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AN URBAN-POLITICAL EXPLANATION

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ABSTRACT

Neighborhood Deterioration: An Urban-Political Explanation

This paper studies the process of neighborhood deterioration in American cities by examining the forms of political participation among newly-arriving residents, and contrasting these with the patterns found among those with longer residence in the neighborhood.

We suggest that newly-arriving poor residents lack the incentive to register and vote that characterized citizens of earlier eras. Absent material incentives, such individuals remain largely outside the electoral process. Elected officials take note of this non-participation, and develop a pattern of "perverse incentives," in which they personally benefit by presenting themselves to their communities as largely powerless and ineffective. They are able to retain their offices by individualized benefits presented to longer-term residents, and newer residents respond with apathy toward the electoral process, rather than with electoral challenge.

We argue that although "invasion" and "succession" is nothing new in American urban neighborhoods, and although newcomers are often of lower socioeconomic status than those they replace, political processes in the past contained "self-correcting" mechanisms which helped to keep up the level of public services in the neighborhood. When newly-arriving residents were recruited into electoral participation as a matter of course by political machines, elected representatives had to take account of the possibility that if services deteriorated too severely, the new residents would retaliate at the polls. Since today's new arrivals in "changing neighborhoods" are less likely to enter electoral politics immediately, elected officials can instead expect such residents to respond with alienated withdrawal from the electoral arena. They are able to maintain their own positions for longer periods of time than would otherwise be the case, in changing neighborhoods, because of the growing mismatch between

the composition of the population of the neighborhood and the composition of the electorate.

This theoretical argument is partially tested with data from the Washington Heights-Inwood, New York City Ethnic Block Survey and found to be correct in its predictions about the forms of political participation among neighborhood residents.

We regard this theory as "urban-political," i.e. it is rooted in the specific political forms of the communities we are studying. We also delineate three other theories of neighborhood deterioration, the "national policy decisions theory," which focuses on incentives for middle-class shift to the suburbs, "economic base theory," which focuses declining economic resources available to "changing neighborhoods," and "racism theory," which focuses on the change of racial composition within neighborhoods. We regard these theories as complementary to our own, but we argue the need for theories of neighborhood deterioration which examine the specific political contexts of the communities which are being studied.

Neighborhood Deterioration: An Urban-Political Explanation

(A) Introduction

Processes of population "invasion" and "succession" have been the norm for American urban neighborhoods throughout their history. "Concentric-ring" patterns of growth and high rates of immigration combined to ensure that many sections of American metropolises would undergo several waves of ethnic change. Under typical (although not universal) circumstances, these population changes meant that the existing population was being replaced by newly-entering groups of somewhat lower socio-economic status.¹

It should be emphasized at the outset that we do not regard this process of population change as necessarily leading to neighborhood deterioration.^{1a} We specifically reject the notion that in-migrants bring with them such severe social problems that decay is assured. Rather, it is our view that forces external to the population groups themselves play an important role in shaping the impact of neighborhood socio-economic and ethnic change on the quality of neighborhood life.

Our paper is subtitled "an urban-political explanation," and we shall be arguing throughout that variables in the political context effect the impact of neighborhood change. But in presenting this "political explanation," we are not seeking to reject all alternative modes of explanation. Instead, an explicit political explanation is added to the mix of explanations which account for a major modern American urban pathology -- neighborhood deterioration.

Before presenting our theoretical model, we would like to note three other

1. For a current description of the processes of population change in urban neighborhoods, see Gary Sands and Lewis L. Bower, Housing Turnover and Housing Policy (New York: Praeger, 1976).

1a For a comparative study of patterns of neighborhood change, some of which resulted in deterioration while others did not, see Charles L. Leven et. al. Neighborhood Change (New York: Praeger, 1976).

explanations which have been advanced to account for neighborhood decline within American cities, particularly in the period since World War II. These three explanations (none of which are incompatible with our own, political explanation), will be called the "national policy decisions theory," the "economic base theory," and the "racism theory."

In the first of these, decline and abandonment are thought of as being the result of a set of national policy decisions which have made a move to the suburbs so attractive that central city neighborhoods become unattractive to those with economic choices, and are therefore ripe for decay. Federal policy has directly and indirectly subsidized the suburban move, in this argument, so that many people who would otherwise have stayed in cities have moved out. Demand for central-city housing is weaker, therefore, and abandonment of its poorest-quality housing stock then follows. Even sound buildings can be abandoned, if they are in otherwise unsatisfactory environments to those with economic choices.

The elements of this "pro-suburban" policy are by now well-known. We would point particularly to the income tax laws, which permit real-estate tax and mortgage interest deductions for homeowners, but not for renters; FHA and VA subsidized mortgages; and Federal highway construction. This last element is included because of the role of limited-access highways in facilitating the infill of suburban land between older arterial routes with tract housing -- the residents of which can then commute to work on the Federally-subsidized highways.

The "national policy decisions theory" poses a nice counter-example to a line of argument now frequently heard among both academic analysts and the general public -- that public policies cannot work as originally intended. The pro-suburban policies outlined above were designed to facilitate middle-class home ownership, were publicly advocated by both political parties in the years

after World War II and essentially achieved this aim. The negative consequences for central cities and their poorer populations, though, remained for later decades to discover.

The "economic base theory," our second alternative explanation of neighborhood deterioration, is tied to the "national policy decisions theory" briefly outlined above. But while the national policy decisions theory centers on the impact of population shifts, the "economic base" argument pays greater heed to the impact of declines in neighborhood economic bases. In this mode of explanation, "changing neighborhoods" have undergone more severe declines in their local economic base in the post World War II period than did comparable neighborhoods in earlier eras.

Particular emphasis is placed on the growth of structural unemployment among the poorly-skilled. The decline in the availability of jobs for such individuals brings with it an obvious decline in neighborhood spending power as neighborhood change brings with it an increase in unskilled individuals in the neighborhood population. Not only have the types of jobs which previous generations of semi-skilled workers obtained absolutely declined, but the flight of much manufacturing from central city loft buildings to single-story plants in the suburbs makes what jobs are available difficult for central-city residents to gain access to. Together, these trends help explain why neighborhood change in recent American history has brought with it more severe deterioration than in the past -- changes in neighborhood class composition have greater impact on neighborhood spending power than would have been true in the eras when more semiskilled jobs were available to working-class immigrants into "changing neighborhoods."

Although local governments sometimes engage in efforts to counter these trends by investing disproportionate shares of their own resources in such

neighborhoods, this is unlikely to have significant impact. In the American economic structure, the relative share of resources brought into a community by government action, as opposed to private sector activity, is wholly insufficient to counterbalance private-sector resource declines. Neighborhoods are left with fewer overall resources, even if local governments increase their relative spending in such communities.

