied with services, and willingness to use a doctor's office in the neighborhood are all highly correlated only with the highest ranking of Sociocultural Ties. Using medical services inside their neighborhood is associated with both the lowest and the highest category rankings on this element of social capital.

By contrast, there are no correlations between levels of Civic Infrastructure and having medical coverage. There is a correlation between higher levels of Civic Infrastructure and resident satisfaction (feeling very to somewhat satisfied) with medical care received. Residents in neighborhoods with the lowest levels of reported Civic infrastructure are the least likely to have used services inside the neighborhood. But they are more likely than residents in neighborhoods with high levels of Civic Infrastructure to use a medical office in the neighborhood if it was available.

Figure 8: Health Care Use/Satisfaction and Neighborhood Social Capital by Type



The Contrast between Weak and Strong Social Capital in Low- and Moderate-Socioeconomic Status Neighborhoods

Case reports help to further illustrate the influence of social capital on neighborhood trajectory. Below, we contrast low-socioeconomic neighborhoods weak in social capital from low-SES neighborhoods with high levels of civic infrastructure, and likewise describe the differences apparent between moderate-SES neighborhoods that are weak or strong in social capital. While the low- and moderate SES neighborhoods with weak measures of social capital have waned, neighborhoods of similar socioeconomic status but rich in civic infrastructure have shown solid – even significant – improvement.

Low-SES, Low Social Capital

Carey Park is one of the oldest Black communities in northwest Atlanta. It is the largest of four neighborhoods located in Neighborhood Planning Unit G, one of the “NPU” established in 1973 as part of the city’s efforts to promote resident engagement in zoning, land use, and fiscal policy, and as a means for promoting citizen participation in various federal grant-in-aid programs.

Carey Park’s boundaries are formed by major thoroughfares — a major commercial street to the south, arterials and perimeter highways to the northeast and west. Only about half of the land area in the neighborhood is residential. The rest is either undeveloped (some of this is wooded,

natural area) or industrial. Much of the residential settlement developed around Proctor Creek and Terrell Creek.

Bowen Homes, a major public housing development (650 units in several two-story buildings) is located in the western portion of the neighborhood. The development is situated on several acres and the units are distributed among several buildings. The complex also includes an elementary school, a day care center, a branch library, and a medical center.

The housing stock is dilapidated and many of the yards cluttered with old vehicles, broken appliances, and other trash. In describing Carey Park, the Atlanta Journal Constitution noted “the problems of blight, economic depression, drug activity, prostitution and a high percentage of renters are all too familiar, with the exception of the latest addition to the list: tuberculosis.”

The main commercial thoroughfare is typical of a commercial street in a distressed neighborhood—small mom and pop markets and food marts, check cashing establishments, pawn shops, liquor stores, auto repair and tire shops, barber and beauty salons, and an occasional fast food restaurant comprise the scene. The clientele appears to be drawn largely from the neighborhood and the area immediately surrounding the neighborhood.

There appears to be no neighborhood or civic life outside of the activities of the Neighborhood Planning Unit, which was formed by the city and serves four neighborhoods, including Carey Park. No organizations, associations, groups, clubs or other entities could be found working on behalf of Carey Park or its residents. Consequently, no inter-organizational efforts – cooperative or collaborative – could be found.

Low-SES, High Social Capital

The ***Fruit Belt*** section of Buffalo, New York began as an enclave for German craftworkers and remained so until the 1960s, when residential preferences transformed the community into a lower-income African American neighborhood. Fruit Belt’s small, close-set bungalows were fine for workers commuting by foot or streetcar, anxious to keep heating costs down in Buffalo’s famous winters, and untroubled by the lack of a driveway or a garage. However, as consumer transportation choices – and public policy decisions – favored private cars, the neighborhood lost out to the suburbs.

