NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVISTS AND
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS:
A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

THE REACTIONS TO CRIME PAPERS

CENTER FOR URBAN AFFAIRS
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

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David Emmons

Center for Urban Affairs
Northwestern University
Evanston IL 60201

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I. INTRODUCTION

If the 1960's was the decade of the social movement, the 1970's is the decade of the community organization and the neighborhood activist. Grassroots groups are not new to American political life (Alinsky 1941, Dilleck 1953). But their unprecedented growth in number (Perlman 1978), their formation into city- and state-wide federations (Perlman 1978, Hunter and Suttles 1972), and their increasing adoption of direct action tactics (Steggert 1975) during the last ten years distinguish them from their predecessors.[1]

Support for their activities and concern for the quality of neighborhood life is widespread among citizens, warranting the view that community organizations are not an epiphenomenon in American politics. A recent Gallup poll found that 89% of urban residents were willing to assist in solving neighborhood problems by practicipating in one or more activities which ranged from signing petitions to picketing. Fifty-two percent had already done so.[2]

These developments prompt the major question which this paper addresses: under what circumstances do people participate in community organizations, or when do citizens engage in formal collective action to solve neighborhood problems?

Community organizations are viewed here as territorially based voluntary associations of local citizens who initiate collective action to achieve self-determined goals held to be in the interest of the neighborhood or local area. These goals typically concern land use and development (Mollenkopf 1972), the delivery of goods and services (Yates 1973), and the local moral order (Street and Janowitz 1978). They relate to the local

citizen's roles as resident, consumer, and family member, respectively. Community organizations are fundamentally--although not exclusively--political organizations since in pursuing their goals they bargain most frequently with government to influence the allocation of benefits to the locality. Their authority in the political arena emerges de facto from these dealings rather than being de jure guaranteed. Thus community organizations must struggle to achieve legitimacy. And they frequently resort to the tactics of direct action to gain their ends. The members of community organizations, defined in this way, are engaged in citizen participation, but in a form of it which is distinct from government-initiated participation to elect public officials or promote public programs. Such participation, which can be termed local citizen action (Langdon 1978:21), is instigated from the bottom up rather than sponsored from the top down. It is more "gladitorial" than voting (Milbrath and Goel 1977). And its intention, in part, is to strengthen--or to establish in the first place--the accountability of elected representatives and government bureaucracies to the locality.

The answer to when citizens initiate this sort of collective political action inevitably touches on more general issues: the nature of neighborhoods and the possibilities of political initiative by individuals. These issues are part of a long-standing and focal concern of social science with the effects of modernization in the Western world on primary ties, community life, democracy, and the human personality.

Since World War II three streams of research have dealt directly with this focal concern: empirical studies of participation in electoral politics and participation in voluntary associations, and ethnographies of neighborhood life. For the most part, these studies do not illuminate participation

in contemporary community organizations. They deserve examination, however, because their shortcomings underscore some of the leading criteria which should guide such an inquiry. They will be reviewed here, then, not so much for what they explain, but for why they explain so little.[3]

II. URBANISM, MASS SOCIETY, AND STUDIES OF PARTICIPATION IN VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

Research on voluntary associations flowered in the 1950's and 1960's in response to the forecasts of Wirth's theory of urbanism (1938) and mass society theory (Kornhauser 1959).

Wirth predicted that urbanism diminished the individual's primary ties and thus weakened the neighborhood, whose tight-knit social world was thought to have provided him with a sense of identity, belonging, moral guidance, and resources for mutual assistance. Secondary groups--based primarily on occupation and class--provided an alternative basis of affiliation but could not, according to Wirth, recreate the moral consensus and social control of the local community and its personal ties.

The special concern of mass society theory, which shares many of Wirth's assumptions, was the threat this situation posed to democratic values. Its advocates forecast the dissolution of primary ties and frequently secondary groups as well (Wilensky 1964). As a result, the individual was in danger of being isolated and anomic. Lacking the mediating protection of group ties, he was potentially vulnerable to totalitarian control by the state. His political activities would not be self-determined or locally inspired but would be shaped instead by mass influences--large bureaucracies, extremist movements, the media, government.

A widely held assumption in sociology which underlies this view is that the decline of the neighborhood as a vital social world necessarily spells its decline as a basis of political organization. This assumption is incorrect. It applies poorly to the current situation in which the neighborhood typically does not command the intense loyalty of its residents and their intimate involvement with each other (Craven and Wellman 1974, Fischer 1975, Fischer et al. 1977, Taub et al. 1977), and yet in which community organizations are thriving and apparently proliferating. And thus it obscures an understanding of the circumstances under which residents participate in community organizations.

The crucial conditions which promote local political mobilization do not derive from the neighborhood's existence as a core social world. (The neighborhood can have an active political life without having an active social life.) Electoral politics is based on representation by locality. Many governmental resources and functions are organized on this basis as well. The increase in government spending and programs in the past three decades has intensified expectations by neighborhoods for services and for accountability in their delivery (Street and Janowitz 1978). Government officials sometimes encourage community organizations to form when they need policy advice, information about an area, and legitimacy in order to implement programs which are based in neighborhoods (Taub et al. 1977). Community organizations are frequently constructed in response to external threats to the neighborhood rather than naturally emerging from the prior relations of residents. And neighborhood cohesion may be produced by such threats rather than existing prior to them (Coleman 1971). In a neighborhood with an extensive network of personal ties a number of local concerns may be handled informally through these relationships. In a

neighborhood which lacks such a network community organizations may be formed precisely in order to deal on a formal basis with those problems which cannot be solved informally.[4] Finally, participation in community organizations to solve local problems entails instrumental action. Prior neighborliness is not a necessary condition for such instrumental action to occur. Participants may act together without being friends (Fischer 1975). As Heberle points out,

> Neighborhood, as a social relation, is originally indifferent in regard to emotional-affectual attitudes of neighbors to on another. Neighbors will do certain things for each other, whether they like each other or not (Heberle 1960:9, cited in Fischer 1975).

Starting in the 1950's, researchers mounted an empirical counterattack against the pessimistic interpretations of urban society advanced by Wirth and the mass theorists (Axelrod 1956, Dotson 1951, Foskett 1955, Freeman, Novak, and Reeder 1957, Wright and Hyman 1958). While their findings do not focus on the conditions for local political mobilization, they did discredit the prevailing view that personal and secondary ties were dwindling. They generally found primary groups surviving and participation in voluntary associations substantial.

Tomeh offers a number of criticisms of these and more recent studies of participation in voluntary associations.

> The empirical findings on membership participation differ widely...Although it is impossible to come up with exact figures, cited research shows that the majority of urbanites are members of at least one formal group other than the church...
>
> For the most part, empirical investigations directed at distinguishing individuals who participate in formal groups from those who do not participate are limited to analyses of population characteristics. In general, the findings indicate that participation in voluntary organizations is high among high SES groups, males, married persons, Protestants, and blacks. Results with respect to age, length of residence, and size of community are not very consistent. Furthermore the variations within the

> different categories of most of the demographic variables is rather wide...
>
> Moreover, the effects of the heterogeneity or homogeneity of the voluntary group membership population are generally neglected, although this characteristic may affect patterns of interaction types of leadership, and degree of consensus within the organization. The level of participation within an organization has not been treated as an attribute of the organization. Finally, the structural characteristics of formal groups have been examined from the standpoint of the occupants of roles, while the structure of the organizations in the community is seldom regarded as itself a variable within a comparative community context.
>
> In contrast to the preponderance of research on demographic characteristics, studies relating membership to attitudinal and psychological factors are few. What is known is that membership in formal groups is associated with feelings of satisfaction and well being, optimistic attitudes, a sense of predictability, etc....
>
> Other types of influence on decision-making relative to affiliation (such as reference groups, self-interest, previous experience, specific events, etc.) have been inadequately treated in terms of a research strategy or a theoretical typology.
>
> Some of these issues are important, moreover, because of their implications for the nature of the community, in that the type of association an individual encounters is related to the associational structure of the local community...(Communities) differ greatly in the pattern of associational activities which they afford...Communities may also vary with respect to type of formal organization. In some communities economic and political groups are likely to predominate, whereas in others interest groups and recreational clubs are prevalent. This suggests that communities differ with regard to sources of affiliation, which difference in turn may affect membership rates or affiliation processes... (Tomeh 1974:108-11).

To these criticisms the following may be added.

The studies of the empirical critics focus on how much participation exists generally rather than on who participates in what organizations for which reasons. Rates of participation for the most broadly defined segments of the population and in the most general categories of groups predominate over more discrete findings. The data is not differentiated enough to examine how the characteristics of participants and the circumstances of

participation vary by type of organization (Marshall 1968, May 1971). Whether, for example, a person's length and type of residence, life cycle stage, intra- vs. extra-neighborhood ties, and a locale's problems and interests are correlates of participation in community organizations cannot be assessed from these studies. The focus on gross levels of participation in these studies is prompted by the terms of debate which Wirthian and mass society theory set. If urbanism and industrialism lessen or emasculate group ties, then rates of participation are the critical data to confirm or disprove these theories.

Distinctions between mere membership and active participation, and levels in between, are generally not made. The structure of participation in community organizations, which rely so heavily on people's time and energy, reveals a great deal about the rewards they offer members, the goals they pursue, and the style of leadership they practice.

How participation is affected by the contextual and structural variables beyond the level of the individual or the organization is not examined. How the neighborhood setting, the aggregate character of its residents, inter-organizational relations, the nature of political authority, and so on influences participation is not treated.

As Tomeh implies, communities--or neighborhoods--offer residents different opportunity structures for participation. Whether, and in what, a person participates will depend, in part, on what opportunities an area provides. The literature on voluntary associations ignores this line of investigation for the most part.[5]

Finally, while the empirical critics differ with Wirth and the mass society theorists about urbanism's impact on primary and secondary groups, they share with them a similar conception of the functions of participation which is inadequate for understanding involvement in community organizations. For Wirth, participation in intimate, territorially based social relations generated local social control in the community, establishing a local moral order of shared values and self-regulated behavior among residents. For the mass theorists, participation in voluntary associations erected a mediating bulwark between the individual and the state, protecting him against the destruction of individual freedom by state power.

This conception of participation is expressed cogently by Greer, a leading critic of mass society theory, in two articles of the period.

> The participation of the individual in his community is of importance on two grounds. Theoretically an understanding of such behavior aids in the clarification and extension of our picture of modern society as a system. And, from a normative point of view, the nature and degree of such participation sets the limits and indicates the possibilities of social control in a non-hierarchical society (Greer 1958:329).

> ...Mediating organizations--the structural expression of a plural society--...(are)...effective because they can mobilize the population in such a way as to limit the administrative state. The groups...range from B'nai Brith or the C.Y.O. to the garden and 4-H clubs, from the industrial association and labor union to the philatelist or madrigal society. They are on-going organizations, based on the routine of everyday life, which represent an area of autonomous social value, and <u>can</u> represent that value in political terms if necessary. Therefore, we shall call such voluntary formal organizations "parapolitical" (Greer and Orleans 1962:635).

We do not quarrel with the notion that participation may function as a defense against anomie and tyranny, but argue that neighborhood participation to influence public policy and the distribution of public goods and services is not adequately understood in these terms. And its impact on the problem-solving capacity of the neighborhood merits explanation in

its own right, whatever its implications for society as a whole. The essential function of such participation, from the perspective of the neighborhood and its interests, is not normative or mediating but political. Moreover, since participation in community organizations is explicitly political, it should be differentiated in analysis from participation in other types of voluntary organizations, which are merely potentially political --or parapolitical, to use Greer's term. The empirical critics failed to make this distinction because for them, as for the mass society theorists, all voluntary associations played a mediating function in society, and this shared characteristic was more crucial to their theoretical interests than any differences between such groups were.

III. NEIGHBORHOOD STUDIES

The long tradition of urban neighborhood studies has excelled in finely wrought ethnographies of self-contained social worlds (Short 1971). They provided evidence that personal and social disorganization at the local level had not broken down (Whyte 1943). They have demonstrated the importance of local territory in the large city as a basis for organizing social relations (Suttles 1968). They have, in sum, discredited the view that community, rooted in locality, lies everywhere dead or dying.