Our third alternative is "racism theory." This mode of explanation takes account of the fact that post-World War II patterns of invasion and succession have involved changes in racial composition far more frequently than in the past. While invasion and succession, as we argued earlier, are not new phenomena in American cities, the post World War II period has been distinctive in the extent to which "neighborhood change" has meant race change as well. Indeed, the very euphemism "changing neighborhood," is often used to denote those neighborhoods in the process of change from virtually all-white, to virtually all non-white.

Because of segregated housing markets, non-whites are only able to move into a small number of neighborhoods at any one time. Existing neighborhood entrepreneurs and residents may become frightened by this process and leave the community in significant numbers. Thus, neighborhood change, when it involves race change as well, can lead to a far more complete and rapid turnover of populations than would have been true when changes were more likely to involve the replacement of one/dominant numerically-dominant white ethnic group with another. In addition to rapidity of turnover, racist attitudes among some service-delivery personnel can contribute to neighborhood deterioration. Such individuals may believe that new residents don't "need" and/or "can't properly use" good-quality services, and begin to neglect the community. Fears of the impact of race change can contribute to patterns of non-investment and disinvestment

in a community, thereby obviously speeding its deterioration.

Although these various types of explanation differ considerably, they have the common characteristic of not being "urban-political." That is, they are not tied to the particular political structures of the communities undergoing transition and deterioration. As indicated above, we believe that such a "micro-political" type of theory does have considerable explanatory power.

(B) An Urban-Political Theory of Neighborhood Change

Mancur Olson argues, in the Logic of Collective Action, that individuals join, and remain in organizations, only under circumstances of either coercion or "side-benefits."² James W. Wilson has modified this argument somewhat in Political Organizations, to argue that middle-class people particularly, may remain active in organizations for less material rewards.³

Olson's theory, however, is relevant to any explanation of why working class people participate in politics, and how rates of working-class participation have changed over time. In earlier periods, according to our argument, newly-arriving residents in a "changing neighborhood" had incentives to join the formal political process, i.e. to register and vote. This was so because this level of formal participation carried with it possibilities of "side-benefits." The classic examples of this are the reports of "turkeys at Christmas" and "a ton of coal" during the winter. It is not necessary to argue that every newly-arriving working-class family actually received such benefits to point out that a belief that such benefits might be forthcoming, and were dependent upon the types of formal political participation described above, would be sufficient to lead such individuals to become registered voters.

2. Mancur Olson. Logic of Collective Action (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

3. James Q. Wilson. Political Organizations (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

We wish to further argue that once such individuals became habituated into formal participation on these "side-benefits" grounds, that formal decision-makers, such as city-wide elected officials, needed to take into account that these new residents, and new neighborhood voters, might use the vote for other purposes. Thus, the formal decision-makers had incentives to provide sufficiently adequate public services to keep the new residents "happy," or at least politically quiescent. In the era of the welfare state this incentive system has changed. Since the modern equivalents of the Christmas turkey or the ton of coal are dependent on actions of public bureaucracies and not machine politicians, registration and voting no longer are as directly instrumental to newly-arriving residents in changing neighborhoods as would have been true in days before the welfare state. Thus, such new residents today lack the side-benefits motivation to initially become involved in any type of formal political activity and do not as readily become habituated into voting.

This low level of participation is recognized by formal neighborhood and city-wide decision makers. Rather than needing to take into account how such residents might use their votes, they rather take into account the low levels of participation. Under such a formulation, it is not as immediately necessary, in political terms, to keep new residents of working class neighborhoods satisfied, since the threat of retaliation at the polls is less.

Indeed, we wish to argue that in the current period a system of "perverse incentives" is at work in changing neighborhoods.⁴ As long as rates of formal participation among new residents of ethnically (and class) changing neighborhoods remain low, individual office-holders, representative of the area's old

4. We have adopted the use of the term "perverse incentives" from the work of Norton Long. See "The City as a System of Perverse Incentives," Urbanism Past and Present, No. 2 (Summer, 1976) pp. 1-8.

population, can retain their positions for longer periods of time. Older residents continue to vote, so that even when their percentage of the population drops to relatively low levels, they continue to constitute majorities of those who do vote. Under such circumstances, it becomes valuable for formal office-holders to present themselves to their communities as powerless, and incapable of reversing patterns of neighborhood decay. If, for a counter-example, State Assemblymen or City Councilmen were widely perceived as potentially efficacious, then rates of participation among new residents might rise. If it did rise, the older office-holders' positions might be threatened by new challengers, making ethnic-solidarity appeals among the new residents. As long as such offices are perceived as irrelevant by the new arrivals, however, and as long as they are not habituated into voting by the side-benefits of earlier eras, the combination of alienated apathy and "rational" assessment of the disutilities of voting in "meaningless" elections keeps such new arrivals out of formal politics, and permits representatives of the area's old population to remain in office longer than they otherwise would. We regard this as a system of "perverse incentives," because it creates a situation in which local office-holders rather than seeking reputations for effectiveness, personally gain from presenting themselves to their communities as powerless and ineffective.

What are the consequences of such a political structure for the ongoing life of a neighborhood? If one were to accept a view in which the urban political structure is seen as an irrelevancy, then the consequences of the "perverse incentives" just described would be minimal. They might produce a lowered percentage of officeholding among members of newly-arriving groups, but would not necessarily have any impact on neighborhood conditions.

Some analysts seem to reach such a conclusion. Without dealing specifically

with the process of political change outlined above, Lineberry in San Antonio,⁵ and Jones in Detroit,⁶ have argued that there is little relationship between the political power of a particular neighborhood and the type of services it receives from its city government. While the data presented here do not engage directly with this issue, we would point out that the cities investigated in these studies are both at-large, politically "reformed" in structure. Our argument, of course, depends on the existence of ward-based forms of government, in which the population (and electoral) compositions of particular neighborhoods effect "who governs." This is not the case in at-large systems, and the model we propose, therefore, should be of less importance in such a setting. But for ward-based urban political systems, the pattern of perverse incentives should have an impact on public services.

It is more common in current American political science to argue the advantage of ward-based structures in promoting political access for new immigrant groups. While not rejecting this view, we are suggesting that ward-based structures can pose certain dangers to the political entrance of new groups. It is our position that the advantage of ward-based structures (as opposed to at-large systems) depends on the simultaneous existence of a system of incentives for participation which keeps the composition of the electorate roughly in line with the composition of the population in neighborhoods of ethnic change.

We suggested at the outset that population changes in American urban neighborhoods are nothing new, but explicitly rejected the idea that these changes

5. Robert Lineberry, Equality and Urban Policy (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977).

6. Bryan Jones, "Distributional Considerations in Models of Urban Government Service Provision," Urban Affairs Quarterly, Vol. 12 (Mar. 1977).

need to lead to neighborhood deterioration, even if the new arrivals are of lower socio-economic class than the neighborhood's "old residents." We do think, however, that the in-migration of poorer people into a neighborhood puts that community's services under greater stress than would have been true before. The new arrivals, having fewer private resources of their own, are bound to place greater demands on available collective resources. For the newly-arriving population, the move into a "changing" neighborhood usually means something of an improvement in the quality of life (and of available collective services.) Although long-standing residents may perceive service decline, newly-arrived residents will perceive service improvement. (This does not suggest that new residents will perceive services to be entirely satisfactory, only that services in the "changing" neighborhood will be better than those available in the neighborhood out of which they have just moved.)

