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NEIGHBORHOOD PARTICIPATION IN BOERUM HILL, BROOKLYN

by

STEPHANIE DIANE SCOTT-MELNYK

A dissertation submitted to the
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

NEIGHBORHOOD PARTICIPATION IN BOERUM HILL, BROOKLYN

by

STEPHANIE DIANE SCOTT-MELNYK

Advisor: Professor John Seley

This dissertation reports a study of how the residents of one neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York interact with each other, their neighborhood, and the government of the City of New York. This study investigates why residents of Boerum Hill, Brooklyn do or do not participate in three types of voluntary "neighborhood-based" organizations: block associations, neighborhood associations, and the Community Board.

Four main research questions are addressed: (1) Why do people participate in neighborhood-based organizations? (2) Why don't people participate in neighborhood-based organizations? (3) For those who do participate, how do they choose among block associations, neighborhood associations, and the Community Board? (4) What are the relationships among these types of neighborhood-based organizations? Qualitative and quantitative methods were used, including participant observation, a door-to-door survey, in-depth interviews with neighborhood residents, and interviews with New York City government officials.

Findings indicate that those who participate in block and neighborhood associations do match the demographic profiles of participators described in participation

literature. These similarities are overshadowed, however, by differences in motivations for participation in block and neighborhood associations. Motivations for participation are discussed according to three theoretical frameworks. Non-participation is examined separately for the three types of organizations. In general, block associations were found to focus on social issues, neighborhood associations on issue organizing, and Community Boards on local politics. Relationships among the organizations vary according to the issue at hand.

Differences in participation rates were found among different racial and ethnic groups in this diverse neighborhood, and were also related to length of residence in the neighborhood. Social capital is unevenly distributed across the neighborhood. Long-term, generally Hispanic, residents resent the gentrifiers who arrived in the 1960s, re-named the neighborhood, and continue to focus on increasing property values to the perceived exclusion of issues important to non-participators. This is particularly important when these organizations claim to speak for the entire neighborhood in political matters.

Implications of this research are given for academic researchers, leaders of neighborhood-based organizations, and public policy makers.

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank all of the residents of Boerum Hill who assisted me with this research. Whether as survey respondents, interviewees, helpful neighbors, or all three, their willingness to open their lives to me is truly appreciated. Conducting this type of research in my home neighborhood afforded an even deeper appreciation of the physical and interpersonal neighborhood environment. Having spent so much time with neighbors talking about Boerum Hill made it very hard to leave. I hope they think I have done them justice here.

I also thank my dissertation committee for their assistance and patience with this project. John Seley stepped in as my advisor and committee chair shortly after he joined the Environmental Psychology faculty. John's pragmatic viewpoint and instruction in mapping can be seen throughout this dissertation. Leanne Rivlin has been part of this research since its inception in Dissertation Seminar. Her suggestions on the research and writing as well as her warm personal support were always helpful. Ed Rogowsky's keen knowledge of Brooklyn's Community Boards was an essential part of the development of this research, and he served well as a factual touchstone and a great source of contacts. I also appreciate the comments made by Bill Kornblum and Fran Justa, as outside readers for the final examination; their insights have improved this document. Maxine Wolfe, a former member of my dissertation committee, was also an important part of this research. Although Max retired from CUNY during the course of this project, she had a great

influence on me.

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All maps in this dissertation were created with Microsoft® Streets Plus Software package, and are used with permission. Map data is provided by GDT, Inc.

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CHAPTER ONE:
NEIGHBORHOOD PARTICIPATION IN BOERUM HILL, BROOKLYN

Neighborhood. A word that immediately evokes images in the reader's mind. Whether one thinks of sprawling suburban cul-de-sacs, inner-city public housing projects, centuries old port cities, recently constructed gated communities, or the "New Urbanism," everyone has an impression of what a neighborhood is. Neighborhood boundaries are rarely agreed upon, yet most people have no trouble naming their neighborhood. The neighborhood is the context in which home life occurs. Many people feel quite attached to their neighborhoods; others do not. Those who do feel some sort of bond may choose to be active in improving, preserving, maintaining, recruiting people to, socializing with the people in, or defending their neighborhoods. This dissertation examines why and how people choose to participate in neighborhood life. More specifically, it reports a study of how the residents of one neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York interact with each other, their neighborhood, and the government of the City of New York. This study investigates why residents of Boerum Hill, Brooklyn do or do not participate in three types of voluntary "neighborhood-based" organizations: block associations, neighborhood associations, and the Community Board. Although this research focuses on one specific neighborhood, residents throughout Brooklyn and in other cities will recognize familiar patterns of organizational lifecycles, neighborhood life, and citizen participation.

Neighborhood Participation

A range of voluntary organizations exist in neighborhoods, from crime watches and block associations to business associations and environmental justice groups. Yet very few people, relative to the size of the population, actually participate in neighborhood-based organizations. One reason many people choose not to participate in neighborhood organizations is their participation in other types of organizations. Americans have long been known for participation in voluntary associations (Tocqueville, 1850/1969). We form associations based on where we live, where we come from, what we do for a living, which religion we practice, which sports we play, what race we are, what race we aren't, which sex we are, which interests we have, and what services we perform for others. Any one person may be involved in none, one, or many of these organizations; which are communities based on interest, self-definition, and geography. The depth of these interests can range from paying membership fees without ever showing up at a meeting, to daily interaction with other group members.

There is a body of research on both block associations and Community Boards (e.g. Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Greenblatt & Rogowsky, 1980; Pecorella, 1994; Perkins, Brown, & Taylor, 1996; Perkins, Florin, Rich, Wandersman, & Chavis, 1990; Rogers, 1990; Wandersman, Florin, Friedmann, & Meier, 1987), but almost none that compares residents' involvement in, or understanding of, these different types of local organizations. Spiegel (1982) describes various types of community organizations (including those to be

studied in this research), but does not examine their relationships to each other or to local residents. Many scholars study participation in organizations through the rubric of voluntarism, yet they do not distinguish neighborhood-based organizations from the many other types of organizational affiliations (e.g. Ellis & Noyes, 1990; Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1996). Hunter (1974), Rivlin (1987), and Warren (1978) discuss identification with different types of neighborhoods, and communities within neighborhoods, but do not study neighborhood-based organizations. Research on community organizations and participation should examine these different types of organizations with a more comprehensive theoretical viewpoint.

Neighborhood and Community

Many scholars have debated the distinction between the concepts of "neighborhood" and "community," which are often used in common language and by researchers (e.g. Florin & Wandersman, 1990) as if they are interchangeable. "Neighborhood" is an inherently place-based term. Neighborhoods are generally defined as the geographic area within which a person lives; often the boundaries of individual neighborhoods are defined by residents themselves, and may differ from person to person. However, this study did not examine residents' exact definitions of their neighborhoods because of the nested quality of neighborhood involvement—although almost no one

would consider an entire Community District[1] to be his or her neighborhood, the decisions made about the district do affect the person's individually defined neighborhood.

"Community" is not an inherently place-based term. One can belong to a community within one's neighborhood, or one may think of the neighborhood as part of a larger community. The concept of community also denotes "community of interest," that is, that those who belong to a particular community share similar interests but need not have geographic commonality, although they sometimes do. Sociologists have long referred to "the community of limited liability," "symbolic communities," and "community without propinquity" (Hunter, 1974; Janowitz, 1967; Webber, 1963, respectively); each of these terms refers to community allegiances that go beyond neighborhoods. Community organizers began with a tradition of place-based organizing, but now often work organizing communities of interest (Austin & Betten, 1990). The concept of community—other than as a place—is relevant because it is often used to refer to people feeling connected with one another.

Types of Organizations

This dissertation focuses on neighborhood-based participation, that is, an individual's activity within or in relation to organizations based on place of residence.

[1] A "Community District" in New York City is a government-defined area equivalent in population to a medium-sized city elsewhere in the U.S.. Community Districts are discussed further later in this chapter, as well as in Chapter 8.

"Neighborhood-based organizations" are those which are dedicated to dealing with neighborhood issues, whose sole organizing principle is to involve people who live in a particular place. Therefore, this dissertation examines block associations, neighborhood associations, and Community Boards. This research does not include organizations based on schools, religion, ethnicity, fraternal association, business interests, type of work, or any of the many non-profit organizations found within Boerum Hill, although these other types of organizations are important to residents. Many people do not participate in school-based or religious-based organizations because they feel they do not "qualify" for membership; for example, people who do not have children rarely join Parent Teacher Associations, and those who do not attend a particular church hardly ever participate in its organizations, even if those organizations have an impact on the larger neighborhood. Limiting the focus in this way allows a thorough understanding of one type of "community" which can then be compared with other types of community participation in future research.

Block Associations

"Block associations" are those organizations that focus on issues of concern to a small, defined, geographic area. Generally these groups confine membership and address themselves to the concerns of the residents of a "face block"—both sides of one street between two cross streets—although other nearby neighbors are sometimes invited to join

or participate in these groups. Block associations can also become involved with an issue that occurs on a different block, because the members feel it affects their block. Block associations are almost always organized by someone who lives on the block, and the focus is on the block's residents, their relationships to one another, and their collective endeavors. In New York City, the membership of a block association can be quite diverse because of the mix of residents. Block associations are discussed further in Chapter 6.

Neighborhood Associations

"Neighborhood associations" cover a wider geographic area than block associations, very often naming themselves after a "known" neighborhood. The boundaries defined by a neighborhood association are often specific, although they are rarely identical to the boundaries of what any one individual might consider to be his or her neighborhood. The membership of neighborhood associations usually includes individuals who are interested in their larger neighborhood and who may or may not be members of block associations in the area. Neighborhood associations focus on the concerns of a larger community, and may address more general issues than the specific concerns of a single block association. Similarly, a neighborhood association may become involved in an issue of immediate concern to a particular block but which also affects the entire neighborhood. Many neighborhood associations permit block associations falling within their boundaries to become members of their organization, although not all block associations join them.

Neighborhood associations differ from block associations in terms of the participants, issues addressed, and goals, and therefore should be studied separately from block associations in community research, especially research which seeks to understand participation. Neighborhood associations are discussed further in Chapter 7.

Community Boards

Community Boards were created by the New York City government more than 40 years ago as a way of giving residents a voice in the process through which the city government makes decisions on land-use, service delivery, and budgeting.[2] "Community Board" refers both to the group of people appointed to serve and to the structure of the entity. "Community District" refers to the geographic area served by the Community Board. Community Districts were demarcated by the New York City government when finalizing the Community Board system in the 1970s.

Each Community Board serves a Community District with a population range between 100,000 and 250,000 people—comparable in population to many medium-sized cities in the United States. The Community Board is composed of fifty District residents and business people, appointed by the Borough President,[3] with recommendations from the local City Council members. Brooklyn is divided into eighteen Community Districts; the

[2] Please see Chapter 8 for the exact timeline of the development of Community Boards.

[3] Each of New York City's five counties or boroughs—Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island—has an elected Borough President who serves as chief executive.

focus of this dissertation, Boerum Hill, is in Community District 2. Community Boards are discussed further in Chapter 8.

Relationships of the Organizations

To examine why residents do or do not participate in each type of neighborhood-based organization, the organizations must be placed in context. Each block association, neighborhood association, and Community Board is only one of the myriad of organizations in which a person can be involved. When the choice of organization is narrowed to those based on place of residence, these three types of organizations emerge. However, as will be discussed in Chapter 9, each of these organizations does not exist independently of the other types. The leadership of each organization usually is aware of many other local organizations, and the different organizations can work with or against each other.

Types of Participation

Just as there are different levels of neighborhood-based organization (block level, neighborhood level, Community District level) there are different levels of participation in each of these organizations. Those who are most involved are usually "officers" of some type. Officers generally call meetings, set the agendas, and keep track of what is going on in the neighborhood, in order to keep the organization apprised of any issues that arise. The next most involved participants in these types of organizations are usually "members."

Membership varies from organization to organization. Community Board members are appointed by their Borough President, with recommendations from the City Council. Some organizations use dues payment to confer membership; and others allow anyone who wishes to consider themselves members of the organization. Officers and members are the only two types of participants usually discussed by most literature on community participation. For example, Prestby, Wandersman, Florin, Rich, and Chavis (1990) define five levels of involvement in block associations, all of which are either leaders or members: "max leaders," "active leaders," "worker members," "active members," and "nominal members" (p. 125).

However, there are at least two other levels of involvement in neighborhood-based organizations which demand attention by participation researchers. The first of these is what I am calling "use of services." There are community residents whose contact with local organizations consists of partaking of the services offered by the organization, but who do not consider themselves members. In New York, one of the functions of Community Boards is to operate as a repository of information about the Community District. Any resident may contact the Community Board to find out when the next street festival will be held, when construction will begin on the expressway, or if there is a block association on a particular block. Neighborhood associations, especially those organizations that maintain an office, may inform residents about changes in local parking regulations or other issues. Block associations are less likely to offer services to residents. Residents who

use the services of neighborhood-based organizations may rely on those services, although they have a different relationship to the organization than members or officers. Unfortunately, the data for this dissertation were insufficient to adequately examine this category (see Chapter 5).

Another level of participation in neighborhood-based organizations that has not been very visible in participation research is that which I am calling the "available pool." Although not a monolithic group, the available pool is composed of people who would assist a neighborhood-based organization that needed them, but who would otherwise not actively participate. Another way to think of these people is as "detached participants" or "on call." These residents do feel a connection to the organization, in that they are willing to help when needed—if they agree with the particular project—but they are not willing to join the organization as official members. The available pool is discussed further in Chapter 10.

Summary

The types of organizations and concepts which are the focus of this dissertation have thus far been introduced. The next chapter explores research on participation which informed this dissertation, highlighting strengths and deficiencies which this study addresses. Following the literature review are chapters on the research questions, methodology, and results of this research.

A Note on Language

Boerum Hill, Brooklyn is home to people of several different races, ethnic groups, and language groups. In this dissertation I use a variety of terms to describe people, because my interviews found they use a variety of terms to describe themselves. For example, people who refer to themselves as "African American" are generally referred to as "Black" in U.S. Census reports. Some intentionally make a political statement by not adopting the term "African American." Similarly, some Spanish-speaking people refer to themselves as "Latino," while others call themselves "Hispanic" as a group. Many other residents were uncomfortable describing themselves as "White," preferring ethnic designations such as "Lebanese" or "Jewish," or simply refusing to choose a race or ethnic group. One large group of residents that has moved to the neighborhood most recently is generally referred to as "Arab" in Brooklyn, whereas in other parts of the United States they call themselves "Middle Eastern." Over time, people who fit this description may choose more precise ways of identifying themselves. This dissertation uses all the above terms interchangeably, in recognition of different preferences, and in the hope that no reader is confused or offended by any of the terms.

CHAPTER TWO:
CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Participation research has been conducted from many different perspectives. How and why people become involved in their communities has been addressed by psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, urban planners, historians, and other students of urban life. However, after reading many books and articles on community participation the reader still may not understand what the act of participating means to participants because each discipline approaches citizen participation from its own theoretical base. This may seem self-evident, but it has resulted in a compartmentalized view of participation. Each separate discipline can explain participation in its own way, but rarely do the disciplines speak to each other.

Additionally, different disciplines generally study different forms of participation, and do not differentiate among types of participatory options available to people. Research on participation in neighborhood-based organizations does not generally distinguish among the different ways residents can become involved in their neighborhoods.

Motivations for Participation

This dissertation uses an interdisciplinary framework to investigate why people do or do not participate in neighborhood-based organizations. There are three major theoretical perspectives that attempt to explain motivations for citizen participation; this

dissertation examines how useful each perspective is in understanding why people do or do not participate in three types of neighborhood-based organizations. The different frameworks are referred to throughout this dissertation as: "Political Perspectives," "Social Perspectives," and "Community Organizing."

In much of the voluminous literature on citizen participation, non-participation is dealt with only sporadically. Many analyses of participation do not include people who do not participate. Researchers often draw inferences about non-participators' behavior as the negative of the picture they have drawn of people who do participate. The three major perspectives are summarized below, including their analyses of participation and non-participation.

Political Perspectives

Social scientists have been studying community participation in the United States at least since Alexis de Toqueville arrived from France in 1831 to study this experiment in democracy. One of the many theoretical lenses through which community participation has been viewed is democratic theory. Participation in one's community is often referred to as fulfilling a civic duty—people participate in their neighborhoods because it is a responsibility that derives from citizenship in a representative democracy. This literature harkens back to 18th century community life as described by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who maintained that people should live in groupings small enough to know each other and

effectively govern themselves (Rousseau, 1762/1968). Our cities are now larger than the 10,000-20,000 people Rousseau thought ideal for effective government, (and those who are "citizens" eligible to vote make up a much larger percentage of the population than in Rousseau's time), but many scholars feel neighborhoods are an optimal size for self-governance and the exercise of citizenship (Barber, 1984; Boswell, 1990; Etzioni, 1993; Evans & Boyte, 1986; Lowery, DeHoog, & Lyons, 1992).

Political Science is the academic discipline in which the most purposeful discussion of non-participation occurs. However, both participation and non-participation are generally discussed in terms of political acts such as voting, contacting officials, campaign contributions, and joining organizations in general. There is very little focus on neighborhood-based organizations. In one of the few analyses of non-participators, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) report a massive study of political participation in the United States, which included a telephone survey of 15,053 respondents, and in-person interviews with 2,517. In their "Citizen Participation Study[4]," the authors examined non-participation in political acts, and found that people generally do not participate in political activities for three basic reasons:

[4] The Citizen Participation Study is a "large-scale, two-stage survey of the voluntary activity of the American public. . . . The first stage consisted of a random telephone survey of 15,053 members of the American public. These short screener interviews provided a profile of political and non-political activity as well as basic demographic information. . . . [They] then conducted longer, in-person interviews with 2,517 of the original 15,000 respondents, weighting the sample so as to produce a disproportionate number of both activists and members of the two minority groups [African Americans and Latinos]. . . . The screener survey was conducted in the summer and fall of 1989; the follow-up survey in the spring and summer of 1990." (Verba et al., 1995, pp. 31-33)

> . . . because they can't; because they don't want to; or because nobody asked. "They can't" suggests a paucity of necessary *resources*—time to take part, money to contribute to campaigns and other political causes, and skills to use time and money effectively. "They don't want to" focuses attention on the absence of political *engagement*—little interest in politics or little concern with public issues, a belief that activity can make little or no difference, little or no knowledge about the political process, or other priorities. "Nobody asked" implies isolation from the networks of *recruitment* through which citizens are mobilized to politics. (pp. 15-16)

Other research on non-participation describes a lack of trust in government and distrust of other people as depressing the rate of civic participation. Lack of trust in government is often based on the conviction that an individual person or group has no real power to get anything done. Also, many of the forms of participation, such as structured meetings, are frustrating to those who have not been taught how to negotiate them (Ackelsberg, 1988; Greider, 1992; Putnam, 1993).

Research using a political perspective covers both participators and non-participators, but studies neither group fully. The explanations given within the context of this perspective as to why people do or do not participate in their communities do not go far enough toward understanding the complexities of people's lives. Participation in political activities in order to fulfill a democratic ideal does not explain the behavior of people who join block associations for social reasons. These are most often dealt with by scholars employing a social perspective.

Social Perspectives

Disciplines which focus on the interpersonal or social aspects of community participation use what I am calling a social perspective. Much of the theoretical work on community participation using social perspectives has focused on the concept now called "sense of community," which addresses people's attachments to various communities (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Hunter, 1979; Janowitz, 1967; Mackin, Gomez, Crew, & Schweitzer, 1996; Perkins, 1995; Putnam, 1993; Rivlin, 1987; Webber, 1963). The sense of community literature indicates that the more socially integrated a person is into their local community, the more likely that person is to become involved in community matters.

Other authors draw upon these works and study how community organizations help foster empowerment of neighborhood residents. Empowerment is posited as having a similar catalytic effect on local participation; that is, participating in one's neighborhood gives a sense of belonging and efficacy which reinforces one's desire to participate (Freire, 1973/1993; Kroeker, 1995; Pateman, 1970; Prestby, Wandersman, Florin, Rich, & Chavis, 1990). Thus, both empowerment and sense of community have a circular relationship with community participation; feeling empowered (or socially integrated) leads to participating, which leads to feeling empowered (socially integrated). Due to the cyclical nature of efficacy and participation, empowerment is a very difficult concept to study in relation to the types of neighborhood-based organizations which are the focus of this research. Zimmerman (1995) points out that empowerment means different things to

different people in different contexts. Although there have been many studies of personal and group empowerment, this dissertation research cannot address causative relationships among participation in each of the three types of neighborhood organizations and feelings of empowerment. This would be best studied through longitudinal research, in order to determine if participation causes feelings of empowerment, which in turn, may lead to further participation. This dissertation examines one point in time.

Few of the social perspective analyses of community participation—especially participation in local organizations—actually studied people who choose not to be involved. One project which did include non-participators was carried out in Tennessee in 1978. This project focused on participation in block associations in a neighborhood in Nashville that had gone through a period of extensive community organizing to create block associations. Through interviews with all adults in the neighborhood, the researchers reached people who did not participate in block associations, and included these non-participators in the analysis. Several articles based on this study (e.g. Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Wandersman et al., 1987) conclude that participation in block associations is best predicted by sense of community, neighboring relations, and general "rootedness" in the neighborhood.

Community Organizing

The "community organizing" analysis of community participation uses protest as its defining characteristic. Where political perspectives focus on civic duty and social perspectives focus on interpersonal relationships as reasons for participation in neighborhoods, the community organizing model explains participation as joining others to fight against a perceived threat (Cahn & Cahn, 1968; Castells, 1983; Fisher, 1993; Greenstone & Peterson, 1973; Greider, 1992; Perlman, 1978; Piven, 1968; Scavo, 1986). Although there are many styles of organizing, one often used to organize at the neighborhood level involves protesting against a specific event. These events can range from the siting of "locally unwanted land uses" (LULUs) by government or business, to the removal of neighborhood amenities such as a library or social services.

The scholarship on this type of neighborhood participation rarely takes into account alternative motives for joining or staying with an organization created in this manner. In fact, many authors have noted that organizations created around a single issue do not exist for very long after the central organizing issue is settled. Many block associations are initially constituted to deal with a single issue. Once the trees are planted or the liquor store moves in anyway they cease to exist (Jones & Tumelty, 1986; Yates, 1973). Early community organizers such as Saul Alinsky (e.g. Alinsky, 1946) stressed the importance of achieving small victories on the way to a larger goal in order to keep people interested and involved.

Non-participation in the community organizing framework is generally conceived as part and parcel of the activity. Community organizing concentrates on getting those who are not currently participating to do so. Organizers have many different techniques to encourage participation, but analyses of organizing attempts rarely ask non-participators why they are not involved. To use the concept promulgated by Verba et al. (1995), these authors attribute the lack of participation to insufficient engagement (Fisher, 1993; Perlman & Gurin, 1972).

A subset of the community organizing perspective is a focus on planning and design. Participatory planning and design focuses on involving residents in planning and making physical changes to their neighborhoods. This approach to participation says people organize around issues and participate in their neighborhoods to have a say in the changes to the place where they live and try to ensure they get what they need or want. For the most part, this type of organizing focuses on projects which involve professional planners and architects seeking community input. Allowing users a voice in designing their environments is often done in an effort to increase satisfaction with the final product (Wooley, 1985). Participatory planning developed in part because of the protests around urban renewal in the 1950s and 1960s. It was then that planners began to involve neighborhood residents in private plans, and participate in government-led initiatives which incorporated residents in neighborhood-based programs (Comerio, 1984; Davidoff, 1965; Needleman & Needleman, 1974; Rohe & Gates, 1985).

As is the case in the community organizing framework generally, analyses of participatory planning do not deal well with non-participators. There are discussions of the representativeness of those who do participate, and calls for increased participation, but little mention of why more people do not participate (e.g. Lazar, 1971). They do however, discuss the value of the participation to the participators. Several authors discuss the different levels at which local people are included in decision making. These analyses range from participation as co-optation by those in power to participation as full power sharing (Arnstein, 1969; Connor, 1988; Langton, 1978).

