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THE DISTRIBUTIVE IMPACT OF FEDERAL FISCAL POLICY

Federal Spending and Southern California Cities

PASCALE JOASSART-MARCELLI
JULIET ANN MUSSO
University of Southern California

The authors analyze the intraregional distribution patterns of federal expenditures across Southern Californian cities, using Consolidated Federal Funds Reports data from fiscal years 1983 to 1996. The findings suggest that although poorer cities benefit from larger amounts of anti-poverty funds, they receive lower amounts of other types of expenditure. Thus, the allocation of federal funds fails to promote fiscal equalization across cities and actually contributes to urban disparities. Regression analyses reveal that a city’s poverty level and its proportion of minorities and immigrants have a negative impact on federal expenditure, but its fiscal capacity and institutional strength have a positive impact.

FISCAL FEDERALISM AND INTRAMETROPOLITAN DISPARITY

We analyze the distributional impact of federal expenditures on Southern California cities. The central question is the extent to which federal expenditures, grants, and direct spending may improve or worsen the relative economic standing of poorer cities in the region. Our findings suggest that taken as a whole, federal fiscal policy has a regressive effect on Southern California cities. Although redistributive funds (welfare and other social service spending) do tend to be targeted to poorer cities, the bulk of federal funding is more

AUTHORS’ NOTE: We thank the Southern California Studies Center at the University of Southern California and the National Science Foundation’s Program in Geography and Regional Science for funding this research. Jennifer Wolch’s advice and continued support were essential to the completion of this article. We are also indebted to Alejandro Alonso for GIS assistance and Enrico Marcelli, Gary Painter, Manuel Pastor, and Chris Weare for comments on earlier drafts.

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likely to be distributed to cities with higher-income individuals and higher fiscal capacity.

Several economists have attempted to measure the redistributive impact of fiscal policy (i.e., taxation and/or expenditure) on individual income distribution (Reynolds and Smolensky 1977; Ruggles 1991; Stewart 1998). In general, these studies conclude that the federal taxation system tends to be mildly progressive, whereas transfer programs have a more positive impact in reducing inequality between income groups. A major limitation of these studies is that they focus more on taxing policies and have placed less emphasis on the impact of federal expenditures on the income distribution. This is because the benefits of most expenditure programs cannot easily be allocated among individuals. As a result, researchers have typically focused on the impact of transfer payments such as Social Security and Medicare and have ignored the potential effect of other types of expenditures such as infrastructure and defense. The latter can indirectly benefit individuals through employment opportunities, improved transportation, and a cleaner environment. Moreover, these nontransfer expenditures represent more than three-fourths of federal spending and are likely to have important consequences on the distribution of income.

To study the distributive impact of federal spending, we focus on the distribution of federal expenditures on local governments—specifically, cities in the five-county Los Angeles metropolitan region. In the context of federal devolution, where cities have become increasingly responsible to provide services to local residents, it is important to understand the extent to which federal expenditures of all sorts either advantage or disadvantage city residents.

In the United States, federal decentralization of the welfare function has given localities increased responsibility for social and other services. Within such a decentralized system, cities with the largest populations in need likely have limited resources to provide support services (Donahue 1999; Hovey 1999). Pack (1998) found that cities with high concentrated poverty not only faced higher direct costs for redistributive programs but also for other poverty-related services such as police services. Moreover, economically stressed cities may lack the infrastructure and other services to support the job-producing industries necessary to move people out of poverty. To the extent that cities with low fiscal capacity also harbor large numbers of people in poverty, service needs, fiscal stress, and dampened economic development mutually reinforce each other to perpetuate poverty and inequality. Hence, the central question of this study is whether federal expenditure equalizes fiscal disparities across cities.
The fiscal federalism literature provides some insight on the role of intergovernmental grants to redress problems of vertical inequity among individuals, or horizontal inequities between subnational governments (Musgrave 1959; Oates 1972; Musso 1998). Although fiscal equalization through intergovernmental grants has been less popular in the United States than in Australia, Canada, and Germany, there are several equity- and efficiency-related arguments in favor of such policy (Mieszkowski and Musgrave 1999; Qiao 1999). First, cities with diminished fiscal resources must impose higher relative tax rates to provide the same services, violating the normative criterion of horizontal equity. Second, fiscal disparities—the variation in resources available to finance public services (Yinger 1986)—can pose a number of problems within a highly fragmented governance structure. In such areas, migration between jurisdictions in search of preferred service levels (Tiebout 1956; Greene and Parliament 1980) will tend to reinforce fiscal disparities over time (Musso 1998). Fiscal disparities also can reduce efficiency in that they have migrational spillover effects on other communities (Gramlich and Laren 1984), leading to distortions in the allocation of resources (Aronson and Hilley 1986, 88). In California, these problems with efficiency and equity are exacerbated by a rigid and often arbitrary financing structure in which fiscal discretion is limited, and property taxes are allocated to localities based on historical factors (Musso and Quigley 1996).

Given the efficiency and equity arguments in support of fiscal equalization, it is crucial to understand the effects of federal expenditure on fiscal disparities across cities. However, there has been little empirical analysis of such effects. Parker (1995, 1997), using an approach similar to that of this study, argued that central cities received greater federal funds than suburbs between 1983 and 1992. However, his definition of suburbs as metropolitan areas outside the central city is inappropriate for the study of Southern California, which does not readily fall into traditional city-suburb distinctions. Moreover, most of his analysis focused on county-level expenditures and did not disaggregate the data to the city level, failing to capture interjurisdictional differences. Pack (1998) found that federal aid to cities does not fully compensate the costs of poverty experienced by cities. However, this study did not consider intraurban disparities but rather compared large cities within the United States. Such comparisons can be complicated by institutional differences between states and cities. Persky, Kurban, and Lester (2000) and Summers (1999) provided more recent empirical analyses of federal expenditures and advanced the idea that although central cities receive more anti-poverty funds, other federal expenditures seem to favor suburban areas. But like Parker, they failed to consider the relationship between local fiscal capacity and federal expenditures. In this study, we focus on the determinants of
federal funds allocation among cities within the Southern California region and analyze its impact on fiscal disparities.

**METHOD**

Our analysis relies on several data sources. First, city-level socio-economic and demographic data were obtained from the *Census of Population and Housing* (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1980, 1990). Second, city revenue figures used to calculate alternative fiscal capacity measures were computed from city fiscal data compiled by the California State Controller (1982, 1997). Third, federal expenditure data were gathered from the fiscal year 1983-1984 through fiscal year 1996-1997 *Consolidated Federal Funds Reports (CFFR)* from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1983-1996). These reports provide federal expenditures and obligations by states, counties, and cities for more than 2,000 government programs, including grants, salaries and wages, procurement contracts, and payments to individuals.

To create estimates of federal expenditures within cities, three-year averages during two periods were computed to dampen large annual variations in certain programs, and all figures were adjusted to 1996 dollars to facilitate comparisons. To understand the general effects of fiscal federalism and welfare reform on the region, we compare data from 1983-1985, which correspond to early days of federalism reform, to the most recent period for which data were available, 1994-1996.

All programs were aggregated in 31 subcategories organized in five general groups, including (1) retirement, (2) nonspatial redistribution (i.e., individual-level transfers such as food stamps, medical assistance, unemployment benefits), (3) spatially related redistribution (i.e., federal expenditure targeting specific areas such as housing projects, community development, health and education), (4) other spatially related programs (e.g., infrastructure, transportation, crime reduction programs allocated to specific areas but whose purpose is nonredistributive), and (5) all programs not otherwise categorized (see Persky, Kurban, and Lester 2000; Summers 1999). The expenditure categories and their magnitude are summarized in Table 1. Approximately 60% of expenditures are allocated to counties rather than cities, typically with the state as intermediary. To estimate the amount of county expenditures spent within cities and within the unincorporated areas of the counties, we ran logistic regressions on the individual-level 1992 *Current Population Survey (CPS)* to predict program participation for each category (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 1992). We then used these predictors to
estimate the number of recipients by city and allocated the county-level expenditures to each city based on these estimates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TABLE 1:</strong> Federal Expenditure Categories and Per Capita Averages, Southern California, 1983-1985 and 1994-1996 (in U.S. dollars)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Retirement</td>
<td>1,689.76</td>
<td>1,832.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security and other</td>
<td>1,070.56</td>
<td>1,028.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicare and related</td>
<td>469.02</td>
<td>703.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement for veterans</td>
<td>150.18</td>
<td>100.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and families</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Redistribution—nonspatial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food stamps</td>
<td>26.34</td>
<td>85.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redistributinal grants</td>
<td>94.22</td>
<td>220.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical assistance</td>
<td>92.98</td>
<td>285.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>13.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplemental Security</td>
<td>62.53</td>
<td>115.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned income tax credit</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Redistribution—spatial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and other space-related transfers</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>122.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and community development</td>
<td>59.51</td>
<td>36.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>11.36</td>
<td>18.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Other spatial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highways and related</td>
<td>41.59</td>
<td>53.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other infrastructure</td>
<td>35.49</td>
<td>17.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance for disaster</td>
<td>318.04</td>
<td>642.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and environment</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. All other</td>
<td>3,238.95</td>
<td>1,457.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers to families and</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veterans</td>
<td>6.91</td>
<td>12.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct business</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct payments—post office</td>
<td>2,293.99</td>
<td>722.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement—defense</td>
<td>357.78</td>
<td>214.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement—civilian</td>
<td>13.48</td>
<td>32.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement—post office</td>
<td>261.08</td>
<td>150.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and wages—other</td>
<td>100.30</td>
<td>99.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>civilians</td>
<td>151.80</td>
<td>146.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>37.30</td>
<td>56.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other health</td>
<td>14.13</td>
<td>15.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other grants</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,693.19</td>
<td>4,912.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the case of retirement programs, an age variable (age 65 or older) was a good predictor of receipt of retirement funds (Medicare and Social Security). Consistent with Summers (1999), we used a city’s share of the county’s population age 65 or older to allocate retirement spending to cities.

Summers (1999) used the city’s share of county population below the federal poverty level to allocate redistributive expenditures. This may introduce bias because it assumes that federal funds are allocated perfectly to poor households. We improved accuracy of the allocation method by defining poverty at 150% of the official level and adding gender and age variables. Using 1980 and 1990 data on the number of females, persons in poverty, and adults (18 to 64 years old) by city, we predicted with 76.3% confidence the number of people who received poverty-related transfers in each city for each period. We then used these predicted values to allocate a share of each county’s undistributed poverty-related federal expenditure to each city.

The last broad category includes all other programs, most of which are not related to each other and are distributed in the form of larger grants for research, procurements, and salaries. Given the variability among programs, it is difficult to develop a straightforward model for allocating county aggregate funding. Consistent with Summers (1999), we allocated county grants based on each city’s share of the county population. Although this might introduce error, it should not be substantial because more than 80% of this funding category is allocated directly to cities.

Another central component of our study is the computation of fiscal capacity measures for Southern California cities. Several types of indices have been used in the literature. One common measure consists of estimating fiscal capacity using an income burden approach in which representative revenues are calculated by multiplying each city’s aggregate income by the proportion of regional income collected as local government revenue (Ladd and Yinger 1989). However, cities in California have limited control over intergovernmental aid (determined by formulas), sales tax (set by state laws and influenced by local retail space), and property tax revenues (heavily restricted by Proposition 13). As a consequence, they have increasingly relied on other taxing sources and fees (Musso 2000). Under these conditions, it may be useful to distinguish between several measures of fiscal capacity depending on the type of revenues included. First, we computed discretionary local fiscal capacity based on the burden approach but excluding intergovernmental grants, sales and property taxes, and electrical revenues. This reflects more clearly the amount of money over which local governments have relative control. Second, a total fiscal capacity measure adds actual other revenues to the first estimate and represents the total amount of revenues that could be available to a city. Such measures were computed for
1982 and 1997. To allow comparisons with the federal expenditure averages described earlier, federal intergovernmental grants were excluded from these measures, and all measures were calculated on a real, per capita basis.

**SPATIAL PATTERNS OF FEDERAL EXPENDITURES**

Not surprisingly given its population share, Los Angeles County received the largest part of federal funds channeled to the region during the 1983-1996 period. However, on a per capita basis, the distribution of funds looks very different. In 1996, for instance, Orange County residents received more than $6,450 on average, compared with approximately $4,774 in Los Angeles, $5,202 in Ventura, $3,965 in Riverside, and $3,836 in San Bernardino Counties. These differences have not always been constant over time. In the early and mid-1980s, Los Angeles enjoyed the highest per capita average, whereas Ventura had the lowest. By 1986, Orange County had surpassed other counties and maintained its higher average for the rest of the period (except in 1992). In San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, per capita averages have remained low throughout the whole period and have actually declined slightly.

The higher average in Orange County is driven mostly by the *other spatial* category that includes infrastructure projects. Overall, Los Angeles County receives a higher per capita average for redistribution programs (both spatial and nonspatial). Again, this is not surprising given the greater proportion of poor households in the county. Similarly, Riverside has a higher figure for retirement funds because it has a greater proportion of retirees.

County patterns, however, often obscure sharp intracounty differences. As Figure 1 illustrates, per capita redistributive spending in 1994-1996 varies drastically from one place to another. The cities of Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino, as well as a large number of cities east of Los Angeles, receive higher averages than cities in the southern part of Orange County or Ventura County. For example, the cities of Cudahy, Bell Gardens, Maywood, and Huntington Park have significantly higher per capita averages (approximately $1,100) than do Laguna Niguel, Mission Viejo, and Villa Park (about $325). This is because poverty tends to be concentrated in the older urban areas and is relatively lower in newer suburbs.

Larger variations are observed for nonredistributive expenditures, including the other spatial, retirement, and residual subcategories defined earlier. Figure 2 shows the relatively low amounts of funding received by cities located to the east of Los Angeles and in San Bernardino and Riverside.
Figure 1: Redistributive Federal Expenditures to Southern California, 1994-1996

Figure 2: Nonredistributive Federal Expenditure to Southern California, 1994-1996
Counties compared with those in Orange County. For example, in 1994-1996, the city of El Segundo received an average of $36,512 in other funds per person, but Hawaiian Gardens received only $1,420.14

These patterns of federal expenditures seem to be closely related to the geography of poverty in the region (see Figure 3). Although poor cities tend to receive larger amounts of redistributive funds, this advantage is to a large extent offset by their receiving a smaller share of nonredistributive expenditure.

In 1983-1985, the patterns were almost identical. However, nonredistributive expenditures were spread more throughout the region in 1983-1985 than in the later period. In 1994-1996, they had begun to move out of Los Angeles and concentrate in Orange County.

**FISCAL EQUALIZATION**

To determine the extent to which federal funding accomplishes fiscal equalization, we categorized cities in poverty quintiles and calculated average per capita spending for each quintile.15
Table 2 shows that cities in the poorest quintile received fewer federal funds on a per capita basis than those in the more affluent quintiles. Indeed, cities in the richest quintile received almost 80% more funding than the poorest cities in 1983-1985 and almost 50% more in 1994-1996. These findings give support to the argument that federal programs fail to help the poorest groups. However, if one distinguishes between redistributive and nonredistributive spending, two different stories emerge.

As one would expect, redistributive funds seem to be allocated based on poverty. Indeed, in both periods, the per capita averages consistently increase with each poverty quintile, suggesting that poorer cities benefit from larger federal anti-poverty expenditures.\(^\text{16}\) It is important to note, however, that Table 2 shows that although average redistributive expenditures increased between 1983-1985 and 1994-1996, the rate of increase is inversely related to poverty. This suggests that the increase in anti-poverty expenditures noted

### Table 2: Real Per Capita Federal Expenditure, by Poverty Quintile of Southern California Cities, 1983-1985 and 1994-1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Per Capita Federal Spending (in U.S. dollars)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Redistribution</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Per Capita Federal Spending</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-1985 poverty quintile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (lowest poverty rate)</td>
<td>7,355.44</td>
<td>215.16</td>
<td>7,140.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7,874.68</td>
<td>251.20</td>
<td>7,623.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4,544.43</td>
<td>349.24</td>
<td>4,195.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4,574.49</td>
<td>387.07</td>
<td>4,187.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (highest poverty rate)</td>
<td>4,115.36</td>
<td>571.64</td>
<td>3,543.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1996 poverty quintile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (lowest poverty rate)</td>
<td>5,230.99</td>
<td>512.82</td>
<td>4,718.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4,957.01</td>
<td>584.90</td>
<td>4,372.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4,157.85</td>
<td>705.80</td>
<td>3,452.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5,385.32</td>
<td>813.50</td>
<td>4,571.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (highest poverty rate)</td>
<td>3,562.32</td>
<td>1,027.13</td>
<td>2,535.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Change in Per Capita Federal Spending</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Redistribution</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (lowest poverty rate)</td>
<td>–28.88</td>
<td>138.34</td>
<td>–33.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>–37.05</td>
<td>132.85</td>
<td>–42.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>–8.51</td>
<td>102.09</td>
<td>–17.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.73</td>
<td>110.17</td>
<td>9.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (highest poverty rate)</td>
<td>–13.44</td>
<td>79.68</td>
<td>–28.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
earlier has been disproportionately directed to poor individuals who live in nonpoor cities.

We also computed average anti-poverty spending figures per poor person because poor people are the likely recipients of such expenditures. Interestingly, city averages declined as poverty increased, as illustrated by a correlation coefficient of –0.66 for 1994-1996 and –0.42 for 1983-1985. Thus, poor individuals residing in poor cities receive a lower average amount of redistributive expenditures than those in cities with lower levels of poverty. Consequently, it would seem that the urban concentration of poverty is likely to weaken the quality and quantity of services the poor receive. This is especially problematic if, as Pack (1998) argued, poverty concentration raises the costs of anti-poverty efforts. Moreover, this phenomenon has increased between 1983-1985 and 1994-1996, reinforcing the argument made earlier that anti-poverty expenditure has shifted to target mainly poor individuals in medium- and high-income cities.

Nonredistributive funds tend to go disproportionately to the wealthiest cities. In both periods, cities in the least poor quintile received almost twice as much other federal money than cities in the poorest quintile. These figures suggest that poor cities may be hurt by a lack of federal funds for nonredistributive purposes such as infrastructure and procurement.

To analyze further the impact of federal expenditures on local fiscal disparities, the figures obtained in Table 2 were added to average discretionary local fiscal capacity and other revenues obtained by poverty quintiles. As Figure 4 illustrates, 1997 fiscal capacity declines drastically as poverty rises. Once 1994-1996 federal expenditures are taken into account, the disparities among poverty quintiles actually increase, supporting the argument that the allocation of federal funds fails to promote fiscal equalization across cities. Similar results are obtained when combining 1982 fiscal capacity with 1983-1985 federal expenditures (not shown).

Measuring disparity between cities using the coefficient of variation of discretionary fiscal capacity leads to a disparity estimate of 55% in 1982 and 68% in 1997. After adding federal expenditures, the coefficient rose to 185% in 1982 and 261% in 1997. Again, this suggests that the allocation of federal expenditures exacerbates disparities across cities in Southern California.

The pattern observed here raises concerns about the future of poor cities in the region and their ability to maintain public services for people in poverty as well as for all residents and businesses. This is especially true if the funds they receive for anti-poverty programs are insufficient and, on a poor person basis, inferior to those available to wealthier cities. This lack of resources could force poor cities to reallocate local and state funds to the most urgent needs of poverty reduction and further reduce spending on other important
programs. Thus, federal funding patterns fail to correct poverty and inequality in the Southern California region and could have the effect of fueling out-migration from less advantaged cities to economically healthier cities often located in newer suburbs. The resulting sprawl leads to environmental problems linked to the destruction of open space and the rise in traffic-related pollution, and it accentuates city-suburb disparities (Nivola 1999).

**EXPLAINING URBAN VARIATIONS IN FEDERAL EXPENDITURES**

The relationship between poverty and federal expenditures is likely to be influenced by other factors such as race and ethnicity, population size and growth, institutional strength, and fiscal characteristics of cities. In many ways, these forces are linked to the level of poverty and modify its influence on the process of funds allocation. The following factors are likely to be significant predictors of federal expenditures:

*Poverty.* Although there is an ongoing debate on the relationship between poverty and public expenditures, one might expect poorer cities to receive more funds based on higher needs alone.
Race and ethnicity. As poverty disproportionately affects minority households, and racial and ethnic minority groups tend to concentrate in specific areas, poorer cities often have a large proportion of African-Americans or Latinos or immigrants. Nevertheless, minority status is not synonymous with poverty, and federal funds may be allocated differently among cities with different ethno-racial compositions. In fact, federal anti-poverty policies may target specific groups at the expense of others.

Population growth and size. One may expect cities with rapid population growth to receive more federal funds given their rising need for infrastructure, schools, and so on.

Age and institutional structure. One also might predict that federal expenditures would be affected by the age of the city and its institutional structure, in terms of whether the city is a general law or charter city. In California, general law cities have a council-manager form of government with five city council members elected at large. Charter cities have greater variability in political structure, often have district rather than at-large elections, and have greater home rule powers under the California constitution. These institutional differences may differentially affect the ability of residents to articulate service demands and the ability of the city government to attract federal funds.

Fiscal strength. Finally, a city’s fiscal capacity is likely to shape its need for federal funds and thus ought to influence the actual level of expenditure. We distinguish between discretionary local fiscal capacity and other revenue capacity (i.e., sales and property taxes as well as nonfederal intergovernmental grants). Given the former is closely related to the aggregate income level of a city, we expect it to be more strongly related to federal expenditures, with a negative impact on redistributive funds and no impact on nonredistributive funds. We also hypothesize that cities exerting a stronger fiscal effort (i.e., those raising revenues beyond their capacity) may be able to attract more funds because this is likely to reflect an active role in public services provision.

We performed a series of regression analyses to test the extent to which the variables listed earlier are related to federal funding received by cities. The model is based on the following specification:

$$Y_c = \alpha + \beta X_c,$$

where $Y_c$ is the dependent variable measuring either per capita redistributive or other (i.e., nonredistributive) federal expenditure by city $c$, and $X_c$ is a vector of city-level characteristics, including poverty, race and ethnicity variables (proportions of Latinos, African-Americans, Asians, and whites),
demographic variables (proportion of immigrants, population growth, population size), institutional variables (city age, charter vs. general law city), and fiscal variables (per capita discretionary local fiscal capacity, per capita other revenues capacity, and total fiscal effort).

REDISTRIBUTIVE EXPENDITURES

Because most redistributive expenditures are allocated to cities based on a prediction equation, including poverty as one of the predictors, there is a potential endogeneity problem linked with regressing redistributive expenditure on poverty. To eliminate bias due to endogeneity, we use two-stage least squares regressions with an instrumental variable for poverty. The poverty instrument is predicted using median income, proportion of African-Americans, and proportion of Latinos. These variables seem to predict poverty rather well given the high $R^2$ obtained (0.7438 in 1990 and 0.7203 in 1980).20

Table 3 shows the regression results for the natural logarithm of redistributive per capita spending on a set of independent variables for 1994-1996 and 1983-1985. According to these regressions, the most significant determinant of the allocation of redistributive federal funds is poverty.

The race and ethnicity variables used in the regression do not have a significant role in either period, with the exception of the proportion of Asians in 1994-1996, which we find to be positively related to the natural logarithm of per capita redistributive expenditure.21 Similarly, the proportion of immigrants in a city had no significant influence on the dependent variable.

Surprisingly, population growth was positively related to redistributive expenditures in 1983-1985 but negatively associated in 1994-1996. This may be linked to the fact that population growth was most rapid in the poorest cities during the 1980s but slowed down during the 1990s and shifted to suburban areas as wealthier residents moved away from urban areas.

The institutional strength of cities, measured by whether the city is a general law or charter city, seemed to play a significant role in their ability to attract greater amounts of anti-poverty funds during the second period. This finding reinforces the importance of taking into account institutional variations in the study of intrametropolitan poverty.

Finally, the fiscal health of cities, as measured by discretionary local fiscal capacity, is positively related to the allocation of redistributive federal funds. Under such conditions, federal expenditures do not compensate cities for their lack of local resources or equalize fiscal capacity in Southern California cities, but rather they exacerbate inequalities by granting more funds to cities with greater fiscal health. In the second period, the capacity to raise other revenues had a negative impact on redistributive expenditures, whereas a higher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% in poverty(^a)</td>
<td>3.80068**** 3.96295****</td>
<td>0.28522 0.75129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Latino</td>
<td>0.70693 0.66733</td>
<td>0.66776 0.6337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% African-American</td>
<td>0.65801 0.69442****</td>
<td>–0.93780 –0.33284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Asian</td>
<td>0.68271 0.30796</td>
<td>–0.13868 0.43403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% immigrant</td>
<td>0.31381 –0.13868</td>
<td>1.01686 0.79567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter city</td>
<td>0.06818 0.05083</td>
<td>0.12718 0.11954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of city</td>
<td>0.00018 0.00089*</td>
<td>0.00014 0.00019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population size</td>
<td>0.00020 0.00000</td>
<td>0.00016 0.00010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population growth</td>
<td>0.61348**** −0.47251****</td>
<td>−0.00048 −0.00001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per capita discretionary local fiscal capacity</td>
<td>0.000061**** 0.000322***</td>
<td>0.00027 0.00008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per capita other revenues capacity</td>
<td>0.00001 −0.00033****</td>
<td>0.00001 0.00000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal effort</td>
<td>−0.00152 0.04629****</td>
<td>−0.00734 −0.02056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% age 65 or older</td>
<td>0.00133 0.02140</td>
<td>0.00025 0.005082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>4.13024**** 5.50277****</td>
<td>7.34045 7.71928****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of observations</td>
<td>149 165</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(R^2)</td>
<td>0.6200 0.6051</td>
<td>0.5293 0.3601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted (R^2)</td>
<td>0.5924 0.5795</td>
<td>0.484 0.3046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation of residuals</td>
<td>0.2625 0.2313</td>
<td>0.2625 0.2313</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) An instrumental variable estimating percentage in poverty is used in the two-stage least squares regressions.

* Significant within the 20% intervals. ** Significant within the 15% intervals. *** Significant within the 10% intervals. **** Significant within the 5% intervals.
fiscal effort seemed to help cities to receive more funds. However, neither one of these variables were significant in the first period.

NONREDISTRIBUTIVE EXPENDITURES

Regular ordinary least squares (OLS) technique can be employed for nonredistributive expenditures given the lack of endogeneity problems associated with the allocation procedure. Hence, in this case, actual poverty is used, and all race and ethnicity variables can be included in the model. The regression results are also reported in Table 3.

Overall, the model has less explanatory power than the model of redistributive expenditure. In both periods, nonredistributive funding appeared related to institutional strength, fiscal health, and the proportion of the population older than age 65. The latter is not surprising given that a large share of nonredistributive funds include retirement expenditures (i.e., 32% in 1983-1985 and 46% in 1994-1996).

Being an older city and having an independent charter were significantly and positively related to per capita nonredistributive expenditure, suggesting that cities with stronger institutions and greater experience at dealing with upper levels of government have a better chance at receiving federal funds for general purposes.

The fact that cities with higher per capita other revenues capacity received more funds on average indicates that the federal government favors cities with a greater ability to raise funds through property and sales taxes, or other intergovernmental aid, and fails to help cities with the most urgent needs for infrastructure and employment creation. In the first period, discretionary local fiscal capacity had a small negative impact on nonredistributive funds allocation, suggesting that cities with lower local fiscal resources, but nevertheless higher other revenues, were able to attract more funds. The fact that wealthier cities benefit from higher expenditures likely is an indirect effect, reflecting a higher level of activity among wealthier cities (and thus their application for matching funds) as well as higher administrative and political capacity.

Moreover, the amount of nonredistributive expenditures is negatively—although not significantly—related to poverty, giving further support to the argument that nonredistributive expenditures are allocated in a regressive manner. The regressions also suggest that cities with faster population growth in the 1990s received smaller per capita average expenditure than slower growing cities.

