

Neighborhood Activism in Context: Three Studies of the Neighborhood Antecedents and  
Individual Effects of Participation in Neighborhood Activism

by

Megan E. Gilster

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
(Social Work and Sociology)  
in The University of Michigan  
2010

Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Jeffery D. Morenoff, Co-Chair  
Associate Professor Michael Spencer, Co-Chair  
Assistant Professor David James Harding  
Associate Professor Elizabeth T. Gershoff, University of Texas, Austin

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## **Acknowledgements**

My journey through graduate school, and especially this dissertation, has been guided so much by my husband, Hector Torres-Cacho. From my decision to stay in Ann Arbor for the Joint Doctoral Program in Social Work and Sociology, to the process of narrowing my focus onto urban neighborhoods, to the exciting and frustrating moments as I unraveled each dissertation paper—Hector has tirelessly championed and intelligently informed my work. It makes me so glad that we overcame difference and distance to be together while I wrote this dissertation. Hector, you helped make this process meaningful and even fun.

My family has helped me through the dissertation process at so many crucial moments. My father surprised me time and time again with his interest, support, and enthusiasm for this undertaking. This process has drawn us closer. My brother, Garth, has always been my rock. Not only has Garth been a tireless champion of all I do, he has also been incredibly generous with his time and resources throughout my doctoral studies. Garth so willingly became my computing and technology consultant—especially while in Los Angeles away from the resources of the University of Michigan. My mother's support throughout the doctoral program has been very important. She kept me connected to everything that is important to me when Los Angeles had me feeling adrift. I enjoyed staying in constant contact with her through our online scrabble games but am excited that those games will soon be in person. My aunt Ashley was a constant cheerleader. And

finally, Hector's entire family understood when I missed family events to write. Thank you all for your unending love.

I am very lucky to have assembled a committee that has been incredibly supportive of long-distance dissertating. Each of them has helped in different ways to help me reach my goals. They have encouraged my ideas while also providing insightful, critical feedback from diverse points of views. This dissertation would not be the same without them.

During orientation to the Masters in Social Work program at the University of Michigan in 2001, I took some time to meet with Mike Spencer about a work-study research assistantship. After our meeting, I knew that working for Mike would not just be the most exciting part of my Masters training, but also the most meaningful. Under Mike's guidance, I began to see a career ahead of me in research. He has continued to be a wonderful mentor—kind and supportive, but also matter of fact when I needed to put more into my work.

Jeff Morenoff provided a large part of my education as a doctoral student through coursework in statistics, practical advice on the practice of research, to detailed feedback during the planning and implementation of my dissertation. My research has been improved by his keen eye for the interesting questions within my work that would have otherwise remained hidden. As a PI for the Chicago Community Adult Health Study—the data I use in this dissertation—Jeff opened all the resources of this research group to me.

David Harding has been a stellar advocate for joint sociology and social work students. David inspired me to work at the intersection of fields in order to build

knowledge. I wish I had more time at Michigan—particularly in residence—to take advantage of his offers to work on projects that were relevant to both social work and sociology.

Liz Gershoff has helped me in so many ways, most importantly by constantly grounding me in the practical aspects of research, publishing, and developing an academic career. Liz provided me with my first research opportunity in which I was given free rein to follow my own interests. Liz has also consistently held me to high standards, which has improved the quality of my work, particularly this dissertation.

A number of other faculty members have supported my journey through the program. Andrew Grogan-Kaylor has been an especially generous mentor. Andy has, in many ways, modeled the professor I would like to be someday. Jim House has generously provided feedback on my work and talked me through a number of important career decisions. The three directors of the joint doctoral program during my time as a doctoral student—David Tucker, Lorraine Gutierrez, and Berit Ingersoll-Dayton—have all been so supportive. Each of them helped me get through the program quickly, yet on my own terms. Other faculty who have been important to my development as a scholar include Sandy Danziger, Larry Gant, Carol Mowbray, Brian Perron, Michael Reisch, Trina Williams Shanks, and Arland Thorton.

The staff and students associated with the Chicago research group have been crucial to the completion of this dissertation. Cathy Doherty and Barb Strane were especially helpful in making sure I got the information, data, and appointments I needed while working on the dissertation from 2,000 miles away. Rich Mero and Robert Melendez did much of the data cleaning and variable construction work for the data used

in this dissertation. Katherine King helped me through a number of frustrating moments while I taught myself HLM. Jennifer Ailshire, Mike Bader, and Becky Karb were not just helpful in sorting through the mounds of data, but were also extraordinarily collegial. Our discussions on research ideas kept my eyes on the post-doctoral horizon. Additionally, the doctoral work of Sapna Swaroop, Mike Bader, and Christina Mair inspired my dissertation.

I am thankful to my friends and colleagues who have undertaken this journey along side me, offering encouragement, guidance, and friendship. Valenta Kabo and Zakiya Luna went beyond the call of duty as writing group members by reading chapters, sending notes of encouragement, and talking me out of my moments of dissertation block. Dana Levin kindly shared her experiences of the process along the way—especially when the clock was running out. Julia Yeh took time from her busy work and travel schedule to copy edit this dissertation. Michelle Hughes, Daniela Pineda, Kristin Scherrer, and Emily Kazyak also extended kindness and support from afar. What is most remarkable is that each of these friends and colleagues has very different substantive interests and methodological approaches to their research. I know I am a better scholar for this intellectual diversity. I am also a better person for their friendship.

I am also thankful to have had the opportunity to work with the Doctoral Student Organization (DSO) of the School of Social Work and Conversations Across Social Disciplines (CASD). The social and academic community we worked to build each year was an important part of my experience as a doctoral student. Thank you to everyone who was a part of DSO and CASD for making my years in Ann Arbor so enjoyable.

Finally, a special word of thanks must be given to Amy Hammock and Katherine Luke who encouraged me to put my personal life before all else and pack up and move to Los Angeles while working on my dissertation. I had felt cornered by the decisions I had made—to purchase a home in Ann Arbor, to write a dissertation that did not fit well into funding sources—but that discussion at Katherine’s home made all the difference. This is now such a bittersweet memory. I therefore extend this acknowledgement to Katherine’s family, as she was such an excellent role model of how to prioritize family and personal life while achieving academic goals.

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## **Abstract**

In a July 13, 2009 speech, President Barack Obama emphasized “neighborhood-level intervention” as a priority of his Office of Urban Policy. The President’s experiences organizing neighborhoods and his policies of neighborhood-focused solutions have created an opportunity to build our understanding of the effects of community interventions. Despite decades of neighborhood-based work, knowledge from this kind of community practice is rarely incorporated into urban sociology—especially into the line of research known as neighborhood effects. Neighborhood effects research has documented the negative effects of neighborhood inequality; this dissertation demonstrates the protective capacity of community practice.

I synthesize scholarship on community practice and urban sociology to ask: How does neighborhood activism affect individuals and neighborhoods? Despite the early ties between social work and urban sociology, knowledge from these two disciplines is rarely shared. Social disorganization theory, an early theory that still dominates the urban sociology literature, suggests that poor neighborhoods lack social organization. More recently sociologists have argued that social organization is present in a variety of neighborhoods and protects against neighborhood disadvantage. Community empowerment theory, which informs much of community-level social work practice, suggests that activism in disadvantaged neighborhoods can address inequality. In this

dissertation, I bridge these perspectives to examine the effects and antecedents of activism by analyzing secondary data on residents and neighborhoods in Chicago.

This dissertation is comprised of three interrelated manuscripts which examine the multilevel processes of neighborhood activism. First, I find that participation in neighborhood activism positively affects individual psychological resources. Second, I explore the neighborhood antecedents of participation in activism, specifically testing competing theories of the relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and this under-researched form of social organization. Residents are more likely to engage in activism in neighborhoods that are more stressed and more disadvantaged. Finally, I find that activist neighborhoods have a positive effect on psychological well-being for all but first generation immigrants. I find significant, unexplained variation in how neighborhoods affect immigrant mental health, suggesting questions for future research. This dissertation will add to the research base for community practice, advance theory of the social context of mental health disparities, and inform neighborhood interventions.

## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

Urban neighborhoods were the key interest of both Chicago School sociologists and early settlement house social workers. Both fields returned to the urban context in the 1990s in response to the attention given to concentrated poverty (Wilson, 1996) and segregation (Massey & Denton, 1993) by influential sociologists. Community-level social work practice, a neglected subfield for decades, renewed its focus on community building in particular (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001). Despite these ties between social work and urban sociology, knowledge from these two disciplines is rarely shared.

Social disorganization theory, an early theory that still dominates the urban sociology literature, suggests that poor neighborhoods are unstable and lack social organization. More recently sociologists have argued that social organization is not dependent on neighborhood demographic characteristics (Small, 2002; 2004). This echoes the knowledge of those in disadvantaged communities who are working towards neighborhood change.

In social work, strategies for effective community work have taken precedent to theoretical understandings of neighborhood dynamics. Empowerment theory, which cuts across individual-, group-, and community-level practice, is most often called upon as a framework for understanding multilevel change. Empowerment practice suggests that

activism is an important component of practice, especially for disadvantaged groups, because it increases individual well-being and can address inequality.

In this dissertation, I bridge sociological and community practice perspectives to examine the effects and antecedents of a particular form of activism—neighborhood activism. Along the lines of recent critiques to the dominant paradigm of social disorganization theory, I test the relationship between neighborhood demographic composition and an individual's propensity to participate in neighborhood activism. I examine both individual- and neighborhood-level activism in neighborhoods (i.e., residents efforts to change or maintain their home neighborhood) as it relates to resident psychological well-being.

Psychological well-being is an important aspect of a healthy, productive, and empowered community. Psychological well-being has been linked to health and improved outcomes of disease (e.g., Chida & Steptoe, 2008; Taylor, Kennedy, Reed, Bower, & Greunwald, 2000). Nevertheless, psychological well-being has not been the focus of much empirical work in the growing neighborhood effects literature that ties communities to individual outcomes.

In this dissertation, I take a broad approach to psychological well-being and mental health by examining psychological resources, empowerment resources, social resources, and mental health symptoms. This is because, following Aneshensel (2005), I use the social consequences perspective rather than the social etiology perspective. According to Aneshensel (2005), these are the two main standpoints of research that examine the relationship between neighborhood context and health outcomes. The goal of social etiology, most often employed by epidemiologists, is to understand the causes of a

particular pathology. Those using a social etiology approach are trying to understand whether or not an individual or contextual condition is truly related to the relevant morbidity. On the other hand, the social consequences perspective is concerned with social inequality and its consequences for individuals. Those working from the social consequences perspective are less interested in a particular disease and instead concerned with documenting the effects of social inequalities on a broad spectrum of mental and physical health conditions. I extend the social consequences perspective to understand an aspect of community life that I posit is a positive force in the health of individuals and communities—neighborhood activism.

In this dissertation, I examine neighborhood activism—both its antecedents and consequences—in three empirical chapters, all of which use data on residents in Chicago neighborhoods.

In Chapter 2, I examine the relationship between participation in neighborhood activism and individual social and psychological well-being. In particular, I examine the benefits of participation in neighborhood activism in comparison to volunteering. There is a great deal of literature which finds that volunteering benefits one's physical and mental health. Experts in the field of volunteer research have argued that activism is simply a sub-type of volunteering. Yet little research exists on the effects of activism alone or the comparison between activism and volunteerism. My findings suggest that activism and volunteering impart different benefits to participants. Participating in neighborhood activism is particularly empowering for residents.

In an attempt to better understand neighborhood activism, Chapter 3 examines the individual and neighborhood-level antecedents of activism. I test competing theories of

neighborhood problems and neighborhood resources and find support for both theories. Contrary to the concentrated poverty perspective, the most disadvantaged, stressful neighborhoods have higher rates of neighborhood activism.

In Chapter 4, I return to the question of neighborhood activism and psychological well-being, this time examining neighborhood-focused activism as a characteristic of the neighborhood as a whole, in other words, neighborhood activism as a level-two concept. Informed by the individual and neighborhood antecedents of participation, I examine neighborhood-level activism controlling for other characteristics of individuals and their neighborhoods. The literature has most consistently found a link between mental health and neighborhood violence and disorder. I find that neighborhood activism improves well-being controlling for other neighborhood conditions, including stressors such as perceived violence and disorder. Unexpectedly, I find that neighborhoods are experienced differently by Hispanic/Latino residents and first generation immigrants.

I conclude this dissertation with suggestions for future research and implications for policy and practice in neighborhoods. Of particular interest are place-focused policies of the Obama administration's Office of Urban Affairs. Place based policies recognize that the well-being of people, especially those with fewer resources, is intrinsically linked to the character of the neighborhoods and metropolitan areas where they live. These place- rather than person-centered policies to improve poor communities mark a sea change in thinking on urban policy (Douglas, 2010; Turner, 2010). Missing from the current place-based policies are efforts to make residential neighborhoods more hospitable to immigrants.

## **Chapter 2 Focusing on Change: Comparing the Effects of Neighborhood-Focused Activism and Volunteerism on Well-Being**

The engagement of community members in organizational and civic life has been identified as an important component of healthy communities and has been the subject of much scholarly debate. To understand the individual and community benefits of engagement, focus has been placed on participation in voluntary associations, volunteering in organizations, and the amorphous concept of social capital. In order to address a gap in the current research, I examine the effects of participation in neighborhood activism on individual well-being.

The literature suggests that participation in neighborhood activism is important for the psychological and social well-being of residents for several reasons. Activism is a form of community empowerment practice which is a multilevel approach to addressing the well-being of individuals and communities (Gutierrez, 1990). Community activism is one proven approach to building empowerment (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988) and as such should improve individual well-being through multilevel pathways. The research on volunteerism has found strong evidence for individual-level effects of volunteering on psychological well-being but has not focused much on activist-specific involvement. Similarly, the social movement literature examines the consequences of participation in activism but has focused on participant's economic and social outcomes, such as employment and marriage, and less on psychological well-being. The social capital literature has also been drawn upon to suggest that social networks—to which

participation has been linked—are important for health and well-being, though the evidence has been more mixed. These literatures suggest that participation in neighborhood activism is beneficial to psychological well-being but that activism may be even more empowering than other forms of participation.

In order to address this gap in the literature by examining the relationship between neighborhood activism and psychological well-being, I also test the ways in which demographic factors and stressors affect this relationship. I draw on several literatures in order to provide a theoretical background for this project. First, I describe the literature on the benefits of volunteerism. Then, I describe current community practice literature. And finally, I discuss the social capital literature. All of these research areas suggest that there is a psychosocial benefit to participation in activism but that burnout may moderate the benefits. Informed by the literature on the processes that contribute to well-being, I present and test a model of the relationship between activism and psychosocial well-being.

## **Background**

### **Psychosocial Well-Being**

In this chapter, I examine psychosocial well-being, which I conceptualize as mental health (specifically depression and anxiety symptoms), psychological resources (such as mastery and self-esteem) and social resources (such as social ties). Disparities have been found that indicate lower socioeconomic status is associated with poorer well-being across these measures of mental health, psychological resources, and social resources.

Socioeconomic disparities exist for mental health outcomes, such as anxiety and depression. While racial disparities exist for many health conditions, disparities in lifetime prevalence are not found for either anxiety or depression. However, many have cautioned that similarities between racial and ethnic groups in lifetime prevalence may fail to reflect average differences in mental health status and the actual distribution of illness across groups (Algeria, Perez, & Williams, 2003; US Surgeon General, 2001). Furthermore, the consequences of mental health problems are greater for people of color (Algeria et al., 2003). At the very least, the unequal distribution of socioeconomic resources by race suggests that socioeconomic disparities in mental health are important for addressing both class and race inequality.

One way that inequality effects mental health is through the uneven distribution of stress. Chronic stressors are experienced disproportionately by lower income individuals. Stress is a major predictor of mental health problems (Aneshensel, 1992). Stressors include life events, such as loss and chronic stressors, which may be experiences of discrimination, fear of violence (Williams & Collins, 1995), and economic strain (Aneshensel, 1992). An individual's psychological and social resources are key components of well-being that protect against stressors and directly affect health and mental health (Aneshensel, 1992). But these too are also unevenly distributed by socioeconomic status (Aneshensel, 1992; Thoits, 1995; Williams & Collins, 1995). Thus, both stress and resources are important for understanding individual well-being.

### **Volunteerism**

Because the direct effects of activism on individual psychosocial outcomes are not documented in the literature (with the exception of one psychological experiment

with college students (Klar & Kasser, 2009)), I turn to the evidence that volunteering affects individual well-being. This work, while marked by differences in the attitudes, motivations, and goals of participants, can inform the present study. Activists seek to create change at the neighborhood, community, or global level. Volunteers, on the other hand, seek to provide services. Research supports the conventional wisdom that activists are oriented towards politics and social change whereas volunteers are oriented towards helping individuals—volunteers were quick to deny that their work was related to activism because of the political implications (Eliasoph, 1988). Certainly, the line between activism and volunteerism is blurred: often activists do volunteer work and volunteers become activists. In a review of the literature, John Wilson (2000) argues that volunteering and activism should be considered jointly—but their similarity remains an empirical question. The dearth of literature on activism makes volunteerism literature a logical starting point for a study on activism

Volunteering is thought to have positive consequences for mental health as forms of social integration and productive activities. First, volunteering is a form of social integration, which has the potential to bestow beneficial social support (House, Umberson, & Landis, 1988). Kawachi & Berkman (2001) describe the type of social ties originating from community, voluntary, and religious participation as weak ties. Participation, they argue, promotes belongingness, and may help to develop stronger ties (bonding and binding ties). These social ties may have both direct effects and stress-buffering effects (Kawachi & Berkman, 2001). Volunteering may also confer positive benefits as a form of productive activities. In addition to social integration, productive activities are thought to increase sense of meaning and purpose and social role

performance, all of which may explain the link between productive activities and improved mortality (Glass, Mendes de Leon, Maratolli, & Berkman, 1999). Productive activities improve feelings of satisfaction, self-worth, and happiness. Both social integration and productive activities are mechanisms which bestow mental health benefits. While activism is a productive activity and would impart the psychological benefits associated with other productive activities, some would argue that activism might not provide as much social integration because of its potential to be confrontational.

There is consistent evidence from the empirical literature that volunteering benefits individual psychological well-being (Wilson, 2000). Criticisms of selection bias plague this literature. That is, because most of the research has been cross-sectional, one is unable to determine the causal relationships at work—does volunteering improve well-being or do people with higher levels of well-being volunteer? A compounding problem is that the causes and consequences of volunteering are similar (e.g., social and economic resources). The evidence from longitudinal studies suggests that both selection and causation are present. Positive effects of volunteering persist for happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, mastery, and physical health and negative effects persist for depression even after controlling for selection. Thus, the researchers argue that volunteering does independently affect mental health and health (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001).

Some have suggested that the benefits of volunteering vary by social identity, in particular, that those with more advantaged social status will be more likely to benefit from participation. The effects of volunteerism have been found to be especially important for older adults (Wilson, 2000). The relationship between volunteering and

mental health outcomes is more robust for older adults (those over 65; Musick & Wilson, 2003), controlling for health, physical activity, and church attendance. But for other social identities such as gender and race, the results are less clear. Other research has found that older adult volunteers who engage in more hours of volunteering report higher well-being and that these positive effects were not moderated by social integration, race, or gender (Morrow-Howell, Hinterlong, Rozario, & Tang, 2003). But others have found that gender and class matter for the extent to which social ties can buffer against stress, indicating that women with fewer resources may have increased mental illness in response to social connections (Kawachi & Berkman, 2001). On the other hand, McAdam (1992) finds that the effects of participation in the Freedom Summer social movement on later life political activity are stronger for male participants. Though the evidence that those of different social identities have different experiences of participation is still mixed, this literature suggests that it is important to investigate these effects.

Musick and Wilson (2002) differentiate between secular and non-secular volunteering, but they note that there are no clear theoretical guidelines for distinguishing between types of volunteering. Church-related volunteering was associated with a greater improvement in depression. They argue that organizational context explains the differences—secular organizations reward volunteering more. No research to date has differentiated between activism and volunteerism. Furthermore, there has been no research suggesting that different types of volunteering may function through different mechanisms.

As stated earlier, John Wilson (2000) argues that volunteerism and activism are the same activity, despite some differences in how volunteers and activists orient their work. But the differences are important to understand before they are ignored. Volunteers work within the system, and therefore most frequently help people on an individual basis. Activists, on the other hand, view the system of power as a target of intervention, rather than a framework within which to work. Additional theory and research should focus on the difference between volunteers and activists, as well as the differences in the processes and outcomes of each activity. Theory suggests that the effects of participation in activism may operate differently than the effects of volunteering. But at the very least, this is an empirical question. Are the same positive benefits bestowed to activists as volunteers? Next I argue that activism should act through additional pathways of empowerment.

### **Empowerment and Well-Being**

Empowerment theory is often used to inform social work interventions that address individual well-being. Empowerment is the ability of individuals (as well as groups, neighborhoods, communities) to develop power to act on their own behalf in society (Parsons, Gutiérrez, & Cox, 1998). Empowerment has been an important aspect of social work practice since the beginnings of the profession (Wenocur & Reisch, 1989). At the individual level, empowerment practice improves psychosocial well-being by increasing individual self-efficacy, self-awareness, self-esteem, and critical thinking skills (Parsons, et al., 1998).

Sense of control, or mastery, is an especially important aspect of empowerment (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; Becker, Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Klem, 2002).

Research has found that participation in political activities and organizations is related to improved control at multiple levels (Becker et al., 2002). Some work on empowerment has emphasized the situation-specific nature of empowerment (e.g., Zimmerman, 1995). Situation-specific empowerment suggests that activism focused on education, for example, will improve one's sense of personal empowerment in education fields. While Zimmerman argues that a situation-specific approach is best to capture the specific nature of personal empowerment, a useful alternative is to measure activism-specific sense of control. As the present research focuses on neighborhood activism, this would suggest that sense of control over neighborhood conditions would be improved by neighborhood activism. I expect to find that the effect of activism is stronger on mastery and neighborhood control than for volunteering.

### **Diversifying the Theory of Social Capital.**

Social capital theory is a theory about social resources that is highly referenced in both scholarly literature and community practice but is also highly debated. Social capital has been defined in many different ways, but it generally includes access to social resources that stem from interpersonal ties (Coleman, 1988). Social capital has been drawn on by neighborhood researchers extensively (Carpiano, 2006). Despite the widespread use of social capital, considerable problems have been noted with its use in theory and practice.

