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Linking social capital and organizational ties: How different types of neighborhood organizations broker resources for the urban poor

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ABSTRACT

Recent studies have called attention to how neighborhood organizations can help people in low-income neighborhoods who face risks of social exclusion. This study examines how different types of neighborhood organizations broker resources for the urban poor. We investigate how neighborhood organizations employ linking social capital (vertical networks) and organizational ties (horizontal networks). Furthermore, we discuss the process of organizational brokerage and through which mechanisms neighborhood organizations make resources accessible. Qualitative field work was conducted in a faith-based organization, a professional welfare organization and a volunteer organization. Our findings demonstrate that organizations broker resources in different ways, and that mechanisms of organizational brokerage complement each other. We further show how neighborhood organizations play an important role in connecting people from low-income neighborhoods to main institutions such as the labor market and welfare bureaucracies. We conclude with a discussion of the implications for neighborhood effects studies and policy, and what the study's limitations are.

KEYWORDS

Neighborhood organizations; linking social capital; organizational brokerage; organizational ties; urban poverty

Introduction

Even though there is extensive literature on inequality in social capital, it has recently been argued that the role of neighborhood organizations in the creation of social capital for especially the urban poor remains underexplored (Allard & Small, 2013). Previous research has documented that supportive networks among low-income people are essential to "get by" (Edin & Lein, 1997; De Souza Briggs, 1998), but little is known about *how* such networks originate. In particular, more research is needed on the organizational dimension that structures the process of social capital formation (Allard & Small, 2013; Nast & Blokland, 2014; Small & Gose, 2020). Many studies start from the premise that inequality in social capital exists and then mostly focus on either the factors that explain this inequality or its consequences. In effect, the question of how social capital is formed, and the implications for inequality, is often ignored (Small, 2009).

Neighborhood organizations are not only important for helping low-income people to get by, but they also connect people to main institutions. As McQuarrie and Marwell (2009, p. 257) put it: "Organizations are the medium through which systemic processes reach the street corner; they make state and market resources available, socialize individuals into a society beyond the neighborhood, and constitute social identities that have relevance beyond the neighborhood." In this paper we will therefore focus on social capital that links people to the wider societal context. This issue is related to what Small (2009) calls *organizational brokerage*, that is, the process through which organizations make resources

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available for their participants (cf., Obstfeld et al., 2014; Stovel & Shaw, 2012). Two relevant forms of social capital at the level of neighborhood organizations are *linking social capital* (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004)—linkage to bodies with relative power over an organization (vertical networks)—and *organizational ties* (Small, 2009)—linkage to other organizations in the vicinity (horizontal networks).

Providing more insight into how organizations create social capital for low-income groups is important for three reasons. First, considerable variation exists among low-income neighborhoods in the extent and forms of social capital that residents have (e.g., Custers & Engbersen, 2022; Gilster, 2017; Hays, 2015). Neighborhood effects studies suggest that the presence of neighborhood organizations can explain why some low-income neighborhoods have more social capital than others, since neighborhoods with more organizations offer more opportunities for accessing social capital. Yet, studies that quantify the effect of neighborhood organizations (Curley, 2010; Gilster, 2017; Snel et al., 2018) provide little insight into how neighborhood organizations create social capital. For instance, through their organizational practices and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Understanding these mechanisms is likely to produce better theoretical explanations as to why the presence of organizations contributes to the development of social capital—or why not in some cases (Klinenberg, 2015; Small & Gose, 2020).

In addition, organizations such as faith-based organizations, welfare organizations and volunteer organizations serve different groups of people and vary in their possession of linking social capital and organizational ties (e.g., De Hart et al., 2013; Marwell, 2007; Vermeulen et al., 2016; Wuthnow, 2002). Quantitative neighborhood effects studies often consider to what extent organizational density or the aggregate of different organizations affect social capital, but rarely account for how such effects might differ per organizational type. Therefore, we shed light on how different types of neighborhood organizations help residents using their social capital.

Second, from a policy perspective it is useful to study what neighborhood organizations can do to help vulnerable populations. Neighborhood organizations are especially relevant to the urban poor as they may mitigate the disadvantaging effects of inequalities in the labor market, changing welfare policies, and restricted access to housing (see, Oosterlynck et al., 2013). Governments frequently struggle in accessing the target group of their services, as vulnerable people are difficult to reach and often mistrust government employees (Snel et al., 2022). Neighborhood organizations, on the other hand, tend to have intimate knowledge of local dynamics (Marwell, 2007). For this reason, governments regularly collaborate with local organizations (Smith & Lipsky, 1993). By studying how people access social capital through neighborhood organizations, we can also better understand what the advantages are for policymakers to collaborate with neighborhood organizations.

Finally, the current literature on the relation between neighborhood organizations and social capital is predominantly U.S.-based (e.g., Marwell, 2007; McRoberts, 2003; Small & Gose, 2020). In the European—and notably Dutch—context, several studies have documented the relevance of social capital in low-income neighborhoods for residents (Baines & Hardill, 2008; Pinkster, 2007, 2009; Van Eijk, 2010) and to what extent this social capital is related to the presence of neighborhood organizations (Dekker et al., 2010; Nast & Blokland, 2014; Vermeulen et al., 2012). However, they rarely specify the mechanisms that explain how neighborhood organizations affect the social capital of poor residents, even though Small (2009) has identified mechanisms such as validation, storage, referral, and collaboration. This study tries to fill this gap by examining how these mechanisms operate in three neighborhood organizations, which are located in low-income neighborhoods in the Dutch city of Rotterdam. Our study includes a faith-based, a welfare and a volunteer organization. Qualitative fieldwork was conducted in these organizations by interviewing the leaders and participants. The research question is: How do different types of neighborhood organizations broker resources for people in low-income neighborhoods through their linking social capital and organizational ties?

