Political Places: Neighborhood Social Organization and Political Participation*

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Abstract

Objective: While scholars treat neighborhoods as important contexts of inequality, few studies explore the social processes that create disparities in neighborhoods' political capacities. How does neighborhood social organization affect rates of political participation?

Methods: We combine surveys from the U.S. Census and Boston Neighborhood Survey (BNS), and administrative data from the City of Boston. Accounting for spatial dependence, we fit a series of regression models investigating the relationship between neighborhood social

structure and four forms of political engagement: community meeting attendance, contacting local government for services, and voter turnout in a local and a national midterm election.

Results: We find higher rates of political participation in more stable neighborhoods, and lower rates of participation in neighborhoods with higher concentrations of immigrants. The relationship between collective efficacy and rates of political participation is not statistically significant in our models. We find a positive association between concentrated disadvantage and city election turnout, but this association is nonlinear: Beyond a certain threshold, increases in disadvantage are associated with decreasing rates of participation.

Conclusion: We argue neighborhoods are indeed political places, and residential stability, immigrant concentration, and—to a lesser extent—concentrated disadvantage are important factors affecting the civic capacity of urban communities.

Keywords: urban neighborhoods, neighborhood effects, political participation, inequality

Introduction

How does neighborhood social organization affect political behavior? Over a century of urban sociology illustrates the ecological nature of human behavior and general well-being. More recently, the so-called "neighborhood effects" literature depicts neighborhoods as important sites for understanding inequality, crime, mobility, and to a lesser extent, civil society (Sampson, 2012). Some political theorists also conceptualize neighborhoods as quasi-political communities, serving many functions of governance while simultaneously being subjected to the power of the state (Crenson, 1983). Yet, to date, our understanding of the social factors producing varying rates of political behavior across urban neighborhoods remains limited (for a discussion, see Gay [2012]).

This article advances the literature on political behavior and urban inequality in two ways. First, we build upon Sampson et al. (2005) and Ebert and Okamato (2013) by recognizing the importance of social context in shaping aggregate political outcomes. While individual attributes (attitudes and demographics) and institutional arrangements such as election procedures (Winders, 1999) have received more attention in the literature on political behaviors, we emphasize the community factors behind these behaviors. In doing so, we echo Wuthnow's argument that "the character of civic involvement must be understood in terms of the social ecology of entire neighborhoods, rather than as an attribute of individuals or families alone" (1998, p. 112). Yet few studies investigate the neighborhood-level predictors of political participation.

Second, we explore a range of political behaviors beyond the focus on collective civic protests and self-reported civic participation emphasized in the neighborhood effects literature (Michener, 2013; Sampson et al., 2005; Swaroop and Morenoff, 2006). Attending community

meetings, contacting local government for services, and casting a ballot in a state or local election illustrate different features of civic capacity. By investigating these additional behaviors alongside one another, we can better understand the social processes by which neighborhoods influence political outcomes.

With these theoretical and methodological goals in mind, we analyze neighborhood-level rates of four political behaviors: voter turnout in a national midterm election, voter turnout in a municipal election, contacting government for services, and community meeting attendance. We draw on the literature in urban sociology to test the impact of four social organizational factors on political participation: neighborhood stability, immigrant concentration, collective efficacy, and concentrated disadvantage. Our investigation focuses on a single municipality, Boston, which allows us to analyze neighborhoods as interdependent units. Specifically, we are able to fit models accounting for unobserved spatial processes that may bias traditional models that assume neighborhood independence.

We find higher rates of political participation in more stable neighborhoods and lower rates of participation in neighborhoods with higher concentrations of immigrants. We do not find statistically significant associations between collective efficacy and political behavior. Voter turnout in a city election is generally higher in more disadvantaged neighborhoods, but the relationship is nonlinear; beyond a certain threshold, additional increases in disadvantage are associated with diminishing rates of participation. In the discussion section, we propose extensions of, and refinements to, existing theories based on these findings. We argue that political behavior varies with neighborhoods' social structure, and conclude this article with theoretical implications for integrating urban sociology and the study of political participation.

Neighborhood Social Context and Political Behavior

A long tradition of urban sociology emphasizes the importance of neighborhood context for understanding social outcomes. In this section, we draw on the existing literature to develop four hypotheses related to neighborhood-level political participation.

Neighborhood Stability

The character of a neighborhood is strongly determined by the permanence or transience of its residents' ties to the community and each other. Urban sociologists have long pointed out that for certain outcomes, the effects of neighborhood stability transcend an individual's own residential tenure or even social class (Taylor, 1996). As Sampson notes, "an individual in a highly mobile area faces quite different *constraints* than residents of stable areas – regardless of his/her own length of residence" (Sampson, 1988, emphasis in original). A resident newly-arrived in a stable neighborhood is likely more capable of civic engagement than a long-time resident of a neighborhood in constant flux. Residential stability produces neighborhood-level outcomes by creating a unique social context, greater than the sum of individual residency decisions.