But the neighborhoods literature, partly because of its special concern with finding community and bounded social structure at the local level, has tended to ignore two sets of forces which are important for understanding community organizations and the participation of local residents in them.

Most neighborhood ethnographies have discovered vibrant community by examining special rather than typical localities (Keller 1968): the slum (Suttles 1968), the high-rent district (Zorbaugh 1929), the university

locale (Hunter 1975), the ethnic enclave (Wirth 1928), the area dominated by a single occupational subculture (Kornblum 1974). Their descriptions do not fit many neighborhoods where local territory is frequently not the major focal point of social integration and interaction among residents (Craven and Wellman 1974, Fischer 1975, Fischer et al. 1977, Janowitz 1967).

To the extent that local residents are embedded in social networks beyond the neighborhood, the neighborhood lacks a strong system of informal social organization. Influence and social control cannot be effectively exerted through such a system to solve the problems of local incivility. Community organizations may arise, in part, in response to this situation. They attempt to reconnect people at the local level around instrumental tasks which much weakened neighborhood ties can no longer accomplish. Thus the proliferation of community organizations may be associated with the decline of traditional community in the neighborhood. And it may represent the recreation of community in a new form.

Neighborhood ethnographies have also failed to document systematically the external influences which shape neighborhood life and to which community organizations are frequently a response. Residents qua residents of a neighborhood are much concerned with the security and value of their property stakes, who moves in and who moves away, what businesses or facilities open or close, what transportation routes run through or near the area (Davies 1966, Fellman and Brandt 1973, Mollenkopf 1973, Molotch 1972). These issues of property and captial are decided by economic and political forces beyond the control and frequently beyond the influence of neighborhood residents. They shape much of life in a neighborhood but are external to it. So in this sense as well the neighborhood is not a self-contained social world. Community organizations do battle with these issues. The structure these

groups take, the targets they select, and the limits they face--all of which affect who participates in them--are influenced by the forces behind these issues.

IV. STUDIES OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The study of political participation was traditionally the study of participation in electoral politics (Almond and Verba 1963, Berelson et al. 1954, Campbell et al. 1960, Lane 1959). Research centered on the rates and correlates of voting or on a broader set of electoral activities ranging from keeping informed about politics to working in campaigns or running for public office. These activities were arrayed on a continuum of participation from the least difficult (e.g., voting) to the most difficult (e.g., being a candidate). Participants, depending on their level of activity, were classified as more, or less, active. Milbrath (1965), for example, distinguished between apathetics, spectators, and gladiators.

The early studies, with their focus on electoral participation, do not examine involvement in community organizations, although such activity is one aspect of politics broadly defined as the allocation of values in the community. Moreover, the correlates of electoral participation, which these studies uncovered, and the correlates of community activism may differ since these two sets of activities are analytically distinct in several respects. The two occur in different institutional settings: the mechanisms of partisan elections and voluntary associations, the one controlled by government, the other not. In addition, most electoral activities examined in these studies involve individual behavior: staying informed about politics, voting, contacting a public official. (Even attending a

political meeting is essentially an individual act.) In contrast, most of the activities of community organizations involve collective behavior, which is undertaken with reference to or as a part of an organized group. Work in a political campaign or party organization is collective and, like community activism, entails higher costs, incurs more risks, and requires different skills of the individual than other forms of political participation. Yet community organizations may be established because public officials cannot be made accountable to citizens through their conventional participation in the electoral process. Participants in such groups may have given up on "politics" or at least view the political system with cynicism. In such instances, community activists and electoral activists may be influenced to participate by different factors.

Evidence that involvement in community organizations indeed represents a distinct mode or style of participation with its own pattern of correlates comes from a recent study which expands the older conception of participation to include a broader range of political activities (Verba and Nie 1972). Verba and Nie identified "communalists" (about 20% of Americans) as a distinct type who tended to concentrate their participation in the following cluster of activities, although they also voted regularly: forming a group--or working with an existing group--to solve local problems; being an active member of community organizations; and contacting public officials about some social issues. Electoral activists, in contrast, devoted their efforts to political party and campaign work.

Studies of political participation have relied on survey research and multivariate analysis. While these techniques have enormously advanced understanding of the extent, modes, and correlates of participation within large populations and facilitated cross-national comparisons, they have

diverted attention from data and interpretations which would contribute to a fuller explanation of political participation. Research which overcomes these problems is likely to improve our understanding of participation generally and community activism specifically.

May (1971) has summarized some of the key findings of survey research on political participation.

> In general, people who are effective in private life are effective in public life, people with more eduction know more about politics, people who engage in some political activities are highly likely to engage in others, and people of higher socio-economic status are more likely to possess the characteristics which lead to high rates of participation...Recently several studies have demonstrated that blacks participate no less than whites of similar socio-economic status and frequently participate more but they are less satisfied with the results (pp. 210-211).

The correlates of political participation most often examined by survey researchers have been demographic and social psychological characteristics of individuals: socio-economic status, place and length of residence, age, sex, religion, race, political efficacy, psychological involvement in politics, civic attitudes, political alienation, cynicism, and distrust (Milbrath and Goel 1977).

The strongest single "determinant" of political participation is socio-economic status, a finding consistently replicated in various studies. What strongly links socio-economic status to participation, most studies have found, is civic attitudes.

> According to the...(standard socio-economic model)...social status determines to a large extent the amount to which...a person...participates. And it does so through the intervening effect of a variety of "civic" attitudes conducive to such participation (Verba and Nie 1972).

Verba and Nie found that the civic attitudes which most connected high socio-economic status to high participation were: psychological involvement in politics, a sense of political efficacy, information about politics,

and a sense of contribution to the community.

But an emphasis on the mediating role of civic attitudes may not provide an adequate explanation of participation. Civic attitudes which are conducive to participation may result from people's past experience or realistic expectations about the outcomes of participation. If a group's participation is effective in securing public goods or influencing public policy, then it will develop the requisite civic attitudes. The lack of such attitudes among a group may reflect its realistic assessment that political participation does not work for them. Thus the poor participate less because politics pays less; their attitudes are a response to this state of affairs rather than a cause of it. Their lower sense of political efficacy, for example, results from the experience or knowledge that participation does not lead to power.

In their assessment of the War on Poverty's Community Action Program, Marris and Rein note, "as soon as the project offered an opportunity that seemed genuine there was more response (i.e., participation) than could be handled" (Marris and Rein 1968:4).

In sum, research relying heavily on demographic and social psychological data tends to ignore how rates of participation among various groups are influenced by their impact on policy and politicians.

This shortcoming is part of a larger one: the tendency of survey research on participation to ignore the way in which the structure and power of government shapes the possibilities for political influence which different classes of citizens have. This failing has been a central feature of the critique, mounting over the past decade, of the pluralist view of community power. The pluralist view sees the holders of power as those who choose to participate most effectively in the political market place and thus win

battles over public issues although the constraints of class and race may make the participation of some groups less effective than that of others. The counter view argues that state authority not only differentially structures the possibilities of participation but also makes the most accessible forms of participation (e.g., voting) the least effective, influences the scope of issues which are publicly considered, and permits certain interest groups and elites to win without participating through conventional political channels at all (Bachrach and Baratz 1970).

Alford and Friedland (1975) take this view in elaborating how the structure of state authority affects political participation.

> The state structure in the United States has (a) bureaucratically insulated dominant interests from political challenge, (b) politically fragmented and neutralized nondominant interests, (c) supported fiscal and policy dependence on private economic power, and (d) therefore resulted in a lack of legislative or electoral control over the structure of expenditures and revenues. Participation through normal institutionalized channels has little impact on the substance of government policies. Ineffective symbolic responses to the demands of nondominant interests have resulted in cycles of noninstitutional participation as a form of social control. If the structuring of the state has thus prevented the effective political organization of nondominant interests, and if programs designed to meet their needs have been symbolic and ineffectual, then the particularly low level of participation by lower-income individuals is neither analytically surprising nor politically irrational.

Survey research on political participation assumes for the most part that the individual's attitudes activate or trip off political participation. Behind this assumption is a light-switch conception of behavior as the external response to internal states of the individual which social psychology has persistently disputed (Deutscher 1973). The impression is left in studies of political participation that the decision to participate is a matter solely between the individual and his attitudes. One consults one's attitudes and, if not found wanting, participates.

This conception is deficient in three respects which are important to understanding participation in community organizations. First, people frequently join organizations, political or otherwise, precisely because they find certain attitudes wanting. People join because they don't feel efficacious enough to accomplish some task on their own. Organizations exist, after all, because they possess more efficacy and skills than separate individuals (Milgram 1975). In deciding to join a group an individual's weak self-efficacy or deficient skills may be less important considerations than the knowledge that he will be acting in the presence of others with a stronger sense of efficacy and greater resourcefulness and that the group as a whole can be influential where the isolated individual can't.

Secondly, there generally are intervening steps between the existence of predisposing attitudes and their expression as full-blown participatory behavior. People who join movements or community organizations, where the costs of participation may be high, do not move from quietude to direct action in one leap. They participate incrementally, taking on risks a step at a time, and relying on the more experienced or courageous to take the lead. This process with its steps, its tentativeness, and its assessment of others is not captured by a conception of certain levels of civic attitudes eliciting certain levels of political participation.

Finally, the light-switch conception of behavior emphasizes personal characteristics as the determinants of participation at the expense of group processes. It tends to ignore the role which political socialization, social pressure, and group identification--processes which operate within groups and organizations--play in precipitating political participation, especially collective forms of it. As Milbrath and Goel (1977) note:

> Some individuals achieve a high level of political activity because of their personal characteristics: education, skills, efficacy feelings and so on. Others who are without these necessary resources also can reach high activism through affiliation and involvement with groups. Group activity can usually increase political action without concomitant increases in political information, efficacy, or attentiveness (p. 113).

V. GUIDELINES FOR STUDYING PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

This review of literature on voluntary associations, neighborhoods, and political participation suggests several guidelines for studying participation in community organizations.

1. Community activism merits attention in its own right as an instrumental process for achieving neighborhood political goals. It may function as well to integrate the individual with the larger structures of society and to protect him from their challenges to personal freedom. But participation from this perspective becomes a measure, ultimately, of the extent to which society is pluralistic, open, and orderly. Studies designed to examine participation with this aim in mind miss what is distinctive about community activists, as opposed to other kinds of activists, and what is distinctive about community organizations, as opposed to other kinds of associations.

2. The neighborhood continues to be an important territorial basis for political organization quite apart from its status as a core social group in society. Community organizations should be examined especially in light of the political significance of neighborhoods. The relation between such groups and the prior social relations of the neighborhood must be examined empirically rather than assumed. The notion--rooted in an earlier urban sociology--that community organizations are a product of the

neighborhood as a tight-knit social world misses their significance in today's neighborhoods, which are generally partial and permeable social groups. A more appropriate basis for understanding the local context of community organizations and participation in them is Suttles' (1972) conception of the neighborhood as socially constructed in response to external forces. This suggests that the foreign relations of the neighborhood are a crucial influence on its internal group life.

3. To understand who participates in community organizations one must look not simply at the demographic and social psychological characteristics of the individual but at the character of his neighborhood and the extra-local influences on it. To put it starkly, research must get outside of the individual's head and skin. We argue specifically for the importance of examining three levels of variables on participation in community organizations:

A. the personal and status characteristics of residents

B. neighborhood context, including the local political opportunity structure

C. extra-local or macro influences.

The local political opportunity structure consists principally of the extent and type of community organizations present in the neighborhood. Community organizations will influence participation in two ways: by providing residents with opportunities for participation and by promoting community norms which endorse participation. The nature of community organizations is an independent variable influencing participation.

4. The notion of constrained voluntarism best portrays participation in community organizations. People voluntarily choose to join or not to join such groups but they do so in a setting which offers and limits opportunities

to participate, which provides barriers, pressures, and encouragements to involvement. We favor this notion as a corrective to two misconceptions about participation.

The first is the economic conception of participation in which the decision to participate is conceived in terms of the isolated individual who rationally and instrumentally assesses the costs and benefits of involvement apart from local and extra-local contextual influences which make him a moral and social being.

