Summer 6-11-2009

Democracy by Design: The Institutionalization of Community Participation Networks in Los Angeles

Christopher Weare

University of Southern California, weare@usc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/pn_wp

**Democracy by Design: The Institutionalization of Community
Participation Networks in Los Angeles**

Juliet Musso
Associate Professor
School of Policy, Planning, and Development
University of Southern California

Christopher Weare
Research Associate Professor
School of Policy, Planning, and Development
University of Southern California

Kyu-Nahm Jun
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
Wayne State University

Paper Presented at the

**The Harvard Political Networks Conference
Cambridge, MA
June 11-13, 2009**

ABSTRACT

The paper uses network theory to examine the institutionalization of community governance in Los Angeles. Since the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 mandated the created of neighborhood level bodies to foster "maximum feasible participation" in program development and implementation, we have witnessed rapid growth in local participative bodies. Their success in developing legitimacy and promoting government accountability, however, has been highly varied. Scholars have attributed this variation to a number of centralized design features (e.g. the degree of political support, the provision of organizational resources, the training for participants) and community characteristics (e.g. social capital, community capacity, SES). Others point to system dynamics and historical processes. For example, Putnam, Feldstein, and Cohen (2003) propose a model of positive feedback in which neighborhood-level activism promotes improved accountability which in turn promotes great activism.

Building on the dynamic proposed by Putnam et. al., we develop a network model of institutionalization to explain the process by which neighborhood governance becomes regularized and meaningful. We specifically incorporate the influence of central system features and community characteristics, acknowledging the goal complexity of citizen engagement entities (fostering community capacity, information sharing, greater government accountability, and popular mobilization). We then illustrate the model employing social network data on the political networks that have arisen through the implementation of a system of neighborhood councils in Los Angeles. At the system level, we show how the pattern of network evolution is related to the central design features of the LA system and pre-existing social capital. Then we turn to community level factors and assess the extent to which community contextual factors and organizational dynamics influence network development, with implications for subsequent patterns of involvement and policy influence.

Keywords: political networks, institutionalization, participatory democracy, community governance

I. Introduction

Within urban governance, there has been increasing interest from both political leaders and scholars in the development of institutional reforms that promote citizen participation in administrative and political decision making (Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993; Sirianni and Friedland 2001; Williamson and Fung 2005). Examples of such reforms include neighborhood councils, citizen panels, participatory budgeting, and large scale experiments such as those conducted by America Speaks. Still unclear is the effect of such reforms on political participation, democratic processes, and governance broadly. Sirianni and Freidland (2001) state the situation succinctly, "The story [of civic innovation in America] is . . . one of innovation and learning but also one of roadblocks and detours, struggles and failures." (p. 9). In this paper we advance understanding of participatory governance by developing a network theory of how such innovations become politically institutionalized, and exploring how this theory explains the successes and shortcomings of one such innovation, the creation of a neighborhood council (NC) system in the City of Los Angeles.

There is a tension in the growing scholarship on deliberative democracy about the extent to which it may lead to more informed and deliberative "citizen governance"(Box 1998). The contradictions in the literature are perhaps best illustrated by the work of Archon Fung and collaborators setting the axis of optimism, while Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) serve as a stark counter-critic. Fung and Wright (2003) argue that democratic participation can make governance more effective, and help educate and socialize participants. In subsequent work, Fung (2004) argues that properly structured delegation of authority, what he terms empowered participation, can lead to improved outcomes in a variety of urban settings. In contrast, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) contend that most people resist participation, and that deliberative democracy reforms merely make matters worse by exacerbating political alienation and anger toward government.

The contradictions in the literature in part relate to differing normative foci. As participatory reforms are complex and frequently seek an array of constitutive and instrumental objectives, it is not surprising that evaluators may emphasize some goals over others. For example, proponents of such reforms typically emphasize constitutive effects such as the development of individuals' sense of political efficacy and political skills (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993). Critics, on the other hand, focus on an array of normative ills, including representative biases (Cnaan 1991); citizen disillusionment or alienation (Arnstein 1969; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002) or system level conflict that arises due to new demands being placed on political and administrative decision makers (Huntington 1981; Moynihan 1965).

In this paper, our primary normative concern is the extent to which participatory reforms enacted by government result in institutionalized patterns of political interaction in governance. We define institutions as shared concepts used by individuals in repeated interactions that are organized by mutually understood rules, norms of behavior, and regularized patterns of behavior induced by those rules and norms (Crawford and Ostrom 1995; North 1990). The goal of the paper is to understand the dynamics of institutionalization, understood as the process by which these rules and norms develop and are maintained over time. The focus on institutions is critical, because these support the repeated interactions and relationships that create social capital, and in turn, more effective governance (Coleman 1988; Putnam 1995).

In particular, we focus on how these institutions are constituted by the social networks that arise from political innovation. Such a network perspective on political institutions is not entirely new.

Scholars have worked in this traditions to how the structure of networks and the position of actors within those networks influence the exercise of community power (Galaskiewicz 1979; Laumann and Pappi 1976), the non-profit sector (Knoke 1981, 1990), and policy networks(Marsh 1998; Peterson 1993; Rhodes 1997)Laumann, Knoke, and Kim 1985). Our paper makes an important contribution by applying the network perspective to participatory governance reforms, and by considering the dynamic manner in which networks develop.

The development of networks serves as a manifest measure for assessing changing patterns in political processes and political influence. Moreover, this focus permits us to pay explicit attention to what have typically been implicit arguments about institutional dynamics. Much of the social capital literature suggests that interaction between participatory bodies and government institutions creates a virtuous circle whereby increased participation improves government responsiveness which in turn increases the benefits of participation (Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993; Putnam and Feldstein 2003). Others have pointed out the importance of early successes for establishing the legitimacy of participatory bodies (Chaskin 2003). A dynamic network framework provides a more systematic means of examining these arguments about social capital development. In particular, we consider how contextual variables (e.g. community characteristics) and institutional variables (e.g. system design and political characteristics) mediate the interaction between participation and government responsiveness.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we present a theory of network development that explains how institutional innovation in the form of the creation of participatory bodies sets in motion the creation of new political networks. We then provide a contextual discussion of the system reform to which we will apply this theory, the development of NCs in Los Angeles. After a methodological discussion, we present results of an analysis of social network data from survey data of NC members and other system actors in Los Angeles. We then trace the broader implications of how institutional structures influence the development networks and illustrate these dynamics with the case of Los Angeles NCs.

II. A Network Theory of Participatory Reform

We theorize that citizen engagement reforms put in place distinctly co-evolutionary processes of institutional development involving the interaction of political/administrative arenas and emergent network structures. A participatory reform typically will begin with an organizational innovation such as the creation of community councils or citizen panels, or modification of a political or administrative process, such as involvement of stakeholders systematically in budgetary processes. These reforms thereby create new roles occupied by actors who bring specific skills, interests, and social connections to their work. Operating within existing community and political structures, these actors begin an evolutionary process that creates new sets of relationships among citizens and between citizens and political and administrative decision-makers. It is the emergent network of relationships that become the infrastructure that guides and promotes participatory activities. The emergent network influences the form and effectiveness of representation of community interests in the decision-making process (Galaskiewicz 1979; Laumann and Pappi 1976), the distribution of information within neighborhood organizations (Granovetter 1973), access to resources (Knoke 1981; Lin 2006), the formation and maintenance of political attitudes evaluations (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995), and the prospects for collective action (Oliver and Marwell 1988),

The process of network evolution instigated by the creation of new participatory bodies involves a number of steps and feedback loops that are depicted in Figure 1. First, individual activists

choose to take advantage of the opportunity to participate in newly formed bodies based on their individual characteristics, civic skills, and political attitudes, and city inputs into the creation of these organizations. Once new bodies are formed, their members begin to develop relationships through meetings, community projects, and lobbying efforts. The emergent structures of these networks are influenced by individual goals and political attitudes as well as the social and political contexts that shape the opportunities and challenges, benefits and costs of differing relationships. In turn, the relational networks institutionalize and regularize participatory activities. In addition, the networks of informal connections to the community and the tenor of organizational activities feed back to influence further recruitment into these bodies. In the following paragraphs we elaborate each of these steps of the process illustrated in Figure 1.