Previous research offers specific reasons to expect a positive relationship between neighborhood stability and aggregate political behaviors. Neighborhood stabilizing processes, like homeownership, foster intra-community ties (Brisson and Usher, 2005), and levels of community attachment or "communality" may have a positive impact on voting (Zimmer, 1983). Additional research finds that homeownership, in particular, affects voting behavior through increased social ties and the transmission of community values (McCabe, 2013) or through attempts of homeowners to maximize property values (Fischel, 2001). In contrast to the stability provided by home ownership, Gay (2012) finds residential mobility negatively impacts voting, which the author attributes to the loss of social ties and connectedness. Neighborhood

stability may also increase involvement in local community organizations, though recent research finds mixed results (Swaroop and Morenoff, 2006).

As such, we would expect that stable neighborhoods—specifically, those with larger populations of homeowners, longer lengths of residence, and older populations—will sustain local institutions and present more opportunities for pro-social behavior and civic participation. Importantly, the effects of neighborhood stability may be manifested through the actions of individuals, but it is the properties of communities such as the density of homeowners, committed residents, and the elderly that create unique social contexts for this individual political behavior. Therefore, we present the following hypothesis related to neighborhood stability:

H_1: Rates of political participation will be higher in stable neighborhoods due to increased opportunities for social organization and feelings of "communality" (Sampson, 1988; Zimmer, 1983).

Immigrant Concentration

Urban sociologists and political scientists have theorized both positive and negative relationships between immigration patterns and social outcomes. Early research in urban sociology suggested immigrant concentration destabilized communities and contributed to social disorganization (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1919; Shaw and McKay, 1942). In particular, population turnover by immigrants can destabilize local communities by obstructing interpersonal communication and undermining local institutions and networks (Davies and Fagan, 2012). In this perspective, immigrant concentration is expected to reduce informal social

control in neighborhoods and weaken social institutions. Immigrant neighborhoods may also be isolated from mainstream political institutions and therefore detached from American politics. Research in political science supports this perspective, finding a negative relationship between immigrant concentration and voting (Cho et al., 2006; Junn, 1999). Additionally, deep co-ethnic ties in dense immigrant communities can reduce participation in local politics, as immigrants orient themselves more to the politics of their homelands (Jones-Correa, 1998). If immigrant density affects organizational capacity and co-ethnic ties reduce the symbolic importance of American political norms, we would expect political participation to decline with greater concentrations of immigrants.

However recent research connecting immigrant concentration and crime proposes an "immigrant revitalization perspective" (Lyons et al., 2013), or what Sampson (2008) considers "the Latino paradox:" Even in neighborhoods of high disadvantage, there is evidence that the concentration of immigrants *reduces* social problems. A high concentration of immigrants can strengthen a neighborhood's institutional base of churches, social service providers, and community-based organizations, directly contradicting the immigrant disorganization perspective. Immigrants can also spur neighborhood revitalization, reversing economic decline. Thus, the immigrant revitalization perspective suggests immigrant groups will be more active in citizen-directed political behaviors if a capacity for social control translates to local civic action. Again, whether immigrant concentration ultimately serves to galvanize or depress political behavior, our view is that social context may shape political outcomes beyond the attributes of any single immigrant or native-born person. We therefore present two contrasting hypotheses with respect to immigrant concentration and neighborhood political behaviors:

H_{2a}: The percent of foreign-born residents is negatively associated with rates of all political behavior due to their detachment from the politics of their host societies (Jones-Correa, 1998).

H_{2b}: The percent of foreign-born residents in a neighborhood is positively associated with rates of political behavior due to institutional development and economic revitalization (Lyons et al., 2013).

Collective Efficacy

According to a rich tradition in urban sociology, neighborhood collective efficacy also impacts political behavior. While this research is most notable for its treatment of crime and inequality, understanding how residents interact in a neighborhood offers a window into the social structure of civic participation. In particular, neighborhoods vary in their capacity to solve community problems and instill social norms of trust, which may affect rates of political action.

Working trust and the capacity to intervene on behalf of the common good constitute the two key elements of collective efficacy (Sampson et al., 1997). In this research, collective efficacy represents the spatial context in which residents mobilize for an intended purpose. "Moving away from a narrow focus on private ties and personal memberships," Sampson et al. (2005) write, "the concept of collective efficacy is meant to signify an emphasis on conjoint capability for action to achieve an intended effect" (p. 676). When community members share feelings of trust and competency, they are more likely to work towards shared goals. Consequently, Sampson and his colleagues argue collective efficacy relates to *citizen-directed* political action, like collective civic protests. We therefore present the following hypothesis:

H_3: Neighborhood collective efficacy is positively associated with *citizen-directed* behavior (community meeting attendance and service requests) since collective efficacy involves mobilization for an intended purpose (Sampson et al., 2005).