Social capital has come under a great deal of criticism in academia for several reasons. First, the concept has been poorly defined (Portes, 1998). Putnam's (2000) interpretation (which has been employed most frequently in neighborhood research (Carpiano, 2006)) is especially problematic because organizations, politics, social life,

and economics are all bundled up into one concept. Second, Putnam and others have conflated cause, process, and consequence such that the story becomes tautological (Mayer, 2003). Finally, excluding more forms of collective action and prioritizing voluntary associations such as the Elks ignores the type of activities that may be occurring in more disadvantaged neighborhoods (Carpiano, 2006; Mayer, 2003). Such contentious debate surrounds social capital. Thus, it is surprising efforts exist to salvage it.

Mayer's (2003) theoretical argument is quite informative for this study. She suggests that activism is important for economic and social conditions of communities. I further her argument by suggesting that activism is important for the psychological well-being of neighborhood residents. In total, the literature on social capital is useful for the study of neighborhood activism but should not be employed uncritically. The theoretical arguments of Carpiano (2006) and Mayer (2003) suggest that participation in activism is missing from the social capital literature. Including activism is therefore important for improving our understanding of the social resources available to residents.

### **Summary and Model**

In this paper I posit that activism bestows the same benefits as volunteerism as well as the benefits of empowerment. The literatures on empowerment practice and social capital suggest that activism is important and overlooked in the literatures on the social determinants of well-being. These literatures suggest that social ties, neighborhood sense of control, and mastery should be more closely linked to activism than volunteerism.

Activism is linked to positive social, psychological, and empowerment resources and mental health outcomes. I will explore whether activism buffers against the negative

effects of disadvantaged social identity and experiences of stressors. Stressors are hypothesized to be important positive predictors of mental health status. I also hypothesize that there are direct positive effects of activism on good mental health.

## **Hypotheses**

To summarize, I will be testing several hypotheses. I also test these hypotheses alongside volunteerism to understand the similarities and differences in how these activities operate for participants.

H1: Activism positively predicts social and psychological resources.

H2: Activism negatively predicts symptoms of depression and anxiety.

H3: Activism moderates the effect of stressors on outcomes.

H4: Social stratification results in differential effects of social identity status on the relationship between activism and psychological well-being.

## **Methods**

### **Data**

Data from the Chicago Community Adult Health Study (CCAHS) were used to answer the above hypotheses. Survey respondents in this study are 3105 adults aged 18 years and older from a neighborhood-based multistage probability sample of residents of Chicago, IL. Data were collected between 2001 and 2003.

Weighted sample characteristics are detailed in Table 2.1. With weights applied, the sample consisted of 25.8% Latino, 38.4% non-Hispanic White, 32.1% non-Hispanic Black, and 4.8% individuals of other races. The average age of respondents is 42.5 years old.

## Measures

Survey measures are detailed below. Complete listings of survey items comprising each measure or scale are listed in Appendix A.

**Depression.** One of the key independent variables for this study is depressive symptomology, measured by the mean of an 11-item Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression scale (CES-D scale; Radloff (1974)). The possible range on this item is 1 to 4, where 1 indicates no symptoms and 4 indicates the highest frequency of experiencing symptoms, though the actual range on the item is 1.00 to 3.82. The scale was constructed from the mean of all items with responses, so that if one item was missing, the average of 10 items was taken. No respondent had missing data on more than one CES-D item, and only seven respondents had imputed scales.

**Anxiety.** Anxiety symptomology is measured by the five-item Hopkins Symptom Checklist scale (Derogatis, Lipman, Rickels, Uhlenhuth, & Covi, 1974). The scale is constructed from the average of similarly constructed items with a range of 1 to 4 and has an actual range of 1 to 4. All respondents had answers to some of the scale questions. As with depression, this scale was constructed using the average of responses with completed data, but only two respondents had scales that were imputed in this manner.

**Mastery.** Mastery is measured by survey responses to the 5-item Pearlin Mastery scale (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). This scale also had a potential and actual range of 1 to 4. The scale was constructed from the mean of all items with responses, where 18 respondents had less than five responses. Furthermore, two respondents had no responses to the questions on this scale, and the scales for these respondents were imputed using

OLS with age, sex, education, income, race, Latino ethnicity, immigration status, marital status, home ownership, and other psychological resources used as predictors.

**Self-esteem.** Self-esteem is measured using a 4-item scale with a range of 1 to 4 where items were coded such that 1 indicates the lowest self-esteem, or using the terminology used in the survey, the strongest level of agreement with statements about esteem. Items were constructed in the same manner as mastery. Nine individuals had one or more missing items in the scale, and three had fully imputed scales.

**Hopelessness.** Hopelessness is measured by a 4-item scale with a potential and actual range of 1 to 4 where 1 indicates the lowest level of hopelessness. Responses to these items indicate the level of agreement with statements where 1 indicates strong agreement and 4 indicates strong disagreement. Using the same methods of scale calculation and imputation described above, 28 respondents had scales imputed from fewer than four responses, and three had scales imputed from the same variables used in the measure of mastery.

**Neighborhood sense of control.** Sense of control over one's neighborhood conditions is a theoretically grounded indicator of empowerment related to participation in neighborhood activism. This construct, neighborhood control, is measured using one survey question with four response categories: "Overall, how much impact do think people like you can have in making your community a better place to live: no impact at all, a small impact, moderate impact, or big impact?" with 1 being no impact at all and 4 being a big impact. Missing data on this variable were imputed using OLS with age, sex, education, income, race, Latino ethnicity, immigration status, marital status, home

ownership, and other psychological resources as predictors. Fifty respondents had missing data on this question.

**Social support.** Social support is measured using a 4-item scale consisting of various types of social support. The potential and actual range on this scale is 1 to 5 where 1 indicated that social support was available most of the time, and 5 indicated social support was unavailable. The scale has an alpha of .55. Twenty six cases had one or more items missing from the scale and were imputed using the remaining scale items.

**Social ties.** Social ties were measured by two questions about the number of friends or relatives a person has in their neighborhood. Coding is categorical such that 1=none, 2=one or two, 3=three to five, 4=six to nine, 5=ten or more for each item, and the two items were averaged.

**Activism.** The measure of neighborhood activism comes from three items selected from two sets of survey questions on civic participation and group membership. All three items are coded as dummy variables. The first two questions come from a list of civic activities in which respondents participated in the last 12 months: have you participated in a community project; have you participated in any group that took local action for reform? The final question came from a set of questions about group membership: do you belong to a block group, tenant association, or community council? This variable is coded as a scale, averaging items, with a range from 0 to 1 as well as a dummy variable for any participation in one of these three groups. The alpha for this scale is .55.

**Volunteerism.** Volunteerism is a dummy variable derived from a set of questions which asks about membership in organizations and voluntary associations and

organizations to which people might give their time. Respondents who responded that they were associated with any of these groups were then asked the number of hours of volunteer time (specifically, how much unpaid work) they gave to these groups.

Respondents who gave one or more hours of their time were coded as volunteers. For three cases, respondents either did not know if they volunteered, or the information was not ascertained. These cases were coded as non-volunteers.

**Income.** Income is measured by a categorical variable based on a survey question with five income categories (\$0-5000, \$5000-9999, \$10,000-29,999, \$30,000-49,999, and more than \$50,000). Because many individuals (n=577) were missing on income, another dummy variable will be used to identify those with missing income data.

**Financial stress index.** Two survey questions comprise the financial stress index. Respondents were asked how satisfied they are with their present financial situation and how difficult it is to meet monthly payments on bills. The range on this measure is 1 to 5, where 5 indicates the highest level of financial stress. The alpha for this scale is .644.

**Control variables.** Age, gender, and race are important social identity factors which are thought to be related to mental health and the social processes effecting mental health. These variables are entered as controls but are also explored as interaction terms with activism. Respondent gender was obtained by interviewer observation. Employment status was asked by the question “are you working now for pay, looking for work, retired, keeping house, a student, or something else?” A total of 134 respondents gave a response of “something else”, and these were recoded into the original categories. Years of education were categorized into four categories: less than a high school education (<12

years), a high school diploma (12 years), some college (13-15 years), and a college diploma or beyond ( $\geq 16$  years).

Respondent race and ethnicity was ascertained by first asking if the respondent identified as Hispanic or Latino, then a set of race questions were asked to identify as one or more races: white/Caucasian, black/African-American, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, other race. Because of sample sizes, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian and “other race” were all grouped into an “other” category. The Latino category is comprised of Hispanic/Latinos of any race. Marital status is measured by five categories: married, separated, divorced, widowed, and never married. Age is a continuous variable. Although the age quadratic is not used in final models, in preliminary tests the age squared variable was created by mean centering (at 42.5) and squaring the continuous variable. Income was measured using a categorical variable

### **Analyses**

The hypotheses described above are tested using multivariate regression with survey weights. Regression models are estimated for continuous scales of depression, anxiety, and psychological, empowerment, and social resources. In order to test whether there are race, gender, and socioeconomic status specific effects of activism, interaction terms were tested. Because those tests were not significant, I do not report the results here.

### **Limitations**

A primary limitation of the proposed analyses is that they are cross sectional. With cross-sectional regression analyses, the ability to make causal inferences about the processes of interest is severely impaired because of selection bias. As noted earlier, the

volunteerism literature has found that individuals with more psychological resources and better mental health are more likely to volunteer. This selection bias is just as likely for neighborhood activism, upwardly biasing the results.

Another limitation of this study is that the concept of activism, because it is not often included in survey literature, does not have common measurement techniques associated with it. The reliability coefficient for this item is fairly low. Using secondary survey data is another limitation in this respect, as the measures of activism were built from questions with other purposes. Nevertheless, the items were selected on face validity and confirmed with community practitioners. A strength of the scale is its emphasis on neighborhood-focused activism, but the extent to which these items embody the broad definition of activism given in the background—work targeting the system of power—is less clear. Furthermore, the measure of activism and volunteerism share one item (participation in a block group, tenant association, etc...) which precludes inclusion of both measures in a single model. Without both measures in the model, a comparison of activism and volunteerism is hampered.

The measure of neighborhood control is another limitation of this project. Control is measured by a single item, whereas previous research has used multi-item scales which include multi-level concepts of control (Becker, et al., 2002).

Despite these limitations this work is the first of its kind to combine the concepts of activism, empowerment, social, and psychological resources in large scale survey research. This project will add to the literature on psychological processes of empowerment, community practice, and mental health disparities.

## Results

Regression results testing the first three hypotheses are shown in Tables 2.2 through 2.5. For each outcome four models are shown, a model with demographic control variables including gender, race, and socioeconomic status; a model introducing activism as a continuous variable, and then a model with activism and volunteerism as dummy variables for the purpose of comparison.

Participation in activism has a large, significant positive effect on neighborhood sense of control. Those who participate in any activism also experience a large beneficial effect on neighborhood sense of control. The coefficient for activism is greater than that for those who participate in any volunteerism ( $b=.3660, p<.001$ ;  $b=.2347; p<.001$ ). When activism is included in the models, demographic predictors of neighborhood sense of control are mediated, especially educational attainment. Activism is also significantly related to mastery. Like neighborhood sense of control, mastery (or personal sense of control) is more related to participation in activism ( $b= .1178, p<.001$ ) than volunteerism ( $b= .0813, p<.001$ ). Self-esteem is also positively predicted by participation in neighborhood activism, though only the continuous measure is statistically significant. Here, volunteerism is more strongly related to self-esteem than activism. Hopelessness is significantly related to both measures of activism. Again, volunteerism is more strongly related to hopelessness than is activism. Neither anxiety nor depression is significantly predicted by participation in activism or volunteerism.

Similarly, social support is unrelated to participation in activism and volunteerism. Social ties, on the other hand, are highly related to both types of

participation. The effect size is somewhat larger for any participation in neighborhood activism than any volunteering.

In order to test the fourth hypotheses, I tested interactions of activism (and volunteerism) with financial stress, gender, race, and income. No significant interactions were found and were therefore not reported in the tables.

### **Discussion**

As predicted, participation in neighborhood activism is strongly related to well-being, especially those measures that are related to empowerment. Both neighborhood sense of control and individual mastery (personal sense of control) have been argued to be especially important for empowerment (Israel, Checkoway, Zimmerman, & Schulz, 1994) and are highly related to participation in activism. The strong relationship between participation in neighborhood activism and neighborhood sense of control indicates strong evidence for the argument that empowerment is context specific (Zimmerman, 1995).

Furthermore, the evidence that activism is more strongly related to empowerment than volunteerism suggests that activism may be a different experience. In future research, I will make use distinct measures that will better distinguish between each mode of participation and will therefore aid an analysis of the differences between the two. The literature generally defines the differences between activism and volunteerism as the difference between working for social change and working to help individuals (Eliasoph, 1988). The current study suggests that this focus on change—neighborhood change in particular—translates into improved notions of the ability to control one's life and the social context in which one lives.

Another interesting finding of this study is that those who participate in activism are more likely to have a high level of social ties within the neighborhood. This is particularly interesting because of notions that those who participate in activism may either be more antagonistic (and therefore would have trouble with social connections) or that activism might be alienating because it necessitates some degree of confrontation.

Because social ties and psychological resources are all generally tied to improved mental health, it is unusual to find that the effects of activism and volunteerism do not extend to decreases in depression and anxiety symptoms. Future research is needed to better understand these unexpected relationships. One possible argument is that there may be some negative effects of participating in activism and volunteerism, such as burnout (Kagan, 2006; Einwohner, 2002; Downton & Wehr, 1998). The concept of burnout is qualitatively similar to depressive symptomology—burnout consists of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished achievements (Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986). Einwohner (2002) suggests that, as a strategy to avoid burnout, activists find small successes to celebrate. He suggests that “perceived efficacy is necessary not only for initial participation in protest but must also be maintained for long-term activism” (p. 509). This strategy may also foster individual coping resources and help build the sense of empowerment that is seen among those who participate in neighborhood activism in this study.

Contrary to my expectations, I found no significant interaction between participation in neighborhood activism (or volunteerism) and experience of stress or disadvantaged social status. Activism thus does not buffer against structural experiences of inequality. Markers of socioeconomic status and financial stress were particularly

strong predictors across all outcomes. This suggests that, while activism is beneficial at the individual level, it does not appear to ameliorate the stress of inequality.

In order to truly understand the benefits of neighborhood activism for individual residents, a study that takes into account neighborhood changes due to activist efforts are needed. This study suggests that those structural changes (which may affect individual socioeconomic status) are still necessary to effect change for resident well-being.

Table 2.1 Weighted Sample Characteristics (N=3105)

	Mean/ Percent
Female	52.6%
Age	42.5
Race/Ethnicity	
Latino	25.8%
Non-Hispanic White	38.4%
Non-Hispanic Black	32.1%
Non-Hispanic Other	3.8%
Employment Status	
Employed	64.4%
Job seeking	8.8%
Retired	15.7%
Family Work	7.8%
Student	3.4%
Education	
Less than a high school education	23.4%
High School	23.8%
Some College	24.9%
College +	27.9%
Income	
<5K	5.2%
5-15K	14.9%
15-40K	26.4%
40K +	34.9%
Missing	18.6%
Marital Status	
Married	41.8%
Separated	4.0%
Divorced	10.8%
Widowed	6.7%
Never married	36.7%
Immigrant	
1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	26.9%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Generation	13.9%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Generation + (non-immigrant)	59.4%
Financial Stress Index	2.49

Table 2.1 Continued

	Mean/ Percent
Neighborhood Activism	.119
Neighborhood Activism (dummy=1)	25.2%
Volunteerism (dummy=1)	34.6%
Neighborhood Sense of Control	2.78
Mastery	3.19
Self-Esteem	3.40
Hopelessness	1.75
Anxiety	1.55
Depression	1.82

Table 2.2 Weighted OLS Models of The Effects of Neighborhood Activism and Volunteerism on Neighborhood Sense of Control and Mastery

	Neighborhood Sense of Control				Mastery			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Female	0.0764*	0.0658	0.0693	0.065	-0.0369	-0.0405	-0.0391	-0.0408
Race (non-Hispanic White reference)								
Hispanic	0.1872**	0.1740**	0.1708**	0.1848**	0.0544	0.0498	0.0491	0.0536
Black	0.1412**	0.1303**	0.1335**	0.1466**	0.1173**	0.1135**	0.1148**	0.1191**
Other	0.0435	0.0508	0.0275	0.0305	-0.1782	-0.1757	-0.1834	-0.1827
Immigrant (3+ generation reference)								
1st gen	-0.3262***	-0.2654***	-0.2610***	-0.2783***	-0.0669	-0.0457	-0.0459	-0.0503
2nd gen	0.026	0.0385	0.0353	0.035	0.0145	0.0189	0.0175	0.0176
Employment (employed reference)								
Job seeking	0.0028	-0.0033	0.0025	0.0094	-0.0455	-0.0476	-0.0455	-0.0432
Retired	-0.2655***	-0.2319**	-0.2335**	-0.2352**	-0.3137***	-0.3020***	-0.3034***	-0.3032***
Family Work	-0.0194	-0.0284	-0.0255	-0.0127	-0.0284	-0.0315	-0.0304	-0.0261
Student	0.1635	0.1298	0.1216	0.1395	0.1404	0.1286	0.1269	0.132
Education (less than high school reference)								
High School	0.0457	0.0309	0.0311	0.0389	0.1756***	0.1704***	0.1709***	0.1732***
Some college	0.1801**	0.1223*	0.1354*	0.1356*	0.2545***	0.2344***	0.2402***	0.2391***
College +	0.3410***	0.2356***	0.2533***	0.2763***	0.3788***	0.3422***	0.3506***	0.3564***
Marital Status (married reference)								
Separated	-0.1557	-0.1334	-0.1432	-0.1517	0.0015	0.0092	0.0055	0.0028
Divorced	-0.0504	-0.0638	-0.0647	-0.0576	0.0668	0.0621	0.0622	0.0643
Widowed	-0.1701	-0.1552	-0.172	-0.1735	0.007	0.0121	0.0064	0.0058
Never married	-0.1834***	-0.1672**	-0.1750***	-0.1823***	0.0302	0.0359	0.033	0.0306
Age	0.0044*	0.0029	0.0032	0.0041*	-0.002	-0.0025	-0.0024	-0.0021
Income (40K + reference)								
<5K	-0.077	-0.0659	-0.0583	-0.0583	-0.2479***	-0.2441***	-0.2419***	-0.2414***
5-15K	-0.1162	-0.0927	-0.0856	-0.0948	-0.2201***	-0.2119***	-0.2102***	-0.2126***
15-40K	-0.0674	-0.0575	-0.054	-0.0537	-0.0652	-0.0617	-0.0608	-0.0604
Missing	-0.1643**	-0.1438*	-0.1416*	-0.1476**	-0.1668***	-0.1597***	-0.1595***	-0.1610***
Financial Stress Index	-0.0414*	-0.0429*	-0.0451*	-0.0444*	-0.1253***	-0.1259***	-0.1265***	-0.1264***
Neighborhood Activism Scale		0.7818***				0.2719***		
Neighborhood Activism (dummy)			0.3660***				0.1178***	
Volunteerism (dummy)				0.2347***				0.0813**
_cons	2.6911***	2.6870***	2.6722***	2.6385***	3.4897***	3.4883***	3.4836***	3.4715***

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 2.3 Weighted OLS Models for Individual-Level Effects of Neighborhood Activism and Volunteerism on Self-Esteem and Hopelessness

	Self-Esteem					Hopelessness			
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
Female	-0.0096	-0.0111	-0.0106	-0.0125	-0.0014	0.0019	0.0007	0.0048	
Race (non-Hispanic White reference)									
Hispanic	0.1764***	0.1745***	0.1740***	0.1758***	0.061	0.065	0.0658	0.0623	
Black	0.2329***	0.2313***	0.2317***	0.2342***	-0.0188	-0.0154	-0.0165	-0.0217	
Other	0.122	0.1231	0.1197	0.1187	0.097	0.0947	0.1017	0.104	
Immigrant (3+ generation reference)									
1st gen	-0.0269	-0.018	-0.0174	-0.0148	0.0815	0.0628	0.0621	0.0555	
2nd gen	-0.0573	-0.0555	-0.0559	-0.055	-0.0182	-0.022	-0.0209	-0.0231	
Employment (employed reference)									
Job seeking	-0.0842	-0.0851	-0.0842	-0.0825	0.1072	0.1091	0.1073	0.1036	
Retired	-0.1135*	-0.1086*	-0.1088*	-0.1058*	0.1931***	0.1828***	0.1836***	0.1766**	
Family Work	0.0041	0.0028	0.0032	0.0058	0.0272	0.03	0.029	0.0236	
Student	0.0362	0.0312	0.0301	0.03	-0.3088***	-0.2985***	-0.2964***	-0.2958***	
Education (less than high school reference)									
High School	0.1003**	0.0981**	0.0982**	0.0986**	-0.1910***	-0.1864***	-0.1866***	-0.1873***	
Some college	0.1107**	0.1023*	0.1042*	0.0994*	-0.3290***	-0.3113***	-0.3157***	-0.3049***	
College +	0.1352**	0.1197**	0.1224**	0.1187**	-0.5297***	-0.4974***	-0.5037***	-0.4946***	
Marital Status (married reference)									
Separated	0.0433	0.0466	0.0451	0.0443	-0.083	-0.0899	-0.0867	-0.0852	
Divorced	-0.0216	-0.0235	-0.0236	-0.0234	-0.0653	-0.0612	-0.061	-0.0613	
Widowed	0.003	0.0052	0.0027	0.0021	0.0116	0.0071	0.0122	0.0135	
Never married	-0.0442	-0.0418	-0.0429	-0.0439	-0.0865*	-0.0915*	-0.0890*	-0.0871*	
Age	0.0011	0.0009	0.001	0.0011	0.0032*	0.0036**	0.0035**	0.0034*	
Income (40K + reference)									
<5K	-0.1916***	-0.1900***	-0.1889***	-0.1869***	0.2635***	0.2601***	0.2579***	0.2533***	
5-15K	-0.0782	-0.0748	-0.0737	-0.0727	0.1889***	0.1817**	0.1798**	0.1773**	
15-40K	-0.0051	-0.0037	-0.0031	-0.0016	0.0318	0.0288	0.0278	0.0244	
Missing	0.0044	0.0074	0.0077	0.0086	0.1141*	0.1078*	0.1073*	0.1050*	
Financial Stress Index	-0.1217***	-0.1219***	-0.1222***	-0.1224***	0.1116***	0.1121***	0.1127***	0.1132***	
Neighborhood Activism		0.1145*				-0.2396***			
Neighborhood Activism (dummy)			0.0533				-0.1088***		
Volunteerism (dummy)				0.0597*				-0.1274***	
_cons	3.5228***	3.5222***	3.5200***	3.5094***	1.5225***	1.5238***	1.5281***	1.5510***	