The second is the mechanistic conception of participation in which the individual is described as if he were prompted to participate directly by forces beyond or inside him--or by statuses which characterize him. The failure here is not specifying the mechanisms which mediate between the individual and such "influences," whether they be the state or one's self-esteem. Research must look to processes in the middle ground of every day life--family, friends, contacts, neighborhood, organizations--which transform the macro forces of society and the internal forces of the individual into constraints on or incentives for participation.

We turn now to a selective review of literature which directly addresses participation in community organizations.[6] Each work to be examined meets some of the guidelines discussed above. None adheres to all of them. That task awaits further researchers.

VI. PARTICIPATION AND THE PERSONAL AND STATUS CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIVIDUALS

A.

McCourt (1977) studied the individual antecedents and consequences of community activism by women. Her findings are based on extensive interviews with 40 working class women from the southwest side of Chicago who

were very active, somewhat active, or non-active in "assertive community organizations."

A number of factors prompted these women to participate.

> The women most likely to become very active are those who see problems in their community, do not see a response to these problems forthcoming from public officials, and believe that women like themselves can resolve the problems. They have had the experience, one which is probably essential for most potential joiners, of being brought into the group by an organizer or an otherwise already active participant. The active women (this category combines the very active and the somewhat active women) are convinced that people like them, those in their social class, are treated unfairly, and they possess an intense emotional attachment to the neighborhoods in which they live. The absence of small children, a recalcitrant husband, and the demands of a paying job all remove constraints. And, finally, a relatively loose social network, in which her in-laws live at least at some slight distance, provides a context of greater freedom and openness for experimenting with new behaviors (p. 224).

McCourt suggests many of these factors are elements in a sequential process by which women become active. She depicts the process in a model, cautioning that it is conceptual rather than empirical. "The particular time sequence, along with the specified elements, may vary for any given activist" (p. 129).

Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Time 4
Space for new role	Perception of problem	Contacted by an organizer	Participation in assertive community organizations
Desire to stay in neighborhood		Support of husband	
Feeling of social class oppression			
Relatively loose-knit social network			

McCourt shows sensitivity in distinguishing between the antecedents and the effects of participation. Because her data is not longitudinal,

however, she must rely on informed speculation and the activists' own accounts as to what led to joining and what followed from it. Her attention to this problem is generally missing in the literature on political participation. One can plausibly argue that many of the attitudes and other psychological characteristics which are assumed to stimulate participation are in fact consequences of it. Personal efficacy, neighborhood attachment, and disaffection with the political system, for example, may be the results of participation rather than the causes. Non-participants may lack these characteristics because they have not participated. In the absence of longitudinal studies, which would admittedly be difficult and costly to mount, surveys should at least seek personal clarifications from interview subjects on which psychological characteristics (or the overt measurements for them) preceded and which resulted from participation.

VII. PARTICIPATION AND NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

A.

A number of studies have uncovered distinct neighborhood patterns in political attitudes and behavior which are not wholly attributable to the residents' individual (especially demographic) characteristics but are also linked to the characteristics of their community of residence (Bell and Force 1956, Foladare 1968, Putnam 1966, Segal and Wildstrom 1970, Wilson 1971). These findings reveal that the neighborhood is a site of shared experiences and local norms and may provide a context for political socialization.

One method which has been employed in these studies to assess neighborhood effects is contextual analysis. When such an analysis draws on survey data, the typical approach is to treat the distribution of attitudes and

behavior within a neighborhood as independent variables which influence the attitudes and behavior of the individual resident. The technique assumes that an individual's behavior is influenced by his social context in two ways: as an object of his perceptions; and as a source of opportunities for action (Barton 1970). Several recent studies which examine local context in this manner offer valuable insights into participation in community organizations.

1.

A study by Cornelius (1973, 1975) demonstrates particularly well the value of contextual analysis and offers a number of insights into political participation in neighborhood problem-solving.[7] He draws on survey data to contrast and explain patterns of politically relevant attitudes and behavior in six poor neighborhoods of migrants on the fringes of Mexico City.

Cornelius finds, first of all, important differences by neighborhood in a large array of perceptual, attitudinal, and sociopsychological characteristics of residents. These differences persist when the residents' age, socioeconomic status, and length of residence are held constant (p. 17 and Tables 1-5). Substantial differences by neighborhood are also found in the frequency and type of political participation in which residents engage (p. 24 and Tables 6-7). The rest of Cornelius's study examines how neighborhood setting helps explain the differences in political participation.

Using the partial correlation approach, Cornelius determines that "selected participant characteristics of the community of residence" (the contextual variables) have an independent effect on a resident's frequency of overall participation which persists (and sometimes increases) when

controlling the effects of various individual characteristics (Table 8). The contextual variables used in this--and later parts of the analysis--represent the percentage of residents ranking about the total sample median on indices of: overall frequency of political participation, degree of civic-mindedness, general disposition to conform to community norms, perception of external threat, and strength of self-help orientation--all in the community of residence.[8] Overall political participation is made up of voting, campaign involvement, individual and communal contacting of public officials, and participation in community self-help, problem solving activity (p. 26 and Table 8).

> The addition of the five community contextual variables to a multiple regression equation results in an absolute increase of 12% in the explained variance in political participation beyond the effects of age, socioeconomic status, length of urban residence, and psychological involvement in politics. Given the fact that the latter individual characteristics alone account for only about 20% of the variance in the level of political participation, the explanatory contribution made by community contextual variables is an important one (p. 27).

One cannot say with great confidence that the contextual effects truly explain political participation. As Cornelius points out, a wider range of neighborhood settings would need to be analyzed. As things stand it is unclear whether a contextual variable or some community characteristic associated with it actually affects the rate of political participation (p. 45).

In addition, the contextual variables most strongly affect those forms of participation which are most closely linked to the neighborhood--communal contacting of public officials and involvement in community, self-help efforts.

The second stage of analysis addresses those characteristics of the individual resident which make him more susceptible to the impact of his

neighborhood setting.[9] The theoretical concern here is with uncovering the process by which neighborhood effects occur.

The individual characteristics which Cornelius employs in this part of the analysis consist of the residents' perceptions of the neighborhood normative system and psychological orientation to it; degree of integration and interaction in the community; behavioral and perceptual orientations to the political opportunity structure; demographic attributes; and miscellaneous characteristics.[10] The contextual variables' effect on individual participation is greatest for persons with: a high disposition to conform to community norms; a high perception of general concern in the community for community problems; a high level of overall social integration; frequent discussions of community problems with other residents; close relatives in the community; high religiosity; involvement in community groups; perception of one party dominance; shorter versus longer length of residence in the area; and younger age (under 35).

The third stage of analysis is based on Cornelius's own observations and his review of other literature rather than empirical data from the present study. He summarizes the structural and situational characteristics of a neighborhood which promote a "cooperative political ethos" among its residents. An individual with the ethos is likely to participate in community-related, collective political activity (e.g., collective demand-making, self-help projects, community organizations) and to endorse this approach over others for solving local problems. Elements of a cooperative political ethos--and other factors associated with it--are contained among the individual characteristics examined in the second stage of the analysis as well as the contextual variables in the first stage.[11]

Neighborhood characteristics which Cornelius suspects encourage a cooperative political ethos include: a smaller neighborhood populations; socio-economic homogeneity; residential stability; distinct neighborhood boundaries; indifferent, inadequate, or punitive responses by political authorities to local demands or needs; local leaders and organizations which encourage resident participation; on-going problems which require collective solution; and political learning experiences from the past which demonstrate the importance of cooperative political action.

Three key conclusions emerge from this study. First, neighborhood effects exist. Political socialization in at least certain types of neighborhoods helps to shape the political attitudes and behavior of residents. For the low income Mexicans in Cornelius's study it has greater salience than the standard socioeconomic model of political participation. Cornelius found that "overall socioeconomic status (SES) accounts for less than 1 percent of the variance in voting participation, contacting officials, and community problem-solving activity; and it explains less than 3 percent of the variance in campaign involvement" (p. 94, 1975).

Second, Cornelius's data partially support two models of how neighborhood socialization works. According to one model, a resident is directly influenced by neighborhood norms to the extent he is aware of the norms and of local group pressure to conform to them. This model assumes that a person is motivated to conform and that he internalizes neighborhood norms. (It is partially supported by findings in Table 9.) According to the other model, the influence of neighborhood norms on a resident is mediated by social structure. Whether a person conforms depends on his degree of both exposure to social communication among residents and interaction--in informal and formal settings--with them. This model assumes

neighborhood socialization can occur without a person being motivated to conform and without his being aware of neighborhood norms. (This model is partially supported by findings in Table 10.)

Third, Cornelius finds support in his data for the views that participation by the urban poor is closely related to: group consciousness among a poor population, growing from a common sense of deprivation; people's sense of the personal relevance of government activities for their lives; and a neighborhood's political opportunity structure--"the range and frequency of opportunities for political involvement to which people are exposed" (p. 46). But he does not fully elaborate the theories which incorporate these factors, and he did not design his study to test them systematically.

2.

When people are upset about neighborhood problems, they may do nothing, try to solve them, or move away. Orbell and Uno (1972) have developed a model for explaining some of the circumstances under which people choose one or more of these responses.

They view political participation--especially when protest is involved--as a problem-solving act and the neighborhood resident as a rational decision-maker about political concerns. Whether the resident deals with neighborhood ills by participating actively to improve things (voice), leaving (exit), or remaining passive (resignation), depends on how he assesses the costs and benefits of each response in light of his neighborhood environment.[12]

This perspective differs from more conventional ones in two important respects. It stresses that people will not participate politically if more attractive (i.e., lower cost, higher benefit) non-political alternatives exist. Exit, for example, may be a more reasonable choice than voice for

some facing neighborhood problems. Such choices, however, are usually ignored in studies of political participation.

This perspective also poses a different causal sequence between political attitudes and political participation. Instead of arguing that attitudes "inside the individual's head" are the key explanatory variable, it reasons that the individual's assessment of his social and political environment "out there" is crucial, with political attitudes and behavior being consequences of such an assessment. Neighborhood context, in other words, influences participation through the resident's rational evaluation of it as he decides what response to make to local problems.

The empirical evidence with which Orbell and Uno support this approach comes from aggregate data on neighborhood characteristics and survey data on individual responses to local problems in 150 census tracts in Columbus, Ohio. Using factor analysis on the aggregate data, they identified a cluster of characteristics usually associated with the degree of urbanism. This permitted three types of neighborhoods (operationalized as census tracts) to be distinguished: urban, suburban, and mixed. The survey data uncovered respondents' awareness of sense of urgency about local problems and their "proneness" to voice, exit, or resignation in light of them (rather than their actual responses to particular problems).

The only individual characteristics examined which significantly influence a resident's choice of a problem-solving strategy, according to Orbell and Uno, are race, status, and length of residence.

"Blacks are more likely to voice in response to problems than are whites of similar status who live in similar urban areas" (p. 485). For blacks, voice increases with length of residence (and exit, upon peaking several years after arrival, declines). For whites, voice decreases with length

of residence (and exit increases), although the timing and speed of change in strategy varies with the type of neighborhood. In suburban areas, for example exit is lowest and voice is highest for whites between the third and sixth year of residence. After that voice declines and exit increases. Discrimination limits the opportunities for blacks to exit. And although Orbell and Uno do not mention it, race consciousness--due to discrimination--probably explains their greater proneness to voice.

Status (defined by educational attainment) "makes some difference in selecting a strategy independently of area characteristics" (p. 484). But the type of neighborhood (and length of residence there) are most important.[13] The contextual effect of neighborhood type on a resident's strategy preference is evidenced by three sets of findings.