Concentrated Disadvantage

An especially important ecological approach to studying social life concerns neighborhood disadvantage. Building on Wilson's (1987) theory of concentrated poverty, a number of studies analyze the impact of concentrated disadvantage on a variety of social outcomes (Sharkey, 2013; Wodtke et al., 2011). Concentrated disadvantage is not simply a measure of individual-level poverty or race. It encompasses racial disadvantage, weakened labor force attachment, high rates of single parenthood and welfare receipt—factors that combine to produce a distinct ecological context. Research links concentrated disadvantage to social inequality through a mechanism of social isolation, which Wilson defines as "the lack of contact or sustained interaction with individuals and institutions that represent mainstream society" (1987, p. 60). If areas of extreme disadvantage are socially isolated from mainstream institutions, we expect reduced rates of all types of political participation, since isolation decreases the social enforcement of behavior and access to resources necessary for political participation. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

H_4: Rates of political behavior will be lower in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage, due to the social isolation from mainstream institutions, resources, and conventional behavioral role models (Wilson, 1987).

Data and Methods

Data Sources

We draw on four sources of data for our analyses. First, voter turnout data come from the Boston Election Commission. We focus on the 2009 municipal election (including races for mayor and city council) and the 2010 midterm election (including races for governor and state representatives). The data include addresses for all registered voters eligible to vote in each election, as well as all addresses of voters who *actually* cast a vote.

Second, our data on neighborhood meeting attendance and social organization come from the Boston Neighborhood Survey (BNS) (Azrael et al., 2009). The BNS data include a representative phone survey of 1,718 Boston adults collected in 2010. Third, our data on city service requests come from the City of Boston's Constituent Relationship Management (CRM) system. Data are generated through a system similar to "311" which collects all requests for basic city services—requests like fixing cracked sidewalks or removing graffiti from public parks. We follow recent research (Lerman and Weaver, 2014; Levine and Gershenson, 2014) by conceptualizing the data as a measure of direct citizen interactions with the state. Finally, our demographic data come from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates.

Dependent Variables

For the 2009 and 2010 voter turnout data, we geo-coded the addresses of registered and actual voters to create counts at the Census tract level. We then created voter turnout variables,

representing the proportion of *eligible* voters (i.e. individuals registered to vote) in each year who actually cast a vote.[1]

We model voter turnout alongside two additional outcome variables. First, we use a BNS survey question on community meeting attendance. The survey question asks respondents if they attended a neighborhood meeting in the past year, "such as a community meeting, crime watch meeting, or block meeting." We calculate a tract-level mean from these responses.

Second, we create a variable for city service requests that focuses on snow removal. This is done out of concern for endogeneity, since rates of service requests may reflect differential need or differential receipt of service. For example, poor neighborhoods may be more likely to contact local government about housing violations because of poor housing conditions, or wealthy neighborhoods may be more likely to request bulk item pickups because of consumption patterns. However, when need and receipt of service is constant, Levine and Gershenson (2014) argue that variation in service requests represents an important dimension of citizen-directed political behavior. We borrow the authors' technique to account for exogenous sources of variation in demand for city services by focusing on snowplow requests during official snowstorms. During snowstorms, all city streets need snowplows, and so variation in requests can reasonably be attributed to variation in the propensity to contact local government. We geo-coded snowplow requests during snowstorms throughout the winter of 2010-2011 and created tract-level counts.

[1] Importantly, information on voter eligibility allows us to assess the impact of immigrant concentration on voter turnout without concern for the legal barriers to voting posed by non-citizenship, since the denominator in the dependent variable is the number of registered voters.

Independent Variables

To empirically test theories of neighborhood stability, we created a composite measure based on three variables from the ACS. Neighborhood-level scores on this measure are a function of *percent homeownership*, *percent of population that has moved in the last year*, and the *median age of residents*. We conducted a principle components analysis and confirmed a single factor of stability (eigenvalue of 2.07), which we used to create a regression-weighted scale. To measure immigrant concentration, we simply use the *percent of foreign-born residents* in the neighborhood according to the ACS.

The measure for collective efficacy was created as the mean of 10 BNS survey items capturing social cohesion and social control. The survey items were adapted directly from previous research (Sampson et al., 1997). The scale demonstrated high internal reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 (Rothman et al., 2011). We use tract-level means in our models.

We also created a measure for concentrated disadvantage based on demographic variables from the ACS. Following Sampson et al. (2007), we focused on six characteristics of Census tracts: welfare receipt, poverty, unemployment, female-headed households, racial composition (percent black), and population under 18. Like our measure of neighborhood stability, we conducted a principal component analysis and confirmed a single factor of concentrated disadvantage (eigenvalue of 4.03), which we used to generate a regression-weighted scale from the six neighborhood characteristics.

Finally, we include control variables for population size, percent currently enrolled in college, and percent employed by city government.[2] In models regressing on plow requests, we additionally control for the percent of residents that commute to work by automobile and the length of streets in that neighborhood. Table 1 includes descriptive statistics for our key independent and dependent variables.