As a result of this mix of attitudes among service receivers, attitudes among service deliverers can change for the worse. For those with ties to the long-standing community residents, the increase in service demands (rarely coupled with any increases in resources to meet these demands) means that morale will drop -- it will no longer be possible to do as good a job. In addition, the "average" level of community pressure on service deliverers to "do a good job" will at least temporarily drop off -- the newly-arrived residents, seeing that services are better than those in their old neighborhoods, will temporarily be more satisfied with those services than they "ought" to be, and will not be as insistently demanding of "excellence" from service deliverers as were those exiting residents they are replacing. If one accepts the common-sense notion that one of the components which affects quality of service delivery is the quality of services demanded by the community, then invasion and succession brings with it certain particular problems in this regard, as the demand for

"excellent" services temporarily slackens. It can be anticipated, however, that new residents will, after a time, also become dissatisfied with deteriorating services in their new neighborhood. The question is open, however, as to what they can do about this problem after deterioration has set in.)

Changing neighborhoods, therefore, suffer from the dual service-delivery problems of greater demand for services in terms of volume, and weaker demand for services in terms of quality.

Despite such strains, a healthy political system contains self-correcting mechanisms which alleviate many of the problems brought on by invasion and succession. We have put particular emphasis on the self-interest of elected officials, and their needs to keep an electorally-mobilized constituency sufficiently satisfied so that this electorate will continue to return incumbents to office. This opportunity for self-correction can erode sharply, however, when the gap between population and electorate grows too wide, and the self-interest of elected officials changes as a result.

Indeed, the self-interest of elected office-holders can become "perverse," once this gap develops. As demographic change in a neighborhood proceeds, office-holders whose political base was built on support of older neighborhood residents will see their possibilities for remaining in office as limited. Even with a substantial gap between population composition and electorate composition, the new arrivals will eventually constitute majorities of the electorate as well. Given the likelihood of "ethnic-solidarity" candidates eventually emerging from the new group, the older office holders come to recognize that they cannot remain in office indefinitely. An extensive population-electorate gap, however, can postpone this time considerably. At its final stages, such an elected official may have little incentive to do much of anything for his constituency, since he perceives his chances of continuing to hold

office as doomed anyway.

In the interim, such as office holder can retain the support of the remaining "older" residents through ethnic-solidarity appeals of his own ("They" are coming--I'm the best person to try to keep them out.") and by the provision of individualized benefits to the remnant of his older constituency. Such benefits can take the form of petty patronage (election day inspectorships are a common form of this in New York) or by the support of small-scale programs which particularly benefit his own constituency. (The process of ethnic change normally contains elements of age change as well. The "older" residents of the neighborhood are "older" in length of time in the neighborhood as well as chronological age. One "individualized" benefit an office-holder can provide to such a group are programs for the elderly of the community.)

Although older residents may be dubious about the possibilities of success in keeping out the newly-arriving groups, they are unlikely to themselves defeat their incumbent office-holders once it becomes clear that the process of ethnic change is substantially underway. Observation of neighboring communities will have convinced them that the process is probably irreversible (although some research shows this need not necessarily be so)^{6a} and their dubiousness about anybody's chances for retarding this influx makes them poor targets for insurgent appeals. Unlike the new arrivals however, older residents have had a lifetime of habituation into the electoral process, and they are unlikely to respond to their feelings of lack of efficacy by alienated withdrawal. Thus, the individualized benefits which incumbents can provide should be sufficient to retain the support of older residents, even when they too become skeptical about such office holders' effectiveness in their behalf.

6a. Charles Leven et al., op. cit.

(C) A Partial Test

Our theoretical argument is dependent upon the validity of our assertions concerning participation in the electoral process.

In the next section of this paper, we will present evidence on one of the essential aspects of our theoretical model; our assertions concerning variations in participation in the electoral process. While these assertions form only a portion of the total argument, they form an essential part of our entire model. Future work will report on the linkages between the attitudes of individual community residents, as reported in this paper, and the incentive systems which operate for neighborhood political leaders.

We have asserted that the process of recruitment into the electorate for new arrivals in changing neighborhoods does not operate as strongly as it did during earlier periods. Previous research by one of the authors of this study has demonstrated that ethnic groups in New York City showed considerable variation in their inclination to participate in political activity, and that this variation could not be explained simply by reference to variations in socio-economic status.⁷ Ethnicity is an important independent explanatory variable.

In this previous study, distinction was made between participation in politics by voting, and participation which was more "communal" in nature, and which centered on involvement in collective activity at the neighborhood level, seeking redress of (local) grievances. The study also showed that there was surprisingly little correlation between these two forms of political activity.

That finding is consistent with the theory outlined in this paper. Our

7. Dale Nelson, "Ethnic Sources of Non-Electoral Participation in an Urban Setting," Paper presented at 1977 Annual Meeting, American Political Science Association.

argument is that under present formal political arrangements, the incentives for recruiting new arrivals into conventional electoral politics are weak. Rather, the entire apparatus of "community involvement" agencies created during, and in the aftermath of the War on Poverty, as well as the distinctive political histories of different ethnic groups, contribute to a style among many new arrivals in which political activity is undertaken through collective "communal" protest, without concomitant participation in electoral politics.

We wish to argue that such a pattern of involvement is a part of the system earlier characterized as one of "perverse incentives," because it serves to deflect such protest away from those who hold formal decision-making power, and allows such individuals longer and less-challenged tenure in office. While acknowledging that protest activity (and other forms of communal but non-electoral participation) can provide some community gains, and that some resources are supplied directly to communal groups from central government funds, (and sometimes from foundation grants), we believe that the preponderance of economic resources available for distribution by the American public sector remain under the control of traditional decision-making bodies. And, as suggested earlier, to the extent that such decision-makers see themselves as insulated from the protestors, they have little incentive to be particularly responsive to such groups.

While these arguments are not themselves empirically based, many of them lend themselves to empirical test. This paper particularly focuses on our hypotheses regarding recruitment into the political process of a neighborhood as it operates today. It is useful to conduct this analysis by presenting a series of testable (and falsifiable) hypotheses about the neighborhood political process which are drawn from the theory we have presented above.

(D) Hypotheses

1. For low SES populations, especially minority ethnic group members, longer residence in a neighborhood will be associated with less satisfaction with the quality of neighborhood life and services. Newer arrivals will be more satisfied (or less dissatisfied).