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 2.4 Weighted OLS Models for the Effects of Neighborhood Activism and Volunteerism on Anxiety and Depressive Symptoms

	Anxiety				Depression			
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Female	0.0603*	0.0603*	0.0599*	0.0605*	0.0786**	0.0791**	0.0786**	0.0795**
Race (non-Hispanic White reference)								
Latino	0.0305	0.0305	0.0296	0.0306	-0.0049	-0.0042	-0.0046	-0.0047
Black	0.0325	0.0325	0.0321	0.0324	-0.0011	-0.0005	-0.001	-0.0016
Other	0.0931	0.0931	0.0922	0.0933	0.0391	0.0387	0.0393	0.0402
Immigrant (3+ generation reference)								
1st gen	-0.1052**	-0.1053*	-0.1016*	-0.1062**	-0.1285***	-0.1317***	-0.1293***	-0.1325***
2nd gen	-0.0138	-0.0138	-0.0133	-0.014	-0.0307	-0.0314	-0.0309	-0.0315
Employment (employed reference)								
Job seeking	0.0229	0.0229	0.0229	0.0228	0.0278	0.0282	0.0278	0.0273
Retired	0.1432**	0.1432**	0.1450**	0.1426**	0.2015***	0.1997***	0.2011***	0.1990***
Family Work	0.1439**	0.1439**	0.1436**	0.1438**	0.1548**	0.1552**	0.1548**	0.1542**
Student	0.0935	0.0935	0.0911	0.094	-0.0395	-0.0377	-0.0389	-0.0375
Education (less than high school reference)								
High School	-0.0437	-0.0437	-0.0445	-0.0436	-0.0261	-0.0253	-0.0259	-0.0255
Some college	-0.0541	-0.054	-0.0566	-0.0532	-0.0533	-0.0502	-0.0527	-0.0496
College +	-0.1329**	-0.1329**	-0.1379**	-0.1317**	-0.1020**	-0.0963*	-0.1008**	-0.0965*
Marital Status (married reference)								
Separated	-0.0008	-0.0008	-0.0001	-0.0008	0.1101	0.1089	0.1099	0.1098
Divorced	0.0654	0.0654	0.0646	0.0655	0.1568***	0.1575***	0.1570***	0.1574***
Widowed	0.1249*	0.1249*	0.1248*	0.1249*	0.1415**	0.1407**	0.1416**	0.1418**
Never married	0.0563	0.0563	0.0568	0.0563	0.1285***	0.1276***	0.1284***	0.1284***
Age	-0.0008	-0.0008	-0.0009	-0.0008	-0.0032**	-0.0032**	-0.0032**	-0.0032**
Income (40K + reference)								
<5K	0.1734**	0.1733**	0.1744**	0.1730**	0.0726	0.0721	0.0724	0.0711
5-15K	0.0663	0.0663	0.068	0.0658	0.0561	0.0548	0.0557	0.0543
15-40K	0.0515	0.0514	0.0522	0.0512	0.0626*	0.0621*	0.0625*	0.0615*
Missing	0.0132	0.0132	0.0145	0.0129	-0.026	-0.0271	-0.0263	-0.0274
Financial Stress Index	0.0885***	0.0885***	0.0883***	0.0885***	0.1482***	0.1483***	0.1483***	0.1485***
Neighborhood Activism		-0.0003				-0.0419		
Neighborhood Activism (dummy)			0.0206				-0.0048	
Volunteerism (dummy)				-0.0047				-0.0198
_cons	1.2888***	1.2888***	1.2877***	1.2899***	1.4831***	1.4833***	1.4834***	1.4875***

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 2.5 Weighted OLS Models of the Effects of Neighborhood Activism and Volunteerism on Social Ties and Support

	Social Ties					Social Support			
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
Female	-0.1481***	-0.1575***	-0.1550***	-0.1636***	0.0366	0.0352	0.0356	0.033	
Race (non-Hispanic White reference)									
Latino	0.1319	0.1203	0.1161	0.1288	0.0574	0.0556	0.0551	0.0567	
Black	-0.0055	-0.0152	-0.013	0.0018	-0.0089	-0.0104	-0.01	-0.0072	
Other	-0.036	-0.0295	-0.0515	-0.0536	-0.1909	-0.1899	-0.1932	-0.1949	
Immigrant (3+ generation reference)									
1st gen	-0.0826	-0.0286	-0.0194	-0.0175	0.0199	0.0283	0.0292	0.035	
2nd gen	0.0874	0.0985	0.0964	0.0996	0.0039	0.0057	0.0053	0.0068	
Employment (employed reference)									
Job seeking	0.0835	0.0781	0.0832	0.0926	-0.1137	-0.1146	-0.1138	-0.1116	
Retired	0.0498	0.0796	0.0808	0.091	-0.0115	-0.0069	-0.0069	-0.002	
Family Work	0.1463	0.1383	0.1404	0.1554	-0.1989**	-0.2001**	-0.1997**	-0.1968**	
Student	-0.0391	-0.069	-0.0797	-0.0717	0.1021	0.0975	0.0962	0.0946	
Education (less than high school reference)									
High School	0.1725**	0.1593*	0.1583*	0.1632*	0.0408	0.0388	0.0388	0.0387	
Some college	0.1381*	0.0868	0.0948	0.0777	0.0263	0.0184	0.02	0.0124	
College +	0.0411	-0.0525	-0.0439	-0.0468	0.0509	0.0364	0.0384	0.0306	
Marital Status (married reference)									
Separated	-0.132	-0.1123	-0.12	-0.1267	-0.1482	-0.1452	-0.1465	-0.147	
Divorced	-0.039	-0.0509	-0.0528	-0.0489	-0.2161**	-0.2179**	-0.2181**	-0.2184**	
Widowed	0.0437	0.0569	0.0418	0.039	-0.0422	-0.0401	-0.0424	-0.0432	
Never married	-0.0588	-0.0444	-0.0506	-0.0573	-0.1243*	-0.1221*	-0.1231*	-0.1240*	
Age	-0.0006	-0.0019	-0.0017	-0.001	-0.0026	-0.0029	-0.0028	-0.0028	
Income (40K + reference)									
<5K	0.0646	0.0744	0.0827	0.09	-0.0684	-0.0669	-0.0657	-0.0625	
5-15K	0.0078	0.0286	0.0374	0.0369	-0.1124	-0.1092	-0.1081	-0.1057	
15-40K	0.0055	0.0142	0.0185	0.0242	0.0069	0.0082	0.0088	0.0112	
Missing	-0.0014	0.0168	0.0205	0.0212	0.0237	0.0265	0.0269	0.0289	
Financial Stress Index	-0.0700**	-0.0714**	-0.0736**	-0.0740**	-0.1841***	-0.1843***	-0.1846***	-0.1850***	
Neighborhood Activism		0.6941***				0.1077			
Neighborhood Activism (dummy)			0.3548***				0.0521		
Volunteerism (dummy)				0.3191***				0.0737	
_cons	2.7990***	2.7954***	2.7807***	2.7275***	4.7196***	4.7190***	4.7169***	4.7031***	

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

APPENDIX A: Scale Composition

	Questions
Financial Stress Index	<p>Now, I'd like to ask a few questions about (your/your family's) financial situation. How satisfied are you with (your/your family's) present financial situation – completely, very, somewhat, not very or not at all satisfied?</p> <p>How difficult is it for (you/your family) to meet the monthly payments on your (family's) bills? Is it extremely difficult, very difficult, somewhat difficult, or not difficult at all?</p>
Neighborhood Activism	<p>Which of the things listed have you done in the past twelve months?</p> <p>Worked on a community project</p> <p>Participated in any group that took local action for reform</p> <p>Do you belong to a block group, tenant association, or community council?</p>
Volunteerism	<p>Thinking of all of the organizations that you just told me you are associated with, such as (<i>fill—see below</i>), during how many weeks in the last twelve months did you do unpaid work for <u>any</u> of these organizations? During a typical week that you did this work, about how many hours did you spend doing unpaid work for these organizations?</p>
Neighborhood Sense of Control	<p>Overall, how much impact do think people like you can have in making your community a better place to live – no impact at all, a small impact, moderate impact, or big impact?</p>
Mastery	<p>I have little control over the things that happen to me.</p> <p>There is really no way I can solve some of the problems I have.</p> <p>There is little I can do to change many of the important things in my life.</p> <p>I often feel helpless in dealing with the problems of life.</p>
Self-Esteem	<p>I take a positive attitude toward myself.</p> <p>On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.</p> <p>I certainly feel useless at times.</p> <p>At times I think I am no good at all.</p>

Hopelessness	<p>I feel it is impossible for me to reach the goals that I would like to strive for.</p> <p>The future seems hopeless to me and I can't believe that things are changing for the better.</p> <p>I don't expect to get what I really want.</p> <p>There's no use in really trying to get something I want because I probably won't get it.</p>
Depression	<p>Now I am going to read some statements about how people sometimes feel. After each statement, please indicate how often you felt that way DURING THE PAST WEEK.</p> <p>I felt depressed.</p> <p>I felt that everything I did was an effort.</p> <p>My sleep was restless.</p> <p>I was happy.</p> <p>I felt lonely.</p> <p>People were unfriendly.</p> <p>I enjoyed life.</p> <p>I did not feel like eating. My appetite was poor.</p> <p>I felt sad.</p> <p>I felt that people disliked me.</p> <p>I could not get "going."</p>
Anxiety	<p>I had fear of the worst happening.</p> <p>I was nervous.</p> <p>I felt my hands trembling.</p> <p>I had a fear of dying.</p> <p>I felt faint.</p>
Social Ties	<p>Not counting those who live with you, how many of your relatives or in-laws live in your neighborhood?</p> <p>How many friends do you have who live in your neighborhood? Would you say none, one or two, three to five, six to nine, or ten or more?</p>
Social Support	<p>On the whole, how much do your friends and relatives make you feel loved and cared for?</p> <p>On average, how much do you feel your friends and relatives make too many demands on you?</p> <p>How much are friends and relatives willing to listen when you need to talk about your worries or problems?</p> <p>How much are they (your friends and relatives) critical of you or what you do?</p>

### **Chapter 3 Putting Neighborhood Activism in Its Place: The Neighborhood Context of Participation in Activism**

Community participation has developed into a key component of healthy communities. Activism in neighborhoods has positive effects on individual well-being, as shown in the previous chapter, and has the potential to improve characteristics of the neighborhood as a whole. There has been renewed interest in community participation with the recent growth in foundation-sponsored community change initiatives. A core premise of these programs is that residents of poor, disadvantaged communities are not involved in their community and therefore not connected to one another or to the resources that would help meet their needs (Brown, Chaskin, Hamilton, & Richmond, 2004). In this chapter I examine the assumption that residents of poor communities are less active by asking: What are the individual and neighborhood-level antecedents of participating in neighborhood activism?

Neighborhood activism has not garnered much attention in the extant research. Rather, engagement in voluntary associations like bowling clubs and Elks Lodges highlighted in the work of Robert Putnam (2000) has amassed the bulk of scholarly attention. Other researchers have focused on volunteering and the effects of volunteering on life chances (e.g., Musick & Wilson, 2008). But the importance of engaging in activities that improve the well-being of the community as a whole—i.e., neighborhood activism—has not been the focus of such scholarly and popular attention. Nevertheless,

we know from qualitative studies that neighborhood activism is an important way that individuals enact their vision for how their community should be.

I seek to understand how neighborhood conditions contribute to the likelihood that residents will engage in neighborhood activism. First, I review literature from volunteerism and social movements in order to better understand why neighborhood activism has been overlooked in the literature. I describe competing theories of the neighborhood context of participation in general. I then analyze how both neighborhood conditions and individual attributes contribute to individual activism. In particular, I seek to understand whether residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods participate in neighborhood activism. Finally, I discuss the implications of these findings for place-focused interventions.

## **Background**

### **Distinguishing Between Activism and Volunteerism**

Activism is an important part of civic life because activism is a component of community empowerment. Israel and colleagues (1994) define empowerment as “the ability of people to gain understanding and control over personal, social, economic, and political forces in order to take action to improve their life situations” (p. 152).

Neighborhood activism is an attempt to take control of one’s environment—the neighborhood—in order to improve their life situation. Neighborhood activism has the potential to improve neighborhood conditions. Activism is also important for individual well-being, as established in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. I define neighborhood activism as participation in work that moves towards a goal of changing one’s home neighborhood.

Scholars of volunteerism have argued that activism is simply a sub-type of volunteerism (Wilson, 2000; Musick & Wilson, 2008). Activism has been seen as in the purview of social movement scholars whereas volunteerism has been associated with the study of nonprofit organizations and voluntary association. There has been little work towards understanding who participates in neighborhood activism. It is important that this work is done in order to answer the empirical question of whether activism and volunteerism are actually similar activities. The limited literature does suggest that the characteristics of those who participate in activism are different than those who volunteer. A study of women using data from 1978 found significant differences between activists and volunteers. While employment deterred the likelihood that women volunteer, it did not affect activism. Participation in activism was also higher among those with more education and among non-Whites. Among women who volunteer, those who participate in activism are much less likely to volunteer in religious organizations (Caputo, 1997). Research on volunteers for AIDS organizations has highlighted how activities that are labeled volunteerism and activism actually overlap in practice (e.g., Kayal, 1993; Stewart & Weinstein, 1997). Nevertheless, they find that different people engage in these activities. Those offering individual support were more likely to be older, female, and heterosexual, while those taking political action were more likely to be young, male, and gay or bisexual (Stewart & Weinstein, 1997).

The work of Sampson, McAdam, and colleagues has focused on redefining social movement activism to include the more mundane activities that I define as neighborhood activism. They suggest that while protest events have declined since the 1960s, both civic activities like neighborhood parades and events and hybrid events which combine civic

activities with protest events—what they call collective civic action--have become more important (McAdam, Sampson, Weffer, & MacIndoe 2005; Sampson, McAdam, McIndoe, & Weffer, 2005). They describe these hybrid events as “blended social action”, such as block clubs planting a community garden (Sampson et al., 2005). Their work suggests that social movement scholars have been looking at extreme, leftist organizations and are missing the social movements that have become more peaceful, routine, suburban, local in nature, and are now more often initiated by the advantaged (McAdam et al., 2005). Thus, neighborhood activism is precisely the kind of activism that is gaining ground.

The extant literature which can be related to neighborhood activism paints a blurry picture of who participates in such events. There is some evidence that those with privilege—education, economic advantage, suburban, and young—are more likely to participate. But there is also evidence that those who experience disadvantage or discrimination (such as gay men and women of color) turn to activism as opposed to volunteerism. Most social movement scholars answer the question “who participates in activism” with nuanced theories of collective identity and movement frame alignment, focusing at the movement and organizational level. However, there is still much to learn about who participates in neighborhood activism.

### **Neighborhood Activism in Context**

What kinds of neighborhoods have high levels of participation in neighborhood activism? The literature on communities, urban neighborhoods, and organizations has more to say about what kinds of neighborhoods have higher levels of participation in general and neighborhood activism in particular. Theories of the participation of residents

in efforts to improve or maintain the conditions of their neighborhoods have been an important component of urban sociology since its inception (e.g., Shaw & McKay, 1942). The theories presented below suggest that a nuanced approach should be taken for understanding how neighborhoods impact resident participation in neighborhood activism.

### **Resources Afford Participation**

The theory of social capital is highly referenced in both scholarly literature on communities and community practice literature. Social capital has been defined in many different ways, but it generally includes access to social resources that stem from interpersonal ties (e.g., Bourdieu, 2001; Coleman, 1988). Much of the literature on how community characteristics contribute to social capital has focused on the work of Putnam (2000). He operationalized social capital as participation in voluntary organizations and found that participation is much lower in poor communities. Putnam argued, as have other social capital theorists (e.g., Coleman (1988)) that an individual's social capital was tied to economic and human capital. Putnam extended social capital theory to the group level such that rates of participation were equated with social capital. Social capital theory suggests that neighborhood socioeconomic disadvantage is negatively related to neighborhood social capital, and it follows that disadvantage would also have a negative effect on resident participation in neighborhood activism.

Work on concentrated disadvantage similarly suggests that poor neighborhoods have low levels of participation. Concentrated disadvantage refers to the concentration of poverty and joblessness in deteriorated inner city neighborhoods. According to Wilson (1996), these high-poverty neighborhoods are socially isolated from middle-class leaders

and role models who, according to this theory, are crucial for formal and informal social organization of the neighborhood (Wilson, 1996). Thus poor neighborhoods lack informal organization, which includes neighborhood activism, as well as the formal infrastructure to support community change efforts. This argument has been a powerful influence on policy and programs targeted at dismantling concentrated poverty (such as HUD's Hope VI, which demolishes public housing buildings in order to build mixed income developments (Sharkey, 2009)). Nevertheless, empirical tests of the theory have not found the purported inverse relationship between concentrated poverty neighborhoods and participation (e.g., Swaroop & Morenoff, 2006; Rankin & Quane, 2000).

### **Addressing Neighborhood Needs**

Disadvantaged neighborhoods experiencing a number of problems including violence, disorder, environmental issues, and unemployment are just the locations where residents should, and do organize. The community psychology literature has focused on the relationship between neighborhood problems and participation in neighborhoods. In particular, awareness of community problems and participation in problem alleviation strategies has been linked to personal and community empowerment (e.g., Peterson & Reid, 2003; Perkins, Florins, Rich, Wandersman, & Chavis, 1990) Some studies of poor communities have found that neighborhood problems motivate residents to take action in the neighborhood (e.g., Foster-Fishman, Cantillon, Pierce, & Van Egeren, 2007). Residents argue that their neighbors withdraw from participation in neighborhoods with crime and disorder (Saegert & Winkel, 2004). At the same time, problems in a neighborhood can motivate participation (Saegert & Winkel, 2004). Perkins and

colleagues (1990) found that neighborhood problems were positively related to participation in voluntary organizations to solve neighborhood problems. For example, individuals aware of substance use problems in a neighborhood were more likely to participate in prevention initiatives in the community (Peterson & Reid, 2003). There are two key limitations to the extant community psychology literature on the neighborhood context of participation. First, the majority of these studies employ a resident's own perception of the neighborhood to understand the contextual effects on participation rather than the multi-level analyses used in this paper. Second, nearly all studies focus solely on disadvantaged communities, limiting our understanding of the differences between poorer and more affluent neighborhoods.

Addressing neighborhood needs has also been uncovered as a motivator of participation in disadvantaged communities in the work of qualitative urban sociologists. According to qualitative studies, problems in disadvantaged neighborhoods are often solved by neighborhood resident activists working, in many cases, *with* those in the community who might otherwise be causing some of the problems with which they are concerned. For instance, Venkatesh (2002) describes a number of organizations in neighborhoods working to address problems with public housing, gang violence, and other community needs. He even finds a tenant association working with a gang, whose territory included their public housing buildings, to help create playground areas for the youth in the buildings. This suggests that participation happens when residents identify (and can agree upon) needs to be addressed.

Pattillo (2007) examines a neighborhood in Chicago that is transitioning from extreme poverty to a more class-integrated neighborhood. Nevertheless, this

neighborhood has poverty rates of approximately 60%, placing it, by all definitions (Jargowsky, 2003; Kingsley & Petit, 2007) squarely among very-high-poverty neighborhoods. Within this neighborhood many of the non-poor are middle-class, which she defines as highly educated (with a college degree and above) and may earn higher incomes. These middle class residents are concerned with improving the neighborhood and are especially active. One reason she suggests that they are so active is that the middle class is especially concerned with putting a polished face on the neighborhood. They are uncomfortable with the voices of the low income, public housing residents who have “too much of a voice,” (p. 99). And the middle class blacks are especially motivated to participate in neighborhood-focused activism here because they view neighborhood activism as directly related to race-politics.

This work suggests that in disadvantaged neighborhoods, problems are identified and resolved by residents. This work is often spearheaded by middle-class residents, who may be antagonistic, paternalistic, or cooperative. Nevertheless, evidence from qualitative studies suggests that neighborhoods are not as uniformly “disadvantaged”, as suggested by theories of concentrated disadvantage.

### **Two Forces at Work: Resources and Problems**

Sociologists have found compelling relationships between the structural antecedents of various forms of participation. This research has shown that the amount of participation does vary by neighborhood. For instance, in a study of Seattle neighborhoods, more stable neighborhoods were more likely to have residents who participated in neighborhood activism (what they call organized neighboring (Guest et al, 2006)), but no other neighborhood characteristics were found to be influential. While

renters were more likely to participate in neighborhoods that were more stable, this relationship was actually curvilinear for homeowners—they were more likely to participate at moderate levels of stability. Another study of Chicago neighborhoods found that both neighborhood disadvantage and disorder are associated with higher levels of participation in instrumental organizations, which were conceptualized as organizations that addressed neighborhood needs (Swaroop & Morenoff, 2006). But disadvantage was curvilinear such that highly disadvantaged neighborhoods began to have lower participation. Similarly, Rankin and Quane (2000) find that mothers' participation in community organizations has a non-linear effect such that participation increases as the neighborhood poverty rate goes past 40% but decreases between 0 and 40% poverty. The empirical evidence suggests that both resources and neighborhood problems increase the likelihood of participation.

### **The Current Project**

In this paper I seek to understand the individual and neighborhood correlates of participation in neighborhood activism. Given the competing theories and the evidence of non-linear relationships—I expect that the relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and activism will be curvilinear such that neighborhoods with high disadvantage and more problems, yet some population of middle class residents, will have higher levels of participation. I examine the following research questions:

- Do poor, disadvantaged, high-problem neighborhoods have lower rates of activism?

- Are poor, disadvantaged, high problem neighborhoods associated with higher odds of participation in neighborhood activism when there are more residents who are educated or more affluent?
- Are perceived neighborhood problems more influential than objective reports of neighborhood problems on the likelihood of participation in activism?