Social capital and its different forms

The concept of social capital has been debated across a wide range of literature and often invokes questions about its different forms and exact meaning. Social capital is generally used to explain why inequalities in

access to resources exist between people, neighborhoods and societies or why some communities function better than others (Halpern, 2005). One of the most common distinctions in social capital is that between bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000). Bonding social capital refers to social ties between similar individuals, for instance, in terms of ethnicity and class, and is important to foster social support and reciprocity. Bridging social capital are social ties between people from different backgrounds and can be used for accessing resources beyond one's inner circle. Similar concepts are "strong" and "weak" ties (Granovetter, 1973) and "getting by" and "getting ahead" (De Souza Briggs, 1998).

Linking social capital refers to networks and institutionalized relationships between unequal actors and captures to that what extent actors in subordinate positions might obtain resources from formal institutions that have relative power of them (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). It is different from bridging social capital because it denotes inequality in power between actors. The relevance of linking social capital has been demonstrated in different contexts (e.g., Agger & Jensen, 2015; Firth et al., 2011; Hawkins & Maurer, 2010).

It is debated whether social capital is a property of individuals or communities, or both (Carpiano, 2006; DeFilippis, 2001; Halpern, 2005). In line with scholars such as Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), and Lin (2001), we view social capital as individuals having access to (potential) resources whereby access results from being embedded in structured networks and the opportunity to mobilize resources. Resources thereby comprise a broad range of elements, such as services, material goods, information, and emotional support (see, Small & Gose, 2020). We think this view emphasizes that individual differences in social capital arise from being differently embedded in networks that are shaped and maintained by institutions and organizations.

This conception aligns with our focus on how organizations broker resources for individual participants. We treat linking social capital as a property of neighborhood organizations that can be used to (indirectly) benefit individual members. Neighborhood organizations generally need linking social capital to obtain funding and other essential resources in order to survive and conduct their daily operations (cf., Ahmadi, 2017; Vermeulen et al., 2016). Since we assume that neighborhood organizations provide services that positively contribute to the lives of their members, individuals indirectly gain from the organization's linking social capital. Members can also profit from the organization's linking social capital in a more direct way, for instance, when an organization links individuals to political representatives (Marwell, 2007; Wuthnow, 2002).

Next to linking social capital, we use the notion of organizational ties (Small, 2009). Organizational ties are connections organizations have to other organizations, which can be used to broker resources for members. For example, Small (2009) shows how childcare centers help parents gain knowledge about child nutrition by putting them in touch with an expert from another organization. Organizational ties are different from bridging ties, since organizational ties stress the process of organizational brokerage (see next section).[1] We distinguish organizational ties from linking social capital because the former include ties to more or less equal organizations—resulting in vertical networks—while the latter are connections to more powerful actors—resulting in horizontal networks. By using both concepts of social capital, we can more exactly describe how neighborhood organizations help their participants.

Finally, the literature on social capital mainly emphasizes the positive consequences, but several authors have pointed toward the "dark side" of social capital (e.g., Blokland & Noordhoff, 2008; Portes, 1998). For instance, Portes (1998) argues that strong communities can limit others from accessing resources or restrict individual freedom of their members. Although our literature review predominantly discusses the positive sides of linking social capital and organizational ties, we will also consider some of their drawbacks for neighborhood organizations.

Tie formation, organizational brokerage and mechanisms

In studying the linking social capital and organizational ties of neighborhood organizations and their advantages for individual members, it is necessary to understand how organizations draw people in

and by which mechanisms they broker resources. How people join organizations generally depends on the type of organization (see also next section). For instance, sport associations have a more voluntary character than schools, which has consequences for what kind of people meet each other. Based on literature about tie formation, some general observations can be made about the role of neighborhood organizations.

Whether people form ties depends on their opportunities to come into contact with each other ("meeting") and whether they are willing to associate ("mating"; Verbrugge, 1977). The meeting process depends on both the individuals in the organization and the goals of the organization. Individuals within organizations can invite people from their network to join the organization, thereby providing opportunities for others to meet (cf., Burt, 1992). In addition, many organizations have the goal to attract new members or have a social or juridical responsibility to help people (Smith & Lipsky, 1993). The mating process in organizations is further shaped by routine activities during which people are actively brought together or passively constraint to interact (Feld, 1982). Ultimately, the decision to form a tie between two actors is believed to result from individual choices (Marsden, 1990).

Small and Gose (2020) criticize the idea that tie formation is merely an individual choice. They argue that organizational conditions can dramatically affect the degree of network formation among people who have already had the opportunity to come into contact (Small & Gose, 2020, p. 93). According to them, organizations shape four aspects of social interaction among their members: how repeated it is (frequency), how long-lasting it is (duration), how focused it is on others (outward orientation), and how centered it is on the accomplishment of joint tasks (collaboration). Thus, these aspects determine how and to what extent people socialize within an organization.