The low $R^2$ obtained for these last regressions suggests that other idiosyncratic variables such as administrative and political factors, number of
projects proposed and approved, and other forces not captured in the data available here influence the allocation of nonredistributive expenditures. Nevertheless, the data available indicate that general federal expenditures target cities with higher institutional and fiscal strength and, as such, will tend to reinforce preexisting patterns of inequality.

**METROPOLITAN FISCAL DISPARITIES**

The extent to which federal funds target poor communities has become an urgent issue because of rising income disparity and concentrated poverty in the region combined with decreasing federal responsibility for social welfare at the local level. Without federal expenditures, poorer cities may find it difficult to fight poverty and continue to provide other public services to residents.

We find that although disadvantaged cities enjoy higher levels of anti-poverty expenditures, on a poor person basis, they receive lower levels of spending. Moreover, they tend to get lower levels of other types of federal spending. The latter represents more than 80% of total expenditures in the region and plays a crucial role in providing services such as infrastructure, transportation, and employment opportunities that promote economic development. To the extent that poorer cities receive less than healthier cities, a downward spiral of increasing inequality and poverty is likely to result.

Analyses of CFFR data reveal that per capita federal spending in the region has decreased between 1983 and 1996. Redistributive federal expenditures have increased during this period, although they continue to represent less than a fifth of overall spending and disproportionately target poor people in wealthier cities. The general decline in spending is mostly explained by the drastic cuts in defense and military spending. Important variations are also found in the region across cities and counties.

Regression analyses suggest that the variations in levels of redistributive and nonredistributive federal expenditures are linked to several important factors. First, although redistributive expenditures are positively related to city-level poverty, nonredistributive funds are inversely but weakly correlated with poverty. Second, the age and institutional strength of cities are positively linked to their ability to attract either type of federal expenditures. Third, cities with higher discretionary local fiscal capacity typically receive higher levels of redistributive expenditures but lower levels of nonredistributive expenditures. In contrast, those with a higher capacity to raise other revenues receive fewer redistributive funds but more nonredistributive funds.
Taken as a whole, federal expenditures do not equalize fiscal capacity across cities, counties, or poverty quintiles. Rather, federal expenditures seem to exacerbate urban fiscal disparities. Under such circumstances, federal expenditures may alleviate some of the direct cost associated with poverty through redistributive expenditures, but they fail to give cities equal chances to compete in the provision of other public services by disproportionately allocating nonredistributive funds to fiscally healthier cities. To the extent that federal anti-poverty programs are insufficient to eliminate poverty (Pack 1998), cities are faced with the residual cost associated with poverty and consequently may be forced to cut the funds they can allocate to other programs and to building their administrative capacity. The regressive effects of federal spending imply that poorer cities are systematically disadvantaged in attempts to finance infrastructure projects and create jobs for local residents.

To reduce metropolitan inequality and poverty, federal fiscal policies would need to take into account the fiscal capacity of local government in their allocation processes. It is important to note, however, that such an approach raises trade-offs between efficiency and equity. The programs that disproportionately favor wealthier cities tend to be related to infrastructure procurement and contracts. It could be inefficient to shift these programs to poorer cities to the extent that such cities may not benefit from these types of infrastructure improvements. Moreover, it would be cost-ineffective to use categorical grants to reduce fiscal disparities. This is because a poorer city would likely prefer a smaller grant that was not earmarked rather than a somewhat larger categorical grant. Hence, our results suggest that there is a need for state- or federal-level fiscal equalization policy to alleviate local fiscal disparities through targeted general-purpose aid.

NOTES

1. Buchanan (1950) rejected the need to equalize fiscal capacity to enable jurisdictions of unequal resources to finance services at the same tax rates, arguing that this was actually a vertical equity consideration. Rather, he argued that “equal treatment of equals” would require that all individuals of a particular income level receive the same net benefit (welfare gains minus costs). This distinction has proven impossible to put into practice (Mieszkowski and Musgrave 1999). Moreover, this study is premised on a normative concern with vertical as well as horizontal equity.

2. The urban Consumer Price Index (CPI) series for the Los Angeles metropolitan area were used to compute real figures.

3. Loans and insurance programs were dropped because they do not represent direct payments to localities.
4. For example, undistributed expenditures include food stamps, medical assistance, and other important poverty-related programs as well as retirement programs.

5. The percentage of concordant pairs for the logistic regression estimating the likelihood of receiving retirement funds, based on whether a person was age 65 or older, was 84.6% (87.5% for Medicare and 78.6% for Social Security). The Sommers’s D was 0.823.

6. Redistribution or anti-poverty categories include a wide range of programs such as food stamps, school lunch, medical assistance, scholarship for low-income students, and job training. On average, only 20% to 25% of expenditures are allocated directly to cities. The remaining 75% or 80% need to be allocated using an estimation procedure.

7. Poverty-related transfers include Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), food stamps, medical assistance, energy assistance, housing assistance, and school lunches. Because the official poverty level is very low, many people who qualify for government assistance are not officially considered poor. Raising the poverty level to 150% of the official threshold allows us to capture better that share of the population. Moreover, age and gender variables permit us to target the recipient population better given the fact that women, children, and elderly people are more likely to receive aid than other groups.

8. When using the Summers (1999) method, only 51.1% of pairs were concordant.

9. This assumes that the predictors of receiving federally funded assistance (i.e., poverty, age, and gender) are the same in each city as they are for the region as a whole. We also allocated the share of redistributive funds going to the unincorporated areas of the county.

10. A potential problem arises from the fact that some expenditures may benefit several jurisdictions but are geographically allocated based on the contractor’s business address. This is sometimes true of highway expenditures. However, because the data do not list each project separately, we were unable to remedy this problem.

11. The passage of Proposition 13 in 1978 dramatically restricted the ability of local government throughout the state of California to obtain revenues from property taxes. It effectively limited local property taxes to 1% and capped the allowable growth in assessed value.

12. Enterprise revenues from the production of electricity are excluded because they are highly concentrated in a few cities and would risk distorting the results.

13. Between 1994 and 1996, several Orange County cities (i.e., Huntington Beach, Fountain Valley, and Santa Ana) received very large amounts of federal money for flood control.

14. Between 1994 and 1996, El Segundo received more than $30,000 per capita in defense-related contracts per year.

15. Cities were ranked according to their proportion of people in the household with income below 150% of the official poverty threshold. The 150% cutoff is used to measure poverty throughout this study.

16. Among Southern California cities, poverty is positively correlated to per capita anti-poverty federal spending (i.e., 0.66 for 1994-1996 and 0.58 in 1983-1985) but is only weakly and negatively linked to other or nonredistributive federal expenditure (−0.15 in 1994-1996 and −0.10 in 1983-1984), suggesting that poorer cities may get fewer funds.

17. This may be partially explained by the fact that in Southern California, poor cities are typically characterized by a large proportion of immigrants who are not eligible for all types of public assistance programs. Consequently, federal expenditures are likely to be lower in cities where immigrants are overrepresented.

18. The coefficient of variation measures the standard deviation as a percentage of the value of the sample mean. The sample mean of discretionary local fiscal capacity was $503 in 1982 and $827.50 in 1997, and the standard deviation was $277.50 in 1982 and $560.66 in 1997. The total figures—based on total fiscal capacity and total federal expenditures—produced sample
means of $6,840 in 1982 and $7,312.50 in 1997 and standard deviations of $12,670 and $19,071 for each period, respectively.

19. Southern California cities’ poverty rates are found to be positively correlated with their proportion of Latinos (0.77), immigrants (0.56), and African-Americans (0.27) and negatively correlated with their share of whites (–0.72) and Asians (–0.23).

20. It would appear that this instrument is an appropriate control for endogeneity given the low correlation between the residuals from each stage.

21. The proportions of African-Americans and Latinos, which we used to construct the poverty instrumental variable, were excluded from the regression to avoid multicollinearity. However, given the large positive coefficient associated with poverty, we could expect a positive relationship between redistributive expenditures and the share of these two groups in city population.

REFERENCES


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COLLABORATING TO REDUCE POVERTY
Views from City Halls and Community-Based Organizations

MICHAEL J. RICH
MICHEAL W. GILES
Emory University
EMILY STERN
National League of Cities

The authors report on the findings of a national survey of city officials and executive directors of nonprofit organizations that was conducted by the National League of Cities in 1998 to gain a better understanding of the ways in which community-based organizations (CBOs) and city governments are working together to reduce poverty and revitalize neighborhoods. The findings are mixed. Although collaboration between city governments and CBOs is fairly widespread, in most communities, the “thin” version of collaboration reported may not produce the beneficial outcomes suggested by some proponents of collaboration. Although both city and CBO officials acknowledge the importance and value of collaborative approaches to reducing poverty and revitalizing neighborhoods, investments in capacity building and community-based strategic planning may be needed before the benefits of collaboration can be fully realized in most communities.

Although city governments and community-based organizations (CBOs) have been engaged in poverty reduction efforts for several decades (Halpern 1995), the past few years have witnessed an unprecedented growth in collaborative efforts between city halls and community organizations to reduce poverty and/or revitalize neighborhoods. As summarized by one recent report, a new generation of urban revitalization initiatives has emerged in hundreds of cities across the country (Sharp and Beaudry 1994). These initiatives are characterized by a new language (e.g., collaboration, empowerment, community building) and a new sense of optimism that the intractable problems of poverty and neighborhood decline can be overcome.
A recent report by the Committee for Economic Development (CED 1995) strongly endorsed this approach to revitalization. According to the CED,

Community-based successes offer new hope that the complex problems of the inner cities can be solved. *Something is working.* . . . *Community groups offer indispensable institutional and human resources, a knowledge of neighborhoods and their problems, and the trust and participation of residents. Outside institutions* [government, business] possess financial resources, technical knowledge and skills, and political power. *Partnerships* between these two complementary sources of strength represent the nation’s best hope for revitalizing inner-city communities. (P. 1)

This new, collaborative approach to poverty reduction and neighborhood revitalization in many U.S. cities is due in part to three intersecting streams of activity: (1) comprehensive community initiatives launched by national and local foundations, local governments, and, in some instances, residents themselves (Brown 1996; Kingsley, McNeely, and Gibson 1997; Stone 1996; Chaskin and Garg 1997; Medoff and Sklar 1994); (2) efforts to broaden and expand the work of community development corporations to also include human services, community-based strategic planning, and neighborhood mobilization (Vidal 1992; Dreier 1996; Briggs and Mueller 1997; Gittell and Vidal 1998; Walker and Weinheimer 1998); and (3) new federal government initiatives such as empowerment zones and enterprise communities, Healthy Start, Operation Weed and Seed, and school-to-work programs, which emphasize partnerships, collaborations, and community building (U.S. Department of Justice 1995).

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the ways in which community organizations and city governments are working together to reduce poverty and revitalize neighborhoods, the breadth and depth of those working relationships, the factors that contribute to effective collaborations as well as those that impose barriers, and the strategies communities are using to foster more effective collaborations. The analysis is based on a national survey of city and CBO officials in cities with populations of 50,000 or more that was conducted in 1998 by the National League of Cities. While city-CBO relationships have been examined in specific issue areas such as housing and homelessness (e.g., Mayer 1984), this is the first national survey to cover a broad range of substantive areas. In light of recent efforts and incentives to adopt collaborative approaches, it is important to better understand the current state of city-CBO relationships, the extent of collaborative relationships between these sectors, and the possible barriers to further
movement toward collaborative approaches to poverty reduction and neighborhood revitalization.

THE SURVEY

A mail survey was conducted in summer 1998 under the auspices of the City Halls and Community Organizations project of the National League of Cities. The survey was sent to all mayors of cities with a 1990 population of 50,000 or greater. Mayors were asked to direct the survey to the most appropriate city official. A substantial majority of city officials completing the survey were department directors followed by deputy mayors and managers. The department affiliations most frequently noted by city respondents were planning, community development, and social services.

The CBO mailing list was derived from the membership lists of four national associations of community-based organizations: the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAH), the National Congress for Community Economic Development (NCCED), the National Association of Community Action Agencies (NACAA), and the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN). The CBO survey instrument was sent to the executive directors of a random sample of nonprofit organizations included on the membership lists of these four organizations in cities with populations of 50,000 or greater.

A total of 2,110 surveys were sent to the mayors in 555 cities and to the executive directors of 1,555 CBOs located in those same cities. A total of 788 responses were received, resulting in an overall response rate of 37%. The response rate for city government officials was 39%, and the response rate for CBO officials was 34%. Responses were received from either a city official or a CBO executive in 368 cities (65%).

When compared in terms of region, population size, form of city government, percentage nonwhite population, and percentage of the population in poverty, both the city returns and the CBO returns reflected very well the composition of the populations from which they were drawn (see the appendix). For most of these characteristics, there was a difference of no more than a couple of percentage points between the sample and the overall population. For the city officials, there was a slightly lower proportion of returns from northeastern cities and a somewhat larger proportion of returns from cities in the West. A similar pattern held for the CBO sample, although the differences between the population and sample were less than was the case for the city officials group.
Although the survey returns yielded samples that very closely matched the populations from which they were drawn, it is important to point out that the two groups of respondents represent very different populations. For instance, more than half of the city respondents (59%) were from cities with populations between 50,000 and 100,000. On the other hand, only about one in four of the CBO respondents (28%) were from cities with populations between 50,000 and 100,000. CBO respondents were also much more likely than city respondents to come from cities with relatively large nonwhite populations and high poverty rates. These sample differences reflect differences in the distribution of the populations from which they are drawn. Community-based organizations, or at least CBOs affiliated with the national organizations employed to develop the sample, are simply more numerous in larger cities with higher nonwhite and lower-income populations. Because of these differences in the samples, the following analyses focus only on respondents from the 105 cities with both city and CBO respondents in the samples. The results of the analyses using this subsample are consistent with those derived using the full sample of respondents.1

FINDINGS

THE CURRENT STATE OF CITY-CBO RELATIONS

A primary purpose of the survey was to assess the variety of ways in which city governments and CBOs are working together to reduce poverty and revitalize neighborhoods and to assess the factors that facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of that interaction. To assess the state of current city-CBO relations, we asked respondents to characterize the “typical” city government–CBO relationship around poverty reduction and/or neighborhood revitalization issues in their city.2 Possible responses included “do not work together on these issues,” “work on separate activities with limited interaction,” “work together on an irregular or ad hoc basis on these issues,” “work together regularly and consistently on these issues,” and “take collective action and share power in dealing with these issues.”

Collaboration is a complex and multifaceted construct (Gray 1989; Chrislip and Larson 1994), and we acknowledge that the single item employed in our survey instrument does not fully operationalize the concept of collaboration. However, the survey instrument does allow respondents to categorize city-CBO relationships across a wide range of engagement and interaction. Moreover, the ideas of regularity, consistency, and power sharing in city-CBO relationships embodied in the final two responses to the question are necessary, if not sufficient, requirements for
the existence of collaboration. In the discussions that follow, we treat responses in these latter two categories as indicating the presence of “collaborative” city-CBO relationships while recognizing that others might reasonably require additional criteria be met before assigning that label.

The responses summarized in Table 1 reveal a mixed picture regarding the current state of relations between city governments and CBOs. Although relatively few of the respondents characterized the typical city-CBO relationship in the highest category (“take collective action and share power”), almost half (49%) indicated that city governments and CBOs typically work together regularly and consistently on poverty and neighborhood revitalization issues. A substantial minority (43%) of the respondents assessed city-CBO relationships as irregular, ad hoc, or more limited.

Assessments of the state of city-CBO relationships varied considerably depending on who was responding. City officials generally offered a more positive impression of city-CBO interactions than their CBO counterparts. A substantial majority of city respondents (73%) characterized typical city-CBO relationships in the two most positive categories. In contrast, only 49% of the CBO respondents characterized typical city-CBO relations in their community in collaborative terms.

The state of city-CBO relationships on initiatives concerning poverty and neighborhood revitalization may simply be a reflection of city characteristics. For example, larger cities with their greater administrative hierarchy may find it more difficult to adopt power-sharing arrangements with community organizations. Likewise, cities with larger minority and poverty

### TABLE 1: Assessment of Typical City-CBO Relationship by Type of Respondent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Description</th>
<th>Total %</th>
<th>City %</th>
<th>CBO %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not work together on these issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work on separate activities with limited interaction</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work together on an irregular or ad hoc basis on these issues</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work together regularly and consistently on these issues</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take collective action and share power in dealing with these issues</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total percentage</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: CBO = community-based organization.
populations may have a more difficult environment in which to work. Having a greater number of communities in need of revitalization may make it more difficult for city governments to meet the expectations of community-based organizations for programmatic coordination and power sharing. In the simplest terms, such cities have more CBOs vying for the attention of city government.

This interplay between city demographic conditions and respondent assessments of the working relationship between city government and CBOs is examined more closely in Table 2. The patterns reported are consistent with expectations. Respondents from larger cities, cities with nonwhite populations above the national median, and cities with poverty populations above the national median are less likely to view city-CBO relationships positively. However, these differences are not of sufficient magnitude to attain statistical significance.3

### COLLABORATION BY PROGRAM AREA

The overall assessments of city-CBO relations reported in the previous section may obscure variation across specific issue areas. To address this possibility, respondents were asked to indicate the typical level of city-CBO interaction in a variety of program areas. For simplicity in presentation, only the percentage of respondents characterizing city-CBO relationships in the issue area as collaborative (i.e., “work together regularly and consistently” or “take collective action and share power”) are reported. In addition, only city

---

**TABLE 2: Percentage Collaborative Responses by City Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% Collaborative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000 to 99,999</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,000 to 249,999</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250,000+</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% nonwhite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below national median</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above national median</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% below poverty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below national median</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above national median</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Differences in percentage collaborative among categories are not statistically significant at .05.
and CBO respondents who reported their organizations were working in a program area are included in this analysis.

As Table 3 shows, assessment of city-CBO relationships varies considerably across the program areas and by type of respondent. City officials, once again, are more positive than their CBO counterparts in the characterization of the state of collaboration across program areas. On average, across the 14 program areas, 52% of the city respondents but only 29% of the CBO respondents characterize city-CBO relations as collaborative. For both city and CBO respondents, these assessments are considerably lower than in Table 1, where the focus was on the state of the “typical” city-CBO interaction. Although the two sets of respondents differ in their degree of perceived collaboration, the pattern of assessment across the various program areas is strongly correlated ($r = .84$). In other words, city and CBO respondents tend to rate the same program areas as high or low in collaboration.4

The patterns of collaboration across substantive policy areas shown in Table 3 tend to map closely the activities of city governments and CBOs.

### Table 3: Percentage Reporting Collaborative Responses by Program Area and Type of Respondent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Area</th>
<th>% of Respondents Working in Areaa</th>
<th>% Collaborativea</th>
<th>City %</th>
<th>CBO %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affordable housing</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public safety</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless assistance</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior services</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood improvements</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth development</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community organizing/advocacy</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family support</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment and training</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: CBO = community-based organization.

a. The denominator of the percentage, total respondents in the category, varied between 88 and 104 for city respondents and 136 and 229 for CBO respondents.

b. All city-CBO differences in percentage collaborative respondents are significant at least at .05 except health care and adult education.
Evidence of higher levels of collaboration seems to be greatest in those program areas where city governments and CBOs have some degree of responsibility—either directly or indirectly through participation in federal grant-in-aid programs (e.g., affordable housing, homeless assistance, public safety). On the other hand, the data suggest lower levels of collaboration in program areas where city governments and/or CBOs have not traditionally played a prominent role in service delivery or have been major recipients of federal aid programs (e.g., adult education, transportation, health care, child care, family support), a finding that may portend major obstacles to achieving a more collaborative approach to welfare reform and workforce development in some cities.

**COLLABORATION BY PROGRAM PHASE**

City-CBO relations may vary not only across program areas but also by when collaboration occurs. For example, some collaborative 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. Other forms of collaborative relationships between city government and CBOs may extend deeper into the life cycle of public programs and involve joint/shared participation in funding, implementation, and/or evaluation.

The extent of collaboration across program phases was assessed by asking respondents to indicate the level of city-CBO interaction for each phase of a typical initiative. Table 4 reports the proportions of respondents characterizing city-CBO relations in the two most collaborative terms (“work together regularly and consistently” or “take collective action and share power”) for the eight phases of program development included in the survey.

The extent of perceived collaboration varies considerably across the phases of initiatives. Collaboration is judged to be highest in the early phases of a project such as identifying community needs, developing the project concept, and including key stakeholders. The exception to this pattern is “developing the project plan and budget,” which had relatively low levels of perceived collaboration. Assessments of collaboration were lower for the ongoing aspects of a typical initiative such as implementation, project management, and evaluation. Once more, city respondents, on average, were more likely than CBO respondents to characterize city-CBO relations as collaborative. Similar to the pattern reported for collaboration by program areas, city and CBO respondents’ assessments of the degree of collaboration by program phases also were strongly correlated ($r = .85$). Thus, although city and CBO officials differed in their estimates of the levels of collaboration by
program phase, they tended to agree on which phases are characterized by more collaboration and which by less.

As a follow-up, both sets of respondents were asked to indicate the phase of an initiative that was most essential to achieving effective collaboration. Although they differ somewhat in rank order, the top four choices for both city and CBO respondents were the same: identifying community needs (49% city, 47% CBO), inclusion of key stakeholders (42% city, 28% CBO), developing project/program concept (28% city, 26% CBO), and identifying and securing funding (20% city, 39% CBO). Thus, not only do both city and CBO respondents perceive greater collaboration in the earlier phases of an initiative than in the later but both sets of respondents also view the earlier phases as more crucial to successful collaboration.

**BENEFITS AND BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION**

Why should city governments and CBOs work together to reduce poverty and revitalize neighborhoods? Proponents of collaboration frequently point out that “collaboration changes the way we work” and note such positive attributes as building consensus, promoting diversity and inclusiveness, taking a strategic as opposed to a programmatic approach to problem solving, and emphasizing long-term as opposed to short-term accomplishments (Winer and Ray 1997; Gray 1989).
We asked city government and CBO officials to indicate what types of benefits were typically achieved in their communities as a result of their current collaborations. Table 5 summarizes these results by the type of respondent for a variety of benefits that are frequently assumed to result from collaborative initiatives. Once again, city respondents were much more positive than CBO respondents in their assessment of the benefits of current collaborations. Overall, the percentage of respondents reporting that a specific benefit had been achieved averaged 83% for city respondents, compared with 57% for their CBO counterparts. The average difference between the two sets of respondents is 26 percentage points.

Although differing in perceptions of the degree to which the benefits were accomplished, the assessments of whether various benefits were achieved were significantly correlated ($r = .56$). Even so, there is considerable difference of opinion between city and CBO respondents on a few benefits. Nine out of 10 city respondents believe that their current collaborations provide CBOs access to city technical resources, but only 50% of CBO respondents see that benefit accruing from current collaborations—a 40 percentage point difference. A discrepancy of similar magnitude occurs with regard to the benefits of “fosters connections across city departments” and “creates a forum to address competing views and priorities.”

A follow-up question asked respondents to identify the three most important benefits of collaboration. Four of the five most frequently cited benefits were the same for city and CBO respondents: “activities are better aligned with community priorities” (city 46%, CBO 33%), “larger pool of funding is available” (city 26%, CBO 42%), “activities are more comprehensive” (city 23%, CBO 17%), and “activities are more effective at achieving goals” (city 24%, CBO 20%). City respondents included “involves residents in planning and implementation” (city 27%, CBO 13%) among their top five benefits, whereas CBOs included “city gains better understanding of community needs” (city 19%, CBO 24%). By and large, the benefits of city-CBO collaborations identified by respondents as most important are also perceived as accruing from current collaborations by more than 80% of city and 60% of CBO respondents (see Table 5). The one major exception is “larger pool of funding is available,” which two-thirds of city respondents but a bare majority of CBO respondents perceive as flowing from current city-CBO collaborations.

Although there is considerable agreement between city and CBO respondents concerning the important benefits of city-CBO collaboration, there is far less agreement between the two groups concerning the greatest barriers to effective collaboration. The factors cited most frequently by city officials as discouraging effective collaboration are the following: “CBOs do not
provide adequate resources/funding” (30%), “city does not provide adequate resources/funding” (25%), “CBOs do not understand citywide needs” (16%), “CBOs do not have efficient administration” (19%), and “city government and CBOs do not trust and respect each other” (17%). The factors cited most frequently by CBO respondents are as follows: “city does not provide adequate resources/funding” (31%), “city government exhibits an excessive need for control” (21%), “city government is overly bureaucratic” (18%), “local political environment does not support poverty reduction efforts” (18%), “city government and CBOs do not communicate effectively with each other” (16%), and “city government and CBOs do not trust and respect each other” (16%). Apart from identifying inadequate city funding and lack of trust as important barriers to effective city-CBO collaboration, there is little else that city and CBO respondents agree on with regard to important

### TABLE 5: Percentage of Respondents Identifying a Benefit of Collaboration by Type of Respondent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Type of Respondent²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City gains better understanding of community needs</td>
<td>City 95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners gain better understanding of each other’s capacity</td>
<td>CBO 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities are better aligned with community priorities</td>
<td>City 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthens other partnerships within the community</td>
<td>CBO 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities are more effective at achieving goals</td>
<td>City 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities are more comprehensive</td>
<td>CBO 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates an atmosphere of mutual trust</td>
<td>City 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates a forum to address competing views and priorities</td>
<td>CBO 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involves residents in planning and implementation</td>
<td>City 89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds appreciation for efforts of city hall and CBOs</td>
<td>CBO 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fosters connections with other groups</td>
<td>City 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large-scale activities can be undertaken</td>
<td>CBO 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOs gain access to city’s technical resources</td>
<td>City 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger pool of funding is available</td>
<td>CBO 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes leadership development</td>
<td>City 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fosters connections across city departments</td>
<td>CBO 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility and accountability are shared</td>
<td>City 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates a forum to address racial and class biases</td>
<td>CBO 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involves residents in planning and implementation</td>
<td>City 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds appreciation for efforts of city hall and CBOs</td>
<td>CBO 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fosters connections across city departments</td>
<td>City 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes leadership development</td>
<td>CBO 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involves residents in planning and implementation</td>
<td>City 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creates a forum to address racial and class biases</td>
<td>CBO 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involves residents in planning and implementation</td>
<td>City 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds appreciation for efforts of city hall and CBOs</td>
<td>CBO 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fosters connections across city departments</td>
<td>City 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders and program staff gain appreciation</td>
<td>CBO 57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: CBO = community-based organization.

a. The denominator of the percentage, total respondents in the category, varied between 101 and 105 for city respondents and 215 and 221 for CBO respondents.
b. All city-CBO differences are significant at least at .05, except larger scale activities can be undertaken.
barriers. CBO respondents point to city government and the local political environment as the primary obstacles to effective collaboration to reduce poverty and revitalize communities. For CBO respondents, an overly bureaucratic city government that does not want to release control is the major obstacle to effective collaboration. The city respondents, on the other hand, see CBOs with limited resources, poor administration, and parochial interests as the major stumbling block. A lack of mutual trust and poor communication reflect and reinforce these views of one another.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION

As the preceding discussion of barriers makes clear, effective collaboration between city governments and community-based organizations does not occur spontaneously—it requires concerted effort and commitment on the part of both partners. The survey asked city and CBO respondents to identify some of the strategies they have used in their collaborations and to indicate how valuable certain strategies could be in making their collaboration more effective.9

Using city government funding or incentives for community-based activities was the most frequently employed collaboration strategy and one of the strategies perceived to be most valuable (see Table 6). Nevertheless, the city and CBO responses reflect different perceptions of how often city funding and incentives are used. Of city officials, 82% said their local government makes funding or incentives available for collaborative community-based activities, whereas only 63% of CBO respondents reported that they initiate these types of activities using city government funding or incentives. Various approaches to open channels of communication between partners (e.g., “developing a forum for increased communication,” “creating a CBO consortium,” and “sharing/exchanging ideas on best practices”) are frequently employed and perceived as valuable.