## **Methods**

### **Data**

Several sources of data are merged to examine these research questions. Data from the Chicago Community Adult Health Study (CCAHS) provides individual-level and neighborhood-level data. Survey and biomarker data were collected from respondents between 2001 and 2003. Respondents in this study are 3105 adults from a neighborhood-based sample of residents of Chicago, IL. Respondents were asked about their mental health, activities, as well as about their impressions of their residential neighborhood. Respondents live in 343 Chicago neighborhoods which are clusters of contiguous census tracts. Previous studies of Chicago neighborhoods have found that neighborhood clusters (groups of contiguous census tracts) are the best unit of analysis for understanding neighborhood effects (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). The 343 neighborhood clusters were formed from 847 census tracts. Each neighborhood cluster had 1 to 20 respondents with an average of 9.06 respondents per neighborhood cluster. CCAHS data from survey responses to questions about their neighbors and neighborhood conditions were aggregated to the neighborhood level in order to create neighborhood-level measures of the social characteristics of neighborhoods. CCAHS also had research staff conduct systematic social observations (SSO) of neighborhoods in order to collect

data on the physical characteristics of neighborhoods, described previously (Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999).

Additionally, CCAHS research staff members have collected secondary data on crime, businesses, and green space. These data sources are combined in neighborhood-level summary measures described later in this paper.

The final data source is the US Census. Census data provides administrative neighborhood-level data measuring the housing and demographic characteristics of all neighborhood residents. Census data at the census tract level is aggregated to the neighborhood cluster level.

## **Variables**

A number of the individual-level demographic variables used in Chapter 2 are included in the present analysis. See Chapter 2 for descriptions of these variables.

**Neighborhood activism.** The measure of neighborhood activism comes from three items selected from two sets of survey questions on civic participation and group membership. All three items are coded as dummy variables. The first two questions come from a list of civic activities in which respondents participated in the last 12 months: Have you participated in a community project; have you participated in any group that took local action for reform? The final question came from a set of questions about group membership: Do you belong to a block group, tenant association, or community council? Because a scalar variable of types of participating is highly non-linear, and there is no reason to suggest that participating in multiple organizations is the same as participating more, the variable was coded as a dummy variable for any participation in one of these three groups for the present analysis.

**Homeowner.** Respondents were asked whether they owned their home, rented, or had some other arrangement. The homeowner variable indicates that residents own their own home (and collapses renting and other residents into the comparison group).

**Tenure.** Respondents were asked about their length of residence at the current address. The neighborhood tenure variable denotes the length of time in years that respondents have been at their current address.

**Has child.** Respondents were asked detailed questions about their children, both biological and other, within their household and outside their household. This variable indicates that the respondent has a child under the age of 18 in the home whose relationship might be biological, step, foster, or adoptive.

**Neighborhood demographics.** US Census data provide information on the demographic composition of neighborhoods. Neighborhood factors, which have been found in factor analysis to be parsimonious and orthogonal, will be used to depict neighborhood demographic composition (Morenoff et al., 2007). Neighborhood disadvantage is characterized by low family incomes, high levels of poverty, public assistance, unemployment, female-headed families, never-married adults, and few owner-occupied homes. Neighborhood affluence is characterized by people with higher education, professional/managerial occupations, residential mobility, more young adults, and fewer children under 18 years of age. The third factor, neighborhood immigration, is associated with percent Hispanic, foreign born, and negatively associated with percent non-Hispanic black. Neighborhood older age indicates those over 50 years old and fewer young adults and never married adults. In order to understand the nonlinearity of the effects of neighborhood demographic context on participation, these variables are

analyzed as quadratics (squared terms) and categorical quartiles of disadvantage, affluence, immigration and older age.

**Neighborhood segregation.** In the literature segregation is usually a metropolitan-level context. In order to capture this at the neighborhood level, segregation is measured by the percent of neighborhood cluster residents who are African American. In addition to the linear measure, non-linear transformations of percent African American tested in this project include quartiles of neighborhood percent African American, quadratic transformations and an indicator variable that captured high-African American population (greater than 90%, as defined by the work of Pickett, Collins, Masi, and Wilkinson, 2005) neighborhoods. The high-African American variable is especially meaningful because the distribution of African American residents in neighborhoods is bimodal, with a large distribution of respondents below 10 and above 90% African American.

**Neighborhood poverty.** Neighborhood poverty is measured by US Census data on the percent of families with incomes below the federal poverty level. As with other neighborhood level variables, quadratic and quartile variables were created to test non-linearity. Additionally, a high-poverty neighborhood indicator variable was created to identify neighborhoods with a 20% or higher poverty rate.

**Neighborhood stressors.** Neighborhood social conditions are summarized by neighborhood-level factors created from survey data, social observation data, US Census data, and administrative crime data (Karb, 2010). The first measure of neighborhood social conditions is Neighborhood Perceived Stressors, which is composed entirely of survey data aggregated to the neighborhood level. Four scales are included in this

summary variable with an alpha of .9149: neighborhood disorder, perceived violence, neighborhood hazards, and services (which has a negative loading). Neighborhood Observed Stressors includes administrative data on homicide, robbery, and burglary rates, SSO data on disorder, deterioration, vacant lots, and street condition, and US Census data on vacant housing. Both measures were summarized as means of the standardized component variables.

### **Sample Characteristics**

Weighted sample characteristics are detailed in Table 3.1. With weights applied, the sample consisted of 25.8% Latino, 38.4% non-Hispanic White, 32.1% non-Hispanic black, and 4.8% individuals of other racial or ethnic groups. The sample is also diverse in educational background. While 23.4% have less than a high school education, 23.8% have a high school diploma, 24.9% have some education beyond high school, and 27.9% have at least a college degree. About one quarter (25.2%) of respondents participated in at least one form of neighborhood activism.

Characteristics of the neighborhood clusters (NC) are detailed in Table 3.2. The concentrated disadvantage in Chicago neighborhoods is evidenced by the 29.1% of respondents living in high poverty neighborhoods (defined as a 20% or higher poverty rate) and 27.4% of respondents living in neighborhoods that are at least 90% African American.

There is a wide variation in the demographic characteristics of neighborhoods in Chicago by income, poverty, and especially racial composition. Although the average median family income across neighborhood clusters is about \$43,889, there exist

neighborhoods where the median income is well below the poverty line (\$7,885) and neighborhoods where the median income is above the top 5% of US household incomes.

## **Analyses**

First, bivariate exploratory analysis was conducted in order to examine differences in the rate of participation in activism across groups and associations between continuous variables and participation.

The dependent variable, participation in neighborhood activism, is a dichotomous variable and as such is non-linear. Furthermore, because the data are grouped by Neighborhood Cluster, individual observations are not independent at the neighborhood level. The analysis is therefore conducted using generalized multilevel modeling with a logit link function (Snijders & Bosker, 1999) using HLM 6.06. Survey weights are used so that the sample is representative of the City of Chicago.

In the first step of the analyses, I examine the effect of individual-level characteristics (primarily demographic characteristics). Next, I add neighborhood census characteristics, which I test for non-linear effects. Then, I examine neighborhood stressors from survey and observational data, again testing for non-linearity.

## **Results**

### **Exploratory Analysis**

First, I examine the bivariate distribution of the data by examining the proportion of residents who participate in neighborhood activism by both individual and neighborhood characteristics (Tables 3.3 and 3.4). In these bivariate relationships, income and education appear to be positively related to neighborhood activism. Home owners

also have a high rate of participation in activism. First generation immigrants have a very low rate of participation in activism.

### **Multilevel Regression Analysis**

Model 1 is a level-1 only model which serves as a comparison point for the subsequent models. In this model, as in the exploratory analysis, homeowners, students, and those who are older and have more education all have higher odds of participating in neighborhood activism. Immigrants are much less likely to participate, controlling for all other individual-level demographic characteristics. In the next model, the neighborhood-level census factors are added. Both neighborhood disadvantage and neighborhood affluence are positively related to participation in activism. The neighborhood immigrant factor, on the other hand, has marginally lower odds of residents participating in neighborhood activism.

While intuition might suggest that affluence and disadvantage should have opposite effects on the odds of participation, I find that both have positive effects. This finding may be an artifact of the orthogonal rotation used to create these variables. Figure 3.1 displays this orthogonal relationship. The figure shows that while some neighborhoods are low on both measures, few are high on both. Nevertheless, disadvantage and affluence may not be highly correlated even when orthogonality is not imposed because of the different variables which comprise each scale.

Models 3 and 4 examine the nonlinear effects of disadvantage, affluence, and immigrant factors. First, quadratic forms of each of the significant variables are tested. These results suggest a linear relationship, only the quadratic for affluence is marginally significant. In Model 4, where quartiles are tested, both the quartile of highest

disadvantage and the quartile of highest affluence have significantly higher odds of resident participation in activism. The size of the non-significant odds ratio coefficients for the second and third quartiles highlight the non-linearity of the effect of high-disadvantaged and high-affluence neighborhoods on participation in neighborhood activism. While comparing effect sizes across models is not straight forward in non-linear models, it should be noted that the effect of high-affluence or high-disadvantage neighborhoods does not explain away differences in education, homeownership, or other individual-level characteristics.

These factor terms combine a number of qualities of neighborhoods that might be difficult to interpret. In order to further understand what kind of disadvantaged neighborhoods have higher odds of resident participation in neighborhood activism, I explore the relationship between neighborhood poverty and segregated neighborhoods in Models 5-12. Like the disadvantage factor, the poverty rate in neighborhoods is related to increased odds of resident participation in activism but the quadratic term is not significant. The top quartile of neighborhood poverty does have significantly greater odds of resident participation in activism suggesting a non-linear relationship. Furthermore, high-poverty neighborhoods, which include 29% of respondents, are also more likely to have residents participating in neighborhood activism than low-poverty neighborhoods. Neighborhoods with a high concentration of African Americans have been theorized to capture the disinvestment associated with decades of racist segregation policies. Segregation has non-linear effects across each of the three models, but the pattern is slightly different in that the third quartile of segregation has the highest odds of participation, followed by the highest quartile. Although highly-concentrated African

American neighborhoods are tested with an indicator variable, this variable is quite similar to the top quartile.

Finally, I tested measures of the social and physical problems in neighborhoods that might spur on participation in neighborhood activism. Perceived stressors and observed stressors are both similarly predictive of increased participation in neighborhood activism. Each of the tests of non-linearity suggests that stressors are fairly linear in their relationship to activism.

### **Limitations**

While this study is innovative in the ways in which it combines theories from multiple disciplines, it does have some methodological limitations which it shares with much of the extant neighborhood effects literature. The cross-sectional research design used in this study cannot examine changes in neighborhoods or residents over time. This impairs the ability of this study to infer causal relationships between the neighborhood level conditions and individual-level participation. Oakes (2004) describes the challenges of using cross-sectional multilevel models to estimate neighborhood effects. In addition to the hampered ability to infer causation that would be present in any cross-sectional study, Oakes notes that multi-level studies have additional biases because individual-level and neighborhood-level measures are confounded by social stratification. This is a form of selection bias, which would normally mean that one should control for all the individual factors that explain selection into neighborhoods. But selection into neighborhoods is exactly what is interesting about neighborhoods. While Oakes (2004) suggests that experimental studies are the only way to understand neighborhood effects, this is not a practical alternative for understanding a variety of neighborhood conditions.

## Discussion

Understanding the neighborhood and individual-level antecedents of neighborhood activism is important for refining social theory on how neighborhoods matter for residents and improving neighborhood-level interventions. Participation in neighborhood activism is an attempt to improve neighborhood conditions for residents by bringing resources to the neighborhood. As such, neighborhood activism has the potential to transform neighborhoods. It is therefore thought to be an important way to intervene in disadvantaged neighborhoods. But this study has shown that neighborhood activism is most prevalent in poor, disadvantaged neighborhoods.

As have others, I find that individuals with more resources (income, education) are more likely to be involved in volunteerism than those of lower socioeconomic status (Musick & Wilson, 2008). This observation has been extended to the neighborhood level by William Julius Wilson (1996) and other social researchers who claim that—especially because of their lack of middle class residents—poor neighborhoods lack the organized neighborhood activism they need to address problems and bring resources to their neighborhood. The present study refutes this neighborhood-level claim. Rather, I find that neighborhood activism does retain the proposed relationship to social class at the individual level, but that disadvantaged neighborhoods—including segregated, high poverty, high stress neighborhoods—are actually much more likely to have activist residents than more advantaged neighborhoods. I also find that even in the most disadvantaged quartile, 15.94% of residents have attained a college degree or higher suggesting that it may be these more educated residents (who have a higher propensity for neighborhood activism overall) participating in disadvantaged neighborhoods. In

future research, I will explore who within poor, disadvantaged neighborhoods is most likely to participate. This suggests that community practice that aims at increasing the involvement of poor residents in their communities is likely missing activism that already exists—potentially wasting foundation and federal funding by duplicating those efforts.

At the same time, the positive relationship between neighborhood affluence and participation warrants future investigation. Neighborhoods with more educated, professional, young adult residents have more participation even when controlling for those characteristics at the individual level. First, I will perform further analyses to better understand whether or not the relationships between disadvantage, affluence and participation were artifacts of the orthogonal rotation used when the factors were created. In the analyses presented here, I teased out the components of disadvantage. In future analyses I will more carefully examine the components of affluent neighborhoods that drive participation.

A recent form of community practice, known as comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs), has sprung up across the country over the last 15 years emphasizing social capital as a theory of change for intervention (Brown, Chaskin, Hamilton, & Richman, 2004). In a survey of these initiatives, Brown and colleagues (2004) note that social capital is expected to create drastic change, especially in the lives of young people in poor communities. The logic of social capital as the theory of change for these interventions does not make the explicit link from neighborhood to meaningful change in the life chances of residents. CCIs emphasize building relationships between individuals in neighborhoods to solve neighborhood problems and access resources. The present study suggests that this is problematic precisely because residents are already working for

neighborhood change in disadvantaged neighborhoods—residents are already doing the kind of work that CCIs hope to create. It is therefore not surprising that evaluators have learned from CCIs that social capital-based interventions are ineffectual without community leadership, community organizing, and community representation (Ahsan, 2008).

This research suggests that a more fruitful avenue for intervening in disadvantaged neighborhoods would be to support the work of neighborhood activists by increasing the resources they can access through their efforts. This implies policy changes—in particular, policies that provide help to *places*, not just to individuals. President Barak Obama is the first president in decades to emphasize the importance of place-based policy to help cities. To date, housing policies, for example, have focused on the person or family rather than the community, by implementing much of housing assistance through section 8 vouchers. While some small efforts, such as HOPE VI, have focused on the place, redeveloping public housing into mixed income developments, this has only reached a small portion of residents of poor communities and has displaced a number of residents into poorer areas (Sharkey, 2009). This suggests that place-based interventions must balance improving neighborhoods with retaining residents.

Two policy initiatives of the Obama administration may address this problem. Promise Neighborhoods is a funded program of the US Department of Education that seeks to establish community-based efforts to improve educational outcomes in “our most distressed communities” at the direction of nonprofit organizations or higher education institutions in communities. The funding helps communities work across systems to address child outcomes, college culture, and a college pipeline through large

scale, evaluable programs. The emphasis on a place-based intervention approach of this program may be important for improving infrastructure in poor communities, but the outcomes are focused at the individual level (Donovan, 2009). Another policy initiative of the Obama administration is Choice Neighborhoods, administered by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which builds off of HOPE VI, a program that has redeveloped public housing into mixed income housing. While Choice Neighborhoods has yet to be funded, HUD has described a program that will reach out beyond public housing redevelopments to improve the neighborhoods where those developments are located, funding a range of activities in order to improve conditions in neighborhoods.

The Promise Neighborhoods initiative is especially important for improving rates of neighborhood activism because it has a place-based approach to improving educational attainment. To increase participation, education—especially education beyond high school—is important for spurring on neighborhood activism. I find that the effect of education is stronger than any other characteristic of individuals or neighborhoods. The effect of higher than college education is more than double the size of the effect of homeownership. As homeowners have always been thought to be particularly socially invested in the neighborhood where they have invested financially, this is an important comparison point. Policies that improve access to education among youth growing up in disadvantaged neighborhoods are crucial to build a stronger base for participation.

Intervening through education may be particularly important in communities where there are a high number of first generation immigrants. I find that first generation immigrants are much less likely to participate. As such, immigrant voices are not heard in

efforts to improve neighborhoods. Efforts targeted towards improving education of immigrant residents and empowering them to work on behalf of their community should be a focus of community interventions. It should also be noted that, when controlling for individual immigrant status, I found a negative, non linear effect of immigrant neighborhoods on participation in activism such that the each quartile on the immigrant factor had lower odds of resident participation than the lowest quartile—neighborhoods with fewer immigrants, Latinos/Hispanics, and non-Blacks. This suggests that high-immigrant neighborhoods may not have the strong, supportive community which is purported to be the mechanism protecting against health and mental health disparities. This finding is in line with other findings of low social cohesion in Chicago Latino communities (Almieda, Kawachi, Molnar, & Subramanian, 2009). Immigrant neighborhoods may therefore be doubly disadvantaged in the ability of residents to work towards improving those places.

On the other hand, low participation among immigrants—particularly those who are first generation—may simply be indicative of different reference points for what neighborhood needs and problems look like. Recent immigrants in Chicago may not see the need to work together to address neighborhood issues because they do not consider their neighborhood to have issues. What others call disadvantaged neighborhoods may seem resource laden in comparison to their home communities. Similarly, immigrants may be more inclined to participate in other kinds of activities (e.g., hometown associations) or may have higher burdens of work hours and care for family members precluding participation. Future research is needed to fully understand these differences in participation in immigrant communities.

In order to improve the actual conditions of all disadvantaged neighborhoods—the goal of neighborhood activism—we must have policies in place that support disadvantaged and immigrant neighborhoods. Increasing the power of neighborhood activists in local decision making is a starting point. Many of the federally mandated community participation measures have been weakened by the appointment of political and organizational leaders as community representatives in local decision making. All too often, these leaders advocate for their organization's needs rather than the neighborhood as a whole (Gilster, 2008). Neighborhood activist representation on these types of boards would increase the likelihood of resources meeting neighborhood needs. But more resources must also be made available to communities through Community Development Block Grants, funding for physical improvement of streets and parks in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and funding to ameliorate other markers of community decline. Only through these efforts will neighborhoods be able to realize their goals—because according to my findings, the desire for change is there, but the resources to make that change a reality are not.

Table 3.1 Weighted Descriptive Statistics of Sample (N=3105)

	Mean/ Percent
Neighborhood Activism	25.2%
Female	52.6%
Age	42.5
Race/Ethnicity	
Latino	25.8%
Non-Hispanic White	38.4%
Non-Hispanic Black	32.1%
Non-Hispanic Other	3.8%
Employment Status	
Employed	64.4%
Job seeking	8.8%
Retired	15.7%
Family Work	7.8%
Student	3.4%
Education	
Less than a high school education	23.4%
High School	23.8%
Some College	24.9%
College +	27.9%
Income	
<5K	5.2%
5-15K	14.9%
15-40K	26.4%
40K +	34.9%
Missing	18.6%
Marital Status	
Married	41.8%
Separated	4.0%
Divorced	10.8%
Widowed	6.7%
Never married	36.7%
Immigrant	
1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	26.9%
2 <sup>nd</sup> Generation	13.9%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Generation +	59.4%
Has a child	32.1%
Homeowner	41.1%
Financial Stress Index	2.49

Table 3.2 Weighted Descriptive Statistics of Neighborhoods (N=343)

	Mean/ Percent
Neighborhood Disadvantage Factor	-0.164
Neighborhood Affluence Factor	0.219
Neighborhood Immigrant Factor	0.105
Neighborhood Older Age Factor	0.011
Neighborhood Percent Poverty	0.154
Neighborhood Percent African American	0.334
Neighborhood Perceived Stress Factor	-0.183
Neighborhood Observed Stress Factor	-0.170
High Poverty Neighborhood (>20%)	29.1%
High Segregation Neighborhood (>90%)	24.1%

Table 3.3 Weighted Proportion of Respondents Participating in Neighborhood Activism

	Proportion	Confidence Interval
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White	0.2924	( 0.2453 , 0.3394 )
Hispanic	0.1508	( 0.1195 , 0.1822 )
African American	0.2836	( 0.2487 , 0.3185 )
Other	0.2598	( 0.1459 , 0.3737 )
<b>Immigrant status</b>		
First generation	0.1106	( 0.0840 , 0.1372 )
Second generation	0.2792	( 0.2201 , 0.3382 )
Third generation +	0.3094	( 0.2785 , 0.3403 )
<b>Income</b>		
<5K	0.1975	( 0.1231 , 0.2720 )
5-15K	0.1637	( 0.1220 , 0.2054 )
15-40K	0.2335	( 0.1941 , 0.2729 )
40K +	0.3411	( 0.2960 , 0.3862 )
Missing	0.1965	( 0.1552 , 0.2377 )
<b>Homeowner</b>		
Homeowner	0.3342	( 0.2926 , 0.3758 )
Renter/other	0.1942	( 0.1694 , 0.2191 )
<b>Children under 18 in the home</b>		
Yes	0.2411	( 0.2049 , 0.2772 )
No	0.2569	( 0.2294 , 0.2844 )
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	0.2363	( 0.2002 , 0.2723 )
Female	0.2658	( 0.2356 , 0.2960 )
<b>Employment status</b>		
Employed	0.2656	( 0.2352 , 0.2961 )
Unemployed	0.2418	( 0.1710 , 0.3126 )
Retired	0.2132	( 0.1645 , 0.2619 )
Home caregiver	0.1922	( 0.1425 , 0.2418 )
Student	0.3322	( 0.2255 , 0.4389 )
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	0.2421	( 0.2046 , 0.2797 )
Separated	0.2241	( 0.1460 , 0.3022 )
Divorced	0.3310	( 0.2709 , 0.3910 )
Widowed	0.2707	( 0.2057 , 0.3357 )
Never married	0.2392	( 0.2049 , 0.2735 )
<b>Education</b>		
Less than High School	0.1152	( 0.0848 , 0.1457 )
High school	0.1818	( 0.1451 , 0.2186 )
Some college	0.2830	( 0.2454 , 0.3206 )
College plus	0.3981	( 0.3441 , 0.4521 )

Table 3.4 Individual-Level Correlations of Activism with Resident Characteristics and Neighborhood Conditions