<TABLE 1 HERE>

Estimation Strategy

We fit negative binomial models when predicting contact rates, since our outcome is an over-dispersed count variable. We fit generalized linear models (using a logit link function and the binomial family for variance) when predicting fractional response variables such as neighborhood meeting attendance and voter turnout (Papke and Wooldridge, 1996). All models use Huber-White robust standard errors. Focusing on a single municipality, we are also able to account for spatial dependence in our models (Baller et al., 2001; Swaroop and Morenoff, 2006). Spatial dependence can occur when political participation in a neighborhood is systematically influenced by participation in adjacent neighborhoods. These spatially correlated unobservables—for instance: ward- or precinct-based voter mobilization strategies that include multiple adjacent neighborhoods, or spatially interdependent city service operations—can affect estimates. We therefore account for spatial dependence by including spatial lag covariates (based on Rook contiguity matrices) in all of our models. Our models draw on Census tracts, and we use "tract" and "neighborhood" interchangeably.

[2] We do not control for neighborhood racial composition due to collinearity with our measures for concentrated disadvantage and immigrant concentration. However, controlling for *percent Hispanic* and *percent Asian* do not substantively change our results.

Results

Table 2 displays results from multivariate regression models of our four dependent variables. For each outcome, we pair models that do and do not include a quadratic term for concentrated disadvantage, as previous research illustrates nonlinear effects on civic participation (Swaroop and Morenoff, 2006). The models displayed contain the full set of explanatory and control variables. We did consider models that contained only those explanatory variables that were theoretically most likely to be substantially associated with both the explanatory and the dependent variable.

Table 2 is organized in paired columns by outcome. The explanatory variables in the rows of Table 2 are organized according to the order we introduced our hypotheses.

<TABLE 2 HERE>

Estimated coefficients for neighborhood stability are positive and significant for the two turnout models as well as contacting for service, offering support for the claim that stability in a neighborhood produces a social context conducive to political participation (H_1). A standard-deviation increase in neighborhood stability has an average marginal effect of 6.1 percentage points on statewide elections and 6.9 percentage points on local elections. Similarly, such an increase is associated with the number of requests for snow removal increasing from around 20 per neighborhood to around 27. Neighborhood stability is estimated to have a negative effect on meeting attendance, but the coefficient is only statistically significant when controlling for the concentrated disadvantage quadratic term.

We also find that percent foreign-born is estimated to have a negative effect on all four political behaviors, as predicted in H_{3a}. Each ten percentage point increase in the foreign born

population is associated with a 2.1 percentage point decrease in turnout for state elections, a 4.6 percentage point decrease in meeting attendance, and four fewer requests for snow removal per neighborhood. However, the estimate for turnout in a local election is not significant. We emphasize that the explanatory mechanism cannot be citizenship, since we measure turnout as a percentage of all registered voters.

We find that collective efficacy has negative point estimates for meeting attendance and service requests, and a positive point estimate for voter turnout. However, none of the coefficients are statistically significant. These results do not support our hypothesized relationships in H_4. These surprising patterns will be elaborated in the discussion section.

Concentrated disadvantage is estimated to have a negative point estimate for midterm election turnout and meeting attendance, though these coefficients are not statistically significant. Contradicting our prediction in H_5, concentrated disadvantage is estimated to have a *positive* and statistically significant effect on local election turnout. Each standard-deviation increase in concentrated disadvantage is estimated to have an average marginal effect of 2.2 percentage points on local turnout rates. However, as we demonstrate in Figure 1, the relationship is nonlinear. The dotted line in Figure 1 shows that the relationship between concentrated disadvantage and city election turnout is positive, but starting at about half of a standard deviation from the mean, additional increases in disadvantage are associated with declining rates of participation.

<FIGURE 1 HERE>

Our control for spatial dependence merits further discussion. These controls are statistically significant in models estimating voter turnout, but not in those estimating community meeting attendance or city service requests. This provides evidence of a spatial

"spill over" effect, as voting participation may diffuse via social networks or mobilization strategies that transcend geographic boundaries.

Figure 2 graphs our key independent variables from Table 2. We display standardized coefficients, and bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

<FIGURE 2 HERE>

Robustness Check: Multilevel Analysis

As a robustness check, we fit a multilevel logistic regression model on data that include individual-level measures of meeting attendance. Individual level controls include *gender, neighborhood tenure, homeownership, age (over 50), college education, African America race, Hispanic ethnicity,* and whether the respondent is *foreign born*. Tract-level controls remain the same, except now tract-level intercepts are allowed to vary randomly.[3] The estimates from these models are displayed in Table 3 below.

< TABLE 3 HERE >

Most importantly, the findings from Table 2 are reproduced in Table 3. Looking at Model II, neighborhood stability and immigrant concentration still predict lower levels of meeting attendance among tract residents. Concentrated disadvantage still has a curvilinear association with meeting attendance, such that the residents of the most disadvantaged tracts have lower levels of meeting attendance.

[3] We also fit models that allowed the slopes for each individual-level variable to vary randomly. These models had substantively identical findings to those displayed in Table 3.