First, whites of the same status tend to respond differently to local problems depending on where they live. Low status residents of urban areas are exit prone while their suburban counterparts are voice prone. Secondly, whites of different status in similar neighborhoods tend to respond in the same way. Both high and low status persons from urban areas are prone to exit while "low status persons favor voice outside of urban areas just as much as high status persons" (p. 479). Thirdly, the priorities people attach to problems vary sharply with their area of residence, independently of individual characteristics. Poor housing and environmental quality rank very high in both black and white urban neighborhoods but very low in suburban neighborhoods. Schools rank high in suburban and mixed areas and low in suburban neighborhoods. Schools rank high in suburban and mixed areas and low in black and white urban areas. (Interestingly, only crime ranks high in all areas.) Orbell and Uno note that suburban problems

(transportation, schools, and crime) may be "'easier' to deal with and therefore more likely to provoke voice," while urban problems are more difficult and therefore more likely to encourage exit--if it is a viable option--or resignation.

"Exit fatigue" (deriving from the number of previous moves a resident has made), "sunk costs" (whether a resident was a homeowner), and a person's past residential history (the type of neighborhood in which he previously lived) had no impact on which strategy a resident favored. Orbell and Uno reasoned that high social integration into the neighborhood would promote voice and discourage exit; a resident with friends in the area would be more likely to stay and fight local problems than a resident without such ties. This hypothesis was not supported by the data. In fact, low social integration made voice more likely and exit less likely, a finding for which the authors have no plausible explanation. One possible explanation is that low social integration is associated with briefer length of residence. Voice is more likely to be chosen by a recent arrival than by a longer-term resident, who by not leaving may have tired of voice and accommodated to the status quo.

In rationally assessing the costs and benefits of each response to local problems, a resident pays special attention to certain features of the neighborhood.

1. If the number of difficulty of problems requiring solution is too great, voice may be viewed as too costly in comparison to exit.

2. If government, for whatever reasons, will not contribute necessary resources to solve local problems, then voice will be ineffective.

3. If exit to another area will not result in improved benefits to an individual, then staying put may be preferred to leaving. (High status

persons in exclusive suburbs may face this situation.)

4. An additional factor of importance, which Orbell and Uno fail to mention, is the local political opportunity structure. If the neighborhood has already developed an effective capacity for voice (e.g., successful community organizations), then the cost of voice to a resident is reduced and the likelihood of benefits is probably enhanced.

A resident also assesses his own resources in choosing a strategy. If they are high, exit is more affordable.

3.

Disaster research documents numerous examples of communities whose members have shown strong emotional attachment and generosity to each other in the face of calamity. But it also reports many instances in which these impulses of solidarity and helpfulness were restrained or absent. This contrast raises the question of why some communities respond to disasters with high levels of helping behavior while other communities do not. An answer to this question--which relies heavily on contextual propositions--is the centerpiece of Barton's (1970) masterful synthesis of disaster research.

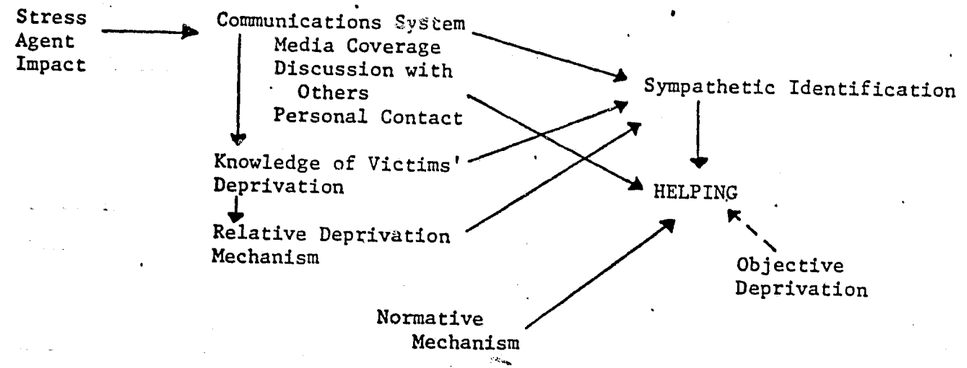
Barton's concern with the circumstances under which disasters elicit mass help by community members to ease suffering is similar to ours: the circumstances under which social problems elicit collective action by citizens to improve neighborhood life. Disasters, as Barton points out, "are part of the larger category of collective stress situations. A collective stress occurs when many members of a social system fail to receive expected conditions of life from the system" (p. 38). Social problems experienced at the neighborhood level are also, by this definition, instances of collective stress situations although many of them are at the

opposite, mundane end of the scale from disasters. The mechanisms which generate mutual assistance in disasters may be the same ones which politically mobilize residents in the face of local problems. The difference between the two situations may not be the mechanisms themselves but the severity of the constraints which inhibit their operation.

Barton develops an elaborate model for analyzing the helping behavior of communities in disaster. The model consists of 71 propositions, too numerous to be fully presented here. However the barest summary can, highlighting those mechanisms which may most influence the mobilization of neighborhood responses to local problems.

> The output of the ...(model)... is the reduction of objective and subjective deprivation of the victims of the collective stress. This is achieved by activating a series of processes (i.e., mechanisms). The stress agent (e.g., a disaster) by its "impact" (i.e., suddenness, randomness, severity, and the extent to which the causes of stress are tied to vested interest) activates the formal and informal communications systems of the ... community ... including the victims' own willingness to communicate about their deprivation, and thereby spreads knowledge of the victims' situation. (The communications system consists of three elements: personal contact with victims; the discussion of victims and their losses with others; and mass media coverage of victims.) This sets off the relative deprivation mechanism, by which those who have not suffered the most severe deprivation come to feel relatively non-deprived. The sense of being relatively advantaged strongly motivates helping among large numbers of both victims and non-victims. At the same time the communications and contacts arouse sympathetic identification with the victims, which also strongly motivates helping. To support these motivational factors, the normative mechanism amplifies the sense of moral obligation to help and puts pressure on those who may not themselves feel such a moral obligation through perceived community norms (p. 278).
>
> Behavior does not depend on motivations alone; it requires opportunity. Two objective circumstances are particularly important to the opportunity to help victims of collective stress: whether the individual himself has been so stricken that he is physically or economically unable to help; and whether he is in contact with victims so that he can help them (p. 269).

These relationships may be diagrammed as follows:



A number of factors favorably influence the extent to which the help-inducing mechanisms operate. Some of them are cited here (p. 279).

1. An impact which is sudden and socially random.

This stimulates greater informal communication about and perception of deprivation. A sudden impact dramatizes the catastrophe, jars people into recognition of damage, and rivets their attention. A crisis of gradual onset or chronic duration may be overlooked or resigned to as "just part of life." A socially random impact has several consequences. It helps spread knowledge into all or most social categories, across which communication might not normally occur. It decreases the likelihood that vested interests (e.g., a class or power group) are involved in the causes of the stress. This, in turn, makes it less likely that vested interests will distort or suppress information about the deprivation in order to conceal their own blame for what has happened. Since no one social category has been singled out by the impact as sufferers, blaming the victim explanations (especially by vested interests) is discouraged.

2. An impact which is not too large.

An extremely large impact saturates the system's capacity to respond, creating a "Hiroshima situation." It inhibits the relative deprivation mechanism, counteracts sympathy for others and norms for helping (people become too preoccupied with their own deprivation) and increases objective deprivation (thus physically incapacitating more people from helping others.)

3. Strong informal integration in the community.

This increases personal contacts between people and facilitates ease of communication.

4. Prevailing ideologies and values.

Those which stress collectivist orientations and a moral obligation to help others in distress promote helping behavior. Those which are individualistic, aristocratic, or racist discourage it.

Four mechanisms, all of which involve contextual relationships between the individual and his setting, are at the heart of Barton's model and merit further discussion.

People cannot help others suffering deprivation unless they are aware that deprivation exists. The extent of their knowledge--that is, their perception--of the amount and intensity of deprivation (the first mechanism) is directly affected by a number of factors. These include the severity and suddenness of a disaster's immediate impact and the willingness of victims to discuss their deprivation with others. The effect of these factors is to make the suffering of victims more visible to others. A major obstacle to successful neighborhood action is the invisibility of many local problems, their causes, or their victims to residents themselves or to the larger public. This is characteristic of many social problems generally in contrast to physical disasters. Social problems are frequently

slow to start, chronic in duration, and obscuring of their causes. They may be accommodated to as a part of every day existence. Their victims may be concealed from others by norms of privacy, physical segregation, or sanctions against speaking out. Many of the tactics of community groups and social movements are intended to make social problems visible while many of the reactions of those in power are intended to keep them invisible. Community organizations attempt to dramatize social problems by giving them the appearance in some respects of disasters. Crimes of incivility in a neighborhood, for example, may in part prompt more neighborhood concern and action than more serious crimes do because they are more visible.

People may be prompted to help a victim because they "feel a sense of identity with him, are made unhappy by his deprivation" (p. 238). If this sympathetic identification with the victim (the second mechanism) is absent, people may still be influenced to help by community norms which view helping as a moral obligation.

A group norm which is perceived by an individual influences him in two ways (the third mechanism): "first it may influence his actions through hope of reward and fear of punishment; and, second, it may be internalized, if the individual identifies with those who are seen as holding the norm" (p. 262).

On the aggregate level the normative mechanism is created in the following way:

> The initial number who help is a function of the initial number who feel a moral obligation to help or who have 'private' reasons for helping such as sympathetic identification with the victims. The initial number helping affects the number who perceive others as helping, and thereby the number who perceive others as having moral standards requiring helping. This in turn increases the number helping, and so the process snowballs. When the majority perceive that a majority holds a certain moral standard, we can say that a 'perceived group norm' exists (p. 262-3).

Extreme suffering by a few allows other victims by comparison to feel relatively well-off and to become less preoccupied with their own deprivation and more concerned with helping others. This sense of relative deprivation (the fourth mechanism) "tends to maintain community-oriented motivations (sympathetic identification with others and adherence to community-helping norms) in the face of severe personal deprivation" (p. 247). Empirical disaster research supports this hypothesis over the rationalistic one which assumes that the least deprived victims feel the best off and consequently help others the most (p. 249).

> The operation of the relative deprivation mechanism produces... paradoxical results when we compare aggregate figures for different zones or communities. While an individual who is severely deprived is likely to feel subjectively deprived, an area in which many people are severely deprived is likely to have only a moderate level of subjective deprivation. This happens because the factors that produce individual deprivation in some also produce a high level of awareness and identification among others; the very presence of severely deprived victims reduces the subjective deprivation of these less deprived. If we were to interpret the relationships between aggregate figures for areas as indicating the direction of individual relationships, we should be committing the 'ecological fallacy" (p. 253).

B.

Austin (1968) catalogues factors in three parts of a community organization's environment--the locality, the larger community (e.g., city), and the world of other organizations--which influence its development.

Factors in the locality especially have a direct effect on participation. These factors include:

- the extent to which the locality comprises a community(this being a function of: its existence as a service area, residents' psychological identification with the locality; the strength of horizontal over extra-local ties); the extent to which local networks are fragmented by:

institutional affiliations which generate informal communication but exclude non-members (e.g., Protestants in a largely Catholic neighborhood); natural barriers (e.g., expressways); or demographic divisions (e.g., blacks vs. whites). (These factors affect the number and type of participants.)

- the prevailing pattern of residents' values and stakes, which shape local definitions of reality and self-interest; the extent to which residents are protected from external sanctions against collective action. (These factors affect the goals for which--and the tactics by which--residents will participate. For example, the more vulnerable residents are to sanctions, the less likely they will pursue controversial goals or employ unpopular tactics.)

C.

Social network analysis is an approach to social science which attempts to clarify the behavior of individuals or collectivities by examining their social networks. It focuses on the attributes of interactional relations, specifically, the structure and content of social interaction within networks, which link people or groups together. This distinguishes it from other approaches which emphasize the characteristics of individuals or institutions (Boissevain and Mitchell 1973, Craven and Wellman 1974, Fischer et al. 1977, Mitchell 1969).

A network is "a specific set of linkages among a defined set of persons (or collectivities) with the additional property that the characteristics of these linkages as a whole may be used to interpret the social behavior of the persons (or collectivities) involved" (Mitchell 1969:2). A community, in network terms, is a bounded set "of links and nodes, all of whose members are connected either directly or via indirect paths of short length" (Craven and Wellman 1974:74).