Voluntarism

Although not a theoretical perspective, the literature on voluntarism is important to mention at this point. Voluntary action is well-studied, but the position of neighborhood-based organizations within this literature is contested. Ellis and Noyes (1990) emphasize the distinction between *volunteerism* and *voluntarism*. "To *volunteer* is to choose to act in recognition of a need, with an attitude of social responsibility and without concern for monetary profit, going beyond one's basic obligations" (Ellis & Noyes, 1990, p. 4). In their formulation, *volunteerism* is "anything relating specifically to volunteers and volunteering," and *voluntarism* is "the generic term for all that is done in a society voluntarily" (Ellis & Noyes, 1990, p. 5). Although participants in neighborhood-

based organizations are generally volunteers, scholars often consider neighborhood organizations to be organized for mutual benefit, rather than social responsibility.

Many researchers study motivations for volunteering, yet much of the research on volunteerism focuses on people who volunteer with established charitable organizations, rather than local, grassroots associations (e.g. Guterbock & Fries, 1997; Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1996; Orellana, 1996; Pew Research Center, 1997). Nonetheless, a study of participation in Philadelphia found similar predictors of volunteering to those identified in Tennessee as predicting participation in block associations.

> Strong tangible links to one's community, or "rootedness," stimulates participation in volunteer and civic activities. The belief that engagement can make a difference in their own or their children's daily lives is also important in understanding what motivates citizens to be civically active. (Pew Research Center, 1997, p. 39)

David Horton Smith (1997a & 1997b) is the most vocal of researchers of nonprofit organizations who advocate for more scholarship on grassroots voluntary associations (see also Harris, 1998). This dissertation demonstrates the importance of understanding the differences among three similar types of organizations, a key step not often taken in the study of nonprofit organizations and voluntary action.

Synopsis

There is some overlap of the major theoretical frameworks as outlined, but it is often left to individual scholars to connect the various reasons people may have for

participating in their neighborhoods. Many scholars who write about community participation from political or community organizing perspectives do not address the personal and social effects of participation. Other researchers are so focused on the social aspects of participation that they do not address the local, city, state, and national political forces that influence the decision to participate.

A few key studies have attempted to avoid the discipline-based segmenting of participation research. Churchman (1987) studied a government-sponsored neighborhood renewal project in Israel, and compared that project to other published accounts of community participation. She identified six "higher-order" goals of participation which were held by the officials in charge of the projects and the residents who participated in them: (1) to further democratic values; (2) to achieve planning that is attuned to the preferences of different groups; (3) to educate the public; (4) to bring about social or personal change; (5) to build support and legitimacy for planning; and (6) to bring about political change (p. 127). Churchman also notes the theoretical compartmentalization of analyses of participation. "Although the goals of involvement and participation are much discussed in the theoretical literature, they are relatively neglected in the literature that describes or analyzes particular cases" (p. 128).

Perkins, Brown, and Taylor (1996) also demonstrate the importance of a broad understanding of participants' reasons for participating. Their work analyzes data from separate research projects in New York, Baltimore, and Salt Lake City over seven years.

Although they rely on a Community Psychology framework, they identify physical, social, community, and civic predictors of participation in, and viability of, block and neighborhood associations. Attempting to predict participation in community organizations, the authors included all of these factors in their analyses.

The most consistent predictors of participation in these studies by Perkins et al. (1996) were "community-focused social cognitions and behaviors." These include the traditional Community Psychology areas of sense of community, attachment to place, block satisfaction, and neighboring. However, the authors went beyond this social perspective. The condition of the physical environment was also important in predicting participation. If the physical environment was considered "defensible," that is, having outdoor lighting and natural and created boundaries, residents were more likely to participate in neighborhood-based organizations. A sense of civic responsibility was also considered to be important in predicting local participation, but the measure of civic responsibility used was not consistent across the studies examined by Perkins et al.

Although Churchman (1987) and Perkins et al. (1996) go further toward taking an interdisciplinary approach to community participation than most participation literature, these authors still leave many questions unanswered. Neither study differentiates among types of neighborhood-based voluntary organizations. The authors lump block and neighborhood associations together in their research, even as Perkins et al. acknowledge that participation at the block level may be quite different from

participation at the neighborhood level. Also, neither study addresses why people *do not* participate in any of the organizations under study.

Explanatory Factors

Researchers using the conceptualizations of participation detailed above have generally found similar demographic patterns among participants. Whether engaged in voting, protesting, social activities, or participatory planning, participants have been found more likely than non-participants to be highly educated, have higher incomes, and are more likely to be married (or, one could surmise, living with a partner). Participators are also generally involved in more organizations than non-participators, have more investment in the neighborhood (such as owning property and raising young children), and, as found in recent studies, participators generally attend religious services more frequently than non-participators. When income level is held constant, Blacks have a higher rate of participation than Whites. All of these factors were examined in the present research, with particular attention paid to the interaction between race and income. (Churchman, 1987; Guterbock & Fries, 1997; Janowitz, 1967; Perkins, Brown, & Taylor, 1996; Pew Research Center, 1997; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Verba, Schlozman, Brady, & Nie, 1993)

An important caveat to these demographic statistics, however, is given by Wandersman et al. (1987). In reviewing studies which attempted to predict participation

in voluntary associations, Wandersman et al. found that demographic variables (including age, sex, race, martial status, years in neighborhood, income, education, and occupation) accounted for less than ten percent of the variance in participation (pp. 536-537). Thus, demographics alone do not explain participation or the lack thereof.

Gender Analyses

There are other theoretical frameworks guiding community participation research that can be followed through each of the above perspectives. For example, feminist analyses of community participation, with an emphasis on gender differences in involvement, can be found within each of the schools of thought detailed earlier (Ackelsberg, 1988; Hyde, 1995; Leavitt & Saegert, 1990; Susser, 1988). These authors point out that men and women often focus on different facets of participation, with community-focused relationships generally more important to women than to men. Hyde (1995) discusses masculine leadership styles as product oriented, and feminine leadership styles as process oriented. She also highlights the need for any leader to integrate both styles, rather than take an either-or position. None of these authors discuss gender differences in terms of choosing a type of organization in which to participate. As discussed in Chapter 10, this research found no gender differences in participation rates or attitudes.

Cost / Benefit Analyses

Some researchers employing each of the three major perspectives detailed above have examined the decision to participate as a series of individual cost/benefit analyses. This view says that people will participate in a group activity (whether it is a neighborhood organization or a local election) if it is in their interest to do so. A pivotal work on why people do not participate in large collective efforts is *The Logic of Collective Action* by economist Mancur Olson. This 1965 book points out that most people will choose not to participate in an activity if they calculate that they will be able to enjoy the benefits anyway. The best example of this is voting. If you really do not care which candidate wins, or if you are convinced your favorite will win without your vote, you are less likely to vote. It is logical not to expend extra effort if others will accomplish the task for you. Many scholars have referred to this non-participating behavior as apathy, implying that those who do not participate are not interested in the outcome (e.g. Milbrath, 1965). However, much of what is termed "apathy" may actually be a rational response to individual circumstances.

Researchers have noted several basic types of incentives related to civic participation. Olson (1965) described participation in large groups as based on collective and selective incentives; that is, people are willing to work with others to achieve a desired outcome if their participation will help ensure a larger benefit for everyone (collective incentive), or if their individual participation gains for them something more than that

which will be shared by all (selective incentive). Other authors have expanded upon and further specified these concepts to explain participation in political life (Schlozman, Verba, & Brady, 1995) and voluntary associations (Chinman & Wandersman, 1999).

Schlozman et al. (1995) identify civic, social, and material selective benefits, which explain different aspects of political participation. Selective civic benefits include satisfying a sense of civic duty; selective social benefits include enjoying the company of fellow participants; and selective material benefits include the opportunity for career advancement. Of particular significance to this research, Schlozman et al. found that members of organizations reported a wider variety of benefits than those who do not participate in local organizations. That is to say, participators in several types of organizations attributed their participation to a combination of civic, social, material, and collective policy benefits.

Chinman and Wandersman (1999) use the categories of purposive (similar to collective), solidary (social), and material (tangible) benefits and costs to examine several studies of reported benefits and costs of participation in voluntary associations. Their review concludes that different types of organizations provide different benefits, and are associated with different costs.

Civil Society and Social Capital[5]

Participation in neighborhood-based organizations is also addressed by the paired concepts "civil society" and "social capital." Although these exact words may not appear in each of the above detailed perspectives, the concepts permeate analyses of citizen participation. The term "civil society" is understood in this research as the realm of formal and informal groups with which people interact as they participate in society at large. Benjamin Barber (1998), in defining civil society says:

> The very phrase suggests an independent domain of free social life where neither governments nor private markets are sovereign; a realm we create for ourselves through associated common action in families, clans, churches, and communities; a "third sector" (the other two are the state and the market) that mediates between our specific individuality as economic producers and consumers and our abstract collectivity as members of a sovereign people. (p. 4)

Barber persuasively delineates three understandings of civil society: (1) the "libertarian" perspective, in which civil society is equated with the market-driven private sector; (2) the "communitarian" perspective, in which civil society is equated with tightly knit exclusionary communities; and (3) the "strong democratic" perspective, in which civil society is understood as the domain between the individualistic market and the enforced group identity of specific communities. The present research, following Barber, uses the strong democratic perspective of civil society. This understanding of civil society is the domain in which voluntary neighborhood-based organizations such as block associations

[5] This section is based on a working paper presented at the Independent Sector Spring Research Forum in March, 1999. See Scott-Melnyk, 1999.

and neighborhood associations flourish. Along with other grassroots and nonprofit organizations, block and neighborhood associations present opportunities for citizens to gather and work jointly on local issues. However, civil society is not only inclusive of organizations. Civil society includes the "free spaces" discussed by Sara Evans and Harry Boyte in their 1986 book of the same name. Evans and Boyte define free spaces as places, organizations, and other environments in which people can practice their civic skills and deepen both their group identity and independence. Civil society includes both long-standing organizations and one-time events such as public fora, the block association, and—for that evening—the neighborhood restaurant in which the group is meeting. Even the Community Board, although a structure of city government, fosters the development of civil society by providing an opportunity for citizens to meet and discuss community concerns.

Barber's (1998) definition of civil society, however, subsumes the concept "social capital." Though they are intricately linked, it is important to keep these two concepts separate, as they signify different processes which feed each other. Barber accepts Michael Walzer's (1997) definition civil society as "'the space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks—formed for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology—that fill this space'" (Barber, 1998, p. 4), with the caveat that participation in civil society is not always "uncoerced." The inclusion of "the set of relational networks"

as part of the definition of civil society should also be questioned; these networks are more appropriately considered social capital, not civil society.

In a seminal work, James Coleman (1990) defines *social capital* as inherent in the relationships among people in communities.

> Social capital, in turn, is created when the relations among persons change in ways that facilitate action. Physical capital is wholly tangible, being embodied in observable material form; human capital is less tangible, being embodied in skills and knowledge acquired by an individual; social capital is even less tangible, for it is embodied in the *relations* among persons. Physical capital and human capital facilitate productive activity, and social capital does so as well. For example, a group whose members manifest trustworthiness and place extensive trust in one another will be able to accomplish much more than a comparable group lacking that trustworthiness and trust. (Coleman, 1990, p. 304)

Thus, the relationships that ease participation in civil society are not necessarily part of civil society. Social capital and civil society can each theoretically exist without the other, yet civil society is much stronger in the presence of increased social capital.

The terms social capital and civil society have become so prominent in social science research in the past few years that they are in danger of becoming clichés. They are powerful concepts for addressing citizen participation in neighborhood organizations, yet it is important to be clear about how these terms are being used.

Social capital is developed through relationships. Getting to know one's neighbors helps develop social capital within a neighborhood. As seen in the quote above, social capital in Coleman's 1990 formulation is more ephemeral than, but has principles similar to, economic capital. Guterbock and Fries (1997) explain this comparison well:

> Like economic capital, social capital refers to something that is built up over time, often by collective effort, that may bring with it enormous benefit to those who have access to it. . . . When we join an organization, get to know the members, take time to go to meetings, and work with others in a group to develop effective relationships, we are building social capital. We may build it as well in informal groups of friends or coworkers, but as with economic capital, more organized and better-financed forms of social capital have greater potential for generating social benefits. It often takes considerable investment, over time, before we reap the rewards of such investments. And, as with economic capital, the amount of return we get may be considerably greater, or sometimes considerably less than what we invest. (pp. 2-3)

Social capital can be thought of as more of a process than a commodity; it develops through relationships, yet, as the quote from Coleman illustrates, people can have relationships with little accumulated social capital.

Many scholars employ Robert Putnam's 1995 definition of social capital: "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, 1995, p. 67). However, Putnam's work has sparked much debate among social scientists. Foley and Edwards (1997) conclude that Putnam's usage of "social capital" strays too far from Coleman's original intention, and does not allow for the negative aspects of social capital. Despite its prominence in the definitions of Coleman and Putnam, a study by the Pew Research Center (1997) found that trust is *not* essential to the development of social capital. This dissertation refers to social capital as a feature of the relationships extant among neighborhood residents, without attaching a positive or negative value to those relationships unless so specified by the respondents.

The Web of Civil Society and Social Capital

I posit an image of an individual's experience of civil society as a spider's web. The anchor points are civil society—the associations, entities, and people with whom the individual has contacts; and the webbing between the anchors is the individual's social capital or relationships with the anchors. As with a spider's web, some connecting strands (relationships) are thicker and stronger than others. Some individuals have more anchor points (contacts) than others, and some individuals have relationships with only one segment of society at large, while others have a whole array of relationships.

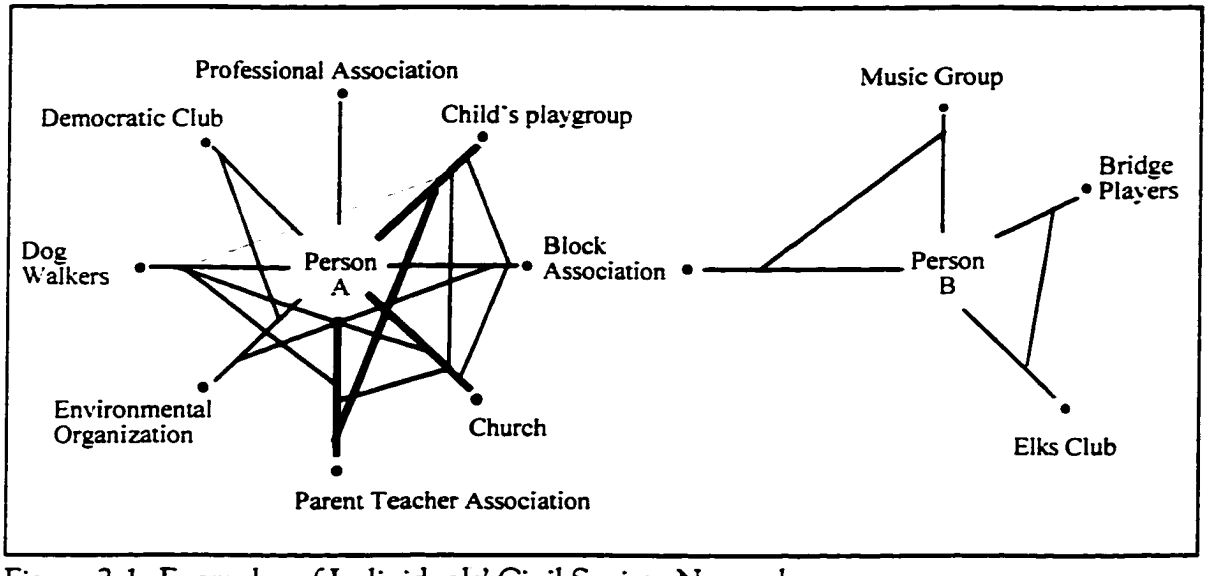

Figure 2.1: Examples of Individuals' Civil Society Networks

Combining Barber's (1998) strong democratic understanding of civil society and Coleman's (1990) definition of social capital, neighborhood-based organizations (civil

society) help people work together (social capital) to achieve goals related to government or the private sector that would be harder to attain individually.

Figure 2.1 is not meant to imply that civil society consists only of the associative ties *one* individual has. According to Barber's (1998) definition, civil society is the space of all social life. Civil society exists all around us, and we choose where, when, and how to participate in it. It is also important to not interpret civil society as localized in geographic space. Although the focus of this research is one neighborhood, residents' civil society networks span great distances.

Summary

This review of literature demonstrates that research on community participation is quite varied. All of the foregoing theoretical frameworks are drawn upon in this dissertation to understand why people do or do not participate in neighborhood-based organizations, and to help develop a more interdisciplinary analysis of community participation.

CHAPTER THREE:
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

As demonstrated by the conceptual background of this research, the study of neighborhood participation is a large undertaking. For this dissertation, eight major research questions were developed. They are listed below, along with assumptions which guided the development of the research questions. Unfortunately, the data collected for this dissertation were not adequate to address some of these questions; those not addressed are noted.

Question 1: Who participates, and who does not participate in block associations, neighborhood associations, and the Community Board?

Assumption 1: It was assumed that those who participate in any of these three types of organizations would have similar demographic characteristics to those identified with participators in the literature as a whole. As indicated in Chapter 2, researchers have found that those who participate in community organizations are highly invested and involved in their neighborhoods, have high socio-economic levels, and are of the dominant racial/ethnic group of the area (Churchman, 1987; Janowitz, 1967; Perkins et al., 1996; Verba et al., 1993).

Question 2: Are the demographic characteristics of those who participate in block associations different from those who participate in neighborhood associations and Community Boards, etc.?

Assumption 2: It was assumed that those who participate in one of these three neighborhood-based organizations may have different characteristics from those who participate in the other types of organizations (e.g. Fisher, 1984; Janowitz, 1967).

Question 3: Does a person's contact with these types of organizations differ at different times in their lives? (e.g. someone who becomes involved with an organization once the children are grown.) As discussed in Chapter 10, the data were insufficient to answer this question.

Question 4: How do different theoretical perspectives on participation explain residents' motivations for participation in these organizations?

Question 5: How do block associations, neighborhood associations, and Community Boards relate to each other? (i.e. Do they perform the same or different functions? Do they ever work together?)

Assumption 3: It was assumed that each of the three types of organizations serves a different function in the neighborhood, thus explaining the presence of three similar types of organizations. This issue is addressed in Chapter 9.

Question 6: How do residents understand each type of organization in relation to local government?

Question 7: Does a person's perception of the neighborhood affect the decision to participate in a neighborhood-based organization?

Question 8: What types of benefits and costs do residents associate with participation in each type of organization?

Assumption 4: Based on the review of literature, it was expected that block and neighborhood associations would provide more social benefits than Community Boards, and Community Boards would provide more collective policy benefits, as described by Schlozman et al. (1995). The corollary is that there are also different types of costs associated with each type of organization, which would help to explain non-participation. Again, this issue was not fully addressed by the data collected (see Chapter 10).

Choice of Organization

As discussed in Chapter 2, most of the literature on participation in neighborhood organizations does not differentiate among the many types of organizations in which a person may choose to participate. Following Schlozman et al. (1995) and Churchman (1987) it is assumed that people choose the organization in which to participate based on their goals and interests. Figure 3.1 (on the next page) shows a diagram of hypothesized choices of organizations. There are four major components of this decision process: (1) the concerns or interests a person has within the neighborhood; (2) knowledge of and opinions about the various organizations in which a person might choose to participate; (3) the choice of organization(s); and (4) constantly evaluating one's participation or lack of participation in an organization against one's concerns or interests, which becomes part of

the knowledge and opinions. This process is constant, dynamic and not necessarily conscious and/or logical. For clarity of presentation, only parts (1) concerns/interests and (3) choice are presented in Figure 3.1.

CONCERNS / INTERESTS (ordered from general to specific)	CHOICE OF ORGANIZATION				
	BA	NA	CB	Other	No Participation
Civic Duty	✓		✓		
Social interests / Sense of Community	✓	✓		✓	✓
Desire to influence government in some way			✓	✓	✓
Neighborhood planning			✓	✓	
Neighborhood preservation	✓	✓	✓		
Concern with neighborhood problems	✓		✓	✓	
Interest in fighting neighborhood crime	✓		✓	✓	
Personal goals such as job, public office	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Need services provided by the organization			✓	✓	

Figure 3.1: Hypothesized Choices of Organizations Based on a Person's Concerns / Interests
Note: BA=Block Association, NA=Neighborhood Association, CB=Community Board

Figure 3.1 lists the nine major categories of concerns or interests examined in this dissertation. These categories were culled from the literature on neighborhood participation referenced in Chapter 2, and appear in order from concerns of a general nature to those which are more specific to an individual. They are:

1. *Civic duty:* the belief that one "should" participate in one's neighborhood to fulfill the principles of democracy;

2. *Social interests / Sense of community:* the desire to participate in one's neighborhood in order to interact socially with neighbors and feel part of the community;
3. *Influencing government:* the desire to have some effect on government officials or policy;
4. *Neighborhood planning:* participating in a neighborhood planning project, which is usually initiated by city government or a planning/design organization;
5. *Neighborhood preservation:* an interest in preserving historic areas, maintaining property values, keeping out people or businesses considered undesirable, etc;
6. *Concern with neighborhood problems:* the desire to get something done about issues such as graffiti, potholes, planting trees, adding a stop sign, etc.;
7. *Fighting neighborhood crime:* the desire to work with others to stop many types of crimes, from muggings to drug sales to prostitution;
8. *Personal goals:* the desire to achieve something personal that does not necessarily help anyone else, such as improving business contacts, running for public office, getting the zoning changed for one's business, etc;
9. *Needing the services provided by an organization:* contact with an organization in order to have access to the services offered, or information about the neighborhood.

There are several areas of overlap among the above categories. For example, participation in a crime fighting effort may be initiated because of personal safety reasons, neighborhood preservation reasons, or because of a perceived duty to the community. Also, a person who joins an organization to work on neighborhood problems may end up staying for social reasons; or, someone who joined for social reasons may become interested in working on neighborhood problems.

The organizations from which to choose are also listed in Figure 3.1. These are: block associations (BA), neighborhood associations (NA), the Community Board (CB), other organizations which are not neighborhood-based (such as school-based, religious-based, work-based, etc.), and no organization (working individually to achieve a result). Each category of concerns/interests has check marks (✓) indicating which type of organization it was originally hypothesized a person with that concern might be likely to contact. This figure indicates possible contacts; two individuals with similar concerns may choose different types of organizations based on the scale of the problem. A crime wave across several neighborhoods may be dealt with by going to the Community Board, while individual acts of vandalism may be addressed by block associations. It must also be noted that involvement in a block association may lead to involvement with a neighborhood association and/or Community Board, and vice versa.

The ongoing, dynamic aspects of the choice of whether and which organization to participate in are not included in Figure 3.1. These are the knowledge and opinions a

person has of the particular organizations, and the evaluation of the choice that has been made. If a person does not know about an organization it is not possible to choose to participate in it; also opinions of the participants may preclude participation. Similarly, an individual may choose a different method of acting upon a concern if the initial method did not bring the desired result. Another way this process of neighborhood participation is dynamic is the development of new concerns and interests based on one's past participation.

The hypotheses depicted in Figure 3.1 were developed from my reading of other research on neighborhood-based organizations. As indicated previously, few studies distinguish among types of organizations. Therefore, these hypotheses draw upon studies of these types of neighborhood organizations individually, as well as my personal experience with all three of these types of organizations. However, these hypotheses were developed early in this dissertation research process, as I was learning about the various kinds of organizations. A greater depth of knowledge is reflected in the revised version of this figure, which appears in Chapter 10.

Non-Participation

Non-participation may be partially explained by how participators are perceived by non-participators. Wandersman et al. (1987) found that non-participators believe that participation in block associations involves greater costs to participators than participators

report they experience. It was therefore hypothesized that this dissertation research might find that people do not participate in a particular group because it is perceived as welcoming only certain people, or because its members have a narrow vision for the neighborhood. Of the three types of organizations in this research, neighborhood associations were expected to be most likely to have agendas for the neighborhood with which residents disagree. As mentioned in Chapter 1, neighborhood associations often exist to maintain the "quality" of a neighborhood, and are often perceived as having been formed by and for homeowners, which may deter some residents from becoming involved with that type of organization.

Summary

All of the above issues have been addressed in this research. Chapters 5-10 explain how the research questions were answered in this research. As is inevitable in the research process, more questions and issues were raised during the data collection phase. These new questions will be presented and discussed as well. The next chapter details the methodology employed to consider these questions.