Argument - We suggested at the outset that one of the factors which operates to put strain on service quality in changing neighborhoods is the attitude of newly-arriving residents. Since many such residents are moving into "changing neighborhoods" from areas of more severe deterioration, the new neighborhood (for them) will appear to be an improvement, and this distinction will be reflected in their greater satisfaction with quality of services in the new neighborhood.

2. After a period of residence, however, demands placed on service deliverers by poor minority group residents should increase.

Argument - As we indicated above, class and ethnic change in a neighborhood puts strain on its services. After the passage of an initial period of relative satisfaction with the new neighborhood (in comparison with the previous place of residence), the declining quality of services in the new neighborhood should be reflected in increasing dissatisfaction with its services as well, and increase demands on service deliverers for improved performance.

3. Older residents (politically socialized when the political machine was stronger and more visible) and longer-term community residents (recruited into political participation in this neighborhood when local political operatives had more reason to try to recruit them) vote more than younger residents and new arrivals. Even controlling for age, new minority residents should vote less frequently than do longer-term community residents.

Argument - We suggested at the outset that the strain on services in changing neighborhoods is nothing new. However, the urban political process of earlier eras had certain "self-correcting" mechanisms built into it which are now severely eroded. Chief among these was the potential sanction which could be imposed by a dissatisfied population with the power of retribution at the polls. A non-voting population, however, does not have nearly so powerful a sanction, and the "self-correcting" mechanism will not operate as before. While our data do not permit an examination of past attitudes, we can compare the political participation of newly-arriving residents and longer-term residents of today's changing neighborhoods. We are suggesting that newness in such a neighborhood will be associated with substantially less participation.

4. Newly-arriving residents are more likely to express their political needs through participation in "communal" (but non-electoral) activities.

Argument - As indicated above, we do not believe that newly-arriving residents in changing neighborhoods remain satisfied with neighborhood conditions for very long. After the period of satisfaction (in comparison to the old neighborhood) fades, such new residents will recognize deteriorating conditions and complain about them. However, such complaint is more likely now than in previous periods to be channelled into purely non-electoral forms. Without the channels of recruitment into electoral politics which operated in the past, but with a considerable array of non-electoral "community action" organizations presenting opportunities for protest, newer residents who are dissatisfied with neighborhood conditions and who seek a forum for expressing such grievances are more likely to be led into non-electoral forms. We are not suggesting that older residents will not use forms of political activity in addition to voting, but rather that such residents, if they do participate in protest activity, are far less likely to do so without simultaneously being

involved in electoral politics as well.

5. In addition to predicting such a variation on the basis of length of neighborhood residence, we would also expect to find variation among ethnic groups as well.

Argument - Previous research has shown that ethnicity is an important (and independent) explanatory variable in accounting for differences in forms of political participation. Minority-group members are more likely than white ethnics, we hypothesize, to be drawn into the communal, but non-electoral style. One reason for this variation, is that these groups were the target populations for organizations begun during the War on Poverty which reinforced such styles.

Although predicting a variation between whites and non-whites, we also expect variation among minority ethnic groups as well. We would anticipate that the pattern described in hypothesis five to be less true for blacks than for other minority ethnic groups.

Argument - The civil-rights activism of the 1960's, especially but not exclusively in the South, put considerable emphasis on access to the franchise. This emphasis should "spill over" into communities without explicit histories of denial of the right to vote. Although we have suggested that local elected officials of changing neighborhoods have little incentive to register new arrivals, the national black civil-rights movement, and publicity about its voter-registration efforts, served as a partial substitute voter recruitment device for some blacks.

The following sections of this paper present our data on each of these hypotheses. We will then discuss certain counter-arguments which have been advanced, and comment on the implications of our findings for further studies of the process of neighborhood change in American cities.

(E) Data Base and Research Site

The data base for examining the hypotheses stated above is a 1973 survey of 466 residents of the Washington Heights-Inwood section of Manhattan.⁸ Manhattan in general and Washington Heights-Inwood in particular provide useful locales for testing the hypotheses of this study. Washington Heights-Inwood, a "neighborhood" of approximately 200,000 residents occupying the northern tip of Manhattan, is a good example of a New York City neighborhood undergoing rapid class and ethnic changes in the past several decades. Although whites (mostly Jews and Irish) still constitute approximately half of the area's population, they tend to be much older than minority group residents. Data from one study of the neighborhood show that 47% of the Jewish and 50% of the Irish residents were 60 years or older. By way of contrast, only 32% of the blacks and 6% of the hispanics were 60 years of age or older.⁹ Not surprisingly, the older white residents comprise an inordinately large percentage of the longer-term residents of the area. A full 64% of the whites in the Ethnic

8. One of the present authors, Dale Nelson, was codirector of the survey, which was part of the Ethnic Block Project of the New York City Neighborhood Study, and was conducted under the auspices of the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University. The New York City Neighborhood Study was funded by Grant #GI-32427, Advanced Productivity Research and Technology Division of the Research Applied to National Needs Division (RANN), National Science Foundation.

Although the survey data to be analyzed were not collected in order to test the theory presented in this paper, the Ethnic Block Survey does contain many relevant variables for our purposes. For example, it includes questions on ethnic, class and other demographic characteristics of respondents. In addition, data were collected on length of neighborhood residence, satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the neighborhood in general, and a number of questions tap the nature and extent of political participation. The survey data, then, provide a wealth of information for examining possible sources of support for the system of "perverse incentives" described in our theory.

9. This, and all subsequent data reported on in this paper are drawn from the Washington Heights-Inwood Ethnic Block Survey.

Block Survey had lived in the neighborhood for 15 or more years, while 25% of the blacks and only 9% of the hispanics had a similar residential status. On the other end of the scale, 33% of the blacks and 60% of the hispanics lived in the neighborhood less than 5 years, while only 21% of the whites in the sample were similarly new arrivals.

The changing ethnic character of the neighborhood has also meant rapid decline in the average SES levels of neighborhood residents. While 76% of Jewish respondents in the survey and 58% of the Irish respondents had what could be termed middle class (white collar) occupations, this was true for only 37% of the blacks, 26% and 27% of the Cuban and Puerto Rican respondents, and 15% of the Dominicans.

Washington Heights-Inwood, then, exemplifies well the meaning of the concept "changing neighborhood"; thus, we would expect the theory presented in this paper (and the hypotheses derived from it) to be supported by our data.

(F) Analysis

Hypothesis #1: For low SES populations, especially minority ethnic group members, longer residence in a neighborhood will be associated with less satisfaction with the quality of neighborhood life and services. New arrivals to the neighborhood will be more satisfied (or less dissatisfied).

As argued earlier, for the newly arriving population the move into a changing neighborhood usually means something of an improvement in the quality of life and of available collective resources. But even when there is no objective basis for believing that the new neighborhood is better, "cognitive dissonance theory" would suggest that many new arrivals will be favorably disposed toward their new home; otherwise they would face the dilemma of having made the "wrong" choice in moving. Respondents in the Ethnic Block Study were asked in an open-ended format what they liked and disliked about their neighborhood.