Perhaps the most interesting finding in this area involves the adoption of a comprehensive and strategic approach to poverty reduction, an approach that many advocates of collaborative problem solving have encouraged. For example, the empowerment zone/enterprise community initiative based its designation of zone communities in part on the quality of the community-based strategic plan developed by multiple stakeholders (e.g., government, community, private sector, etc.). Fifty-six percent of the city and slightly less than half of the CBO respondents indicated that they have actually employed a comprehensive and strategic approach to poverty reduction and/or neighborhood revitalization. However, approximately 70% of both groups view this strategy as very valuable in creating successful collaborations.
TABLE 6: Strategies Used to Bring About More Effective Collaborations and Their Perceived Value by Type of Respondent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>City Employing</th>
<th>City Responding</th>
<th>CBO Employing</th>
<th>CBO Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Very Valuable</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating community-based activities using city government funding/incentives</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>63*</td>
<td>57*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using advocacy efforts to raise public awareness of issues and needs</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>56*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a forum for increased communication between city government and CBOs</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>51*</td>
<td>58*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a CBO consortium or network to work with city government</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing/exchanging ideas on best practices for successful partnerships</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopting a comprehensive and strategic approach to poverty reduction or community revitalization involving multiple partners and program areas</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating targeted outreach to private-sector partners with city and CBOs</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>39*</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a spin-off organization to implement joint projects</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing in a third-party intermediary to help develop collaboration</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of respondents*</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>219</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: CBO = community-based organization.

a. Because respondents only rated the value of strategies that they employed, the number of respondents potentially varies across the strategies. For this set of respondents, the actual number was never more than one or two less than that shown in the table.

* City-CBO difference significant at least at .05.

DISCUSSION

Collaboration has become a watchword in city-CBO relationships. Academic observers, private foundations, national policy organizations, and federal government programs have increasingly advocated and provided incentives to foster collaborative interactions between city governments and
community-based organizations. The present study has reported the results of a survey on the current status of city-CBO relationships and prospects for increased collaboration in the future. The findings are mixed.

The barriers to collaboration identified in the survey response are substantial and deeply embedded. City respondents see the major hindrances to collaboration arising from characteristics/traits of the CBOs, and CBO respondents see the major barriers arising from shortcomings of city administrators. Moreover, the identified barriers reflect characteristics that serve the particular organizations well while working against collaboration. For example, the failure of CBOs to see the citywide picture that city respondents see as a barrier to collaboration reflects the very nature of CBOs, their linkage to the local community. Likewise, city government’s bureaucratic decision structures and assertion of control that CBO officials see as barriers to collaboration are responses by city governments and officials to real organizational needs for structuring authority and maintaining accountability. Poor communications and lack of trust, which are identified as barriers by both sets of respondents, in part reflect the difficulties of bridging this organizational divide. Developing trust is exceptionally difficult when it requires relaxing or deviating from strategies and approaches that have served organizations well in the past.

The positive finding of the survey is that despite these apparently fundamental barriers, a large amount of city-CBO collaboration is occurring. The percentage of respondents reporting collaborative city-CBO relationships varies across program areas and by the type of respondent, but on balance the results indicate that a large percentage of cities and CBOs are working together regularly. In addition, the respondents see these collaborations as yielding substantial benefits—city governments have a better understanding of community issues and are able to design and implement programs that better fit community needs. These are benefits anticipated by proponents of collaboration. Moreover, regardless of whether they had used the strategy, a substantial majority of both city (72%) and CBO (70%) respondents reported that the adoption of a comprehensive and strategic approach to poverty reduction or community revitalization involving multiple partners and program areas is a very valuable strategy for fostering more effective collaborations. Although we have no earlier survey against which to compare these responses, it would seem that the efforts and incentives to promote collaboration between cities and CBOs have enjoyed notable success.

Although the survey reveals substantial evidence of city governments and CBOs working together regularly, and both sets of respondents responded favorably to questions about city-CBO “collaborations,” the identified relationships seem best characterized as a “thin” version of collaboration.
Scholars define *collaboration* to require but not be limited to city government and CBOs working together on a regular and consistent basis. Academic definitions and associated discussions of collaboration typically include a power-sharing relationship between partners. For example, Gray (1989, 5) defined collaboration as “a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible.” Similarly, Chrislip and Larson (1994, 5) argued that

collaboration [is] . . . more than simply sharing knowledge and information (communications) and more than a relationship that helps each party achieve its own goals (cooperation and coordination). The purpose is to create a shared vision and joint strategies to address concerns that go beyond the purview of any particular party.

The results of this survey indicate that city governments and CBOs are working together, and a larger number are working together on a regular and consistent basis. However, relatively few of the respondents—either in response to questions regarding “typical” city-CBO interactions or to questions focused on city-CBO interactions in specific program areas—describe those relations in terms of cities and CBOs sharing power. Moreover, when the focus turns to city-CBO interactions at the various phases of initiatives, the most positive assessments appear to be in the early formative stages of initiatives. This is consistent with respondents’ perceptions of the benefits of collaborating. The responses to these questions cluster around better awareness of community needs and shaping of program initiatives to reflect community priorities. Both sets of respondents see greater city-CBO collaboration early in the initiative process, and both tend to see the benefits of collaboration in those phases. Involvement in implementation, ongoing project management, and joint accountability for outcomes (e.g., monitoring/evaluation) are not only less likely to occur, but city and even CBO respondents see these issues as less central to city-CBO relations.

Although the fact that a large percentage of cities are working regularly and consistently with CBOs to engage the communities in needs assessments, and initial project design is a very positive finding, this thin version of collaboration may not produce the beneficial outcomes suggested by some proponents of collaboration. For example, as Chrislip and Larson (1994, 13) noted, when collaboration is successful, the benefits often affect the entire community:

When collaboration succeeds, new networks and norms for civic engagement are established and the primary focus of work shifts from parochial interests to
the broader concerns of the community. Collaboration... not only achieves results in addressing... substantive issues... it also builds “civic community.”

The fundamental reordering of city-CBO relations anticipated in such descriptions of collaboration is unlikely to proceed from the thin version of collaboration apparently at work in the minds of most city officials and CBO directors. Of course, the adoption and spread of the thin version of collaboration may be a necessary step to the fuller version envisioned by scholars of organizational dynamics.

The emphasis that both city and CBO respondents place on communication and trust as important to facilitating collaboration is underscored by the overwhelming agreement by both sets of respondents that a comprehensive and strategic approach to poverty reduction and community revitalization is an effective strategy. Many of the private and public initiatives emphasizing collaboration have included comprehensive, strategic planning as a funding prerequisite. This approach brings public, private, and community stakeholders into a neutral setting and strives to obtain consensus concerning problems, strategies for addressing problems, allocation of responsibilities, and monitoring. In sum, this approach flattens the city hierarchy by bringing responsible decision makers directly to the table and offers the potential of minimizing the obstacles of control and “turf” embedded in lower levels of city administration. It also places CBO officials in a decision-making realm where the larger picture of citywide needs comes into focus. The facilitated nature of this process offers the potential for real communication across the city-CBO divide. In short, comprehensive strategic planning has evolved as a process to address most of the barriers to collaboration identified by city and CBO respondents. Their responses to the survey indicate their recognition of that fact.

Strategic planning, however, is not a panacea. As a strategy for advancing collaboration, it has two major challenges. The first involves challenges to its internal success. The participants have to include the major stakeholders, persons with authority (not simple representatives) must be at the table, the various parties must see the process as potentially important and commit to it, and the facilitation must go well. Even if a planning process is successful, the shared understandings, trust, and commitments made by the participants must be exported to the larger community. Implementation in the face of embedded hierarchies and parochial community views is the second challenge to successful strategic planning. For example, a recent assessment of the empowerment zones and enterprise communities initiative noted that as the initiative moved from planning to implementation, the engagement of
community organizations declined sharply (Rockefeller Institute of Government 1996; Gittell et al. 1998).

In closing, the results of the National League of Cities survey indicate that collaborative approaches to persistent poverty and neighborhood revitalization are no longer confined to a handful of cities but have become fairly widespread across cities of all sizes and conditions. Future research is needed to understand more fully the dynamics and determinants of these relationships in individual cities. Although national surveys can aid in identifying the scope and frequency of city-CBO partnerships, case studies and comparative case studies may be a more effective approach for generating knowledge on the factors most strongly associated with successful partnerships and collaborations, particularly those factors that draw city governments and community organizations into more formal arrangements that have the potential for taking collective action and sharing power.
### APPENDIX

Sample Characteristics and Response Rates by Type of Respondent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census region</th>
<th>City Universe</th>
<th>City Sample</th>
<th>CBO Universe</th>
<th>CBO Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northeast</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Midwest</strong></td>
<td>125</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South</strong></td>
<td>142</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>West</strong></td>
<td>175</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Puerto Rico</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population, 1990</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000-99,999</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>59.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>100,000-249,999</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250,000-499,999</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500,000+</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% nonwhite</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below national median</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above national median</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>% poverty</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Below national median</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>44.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Above national median</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>50.7</td>
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NOTE: Because some returns were not able to be matched with their cities, demographic characteristics are not available for all responses. CBO = community-based organization.
NOTES

1. A set of tables comparable to those presented but employing the full sample is available on request from the authors. Many of these tables are also reproduced in Rich, Giles, and Stern (1998).

2. “Thinking about the city as a whole and all the CBOs in it, which of the following BEST CHARACTERIZES typical city government–CBO relationships around poverty reduction and/or neighborhood revitalization issues?”

3. For the full sample, the differences were statistically significant. Moreover, the pattern in the full sample suggests that cities having these characteristics in combination—greater than 250,000 population, above the median in nonwhite population, and above the median in poverty—demonstrate the greatest effects. In these cities, city respondents are far more sanguine about the state of collaboration and CBO respondents far less so than their counterparts in cities with less demanding demographic conditions. Apparently, reducing the sample deleted very negative CBO respondents from the analyses from cities where the city failed to respond to the survey. Of course, we cannot say whether it was the poor state of collaboration that resulted in the failure of a city representative to respond to the survey in these cities.

4. Controlling for demographic conditions did not affect the pattern of results in Table 3. However, in the full sample, the differences between city and CBO respondents were systematically greater in cities with populations above 250,000 and above-average nonwhite and poverty populations. This analysis is available from the authors.

5. We would have preferred to ask respondents about collaboration across initiative phases by program area. However, concerns about the length and complexity of the survey caused us to focus on a more general assessment of the “typical” initiative.

6. “Identify the two phases you feel are MOST ESSENTIAL to achieving effective collaboration between city government and CBOs.”

7. Numbers are the percentage of respondents mentioning the particular phase as essential to effective collaboration.

8. “Regardless of whether you are getting them now or are likely to get them, which three could be the most important benefits of city government–CBO collaboration?”

9. “Please check those strategies the city government [CBO] has used to bring about more effective collaborations with CBOs [city government].” “Regardless of whether you have used the strategy or not, how valuable do you think each is likely to be in fostering more effective collaborations?”

REFERENCES


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THE POWERS THAT BIND
A Case Study of the Collective Bases
of Coalition Building in Post–Civil
Unrest Los Angeles

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Studies on coalition building have neglected the role of historical, cultural, and spatial relationships in shaping the development of interethnic coalitions, particularly between immigrant and native-born minority groups. Based on interviews, participant observation, and archival research on one public space coalition in Koreatown and West Adams, the author argues that (1) the intersection of use and exchange positions among organized segments of both communities provided the interest basis for coalition building, and (2) the competing claims of Koreans around their financial contributions and African-Americans around political and territorial advantages forced each side to negotiate and recognize the benefits of coalescing.

With the passage of the 1965 Harts-Cellars Act, a massive wave of immigrants from Asia and Latin America has begun to settle in inner-city neighborhoods, where declining resources, increasing economic and political competition, high crime rates, and cultural differences have strained relations between native minority residents and incoming immigrants (Chang 1992; Johnson and Oliver 1994; Yoon 1997). In the contemporary period, coalition building among disempowered ethnic minorities is difficult to envision as interest groups become more heterogeneous and polarized by a diversity of interests. Within racial groups themselves, an increasing gap among the poor and the rich has complicated the notion of racial solidarity and, hence, coalition building. Interethnic cooperation has been further complicated by globalization and major political transformations since the 1960s (Chung and
Nevertheless, the concentration of racial minorities in urban areas and the recent outbreak of interethnic hostilities across the United States such as those between Korean merchants and their African-American patrons in inner-city neighborhoods compel us to construct a new theoretical paradigm for understanding coalition building in the present era.

In this study, I examine the ways in which the negotiation of differential collective bases of two racial and ethnic communities may set the conditions for the emergence of a “successful” interethnic coalition in post-civil unrest Los Angeles. Numerous studies have shown how conflicts between African-Americans and Koreans of the 1980s and 1990s partly were shaped by the relative socioeconomic privilege of Korean merchants in low-income minority neighborhoods and the political assertiveness of African-American activists and patrons in protesting perceived injustices committed by the merchants (Light and Bonacich 1988; Min 1996; Yoon 1997). Yoon (1997) argued that disparities between the socioeconomic status of Korean merchants and the political strength of African-American communities also result in contrasting views on power in society.

Although such differential sources of empowerment may cause potential conflict, I argue that in the case of coalition building, they may also allow racial and ethnic groups to provide what the other lacks under the proper conditions. As the empirical focus of this analysis, the following project focuses on the formative stages of one multiracial coalition, the Koreatown and West Adams Public Safety Association (KOWAPSA), as it negotiated the terms for building a community policing substation between the two neighborhoods. In particular, the intersection of use and exchange positions among organized segments of both communities provided the interest basis for coalition building. Moreover, the competing claims of Koreans around their financial contributions and African-Americans around political and territorial advantages forced each side to negotiate and eventually recognize the benefits of coalition building around these two collective bases of empowerment.

THE COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL BASES OF COALITION BUILDING

Much research on interethnic coalition building has been concerned with the dynamics of interest, identity/ideology, and leadership, particularly in the realm of electoral politics (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1990; Sonenshein 1993; Tedin and Murray 1994). In the area of interest, the general consensus has been that coalitions must be grounded in the pragmatic needs and aspirations of the participants as opposed to general, humanistic precepts of
equality. Because it has become more difficult to identify a broad range of issues around which constituents may ally, successful coalitions are expected to focus on specific issues of interest as opposed to general agendas—a quality that renders them temporary and unstable.

Although groups may have mutual interests in a particular issue, they are more likely to mobilize if they are aware of those interests, are able to communicate them, and generally agree on how to achieve those goals. In this sense, conflicts in ideology, strategy, and culture may become a major obstacle in engendering alliances between different racial and ethnic groups. In some cases, commonalities that arise from interaction in shared geographical spaces establish the setting and context within which to initiate the processes of intergroup collaboration (Oliver and Grant 1995). But racial groups that plan to ally with other groups must often undergo an initial process in which they are able to negotiate the terms of the coalition, develop an atmosphere of trust and recognition, and come to an agreement on how to achieve their purposes (Eisinger 1976; Espiritu 1992). Such processes aid in the creation of a coalitional identity and culture.

Finally, leadership is a key component in coalitional literature. An efficient leader may act as a charismatic figure who is able to organize and articulate the needs of the constituency (Morris 1984). Leaders play a crucial role in establishing an environment of trust and shaping the subjective consciousness of their constituents toward coalition building (Sonenshein 1993). Yet particularly in the case of electoral politics, it is crucial that the leaders remain aware of and accountable to the needs and desires of the population they represent, without which their legitimacy, support, resources, and collaborative efforts may be undermined (Eisinger 1976; Watts 1996).

Interest, ideology, and leadership provide the impetus and foundations for forging coalitions among different racial and ethnic groups. Yet many coalitional paradigms continue to conceptualize coalitions within a framework that is most appropriate for the union of *individuals* around these three factors. From this approach, coalition building is oftentimes conceptualized as a mere sum of various parts with little sense to the cultural, historical, and spatial dynamics that may determine the overall outcome of any organization involving two or more racial and ethnic minority groups. What is further lacking in such perspectives is a greater understanding of preexisting collective bases from which many of the more successful coalitions may ultimately harness their greatest power and resources.

In this sense, contemporary social movement theories offer some insight into the role of preexisting social networks, political linkages, leadership, and resources in facilitating collective action. Although few scholars in this tradition have applied this approach to coalition building, their elaboration of
structural linkages and political processes in affecting social movements is most relevant to what occurs in coalitions. In particular, the conventional resource mobilization approach contends that social movements develop from a crisis or historical grievance that underlines the benefits of mobilizing as a collective over the costs of apathy or nonparticipation (Fireman and Gamson 1979; Morris and Mueller 1992; Oberschall 1973). Such activity is substantially affected by the prior existence of organizations and resources, the strategies of leading organizers, the configuration of allies and oppositional parties, and state support or repression, among other things (Fireman and Gamson 1979; Morris and Mueller 1992). However, more recent trends in social movement theory have paid greater attention to the cultural underpinnings of social movement, arguing that the emergence of social movements also relies on micro-level processes, contexts, and meaning (Bernstein 1997; Klandermans 1984). Indeed, culturally rooted ideas, identities, and value systems play a crucial role in orienting individual actors embedded in multiple identities and networks (e.g., race, class, gender, etc.) toward a specific course of action within a specific context (Morris and Mueller 1992).

Yet social movement theory still does not capture the entirety of coalition-building processes. The bases of collective mobilization must be conceptualized in such a way that they take into account the increasing diversity of racial and ethnic groups today. One of the obstacles to creating alliances in the contemporary era is reconciling vast differences in the culture and value systems of different groups, particularly with the introduction of the post-1965 immigration. Generational differences, language barriers, and different cultural ways of thinking are some areas that have divided groups both within and across racial communities. Yet even beyond cultural considerations, the processes of coalition building bring together groups with different historical experiences, modes of adaptation, and relationships to space. As such, I examine how history, culture, and space shape the ways in which Koreans and African-American participants in this study perceive and interpret the world and how these in turn must be negotiated to achieve coalitional goals.

The process requires greater attention to the dynamics of power involved when two or more racial and ethnic groups are brought together in alliance. On one hand, racial groups that engage in coalitional work must have a means to enforce equal representation and access within the organization. Part of this balance is achieved through collective organizational bases, or the group’s ability to organize itself and coherently express its needs on a collective level through organizational solidarity, effective leadership, and preestablished support networks (Morris 1984). Carmichael and Hamilton (1967) were the first to articulate the need for a balanced coalitional party in which
each racial group is organized around its own base of power so that the coalition does not marginalize the needs of participating racial minorities. Organized groups can channel the energy and interest embedded in their independent groups into the coalition, so that cold and rational purpose is conditioned by indirect sentimental attachment. Relative equivalence in the size of each constituency will also affect the direction of the coalition and diminish the dominance of one group over the other (Oliver and Grant 1995). Each group should be able to not only demand equal status within the organization but, more important, also contribute something valuable to its development that cannot be as easily obtained by the other party. Thus, in this article, I examine how differential power bases of racial and ethnic groups must be negotiated along with interest and ideology in coalitions.

At the same time, I hope to provide a more complex understanding of power. For racial minorities, disempowerment has engendered interethnic conflict and a status of invisibility within mainstream society, as demonstrated throughout the conflicts between Koreans and African-Americans and the 1992 Los Angeles civil unrest. By using black-white paradigms that categorize ethnic groups into clear-cut positions of superiority or inferiority, current literature fails to understand the situation of Koreans, who are neither above nor below the overall status of African-Americans in terms of aggregate empowerment (Chang 1992; Yoon 1997). Scholars who use such dichotomous models have pessimistically predicted difficulties in cultivating alliances between African-Americans (or Latinos) with Asian-Americans because of the latter’s generally higher socioeconomic status and supposedly conservative values (Oliver and Grant 1995; Sonenshein 1993). Yet, as will be demonstrated, empowerment encompasses more than access to financial resources.

**RESEARCH METHOD AND SETTING**

The following case study is based on observations and interviews with members of a nonprofit organization called the Koreatown and West Adams Public Safety Association (KOWAPSA). The group was initially established in March 1994 by first-generation Korean immigrants from the Koreatown community, who later incorporated African-American and Anglo residents of the West Adams neighborhood. Its official purpose was to oversee the construction of a community policing substation, which was to be built on the fringes of West Adams. The substation would house a small community safety center in the back of the two-story building so that community members could work with police officers in promoting public safety and crime
prevention programs within the two neighborhoods. KOWAPSA’s second purpose was to facilitate relations among various segments of the community, including community relations with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and race and ethnic relations among the various groups that make up the neighborhood—specifically Koreans, African-Americans, Anglos, and Latinos.

One of the primary purposes of this research is to determine whether the differential disempowerment of ethnic minorities is an area that can be used to the advantage of biracial coalitions, which is best exemplified in relations between the Korean and African-American communities. The core of the organization is mostly composed of first-generation Koreans from Koreatown and African-Americans from West Adams, and for most members, the underlying motive for the organization lies in its historical origins within the conflicts between Koreans and African-Americans and the 1992 civil unrest. However, KOWAPSA was not just a biracial coalition. The organization was also composed of several active Anglo members who were integral to the neighborhood associations that initially facilitated the participation of African-American residents in the coalition. The one Anglo member associated with the Koreatown community was also key in helping the Korean leaders network into other racial and ethnic communities or work with mainstream institutions.

Koreatown is distinguished as the business and cultural mecca of the Korean-American community in Southern California. Although it is better known as an ethnic entrepreneurial economy, the region, which is located west of downtown L.A., is also home to one of the highest concentrations of Koreans and Latinos in the United States. According to the 1990 U.S. census, Latinos constitute more than half the residential populations of both neighborhoods. In Koreatown, Koreans comprise only 19.6% of residents in the area, most of whom are poor, elderly, and recently immigrated. Historically, Koreatown has been the major destination point for incoming Korean immigrants in the United States because of entrepreneurial and labor opportunities, the influx of South Korean capital, and the availability of cultural resources for the unacculturated (Abelmann and Lie 1995; Light and Bonacich 1988). Wielding signs written in Korean, the business and cultural establishments in Koreatown offer a wide variety of goods and services that preserve a lifestyle reminiscent of Seoul. A majority of the Koreans may be associated with business establishments or cultural- and community-based organizations in the area but reside in suburban neighborhoods outside the enclave (Abelmann and Lie 1995).

Adjacent to the expanding borders of Koreatown and north of South Central, the West Adams community is one of the oldest and most ethnically
mixed neighborhoods in Los Angeles County. With the dissolution of the racial covenants in the 1960s, middle-class and upwardly mobile lower-middle-class segments of the African-American community left the traditionally African-American neighborhoods of South Central to establish residency in nearby suburban or middle-class neighborhoods, including West Adams (Grant, Oliver, and James 1996; Sonenshein 1993). In the early 1960s, the neighborhood gave way to urban blight and socioeconomic stagnation with the construction of the Santa Monica Freeway through the center of the community and changes in the economy (“West Adams” 1988). In recent years, the influx of Latinos and Asians has contributed to the diversity of the locality. African-American residents constitute almost one-third of the population (29.3%), but the migration of upwardly mobile African-Americans into outer suburbs has been accompanied by an increase in the average age of the remaining African-American old-timer population (Grant, Oliver, and James 1996). Whites constitute less than 15% of the population in both neighborhoods. The general Koreatown–West Adams area can be characterized as overlapping “biethnic spaces” of Asian/Latino and Asian/African-American populations (Oliver and Grant 1995).

Using open-ended and semistructured interview guides, I conducted 15 initial and follow-up in-depth interviews throughout 1997 with KOWAPSA's executive staff, general board members, and ex-officio affiliates, who were selected through either referrals or their affiliation with the organization. The interview sample includes respondents from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, two police officials, and both new and old members of KOWAPSA. The social background of the participants varied, although the Korean leadership tended to be male and from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, whereas the West Adams constituency was more gender mixed, comprising residents with lower-middle to middle-income status and generally older African-Americans.

The study also draws on field notes from informal conversations with several of the organization’s members and official minutes from general board and executive board meetings extending back to the first gathering in November 1994. I also attended most periodic board meetings, one neighborhood association meeting in Harvard Heights, two KOWAPSA press conferences, and the West Adams Homes Tour, a major annual event showcasing the historic homes of residents. In addition, newspaper clippings, brochures, newsletters, and other organizational material allowed me to become acquainted with KOWAPSA's history, structure, and mission. Insights on the political histories of the Korean and African-American communities are also drawn from two other interview studies that were conducted on relations between
African-Americans and Koreans and the organizational structures of Koreatown.

RIOTS AND REFORM

From April 29 to May 1, 1992, Los Angeles witnessed an outbreak of rioting that led to the loss of more than 50 lives, thousands of arrests, and almost a billion dollars in property damage (Ong and Hee 1993). Initially, the rioting began as a political expression of pent-up frustration and anger by African-Americans against the acquittal of four white LAPD officers who had been charged with a brutal attack on an African-American motorist. However, both the nature and the demographic profile of the uprisings eventually changed as violent political protest gave way to the fulfillment of socio-economic needs, especially by low-income Latino looters (Tierney 1994). In stark contrast to the Watts rebellions of 1965, the Los Angeles civil unrest was distinguished by the multiethnic composition of both its participants and its victims and its most devastating impact on mostly inner-city neighborhoods already in the midst of urban poverty (Baldassare 1994).

Three factors related to the civil unrest set the backdrop for the emergence of KOWAPSA. The first factor involved the traumatic psychological and financial impact the rioting inflicted on an already marginalized, low-income, and multiethnic population. The group that was hit hardest by the riots was Korean merchants, with 1,867 Korean-owned businesses suffering at least an estimated $347 million in property damages and immeasurable psychological and social trauma (Kwong 1992). The second factor concerns grievances with the discriminatory and inefficient practices of the LAPD by both the African-American and Korean-American communities. Continuing its long legacy of discrimination against low-income communities of color, the LAPD concentrated its forces throughout the more affluent neighborhoods of Santa Monica, Westwood, and Beverly Hills during the riots, whereas little was done to counteract the devastation being inflicted on low-income communities of color (Cho 1993). When the National Guard was finally dispatched, South Central had suffered 67% of property damages, Koreatown 10%, and West Adams 5% (Task Committee for Rebuild L.A. 1993). The third factor involves the faulty portrayal of relations between Koreans and African-Americans in the media, which stems back to the 1980s, when interethnic tensions over the proliferation of Korean-owned stores in predominantly African-American neighborhoods first began to surface. Stereotypical depictions of Korean merchants as racist, gun-crazy
exploiters or African-Americans as unethical rabblerousers racialized the nature of the conflict and deepened tensions between the two groups.

It can be argued that the 1992 civil unrest had the greatest impact on the Korean-American community. The “triple scapegoating” by looters, the local government and police, and the media during the civil unrest made the Korean-American community painfully aware of the price of political powerlessness (Cho 1993). Many Korean-Americans in Los Angeles experienced a shift in attitude as they realized that the society on which their livelihoods depend is multiethnic and must be confronted if they are to progress as individuals and as a collectivity.

In the aftermath of the 1992 civil unrest, both Korean entrepreneurs and African-American homeowners adamantly vocalized their deep concerns over inadequate police protection and delayed response time. Both communities’ widespread desire for reform in the LAPD came at an opportune moment when law enforcement agencies were beginning to institute changes in response to the Rodney King trial and the 1992 civil unrest. As early as the 1970s, police administrations in Los Angeles and other cities across the nation had begun to incorporate a series of community-oriented programs into the departmental agenda to improve crime prevention strategies and general relations with the community. However, in Los Angeles, it was not until the wake of the Rodney King beatings that the programs became more institutionalized and strongly supported as a popular solution to the impersonal and abusive legacy of the highly centralized, professional LAPD regime (Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Department 1991). Including such things as increased foot patrol and neighborhood watch programs, community policing refers to the transition in the organizational structure, philosophy, and conduct of the police department in relation to the communities they serve, as well as an effort to empower communities that contribute time, manpower, and resources toward protecting their own neighborhoods (Friedmann 1992).