CHAPTER FOUR:
METHODOLOGY

Location

This dissertation research was conducted in the Boerum Hill neighborhood of Brooklyn, which is part of Community District 2. Community District 2 is made up of the neighborhoods of Downtown Brooklyn, Brooklyn Heights, Fort Greene, Boerum Hill, Clinton Hill, Farragut, Fulton Ferry, Vinegar Hill, DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass), and the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The 1990 population of Community District 2 was 94,534, which makes it one of the less populated Community Districts in Brooklyn. As the location of the original City of Brooklyn, Community District 2 is home to the Brooklyn Borough President's office, federal and New York State civil, criminal, and family courts, the Brooklyn House of Detention, major transportation hubs for the New York City subway and the Long Island Rail Road, and one of the most vibrant shopping districts in New York City.

Boerum Hill is a largely residential neighborhood. It borders Downtown Brooklyn to the north, and has commercial strips to the west and east. The south is bounded by two large public housing developments, which are located in Community District 6. The public housing developments are not in the Boerum Hill neighborhood as defined by the Community Board. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 on the next page show Brooklyn's location within New York City, and Boerum Hill's location within Community District 2 and Brooklyn.

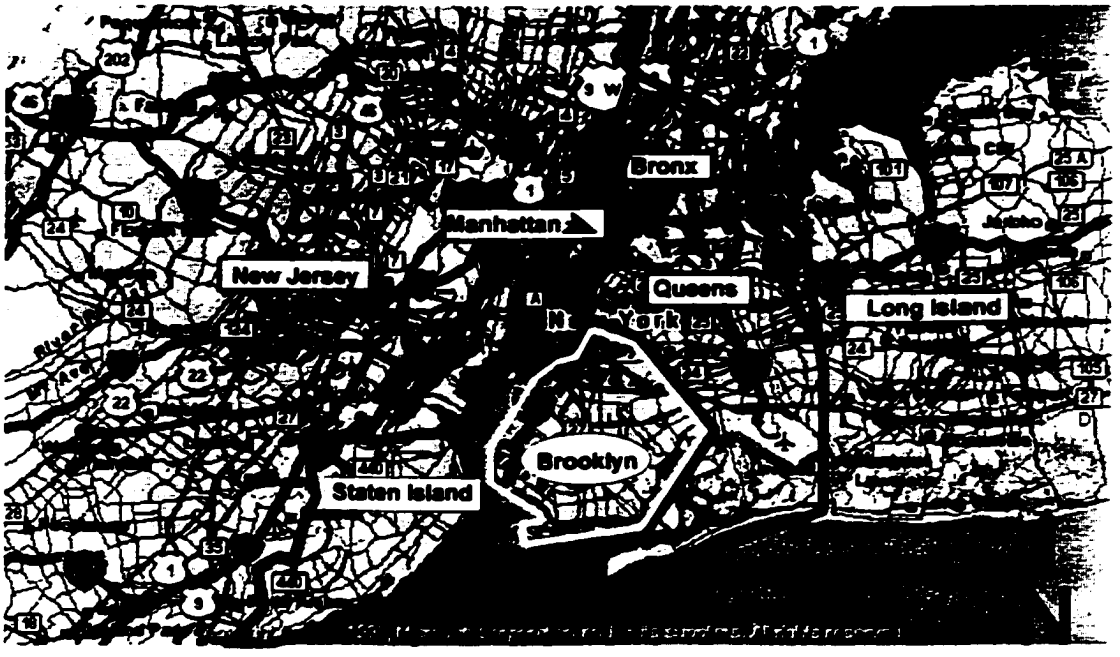

Figure 4.1: Map of New York City. Brooklyn is outlined in white, the other four boroughs in black (borders are approximate).

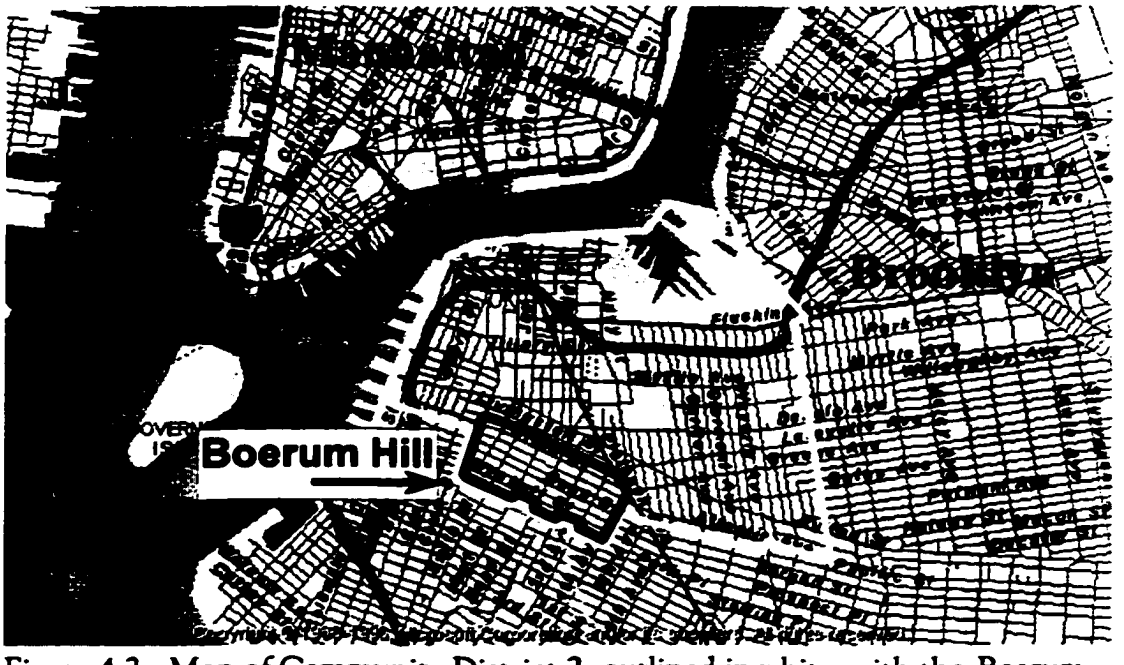

Figure 4.2: Map of Community District 2, outlined in white, with the Boerum Hill neighborhood outlined in black.

Neighborhood History

The area now known as Boerum Hill was mainly built between the 1840s and 1870s as a home for Brooklyn's mostly Irish and Italian merchant class, with businesses along the commercial streets that border the neighborhood. An urban neighborhood, there was always some light industry mixed in among the residential buildings. (Gowanus, the area just to the South, was, and is, largely industrial.) The neighborhood was variously referred to as "Downtown Brooklyn," "South Brooklyn," and "North Gowanus;" many residents felt that it was simply unnamed.

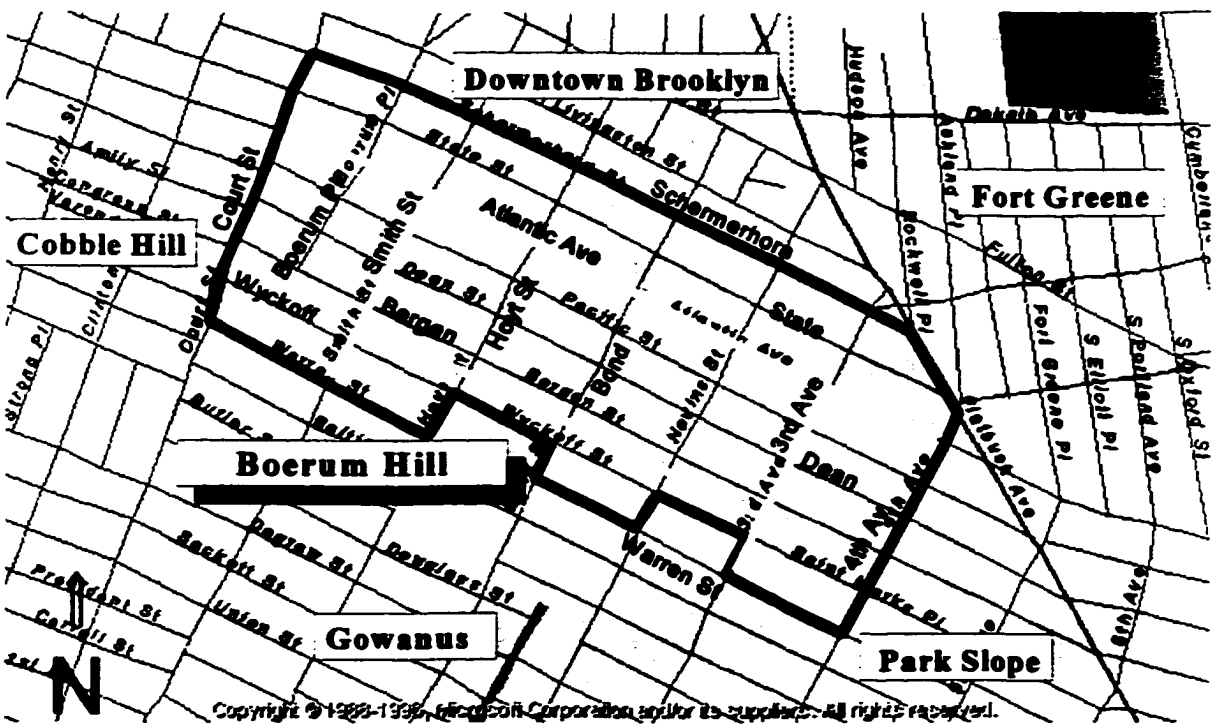

Figure 4.3: Map of Streets in Boerum Hill and nearby neighborhoods.

The housing remained predominately single-family homes until after World War I, when the city was crowded with returning veterans, and the relatively new subway system allowed people to live farther from the central areas. Many homeowners divided their homes into apartments and moved away, becoming absentee landlords. Others turned their homes into rooming houses. During the Great Depression the neighborhood became filled with rooming houses, which multiplied the number of residents and lowered the per capita income. With World War II and the expansion of jobs in New York City, Puerto Rican families began buying houses in the neighborhood; generally converting them to duplexes or multiple apartments, housing fewer people than the rooming houses. In the 1960s New York City declared a moratorium on rooming houses. Gentrification as it is now known came to the neighborhood just as New York City designated large sections of the neighborhood as urban renewal areas. Since gentrification began in earnest, the homes have continued to increase in value. See Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of gentrification in Boerum Hill. (Anderson, 1977; Fioravante, 1995)

1990 Demographic Mix

Boerum Hill was chosen as the neighborhood on which to focus this research because it has the widest variety of race and income of the five principal neighborhoods in Community District 2 (see Table 4.1 on the next page for race/ethnicity distributions, and Table 4.2 on the following page for income distributions). Race and income were taken

as the most important demographic variables on which to look for diversity, based on previous studies of community participation (e.g. Churchman, 1987; Janowitz, 1967; Perkins et al. 1996; Verba et al., 1993). Most of these studies found that those who participate in local organizations tend to have higher incomes and educations, and also to be of the dominant racial group of the area. Because income and education are generally quite correlated, income serves here as a proxy for both. Boerum Hill was therefore selected as the neighborhood with the greatest chance of having diverse organizations.

Table 4.1: Race/Ethnicity in Boerum Hill, Other Community District 2 Neighborhoods, and Larger Areas

	Total Population	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other
Boerum Hill	8,299 100%	3,463 42%	2,092 25%	2,437 29%	245 3%	9 <1%
Brooklyn Heights	18,019 100%	14,895 83%	1,231 7%	1,316 7%	543 3%	10 <1%
Clinton Hill	10,795 100%	1,711 16%	7,674 71%	1,075 10%	269 2%	25 <1%
Fort Greene	28,983 100%	3,266 11%	19,013 66%	5,653 20%	812 3%	104 <1%
Farragut/Fulton Ferry/ DUMBO	8,374 100%	401 5%	5,470 65%	2,145 26%	324 4%	15 <1%
Community District 2	94,534	32%	47%	17%	3%	<1%
Brooklyn	2,300,664	40%	35%	20%	2%	<1%
New York City	7,322,564	43%	25%	24%	7%	<1%
U.S.A.	248,718,000	76%	12%	9%	3%	<1%

Source: 1990 Census - Census tracts do not precisely match neighborhood boundaries.

Table 4.1 shows that, although Boerum Hill was not racially representative of the total population of Community District 2, its 1990 racial distribution was the most diverse of the neighborhoods within Community District 2. Table 4.2 shows that, in 1990, Boerum Hill had the most diverse mix of income levels of the major neighborhoods within Community District 2. These race and income distributions have likely changed due to the strong economy of the late 1990s, but 1990 Census data were the most reliable available at the time this research was planned.

Table 4.2: 1989 Total Household Income in Boerum Hill, Other Community District 2 Neighborhoods, and Larger Areas

	less than $15,000	$15,000-$25,000	$25,000-$50,000	$50,000-$75,000	$75,000-$100,000	$100,000 +
Boerum Hill	20%	15%	32%	18%	8%	8%
Brooklyn Heights	13%	11%	28%	18%	9%	21%
Clinton Hill	27%	20%	30%	15%	6%	2%
Fort Greene	35%	14%	29%	14%	5%	4%
Farragut/Fulton Ferry/ DUMBO	48%	20%	23%	4%	3%	2%
Community District 2	26%	14%	29%	15%	7%	9%
Brooklyn	32%	17%	30%	13%	5%	4%
New York City	28%	15%	30%	15%	6%	6%
U.S.A. (1993)	23%	17%	31%	16%	7%	6%

Source: 1990 Census - Census tracts do not precisely match neighborhood boundaries.

Housing Stock

Boerum Hill, as defined by Community Board 2, is composed of 93 "face blocks"—both sides of one street between two cross streets. In preparation for the community survey described below, a partner and I assessed each of the blocks to identify the type and quantity of housing structures. The neighborhood is composed largely of four-story connected "brownstone" type rowhouses, which are often the target of gentrification and speculative investment. There are several four to eight story apartment buildings in the neighborhood, but there are no buildings which would be considered "high rises" in New York. Several of the blocks which border Downtown Brooklyn have no housing whatsoever, and are the location of parking lots, courts, and a jail (the Brooklyn Detention Center). Of the 93 face blocks, I classified 41 as commercial or industrial, including the aforementioned blocks

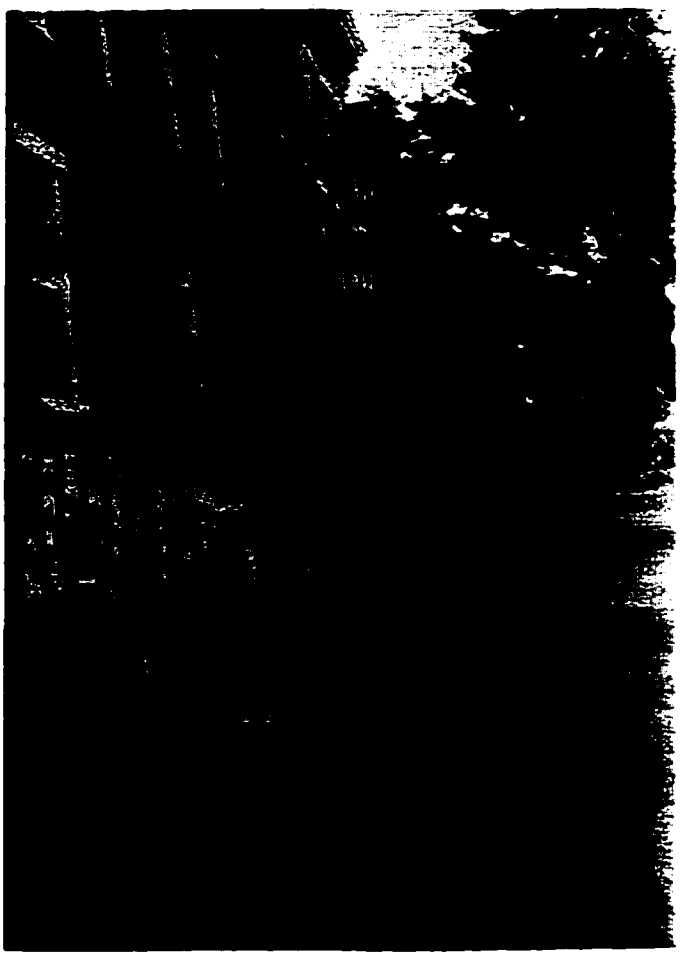

Figure 4.4: Front Stoops in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn
Photo by author

bordering downtown Brooklyn with large parking lots, court buildings, and the Brooklyn Detention Center. The pictures in this chapter show typical residential blocks in Boerum Hill.

Selection of Blocks for Inclusion in the Research Project

The main commercial streets in or bordering the neighborhood (Atlantic Avenue, Court Street, Smith Street, and Fourth Avenue), are generally composed of four-story buildings with stores on the ground floor and apartments on the upper floors. Although these blocks are important to the quality of life in the neighborhood, residents of these types of blocks have inherently different experiences of block life than residents of solidly residential blocks. Many of the commercial streets have associations of business owners and residents, rather than the traditional block associations that residents in other parts of Boerum Hill belong to (e.g. the Atlantic Avenue Betterment Association and the Smith Street Merchants Association). Although these organizations were created to serve specific geographic areas, they focus more on local economic issues and business development than most block associations. Including these types of organizations with block associations would muddy the conceptual waters of the task of understanding the roles and relationships of block associations, neighborhood associations, and Community Boards. Therefore, all blocks that are primarily composed of residences over commercial storefronts were excluded from this research.

Similarly, blocks with only very large apartment buildings (a total of six blocks), and those which do not have at least six houses (another five blocks) were excluded. People living in very large apartment buildings often have "tenant associations" rather than block associations. Although tenant associations can be powerful conduits for the development of social capital (Saegert & Winkel, 1998), members are often more focused on the details of life in the building itself, rather than on the block as a whole.[6] As with the mixed residential and commercial blocks discussed above, blocks with large apartment buildings were excluded because the place-based organizations available to these residents are not comparable to block associations. The blocks with very few houses were excluded because residents of a block with only five or six houses have very different block-level interactions with their neighbors than those who live on blocks with, for example, 50 houses. Selecting solidly residential, brownstone-style blocks left a total of 41 face blocks, most of which are longer, east-west oriented blocks (see map in Figure 4.3).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This dissertation represents a mixture of several kinds of quantitative and qualitative research methods. In the remainder of this chapter the methods used for data collection and analysis are described.

[6] An exception in Boerum Hill is the Ex Lax building, a large co-op which at one time was the Ex Lax factory (the chocolated laxative). Although residents of the Ex Lax building are very involved in the Boerum Hill Association and the Atlantic Avenue Betterment Association, as a large building on Atlantic Avenue, residents of the building were excluded from this research on two grounds.

Participant Observation

I lived in Boerum Hill from August 1992 through July 1997. As a neighborhood resident, I participated in my block association and worked on block and neighborhood beautification projects, as well as a neighborhood planning initiative. I also attended many Community Board and neighborhood association meetings as part of this research. I was always open with interviewees, survey respondents, and others I met about my dual role

Figure 4.5: Houses in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn Photo by author

of resident and researcher. During the course of this research one neighborhood association asked me to discuss my project at a monthly meeting. Everyone with whom I discussed my dissertation research was enthusiastic about this endeavor.

When I was choosing which neighborhood to use as the focus of this research, I weighed the pros and cons of studying my home neighborhood. I finally decided to base the decision on the demographic profile of the neighborhood and deal with the ramifications of living so close to the target of my research. Now that the process is complete, I feel that this dissertation is much stronger for the fact that I was a resident-researcher. Many of the nuances I discovered about neighborhood participation in Boerum Hill came from the experience of five years of getting to know the neighborhood and its residents, not from surveys and interviews.

Despite being a convenience for me, the role of participant-observer is a highly-regarded approach in qualitative research. Miles and Huberman (1994) point out that participant observation is a technique of ethnography often used in social anthropology.

> The primary methodology in this field, ethnography, stays close to the naturalist profile we just described: extended contact with a given community, concern for mundane, day-to-day events, as well as for unusual ones, direct or indirect participation in local activities, with particular care given to the *description* of local particularities; focus on individuals' perspectives and interpretations of their world; and relatively little prestructured instrumentation, but often a wider use of audio- and videotapes, film, and structured observation than in other research traditions. (p. 8)

The only structured part of my participant-observation was attendance at meetings of block associations, neighborhood associations, and the Community Board, yet I was able to use my knowledge of neighborhood events to draw interviewees and others into richer conversations about the neighborhood.

Community Survey

Sampling and Content

I conducted a door-to-door survey of 120 residents on 29 face blocks within Boerum Hill. The survey was administered from July 13, 1996 to October 14, 1996. The survey had two main objectives: (1) to find people for the in-depth interviews, and (2) to get basic information to compare with those who participated in the follow-up interviews. As a method of contacting people for later interviews, the survey was useful in reaching a sample of people who do not participate in any neighborhood-based organizations. The survey questionnaire covered respondents' knowledge, use, and opinions of their local block associations, neighborhood associations, and Community Board (see Appendix for the survey instrument). The survey instrument drew upon previous research including Chavis and Wandersman (1990), Perkins et al. (1990), and Verba and Nie (1972). Respondents' thoughts about the neighborhood and demographic information were also collected. I conducted all the surveying myself. Each questionnaire administration lasted about 15 to 20 minutes. At the end of the questionnaire I asked each person if they would be willing to talk with me further for an in-depth interview.

Although Boerum Hill was chosen to yield a variety of respondents in terms of race and income, these demographic variables were not part of the survey sampling criteria. That is, Boerum Hill was selected as the neighborhood in Community District 2 with the best opportunity to maximize the possibility of contacting many different kinds of people.

Although the survey was conducted in all parts of the neighborhood, I did not target any particular racial, ethnic, or income groups with a screener question. I completed a

Figure 4.6: A Street in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn Photo by author

questionnaire with all who agreed, regardless of their demographic characteristics. I did not attempt to match the demographics of the survey respondents to the demographics of the neighborhood because the survey was not intended to provide a representative sample. The survey was intended to locate potential respondents for the in-depth interviews, many of whom were selected according to demographic criteria.

Locating Block Associations

The original plan for this research called for equal distributions of survey respondents among blocks with and without block associations. The presence or lack of block associations is important because all residents of the neighborhood theoretically have access to both their neighborhood association and their Community Board, but access to block associations is not universal. Thus, in preparing to conduct the survey, I tried to determine the location of block associations within Boerum Hill. I obtained two lists of local block associations; one from Community Board 2, and one from a private nonprofit organization, the Citizen's Committee for New York City. I then attempted to verify the existence of the block associations by calling or writing to each contact person listed. Of the twelve Boerum Hill block associations on the two lists, through the calls and letters, I was able to confirm the continued existence of nine, two of which were identified as "inactive." In the course of conducting the survey I discovered five additional block associations, and several blocks where residents felt they were served by nearby block associations. Therefore, of the 29 face blocks surveyed, at least 17 were *served by* block associations.

I attempted to complete five survey questionnaires on each block, although on several blocks this was not possible. The surveying was generally conducted on weekends during daylight hours. On blocks in which it was difficult to get five respondents I returned at different times, including weekday evenings. No more than one residence per

street address was surveyed. I originally planned to get 100 completed questionnaires; although once that number was achieved I decided to continue surveying in order to get more coverage of the neighborhood.

Limitations of the Survey Sampling Technique

The community survey was useful for finding neighborhood residents to interview. However, there are limitations to the sample used in this research. First of all, the survey was not a statistical random sample of neighborhood residents. I walked up and down each block knocking on doors until I had five completed questionnaires, or until I had tried every house on the block. I covered both sides of each street, and both ends of the block, but the survey sample was not drawn ahead of time. Therefore, quantitative analyses of the data must be limited. Similarly, the survey did not target specific ethnic or income groups in the neighborhood. I conducted a questionnaire with all who agreed, without screening respondents for race or income. Additionally, by choosing blocks to survey based on similarity of housing type, I excluded those who live in apartments above storefronts, and those who live in blocks with only large apartment buildings, as discussed earlier. Although this decision was made with the goal of minimizing the variation in block associations and residents' experiences of their blocks, it appears to have excluded many of the poorer Black and Hispanic neighborhood residents. This resulted in a skewed sample (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of the respondents). Although these are limitations

for statistical analysis, a random, representative sample was never the goal of my community survey. The in-depth interviews are the focus of this research, and the survey was designed as a tool to find an assortment of neighborhood residents to interview. In service of this goal, the survey was quite successful.[7]

During the questionnaire, each respondent was asked if the block had a block association. These data were used to identify the presence or lack of block associations in the neighborhood, but this may not be accurate due to the limited number of respondents per block. At the very least, these data are a gauge for how well publicized a block association may be, in that for each block in which survey respondents indicated that there is no block association, that may in fact be true, or, if there is one, it does not reach all block residents. Similarly, many long-term residents reported that there was a block association, but that it had not been active for many years. This will be discussed further in the section on the life cycle of block associations in Chapter 6, but should also be noted as a possible false positive recording of a block association.