From their responses, an overall three-point "neighborhood satisfaction index" was constructed, ranging from "negative" to "positive." Table 1A reports the results for all respondents by their length of neighborhood residence.

Table 1A

Orientation to Neighborhood by Length
of Neighborhood Residence (N=434)
(in percentages)

Neighborhood Orientation	0-5 years	6-15 years	16 + years
positive	56.9	55.3	39.9
neutral	23.3	27.2	29.1
negative	19.8	17.5	31.0
	100% (172)	100% (114)	100% (148)

The data in Table 1A support our expectation that new arrivals will be more satisfied than longer-term residents with their neighborhood, with the greatest differences existing between those who have lived in the neighborhood 15 years or less, and those with 16 or more years in residence. About 56% of the former exhibit positive feelings while only about 40% of the latter do so. On the other end of the scale, about 18% of the newer arrivals express an essentially negative orientation to the neighborhood, while 31% of the long term residents are negative.

Because the hypothesis singles out minority group members as being increasingly negative toward their neighborhood as time goes by, Table 1B provides for comparison between whites and minorities of the relationship between length of residence and neighborhood satisfaction.

Table 1B

Orientation to Neighborhood by Length of
Residence, Controlling for Ethnicity (N=434)
(in percentages)

Neighborhood Orientation	Whites*			Minorities**		
	0-5 yrs	6-15 yrs	16 + yrs	0-5 yrs	6-15 yrs	16 + yrs
positive	57.9	71.4	43.1	56.7	50.0	28.1
neutral	36.8	17.9	27.6	19.4	30.2	34.4
negative	5.3	10.7	29.3	23.9	19.8	37.5
	100% (38)	100% (28)	100% (116)	100% (134)	100% (86)	100% (32)

* Includes 69 Jews, 58 Irish, and 55 other White Europeans

** Includes 63 Blacks, 78 Cubans, 61 Dominicans, and 50 Puerto Ricans

Table 1B provides interesting data to interpret in light of our hypothesis about levels of neighborhood satisfaction. First, whereas both white and minority new arrivals are about equal in positive affect toward the neighborhood, new minority arrivals exhibit higher negative attitudes than whites (23.9% to 5.3%, respectively). It may be that internal racial segregation in the neighborhood and/or the communal and political dominance of whites lead newly arriving whites to perceive the neighborhood as "stable." Some minority new arrivals may react negatively to a ghettoization process similar to that existing in their previous neighborhoods. Initially, at any rate, as length of residence increases whites become more rather than less positively disposed to the neighborhood, while minorities become less positive (or more accurately, increasingly neutral). Thus, 71.4% of the whites living in the neighborhood 6 to 15 years have a positive attitude toward the neighborhood, compared to only 58% of the newly arriving whites. For minorities, among the very recent arrivals 56.7% are positive while only 50% of those in the 6 to 15 year range

are positive. Lastly, longer-term white residents (i.e., those residing for 15 or more years) are much more positive toward the neighborhood than longer-term minority residents (i.e., 43.1% to 28.1%, respectively). Similarly, 37.5% of the long term minority residents are negatively disposed while 29.3% of the long term whites exhibit negative attitudes. Overall, minority group residents' attitude toward the neighborhood fit the predictions made in Hypothesis #1. For instance, as length of residence increases, satisfaction with the quality of life and services declines for minorities. That this pattern is not an inherent component of longer residence in a neighborhood can be seen by contrasting the findings for minority residents with those for whites. Whites do not demonstrate the steady decline in positive feelings toward the neighborhood so clearly associated with longer residence for minorities.

Hypothesis #2: As length of residence in the neighborhood increases, demands placed on service delivers by poor minority group residents will also increase.

After the initial high satisfaction with the neighborhood declines and as familiarity with private and public institutions improves, we expect minority group members to make greater demands on public service delivers. In particular, a rise in "communal" nonelectoral participation is predicted. By "communal" we mean that the individual participant is acting in concert with (or on behalf of) members of the wider community. At the neighborhood level there are many acts that fall under the rubric "communal political participation." Four of them are examined: contacting public officials or agencies about neighborhood problems, signing neighborhood petitions, attending community protest meetings, and joining community organizations to deal with neighborhood problems. Table 2A reports the percentage of respondents who have performed at least one of these four communal acts by length of residence in the neighborhood, controlling for ethnic background:

Table 2A

Ever a Communal Participant by Length of
Neighborhood Residence, Controlling for
Ethnicity (N=434) (in percentages)

Communal Participant	Whites			Minorities		
	0-5 yrs	6-15 yrs	16 + yrs	0-5 yrs	6-15 yrs	16 + yrs
Yes	50.0	50.0	54.3	35.8	40.7	53.1
No	50.0	50.0	45.7	64.2	59.3	46.9
	100%(38)	100%(28)	100% (116)	100%(134)	100%(86)	100%(32)

The data in Table 2A tend to support the assertion made in Hypothesis #2 that the longer the length of residence the greater the level of demands placed on public service delivers. While only about 36% of the minority new arrivals have performed at least one communal act, approximately 53% of those residing in the neighborhood for 16 years or more are communal activists. It should also be noted that long term minority residents are just as likely to be communal activists as long term white residents. However, once again there are significant differences between whites and minorities. Unlike minority residents, length of residence has little or no impact on levels of communal political activity for whites -- that is, newly arriving whites are about equally likely to perform at least one communal act as long term white residents. And although our theory does not predict white-minority differences it is interesting to note that Hypothesis #2 is confirmed only for minorities.

The gross distinction made between whites and minorities in Table 2A actually glosses over important differences between minority groups in the impact that length of residence has on their communal participation. Examining the relationship between length of residence and communal participation separately for blacks and hispanics highlights such minority group differences:

Table 2B

Ever a Communal Participation by Length of
Neighborhood Residence, Controlling for
Minority Group Membership (N=252)

Communal Participant	Blacks			Hispanics		
	0-5 yrs	6-15 yrs	16 + yrs	0-5 yrs	6-15 yrs	16 + yrs
Yes	52.4	61.5	56.3	32.7	31.7	50.0
No	47.6	38.5	43.7	67.3	68.3	50.0
	100%(21)	100%(26)	100%(16)	100%(113)	100%(60)	100%(16)

The data in Table 2B demonstrate clearly the strong communalist nature of black participation. Although hispanics are at similar SES levels to blacks, their communal activity is lower than blacks, even when length of residence is controlled. Blacks also exhibit higher levels of communal participation than whites (see Table 2A above) at all three levels of length of residence. These high levels of communal participation among blacks, when compared both to whites and hispanics, would seem to suggest a strong impact for Great Society programs on the style of black political participation.