Even prior to the outbreak of the civil unrest, however, segments of both populations had actively solicited substations and stop-in centers as a means to improve police performance and ensure a more personal and secure milieu within the two urban communities. In the pre-civil unrest era, Korean-American leaders and organizations organized various dinners to improve relations with the LAPD, pressured for greater police visibility, and established their own system of protection through community patrols and storefront substations. Inspired by the Korean community’s efforts, the Western Heights Neighborhood Associations independently proceeded to inquire around the businesses in West Adams and located a couple of potential sites to build their own substation. Yet, despite the high level of political organi-
zation and activism among members of the West Adams community, the meager incomes of residents continued to be a major impediment in the acquisition of the long-sought substation. According to an elderly first-generation member from the Korean senior citizen’s association, the Koreatown leadership encountered its own bureaucratic obstacles in its two-year negotiations with the LAPD to unite the two major police stations (Wilshire and Rampart) that served the broader Koreatown area. Korean representatives thus decided to request the construction of a community policing substation for about a year and a half with little outcome.

The coincidental discovery of an empty bank building by Koreatown and West Adams leaders in 1993 provided the first opportunity to accommodate a substation that would bring each community one step closer to their larger hopes for police reform. Nevertheless, the independent yet simultaneous discovery led to conflict between the two communities, both of which had their own claims to the substation project. Having been informed about the availability of the building during an LAPD dinner, a small group of community leaders from Koreatown established the Koreatown Public Safety Association (KPSA) in 1995 to oversee the construction of the substation. During a political protest of a major bank merger within this same time period, several West Adams associations themselves learned of the vacant building and unsuccessfully consulted with bank representatives and police officials about building the substation. Upon learning that the building had been offered to the Koreatown leaders by the LAPD, West Adams expressed extreme indignation at being excluded after years of struggling for its realization.

As a result, a collective gathering of representatives from various West Adams neighborhood associations attended the first series of Koreatown meetings to demand inclusion into the substation project. As one longtime African-American resident stated, “We all don’t have a lot of money, but we knew that we needed the support of everybody, that we would have a bigger voice if we had the numbers rather than the dollars.” The process of coming to a consensus lasted about a year, during which the participants not only debated the incorporation of West Adams into the organization but also negotiated the terms on which this would occur. In the following sections, I explore various themes that emerged during the negotiation processes.

**THE COLLECTIVE ORIGINS OF COALITION BUILDING**

On its most fundamental level, the dispute over the construction of the police center arose from the two communities’ coinciding interest in
safeguarding spatial interests through the establishment of community policing programs. Suttles (1972) argued that “expanded communities of limited liability,” or the hypothetical communities on which broad-based organizations such as KOWAPSA draw their strength, are often created in response to the increasing centralization and unresponsiveness of big government and big businesses—or, in this case, the LAPD bureaucracy. The desire for decentralization was indeed a crucial impetus behind the emergence of the coalition, yet the testimonies of the Koreatown and West Adams interviewees also underline how race, ethnic, nativity, and class interests permeated contrasting notions of “community.” In particular, the interests of the interethnic coalition evolved from specific eth-class and territorial bases of power among organized factions within each community. Such bases had both historical and cultural dimensions as well.

Location in race- and class-marginalized neighborhoods, either as residents or entrepreneurs, was accompanied by an enhanced awareness of spatial hierarchies. Koreatown and West Adams are located on the fringes of a poor inner-city core, which is reflected by both the racial and low-income demographics of the two neighborhoods. The following two statements made by a Korean real estate agent and an African-American professor from West Adams, respectively, showed some parallels in this respect:

If we [work] together with the police, it’s like a semi-police. Then, it’s powerful, and we have some strong entity to protect the community. Then you know, gangsters watch out too, but you go Beverly Hill, the policemen they just give you a signal and that . . . guy’s gone away. Koreatown has, nobody has control. [But] we can do that same thing.

When you’re coming down the freeway and get off at Western, there is a whole series of guys who stand there and wash windows. How come LAPD can’t get that out of the way? I think if that was occurring in another part of the community in a more affluent area, that it wouldn’t happen. I think the level of expectation from the community, based on socioeconomic status, educational status, may be different than the expectation in a more affluent community.

The passages show how both sides coincided in their perceptions of space (e.g., on issues of homelessness and crime) and how this was further reaffirmed by a general sense of disempowerment as an urban, low-income community. What became apparent in both cases was the growing conviction that the governmental and law enforcement system had failed them and that some broader notion of “community” must be created to compensate for their position of relative powerlessness. Inequality was not clearly articulated into an oppositional consciousness against the LAPD for most members, although many were critical of its poor service to these areas. Instead, the members
were apt to attribute such inequalities to their own relative disempowerment. For Koreans, their political powerlessness and cultural impediments prevented them from receiving the same type of protection afforded by Beverly Hills, as evidenced by the civil unrest. On the other hand, West Adams was treated like the "stepchild of the city," as one African-American woman termed it, because of its relatively lower socioeconomic status.

Moreover, there were parallels in both parties’ coinciding desires to combat street crime, eliminate the presence of “negative elements” (e.g., homeless), and clean up the area, even though the motivations arose from differential interests. That is, the basis for interest convergence paradoxically emerged from the conflictual yet intersectional relationship between the use interests of home-owning residents and the simultaneous use/exchange interests of Koreatown leaders. Generally, exchange agents tend to view areas in terms of fiscal value, whereas residents perceive these same locations as a site of sentimental and daily activity (Logan and Molotch 1987). In particular, the increased fear of urban crime, despite declining crime rates since the early 1990s, was perceived to have had a negative impact on both the financial interests of Koreatown entrepreneurs and the residential environment of West Adams.

In the case of West Adams neighborhood associations, the basis for political solidarity emerged from interests rooted in homeownership status and a renovationist consciousness surrounding the multiethnic history of the residential neighborhood. According to Logan and Molotch (1987), such “use” orientations are predicated on sentimental attachments toward home and neighborhood, which evolve from day-to-day, intimate uses of space. In this light, none of the members I interviewed failed to underline the achievements of their associations in revitalizing and empowering their neighborhood through various historical restoration projects and collective action movements. Neighborhood projects included those directed at cleaning up and beautifying the area, fighting against increasing crime rates, and protesting any establishments (e.g., boarding homes, liquor stores, etc.) that would attract negative elements to the area. Yet part of this commitment originated from the long, multiethnic history of the neighborhood that had formatively shaped its humanistic outlook and strategies of resistance. When asked what West Adams had contributed to the coalition, one African-American male interviewee said, “Part of the Korean community . . . tends to stick together and not be inclusive with other groups. Groups in L.A. cannot live by themselves if this community’s going to work [so] [West Adams] brought this issue of diversity into it.”
Even though democracy and diversity were key components in the making of community, the neighborhood associations derived their membership from particular organized segments within the community, especially among young white renovationists and select elderly African-American homeowners. Since the early 1980s, West Adams has undergone what some label a “renaissance” and what others call a “racial invasion” by young white restorationists and investors who aim to restore the historical heritage of the many Victorian and bungalow houses in the area. This influx has ignited intense racial and class animosity between the newcomers and residents who complain that these “urban pioneers” tend to neglect the needs and desires of the African-American people who have lived in the area for generations. As homeowners in a lower- to middle-class urban neighborhood, West Adams residents also have occupied a relatively privileged status compared with its southern neighbors in South Central. A 1989 study has shown that police departments tend to be more responsive to African-American communities that are dominated by “what are perceived to be stable, responsible citizens” (e.g., homeowners) (Cashmore and McLaughlin 1991).

For the Korean-American community, the justifications for or against the coalition were predicated on two competing concepts of “community”—one based on eth-class superiority and the other based on multiethnic political empowerment. Despite the growing influence of the 1.5- and second-generation leadership in Koreatown politics since the 1992 civil unrest, the financial and human capital of Korean-American politics continue to be dominated by the entrepreneurial and homeland-based interests of the first-generation immigrant community. Although there were not many store owners directly involved in KOWAPSA, it became clear from the interviews that the representatives for the Korean community started this organization as strong advocates of property and business interests. Another aspect of immigrant politics was the relative absence of women in key leadership positions, particularly during the period of study, as evidenced by the overrepresentation of Korean males in KOWAPSA. At the same time, the symbolic significance of Koreatown lay in its sentimental value for residents, business owners, and customers as the center of cultural and religious activity and the place where ethnic activities cannot be as easily fulfilled elsewhere. The Koreatown community leaders I interviewed expressed sincere commitment to improving the welfare of their ethnic community.

Although eth-class interests were the underlying impetus for Koreatown’s involvement in KOWAPSA, several core leaders from the community realized that resistance to the incorporation of West Adams would be not only
futile but self-defeating as well. In particular, the 1992 riots had impressed on them two important lessons: that they could not survive without working with the multiethnic community of Los Angeles and that money alone would not guarantee them power. One 1.5-generation leader in particular played an important role in making this connection for the other leaders. He explained, “In order to understand American system, you have to work with Americans, whether it be black, Hispanic, or Anglo. If you organize purely . . . based on own ethnicity, it’s not gonna work, because everything outside of your house is managed by . . . Americans.” As a result, a new competing consciousness emerged among members of the Koreatown community that embraced multiethnicity as a means to greater political empowerment.

Thus, although congruency in spatial interests provided the basis for interethnic cooperation, the identification of coalitional interests required a more flexible and broader understanding of community empowerment that could be achieved only by compromising other traditional bases of collective empowerment entrenched within the respective ethnic neighborhood communities. This compromise was accompanied by a shift in power and leadership. In particular, non-English-speaking members of the Korean constituency recognized that the inclusion of non-Korean members could result in the diminution of their political voice by changing the official language of the organization. In the new coalition, 1.5-generation members became the key intermediaries because of their proficiency in both languages, but the clear implication of this was an internal shift in organizational control. As such, non-Korean-speaking members expressed the most resistance to the new coalition. The following statement made by one 1.5-generation male leader from KOWAPSA describes some of the pressures and frustrations that these members experienced throughout the negotiation processes:

[The language barrier] makes them uncomfortable, because you can’t present your thoughts the way that you should do it. Thoughts get lost in translation. Captain Hong and I are both English [speaking], so we have no problem. But not English-speaking person might have difficulty understanding that. Once you don’t have that opportunity to express fully, you get frustrated. Another thing is, this is a joint meeting with English speaking and non-English speaking, so the Koreans become mute.

Lacking the ability to communicate in the official language of the coalition, the Korean-only members could not equally partake in the discussions or protect ethnic-specific interests within the organization. Yet, as will be discussed in the following section, the interests of those Korean members who prioritized eth-class ranking over multiethnic spatial solidarity would not prevail under the pressures of differential empowerment.
FROM CONFLICTUAL TO COMPLEMENTARY EMPOWERMENT

Mutual interests may provide compelling reasons to engage in a coalition, but how does multiethicity end up prevailing over interests and identities grounded in other stratification systems, such as race and ethnicity? For Korean and African-American representatives of KOWAPSA, the answer lay in the different capabilities and resources of each racial community that were used to enforce equal representation within the organization. That is, the strategy of pro-diversity Koreans dominated over those of pro-ethnic Koreans because of the group’s overall political weaknesses against the pressures of West Adams leaders. Once the balance was established, the coalition converted differential empowerment into complementary powers, whereby each party derived advantages from the status of the other. History and culture provide the framework within which to understand the power bases and ideological orientation of each community.

With respect to income, property, and social mobility, Korean immigrants have largely surpassed the progress of native-born blacks (Chang 1991; Yoon 1997). The power structure of Koreatown itself is rooted in the predominance of Korean entrepreneurs, whose success in operating small businesses has been the subject of numerous studies (Light and Bonacich 1988; Min 1996; Yoon 1997). The orientation of Korean immigrants toward values of capitalism and meritocracy can also be attributed to the rapid industrialization and Westernization of Korea, which is responsible for “presocializing” Koreans prior to immigration (Chang 1996). The initial hardships that immigrants face on arrival as well as the risks involved in self-enterprise are reaffirmed by optimistic aspirations embedded in the “American Dream.” Furthermore, as a result of the timing of Korean immigration after the civil rights era, many Koreans are largely unaware of the historical struggles of African-Americans against racism and are thus unlikely to challenge the assumptions of American democracy (Chang 1996). Yet, as a result of language barriers, small population size, political exclusion, and mistrust of politicians, Korean immigrants have been severely handicapped in their ability to advance their political interests (Yoon 1997).

On the other hand, African-Americans have been impeded by a long history of racial discrimination, resource deprivation, and the socioeconomic deterioration of their segregated communities. Instead, they have found greater sources of empowerment in political bases. Generally, African-Americans can draw from a longer history of political activism both within their indigenous communities and in mainstream politics (Yoon 1997). Furthermore, as Haymes (1995, 117) stated, “In the city, black political activism
equates empowerment with control of land in the Black urban communities and that this notion of empowerment surpasses affirmative action, job discrimination, or school integration.” In recent years, socioeconomic disintegration has begun to dissolve social networks of family, friends, and neighbors and destroy the emotional, cultural, and political substance of these communities of resistance (Haymes 1995). In resistance to dominant representations of the racialized and “pathologized” spaces of urban ghettoes, African-Americans have created “organic communities of resistance” as the basis for political mobilization and cultural consolidation (Haymes 1995).

Value systems and strategies in the accounts of Korean members of KOWAPSA were mainly structured around financial claims to space, whereas those of West Adams were based on territorial rights. Moreover, Koreans were more empowered by their access to financial resources within their community in contrast to West Adams’s use of political activism as a means to empowerment. These contrasting perceptions of power and rights were clearly linked to each side’s different collective base of power. The organizational bases of West Adams residents came from the coordinated human and capital resources of various housing and neighborhood improvement associations through which residents could make a political presence and promote their interests. On the other hand, the Korean membership was generally composed of members from religious, entrepreneurial, and ethnic immigrant organizations in the Koreatown community through which the Korean members were able to garner the funds to finance the substation project.

The following statements made by an elderly female African-American resident revealed how these dynamics took shape during the discussions:

Some were against it, don’t wanna take part in it, and some stopped. . . . And there wasn’t any screaming and hollering, nothing of that sort, it was just expressing what they felt. “We [the Koreans] had raised the money, so it’s our group.” But then we explained why it can’t be just that way. You know, it’s in our neighborhood, and how would you name something like that in your neighborhood, when it’s not even in your neighborhood?

When asked if he could identify any heated issues that arose during the negotiations, one 1.5-generation Korean police officer responded,

Well, I mean territorial imperative. They were very upset that they were not included, West Adams people. But for Korean perspective, you’ve gotta understand, Koreans did most of the work and donated most of the money, and their idea was very simple—this is capitalist country. When you do most of the work
and when you raise most of the money, you make most of the decisions. But that was a simplistic outlook.

According to the excerpts, the Korean representatives of KPSA felt they could claim control over the substation because the Koreatown community was the primary financial investor of the organization. Rights to the organization were defined in terms of economic advantages.

The leaders of the neighborhood associations, however, fervently contested this notion of power based on territorial advantage. Most of the West Adams members interviewed adamantly asserted that they had equal rights to the organization because the substation was located officially within West Adams and because their community had solicited such a station from the police long before Koreatown’s “discovery.” One African-American man who was particularly angered by this “show of favoritism” explained:

Our group was a little annoyed, because we felt that we weren’t as valuable as the Korean community.... The police department, the city was willing to give this building, which is right in the heart of where we were without any consultation from us. It’s as if we didn’t exist, and that was part of my frustration. The political process wasn’t fair for those of us who live in the community. The city, the police, the Korean community, and anybody else involved should not have that much clout in coming into a community where people live and just dictate to them without any input from them.

Territorial rights conferred on the residents of the area the right to be part of the decision-making body. Yet, because of their marginal economic status, the police department offered the building to Koreans without consulting the residents of that neighborhood, devaluing the community and rendering them politically invisible to the process.

As a means to safeguard their interests and reassert their presence in mainstream society, West Adams residents exercised their political strength—not to contest the Koreans’ rights to the organization but to take advantage of their financial assets and realize a long-sought project. Indeed, throughout the period preceding the Los Angeles civil unrest, the West Adams neighborhood associations had engaged in a number of solidifying political activities that demonstrated their potential to enact change and their resolve to maintain a long-standing presence within city hall. In the same way, both direct and indirect political pressure by the neighborhood associations in itself was the most critical factor in forcing Koreans to accept the West Adams leaders as their equal partners. This pressure did not manifest itself merely through endless negotiation meetings with the Korean representatives but also through the voice of their district councilman. As one Korean man recounted,
“[The councilman] told me, if you don’t put West Adams, I’m not gonna support you, I’m not gonna vote for you.” The understanding among the interviewees was that the African-American constituency of the West Adams community wielded greater political power than the Korean constituency because of their influence as voters, their ability to mobilize politically, and the added support of an African-American councilman. For Koreans, their powerlessness in political stratification systems meant that they had to realize the practicality of the change. In turn, West Adams faced its own indirect pressures because of its lower socioeconomic status. Practically speaking, the West Adams association had spent many years pursuing a project that it did not have the resources to finance and could achieve only through partnership with Koreans.

**IMPLICATIONS ON COALITION BUILDING IN THE CONTEMPORARY ERA**

The findings have two broader implications: First, greater attention to the processes of negotiation uncovers the significance of historical, cultural, and spatial meanings in producing coinciding or complementary orientations toward collective notions of power and rights. The commonplace positions of Koreatown and West Adams members were defined by the spatial intersection of class and ethnic interests, yet the meaningful basis of the coalition could be sustained only by downplaying ethnic differences through ideologies on multiethnicity and converging on shared spatial issues arising from a broader notion of urban community. As exemplified by KOWAPSA, the interest and ideological base of coalitions encompassed not only contemporary and issue-specific matters but also the negotiation of cultural, historical, and spatial relationships. Second, this case study demonstrated how inequalities in social movement bases might prompt coalitional action among racial and ethnic groups. As revealed in the case study, differential bases of collective organization and mobilization do not obviate the possibilities of forming alliances but necessitate that racial minority groups be made aware of and compelled to act on weaknesses in their collective organizational bases while making use of their own collective strengths to ensure equal participation.

What implications does this have on the empowerment of other racial and ethnic groups within the two communities? For one, KOWAPSA had difficulties recruiting Latino members despite numerous efforts to contact individuals and church leaders in the area and the numerical dominance of the Latino population in both Koreatown and West Adams. In this light, the absence of preexisting collective bases offers one compelling reason for the
inability of KOWAPSA to find active Latino participants other than the one member associated with the West Adams neighborhood association. It is worth noting that after the riots, more organized Latino communities in East Los Angeles recognized the need to create stronger links to the underserved Latino population in areas of Pico-Union and downtown Los Angeles such that new Latino organizations have begun to develop in these areas (“Charting a New Course” 1993). The difficulties can also be attributed to a combination of other factors, including language and cultural barriers, low socioeconomic status, internal diversity, homeland orientation, and problems with citizenship status in the Latino community—all of which can aggravate collective disempowerment and make it difficult for Latinos to organize on a racial level.

The decision to incorporate West Adams on an equal basis was followed by a series of membership turnovers and a shift in the orientation of existing members. Upon examination, the line between those who withdrew and those who remained did not seem to be based on any differences in class, religion, or other values but roughly around issues of bilingual capabilities and degree of ethnic separatism. Those who did not want to adjust to the new division of power and multiethnic composition left the board, thus filtering out members who did not fit with the generally shared orientation of the remaining leaders. Unfortunately, this transition also came at a cost to many non-English-speaking Koreans, who had up until this point managed to survive in Koreatown through minimal contact with other non-Koreans. Many of them ended up leaving or finding alternative ways to participate (e.g., sending English-speaking representatives or having translators). Significantly, the membership turnover in KOWAPSA signified a larger generational struggle in the leadership of the Korean-American community, yet it is important to note that several prominent first-generation leaders chose to remain with the organization. At the time of this article, the KOWAPSA project was reported to have reached a stagnant point of being unable to complete the substation, the construction of which they had started and still stands awaiting funds for its completion. Although the organization’s quiet disappearance was related to problems associated with bureaucratic red tape and the exhaustion of funds, divisions within the leadership of the Korean-American community also fed the fuel of controversy surrounding its dissolution. Yet its ultimate end indicates that the burden of receiving better services should not be placed solely on the shoulders of such communities but must involve government agencies as well.

Nevertheless, the coalition still remains a significant model in that it was able to overcome one of the most difficult barriers to forging a coalition—that is, bringing together racial and ethnic groups around a project of mutual
interest. The Koreatown and West Adams Public Safety Association demonstrates one way coalitions can find concrete issues that transcend conflicts in ethnic stratification systems, converge on spatial interests, and seek better access to mainstream institutions. Future studies cannot simply dismiss the possibilities for coalition building based on perceived inequalities but instead must investigate alternative paths among the multiple systems of hegemony that stratify our society.

NOTES

1. In this particular study, success is defined in narrow terms as the ability of two or more racial and ethnic groups to identify and mobilize around areas of commonality and strength that will reasonably allow them to fulfill a specific goal. Although this definition disregards the ultimate fate of the coalition, the coalition’s demise cannot primarily be the result of tensions between the two groups but rather the result of external factors, such as lack of funding or manpower or even internal divisions within the respective communities.

2. All of the interviews were conducted after most of the described events took place and hence missed events that took place before the civil unrest and the negotiations that ensued over the multiethnic expansion of the board membership. To counter this weakness, I used material from multiple interviewees with different backgrounds to piece together more significant details and substantiate them with other interviewees and the official minutes.

3. The racial/gender distribution includes 4 African-Americans, 6 Koreans, 1 Latino, and 4 Anglos (4 women and 11 men).

4. I use the term oppositional consciousness to refer to conflict-based (as opposed to consensus-based) actions or ideologies directed against a real or imagined oppositional party that is perceived to be an obstacle in the achievement of a desired goal.

REFERENCES


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Despite the voluminous literature on participation, when it comes to the participatory behavior of racial and ethnic minorities and lower-income groups, many questions remain unanswered. The author tests the extent to which four theoretical models—socioeconomic status, psychological orientations, social context, and mobilization resource—explain the participation of whites, African-Americans, and Latinos in local political and community activities. Based on a sample of inner-city New York respondents, the author finds that existing theories differentially explain participation across both ethnic group and participatory activity. More generally, the findings indicate that more attention needs to be focused on how the broader social and institutional environment shapes the behaviors and attitudes that ultimately foster political engagement.

**Sociologists and political scientists** have long sought to understand social, civic, and political participation. For the most part, sociologists have tended to focus on participation in nonpolitical organizations and institutions, whereas political scientists have been primarily interested in political activities and organizations. Nevertheless, students of participation across both disciplines share a common interest in understanding why and how some individuals participate but others do not. In much of the research that has accumulated over the years, socioeconomic status (SES), measured by such variables as money, education, and civic orientations, has been the model of choice. However, interspersed in early research were efforts by both sociologists and political scientists to examine the social and institutional context of political participation as well. For example, researchers working in this
tradition argued that involvement in communal activities played an important role in motivating, preparing, and directing participation in political life (see, e.g., Verba and Nie 1972). Thus, although SES remains an important predictor of participation, the past several decades have witnessed the development of new and increasingly complex theories to explain the variations in individuals’ sociopolitical behavior.

Although extant research has certainly provided a richer explanation of why people participate in social and political activities, several important questions remain unresolved. In particular, the participatory behaviors of racial and ethnic minorities and lower-income groups are less well understood today than those of Anglo-whites and more socioeconomically advantaged groups, despite some early calls for more research in this vein (see Greeley 1974). That is not to say that racial and ethnic minorities have been altogether overlooked by researchers. However, much of what we know about African-American participation, for example, comes from studies conducted in the 1970s and early 1980s (Guterbock and London 1983; McPherson 1977; Miller et al. 1981; Rogers, Bultena, and Barb 1975; Singles 1981; Verba and Nie 1972; Williams, Babchuk, and Johnson 1973). To be sure, the political, social, and economic situation of African-Americans, particularly those living in central cities, has changed considerably over this period (see, e.g., Kasarda 1993; Wilson 1996). Among other things, increasing rates of poverty, unemployment, and high school dropouts, along with increases in the number of African-Americans holding political office, certainly have important implications for African-American participation. Yet, with only limited empirical research based on data from the late 1980s and 1990s (see Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Peterson 1992; Tate 1991; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), it is unclear whether findings from earlier studies still hold true today.

In addition, most studies of minority participation have focused exclusively on African-Americans, leaving even more questions unanswered with regard to the participatory patterns of other ethnic groups (but see Arvizu and Garcia 1996; Diaz 1996; Leighley and Vedlitz 1999). Given the significant growth in the Latino population in the past two decades and the fact that by 2010, Latinos are expected to surpass African-Americans as the largest distinctive ethnic/racial minority group in the United States (O’Hare 1992), more research on the sociopolitical behavior of this group is certainly warranted.

A second set of questions in need of further exploration relates to the extent to which existing models of participation, which have been primarily developed to explain national electoral behavior, can be directly applied to explain participation in local political and community activities. Not only does
electoral participation represent just a small subset of possible political behaviors in which individuals engage, but Americans actually participate more in various local organizations and activities than in state or national political activities or groups (for recent data, see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). It is thus high time we begin to focus more specifically (and rigorously) on political and social behavior that takes place locally. As Leighley (1995, 181) notes,

We will improve the theoretical rigor of our models of participation by studying [the] variety of political acts and how [they] change over time; focusing on voter turnout alone—as discrete acts structured by the electoral calendar—offers no such advantage. We must therefore shift the focus of our study to alternative forms of participation.

Consequently, in this article, I attempt to address these shortcomings in extant literature by examining the degree to which general models of participation explain involvement in local political and community activities and by testing whether these models uniformly predict the participatory behavior of different ethnic groups—specifically, whites, African-Americans, and Latinos. I also address several limitations in existing studies of participation by using recent data and a wider range of participation measures.

I begin by briefly outlining some of the more commonly advanced participation theories (SES, psychological orientations, social context, and resource mobilization) developed largely to explain the behavior of whites and African-Americans. Thereafter, I test these theories using survey data from inner-city New York respondents. Because of the rich ethnic diversity in the population sampled, these data allow me to estimate separate models of participation for each of the three ethnic groups. The findings of this study suggest not only that there are important differences in the mechanism driving participation across both ethnic groups and types of activities but also that these differences are rooted in the broader social and institutional environment that ultimately shapes political participation.

ETHNICITY AND PARTICIPATION: COMPETING EXPLANATIONS

THE SES MODEL OF PARTICIPATION

It is widely accepted that participation is driven, at least in part, by the personal resources—money, education, civic attitudes—that individuals have at
their disposal. The standard SES model of participation (Verba and Nie 1972) posits that the greater the resources an individual possesses, the more likely he or she is to engage in sociopolitical activities. This is because higher SES individuals are said to have better interpersonal skills, more social interactions, and greater access to avenues (institutions, activities) of participation, all of which purportedly lead to higher levels of involvement in political and community affairs (Rogers, Bultena, and Barb 1975).

Based on the SES model, African-Americans, and especially Latinos, are expected to participate at levels below whites. As Tate (1991, 1162) points out, not only do these groups tend to be resource poor—in the sense that in comparison to whites, they lack the necessary political skills, politically relevant information, and formal education—but like the socioeconomically less advantaged in general, they are also more likely to lack the requisite psychological attributes and basic motivation that fuel participation. To be sure, it is not surprising that African-Americans tend to possess lower levels of political trust and efficacy than whites given their long suppression by a political system that barred them from participating in politics or public life more generally. However, the SES model does not make clear what orientations other minority groups, such as Latinos, possess or how these orientations relate to their sociopolitical behavior.