[Figure 1 About Here]

A. Network Effects

Individual factors have strong influences on both the choice of individuals to become engaged in a participatory opportunity, and their subsequent development of network relationships (Box A of Figure 1 above). The choice to become active in participatory bodies depends on an individual's interest in politics in general or in specific issues, their available resources, most importantly time and civic skills and network of recruitment (McAdams 1986; Tindall 2002; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). In addition, race or ethnicity of individuals is also a factor that predicts different degree of participation in voluntary associations (Williams, Babchuk, and Johnson 1973). In general all of these attributes are highly correlated with socio-economic status (SES), and there are observed SES biases in political participation that are particularly strong in the case of participatory bodies (Cnaan 1991; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). For example, 1990 Citizen Participation survey data show just a small degree of elite bias toward church attendance with the top income group being 20 percent more likely to participate (56 percent to 67.2 percent).[1] This bias, though, is much stronger for volunteering for a local council where the high income group is more than 5 times more likely to participate (6.2 percent to 1.2 percent). These biases are probably linked to the high degree of effort that participation entails, meaning that only the most highly committed and with the largest reserves of civic skills join.

The self-selection of individuals into participatory bodies, in turn, sets in motion the evolution of political networks, with interpersonal ties shaped by complex factors including rational calculation of the instrumental benefits of relationships, psychological and affective factors, and social and institutional forces (Contractor and Monge 2003). In particular, exchange theory (Contractor and Monge, 2003 chapter 7) suggests that while relationships confer advantages they are costly to develop and maintain. Thus, individuals tend to seek out relationships in which the instrumental and affective benefits outweigh maintenance costs. Benefits and costs are influenced by individual characteristics, the characteristics of others with whom they seek to form relationships, and the broader social and political context in which they operate.

SES and education. Among individual characteristics, SES is particularly important as it is a recognized determinant of political behavior (Blais 2000; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Education in particular would appear to be an important factor. Research on core discussion networks has shown that more educated whites tend to have larger networks (Marsden 1987; McPherson, Smithlovin, and Brashears 2006). More highly educated people through their education and employment experiences are exposed to a broader

---

[1] Low income was defined as the bottom 37.6 percent of respondents and high income as the top 24.4 percent of respondents.

range of people and tend to have greater "informational motives for new media" (Shah, Kwak, and Holbert 2001, p.154) which motivate them to seek out relationships for information exchange. Education is also associated with the acquisition of civic skills (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995) which facilitate networking and the development of political attitudes, such as interest in politics and a sense of political efficacy, which should increase the perceived benefits of relationships, thereby increasing network size (Marsden 1987; Boisjoly, Duncan, and Hofferth 1995; Putnam 1993).

Diversity or homophily? An issue that is unresolved in the network literature, but critical to our theory of participatory reform, is the extent to which people tend to seek diverse or "homophilous" ties. Some argue that there are strong benefits to developing relationships with a broad range of diverse individuals. In particular, relationships often develop around resource exchange, and the resources provided by relationships arguably increase with their diversity. Lin (2006), for example, argues that social capital increases with the range of social positions occupied by an individual's contacts. Similarly, in his seminal article on weak ties, Granovetter argued that the range of relationships also matters in that social ties that extend beyond one's tightly knit social group are essential for accessing information needed to support community collective action.

Counteracting the benefits of diversity is the strong tendency of individuals in their normal social interactions toward homophily, the propensity to forge relationships with people how are similar (Marsden 1987; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001; Popielarz and McPherson 1995; McPherson and Smithlovin 1987; Ruef, Aldrich, and Carter 2003; Marsden 1988; Kalish 2008; Yuan and Gay 2006). Relationships that cross political, ethnic, or class differences tend to involve a higher degree of social discomfort, and they are less likely to be a source of social support. While the tendency to shun cross-cutting relationships diminishes with prior experience with inter-group contacts (Emerson, Kimbro, and Yancey 2002).the composition of voluntary civic associations has been found to be strongly shaped by homophily (Mutz and Mondak 2006; Weare, Musso, and Jun 2006). In addition, in community studies the sets of ties between citizen groups and political elites is also affected by ethnic and class commonalities (Laumann and Pappi 1976).

Self-perpetuating social capital. The costs of forming new relationships are expected to decline as a function of individuals' pre-existing social capital. Actors' networks of social and associational relationships provide a base of community contacts that community activists can leverage in their new role. For example, Verba et al find that fully 69 percent of respondents who contacted their local mayor's office officials already knew the person they were trying to contact. So, those activists with larger pre-existing networks should develop more relationships associated with their role as a community representative. In this sense there is a self-perpetuating character to the development of social capital.

The set of people with whom an actor maintains relationships in turn affects their prominence or influence within a participatory institution. The network literature has focused on two main mechanisms that promote influence: centrality and brokerage (Brass and Burkhardt 1992; Burt 2000; Freeman 1979). Network centrality has a number of technical definitions but most broadly refers to prominence as a function of the degree to which actor is a central hub in a network (Wasserman and Faust 1994). The most straightforward definition is degree centrality which refers to the total number of relationships an actor maintains. From this perspective an actor gains increased prominence simply through involvement in a larger number of relationships (Galaskiewicz 1979). A more subtle definition is "betweenness" centrality which measures the degree to which an actor connects others in a network, with attendant increases in power and

influence garnered by brokering resources among individuals. Burt (2000) has expanded this concept to relate power and influence to structural holes, breaks in a network that separate differing groups. Influence and power, then, are gained when actors broker between subgroups and control flows of information and resources.

The networks that evolve as a result of these individual relational choices in turn have feedback effects on future decisions to participate. Both the literatures on social movements and on political participation have demonstrated the importance of personal contacts and social relations for recruitment into political activities (McAdams 1986; Tindall 2002; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Consequently, the networks formed by existing participants have a significant impact on the types of individuals who will volunteer subsequently. Moreover, to the extent that homophily shapes the character of participatory networks, later recruitment will reinforce and magnify participatory biases (Liedka 1991).

B. Contextual Factors

Network formation will also be shaped by contextual factors including the characteristics of the community and of the participatory institutions that foster and regulate the activities of community representing organizations, as illustrated in Box B of Figure 1). Research on the formation of voluntary associations and political and nonpolitical behaviors, such as network formation, report differing impacts of community contexts on individual choice (Bell and Force 1956; Giles and Dantico 1982; Abowitz 1990; Huckfeldt 1983; Leighley 1990; Pattie and Johnston 1999; Lindstrom, Merlo, and Ostergren 2002; Huggins 2002; Ellen and Turner 1997; Huckfeldt 1979). Huckfeldt (1979) finds that the higher SES individuals situated in high SES contexts are encouraged more to participate but lower SES individuals are not. Giles and Dantico (1982) extends this study and argues that contexts influences socially based participation but not for individually based participation. Studying social networks, Huckfeldt (1983, p.667) finds that,

> [E]ven though individuals demonstrate strong associational preferences, their contextually structured set of associational opportunities makes itself felt in the composition of friendship groups. Thus, the social content of social networks is not solely a function of either the social context or individual choice; it is the complex product of individual preferences operating within the boundaries of a social context.

Much of the research to date on contextual determinants of political behavior has focused on political behavior such as voting. In particular, the political geography literature has employed multi-level analysis and hierarchical linear modeling techniques to demonstrated how the geographic proximity or embeddedness of individuals in certain particular communities constrain and influence individuals' voting behavior (Pattie and Johnston 1999, 2000, 2002; Johnston, Jones, Sarker, Propper, Burgess, and Bolster 2004; Leighley and Nagler 1992; Tate 1974). In addition, community level racial and economic diversity have been considered in the study of associative and political behavior (Baybeck 2001; Rotolo 2000; Costa and Kahn 2003; Rubenson 2004; Huckfeldt 1979; Giles and Dantico 1982; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987) and in other societal outcomes (Brisson and Usher 2007; Ainsworth 2002). Difficulties in teasing out individual-level effects (e.g. homophily) from community level factors leads to differing findings from these studies as to the effects of community contexts on network development. Nevertheless, many support the notion that ethnic and cultural divisions dampen opportunities to network (Coffé and Geys 2006; Small 2007; Peek 2001; Kim and Ball-Rokeach 2006).

On the other hand, pre-existing community capacity, including leadership, aggregate levels of social capital, sense of community, and organizational resources, should ease network development, controlling for individual characteristics (Tigges, Browne, and Green 1998; Stoll 2001). Consistently studies find the individuals in impoverished communities tends to have less pre-existing ties and this further limits in creating new ties (Small 2007).[2] In this way, both individual social capital in the form of social ties, and aggregated community capacity, may have self-perpetuating effects that magnify socio-economic biases in that network institutionalization is facilitated within wealthier and more highly educated communities.