09

	Activism	Residential Tenure	Age	Financial Stress	Neighborhood Disadvantage Factor	Neighborhood Affluence Factor	Neighborhood Immigrant Factor	Neighborhood Older Age Factor	Neighborhood Poverty Rate	Neighborhood Percent Black	Neighborhood Perceived Stress
Activism	1										
Residential Tenure	0.0634* 0.0004	1									
Age	0.0540* 0.0026	0.5438* 0.0000	1								
Financial Stress	-0.0215 0.2304	-0.1214* 0.0000	-0.0500* 0.0053	1							
Neighborhood Disadvantage Factor	0.0254 0.1578	-0.0878* 0.0000	-0.0395* 0.0276	0.1624* 0.0000	1						
Neighborhood Affluence Factor	0.1218* 0.0000	-0.1207* 0.0000	-0.0410* 0.0224	-0.0948* 0.0000	0.0151 0.4014	1					
Neighborhood Immigrant Factor	-0.1261* 0.0000	-0.1097* 0.0000	-0.1115* 0.0000	-0.0635* 0.0004	0.0055 0.7599	-0.0416* 0.0205	1				
Neighborhood Older Age Factor	0.0161 0.3701	0.1430* 0.0000	0.1809* 0.0000	-0.0847* 0.0000	-0.0691* 0.0001	0.0128 0.4757	-0.1092* 0.0000	1			
Neighborhood Poverty Rate	-0.0001 0.994	-0.0218 0.2237	-0.0235 0.1896	0.1987* 0.0000	0.8548* 0.0000	-0.3710* 0.0000	-0.1637* 0.0000	-0.1987* 0.0000	1		
Neighborhood Percent Black	0.0891* 0.0000	0.0960* 0.0000	0.1017* 0.0000	0.1504* 0.0000	0.3924* 0.0000	-0.2231* 0.0000	-0.8193* 0.0000	0.1423* 0.0000	0.5265* 0.0000	1	
Neighborhood Perceived Stress	-0.0263 0.1426	-0.0510* 0.0044	-0.0982* 0.0000	0.1953* 0.0000	0.6164* 0.0000	-0.4004* 0.0000	0.0061 0.7325	-0.4324* 0.0000	0.7477* 0.0000	0.3605* 0.0000	1
Neighborhood Observed stress	0.0045 0.803	0.004 0.8255	-0.0042 0.8147	0.1910* 0.0000	0.7034* 0.0000	-0.2983* 0.0000	-0.3481* 0.0000	-0.1784* 0.0000	0.8144* 0.0000	0.6597* 0.0000	0.7180* 0.0000

Table 3.5 Weighted HLM with a Logit Link of Participation in Neighborhood Activism on Neighborhood Census Factors

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<b>Individual level</b>	Odds Ratio	Odds Ratio	Odds Ratio	Odds Ratio
Intercept	0.054 ***	0.056 ***	0.066 ***	0.038 ***
Female	1.039	1.042	1.027	1.053
Race/Ethnicity				
Hispanic	1.16	1.221	1.284	1.238
African American	1.106	0.916	0.857	1.173
Other	1.478	1.354	1.361	1.38
Immigrant status (3+ reference)				
First generation	0.301 ***	0.329 ***	0.328 ***	0.309 ***
Second generation	1.024	1.092	1.091	1.064
Employment status (employed reference)				
Unemployed	0.995	0.965	0.985	1.006
Retired	0.773	0.782	0.789	0.801
Home caregiver	1.154	1.149	1.166	1.16
Student	2.348 ***	2.237 **	2.188 **	2.333 **
Education (less than high school reference)				
High school	1.481 *	1.582 **	1.544 *	1.545 *
Some college	2.369 ***	2.473 ***	2.397 ***	2.4 ***
College plus	4.153 ***	3.999 ***	3.956 ***	3.916 ***
Marital Status (Married reference)				
Separated	0.952	0.933	0.936	0.956
Divorced	1.416 *	1.377 *	1.395 *	1.396 *
Widowed	1.58 *	1.592 *	1.586 *	1.604 *
Never married	1.147	1.063	1.076	1.079

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 3.5 Continued

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Individual level (continued)	Odds Ratio	Odds Ratio	Odds Ratio	Odds Ratio
Income (40K + reference)				
<5K	0.907	0.923	0.914	0.936
5-15K	0.703 +	0.681 *	0.691 *	0.695 *
15-40K	0.999	1.01	1.028	1.018
Age	1.015 **	1.014 *	1.013 *	1.013 *
Age squared	0.999 ***	0.999 ***	0.999 ***	0.999 ***
Homeowner	1.8 ***	1.987 ***	1.97 ***	2.014 ***
Financial Stress	1.08	1.069	1.075	1.077
Has children	1.307 *	1.389 **	1.387 **	1.398 **
Residential tenure	1.012 *	1.015 **	1.015 **	1.015 **
<b>Neighborhood level</b>				
Neighborhood disadvantage factor		1.377 ***	1.386 ***	
Neighborhood affluence factor		1.181 *	1.37 **	
Neighborhood immigrant factor		0.844 +	0.799 *	
Neighborhood older age factor		0.922		
Neighborhood disadvantage * affluence				
Neighborhood disadvantage ^2			0.97	
Neighborhood affluence ^2			0.921 +	
Neighborhood immigrant ^2			0.987	
Neighborhood disadvantage quartiles (first excluded)				1.123
				1.184
				1.788 **
Neighborhood affluence quartiles (first excluded)				1.129
				1.288
				1.986 **
Neighborhood immigrant quartiles (first excluded)				0.671 *
				0.839
				0.655 *

Table 3.6 Weighted HLM with a Logit Link of Participation in Neighborhood Activism on Neighborhood Poverty and Segregation

Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
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<b>Individual level</b>	Odds Ratios															
Intercept	0.044	***	0.041	***	0.047	***	0.05	***	0.049	***	0.044	***	0.039	***	0.053	***
Female	1.034		1.035		1.034		1.042		1.028		1.029		1.037		1.034	
Race/Ethnicity																
Hispanic	1.083		1.059		1.093		1.09		1.098		1.097		1.11		1.127	
African American	0.919		0.898		0.906		0.963		0.708	+	0.709	+	0.827		0.866	
Other	1.458		1.443		1.466		1.465		1.388		1.368		1.349		1.432	
Immigrant status (3+ reference)																
First generation	0.304	***	0.303	***	0.302	***	0.305	***	0.323	***	0.325	***	0.326	***	0.312	***
Second generation	1.045		1.048		1.037		1.047		1.071		1.081		1.097		1.047	
Employment status (employed reference)																
Unemployed	0.974		0.983		0.979		0.985		0.979		0.986		0.987		0.985	
Retired	0.759		0.76		0.757		0.766		0.773		0.779		0.789		0.77	
Home caregiver	1.138		1.137		1.138		1.151		1.167		1.177		1.171		1.155	
Student	2.299	**	2.299	**	2.282	**	2.301	**	2.269	**	2.253	**	2.28	**	2.312	**
Education (less than high school reference)																
High school	1.553	**	1.554	**	1.559	**	1.541	*	1.521	*	1.535	*	1.528	*	1.499	*
Some college	2.489	***	2.492	***	2.498	***	2.458	***	2.426	***	2.427	***	2.398	***	2.397	***
College plus	4.491	***	4.518	***	4.469	***	4.387	***	4.323	***	4.316	***	4.163	***	4.241	***
Marital Status (Married reference)																
Separated	0.929		0.928		0.926		0.934		0.932		0.936		0.943		0.942	
Divorced	1.403	*	1.399	*	1.411	*	1.399	*	1.424	*	1.423	*	1.41	*	1.422	*
Widowed	1.594	*	1.588	*	1.618	*	1.573	*	1.542	+	1.54	+	1.547	*	1.558	*
Never married	1.128		1.13		1.123		1.134		1.133		1.131		1.119		1.14	

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 3.6 Continued

	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
<b>Individual level</b>	Odds Ratios							
Income (40K + reference)								
<5K	0.889	0.887	0.883	0.892	0.88	0.873	0.887	0.891
5-15K	0.671 *	0.672 *	0.67 *	0.683 *	0.691 *	0.687 *	0.685 *	0.696 *
15-40K	0.978	0.971	0.974	0.991	0.999	0.991	0.993	0.999
Missing	0.785 +	0.782 +	0.784 +	0.787	0.781 +	0.774 +	0.784 +	0.788
Age	1.015 **	1.015 **	1.015 **	1.015 **	1.015 **	1.015 **	1.015 **	1.015 **
Age squared	0.999 ***	0.999 ***	0.999 ***	0.999 ***	0.999 ***	0.999 ***	0.999 ***	0.999 ***
Homeowner	1.85 ***	1.855 ***	1.844 ***	1.836 ***	1.788 ***	1.795 ***	1.806 ***	1.792 ***
Financial Stress	1.073	1.073	1.074	1.079	1.078	1.079	1.078	1.078
Has children	1.279 *	1.283 *	1.28 *	1.282 *	1.289 *	1.301 *	1.335 *	1.295 *
Residential tenure	1.011 *	1.011 *	1.011 *	1.011 *	1.011 *	1.011 *	1.012 *	1.011 *
<b>Neighborhood level</b>								
Percent poverty	5.888 **	18.108 *						
Percent Poverty ^2		0.106						
Poverty Quartiles (first reference			1.237					
			1.172					
			1.972 ***					
High Poverty (>20%)				1.486 **				
Percent Black					2.08 **	10.526 *		
Percent Black ^2						0.193 +		
Black Quartiles (first reference)							1.565 **	
							2.027 ***	
							1.956 **	
Highly Segregated (>90% Black)								1.472 +

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 3.7 Weighted HLM with a Logit Link of Participation in Neighborhood Activism on Neighborhood Perceived Stress

	Model 15		Model 16		Model 17		Model 18		Model 19		Model 20	
<b>Individual level</b>	Odds Ratio											
Intercept	0.06	***	0.066	***	0.042	***	0.062	***	0.068	***	0.042	***
Female	1.033		1.03		1.033		1.034		1.035		1.04	
Race/Ethnicity												
Hispanic	1.052		1.04		1.068		1.088		1.037		1.047	
African American	0.936		0.919		0.953		0.895		0.873		0.896	
Other	1.446		1.413		1.439		1.449		1.422		1.439	
Immigrant status (3+ reference)												
First generation	0.301	***	0.303	***	0.3	***	0.31	***	0.312	***	0.31	***
Second generation	1.036		1.038		1.039		1.048		1.057		1.051	
Employment status (employed reference)												
Unemployed	0.984		0.985		0.988		0.966		0.972		0.968	
Retired	0.765		0.763		0.765		0.768		0.769		0.775	
Home caregiver	1.128		1.134		1.132		1.139		1.149		1.154	
Student	2.315	**	2.339	**	2.33	**	2.291	**	2.302	**	2.325	**
Education (less than high school reference)												
High school	1.562	**	1.554	**	1.549	**	1.541	*	1.547	**	1.533	*
Some college	2.51	***	2.497	***	2.486	***	2.464	***	2.474	***	2.46	***
College plus	4.458	***	4.383	***	4.434	***	4.362	***	4.344	***	4.313	***
Marital Status (Married reference)												
Separated	0.918		0.924		0.926		0.93		0.944		0.929	
Divorced	1.381	*	1.38	*	1.385	*	1.403	*	1.389	*	1.386	*
Widowed	1.565	*	1.563	*	1.564	*	1.587	*	1.569	*	1.559	*
Never married	1.123		1.116		1.126		1.124		1.124		1.129	
Income (40K + reference)												
<5K	0.884		0.891		0.885		0.885		0.898		0.891	
5-15K	0.684	*	0.69	*	0.689	*	0.68	*	0.687	*	0.687	*
15-40K	0.974		0.977		0.98		0.987		0.984		0.987	
Missing	0.782	+	0.788		0.784	+	0.788		0.788		0.789	

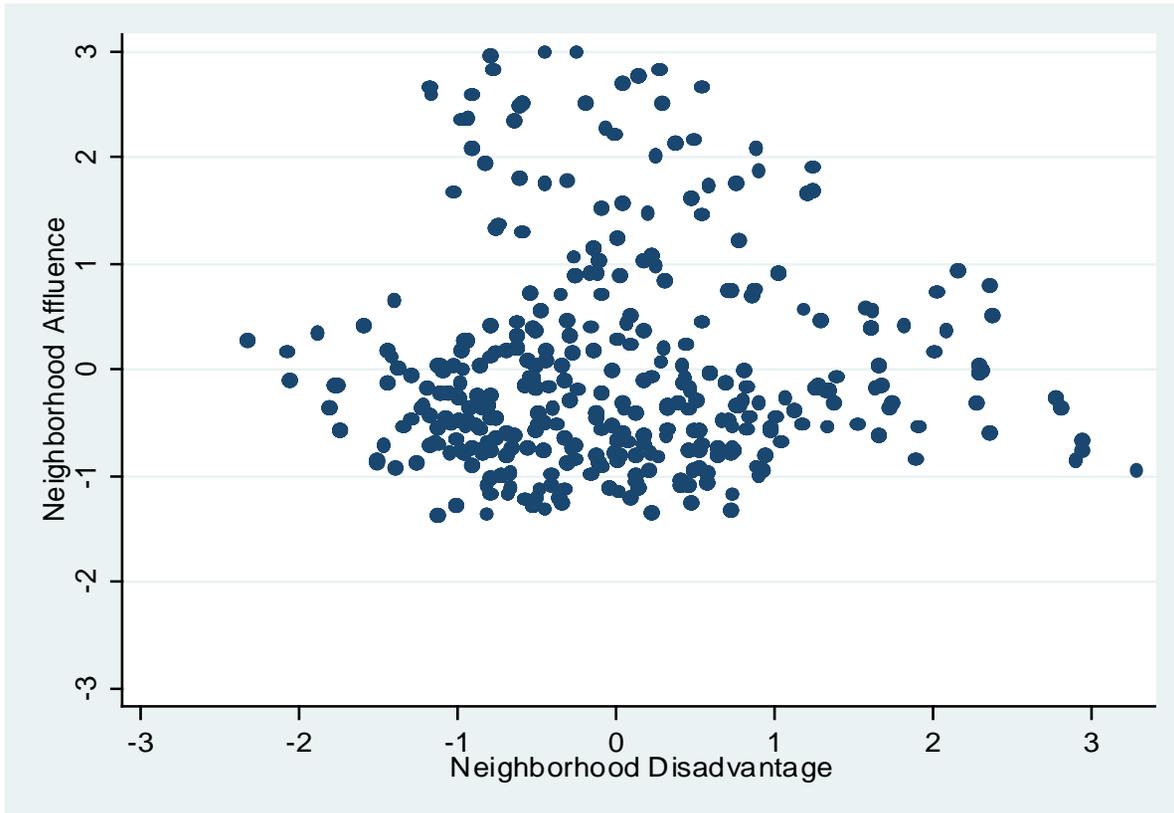
+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 3.7 Continued

	Model 15	Model 16	Model 17	Model 18	Model 19	Model 20
<b>Individual level (continued)</b>	Odds Ratio					
Age	1.016 **	1.016 **	1.016 **	1.015 **	1.015 **	1.015 **
Age squared	0.999 ***	0.999 ***	0.999 ***	0.999 ***	0.999 ***	0.999 ***
Homeowner	1.853 ***	1.872 ***	1.858 ***	1.834 ***	1.86 ***	1.846 ***
Financial Stress	1.074	1.073	1.075	1.076	1.076	1.077
Has children	1.297 *	1.317 *	1.307 *	1.294 *	1.315 *	1.304 *
Neighborhood tenure	1.011 *	1.011 *	1.011 *	1.011 *	1.011 *	1.011 *
<b>Neighborhood level</b>						
Neighborhood Perceived Stress	1.313 ***	1.285 **				
Neighborhood Perceived Stress ^2		0.881				
Neighborhood Perceived Stress quartiles			1.394 *			
			1.469 *			
			1.83 **			
Neighborhood Observed Stress				1.352 **	1.439 **	
Neighborhood Observed Stress ^2					0.828 +	
Neighborhood Observed Stress quartiles						1.489 *
						1.718 **
						1.733 **

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Figure 3.1 Scatter plot of neighborhood affluence and neighborhood disadvantage.



APPENDIX B: Neighborhood factor composition

		Questions/Data source
Neighborhood Perceived Stress	Neighborhood disorder	<p>How much broken glass or trash on sidewalks and streets do you see in your neighborhood?</p> <p>How much graffiti do you see on buildings and walls in your neighborhood?</p> <p>How many vacant or deserted houses or storefronts do you see in your neighborhood?</p> <p>How often do you see people drinking in public places in your neighborhood?</p> <p>How often do you see unsupervised children hanging out on the street in your neighborhood?</p>
	Neighborhood hazards	<p>How would you rate the quality of air in this neighborhood, 1=Excellent, 2=Good, 3=Fair, 4=Poor</p> <p>How often do you see rats, mice, or roaches in your neighborhood: index codes: 4=Very often, 3=Sometimes, 2=Not very often, 1=Never</p> <p>How dangerous do you think traffic is in your neighborhood either to people driving in cars or walking on the street: index codes: 4=Very dangerous, 3=Somewhat dangerous, 2=Not very dangerous, 1=Not dangerous at all</p> <p>How noisy would you say your neighborhood is: index codes: 4=Very noisy, 3=Somewhat noisy, 2=Not very noisy, 1=Not noisy at all</p> <p>How often do you encounter potentially toxic substances in your neighborhood?: 4=Very often, 3=Sometimes, 2=Not very often, 1=Never</p>

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	Perceived violence	<p>During the past six months, how often was there a fight in this neighborhood in which a weapon was used?</p> <p>During the past six months, how often was there a violent argument between neighbors?</p> <p>Gang fights?</p> <p>A sexual assault or rape?</p> <p>A robbery or mugging?</p>
	Services	<p>How would rate your neighborhood on its accessibility to parks or other areas where people can jog and exercise or kids can play?</p> <p>How would you rate the quality of street cleaning and garbage collection in this neighborhood?</p>
Neighborhood Observed Stress	Disorder	Systematic Social Observation (SSO)
	Deterioration	Systematic Social Observation (SSO)
	Vacant lots	Systematic Social Observation (SSO)
	Street condition	Systematic Social Observation (SSO)
	Crime rates	Administrative data on homicides, robberies, burglaries
	Vacant housing rate	US Census data

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## **Chapter 4 The Effects of Neighborhood-level Activism on Resident Well-being**

Neighborhood residents most often engage in activism in order to improve neighborhood conditions and resident quality of life, yet we have little information about the impact of their efforts. Thanks to the frequency with which President Barack Obama draws on his community organizing experience in neighborhoods on the South Side of Chicago, IL, the media has paid neighborhood activism much more attention in recent years. Like many organizers, President Obama frequently notes how the lessons learned on the South Side have influenced him. This individual-level effect, documented in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, is not the only outcome of concern of activist efforts. The goals and theory of neighborhood activism suggest that change should extend to all neighborhood residents.

Neighborhood activism, as a form of community empowerment practice, is a multilevel process affecting individual participants and neighborhood residents as a group. In Chapter 2, I explored the individual-level processes through which empowerment improved individual psychological well-being. In Chapter 3, I examined the neighborhood-level context of participation. In this final empirical chapter, I examine how neighborhoods with activist residents impact the well-being of all residents.

While research on the effects of neighborhood context has grown exponentially in recent years, neighborhood activism has been given little attention in this work. Similarly, neighborhood effects on individual outcomes such as adult health status and

adolescent behaviors have been studied at length, but the relationship between neighborhood factors and adult mental health has been given less attention. In the present chapter of this dissertation, I examine both of these understudied phenomena by examining the neighborhood context, especially activism as a neighborhood-level characteristic, on individual-level psychological well-being. First, I review the relevant neighborhood effects literature. I focus on the three neighborhood-level characteristics that have predominated the mental health and psychological well-being literature: poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage, social disorder, and social capital. Next, I employ recent theoretical critiques and extension of social capital in order to understand how activism at the neighborhood level may be important for residents. Finally, I integrate these literatures to test the relationship between neighborhood-level activism and mental health with attention to social group disparities in the effect of neighborhood activism. I find that activism does have a positive effect on a number of psychological outcomes, but there are great disparities between the effects for first generation immigrants and other residents. This study is an important advancement in our understanding of how neighborhoods affect residents—and the important differences in those processes across groups.

## **Background**

### **Neighborhood Inequality and Mental Health**

This study contributes to an extensive collection of literature on how residential neighborhoods affect individuals. This area of research has deep roots in the fields of sociology and social work, as research on neighborhood poverty was an important area of research and practice for Chicago School social workers and sociologists. More recently,

concentrated poverty and social characteristics have been the focus of a line of research known as “neighborhood effects” which has grown exponentially in the social science literature (Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002). The focus of much of this research has been on child health, mental health, and behaviors (e.g., school dropout, delinquency, teen pregnancy) and on adult health. Comparatively little attention has been paid to adult mental health.

The lens of mental health disparities is helpful for understanding the importance of neighborhood conditions. Disparities are differences in physical and mental health outcomes attributable to social identity characteristics such as race and class. In general, health disparities in the United States are greatest between whites and blacks, with socioeconomic disparities closely behind (Williams & Collins, 1995). Disparities can be explained in part by unequal exposure to a variety of stressors (e.g., racism, discrimination, pollution). Neighborhood conditions are thought to contribute to disparities through exposure to additional stressors such as neighborhood violence (Williams & Collins, 1995). Racial residential segregation increases exposure to neighborhood poverty, which explains much of the disparities in morbidity and mortality rates by race for a variety of health outcomes (Krieger, Chen, Waterman, Rehkopf, & Subramanian, 2005). As noted in Chapter 2, disparities in mental health operate primarily through socioeconomic status rather than racial and ethnic groups. At the neighborhood level, non-Whites are more likely exposed to both segregated and poor neighborhoods—it is therefore hard to untangle these disparities. While we need to better understand mental health disparities generally, the importance of unequal exposure to stressors and

resources at the neighborhood level are important for understanding socioeconomic and racial disparities in mental health outcomes.

### **Neighborhood Poverty**

Two streams of research have been devoted to addressing the question of whether neighborhood poverty is important for mental health disparities above and beyond individual factors: intervention research and neighborhood effects research.

Results from quasi-experimental studies, which move families out of high-poverty neighborhoods into low-poverty neighborhoods, have been somewhat favorable. A study in Yonkers, New York found significant differences in experiences and health but no short term effect on adult mental health for low-income minority adult movers (Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn, 2004). Early results from Moving to Opportunity (MTO) indicated that parents who moved to low-poverty neighborhoods had lower levels of distress and depressive symptoms (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). In a more recent study (Kling, Liebman, & Katz, 2007), several measures of mental health (distress, depression, anxiety, calmness, and sleep) were all lower in the experimental group of MTO. The relative reduction in risk of an episode of major depression was 30%, which the authors argue is comparable to proven clinical interventions (Kling et al., 2007).