Today, Fruit Belt comprises three areas and purposes: a thriving medical corridor, a commercial section, and an older residential area. Neighborhood redevelopment has focused on commercial for-profit redevelopment of the medical corridor, which plays a significant role in the city and region. The corridor is home to Buffalo General, a full-service, acute care hospital that looms above other buildings in the community. Roswell Park Memorial Cancer Institute, a cutting-edge cancer research center, presents a second, major medical facility in the neighborhood. Several other significant health organizations – Kaleida Health, Universa, a host of research and service centers among them – are connected together within the medical complex, as is a hotel housing family of patients and other overnight visitors.

Nearby the hospital corridor is a cluster of well-kept and maintained historic buildings, including some of Buffalo's most historically significant sites. These brick and stone buildings, some of which feature detailed grillwork and wrought iron work, are home to a small Catholic cathedral, a guest house for family and friends of long-term care patients, medical services for doctors and hospital outreach clinics, and a number of community-serving organizations. Entrepreneurial activity around the medical corridor is picking up appreciably, with the regional economic development agencies strongly encouraging new start-up firms in biotechnology and medical information support services.

Long-time residents recall that they used to do most of their shopping in Fruit Belt; back when there was a large grocery store in the neighborhood, and solid businesses lined several commercial boulevards. Today, that once vibrant neighborhood commercial area is decaying. Close to the medical complex there are signs of life in the retail sector – boutique-style shops, beauty parlors, and restaurants, including Buffalo's most renowned restaurant, the Anchor Bar, home of Buffalo chicken wings. Residents are walking and going into the stores, sitting on the steps, and hanging out with friends. But there is a perception among neighborhood residents that the current neighborhood stores attract illegal drug activity and there are symbols of fear, with iron gates covering the windows and the front doors of businesses.

Generally, the housing stock in Fruit Belt and the business district around the medical corridor are far stronger than the neighborhood's commercial sector, and one is drawn to a small neighborhood full of historic, small houses. A sign for a block association appears, located in the middle of a landscaped vacant lot with cut grass and flowers, and entrances to the Fruit Belt are well marked with welcome signs to the neighborhood.

To the south of the hospital complex area are several large, scattered site housing projects, some sponsored by area churches, and serving senior citizens and others. The townhouse structures are a mix of wood and brick, and the lawns and yards surrounding these projects are landscaped and well-tended. And there is new residential development, too. A local bank, construction company, and city development agency, with state mortgage subsidies, are building a development of 28 new houses in Fruit Belt, ranging in value from \$65,000 to \$80,000. Newly built infill houses designed to fit the scale of the neighborhood sell between \$75,000 and \$90,000.

Faith-based institutions are quite visible in the traditional core of the Fruit Belt. On Sunday, numerous cars are parked along the street and in the parking lots of the churches. In particular, on High Street, it is difficult to find a parking spot near Promised Land or the New Zion churches, crowded with families with children, the elderly, and single young adults going into the churches. Parishioners come from outside the neighborhood, but many neighborhood residents are visible walking to and from their church.

St. John the Baptist Church is also home to a newly-built, \$4.5 million Family Life Center, with financial support from the federal government, congregational donations, and other sources. The 30,000 square foot structure houses the St. John Christian Academy, offers a range of services such as health screening, exercise, fitness and sports activities, while providing space for meeting rooms, music and dance instruction, a computer literacy lab and child care. The Family Life Center of the Greater Refuge Temple of Christ was completed in February 1998 at a cost of

approximately \$450,000, raised largely from grassroots donations. Located at Jefferson Avenue and High Street, the facility offers a full-size gymnasium and offers a wide range of services for people of all ages, including five classrooms, a computer lab, a health clinic, a recreation and community room, exercise room, kitchenette, office and two locker rooms.

Among the Fruit Belt's most celebrated assets are its educational institutions, which include two, well-regarded K-8th grade magnet schools. These institutions are housed in some of the most architecturally significant buildings in the region, as are a number of the neighborhood cultural, educational and religious institutions.

A drive through the neighborhood reveals a great deal of investment and commitment from neighborhood residents to keeping up their homes and their community. Residents have taken great efforts to plant flowers, add outdoor decorations, and use vacant lots for gardens. There is a strong sense of a close-knit, proud community, where watch groups are evident, people walk on neighborhood streets day or nighttime, and sit on their front porches talking. The vibrancy of the neighborhood is apparent.