Internal ethnic variation notwithstanding, it is clear that the data presented in the above two tables provide strong support for Hypothesis #2. That overall demand for public services increases with length of neighborhood residence among minorities can be concluded with confidence.

Hypothesis #3: Older residents and longer-term community residents vote more than younger residents and new arrivals. Even when controlling for age, new minority group residents will vote less frequently than do longer term residents (minority or white).

As discussed earlier, newly arriving poor ethnic groups no longer have the incentives that white neighborhood residents had to vote and participate in electoral politics in general. Earlier residents were attracted to electoral

politics by "side benefits" (potential or actual) under the control of political machines. Once habituated into voting, longer-term white residents continue to vote at much higher rates than other residents. Thus we expect both age and length of neighborhood residents to have a strong positive association with local voting levels. Furthermore, if our thesis about the effects of being socialized to neighborhood participation is correct, longer-term residents should vote more often than new arrivals even when age is held constant -- that is, length of residence should have an independent effect on local voting.

Respondents of the Ethnic Block Survey were asked whether they had voted in a local election in the past few years as a means of dealing with neighborhood problems. Table 3A presents evidence for the first part of Hypothesis #3, namely that age is positively associated with local level voting. (Due to citizenship restrictions on voting, only American citizens are included in the table):

Table 3A

Voted in Recent Local Election
By Age (N=326) (in %)

Voted	18-29 years	30-59 years	60 + years
Yes	55.8	75.2	86.4
No	44.2	24.8	13.6
	100% (77)	100% (161)	100% (88)

Gamma = .451

A strong linear association between age and voting can be observed in Table 3A above. The strength of the association is indicated by the size of the gamma (.451). Particularly strong is the difference between young and old residents: only 56% of the former and 86% of the latter have voted in a recent election. Older residents, then, are much more likely than younger residents

to vote.

In Table 3B below the relationship between length of residence and voting is explored. Again, non-citizens are excluded from the table:

Table 3B

Voted in Recent Local Election
By Length of Neighborhood Residence
(N=326) (in %)

Voted	0-5 years	6-15 years	16 + years
Yes	59.6	68.2	85.7
No	40.4	31.8	14.3
	100% (94)	100% (85)	100% (147)

Gamma = .454

Based on the evidence in Table 3B the second part of Hypothesis #3 can also be confirmed. Long-term residents are considerably more likely to vote than newly arriving citizens. Approximately 86% of the long term residents have recently voted, whereas only about 60% of the new arrivals have done so. The positive gamma of .454 indicates how strong the association is. But the fact that age and length of residence are strongly correlated with each other (Pearson's $r = .55$) suggests the possibility that the relationship between length of residence and voting is spurious, *i.e.*, due solely to the correlation between age and length of residence. Table 3C presents data to test for possible spuriousness by examining the relationship between length of residence and voting when age is held constant. Again only U.S. citizens are included in the analysis.

Table 3C

Voted in Recent Local Election by
Length of Neighborhood Residence,
Holding Age Constant (N=326) (in %)

Voted	18-29 yrs old		30-59 yrs old		60 + yrs old	
	0-15 yrs	16 + yrs	0-15 yrs	16 + yrs	0-15 yrs	16 + yrs
Yes	49.2	81.3	70.4	82.5	75.0	89.7
No	50.8	18.8	29.6	17.5	25.0	10.3
	100%(61)	100%(16)	100%(98)	100%(63)	100%(20)	100%(68)
	Part. Gamma =.634		Part. Gamma=.329		Part. Gamma=.488	

The results of Table 3C strongly suggest that the association between voting and length of neighborhood residence was a true rather than spurious one. Age exhibits a specification effect on length of residence. Specifically, the table shows that length of residence effects the voting rates of young people more than middle-aged people and somewhat more than older people. But in none of the three age categories is length of residence unrelated to voting. Thus, despite the age of an individual, the longer one resides in the neighborhood the more likely one is to vote. The third part of Hypothesis #3, then, is confirmed by our data.

Hypothesis #4: Newly arriving minority residents are more likely to express their political needs through participation in "communal" rather than electoral activities. Although they may participate in communal activities, longer-term white residents are less likely to do so without simultaneously being involved in electoral politics as well.

The theoretical argument underlying this hypothesis is that a "communal" participation style has been nurtured and reinforced during the War on Poverty period of the 1960's and early 1970's. We therefore expect minority participants

to place greater emphasis on communal activity than voting. While older white residents may also participate heavily in communal activity, they are much more likely to vote than minority group members. Since Washington Heights-Inwood is a "changing neighborhood" the influx of minorities into the neighborhood, is likely to depress neighborhood voting rates and consequently to decrease pressure on elected officials to respond to new service demands. The system of "perverse incentives" is thus supported (or at least not countered) because elected officials are relatively free to present themselves as "powerless" to their constituents without fear that new minority residents will vote them out of office. While communal participation may lead to some improvements in the quality of neighborhood service delivery, we openly question whether communal participation is sufficient to hold elected officials accountable.

Table 4A provides evidence to support our assertion that, among newer arrivals, participation tends to be communal rather than electoral in style. The dependent variable, "participation pattern", is composed of three categories: 1. those who participate in communal activity but do not vote, 2. voters who do not participate in communal activity, and 3. those who vote and participate in communal activity. Nonparticipants (i.e., those who neither vote nor participate communally) and aliens are excluded from Table 4A:

Table 4A

Participation Patterns Among Community Activists
By Length of Neighborhood Residence (N=267) (in %)

Participation Pattern	0-5 years	6-15 years	16 + years
Communal Only	16.4	12.1	6.0
Voting Only	29.9	36.4	40.3
Communal + Vote	56.7	51.5	53.7
	100% (67)	100% (66)	100% (134)

The results in Table 4A lend support to the first part of Hypothesis #4, i.e., longer term residents tend to specialize more in voting than new arrivals. About 40% of those activists living in the neighborhood for more than 15 years are voting specialists, while only 6% of such residents are communal specialists. On the other hand, of the newly arriving activists about 16% are communal specialists while only about 27% are voting specialists. However, among new arrivals voting specialists still outnumber their communalist counterparts, so the data do not fully support the hypothesis.

The main thrust of Hypothesis #4, though, focuses on minority groups. That is, newly arriving minority group members are expected to place greater emphasis on communal activity, and for there to be fewer longer-term minority residents who specialize in voting when compared to whites. Thus, in Table 4B the relationship between ethnic group membership and participation style is displayed, and again includes only U.S. citizens and community political participants:

Table 4B

Participation Patterns Among Community Activists
By Ethnic Group Membership (N=267) (in %)

Participation Pattern	Whites	Minorities
Communal Only	5.1	17.3
Voting Only	40.1	30.0
Communal + Vote	54.8	52.7
	100% (157)	100% (110)

Although the relationship is only a moderate one, Table 4B does show that white activists are more likely to specialize in voting and less likely to be communal specialists than minority group members. Thus, the first part of Hypothesis #4 is supported, but the evidence is not particularly strong.