[7] One difficulty faced during the survey period was the choice of blocks. Usually, I chose blocks to survey and continued until I filled my quota for each block. Several times, however, I felt compelled to change my plans due to Jehovah's Witnesses proselytizing on the block. Downtown Brooklyn is home to the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witness, and the faithful practice their door-to-door techniques in the local neighborhoods. I could only assume that people would not talk to me after having just encountered Jehovah's Witnesses. In fact, several respondents said they opened the door to me only after determining that I was not a Jehovah's Witness (by my casual clothes).

In-Depth Interviews

Sampling and Content

After finishing the survey questionnaire with each respondent, I asked if he or she would be willing to talk with me further about the local neighborhood organizations. If a respondent agreed, I asked for his or her name and telephone number. Once I had completed 95 questionnaires, I began conducting individual interviews. In all, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 33 Boerum Hill residents. The interviews are the major focus of this research. The community survey was designed as a way to get access to a variety of residents, and is used mainly as a comparison group for the interviews.

I used a purposive sampling technique to select potential interviewees. Although this dissertation is not "grounded theory" research, it draws upon the theoretical sampling techniques of grounded theory. Strauss and Corbin (1991, p. 178) point out that theoretical sampling is cumulative and flexible, and increases the depth of focus, in order to truly understand the phenomenon at hand. With most of the surveys complete, I was able to begin the analysis to determine how to select a sample for interviews. For example, the surveys highlighted the importance of gentrification (discussed in Chapter 5), which necessitated that several long-term residents of the neighborhood be interviewed. Similarly, the largely White attendance at most block association and neighborhood association meetings indicated a need to locate interviewees of color—especially African

Americans and Hispanics, as they comprise a large portion of the neighborhood population.

In order to cover many different types of neighborhood residents, I chose potential interviewees by attempting to obtain a wide variety of respondents along the following dimensions: location in the neighborhood (East, West, North, South, Central - outlined in white in Figure 4.3), level of participation in neighborhood organizations, and race/ethnicity (especially focusing on Black and Latino residents). I limited the pool of potential interviewees to those who had lived in the neighborhood for at least one year at the time I surveyed them, because of the concern that newcomers might not know enough about the neighborhood organizations to inform this research. I also conducted in-depth interviews with four key informants who had not been surveyed: two neighborhood association presidents, and two Community Board members, all of whom lived in Boerum Hill.

Finally, because the population of survey respondents was skewed toward higher income and White residents, I used a snowball sampling technique to locate additional potential Black and Hispanic interviewees. (I did not feel comfortable asking for referrals to "lower income" residents.) Each time I interviewed someone, I asked if they could suggest other neighborhood residents I could talk to—especially Black and Hispanic people. This yielded additional names, several of whom agreed to be interviewed.

It is in the interviews that I asked the "Why" and "How" questions about neighborhood participation; the surveys only asked "What do you do?" and "What do you think about your neighborhood and its organizations?". The shortest interview lasted approximately 25 minutes, the longest was over two hours. Interviews were conducted between September, 1996, and June, 1997. The timeframe was so long due to the additional time required to locate more interviewees of color. The distribution of resident interviews was as follows:

- Nine residents who were current members of local block associations, neighborhood associations, and/or the Community Board, of whom, two were current neighborhood association presidents, and two were current Community Board members;
- Six former members of local organizations; and
- 18 residents who had not participated in these types of organizations in Boerum Hill, of whom six knew nothing about any of the organizations.

As with the survey respondents, the demographic characteristics of the 33 interviewees do not match the neighborhood as a whole (see Chapter 5 for demographic details). However, this can be partially explained by the selection of blocks for the survey. Although no statistical data are available, five years of living in the neighborhood gives me the confidence to say that the poorer (and generally less well-educated) neighborhood residents are more likely to live in the apartments above stores and in the large apartment

buildings than those with higher incomes. Thus, by attempting to hold housing type "constant," I may have inadvertently excluded many of the poorer residents from my sample. The snowball sample attempt to broaden the pool of potential interviewees focused on finding more people of color, but not people of lower income or education levels. Census data show that the residents who have lived in the neighborhood longest, tend to be less-well educated, and have lower incomes, are Hispanic residents. By targeting more Latino interviewees, I hoped to capture some of these other groups.

Following Strauss and Corbin (1991), the sampling for interviewees continued to the point of "theoretical saturation."

> This means, until: (1) no new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category; (2) the category development is dense, insofar as all of the paradigm elements are accounted for, along with variation and process; (3) the relationships between categories are well established and validated. (p. 188)

I continued searching for additional interviewees until I felt that I was hearing the entire range of views about block associations, neighborhood associations, and the Community Board. With the exception of non-English speaking, Arabic, and poorer residents, I believe I accomplished that goal.

Interviews with Government Officials

This research also examined how local government officials view Community Boards, block associations, and neighborhood associations in order to find out how officials' understandings of these organizations are similar to or different from those of residents.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the chair of Community Board 2, one New York City Council member, and the Brooklyn Borough President's Community Board Liaison, to determine if and how block and neighborhood associations are both officially and unofficially understood to be related to Community Boards. I also spoke with an aide to the City Councilperson for Boerum Hill when I was not able to interview the council member. I attempted to interview the District Manager for Community Board 2, but she was very ill for a long period of time while this research was being conducted. Although there are many other local government officials, the respondents selected for this research were most closely connected with the Boerum Hill neighborhood and its associations, and knowledgeable about Community Boards in Brooklyn and their relationships to block and neighborhood associations.

Analysis

The combination of the above data collection methods afforded a well-rounded view of perceptions of and participation in neighborhood-based organizations in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn. In order to systematically understand the data, several analytic techniques were employed.

The resident interviews, as the central focus of this dissertation, were analyzed using qualitative techniques to determine the underlying themes of the residents' experiences, as well as the similarities and differences in their uses of block associations,

neighborhood associations, and the Community Board. The techniques used draw upon those of Miles and Huberman (1994) and Strauss and Corbin (1991).

The process of data analysis began during the interview itself. One value of conducting all of the interviews myself was to be able to change the interview protocol to discuss issues raised by previous interviewees. Additionally, I constantly compared my recollections of the interviews even before I transcribed the audiotapes and coded the data. The coding began with categories developed during the process of formulating research questions, and conducting the survey and interviews. As the analysis deepened, new codes were added. Examples of initial codes used are: best and worst aspects of the neighborhood, gentrification, neighborliness, neighborhood change, issues of concern to residents, minority participation, neighborhood history, and relationships among organizations. Second-level coding included items such as: social, political, civic, and personal motivations for participation, and lack of time, interest, and trust in others as deterrents to participation.

The interviews of government officials were compared with the interviews of community residents to determine the issues on which opinions of the relationships between block associations, neighborhood associations, and the Community Board are similar, and those on which they diverge. In order to provide a broader context in which to understand the findings from the in-depth interviews, SPSS PC (version 6.1.2) was used to obtain basic frequencies of the community survey data.

Events During the Course of this Research

As indicated above, the data collection period for this dissertation was July 1996 through June 1997. However, the conceptual development of the project began in 1994. As this project was not a controlled experiment in which participation in neighborhood-based organizations is unaffected by the political, social, and economic environment, it is important to note some of the events occurring in Boerum Hill. During the mid-1990s, housing prices skyrocketed, due, in part, to the rising stock market (Iovine, 1997). Many people moved from Manhattan to Brooklyn during this period, to take advantage of better deals in housing costs. Downtown Brooklyn is constantly changing. Construction of the first new hotel in Brooklyn in 50 years began in downtown Brooklyn in 1996. Also, the Regional Plan Association's *Third Regional Plan for New York* was released in 1996, suggesting that developers focus on making downtown Brooklyn New York City's third main business district, after downtown and midtown Manhattan. During the mid-1990s Community Board 2 was also working on redevelopment plans for the closed Brooklyn Navy Yard.

In Boerum Hill there were several events and activities which might have had some effect on neighborhood participation during the period of this research. In 1995 a woman who lived in the neighborhood was murdered in her apartment. This crime was kept in the news for several months due to the police handling of the case. From late 1995 through early 1996, many neighborhood residents worked to keep McDonald's from

building a new restaurant on a vacant lot in the neighborhood. This fight against McDonald's was successful (see Chapter 9 for a complete discussion), and a drug store was eventually built on the lot. In the summer of 1996, the reconstruction of Smith Street, which included the installation of antique-style street lamps, was completed. In November 1996 the Atlantic Center shopping center opened. This large project is part of the Atlantic Terminal Urban Renewal Area, and had been in the planning stages for more than 20 years.

There was also some turnover of elected officials. In November 1996, a long-time New York State Assembly Representative, Eileen Dugan, whose district included parts of Boerum Hill, died of cancer. In Spring 1997, a City Councilperson for part of Boerum Hill, Joan McCabe, announced she would not seek reelection. A neighborhood resident—on the Community Board at the time—entered the race for the City Council seat, although he was not successful.

In January, 1994, the Boerum Hill Association began the "Neighborhood Profile Project," in which they documented and mapped land uses in order to inform proactive planning. They created several committees to work on expanding the historic district, planning the development of a large parcel of vacant land, getting existing businesses to conform to the historic district regulations, attracting new businesses to Boerum Hill, and creating a brochure to advertise Boerum Hill to prospective residents. The Neighborhood Profile project is still ongoing at this writing (Fall, 1999).

CHAPTER FIVE:
GENERAL NEIGHBORHOOD FINDINGS

This chapter explores the findings from the community survey and interviews regarding Boerum Hill residents' views of the neighborhood itself.

Community Survey

Demographics

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the demographics of the survey respondents do not match those of the neighborhood. On the whole, survey respondents were more likely to be White, homeowners, well-off, and well-educated than the neighborhood population (see Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, & 5.4).

Table 5.1: Race/Ethnicity

	Total Population	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other	Refused
Survey Respondents	120 100%	70 58%	17 14%	19 16%	3 2.5%	2 1.6%	9 7.5%
Boerum Hill	8,299 100%	3,463 42%	2,092 25%	2,437 29%	245 3%	9 <1%	N/A

Sources: 1996 Dissertation survey by author
1990 Census - Census tracts do not precisely match the boundaries of Boerum Hill.

Table 5.2: Tenure			
	Total # of Households	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied
Survey Respondents	118 98%	55 46%	63 52%
Boerum Hill	3,451 98%	645 18%	2,806 80%
Sources: 1996 Dissertation survey by author 1990 Census - Census tracts do not precisely match the boundaries of Boerum Hill.			

Table 5.3: Total Household Income							
	Total # of Households	less than $15,000	$15,000-$25,000	$25,000-$50,000	$50,000-$75,000	$75,000-$100,000	$100,000 +
Survey Respondents (1995)	120 100%	29 24%		34 28%	19 16%	20 17%	10 8%
Boerum Hill (1989)	3,482 100%	693 20%	510 15%	1,132 32%	621 18%	262 8%	264 8%
Sources: 1996 Dissertation survey by author 1990 Census - Census tracts do not precisely match the boundaries of Boerum Hill.							

Table 5.4: Education of those 25 and older							
	Total Aged 25+	less than High School	H.S. Graduate	Some College	Associate Degree	Bachelor Degree	Graduate / Prof. Sch Experience
Survey Respondents	104 100%	7 7%	17 16%	6 6%	1 1%	29 28%	44 42%
Boerum Hill	6,239 100%	1,566 25%	928 15%	733 12%	249 4%	1,667 27%	1,096 18%
Sources: 1996 Dissertation survey by author 1990 Census - Census tracts do not precisely match the boundaries of Boerum Hill.							

Table 5.5 (below) gives more descriptors of the survey respondents. For example, there is a wide range of years survey respondents had lived in Boerum Hill, from newcomers who had been there less than one month at the time of the survey, to one respondent who had lived in the neighborhood for 50 years. Many respondents had lived in the neighborhood their entire lives.

Table 5.5: Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents (N=120)	
Sex	•Female: 54 (45%) •Male: 66 (55%)
Age	•Range= 18-80 •Mean=42 •Median=40 (missing=3)
Time in Neighborhood	•Range= 1 month-50 years •Mean=13 years •Median=8 years
Household Status	•Partnered: 65 (54%) •Alone: 32 (27%) •Family: 8 (8%) •Roommates: 13 (11%)
Parenthood	•Have children: 54 (45%) •Have children living at home: 30 (25%)
Suffrage	•Respondents eligible to vote who are registered: 102 (92%)
Religious Attendance	•Regular attenders: 14 (12%) •Occasional: 38 (32%) •Never: 68 (57%)

In addition, I was able to glean that, at least eight percent of survey respondents (10 respondents) were gay or lesbian, and a similar percentage were in interracial relationships, although I asked no questions about these issues. I determined this based on the conversations I had with respondents, meeting the respondent's spouse or partner, and through seeing pictures of the spouse or partner. Both of these details fit with residents' general understanding of the population of the neighborhood, and could

represent the tip of the iceberg, as I did not ask about or learn about these aspects of most of the other respondents' lives.

Perceptions of the Neighborhood

Table 5.6, on the next page, displays survey respondents' perceptions of Boerum Hill, by the three major racial/ethnic groups (White, Black, and Hispanic). Survey respondents were overwhelmingly satisfied with their neighborhood as a place to live, although Black and White respondents were more satisfied with the neighborhood than Hispanic respondents. Respondents were also generally positive about the immediate future of the neighborhood. More than half felt that the neighborhood would "get better" over the coming two years, while less than one third thought it would "stay the same," and very few said that it would "get worse." A greater percentage of Hispanics said the neighborhood would get better than White or Black respondents. Five respondents (4 percent) volunteered that they thought the neighborhood would get "better and worse," in that the generally accepted indicators of neighborhood improvement (such as property values, average income of residents, etc) would increase, but that would be worse for the neighborhood in terms of sacrificing economic diversity among residents. Gentrification in Boerum Hill is discussed later in this chapter.

Table 5.6: Perceptions of the Neighborhood by Major Racial/Ethnic Groups								
Survey Questions	White N=70		Black N=17		Hispanic N=19		Total N=120	
Satisfied with neighborhood as a place to live	61	87%	17	100%	14	74%	103	86%
In the next two years the neighborhood will ...								
get better	37	53%	11	65%	13	68%	67	56%
stay the same	20	29%	6	35%	4	21%	35	29%
get worse	2	3%	0	0%	1	5%	3	2%
Sense of community on block (affirmative)	59	84%	13	76%	11	58%	92	77%
*(If yes) I am part of the block community	42	71%	10	77%	9	81%	70	71%
Sense of community in neighborhood (affirmative)	53	78%	13	76%	12	63%	90	75%
*(If yes) I am part of neighborhood community	40	75%	10	77%	6	50%	64	71%
When I see neighbors on the street I speak to ...								
almost everyone	13	19%	6	35%	8	42%	30	25%
a lot	13	19%	3	18%	3	16%	22	18%
some	21	30%	3	18%	4	21%	29	24%
very few	12	17%	5	29%	2	10%	23	19%
almost none	6	9%	0	0%	1	5%	9	7%
none	5	7%	0	0%	1	5%	7	6%
Being involved in neighborhood is ___ important								
very	10	14%	7	41%	9	47%	33	28%
somewhat	50	71%	10	59%	6	32%	71	59%
not at all	10	14%	0	0%	4	21%	16	13%
Neighborhood organizations have a ___ effect								
big	32	46%	12	71%	12	63%	63	52%
little	22	31%	5	29%	3	16%	35	29%
none	5	7%	0	0%	1	5%	7	6%
Would help a neighborhood organization if asked	60	86%	17	100%	15	79%	103	86%
Ever been asked to help an organization	25	36%	9	53%	3	16%	43	36%
*Helped the organization that asked	22	85%	8	89%	3	100%	37	84%

Source: 1996 Dissertation survey by author.
Note: Percentages do not always add to 100% because of missing data.
* Percentage of those who answered previous question affirmatively.

There is a relationship between recognizing the presence of a sense of community and demographic characteristics. Black and White respondents were more likely than

Hispanics to say that there is a sense of community on their blocks. However, of those who said there was a block community, Hispanics were most likely to feel that they were part of the block community. A different pattern holds when asked if there is a sense of community in the neighborhood larger than the block. All three major groups reported that there is a sense of community in the neighborhood (again with Hispanics least likely to respond affirmatively). Yet Latinos were far less likely than Blacks and Whites to feel they were a part of the neighborhood community they did see.

Whether or not Latino residents felt a sense of community in the neighborhood, as a group they spoke to more neighbors than African American or White residents (this may indicate differences among groups in the definition of the term "community"). The largest percentages of Black residents reported that they speak to "very few" neighbors or "almost everyone." The biggest group of White respondents spoke to "some" of their neighbors when they ran into them outside, whereas the largest percentage of Hispanics spoke to "almost everyone."

The vast majority of survey respondents reported that being involved in the neighborhood is "somewhat" or "very" important to them, and more than 80 percent reported that neighborhood organizations do have an effect on the neighborhood. Black and Hispanic survey respondents were more likely than Whites to feel that neighborhood participation is very important, and that local organizations make a big difference. This is surprising because most of the organizations studied in this dissertation had majority

White memberships. However, it is possible that in answering these questions respondents were thinking of more types of neighborhood organizations than block associations, neighborhood associations, and Community Boards.

In addition, survey respondents indicated that they would be willing to work with a local block association, neighborhood association, or Community Board on an issue they cared about *if they were asked to do so.* However, most had never been asked. Although a large majority of survey respondents indicated that they would be willing to work with an organization, fewer than half reported that they had ever been approached by an organization. This disparity is especially pronounced when examined by racial/ethnic group. Blacks were most likely to have been asked to participate with an organization, Hispanics the least. However, all three groups expressed a willingness to participate, and when asked to do so, demonstrated their commitment by helping out. Thus, there appears to be a large available pool of residents who could be tapped by local organizations. This includes the Latino neighborhood residents, although their lack of social capital with other neighborhood groups appears to hinder their opportunities to participate. This issue is addressed further in Chapter 10. Interviewees (not survey respondents) were asked what issues they would be willing to address with local organizations; these results will be reported later in this chapter.

Survey respondents belong to a wide range of organizations. Figure 5.1 (below) displays the percentage of people who considered themselves to be members of the categories of organizations listed.

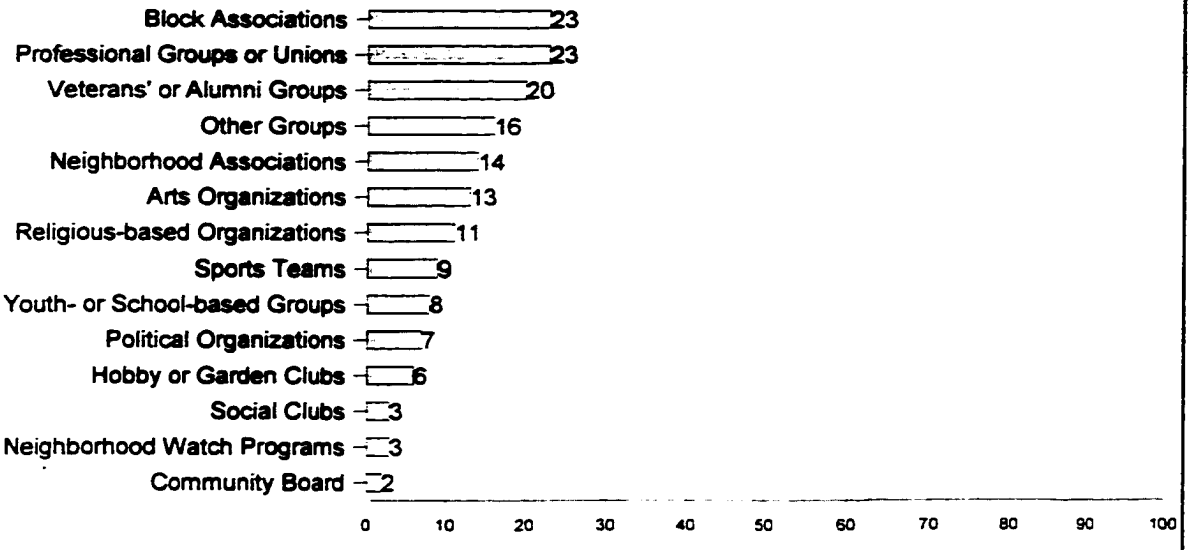

Figure 5.1: Membership in Different Types of Organizations
Source: 1996 Dissertation Survey by author

The relationships other researchers have found between participation and gender or religious attendance were not found in this research (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of these relationships). Among this sample, gender does not appear to be a factor at all in participation at any of the three levels of organizations. Religious attendance, which has been shown by many studies to predict participation (e.g. Guterbock & Fries, 1997; Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1996; Verba et al., 1995) only distinguishes between those who do or do not participate in neighborhood associations (see Chapter 7).

Perceptions of Neighborhood-based Organizations

Finally, survey respondents were asked a series of questions about their perceptions of their block association, neighborhood association, and/or Community Board. These questions were asked only of respondents who indicated that they "knew" something about any or all of these organizations. Before going through this series of questions, respondents were asked if they felt they knew enough about any of the organizations to express opinions about them. Many non-participators were hesitant to go through this series of questions, but several did answer them. Not surprisingly, the greatest number of respondents had opinions on block associations, and the fewest knew anything about Community Boards. Only 57 respondents answered this set of questions, and several gave their opinions on more than one type of organization. Approximately 40 respondents gave their opinions about block associations, 35 spoke about neighborhood associations, and only 15 felt they knew enough about Community Boards to answer this series of questions. Table 5.7 (on the next page) presents the series of questions with responses grouped by type of organization.

Table 5.7: Perceptions of Organizations	% Saying "Yes" *		
Statements about Organizations**	B.A. N=40	N.A. N=35	C.B. N=15
The organization helps me learn about what's going on in my community or meet neighbors	83%	91%	64%
The organization helps bring the neighborhood together	87	81	54
Most of the issues they deal with don't affect me	32	15	31
I disagree with their ideas for the neighborhood	6	16	10
I don't like the people who are involved	0	13	0
I don't feel welcome or like part of the group	5	3	0
I participate in the organization because neighbors pressure me to	8	3	0
The organization gives me a chance to influence government policy	47	59	64
The organization gives me a chance to further my job or make business contacts	11	15	13
I participate because I might want to run for public office someday	5	6	0
The organization gives me a chance to fulfill my duty as a member of the community	78	62	64
The organization is good for solving/addressing neighborhood problems	95	85	86
The city doesn't pay attention to this kind of organization	36	18	33
I use the services the organization provides	60	57	43
The organization doesn't publicize itself enough	33	43	79
The organization is important in neighborhood preservation / keeping up property values	100	100	93
I don't have the time it takes to be involved	41	40	40
It is difficult to get to their meetings/meetings are at a bad time	32	21	23
The organization gives me a chance to help fight crime in my neighborhood	81	65	75
The organization gives me a chance to make my community / city a better place to live	93	94	92

* These questions were only asked of respondents who felt they knew something about the organizations in the neighborhood. The total number of respondents per question varies because of missing data.
** For these questions, the Hoyt Street Association was treated as a block association (see Chapter 7).

Table 5.7 is presented mainly to suggest perceptions of the three types of organizations. Perceptions of Community Boards should not be interpreted, because so few respondents actually answered the questions. Block and neighborhood associations, however, can be compared. Both types of organizations are generally considered to be useful for getting information about, meeting other residents of, and dealing with problems in Boerum Hill. Most of the respondents also generally agreed with the organizations' agendas for the neighborhood, although a surprisingly higher percentage felt unaffected by the issues covered by block associations than neighborhood associations. This finding will be discussed further in the section on non-participators in Chapter 6. Very few of the respondents who knew anything about the organizations felt unwelcome.