Ocean Hill, a mixed-use, primarily residential community in Brooklyn, New York similarly exemplifies a neighborhood low in socioeconomic status but rich in social capital. In the case of Ocean Hill, its improvement is a story of dramatic and unlikely rebirth.

Prior to 1940, Ocean Hill was a predominately white ethnic, mostly Jewish neighborhood. By 1960, much of that population had migrated to the suburbs and the suburban-like sections of neighboring Queens County. Ownership of property in Ocean Hill turned over increasingly, even typically, to absentee landlords whose ties and concerns for the neighborhood were tenuous.

As large numbers of its former residents left Ocean Hill, lower-income African Americans and Latinos poured into the neighborhood, displaced by urban renewal programs in other parts of New York City. Many of these newcomers lacked resources needed to maintain their new residence, or to support rent levels needed for property upkeep. Many landlords walked away from their properties or worse, had them torched to get property insurance payouts: abandonment and arson became widespread.

A 1969 report by New York's Department of City Planning described Ocean Hill in stark terms. "Block fronts look like they have been shelled by heavy artillery." "[A]long the streets are broken glass, rusting cars, garbage and debris." "Housing is almost indescribably bad." "Services are intolerable." "Indigenous leadership has seldom stayed here long, there simply are far better places to live." And things worsened in the 1970s, with more abandonment and the wholesale looting of commercial establishments during the blackout of 1977.

Few elements from this bleak portrait remain. Ocean Hill is on the lower end of the socioeconomic scale, and its public services – local schools, public safety, physical condition of the streets, trash collection, and street lighting – are regarded as between fair and poor quality. Many of the characteristics that typify low-income communities are in evidence, such as housing projects and corner bodegas, graffiti and abandoned buildings. But the neighborhood has clearly known worse times, and has improved dramatically since the 1970s.

Ocean Hill is strikingly diverse in terms of land use. A wide variety of building types, architectural styles, and property uses characterizes the neighborhood. The extent of this variation and the irregularly interrupted grid of local streets can make the neighborhood feel more like of a series of disconnected sections than an integrated ecological. But the variety has also been a source of resilience.

Large tower-in-the-park developments are abundant in Ocean Hill, and they break up the street grid and overall cohesiveness of the area. These massive towers, which can feel like separate neighborhoods unto themselves, include well-maintained high-rise public housing developments – New York being notably successful in maintaining some mix of moderate-income families and stability in its public housing compared to other cities. They also encompass state subsidized, middle-income “Mitchell-Llama” housing, known by the name of the program’s original legislative sponsors.

There is a substantial industrial corridor along Atlantic Avenue, a primary thoroughfare linking Brooklyn with Manhattan and Queens. Other industrial properties, mostly small manufacturing and packaging firms, are interspersed throughout the neighborhood. The elevated L train subway line and the Long Island Railroad further bisect and concentrate economic activity in the neighborhood. Public transportation in general is very good in the area. Several subway lines and many bus lines transverse the neighborhood.

Main retail areas can be found on Pitkin Avenue and also along Broadway, the northern boundary of Ocean Hill. The Pitkin Avenue commercial strip consists mostly of small retail shops selling clothing and household appliances, drawing people from the immediate and surrounding neighborhoods. There has been recent commercial development in the neighborhood, principally through a city-sponsored program designed to attract commercial development to neighborhood retail strips.

Expanded retail services are important. But the crux of Ocean Hill’s story involves housing and aggressive reuse of derelict property. Abandoned buildings and vacant lots were a defining feature of Ocean Hill 20 years ago, while the reuse of those spaces is the defining feature of the neighborhood today. Evidence of neglect is present but much more isolated; no longer do whole sections of the community look like bombed out war zones.