At the individual level, we find that homeowners and the college educated are more likely to attend meetings than other residents. The coefficient for neighborhood tenure is not significant, suggesting that stakes acquired through homeownership may be more important to meeting attendance than are stakes acquired through length of residence. Racial and ethnic group membership does not predict meeting attendance in these models, nor does immigrant status.

Importantly, the fact that the estimated coefficients for tract-level variables remain significant in models controlling for individual-level factors suggests that our findings in Table 2 are not explainable solely as the aggregation of individual residents' characteristics. Unfortunately, we lack individual-level data on voting and service requests. However, the models in Table 3 demonstrate the plausibility of neighborhood-level effects on individual political behaviors. That is, even geographical units as small as tracts may have unique political cultures.

Discussion

Our analysis investigates the connections between neighborhood social organization and political behavior. We focus on four social processes theorized in the neighborhood effects literature—neighborhood stability, immigrant concentration, collective efficacy, and concentrated disadvantage—and extend them to the study of political participation.

Our results mostly support the hypothesis that residential stability positively impacts neighborhood political behavior (H_1). The results provide evidence that neighborhoods with high concentrations of stable stakeholders—homeowners, longtime residents, older populations—foster shared understandings of social goals through repeated interactions. These relationships strengthen over time, due to residents' collective commitment to their

communities. Moreover, the findings suggest a neighborhood context characterized by older, established residents reinforces participatory norms, translating into higher rates of political participation. These findings have important implications for housing policy, insofar as political elites and policymakers are interested in *community* participation. By encouraging greater homeownership in urban neighborhoods, policymakers may facilitate greater community participation in political affairs.

We also find mostly consistent support for theories predicting a negative relationship between the concentration of immigrants in a neighborhood and political behaviors. While the coefficient predicting voter turnout in the 2009 municipal election is not statistically significant in any of our model specifications, nearly all of the coefficients for immigrant concentration are negative, supporting the mechanism of limited attachment to government (H_{2a}). Our results therefore do not support recent "immigrant revitalization" perspectives, reflected in H_{2b}. This research, prominent (though contested) in the criminology literature, suggests concentrations of immigrants create neighborhood contexts characterized by strong institutions and robust norms of social control (Lyons et al., 2013). While this may be true in the context of crime and violence, we do not see those social processes translating into local political action. Rather, the results suggest a community context of political detachment—at least with respect to our measures of political participation.

We do not interpret our results as a blanket dismissal of immigrant political activity, particularly in contexts other than Boston. Other immigrant communities, such as Arizona Latinos in the wake of SB 1070, may undertake political action at much higher rates than our Boston case. Additionally, immigrant communities may engage in different *types* of political behavior not included in our models, such as identity-based rallies which strengthen group boundaries (Ebert and Okamoto, 2013). Future research might address these complexities with alternative samples beyond the Boston case.

We do not find statistically significant relationships between collective efficacy and political participation, contrary to H_3. Theories of collective efficacy suggest social control, interpersonal trust, and a latent capacity to organize should create a social context conducive to citizen-directed, instrumental action. Our results do not support this claim, and as such, suggest a need to refine theories of collective efficacy. One explanation for the null results relates to how political behavior is understood by collective efficacy theorists. In these theories, the willingness of residents to intervene on behalf of the public good is *situated* rather than global, and illustrates a *latent* capacity to act for intended purposes. A neighborhood's efficacy, Sampson et al. (2005) write, "exists relative to specific tasks such as maintaining public order and providing local services" and "is best observed under conditions of challenge" (p. 676). Unlike collective civic action events for social change, studied by Ebert and Okamoto (2013) and Sampson (2012), the political behaviors in our study are routine behaviors and not necessarily in response to immediate threats, challenges, or conflict. In the context of existing research, our non-significant results may point to the central importance of a political *threat* underlying a community's capacity to intervene on behalf of the public good.

Our findings for concentrated disadvantage are perhaps the most surprising. While we find a nonlinear association with city election turnout—consistent with Swarnoop and Morenoff (2006)—we do not find statistically significant relationships with our other outcomes of interest. Concentrated disadvantage is widely used to explain place-based dimensions of inequality, so we expected the theory to apply to neighborhood political behaviors as well. When Wilson (1987) writes that areas of concentrated disadvantage are characterized by an ecological context of social isolation, he is primarily concerned with economic and social institutions—labor markets, welfare dependency, and family structure—and not mainstream *political* institutions. Similar to our observations regarding the appropriate scope conditions for studying immigrant revitalization and collective efficacy, our findings also point to a refinement

of the concentrated disadvantage thesis: Concentrated disadvantage may matter most for *economic* and *social* isolation. The neighborhood context of political behavior, by contrast, exhibits different empirical patterns. We believe this is an important theoretical distinction for future studies of urban inequality and concentrated disadvantage to consider.

Conclusion

Our study investigates the social processes producing neighborhood-level variation in political behaviors. Drawing on a mix of survey and administrative data from the city of Boston, we test five theories predicting four political outcomes. We advance the literature on urban neighborhoods and political participation by focusing on the community context of behavior, and by analyzing multiple behaviors alongside one another. Our findings suggest urban neighborhoods are, indeed, political places, exhibiting varying rates of political behaviors with implications for the neighborhood effects literature in urban sociology.