Lastly, political and administrative context also influences network development through the effectiveness of contacts with various decision making bodies. The networks that develop will interact within arenas for participation typically created by local governments as an adaptive strategy to manage citizen-city relationships (Yang and Callahan 2005; Walsh 1997; Nalbandian 1999). The nature of participatory opportunities provided are likely to shape—and potentially be shaped by—the type of political network that emerges. These relationships in turn create complex patterns of path dependency and feedback. It is not uncommon for proponents of participatory democracy to posit implicitly a positive feedback model of this dynamic in which greater citizen participation (e.g., more network ties with decision-makers) leads to improved political and administrative responsiveness and in turn, improved responsiveness induces increases in participation. Indeed empirical studies that find successful results for citizen participation innovations also find that these reforms included active political support and administrative reforms that created forums for participation (Berry, Portney, Bablitch, and Mahoney 1984; Lowndes, Pratchett, and Stoker 2006; Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993; Fung, Wright, and Abers 2003). Fung's (2004) findings on the benefits of empowered participation were drawn from administrative initiatives in Chicago that provided training, mobilization campaigns, and mechanisms for administrative accountability based on the performance of participatory bodies – all of which were integral to the success of the system.

The creation of a positive feedback dynamic is not however a foregone conclusion. In contrast, the interaction between institutional form and individual capacities can limit participation. For instance, Mansbridge (2003) notes that town-hall style meetings advantage those with greater civic skills. Also, if elected and administrative officials meet citizen efforts to participate in public decision making with tokenism, therapy or other less-than-cooperative reactions (Arnstein 1969) activists will likely react with anger or seek other avenues to influence policy (Cobb and Elder 1972).

In sum, three clusters of factors – individual self-selection as participants, network formation, and community and political/administrative contexts are interrelated within an evolutionary process that strongly supports a path-dependent dynamic of institutionalization (Barley, Freeman, and Hybels 1992). This more finely grained theory of participatory evolution promotes attention to both individual factors and network theoretical concepts in explaining the success of participatory reforms. It also extends attention to community context—typically found within the literature on voting—to explain voluntary community participation. We expect political reforms to proceed in a process that is neither neat nor determinative, but one in which initial conditions, administrative design choices, and micro-level processes interact to have large cumulative effects on system performance. In a case where administrative support and response is lacking, as we argue is the situation in Los Angeles, the costs of certain types of network ties are likely to be higher, and

---

[2] While community capacity has been studied as one aspect of social capital, there are important, though nuanced differences. That is the more social capital one or community posses, the more the community resources.

their benefits diminished, with implications for the ultimate character of the network and the concomitant nature of citizen participation.

III. *Democracy by Design in Los Angeles*

We explore the dynamics of participatory institutionalization using the case of NC development in Los Angeles, which enacted a self-organizing citywide system of NCs through a charter reform referendum in 1999. In large part motivated by secession movements throughout the City, the reform was sought to involve communities more in City processes of policy making, service delivery, and land use. The charter stated that NCs were to "promote more citizen participation in government and make government more responsive to local needs … Neighborhood Councils shall include representatives of many diverse interests in communities and shall have an advisory role on issues of concern to the neighborhood" (Los Angeles City Charter, Article IX, Section 900).

The system that emerged from the 1999 reforms can be characterized as hybrid in character, combining elements of both grassroots voluntarism and representative democracy. While NCs have purely advisory powers, the City provides resources and has structured arenas for participation in city governance. The City has created an "Early Notification System" to provide electronic notification of impending City Council and commission matters, so that NCs may provide input to the policy process. In addition, NCs may advise the Mayor's budget process, and are directed to monitor and facilitate service delivery. Each certified NC receives $50,000 annually from the City to support operations and activities. Thus the reform resulted in a system of largely grassroots voluntary associations that promote stakeholder deliberation on community matters. At the same time, these organizations receive funding from the City, they had to satisfy specified certification requirements including a set of bylaws, and they also must abide by basic requirements with respect to open meeting requirements, disclosure rules, and election of governing board members. What makes the NCs particularly interesting from a standpoint of network development is that they combine elements of both representative and deliberative democracy and of formal government and grass-roots voluntarism.

The NC system is also an excellent case for exploring the dynamics of institutional development because the system emerged to a large extent through self-organization, but within arenas and subject to design constraints that were put into place by the City, both in the original charter, and in subsequent implementation decisions (Musso and Kitsuse 2002). From the onset, the system was a reluctant reform, in part a placatory response to mobilization on the part of the City's NCs, while also reflecting the broader political exigencies of charter reform. While the NC idea had been debated in City Council in the mid-1990s, it had never been able to attract a majority, and the mayor who advocated for Charter reform was not interested in the concept. According to Sonenshein (2004) the concept was initially promoted by unions who wanted to develop an attractive platform to elect their slate onto the elected charter reform commission. It proved to the part of charter reform that garnered the most popular interest throughout commission deliberations on charter reform, and was a strong political selling point in the ultimate passage of the measure.[3]

Implementation subsequently proceeded through a push-pull implementation system, in which implementing agents (City council; the Mayor's office, and the Department of Neighborhood

---

[3] The charter reform also created several other systemic changes, such as strengthening the power of the Mayor vis-à-vis City Council, and decentralizing land use review to area planning commissions. It also included a separate, unsuccessful measure to increase the size of Los Angeles's 15 member city council.

Empowerment established by the reform) interacted with community activists who quickly mobilized and began advocating for particular design features. An early tension involved the degree of standardization and regulation that would be built into the system. As we discuss in detail elsewhere, this tension was largely resolved in favor of providing a high degree of local discretion regarding development of geographic boundaries and of the governance structures embodied within the by-laws submitted to the City for approval. NCs were conceptualized from quite early on to be self-organizing in character, a design decision that we will argue strongly influenced the subsequent character of the emergent system.

Also worthy of note is that despite the City's relatively limited investment in outreach and organizing of the emergent system, community leadership emerged soon after enactment of the Charter, and community activists both influenced the implementation design for NCs, and were leaders in the subsequent development and certification of NCs (Musso, Kitsuse, Lincove, Sithole, and Cooper 2002). Considering the scale and diversity of Los Angeles, a city of 460 square miles and almost 4 million residents, it is quite remarkable that within two years of plan adoption, more than half the city had been incorporated into NC boundaries, while as of this writing, there are 88 councils of which 83 have sitting elected boards that represent the community (Department of Neighborhood Empowerment 2007). The typical NC represents a community averaging 40,000 in size, with a governing board averaging 21.

The implementation of NCs was reviewed by a city-mandated appointed commission in 2007, the findings of which mirrored those of an independent multi-year evaluation study conducted by the authors (Musso, Weare, Elliot, Kitsuse, and Shiau 2007). While the emergence of a city-wide system was commendable under the circumstances, the governance capacity of NCs has varied dramatically across the City. Some have become quite involved in proactive land use planning and design review, while others have been mired in controversy and infighting (Musso, Jun, and Elliot 2006). They have had several notable successes in mobilizing citywide in response to organizational or political proposals, and a measure of their influence is that 13 of the 29 members of the City's NC review commission were past or current NC activists.

Much of the impact of the system has apparently been at the community level, or with respect to systemic mobilization in response to city proposals. They have been less evident or interested in either budgetary involvement, where the Mayor's budget system has struggled to attain broad-based participation among the City's communities (Musso, Sithole, Elliot, and Weare 2007)I They have been virtually absent in the administrative arenas of the City; many city departments are barely cognizant of the system, and in a survey of city administrators, NCs were sited as the least important of external stakeholders both in terms of providing information and influencing departmental policy.

Overall, the first seven years of experience with NCs has not been received with over whelming success in terms of either improved administrative responsiveness or civic engagement. In 2003 and 2006 NC board members were asked to rate the performance of city government in solving problems. Thirty five percent rated the city as good or excellent in 2003, but this number declined to 28.2 percent in 2006. More generally, the Policy Institute of California polled residents of the City and County of Los Angeles City on their rating of various city services. Comparing 2003 and 2005 in Figure 2, we find that LA city residents' level of satisfaction decreased during the institutionalization of NCs and remained consistently below the level of residents of other cities in LA county.

[Figure 2 About Here]

9

In addition, after five years of experience with NCs, Angelenos are distinctly less confident that NCs have a positive impact on the governance of the city (Figure 3).

[Figure 3 About Here]

In the next section we describe our methods, after which we analyze the factors that influence joining behavior and in turn, the development of institutionalized networks of political involvement in neighborhood councils. We argue that several factors are particularly important in shaping network development in Los Angeles: general socio-economic biases in individual decisions to participate, the city's reliance on self-organization of councils, and limited investment in participatory arenas, and the forces of homophily in development of ties to community groups.