The evidence from cross-sectional population studies has been less persuasive. While some authors find no effect of neighborhood socioeconomic status on mental health outcomes once individual characteristics are taken into account (Henderson et al., 2005), others find that low-income neighborhoods are associated with higher odds of mental health problems (Goldsmith et al., 1998; Yen & Kaplan, 1999). In a recent epidemiological review of literature on neighborhoods and adult depression, eleven

studies found significant effects of socioeconomic status on depression, where ten had null findings, and one had mixed findings (Kim, 2008). This literature may be less conclusive because neighborhood socioeconomic conditions are so closely intertwined with individual characteristics that the inclusion of individual characteristics—rather than random assignment, as in the intervention studies described previously—actually over-controls for neighborhood selection.

Socioeconomic disparities in mental health do exist, but the extent to which neighborhood socioeconomic status is an additional risk is still uncertain. In the extant literature examining mental health and neighborhood poverty there is some debate about the relationship between neighborhood poverty or low socioeconomic status and poor mental health outcomes. Social characteristics of neighborhoods may be more important for resident psychological well-being.

One debate in the neighborhood effects literature is the extent to which neighborhood social characteristics are processes stemming from neighborhood poverty or whether social characteristics are independent processes. Experimental studies (e.g., Yonkers, Gatreaux, and MTO) assumed that social characteristics of neighborhoods would also change with the move to a non-poor neighborhood. But this assumption does not appear to hold for social connectedness and social organization. In fact, in the Yonkers quasi-experimental study, participants reported that while they did perceive less neighborhood disorder, and higher social cohesion, they were much less likely to interact with their neighbors (Fauth, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn, 2004). There is an ongoing debate in the literature as to whether or not poverty is related to formal and informal organization (e.g., Small, 2002; 2006; Swaroop & Morenoff, 2006). Thus, social

conditions should be approached as important independent predictors of individual outcomes.

**Neighborhood disorder.** Social disorder has dominated mental health research and is related to early thinking on the relationship between mental health and neighborhoods. Social disorder in the neighborhood is thought to invoke individual-level negative responses, including powerlessness, normlessness, mistrust, and isolation, which in turn have negative effects on anxiety, depression, and other mental health outcomes (Ross & Mirowsky, 2009).

The relationship between perceptions of disorder and mental health outcomes has been the subject of many empirical studies. Perceived neighborhood disorder, as reported by respondents, was found to increase maternal distress (Christie-Mizell et al., 2003), decrease mastery (Christie-Mizell & Erickson, 2007), and increase CES-D measured depression symptoms (Hill & Herman-Stahl, 2002). Similarly, perceptions of community problems were significantly related to social stress, anxiety, and major depression (Gary et al., 2007). The significance of respondent reported neighborhood disorder is robust to the inclusion of other individual risk and protective factors. Latkin and Curry (2003) find that respondent rating of neighborhood disorder increased depression (CES-D score), even after controlling for baseline depression. Several studies have found that perceived disorder accounts for objective characteristics of neighborhoods, such as inner-city location (Christie-Mizell et al., 2003; Christie Mizell & Erickson, 2007), neighborhood stability and neighborhood poverty rate (Ross et al., 200).

Several researchers have examined whether neighborhood disorder affects residents differently based on sociodemographic characteristics. Schulz and colleagues

(2003) found that neighborhood disorder imparts negative effects regardless of individual income. Neighborhood disorder was found to be more strongly predictive of depression among African American women with more negative life events (Cutrona et al., 2000; 2005). While respondent assessed neighborhood disorder is clearly linked to mental health outcomes, this relationship may be inflated because individual-level assessments are likely correlated with psychological well-being. Perceptions of neighborhood have more of an effect on mastery than objective characteristics. Recently, perceived neighborhood disorder was found to affect mastery directly but also to have interactive effects with income, marital status, and health concerns for mothers (Christie-Mizell, 2007).

In order to better measure neighborhood conditions, some studies have created neighborhood-level measures. Neighborhood-level measures capture average neighborhood assessments rather than individual perceptions. In one study, an aggregate neighborhood problems scale was found to be a source of chronic stress (Steptoe & Feldman, 2001). Araya and colleagues (2006) find that neighborhood-level measures of quality, which they suggest as the absence of disorder, was negatively related to continuous and binary Global Health Questionnaire (GHQ) measures controlling for individual characteristics and neighborhood SES. Echeverría and colleagues (2008) found that neighborhood problems measured at the individual and neighborhood levels both significantly predicted CES-D measured depression. Stockdale and colleagues (2007) found that administrative data on neighborhood crime—somewhat related to disorder—was an important predictor of anxiety and depression insofar as it aggravated the individual-level effects of witnessing violence. A more recent study examines the

pathways through which neighborhood disorder affects anxiety, anger, and depression (Ross & Mirowsky, 2009). These authors find that ambient threat (mistrust of others, a sense of powerlessness) rather than actual victimization was a key pathway through which neighborhood disorder affects these mental health outcomes. The evidence from studies using neighborhood-level measures of disorder suggests that disorder is a robust predictor of mental health problems.

Respondent ratings of disorder, as well as neighborhood-level aggregates and secondary data, have significant effects on mental health outcomes for residents of a variety of neighborhoods. This literature suggests that neighborhood is indeed important for mental health. The importance of ambient threat, not just actual victimization, suggests that social conditions are especially crucial for understanding inequalities in mental health.

*Neighborhood Social Capital.* The theory of social capital is highly referenced in both scholarly literature and community practice but is also highly debated. Social capital has been defined in many different ways, but it generally includes access to social resources that stem from interpersonal ties (Coleman, 1988). Social capital, in its original formulations, was an individual-level concept. Putnam's (2000) formulation of social capital extended the concept to the community level. In the neighborhood-effects literature, neighborhood social capital has been used extensively and defined in many ways (Carpiano, 2006), but generally has been conceptualized as a bundle of macro-level social ties, support, and cohesion. Kawachi and Berkman (2001) suggest that neighborhood-level social ties (they interchangeably use this terminology with social cohesion, social networks, and social support) affect mental health outcomes through

direct effects and by buffering against individual and neighborhood-level stressors, and that they operate differently among diverse social groups. Despite the widespread use of social capital, problems with the theory have been noted in a number of fields.

Despite the theoretical claims, there is limited evidence of direct effects of neighborhood-level social capital on mental health outcomes. In one study, social cohesion was not found to significantly predict distress when individual factors were included in the model (Cutrona et al., 2000). Similarly, Mulvaney-Day, Alegría, and Sribney (2007) found that the effects of neighborhood social cohesion on self-rated mental health disappeared when individual-level support was entered. While self-rated neighborhood cohesion had significant effects on CES-D measured depression with individual and neighborhood controls in logistic regression models, a measure of neighborhood cohesion aggregated across respondents did not significantly affect depression (Echeverría, Diez-Roux, Shea, Borrell, & Jackson, 2008). But others have found significant effects of similarly aggregated measures of neighborhood cohesion. Perceptions of neighborhood social cohesion and trust were negatively related to continuous and binary General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) psychological well-being subscale scores in a survey of South Wales (Araya, Dunstan, Playle, Thomas, Palmer, & Lewis, 2006). In another study, aggregated neighborhood social cohesion was positively related to mental health, controlling for individual characteristics including individual ratings of social cohesion (Fone et al, 2007). In a review of the literature on neighborhoods and depression, only one of the five studies examining neighborhood-level social capital found consistently positive effects of social capital (Kim, 2008). The mixed evidence of the effects of neighborhood social capital suggests that individual

assessment of social capital and other individual factors trump neighborhood-level social capital in terms of the direct effect on individuals.

There is some support for the interactive effects, or buffering effects, of social capital. In one study, social cohesion did not have direct effects (Cutrona et al., 2000) but did intensify the protective relationship between positive outlook and distress (Cutrona et al., 2000). Fone and colleagues (2007) found that social cohesion buffered against the negative effect of area poverty on mental health. Neighborhood social capital may buffer against both individual and neighborhood stressors and may intensify individual and neighborhood resources.

Furthermore, there is some support for Kawachi & Berkman's (2001) theory that social capital operates differently depending on social group membership. A study of two contiguous census tracts in Baltimore, MD found that perceptions of community cohesion (whether or not people work together) were significantly related to three measures of mental health for whites but not for African Americans—GHQ Anxiety scale, a social stress scale, and a measure of major depression using the PHQ-9. (Gary et al., 2007). Additional research needs to examine the presence of these interaction effects.

Neighborhood social capital is a protective factor, aiding the coping ability of residents. Measures of social capital vary greatly among these studies. Many use neighborhood social cohesion as a measure of social capital, but it has been suggested that neighborhood social cohesion is too broad of a concept (Zubrick, 2007). This may account for the mixed evidence in the literature. Examining neighborhood activism may help understand one aspect of social capital and help disentangle the bundle of processes that have been included in the term social capital.

In fact, the concept of social capital in general has been poorly defined (Portes, 1998). Putnam's (2000) interpretation (which has been employed most frequently in neighborhood research (Carpiano, 2006) is especially problematic because organizations, politics, social life, and economics are all bundled up into one aggregate concept. Second, Putnam and others have conflated cause, process, and consequence such that the story becomes tautological (Mayer, 2003). Such contentious debate surrounds social capital that it is surprising efforts exist to salvage it. One theme among theorists is the importance of including neighborhood activism as a component of social capital (Altschuler, 2004; Carpiano, 2006; Mayer, 2003).

Carpiano (2006; 2007; 2008) disaggregates the muddled concept of social capital by employing the original work on social capital—that of Pierre Bourdieu—in order to articulate a model of the relationship between neighborhood-level social capital and health. For Bourdieu (2001), social capital theory explains an individual's potential to access relationships that might impart resources. Social capital is located in social networks, and individuals have different abilities to draw down that capital because of their social location. In this definition he separates social cohesion from social capital. Carpiano suggests a model of neighborhood social capital, which affects health outcomes through four important components of social capital: (1) participation in neighborhood organizations, (2) social leverage (i.e., ability to access resources and create change), (3) informal social control, and (4) social support. The first component of this model is especially useful in understanding the place of neighborhood activism in social capital theory.

Mayer (2003) takes on the specific question of activism and social capital in poor, urban neighborhoods. She argues that the rise of social capital (again, especially Putnam's version) is problematic because it serves to placate neighborhood organizations. Instead of organizing to create change by addressing inequalities by targeting those in power, the emphasis on social capital by foundations, local government, and others has encouraged organizations to perform associational tasks (e.g., providing services, applying for funding). The thrust of Mayer's argument is that the dominance of social capital is shaping the third sector and homogenizing it into two main activities: volunteerism of the well-to-do and labor force development of the poor. Essentially, she argues that social capital ignores social movement organizations and other activist forms of participation.

Mayer's (2003) theoretical argument is quite informative for this study. While she suggests that activism is important for economic and social conditions of communities, I further her argument to suggest that activism is important for the psychological well-being of neighborhood residents. Many have argued that social capital is important for mental health (e.g., McKenzie, Whitley, & Weich, 2002). But the empirical literature (some of which is included in the review of social cohesion because of the emphasis on Putnam's theory) is mixed at best (e.g., Kim, 2008).

It seems the practice literature may also be heading in this direction. Early in their CCI, the Annie E. Casey Foundation put out literature on the importance of social capital for changing communities (e.g., Schneider, 2004), but more current documents suggest that four components of community practice are important for change: leadership training, building social networks, community organizing, and civic participation that

holds those in power accountable to the neighborhood (Ahson, 2008). This suggests that lessons from the field indicate that social capital alone is not sufficient to create meaningful change for residents.

In total, the literature on social capital is useful for the study of neighborhood activism but should not be employed uncritically. Putnam's (2000) theory is limited in its ability to specify neighborhood processes that would be important for mental health. Carpiano (2007; 2008) demonstrates a clear link between this theory and health. The theoretical arguments of Carpiano (2006) and Mayer (2003), as well as the lessons from the field, suggest that neighborhood participation in activism is missing from the social capital literature. Including activism is thus important for improving our understanding of neighborhood conditions and individual outcomes.

### **Methodological Issues in Neighborhood Effects**

As noted above, of the variety of outcomes addressed in neighborhood effects research, mental health research has been less developed. Not only is this evidenced in the quantity of literature reviewed above, but to some extent, the quality. When examining neighborhood effects, an ideal research design is a neighborhood-based sampling frame, multilevel statistical models, and neighborhood-level variables. Because, as I will explain below, few of the studies reviewed here use this ideal research design, the results of the literature are somewhat less convincing.

Several issues exist in the literature to date. The majority of the studies reviewed did not use multilevel models. Of those that do employ multilevel models, not all employ sampling based on physical neighborhoods. For instance, two of the above articles come from a study that did use multilevel models, but they did so by creating statistical clusters

of neighborhood types (as opposed to spatially defined neighborhoods) at level two (Cutrona, 2000; 2005). Those clustered together did not necessarily live in the same area, but shared similar neighborhood conditions. This neighborhood cluster method ignores the unmeasured neighborhood variation. This is precisely the benefit of multilevel models using spatially defined neighborhoods within those statistical clusters. Multilevel models adjust the standard errors of neighborhood level variables because these variables violate the IID assumption of ordinary least squares regression. But this suggests that the presence of neighborhood effects may be overstated by research that fails to use multilevel modeling with a physical neighborhood area at level two.

Additionally, individual-level subjective perceptions of neighborhood conditions were often used to measure neighborhood disorder and cohesion. This creates a problem because individuals' assessments of their neighborhood can be biased by mental health status. For instance, someone with heightened anxiety or depression may be more likely to perceive their surroundings as socially unfriendly, disorderly, and dangerous (e.g., Latkin & Curry, 2003). This may cause an error in measurement which could inflate the relationship between neighborhood conditions and mental health outcomes.

Although there are problems in the current literature, as the literature continues to grow they are being resolved. The lessons from the above literature are addressed in the following analysis by using data with a neighborhood-based sampling frame, employing multilevel statistical models, and using neighborhood-level rather than individual-level variables to capture neighborhood processes. The mixed evidence on the importance of neighborhood social processes suggests that the literature and our understanding of neighborhoods and mental health may be limited by ignoring an important component of

neighborhoods—community empowerment. Activism is one way of working towards community empowerment. To better understand neighborhood antecedents of mental health, this current research will address the methodological shortcomings and the currently debated substantive areas of the literature while examining neighborhood activism. This project will provide a complete picture of the role of neighborhoods in mental health and will help better explain the place of activism in ecological effects on mental health.

### **Psychological Well-Being: Outcomes of Interest**

The US Surgeon General (2001) reported that rather than focus on mental disorder, we should think of mental health as a spectrum from good health to mental illness rather than simply a categorical diagnosis. In the current analyses, I used continuous measures of depressive symptoms and anxiety symptoms in order to understand differences in psychological well-being.

Psychological characteristics such as mastery, self-esteem, and hopelessness are important components of mental health. Mastery and self-esteem are coping resources. Empowerment theory suggests that mastery and self-esteem are especially important for individual well-being (Zimmerman, 1995). Hopelessness indicates the absence of such coping resources and is linked with depression and suicidality (Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy, 1989). While these characteristics are sometimes considered constant aspects of one's personality, they are mutable to intervention (Taylor & Stanton, 2007) and therefore more aptly considered aspects of mental health and well-being. I also include neighborhood sense of control, a concept akin to mastery—which is also known as

personal sense of control in the literature in order to understand neighborhood-specific well-being.

### **Summary and Model**

The relationship between neighborhood activism and resident mental health is a question that has not been researched. From the extant literature on neighborhoods and mental health, it is clear that neighborhood poverty is important, but the extent to which it operates solely through individual factors is still debated. Neighborhood disorder has a clear effect on resident mental health outcomes. Neighborhood social capital may be less important but may serve as a buffer against individual and neighborhood risk factors. One reason the effects of social capital have been less consistent is the variation in conceptualization and measurement. The state of this literature suggests that there is a need for this study, which will help to better understand the specific role of neighborhood activism in the mental health of residents.

This review of the literature suggests that there is much to learn about the relationship between neighborhoods and individual well-being. I suggest that neighborhood activism is a social process which can help explicate the relationship between neighborhood and mental health. I will consider two main questions.

- Does neighborhood activism positively affect psychological well-being?
- Are the effects of neighborhood activism moderated by social group status?

## **Methods**

### **Data**

Two sources of data will be merged to examine these research questions. Data from the Chicago Community Adult Health Study (CCAHS) will provide individual-level and aggregated neighborhood-level data. Respondents in this study are 3105 adults from a neighborhood-based sample of residents of Chicago, IL. Respondents were asked about their mental health, activities, as well as about their impressions of their residential neighborhood. Respondents live in 343 Chicago neighborhoods which are clusters of contiguous census tracts. Previous studies of Chicago neighborhoods have found that neighborhood clusters (groups of contiguous census tracts) are the best unit of analysis for understanding neighborhood effects (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). The 343 neighborhood clusters were formed from 847 census tracts. Each neighborhood cluster had 1 to 20 respondents with an average of 9.06 respondents per neighborhood cluster. Demographic characteristics of the sample are discussed in Chapter 2 and displayed in Table 2.1.

The second data source is the US Census. Census data provides administrative neighborhood-level data measuring the housing demographic characteristics of all neighborhood residents. Census data is available at the census tract level and will therefore be aggregated to the neighborhood cluster level.

### **Variables**

See Chapter 2 for the following variables: depression, anxiety, psychological resources, income, race and ethnicity, immigrant status, gender, financial stress. See

Chapter 3 for descriptions of neighborhood perceived stress and neighborhood demographic variables.

**Neighborhood-level activism.** The neighborhood-level activism measure was created by aggregating to the neighborhood cluster (NC) level by calculating neighborhood means of the activism measures described in Chapter 2. Several tests of neighborhood-level activism scales were conducted, and the results are displayed in Table 4.1. Unconditional interclass correlations (ICCs) were calculated for the individual-level measure of activism, which indicate the extent to which the outcome varies by neighborhood. Activism has 8.78% variation at the neighborhood level ( $ICC=0.0878$ ), which is fairly high. This suggests that meaningful neighborhood-level differences exist. More important than the neighborhood level measurement properties of neighborhood activism, is the reliability for the scale conducted in HLM. Both have moderate reliability. At the neighborhood level, individual-level participation in activism becomes the percent of respondents who participate in neighborhood activism. Because this variable is especially influenced by the number of respondents in a neighborhood cluster, a dummy variable was created to identify neighborhoods where at least one respondent participated in neighborhood activism, called “Activist Neighborhood”.

### **Analyses**

First, bivariate exploratory analysis was conducted in order to examine differences in outcomes across groups and associations between continuous variables and the psychological and mental health outcomes of interest.

In the second part of the analysis, I make two investigations into the relationship between individual characteristics and neighborhood variation. Then I examine the extent

to which the outcome variables of interest vary by neighborhood by calculating the unconditional interclass correlation (ICC) and then a conditional ICC with individual-level variables included. Conditional ICCs show how the variation at the neighborhood level is affected by the inclusion of individual-level variables, which are associated with the sorting of individuals into neighborhoods. Next, I compare models for each outcome variable with individual-level variables included with models where the fixed effect for the neighborhood is included. This is done by centering the individual-level variables around the neighborhood mean, which is analogous to including neighborhood cluster fixed effect variables as dummy variables with one excluded reference (Raudenbush & Byrk, 2002). Survey weights are used so that the sample is representative of the City of Chicago. The analysis is conducted using HLM 6.06.

Finally, I conduct multilevel regression to examine the effect of both individual and neighborhood-level independent variables on each of the six dependent variables. Multilevel models are necessitated because the data are grouped by Neighborhood Cluster. Individual observations are therefore not independent at the neighborhood level. Survey weights are also used so that the sample is representative of the City of Chicago. The analysis is therefore conducted using multilevel modeling in HLM 6.06.

In order to test for group specific effects, interaction terms will be tested on the final model. This is done by first examining whether each sociodemographic identifier variable varies at the neighborhood level across multiple outcomes. Next, cross-level interactions with the activist neighborhood variable are tested. Additional neighborhood-level variables are tested to see if the activist neighborhood interaction can be explained by other neighborhood characteristics.

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

Bivariate and exploratory analyses presented below suggest that psychological outcomes are associated with neighborhood activism, neighborhood stress, and demographic characteristics. Neighborhood variation in the outcomes is moderately high and is not fully accounted for by individual-level characteristics.

**Correlations.** First, I examine the associations between neighborhood characteristics and the psychological well-being outcomes of interest. Neighborhood activism is significantly associated with neighborhood sense of control ( $r=.1812$ ,  $p<.001$ ), self-esteem ( $.0662$ ,  $p<.001$ ), mastery ( $.0860$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and hopelessness ( $-.0887$ ,  $p<.001$ ) in the expected directions. While the associations with depression and anxiety symptoms are not significant they are in the expected direction. Neighborhood perceived stress is significantly associated with all outcomes in the expected direction. The census-generated neighborhood disadvantage factor is also associated with outcomes in the same direction, though neighborhood sense of control and self-esteem are not significantly related to disadvantage. It should be noted that the neighborhood immigrant factor are significantly associated with outcomes in unexpected directions—immigrant neighborhoods are associated with better outcomes on all but the two mental health symptom variables.

**Interclass correlations.** Unconditional and conditional ICCs were calculated for the mental health and psychological resource outcome variables. The ICCs are displayed in Table 4.2 and generally have between 3 and 9 percent neighborhood variance in the unconditional models. Neighborhood sense of control and hopelessness have high ICCs,

at 9.08% and 8.82%, respectively. But while much of the neighborhood-level variation in hopelessness is explained by the inclusion of individual-level characteristics (the ICC is reduced to 3.23% in the conditional model), neighborhood sense of control has a great deal of neighborhood-level variance left unexplained (7.35%) by the inclusion of individual-level variables. The inclusion of individual-level variables likewise leaves 5.49% neighborhood level variance to be explained for depression.