The preceding analysis is limited in ways that future research can address. First, our study is restricted to the 156 neighborhoods of a single city; additional studies can investigate how neighborhood political behavior may vary across different urban contexts and political jurisdictions. Particulars of the Boston case—like the city's specific mix of immigrants, relative parochialism of neighborhoods, or other aspects of social structure—may relate to neighborhood political outcomes. Replication of our empirical analysis outside of Boston can test whether city-specific dynamics mediate the relationship between neighborhood social organization and aggregate political participation—another opportunity to build and refine theory. Our study is also cross-sectional, and so future work can draw on longitudinal data to better understand how *changes* to neighborhood social context produce different rates of political participation. Though we are able to fit a multilevel model on one of our outcomes,

additional research can weigh the relative importance of individual- and neighborhood-level factors for other political outcomes. Overall, additional spatial and temporal variation would allow for alternative analytical techniques—such as hierarchical modeling or fixed effects—which may lead scholars toward further extensions of the theories tested in our analysis.

These limitations notwithstanding, future research should continue to unpack the factors contributing to neighborhoods' varying political capacity. We agree with political scientist Matthew Crenson that neighborhoods are more than territorial units. Under certain conditions, they can exhibit governance, resembling what he calls mini polities, or interdependent political societies. In *Neighborhood Politics* (1983), Crenson writes, "Once we know something of the extent and configuration of today's political societies, we may also be able to facilitate their maintenance and formation" (p. 20). Insofar as the civic vitality of urban neighborhoods contributes to the maintenance of democracy, future research should address what makes places political, and how to support their political capacities.

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Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
City turnout	156	0.4372	0.1237	0.1481	0.8101
Midterm turnout	156	0.542	0.097	0.3333	0.8137
Meeting attendance	155	0.2989	0.178	0	1
Service requests	156	26.02	27.04	0	185

Descriptive Statistics for Select Independent Variables

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Neighborhood Stability	156	-3.19E-09	1	-3.378	2.468
Immigrant concentration	156	0.261	0.1329	0.0134	0.6864
Collective efficacy	156	3.709	0.32	2.95	4.4
Concentrated disadvantage	156	-2.08E-09	1	-1.327	2.401

Correlation Matrix for Dependent Variables

	(I)	(II)	(III)	(IV)
(I) City turnout	1			
(II) Midterm turnout	0.714	1		
(III) Meeting attendance	-0.0069	0.1153	1	
(IV) Service requests	0.4576	0.4931	-0.0372	1

Correlation Matrix for Selected Independent Variables

	(I)	(II)	(III)	(IV)
(I) Neighborhood Stability	1			
(II) Immigrant concentration	-0.1888	1		
(III) Collective efficacy	0.3455	-0.5288	1	
(IV) Concentrated disadvantage	-0.1268	0.2653	-0.55	1

Table 2. Regression Models for Four Political Behaviors with Neighborhood-Level and Spatial Lag Controls

	Midterm Turnout		City Turnout		Meeting Attendance		Snowplow S
	(I)	(II)	(III)	(IV)	(V)	(VI)	(VII)
Neighborhood Stability	0.246***	0.242***	0.282***	0.248***	-0.119	-0.240**	0.331**
	(-0.027)	(-0.029)	(-0.046)	(-0.048)	(-0.098)	(-0.093)	(-0.121)
Immigrant Concentration	-0.855***	-0.887***	0.241	-0.0471	-2.195**	-3.226***	-1.943**
	(-0.156)	(-0.165)	(-0.297)	(-0.33)	(-0.676)	(-0.723)	(-0.599)
Collective Efficacy	0.071	0.0685	0.217	0.193	-0.495	-0.596	-0.195
	(-0.083)	(-0.082)	(-0.149)	(-0.144)	(-0.328)	(-0.314)	(-0.333)
Concentrated Disadvantage	-0.0454	-0.0391	0.0889*	0.145**	-0.149	0.0219	0.155
	(-0.024)	(-0.027)	(-0.043)	(-0.05)	(-0.093)	(-0.091)	(-0.1)
Disadvantage Squared		-0.00972		-0.0873**		-0.286***	
		(-0.017)		(-0.032)		(-0.082)	
Controls							
Percent College Students	-0.0746	-0.0937	0.265	0.0964	-0.709	-1.379*	-0.618
	(-0.157)	(-0.158)	(-0.26)	(-0.263)	(-0.63)	(-0.581)	(-0.732)
Percent City Employees	0.553	0.529	2.005*	1.803*	1.378	0.738	-1.836

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	(-0.459)	(-0.461)	(-0.865)	(-0.872)	(-1.516)	(-1.465)	(-1.775)
Population	0.00954	0.00926	-0.00402	-0.00618	-0.0668	-0.0696	0.105*
	(-0.011)	(-0.011)	(-0.0184)	(-0.0180	(-0.046)	(-0.043)	(-0.05)
Spatial Lag	1.074***	1.068***	1.469***	1.431***	-0.561	-0.563	0.00695
	(0.317)	(0.315)	(0.351)	(0.337)	(0.665)	(0.622)	(0.004)

Notes: * $p < .05$ (two-tailed). ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

N = 156. All models report robust standard errors. Constant terms not shown. Models VII and VIII contains controls for *percent commuting by car* and *length of streets in tract.* Full models are available upon request.