In fact, studies conducted in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s actually found that, after controlling for SES, African-Americans tended to participate at higher levels than whites (Babchuck and Thompson 1962; Verba and Nie 1972). As McPherson (1977, 197) noted, “Indeed, the finding of higher participation by blacks, with class controlled, has become one of the more intensively replicated findings in the literature.” Consequently, students of participation in both sociology and political science have sought alternative theories to explain this phenomenon.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS AND PARTICIPATION

One explanation, provided by Verba and Nie (1972), attributed higher levels of African-American participation to group consciousness because they found that African-Americans who more frequently mentioned race in their discussions of political issues tended to be more participatory than African-Americans who did not cite race in their discussions. Elaborating on this idea, several theories focusing on psychological orientations—specifically, political efficacy and trust—have since been developed. Two of the more prominent and widely tested of these include the ethnic community and compensatory theories.
The ethnic community theory developed from the idea that those in a given ethnic community develop a consciousness of each other and hence cohesiveness because of pressures exerted on them by outsiders (Olsen 1972). According to Shingles (1981), black consciousness actually contributes to the combination of political efficacy and political mistrust, which in turn induces political involvement. In contrast, according to the compensatory theory, the reason ethnic minorities participate is because of their lower social status. In other words, in an effort to compensate for their inability to acquire skills and resources, ethnic minorities exaggerate certain behaviors such as participation in political processes (Ellison and Gay 1989; McPherson 1977; Williams, Babchuk, and Johnson 1973). The mechanism driving participation with regard to this explanation is low levels of political efficacy but, at the same time, high levels of political trust.

Although the ethnic community and compensatory theories focus on different combinations of low and high political efficacy and political trust to explain higher than expected levels of participation among African-Americans, two other combinations of these attitudes have also been used to predict participation levels among both whites and African-Americans. The first includes the combination of high levels of both trust and efficacy, typically associated with individuals who are considered politically integrated. The other is low levels of both trust and efficacy, typically found among the politically alienated. Whereas politically integrated individuals, regardless of ethnic identity, are expected to participate at normal levels, the politically alienated are expected to exhibit the lowest levels of participation (Guterbock and London 1983).

Empirical tests of this typology of political orientations were conducted largely in the 1970s and early 1980s using data from the General Social Survey (GSS) and the National Election Study (NES) that contained oversamples of African-Americans. Findings from several studies (Ellison and Gay 1989; Guterbock and London 1983; McPherson 1977; Shingles 1981; Williams, Babchuk, and Johnson 1973) support the ethnic community theory; however, there has been little empirical support for the compensatory theory. In fact, Shingles (1981) found that African-Americans exhibiting attitudes consistent with the compensatory theory were least participatory.

In addition to inconsistent results, scholars have questioned the validity and generalizability of these findings because of limitations in some earlier studies. Bobo and Gilliam (1990), for example, argued that because many earlier studies relied on small numbers of African-Americans and sought to explain sociopolitical behavior at a time when African-Americans were struggling for basic inclusion in American society and politics, these theories may not be applicable in more recent times. Ellison and Gay (1989) added
that structural trends and conservative politics at the national level might have heightened political alienation among African-Americans in the years since these studies were conducted. Finally, many of the earlier findings have not been replicated with regard to the participatory behavior of other ethnic groups, thereby leaving the question of how political orientations affect the sociopolitical behavior of Latinos and others relatively unexplored (but see Leighley and Vedlitz 1999; Uhlman, Cain, and Kiewiet 1989).

SOCIAL CONTEXT THEORIES

In addition to psychological orientations, a variety of different participation theories examine the way in which the social environment affects individuals' involvement in political and community life. For example, several scholars have analyzed the relationship between social connectedness or neighborhood ties and sociopolitical participation (see, e.g., Huckfeldt 1979, 1986; Giles and Dantico 1982). Much of this research is based on social network or social exchange theories, which posit that individuals socialize with other community members and generally take a more active role in social and political affairs when they feel more positive about or are more integrated in their community (see, e.g., Weatherford 1982). Studies examining the effects of social context typically focus on neighborhoods and the extent to which individuals are socially connected to others in their neighborhood. For the most part, however, low-income and minority neighborhoods have been conspicuously absent from this research (but see Alex-Assensoh 1997; Callahan 1998). Consequently, we know relatively little about how social networks and other contextual factors affect the participatory behavior of individuals residing in these neighborhoods.

Similar to social ties, other researchers have focused especially on African-Americans' connectedness to religious institutions to explain their political participation. Studies have found, for example, that African-Americans are not only more intensely religious than other Americans but also that their involvement in church (or other religious institutions) is an important predictor of voting turnout (Harris 1994; Peterson 1992; Tate 1991). Yet, again, less work has investigated the relationship between church involvement and political participation among Latinos or other minority groups (but see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

MOBILIZATION RESOURCE THEORIES

Somewhat similar to social context theories of participation, as early as the 1960s and 1970s, scholars (Olsen 1972; Alford and Scoble 1968) argued
that involvement in voluntary associations stimulated individuals to become politically active. Almond and Verba (1965) and Sallach, Babchuk, and Booth (1972) linked involvement in voluntary associations to voting and political involvement, whereas others found it to have effects on self-esteem (Aberback 1969; Zurcher 1970) and the development of skills necessary for effective interaction with government agencies (Vanek 1969). Regardless of predisposing factors (SES, civic attitudes), the experiences gained through participation in formal social organizations were found to affect political participation and political orientations.

The underlying theoretical assumption of the mobilization resource model is that the more individuals interact with others in organizations and institutions, the more they are exposed to social norms of political behavior and specific details about participation opportunities (Leighley 1990). Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) made a strong case for a resource model of participation in their Citizen Participation Study (see also Verba et al. 1993). They argued that nonpolitical institutions, such as the workplace or voluntary associations, provide individuals with opportunities to develop organizational and communication skills relevant for political participation. Such institutions also provide exposure to networks of recruitment that are embedded in them. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) provided empirical evidence demonstrating that participation results largely from the process of mobilization whereby activists, groups, and organizations both directly induce others to participate through personal contact and recruitment and indirectly promote participation by contacting mutual associates who then provide the necessary incentives and expectations to encourage the participation of others.

Although the Citizen Participation Study (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995) found some evidence of higher participation rates for whites than African-Americans across nearly all social and civic activities and institutions considered (church is the exception), the evidence on race-related differences in participation rates remains sketchy (see especially Leighley 1995). Specifically, depending on the type of participation and the time period investigated, one finds African-Americans both more and less participatory than whites. For example, the 1988 National Survey of Families and Households (Sweet, Bumpass, and Call 1988), which included a probability sample of 13,017 respondents with an oversample of African-American and Latino households, reported that African-Americans participated in neighborhood groups at higher rates and schools at about the same rate as whites.

In sum, and as the preceding review of several decades of research on participation—especially minority participation—indicates, many questions remain either altogether unanswered or inadequately addressed. Although the comprehensive Citizen Participation Study has clearly enhanced our
understanding of the participation process, data from a national survey of U.S. residents may be insufficient to examine the ways in which different institutional and social contexts affect the participatory behaviors of different ethnic groups. In particular, national samples seldom provide sufficient numbers of respondents clustered in particular neighborhoods and thus do not permit the researcher to combine individual and neighborhood effects in a single model. My analyses surmount this limitation, among others.

ANOTHER LOOK AT MINORITY PARTICIPATION

In the analysis that follows, I test the explanatory power of the various theories of participation by estimating separate models for each of the three ethnic groups: whites, African-Americans, and Latinos. Where this study differs from much of the existing work on minority participation is its focus. Instead of analyzing a national sample, this study relies on a sample of inner-city residents—a group that has been overlooked in much of the previous work on participation. Given both the increasing concentration of minorities in America’s central cities and the distinct economic, social, and political conditions characterizing inner-city neighborhoods within these central cities, the participatory patterns of this particular cross section of Americans warrant serious consideration. In addition, this study investigates how well existing participation theories explain involvement in local political and community activities.

DATA AND METHODS

The data for this analysis come from a large-scale survey of residents in two New York City communities (see Schneider, Teske, and Marschall 2000 for more details on these communities). Polimetrics, the survey research lab at The Ohio State University, conducted the survey in the spring of 1995. The sample frame was constructed by first identifying all listed phone numbers for the ZIP codes in two low-income, predominantly Latino school districts. A list was then developed using random generation of the last two digits of the appropriate telephone exchanges (allowing unlisted numbers to also be included). All known business numbers were removed. Finally, a random sample was taken of the remaining numbers. Approximately 800 interviews were completed.

It is important to note that the data employed here were originally collected for a project investigating schooling and community safety issues. For this reason, the data do not constitute a probability sample of all residents in
the two communities, but instead they constitute a probability sample of all parents of school-age children in these communities. In Table 1, I report summary statistics for the population and sample demographics.

As these data indicate, the sample of parents in each community is representative of the population (parents with school-age children) of each community. Clearly, however, the high percentage of females, minorities, nonworking individuals, and residents with incomes below $20,000 make this particular cross section distinct from the U.S. population as a whole. Consequently, I do not attempt to generalize to the U.S. population in general but instead to other low-income, inner-city communities. In short, the data provide a unique opportunity to examine how social and institutional factors influence inner-city residents’ involvement in local community and political affairs.

The survey instrument, on which these data are based, included not only a range of questions regarding respondents’ participation in schools and community safety organizations but also two network components that measured the size and structure of respondents’ social networks. Respondents were asked to name up to three persons with whom they discussed education matters and up to two persons with whom they discussed policing and

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NOTE: Because both districts are administrative units for the New York City school system rather than, for example, census designated units, some demographic data are not available (NA).

a. Number of K-8 students in each district.
community safety issues. After generating the names of their discussants, respondents were asked a battery of questions about each person. The relations between the respondents and their discussants provide some insight into the degree of their social connectivity, particularly with others living in the same neighborhood who likely share many of the same concerns about local politics and public policies.

The data thus include a number of measures for both sociopolitical behaviors and the social context in which these behaviors take place. In addition, because the underlying population is ethnically diverse, the sample includes a sizable proportion of respondents from each of the three main ethnic groups in the United States. This particular attribute of the data allows me to estimate separate models for each group, thus testing the extent to which the process and pattern of participation are different across different ethnic groups (see Leighley and Vedlitz 1999 for alternative explanation of this approach).

In Table 2, I report summary statistics for both demographic and participatory measures for each of the three ethnic groups. For comparative purposes, I also report statistics for the full sample (column 4).

### TABLE 2: Summary Statistics by Ethnicity

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<th></th>
<th>Whites (n = 99)</th>
<th>African-Americans (n = 138)</th>
<th>Latinos (n = 496)</th>
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<td>Age</td>
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<td>.48 (.50)</td>
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**NOTE:** Table entries are means/proportions with standard deviations in parentheses. There were 68 respondents who identified themselves as Asian or “other” or refused to place themselves in a racial/ethnic category. These respondents are not analyzed in this study. PTA = parent-teacher association.
As is evident in Table 2, there are significant differences across the three groups, with whites being the most socioeconomically advantaged and Latinos the most disadvantaged. For example, on average, whites have a full four more years of schooling than Latinos and are more than twice as likely to be employed. African-Americans, on the other hand, have on average only about one and half fewer years of schooling than whites. In addition, only 36% of African-Americans in the sample are married, compared with 50% of Latinos and 76% of whites. Given the extremely high percentage of female respondents in this sample and the fact that all respondents by design have at least one school-age child, the incidence of female-headed families is quite high for both African-American and Latino respondents (59% and 47%, respectively). It is worth repeating, however, that these differences are not due to sampling error; instead, the sample simply reflects the sharp demographic disparities across ethnic groups that exist in the underlying population.

It is in part because of these demographic differences that we should expect rates of participation to vary across ethnic groups. Looking at the bivariate relationship between ethnicity and measures of school-related participation, whites have the highest rates of participation followed by African-Americans and Latinos. Whites are particularly more likely to have contacted a school official (59%) than are either African-Americans (25%) or Latinos (21%). On the other hand, African-Americans have the highest level of involvement in community safety activities, with whites registering rates nearly identical to those of Latinos for most of these activities. The participation differential across groups is smallest with regard to voting in school board elections. Clearly, this bivariate evidence of differential participatory behavior across groups, not only within a particular activity but also across activities, merits careful multivariate study.

**EMPIRICAL MODELS AND MEASURES**

In the multivariate analyses, I use the survey data of inner-city parents to examine two different domains of participation: community involvement and political participation. The community involvement variable is an additive scale (ranging from 0-1) measuring the number of school and community safety activities in which respondents were involved. These activities include involvement in (1) parent-teacher organizations, (2) school activities that include other parents, (3) fund-raising or other voluntary activities at school, (4) community awareness programs, (5) public safety meetings, (6) auxiliary police programs, and (7) Blockwatchers. Political participation, in turn, corresponds to two dichotomous dependent variables: voting in local
school board elections and contacting school officials (1 = yes; see the appendix for question wording and coding for all variables).

The empirical models I specify to test the explanatory power of the different participation theories are given as follows:

\[
\text{Community involvement} = f(a + \beta(SES) + \beta(psychological orientations) + \beta(social context) + \beta(controls) + \epsilon). \tag{1}
\]

\[
\text{Political participation} = f(a + \beta(SES) + \beta(psychological orientations) + \beta(social context) + \beta(mobilization resource) + \beta(controls) + \epsilon). \tag{2}
\]

The explanatory variables in the models include two indicators of SES: a continuous variable for respondents’ level of education (years of schooling) and a dichotomous measure for employment status (1 = employed). PSYCHOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS is vector representing three dummy variables that measure the attitudes encapsulated in the compensatory (high trust/low efficacy), ethnic community (low trust/high efficacy), and political integration (high trust/high efficacy) theories. To operationalize these attitudes, I use two standard survey questions that tap internal efficacy and one standard measure for trust in government. Each of the attitudinal variables takes the value 1 if respondents exhibited the relevant combination of trust and efficacy. The baseline for comparison is the fully alienated condition (low trust/low efficacy).

SOCIAL CONTEXT is another explanatory vector consisting of a 7-point scale measuring frequency of attendance at religious services (0 = never, 6 = weekly), a continuous variable reflecting the length of residence in the community (in years), and a variable corresponding to the total number of network discussants that live in the same neighborhood as the respondent (0 = none, 5 = maximum).

For the political participation model, MOBILIZATION RESOURCE refers to a vector consisting of the community involvement scale, which is the dependent variable in equation (1). Finally, CONTROLS is a vector containing three measures: dichotomous variables for gender (1 = female) and marital status (1 = married) and a continuous variable for the respondent’s age (in years).

To test the independent effects of these explanatory variables, on the two types of participation—political and community—I estimate separate models for each of the three ethnic groups. I expect ethnicity to affect not only the intercept of the subgroup regressions in a pooled model of participation but the slope coefficients as well. The standard Chow tests for pooling indicated that simply estimating a single equation with dummy variables for ethnic identity was inappropriate (see Greene 1993, 211-12, for a more detailed
discussion). Recall that the community involvement measure is an additive scale, whereas the contact and vote variables (the two measures of political participation) are dichotomous. Thus, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression is used to estimate the community involvement models, and probit is used to estimate the political participation models.

FINDINGS

In Table 3, I report the results for each model of participation by ethnic group. The first column of each set of models includes the OLS estimates for the community involvement equation. The second and third columns report the transformed probit coefficients for the political participation equations. The transformed coefficients indicate the change in the probability of contacting and voting, for a unit change in \( X \), when \( X \) is at its mean (for a continuous variable), and the change from 0 to 1 when \( X \) is dichotomous (see StataCorp 1999 for more details on this transformation).

Starting with the community involvement models, the results indicate that the number of years of schooling is positively related to the number of community activities in which individuals of every ethnic group participate. The results also show that psychological orientations matter for both African-Americans and Latinos, but not in the way previous research suggests. Specifically, it is the combination of high trust and high efficacy (political integration), rather than low trust and high efficacy (ethnic community), that increases levels of community involvement among African-Americans. Unlike previous studies (Shingles 1981), my findings do not support the ethnic community theory for African-Americans but instead suggest that with regard to involvement in school and community safety activities, African-Americans behave in a manner consistent with the political integration thesis. On the other hand, I do find support for the ethnic community theory with regard to Latinos. Among Latinos, it is the combination of low trust and high efficacy that significantly increases their involvement in community life.

There are also significant differences in the effects of social context across whites, African-Americans, and Latinos. Based on the results of the community involvement models, social context appears to have the strongest effects for African-Americans and Latinos. For these two groups, the frequency of church attendance, length of residence in the community, and the number of social ties in the neighborhood each have positive and significant effects on the number of community activities in which respondents are involved. For whites, only the number of social ties matters.

Turning to the political participation models, I find that education is a significant predictor of both voting and contacting officials, albeit only for
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NOTE: Table entries for the community involvement models are ordinary least squares regression coefficients. For the contact and vote models, table entries are the transformed probit coefficients (standard errors for all models are in parentheses). Transformed probit coefficients indicate the effect of a unit increase in $X$ on the probability of contacting or voting, when $X$ is set at its mean. For dichotomous variables, they indicate the effect of a discrete change in $X$ from 0 to 1. *$p \leq .05$, one-tailed test. **$p \leq .01$, one-tailed test.
Latinos. With regard to the attitudinal measures, I find no support for the compensatory or the ethnic community theories. Specifically, both whites and African-Americans who exhibit high levels of trust and low levels of efficacy are significantly less likely to contact public officials than are whites and African-Americans with other psychological orientations. Although this is contrary to the compensatory theory—which posits that African-Americans with these orientations are likely to be compensators, participating at very high levels—my findings are nevertheless consistent with other empirical studies (Guterbock and London 1983; Shingles 1981).

With regard to social context variables, the number of social ties has the most consistent effect: The more social contacts a respondent has with other individuals living in his or her neighborhood, the more likely he or she is to contact a school official or vote in a school board election. These effects are clearly strongest for whites, for whom an increase of one social tie (from 1.54, the average number of ties for whites) corresponds to a 14 percentage point increase in the probability of contacting an official and an 11 percentage point increase in the probability of voting in a school board election. For Latinos, on the other hand, the length of residence in the community also matters. Specifically, an increase of 1 year of residence (from the average length of residence, 12.9 years) increases the probability of contacting an official by six-tenths of a percent and the probability of voting by nearly one percentage point.

Finally, the community involvement variable, a measure for mobilization resource theories, has weaker but more consistent effects on Latino political participation in comparison to participation among whites and African-Americans. Although positive and significant for both contacting and voting in the Latino models, the effect of an additional community activity (from the mean number of activities) corresponds to an increase of about 4 and 7 percentage points in the probability of contacting and voting, respectively. For whites, an increase by one activity from the mean number of activities increases the probability of contacting nearly 11 percentage points, whereas for African-Americans, this same increase corresponds to a 13 percentage point increase in the probability of voting.

**SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT IS KEY TO UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCES IN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

Before discussing the broader implications of these findings, it is first necessary to recognize data limitations. Obviously, because the sample frame is
restricted to parents rather than all residents residing in the inner-city communities, some of the findings may not be generalizable to other populations. On the other hand, because the objective in this analysis is to determine whether the underlying mechanisms driving participation differ according to ethnic group, form of participation, or both, focusing on this particular population actually makes this task easier. Not only is the population ethnically diverse, but it also represents a cross section frequently overlooked in political and social research. In addition, the survey on which this study was based focused on two domains of participation crucial to local communities—schools and public safety. Thus, the findings of this study provide important insights into the participatory behavior of minority and lower-income parents.

My findings clearly indicate that there are important differences in the ability of identical theories of participation to explain the behavior of whites, African-Americans, and Latinos with regard to different types of activities. When it comes to community activities—which are all communally oriented in this study—attachments to neighborhood and religious institutions most strongly predict the participatory behavior of African-Americans and Latinos. On the other hand, social context provides less explanatory leverage when it comes to levels of community involvement among whites. In addition to these differences, I also find that attitudinal measures exert differential effects across ethnic groups. For instance, although psychological orientations are not significant predictors of community involvement for whites, they do play an important role in promoting community involvement among both Latinos and African-Americans.

This latter set of findings is noteworthy because it constitutes fresh evidence regarding the relationship between attitudes and participation among minorities. In particular, it appears that for African-Americans, the attitudes associated with political integration (high efficacy/high trust) promote involvement in community activities, whereas for Latinos, attitudes associated with the ethnic community theory (low trust/high efficacy) significantly increase the propensity for community involvement. Although the ethnic community theory was originally intended to explain participation among African-Americans, in the context of this study, my findings suggest that the theory no longer fits African-Americans but is instead applicable for some types of participation among Latinos.

Although Latinos are only slightly more socioeconomically disadvantaged than African-Americans, their status as an immigrant population may contribute to lower levels of political motivation. Just as it did for African-Americans at a time when they were struggling for inclusion in the political system, it appears that the combination of political mistrust and a high sense
of internal political efficacy serves to promote involvement in more communally oriented activities for Latinos. The good news may be that African-Americans have achieved sufficient political incorporation, at least in the communities examined here. The bad news is that Latinos appear to be where African-Americans were a few decades ago; however, their plight may be even worse because they face greater competition from other immigrant groups and a more hostile political environment as well. Indeed, it is unlikely that community action and other War on Poverty programs of the 1960s, which stimulated community and political activism among African-Americans, will be repeated any time soon. Thus, the question of how Latinos and other immigrant groups will achieve greater political incorporation merits serious investigation.

In contrast to the community involvement models, in which differences in behavior across the three ethnic groups are most evident, the factors predicting political participation appear more similar regardless of ethnic identity. The lone exception appears to be SES effects, which are positively and significantly related only to the political participation of Latinos. Because both contacting officials and voting require not only fluency in English but also familiarity with bureaucratic procedures, these acts may be prohibitive for many Latinos in these inner-city New York communities. As first- or second-generation Americans, Latinos clearly must overcome greater hurdles to participate in these activities. It is thus not surprising that education is a very strong predictor of political participation for Latinos.

For all three groups, involvement in local school and community organizations and social connections with others in the neighborhood overwhelmingly predict participation in political activities. Obviously, the discussion and deliberation that take place both within community organizations and in informal interactions with neighbors provide information about local school affairs—from test scores in a particular school to opinions about where school board candidates stand on different issues. As Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) carefully documented in their study, nonpolitical organizations such as parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and Blockwatchers represent arenas where individuals develop not only organizational and communication skills relevant for political participation but also the social contacts that provide opportunities and inducements for future political involvement.

The fact that community involvement is the strongest predictor of political participation for all three ethnic groups is thus not really the main story here. Because the mechanism driving community involvement differs across the three ethnic groups, it appears that the real key to understanding political participation lies in the social and institutional context that shapes political engagement.
APPENDIX
Survey Question Wording and Response Codes

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

About how often do you attend school activities where parents are invited? (0 = never/occasionally, 1 = most/all of the time)
Have you ever helped out with a school fundraising event or done some volunteer work for your child’s school? (0 = no, 1 = yes)
Have you ever had any involvement in a group for parents of students like the PTA? (0 = no, 1 = yes)
In the past 2 or 3 years, have you participated in a community awareness program such as neighborhood watch? (0 = no, 1 = yes)
In the past 2 or 3 years, have you attended a community meeting organized to deal with public safety issues? (0 = no, 1 = yes)
In the past 2 or 3 years, have you participated in an auxiliary police program? (0 = no, 1 = yes)
In the past 2 or 3 years, have you participated in Blockwatchers? (0 = no, 1 = yes)

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Contact: Have you ever telephoned or written to a school administrator, such as the principal, regarding any aspect of school policy? (0 = no, 1 = yes)
Vote: Have you ever voted in a school board election? (0 = no, 1 = yes)

INTERNAL POLITICAL EFFICACY

“I consider myself to be well qualified to participate in politics.” (0 = neither agree/disagree, disagree somewhat/strongly; 1 = strongly agree/agree somewhat)
“I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.” (0 = neither agree/disagree, disagree somewhat/strongly; 1 = strongly agree/agree somewhat)

TRUST

How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right? (0 = never/some of the time, 1 = most of the time/just about always).

NOTES

1. To simplify and avoid confusion, I will not distinguish between race and ethnicity in the remainder of this article but will instead use ethnicity to refer to both ethnicity and race. In addi-
tion, rather than refer to different groups with interchangeable terms, I will simply use Latino to refer to the various national-origin groups typically subsumed under the terms Latino and Hispanic and African-American to refer to individuals who classify themselves as black or African-American.

2. Although few studies looked at Hispanics during this period, using a sample of 223 low-income residents in Austin, Texas, Williams, Babchuk, and Johnson (1973) found that after controlling for education, occupation, length of residence, presence of young children in the home, home ownership, age, and head of household status, Mexican-Americans were not significantly different than Anglos in social participation.

3. The disposition of survey calls is given as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disposition</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusals</td>
<td>635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No final disposition</td>
<td>1,867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonhouseholds</td>
<td>23,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineligible</td>
<td>19,191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the communities included in the sample frame (the Lower East Side) has traditionally been and continues to be a place where newly arrived immigrants to the United States initially settle. This community is also characterized by extremely high rates of mobility. These factors were taken into account when calculating the number of telephone numbers needed to meet the desired sample size. Polimetrics ensured that the relatively high number of nonhouseholds, ineligible numbers, and no final dispositions did not bias the sample in any appreciable manner.

4. This project was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation, number SBR9408970.

5. To be eligible to be interviewed, respondents not only had to have a child in grades K-8 but also had to be the main decision maker for that child’s education and schooling. Although this partly accounts for the relatively high percentage of females in the sample, the inner-city context, where the incidence of female-headed households is greater, is also a contributing factor.

6. The scale reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s alpha) = .561.

7. Income is not included as a measure of socioeconomic status (SES) because of its high correlation with education ($r = .45$) and the sizable number of respondents ($n = 112$) who refused to answer this question. Moreover, those who refused to answer the income question are significantly less educated than those who responded ($t = 3.14$).

8. The scale reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s alpha) for the two internal efficacy items = .535.

9. The compensatory theory variable was dropped from the contact model for African-Americans because it perfectly predicted contacting. None of the African-Americans with these orientations reported contacting a school official.

REFERENCES


Melissa J. Marschall is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her book, Choosing Schools: Consumer Choice and the Quality of American Schools (coauthored with Mark Schneider and Paul Teske), was recently published by Princeton University Press. Her work has appeared in the American Political Science Review, American Journal of Political Science, Social Science Quarterly, Urban Affairs Review, Journal of Urban Affairs, and The Public Interest. She has taught courses on public policy, urban politics, data analysis, decision making, and research methods.
QUALITY, RACE, AND THE URBAN EDUCATION MARKETPLACE

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A key issue in urban education policy is the potential impact of market-based reforms. Using a data set encompassing 50 urban school systems, the authors investigate the market reform hypothesis by assessing the impact of perceived school performance, race, and religion on private school enrollment. Previous work in this vein has relied on statewide data, generating findings that may not generalize to the urban districts at the center of the school choice debate. The authors find some evidence that perceived public school quality may affect enrollment, consistent with claims that competition spurs improvement. Consistent with previous work, the results also suggest that religious and racial considerations influence school selection.

Perhaps the most contentious debate in contemporary education policy involves the desirability of market-based reform in education. This debate is most relevant in urban areas, where continued low levels of performance and frustration with decades of reform activity have prompted some advocates to call for school choice as a way to remake a troubled institutional landscape. In recent years, public school choice plans have been launched in Milwaukee and Cleveland, and widely scrutinized and high-profile private scholarship plans were instituted in cities, including San Antonio, Washington, D.C., and New York.

The debate about school choice has turned in large part on three empirical questions. The first is whether parents will respond to school quality or will select schools based on other criteria, such as race or religion. A second question is whether markets will prompt widespread school improvement. The third is whether private and charter schools and other alternatives will outperform traditional public schools. In this article, we will set aside the third question to focus on the first two.
Of particular interest to the policy community is the “market reform” theory, which suggests that poor public school performance prompts families to exit public school systems in favor of private schools. This hypothesis has important implications for the school reform debate because some public schools may not be driven to improve by declining market share if parents do not respond to school quality. Competition, the motive force behind voucher and charter school proposals, is premised on customer sensitivity to quality and service.