IV. *Data and Methods*

This paper presents analysis of data from our multi-methodological, multi-year study of NC development in Los Angeles. We rely primarily on two sources of data 1) census tract data from the 2000 U.S. Census aggregated to correspond to NC boundaries and 2) network surveys of Los Angeles NCs conducted by University of Southern California in 2003 and 2006. These data are augmented by extensive field notes on NCs and three general population surveys of Los Angeles County residents conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California between 2003 and 2005. The U.S. census data provides community level information on demographic characteristics and home ownership rates.

The NC surveys targeted elected board members and collected political and demographic data as well as data on the internal social networks of board members. The questionnaire items of most importance in this paper presented board members with lists of city offices and departments, community stakeholder groups, and other NCs. They were then asked which of these actors they were in contact with in the two weeks just before your most recent NC meeting.

At the time of the first NC survey in 2003, 45 boards had been certified by the City of Los Angeles and had sitting elected boards. We were unable to obtain complete lists of board members for four boards, and they consequently were excluded from this analysis. Members of this research team personally visited board meetings and invited members to take the survey either online or by telephone in the summer of 2003. The survey also was made available in Spanish. Out of 894 total board members, 587 respondents began the survey for a response rate of 66 percent. The second round of the survey was administered in a similar manner in 2006. By that time there were 85 certified boards, although three were almost entirely inactive. There were 1488 total board members on the 82 active boards of whom 703 responded to the survey for a response rate of 47 percent.

To analyze and illuminate the co-evolutionary process outlined in Figure 1, we take a multi-method approach that seeks to capture both the overall institutional evolution of NCs and to identify the main factors driving the process. To chart the macro-level evolution, we focus on the three types of ego-centric ties maintained by board members: ties to 1) community stakeholders, 2) city offices and departments, and 3) other NCs. We assess the evolution of NCs by examining the changes in the characteristics of board members and their networks between 2003 and 2006. We then a number of regression models to explore how micro-level individual and contextual effects mediate the formation of relationships that aggregate to these observed networks. We also rely on extensive field and interview data to illustrate and highlight the dynamics at play.

V. *Findings*

We begin our examination of network evolution by laying out the broad patterns of network growth and retrenchment as the system of NCs became institutionalized. We then turn to our dynamic model in Figure 1 to examine the micro forces at work at the various stages that help explain the observed pattern of institutionalization in Los Angeles.

a. *Network Growth: Horizontal versus Vertical Ties*

With the passage of the charter reform measure, we observed the initiation of political activity, and as noted above a citywide system had evolved within four years following the adoption of an implementation plan. Participation in the system is evident both in the involvement of elected board members, of which there are approximately 1,800 in the City, as well as attendance at regular NC meetings. Most NCs hold meetings every month, and average attendance at these meetings is about 22 people, with some particularly salient meetings attracting hundreds of stakeholders. In addition, NCs reach out to their communities with most holding community events (78.8 percent) and a smaller number (42.9 percent) circulating regular newsletters.

Through these activities, networks began to emerge early in the development of NCs. In the 2003 survey the average NC board member reported being in contact with 7.5 other board members in the two weeks prior to the last board meeting. In addition, they contacted on average 2.3 city offices or departments and a representative from 2.7 different stakeholder groups in their community.[4] Horizontal networks in contrast were sparse; on average about every two NC board members was in contact with someone from another NC (See Figure 4).

[Figure 4 About Here]

Replication of the network survey three years later demonstrated some areas of growth and of stagnation in the shape of emergent networks. Although many NC representatives had gained significant experience in operating the organizations and had overcome some of the difficulties entailed in organizational maintenance, some networking activities had stagnated. This was particularly true of what one might term "vertical" ties between NCs and stakeholders in the community, or representatives in the City. Board members tended to talk to slightly fewer fellow board members than before, and about the same number of city offices or departments. Stakeholder contacts actually declined significantly on average from 2.7 to 2.0. Other indicators and our field observations corroborate these network patterns. Reports from city project coordinators who work with the councils indicate that stakeholder participation in committees and attendances at meetings declined between 2003 and 206. In addition, in self-evaluations, board members rated outreach as a particular challenge and source of frustration, and cited with some bitterness lack of response from city officials.

In contrast, horizontal contacts had increased significantly between our two waves of network survey. The average number of other NCs contacted increased from .41 to 2.3 and the average number of citywide meetings in which members from differing NCs tended to come into contact increased from 2.0 to 2.6.

---

[4] The respondents were asked about their contacts with 1) business owners, 2) employees of local businesses, 3) property owners, 4) homeowners, 5) renters, 6) social service agencies, 7) schools, and 8) faith-based organizations.

B. Emergent Boards

Because of the path dependency discussed in our theoretical discussion, we would expect the initial composition of boards to have a strong and lasting effect on the networks of participatory activities promoted by new participatory organizations. To create a board a community group had to submit an application for certification including bylaws, boundary of their community, and petitions indicating community support. The groups were entirely self-organizing and the members who originally won elections to sit on these boards were primarily composed of these early organizers. As is expected, early board members, who volunteered long and difficult hours, demonstrated a distinct bias toward higher SES compared to the general population of Los Angeles. As Table 1 indicates, in 2003 board members were much more likely have household incomes that exceeded $100,000 than other residents (33.2 to 13.6 percent), were more likely to have college degrees (72.9 to 22.9 percent), and were more likely to own homes (80.7 to 38.7 percent). The ethnic composition of board members was also skewed to whites who made up 53.4 percent of boards but only 29.5 percent of city residents. Latinos and Asian were heavily underrepresented (17.2 to 46.5 percent and 5.1 to 9.9 percent respectively). African-Americans were the only traditional minority group that was proportionately highly represented on boards.

[Table 1 About Here]

The descriptive representativeness of NCs, however, should not be unduly emphasized while the initial composition of boards also greatly influences participatory and substantive forms of representation (Guo and Musso 2006). The relationship between descriptive and substantive representation is more nuanced. For example, Rosenthal (1995) and Thomas (1994) find evidence that "people's characteristics are a guide to the actions they will take" (Pitkin 1967, p.89). The simple logic of this assumption is questioned by others (Young 2000; Mansbridge 1999) and Donahue (1999) has found some evidence to dispute the relationship.

Regarding substantive representation, NCs' policy concerns do seem closely related to their descriptive character in that they center around a local quality-of-life agenda. In Figure 5, we display the percentage of board members and residents of Los Angeles that cite specific policy issues as major problems in Los Angeles. In both 2003, board members most frequently identified public safety, transportation, and land use as major problems. These preferences share both commonalities and differences with the general population. Los Angeles residents also highlighted a strong concern for public safety, but lower levels of concern about transportation and land use. LA residents, in contrast, were much more likely than board members to be concerned about education and the economy.

[Figure 5 About Here]

C. Forging network Relationships

We next examine the individual level factors that shape the number and types of relationships formed and maintained by board members. We ran three OLS regressions predicting the number of different types of relationships. The first dependent variable is the number of different community stakeholders groups with which the respondent was in contact. The second is the number of different city offices and departments, and the third is the number other NCs.[5] As

---

[5] The number of stakeholder groups ranges between 0 and 8. The number of city departments ranges from 0 to 11. These contacts include the mayor's office, their city council representative's office, the office of another city council representative, and eight departments such as police, fire, planning, and libraries. The

explanatory variables we include measures of SES, *income* and *education*. We include a number of measures of social capital and attachment to one's community. *Community tenure* measures the number of year a respondent has lived in their current community. *Visit neighbors* measures frequency with which one talks with or visits their immediate neighbors. *Volunteering* measures the average number of hours one spends volunteering in their community, and *Associational ties* is an index of associational involvement that count the number of associational and the level of involvement within association.[6] We include a measure of group political efficacy, *Political Efficacy*, to capture the perceived value of relationships. We also include *Media Use* which is an index that combines the frequency of use of print, broadcast, and internet media to learn about local affairs. A dummy variable, *White,* is included to test for differences in networking activities between ethnic groups. Finally, in the regressions predicting the number of stakeholder and city contacts, we include *Attend City Meetings* which measures the frequency with which the respondent attending meetings that brought together.