**Fixed effects models.** Individual-level and fixed effects models are displayed in Table 4.5 (models ending in “a” are the individual-level models, and models ending in “b” are the fixed effects models). Looking across the six sets of models, several patterns emerge. For African Americans, the advantage in neighborhood sense of control, self-esteem, and mastery are all reduced by the inclusion of neighborhood fixed effects. On the other hand, no clear pattern is present for Hispanics and first generation immigrants. Immigrants have a disadvantage in neighborhood sense of control which is reduced, or explained, by the inclusion of neighborhood fixed effects for neighborhood sense of control, but have an advantage in depression and anxiety, which is heightened by the inclusion of fixed effects. Hispanics have greater advantage in neighborhood sense of control when fixed effects are included, but their self-esteem is lowered, and hopelessness increased by the inclusion of fixed effects.

Educational inequalities perform as expected for socioeconomic disparities. Those with a college degree or higher education have advantages that are explained by neighborhood characteristics for all outcomes except self-esteem. For those in the lowest income group, significant disparities were exacerbated by the inclusion of neighborhood fixed effects.

## **Multilevel Models**

Table 4.6 displays results for multilevel models for each of the six psychological well-being outcomes. First, models of the individual-level and neighborhood level characteristics are presented (Models 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a, and 6a). I then explored interactions between individual characteristics of race and ethnicity, immigrant status, education, and gender with neighborhood level-characteristics. Of all of those, only first generation immigrant status significantly varied at the neighborhood level and varied by activist neighborhood. The subsequent models include a random slope for first generation immigrant, an interaction with activist neighborhood, and in order to ensure that the effect of activist neighborhoods was not related to characteristics of neighborhood that predict activism, an interaction with neighborhood stressors.

Neighborhood level characteristics are significantly related to a number of the psychological outcomes examined. Neighborhood disadvantage is positively and significantly related to neighborhood sense of control and self-esteem and marginally associated with fewer symptoms of anxiety. These results are the opposite of the associations presented in the correlation matrix in Table 4.3, when controlling for individual characteristics and other aspects of neighborhoods. Neighborhood affluence is negatively related to self-esteem and positively but marginally related to depression and anxiety symptoms. The neighborhood immigration factor is related to lower neighborhood sense of control. As expected, neighborhood stress is negatively related to neighborhood sense of control, self-esteem, and mastery and positively related to hopelessness (though only marginally significant when the random effect for immigration is added), depression, and anxiety.

Activist neighborhoods are associated with increased neighborhood sense of control and mastery (though mastery is only marginally significant before the first generation random effect is added) and negatively associated with hopelessness. In each of subsequent models, a random effect for the individual-level first generation variable is included and was significant in each model. Next, cross-level interactions between the activist neighborhood and first generation were tested. This interaction term was significant and negative for mastery, and positive for hopelessness, depression, and anxiety. Because these relationships were not in the expected direction, an interaction with neighborhood stress was included to ensure that the interaction with activist neighborhoods was not an artifact of neighborhood problems (informed by the analysis in Chapter 3). The interaction with neighborhood stress is only significant for anxiety, and the interaction between activism and first generation immigrants remains significant.

These interactions mean that for mastery, hopelessness, depression, and anxiety, immigrants living in activist neighborhoods have poorer mental health. With respect to depression and anxiety, this effect among first generation immigrants living in activist neighborhoods reduces the mental health benefit of first generation status. For instance, immigrants in non-activist neighborhoods have .232 points lower on the anxiety symptoms scale, but immigrants in activist neighborhoods have .070 points lower on the anxiety symptoms scale than those of third generation or beyond.

### **Limitations**

While this study is innovative in the ways in which it combines theories from multiple disciplines, it does have some methodological limitations. The first I describe is a common limitation of neighborhood effects research. This cross sectional research

design cannot measure changes in neighborhood over time. This severely impairs the ability of this study to examine causal relationships between the key independent variable and neighborhood and individual-level processes and outcomes. Oakes (2004) describes the challenges of using cross sectional multilevel models to estimate neighborhood effects—specifically issues of reverse causation and selection bias. In addition to the hampered ability to infer causation that would be present in any cross-sectional study, Oakes notes that multi-level studies have additional biases because individual-level and neighborhood-level measures are confounded by social stratification. This is a form of selection bias, which would normally mean that one should control for all the individual factors that explain selection into neighborhoods. But selection into neighborhoods is exactly what is interesting about neighborhoods. While Oakes (2004) suggests that experimental studies are the only way to understand neighborhood effects, this is not a practical alternative for understanding a social characteristic of neighborhoods such as activism.

The measure of neighborhood activism, while it captures an idea of activism from community practice, does not neatly fit into the theories of social capital and empowerment that have been employed here. This measure, as noted in Chapter 2, did not have very good reliability at the individual level. The decision to treat neighborhood-level activism as a dummy, or indicator variable is another limitation of this study. A preferred method would be to create a measure of the percent of activists using the empirical Bayesian method in HLM. This was not preformed in the present analysis due to time limitations but will be used when this research is prepared for publication. The dummy approach was chosen because the sample size per neighborhood is quite small

(n=9.1), and a number of neighborhoods are quite small. Also, the percentages would therefore be weighted by neighborhood size (neighborhoods with one respondent would be outliers at 0 and 100 percent). The empirical Bayes estimation of neighborhood-level measures also addresses this problem by weighting the neighborhood-level measures by size of the sample. Furthermore, because individual-level activism is correlated with neighborhood-level activism, controlling for individual-level activism or excluding individuals from their neighborhood-level measure will be explored to build the evidence of a multi-level relationship. Despite these limitations, this study will contribute to the research by addressing aspects of neighborhoods that have been understudied.

### **Discussion**

Preliminary analyses made it clear that the psychological well-being variables all vary by neighborhoods. While neighborhoods explain away disparities between African Americans and Whites, neighborhood conditions sometimes explain and sometimes exacerbate advantages and disparities experienced by first generation immigrants and Hispanic/Latinos. This suggests, as we find in later analyses, that neighborhoods operate differently for Hispanic/Latinos and immigrants.

Activist neighborhoods have residents with improved psychological well-being. This suggests that neighborhood activism has important consequences that extend beyond individuals. To date, the literature on mental health has focused on social cohesion rather than what residents do to improve or maintain their quality of life in their neighborhoods. By addressing neighborhood activism, a concept missing from the mental health literature and gaining little attention in the physical health literature, I find that what neighbors do

for their community may be more important than the social ties or cohesion between members in the community.

Finally, I find that immigrants are uniquely disadvantaged by neighborhood activism. Rather than a cautionary tale against neighborhood activism, I suggest that this relationship needs further research to be fully understood. Immigrants experience unique stressors of acculturation that may be exacerbated by neighborhoods where residents are highlighting problems and possibly creating conflict in order to address neighborhood problems. Furthermore, we know from Chapter 3 that activists are more likely to be college educated. It may be that encounters with neighborhood activists, who likely are educated third or more generation or non-immigrants, highlights the inequality immigrants experience in US society. It may even be that the attention activists bring to the neighborhood invokes fears of attention from US Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (for those who are in the US without documentation). Finally, it may be that immigrants may be the “threat” around which other residents are organizing. These stressors may reduce the mental health benefit experienced by immigrants to the US.

Table 4.1 Ecometrics of Neighborhood Activism

	ICC	Reliability
Neighborhood Activism Scale	0.087786	0.481
Any Neighborhood Activism*		0.463

\*Dummy variables cannot produce ICCs

Table 4.2 Interclass Correlations (ICCs) of Psychological Well-Being Outcome Measures

	Unconditional Model	Individual-level Model
Neighborhood Sense of Control	9.08%	7.35%
Self-Esteem	3.66%	2.57%
Hopelessness	8.82%	3.23%
Mastery	5.68%	3.69%
Anxiety	6.28%	2.46%
Depression	6.76%	5.49%

Table 4.3 Correlations between Individual-Level Outcome Variables and Neighborhood-Level Characteristics (N=3105)

	Neighborhood Sense of Control	Self-Esteem	Mastery	Hopelessness	Depression	Anxiety
Neighborhood-level Activism	0.1812 (0.0000)	0.0662 (0.0002)	0.0860 (0.0000)	-0.0887 (0.0000)	-0.0207 (0.2477)	-0.0149 (0.4050)
Neighborhood Disadvantage	-0.0184 (0.3065)	-0.0336 (0.0612)	-0.0792 (0.0000)	0.0741 (0.0000)	0.1115 (0.0000)	0.1372 (0.0000)
Neighborhood Affluence/Gentrification	0.1051 (0.0000)	-0.0281 (0.1177)	0.1189 (0.0000)	-0.1829 (0.0000)	-0.0635 (0.0004)	-0.0404 (0.0242)
Neighborhood Immigrant	-0.1176 (0.0000)	-0.0614 (0.0006)	-0.0483 (0.0071)	0.0644 (0.0003)	-0.0831 (0.0000)	-0.1041 (0.0000)
Neighborhood Older Age	0.0316 (0.0785)	0.0458 (0.0106)	0.0326 (0.0693)	-0.0379 (0.0347)	-0.0101 (0.5725)	-0.0356 (0.0470)
Neighborhood Perceived Stress	-0.0819 (0.0000)	-0.0395 (0.0276)	-0.1254 (0.0000)	0.1380 (0.0000)	0.1355 (0.0000)	0.1449 (0.0000)
Neighborhood Social Support	0.1095 (0.0000)	0.0667 (0.0002)	0.0759 (0.0000)	-0.0512 (0.0043)	-0.0523 (0.0036)	-0.1189 (0.0000)
Neighborhood Participation	0.1943 (0.0000)	0.1002 (0.0000)	0.0986 (0.0000)	-0.1156 (0.0000)	0.0060 (0.7387)	-0.0060 (0.7373)

Table 4.4 Correlations between Neighborhood Characteristics (N=343)

	Neighborhood Activism (% activist)	Neighborhood Disadvantage	Neighborhood Affluence	Neighborhood Immigrant	Neighborhood Older Age	Neighborhood Perceived Stress
Neighborhood Activism (% activist)	1.0000					
Neighborhood Disadvantage	0.0297 (0.5839)	1.0000				
Neighborhood Affluence	0.2839 (0.0000)	-0.0067 (0.9016)	1.0000			
Neighborhood Immigrant	-0.2731 (0.0000)	-0.0185 (0.7325)	-0.0023 (0.9661)	1.0000		
Neighborhood Older Age	0.0304 (0.5744)	-0.0166 (0.7593)	0.0006 (0.9907)	-0.0188 (0.7285)	1.0000	
Neighborhood Perceived Stress	-0.0410 (0.4489)	0.6123 (0.0000)	-0.3781 (0.0000)	-0.0611 (0.2593)	-0.3820 (0.0000)	1.0000

Table 4.5 Individual-Level Models and Neighborhood Fixed-Effects Models Predicting Psychological Well-Being

	Neighborhood Sense of Control						Self-Esteem						Mastery					
	Model 1a			Model 1b			Model 2a			Model 2b			Model 3a			Model 3b		
	b	se		b	se		b	se		b	se		b	se		b	se	
Intercept	2.637	0.100	***	2.783	0.022	***	3.518	0.065	***	3.393	0.012	***	3.474	0.080	***	3.189	0.017	***
Female	0.076	0.033	*	0.079	0.034	*	-0.012	0.021		-0.010	0.023		-0.043	0.026	+	-0.054	0.028	+
Race/Ethnicity																		
Hispanic	0.210	0.052	***	0.238	0.058	***	0.167	0.033	***	0.104	0.039	**	0.041	0.041		-0.004	0.047	
African American	0.151	0.047	**	0.129	0.071	+	0.231	0.029	***	0.146	0.048	**	0.116	0.036	**	0.092	0.058	
Other	0.053	0.088		0.088	0.095		0.122	0.058	*	0.124	0.063	+	-0.195	0.071	**	-0.255	0.078	***
Immigrant status (3+ reference)																		
First generation	-0.309	0.051	***	-0.266	0.055	***	-0.016	0.033		0.027	0.036		-0.053	0.041		-0.028	0.045	
Second generation	0.047	0.054		0.058	0.057		-0.056	0.035		-0.043	0.038		0.022	0.044		0.051	0.046	
Employment status (employed reference)																		
Unemployed	0.014	0.057		0.035	0.060		-0.075	0.038	*	-0.057	0.040		-0.033	0.046		0.008	0.049	
Retired	-0.213	0.062	***	-0.178	0.065	**	-0.109	0.041	**	-0.078	0.043	+	-0.308	0.050	***	-0.283	0.053	***
Home caregiver	-0.031	0.062		-0.044	0.064		0.007	0.041		0.024	0.043		-0.022	0.050		0.004	0.053	
Student	0.189	0.089	*	0.191	0.093	*	0.041	0.059		0.076	0.062		0.165	0.072	*	0.250	0.076	**
Education (less than high school reference)																		
High school	0.054	0.047		0.080	0.049		0.098	0.031	**	0.110	0.033	***	0.166	0.038	***	0.161	0.040	***
Some college	0.175	0.048	***	0.177	0.051	***	0.111	0.032	***	0.123	0.034	***	0.245	0.039	***	0.234	0.041	***
College plus	0.323	0.053	***	0.282	0.058	***	0.135	0.035	***	0.156	0.038	***	0.362	0.043	***	0.332	0.047	***
Marital Status (Married reference)																		
Separated	-0.142	0.082	+	-0.150	0.085	+	0.051	0.054		0.023	0.057		0.021	0.066		0.011	0.069	
Divorced	-0.059	0.055		-0.069	0.057		-0.013	0.036		0.004	0.038		0.080	0.045	+	0.088	0.047	+
Widowed	-0.140	0.073	+	-0.179	0.076	*	0.005	0.048		-0.002	0.051		0.015	0.059		0.022	0.062	
Never married	-0.172	0.044	***	-0.203	0.046	***	-0.039	0.029		-0.024	0.030		0.047	0.035		0.059	0.037	
Income (40K + reference)																		
<5K	-0.035	0.080		-0.012	0.083		-0.188	0.052	***	-0.209	0.055	***	-0.233	0.064	***	-0.242	0.068	***
5-15K	-0.104	0.056	+	-0.115	0.059	+	-0.071	0.037	+	-0.087	0.039	*	-0.198	0.045	***	-0.188	0.048	***
15-40K	-0.042	0.044		-0.030	0.046		0.002	0.029		0.006	0.031		-0.045	0.036		-0.027	0.037	
Missing	-0.138	0.047	**	-0.110	0.050	*	0.005	0.031		-0.007	0.033		-0.158	0.038	***	-0.150	0.041	***
Age	0.005	0.002	**	0.004	0.002	*	0.001	0.001		0.000	0.001		-0.003	0.001	*	-0.003	0.001	*
Age squared	0.000	0.000	+	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	
Homeowner	0.048	0.038		0.063	0.041		0.032	0.025		0.021	0.027		0.072	0.031	*	0.085	0.033	*
Financial Stress	-0.037	0.017	*	-0.031	0.018	+	-0.120	0.011	***	-0.122	0.012	***	-0.122	0.014	***	-0.123	0.015	***

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 4.5 Continued

	Hopelessness			Depression						Anxiety								
	Model 4a		***	Model 4b		***	Model 5a		***	Model 5b		***	Model 6a		***	Model 6b		***
	b	se		b	se		b	se		b	se		b	se		b	se	
Intercept	1.532	0.079	***	1.746	0.018	***	1.506	0.060	***	1.829	0.013	***	1.295	0.065	***	1.554	0.014	***
Female	-0.003	0.026		-0.023	0.028		0.083	0.020	***	0.078	0.021	***	0.066	0.021	**	0.063	0.023	**
Race/Ethnicity																		
Hispanic	0.068	0.041	+	0.097	0.047	*	0.004	0.031		0.037	0.036		0.038	0.034		0.054	0.038	
African American	-0.021	0.035		-0.007	0.058		-0.011	0.027		-0.014	0.044		0.033	0.030		0.059	0.047	
Other	0.094	0.070		0.093	0.076		0.033	0.053		0.030	0.059		0.097	0.058	+	0.115	0.063	+
Immigrant status (3+ reference)																		
First generation	0.068	0.040	+	0.025	0.044		-0.144	0.031	***	-0.154	0.034	***	-0.114	0.033	***	-0.120	0.036	***
Second generation	-0.014	0.043		-0.047	0.046		-0.026	0.033		-0.038	0.035		-0.023	0.035		-0.036	0.037	
Employment status (employed reference)																		
Unemployed	0.103	0.046	*	0.084	0.048	+	0.030	0.035		0.026	0.037		0.016	0.038		0.010	0.040	
Retired	0.203	0.049	***	0.154	0.052	**	0.220	0.038	***	0.218	0.040	***	0.142	0.041	***	0.130	0.043	**
Home caregiver	0.028	0.049		0.002	0.052		0.162	0.038	***	0.175	0.040	***	0.137	0.041	***	0.126	0.042	**
Student	-0.311	0.071	***	-0.368	0.075	***	-0.026	0.055		-0.067	0.058		0.090	0.059		0.071	0.061	
Education (less than high school reference)																		
High school	-0.187	0.037	***	-0.194	0.040	***	-0.020	0.029		-0.021	0.031		-0.034	0.031		-0.032	0.032	
Some college	-0.321	0.038	***	-0.313	0.041	***	-0.047	0.029		-0.053	0.031	+	-0.050	0.032		-0.052	0.033	
College plus	-0.515	0.042	***	-0.460	0.046	***	-0.092	0.032	**	-0.078	0.036	*	-0.122	0.035	***	-0.114	0.038	**
Marital Status (Married reference)																		
Separated	-0.100	0.065		-0.093	0.068		0.077	0.050		0.055	0.053		-0.017	0.054		-0.023	0.056	
Divorced	-0.080	0.044	+	-0.096	0.046	*	0.130	0.034	***	0.104	0.035	**	0.048	0.036		0.024	0.038	
Widowed	0.017	0.058		-0.019	0.061		0.144	0.045	**	0.112	0.047	*	0.113	0.048	*	0.101	0.050	*
Never married	-0.088	0.035	*	-0.089	0.037	*	0.111	0.027	***	0.061	0.028	*	0.036	0.029		0.006	0.030	
Income (40K + reference)																		
<5K	0.271	0.064	***	0.309	0.067	***	0.063	0.049		0.096	0.052	+	0.165	0.052	**	0.190	0.055	***
5-15K	0.178	0.045	***	0.180	0.047	***	0.035	0.034		0.049	0.037		0.053	0.037		0.074	0.039	+
15-40K	0.027	0.035		0.024	0.037		0.053	0.027	*	0.069	0.028	*	0.042	0.029		0.057	0.030	+
Missing	0.113	0.037	**	0.113	0.040	**	-0.025	0.029		0.010	0.031		0.024	0.031		0.070	0.033	*
Age	0.004	0.001	***	0.005	0.001	***	-0.001	0.001		-0.002	0.001	*	0.000	0.001		0.000	0.001	
Age squared	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	*	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	
Homeowner	-0.063	0.030	*	-0.065	0.033	*	-0.109	0.023	***	-0.095	0.025	***	-0.062	0.025	*	-0.059	0.027	*
Financial Stress	0.105	0.014	***	0.107	0.014	***	0.139	0.011	***	0.138	0.011	***	0.087	0.011	***	0.092	0.012	***

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 4.6 Weighted HLM of Psychological Well-Being on Individual- and Neighborhood-Level Characteristics

	Neighborhood Sense of Control			
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c	Model 1d
	coef	coef	coef	coef
<b>Individual level</b>				
Intercept	2.52 ***	2.508 ***	2.524 ***	2.531 ***
Female	0.082 *	0.082 *	0.081 *	0.08 *
Race/Ethnicity				
Hispanic	0.242 ***	0.233 ***	0.232 ***	0.235 ***
African American	0.087	0.082	0.082	0.079
Other	-0.004	-0.024	-0.03	-0.035
Immigrant status (3+ reference)				
First generation	-0.26 ***	-0.246 ***	-0.285 **	-0.304 **
Second generation	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.066
Employment status (employed reference)				
Unemployed	0.007	0.009	0.008	0.007
Retired	-0.217 **	-0.221 **	-0.221 **	-0.222 **
Home caregiver	-0.036	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04
Student	0.167	0.178	0.178	0.177
Education (less than high school reference)				
High school	0.054	0.05	0.05	0.048
Some college	0.154 **	0.154 **	0.154 **	0.151 **
College plus	0.271 ***	0.271 ***	0.272 ***	0.27 ***
Marital Status (Married reference)				
Separated	-0.138	-0.139	-0.139	-0.14
Divorced	-0.055	-0.057	-0.058	-0.058
Widowed	-0.139	-0.133	-0.133	-0.132
Never married	-0.186 ***	-0.186 ***	-0.185 ***	-0.186 ***
Income (40K + reference)				
<5K	-0.044	-0.048	-0.047	-0.048
5-15K	-0.111 +	-0.108 +	-0.107	-0.108 +
15-40K	-0.035	-0.033	-0.033	-0.033
Missing	-0.113 *	-0.115 *	-0.113 *	-0.115 *
Age	0.004 *	0.004 *	0.004 *	0.004 *
Age squared	0	0	0	0
Homeowner	0.057	0.06	0.061	0.061
Financial Stress	-0.037 +	-0.036 +	-0.036 +	-0.036 +
<b>Neighborhood level</b>				
Neighborhood Disadvantage	0.107 **	0.108 **	0.107 **	0.104 **
Neighborhood Affluence	0.013	0.014	0.014	0.015
Neighborhood Immigration	-0.084 **	-0.085 **	-0.085 **	-0.082 *
Neighborhood Older Age	-0.022	-0.022	-0.022	-0.023
Perceived Stress	-0.127 **	-0.124 **	-0.123 **	-0.11 *
Activist Neighborhood	0.198 ***	0.21 ***	0.19 **	0.19 **
Activist Neighborhood *1st generation			0.052	0.058
Neighborhood Perceived Stress*1st generation				-0.039