The socializing process within organizations also affects organizational brokerage. Organizational brokerage builds on general brokerage theory (see, Burt, 1992; Gould & Fernandez, 1989; Granovetter, 1973; Stovel & Shaw, 2012) and includes how organizations can connect actors in a system and facilitate the exchange of resources. Organizational brokerage is seen as a process (Obstfeld et al., 2014), which means that organizations must socially act to connect members to others. For instance, a member and an outsider might make a connection during an organization's event, but for real contact to endure it would help when similar events are repeatedly organized so that these persons have more opportunities to socialize. Organizational brokerage for individual members depends on the nature and degree of their involvement in an organization. It is likely that members who are more actively involved will have more chances to be brokered on the organization's behalf, although this is not always necessarily true (cf., Small, 2009).

Finally, organizational brokerage can happen in different ways, meaning resources are made available through different mechanisms. Small (2009, p. 152) identifies four organizational brokerage mechanisms:

- Validation: the process by which an organization confirms to another organization that a member is deserving of a resource (e.g., a debt counselor indicates that a client needs social assistance).
- Storage: the form of brokerage whereby an organization stockpiles a resource for access by members as sought or needed (e.g., an information brochure in the waiting room).
- Referral: the process by which an organization formally refers its member to another organization (e.g., a telephone call from a trainer to a potential employer).
- Collaboration: the process by which organizations cooperate with others to provide access to goods (e.g., a joint training session with different neighborhood organizations).[2]

The social capital of different neighborhood organizations

Faith-based, welfare and volunteer organizations differ in how they make social capital accessible. We should note two things before discussing these differences. First, although our focus is on linking social capital and organizational ties, the literature shows that different types of organizations produce

specific forms of social capital (e.g., bonding and bridging). Our literature review also pays attention to these differences. Second, variation in social capital exists within organizational types, depending on characteristics such as size, age, and location of the organization. We acknowledge these internal differences, but our discussion focuses on what certain types of organizations have in common.

Faith-based organizations

Faith-based organizations (e.g., churches, mosques, synagogues) usually attract a selective group of people from the neighborhood (but see, McRoberts, 2003), namely those who adhere to a certain belief. This sorting effect is not surprising given the nature of the faith-based organization. Faith-based organizations are known for creating strong social bonds between their members, because they are "caring communities" (Wuthnow, 2004). Caring communities are characterized by having frequent and a wide variety of activities over a longer period of time. There is a strong sense of "us" that is constituted by shared values, norms, traditions and beliefs. Research has shown that religious involvement is strongly correlated to measures such volunteering, feelings of belonging, and altruism (e.g., De Hart et al., 2013; Putnam, 2000). Faith-based organizations also have high legitimacy because they can offer safe environments for their constituents, which is especially the case for faith-based organizations with a high share of immigrants (Vermeulen et al., 2016).

Next to having high levels of bonding social capital, faith-based organizations frequently possess organizational ties and linking social capital that can be used to support the organization and broker resources for their members (Airriess et al., 2008; Ammerman, 1997; Lockhart, 2005; Marwell, 2007; McRoberts, 2003; Wuthnow, 2002). Faith-based organizations are often part of larger conglomerates such as congregations and parishes. Being part of a larger entity enables faith-based organizations to draw upon resources such as financial and political support from outside their own organization. Having such linkages to other organizations increases the chances for organizational survival (Vermeulen et al., 2016; Walker & McCarthy, 2010). Airriess et al. (2008) illustrate how a Vietnamese American church-led community was able to resettle in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina due to their connections to actors outside the neighborhood. In this case a team of volunteers from all over the country was established to help with community building activities. Wuthnow (2002) further argues that faith-based organizations can link members to power elites (e.g., elected public officials and wealthy persons) even when members have no direct connection to such influential people, because the leaders of the organization can act as brokers for them (cf., Hays, 2015).

Moreover, by using outside contacts, faith-based organizations can make services directly available to their members through referrals and collaboration. Lockhart (2005) describes how two faith-based organizations organized poverty-to-work programs for unemployed members with the support of other congregations. This support took various forms, such as material resources, job connections, and volunteer teachers. Lockhart (2005) suggests that the faith-based programs were more successful than the government-funded secular programs because the clients in the former programs received more personal support from staff and volunteers, which links back to the high levels of bonding social capital and the close mating process in faith-based organizations. These findings also show how organizational brokerage is a process: participants were able to complete the program due of the *continuous* support from external partners, which extended beyond the incidental exchange of resources.

However, the linking social capital of faith-based organizations can have downsides (cf., Portes, 1998). Faith-based organizations may strengthen their social services with the aid of government funding, but this collaboration involves risks such as a higher administrative burden and excluding groups such as undocumented people from help (Pipes & Ebaugh, 2002).

Volunteer and welfare organizations

Volunteer and welfare organizations are generally aimed at social service delivery, such as food banks, job training programs, managing community gardens or organizing social events. The main difference

between these two types of organizations is that volunteer organizations are primarily run by volunteers whereas welfare organizations are managed by professionals. However, in practice such organizations tend to be hybrid, consisting of both volunteers and professionals (Baines & Hardill, 2008; Smith & Lipsky, 1993).[3] We will therefore simultaneously discuss these two types of organizations.

Volunteer and welfare organizations attract people based on common interests or because they serve specifics groups. People are thus inclined to join organizations based on homogeneity (McPherson et al., 2001) and this sorting effect is often reproduced over time (Wiertz, 2016). In contrast to faith-based organizations, volunteer and welfare organizations do not necessarily produce strong social bonds among their members. For instance, some professionals consider their involvement strictly as "work" (cf., Specht & Courtney, 1995) or volunteers are only involved a few hours a week, thereby limiting the opportunities for creating bonding social capital. Whether people create strong social bonds depends on how organizations shape the mating process among their members (Small & Gose, 2020; cf., Feld, 1982).