The combination of ethnic group membership and length of residence may provide insights into participation styles that neither can contribute separately. Our hypothesis states that newly arriving minority group members will be more likely to exhibit a communal style than whites (newly arrived or long-term residents). Table 4C presents the relationship between length of neighborhood residence and participation style, controlling for ethnic group membership. As before, Table 4C includes only U.S. citizens and political participants.

Table 4C

Participation Patterns Among Community Activists
By Length of Neighborhood Residence, Controlling
For Ethnic Group Membership (N=267)

Participation Pattern	Whites			Minorities		
	0-5 yrs	6-15 yrs	16 + yrs	0-5 yrs	6-15 yrs	16 + yrs
Com. Only	0	9.0	5.5	26.9	13.6	8.0
Vote Only	30.8	41.0	42.2	24.3	34.1	32.0
Com. + Vote	69.2	50.0	52.3	48.8	52.3	60.0
	100%(26)	100%(22)	100%(109)	100%(41)	100%(44)	100%(25)

The results in Table 4C confirm our hunch that combining the effects of ethnicity and length of residence would add a new dimension to the analysis of participation style among participants. It is particularly noteworthy that none of the newly-arriving white activists are communal specialists, while about 27% of minority newly arriving activists are. As time goes by white activists become increasingly specialized to voting and there is a slight increase in the number of communal activists in their rank. The proportion of white activists who participate in both communal activity and voting actually declines over time, i.e., from 69.2% to 52.3%. Minority activists, on the other hand, follow a different pattern. The proportion of activists who are communal specialists declines

rapidly over time while voting specialization increases moderately as does the proportion of minority activists who perform both voting and communal acts. As predicted, longer-term white activists are more likely to specialize in voting than minority activists (i.e., 42% to 32%.)

So far the empirical support for Hypothesis #4 has been mixed. For example, newly arriving minority activists are only slightly more likely to specialize in communal activity than voting (26.9% to 24.3%, respectively). On the more positive side, there is about an 18% difference in voting specialization between long-term white resident activists and their short-term minority counterparts (42.2% to 24.3%, respectively). In fact, in all residence categories white activists are more likely to specialize in voting.

But the focus on participants only has tended to obscure the fact that a much greater proportion of whites actually vote. Based on a probability sample of the neighborhood, we estimate that approximately 45% of the neighborhood population is of white European background. Using our own sample (the Ethnic Block survey sample) to estimate the white percentage of the voting population shows that while whites comprise approximately 45% of the area's population, they constitute at least 70% of the area's voters. One reason, of course, for the lower percentage of minority voters is the large proportion of noncitizens among the hispanics. About 40% of minorities in general, and 65.4% of the Cuban and 82% of the Dominicans are not U.S. citizens. But citizenship cannot fully account for lower minority rates. Even when U.S. citizenship is controlled for only 60.3% of the minority group members have voted in a recent local election compared to 85.1% of the white citizens. It is also true that as length of residence increases for minority citizens, the voting gap between them and white citizens narrows, but it is not completely eliminated. Among new arrivals, 78.8% of the white citizens vote compared to 49.2% of the minority

citizens; among longer-term residents 88.8% of the white citizens but only 74.2% of the minority citizens vote. Thus, even though voting rates for longer term white and minority activists are essentially the same (94.5% to 92.8%), the fact that longer term white residents vote more than their minority counterparts means that whites will continue to exercise voting power that is disproportionate to their share of the neighborhood population.

Hypothesis #5: Blacks will be especially likely to participate in communal political activity. They will also vote more often than hispanics; thus, differences in voting levels will exist between minority groups.

The assumption that blacks will exhibit different participation patterns than other minority groups is based on the fact that simultaneous with the War on Poverty, black civil rights leaders and organizations have placed great emphasis on gaining access to the electoral franchise. We expect that the salience granted to voting will translate into higher voting rates for blacks when compared to hispanics. Table 5A presents the voting rates for black and hispanic citizens, and for comparative purposes the voting rates of specific white ethnic groups.

Table 5A

Voted in Recent Local Election by Ethnic Identification (N=326) (in %)									
Voted	Jews	Irish	Oth. Europ.	Tot. White	Black	Cub.	Dom	PR	Tot. Hisp.
Yes	85.3	91.1	78.4	85.1	66.7	74.1	27.3	52	55.7
No	14.7	8.9	21.6	14.9	33.3	25.9	72.7	48	44.3
	100%(68)	100%(56)	100%(51)	100%(175)	100%(63)	100%(27)	100%(11)	100%(50)	100%(88)

The most striking thing about the data displayed in Table 5A is the extraordinarily wide variation in voting levels between individual ethnic groups.

the product of a realistic alienation from formal politics -- only protest and/or community organization is a useful vehicle for the accomplishment of the social goals of poorer people. There has been considerable debate over the programmatic utility of voting, and we will not add to that argument at this point. Rather, we wish to engage with the feelings of the participants (and non-participants) themselves.

Our data permit an examination not only of the forms of political participation engaged in our research neighborhood, they also allow us to investigate the attitudes toward the electoral process that its residents hold. Our sixth hypothesis is that:

Hypothesis #6: Minority group members will not differ significantly from whites in their beliefs about the effectiveness of voting; strong majorities of non-voting minorities will also believe that voting is effective.

It can be argued that minority group members exhibit low voting rates simply because they feel that the government in general and the electoral system in particular are unresponsive to their needs. Rather than being mobilized to communal participation and voting by War on Poverty type programs, blacks and hispanics make a conscious choice not to vote, since it is seen as inefficacious for them.¹¹

This explanation of low voting rates among minorities runs counter to our own. We have maintained that whites (and older whites in particular) vote often because they were socialized to politics in a machine-dominated era when a strong connection could be drawn between voting and concrete benefits that might accrue to neighborhood residents. Thus, whites of an earlier era drew

11. For a critique of this view, see Charles Hamilton, "Political Costs and Benefits of Participation," in Herrington Bryce (ed.) Urban Governance and Minorities (New York: Praeger, 1976) pp. 146-150).

a link between voting and the accountability of elected officials.

Two questions from the Ethnic Block Survey will aid in testing the "alienation thesis." The first reads as follows: "How much do you feel that having elections makes the government in New York City pay attention to what people think--a good deal, some, not very much, or not at all?" Table 6A below reports the answers to this question, broken down by ethnic group membership:

Table 6A

Perceived Influence of Elections On Local Government
By Ethnic Group Membership (N=434) (in %)

Perceived Influence	Whites	Minorities
High	28.0	32.5
Moderate	37.4	36.1
Low	28.6	18.7
Very Low	6.0	12.7
	100% (182)	100% (252)

The data in Table 6A provide strong support for our contention that "alienation" is not a prime source for lower voting rates among minorities than whites. Minorities are, if anything, slightly more positive than whites in their assessment of the impact of local elections although the differences are not large. Minorities are more likely to give a high rating to elections but also slightly more likely to give a very low rating. Both are equally likely to rate elections as moderately effective, whereas whites are somewhat more likely to rate them as low (i.e., 28.6% to 18.7%, respectively). In short, the data in Table 6A do not lead to the conclusion that minorities are especially alienated when compared to whites.