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 4.6 Continued

	Self-Esteem							
	Model 2a		Model 2b		Model 2c		Model 2d	
	b		b		b		b	
<b>Individual level</b>								
Intercept	3.491	***	3.489	***	3.488	***	3.484	***
Female	-0.011		-0.011		-0.011		-0.01	
Race/Ethnicity								
Hispanic	0.15	***	0.149	***	0.149	***	0.147	***
African American	0.18	***	0.18	***	0.18	***	0.182	***
Other	0.118		0.116		0.116		0.119	
Immigrant status (3+ reference)								
First generation	-0.004		-0.002		0.001		0.012	
Second generation	-0.055		-0.053		-0.053		-0.051	
Employment status (employed reference)								
Unemployed	-0.081		-0.081		-0.081		-0.08	
Retired	-0.118	*	-0.119	*	-0.119	*	-0.118	*
Home caregiver	0.007		0.01		0.01		0.01	
Student	0.047		0.045		0.045		0.045	
Education (less than high school reference)								
High school	0.098	*	0.1	**	0.1	**	0.102	**
Some college	0.11	**	0.111	**	0.111	**	0.113	**
College plus	0.154	***	0.156	***	0.156	***	0.157	***
Marital Status (Married reference)								
Separated	0.054		0.052		0.052		0.052	
Divorced	-0.005		-0.003		-0.003		-0.002	
Widowed	0.005		0.005		0.005		0.005	
Never married	-0.028		-0.027		-0.027		-0.026	
Income (40K + reference)								
<5K	-0.198	***	-0.196	***	-0.196	***	-0.196	***
5-15K	-0.078		-0.075		-0.075		-0.074	
15-40K	-0.002		-0.002		-0.002		-0.001	
Missing	-0.004		-0.007		-0.007		-0.006	
Age	0.001		0.001		0.001		0.001	
Age squared	0		0		0		0	
Homeowner	0.017		0.017		0.017		0.017	
Financial Stress	-0.12	***	-0.121	***	-0.121	***	-0.121	***
<b>Neighborhood level</b>								
Neighborhood Disadvantage	0.042	*	0.042	+	0.042	+	0.044	*
Neighborhood Affluence	-0.061	**	-0.063	**	-0.063	**	-0.063	**
Neighborhood Immigration	-0.029		-0.03		-0.03		-0.031	
Neighborhood Older Age	-0.021		-0.022		-0.022		-0.021	
Neighborhood Perceived Stress	-0.073	**	-0.073	**	-0.073	**	-0.08	**
Activist Neighborhood	0.061		0.063		0.065		0.065	
Activist Neighborhood *1st generation					-0.003		-0.007	
Neighborhood Perceived Stress*1st generation							0.022	

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 4.6 Continued

	Mastery							
	Model 3a		Model 3b		Model 3c		Model 3d	
	B		b		b		b	
<b>Individual level</b>								
Intercept	3.39	***	3.392	***	3.343	***	3.343	***
Female	-0.039		-0.036		-0.034		-0.034	
Race/Ethnicity								
Hispanic	0.058		0.058		0.062		0.062	
African American	0.134	*	0.139	**	0.136	*	0.136	*
Other	-0.199	*	-0.193	*	-0.176	+	-0.176	+
Immigrant status (3+ reference)								
First generation	-0.047		-0.039		0.107		0.107	
Second generation	0.019		0.021		0.019		0.02	
Employment status (employed reference)								
Unemployed	-0.033		-0.036		-0.033		-0.033	
Retired	-0.311	***	-0.308	***	-0.309	***	-0.309	***
Home caregiver	-0.024		-0.024		-0.024		-0.024	
Student	0.162	*	0.155	*	0.159	*	0.159	*
Education (less than high school reference)								
High school	0.157	***	0.161	***	0.162	***	0.162	***
Some college	0.228	***	0.231	***	0.229	***	0.229	***
College plus	0.35	***	0.343	***	0.339	***	0.339	***
Marital Status (Married reference)								
Separated	0.03		0.031		0.032		0.032	
Divorced	0.087	+	0.087	+	0.088	+	0.088	+
Widowed	0.017		0.017		0.015		0.015	
Never married	0.053		0.044		0.043		0.043	
Income (40K + reference)								
<5K	-0.236	***	-0.238	***	-0.245	***	-0.244	***
5-15K	-0.198	***	-0.2	***	-0.204	***	-0.204	***
15-40K	-0.043		-0.043		-0.046		-0.046	
Missing	-0.155	***	-0.155	***	-0.16	***	-0.161	***
Age	-0.003	*	-0.003	*	-0.003	*	-0.003	*
Age squared	0		0		0		0	
Homeowner	0.063	+	0.061	+	0.059		0.059	
Financial Stress	-0.12	***	-0.121	***	-0.121	***	-0.121	***
<b>Neighborhood level</b>								
Neighborhood Disadvantage	0.039		0.041		0.043		0.043	
Neighborhood Affluence	-0.025		-0.02		-0.022		-0.022	
Neighborhood Immigration	-0.004		-0.004		-0.004		-0.004	
Neighborhood Older Age	-0.009		-0.012		-0.013		-0.013	
Neighborhood Perceived Stress	-0.101	**	-0.102	**	-0.103	**	-0.103	**
Activist Neighborhood	0.093	+	0.105	*	0.166	**	0.166	**
Activist Neighborhood *1st generation					-0.196	*	-0.196	*
Neighborhood Perceived Stress*1st generation							-0.002	

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 4.6 Continued

	Hopelessness							
	Model 4a		Model 4b		Model 4c		Model 4d	
	b		b		b		b	
<b>Individual level</b>								
Intercept	1.625	***	1.626	***	1.683	***	1.686	***
Female	-0.008		-0.009		-0.012		-0.013	
Race/Ethnicity								
Hispanic	0.046		0.047		0.044		0.045	
African American	-0.055		-0.059		-0.054		-0.056	
Other	0.111		0.106		0.085		0.083	
Immigrant status (3+ reference)								
First generation	0.055		0.047		-0.115		-0.124	
Second generation	-0.015		-0.019		-0.016		-0.018	
Employment status (employed reference)								
Unemployed	0.1	+	0.101	+	0.098	+	0.098	+
Retired	0.203	***	0.198	***	0.199	***	0.198	***
Home caregiver	0.032		0.032		0.032		0.032	
Student	-0.309	***	-0.305	***	-0.311	***	-0.311	***
Education (less than high school reference)								
High school	-0.181	***	-0.186	***	-0.187	***	-0.188	***
Some college	-0.306	***	-0.311	***	-0.308	***	-0.309	***
College plus	-0.485	***	-0.484	***	-0.479	***	-0.48	***
Marital Status (Married reference)								
Separated	-0.108		-0.109		-0.11		-0.111	
Divorced	-0.082		-0.082		-0.083		-0.084	
Widowed	0.018		0.02		0.022		0.022	
Never married	-0.086	*	-0.082	*	-0.082	*	-0.082	*
Income (40K + reference)								
<5K	0.268	***	0.269	***	0.277	***	0.276	***
5-15K	0.176	**	0.175	**	0.179	***	0.179	***
15-40K	0.022		0.024		0.026		0.026	
Missing	0.101	*	0.104	*	0.11	*	0.11	*
Age	0.005	**	0.005	***	0.005	***	0.005	***
Age squared	0		0		0		0	
Homeowner	-0.061		-0.062		-0.06		-0.06	
Financial Stress	0.103	***	0.103	***	0.103	***	0.103	***
<b>Neighborhood level</b>								
Neighborhood Disadvantage	-0.008		-0.011		-0.013		-0.014	
Neighborhood Affluence	-0.011		-0.013		-0.011		-0.011	
Neighborhood Immigration	0.003		0.002		0.001		0.002	
Neighborhood Older Age	0.01		0.01		0.011		0.011	
Neighborhood Perceived Stress	0.057		0.059	+	0.06	+	0.065	+
Activist Neighborhood	-0.093	*	-0.101	*	-0.173	**	-0.172	**
Activist Neighborhood *1st generation					0.218	*	0.221	*
Neighborhood Perceived Stress*1st generation							-0.016	

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 4.6 continued

	Depression							
	Model 5a		Model 5b		Model 5c		Model 5d	
	b		b		b		b	
<b>Individual level</b>								
Intercept	1.52	***	1.523	***	1.569	***	1.571	***
Female	0.083	***	0.082	***	0.08	***	0.079	***
Race/Ethnicity								
Hispanic	0.01		0.01		0.006		0.008	
African American	-0.043		-0.046		-0.043		-0.045	
Other	0.018		0.011		-0.004		-0.005	
Immigrant status (3+ reference)								
First generation	-0.131	***	-0.133	***	-0.253	***	-0.259	***
Second generation	-0.016		-0.014		-0.013		-0.014	
Employment status (employed reference)								
Unemployed	0.029		0.027		0.025		0.025	
Retired	0.223	***	0.222	***	0.222	***	0.222	***
Home caregiver	0.16	**	0.16	**	0.16	**	0.16	**
Student	-0.036		-0.035		-0.038		-0.038	
Education (less than high school reference)								
High school	-0.014		-0.014		-0.015		-0.016	
Some college	-0.044		-0.044		-0.042		-0.043	
College plus	-0.104	*	-0.104	*	-0.1	*	-0.101	*
Marital Status (Married reference)								
Separated	0.072		0.07		0.068		0.068	
Divorced	0.125	**	0.123	**	0.122	**	0.122	**
Widowed	0.141	**	0.143	**	0.145	**	0.145	**
Never married	0.1	**	0.101	**	0.102	**	0.102	**
Income (40K + reference)								
<5K	0.062		0.064		0.069		0.069	
5-15K	0.033		0.034		0.037		0.036	
15-40K	0.054	+	0.056	+	0.059	+	0.058	+
Missing	-0.016		-0.011		-0.006		-0.006	
Age	-0.002		-0.002		-0.002		-0.002	
Age squared	0	+	0	+	0	+	0	+
Homeowner	-0.1	***	-0.098	**	-0.096	**	-0.096	**
Financial Stress	0.138	***	0.139	***	0.139	***	0.139	***
<b>Neighborhood level</b>								
Neighborhood Disadvantage	-0.005		-0.005		-0.006		-0.007	
Neighborhood Affluence	0.031	+	0.031	+	0.032	+	0.032	+
Neighborhood Immigration	-0.021		-0.023		-0.023		-0.023	
Neighborhood Older Age	0.013		0.014		0.015		0.015	
Neighborhood Perceived Stress	0.049	*	0.05	*	0.051	*	0.055	*
Activist Neighborhood	0.007		0.003		-0.054		-0.053	
Activist Neighborhood *1st generation					0.159	*	0.161	*
Neighborhood Perceived Stress*1st generation							-0.012	

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 4.6 Continued

	Anxiety							
	mf6		mf6a		mf6b		mf6d	
	b		b		B		b	
<b>Individual level</b>								
Intercept	1.313	***	1.321	***	1.365	***	1.378	***
Female	0.064	*	0.063	*	0.061	*	0.059	*
Race/Ethnicity								
Hispanic	0.037		0.036		0.033		0.04	
African American	0.012		0.007		0.01		0.002	
Other	0.087		0.088		0.071		0.061	
Immigrant status (3+ reference)								
First generation	-0.106	**	-0.11	**	-0.232	***	-0.267	***
Second generation	-0.016		-0.016		-0.015		-0.021	
Employment status (employed reference)								
Unemployed	0.018		0.017		0.015		0.014	
Retired	0.145	**	0.142	**	0.142	**	0.141	**
Home caregiver	0.135	**	0.133	**	0.134	**	0.134	**
Student	0.084		0.084		0.081		0.08	
Education (less than high school reference)								
High school	-0.028		-0.031		-0.032		-0.036	
Some college	-0.043		-0.045		-0.043		-0.048	
College plus	-0.128	**	-0.129	**	-0.125	**	-0.129	**
Marital Status (Married reference)								
Separated	-0.023		-0.024		-0.025		-0.027	
Divorced	0.042		0.042		0.041		0.04	
Widowed	0.109	+	0.11	+	0.112	+	0.113	+
Never married	0.027		0.03		0.031		0.028	
Income (40K + reference)								
<5K	0.163	*	0.161	*	0.166	**	0.164	**
5-15K	0.054		0.052		0.056		0.054	
15-40K	0.042		0.041		0.043		0.042	
Missing	0.029		0.031		0.036		0.032	
Age	0		0		0		0	
Age squared	0		0		0		0	
Homeowner	-0.057	+	-0.057	*	-0.055	+	-0.055	+
Financial Stress	0.087	***	0.087	***	0.086	***	0.087	***
<b>Neighborhood level</b>								
Neighborhood Disadvantage	-0.046	+	-0.046	+	-0.048	+	-0.052	*
Neighborhood Affluence	0.042	+	0.038	+	0.04	+	0.041	+
Neighborhood Immigration	-0.01		-0.009		-0.01		-0.006	
Neighborhood Older Age	0.022		0.022		0.023		0.021	
Neighborhood Perceived Stress	0.099	***	0.103	***	0.104	***	0.124	***
Activist Neighborhood	-0.008		-0.015		-0.068		-0.067	
Activist Neighborhood * 1st generation					0.162	*	0.173	*
Neighborhood Perceived Stress* 1st generation							-0.071	*

+  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## **Chapter 5 Conclusion**

Each empirical chapter of this dissertation informs practice in neighborhoods and future research on urban communities. This dissertation re-focuses the attention of urban sociology—and the neighborhood-effects literature in particular—onto neighborhood activism. Neighborhood activism improves the well-being of individual participants. Residents participate in neighborhood activism in neighborhoods that have high poverty and disadvantage and more perceived and observed stressors. But given those neighborhood problems, individuals living in neighborhoods where residents are engaging in activism have better psychological well-being. In other words, neighborhood activism exists where it is most needed, has the potential to improve neighborhood conditions, and improves the well-being of residents.

In this conclusion chapter, I reiterate and integrate the major findings and implications of each of the three empirical chapters. I then discuss the implications of this research for sociological theory and community practice in urban neighborhoods. Finally, I note future directions for research suggested by the findings and implications of this work for neighborhood theory and practice.

### **Major Findings**

In Chapter 2, I found that activism is a significant predictor of individual psychological and social resources. Although the literature on volunteering considers activism to be a sub-type of volunteerism, my findings suggest that activism acts

differently than volunteerism. In particular, activism is strongly related to mastery and neighborhood sense of control—characteristics associated with empowerment. These findings support empowerment theory which has long argued that activism is a particularly empowering form of practice. Neither activism nor volunteerism ameliorate the stress of inequality—especially financial stress and disadvantaged social group status. This suggests a need to focus on supporting the efforts of activist groups to address inequality and improve resident life chances (i.e., to make meaningful advancements in financial security, educational achievement, and income).

In Chapter 3, I found that, in contrast to the concentrated poverty perspective which states that high poverty neighborhoods lack the formal and informal organization needed to address neighborhood problems, neighborhoods with high disadvantage and high poverty have more activism controlling for individual-level characteristics. Individuals with more education are much more likely to participate in neighborhood activism. Given individual education, neighborhoods with more professional, educated residents (i.e., neighborhood affluence) also have a higher propensity for neighborhood activism. At the same time, disadvantage spurs on activism as residents appear to respond to neighborhood needs. The findings in this chapter suggest that creating activism need not be a primary focus of interventions and policy. Rather, the focus of place-based interventions should be on increasing the availability of resources to neighborhood activists. This suggests that the place-based policy initiatives of the Obama administration, rather than the individual-level poverty dispersion techniques of the past, are promising solutions for disadvantaged neighborhoods.

In Chapter 4, I find that residents of activist neighborhoods have better mental health, especially in terms of neighborhood sense of control, mastery, and hopelessness. This holds true for all but first generation immigrant residents. First generation immigrants in activist neighborhoods fare worse across a number of outcomes: mastery, hopelessness, anxiety, and depression. This is surprising, since immigrants generally have better mental health than non-immigrants—a phenomenon known as the immigrant paradox (e.g., Burnam, Hough, Karno, Escobar, & Telles, 1987; Alegría et al., 2008)—and have significantly less depression and anxiety in the present research. In fact, the negative effect of activist neighborhoods simply lessens the significant immigrant advantage in depression and anxiety. On the other hand, there is an emerging body of research which suggests that the processes that have previously been identified as protective factors operate differently for immigrants and Latinos (Almeida, Kawachi, Molnar, & Subramanian, 2009; Ellison, Finch, Ryan, & Salinas, 2009). These findings suggest that immigrants have different experiences of their neighborhoods which need to be further examined in order to better understand neighborhood activism and to better address inequalities in mental health. There may be a number of explanations for this finding. One unfortunate explanation is that first generation immigrants may be experiencing neighborhoods in which they are the subject of neighborhood activism.

Taken as a whole, the results from the present research suggest that, while activism is an important resource for urban neighborhoods, several steps should be made to ensure that activism in neighborhoods supports all residents. First, linking neighborhood activist groups to efforts to improve individual socioeconomic status (e.g., living wage campaigns and educational initiatives) would help address socioeconomic

disparities in psychological well-being. Second, because neighborhood activist efforts exist in poor, disadvantaged, stressful neighborhoods, foundation and policy initiatives to improve neighborhoods should move beyond building links between neighbors and towards making resources available to activists in poor neighborhoods so that neighborhoods could be improved based on resident priorities. Finally, the benefit of neighborhood activism extends to all residents except first generation immigrants. This implies a fundamental rift in the experiences of communities and may suggest a need to work harder at making immigrants welcome members of communities.

### **Implications**

The findings in Chapters 2 and 4 support empowerment theory; activism is an important form of practice for improving community and individual well-being. The findings also support the notion that empowerment practice is multilevel. The findings that neighborhood activism is not empowering for first generation immigrants should not be taken to suggest that all activism is not empowering. The detrimental components of neighborhood-focused activism experienced by first generation immigrants in Chicago neighborhoods need to be better understood. This finding does suggest that neighborhood activists should examine the extent to which their work is inclusive in a way that contributes to the well-being of all residents, especially that of immigrants.

Immigrant enclaves have been used to explain the immigrant paradox (that the health of immigrant groups declines with time in the US) and the Latino health paradox (that Latinos have better health given their high poverty levels). Immigrant enclaves are thought to protect co-ethnics by providing social capital and culturally relevant services, but these characteristics have rarely been researched. In a rare test of this theory, Almeida

and colleagues (2009) find that Latinos have lower social ties in co-ethnic neighborhoods. The findings presented in Chapter 3 similarly find that residents of Latino/immigrant neighborhoods are less likely to engage in neighborhood activism, which I suggest may be another kind of social capital. This finding has important implications for our understanding of immigrant enclave neighborhoods. This does not suggest that immigrant enclaves are not protective, rather that the mechanisms purposed in the extant literature are not supported.

I find that neighborhoods are experienced differently by first generation immigrants and Hispanics. In Chapter 4, I find significant neighborhood variation in the effect of being Hispanic or Latino on well-being. This variation is not explained by neighborhood demographic characteristics and is only partially explained by neighborhood activism. Some scholars have noted that urban sociology has been focused on theories developed in poor, segregated neighborhoods of Chicago leaving other neighborhoods under-theorized and under-researched (e.g., Small & McDermott, 2006). I similarly find variation within Chicago which suggests that ethnic and immigrant neighborhoods need to be better understood.

Findings from this dissertation suggest a number of issues that neighborhood activists should consider when organizing neighborhoods. Non-profit organizations have emphasized the benefit of volunteering to the volunteer (as well as to the community and individuals served) with much success. Likewise, neighborhood organizers should capitalize on the evidence of improved well-being among activists in their recruitment to neighborhood activism. The dominant ideas of burn out—a negative effect of participation in activism—are not supported in the present research. The propensity of

highly educated, middle class residents to participate, even in low-income, stressed communities suggest that issues of class conflict likely play out in community activism. Mary Pattillo finds this to be true in a gentrifying African American neighborhood in Chicago (2007). The data analyzed in this dissertation are not able to gage the degree of class conflict, but this is something to which neighborhood organizers should be especially attuned.

Neighborhood activism has the potential to improve communities, and I find that it improves individual well-being. Nevertheless, the findings that first generation immigrants do not benefit from activism—that their well-being is actually worse in activist neighborhoods—suggests that larger scale policy and political change is needed to ensure that neighborhoods are hospitable to immigrants. In Chapter 3, I reviewed the place-based policy initiatives of the Obama administration and suggest that they are an important next-step in neighborhood interventions. Findings from Chapter 4 suggest that these place-focused policies must be included and relevant to the growing immigrant composition of neighborhoods.

### **Future Research**

In Chapter 2, I find racial and ethnic group differences in some of the psychological well-being variables but not in depression and anxiety. This warrants further research. For instance, mastery is higher among African Americans compared to Whites but depression is not different. Mastery has been found to be strongly predictive of depression. What are the determinants of this difference in mastery? Does this mean that mastery does not exert the same protective benefit for African Americans as it has been found to do for Whites?

In addition, Chapter 2 suggests that work needs to be done in differentiating volunteerism from activism and then in investigating the similarities and differences between the two. The CCAHS data used in this study are not ideal for making this differentiation. While this dissertation examined only neighborhood-focused activism, research examining all modes of activism is needed. This is especially true when comparing between activism and volunteerism.

In future research on the neighborhood antecedents of participation it is important to understand the systematic advantages and disadvantages bestowed to neighborhoods through investment in the organizational infrastructure of neighborhoods. The more mundane face of social activism today means that activism is more often associated with stable non-profit and voluntary organizations. In fact, Sampson and colleagues (2005) find that nonprofit organizations in the neighborhood are one of the most consistent predictors of collective civic action events. Qualitative research has found that community based organizations are important in structuring opportunity for poor residents (Small, 2009) and effecting neighborhood change (Marwell, 2007). Most research on the role of a neighborhood's organizations has been qualitative (e.g., Marwell, 2007; Sanchez-Jankowski, 2008; Small, 2004). Testing these theories across neighborhoods in a large scale quantitative analysis would therefore be an important contribution of future research.

Investigations into the processes through which neighborhood activism affects residents would help improve an understanding of the neighborhood context. This research would benefit from a longitudinal design. Longitudinal data would allow the comparison of activist neighborhoods across time in terms of neighborhood-level

resources. Neighborhood level resources are likely the pathways through which neighborhood activism affects resident mental health and psychological well-being. Community empowerment theory also suggests that activism is important for neighborhood identity, shared neighborhood problems, neighborhood social control, and social change. Furthermore, the instrumental gains achieved by activism (e.g., more neighborhood gardens and parks, less graffiti, improved street lighting) are likely to impact resident health and mental health. Uncovering these relationships in future, longitudinal research will be especially informative for place-based policy that supports indigenous community leadership.

One way to better understand the dynamics of activism in urban neighborhoods would be to make use of ongoing interventions into neighborhood conditions. Hope VI—and soon Choice Neighborhoods—provides an opportunity to better understand activism in poor neighborhoods. By replacing public housing with mixed income developments, these policies create neighborhoods with a high poverty rate, yet a number of moderate income families. It would be especially interesting to investigate the dynamics of activism in such a neighborhood in order answer questions about who engages in neighborhood activism, what issues activists organize around, and what the consequences of that activism are. As place-based initiatives continue to be advocated by the Obama administration, more opportunities such as this may be revealed.

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