Most volunteer and welfare organizations have linking social capital to some extent. Linking social capital is established with governments and higher-level organizations (e.g., philanthropies, national associations) because volunteer and welfare organizations need their financial support and other resources such as expertise and networks to provide social services and keep their organizations running (Salamon, 1987; Smith & Lipsky, 1993). Such resources can be acquired through having contacts within (local) government or higher-level organizations. These contacts can also be used to influence policymaking as neighborhood organizations can provide feedback on how policies work in practice (Firth et al., 2011; De Graaf et al., 2015; Marwell, 2007). Neighborhood organizations can thus act as collaborating partners on how to develop policy. Furthermore, being located in a low-income neighborhood sometimes offers an advantage to secure funding for organizations, because in low-income neighborhoods there is a higher need for social services (Bosch, 2016; Firth et al., 2011; cf., DeFilippis, 2001). Higher-level actors therefore feel more responsible to aid organizations in these neighborhoods.

However, having linking social capital can be a source of precarity for volunteer and welfare organizations. This precarity can be expressed in several ways, such as short-term and incidental funding, tokenistic state support (lack of funds for fundamental work such as administration) and state support leading to co-optation and undermining of autonomy (Ahmadi, 2017).

Next to linking social capital, organizational ties of volunteer and welfare organizations are important to broker resources for residents. Pinkster (2007) shows how organizations in a low-income neighborhood link residents to job positions in the neighborhood though mechanisms such as validation and referral, especially for people who are excluded from informal job networks in the neighborhood (cf., Kleit, 2001). Because local organizations have knowledge of the difficulties that residents face, such as discrimination and language barriers, they can more effectively help them obtain a job. They can also store information for residents that might otherwise be difficult to access. Yet, being dependent on these local organizations also has a downside, as they have an unfavorable reputation amongst employers from outside the neighborhood. Dekker et al. (2010) further indicate that welfare and volunteer organizations have more connections with other organizations than faith-based organizations. The more extensive network of these organizations might be explained by having more professionals in service, who are frequently engaged in neighborhood networks (Bosch, 2016; De Graaf et al., 2015). At the neighborhood level, welfare and volunteer organizations are thus especially skilled in brokering resources for residents.

Data and method

We use the COREQ checklist by Tong et al. (2007) to describe our data collection and analysis. This checklist was designed to promote explicit and comprehensive reporting of qualitative studies, which thus provides a more formal way to clarify how qualitative research was conducted.

Research team—the research team consisted of the two authors and three student-assistants who used the collected data for writing their master thesis. The student-assistants conducted interviews with participants in three neighborhood organizations and when possible, additional participant observation was carried out. At a later stage in the research process, a second interview with the leader of every organization was conducted by the first author. During data collection, the first author was employed as a PhD researcher and the second author was a full professor in Sociology. The two authors are both male and the three student-assistants are all female. The student-assistants received interview training from the authors.

Study design—the theoretical framework and methodological orientation that underpin our study are based on the *adaptive theory* approach by Layder (1998). Adaptive theory endeavors to combine the use of preexisting theory and theory generated from data analysis in the formulation and actual conduct of empirical research (Layder, 1998, p. 2). It can be seen as a middle position between deductive or theory-testing approaches on the one hand and inductive or theory-generating approaches on the other hand.

The initial research idea was to investigate how neighborhood organizations help residents obtain employment and how they provide daily structure for unemployed or economically non-active residents, for example, through facilitating volunteer work. A main goal was to study the dynamics of different neighborhood organizations, since organizations differ in their capability to address several social needs. Convenience sampling was used to select three neighborhood organizations in low-income neighborhoods, as the student-assistants were already acquainted with these organizations. The most important criteria for qualifying as a neighborhood organization were that organization should be (1) institutionally separate from government, and therefore not part of the government apparatus (2) self-governing, that is, in control of their own activities (3) that their members should be involved on a voluntary basis to some degree and (4) that their services are oriented to people living in the near vicinity (cf., Anheier, 2005). We have a mix of organizations in our study, including a faith-based ("Faith Center"), a professional welfare ("Top Job") and a volunteer-based organization ("Neighbor Spot").

Access to the organizations was gained through establishing contact with key persons in the organizations, who also acted as key informants during the research. They were either the leader of the organization or held important management positions. Snowball sampling was used to interview the most active or frequently visiting participants in every organization. Most interview requests were made face-to-face, when the student-assistants were visiting the organization. This process continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Only a few potential respondents declined interview requests because they were not interested, shy or lacked trust. In total, 34 interviews were conducted by student-assistants, including interviews with the leaders: 17 in the faith-based organization, five in the welfare organization, and 12 in the volunteer organization.[4] In addition, the first author held three follow-up interviews with the leaders to discuss issues that had emerged after initial analysis of the data. All interviews took place at the organizations, nearly always in a separate space where privacy was assured.[5] A list of respondents, including their age and gender, is provided in the Supplementary Material (Table S1). Pseudonyms are used to the preserve the respondents' privacy.