Scholars have sought to address the issue of how school systems respond to competition, but their conclusions have varied. Using extended longitudinal data encompassing the nation’s 15,000 school districts, Hoxby (1994, 1998) and Dee (1998) argued that outcome measures show that school competition leads to better long-term educational productivity. Others (Armor and Peiser 1997; Rofes 1998) suggested that a minority of districts respond to choice-induced pressure in the short term, and Hassel (1998) found that the choices families make and the impact of those choices depend heavily on political forces. Researchers have even argued that competition produces perverse educational results (Loveless and Jasin 1998), and some work investigating school choice in Great Britain finds no benefits produced by competitive pressure (Gorard 1997; Woods, Bagley, and Glatter 1998).

Aside from quantitative efforts to infer competitive effects from the historic record (including Dee 1998; Hoxby 1994, 1998), most research in this area has studied the consequences of choice by examining its effects in a select number of districts or schools. This work is, through no fault of the scholars, limited in its ability to systematically assess the effects of school choice. In addition, these studies have examined various types of districts, with the consequence that none has examined more than a small number of urban districts. This research is also constrained by the limited number of locales where choice-based education exists and by the limited scope of those alternatives.

Another way to approach the question of competitive effects is by asking how consumers behave in the educational marketplace, attempting to extrapolate from behavior under existing arrangements. In particular, if families do not appear to respond to academic quality, there is reason to doubt whether competition will press schools to improve. Instead, schools might concentrate on delivering other services that families demand. It is to that literature that we will now turn and to which this article will contribute.

The questions of how responsive families are to quality in education and whether families will use choice options to escape poor public schools have been examined empirically for several years now (Schneider et al. 1997;
Schneider et al. 1998; Smith and Meier 1995a, 1995b). This debate draws particular attention because of its implications for both a key public policy issue as well as for a larger discussion of individual decision making, spatial mobility, and socially optimal mechanisms of resource allocation (Lowery, Lyons, and DeHoog 1995; Teske et al. 1993, 1995).

In a recent study examining the 73 largest Texas counties, Wrinkle, Stewart, and Polinard (1999) examined the market reform theory. Undercutting the argument that familial demands for educational quality will drive school improvement, they found that private school enrollment was not driven by public school performance. Instead, religious and racial factors appeared to play a role.

Their work is particularly significant because it corroborates previous research conducted in Florida by Smith and Meier (1995a, 1995b). They analyzed Florida school district data from 1986 to 1990 and found no evidence that public school quality influenced demand for private schooling. They concluded, “Poorly performing public schools are not a determinant of private school enrollment” (Smith and Meier 1995b, 470).

These findings have clear, immediate, and substantial implications for the school choice debate. As Wrinkle, Stewart, and Polinard (1999) pointed out, market advocates suggest that not only are private schools educationally superior to public schools but that competition will force public schools to enhance their quality to retain students who may otherwise flee to private schools. Given the lack of solid evidence on this topic, the research by Wrinkle, Stewart, and Polinard (1999) and Smith and Meier (1995a, 1995b) is likely to be turned to for guidance by policy makers.

The implications of this research make it vital that scholars test whether the findings generalize to the urban school districts for which they are most relevant. Most policy debate on the issue of school choice conceives of choice-based plans as primarily a policy tool for troubled urban school systems. In fact, it is the failure of more traditional reform strategies in the nation’s severely troubled urban districts (Gallup 1998; Hill and Celio 1998; Hess 1999) that has played a pivotal role in fueling interest in school choice. The few existing public voucher programs are found in urban areas, the vast majority of privately funded voucher programs target urban districts, and urban districts boast disproportionate concentrations of charter schools.

It is also possible that the counties studied in Texas and Florida may contain political and cultural dynamics very different from those present in urban school districts. For instance, the difference in municipal governance structures between sunbelt cities and northern cities (Elkin 1987; Mollenkopf 1983) may have produced school systems that operate in a manner more
likely to reduce familial discontent, regardless of measured outcomes. Alternatively, the rapidly growing populations of Texas and Florida might mean that parents have more difficulty finding private schools with open seats, thus impeding parental response to poor performance.

Third, counties often do not have as coherent a political identity as do cities. Because the former may lack shared daily newspapers or major television stations to help focus attention on school performance, the local population may have a more difficult time learning about and responding to such measures. This is not to deny that counties are a source of significant political attachments in southern politics, but they may lack the concentrated informational and social infrastructure more common to cities.

A fourth possibility is that the large percentage of Latino families in Texas and Florida may change the dynamics of school enrollment. The Latino National Political Survey (LNPS) revealed that 43% of Mexican-origin Latinos and 54% of Cuban-origin Latinos were not citizens during the approximate time period of this study (De la Garza et al. 1992). Noncitizen parents may have less experience with the U.S. educational system and may therefore be less likely to depart public schools for private schools in response to district test results. Alternatively, language barriers may reduce the likelihood of such parents behaving like consumers.

Finally, parents in most school districts may be relatively complacent about school quality, as the average suburban public school district is not generally perceived to be in crisis. Parents in urban settings, however, may be more sensitized to such concerns by years of discussion and media coverage. Given these untested but reasonable hypotheses, distilling national policy implications from Florida and Texas without examining more relevant data could be problematic.

DATA AND METHOD

To understand the effects of school quality on private school enrollment in urban districts, we have replicated the Wrinkle, Stewart, and Polinard (1999) study using the 1992 Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE) survey of the nation’s urban school districts, which was conducted during the 1990-1991 school year. We coupled the CUBE information with 1990 U.S. census data, aggregated at the school district level by the School District Data Book (National Center for Education Statistics 1994), and with data from the county-level 1990 Survey of Churches and Church Membership in the United States (Roper Center 1990).
The districts in our sample constitute all districts that responded to the CUBE survey and supplied relevant data. The survey was distributed to CUBE member districts and to nonmember districts that were sufficiently large to be eligible for membership. Of the 62 districts responding to the survey, 12 were excluded from the analysis because of missing data. On the whole, the districts appear to be statistically representative of the nation’s urban districts. See Appendix A for a list of the districts studied, Appendix B for descriptive statistics of the variables, and Appendix C for simple correlations of the variables.

The CUBE data permit us to examine whether the market reform hypothesis fares any differently in a national urban sample than it did in the Texas and Florida studies. Recall that the market reform hypothesis is the notion that poor school performance will drive market exit into the private schools, thus driving reform within the public school systems. To test this theory, Wrinkle, Stewart, and Polinard (1999) used a model in which the dependent variable was the percentage of county students in private schools, and the key explanatory variable was the previous year’s county test score on the TAAS (Texas Assessment of Academic Achievement).

We used the same dependent variable as Wrinkle, Stewart, and Polinard (1999), but for the key explanatory variable, we used the district graduation rate as a proxy for school quality. This represents a relatively significant departure from the Wrinkle, Stewart, and Polinard approach. We would prefer to replicate their variable more precisely, but standardized national tests are not administered, leaving us without a standard barometer for performance across the nation’s urban districts.

Potentially comparable proxy test data, such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT), are highly suspect (Powell and Steelman 1996) and offer a poor proxy for school quality in diverse and troubled urban districts. In fact, with many minority parents believing that these tests are racially biased, it is not difficult to believe that such parents might be skeptical about using them to measure school performance. All locales use batteries of tests, but these vary widely by type of instrument and local test-taking rules, making comparability a chimera. Scholars have also found widespread gamesmanship in such testing that can often make scores a misleading measure of school performance (Cannell 1987; Clarke and Agne 1997; Finn 1991; Lieberman 1993; Orfield and Ashkinaze 1991; Sizer 1996).

It is important to recognize that graduation rates are often considered useful barometers of system performance, particularly in urban areas where there is much concern about high dropout rates. Graduation rates are generally perceived by parents to be meaningful, are reported and discussed on a
regular basis, and have real economic and social consequences for a community.

Perhaps most important, the market argument is not that parents will necessarily respond to "real" school quality but that they will respond to visible proxies for school quality. Seen in this light, what matters is the visibility and credibility of the cue rather than the underlying phenomenon itself, so in theory, the local graduation rate may even be an improved proxy over test scores.

On the other hand, graduation rates do not allow a precise replication of previous work and are subject to the same manipulations that may take place in the case of test scores. Because nearly all urban districts are under pressure to put a favorable face on their graduation rate, the numbers may be inflated in a variety of ways. In addition, districts can differ in how they calculate graduation rates, and a diploma from one district does not necessarily signify the same accomplishment as a diploma from another district (Card and Krueger 1992).

Although such variation will make the results of the analysis less efficient, it is not obvious that it will result in bias. It is possible that many districts engage in such behavior to some extent, but it seems unlikely that districts have systematically misrepresented rates in a manner that correlates with the dependent variable of private school enrollment or that the meaning of a high school diploma correlates systematically with private enrollment percentage.

We therefore recognize the imperfections in the graduation data and will keep in mind the possibility that the change in quality variables may be responsible for any differences in the findings or conclusions of this article. Given the limited available data and the importance of the question at hand, however, we proceed on the premise that tackling the question by using this relatively standardized and widely available proxy for system performance is preferable to no analysis at all.

The CUBE survey measured graduation rates by asking districts to report, “What percentage of students enrolled in your high schools graduate?” Each district used its own metric, although the CUBE researcher responsible for overseeing the survey data explained that the standard interpretation was the system’s most recent graduating class divided by the size of the average current high school cohort.6

Unlike Wrinkle, Stewart, and Polinar (1999), we were unable to use a lagged performance variable, as these kinds of data are not available on a systematic basis for the nation’s urban districts. We sought to otherwise replicate their model as much as possible. The dependent variable is therefore the percentage of total district enrollment in private schools. Our figure for each district is the 1990-1991 school year percentage.
Also included was district median family income (1990), as private schools charge tuition that those with more income will find easier to afford. This control variable is essential to clearly understand the other factors associated with private school choice.

The black percentage of district public school enrollment (1990-1991 school year) tests the theory that demand for private schooling in part reflects a desire by white families to avoid minorities. As Smith and Meier (1995a, 468) wrote, “This variable is designed to test to what extent those attending private schools are purchasing segregation rather than quality education.”

The Catholic percentage of the local population is important because Catholic schools make up the large majority of private schools. Parental interest in private schooling may therefore reflect more a demand for religious instruction than dissatisfaction with the public schools. It was only available on a countywide basis (as reported in 1990 by the Survey of Churches and Church Membership), so the Catholic population percentage is not always coterminous with the school district.7

This model is therefore written as

\[
\text{PrivateSchool\%} = \alpha + b_1\text{Graduation\%} + b_2\text{BlackStudent\%} + b_3\text{Catholic\%} + b_4\text{MedianFamilyIncome} + \epsilon.
\]

A second model controls for whether the district had ever been under a desegregation plan, as reported by the CUBE survey.8 Smith and Meier (1995a) and Wrinkle, Stewart, and Polinard (1999) hypothesized that some families seek to avoid school systems with relatively large minority populations. This relationship, however, may mask the effects of desegregation efforts, which have generally been more common in cities with relatively large minority populations. Desegregation, which often prompts white middle-class families to depart the public schools for private schools or the suburbs, may result in lower measures of public school performance as well as boost the district’s private school percentage (Crain 1968; Fraga, Erlichson, and Lee 1998). To ignore the impact of this on private enrollment may risk generating biased estimates of how families act in the presence of large black populations.9

In addition, a third model adds a measure of district Latino student population. This takes into account the citizenship and linguistic factors discussed in the previous section, although it could encompass the same dynamics as theorized for the black student variable. It was not included in the previous two models because Wrinkle, Stewart, and Polinard (1999) and Smith and Meier (1995a, 1995b) did not test it, but it seems reasonable to hypothesize that unique dynamics might be associated with this unique population.
Contrary to previous research, we find that a proxy for public school educational performance is associated with private school enrollment. Specifically, higher public school graduation rates are associated with lower enrollment in private schools ($p < .01$).

The substantive effect is modest, with a 10 percentage point increase in the graduation rate associated with a decrease in private school enrollment of just over 1%. This nevertheless suggests that some urban parents may be responding to perceived inadequacies in their local public schools by enrolling their children in private schools. Moreover, because nonsystematic measurement error in an explanatory variable will produce underestimates of its causal effect (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, 163-68), we should regard the coefficient as a likely understatement of the real effect. This finding is especially noteworthy given that the previous studies of Florida and Texas school districts found no such effect.\footnote{10}

Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that the relationship we estimate here is cross-sectional in nature. The Florida and Texas studies were able to use longitudinal data, which found that changes in proxies for perceived school performance did not lead to changes in public enrollment percentage. It is possible that perceived school quality may be related to private

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**TABLE 1:** Determinants of Private School Enrollment Percentage in Urban School Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.857*** (0.068)</td>
<td>-0.951*** (0.064)</td>
<td>-0.935*** (0.063)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation rate (from 0 to 1)</td>
<td>-0.134*** (0.04)</td>
<td>-0.13*** (0.03)</td>
<td>-0.115*** (0.033)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Catholic (from 0 to 1)</td>
<td>0.124** (0.05)</td>
<td>0.16*** (0.05)</td>
<td>0.211*** (0.052)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income (in 10,000s)</td>
<td>0.023 (0.019)</td>
<td>0.034** (0.017)</td>
<td>0.030* (0.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% black (from 0 to 1)</td>
<td>0.066* (0.038)</td>
<td>0.049 (0.034)</td>
<td>0.026 (0.035)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desegregation history (1 = yes, 0 = no)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>-0.070*** (0.018)</td>
<td>0.063*** (0.018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Latino (from 0 to 1)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>-0.088** (0.044)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. 

---

EXAMINING THE DETERMINANTS OF PRIVATE ENROLLMENT

Contrary to previous research, we find that a proxy for public school educational performance is associated with private school enrollment. Specifically, higher public school graduation rates are associated with lower enrollment in private schools ($p < .01$).

The substantive effect is modest, with a 10 percentage point increase in the graduation rate associated with a decrease in private school enrollment of just over 1%. This nevertheless suggests that some urban parents may be responding to perceived inadequacies in their local public schools by enrolling their children in private schools. Moreover, because nonsystematic measurement error in an explanatory variable will produce underestimates of its causal effect (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, 163-68), we should regard the coefficient as a likely understatement of the real effect. This finding is especially noteworthy given that the previous studies of Florida and Texas school districts found no such effect.\footnote{10}

Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that the relationship we estimate here is cross-sectional in nature. The Florida and Texas studies were able to use longitudinal data, which found that changes in proxies for perceived school performance did not lead to changes in public enrollment percentage. It is possible that perceived school quality may be related to private
school enrollment, but that changes in the one have only minimal effects on the other. If that is the case, our findings can be reconciled with the previous research rather easily.

One might also argue that we have the causal effect backward, meaning that higher private school enrollment lowers public school graduation rates because they are “creaming off” the students most likely to graduate. Although we acknowledge the possibility of a creaming effect, it does not appear likely for several reasons. First, because of the manner in which the model is specified, any such effect (in which private schools attract a disproportionate share of good students) is likely to be largely a function of perceived school quality—which would mean it is not a “creaming effect” at all but a perceived quality effect consistent with our analysis.

This is because the model already accounts for community variation in family income and race. For our purposes, communities can be regarded as identical on these dimensions, and socioeconomic status (SES) and race are generally hypothesized to be the key dimensions on which creaming will systemically occur. Holding these factors constant, it is less clear why some communities would cream more than others do. The fact that some skimming occurs in all communities is not a problem for the analysis, as we are looking at variation between communities. Skimming is only a problem if it is systematically occurring in some communities more than in others.11

The model also provides evidence that private school enrollment is partially explained by the desire for religious instruction. Despite the inefficiency caused by our use of county data to measure Catholic population in a particular school district, districts in counties where Catholics constitute a larger share of the local population have increased levels of private school enrollment \((p < .05)\). This corroborates the findings of Wrinkle, Stewart, and Polinard (1999) and Smith and Meier (1995a, 1995b). The substantive effect is again small, however, with a 10 percentage point increase in Catholic population associated with an increase in private school enrollment of slightly more than 1 percentage point.

Consistent with the findings of Wrinkle, Stewart, and Polinard (1999) and Smith and Meier (1995a, 1995b), districts with a greater percentage of black residents had higher rates of private school enrollment. This suggests that private school enrollment is partially a consequence of “white flight.” The median income of the school district is insignificant, however, despite the commonsense hypothesis that higher incomes will be associated with higher rates of private school enrollment.

In an attempt to better account for racial effects, we tested a second model with an additional variable measuring whether a district had ever operated under a desegregation plan. Although the effects of graduation rates in this
model were unchanged, the results suggest that race may play a somewhat different role in private school enrollment than previous research has suggested.

The variable for school district experience with desegregation was statistically significant and was associated with a 7% reduction in public enrollment percentage. This suggests that efforts to use busing and other tactics to promote integration may increase the percentage of families opting to use private schooling. In addition, when the desegregation variable is taken into account, the effect of the black percentage of public school enrollment falls below the .10 level of significance. This finding suggests that, at least in the urban context, private school demand may be more a response to desegregation efforts than to the presence of black students in the public schools. However, the varying findings on black enrollment percentage make clear that more research is needed on this point.

Adding the Latino student variable further diminishes the statistical significance of black enrollment percentage, regardless of the standard used (p-value of .461). The Latino variable is significant, however, and negatively associated with private school enrollment. Substantively, a 10% increase in Latino student population is associated with just under a 1% increase in the public school enrollment percentage. This might involve the linguistic and citizenship issues mentioned previously, but it could also reflect the generally high level of respect for public institutions by Latinos.

Finally, the median family income variable is statistically significant in the second and third models when the effects of desegregation as well as Latino student population are taken into account. Given the existence of private school tuition, it makes sense that income would play some role in private school enrollment, but we are unable to explain why this relationship would become clear only when these racial and ethnic measures are included.

COMPETITION AND URBAN SCHOOLS

This study provides evidence that families are slightly more likely to turn to private schools in those urban school districts where the public system graduates students at a reduced rate. These results do not necessarily contradict those of Wrinkle, Stewart, and Polinard (1999) or Smith and Meier (1995a, 1995b), because we looked at cross-sectional data, whereas they were able to longitudinally examine the relationship of perceived public school quality and public school enrollment. It is possible that there may be a relationship between perceived quality and public enrollment at any given
time but that changes in quality do not readily or rapidly translate into enrollment changes.

As with any study, it is important to assess not just statistical but also substantive significance. For the latter, the effect of the graduation rate variable is modest, but it is nevertheless the first quantitative evidence of market reform dynamics at the urban level. This suggests we should be cautious before extrapolating from the evidence in the cases of Florida and Texas to the national level or to urban school systems.

On the other hand, some of Wrinkle, Stewart, and Polinard’s (1999) and Smith and Meier’s (1995a, 1995b) findings do appear to apply to the national urban level. We find that the percentage of Catholics in a community is associated with higher rates of private school enrollment. Race also appears to play a role, although in a somewhat different way than previous research found. The percentage of black students is statistically significant in the first model, but it drops to insignificance when desegregation and Latino student percentage are included. As desegregation is statistically significant, it may not be concerns about race alone but the problems and turbulence associated with desegregation efforts that lead families to exit the public schools. On the other hand, it may not necessarily be the actual presence of minorities that prompts white flight but the potential of that presence due to a desegregation order.

The Latino student variable has not been factored into previous analyses and could reflect language, citizenship, or trust in public institutions. This finding is particularly useful because the Wrinkle, Stewart, and Polinard (1999) and Smith and Meier (1995a, 1995b) articles studied Texas and Florida but did not control for Latinos.

One caveat is that this article examines the effect of graduation rates on public school enrollment rather than the effect of test scores. Graduation rates may be a useful proxy for perceived school system performance, as we suggest, but they are subject to inconsistent reporting as well as the same gamesmanship that affects test scores. This means that we have not precisely replicated the previous state-level research, and our measurements likely contain some inefficiency. Nevertheless, we still believe it is crucial to extend quantitative consideration of the competition question to urban districts—because that is where choice-based policies are most often contemplated—and it is better to address this question with imperfect, albeit unbiased, data than to leave it unaddressed.

The previous studies of counties in one state included an assortment of districts, thus presenting potential problems for those attempting to shape policies targeted to urban areas. Families may not generally be driven to use
the exit option by slight variations in test scores but may only do so when perceived school performance reaches a level of critical concern—as many scholars suggest it has done in the case of urban schooling. By focusing on urban school districts, we are able to study the venue of central interest to the school choice debate.

From a policy perspective, the findings presented here may assist state and federal policy makers who are deliberating over the creation of charter school, voucher, and educational tax credit programs. Particularly because so many of these programs are implicitly or explicitly targeted at troubled urban school systems, it is important that policy makers understand just how competition and educational markets would be likely to operate in practice. The findings we report suggest some consistent dynamics that characterize the “urban education marketplace.”

In particular, there are two points of interest to policy makers. First, there is some evidence that private school enrollment percentage is related to perceived school quality, although it cannot be determined from our data whether changes in perceived urban school quality drive changes in private enrollment. If the cross-sectional relationship we find here does signify such a sensitivity to changes in quality, it would suggest that quality-conscious consumers may depart public schools under choice-based reforms, potentially pressuring public school systems to improve.

Second, not only is there evidence that families appear to choose private schools for reasons related to the religious and perhaps the racial composition of schools, but families may be more likely to leave the public schools when districts have been engaged in desegregation-related activities. These findings suggest that when families choose schools, they are responsive to contextual factors that involve school quality as well as other factors; choice-based reforms will make it easier for families to act on such preferences.

In sum, this study finds the first quantitative evidence in support of the market reform hypothesis for urban school districts. In addition, it suggests that some previous findings from Texas and Florida may hold across a national sample of urban districts. One goal for future research is therefore to see whether the differences between our findings and those of previous scholars are a result of the varying venues studied, the different measures of school system performance, the different variables used to operationalize system performance, the lack of a lagged system performance measure, or some other reason. More research will enable scholars and policy makers alike to better understand if and how markets work in a variety of educational settings as well as the benefits such approaches confer.
APPENDIX A
School Districts in the Study

- Akron
- Albuquerque
- Anchorage
- Atlanta
- Boston
- Bridgeport
- Chicago
- Cincinnati
- Cleveland
- Columbia
- Dallas
- Dayton
- Denver
- Des Moines
- Detroit
- Ft. Lauderdale
- Gary
- Huntington
- Jackson
- Jacksonville
- Laredo
- Las Vegas
- Long Beach
- Memphis
- Mesa
- Miami
- Minneapolis
- Montgomery
- New York
- Norfolk
- Oakland
- Orlando
- Philadelphia
- Pittsburgh
- Providence
- Raleigh
- Reno
- San Bernardino
- South Bend
- Springfield
- St. Louis
- Syracuse
- Tacoma
- Tampa
- Toledo
- Tulsa
- Virginia Beach
- Wichita

APPENDIX B
Descriptive Statistics for All Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private enrollment (%)</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black students (%)</td>
<td>0.324</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino students (%)</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income (thousands)</td>
<td>26.017</td>
<td>5.049</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desegregation</td>
<td>0.847</td>
<td>0.354</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic (%)</td>
<td>0.214</td>
<td>0.155</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduation (%)</td>
<td>0.708</td>
<td>0.199</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation (%)a</td>
<td>0.738</td>
<td>0.158</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation (%)b</td>
<td>0.753</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Observations within 2 standard deviations of the full sample mean.
b. Observations within 1.5 standard deviations of the full sample mean.

APPENDIX C:
Correlation Matrix of Independent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Graduation</th>
<th>Black Students</th>
<th>Median Income</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Latino Students</th>
<th>Desegregation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-0.523</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-0.312</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-0.195</td>
<td>-0.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation</td>
<td>-0.293</td>
<td>-0.312</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-0.493</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-0.195</td>
<td>-0.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black students</td>
<td>0.238</td>
<td>0.331</td>
<td>-0.493</td>
<td>-0.195</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-0.195</td>
<td>-0.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td>-0.226</td>
<td>0.331</td>
<td>-0.493</td>
<td>-0.195</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-0.195</td>
<td>-0.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>0.328</td>
<td>-0.195</td>
<td>-0.461</td>
<td>-0.195</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-0.195</td>
<td>-0.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino students</td>
<td>-0.204</td>
<td>0.145</td>
<td>-0.353</td>
<td>-0.195</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-0.195</td>
<td>-0.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desegregation</td>
<td>0.414</td>
<td>-0.122</td>
<td>0.268</td>
<td>-0.190</td>
<td>-0.136</td>
<td>-0.296</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTES

1. The debate on this third issue has received a good deal of attention, much of which has turned on the question of how data on student performance should be appropriately analyzed and understood (see Greene, Peterson, and Du 1999; Rouse 1998; Witte 1998). This discussion is conceptually distinct from the points under examination here and will not occupy us in this analysis.

2. Through either private schools or a multitude of public school districts.

3. Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE) guidelines call for members to have a population of at least 100,000 students or to be the largest urban district in their state, but smaller districts that consider themselves urban are permitted to join. Records are unclear, but it appears the CUBE survey was distributed to about 160 districts, of which 62 responded.

4. This was not easy to determine because we are unaware of a readily available source of information for the largest 200 or 300 urban school districts (as opposed to the largest school districts, which are described in the School District Data Book but include many large nonurban districts that are not always easy to differentiate based on district name). We therefore compared the means of several variables in our overall data set with those listed in the County and City Data Book (CCDB) (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992) for the 77 largest cities (why it presents data for the top 77 and not some other number is unclear). Our black community population was 25.1%, compared with the CCDB mean of 22.3%; our Hispanic community percentage was 11.4 compared with 13.8; our median family income was $26,017 compared with their median household income of $26,977; our district public school enrollment was 84.4% compared with 87.1%; and our community poverty rate was 17.8% compared with 18%.

5. The reader should note that all variables, with the exception of percentage Catholic, are at the school district level, not the county level.

6. Because this measure is vague, it introduces noise into the measure. The minimum and maximum values for the variable (see Appendix B) suggest that all districts did not interpret the question uniformly. This approach to measuring school quality would be cause for significant concern were it not for three factors. First, the regression results are remarkably resistant to the deletion or addition of outliers. Deleting those outliers more than two standard deviations from the mean graduation rate value (as well as deleting those more than one and a half standard deviations away) had no important effect; the significance of the graduation rate variable remained constant. This stability increases our confidence in the validity of graduation rates as a proxy variable. Second, any variation in the graduation rate data produced by this wording will tend to cause the analysis to underestimate the causal effect of the variable (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994), as it causes inefficiency but not bias. This suggests that any findings are likely to understate the actual causal relationship. Third, all bodies that collect data on a sample of urban school systems (such as CUBE or the Council of Great City Schools) rely on self-reported data that are calculated according to district norms, which can vary significantly. Any effort to conduct national research on this question at this time is therefore forced to use data that are not fully standardized or to forgo comparative analysis on urban districts.

7. The simple correlation for all pairs of explanatory variables is below 0.50, and only two pairs of variables (median family income and black student percentage; median family income and Catholic population percentage) have a simple correlation above 0.33 (see Appendix C).

8. Pages 199-203 of the survey report ask districts about their current and past desegregation plans. This variable correlates with the percentage of black students at 0.25, not enough to raise concerns about multicollinearity.
9. We might also respecify the black student variable to further test its potential effect on “white flight” to private schools. Perhaps racial effects are more likely to occur when the black student percentage reaches a threshold point, such as 50% of public school enrollment. A relevant dummy was therefore included in the regression in place of the black student percentage measure but proved statistically insignificant.

10. Some might argue that this is explained by a mathematical relationship. A decline in graduation rates means fewer students in the public school system; even if the number in private schools remains the same, this will increase the share of students in private schools. However, simple mathematical tests of this possibility show that, on average, it can only account for less than one-fifth of the substantive significance of the variable for graduation rates in the second model.