Approximately equal percentages of survey respondents indicated that they use the services provided by block and neighborhood associations. This question was designed to learn more about respondents who take advantages of neighborhood-based organizations as community resources, but do not necessarily consider themselves members. Unfortunately, the question was not worded well enough to fully understand this phenomenon. The respondents who reported that they do use services were generally members of the organizations, and thus would not fit the category of users. Additionally, the "services" were never defined, making it difficult to interpret these responses.

One final caveat to this section on survey respondents' perceptions of the organizations must be presented. These respondents were not unwilling to express

negative opinions about the organizations, but the responses are still likely to be skewed towards the positive. Most of those who felt comfortable expressing opinions about any of the organizations were people who participate in those organizations. Many of the non-participators said they did not know enough to answer the questions. I urged them to give me their opinions anyway, but most declined. Therefore, any interpretation of the responses to the above set of questions must be limited.

In-Depth Interviews

Demographics

As is the case with survey respondents, the interviewees do not reflect the demographic characteristics of the neighborhood as a whole. However, as mentioned in Chapter 4, there was no attempt to get a representative sample of interviewees. Rather, particular groups of people were sampled until theoretical saturation had been reached (see Strauss & Corbin, 1991). Interviewees were selected to attain diversity along several dimensions, yet the survey process revealed four categories of paramount interest: race/ethnicity, length of residence in the neighborhood, location in the neighborhood, and level of participation in neighborhood-based organizations. (Organizational participation is, of course, not a demographic variable, but it is reported here because of its theoretical importance in the selection of interviewees.) Half of the interviewees were White, and half were non-White, with Latinos accounting for one fifth of the total. Two fifths had lived

in Boerum Hill fewer than five years, while one third had been in the neighborhood longer than 20 years.

In an attempt to ensure geographic diversity within the neighborhood, Boerum Hill was divided into North (north of Atlantic Avenue), East (east of Third Avenue, and south of Atlantic), West (south of Atlantic and west of Smith Street), Central (bounded by Atlantic Avenue, Smith Street, Third Avenue, and Bergen Streets), and South (east of Smith, south of Bergen, and west of Third Avenue) sections (these sections are demarcated by white lines in Figure 4.3). The Central section is the most populous, and the western section has the lowest concentration of brownstone-type houses. The boundaries for these sections were based on survey respondent and interviewee comments as to neighborhood boundaries, as well as consultation with neighborhood residents.

Finally, as mentioned in Chapter 4, just over half of all interviewees had never joined a block association, neighborhood association, or Community Board in Boerum Hill; the remaining interviewees were current or former members of these types of neighborhood-based organizations at the time of these interviews. Table 5.8, on the next page, displays the general demographic characteristics of interviewees.

Table 5.8: Demographic Characteristics of Interviewees (N=33)	
Race/Ethnicity	•White: 16 (48%) •Black: 5 (15%) •Hispanic: 7 (21%) •Asian: 1 (3%) •Mixed Race: 1 (3%) •Refused: 3 (9%)
# of Years in Neighborhood	•Range= 1-40 •Mean=15 •Median=12 •1-5 years: 13 (39%) •6-10: 2 (6%) •11-20: 7 (21%) •21-30: 6 (18%) •31-40: 5 (15%)
Location in Neighborhood	•Central: 17 (52%) •South: 9 (27%) •North: 3 (9%) •East: 3 (9%) •West: 1 (3%)
Organizational Membership*	•Current B.A. members: 5 (15%) •Former B.A. members: 5 (15%) •Current N.A. members: 6 (18%) •Former N.A. members: 3 (9%) •Current C.B. members: 2 (6%) •Never joined any organization: 18 (54%)
Sex	•Female: 20 (61%) •Male: 13 (39%)
Age	•Range= 24-71 •Mean=44 •Median=42 (missing=4)
Highest level of Education	•less than High School: 0 (0%) •High School: 3 (9%) •Some College: 3 (9%) •Associate's degree: 1 (3%) •Bachelor's degree: 7 (21%) •Graduate degree or schooling: 16 (48%) (missing=3)
1995 Household Income	•less than $25,000: 3 (9%) •$75,001-$100,000: 10 (30%) •$25,000-$50,000: 10 (30%) •$100,001+: 2 (6%) •$50,001-$75,000: 4 (12%) (missing=4)
Tenure	•Owners: 20 (61%) •Renters: 13 (39%)
Household Status	•Partnered: 23 (70%) •Alone: 8 (24%) •Family: 0 (0%) •Roommates: 2 (6%)
Parenthood	•Have children: 18 (54%) •Have children living at home: 14 (42%)
Suffrage	•Respondents eligible to vote who are registered: 31 (97%)
Religious Attendance	•Regular attenders: 3 (9%) •Occasional: 10 (30%) •Never: 16 (48%)
* Percentages total more than 100% because of multiple memberships	

Perceptions of the Neighborhood

As with the survey respondents, interviewees were generally positive and hopeful about the present and the future of the neighborhood. Interviewees were asked what they thought were the "best" and "worst" aspects of living in Boerum Hill. Most interviewees gave more than one answer for best thing, and several had trouble thinking of a worst thing (see Figures 5.2 and 5.3). Location was considered the best feature of the neighborhood by 14 of 33 residents. The easy access to downtown Brooklyn, Manhattan, the subway and bus system, and the surrounding neighborhoods is quite a draw for many residents of Boerum Hill. The second most often cited best feature of the neighborhood was the diversity of the population (9 of 33). Many interviewees reported the fact that Boerum Hill was known for having a lot of mixed-race couples at least as far back as the 1960s. Several reported that they especially valued the racial and economic diversity for the sake of their children. Other factors that were given as the "best" aspect of the neighborhood were: access to

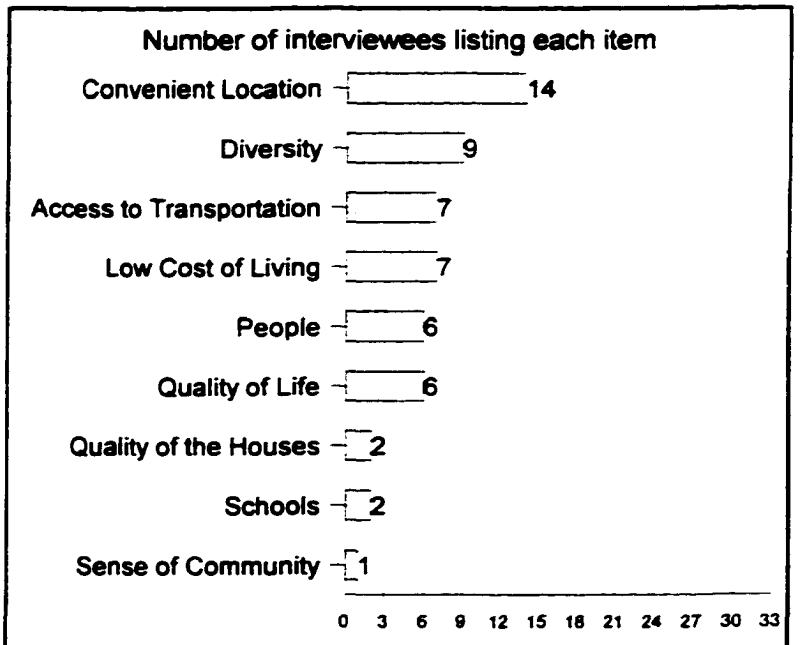

Figure 5.2: Best Aspects of Boerum Hill

transportation (7 people), low cost of living (7 people), the people in the neighborhood (6 people), the quality of life (6 people), the quality of the houses (2 people), the schools (2 people), and the sense of community in the neighborhood (1 person).

There was much less consensus on the "worst" aspect of life in Boerum Hill. The three items tied for first place (with four votes each) were: the proximity of the public housing projects, safety concerns, and the lack of a sense of community. Concerns about crime were mentioned by three people (which, if combined with safety issues would create the largest category), two people each gave traffic, dirtiness, parking, high cost of living, and friends' perceptions of the neighborhood. The other concerns mentioned by one person each were: the lack of neighborhood amenities, abandonment, the proximity to downtown Brooklyn, the length of the commute to a job in Harlem, difficulties of small

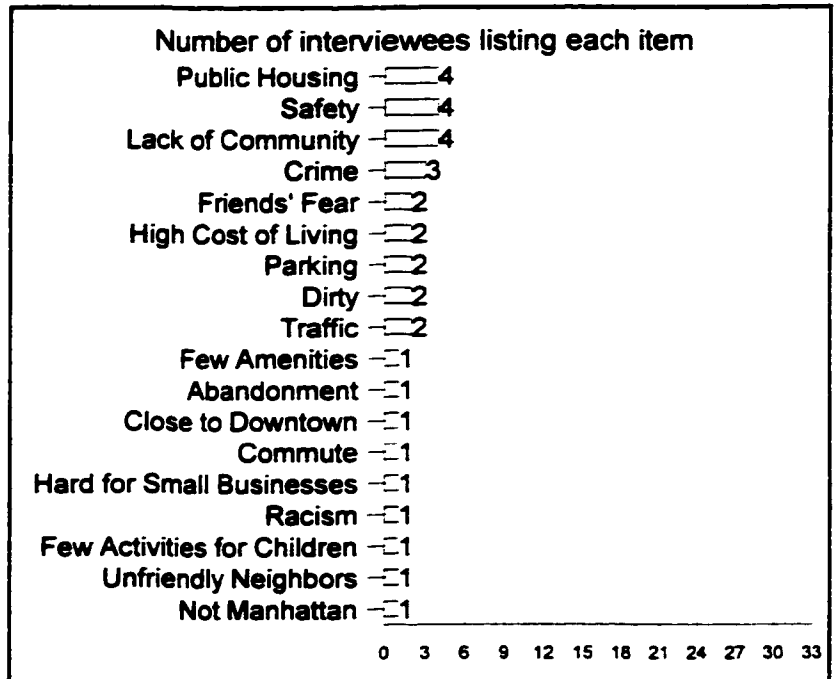

Figure 5.3: Worst Aspects of Boerum Hill

businesses, racism, few activities for children, unfriendly neighbors, and the fact that it is not Manhattan.

The negative aspects of Boerum Hill are reflected in the issues interviewees said they would be willing to work on with a neighborhood-based organization if asked (see Figure 5.4). This constitutes the available pool of resources. The largest category of issues involved concerns about the "quality of life," such as clean streets, parking and traffic, noise, and nuisance businesses (this category includes businesses which create excessive amounts of noise or trash). The second most important category to interviewees was issues relating to children and schools.

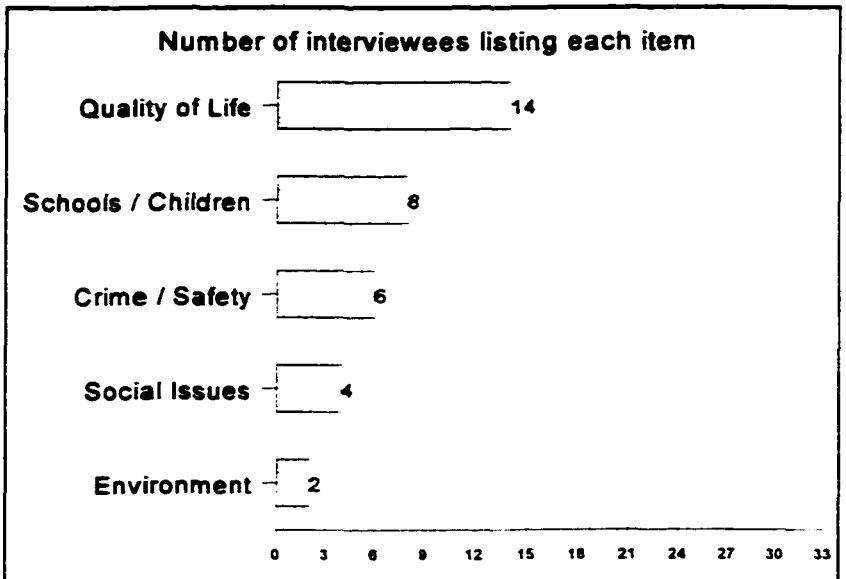

Figure 5.4: Issues Interviewees Would Work on if Asked

Most of the neighborhood-based organizations do not tackle these issues, as there are many organized groups whose sole focus is schools or children, but there is clearly a willingness in the neighborhood for the other organizations to participate in these issues. The third most important category was crime and safety issues. Also mentioned were social issues,

such as block parties, community gardens, and a dog run, and environmental issues such as recycling and the siting of incinerators. These categories of concerns are not surprising for residents of a downtown Brooklyn neighborhood, and they do show some consensus around priorities among interviewees. The available pool is discussed further in Chapter 10.

The interviewees also expected the neighborhood to improve over the coming two years. When asked why they said this, the majority of reasons centered around economic development. As indicated in Chapter 4, downtown Brooklyn is the focus of a lot of development. The Atlantic Center shopping plaza opened during the interviewing period. Also, the hotel construction in downtown Brooklyn was mentioned by several respondents as an indicator of local improvement. In addition to these development issues, many interviewees mentioned that more young families were moving to Boerum Hill, and buying and fixing up homes. There was a tangible feeling among Boerum Hill residents that there was a lot more money in and around the neighborhood. In fact, the July 26, 1999 edition of *The New Yorker* magazine gives yet another sign of the increasing economic development in and around Boerum Hill. In a brief restaurant review of the Victory, a three-month-old sidewalk cafe at the corner of Hoyt and State Streets, the reviewer noted the charms of a small, friendly, neighborhood place where the owner gives dog biscuits to diners' canine companions. However, the review ends with the following warning:

> . . . it's a good idea to start now, while the Victory still feels like a neighborhood secret—and before Realtors turn Boerum Hill into BoHo and the people who talk

> to cell phones instead of each other start showing up for lattés. (The New Yorker, July 26, 1999, p. 8)

Gentrification

Although most interviewees saw the increase in personal wealth and economic development as a positive sign for the neighborhood, others worried about those with less money. Concern was expressed by owners as well as renters, due to the desire to keep a racially and economically mixed neighborhood. As one lifelong Latina resident who owns her home put it "We don't want our block to be all White." When asked directly about the process of gentrification, however, most interviewees felt that the changes occurring in the neighborhood in the late 1990s would not be of the same magnitude as the changes of the mid-1960s. A White woman who moved to Boerum Hill in 1966 explained this attitude by saying "there aren't so very many people who are likely to not scream about being displaced, so I don't think there is going to be much more displacement."

Until the 1960s most of the neighborhood residents were Hispanic, and there was little economic investment. The wave of gentrification that started in the mid-1960s brought mostly White people who saw themselves as "pioneers" in a new neighborhood. They set out to "create" a neighborhood, and formed a close-knit community of people determined to improve their neighborhood together. Most of these "pioneers" in Boerum Hill had far less money than those moving into the nearby neighborhoods of Brooklyn Heights or Park Slope, but they had stumbled upon a neglected neighborhood in which

they could purchase brownstones for less than $20,000. Anderson (1977) describes the gentrification of several downtown Brooklyn neighborhoods:

> Couples, a few with children, and mostly from Manhattan, began going to Brooklyn, buying brownstones at prices ranging from twelve thousand dollars to thirty thousand, fixing them up, living in them, and refurbishing the neighborhoods around them. Many of these people were middle-income professionals and artists who needed more living and working space than they could afford to rent in Manhattan. They became known as brownstone renovators, and they did not mind answering to that quite accurate description. But since, as educated people, they were taken with Victorian ambience—conscious of the residential tradition they were attempting to restore—they much preferred the stylish term "brownstoners." It implied that they were not just repairing and living in brownstones—ignorant, like so many ordinary tenants, of the cultural and historical background of these old dwellings—but that they were qualified by imagination and taste to appreciate what they once stood for. It also implied that in saving the houses from collapse they deserved to be commended for being protectors of one of New York City's rich but neglected historical treasures. . . . Finally, the term "brownstoners" implied a certain neo-pioneer heroism. Many of the new owners felt that in helping to arrest the decay of certain areas of New York City they were affirming, against the direst of predictions, a belief in the city's future—showing that it *can* be a livable place for everyone. (pp. 86, 91)

The newcomers, along with several long-term White residents, created the Boerum Hill Association in 1964 as a sort of support group for renovators, and to attract more middle class people to purchase and renovate homes. This set up a line between "newcomers" and longer-term Latino residents, which exists to this day. In fact, a 1978 description of a then-recently gentrified neighborhood of Philadelphia could have been describing Boerum Hill.

> Neighborhood efforts to attract rehabilitation began in 1962 when representatives of local churches and businesses discussed improving the image of the area (then known as Southwark). These activists renamed the community in 1963 and became the Queen Village Neighbors Association. The goals of the

> organization were to promote revitalization and provide low to moderately priced housing. The creation of the association and the renaming of the neighborhood created tensions between newcomers and old-timers as early as the 1960s. Many adults in Queen Village had lived there all their lives, and a few could trace their family's presence back three or more generations (Levy 1978; Levy and Cybriwsky 1980).
>
> In 1970, 7,500 people lived in Queen Village; by the late 1970s, an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 immigrants had arrived. Unlike the blue-collar, long-term residents, the newcomers were upper income professionals seeking proximity to office work in Center City. Rents, housing prices, and tax assessments rose quickly and dramatically, in some cases by as much as 200 to 300 percent. Queen Village became a "neighborhood of affluent transients and low- and moderate-income life-long resident families" (Levy 1978, 26). (the above two paragraphs are from Spain, 1993, p. 158)

Substituting "Boerum Hill" for "Queen Village," "South Brooklyn" for "Southwark," and "Manhattan" for "Center City," this summary rings true in Brooklyn, and is a recognizable pattern in many other cities as well. The biggest difference between Queen Village and Boerum Hill is that the initial gentrifiers in Queen Village were invited by the local businesses and churches who set up the neighborhood association, whereas in Boerum Hill, the initial gentrifiers moved to the neighborhood of their own accord, met some of the older families who had been in the neighborhood for more than 50 years at that time, and then created the neighborhood association as a self-help group and a way to publicize the neighborhood to other similarly inclined New Yorkers. Not surprisingly, the older White woman who is credited with being the first outsider in many years to purchase a brownstone to live in, sought out the White families who had remained in the neighborhood since before the Black and Hispanic influx due to both World Wars. (Anderson, 1977)

What Anderson (1977) termed "The Making of Boerum Hill" has all the hallmarks of gentrification identified by researchers: central location, historical disinvestment by the merchant class, lowered housing costs, "discovery" by a largely White population moving from elsewhere within New York City, a "pioneer" mentality, increasing property values, the closing of rooming houses, renaming an existing neighborhood, the establishment of a historic landmarked district, and activism by new residents which does not include many of the older residents (Carpenter & Lees, 1995; N. Smith, 1996; Spain, 1993). However, there is clearly a need for more research on the continuing social effects of gentrification after the initial period of upheaval and change. The tensions between newcomers and old-timers still exist in Boerum Hill, and seem to be intensifying as the booming stock market of the late 1990s permits even more Manhattan residents to move to and buy brownstones in Boerum Hill.

Kasinitz (1988), in an article titled "The Gentrification of 'Boerum Hill'," found that in the early 1980s the Latino residents of Boerum Hill who had lived in the neighborhood since before the gentrification began were struggling to fight the gentrification of their neighborhood. In my five years as a resident of the neighborhood in the 1990s I knew of no such organized opposition. Although several interviewees were opposed to further gentrification, they were not actively fighting it.

Kasinitz (1988) describes housing trends in the 1970s that seem to be reappearing in the late 1990s. For example, Kasinitz details the history of the Boerum Hill

Association's house tours, which ran annually from 1966 through 1982. In the early 1980s activists protested the house tours as elitist, and the Boerum Hill Association decided to stop conducting them, rather than continue to be embarrassed by protests. In 1995 the Boerum Hill Association resumed the practice of running house tours, with no widespread opposition. Similarly, Kasinitz points out that the designation of the Boerum Hill Historic Landmarked District in 1974 led to many older, poorer homeowners selling their homes and moving away because they could not afford to make improvements within historic district guidelines. In 1996 the Boerum Hill Association embarked on a Neighborhood Profile Project, one aspect of which is to expand the historic district. Finally, Kasinitz demonstrates that, unlike Queen Village, Boerum Hill's immigration resulted in a net decline in population as smaller families lived in larger spaces, such as one or two families per brownstone, versus four or more in the 1950s. An original goal of the Boerum Hill Association was to attract more like-minded renovators to the area. Now, the Neighborhood Profile Project has created a brochure to advertise Boerum Hill through realtors to prospective owners and renters. Although several residents interviewed for this research said they were not at all opposed to having more homeowners in the neighborhood, they questioned the need to bring in new people from outside the neighborhood. These respondents would prefer that the Boerum Hill Association work on helping current residents with buying and renovating their houses.

A comprehensive study of gentrification is beyond the scope of this dissertation, yet it is important to note that the split between new and old residents is reflected in the membership of the organizations discussed in the following chapters. However, it is important not to overemphasize the divide in Boerum Hill. There is certainly no open hostility, nor do new and old residents keep away from each other. Each group values the diversity of the neighborhood, as demonstrated by the responses to the "best" aspects of Boerum Hill.

- "That you can walk everywhere and there's so many different interesting people." (3 year resident)
- "Currently, the population is quite mixed; that's one thing I like about it really." (20 year resident)
- "Well the neighborhood has gotten better than it was in the past. . . . It's a mixed neighborhood, of all nationalities, religions, races, and I feel that's good." (54 year old born and raised in neighborhood)
- "By far it's one of the most mixed [of the nearby] neighborhoods. . . . You know neighborhoods change a lot in New York, very quickly, from block to block. You know, one side is very mixed, very minority, the other one is very White. This one is a good cross in between." (1½ year resident)

Despite these feelings of goodwill, divisions within the neighborhood become evident when differences in participation among block associations and neighborhood associations are examined.

CHAPTER SIX:
BLOCK ASSOCIATIONS

Many authors have noted that the number of block associations increases in times of turmoil. For at least the past 50 years major social and political upheavals have caused the number of block associations to grow. World War II, urban renewal, the Black Power fights for urban decentralization, the federal withdrawal of funding for neighborhoods, and the New York City fiscal crises of the 1970s, have all preceded huge jumps in the number of block associations (Levy, 1979; Yates, 1973). Social change seems to cause people to renew their interest in their neighborhood, either with a conservative mindset of protecting their property and family from change, or with an activist mindset of demanding services and attention from government. Although block associations often form with the goal of influencing public policy through "strength in numbers" as constituents of the elected representatives, they do not otherwise have much influence on government.

Roles of Block Associations

This research has shown that block associations in Boerum Hill are overwhelmingly considered to have a social focus. Many block associations conduct crime prevention activities (especially block watches and graffiti removal) but the majority of respondents view block associations as organizations which promote neighborliness through block

parties, street sweeping days, and pot-luck dinners. Several interviewees described their block's street cleaning day as a chance to get outside and connect with other block residents, rather than as an essential ingredient in the cleanliness of the block. However, others described their block associations as cliquish and exclusionary, although serving a social function for those invited to participate.

Interviewees also saw block associations as useful for small scale block improvement projects, such as planting flowers around street trees, despite some disagreement about many of the planned "improvements." Interviewees who disagreed with the block association's plans reported that they generally declined to participate in them, rather than attempt to change the group's focus.

Lifecycles of Block Associations

Jones and Tumelty (1986) note that of the 475 block associations listed with Community Boards or the Citizen's Committee for New York City in the mid 1980s, only 138 (29%) were identifiable as active, 215 (45%) were inactive, and 122 (26%) could not be contacted for determination of activity levels. The present research employed the same method to identify block associations in Boerum Hill, and had different results; of 12 block associations, 7 (58 percent) were active, 2 (17 percent) were inactive, and 3 (25 percent) could not be contacted. As stated in Chapter 4, residents on 17 of 29 blocks reported being served by nearby block associations. Again, it must be noted that this count of block

associations cannot be considered an accurate total of block associations in Boerum Hill. It merely represents the number of blocks on which survey respondents and interviewees indicated there are block associations available to residents. There may be other blocks with organizations, and some of the respondents may have mistakenly reported the existence of a block association. Nevertheless, residents of these 17 blocks did feel that there is some structure in which block residents participate.