The interviews were semi-structured to ensure the same topics were covered in every interview while allowing flexibility to follow up relevant themes that might emerge. An interview guide was developed with topics and questions of interest, including how respondents joined the organization, their role in the organization, their relations with other active members, and their connections to other organizations. Interviews with the leaders were set up differently. The student-assistants mainly focused on the operation and goals of the organization, and the personal motivation of the leaders. Guided by theoretical interest and a discussion of the initial data, the follow-up interviews with the leaders also discussed policy and organizational ties. The student-assistants were encouraged to make field notes during activities of the faith-based and welfare organization, since these organizations ran regular programs for their participants.

Data analysis—The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the student-assistants. Field notes were also written in digital format. The transcripts were coded and analyzed by the first author using ATLAS.ti software. In line with the adaptive theory approach, we constructed several codes before analyzing the data. Theoretical interest guided our main codes, which included "entry organization," "ties in organization," "benefits participation," "connection neighborhood." During the analysis, open coding was applied to identify any emerging themes. After initial coding, all codes were evaluated and merged with other codes when relevant. In this step, "links to other organizations," "mediate contact," "funding," "routine," "increase network" and "personal growth" were identified as important codes. Some specific codes from the initial coding phase were retained when more insight into a theme was needed.

Results

Table 1 presents an overview on the distinctive characteristics of each organization, which shows that the organizations differ in size, type of participants, and daily goals. For instance, whereas Faith Center aims to build community across people from different backgrounds, Top Job trains people so that they might regain labor market access. Neighbor Spot, on the other hand, is a local help center run by volunteers where residents can ask questions about housing, debts, and other social issues. We note that almost none of our respondents had a fulltime job. They were either employed part-time or economically inactive (e.g., unemployed, on social assistance, household work, retired), which means they were able to spend a significant amount of time at the organization.

Linking social capital and organizational ties

Faith center

Considering linking social capital, Faith Center holds connections to philanthropies, congregations in the region, and a social housing corporation. The relations with philanthropies and congregations are especially important for securing the necessary funds to keep the organization running. Starting around 2011, the pastor has received funds from other congregations in the area with the goal to "give faith new meaning and connect it to Rotterdam's contemporary multicultural society." The pastor indicates that the congregations are relatively wealthy and that they worry about the future of Protestant faith, as their own church populations are aging. They therefore see Faith Center as a way to uphold the Protestant faith. The relations with the wealthier congregations provide a suitable opportunity for the pastor to attract financial resources. The motivation of these congregations, i.e., upholding the Protestant faith, explains why Faith Center with its relatively poor population is able to rely on the support of other congregations.

Table 1. Overview of the neighborhood organizations.

Name	Faith Center	Top Job	Neighbor Spot
Type of organization	Faith-based	Professional welfare	Volunteer-based
Organizational goals	Countering social isolation, community building, worshipping	Labor market reentry	Assisting residents on social issues
Number of active participants (estimated)	150	10	15
Idiosyncratic characteristics of participants	Ethnically diverse, low socioeconomic status, non-working	(Long-term) unemployed	Social assistance recipients, retirees
Important linkages	Congregations, philanthropies, social housing corporation, welfare and care organizations	Employers, parental welfare organization, municipality	Social housing corporation, neighborhood team, municipality
Main funding	Congregations and philanthropies	Municipality	Social housing corporation

Faith Center further cooperates with several organizations in the neighborhood and city. Faith Center reports a total of 29 "network partners" (according to an annual report of 2018), including other congregations, philanthropies, welfare organizations, schools, foundations, and a housing corporation. We observe that collaboration is an important mechanism through which resources are made available for participants (Small, 2009). Together with its networks partners—or with their support—Faith Center organizes several social programs and activities for their members, such as language, swimming and sport lessons, neighborhood parties, and play sessions for children.

These shared activities contribute to the lives of Faith Center's members in various ways. A characteristic example is that Faith Center co-organizes a program involving language, swimming and sport lessons for a group of approximately eight Muslim women—with a mix of Moroccan, Turkish, and Syrian background. Together with a welfare organization and health organization, and with the financial support of a health foundation, Faith Center coordinates the program. The language classes are taught at Faith Center by a professional from the welfare organization, whereas a professional from the health organization leads the sport sessions.

This collaboration with other partners aids the women in two ways. First, during the language classes the women can improve their Dutch language skills, which they consider important to navigate their way in society as illustrated by the following quotes. Rima (mid-30s, female): " . . . to take my kids to school. . . . but I want to know it [.i.e., Dutch] for everything. For myself, for how to do this and that, I always have questions about things." Tabatha (mid-30s, female): "Talking is easier now. Going to the butcher or baker, it all goes easier." Nora (early 40s, female): "With this help I can now write a letter, for instance. With other languages I do it in five minutes, but with Dutch it is more difficult, but I can." Second, the women indicate the program helps them meeting new people, thereby expanding their often limited or homogeneous networks. They generally enjoy these new contacts, which help to counter loneliness that some women experience at times. The pastor and other active members can further monitor how they experience the program, because some of the women participate in communal meals at Faith Center.

The collaboration between Faith Center and the other organizations shows how resources are being exchanged, for instance, when Faith Center provides a working space for the language lessons that are provided by the welfare organization. Moreover, through this collaboration the women gain important properties such language skills and network, but these properties take time to develop. The collaboration shows how organizational brokerage occurs over time, since it involves coordination and multiple meetings to discuss the women's participation and language proficiency. Thus, a condition for the women's progress is that Faith Center has a long-term sustainable relation with other organizations.