The results appear in Table 2. Counter to expectations higher SES of individuals does not significantly increase network contacts. Except in Model II the coefficients for income and education are not statistically significant, and in the one case in which it is significant higher levels of education are actually associated with fewer city contacts. Nor do white board members appear to have larger networks, though there is a marginally significant relationship between race and contacts with other boards. These results may reflect the relatively low variability of SES and ethnicity among board members. It is also possibly the case that a relationship observed in the general population will be muted in that members of all SES and ethnic backgrounds self-select into boards with the goal of forging civic relationships. Tenure in one's community does not increase member's propensity to network, indeed, it has a negative and marginally statistically significant effect on contacting community stakeholders. It is possible that this is in part a function of community dynamics; when communities are changing visibly due to immigration, people with long tenure may be less likely to reach out to new groups.

We find that a propensity to visit with neighbors, a social capital measure, increases community contacts, supporting the points made earlier about the self-perpetuating nature of social capital. The effect of this factor on city contacts is much smaller however and only marginally significant. Nor does this measure of social capital affect horizontal networking with other NCs, suggesting that the influence of social capital on institutional development is nuanced.

[Table 2 About Here]

Volunteering and associational ties consistently have the largest impact on networking, as measured by the standardized betas. This again emphasizes the self-perpetuating character of social capital by indicating the importance of leveraging pre-existing community ties for activities in these participatory organizations. For example, a one standard deviation increase in associational activity is related to a .24 standard deviation increase in city contacts. Also, attending citywide meetings of NC members is strongly and positively associated with

---

number of other NCs ranges between 0 to a maximum of six (even though there are over eighty councils) because the survey accepted at most six nominations. This censoring skews the data somewhat because there are a small number of board members with more contacts, but the number is relatively small given that only about 5 percent of the respondents lists six board contacts.

[6] Past memberships are counted as 1, current memberships are counted as 2, active members counted as 3 and holding an office within an association counted a r. These values were summed over 13 standard types of civic associations, and the index ranged between 0 and 45 with a median of 13.

stakeholders and the city contacts, supporting the notion that as board members striving to gain influence, vertical contacts become more valuable as they broker structural holes between NCs.

The results with respect to the influence of political efficacy on participation are mixed. While the coefficients are positive as expected in all three equations, efficacy clearly plays a more important role in promoting horizontal networking rather than vertical ties. Media use is positively associated with networking in all three cases. It is not statistically significant for community stakeholder contacts, though, and it has a much larger beta coefficient for horizontal networking.

We also observe a high degree of homophily in networking with community stakeholders. Board members are twice as likely to be in contact with community members from the same stakeholder group as would be expected purely by chance.[7] Seventy-two percent of board members report being in contact with a community member from the same stakeholder group (e.g. a businesses owner speaking to a business owner).

To examine the contextual effects on networking, we run a number of hierarchical linear models (HLM) again employing stakeholder, city, and NC contacts as the dependent variables. HLM allows us to examine both the effects of individual level variables and how contextual (e.g., higher level) variables mediate the relationship between individual level variables (Bryk and Raudenbush 1992). Due to the small size of boards, however, the power of HLM with these data is limited. Thus, we are constrained to estimating parsimonious models.[8]

The two levels of our model are depicted in Figure 6. In the first level we model contacts as a function of a measure of social capital, *Associational Ties,* because this variable was one of the most important for explaining network formation. At the second level, we then include a measure of community heterogeneity to test the degree to which heterogeneous contexts inhibit the formation of relationships.

The results of these analyses are presented in Table 3. While the overall fit of these models is not impressive due to data constraints, the results are suggestive. In accordance with the OLS results the estimate of γ_{10} is positive and statistically significant in all three equations, indicating that individual's pre-existing social capital does play a role in network formation. In models I and II the estimates of γ_{01} is negative and statistically significant, indicating that community heterogeneity (i.e., in terms of educational attainment) decreases the average number of contacts that NC boards have with stakeholders and the city. In contrast, γ_{01} is not significant in Model III which means the dampening affect of educational heterogeneity in the community does not affect the amount of horizontal networking across the city. Finally, in none of the three models is γ_{11} significant indicating that while community heterogeneity decreases the average number of contacts it does not dampen the positive influence that social capital has on networking.

[Table 3 About Here]

D. Network Effects on Recruitment

---

[7] These calculations assume that all eight would be equally likely to be contacted by chance and it controls for the number of stakeholder groups which each board member is in contact.
[8] With few degrees of freedom for the individual, level 1 regression models limit the reliability of the slope and intercept estimates for individuals within each NC.

The networks developed by NC members and the particular activities they undertake do appear to have feedback effects on recruitment of new members. The main manner in which individuals come to serve on these boards is through direct contact with a board or through personal contacts. Over 51percent of board members surveyed said that they heard about their NC through members of the NC, and 37 percent heard about them through family or friends. In contrast, only 35 percent heard about it through media and only 17 percent through a city official.

This method of recruitment in combination with the tendency for homophilous community relationships should reinforce the socio-economic characteristics of and policy preferences of boards. This pattern, though slight, is observed. As seen in Table 1 and Figure 5 between 2003 and 2006 the percentage of white, highly educated, and relatively affluent individuals tended to dominant board membership even more.[9] In addition, the percentage of board members who cited traffic and land use as major problems also increased.

E. Institutional Factors on Network Development

Lastly, the degree to which network development was shaped by the development of participatory forums and the responsiveness of elected and administrative officials is more complex and has to be assessed qualitatively based on field observations. There is much evidence, nevertheless, that the evolution of networks was shaped by the degree to which forging and maintaining relationships with city officials yielded net benefits to board members. Los Angeles has progressive-era government institutions that are highly bureaucratized and shielded administratively from political influence and stakeholder pressures (Cooper and Musso 1999) In this environment, the City Council had taken on a prominent mediating role between citizens and the bureaucracy.[10] This role is evident in the pattern of city contacts in that a majority of NC board members (55.3 percent) report being in contact with their council office. In contrast the level of contacting is far lower for other city offices. The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment was contacted by 34.6 percent of respondents and 29.7 percent had contact with the Police Department, but no other department was contacted by more than a fifth of the board members.

As we theorized, because networks are more likely to form when more responsive city officials increase the value of relationships, council offices that were more supportive of NCs would promote greater contact with the city, but such an association is not evident in the observed pattern of contacts. This lack of association may indicate that all council offices share similar constituent service orientations and that the institutional factors shaping network formation are more systemic.

Systemically, the city provided tepid support to NCs. The General Manager of Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, who took over in 2007, commented that she was surprised by the pervasive disinterest in working with NCs on the part of city employees. In our 2006 of board members, the most frequently cited problems with the system focused on communication with the city and responsiveness of city employees. Also, while the charter reform called for the mayor to involve NCs in the budgetary process, these efforts were marked by tokenism and did little to

---

[9] Unless otherwise indicated, data compares responses from 41 NC boards surveyed in 2003 with 86 boards surveyed in 2006. Los Angeles City figures are from the 2000 U.S. Census.

[10] Interestingly, this mediating role has continued after the 1999 Charter reform even though the intention of new charter was to elevate the role of the mayor and of NCs in improving the delivery of municipal services.

encourage NCs to deliberate with stakeholders on budget priorities (Musso, Sithole, Elliot, and Weare 2007).

The manner in which this lack of political and administrative support for NC involvement hampered the forging of vertical networks and promoted horizontal networks can be seen in the development of the NC Congress. The charter called for the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment to help plan and convene biannual congresses of NCs. Rather than creating a space in which participants could debate and address city issues, the city-run congresses have been primarily training seminars and information expositions for city departments. In reaction to this lack of policy content, a city-wide group of NC activists joined forces to create a more deliberative forum. This city rebuffed efforts by this group to begin running the official congress, but they have continued to operate in parallel.

V. Discussion and Conclusions

We have presented a model of the institutionalization of participatory bodies based on a co-evolutionary process in which political networks and administrative structures interact, a model that highlights the complex and contingent characteristic of participatory reforms. Our empirical work speaks to the complex factors by which democratic design unfolds. The Los Angeles experience suggests that participatory reforms can lead to new and impactful political networks, even in the absence of political support and meaningful arenas for participation, factors that have been identified as critical building blocks of participation (Berry, Portney and Thomson; Fung).

What we contribute is the insight that the particular form that participatory networks take is contingent on individual-level choices shaped by the characteristics of individuals who participate and on the contexts in which they operate. Pre-existing social capital plays a central role in the development of all types of network relationships. This result supports the contention that social networks are a true form of "capital" that promotes production of further relationships (ADLER). The forces and motivations that promote horizontal versus vertical networks, however, differ. Vertical ties—for example, those from board members to community stakeholders, or from board members to city council member—are impeded by heterogeneity, and positively influenced by political and administrative support. In a diverse city, with tepid political and administrative support, these mediating ties have stagnated. In contrast, heterogeneity does not seem to affect adversely the development of horizontal ties, perhaps because that form of tie development is motivated by desire for influence, where diverse relationships increase resource mobilization.