The second question from the Ethnic Block Survey focuses more specifically on the act of voting. Respondents were presented with nine different strategies for attempting to influence New York City Government, one of which was "voting." The question reads as follows: "There are many ways that people may try to influence the government in New York City. Here are several ways that people attempt to do this. Which of these ways do you think would be effective?...Do you think that voting would be effective?" Table 6B reports the results broken down by ethnic group membership:

Table 6B

Perceived Effectiveness of Local Voting
By Ethnic Group Membership (N-434) (in%)

Voting Effective	Whites	Minorities
Yes	87.4	88.9
No	12.6	11.1
	100% (182)	100% (252)

Gamma = \pm .067

The findings in Table 6B are clearly consistent with the data in Table 6A. Overwhelming majorities of whites and minorities perceive voting as an effective strategy for influencing local government, and differences between whites and minorities prove to be insignificant. When U.S. citizens were isolated for analysis the findings were essentially the same: 87.4% of the minority citizens thought voting was effective, compared to 86.9% of the white citizens. Citizenship, then had no influence on our findings.

Before concluding this section of the paper, it might prove useful to explore possible differences between voters and nonvoters in their perceptions of the effectiveness of voting. If the "alienation thesis" is valid, one would expect nonvoters to be much less likely to believe in the effectiveness of voting than

voters. Table 6C displays data on the perceived effectiveness of voting, broken down by ethnic group membership and whether the respondent has recently voted in a local election. Once again only U.S. citizens are included in the data:

Table 6C

Perceived Effectiveness of Local Voting By
Recent Voting, Controlling for Ethnic Group
Membership (N=326) (in %)

Voting Effective	Whites		Minorities	
	Voter	Nonvoter	Voter	Nonvoter
Yes	87.9	80.8	92.3	80.0
No	12.1	19.2	7.7	20.0
	100% (149)	100% (26)	100% (91)	100% (60)
	Part. Gamma=.268		Part. Gamma=.500	

Although the above data provide some support for the alienation thesis, the evidence is not strong. It is true that nonvoters are less favorably disposed toward voting than voters; but nonvoting whites and minorities are equally likely to support voting as an effective strategy (80.8% to 80% respectively). The fact that about 80% of the nonvoters (minority or otherwise) believe that local voting is effective suggests that alienation is not a major factor in explaining nonvoting.

An examination of the findings of this section of the paper tends to confirm the assertions made in Hypothesis #6. Strong majorities of both white and minority residents express support for the efficacy of voting. That minority group members tend to vote less frequently than whites cannot therefore be simply a function of alienation. Nor can it be only the result of the low SES levels of minority groups, since there are major differences between minority

groups in voting levels.

These variations demonstrate how wide a gap there can be between perceptions of the utility of a political act and actual use of it. What has been shown is that there is a broad consensus on the utility of voting in our test neighborhood, but considerable intergroup variation in actual use of the franchise. This gap reinforces our view of the need to examine the incentives for participation in order to gain a clearer understanding of variations in participation. Our theoretical argument suggests such an explanation, and our examination of "alienation" counter-explanations leads us to reject them.

(H) Conclusion

At the outset of this paper we outlined a variety of theories which have been advanced to account for neighborhood deterioration in American cities. We then suggested an additional "urban-political" explanation. We have presented data which provides a partial test of the validity of our explanation. Although this particular paper only examines the attitudes of rank-and-file citizens, we have shown that these attitudes take a form consistent with our theory.

Our theory suggests that the existence of attitudes such as those described here changes the incentive systems which operate for local elected officials.¹² In future studies we hope to show that local political elites are cognizant of these factors, and do take advantage of the patterns of "perverse incentives" which we have described. It is not our suggestion that this perspective provides the sole explanation for our current urban problems, but we are arguing

12. These problems are particularly acute when we are considering the relationships between white elected officials and minority populations. For a description of the variation in white officials' perceptions of this relationship, See Andrew Glassberg, "Precinct Campaigning in an Urban Ghetto," in David Abbott and Edward Rogowsky (eds.) Political Parties (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1971). Pp. 139-159.

that any attempt to deal comprehensively with our urban difficulties needs to take a realistic look at the problems raised in this research.

It has been our contention that one aspect of neighborhood deterioration, often unrecognized, is the variation in participation between new and old neighborhood residents. Rather than seeing this variation as simply a product of differences in socio-economic status, or of a conscious choice not to participate in "irrelevant" institutions, we have argued that the political structure of a community matters.

Particularly in ward-based political systems, there is a problem in motivating participation of new arrivals in the post-machine era. The United States does not mandate participation in elections, and when the local political structure does not provide any specific stimuli for participation, it may simply atrophy. In a nation where approximately 20% of the population moves every year, we need to be particularly attentive to the motivations (or lack of motivations) not only for initial political participation, but for continued participation (and voter re-registration) following each move. What is suggested in this paper, is that these incentives are weak for poor new arrivals in changing urban neighborhoods.

The data presented here suggest that new arrivals do behave differently in their political participation from older community residents. Building on this finding, we have suggested that elected officials take note of this non-participation, and that their own incentive systems change as a result.¹³ Future work will present evidence in the behaviors of these "neighborhood elites."

13. For a discussion of the uses (and limitations) of protest activity not directly tied to the use of the vote, see Michael Lipsky, Protest in City Politics (Chicago, Rand McNally, 1970). It is our contention, of course, that in the types of neighborhoods we describe, minority groups need not be "relatively powerless," (Lipsky, p. 181) but could be using the vote more effectively if rates of participation among new arrivals were greater.

While we have refrained from specific policy suggestions in this paper, it is obvious that we think that any program aimed at reversing neighborhood deterioration should be sensitive to the need for providing incentives to neighborhood residents to participate in the formal electoral process. This would be the best check on the pattern of "perverse incentives" which we believe operates now in many American cities.

At least since James Madison, political scientists have understood the need to have institutional forms structured in such a way so that the ambition of political elites operates constructively. It is our contention that the pattern of attitudes and actions described in this paper makes the ambition of local elected officials operate in a socially counterproductive way. Rather than attempt to eliminate such ambition, Madison advised us, we ought to restructure our institutions,

"ambition must be made to counteract ambition. The interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place."¹⁴

This advice seems to us to be as valid today for American cities as it was almost two hundred years ago for the nation as a whole.

14. James Madison, "Federalist #51," in Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay, The Federalist (edited by Benjamin Wright) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961) p. 356,