Characteristics of networks of their links which are felt to have important consequences for behavior include (Fischer et al. 1977:36):

multiplicity--the number of relations in a given link

intensity--the degree of commitment in a given link

range--the number of actors connected in a network

density--the extent of interlinkages among the actors, usually expressed as the ratio of the number of existing links to the number of possible links.

Network analysis has a number of applications in social science. Its most important use, perhaps, is empirically depicting how macro-level factors (e.g., city size and density, economic structure) influence micro-level phenomena (e.g., urban life styles, getting a job) (Granovetter 1973). Network analysis disentangles the study of community from the study of neighborhoods, an important advance for analyzing participation in local problem-solving. A community, by the network definition, can be territorially diffuse instead of territorially based. Thus a neighborhood may bereft of community while its residents are not. They find it elsewhere, in their personal networks whose links are largely with non-residents. Neighborhood based community may have declined but community may not have.

Network analysis can look precisely at the kinds of networks residents have and then ask what consequences these networks have for a neighborhood's capacity to generate community organizations and participation in them. This approach is more fruitful than simply assuming that if a neighborhood lacks community its residents are rootless and anomic and consequently unable or unlikely to act collectively.

According to Craven and Wellman (1974) the research literature indicates that tightly-knit (dense and thus sharply bounded) networks tend to be small

with strong ties.[14] Network members are friends, frequently with similar interests and social characteristics. Loosely-knit (less dense and less bounded) networks tend to be large with more weak and indirect linkages. Network members are involved--but less deeply so--with a larger number and variety of others (pp. 73-74).

Using this distinction one may ask what pattern of networks exists in a neighborhood and what are its consequences for neighborhood collective action. Since no empirical studies on this question exist, I am left to speculate. At least four patterns are possible, and they are discussed here as ideal types not real phenomena.

1. Loose-knit neighborhood. Relatively few ties exist between residents. Instead there are many and varied external ties which radiate outward beyond the bounds of the neighborhood. Such ties offer at least four benefits to individual residents. They provide: comparative information with which to evaluate the local setting; practical information and strategic advice about "how to do things;" access to a broader range and higher quality of goods and services; and paths of contact to power centers and other networks with similar interests. These benefits, in turn, increase a resident's ability to mobilize external resources for solving local problems, ease his access to power centers, and facilitate coalition-building. In sum, they boost his efficacy in the larger society.

2. Tight-knit neighborhood. Relatively few ties exist beyond the neighborhood. Rather, the bulk of residents' ties are with each other. Thus, residents' networks are neighborhood-bound; their ties loop back on each other. Internal ties, many of them strong, predominate. Such ties have at least three consequences for the neighborhood. They generate: community solidarity, a local identity, and a system of strong norms. These

consequences, in turn, facilitate local social control, ease communication between residents, increase their ability to mobilize internal resources for local problems, and sharpen their perception of external threats to the neighborhood. In sum, they increase the neighborhood's capacity to mobilize its residents.

3. Mixed neighborhood. Both loose-knit and tight-knit ties exist in significant numbers. Some of the residents' ties are with each other, and the rest branch outside the area to non-residents.[15] The consequences of the tight-knit and loose-knit neighborhoods are both experienced here although perhaps less strongly. The mixed neighborhood will be able to mobilize its residents and to mobilize resources in the outside world.

4. Anomic neighborhood. Neither loose-knit nor tight-knit ties exist in any profusion. Residents are largely isolated from each other and from the larger society. Little mobilization capacity of any kind exists.

Each type of neighborhood has a different capacity for undertaking successful collective political action.

The loose-knit neighborhood has more individuals with substantial tangible resources and expertise for effectively supporting collective action, but less ability to mobilize people so these potential advantages can be pooled and activated. The tight-knit neighborhood, on the other hand, has more ability to mobilize people and their emotional resources for collective action but fewer tangible resources for effectively carrying it out.[16] The mixed neighborhood has the greatest capacity for effective collective action since both conditions for successful community organizing exist: enough internal ties to mobilize people and their sentiments; and enough external ties to invigorate the effort with pragmatic ideas, instrumental resources like technical assistance, paths of influence to

government, and possibilities of coalition with other localities. In the anomic neighborhood little collective action of any kind will occur.

With respect to crime-prevention activities, the loose-knit neighborhood may be especially attracted to programs which can be imported into the area and administered by "professionals" without high levels of local citizen participation. Demands for improved police protection may be common. And the latest security equipment will be bought if affordable. In other words, in the absence of local social control residents will rely on those individual and bureaucratic solutions--on purchasable goods and procurable services--for crime control which require low expenditures of their time and energy.

The tight-knit neighborhood may attempt more formal community organizing but fail to achieve substantial victories, especially if they depend on access to external information, resources, and political authority. It may turn, more than other types of neighborhoods, to informal collective efforts between relatively small numbers of residents: watching from the stoop and other forms of neighborly vigilance, talking to the parents of an unruly teenager, helping with advice or labor on lock installations, or persuading the parish priest to defuse gang rivalries.

The mixed neighborhood will be able to make both "tight-knit" and "loose-knit" responses to crime. In addition it will exhibit the highest level of formal collective action against crime. The implication here is that the mixed neighborhood has available to it the broadest array of responses to crime and thus may be most successful at crime-prevention.

In the anomic neighborhood crime-prevention activity will be confined to modest individual actions which rely on immediately available resources or locally discernable information. Lacking the support of neighbors or

external resources the resident may responde to crime with fatalism, despair or violence.

The hypothesis underlying this typology is that resident participation in neighborhood problem-solving, whatever the actual extent, and perception of a local problem, are independently influenced by the type of response capacity which residents' network relations create.

There is a fifth type of neighborhood, one in which residents have tight-knit networks but the neighborhood as a whole lacks cohesion. This fragmented neighborhood is the subject of speculation by Granovetter (1973) in an important article and illustrates what he calls "the strength of weak-ties." He notes that Boston's West End--the "urban village" of Gans's study--failed to organize against the destructuve intrusion of urban renewal in spite of appearing cohesive. He speculates that the area was characterized by isolated cliques (what Gans called peer groups) within which ties were strong but between which few weak, bridging ties existed. As a result there was sublocal cohesion but neighborhood fragmentation: the cliques were unable to join together against a common enemy (pp. 1373-75). In the terms of this discussion this neighborhood lacks the one major advantage for community organizing it might otherwise have had--the ability to mobilize residents and their sentiments.

Granovetter points out that the fragmented neighborhood may be misidentified as cohesive by fieldworkers, who are usually only exposed to a small segment of the neighborhood's interpersonal relations. From their limited perspective within a clique they observe strong-knit ties but miss the lack of ties across cliques (p. 1374).

"Bridges," as Granovetter calls them, "create more and shorter paths" between persons (p. 1365). They are the only line of contact for a person

to what would otherwise be separate networks. They thus tend to increase a person's access to more information, resources, and influence. The "strength of weak ties" is that bridges can only be weak ties.[17] The weakness of tight-knit networks, then, is that they do not contain bridges.

Granovetter's fragmented neighborhood may approximate reality more closely than my tight-knit neighborhood. It is unlikely, except in very small neighborhoods, for most residents to be strongly linked to most other residents in one tight-knit network. The feasible setting for the tight-knit network, in this case, is the sublocal area--the block or street for example. Whether there are bridges between these sublocal clusters is thus crucial. Local institutions such as the church may serve as bridges in neighborhoods where networks are cliques.

A subsequent exchange between Granovetter and Gans (1974) over the West End clarifies the strengths and weaknesses of network analysis for understanding when neighborhoods organize. Both agree that the West End was fragmented and that networks with bridging ties are a necessary but not sufficient condition for successful community organizing. Granovetter agrees with much of Gans's argument about the important role of political and historical factors in discouraging actions in the West End. There was no tradition of protest against local government at the time and such tactics by West Enders would have been ridiculed by their peer group members. The Catholic church and local settlement houses supported urban renewal. West Enders felt it was pointless to oppose city hall. Urban renewal was a new policy and its consequences not easily fathomed.

Despite their common ground, Gans still places more emphasis on politics and Granovetter on networks to explain inaction in the West End. For Gans, subcultural values which result from macro(especially political)

influences on the neighborhood discourage bridging and community organizing. City politicians were not accessible or accountable to West Enders. West Enders responded rationally to their powerlessness by distrusting politicians and the political process. This limited the formation of bridges and community organizations. For Granovetter, network characteristics affect (in this case discourage) the emergence of community organizations, in part, independently of political factors.

> There is ample evidence...that network structure is heavily affected by neighborhood ecology, length of settlement, economic structure, and simply by chance.
>
> Network structures and characteristics are important variables affecting the outcome of political and other processes and are not either easily visible or deducible from general analysis of cultural, political, or economic variables (pp. 528-29).

D.

Drawing on interviews with approximately 200 key members of voluntary associations in black and white Detroit neighborhoods, Warren (1975) found "a very significant correlation between the neighborhood setting and the way in which a voluntary association operates."[18] Warren's study is unusual in relating neighborhood characteristics to the nature of local organizations. His findings highlight the adaptive character of such groups: in this case they adjust to the composition of the neighborhood by structuring participation in ways which insure their survival. The influence of the local setting on its organizations was strongest in the black neighborhoods Warren examined.

Organizations in black heterogeneous neighborhoods

> insulate themselves from the social diversity in their neighborhoods. Rather than confronting the problem of having to deal with a varied population, these organizations carefully screen out people who have different values and social backgrounds from their own membership. As a result, these groups are able to pursue important instrumental activities. They are not

> preoccupied with trying to maintain group consensus. But this ability to act has a rather high price. In exchange for this capacity to act on specific goals, these organizations become unrepresentative of their neighborhoods (p. 84-5).

Indeed, they tend to form a series of cliquish organizations "operating side by side," but "each drawing from the separate constituencies contained within a common field of potential members" (p. 93). These relationships can be pictured diagrammatically.

Black heterogeneous neighborhood → Selective membership recruitment (organizational adaptation) → Small, self-contained homogeneous organizations with low status conflict → Unrepresentativeness ("price"

Organizations in black homogeneous neighborhoods do not insulate themselves from the social composition of their neighborhoods. They favor open instead of selective recruitment and appear to "draw on the maximum diversity in their neighborhood and possibly beyond" (p. 93). As a result they exhibit greater internal heterogeneity and high status conflict to which they must respond--if they are to survive--with cohesion-building, structural adaptations. These include introducing several levels of authority, larger chains of decision-making, and more committees and offices into the organization. This increase in the formal complexity of the organization "permits diverse status groups to have a voice" (pp. 90-91). But this effort to adapt also carries a high price. It reduces the organization's flexibility, innovativeness, and, above all, efficiency. "Rapid and effective response to (instrumental) problems gives way to the maintenance of internal cohesion" (p. 91). Indeed, "these organizations expend almost more energy than seems necessary to maintain effective internal solidarity" (p. 85). As a consequence "the very survival of the group becomes an end in itself" (p. 91). These relationships are depicted in the following diagram.

Black homogeneous neighborhood → open membership recruitment → large, heterogeneous organizations with high status conflict → structural adaptations → inefficiency

Thus the homogeneous organizations (which are mainly located in heterogeneous neighborhoods) are instrumentally effective within the limits imposed by their relatively small number of participants but unrepresentative of the neighborhood's population as a whole. The heterogeneous organizations (which are mainly located in homogeneous neighborhoods) are representative of their areas but frequently ineffective in achieving instrumental goals. Important implications for community organizing and citizen participation policy follow from these conditions for organizational survival.

In a black heterogeneous neighborhood an organization may be unable to represent the entire locality--as required by provisions of government programs--without threatening its own survival. And the neighborhood's composition may frustrate any but the smallest scale organizing efforts (p. 95).

In a black homogeneous neighborhood, locality may be an effective basis for organizing to solve modest local problems and building neighborhood cohesion. But more complex problems require community organizations to seek resources and allies from beyond the neighborhood. Maintaining internal cohesion may so preoccupy the heterogeneous black organization that it cannot respond effectively to such problems on its own or join forces with other groups beyond its bounds who are attacking them (p. 95).