The results with respect to the development of vertical networks are somewhat discouraging from a standpoint of empowered democracy. The tendencies toward homophily in promoting vertical ties, and the influence of SES on board member self-selection, have a mutually reinforcing effect in that board members do not appear to interact much with community members, and when they do, interact with similar stakeholders. A similar mutually reinforcing process has limited the vertical ties developing from NCs to City agencies. City administrators and office holders, many of whom view neighborhood councils as little more than large homeowners' associations, have been hesitant to embrace neighborhood councils as new participatory bodies that differ from the range of constituent groups with whom they interact. From the perspective of neighborhood councils, the unresponsiveness on the part of city administrators and the Mayor decrease the value of such ties and have limited the evolution of vertical ties to the city. Path dependency is evident in that the majority of NC contacts with the City are with City Council offices, which were the "go-to" agencies prior to reform.

In Los Angeles, what has emerged is a horizontal mobilization network that links neighborhoods across an extremely diverse and dispersed city, and which provides a capacity for oversight of city politics that did not exist prior to reform. These horizontal networks build political capacity for community sub-elites to challenge downtown development and tax politics, and their emergence appears to have been motivated from the start by simmering discontent with the actions of city leaders. As we discuss elsewhere, there was a social movement flavor to the development of these networks, as the perception of the City's failure with respect to system implementation paradoxically motivated volunteer involvement in its creation (Musso and Kitsuse—Haynes conference paper).

The implicit and explicit choices made by City of Los Angeles in designing its community participation reforms have had very real effects on the structure and ultimately the function of the participatory network. The City authorized a system that was largely self-organizing from the grassroots, with relatively limited mandates or direct support for community outreach to the grassroots. Additionally there was weak political support at best for involvement of the new NCs in city deliberations; many administrative departments ignored the new entities; and the Mayor's budget process was highly tokenistic in design. As a result, neighborhood council activities have focused heavily on City Council and a small number of administrative departments, such as Planning or Department of Water and Power, motivated frequently by mobilization against land use or taxation decisions. This is a very different picture of participation than the "empowered participatory democracy" that characterized delegation of community policing and educational involvement in Chicago (Fung, 2004).

In sum, our results also show that the optimistic findings reported by Berry, Portney, and Thomson and Fung are highly dependent on administrative reforms. In particular, an important potential function of community councils is to serve as mediating institutions, channeling community preferences to city administrators. This function has been hampered in Los Angeles by a lack of support for outreach, the tendencies toward homophily in developing vertical ties, and lack of arenas for NC participation in the City. Future research on participatory organizations elsewhere might consider whether delegated authority, of the sort described by Fung (2004) builds vertical ties between stakeholders and city officials, while perhaps having more limited effects in terms of capacity for cross-city horizontal mobilization. This points to the importance of considering network factors in designing participatory democratic reforms, as design decisions made in the formulation and implementation of these systems have profound effects on the relational networks that institutionalize subsequent engagement in civic affairs.

References

Abowitz, D. A. 1990. Sociopolitical participation and the significance of social-context: a model of competing interests and obligations. *Social Science Quarterly* 71 (3):543-566.

Ainsworth, J. W. 2002. Why does it take a village? The mediation of neighborhood effects on educational achievement. *Social Forces* 81 (1):117-152.

Arnstein, Sherry R. 1969. A Ladder of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 35 (4):216-224.

Barley, Stephen R., John Freeman, and Ralph C. Hybels. 1992. Strategic Alliances in Commercial Biotechnology. In *Networks and Organizations: Structure Form and Action*, edited by N. Nohria and R. Eccles. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Baybeck, B. 2001. Which Context? Racial Heterogeneity, Geography, and the Individual. *Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, CA, August*.

Bell, Windell, and Maryanne F. Force. 1956. Urban neighborhood types and participation in formal associations. *American Sociological Review* 21 (1):25-34.

Berry, J.M., K.E. Portney, M.B. Bablitch, and R. Mahoney. 1984. Public involvement in administration: The structural determinants of effective citizen participation. *Journal of Voluntary Action Research* 13 (7-23).

Berry, Jeffrey M., Kent E. Portney, and Ken Thomson. 1993. *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.

Blais, Andre. 2000. *To vote or not to vote? the merits and limits of rational choice theory*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Boisjoly, J., G.J. Duncan, and S. Hofferth. 1995. Access to Social Capital. *Journal of Family Issues* 16 (5):609-631.

Box, Richard C. 1998. *Citizen governance: Leading American Communities into the 21st Century*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Brass, Daniel J., and Marlene E. Burkhardt. 1992. Centrality and Power in Organizations. In *Networks and Organizations: Structure Form and Action*, edited by N. Nohria and R. G. Eccles. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Brisson, D., and C. L. Usher. 2007. The effects of informal neighborhood bonding social capital and neighborhood context on homeownership for families living in poverty. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 29 (1):65-75.

Bryk, Anthony S., and Stephen W. Raudenbush. 1992. *Hierarchical linear models: applications and data analysis methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Burt, Donald S. 2000. The Network Structure of Social Capital. In *Research in Organizational Behavior*, edited by R. I. S. a. B. M. Staw. Grenwich: JAI Press.

Chaskin, R. J. 2003. Fostering neighborhood democracy: legitimacy and accountability within loosely coupled systems. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 32 (2):161.

Cnaan, Ram A. 1991. Neighborhood-representing Organizations: How Democratic Are They. *Social Science Review* 65:614-634.

Cobb, Roger W., and Charles D. Elder. 1972. *Participation in American Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda-Building*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Coffé, H., and B. Geys. 2006. Community Heterogeneity: A Burden for the Creation of Social Capital? *Social Science Quarterly* 87 (5):1053-1072.

Coleman, James S. 1988. Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital. *American Journal of Sociology* 94:95--120.

Contractor, Noshir S., and Peter R. Monge. 2003. *Theories of Communication Networks*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cooper, Terry L., and Juliet A. Musso. 1999. The Potential for Neighborhood Council Involvement in American Metropolitan Governance. *International Journal of Organization Theory and Behavior* 1 (2):199-232.

Costa, Dora L., and Matthew E. Kahn. 2003. Civic Engagement and Community Heterogeneity: An Economist's Perspective. *Perspective on Politics* 1:103-111.

Crawford, Sue E. S., and Elinor Ostrom. 1995. A Grammar of Institutions. *American Political Science Review* 89 (3):582-600.

Department of Neighborhood Empowerment. 2007. *Neighborhood Council Status Report*, April 10 2007 [cited August 10 2007]. Available from http://www.lacityneighborhoods.com/certreport/donenewsflash_c94014785_10222003.pdf.

Ellen, I. G., and M. A. Turner. 1997. Does Neighborhood Matter? Assessing Recent Evidence. *Housing Policy Debate* 8 (4):833-866.

Emerson, M. O., R. T. Kimbro, and G. Yancey. 2002. Contact theory extended: The effects of prior racial contact on current social ties. *Social Science Quarterly* 83 (3):745-761.

Freeman, L.C. 1979. Centrality in social networks: conceptual clarification. *Social Networks* 1:215-239.

Fung, Archon. 2004. *Empowered Participation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Fung, Archon, and Eric Olin Wright, eds. 2003. *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*. London: Verso.

Fung, Archon, Erik Olin Wright, and Rebecca Abers. 2003. *Deepening democracy: institutional innovations in empowered participatory governance*. London; New York: Verso.

Galaskiewicz, J. 1979. *Exchange Networks and Community Politics*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Giles, M.W., and M.K. Dantico. 1982. Political participation and neighborhood social context revisited. *American Journal of Political Science* 26 (1):144-150.

Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (6):1360-1380.

Guo, Chao, and Juliet A. Musso. 2006. Representation in Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations: A Conceptual Framework.

Hibbing, John R., and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 2002. *Stealth democracy: Americans' beliefs about how government should work*, *Cambridge studies in political psychology and public opinion*. Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Huckfeldt, R. 1979. Political participation and the neighborhood social context. *American Journal of Political Science* 23 (3):579-592.

———. 1983. Social Contexts, Social Networks, and Urban Neighborhoods: Environmental Constraints on Friendship Choice. *American Journal of Sociology* 89 (3):651-669.

Huckfeldt, R., and John Sprague. 1987. Networks in Context: The Social Flow of Political Information. *American Political Science Review* 81 (4):1197-1216.