However, not all of these block associations were active. Identifying 14 block associations is not the same as understanding the function and activity levels of those organizations. An interviewee reported that one block association holds regularly scheduled quarterly events, including covered-dish suppers and block parties, for which they have a tee-shirt design contest each year. On several other blocks interviewees and survey respondents reported that their block association exists "on letterhead only," waiting to be invoked when needed for an important issue, but not otherwise active. Residents who reported that their blocks had a block association, either currently or in the past, described those organizations as being in one of four stages: formation, activity, dormancy, and defunction.

1. *(Re-)Formation.* This is the period in which a block association is initially created or re-constituted. The instigating factor is usually one of two things, (1) some sort of threat to the block, against which an organization is formed to protest, or (2) a critical mass of new residents wishing to get to know neighbors. Research on block associations

generally identifies the organizing motive as a fight against a perceived threat (e.g. Levy, 1979), however in Boerum Hill, several block associations were formed, or re-formed because newer residents wanted a way to get to know their neighbors and create ties. This social factor is likely to appear more often as more people move into the neighborhood.

The formation period for a block association is generally marked by high levels of activity. There may be regular meetings, and a lot of plans made as the block association attempts to deal with the issue(s) that gave rise to the group. In addition, this is the period during which the governance rules are created, and there may be elections of officers or leaders. There is no way to predict how long the initial flurry of activity will last, and it depends on the formative issue. For example, if a block association is formed to bar a fast food restaurant from opening a franchise on the block, there may be an extended period of activity until the process is resolved.

2. *Activity.* This period forms the active life of a block association. Once the initial excitement of organizing activity has worn off, block associations generally settle into routines. These may include regularly scheduled meetings, block clean-up days, holiday parties, and protests. Although the level of activity varies dramatically among active organizations, for this research block associations that held meetings or activities at least once per calendar year were classified as active.

3. *Dormancy.* Many block associations fall into a period of dormancy or inactivity at some point. This can occur immediately after the settling of the original organizing

issue, or after years of activity. Many survey respondents and interviewees reported that there were dormant block associations on their blocks. Several people said that there was definitely a block association, but that it had not met for a period of years. Despite this inactivity, respondents felt that if needed, the block association could be easily called into action. This is the category in which the letterhead-only types of block associations are included. On blocks with associations in this stage, at least one respondent reported that the organization still exists, still has officers, and/or still had a treasury. These respondents felt that their block associations were available for particular issues, but did not need to continue to meet or sponsor activities. An article on classifying arts organizations sums up dormant organizations well.

> Whereas people are ordinarily (although not always) unambiguously alive or dead, organizations are more often comatose. Few data sources, if any, allow one to identify such organizations. Although the regularity of performances and duration of seasons is a good indicator of activity, it is difficult to establish the activity level without closely scanning the local press or having the assistance of an informant. (Kaple, Rivkin-Fish, Louch, Morris, & DiMaggio, 1996, p. 23)

Dormant block associations generally perform less of a social function on the block, and more of an activist, organizing function, especially in times of "emergency." However, some dormant block associations were revived with a more social orientation once there was a critical mass of new residents who wanted to get to know their neighbors better. For example, one respondent said "We don't need to have meetings. Everybody here knows everybody else."

4. *Defunction.* Many respondents, when asked if there was a block association that served their block, replied that there had been an organization years ago, but that it hadn't met for as many as 15 years. This type of organization is classified as defunct. Defunction is distinct from dormancy in that block residents do not consider defunct organizations to still exist, whereas dormant organizations do continue to exist, if only on letterhead. This category may not be analytically distinct from a block having no organization at all; further research is needed to verify this distinction. However, it is labeled it a separate category because, in a neighborhood where there are many residents who have lived there for decades, it seems that it would be easier to re-form a block association on a block where there is some institutional memory that there was one previously, than on a block with no such history. One interviewee said that her block association had effectively dissolved after one resident took the leadership role and tried to steer the group toward issues they were not interested in. The other members stopped attending meetings and the "leader" eventually moved away. This respondent felt that the association could be re-constituted now that the troublemaker was gone.

Each block association may go through the above stages in order or skip around, spending years in any particular stage, or skip it completely. As mentioned above, there are also differences among block associations within each stage. Even among those considered active, block associations differ along dimensions of formality, geographic focus,

issues covered, and level of activity. Figure 6.1 (below) presents each spectrum according to how specific the different block associations are along the spectrum.

	Specific	Non-Specific
Formality	Highly structured with: a name, officers, scheduled elections, a dues policy, specific meeting dates and times, and a policy on membership.	Loosely structured with: no membership requirements, no dues, meetings called by anyone whenever necessary, no elections or officers.
Geographic Focus	Focus area confined to the immediate face block which created the association.	Expansive focus on larger neighborhood area. May invite residents of other blocks to join.
Issues Covered	Organization chooses specific issues that are well-defined. Does not get involved in issues considered outside of its purview.	Organization focuses on any issues of interest to participants at the moment. May have a wide range of issues, or just a few, but willing to expand or contract as needed.
Level of Activity	Many regularly scheduled meetings or activities per year. Block residents know when events will take place well ahead of time.	Few meetings or activities, with no regular schedule. Meetings are called on the spur of the moment.

Figure 6.1: Four Spectra within Active Block Associations

Blocks with no block association often had an unelected, de facto "block president." Several survey respondents said that there was no block association, but if they wanted to change something they would go to their block president, and he or she would help them deal with the issue. It may be that on these blocks there is no need for a block association, because there is an active key resident. However, many of the block presidents

were quite elderly; it would be interesting to find out if those blocks form block associations after the block president is gone.

Now that the block associations in Boerum Hill have been described, the questions remain: why do residents participate or not in their block associations?.

Participators

Who Participates?

Twenty-seven of 120 survey respondents considered themselves members or officers of block associations; as many others said they had had some type of contact with a block association, generally in the form of a flyer or sign advertising a meeting. The active members and officers (hereinafter referred to simply as "members") do fit the profile found in the literature (see Chapter 2) as rooted in their neighborhood. Table 6.1, on the next page, summarizes some of the characteristics of block association members.

Table 6.1: Characteristics of Block Association Members (N=27)	
Race/Ethnicity	•White: 19 (70%) •Black: 4 (15%) •Hispanic: 4 (15%) •Asian: 0 (0%) •Mixed Race: 0 (0%) •Refused: 0 (0%)
# of Years in Neighborhood	•Range= 4 months-45 years •Mean=18 years •Median=20 years •0-5 years: 3 (11%) •6-10: 6 (22%) •11-20: 7 (26%) •21-30: 6 (22%) •31-45: 5 (19%)
Sex	•Female: 11 (41%) •Male: 16 (59%)
Age	•Range= 18-74 years •Mean=51 •Median=50 (missing=2)
Highest level of Education	•less than High School: 3 (11%) •Associate's degree: 1 (4%) •High School: 3 (11%) •Bachelor's degree: 5 (18%) •Some College: 0 (0%) •Graduate degree or schooling: 15 (56%)
1995 Household Income	•less than $25,000: 3 (11%) •$75,001-$100,000: 8 (30%) •$25,000-$50,000: 6 (22%) •$100,001+: 6 (22%) •$50,001-$75,000: 4 (15%)
Tenure	•Owners: 22 (82%) •Renters: 5 (18%)
Household Status	•Partnered: 21 (78%) •Alone: 3 (11%) •Family: 2 (8%) •Roommates: 1 (4%)
Parenthood	•Have children: 17 (63%) •Have children living at home: 9 (33%)
Religious Attendance	•Regular attenders: 3 (11%) •Occasional: 9 (33%) •Never: 15 (56%)
Satisfaction	•Satisfied with neighborhood: 26 (96%)
Block Community	•Sense of community on block: 25 (93%) **(If yes) I am part of the block community 25 (100%)
Neighborhood Community	•Sense of community in neighborhood: 22 (81%) **(If yes) I am part of neighborhood community: 21 (95%)
Previous Participation	•Participated in neighborhood-based organization previously: 6 (22%)
* Percent of those who answered previous question affirmatively. Source: 1996 dissertation survey by author	

As Table 6.1 shows, the 27 block association members had lived in Boerum Hill for an average of 18 years, tended to be homeowners, and less than half attended religious services either regularly or occasionally at the time of my survey. This sample of members of block associations in Boerum Hill is extremely well-educated and well-paid; 56 percent have graduate or professional school experience, and 42 percent have household incomes of at least $75,000. Three quarters of block association members lived with a spouse or partner, and about two-thirds have children, although only half of parents still had children living with them. The average age was 50, and 70 percent are White, with Blacks and Hispanics representing 15 percent each of survey respondents who identified themselves as block association members. All but one were satisfied with the neighborhood. All but two felt there is a sense of community on their block, but only four fifths felt a sense of community in the neighborhood. In addition, only 22 percent ever participated in a neighborhood-based organization elsewhere.

Why Do They Participate?

As discussed in Chapter 2, many studies of community participation assign motivation based on the theoretical background of the researcher. The basic theoretical perspectives are described as political, social, and community organizing. When interviewees were asked why they participate in block associations, two main motivations surfaced: social reasons, and to have power or control over their environments. These

motivations were followed closely by a sense of civic duty or responsibility to one's neighborhood. Thus, participation in block associations can be explained largely with social and political perspectives.

Social motivations for participating in block associations are complex. First of all, residents want to get to know their neighbors. This is especially important to homeowners, because they have made a financial investment in the neighborhood, as well as an implied commitment to remain in the neighborhood for a long time. One 18-year resident explained this view by saying:

> People that are going to be in the block association are your neighbors, and people that you've known for years. . . . So the things that you do in the block association, you're thinking in terms of the most basic social needs and values. You want to ensure things like respect for children, respect for older people, how do you deal with community values. The kind of things that you can live with, you try to advocate for those, for basic values, because that's where you're going to be.

Secondly, block associations afford an opportunity to connect with people with whom members do not otherwise socialize. This social function is also tied to safety issues for several residents. Interviewees indicated that they wanted to get to know their neighbors, in part so that they would have someone to turn to if they ever needed help, and conversely, so that others could ask them for help. One renter who had lived on two different blocks in Boerum Hill over the course of five years talked about the first block she lived on, which is next to a public housing development:

> They have a block association that's very - they try to get locks put on the project doors, because of where they are, they do a lot with the precinct to try to make everything safer, make sure everybody knows everyone else, and they also have

> little parties and stuff like that. And I think that works because there is an obvious identity for that block.

Although Boerum Hill is by no means dangerous, it is not crime-free. During the course of this research there were several incidents (see Chapter 4), including a period of time in which there were quite a few muggings of residents walking home from one of the subway stations. Block association members reported that they felt safer knowing that they could go to a fellow member's house to get help if necessary. The president of the Hoyt Street Association promotes this by having everyone introduce themselves at each meeting.

> Because then the next day you see somebody on the street and you say hello to them. That to me, is a success. . . . And also from a security point of view, that I know all these people . . . I could ring a doorbell if I felt like I was threatened on the street. . . . I could get some help if I felt like I needed it, and I would also help them.

Thus, it is important to recognize the social aspects of participation in block associations as a way of generating social capital. As discussed in Chapter 2, social capital is developed and sustained through the interpersonal relationships among neighborhood residents. One way social capital is generated is participation in block associations, and this research demonstrates that some residents join block associations because they are seeking to make or strengthen those relationships. For these residents, block associations are an antidote to the anonymity and isolation that is perceived as part of urban life.

In addition to social motivations for block association participation, an equal number of interviewees indicated that they participate in their block associations because they want some amount of control over their environment, an example of which is the

block association that tried to get locks on the doors of the housing development. Social perspectives also focus on individual and organizational empowerment (Prestby et al, 1990). It is clear from these interviews that block associations can work together to give a sense of power and control that many participants look for. The president of a block association said that one of the strengths of the block association is "that we can do things as a group that none of us as individuals would ever take on." The more formal planning processes generally take place at the neighborhood or Community District level, and will be discussed further in the following chapters.

Finally, several respondents reported that they are block association members because they feel a responsibility to their neighborhood to be involved. This is classified as falling within the political perspective as a sense of civic duty. Of the 40 survey respondents who knew something about local block associations (this includes members as well as nonmembers), 78 percent agreed that block associations give people a chance to fulfill their duty as a member of the community. One respondent, when asked how she views the block association said "I think we see it as something you contribute to. . . . Whatever you can do, you need to do. Otherwise you might as well live in a high rise in Manhattan and let somebody else do it."

Block association members feel that they "should" participate with their neighbors on their block, and often likened a block association to the most local level of self-governance. However, most block associations are formed to promote "neighborhood

improvement," they are not fundamentally about self-governance. Political perspectives on neighborhood-based organizations generally do not study the different types of organizations that make up this large category. It may be that the "civic" responsibility people feel toward block associations is not civic at all, but more a general social sense of responsibility to get to know neighbors.

This chapter began with the observation that block associations are often created through a community organizing framework; an issue arises which causes people to join together to fight (or support) the issue. Although this clearly exists in Boerum Hill (it was demonstrated by the re-formation of the block association to fight the proposed McDonald's restaurant mentioned in Chapters 4 and 9), issue organizing was not stressed as a reason for membership in block associations. Quite a few respondents indicated that they would work with their block association on issues that were important to them, even if they were not members of block associations. Thus, issue organizing is effective for attracting people to block associations, but it does not appear to explain continued participation.

Non-participators

Who Doesn't Participate?

The vast majority of survey respondents (76 percent) reported that they were not members or officers of block associations; this includes respondents who said they had

some type of contact with a block association, generally in the form of a flyer or sign for a meeting. Table 6.2 (below) displays the characteristics of members and non-members.

Table 6.2: Characteristics of Non-members of Block Associations (N=91)	
Race/Ethnicity	•White: 51 (56%) •Black: 12 (13%) •Hispanic: 14 (15%) •Asian: 3 (3%) •Mixed Race: 1 (1%) •Refused: 9 (10%)
# of Years in Neighborhood	•Range= 1 month-50 years •Mean=11 years •Median=5 years •0-5 years: 48 (53%) •6-10: 8 (9%) •11-20: 18 (20%) • 21-30: 8 (9%) •31-50: 9 (10%)
Sex	•Female: 42 (46%) •Male: 49 (54%)
Age	•Range= 18-77 years •Mean=40 •Median=36 (missing=1)
Highest level of Education	•less than High School: 5 (5%) •Associate's degree: 1 (1%) •High School: 14 (15%) •Bachelor's degree: 31 (34%) •Some College: 8 (9%) •Graduate degree or schooling: 32 (35%)
1995 Household Income	•less than $25,000: 26 (29%) •$75,001-$100,000: 11 (12%) •$25,000-$50,000: 28 (31%) •$100,001+: 4 (4% •$50,001-$75,000: 15 (17%) (missing=7)
Tenure	•Owners: 57 (63%) •Renters: 32 (35%) (missing=2)
Household Status	•Partnered: 43 (47%) •Alone: 28 (31%) •Family: 8 (9%) •Roommates: 12 (13%)
Parenthood	•Have children: 36 (40%) •Have children living at home: 21 (23%)
Religious Attendance	•Regular attenders: 10 (11%) •Occasional: 29 (32%) •Never: 52 (57%)
Satisfaction	•Satisfied with neighborhood: 75 (82%)
Block Community	•Sense of community on block: 65 (71%) *• (If yes) I am part of the block community 43 (61%)
Neighborhood Community	•Sense of community in neighborhood: 68 (75%) *• (If yes) I am part of neighborhood community: 43 (63%)
Previous Participation	•Participated in neighborhood-based organization elsewhere: 28 (31%)
* Percent of those who answered previous question affirmatively.	

As is shown in Table 6.2, those who are not block association members are less rooted in Boerum Hill, with an average of 11 years in the neighborhood, they are more likely to be renters, and a lower percentage (although still high at 83 percent) report being satisfied with the neighborhood than block association members. Fewer nonmembers report that there is a sense of community on their block, although a higher total percentage reported that there is a sense of community in the neighborhood. Religious attendance among nonmembers of block associations is about equal to attendance among members.

Demographically, survey respondents who are not block association members are less well-educated and well-paid than members. Less than half of nonmembers live with a spouse or partner, and only 40 percent have children. The average age of nonmembers, at 40, is 10 years younger than members. Therefore, nonmembers are younger, less well-educated, less wealthy, and more flexible in their living environment (fewer have children, and they are more likely to rent) than block association members. These findings match other studies of participation.

Why Don't They Participate?

The most common reason that interviewees in Boerum Hill did not participate in block associations was lack of interest. This category includes people who said that they have higher priorities, including the desire to spend time with their families instead of at

meetings, as well as people who said they are too busy with work. For example, a woman with two school-aged children said:

> I don't want to take the time. In the evenings I want to be home with my kids; we have homework to do, we read books at night. I want to be with them before they go to bed. I don't want to go to a meeting at 7 o'clock at night. I mean even a meeting at school I find difficult, and once in a while I will go, if it's a curricular meeting for my son or something like that. But I want to be here in the evenings.

No one indicated that they did not participate because they did not have time. They recognized that they had other priorities.

The second most common reason for not participating in block associations was the desire for privacy. This is the opposite of the social aspect of participation discussed above. Some interviewees said that they did not want people on their block to know too much about their private lives, cultivating the anonymity of urban life. A respondent who had rented his house for 12 years before recently purchasing it said "I don't want my business being discussed. . . . I do value my privacy a lot, and I didn't really feel like I wanted to be friends with people on the block." A different interviewee (whose spouse is an officer in their block association) said that the organization functions as an exclusionary social clique, describing social functions, such as holiday parties, to which only a select group of block residents is invited. These nonmembers recognize the social aspects of block associations, and specifically choose not to participate in them. Others felt unaffected by issues block associations cover. Several interviewees reported that they do not need any more people to socialize with.

It is difficult to estimate the number of respondents who would participate in a block association if there were one on their block. Several interviewees said that participation in their neighborhood is important to them, and that either their block did not have a block association, or that they did not know if there was one. Some of these people may be willing to participate, but cannot, for lack of opportunity. Interviewees were not asked the hypothetical question "If there were a block association here, would you participate in it?". Rather, a more general question about the three types of neighborhood-based organizations was posed: "If a local block association, neighborhood association, or Community Board asked you to help them protest or work on an issue that you cared about, would you do so?". The vast majority of survey respondents (103 people, or 86 percent) replied that they would work with a local organization on a personally important issue. This finding is discussed further in Chapter 10; suffice it to say here that some of that "available pool" would participate with block associations if an opportunity for which they were sufficiently motivated arose.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Verba et al. (1995) set forth the civic voluntarism model of political participation, which states that nonparticipation is a function of resources, engagement, and recruitment. For block associations, lack of resources does not seem to be a factor. There are generally no membership requirements other than residence. Lack of engagement is a significant cause of non-participation in block associations. People who have other priorities simply do not want to participate in block associations. However it

does appear that the willingness to participate on a particular issue is important here. Engagement with a block association might increase if the organization were to focus on specific issues important to non-participators. Similarly, several respondents indicated that they stopped participating in block association activities when the organization focused on activities with which they did not agree. This demonstrates a form of "voting with one's feet," which may not be very effective with block associations. Several block association officers said that they do not expect to always get the same group of people at each meeting, because they understand how busy people are. Thus, a person's absence in protest over the issues at hand may not be recognized as a protest, but chalked up to non-attendance due to other commitments.

Lack of recruitment also appears to be a factor in non-participation in block associations. A few interviewees reported that they felt excluded by their block associations because, although they had lived on the block for a very long time, they had never been invited to participate. Others did not know that their block had an association, demonstrating a lack of outreach efforts by the organization. This also shows the uneven distribution of social capital on the block. If social capital is a route to participation in local organizations, those who do not feel invited to join are lacking the social capital which would secure an invitation.

Summary

Residents do recognize the potential and limitations of block associations. Block associations are seen as a way to cultivate social capital in the neighborhood, as well as an outlet for fulfilling a sense of responsibility to the community. Block associations are also recognized as effective ways to address specific issues which can be solved by neighbors, including local crime problems and neighborhood improvement (see Table 5.7 for survey results). Block associations are not, however, considered very useful for influencing government policy, nor for advancing one's career.

Explaining Participation

Perkins et al. (1996) predict participation in block and neighborhood associations (they do not distinguish between the two types of organizations) through informal neighboring, religious participation, and involvement with other community organizations. The present study confirms the importance of two of these three factors to participation in block associations. Although there are no differences in religious participation between block association members and nonmembers, there are striking differences in informal neighboring and participation in other organizations. The measure of informal neighboring used in this research is the amount of people on the block the respondent recognizes and speaks to when out on the street (see Table 5.6). Two-thirds of block association members reported speaking to "a lot" of neighbors, or "almost everyone." Only one third of

nonmembers fell into these two categories. Similarly, when asked about participation in different kinds of organizations in any neighborhood, block association members reported an average (and median) of four organizations. Nonmembers reported an average of 1, and a median of zero organizations (only half of nonmembers reported participation in any type of organization).

What is not clear from these comparisons, however, is causation. Given that so many interviewees said that they joined their block association to meet their neighbors, it is entirely likely that members speak to more people on the street because they met them through participation in the block association. Conversely, if residents are recruited into block associations through their social capital networks, those with less social capital would be less likely to speak to people on the street. Similarly, it is not possible to tell from this research if people who join block associations are organization-joiners in general, or if participation in block associations leads to more opportunities or motivation to join organizations. Investigating causation would require a longitudinal study, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

This research clearly demonstrates the degree to which block associations are important to participators. Wandersman, et al. (1987) reported that non-participators assume that the costs of participation are greater and the benefits fewer than participators report. Although this research did not determine perceived benefits and costs of block association participation, it did find that non-participators were simply not interested in

these organizations. Even interviewees who owned their homes felt that they had other outlets for socializing and exercising their civic duty. However, they remain part of the available pool of potential participants.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

Roles of Neighborhood Associations

Neighborhood associations are sometimes referred to as neighborhood improvement associations or civic associations. They usually appeal to the middle class homeowners in a neighborhood by focusing on maintaining the property values and appearance of a neighborhood. Many neighborhood associations promote investment in the neighborhood and reinforce neighborhood values through the tradition of house tours and street festivals (Fisher, 1984; Justa, 1984). One neighborhood association in Brooklyn was originally created to promote historical landmarking within its neighborhood, but was later expanded to work on other neighborhood issues.

Fisher (1984) points out that many neighborhood associations, because of their affluent constituency, tend to deal with problems by working quietly through government channels, rather than through protest at public hearings as block associations often do. In fact, neighborhood associations are often seen by conservatives as the best venue for citizen participation in neighborhoods, in light of the emphasis on maintaining the status quo. Because of the connections neighborhood leaders tend to have with government officials, and because of the larger constituency they claim to represent, neighborhood associations can be more influential on government policy than block associations. (Fisher, 1984)

In Boerum Hill there is one major neighborhood association, the Boerum Hill Association. Another organization, the Hoyt Street Association, is in the process of transitioning from a large block association to a neighborhood association. These two organizations are discussed before examining participators and non-participators at this level.

The Boerum Hill Association

The Boerum Hill Association was founded in 1964. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the neighborhood of "Boerum Hill" was created during the wave of gentrification that started in 1962. Anderson (1977) and Kasinitz (1988) give very detailed histories of the creation of Boerum Hill; only some of the highlights are reported here. The area was formerly known as South Brooklyn, northern Gowanus, or simply downtown Brooklyn, with no separate name. However, the middle class professionals who moved to the area in the early 1960s wanted a well-defined brownstone neighborhood. The woman who initiated the Boerum Hill Association did extensive research, and found that the Boerum family had owned farms and land in this part of Brooklyn from the early 1600s until after the Civil War. "Hill" was chosen to add prestige to the name, despite the fact that the neighborhood is actually located in the shallow valley between Park Slope and Brooklyn Heights.

These new residents liked to think of themselves as "brownstoners" because of their focus on restoring the Victorian era brownstone homes throughout the neighborhood. In fact, Kasinitz quotes one charter member of the Boerum Hill Association who says that they purposefully drew the boundaries of the area they called their new neighborhood to include blocks with similar architecture, omitting the public housing projects just to the South (Kasinitz, 1988, p. 167).