Under either set of circumstances the policy of maximum feasible participation may be inappropriate. In a heterogeneous neighborhood the diversity of membership which would result from such a policy could exceed the local organization's ability to manage it. In a homogeneous neighborhood

the diversity could be fully incorporated but the capacity for effective action might be weakened in the process (pp. 95-96).

Warren commits the functionalist error of overemphasizing the importance of neighborhood cohesion and the role of voluntary associations in achieving it. He notes that voluntary associations perform "an integrative or socializing function that develops group goals (and) community or societal cohesion" (p. 74). Community organizations may profit from local cohesion during times of neighborhood crisis. In fact, they may capitalize on the crisis to create cohesion, even in heterogeneous neighborhoods. And a neighborhood is probably easier to mobilize if its residents feel some attachment to the area and each other. But in their day to day activities many, perhaps most, community organizations act quite adequately in the name of the neighborhood without being fully representative of its demographic diversity. Heterogeneity and homogeneity, typically and for Warren, refer to the pattern of a neighborhood's demographic composition but not to its interests. Residents may endorse or tolerate a community organization which does not represent the composition of the neighborhood so long as it effectively represents some of its interests. Substantive representation may be more highly valued by residents than formal representation, to use Pitkin's terms (1967).

Moreover, the routine function of many voluntary associations is less to unite people in an area than to differentiate them. As Gans (1967) points out in his study of Levittown, "the organizations were mainly sorting groups which divided and segregated people by their interests and ultimately by socioeconomic, educational, and religious differences. On the block people who shared a common space could not really express their diversity; the community sorting groups came into being for this purpose (p. 61)."

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VIII PARTICIPATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Theoretical approaches for studying the impact of organizational characteristics on participation abound.[19] But empirical data on how the characteristics of community organizations influence participation in them is scarce (Smith and Reddy 1972).

Suggestive, and sometimes contradictory, evidence - from sparse sources - is presented here on how participation is affected by a community organization's: size, structure, composition, goals, and rewards-or incentives - system.

As the size of voluntary organizations increases the rate of active participation by members tends to decline (Indik 1965, Warner and Hilander 1964). Yates (1975), in a study of seven types of neighborhood problem-solving efforts, concluded that the cohesiveness, communication, and coordination necessary for effective democratic participation is seriously jeapordized when local organizations exceed roughly 3,000 members or constituents. Federated coalitions of community organizations, however, have been able to achieve larger memberships with only moderate compromise of these structural characteristics (O'Brien 1976).

Restrictive membership requirements will retard participation (Smith and Reddy 1972), but inclusive requirements, on the other hand, may create a diverse membership in which conflicts and factions are more likely. Crippled by its inability to act decisively, participation may decline (Zald and Ash 1966).

Crenson (1974) in a study of six community organizations in Baltimore, found that "where the conditions for internal conflict exist, as they do in

groups with many organizational activists among their members, friendship seems to intensify the disagreements that arise." (p. 365) Organizational activists generate disaffection among the membership, according to Crenson, because they are difficult to govern and because their substantial outside organizational attachments are a basis for internal factions.

Increased bureaucratization of an organization may diminish membership participation (Tannenbaum, and Kahn 1958), but it has also been found that the higher the proportion of members holding office in the organization the higher the proportion of members who attend organizational meetings (Warner 1964). Organizational structures which promote communication between leaders and followers, a sense of influence among members, and pressures to participate from other non-office-holding members also encourage more active participation (Likert 1961, Smith and Brown 1964).

Organizations which address universalistic issues - controversial, intensely felt, frequently redistributive concerns such as civil rights, poverty community control, or police brutality - may attract larger numbers of participants (Austin 1968, Vanecko 1970, Yates 1975), although such issues are usually more difficult to solve than particularistic ones (e.g., street lighting, tree-trimming, snow removal, park improvements, etc.). If universalistic issues remain unsolved, participation may dwindle. New organizations require quick victories--which are easiest to obtain with particularistic issues--in order to attract participants (Alinsky 1969, 1971).

The search for issues which will atract and retain participants is fundamental to a community organization's survival (O'Brien 1976). Issues are chosen by community organizations in light of this maintenance need. Short of ultimate explanation, then, the single most important factor in

explaining whether a neighborhood deals with a local problem may be the existence of community organizations whose maintenance needs are served by attacking it. The perception of many social problems is high enough in most neighborhoods to constitute a collective view that something should be done about them. Whether people act on any of these problems, however, will depend on whether local community organizations decide to act on them. It is not the perception of local problems alone which prompts collective action but a community organization's decision that its maintenance interests are served by tackling the problems. A community organization may make such a decision if it concludes that collective action will:

-gain it greater legitimacy or influence

-retain participants who would otherwise leave

-attract new particpants who would otherwise not join

-be financed by outside sources--a foundation, a government agency--and thus provide it with staff and funds which can be used for other purposes as well

-neutralize its rivals' ability to enhance their reputation or membership at its expense.

Participation has been conceptualized in terms of the incentives (or rewards) an organization can provide its members or potential supporters (Clark and Wilson 1961, Flynn and Webb 1975, Olson 1965, Wilson 1974).

> ...Individuals are more likely to join an association if it promises to provide certain otherwise unattainable benefits, be these benefits for oneself or for others. The extent to which such benefits are attained by participation serves to stimulate active participation...From this perspective, membership and participation have their own costs. In an individual's 'personal economy' time or money spent in one setting limits, restricts, or even eliminates other options. Thus within this 'economy' if rewards or benefits may be forthcoming without active participation, without membership, or even without support of any kind, the individual is unlikely to 'spend' his scarce resources in seeking those rewards or benefits (Smith and Reddy 1972:313).

Olson's (1965) work on collective action and the "public goods dilemma" is a most important theoretical analysis on the limitations of purposive--or instrumental--incentives and organizational strategies to overcome them. According to Olson there are two major disincentives to purposive involvement in social change organizations by citizens. First, the citizen calculates that his own contribution (in a large organization) won't possibly affect the outcome one way or the other. (And a small group, where his presence might be felt, can't effect big change.) Second, he realizes that his participation will not be specially rewarded should the organization gain some change: public goods, being nondivisible, are available to participants and non-participants alike. Those who don't "pay" for the goods benefit from them just as much as those who did "pay." Senior citizens who might lobby in a state legislature for a homestead exemption on property taxes would benefit from this public good--the fruits of their own effort--no more than those who sat on the sidelines and watched. Or local citizens who successfully pressure city government to increase police protection in their area gain no more of this public good than their neighbors who did nothing. A large organization can only overcome these obstacles to participation by offering selective incentives--utilitarian rewards which are not available to outsiders: life insurance policies, dental plans, goods a reduced price, priveleged information, newsletters, etc.

Olson's calculus of non-involvement takes the perspective of atomistic, economic man. It overlooks that individuals are embedded in social contexts and take moral and collective sentiments into account when deciding to enjoin public issues. People don't simply assess the costs of involvement in isolation of others. They may even reject the calculus of non-involvement on the grounds that if everybody follows it all collective action would be

impossible. Assessments about participating in collective action are frequently not made in the abstract but with reference to a real organization they might join. How they perceive the organization's chances of winning will influence their decision to become involved.

In addtion, Olson overlooks the powerful selective incentives--of a non-utilitarian nature--which are available to participants even in a large organization which is engaged in achieving some collective good: psychological gains (improved self-esteem, greater self-confidence, opportunity for moral expression of the self, fear management); status gains; educational gains (cosmopolitanism, political insight, leadership skills); and even communal gains (experiencing a sense of communion or community) (Freedman 1974, McCourt 1977, Weissman 1970).

IX. MACRO-INFLUENCES ON PARTICIPATION

Tilly (1974) in a recent article poses the question of when communities act. He treats community as "any durable local population most of whose members belong to households in the locality" (p. 212). Thus neighborhoods as well as larger localities fit the definition. He means by "act" collective action in which pooled resources are applied by community members on behalf of the local population as a whole (p. 212). His answer to the question draws on his own study of past urbanization, migration, and collective action in Europe and North America.

The extent of a community's (or other collectivity's) collective action is, according to Tilly, a function of: the extent of its mobilization; the amount of its power in relation to other groups; the degree of uncertainty that the claims it is pressing will be met; and the extent to which its actions are typically repressed (p. 213).

A community which is partially mobilized and relatively powerful, uncertain, and invulnerable to repression provides the most fertile setting for community organizing (p. 237). Tilly's point here is perhaps too obvious. Communities which can be most successfully organized are those which are already partly organized.

Communities, rather than other groups, are more likely to exhibit the necessary conditions for collective action when:

1. Communities are homogeneous with respect to the main divisions of power at a regional or national level;
2. The cost of communication rises rapidly as a function of distance; and,
3. Control over land (as compared with other factors of production) is valuable but uncertain (p. 219).

A community more easily becomes the basis of collective action when all its members share roughly the same relation to regional or national divisions of power. When they do not, interests within the community will be divided and members will be linked to bases of mobilization which cross-cut territory. If persons of similar status in relation to power reside in the same place, then community rather than some other form of association will tend to be the unit of mobilization. External threats are more likely to generate demands which are broadly supported throughout the community. The cost of mobilization will also be less since the same procedure for pooling resources can be invoked with everybody.

When the cost of long distance communication is high, it is cheaper for concentrated populations (i.e., communities) to mobilize than for more dispersed populations.

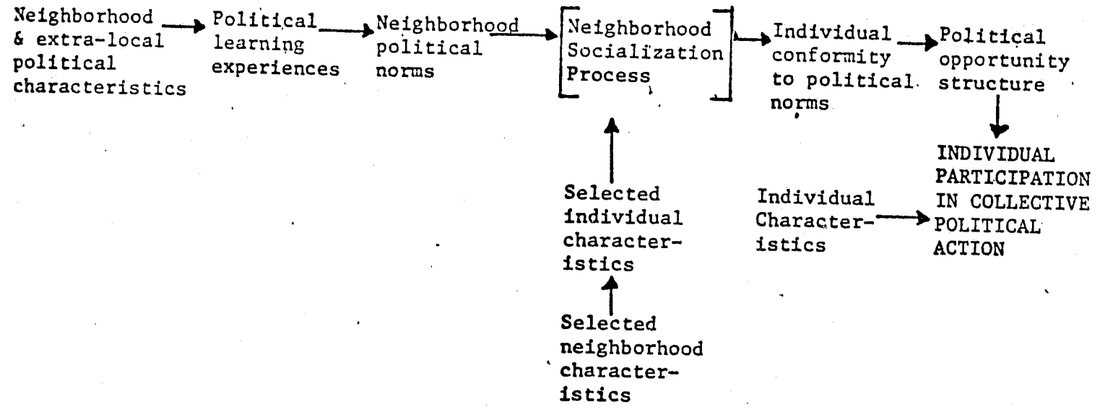
If the territory in which residents have an investment is worthless, then they are "less likely to have interests or claims on them" (p. 222). If their control over land is secure, the need for collective action is low. If residents have a valuable investment in land, then they have a stronger interest in preserving their stakes. As a consequence the costs of mobilization will be lower since the motivation for collective action is higher. Others are also more likely to make competing claims on valuable territory, and if resident control over land is uncertain this will underscore the need for collective action.

In the long run, according to Tilly, the effects of urbanization favor other kinds of groups over communities as collective actors.

X. A MODEL FOR ANALYZING PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

The various factors which influence participation in community organizations--i.e., collective political action by neighborhood residents--can be organized into a model which indicates some of the causal pathways between these factors. The model (see diagram, pp. 59-60) attempts to integrate key empirical findings and speculations contained in this paper.[20] Its usefulness is as an aid in thinking about community participation and designing research to explain it.

Understanding the diagram is simplified by first viewing it in its most skeletal form.