11. One other significant factor that might facilitate skimming is if some communities have more developed private school systems, but the model controls for Catholic population, which has long been used as a proxy for the extent of local private schooling. Consequently, it is not obvious what factors would account for systematic variation in the rate of creaming. Nevertheless, an observer might still look at the impressive graduation rates of many urban private schools and conclude that substantial creaming must be taking place. We suggest there are two further considerations. First, students enrolled in private schools tend to be relatively similar to their public school peers on many measurable dimensions (Bryk, Lee, and Holland 1993; Coleman and Hoffer 1987), although not all. Although white and affluent students are enrolled in private schools at a somewhat higher rate than they are represented in the general population, the size of the difference is not as large as is often imagined. For instance, in a nationally representative sample of 4,700 adults conducted in 1995, Moe (2001) found that private school parents are 12% African-American, whereas public school parents are 15% African-American. He found larger gaps in terms of income and education, but in neither case do private school parents vary from the average parents by as much as one-half of a standard deviation. Similarly, Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) reported that Catholic high schools actually enrolled a slightly higher percentage of black students than did the public high schools. Bryk, Lee, and Holland also found that the family income of Catholic high school students was slightly higher than that of public high school students—$33,596 for the private students and $27,851 for the public students—although they noted that “affluent students, whose family incomes were in excess of $50,000, actually appear slightly underrepresented in the Catholic sector” (p. 71). Of course, the above analysis does not account for unobserved differences, but it may lessen our concern that private schools are systematically skimming students destined to graduate. In addition, although urban private schools do appear to graduate their students at a higher rate than do public schools, there is substantial reason to believe that much of this difference may be due to school-level, rather than student-specific, effects (Neal 1998). For instance, after controlling for student characteristics, Evans and Schwab (1995) and Neal (1997) found that urban Catholic school students are significantly more likely to graduate than their public school peers. To the extent that private school students are graduating at a higher rate because of the schools themselves, creaming is not a factor.

12. Although it is significant at the .10 level for a one-tailed test.

13. In addition, when the first two models are run without the outlier graduation observations (as discussed previously), the black student percentage variable drops to clear statistical insignificance.

14. See Hirschman (1970) for a classic discussion of the circumstances that may or may not prompt individuals to use the exit option.

15. In addition, the potential for market impact on school systems has been observed in other contexts. Previous research has found that a higher percentage of private school enrollment
is positively associated with the provision of computer-enhanced instruction in urban public schools (Hess and Leal 1999a) and with a greater availability of sex-related education programs in urban public schools (Hess and Leal 1999b).

REFERENCES


Frederick M. Hess has been assistant professor of education and government at the University of Virginia since 1997. He holds a Ph.D. in government and an M.Ed. in education from Harvard University. His books include *Spinning Wheels: The Politics of Urban School Reform*, *Bringing the Social Sciences Alive*, and *School Choice in the Real World: Lessons from Arizona Charter Schools*. He has contributed more than two dozen articles to scholarly and practitioner journals, including *Social Science Quarterly*, *American Politics Quarterly*, *Policy Studies Journal*, *Educational Policy*, *Phi Delta Kappan*, *Urban Affairs Review*, *American School Board Journal*, and *School Administrator*.

David L. Leal is an assistant professor of political science at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo. He received a Ph.D. in political science from Harvard University and a B.A. in political science with honors from Stanford University. He has conducted research on Latino politics, education policy, and campaigns and elections. He was an American Political Science Association Congressional Fellow in the office of Senator John F. Kerry (D-MA) from 1998 to 1999. He has articles published or forthcoming in journals such as *British Journal of Political Science*, *Political Research Quarterly*, *Educational Policy*, *American Politics Quarterly*, *Social Science Quarterly*, *Policy Studies Journal*, *Urban Affairs Review*, and the *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*. 
QUALITY, RACE, AND THE URBAN EDUCATION MARKETPLACE RECONSIDERED

SALVATORE SAPORITO
WILLIAM L. YANCEY
VINCENT LOUIS
Temple University

Hess and Leal suggest that public and private schools within cities form an “educational marketplace” in which families act as consumers who seek the best educational alternatives for their children. In such a marketplace, Hess and Leal assume that private schools offer better educational services than public schools. Based on this assumption, they hypothesize that as the quality of public schools within a school district diminishes, the percentage of students who attend private schools increases. To support this view empirically, the authors examine cross-sectional data describing 50 urban school districts and attempt to predict the percentage of students in each of these school districts who attend private schools. Included in their model is a variable for school quality—as measured by the percentage of students who do not graduate from high school. They argue that their results show that as public school quality decreases, children increasingly attend putatively better private schools.

We disagree with this interpretation. In our view, a model that emphasizes people’s attempts to distance themselves from groups they consider socially different better explains the educational choices families make. In particular, we stress the tendency among advantaged groups (i.e., wealthier and white families) to seclude themselves from disadvantaged groups. In short, we do not believe, as do Hess and Leal, that school choices follow a strict economic model of human behavior in which families select the best schools from a range of educational choices. Rather, we suggest that families elect to send
their children to private schools primarily as a way of physically and socially distancing themselves from people who they perceive to be of lower social status (i.e., minorities and the poor). The withdrawal of advantaged students to private schools has repercussions for public schools, including increasing the proportion of disadvantaged students they serve. These disadvantaged students are the most likely to drop out of school before receiving a diploma. In short, increasing private school attendance within a school district erodes the quality of schools, thus reversing the causal order of the argument Hess and Leal presented.

Indeed, Hess and Leal consider this hypothesis: “One might also argue that we have the causal effect backward, meaning that higher private school enrollment lowers public school graduation rates because [private schools] are ‘creaming off’ the students most likely to graduate. Although we acknowledge the possibility of a creaming effect, it does not appear likely” (p. 257). Although they doubt that creaming occurs, the authors nevertheless attempt to control for its potential effects by including income and racial composition in their models. Based on their results, the authors conclude the following:

For our purposes, communities can be regarded as identical on these dimensions, and socioeconomic status (SES) and race are generally hypothesized to be the key dimensions on which creaming will systematically occur. Holding these factors constant, it is less clear why some communities would cream more than others. . . . Skimming is only a problem if it is systematically occurring in some communities more than others. (p. 257)

There are three critical issues: First, do private schools “skim” the most advantaged students? Second, does creaming take place in some school districts more than others? And third, does the presence of private schools within an area have a detrimental effect on the quality of nearby public schools? We address these questions using data from the U.S. census, from the School District Data Book (National Center for Education Statistics 1994), and the data used by Hess and Leal.

DOES CREAMING OCCUR?

We use data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census’s (1990) 5% Public Use Micro Data Sample (PUMS) to show that students from socially advantaged groups are more likely to attend private school. We also use these data to explore the influence of race and economic composition on the likelihood
that advantaged students leave public schools for private schools. We define residential areas as public use micro data areas (PUMAs) containing roughly 100,000 persons. In large school districts, such as those in the Hess and Leal data, there are multiple census areas.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of children who attend private school by their poverty status and the poverty rates of the census areas in which they live. Each line in Figure 1 represents students from different socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds expressed as multiples of poverty. The figure shows two relationships. First, students from wealthier families are more likely to attend private school. Students who live at the poverty line are much less likely than the wealthiest students to attend private schools. Thus, families with greater economic resources (the same families whose children are likely to graduate from high school) are more likely than poorer families to send their children to private schools, indicating that economic “creaming” does take place.

Second, the figure shows that the likelihood that students from different poverty groups will attend private school is influenced by the poverty rate in their residential area. Examining the slope of each line in Figure 1 shows this.
Among poor students and students who live between one and three times below the poverty level (i.e., the lowest two lines), there is little relationship between residential poverty rates and the percentage of students enrolled in private school. This is not the case among wealthier students, who are increasingly likely to attend private schools as the poverty rate in their community increases. This is shown by the increasing steepness in the highest three lines, indicating that private school attendance among more affluent students is highly related to the poverty rates of their residential areas. This has an import effect: The gap in private school attendance between poorer and wealthier students is the greatest in communities that serve higher percentages of poorer students. As a result, public schools serving economically heterogeneous areas serve much higher percentages of poor students than they would if no private schools were available.

Figure 2 shows similar patterns by race. On average, white students are nearly two times more likely than nonwhite students to attend private schools. This disparity increases as the percentage of nonwhites in the PUMA area increases. For example, roughly five times as many white than
nonwhite students attend private schools when between 60% and 80% of school-age children in the area are nonwhite.

The findings in Tables 1 and 2 (presented later) are important for a number of reasons. First, census data document that students who are white or are from wealthier families are “skimmed” from public schools. Second, the proclivity among white and wealthier students to leave public schools is greater when such schools serve higher percentages of nonwhite and poor students. It is important to note that schools serving racially and economically integrated communities are the same schools likely to lose the greatest numbers of white and wealthier students to private schools. This last finding has an important implication. In school districts with high levels of economic and racial integration, white and wealthier families will seek private schools in an effort to distance their children from their disadvantaged peers. Thus, the internal integration of a school district influences its private school attendance rate. Hess and Leal acknowledge that skimming is a problem if it occurs systematically in some communities more than in others. Census data show that it does. Although Hess and Leal control for the effects of income and race for the entire school district, this does not eliminate the important influence of internal integration by race and class.

**SCHOOL DISTRICT-LEVEL RESULTS RECONSIDERED**

The PUMA data show that creaming takes place within communities depending on their race and class composition. This suggests that the degree to which a school district’s communities are integrated influences the rate of its private schooling. We now examine the outcomes of creaming at the district level by reexamining Hess and Leal’s results and a data set that describes the 206 central-city districts with populations greater than 50,000 persons in 1990.

We use the output from the correlation matrices and descriptive statistics (Appendixes B and C in Hess and Leal’s article) to reproduce their regression results. In their statistical analysis, Hess and Leal rely on tests of significance and, to a lesser extent, the regression coefficients to indicate the relative importance of graduation rates (i.e., “school quality”) in determining private school attendance. Standardized regression coefficients (beta weights) are the preferred means of determining the relative contribution of the independent variables. The beta weights indicate that the percentage of Catholics in a district is the most powerful predictor variable in their model ($\beta = .56$). This is
followed by the presence of a desegregation program (β = .39) and then graduation rates (β = .38).

We believe these results are more consistent with a conceptual model that stresses the importance of social distancing than one that stresses free-market behavior. Private school attendance rates are highly associated with the presence of Catholic populations and, to a lesser extent, with racial desegregation programs. Our interpretation is that the presence of Catholic schools provides an opportunity for families to provide an ethnically homogeneous education for their children. Similarly, as they also show, school districts that have attempted to integrate students racially have lost students to private schools. We believe this is consistent with white populations attempting to maintain their social distance from nonwhites, which corresponds with the findings we presented earlier.

However, two critical issues remain. First, does variation in private school attendance across urban school districts reflect our “social distance” hypothesis? Second, does private schooling have a detrimental effect on an urban public school system’s ability to educate children?

To assess these issues, we have conducted a series of multiple regression analyses using data from the School District Data Book compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics (1994). This is the same data source used by Hess and Leal. We have limited our analysis to 206 central-city districts with populations greater than 50,000 persons. Thus, our sample, although larger, covers the same range of city population size found in Hess and Leal’s data. Our analysis of private schooling differs from Hess and Leal’s in four important ways. First, we do not have a measure of school quality. Second, we do not have information describing the percentage of Catholics in the population. Third, we examine the effects of the racial composition of school-age children in district populations on rates of private schooling. Hess and Leal used the racial composition of public school students as their independent variable. This difference is important because the characteristics of public school students are dependent on the rate of private schooling. Finally, we examine rates of private schooling for white and black students separately as well as the total rate of private schooling. Hess and Leal only examine total private school rates. The results of our analyses are presented in Table 1.

The results of our analysis of the total rate of private schooling are similar to that of Hess and Leal. Private schooling is higher among cities with higher proportions of black children, where median incomes are higher, and lower in cities with high proportions of Latino children. It is also higher in northeastern cities—the region where Catholic schools have been concentrated. Hess
and Leal report that the effect of the percentage of public school students who were black was not significant. Our analysis suggests that if they had used the percentage of children in the population who were black, this effect may have been statistically significant.

Private schooling is higher for both blacks and whites in northeastern cities and in cities with higher median incomes. Nevertheless, rates of private schooling among whites are very different from those of blacks. Rates of private schooling among whites are highly related to the percentage of children who are black and Latino in the school district. By contrast, there is no relationship between the racial composition of districts and rates of private schooling among black students. Although all students may be sensitive to the quality of schools, among whites, much of the variance in private schooling is related to the racial composition of district populations. We believe our results are consistent with the general hypotheses that rates of private schooling are a consequence of affluent whites seeking to maintain social distance from poor and minority children.

The last critical issue to be addressed is whether private schooling has a detrimental effect on the quality of public educational systems. Although we do not have a direct measure of school quality, the *School District Data Book* file provides information on the racial and economic characteristics of public school students (National Center for Education Statistics 1994). Substantial research has shown that these are important correlates of school quality. For example, research by Coleman et al. (1966) shows that “the socioeconomic level of a student’s school had more effect on his achievement than any other measurable factor except the socioeconomic level of his home” (Jencks 1973, 100). Similarly, Bankston and Caldas (1996, 552) concluded in their research on Louisiana’s public schools that “defacto segregation, understood

### TABLE 1: Results of Multiple Regression Analyses of Rates of Private Schooling Among Students Living in Central Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>Black Students</th>
<th>White Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% children black</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td>.759</td>
<td>.441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% children Latino</td>
<td>−.147</td>
<td>.234</td>
<td>.158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td>.300</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td>.0006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>northeastern city</td>
<td>.333</td>
<td>.198</td>
<td>5.257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.436</td>
<td>−.846</td>
<td>−6.409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.292</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>.528</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
as minority concentration, constitutes a disadvantage over and above that of individual students’ own racial status.” The question is whether private schooling increases the concentration of low-income and minority students in urban school districts.

Table 2 presents the results of regression analyses of the percentage of public school students who are minorities and percentage who qualify for free lunches. In the first equation, we predict the percentage of public school students who are minorities using the percentage of the children living in the school districts who are minorities and the percentage of white students who attend private school. The results are clear. We find the expected high correlations between the percentage of public school students who are minorities. In addition, the percentage of whites who attend private schools is significantly related to the percentage of public school students who are minorities.

The second regression examines the relationships between the percentage of students who qualify for free lunches and two indicators of the social and economic status of families: median family income and the percentage of families receiving public assistance. In addition, we include the percentage of white students attending private school. As expected, we find that the percentage of public school students receiving free lunches decreases with median family income and increases with the percentage of families receiving welfare. Controlling for these factors, the percentage of whites who

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>% Public School Students: Minority</th>
<th>% Public School Students: Qualified for Free Lunches^a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% children minority</td>
<td>.940</td>
<td>.319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% families AFDC</td>
<td>1.008</td>
<td>1.170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td>-.357</td>
<td>-.0012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% white private school</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.204</td>
<td>.551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.988</td>
<td>8,408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.996</td>
<td>.697</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: AFDC = Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

a. Information on the percentage of children who qualified for free lunches is available for only 99 districts.
attend private schools increases the percentage of public school students who qualify for free lunches.

CONCLUSION

Our disagreement with Hess and Leal begins at the conceptual level. Their view of urban educational systems assumes that the quality of schools is driven by competition between institutions seeking to secure their place in the marketplace. Their view provides little space for understanding families whose choices are driven by “nonrational factors,” particularly their desire to maintain social distance from stigmatized groups. Their model of free-market competition ignores the substantial evidence indicating that the quality of urban school systems is related to their political and economic resources, as well as the character of the communities and populations they serve (Kantor and Brenzel 1993).

We agree with Hess and Leal’s conclusion that it is important that policymakers deliberating over programs that will introduce greater choice in urban educational systems should “understand just how competition and educational markets would be likely to operate in practice.” We disagree with their conclusion. If the new programs—charter schools, vouchers, and income tax credits—have effects that are similar to private education, the political and economic support for and quality of urban public education will be further eroded.

REFERENCES


William L. Yancey is professor and chair of sociology at Temple University, Philadelphia. He received his B.S. degree from Florida State University (1961) and Ph.D. from Washington University (1967). He is the author of numerous articles dealing with issues of urban poverty, race and ethnicity. He is co-author of The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy (1967) and Philadelphia: Neighborhoods, Division and Conflict in a Post Industrial City (1991).
While reading the response by Saporito, Yancey, and Louis, we sometimes experienced the disconcerting sensation that they were responding to an article other than the one we had written. Although we have already made clear our belief that additional research on these questions is needed, we fear that in this response, Saporito et al. have missed the thrust of our argument, misunderstood our analysis, and misrepresented our premises. In addition, the analysis they do present, although interesting and useful, is largely consistent with our own and does not offer any cause for us to modify our conclusions.

One telling problem with the Saporito et al. response is that the authors attribute to us a number of controversial assumptions that we never made. Each seems intended to portray us as ideologues more interested in making a case for school choice than in an evenhanded analysis of the relevant evidence. Prominent examples of this include the following statements:

- “…we do not believe, as do Hess and Leal, that school choices follow a strict economic model of human behavior” (p. 267)
- “Their view of urban educational systems assumes that the quality of schools is driven by competition between institutions seeking to secure their place in the marketplace” (p. 275)
- “In such a marketplace, Hess and Leal assume that private schools offer better educational services than public schools” (p. 267)

Such statements might lead a reader to conclude that we are market adherents who advocate reforms such as school vouchers. Even a quick reading of
our article, however, shows that we take no position on market-based reforms, draw no conclusion about whether educational markets “work,” and make no assumption about whether public or private schools are “better.” Moreover, we would argue that nowhere in our larger body of work is there a basis for the assertions made by Saporito et al. In short, these strong characterizations of our “views” are inaccurate and misleading. They are all the more puzzling because we make clear in a modulated introduction and conclusion that we take seriously claims that urban communities are responsive to school quality (real or perceived), as well as competing hypotheses that educational choice is driven by race-based and economic considerations.

Given the limited data available, we did our best to test these competing theories while controlling for the key environmental factors hypothesized in the extant literature. We made no effort to provide a comprehensive model of school selection but sought to determine whether there are any district-level relationships between perceived school quality or racial context and private enrollment.

Given this research design, we are perplexed by Saporito et al.’s assertion that our article “provides little space for understanding families whose choices are driven by ‘nonrational factors’” (p. 275). First, we make no claims to be providing family-level analysis. Second, it is not entirely clear what Saporito et al. consider “nonrational.” However, as they seem to imply that racial preferences are the key “nonrational” factors of interest, it is peculiar that they would level such a charge when we control for the effects of black student population, Latino student population, and local desegregation activity.

More generally, the Saporito et al. comment primarily addresses our technical point regarding the incidence of “skimming” (where private schools “skim” the best students, reducing public school graduation rates) and seems to overlook the substance of our model, analysis, and discussion. Early in the article, we suggest that the possibility of skimming appears unlikely to significantly bias the values of our graduation rate variable across districts. Contrary to the Saporito et al. critique, however, we never suggest that private school attendance is unrelated to racial or class considerations. In fact, we include in the model median family income as well as the race variables mentioned earlier.

Ignoring our model and discussion and proceeding as if we deny a link between race or income and private enrollment, Saporito et al. present data making the case that race and class are associated with private school attendance. Their Figure 1 shows how much more likely people are to use private schools based on the poverty rate in their residential area. They seem to
present this as a challenge to our analysis. This is puzzling, given that their findings substantively echo our own results showing median family income to be correlated with private enrollment. Moreover, interesting as their additional information is, their discussion presents no reason to question our analytic results unless citywide patterns of poverty concentration are systematically related to the dependent variable and the explanatory variables of interest.¹ At no point do Saporito et al. suggest this is the case.

Saporito et al.’s Figure 2 shows that white students are more likely than minority students to use private schools and that whites are more likely to do so as the minority student percentage increases. In interpreting this racial disparity, the authors essentially impute all white behavior to a desire for whites to remove themselves from “stigmatized groups.” This seems a somewhat incomplete view of human behavior, given the array of other possible explanations that Saporito et al. do not consider. For instance, because minority populations unfortunately graduate at lower rates and are correlated with lower measurable school performance, white families may opt for private schooling out of concern about school quality, rather than out of a desire to escape minorities.

In fact, this is the key point that we seek to test in our article but one that Saporito et al. appear to miss. Their failure to address this issue is unfortunately catastrophic, as it means they have nothing to say on a central question they wish to address—which is whether a negative correlation between minority population and white public enrollment indicates that white families are seeking to distance themselves from minorities, or whether white families are seeking to escape problems that may simply be correlated with minority populations.

We might also point out that our Latino student variable is negatively associated with private school enrollment. If racial considerations dominate school selection as Saporito et al. suggest, we would expect this variable to be positive. Given their race-centric logic, one might well examine our analytic results and be forced to conclude that urban white parents are so partial to Latinos that they are pulling their children out of private schools so that they can attend public school with Latino children. However, this seems unlikely. Instead, there appears to be a complex of factors at work, of which race and class are only two.

Saporito et al. also argue that the correlation of Catholic population with private school enrollment is based on race: “Our interpretation is that the presence of Catholic schools provides an opportunity for families to provide an ethnically homogeneous education for their children” (p. 272). This is a questionable assumption reflecting a lack of familiarity with existing
Saporito et al. conclude by seeking to replicate our models with new data. This is a laudable goal. Unfortunately, the omission of key variables renders their effort moot. Remember, our central aim is to try to sort out the effects of perceived quality and of race and income to assess their relative impact on private enrollment. Because minority population and proxies for school performance (graduation rates in our analysis) are correlated, it is crucial to include both in an analysis. Otherwise, there is the risk that the included variable will be spuriously credited with the impact of the omitted variable. Saporito et al. unfortunately make this mistake. Moreover, they fail to include a measure of Catholic population, even though this is a vital control variable, given the role of the parochial school system in shaping the capacity and size of urban private school systems, and even though Catholic population is also correlated with a district’s racial makeup and class composition. Saporito et al. also fail to control for district desegregation status, although our analysis suggests that this policy variable has an effect on private school enrollment independent of racial composition.

Finally, Saporito et al. make the unusual argument that private enrollment is more sensitive to the percentage of citywide minority children than to the percentage of minority children in the public school system. They use the former in their analyses and mention that our results “may have been” different if we had used such a variable. Somewhat surprisingly, they do not test this claim. However, the claim itself is peculiar. Given Saporito et al.’s belief that white families are attending private schools to flee the minority children in public schools, it seems strange to suggest that families would be more concerned about the racial composition of the city than of the public schools. After all, exiting to private schools only removes white children from the minority children in the public schools; it does not remove them from the larger city in which they live.

In conclusion, we are pleased to see Saporito et al. working to extend our analysis on these important questions. We believe that their additional data suggesting that race and class affect decisions about private schooling are consistent with our analysis. However, it is important to note that we find that graduation percentage—a (flawed) proxy for system performance—also appears to have some effect on aggregate private enrollment. There is no contradiction in concluding that people may flee urban schools because of concerns about quality, as well as for reasons related to class and race.

As our study is the first of its kind to examine the market reform hypothesis in a sample of urban districts, it is perhaps unsurprising that our results
would be subject to careful scrutiny. We applaud Saporito et al. for undertaking the kind of work that will help to more fully develop our preliminary findings. Nevertheless, we find nothing in the comment that requires us to reconsider our cautious conclusions.

NOTES

1. In fact, including this “patterned concentration of poverty” variable, in the absence of a theoretical justification, is simply likely to result in increased analytic inefficiency. For an accessible discussion of these issues, see King, Keohane, and Verba (1994, 168-85).

2. For instance, a 1992 national survey of 799 Catholic and 11,903 public secondary schools found the public schools to be 25.9% nonwhite and the Catholic schools to be 25.0% (Riordan 2000, 38). Similarly, a 1989 national survey of 907 Catholic elementary schools found that of 154 schools self-identifying as “inner city,” nearly half the schools had student enrollments more than 75% nonwhite (O’Keefe and Murphy 2000, 118).

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Book Reviews

Gregory C. Randall, America’s Original GI Town: Park Forest, Illinois (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1999), 236 pp., $42.50 (cloth).

Park Forest, a planned suburb 30 miles south of the Chicago Loop, has attracted attention since its creation in the late 1940s. Gregory C. Randall follows in the path of William Whyte’s 1956 bestseller The Organization Man, which studied Park Forest’s social fabric, depicting young middle managers commuting downtown to staff the New Industrial State. Randall focuses on the evolution of community planning ideas, the trio of town founders, and the experiences of early residents. The book provides a readable narrative of Park Forest’s development, with photos and anecdotes that capture the enthusiasm of its earliest residents. Plans for Park Forest and its predecessors are carefully reproduced or handsomely redrawn.

The strongest chapters trace the development of modern suburban planning, showing how the Victorian “Garden City” and the interwar “New Town” movements in England and the Radburn and Greenbelt developments in the United States served as Park Forest’s conceptual godparents. Planners within these movements, ambivalent toward the city, were always careful to include a fast rail link to the urban centers they scorned. Like previous garden city experiments, Park Forest offered both access to and escape from the city.

Philip Klutznick, a senior housing policy maker in the FDR and Truman administrations, was ideally placed to create an American new town. Klutznick saw the problems and potential in New Deal creations such as Greenbelt, Maryland, and anticipated that housing demand would explode as GIs returned from World War II. In 1945, Klutznick began talks with Carroll Sweet, Sr., a former New Deal housing maven then working for Chicago developer Nathan Manilow. This trio’s actions led to the planning and building of Park Forest.

Their most radical departure was not breaking away from a rigid street grid but giving new residents a key role in Park Forest’s development. Garden City planners, FDR’s brain trusters, and developers James Rouse and Abraham Levitt all feared home ownership would grant residents the power to thwart their “enlightened” plans. By contrast, Klutznick pushed for incorporation, achieved a balance of renters and owners, and, apart from occasional ham-fisted confrontations, let residents run their own affairs, which they did with energy and competence. Early settlers endured mud and construction delays and coped with the lack of stores and schools, largely with good humor. This section draws heavily on the village’s oral history project, setting local trivia against the background of a nation seeking domesticity and normality.
As Park Forest matured, the decline of its central shopping center, the Plaza, became its most vexing problem. Through the 1950s and 1960s, the Plaza dominated the region’s retailing, but by the mid-1970s, it failed to meet competition from a newer enclosed mall. Retailing had changed, but the Plaza’s management failed to notice. High rents and low maintenance alienated merchants, and the Plaza declined through the 1980s and 1990s despite a procession of resuscitation schemes. Randall’s analysis of the Plaza’s initial decline and current prospects is mostly on the mark, although recent events suggest that the transition to a smaller, locally oriented retail district will be difficult. Looking at village leaders’ inability to confront this challenge would have made an interesting counterpoint to Whyte’s (1956) research on community activity and pedestrian flows through public spaces. Certainly, village leaders had limited options in dealing with a privately owned retail center. More broadly, like many others, they failed to comprehend changes not only in retailing and transportation but in the economy as a whole during the 1970s. Finally, the challenges of new projects, such as building a new town, naturally attract energetic leadership, but the difficulties of decline do not.

Park Forest served as a foil for Whyte’s (1956) argument that postwar America had become obsessed with well-regulated social organizations that deployed workers and resources efficiently while stifling creativity and distrusting individuality. Randall puts faces on those attending the early meetings and on young families settling in while waiting for the next corporate transfer, but he does not address Whyte’s sharpest points. Whether the flurry of meetings and multitude of clubs accomplished something more than knitting the fabric of a social straitjacket is a fair question. The creation of a suburb built with just a few distinct floor plans on newly cleared land, populated by a homogeneous cohort of handpicked young white families, could hardly lead to a garden of Thoreaeusque individualism. However, beneath an exterior uniformity Park Forest’s civic culture distinguished itself. The campaign to build its high school won a first All-American City award in 1954, and the creation of the “Aunt Martha’s” teen drop-in center and fair housing policies won another in 1976. Last year, the village narrowly missed winning a third award. Soprano Dawn Upshaw, a champion of contemporary American music; Bruce Pavitt, founder of Seattle’s Sub Pop label; and members of the grunge band Soundgarten all grew up in Park Forest. If such suburbs attract conformists and couch potatoes, they also may nurture creativity and even genius.