Another collaboration is with the social housing corporation from which Faith Centers rents their building. Faith Center receives a discount on the rent for both the communal room and dorms for students that are involved in Faith Center. In return, the students are obliged to perform multiple odd jobs in the neighborhood, such as helping with organizing neighborhood parties and adopting a trash container. The latter includes that students are responsible to keep the area around a trash container clean, making sure no trash is placed next to the container. Dave (early 50s, male), the pastor, explains that the students, who are in higher education, are important for Faith Center, because they have organizational and professional skills:

> Look, when I say I want to make a salad, I have a hundred hands in the air. But when I ask who can make a PowerPoint, I have only one hand raised. . . . So you also need strong shoulders, or at least other qualities.

The collaboration with the housing corporation makes it easier for Dave to tie the students to Faith Center, as he can offer cheap living space.

Top job

Top Job is a welfare organization in a neighborhood nearby an industrial area where companies in logistics, construction, security, and wholesale are located. Mark (late 20s, male), who is a project

leader at Top Job, maintains a close relationship with The Company Center, which is a local platform for employers. Mark noticed that his clients often have problems that are related to being unemployed, such as income insecurity and lack of daily structure. He therefore tried to help his clients obtain a job through putting them in touch with employers from The Company Center. However, having these organizational ties was insufficient to help his clients, since they lacked the necessary skills and qualifications for most jobs.

As a result, Mark developed a job training program together with Harry from The Company Center to get his clients "job-ready." Mark applied for a municipal subsidy that sponsors socially innovative programs. With the aid of this subsidy, a 6-week program was developed that includes activities such as social media lessons, job interview instructions, coaching sessions, theater performance, and workouts. Many of these sessions are provided by local employers and companies, often at a reduced rate, which also helps them get acquainted with the job candidates. A collaboration with different companies in the neighborhood was thus initiated so that participants can learn new skills and in return, employers can meet potential employees.

During the sessions the participants get useful tips from trainers—who work at a cooperating company—on how to develop their professional identity, signaling a transfer of knowledge. How this works is illustrated during a social media training, in which the participants learn to make a LinkedIn-profile:

> The training includes a general explanation of how LinkedIn works, but also involves actively working on your own profile. . . . The participants are seated at a long table and are looking at a projector screen on which different LinkedIn profiles are shown with good and bad examples . . . After the instruction the participants start editing their LinkedIn profiles or creating a new account. Because there are three trainers there is a lot of room for one-to-one support. The trainers walk around and offer support when necessary. A few participants exchange tips, but most stare at their own screen or consult the trainers. . . . The intern helps to make a profile for participants with poor digital skills, accessing their email and uploading a picture. (Field notes, April 2018)

After the training, the trainers tell the research assistant that they usually earn much more money with these sessions. Yet, for the Top Job program they offer a discount because they value helping people from the neighborhood and it provides them more job satisfaction. Thus, there are mutual benefits for Top Job and companies for cooperating at the neighborhood level.

Participants are entitled to two job interviews when they successfully complete the program. Furthermore, at the end of the program candidates can "pitch" themselves to employers during a closing event. This event illustrates what sort of linking social capital and organizational ties Top Job can offer, as representatives from the municipality, the parental welfare organization and several employers were present. It also serves as a validation to these organizations that the program has been successful in training the candidates to become potential employees.

> After the pitches a group picture is taken, followed by drinks at the bar. Here the candidates can be approached by interested employers. Multiple appointments are made for further introductions or sending a resume. Mark is also approached for more information about the candidates and to have them call the employers. (Field notes, April 2018)

This setting shows the important brokerage function of Top Job in connecting the candidates to employers. According to Mark most participants obtained a job with a permanent contract after the program, although the rate of success differs between cohorts.[6]

This description clearly shows how organizational brokerage is a process. Initial references by Top Job were not effective for participants to help them get a job. Only after several organized activities, in collaboration with the external partners (i.e., employers), effective job brokering on behalf of Top Job was possible.

Having relations with employers in the neighborhood does provide some challenges to Top Job. Top Job and The Company Center have different goals regarding their collaboration, as Mark explains: "This collaboration [with The Company Center] is something that goes very well sometimes, but communication stays 'a thing.' . . . He wants to land people jobs, because that earns him money from

the municipality [for saving social benefits]. He just has a commercial interest. . . . We [i.e., Top Job] also look at the process. What kind of person is this? It is already an achievement that people follow this program. So there is some friction there."

Thus, where Mark is mostly interested in the personal growth of participants, Harry from the Company Center wants to fill job positions as quickly as possible. In conjunction with how his candidates are progressing, Mark also has to consider Top Job's reputation in selecting and referring candidates to third parties:

> I visit a lot of companies. Just to check how that person is doing. Or I make a call. It is all very strategic of course, that is how it works. Look, if I send someone to a company who then completely screws up and then I would send another person . . . my name and Top Job's is on the line. Therefore, I am always critical . . . if I think, this is not going to work, then I wait and slow down the process.

Having ties to employers is thus beneficial for Top Job's candidates, but also requires careful balancing of interests on Mark's part. In addition, we observe how different organizational broker mechanisms are simultaneously at work. The joint program with employers (collaboration) enables Top Job to refer candidates to job positions (referral), but a referral only occurs when Top Job considers the candidate "job-ready" (validation).

Finally, the job training program had no structural funding yet, as the main source of funding was an incidental subsidy (cf., Ahmadi, 2017). At the time of research, Mark was still looking to secure more structural funding, either from the municipality or the parental welfare organization. Thus, even though the program is deemed successful by Mark, the participants and other organizations, there is no guarantee it could be continued over a longer period. Thus, despite the many connections of Top Job, this funding insecurity could indicate a lack of strong linking social capital.