According to the model, certain neighborhood--and extra-local--political characteristics provide a body of learning experiences from which norms for an ethos of neighborhood action emerge. The key elements of this ethos are a strong posture towards collective neighborhood problem-solving activities and sanctions which support participation in such activities.[21] Neighborhoods with a strong action ethos will tend to have high levels of resident participation in collective political activity. The strength of this association (the neighborhood effect), however, depends in part on the processes of neighborhood socialization at work. A person's sensitivity to these processes is influenced by a number of his individual characteristics which may be classified as: orientations toward the neighborhood's political opportunity structure (e.g., a high level of awareness of the neighborhood leadership structure); his perceptions of the neighborhood normative system and his psychological orientation to it (e.g., a high disposition to conform to community norms); and the degree of his social integration into the neighborhood and his interaction with other residents (e.g., frequent discussion of local problems with residents). A resident is more likely

to possess certain of these attributes if his neighborhood is characterized by certain political, social structural, and geographic conditions. But the impact of the neighborhood action ethos on participation is also dependent on the neighborhood's political opportunity structure. Conforming to the ethos is most easily translated into active participation in collective political efforts when ample opportunities for such activity exist and when residents are recruited to take advantage of them.

The model incorporates the idea that social context influences people through their perceptions of it and through its provision of objective possibilities for action (Barton 1970). The model indicates two processes--both oversimplified in the diagram--of neighborhood socialization; in one (A) the conforming individual internalizes neighborhood norms; in the other (B) normative conformity does not require internalization but may result from social pressure. The model distinguishes between individual characteristics which directly affect participation (or do so indirectly through processes not specified) and those which increase the sensitivity of the individual to the impact of contextual effects on his political participation. (In some cases the distinction is really between different modes of influence for the same individual characteristic.) Individual characteristics of the first kind influence participation in collective political activity quite apart from whether neighborhood political norms sanctioning such behavior exist, although such norms may amplify the effects of these characteristics. The model suggests, finally, that political characteristics of the neighborhood--and the larger environment--are the crucial variables in generating a climate in which collective political action is likely. Social characteristics of the neighborhood are seen as intervening between ethos and action by influencing individual receptivity to neighborhood socialization.

Neighborhood--and extra-local--influences on individual participation are prominent in this analysis. We close with a brief summary of some of these influences and how they are important.

1. Size and density of the local population

> Social control and pressures for conformity to local norms are likely to be stronger in smaller and up to a point, denser communities since more frequent opportunities for social interaction are more likely and since there can be more scrutiny of neighborhood behavior (Cornelius 1973:39).

2. Socio-economic homogeneity/heterogeneity

In a more homogeneous neighborhood residents can more easily acquire a sense of psychological identification with the area and a cooperative spirit (Cornelius 1973). But it is also possible for these orientations to develop in the absence of homogeneity when the neighborhood is faced with external threats to its interests or survival (Coleman 1971). In a more heterogeneous neighborhood status differences, especially if extreme, may obscure awareness of common interests or even create conflicts in interests. However, in working class or poor neighborhoods the presence of some middle or upper middle class residents may provide an important pool of leaders for mobilizing residents.

3. Stability of residence

Stability of residence eases creation of neighborhood norms, social networks, and solidarity. This effect must be weighed against another one: recent arrivals to an area may in their desire to be accepted and connected show more sensitivity to neighborhood norms than older residents (Cornelius 1973). Extreme residential stability may not be most conducive to a strong local normative system. The ideal situation may be enough residential stability to support an ongoing <u>structure</u> for a local normative system and enough new residents to keep it invigorated.

Thus, a certain degree of residential instability may promote a strong system of local norms.

4. Location and boundedness

A neighborhood with distinct boundaries is easier for residents to identify with and easier for government officials to bargain with (Suttles 1972). One located close to vital services and work allows its residents more free time for political activity (Cornelius 1973).

5. Relations with outside political authorities

Indifferent, inadequate, or punitive responses by political authorities to local demands or needs may unite people in reaction and/or heighten their acceptance of norms for collective action (Cornelius 1973). If such responses persist in the face of efforts to alter them, however, cooperative political involvement may decline as people decide it doesn't pay (Austin 1968, Gans 1967, Yates 1975). If political authorities entice people toward non-local political undertakings (e.g., national elections), at the expense of local ones, cooperative political activity around specifically local issues may wane (Cornelius 1973, Tilly 1974).

6. Community leadership and organization: the political opportunity structure

Participation in collective political activity will be encouraged if community leaders advocate it and if community organizations promote it directly by providing formal opportunities for membership or indirectly by stimulating informal social networks to form (Cornelius 1973, Greer and Orleans 1962). People frequently participate in voluntary associations only after being recruited (Gans 1967, Freeman 1975, McCourt 1977, Sills 1958).

High organizational density in an area has important consequences for participation. It fosters greater opportunities for coalition or competition; inclusion of the entire neighborhood in a controversy; and cross pressures at the sub-neighborhood level which catapult controversy to the level of the whole neighborhood (Coleman 1957).

7. On-going problems and needs

> Sustained political mobilization requires a strong and continuing need for mutual assistance and cooperation deriving from the existence of a set of community-related problems which can be addressed most effectively through collective political action (Cornelius 1973:44).

8. Neighborhood history

Past episodes in a neighborhood's history--including its founding--may constitute political learning experiences which influence the prospects for future action (Cornelius 1973). A neighborhood history of community problems and collective efforts--some successful--to overcome them may provide residents with inspiration, legitimacy, and useful information for engaging in new cooperative activity. But residents must be aware of--or a part of--this history for it to affect them in this manner. If episodes in neighborhood history demonstrate the value of collective action, then residential stability promotes this form of political activity by preserving local history within more people's memory.

9. Social networks

The "mixed neighborhood," characterized by extensive networks with some neighborhood orientation and including local strong ties, local bridging ties, and extra-local bridging ties, may promote participation most readily. Tie generating institutions in the neighborhood, such as the church, which serve as bridges and communications channels but don't exclude non-members will encourage participation (Austin 1968, Granovetter 1973, 1974).

NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION ETHOS
-collectivist posture toward neighborhood problem-solving
-supporting sanctions

receptivity to norms

Perceptual/Behavioral Orientations to Political Opportunity Structure*

-participation in community orgs.
-high perception of neighborhood leadership structure
-high estimate of neighborhood's potency as political group

Potential Political Learning Experiences ← Residential Stability

MACRO & NEIGHBORHOOD POLITICAL INFLUENCES
-Problems: continuing neighborhood problems (including external threats to local interests) which generate discontent and underscore need for local cooperation; or public services or programs which mandate local participation
-Action: collective political action experiences (confrontations, self-help projects, etc.)
-Responses: continuing negative responses by external political authority (indifferent, inadequate, punitive)
-Outcomes: collective gains or losses resulting from local action
-Other (non-local) bases of political organization/ mobilization are weak

Neighborhood Political Characteristics*

-local leaders who interpret political experience as requiring mutual assistance
-local leaders who advocate collective action

*Which neighborhood characteristics specifically affect which individual characteristics is not indicated.

**The assumption here is that the influence of these characteristics on participation is not mediated by contextual effects.

Demographic characteristics
-length of residence
-age, life cycle status

(B)

degree of social interaction/ communication

INDIVIDUAL CONFORMITY TO NORMS OF NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION ETHOS

(A)

Perceptions of Neighborhood Normative System and Psychological Orientations To It

-high disposition to conform to community norms
-high perception of general concern in neighborhood for local problems

Social Integration/ Interaction in Neighborhood

-high social integration
-frequent discussion of local problems with other residents
-lower exposure to other anti-collectivist socializing agents
-high emotional attachment to or sense of identification with locality

Neighborhood Structural Characteristics (especially)*

-size
-homogeneity/heterogeneity
-stability of residence
-neighborhood social networks

Neighborhood Structural & Political Characteristics (especially)*

-size/density
-stability of residence
-extent of negative sanctions by pol. authorities; external threats
-extent of voluntary org. infrastructure
-homogeneity/ heterogeneity.
-neighborhood social networks

POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE

Individual Characteristics**

-SES
-age
-length of residence
-personal resources
-etc.

INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION IN COLLECTIVE POLITICAL ACTION

FOOTNOTES

1. Recent estimates although they vary, indicate the breadth of the neighborhood movement." The National Commission on Neighborhoods, for example, has recently identified more than 8,000 neighborhood associations in the U.S. There are over 10,000 block clubs in New York City. The Office of Neighborhoods, Voluntary Associations, and Consumer Affairs of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development puts the number of consumer and citizen organizations at nearly 15,000. Cited in Perlman 1975.
2. The Gallup Poll, Sunday, March 5, 1978. In various newspapers.
3. For more exhaustive treatments of these studies see reviews cited in Part I of the Bibliography.
4. This is one of the implications which can be drawn from social network analysis. See section VII, C. of this paper.
5. Greer and Orleans 1962 are an exception but their study does not distinguish between membership in community organizations and membership in other types of voluntary associations.
6. The appendix and bibliography contain additional, relevant citations.
7. Cornelius's study treats a wide range of variables and is one of the most comprehensive examinations to date of neighborhood political mobilization. His research is discussed in this section of the paper because of his special concern with contextual effects. Page references are to his 1973 monograph rather than his 1975 book unless otherwise indicated.
8. The control variables include age, socioeconomic status, length of residence, and psychological involvement in politics.

9. More specifically, the analysis at this point investigates which characteristics of the individual resident are associated with a strong correlation between his frequency of political participation and the contextual variables. For a discussion of Cornelius's technique here see p. 32 and the footnotes to Table 9.
10. This classification differs from the one implicit in Tables 9-11 but is more analytically appropriate.
11. Although Cornelius is not entirely clear on this point, he is, I think, pointing out those characteristics of the neighborhood as a social and political unit which promote "context sensitive" characteristics in an individual resident. A resident with such characteristics is more likely to be influenced in his frequency and mode of political participation by the contextual variables--that is, he is more susceptible to the impact of neighborhood effects on his political participation. See p. 39.
12. Orbell and Uno borrow "voice" and "exit" and associated ideas from Albert Hirschman's Exit, Voice, and Lovalty.
13. This and the remaining conclusions cited here refer only to whites in the study unless otherwise indicated. The 85 black cases in Orbell and Uno's sample were largely low status and urban.
14. Granovetter (1973) defines ties as strong when they take up a substantial amount of time and generate high levels of emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocal services.
15. This is one variant of the mixed type. Another would consist of some residents whose ties were almost all tight-knit and the rest whose ties were almost all loose-knit. This variant is probably more realistic than the first, although I am not sure. In any case, it is

more analytically complicated, despite its apparent similarity to Janowitz's and Greer's "community of limited liability." The crucial issue with this variant is whether the "loose-knits" and "tight-knits" are themselves linked to each other, however weakly.

16. One assumption here is that perhaps most collective action requires the mobilization of both tangible and emotional resources.

17. This is dictated by the logic of "the forbidden triad." See Granovetter's reasoning on this point, pp. 1361-5 .

18. These interviews are part of a larger survey of Detroit which interviewed 1700 residents in 38 neighborhoods.

19. See section XIV of the bibliography.

20. The model draws most heavily on Cornelius but relies on other authors as well. While the model as a whole has not been empirically tested, much of it receives confirmation in Cornelius's research.

21. Cornelius uses the term "cooperative political ethos." In his study of poor Mexico City neighborhoods, it was measured by the number of residents who scored highly on: civic-mindedness; collective self-help orientation; frequency of political participation; perception of external threat as requiring collective political action; and disposition to conform to community norms.

APPENDIX

Many factors influence collective political action in neighborhoods, as the list in this appendix indicates. The listing here is compiled from works reviewed in this paper or cited in the bibliography and my own observations. I have not attempted to chart the complex relationships between the variables. I have commented on several entries, however, where it seemed especially appropriate. Individual characteristics in the list are associated with the likelihood a person will participate in neighborhood organizations, which are working to solve local problems. The characteristics of collectivities and issues are associated with the likelihood and scope of neighborhood involvement in collective political action through local organizations.

I CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIVIDUALS

A. Absolute Variables

1. Demographic

-Socio-economic status Studies of political participation consistently document that increases in ses are associated with increases in overall political participation. (The major refinement to this finding is that blacks at certain ses levels participate more than whites at comparable levels. See below.) This association may not hold, however, for participation in community organizations, and the empirical data with which to make a determination does not exist. Most studies of political participation do not include membership, let alone active involvement, in local organizations in their indices of participation. Those which do, fail to treat organizational participation as a separate issue of analysis. An important exception is Verba and Nie who give special treatment to civic involvement and "communalists".