Figure 1: Predicted Rates of City Election Turnout by Level of Concentrated Disadvantage

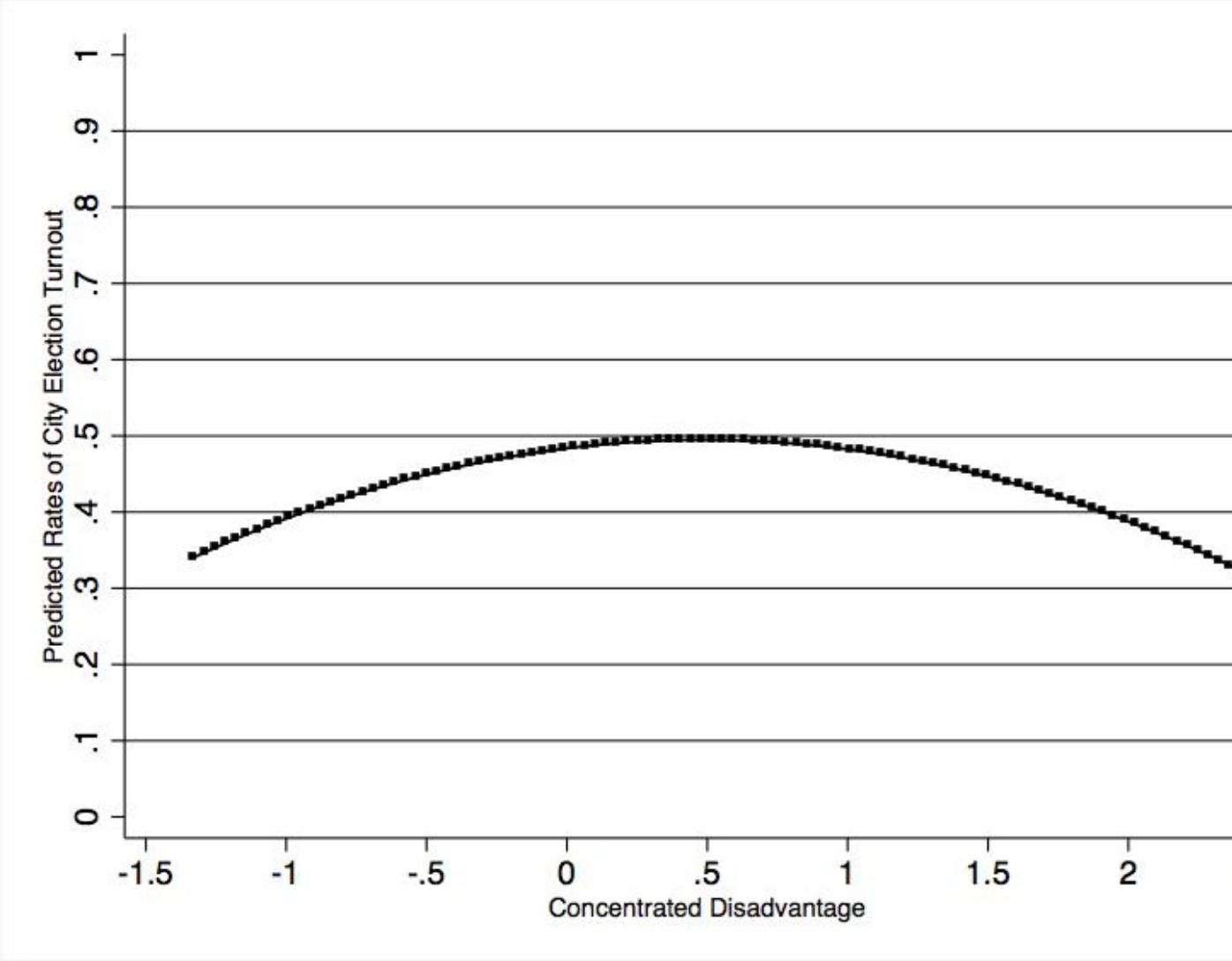

Figure 2: Key Predictors from Table 2

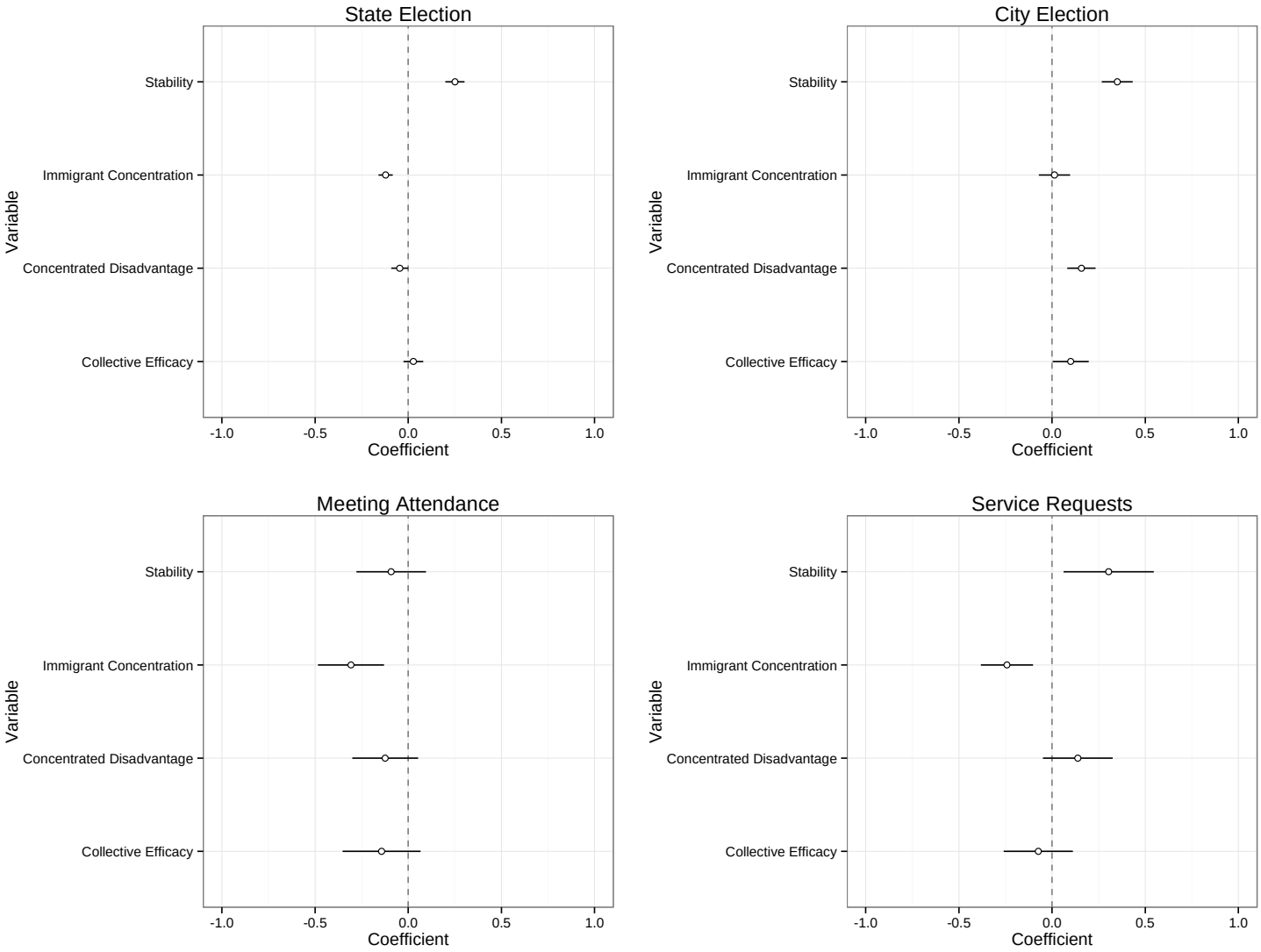

*Figure shows standardized coefficients from Table 2, Models I, III, V, and VII, with error bars

Table 3: Multilevel Regression Models for Meeting Attendance with Random Intercepts and Individual-Level, Tract-Level, and Spatial Lag Controls

	(I)			(II)		
	Coef.		St. Er.	Coef.		St. Er.
Neighborhood Stability	-.193	*	.087	-.268	**	.093
Immigrant Concentration	-1.138		.635	-1.905	**	.713
Collective Efficacy	-.009		.311	-.089		.313
Concentrated Disadvantage	.066		.091	.178		.103
Disadvantage Squared				-.194	*	.080
Individual Measures						
Male	.019		.118	.000		.119
Neighborhood Tenure	.004		.003	.004		.003
Homeowner	.622	***	.135	.629	***	.135
Over Age 50	.028		.375	.042		.376
College Degree	.416	**	.129	.429	**	.129
African American	.215		.166	.239		.166
Hispanic	.111		.246	.108		.246
Foreign Born	-.177		.158	-.152		.159
Controls						
Percent College Students	-.907		.718	-1.324		.736

Percent City Employees	.694	1.453	.230	1.464
Population	-.048	.040	-.042	.040
Spatial Lag	-.689	.677	-.644	.681
N (individuals)	1580		1580	
N (tracts)	155		155	
Log likelihood	-926.093		-923.126	

Notes: * $p < .05$ (two-tailed). ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

N = 156. Constant terms not shown.