Neighbor spot

Neighbor Spot is an organization completely ran by volunteers. The organization was founded to represent a group of residents during a housing restructuring operation, but nowadays they assist neighborhood residents with various issues related to housing, care, and welfare.

Neighbor Spot possesses both linking social capital and organizational ties, of which some ties are direct contacts while others are more indirect. The organization is funded by a social housing corporation that provides a physical location and some budget for daily operations. If renters experience a problem, they may address the housing corporation through Neighbor Spot, which acts on behalf of the renters.

Organizational ties are mainly established with professional and residential organizations in the neighborhood. In Dutch neighborhoods professional care is organized in "neighborhood teams", which are groups of professionals with different backgrounds (e.g., general practitioner, social worker, debt consultant). Laura (middle-aged, female), the head of volunteers, occasionally joins the meetings of the neighborhood team to discuss the problems of specific residents. In this way, professional help can be more quickly organized and residents can be referred to professional care organizations. The volunteers at Neighbor Spot are particularly proud of their "short lines" to other organizations, because these enable them to help residents more effectively. Laetitia (mid-40s, female):

> If you get positivity from people, like "you helped us," or you have a listening ear . . . that can make your day, that gives you a good feeling. Next to that I am dealing with the municipality if something is up, then I have short lines. Also, to the neighborhood police officer, the housing corporation, the neighborhood council, the credit bank, to lawyers, to jurists, I have short lines to all of them.

Referral to other organizations is thus an important broker mechanism through which Neighbor Spot helps residents. As the quote above shows, helping others by guiding them to the right services is also satisfying work for the volunteers because they receive encouraging responses from residents.

A challenging issue, however, is the privacy of residents. During the time of research, the General Data Protection Regulation was just introduced, making it more difficult for organizations to share information on clients.

Neighbor Spot further helps residents in their communication with the municipality and authorities. The linking social capital with these governmental bodies is more indirect, meaning Neighbor Spot has few direct contacts but is still able to broker on behalf of the residents. Similar to Top Job, reputation plays an important role here. According to Andrea, "things get done quicker" when she calls the municipal helpline, because they often recognize her voice and know they are dealing with an experienced volunteer. As Andrea and other volunteers have knowledge of how policies and procedures work, they feel they can more effectively deal with other organizations in obtaining the needed services for residents. The volunteers spend a significant amount of their time on reading about policies and discussing them with others. Storage (i.e., stockpiling a resource) is thus an important brokerage mechanism, as the volunteers at Neighbor Spot know how to navigate the often complex and fragmented local welfare domain. Sanna (early 40s, female):

> I help people from the neighborhood or from other neighborhoods who come with problems, by making a call to Woonstad [i.e., a housing corporation] or the municipality . . . with everything they have to deal with like their fixed expenses or social issues. Or they don't speak Dutch, so we can help them on their way or make a phone call. Like fixing it for them.

Validation also plays a role in linking residents to different social services. Neighbor Spot directs residents to the appropriate services or helps them prepare their documents when applying for help. Other organizations that get referrals from Neighbor Spot can therefore expect that requests for help are clearly formulated. Being referred by Neighbor Spot thus acts as a sign of preparedness.

Another example is "taxes day" at Neighbor Spot. On this day volunteers help residents with limited language or digital abilities with filing their taxes, thereby preventing them from having troubles with the tax authorities. This aid can be seen a form of storage (Small, 2009), as volunteers at Neighbor Spot know what the tax authorities expect from residents.

The more experienced volunteers at Neighbor Spot would also like to provide training programs to residents so that they may become more self-reliant in dealing with social issues. However, the volunteers already struggle with obtaining enough funds for their own personal development. They have not succeeded so far in obtaining funds from the municipality, although they emphasize that their own organization has professionalized in the past years. It thus seems that the linking social capital to the municipality is not strong enough to fulfill all their ambitions.

We see different broker mechanisms in place at Neighbor Spot compared to Faith Center and Top Job. Whereas Faith Center and Top Job have co-organized programs with other organizations, Neighbor Spot is mainly focused on referring people to other organizations. Yet, in order for referrals to be effective, other broker mechanisms such as storage (e.g., having knowledge of policies) and validation (e.g., vouching for a resident in need) are also important.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to show how different neighborhood organizations broker resources for people in low-income neighborhoods by using their linking social capital and organizational ties. We find that linking social capital is important to all organizations to obtain funding. In the line with the literature, our faith-based organization mainly depends on wealthier congregations and philanthropies (De Hart et al., 2013; Wuthnow, 2004), whereas the welfare and volunteer organizations depend on (semi-)public funding (Smith & Lipsky, 1993). Linking social capital can also operate more indirectly, for example, when the volunteer organization improves the relation between residents and governmental departments. Furthermore, although all organizations employed their linking social capital and organizational ties to broker resources for residents, the mechanisms by which this brokerage occurred were substantially different (see, Small, 2009, p. 152). The faith-based and welfare

organizations organized programs for their participants together with other organizations (collaboration), whereas the volunteer organization mainly helped people by connecting them to service organizations (referral).