-Race/ethnicity Orum found that lower class blacks participate more in voluntary associations than lower class whites while the reverse is true for middle and upper class groups. He argues that the "over-participation" of lower class blacks is a rational response to the denial of opportunities for achieving statues, prestige, and power in the larger world. They compensate by pursuing them in their own associations. Olsen generally agrees with Orum but puts more weight on ethnic identification as an explanation of higher participation by lower income blacks. Blacks with high ethnic identification show high levels of participation in voluntary associations. Olsen reasons such blacks feel themselves part of an ethnic community and subject to its norms. If the norms stress community activism, they will participate more in local organizations.

-Age The findings here are contradictory but tend to indicate that very young adults and the elderly participate less than those in between. (Jancwitz and Kasarda, McCourt)

-Length of residence The findings here are contradictory. (Cornelius, Gans, Janowitz and Kasarda, Orbell and Uno)

2. Resource

-political competence (Bloomberg)

-availability to participate

-no job outside home (applies to women) (McCourt)

-no kids at home (applies to women) (McCourt)

-basic survival activities not all-consuming (e.g. time at work; work exhaustion; travel-to-work time; gaining services; etc.) (Landsberger)

-deprivation not so severe as to prevent participation: i.e. low degree of objective victimization (e.g. not enough funds to travel to meetings) (Barton, Kramer)

-existence of some needs which can't be fulfillfed in the family, on the block: i.e. lack of self-sufficiency (Gans, Sennett)

-high material stakes in neighborhood (e.g. homeownership) (Austin, Mollenkopf)

-inadequate financial resources to move away in face of problems (Orbell and Uno)

-invulnerability to sanctions against participation

-independent as opposed to dependent sources of income (e.g., welfare, public housing) (Bloomberg)

-employer who does not forbid/discourage collective political action (Austin)

-network ties which protect against vulnerability to sanctions e.g., ties to lawyer, policeman, well-placed insider) (Austin)

3. Psychological (Cognitive, Evaluative, and Affective)

I) Orientations towards the neighborhood

-sees problems/external threat; is discontent with/upset over them (Cornelius)

-perceives shared discontent in neighborhood over local problems (Bloomberg, Cornelius)

-desires to correct problem, remove threat, improve neighborhood (Bloomberg, McCourt)

-perceives general desire in neighborhood for correcting problem, removing threat, improving neighborhood

-psychological integration into neighborhood: strong emotional attachment to/identification with neighborhood (Austin, Cornelius, McCourt, Roland Warren)

-perceives solidarity among residents (Cornelius)

-disposed to conform to community norms (Cornelius)

-intends to stay in neighborhood (Cornelius, McCourt, Orbell and Uno)

-high estimate of neighborhood residents' potency as a group (Bloomberg)

-high collective orientation to action (Cornelius)

-high degree of civic-mindedness (Verba and Nie, Cornelius)

-high trust of others (Gans, Cornelius)

-high perception of neighborhood leadership structure (Cornelius)

-positive evaluation of community neighborhood leadership performance (Cornelius)

II) Orientations towards the larger political system

-personal political efficacy (Bloomberg, McCourt, Verba and Nie)

-civic-mindedness (Cornelius, Verba and Nie)

-alienation (Bloomberg, Greenberg)

-heightened class-consciousness (McCourt)

-heightened political awareness and anger (McCourt)
estrangement from traditional urban political institutions (Fainstein and Fainstein)
general dissatisfaction with government (Suttles)

B. Relational Variables

-High overall social integration in neighborhood (Cornelius) (Orbell and Uno found, in contrast, that "voice" was associated with low social integration)

-Extensive neighborhood-oriented ties (Mollenkopf, Austin) (Many local ties may be strong, increasing one's attachment to the locality, but some should be weak bridging ties, institutional affiliations, for example. Otherwise one's network will not be extensive but small and perhaps cliquish.)

-close friends in the neighborhood (Cornelius, McCourt)

-close relatives in the neighborhood (Cornelius) (McCourt found that in-laws living nearby was a constraint on a woman's participation.)

-frequent discussion of neighborhood problems with other residents (Cornelius)

-Some weak, bridging extra-local ties (enough to enhance one's sense of personal political efficacy but not so many one lacks an attachment to/interest in the neighborhood) (Wellman and Craven, Fischer, Granovetter)

-lack of constraints from family member (husband in case of woman) (McCourt)

-network ties which protect one from sanctions associated with collective action (Austin)

-being contacted by an organizer or acquaintence to join: solicited membership (Freedman, Gans, McCourt, Sills)

II Characteristics of Collectivities**

**Most of the individual level characteristics may be treated as neighborhood characteristics if they characterize a large proportion of residents. Most of the individual level characteristics have not been transposed into aggregate level attributes and listed below, however.

A. The Neighborhood Organization

-inclusive as opposed to exclusive membership recruitment (D. Warren, Zald and Ash)

-devotes substantial organizational resources to membership recruitment

-low degree of factionalism (Zald and Ash)

-multi-purposed as opposed to single-purposed in its instrumental aims (Zald)

-goals which are redistributive rather than service-oriented (Austin, Vanecko)

-goals whose implementation require large membership

-goals which are viewed by residents as relevant to pressing neighborhood needs: relevancy

-many as opposed to few incentives available to attract and retain members

-high availablility of incentives to overcome "the public goods dilemma"

-decision-making power vested in membership rather than leadership oligarchy

-a positive reputation for successful demand-making: image of effectiveness

-collective action not in conflict with organization's maintenance needs

B. The Neighborhood

1. In General

I) Absolute variables

-existence as a service area (Cornelius, Suttles, Barsky, R. Warren, Taub)

-facilities and services which are used in common by residents (Cornelius)

-service deprivation and other problems, especially in form of external threats which can only/best be solved through collective action (Cornelius, Gans, Mollenkopf)

-but not so many problems or so difficult to solve that action is discouraged (Orbell and Uno, Coleman)

-distinct neighborhood boundaries which mark off area for residents (Austin, Cornelius, Suttles)

-physical facilities and communication organs which may be used for organization-building (Gans)

-physical layout which facilitates interaction/communication (Austin)

-convenient location (to work, services, facilities) (Cornelius)

-a community normative system favorable to collective political action (Cornelius, Barton)

II) Relational variables

-homogeneous in relation to regional or national divisions of power (Tilly)

-isolation from other sources/agents of political socialization (Cornelius)

-lack of alternative bases for political mobilization (Cornelius)

-being comparatively better off, in terms of living conditions, so that residents can't improve their situation by moving elsewhere (Orbell and Uno)

-"boundedness": self-sufficiency, self-containment, autonomy (R. Warren, Verba and Nie)

III) Aggregate (additive, distributional or relational-pattern) variables

-substantial material stakes held by residents (Austin, Mollenkopf)

-control over land is valuable and uncertain (Tilly)

-some residential stability but not too much (Cornelius)

-prevailing values/ideologies support collective demand-making, cooperative activity, joint self-help and discourage elitist, individualist, and blaming the victim sentiments (Cornelius, Barton, Austin)

-enough homogeneity on political values to prevent immediate conflict during efforts to start collective activity (Gans)

-enough dissensus on political values so that people must interact in order to resolve them (Gans)

-somewhat heterogeneous social composition (implied by D. Warren) (Cornelius suggests socio-economic homogeneity is important for encouraging psychological identification with an area and a cooperative spirit. Suttles disagrees, feeling homogeneity is not a necessary condition for community organizing.)
(Gans notes that in a heterogeneous neighborhood minority groups must organize themselves in order to prevent isolation from others)

-small population size (Cornelius)

-high density (Cornelius)

-high aggregate level of civic-mindedness (Cornelius)

-high aggregate disposition to conform to neighborhood norms (Cornelius)

-high aggregate perception of external threat to neighborhood (Cornelius)

-high aggregate adherence to self-help/collectivist orientation (Cornelius)

2. Local social system-networks

-the "mixed neighborhood" (Characterized by extensive networks with some neighborhood orientation and including local strong ties, local bridging ties, and extra-local bridging ties)

-informal communications system (Freedman)

-tie-generating institutions (e.g. church) which serve as bridges and communications channels but don't exclude non-members (Austin, Granovester by implication)

-tie-generating institutions or institutions with strong horizontal ties who share locality interests with residents (R. Warren, Gans)

-strong informal integration (increases personal contacts and eases communication (Barton)

3. Local political system (the political opportunity structure)

I) Leaders

-some people who want to be leaders (Gans)

-some people with prior leadership experience (Gans)

-a sufficient number of leaders with substantial followings (Mollenkopf)

-independent resource bases for leaders (i.e. not tied to vested interests; resources not contingent on restricting collective action, abandoning broadly supported goals) (Mollenkopf)

-leaders who are oriented towards/advocate collective vs personal goals and collective vs individual action (Mollenkopf, Cornelius)

-leaders with general interest in wide range of neighborhood problems as opposed to specialized interest in one problem (Fainstein and Fainstein)

II) Network of neighborhood organizations

-organizations which provide opportunities for participation in collective action

-high organizational density (the greater the organizational density, the greater the opportunities for coalition or competition, the greater the likelihood the entire neighbrohood will be drawn in, and the more likely there will be cross pressures at the sub-neighborhood level which catapault controversy to the level of the whole neighborhood) (Coleman)

-organizations which are already partially mobilized, powerful, and protected from repression (Tilly)

-a tradition of collective action (Cornelius)

C. The Larger Political System

-government programs/policies requiring (or creating conditions for) resident participation (e.g. Model Cities, OEO programs) (Alford and Friedland, Austin, Suttles, Taub)

-recognition by political authorities that locality is an important context of social organization consistent with democratic procedures (Austin)

-government responses to locality demands/needs which are inadequate, indifferent, or punitive (Cornelius)
government which overlooks some needs but takes corrective steps in response to collective action
inadequate resources for high level of government services to neighborhood but some unallocated funds so some response to demands for local improvements is possible (Austin)
(Responses which regularly anticipated all needs/demands or which provide no benefits discourage resident participation.) (Alford and Friedland, Austin, Gans, Cornelius)

-urban political power which is somewhat dispersed rather than highly concentrated or very dispersed. (In the concentrated case, the mayor, intent on preserving a strong party organization - which provides him with important power resources - is hostile to independent neighborhood organizations; in the very dispersed case, the mayor is hostile to independent neighborhood organizations since they may further weaken his already diluted administrative powers; in the somewhat dispersed case, the mayor, elected over the party organization's opposition, is friendly to independent neighborhood organizations, who may provide him with an alternative organizational basis for electoral support.) Peterson, Greenestone and Peterson)

-a variant of above is single party dominance of local government but fragmented by internal rivalries (Austin)

-political authorities with control over vital resources who are directly accountable to the neighborhood rather than to a larger region or bureaucracy and who are accessible to its residents (Gans)

-some social control/repression but not too much: a little spurs participation but a lot stifles it (the relationship is curvilinear) (Tilly, Austin, almost any work on social movements)

-rivals with competing claims who have less influence with political authorities

D. OTHER

-societies in which the cost of communication rises rapidly as a function of distance (Tilly)

III Characteristics of Issues

Issues which:

-are external threats to the neighborhood (Suttles, Cornelius)

-affect peoples' lives as residents (Coleman, Mollenkopf)

-affect the locality specifically (have a locality locus) as opposed to being more diffuse and non-territorial in impact. (Austin)

-have clearly perceivable and unambiguous consequences (Gans)

-have clearly perceivable targets/antagonists

-require collective as opposed to individual responses (Mollenkopf, Cornelius)

-do not require for/as their solution the replacement of antagonists (Gamson)

-are sudden (non-gradual) in their impact (Barton, Mollenkopf)

-are socially random or inclusive in their impact (Barton)

-are not so devastating in their impact or so resistent to solution that collective action is impossible, discouraged (Barton, Coleman, Orbell and Uno)

-involve low costs and/or high benefits (Fainstein and Fainstein)

-generate local claims that are uncertain of being honored (Tilly)

-are recognized as concerns over which residents have a right or plausible claim to influence

-which touch on more than one aspect of residents' ties with each other (e.g. discrimination against an ethnically homogeneous neighborhood)

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