Weed-choked lots and derelict buildings have been replaced by new housing, virtually all of it produced by non-profit and public sector groups taking a leading role. Nehemiah homes were among the largest and most notable efforts, with large blocks of single-family, moderate-income homes offering fenced yards and driveways, built through a collaboration of local churches and city government.

Much of the development over the latter half of the 1990s was through the New York City Housing Partnership, an effort combining strength from financial institutions, other private firms, city and state governments, and local non-profit developers to develop and market affordable housing. The new developments have eliminated blight and have increased the presence of nonpoor homeowners

and residents in the neighborhood. Improvement has also spread to other row houses and small multifamily buildings throughout the community.

The transformation in Ocean Hill is summarized well by Columbia University political scientist Lance Freeman, our field associate in New York, who offered his own personal testimony of the changes he has seen in the community since the 1980s:

“Twenty years ago Ocean Hill was probably one of the worst neighborhoods in urban America. Now, most of the abandoned buildings and vacant land have been replaced by new housing developments in Ocean Hill, most owner-occupied by middle and moderate-income households. Vacant lots and abandoned buildings still dot the neighborhood; crime and poverty are still problems; but the change has truly been dramatic.

“What is especially pertinent is that all of the new development was spawned by community-based organizations. The City of New York subsidized many of these developments through in-kind donations of land and buildings. The Low Income Housing Tax Credit also played a major role. But the community based organizations were the leading forces behind the development that has occurred since the mid-1980s [which] says something about the importance of civic infrastructure or social capital in the absence of economic capital. The community mobilized resources to take on a task normally conducted by the private sector—housing development. And the impacts have been impressive.”

Moderate-SES, with Weak Social Capital

Atlanta’s *Hunter Hills* neighborhood was developed in the late 1930s to early 1940s, and became an area that attracted the Black middle class as it moved westward. Today, the neighborhood is in transition, consisting mostly of elderly homeowners and heirs who are not interested in living in the area or not able to maintain their property.

Hunter Hills is located less than two miles west of the central business district, an area that contains the Georgia World Congress Center, the Georgia Dome, and the CNN Center. The neighborhood is a little over a mile west of the Atlanta University complex, which contains one of the largest concentrations of historically black colleges and universities in the country (Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College, Morris Brown College, and Spellman College). It is bounded by major arterial streets on the north and south, and a rail line on the east.

The vast majority of the neighborhood consists of fairly small single-family homes; most constructed of brick; and all are located on small lots close to one another. Few streets have sidewalks. The yards are reasonably well kept, though a number of homes appear to be using the front yard as a parking area. Many houses have burglar bars on the front door and ground floor windows. Several homes constructed of wood are fairly weathered and in need of paint.

Retail activity in the neighborhood is concentrated along Simpson Road, a major thoroughfare connecting northwest Atlanta to the central business district, and is of relatively poor quality. Stores

include small markets and food marts, barbershops and beauty salons, liquor stores, fast food, auto repair and tire shops. One neighborhood leader referred to this area as “an area of hopelessness—unemployed and loitering men, substance abuse, and a large presence of liquor stores. There are more liquor stores along the Simpson Road corridor than any other place in the city of Atlanta.”

The northwest corner of Hunter Hills is relatively self-contained, isolated by the street patterns from the rest of the neighborhood, and significantly more distressed. The area consists entirely of multi-family properties, several of which are vacant and abandoned. Streets and vacant lots are strewn with litter, discarded furniture and appliances.

Hunter Hills is essentially devoid of civic infrastructure. The Neighborhood Planning Unit – NPU K – is active, but it is a city-created rather than an indigenous organization and it is focused on an area that is much larger than Hunter Hills (encompassing Hunter Hills and five other neighborhoods). Two neighborhood watch-type organizations are present: Hunter Hills Citizens on the Move, and Hunter Hills Volunteers Against Crime. They monitor crime affecting the neighborhood, encourage resident participation, and serve as a liaison between residents and the NPU. There is no collaboration among community organizations in this neighborhood. There are no established community-based organizations serving the neighborhood.