That our neighborhood organizations brokered resources in different ways should not obscure that mechanisms such as validation, storage, referral, and collaboration often work in combination with each other. For instance, the welfare organization was able to provide jobs to participants through collaboration with employers in the job training program, but referrals and validation were an essential part of this brokerage process. When the professional manager thought candidates were ready for a job, he would refer them to a certain employer. Having finished the program also served as a validation that the candidate was suited for a job (cf., Pinkster, 2007). Our findings thus demonstrate that organizational brokerage mechanisms should be understood in relation to each other.

Our study also provides insight into how organizational brokerage operates as a process, which has been insufficiently understood so far (Obstfeld et al., 2014; Small & Gose, 2020). As Small and Gose (2020, p. 93) note: "Brokers must do things to connect people, and the things they do can be important." We observed that all organizations took various actions to broker resources, and that these actions often required more effort from the organizations themselves than from the participants (cf., Small, 2009). In the volunteer organization, residents can drop in if they have an issue, and subsequently the volunteers employ their knowledge or "short lines" to solve the issue. In a similar vein, in the programs by the faith-based and welfare organizations the participants show up and follow the instructions by their teachers or trainers. Even though the participants are motivated and work hard to complete the programs, the process behind organizing these programs is also laborious. The organizational brokerage process can thus only be realized by leaders maintaining and employing their connections with other organizations.

These findings have implications for neighborhood effects research. Neighborhood effects studies often investigate to what extent neighborhood characteristics affect individual outcomes, thereby discarding the organizational process in which social capital is created. Our study shows that what organizations do and with whom they collaborate matters in who gets access to what kind of resources. In understanding why social capital differs between similar neighborhoods (Klinenberg, 2015), it thus pivotal to include organizational practices. In addition, neighborhood effects studies that examine to what extent neighborhood organizations contribute to social capital are often inattentive to role of different organizations (Curley, 2010; Gilster, 2017; Snel et al., 2018). Our findings show that organizations differ in how they create social capital and therefore the theoretical role of different type of organizations should be better specified (cf., Dekker et al., 2010; Vermeulen et al., 2012).

Considering policy, the results show that neighborhood organizations can be effective resource brokers for people in low-income neighborhoods, thereby connecting them to main institutions such as the labor market and welfare bureaucracies (McQuarrie & Marwell, 2009; Rich, 1979). The brokering role of neighborhood organizations might have become more relevant recently (cf., Allard & Small, 2013), as the COVID-19 crisis has negatively affected trust in government (Snel et al., 2022). Governments are therefore looking for new ways to deliver social services to citizens and as our study shows, neighborhood organizations are able to do so in several ways. However, we also observed that some organizations were in a precarious funding position or lacked means to realize ambitions (Ahmadi, 2017). Future research should therefore consider what governments can do to strengthen the position of successful neighborhood organizations (cf., Marwell, 2007).

We conclude with discussing some limitations. First, the neighborhood organizations were selected through convenience sampling using the network of our student-assistants. The findings should therefore not be interpreted as necessarily representative of these types of organizations, also because we only studied one organization of each type. Especially our faith-based organization turned out to be better connected to other (and different) organizations than other studies have shown (Bosch, 2016; Dekker et al., 2010; Lockhart, 2005). More comparative research on these different types of organizations is thus needed to see what the general differences in social capital are.

Second, the design of such comparative research could focus more on different broker mechanisms in different types of organizations and how these mechanisms relate to each other. Due to our adaptive theory approach (Layder, 1998), the significance of different broker mechanisms emerged during the course of research. We have demonstrated how different mechanisms operate in neighborhood organizations, which not many studies have done so far, but we were limited in identifying several mechanisms across different organizations as this was not the initial focus of our data collection. Future research could therefore more systematically compare broker mechanisms across organizations.

Finally, the focus in our study has mainly been on the organizational brokerage process within organizations. We have shown that, in general, neighborhood organizations can be effective brokers, but the scope of our study was too limited to also discuss *how* people join neighborhood organizations —relating to the meeting process. How people join organization is an important issue, as it determines who gets access to potential resources (Small, 2009). That people often join organizations based on homophily (McPherson et al., 2001) indicates that people with different characteristics are possibly excluded from the social capital and resources of neighborhood organizations. Future studies should thus not only investigate how different brokerage mechanisms work, but also what in- and exclusion mechanisms are in joining organizations.

Notes

1. Bridging ties are considered social ties that people form on purpose with the goal to gain access to certain resources (Lin, 2001). From the perspective of the individual, on the other hand, organizational ties tend to be latent and do not require an active role on the individual's behalf. In many cases, the organization is the active broker (Small, 2009).
2. Note that collaboration here refers to a different kind of collaboration than mentioned earlier in this section. The first reference points to collaboration between people *within* an organization, the second reference is about collaboration *between* organizations.
3. Other terms that are used in the literature to describe such organizations are *community(-based) organizations*, *social service organizations*, *nonprofit organizations,* and *human service organizations*.
4. We have three reasons why the number of interviews considerably differs between organizations. First, the organizations substantially differed in size. In some organizations theoretical saturation was thus reached earlier. Second, in Faith Center eight interviews were conducted with women who had limited mastery of the Dutch language. These interviews were therefore relatively short, about 20 minutes on average. Third, the number of participants in the professional welfare organization was small because the program only includes eight people per cohort. Combined with multiple participatory sessions, five interviews were sufficient to reach theoretical saturation.
5. The data were collected between April and June in 2018.
6. This claim was difficult to follow up, as we could not track participants from all cohorts in the program. At the time of our interviews, one respondent was still looking for work while three others had a permanent job.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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