Huckfeldt, Robert, and John Sprague. 1995. *Citizens, Politics, and Social Communication: Information and Influence in an Election Campaign*. Edited by J. Kuklinski and R. S. Wyer, *Cambridge Studies in Political Psychology and Public Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Huggins, Melise D. 2002. Volunteer participation in urban neighborhood organizations: an exploration of individual and contextual characteristics. Ph.D., Michigan State University.

Huntington, S. P. 1981. *American Politics: the Promise of Disharmony*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

Johnston, Ron, Kelvyn Jones, Rebecca Sarker, Carol Propper, Simon Burgess, and Anne Bolster. 2004. Party support and the neighborhood effect: spatial polarisation of the British electorate, 1991-2001. *Political Geography* 23 (4):367-402.

Kalish, Yuval. 2008. Bridging in social networks: Who are the people in structural holes and why are they there? *Asian Journal Of Social Psychology* 11 (1):53-66.

Kim, Yong-Chan, and Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach. 2006. Community Storytelling Network, Neighborhood Context, and Civic Engagement: A Multilevel Approach. *Human Communication Research* 32 (4):411-439.

Knoke, D. 1981. *Organized for action: Commitment in Voluntary Associations*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

———. 1990. *Organizing for collective action: The political economies of associations*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Laumann, Edward. A., and Frank. U. Pappi. 1976. *Networks of Collective Action: A Perspective on Community Influence Systems*. New York: Academic Press.

Leighley, J. E. 1990. Social Interaction and Contextual Influences on Political Participation. *American Politics Quarterly* 18 (4):459-475.

Leighley, J. E., and J. Nagler. 1992. Individual and systemic influences on turnout: who votes 1984. *Journal of Politics* 54 (3):718-740.

Liedka, R. V. 1991. Who do you know in the group? Location of organizations in interpersonal networks. *Social Forces* 70:455-474.

Lin, Nan. 2006. A Network Theory of Social Capital. In *Handbook on Social Capital*, edited by J. v. Deth and G. Wolleb. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lindstrom, Martin, Juan Merlo, and Per-Olof Ostergren. 2002. Individual and neighborhood determinants of social participation and social capital: a multilevel analysis of the city of Malmo, Sweden. *Social Science & Medicine* 54 (12):1779.

Lowndes, Vivien, Lawrence Pratchett, and Gerry Stoker. 2006. Local political participation: the impact of rules-in-use. *Public Administration* 84 (3):539-561.

Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. Should blacks represent blacks and women represent women? a contingent "yes". *Journal of Politics* 61 (3):628-657.

Mansbridge, Jane. 2003. Practice-Thought-Practice. In *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*, edited by A. Fung and E. O. Wright. London: Verso.

Marsden, P. V. 1988. Homogeneity in confiding relations. *Social Networks* 10 (1):57-76.

Marsden, P.V. 1987. Core discussion networks of Americans. *American Sociological Review* 52 (1):122-131.

Marsh, David, ed. 1998. *Comparing Policy Networks*: Open University Press.

McAdams, Doug. 1986. Recruitment to high-risk activism: the Case of Freedom Summer. *American Sociological Review* 92:64-90.

McPherson, J. M., and L. Smithlovin. 1987. Homophily in Voluntary Organizations: Status Distance and the Composition of Face-to-Face Groups. *American Sociological Review* 52 (3):370-379.

McPherson, J. M., L. Smithlovin, and Matthew E. Brashears. 2006. Social Isolation in America: Changes in Core Discussion Networks over Two Decades. *American Sociological Review* 71:353–375.

McPherson, M., L. Smith-Lovin, and J. M. Cook. 2001. Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual Review of Sociology* 27:415-444.

Moynihan, D. P. 1965. *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty*. New York: Free Press.

Musso, Juliet A., and Alicia Kitsuse. 2002. Urban Regimes, Social Movements, And The Politics Of Neighborhood Councils In Los Angeles. Paper read at John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation Conference: "Reform, L.A. Style: the Theory and Practice of Urban Governance at Century's Turn." at University of Southern California School of Policy, Planning and Development, September 19-20, 2002, Los Angeles, California.

Musso, Juliet A., Kyu-Nahm Jun, and M. Elliot. 2006. From "Just Say No" to "Just Say What:" Engaging Planning through Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles. In *Presented at The Institute for Civic Enterprise at the University of Southern California*. Los Angeles.

Musso, Juliet A., Alicia Kitsuse, Evan Lincove, Michael Sithole, and Terry L. Cooper. 2002. Planning Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles: Self-Determination on a Shoestring. Los Angeles.

Musso, Juliet A., Michael Sithole, Mark Elliot, and Christopher Weare. 2007. Implementing Participatory Budgeting: The Case of Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles. Los Angeles.

Musso, Juliet, Christopher Weare, Mark Elliot, Alicia Kitsuse, and Ellen Shiau. 2007. Toward Community Engagement In City Governance: Evaluating Neighborhood Council Reform in Los Angeles. In *Civic Engagement Public Policy Briefing*. Los Angeles: USC Civic Engagement Initiative and USC Neighborhood Participation Project.

Mutz, Diana C., and Jeffery J. Mondak. 2006. The Workplace as a Context for Cross-Cutting Political Discourse. *Journal of Politics* 68 (1):140–155.

Nalbandian, John. 1999. Facilitating Community, Enabling Democracy: New Roles for Local Government Managers. *Public Administration Review* 59 (3):187-197.

North, D. C. 1990. *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*: Cambridge University Press.

Oliver, Pamela E., and Gerald Marwell. 1988. The Paradox of Group Size in Collective Action: A Theory of the Critical Mass II. *American Sociological Review* 53 (February):1-8.

Pattie, C. J., and Ron Johnston. 1999. Context, Conversation and Conviction: Social Networks and Voting at the 1992 British General Election. *Political Studies* 47 (5):877-889.

———. 2000. "People who talk together vote together": an exploration of contextual effects in Great Britain. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90 (1):41-66.

———. 2002. Political talk and voting: does it matter to whom one talks? *Environment and Planning A* 34 (6):1113-1135.

Peek, M. K. 2001. Networks in Later Life: An Examination of Race Differences in Social Support Networks. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 52 (3):207-229.

Peterson, M. A. 1993. Political Influence in the 1990s - from Iron Triangles to Policy Networks. *Journal of Health Politics Policy and Law* 18 (2):395-438.

Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. 1967. *The concept of representation*. 1st ed. Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Popielarz, P. A., and J. M. McPherson. 1995. On the Edge or in between - Niche Position, Niche Overlap, and the Duration of Voluntary Association Memberships. *American Journal of Sociology* 101 (3):698-720.

Putnam, Robert D. 1993. The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life. *The American Prospect* 13:35-42.

———. 1995. Bowling alone: America's declining Social Capital. *Journal of Democracy* 6 (1):65-78.

Putnam, Robert D., and Lewis M. Feldstein. 2003. *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Rhodes, R. A. W. 1997. *Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity and Accountability*. Buckingham-Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Rosenthal, Cindy Simon. 1995. The role of gender in descriptive representation. *Political Research Quarterly* 48 (3):599-611.

Rotolo, T. 2000. Town heterogeneity and affiliation: A multilevel analysis of voluntary association membership. *Sociological Perspectives* 43 (2):271-289.

Rubenson, Daniel. 2004. Community Heterogeneity and Political Participation. Montreal.

Ruef, M., H. E. Aldrich, and N. M. Carter. 2003. The structure of founding teams: Homophily, strong ties, and isolation among U.S. entrepreneur. *American Sociological Review* 68 (2):195-222.

Shah, Dhavan, Nojin Kwak, and R. Lance Holbert. 2001. "Connecting" and "Disconnecting" With Civic Life: Patterns of Internet Use and the Production of Social Capital. *Political Communication* 18 (2):141-162.

Sirianni, Carmen, and Lewis Friedland. 2001. *Civic Innovation in America: Community Empowerment, Public Policy, and the Movement for Civic Renewal*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Small, M. L. 2007. Racial Differences in Networks: Do Neighborhood Conditions Matter? *Social Science Quarterly* 88 (2):320-343.

Sonenshein, Raphael J. 2004. The city at stake: secession, reform, and battle for Los Angeles. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Stoll, M. A. 2001. Race, neighborhood poverty, and participation in voluntary associations. *Sociological Forum* 16 (3):529-557.

Tate, C. Neal. 1974. Individual and contextual variables in British voting behavior: an exploratory note. *The American Political Science Review* 68 (4):1656-1662.