Moderate-SES, with Strong Social Capital

Codman Square is a primarily residential neighborhood in the Dorchester section of Boston. It comprises an area of large, two story Victorian homes set in manicured yards and a second area intermixing single- and multi-family housing, where occasional street trash and empty lots are seen, separated by a main business boulevard home to the large nonprofit agencies and small businesses that serve as the area’s primary employers.

The neighborhood has seen significant revitalization and community development activities since the early 1990s. A community-wide planning process, known as the Millennium Project, identified community priorities and established a community development plan for the coming decade. A Main Streets Program improved the business district and along with marketing and promotion, now works on public safety, transportation and other issues effecting Codman Square. Housing and building improvement projects have included commercial development, construction of a youth services and community technology center, the addition of 100 units of affordable housing, and significant expansions of a neighborhood health center, youth and recreation center, senior citizens center, and of youth development services and employment and training programs by non-profit agencies and church-affiliated organizations in Codman Square.

Codman Square is particularly rich in civic infrastructure, boasting an array of civic organizations working on behalf of the community and its residents. These include:

- ABCD-Dorchester Neighborhood Service Center — a branch of Action for Boston Community Development (Boston’s CAP agency and large non-profit anti-poverty agency) providing Head Start and day care, youth programs and family support services;
- Baker House — a church affiliated program that provides youth development services;

- Codman Square Health Center (CSHC) — a non-profit health center that provides direct outpatient health services, computer skills training, adult education, after school youth activities, economic development, homeless prevention services, community organizing, civic capacity building, and serves as a major anchor and employer for the neighborhood;
- Codman Square Main Streets Program — a non-profit organization working to improve the Codman Square business district through physical improvements, promotion, and business recruitment, in connection with the Boston Main Streets Program;
- Codman Square Neighborhood Council — an umbrella civic association for residents throughout the neighborhood designed to: provide neighborhood-wide input on proposed development projects and plans, represent the neighborhood and block associations within the Codman Square area, and take action on public safety, transportation, neighborhood planning and community organizing efforts;
- Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corp (NDC) — a community development corporation active in affordable housing, commercial real estate, neighborhood planning, neighborhood improvements, public safety, community organizing, job-training program, and a key supporter of the Main Streets Program;
- Dennison House — a settlement house that provides adult education, childcare, and youth development services;
- Dorchester Baptist Temple Church — a multi-racial congregation active in addressing racial conflict, youth violence and other community issues, and which (directly or through an affiliated non-profit) provides a full-time youth street worker, a food distribution center, after school programs, summer camp, job training/leadership development, and a computer technology center;
- Dorchester Branch YMCA — offering recreation facilities and programs for adults and youths, multiple youth development programs, computer skills training from pre-school to adult, child care with an affiliated child care teacher training program, and elder programs;
- Dorchester Garden Lands & Preservation — a non-profit group involved in neighborhood improvements and green space preservation;
- Greenwood Methodist Church Family Life Center — a church sponsored center that provides youth programs including a summer camp, youth clubs and other activities;
- Kit Clark Senior Center — a non-profit social service agency based in Codman Square that provides multiple services to elderly residents in several Boston neighborhoods, including meals on wheels, transportation, social support, and housing;
- Living in Dorchester — a non-profit organization developing affordable housing in Codman Square and other parts of Dorchester;
- Salvation Army — operates an after school program, an alternative middle school, and a summer camp that services youth in Codman Square and beyond.
- Strive — a Codman Square-based job training program that provides job readiness training citywide.

Complementing these organizations are more than 20, formal neighborhood associations, an active merchants association, approximately 40 neighborhood crime watch groups, and a host of private schools and daycare centers providing after-school and other activities for neighborhood children.

While the Health Center and the NDC generated much of the physical revitalization of Codman Square, the Dorchester Y has been key to implementing the human services part of the neighborhood's action agenda. From the mid-1980s, when it was a recreation center, to 2000, the Dorchester Y's budget grew eight-fold as it greatly expanded its services to address employment and youth development issues, contributing to reduced youth violence and expanded employment opportunities for residents—getting more engaged with public contracting under welfare devolution, and continuing to organize, serve, and advocate on behalf of the Codman Square community. The Dorchester Y has also been a lynchpin of resident involvement and inter-organizational interaction. It draws heavily on volunteers to deliver programs and complete projects; has participated extensively with other organizations; and is regarded as particularly collaborative in its approach to working with other neighborhood organizations.