Successful integration of Park Forest’s housing and schools, perhaps the leading achievement of its culture of civic involvement, receives only passing mention. Japanese families settled in the “GI town” as early as 1949, and in the 1960s, Park Forest supplied much of the leadership in the region’s fair housing battles. Park Forest received its first black families peacefully. By contrast, a black physician’s home built on unincorporated land between country club community Olympia Fields and industrial Chicago Heights was torched. In 1972, schools were integrated with minimal controversy, even as conservatives at the national level were using busing as a wedge issue. In subsequent years, the proportion of black residents steadily increased, rising
from 25% in 1990 to 34% in 2000. Although Park Forest lost 5,000 whites in the 1990s, it gained 3,000 new black residents.

The main contribution of America’s Original GI Town is to link the history of planning and federal housing policy with the development of one planned town. Randall sheds new light on Park Forest’s conception and infancy, but more remains to be told about how the town grew up.

—D. Andrew Austin
CERGE-EI, Prague

REFERENCE


The study of juvenile gangs has been one of the most—perhaps the most—intensively pursued criminological enterprises during the past three-quarters of a century. The focus on gangs began with the publication in 1927 of Frederic M. Thrasher’s The Gang: A Study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago and continues apace today, so that there now exists an extensive library dealing with matters such as gangs in different American and foreign cities, on dope dealing by gang members, and a blossoming examination of gangs made up of girls and young women.

Virtually all of this material has been produced by sociologists, with significant but lesser (in terms of numbers) contributions by psychologists, urban ethnographers, and social workers. Gang members themselves (aided and abetted by ghostwriters), journalists, and persons who have sought to alter gang behavior also have documented their experiences and insights.

Given this situation, there was an especially favorable opportunity for an urban historian, such as Eric C. Schneider of the University of Pennsylvania, to add a significant dimension to a too-long neglected aspect of gang activity. Important gaps exist with regard to information about how and where gangs appear and how changes in gang structure and behavior relate to topographical, social, political, economic, and demographic conditions, among other matters, and how gangs change as these conditions alter.

Schneider tackles this task valiantly, but he falls prey to what must have been an almost irresistible research byway—that is, he wanders off from his historical strengths and from what might have been a unique path-breaking contribution into many chapters that recapitulate what was characteristic of gangs in New York City in
the post–World War II years. He tells us about the relationship to male groups of female auxiliaries, about graffiti, about violence, and about initiation ceremonies. Some of this material is based on the memories of old-timers, but there is hardly an insight that by now has not become thoroughly integrated into the scholarship on gangs and entombed in juvenile delinquency textbooks.

The highlights and fresh chapters are near the beginning and at the end of the book, when Schneider tracks changes in the demographic boundaries of various areas of New York City and the flow of gang rivalries. He points out, for instance, that when a new ethnic or racial group occupied a territory being deserted by its earlier population, the newcomers often absorbed some of the boys who remained. For those who had been left behind, this provided a protected refuge; for the newcomers, it bolstered their numbers and their fighting strength.

Material seeking to explain the decline of ganging in the 1960s is excellent, as is the concluding chapter on contemporary gangs as economic units. It is not altogether fair to chide an author for something that he did not attempt to accomplish, but I would have been appreciative had Schneider compared what he learned had happened over time in New York with developments in another city, say Chicago, to obtain a more reliable basis for generalization. Cohen and Taylor’s (2000) recent biography of Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago, American Pharaoh, although it has no particular interest in gangs, is marvelous for setting out the tactics used by the mayor, himself a lifelong inner-city resident, to keep neighborhoods racially segregated by building thruways and other boundary-making barriers. It would be informative to determine how, if at all, such maneuvers played into gang activity in Chicago as compared with New York.

A great deal of emphasis—much too much—is placed by Schneider on the idea that gangs offer an opportunity for persons not otherwise able to achieve a satisfactory masculine self-image. The idea that gang kids are school dropouts who cannot live with failure was enunciated, and much more persuasively and elegantly, by Albert K. Cohen (1955) in his classic Delinquent Boys, but Cohen rates only a single reference in Schneider’s book and only in regard to the issue of subcultures, where Schneider misinterprets what Cohen says and then disagrees with that misinterpretation.

Finally, I cannot resist a paragraph of self-indulgent nostalgia that was prompted by reading Schneider’s book. He observes early on that he had intended to write a book about the murder by the infamous Capeman of a rival gang member at the Highbridge swimming pool on the Manhattan side of the Harlem River. But some basic official material had been purloined, and Schneider decided to broaden his perspective, although he begins with a fine review of the swimming pool episode and ends the book with a rather odd quote made from prison years later by the killer. I remember, fondly, spending many days dog-paddling in that Highbridge pool as a kid. More than half a century later, when a high school classmate, who remained resident in the city, drove me to our old Bronx neighborhood, I was amazed at its war zone appearance. When I got out of the car to take a picture, the driver yelled, “Get your white ass back in here, and quickly. This is not only a dangerous place, it is a very dangerous place!”
Details of the transition from the long-ago Jewish-Italian-Irish placid middle-class area where I grew up to its present condition, as well as changes in other New York neighborhoods as they have related to gang formation and activities, were what I had hoped Schneider would address more thoroughly and consistently. In that regard, I was rather disappointed, but if a gang-informed reader does not mind revisiting a great deal of well-known material (nicely packaged by the author), that reader will also pick up some intriguing insights about the historical alteration in New York City’s gangs from World War II until the present time.

—Gilbert Geis
University of California, Irvine

REFERENCES


OF CITIES, THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS, AND SUBURBS:
LOOKING BACKWARD AND FORWARD


These three books address common themes. They look at the problems of U.S. cities, both past and present. They do this by also looking at their neighborhoods and suburbs. They address critical issues and place them in a regional and national context. They all seek to identify solutions to persistent problems. All are worth reading for those concerned with these issues.
Paul Grogan worked for former Boston Mayor Kevin White on community development and housing, then became president and CEO of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), a key intermediary supporting community development corporations (CDCs) founded by the late Mitchell (Mike) Sviridoff of the Ford Foundation, and is now vice president for Government, Community, and Public Affairs for Harvard University. His coauthor Tony Proscio has been a consultant associated with such organizations as LISC. David Rusk’s career spans anti-poverty work with the Urban League and the U.S. Labor Department’s Manpower Administration, stints as a New Mexico state legislator and mayor of Albuquerque, and since then a consultant on urban affairs. Ray Suarez has been a reporter, host of National Public Radio’s Talk of the Nation show, and currently is again a reporter for the Jim Lehrer News Hour on PBS. All three books include personal experiential anecdotes by the authors relevant to their themes. The style is journalistic but with numerous references to academic authors and relevant studies.

The three books can be summarized thusly: Paul Grogan and Tony Proscio, pragmatists, are generally upbeat and optimistic about the revitalization of central cities and their poorer neighborhoods. David Rusk is generally pessimistic about the state of many central cities and their poor, minority inner-city neighborhoods and looks hopefully to regional approaches to overcome this familiar and persistent trend. Ray Suarez presents a mixed picture of U.S. cities and their older and poorer neighborhoods and tries hard at the conclusion to be hopeful. I will next look at each of the three books.

Grogan and Proscio discuss four waves contributing to the decline of U.S. cities:

1. middle-class flight to the suburbs,
2. the evaporation of inner-city jobs and businesses,
3. expansion of inner-city slums and ghettos, and
4. social implosion as poor, minority inner-city neighborhoods have disintegrated.

They next identify four trends presaging broad inner-city recovery:

1. the maturing of a huge, rapidly expanding grassroots revitalization movement represented by CDCs and intermediary institutions that support them;
2. the rebirth of functioning private markets in previously declining areas abandoned by them;
3. dropping crime rates; and
4. reforms in three key institutional systems that have contributed to the decline of central cities and their neighborhoods: the welfare system, public housing authorities, and public schools.

As one would expect from those so closely associated with LISC, they sing the praises of CDCs and detail their achievements through many examples, beginning with the revival of the South Bronx. Although acknowledging federal, state, and municipal support for these efforts, they contrast the failure of the South Bronx
Development Organization, headed by former urban renewal czar Ed Logue, with the successes of CDCs in the South Bronx. Examples that follow include CDCs in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Houston, Milwaukee, San Diego, and San Francisco. They contrast the efforts of CDCs with the failure of the anti-poverty community action program of the 1960s and point to four reasons for their success:

1. they are true public-private hybrids working in partnerships,
2. they become recognized neighborhood anchors with access to multiple funding sources,
3. they are able to diversify and adapt their redevelopment programs over the long term, and
4. they embrace American values that transcend political ideology: self-help, entrepreneurship, community building, local control, and public-private partnerships.

They also point to the campaign to enact and then to expand and protect the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) as a major factor in the revitalization of central-city neighborhoods.

In addition to the success of CDCs, they focus on the other three trends above. Although hardly naive and acknowledging attendant problems accompanying each, they are nevertheless mostly optimistic about urban prospects because they see them making central cities and their neighborhoods more viable and attractive. Taken together, these comprise a four-point blueprint:

1. grassroots redevelopment expanding on existing programs such as the low-income housing tax credit and empowerment zones;
2. fighting crime through techniques such as community policing;
3. expanding access to capital and commerce, following the lead of Michael Porter of Harvard University’s Business School and his argument that inner cities present untapped or neglected markets for private capital to enter; and
4. continued deregulation and devolution of key institutions—namely, reform of the welfare system as begun under Clinton and the Republican Congress in 1996; the reforms of public housing, again initiated by Clinton’s Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and conservatives promoting the end of conventional public housing projects and increased use of housing vouchers; and public school reforms such as management takeovers by mayors in cities such as Chicago and Cleveland, school voucher experiments in Cleveland and Milwaukee, and charter schools in many cities.

Grogan and Proscio express disdain for advocacy of a national urban policy. They argue that it has lost political currency; those who advocate it run the risk of “being classified with some leftover extreme from an earlier decade,” and “most self-respecting urbanists have shaken off the urban policy mantle.” They are avowed pragmatists. Thus, they also reject David Rusk’s regional approach. They dismiss the idea of anti-sprawl metropolitan governments as “fanciful.” Although applauding his
ideas, they counter that “our sights are decidedly more near-term and are rooted in the achievable politics of today” (p. 265).

Their positive evaluation of the work of CDCs is hardly new. However, there is the question of the long-term impact of CDCs, an important issue raised by David Rusk. There are also questions about the capacity of CDCs to deal with increasing responsibilities, including the management of the housing that they have built and rehabilitated. A notable case in point is the Banana Kelley organization in the South Bronx, whose internal problems were the subject of an exposé in *The New York Times* in early 2001.

As Grogan and Proscio note, Rusk takes a different approach. He opens his book with a visit to Brooklyn and the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, perhaps the longest-lived major CDC in the United States and well known in part due to its creation by the late Senator Robert Kennedy. Despite its accomplishments, Rusk sees its efforts in black Brooklyn as largely a failure to address poverty and its symptoms. He follows this with visits to Walnut Hills in Cincinnati and the Roxbury and Jamaica Plains neighborhoods of Boston. In both cases, despite the accomplishments of long-standing CDCs, he mostly sees a continuation of trends of poverty and racial segregation. Although he opens his book by disclaiming any intention to disparage CDCs, he is skeptical about their achievements. Although stating that they are engaged in a “truly heroic struggle,” he argues that census data over two decades (1970-1990) do not show significant changes in the areas served by what he terms 34 “exemplary” CDCs, looking at poverty rates, household income, and neighborhood buying power. Rusk did not have comparable data covering the past decade because of the unavailability then of the 2000 U.S. census now being released. Although Rusk does concede that CDCs are not empowered or adequately funded to address, much less solve, systemic and often overwhelming problems such as poverty and racial segregation, he gives the distinct impression that they have not succeeded nearly as much as Grogan and Proscio suggest.

Rusk’s stated agenda is the plight of central cities in the Northeast and Midwest United States. He sees two factors as key to their plight: the concentration of the poor and racial minorities in inner-city neighborhoods and suburban sprawl. Although he would like to see the older central cities be able to capture their more affluent suburbs through annexation and regional government, he has previously conceded that this is virtually a political impossibility. Instead, he presents a three-pronged agenda:

1. to help control sprawl, require regional land-use planning;
2. to help dissolve concentrations of poverty, ensure that all suburbs have their fair share of low- and moderate-income housing; and
3. to help reduce fiscal disparities, implement regional revenue sharing.

He documents and decries the disproportionate urban concentration of the poor and minorities and what he terms a national suburban policy. Rusk then presents case studies of what he terms best practices in overcoming these problems. They feature many of his own presentations as a consultant.
Having analyzed the “inside game” that has led to central-city decline, he points to the “outside game,” citing the following regional and suburban models:

- Portland, Oregon: metropolitan urban planning to prevent further regional sprawl;
- Montgomery County, Maryland: promoting social, economic, and racial diversity through a housing regulatory policy;
- Dayton, Ohio: voluntary interjurisdictional regional agreements to promote economic development; and
- Minneapolis–St. Paul, Minnesota: voluntary regional tax base revenue sharing.

These are all powerful examples. However, as has been pointed out, these virtually exhaust the existing major examples of Rusk’s proposed policies, at least on a largely voluntary basis. Other examples often reflect court-ordered remedies, state or federally authorized policies that were not effectively implemented, or efforts now under way (many of which have invited Rusk to advise them) but not as advanced or yet successful.

Rusk ends his book by pointing to two jurisdictions as his models for urban America: Toronto, Ontario, and Montgomery County, Maryland. Both present some unique characteristics that would be very difficult to replicate in most metropolitan areas in the United States. Nevertheless, Rusk points hopefully to churches, universities (including mine), grassroots organizations, metropolitan forums, philanthropic foundations, and big-city mayors as key players in advancing his ambitious agenda.

Clearly, in contrast to the Grogan and Proscio approach advocating the near-term pragmatic, Rusk takes the longer view and advocates policies that have little chance of being adopted in most states and metropolitan areas in the near future. Interestingly, Rusk does not advocate national urban policy to try to achieve these goals. This is an approach decried by Grogan and Proscio, which admittedly does not currently have a political constituency at the federal level.

Ray Suarez takes the reader on a journey through more than three decades of change in metropolitan America. A Brooklyn native, his narrative includes many interviews with both experts (including this reviewer) and local residents in cities that he showcases. He follows a familiar path in documenting the decline of central cities and their neighborhoods since the 1960s era of urban riots and white flight to the suburbs. His purpose in writing the book was to dispel myths about the great suburban migration and to highlight signs of hope in many of the old neighborhoods of our central cities. He journeyed to Brooklyn, Chicago, Cleveland, Miami, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C., which are all featured in separate chapters. Suarez pays special attention to the racial and ethnic divide in the United States. Throughout his travels, he finds signs of hope amid all of the symptoms of urban decline.

Typical of his case studies is my city of Cleveland, Ohio. Despite its self-proclaimed designation as “the Comeback City” (and cited several times favorably by Grogan and Proscio), Suarez points to all the signs of decline still prevalent, including population loss (now down to 478,000 in the 2000 census), deindustrialization, poverty, neighborhood decline, the crises besetting the public school system, and
persistent racial segregation and conflict. Nevertheless, Suarez finds hope for positive change, describing two community-based redevelopment projects in the Hough neighborhood (a very poor and mostly black area depopulated in the wake of the 1966 riot) and the Broadway–Slavic Village neighborhood (a predominantly white ethnic industrial neighborhood that is undergoing a transformation, making it more racially mixed and trying to offset the loss of manufacturing jobs).

In his conclusion, Suarez cites former HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros, who is quoted as striking an optimistic tone about the future of American cities. Suarez tempers that by noting the continuing suburban exodus. He takes a realistic stance, noting the continuing travail of many central cities, while hoping for the comeback that Grogan and Proscio tout.

These three books complement the many academic studies, including those found in this journal, that address the issues they discuss. Many readers will disagree with the mostly optimistic assessments of Grogan and Proscio and their support of institutional reforms that could undermine the social and income support network and public housing for the urban poor and further jeopardize the public education of poor, central-city students. These are all controversial subjects of current policy debates. Many may find Rusk’s policy goals to be unrealistic and requiring widespread rather than occasional adoption to be at all effective. Most readers of this journal (and this reviewer) will no doubt find the role, however limited, of CDCs in the revitalization of central cities to be crucial and deserving of continued and expanded public and private support.

Just how racial and ethnic conflicts and economic inequality can be overcome in the context of urban neighborhoods, central cities, and their surrounding metropolitan areas is not answered, although all three books do address these overriding issues. Despite Grogan and Proscio’s dismissal of a national urban agenda, it is hard to see how these two central problems can be faced without a serious federal role. These three books do underline our persistent urban and metropolitan challenges and point toward available positive examples of success in meeting some of them.

—W. Dennis Keating
Cleveland State University

CREATING RESIDENTIAL SPACE:
SUBURBS AND SLUMS IN GILDED AGE CHICAGO

Michael Ebner, Creating Chicago’s North Shore: A Suburban History (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988), 338 pp., $45.00 (cloth).


The recent “Redefining Suburban Studies” conference sponsored by Hofstra University highlighted just how far the study of suburbia has come (Hofstra Cultural Center 2001). Propelled into national prominence by Kenneth Jackson’s (1985) *Crabgrass Frontier*, scholarly consideration of suburbs has proliferated since 1985. Although the most recent census data contain shreds of encouragement for urban centers, the fact remains that ours is now a suburban nation. The modern-day dominance of suburbs has led to recent calls for new models of the city, replacing the Chicago (or Burgess) model with the so-called Los Angeles, or multicentered, model. The crux of modern suburban scholarship is a recognition that suburbs are constructed space and not just extensions of the city; their emergence from dependence on the central city proves as much. Perhaps because of the continuing influence of the Chicago school, Chicago has been the subject of numerous works on the construction of residential space, of which this essay will consider the following: Ann Durkin Keating’s *Building Chicago: Suburban Developers and the Creation of a Divided Metropolis*; Michael Ebner’s *Creating Chicago’s North Shore: A Suburban History*; and Thomas L. Philpott’s *The Slum and the Ghetto: Neighborhood Deterioration and Middle-Class Reform, Chicago, 1880-1930*.

Keating’s *Building Chicago* concentrates on the intersection of politics and economics, highlighting the important role that land developers played in shaping Chicago into a “divided metropolis.” Developers created service “packages” for most income levels. For example, suburban lots targeted at the well-to-do offered graded streets, sewer and water hookups, and street lighting. This stratification (and uniformity) of service offerings created homogeneity within a given subdivision. As a result, a “suburb” came to be an entity that catered to the various demands of residents for services and amenities. In Keating’s account, this transformation was brought about by the creation and extension of transportation networks. Thus, the land promoter and transit access combined to produce a suburban landscape that was segregated by social and economic class, as well as by race.

A truly divided metropolis is based on more than social or racial segregation; political units must exist to codify these distinctions. Through a detailed examination of local histories, Keating explains the evolution of suburban government in response to the demands of a growing population. The first suburban developments operated as incorporated townships, but because of their agricultural orientation, these governments could not provide the services expected by former city residents. The result was the incorporation of smaller, more homogeneous political bodies possessed of an internal cohesiveness.

The development of a distinctive identity within and among Chicago’s North Shore suburbs is the subject of Ebner’s *Creating Chicago’s North Shore: A Suburban History*. Once again, local histories play an important role, as Ebner skillfully anal-
gamates everyday events to show how North Shore residents created a sense of place. The keystones of North Shore development were Evanston and Lake Forest, founded as temperance towns by railroad commuters. A prohibition on alcohol set apart these settlements on the lake from the more agricultural towns to the interior and encouraged the development of other morally, socially, and economically exclusive suburbs to the north. Significantly, the “space” created in suburbs was both physical and mental. Geographically contiguous towns that did not conform to this residential exclusivity model were mentally excluded from the “North Shore” despite their location, lending credence to Ebner’s argument that this sense of place was “created” by residents rather than determined by geography.

Departing from Keating’s focus on developers and services, Ebner highlights the importance of individual residents in lending meaning to the distinction between suburb and city. The creation of the suburb as a private, moral preserve was an important step in the formation of a separate (and eventually hostile) identity for the North Shore vis-à-vis Chicago. For example, despite its desire to retain a “suburban” identity, Evanston eventually incorporated as a city to avoid annexation by Chicago. In addition, the eight suburbs that make up Ebner’s North Shore found it almost impossible to cooperate on projects that might have been for the common good, such as a unified sewer district. When identity as the “North Shore” was at stake, however, residents of each suburb banded together to preserve Ravinia Park, a source of cultural edification for the entire region. The North Shore suburbs comprise a unique place, possessing at once a common identity and strong local attachments demonstrating that the divided metropolis is more complex than the city-suburb dichotomy; at its root, the distinction is derived from identity development.

Whatever the true influence of builders or morals in shaping Chicago’s suburban development, it is clear that not all Chicagoans participated in the expansion of the metropolis. Both new immigrants and impoverished longtime residents were for the most part restricted to tenement districts that stood in marked contrast to the ideal, if not the reality, of the burgeoning suburbs. Philpott’s study of these “neighborhoods” in Chicago uncovers a housing situation that was created as consciously as were the suburbs, most noticeably in the case of Chicago’s black residents. Racial segregation resulted in the creation of two distinct forms of impoverished neighborhoods: the slum and the ghetto. Slums were simply the homes of those (whites) who were impoverished, and even the settlement workers noticed the high rate of turnover in these areas, indicating that the slum could be escaped. The ghetto, on the other hand, was a deliberately restricted area. Those few blacks who achieved economic success were prevented from joining their white counterparts in the move toward the suburbs. At the same time as elite whites were constructing their North Shore pastoral retreats, they were keeping those places exclusively white preserves by designating the areas in which blacks would be permitted to live. Thus, as a homogeneous, white suburbia (as described by Keating and Ebner) was emerging, a distinctive black ghetto was created. Although a creation of elites (business interests, realtors, etc.), the boundaries of the ghetto were enforced by the mostly lower-class whites who inhabited the districts immediately adjacent to such enclaves as the South Side “black belt.”
As a result, it is clear that the homogeneity of suburbs was not just a function of the actions of suburban land developers. Blacks were both prohibited from entering suburbs and restricted to a certain area. Yet the recent work of Richard Harris (1994), among others, has shown that a model of the city that assumes a wealthy suburbs/impoverished central-city dichotomy is not accurate. Blacks and poor whites did live outside the city in areas that can only be described as suburbs. Those who settled these areas were certainly not motivated by the moral concerns that led to the creation of wealthy settlements such as Evanston. In fact, these “other suburbs” were often escapes from regulation; Chicago’s prohibition of wood structures raised the cost of homeownership beyond the reach of many working-class families.

Each of these works demonstrates the youthfulness of suburban studies. That the underlying assumptions of works not yet 15 years old have been challenged speaks to the fact that a “redefinition” of suburban studies is certainly afoot. Keating and Ebner performed an important service in their sensitivity to the internal developments of the suburbs themselves; this is the direction that new scholarship must take if it wishes accurately to explain the historical origins of suburban growth. Yet, each still clings to a view that history starts from the central city and moves outwards, eventually resulting in the suburbs. Although suburban studies are indeed changing, a real “redefinition” would integrate urban and suburban studies into a larger, metropolitan whole. Although such a change is perhaps overdue, proponents of a new view would do well to take with them the insights developed in these works.

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REFERENCES


Sarah Deutsch, Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940 (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 387 pp., $35.00 (cloth).

What are the forces that have shaped U.S. cities? There is a voluminous literature on the impact of technological change, especially as it affects improvements in transportation and communications. Similarly, the role of residential segregation by race/ethnicity and by income, as well as the role of the federal government in promoting the massive post–World War II growth of the suburbs, has been studied extensively. In
comparison, far less attention has been given to the role of gender in shaping cities. Sara Deutsch’s study of Boston in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is an important contribution in filling this gap.

Deutsch examines how women of different classes and races, native born and foreign born, reshaped the places in which they lived and worked, as well as other public places that connected or divided them. She shows how women in Boston were able to improve their economic and political status, both individually and collectively, within and across class boundaries. The role of the settlement house movement (in which well-educated members of the middle class “settled” in slum areas to interact with the poor) is central to Deutsch’s analysis. Although residents in some of the settlement houses were male, Deutsch focuses on Denison House, whose residents were female. She argues persuasively that women who crossed class boundaries to live in a slum were challenging conventional notions of propriety by their bold move; the same did not hold true for men, who had more freedom of movement in any case.

In examining the concepts of home and workplace, we tend to think about “households” and “workforces” as though they were devoid of gender. Yet land use in working-class residential areas was dramatically affected by gender roles. The ideal late nineteenth-century household was supposed to be a retreat from the world of commerce, not a place where market goods were produced. Although this ideal of the home as a private sphere may have been attained in the households of the middle class and the elite, working-class women, of necessity, found numerous ways of earning income from within their homes. Some took in boarders or lodgers; others did home sewing and finishing for the garment industry. Deutsch describes “kitchen barrooms,” the unlicensed saloons that were run by Irish housewives within their homes.

Even the households of the middle class and elite, although retreats for the householders’ own families, were nevertheless workplaces, and often harsh ones, for the largely female domestic staff that toiled within. They certainly were not havens, nor were they even safe workplaces for those domestic workers who faced sexual exploitation from the men of the families for whom they worked, a not uncommon occurrence, according to Deutsch.

Domestic work was the least preferred occupation among Boston’s women wage earners. One indication of their economic progress is that although domestic work accounted for 44.8% of Boston’s female workforce in 1880, it accounted for only 12.9% by 1920, as opportunities in other occupations grew. Although Deutsch reports this information (albeit in a footnote on page 305), she provides no other data on changes in women’s occupational distribution. I would have found a decade-by-decade table charting changes in Boston women’s occupational distribution extremely helpful, and even more so if it provided breakdowns by race and ethnicity. Deutsch does provide some data on the proportion of shop owners who were female, by decade and by type of shop (in a footnote on page 324).

The book’s thesis, that women’s activities had a distinctive impact on the city’s shape, is most clearly illustrated in Deutsch’s discussion of women who worked outside the home. For example, although some working women lived with their families, many others lived in rooming houses. These independent women and their male
coworkers needed places to eat their meals, and a range of commercial eating establishments sprang up to fill this need. However, as Deutsch observes, “Eating in public was transgressive enough to the middle-class and elites, but the promiscuous mixing of solo women and men at the lunch counter or table, sometimes with alcohol available, seemed not only chaotic but a recipe for social breakdown” (p. 96). In response, the Women’s Educational and Industrial Union (WEIU) purchased buildings in downtown Boston and opened women’s lunchrooms, where working women could eat their meals in a morally safe environment.

In addition to her discussion of women’s home and work roles, Deutsch examines the organizations that women formed—the “class-bridging” organizations such as the WEIU and Denison House, as well as women’s labor and political organizations. She is careful to delineate variations in women’s experiences by class, race, and ethnicity. Deutsch’s narrative ends with the election of the first woman to serve on Boston’s city council.

Deutsch’s study raises many questions for further investigation. For example, if this study were to be replicated in other cities, to what extent would the Boston case be representative? To what extent is the Boston story unique? At the same time that Boston’s class-bridging organizations were having their impact, New York City established a comprehensive zoning law that segregated women factory workers from the privileged women who shopped along Fifth Avenue. Even within Boston itself, there were some cross currents: although the middle-class settlement house workers were helping immigrants to assimilate, the Anti-Immigration League was also establishing a base in Boston. Ironically, Robert A. Woods, one of the proponents of the latter group, was also one of the most prominent members of the former.

Deutsch has given us a seminal study of women’s influence in shaping the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century city. In Boston, women’s influence in shaping public space has continued into the twenty-first century. The State House may soon be altered by the creation of a lactation room for nursing mothers—Massachusetts’s acting governor made the proposal when she herself was pregnant with twins.

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