Tigges, Leann M., Irene Browne, and Gary P. Green. 1998. Social isolation of the urban poor. Race, Class, and Neighborhood Effects on Social Resources. *The Sociological Quarterly* 39 (1):53-77.

Tindall, David B. 2002. Social network, identification and participation in an environmental movement: Low-medium cost activism within the British Columbia Wilderness Preservation Movement. *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 39 (4):413-442.

Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harward University Press.

Walsh, M.L. 1997. *Building Citizen Involvement: Strategies for local government*. Washington: ICMA.

Wasserman, Stanley, and Katherine Faust. 1994. *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*. Edited by M. Granovetter, *Structural Analysis in the Social Sciences*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Weare, Christopher, Juliet A. Musso, and Kyu-Nahm Jun. 2006. Cross-Talk: Homophily and Elite Bias in Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils. In *Paper presented at the Sunbelt Conference on Social Networks*. Vancouver.

Williams, J. Allen, Jr., Nicholas Babchuk, and David R. Johnson. 1973. Voluntary associations and minority status: a comparative analysis of Anglo, Black, and Mexican Americans. *American Sociological Review* 38 (5):637-646.

Williamson, Abigail, and Archon Fung. 2005. Mapping Public Deliberation: A Report to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Cambridge, MA: Taubman Center for State and Local Government, Harvard University.

Wolfinger, Raymond E., and Steven J. Rosenstone. 1980. *Who votes?* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Yang, K., and K. Callahan. 2005. Assessing citizen involvement efforts by local governments. *Public Performance & Management Review* 29 (2):191-216.

Young, Iris Marion. 2000. *Inclusion and democracy*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Yuan, Y. C., and G. Gay. 2006. Homophily of Network Ties and Bonding and Bridging Social Capital in Computer-Mediated Distributed Teams. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 11 (4):1062-1084.

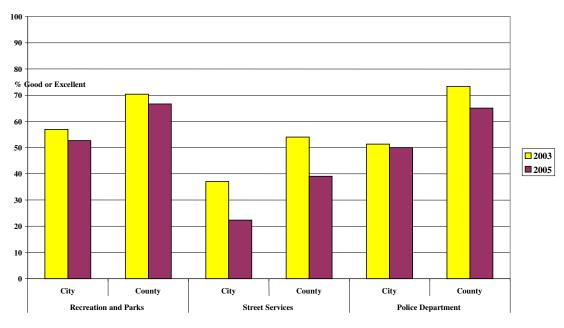**Figures and Tables**

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Figure 2: Los Angeles Residents' Ratings of City Services
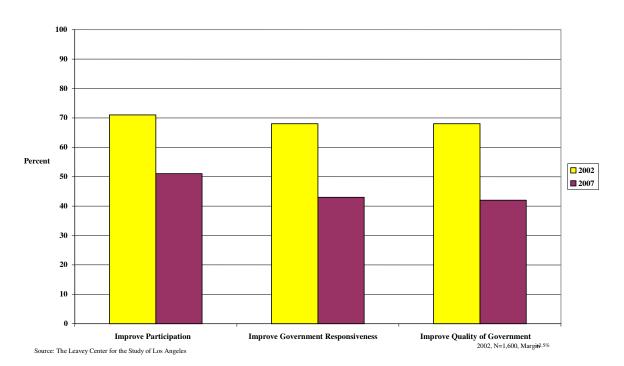

Source: Public Policy Institute of California

Figure 3: Percent of Los Angeles Adults Who Responded "Yes" to NC Questions in 2002 and 2007
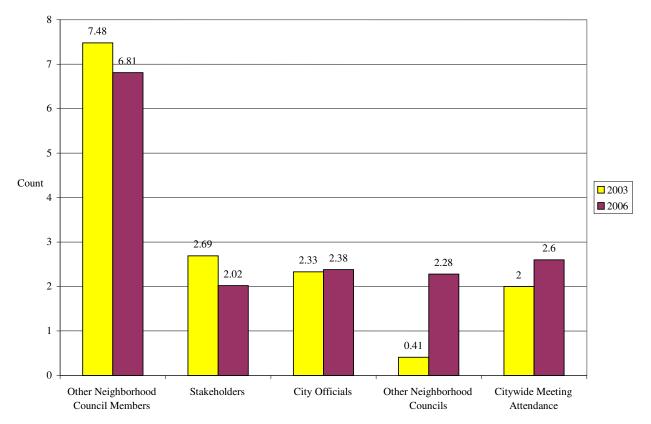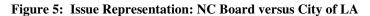

2002, N=1,600, Margin 2.5%

Source: The Leavey Center for the Study of Los Angeles

Figure 4: Average NC member Contacts and Meeting Attendance

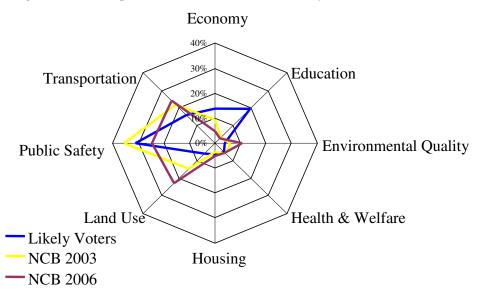**Figure 5: Issue Representation: NC Board versus City of LA**

Figure 6:Structure of Hierarchical Linear Models

Model Equations

Level 1 Model (i.e., individual NC board members)

$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}(SC_{ij}) + r_{ij}$

Level 2 Model (i.e., Neighborhood councils)

$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(\text{Hetero}_j) + u_{0j}$

$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11}(\text{Hetero}_j) + u_{1j}$

Where

Y_{ij} is either is contacts with stakeholders, city or other neighborhood councils

B_{oj} is the intercept for the jth neighborhood council estimated in level 1

B_{1j} is the slope coefficient for the jth neighborhood council estimated in level 1

SC_{ij} is a measure of social capital, *Associational Ties,* of the ith member of the jth neighborhood council

Hetero_j is a measure of the heterogeneity of the jth community measured by the index of dispersion of household incomes

i indexes individuals

j indexes Neighborhood Councils

Table 1: Socio-economic Characteristics Compared Between LA Residents and NC Board Members

	2000 Census City of LA	**2003 NC Boards**	**2006 NC Boards**
Income			
% $100,000+	13.6%	33.2	41.5
Education			
% with BA degree	22.9%	72.9	76.6
Homeownership			
% homeowners	38.7%	80.7	82.4
Ethnicity			
% White	29.5%	53.4	64.8
% African-American	10.9%	18.6	9.3
% Latino	46.5%	17.2	15.2
% Asian	9.9%	5.1	3.3

Table 2:: OLS Regression on Network Contacts

	I Stakeholder Contacts	II City Contacts	III Other NC Contacts
Income	-0.018 (-0.38)	0.041 (0.93)	-0.066 (-1.484)
Education	-0.054 (-1.153)	-0.094** (-2.168)	-0.031 (-0.710)
Community Tenure	-0.087* (-1.905)	0.012 (0.273)	-0.006 (-0.148)
Visit Neighbors	0.121*** (2.753)	0.072* (1.738)	0.043 (1.006)
Volunteering	0.127*** (2.595)	0.244*** (5.334)	0.157*** (3.333)
Associational Ties	0.195*** (3.952)	0.113** (2.454)	0.076 (1.597)
Political Efficacy	0.079* (1.765)	0.074* (1.776)	0.113*** (2.644)
White	0.014 (0.297)	0.061 (1.412)	0.074* (1.670)
Media Use	0.062 (1.347)	0.097** (2.265)	0.144*** (3.286)
Attend Citywide Meetings	0.121*** (2.676)	0.240*** (5.703)	
R^2	.142	.249	.106

Reported coefficients are standardized betas. T-scores appear in parentheses.
*   Significant at the 10% level
**   Significant at the 5% level
***   Significant at the 1% level

Table 3:   Explaining Social Network Dynamics: Intercepts- and Slopes-as-Outcomes Model

	HLM Models		
Fixed Effects: Explanatory Factors	Model I DV: Total Stakes	Model II DV: Total City	Model III DV: Total NCs
Model for NC mean			
-- Intercept (β_0)			
-----Intercept (γ_{00})	2.064***	2.434***	1.058**
-----Heterogeneity (γ_{01})	-4.218**	-4.066**	0.697
Model for slopes			
-- Associational Ties (β_1)			
-----Intercept (γ_{10})	0.072***	0.095***	0.039***
-----Heterogeneity (γ_{11})	0.123	0.330	0.075
Model Statistic ($\chi2$)	100.968*	113.072**	83.052

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01