The Boerum Hill Association was created as a combination support group and advertising mechanism. The new residents helped each other through their renovations, and also projected an image of a historical community in a convenient location. In an effort to attract more renovators like themselves, the Boerum Hill Association began holding house tours in 1966. Kasinitz (1988) details the history of Boerum Hill house tours, up to and including the period during the early 1980s when protesters interrupted the tours on behalf of the poorer residents who were being displaced by gentrification. The Boerum Hill Association resumed house tours in 1995, after a 13 year cessation. In 1973, after a seven year campaign, the Boerum Hill Association won historic landmark district status for a central portion of the neighborhood. The Neighborhood Profile Project initiated in 1995 is now seeking to expand the historic district. (Kasinitz, 1988; Scott-Melnyk, 1997)

Other projects in which the Boerum Hill Association has been involved include what one interviewee termed "The Six Day War of 1970," because local residents, with

only six days' notice, were able to rally enough support from Boerum Hill and other affected neighborhoods to get the New York State legislature to defeat a proposed highway (the Cross Brooklyn Expressway) that would have demolished much of the neighborhood. The Boerum Hill Association also helped to get rid of prostitution in the area of Fourth Avenue and Pacific Streets in the early 1980s, and was instrumental in keeping a McDonald's restaurant from opening at Third and Atlantic Avenues in the mid-1990s (see Chapter 9 for a full discussion). The organization was less successful in protesting the siting of a drop-in service center for homeless people at Bond and Schermerhorn Streets, and the establishment of a New York City social service office on Third Avenue and Dean Street in the early 1990s. The Boerum Hill Association also keeps track of local traffic hazards, including pollution, accidents, congestion, and the rebuilding of the Gowanus Expressway, which is projected to detour a lot of traffic through Boerum Hill until at least 2007.

The Boerum Hill Association works closely with neighborhood businesses, promoting the businesses that help make Boerum Hill a lively neighborhood. For example, the Boerum Hill Association always participates in *Atlantic Antic*, a street festival on Atlantic Avenue every September. Local restaurants and shops advertise in the *Boerum Hill News* newsletter, and provide refreshments at the annual Boerum Hill Association meeting for new residents, as well as the house tour.

The Boerum Hill Association expends a great deal of time and energy working to maintain and improve the quality of life in Boerum Hill. Examples of the other issues they are involved with are listed in the *Boerum Hill News*. On the back page is a membership form (which lists the dues schedule, $15 per year individual, $25 per year for a family), with a section to check interest areas:

> I'm willing to help out in the following areas: __Tutoring, __Sanitation Community Council committee(s), __Gardening (Hoyt Street Garden and/or Pacific Street Garden), __Quality of Life Issues, __Traffic issues (calming/pattern, etc.), __Neighborhood profiling, __Anti-graffiti, __Landmarking issues, __Tree planting/care, __Tree pit planting, __Other beautification issues, __Entertainment, __Organizing a block association. (Vol 4, #2, March/April, 1999)

In 1997 there were 250 paid member households in the Boerum Hill Association, although membership is not required to attend meetings. Many interviewees said that they see the Boerum Hill Association as an umbrella organization for all Boerum Hill block associations.

While the Boerum Hill Association is run entirely by volunteers and gets in-kind donations from local businesses, many of the activities cost money. They hired a lawyer when trying to stop the city's social service office, and they have high photocopying and printing costs for the Neighborhood Profile Project, to list just two examples. The Boerum Hill Association raises money for its projects through the house tours, as well as selling advertising space in its newsletter, and charging members dues.

The past 35 years' worth of activism on behalf of the neighborhood have earned the Boerum Hill Association the respect and attention of many local politicians. All of the City Council members who represent the neighborhood send staff members to Boerum Hill

Association meetings, as do state senators, assembly-men and -women, and occasionally, the United States Congressman. Most Community Board members from the neighborhood are also active in the Boerum Hill Association. Boerum Hill Association representatives have served on many city task forces, including most recently, the Brooklyn Borough President's Hoyt-Schermerhorn Task Force, which, at this writing, is planning to hold hearings to determine the disposition of a large parcel of undeveloped state-owned land along the northern edge of Boerum Hill (see Scott-Melnyk, 1997). Interviews with members and officers of Community Board 2, a City Council member, and the Brooklyn Borough President's office confirmed that local politicians consider the Boerum Hill Association to be the official voice of neighborhood residents.

The Hoyt Street Association

The Boerum Hill Association fits the description of neighborhood civic associations: peopled by middle-class, mostly homeowners, dedicated to neighborhood improvement, known by local politicians through the work they have done, the voice of the community (Fisher, 1984). However, the Hoyt Street Association is a very different type of organization in Boerum Hill. The Hoyt Street Association was formed in 1970 by renovators who wanted to clean up the street on which they lived. Early on, one of the founding members died suddenly, and left $1,000 to the fledgling organization. The organization used that money to purchase 20 trees for the street, which gave an immediate

boost to the participating blocks. In 1975, the Hoyt Street Association created the Hoyt Street Garden at the corner of Hoyt Street and Atlantic Avenue. The land had been a vacant lot for years, and the neighbors had long wanted to create a plaza or garden there, but the land was owned by the church next door, La Iglesia del Cristo Vivo. The church agreed to allow the Hoyt Street Association to use the lot for a garden at no charge, but they insisted that the garden be gated and locked. Although this went against the organization's original plans, they acceded, and began to raise funds for the development of the garden. For start-up money, the Hoyt Street Association held a "circus" with neighborhood residents as performers. Every year since then, the Hoyt Street Association has held a flower sale in the Spring to raise money for upkeep.

Although the Hoyt Street Association was required to have a gate and lock for the garden, they have always had a very liberal key policy. They make hundreds of copies of the key to the padlock, and give a key to anyone who is willing to follow the five simple rules of the garden. "While you are there, leave the gate wide open and encourage others to come in. Please pick up litter, but don't pick the flowers. Lock up when you leave" (Hoyt Street Garden 20th Anniversary Celebration pamphlet, 1995).

During the early years the Hoyt Street Association sponsored Sunday afternoon story hours for young children in the garden. There have also been several "master gardeners" who have volunteered to care for the plants and flowers for years at a time. The garden became a focal point for the Hoyt Street Association.

Until recently, the Hoyt Street Association always called itself a "block" association, even though the "block" was actually a string of seven small blocks of Hoyt Street from State Street to Baltic Street. Based on the picture of the Boerum Hill Association as a neighborhood association above, and the description of block associations as mainly social in the last chapter, the Hoyt Street Association walks, talks, and acts much more like a block association than a neighborhood association. Initially in this chapter the Hoyt Street Association was described as being in transition from a block association to a neighborhood association. This is true in terms of its reach within the neighborhood, but not in terms of issues covered or residents' perceptions.

The Hoyt Street Association is largely a social organization. There are no membership dues because the leadership does not want barriers to participation. The monthly meetings usually have some sort of presentation; meetings held during the course of this research included: neighbors conducting a cooking demonstration, a talk by a local artist, tips on home renovation, and they even had me talk to one meeting about the progress of my research. Although important neighborhood issues are discussed occasionally during meetings, the Hoyt Street Association is not as involved with politicians, the Community Board, or local businesses as is the Boerum Hill Association. When interviewed, the presidents of both organizations clearly differentiated the roles of each organization. The president of the Boerum Hill Association said that she thinks of the Hoyt Street Association as a block association. However, the president of the Hoyt

Street Association said it is a neighborhood association because it draws residents from a larger area of Boerum Hill.

When the Hoyt Street Association was founded it was meant to bring together residents of several blocks with only a few houses each. Each block alone was not considered to be able to sustain a block association, so they banded together to create one. Over the past thirty years more people from other blocks have joined. The leadership of the Hoyt Street Association invites people from all of the nearby blocks, again as a way of not erecting barriers to participation. During the community survey conducted for this research, many respondents on blocks adjoining Hoyt Street said that they do not need their own block association, as their block is served by the Hoyt Street Association. They specifically said that they think of the Hoyt Street Association as a large block association which serves their block. This discussion of the Hoyt Street Association appears in this chapter in deference to the president's position that the Hoyt Street Association is becoming a neighborhood association. However, in all other sections of this dissertation, the Hoyt Street Association is treated as a block association, as that is how the majority of respondents familiar with the organization described it. When survey respondents were asked about neighborhood associations, they talked about the Boerum Hill Association.

Though it is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it would be interesting to see how the Hoyt Street Association changes as it grows. Will it take on more issues usually associated with neighborhood associations? Will it become more politically involved? Will

it draw off members from the Boerum Hill Association? While these questions are hypothetical, they are addressed in Chapter 9, in which the relationships of neighborhood-based organizations are discussed. The remainder of this chapter focuses on why neighborhood residents do or do not participate in the Boerum Hill Association.

Participators

Who Participates?

Of the 120 survey respondents, 17 (14 percent) said that they consider themselves members or officers of the Boerum Hill Association. However, because the Boerum Hill Association charges its members dues, it is important to also look at respondents' contact with neighborhood associations. Only 26 survey respondents (22 percent) reported having "some," "a lot," or "a great deal" of contact with a neighborhood association. Thus, it is safe to assume few survey respondents actively participate in the Boerum Hill Association without being registered members. As is the case with block association members, neighborhood association members are well rooted in Boerum Hill. Table 7.1, on the next page, presents characteristics of survey respondents who considered themselves neighborhood association members; note that Table 7.1 includes only respondents to the community survey conducted for this dissertation, it does not supply any information on the membership of the Boerum Hill Association as a whole.

Table 7.1: Characteristics of Neighborhood Association Members (N=17)	
Race/Ethnicity	•White: 11 (65%) •Black: 4 (23%) •Hispanic: 0 (0%) •Asian: 0 (0%) •Mixed Race: 0 (0%) •Refused: 2 (12%)
# of Years in Neighborhood	•Range= 1.5-30 years •Mean=15 years •Median=16 years •0-5 years: 4 (23%) •6-10: 3 (18%) •11-20: 5 (29%) •21-30: 5 (29%)
Sex	•Female: 7 (41%) •Male: 10 (59%)
Age	•Range= 32-77 years •Mean=51 •Median=50 (missing=1)
Highest level of Education	•less than High School: 0 (0%) •Associate's degree: 0 (0%) •High School: 2 (12%) •Bachelor's degree: 6 (35%) •Some College: 0 (0%) •Graduate degree or schooling: 9 (53%)
1995 Household Income	•less than $25,000: 0 (0%) •$75,001-$100,000: 4 (23%) •$25,000-$50,000: 5 (29%) •$100,001+: 5 (29%) •$50,001-$75,000: 1 (6%) (refused=2)
Tenure	•Owners: 15 (88%) •Renters: 1 (6%) (missing=1)
Household Status	•Partnered: 14 (82%) •Alone: 3 (18%) •Family: 0 (0%) •Roommates: 0 (0%)
Parenthood	•Have children: 11 (65%) •Have children living at home: 5 (29%)
Religious Attendance	•Regular attenders: 5 (29%) •Occasional: 2 (12%) •Never: 10 (59%)
Satisfaction	•Satisfied with neighborhood: 16 (94%)
Block Community	•Sense of community on block: 13 (77%) **•(If yes) I am part of the block community 13 (100%)
Neighborhood Community	•Sense of community in neighborhood: 17 (100%) **•(If yes) I am part of neighborhood community: 16 (94%)
Previous Participation	•Participated in neighborhood-based organization previously: 7 (41%)
* Percent of those who answered previous question affirmatively. Source: 1996 dissertation survey by author	

Survey respondents who were neighborhood association members had lived in the neighborhood for an average of 15 years (median = 16 years), tended to be homeowners, and all but one were satisfied with the neighborhood. Not surprisingly, all of the responding neighborhood association members felt that there was a sense of community in the neighborhood; three quarters reported a sense of community on their blocks. Forty-one percent reported past participation in a neighborhood-based organization. Religious attendance was found among fewer than half of neighborhood association members, but the percentages of occasional (12 percent) and regular (29 percent) attenders are reversed from those of block association members. Demographically, neighborhood association members are similar to block association members. Over half have graduate or professional school experience, another third have bachelor's degrees. A full 60 percent had 1995 household incomes of at least $75,000. Four fifths live with a spouse or partner, two-thirds have children, and just under half of them still have children living at home. The average age of the 17 neighborhood association members was 51 (median was 50), and two-thirds were White. African Americans accounted for one quarter of survey respondents who were neighborhood association members; none were Hispanic. The Boerum Hill Association does not keep statistics on its membership, so it is not possible to say how closely these respondents resemble the general membership.

Why Do They Participate?

Neighborhood association members participate for practically opposite reasons than block association members. The reason interviewees gave most often for participating in the neighborhood association was interest in particular issues. Issue organizing came low on the list for block association members, but is the biggest draw for the neighborhood association. This may be a function of the separation of roles between block and neighborhood associations. Block associations are seen as mostly social, and neighborhood associations are seen as less socially oriented. One Latina interviewee compared her block association to the Boerum Hill Association:

> [The block association's central role is] to promote community. As well as to create a kind of a safe welcoming urban environment. . . . but the Boerum Hill Association covers more community wide issues. Also they bring in an elected official . . . it's a business improvement [association].

Neighborhood association members often have many friends within the organization, yet they do not use the meetings as an opportunity to socialize. Boerum Hill Association meetings are virtually all business.

Although neighborhood associations are considered excellent sources for dealing with neighborhood issues, interviewees did not explain their participation in terms of power or control over their environment as did block association members. There are two interrelated reasons for this. First of all, the neighborhood is a much larger area, and residents are realistic about how much control they can have across several blocks. For example, the president of the Boerum Hill Association said:

> I think that the Hoyt Street Association's perspective is you need somebody at that more direct level to deal with block issues, sometimes. Or people's general day to day concerns. Whereas the Boerum Hill Association, I find myself having to deal with issues that affect Boerum Hill, but are not necessarily in Boerum Hill. And I have often joked, one of these days somebody is going to ask me what's my policy on Israel! Because what do I know about zoning? What do I know about how many particles per square inch of carbon monoxide they should be using to evaluate the courthouse project? I've learned some things about these things.

Secondly, the issues are smaller in block associations, and thus more manageable. While the Boerum Hill Association deals with traffic and air pollution concerns, a block association may focus on planting flowers in a vacant lot. Smaller scale changes in a smaller area are more easily attributable to one person's participation. Although neighborhood association members want to have an effect on the neighborhood at large, they do not attribute their participation to this purpose.

Finally, as with block association members, interviewees who participated in neighborhood associations gave civic duty as a reason for their participation. One 33 year old homeowner said:

> I don't think there is a choice. I think you have to. . . . When I was a kid it was one thing. . . . But as an adult it's a totally different thing. . . . Same with the Boerum Hill Association. You're part of the neighborhood now, what do you do? Well, you get involved with the neighborhood. Meet your neighbors. Well you've met your neighbors, fine. Now use it to do some more communicating, some more talking.

Twenty-two of the 35 survey respondents who said they knew about neighborhood associations (62 percent) saw them as an outlet to fulfill their duty as a member of the community. Additionally, a much smaller percentage felt neighborhood associations are

ignored by city officials (18 percent of 35 respondents) than felt block associations are ignored by the city (36 percent of 40 respondents). (See Table 5.7 for details.) The neighborhood association is therefore an organization which neighborhood residents feel they can use to make their voices heard by government. A higher percentage of respondents felt that neighborhood associations (59 percent of 35 respondents) afford an opportunity to influence government policy than block associations (47 percent of 40 respondents). Block associations are considered less useful for accessing government, although they do function as a vehicle to transmit the voice of residents to the neighborhood association. As the 33 year old homeowner quoted above put it:

> I think each of the smaller organizations takes care of smaller parts. And then they bring that consensus to a bigger organization. Hoyt Street Association, Smith Street Merchants Association, Atlantic Street, [sic] . . . they take care of little blocks and stuff. Then they pull into the Boerum Hill Association. Then the Boerum Hill Association pulls into the Community Board. And the Community Board pulls into the council member. And the council member pulls into the City of New York funding, and then that gets it's way back down through whatever, the department of traffic, parks department, etc. And those funds flow back into actual projects happening.

Therefore, participation in neighborhood associations is best explained through the community organizing and political perspectives. Members feel they have a duty to participate in the process; they believe that New York City government listens to the organization; and they are interested in the particular issues on which the organization focuses. Members of the Boerum Hill Association made it clear that the Boerum Hill Association fills their needs.

Although only one interviewee reported participating in the Boerum Hill Association for social reasons, the social perspective is applicable here. Chapter 2 discussed the cyclical nature of community participation and empowerment; the more empowered you feel, the more likely you are to participate in your community, which, in turn, helps you to feel more empowered (e.g., Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). The Boerum Hill Association fosters a sense of community among participants, who, in turn, feel that the organization is capable of effectively dealing with important issues, which makes members feel even more a part of the group. Thus, although no one said that they participate in order to feel a sense of community, there is clearly a mutually reinforcing benefit.

Non-participators

Who Doesn't Participate?

Eighty-five percent of survey respondents said that they do not consider themselves members or officers of a neighborhood association. Table 7.2 on the next page displays the characteristics of survey respondents who did not participate in a neighborhood association at the time of the survey.

Table 7.2: Characteristics of Survey Respondents Who Are Not Members of a Neighborhood Association (N=102)	
Race/Ethnicity	•White: 59 (58%) •Black: 13 (13%) •Hispanic: 18 (18%) •Asian· 3 (3%) •Other Race: 2 (2%) •Refused: 7 (7%)
# of Years in Neighborhood	•Range= less than 1 month-50 years •Mean=12 years •Median=7.5 years •0-5 years: 48 (47%) •6-10: 11 (11%) •11-20: 20 (20%) • 21-30: 9 (9%) •31-50: 14 (14%)
Sex	•Female: 47 (46%) •Male: 55 (54%)
Age	•Range= 18-74 years •Mean=40 •Median=37 (missing=2)
Highest level of Education	•less than High School: 8 (8%) •Associate's degree: 2 (2%) •High School: 15 (15%) •Bachelor's degree: 31 (30%) •Some College: 8 (8%) •Graduate degree or schooling: 38 (37%)
1995 Household Income	•less than $25,000: 29 (28%) •$75,001-$100,000: 16 (16%) •$25,000-$50,000: 29 (28%) •$100,001+: 5 (5%) •$50,001-$75,000: 18 (18%) (refused=4)
Tenure	•Owners: 39 (38%) •Renters: 62 (61%) (missing=1)
Household Status	•Partnered: 51 (50%) •Alone: 28 (28%) •Family: 10 (10%) •Roommates: 13 (13%)
Parenthood	•Have children: 42 (41%) •Have children living at home: 25 (25%)
Religious Attendance	•Regular attenders: 9 (9%) •Occasional: 36 (35%) •Never: 57 (56%)
Satisfaction	•Satisfied with neighborhood: 86 (84%)
Block Community	•Sense of community on block: 78 (76%) **• (If yes) I am part of the block community 56 (66%)
Neighborhood Community	•Sense of community in neighborhood: 73 (72%) **• (If yes) I am part of neighborhood community: 48 (66%)
Previous Participation	•Participated in neighborhood-based organization previously: 28 (28%)
* Percent of those who answered previous question affirmatively. Source: 1996 dissertation survey by author	

Survey respondents who are not members of a neighborhood association are less rooted in Boerum Hill than survey respondents who are members. Nonmembers had lived in the neighborhood for an average of 12 years (median = 7.5 years), were more likely to be renters, and were quite satisfied with the neighborhood, although less so than members. Lower percentages of nonmembers (than members) felt that there was a sense of community in the neighborhood and on their blocks. More than one quarter reported past participation in a neighborhood-based organization elsewhere. Fewer nonmembers attend religious services, and those who do go far less often than neighborhood association members.

Survey respondents who were not members of neighborhood associations were less well-off and less well-educated than members of neighborhood associations. Half of nonmembers lived with a spouse or partner; fewer (41 percent) had children, but a greater percentage of those with children (60 percent) had children living at home. The average age of the non-neighborhood association members was 40 years, and 58 percent were White. African Americans accounted for 13 percent of nonmembers; 18 percent were Hispanic.

It is important to note that the demographics reported here are reflective only of survey respondents, not of the neighborhood as a whole. This bears mentioning because of the history of gentrification and the Boerum Hill Association. Although other researchers of block and neighborhood associations have demonstrated that participators

are more tied to their neighborhood than non-participators (e.g., Perkins et al., 1996), that may not be the case for the Boerum Hill Association. None of the Latino interviewees were currently members of the Boerum Hill Association (one interviewee was a former member). However, because of the neighborhood's history (detailed in Chapter 5), the residents who have lived in Boerum Hill the longest tend to be Hispanic (although I did speak to several lifelong White residents whose families had been in the neighborhood for more than 50 years). The long-term Hispanic residents also generally own their homes, although they tend to have low incomes and low education levels. Although these residents may be considered more "rooted" in the neighborhood than more recent arrivals, because the Boerum Hill Association was created by and for the (largely White) gentrifiers, participation in the neighborhood association is not as clearly demarcated by "rootedness" as is participation in block associations. The demographic information presented in Tables 7.1 and 7.2 which indicates different levels of rootedness in the neighborhood may be an artifact of the survey sample, and not the neighborhood as a whole.

Why Don't They Participate?

Given the contentious history of gentrification, and the close alignment of the Boerum Hill Association with the overall change in the neighborhood, it is not surprising that so many long-term residents do not participate in the Boerum Hill Association. However, most of the residents interviewed for this research were not there before the

1960s. This section discusses general aspects of why people don't participate in the Boerum Hill Association. Race and class issues among non-participators are discussed in Chapter 10.

The most commonly cited reason for not participating in neighborhood associations among interviewees is lack of interest in this type of organization. Just over half of the interviewees who said they are not interested in these organizations were renters, with an average of three years in the neighborhood. One of these renters was in the process of purchasing her home, and said that she assumed she would feel differently once she was more invested in the neighborhood. Other than one of the homeowners who has lived in Boerum Hill his entire life, the group of interviewees not interested in neighborhood-based organizations is relatively new to Boerum Hill (average = 4½ years), especially when compared to those who had ever participated in the Boerum Hill Association (average = 24 years). Those who are not interested in neighborhood-based organizations fall into Verba et al.'s (1995) unmotivated category. However, each of these respondents said that they would participate with an organization on a personally important issue. They are not opposed to neighborhood associations, they simply had no urgent need for them.

The next largest category of reasons for nonparticipation is lack of information. Again, most of those who gave this reason were renters who were new to the neighborhood. These interviewees said that they would be willing to join a neighborhood association, but they had never heard of one. For those who expressed an interest, I told

them if their block had a block association, and how to contact the Boerum Hill Association. I do not know if any of them took the steps to do so, but these are people who simply had not come across the Boerum Hill Association yet, and expressed an interest in finding this kind of organization. These interviewees would be classified by Verba et al. as lacking a sense of recruitment. Similarly, a smaller category of respondents said that they had heard of the Boerum Hill Association, but as they did not know anyone in the organization they were wary of reaching out. As discussed in Chapter 6, this is another example of the lack of social capital as a barrier to participation in organizations. Rather than risk the unknown, these respondents preferred to wait until they had sufficient contacts to participate in the Boerum Hill Association.

Equally many interviewees as had never heard of the Boerum Hill Association reported that they were not involved in the Boerum Hill Association because they did not agree with the organization's agenda for the neighborhood. These were all long-time resident homeowners (average of 26½ years in the neighborhood), most of whom were former members of the Boerum Hill Association. These interviewees felt the Boerum Hill Association was too focused on property values and local business. They would have preferred the organization have more of an emphasis on building relationships within Boerum Hill between old and new residents, as well as reaching out more to residents of the two public housing projects on the southern edge of Boerum Hill. One homeowner of 18 years said:

> This is a sort of an ideological issue—some people here were so ruthlessly bourgeois that the value of their houses was the key thing. You know they just didn't give a shit about anything except making their houses look good, and that meant that if somebody spit on the sidewalk it was a personal affront to their bank balance. And that attitude irks me. Also I don't belong to that social class—I mean psychologically. Maybe economically I do, but psychologically I'm a member of the working class. I'm the kind of person who sits out on the stoop and doesn't worry about how it looks. They gave me the creeps—some of them—they really did. I didn't like the way they talked about the "projects."

It must be noted that since these interviews were conducted, the Boerum Hill Association has started a tutoring program which pairs Boerum Hill residents with children from the housing projects; however, these former members might not have any way to find that out, since they have distanced themselves from the organization. These disgruntled citizens were vocal, but not organized. An interviewee who had lived in Boerum Hill for 25 years, and was a current member of the Boerum Hill Association, acknowledged the validity of complaints about the Boerum Hill Association regarding neighborhood diversity.