There is a strong pattern of neighborhood organizations working together to address disinvestment, public safety and the underlying issues of resident poverty in Codman Square. One recurring area of collaboration is community-wide planning and agenda setting, which has occurred several times over the past 15 years. There are several formal and informal joint efforts around specific projects, including the NDC and social service agencies working to provide elder services, day care and employment and training to residents of its housing developments. Human services agencies also work together on coordinating summer youth programs. Multiple organizations also collaborate formally within the Codman Square Main Streets Districts.

There is a similar pattern of widespread interaction between neighborhood entities in Codman Square and government organizations and officials. Codman Square is a politically active community and interacts regularly with public officials both to advance a community-based agenda and to shape how proposed public or private projects impact the neighborhood. Political leaders and outside funding agencies view Codman Square organizations as working together well and presenting a fairly uniform voice on neighborhood priorities.

This extensive inter-organizational interaction among neighborhood groups in Codman Square has contributed directly to greatly expanded youth development programs, expanded employment training programs, rehabilitation and reuse of prominent commercial building in the business district, expanded police protection, active neighborhood crime watches, expanded affordable housing, and a vibrant commercial district.

Implications for Public Policy

The summary of what we have found is that there is a strong, positive relationship between neighborhood social capital – particularly in the form of *sociocultural ties* – and better outcomes for residents. Controlling for the influence of socioeconomic status, higher levels of sociocultural ties among neighborhood residents is shown to be strongly related to neighborhood improvement, to satisfaction with neighborhood quality, to neighborhoods that present more kid-friendly environments, and to better access, use and satisfaction with health care services. What appear to matter most among these positive relationships are levels of trust and attachment among neighborhood residents.

The statistical tests demonstrated less clear associations between civic infrastructure and neighborhood SES, trajectory, as well as neighborhood outcomes—but important connections were found. Civic infrastructure – in particular, as measured by organizations with paid staff and budgets running actual programs – was found to be more present among lower-SES neighborhoods, and was also found in higher levels in neighborhoods where residents perceived there to be more problems. Those results could represent successful targeting of civic infrastructure rather than a lack of its efficacy, however, since those are the very neighborhoods where community development efforts would likely be found.

We found that, especially among low- and moderate-SES neighborhoods, Civic Infrastructure was present and important in Stable and Improving neighborhoods, in contrast to those that declined in socioeconomic status from 1980 to 2000. Organizational interactivity was present at higher levels and was active across a fuller, more deeply involved range of activities in Improving Low- and Moderate-SES neighborhoods, compared to those that declined. And higher levels of organizational interactivity were clearly related to higher levels of neighborhood satisfaction, social order, kid friendliness, and fewer reported problems in the community.

This general pattern was illustrated in the neighborhood descriptions included in this paper. The field associate reports on improved neighborhoods had a strong tendency to identify one or more community organizations which played a central role in the neighborhood's progress, and this was true across the spectrum of Low-, Moderate-, Middle-, and even High-SES neighborhoods in the study, and especially the case among Low- and Moderate-SES communities. In Fruit Belt and Ocean Hill, faith-based organizations – St. Johns Baptist Church and Nehemiah Homes, respectively – were an instrumental part of the neighborhood improvement story. Codman Square Health Center, Neighborhood Development Corp, Dorchester Branch YMCA – these were the potent sources of capacity translating community interest into action.

More investigation is surely needed before the final chapter is written on whether and how best to build social capital as a neighborhood improvement strategy. But the stories and statistical data provided by this study surely point to the combined importance of both Sociocultural Ties and Civic Infrastructure – and the particular role of organizational interaction – as elements in helping neighborhoods to prosper.

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