> The way I see it is that they represent the homeowners and the real estate values. . . . You know in the 80s everything went wrong? The Boerum Hill Association by-laws originally had language that the purpose of the organization was to have a better neighborhood and whatnot, and to preserve the diversity of the neighborhood. That was physically taken out of the by-laws in the 80s. I don't know why, I can't explain it to you. It just didn't make sense. And it was one issue who, people who absolutely hate the Boerum Hill Association came out and talked. But since they were not members, and refused to be members, they lost. But it was a very interesting thing.

Several survey respondents also volunteered that they did not want to be associated with the Boerum Hill Association. More than one respondent referred to it as the "White Homeowners' Association" and/or the "Boerum Hill Realtors' Association." Current and

past officers of the Boerum Hill Association were asked about this image problem. They acknowledged that the organization has had that reputation in the past, and deservedly so. They noted, however, that the current influx of home buyers is bringing new, younger people into the organization, who can help steer the Boerum Hill Association in a different direction (whether or not these new participants are racially diverse is unclear). Those working on the Neighborhood Profile Project are hoping to draw others into participating in the Boerum Hill Association. A former officer of the Boerum Hill Association explained:

> It tended to be an organization that wants to smother out, not necessarily diversity, but to smother out anything that was not pristine. In the sense that "when I have people come to the neighborhood I don't want them to see graffiti, I don't want them to see anything that makes us look like a slum, or a drug location or anything." The thing is that "I'm not prejudiced, I just don't approve of the behavior that I see some people doing." But you know that's a very thin line between being insensitive and being actually judgmental about other people's cultures. And so I think that most of the people that wanted to work on this [Neighborhood Profile] project feel that it's leading in the direction of opening up the community to more things that everybody can participate in, rather than making it more exclusive.

While more new residents do appear to be involved with the project, very few long-term residents are. Since its inception, the Boerum Hill Association has had the stated goal of attracting new people to the neighborhood. Many long-term residents resent that.

Finally, equal numbers of interviewees said that they do not participate in the Boerum Hill Association because they are either committed to other kinds of organizations, or because they would rather spend their time with their families. These are people who

weigh the options, and decide to place their priorities elsewhere. These interviewees indicated that they have faith in the members of the existing organizations to take care of neighborhood concerns while they focus on other things.

No interviewees identified a lack of resources as a barrier to participation in the Boerum Hill Association. Although the Boerum Hill Association does have an official dues policy, membership is not required to attend meetings. Resources might have been mentioned as a barrier to participation if more interviewees had had lower incomes. However, it appears that those who are interested in neighborhood associations do spend the money to join. Lack of engagement is much more of an impediment than lack of resources.

Summary

Neighborhood associations in Boerum Hill are in a period of transition. The Hoyt Street Association is broadening its reach, and the Boerum Hill Association is trying to develop new leadership and become more proactive in neighborhood planning. However, change for both organizations is difficult as residents' perceptions of both organizations are based on 30 years of experience.

The need for increased recruitment is clear if the Hoyt Street Association and Boerum Hill Association want to add to their memberships. The Hoyt Street Association, whether considered a neighborhood association or block association, is unknown to many

potential participators. The Boerum Hill Association is known and disliked by a significant portion of neighborhood residents.

Political Representation

The Boerum Hill Association holds a unique political position in the neighborhood. Many local politicians look to the organization as the voice of Boerum Hill. However, most neighborhood residents do not participate in the organization. Nevertheless, decisions get made at the City Council and Community Board levels which affect all neighborhood residents. For those who make the decision to place their priorities elsewhere, this is not a problem. But neighborhood residents who do not participate because they fundamentally disagree with the Boerum Hill Association have no advocate in the neighborhood. Although any resident has the right to bring his or her concerns to government, city officials interviewed for this research said that they weigh the opinions of neighborhood associations more heavily than block associations, and block associations more than individuals.

In addition, although there are no records kept, it is clear that the demographic makeup of the Boerum Hill Association does not reflect the neighborhood as a whole, which further distorts the representativeness of the Boerum Hill Association in political matters. It may be argued (as it was by one homeowner during a meeting for the Neighborhood Profile Project) that renters do not have a need to participate in the

Boerum Hill Association, as they do not have the economic stake or investment in the neighborhood that the homeowners have. However, as mentioned in Chapter 5, after the convenience of the location, the best aspect of the neighborhood for interviewees (owners and renters alike) is the diversity of the neighborhood. While most respondents were referring to the racial or ethnic diversity, many mentioned the economic diversity as well.

If the Boerum Hill Association is seen as the majority voice of the neighborhood, but represents a middle- or upper-middle class, White, homeowner viewpoint, the decisions that get made on behalf of this very specific population could drive away the diversity that everyone values. For example, Kasinitz described the Boerum Hill Association's net effect on the availability of apartments for rent in Boerum Hill: "By changing the area's image, the Boerum Hill Association had increased demand for Boerum Hill apartments. By buying brownstones and later cooperative apartments, they had reduced available rental stock" (Kasinitz, 1988, pp. 174-175). Twenty years ago, an article on the renovation in Boerum Hill detailed the friction between long-term residents and the renovation brought about largely by the Boerum Hill Association.

> Listening to some of [the renovators] one forms the impression that in no residential neighborhood in downtown Brooklyn is there a stronger desire to retain ethnic and economic diversity. . . . "I don't think that most renovators were deliberately callous or were smug and evil. Some of them are my friends. They are White and Black. They are decent, upstanding people. But they displayed a consistent indifference to the consequences of their actions. I believe that all of us will have to be more responsive to the consequences of having turned this area into a renovated district." (Anderson, 1977, p. 138)

Instead, in the early 1980s, the Boerum Hill Association changed its by-laws by removing the section which called for an ethnically integrated neighborhood (Kasinitz, 1988). Thus, neighborhood association participation largely affects political representation as well as the neighborhood's physical environment.

Explaining Participation

Finally, the above findings are compared with the literature on participation in neighborhood-based organizations. Perkins, et al. (1996) predict participation in block and neighborhood associations through informal neighboring, religious participation, and involvement with other community organizations. This research found clear differences among all of these factors for participation in neighborhood associations. As mentioned above, religious participation among neighborhood association members is almost the mirror opposite of nonmembers, with members attending services more often than nonmembers. For informal neighboring (the amount of people on the block the respondent recognizes and speaks to when out on the street), 70 percent of neighborhood association members reported speaking to "a lot" of neighbors, or "almost everyone." Only 39 percent of nonmembers fell into these two categories (see Table 5.6). Similarly, neighborhood association members reported participating in an average (and median) of four organizations. Nonmembers reported an average of 1.5, and a median of one organizational memberships.

As with the block associations, it is not possible to determine causation from these data. They do, however, suggest differences between members and nonmembers that would probably remain if tested more rigorously. At the very least, they highlight the differences between participators and non-participators within a relatively homogenous sample of residents. This points again to the nonrepresentative makeup of the Boerum Hill Association.

CHAPTER EIGHT:
COMMUNITY BOARDS AND THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL[6]

History of Community Boards

Community Boards originated in Manhattan in 1951, with twelve "community planning councils" of fifteen to twenty members each. These original boards were conceived as a way to improve the efficiency of the City Planning Commission (CPC). In 1961 the experiment went city-wide, with an amendment to the City charter which required sixty-two "community planning boards," each of which consisted of the local City Councilmembers and five to nine other members appointed by the Borough President, advising their Borough President.

> The revised charter also expanded the planning board concept functionally in that the boards became more than simply adjuncts of the CPC. Each planning board was responsible to advise the borough president "in respect to any matter relating to the development or welfare of its district," and to "advise the city planning commission. . . in respect to any matter within the jurisdiction of the commission relating to its district" (New York City Charter 1963, sec. 84). (Pecorella, 1994, p. 124)

Pecorella goes on to point out that ". . . the community planning boards served almost exclusively as channels for downward communication from city or borough officials to community residents" (Pecorella, 1994, p. 124). In 1968, New York City passed "local law

[6] This chapter is organized slightly differently than the preceding two chapters on block and neighborhood associations. So few survey respondents and interviewees participated in or had knowledge about Community Boards, it would be misleading to compare data on those respondents with those who do or do not participate in the other organizations. This chapter is based on interviewees' perceptions of Community Boards, as well as interviews with Community Board members and New York City government officials.

39" which more clearly specified the planning boards' responsibilities. These included provisions regarding accountability to the Borough President, informing the public about district plans, and advising the city government on capital projects within their districts. Also, local law 39 required the Borough Presidents to consult with City Councilmembers when making appointments to the boards.

Throughout the 1960s New York experienced demands for community control of administrative departments. This demand was fomented by the increasing success of the Civil Rights Movement and the rise of community organizing; and was a backlash to the highly centralized structure that had been established after the demise of the political machines. One of the first major decentralization plans implemented was the institution of community school boards in 1970. After the school board decentralization, New York City residents voted to decentralize some of the service delivery and land-use decisions in the city. Subsequently, in 1975 another city charter amendment changed the community planning board structure to call for fifty-nine boards of fifty people each, appointed by the Borough President, with half of the members recommended by the City Councilmembers. The current geography of the Community Districts was developed after 1975. In determining boundaries for each Community District, the city attempted to keep neighborhoods whole. Thus, Community District 2's jagged southern boundary was designed in deference to the Boerum Hill Association, which planned the neighborhood

in 1964 to exclude the two large housing projects just to the South of the neighborhood (see Chapter 7). (Kasinitz, 1988; Pecorella, 1994; Rogers, 1990)

Community Boards were first given advisory functions regarding land-use, budget, and service delivery issues with the 1975 charter revision. The most recent revision to the New York City charter came in 1989. Other than removing the word 'planning' from the boards' title, the 1989 revision kept the boards' structure intact, but altered some of their functions. In addition, by dissolving the Board of Estimate and increasing the number of City Council districts, the 1989 revision changed the structure of the city government to which the boards report, although the boards continue to report directly to their Borough Presidents. (Pecorella, 1994; Rogers, 1990)

Community Boards do have paid staff working in the district offices. Each office is staffed with the District Manager, a full-time professional who is responsible for representing the interests of the Community District to the administrative and service-delivery departments of the city government, and as many additional staff as the budget allows, usually about three staff members. Each year the Community Boards hold public meetings to discuss budget priorities. The Community Board budgets appear as line-item allocations in the New York City budget. However, during the period of this research, the Community Board budgets were slashed by 28 percent in one year. Not only does this give an indication of Mayor Giuliani's valuation of the Community Boards, but it demonstrates the political nature of the system, and the difficulties faced by many of the Community

Boards. (Greenblatt & Rogowsky, 1980; Interview with Brooklyn Borough President's Community Board Liaison, 1997)

Community Board Membership

To become a member of a Community Board, any resident of the Community District may fill out an application to be appointed to a two year term by the Borough President. However, this process is unknown to many New York City residents and is not as accessible as it seems on paper. There are political machinations involved with Community Board appointment because the Community Boards are the official voice of the citizens to city government. Although Community Boards do not have veto power over plans for their districts, their approval is essential for many of the projects undertaken by elected representatives, who do not want to be portrayed as making decisions counter to the will of the people. Consequently, appointments are made, in part, with a goal of minimizing conflict between the board and the representative. Neither Borough Presidents nor City Council members are likely to recommend people about whom they know nothing. In some Community Districts the Borough President and the City Council members fight each other to get their supporters on the Board (Jacobs, 1996).

Avoiding unknowns means people appointed to Community Boards are likely to already be active in the neighborhood in other ways and with other groups. Many Community Boards have fewer than the maximum of fifty members, either because there

are too few applicants, or too few known applicants. One way residents can become known to Community Board members is through membership in block associations and neighborhood associations. Some residents use block and neighborhood organizations as stepping stones to Community Board membership.

Knowledge of Community Boards

Survey respondents and interviewees were, on the whole, not knowledgeable about Community Boards. Of the 120 survey respondents, only 25 (21 percent) could correctly identify that they lived in Community District 2; twelve (10 percent) gave a different number (most often Board 6, which wraps around Boerum Hill on the eastern, southern, and western sides). Ninety-two respondents (77 percent) said they had had no contact with the Community Board in the past year. Only 15 respondents felt comfortable answering the series of questions asking opinions of Community Boards. This number is so low, the responses will not be discussed in detail, other than to mention that Community Boards were considered less useful for social interaction than block and neighborhood associations, and more useful for affecting government policy (see Table 5.7).

Interviewees were similarly stymied about the role of Community Boards, especially in relation to their neighborhood. The general perception among interviewees who were not Community Board members is that Community Boards have a specific political and

administrative service-oriented role in city government. However, most interviewees also regard Community Boards as a "bureaucratic wasteland," which they are loath to approach when they need a city service. Instead, many interviewees and survey respondents said they would contact their City Councilperson when they need to interact with the New York City government.

Three Community Board 2 members were interviewed for this research (two residents of Boerum Hill and the Community Board Chair), as well as the Community Board Liaison for the Brooklyn Borough President's Office. The Board members said that the role of the Community Boards is to mainly deal with land-use issues. New York City has a Uniform Land-Use Review Procedure (ULURP) which was enacted with the 1975 charter revision. This is the process through which Community Boards advise the city on land-use issues. For example, when developers wanted to open a McDonald's restaurant with a drive-thru window in Boerum Hill, they were required to apply for a zoning variance for the drive-thru. This application triggered the ULURP process. Once an application is submitted, the affected Community Board has 60 days in which to hold public hearings and recommend that the application be approved or denied. There are also various avenues for appeal in this process. The two Community Board members from Boerum Hill felt that the ULURP process is the major purpose of Community Boards. When these members were asked about individuals bringing complaints about service delivery to the Community Board, they responded that those types of complaints are not part of the job

of Community Board members. One Board member said: ". . . by and large it's zoning. Land-use and zoning. We don't talk about sanitation or any of those kinds of things. I mean it's talked about, but there's nothing we can do. We have no leverage." The Board chair and the Borough President's office pointed out that community residents are invited to bring complaints about city services to the Community Board, but these issues are generally dealt with by the paid staff of the Community Board, rather than by the volunteer members.

Community Boards get a lot of information about events, activities, and services in their districts, but how does this information get passed on to community residents? I attended numerous Community Board meetings at which I picked up all kinds of informational flyers about events I never heard of anywhere else. The Community Board members and staff interviewed for this research all agreed that the Community Boards generally funnel information through neighborhood-based organizations. Because so many Community Board members are active in their block and neighborhood associations, PTAs, and Police Precinct Community Councils, Community Board members are expected to use those venues to pass along information from the Community Board, according to the members and officials interviewed for this research. Conversely, Board members are expected to use the same organizations and opportunities to discuss Board business with neighbors, and solicit feedback from the community. Board members interviewed said they mostly discuss issues with people in the neighborhood whose opinions they respect, rarely

reaching out to neighbors they do not already know. Similarly, information on events given to neighborhood and block association leadership may get no farther. One reason Community Boards are not better repositories of community information is budgetary. With so many mandated tasks to cover, information dissemination is a lower priority. Thus, it is not surprising that so few neighborhood residents are familiar with the Community Board.

Those survey respondents who did know about the Community Board felt that, as a part of the New York City government, most members are involved for personal gain. These respondents saw the Community Board as a stepping stone to local elective office. In fact, two of the three Community Board members interviewed said that they do want to go further in city politics, and another Community Board member who was not interviewed for this dissertation did run for the City Council seat vacated by Joan McCabe in 1997. Although it is unfair to classify Community Board members as interested only in personal gain, unless there is some way for residents to learn more about them, residents will continue to hold these stereotypes.

New York City Council

With so few Boerum Hill residents aware of their Community Board, what do they do when they need assistance with city services? Although several respondents said that

they would call the city themselves, many others said that they would call their City Councilperson first. One respondent summed up the feelings of many:

> Well yeah, it's just "Community Board," the Community Board is not a person. A Community Board is like "what's a Community Board?" Is that someone, is that an entity, I never saw a Community Board. So I can see a person, they're much more tangible in terms of what they do, like the City Councilperson. That's a person. Whereas a Community Board is amorphous. And I guess that's kind of naive, but that's certainly how I see it.

Community Board officials were asked about the relationship between the Community Board and the City Council in terms of constituent services. They were adamant about the fact that residents should bring complaints to the Community Board, not their City Councilperson. They acknowledged that, although interceding on behalf of constituents is not required of Council members, Council members often do so because they want to be re-elected, and are therefore willing to go out of their way to keep constituents happy. They also pointed out that oftentimes the Council member will deal with a complaint by bringing it to the Community Board. So if a resident is not aware of the Community Board, and it is the most appropriate place to bring a complaint, that resident's complaint may still end up at the Community Board office.

According to the Community Board Chair and the liaison for the Borough President, a citizen complaint gets acted upon by the Community Board staff. This includes bringing the complaint to the attention of the appropriate city department, and follow-up as necessary. In this way the Community Board can act as a "buffer" for the City Council, taking on more mundane tasks so the Council can focus on legislative business.

However, as mentioned above, few residents realize this, and Council members are often reluctant to tell constituents to go elsewhere. Thus, residents remain confused about the roles. Additionally, unless a community resident knows that a neighbor is a member of the Community Board, he or she is reluctant to call a faceless "Board" for assistance. This is another example of Verba et al.'s (1995) category of lack of recruitment. One interviewee who is no longer involved with the Boerum Hill Association was talking about a neighbor across the street who is very active in the Boerum Hill Association. I mentioned that the neighbor was also a member of the Community Board, and the interviewee was surprised to learn that. She was aware of the Community Board, but had had no idea that someone she knew as an active neighbor was a member.

Summary

Berry, Portney, and Thomson (1993) studied the participatory structures of 15 medium-sized cities across the U.S. Needless to say, New York was not one of them. But the authors did find that residents were happier with city government and the services they received if they felt that residents had an opportunity to participate in their city government, whether or not they personally did so. The Community Board system was created specifically to give residents a voice in city government decisionmaking. As detailed by Pecorella (1994), the development of the Community Board system was instigated by resident demands for decentralization of power. Twenty-five years later,

many New York City residents are not aware that this resource is available to them. Some respondents for this research knew about the system, but found it too amorphous and confusing to enter. Others, when asked if they had had any contact with the "Community Board" said yes, and then talked about their participation in block associations, Community School Districts, or other organizations with similar sounding names. Clearly Community Board offices are already burdened with the responsibilities they do have, yet the New York City government should help make Community Boards more accessible as resources to residents. The Community Board Liaison said that they used to publish a guidebook for residents that they are considering re-releasing. This is an example of one step the city could take to make sure residents have access to services that already exist.

Community Boards present an opportunity for their members to actively participate in city government. This is important to the members, especially when they have a particular concern about which they care strongly, such as rights for the disabled or protecting the environment. Community Board members certainly do feel empowered and important in their communities. Yet neighborhood residents do not see the Community Board as a useful resource for daily tasks such as getting garbage picked up, abandoned cars removed, or new trees for the block; for these issues they contact their City Council representatives. Community Boards are important to leaders of neighborhood-based organizations, who have a better understanding of why and how to use a Community Board.

The Borough President's liaison was neither surprised nor dismayed when told that only 20 percent of survey respondents knew about the Community Board. He felt that was the percentage to be expected to have contact with the Community Board. Other Board members felt that, although the City Council was not the correct venue for dealing with service delivery complaints, it helped take the burden off the Community Board. For Community Boards to truly be effective intermediaries between citizen and government, there must be more outreach into communities, and more support of the Boards by the city.

CHAPTER NINE:
RELATIONSHIPS AMONG BLOCK ASSOCIATIONS, NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS, AND THE COMMUNITY BOARD[9]

One of the research questions for this dissertation is: "How do block associations, neighborhood associations, and Community Boards relate to each other? (i.e. Do they perform the same or different functions? Do they ever work together?)". This chapter examines these questions through a discussion of the roles and relationships of these neighborhood-based organizations, starting with descriptions of meetings held by each type of organization.

One Week of Meetings

Community Board 2 holds its meetings during the evening of the second Wednesday of every month. The Boerum Hill Association does not have regularly scheduled general meetings, although they try to hold meetings quarterly. The Hoyt Street Association holds its meetings during the evening of the 11th of every other month. And so it happened that all three organizations held public meetings in the second week of February, 1997. I attended all three of those meetings. Early in the course of this research I had introduced myself to a meeting of each of these organizations as a neighborhood resident and doctoral student studying neighborhood-based organizations. The members

[9] This chapter is based on a working paper presented at the Independent Sector Spring Research Forum in March, 1999. See Scott-Melnyk, 1999.

and leaders of each organization welcomed me and agreed to participate in this research. My attendance at the meetings on February 11-13, 1997 was therefore not remarkable, nor was I a member of any of the organizations at the time.

Attending three meetings within three days allowed a stark comparison of the agendas of each organization in a particular month. The three agendas clearly demonstrate the range of focus from block issues to neighborhood issues, to community-wide issues. Although the order of the meetings was: Hoyt Street, Community Board, Boerum Hill, they are discussed below in order of size. I was the only person who attended all three meetings. There were several people who attended both the Hoyt Street Association and the Boerum Hill Association, as well as others who attended the Boerum Hill Association and the Community Board meetings, but there was no one else who attended both the Hoyt Street Association and Community Board meetings.

Hoyt Street Association

The Hoyt Street Association meeting was held on Tuesday, February 11, 1997 at the Bishop Mugavero Nursing Home, which is located on Hoyt Street, between Dean and Pacific. The meeting was advertised by flyers posted in the neighborhood, highlighting the guest speaker for the meeting, a local artist. The meeting was run by the president of the Hoyt Street Association, who opened the meeting, as she usually does, by asking everyone in the room to state their name, where they lived, and how long they had been in the

neighborhood. The length of residence for the 25 attendees ranged from six months to 57 years. The president also pointed out that there were cookies in the back of the room, and passed around slips of paper so everyone could enter a free drawing for two Hoyt Street Garden tee-shirts. Before the guest speaker made his presentation, there were discussions of: the Boerum Hill Community Dog Run, which an offshoot of the Hoyt Street Association is trying to get started in the neighborhood; the annual Hoyt Street Association flower sale with a plea for volunteers; and a presentation by a representative of a development company that was purchasing a row of five abandoned brownstone houses to be refurbished and resold individually. The abandoned buildings had housed administrative offices of the hospital which previously stood on the site of the nursing home in which the meeting was held, and they had been empty since the hospital was torn down (approximately seven years). The empty buildings were considered eyesores and dangerous by block residents (during my community survey I observed someone lighting a crack pipe on the steps of one of the buildings). This presentation was well-received by the meeting participants. The renovation of these buildings by a development company can be seen as yet another example of gentrification in Boerum Hill.

After the above discussions, the guest speaker made his presentation. He was a former resident of the neighborhood, living in another nearby neighborhood, who paints satirical billboards on the side of a building at Nevins Street and Atlantic Avenue. He showed slides of his work at that site, which he uses purely as an artistic outlet. The

billboards, which change about once a year, are funny or poignant, and reflect current events and issues such as: excessive individualism, racially motivated incidents in New York City, the inevitability of gum disease, the rise of video and the decline of reading, the rising dependence on credit cards, and fights with the electric company. After the guest speaker some members brought up additional neighborhood concerns for advice from their neighbors, including a lengthy and heated discussion of how to deal with neighbors who illegally feed pigeons in front of their houses.

Boerum Hill Association

The Boerum Hill Association meeting was held on Thursday, February 13, 1997 at the Baptist Temple on 3rd Avenue and Schermerhorn Streets. Similar to the Hoyt Street Association meeting, the Boerum Hill Association meeting was also advertised through flyers posted around the neighborhood. Neighborhood residents were encouraged to attend, even if they were not members. In the hall before entering the room where the meeting was to be held was a sign-in sheet asking the signer to become a dues-paying member of the Boerum Hill Association. There were about 30 people in attendance, and refreshments were served. The Boerum Hill Association president started by introducing a guest speaker from the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, who discussed at length the findings of the Regional Plan Association's study of improving downtown Brooklyn. He also promoted the Chamber's work on help for small businesses, community development,

and a dining guide to Brooklyn. He urged the attendees to work with Brooklyn's elected officials to help improve downtown Brooklyn. The next speaker was a New York State Assemblyman representing Boerum Hill, who stopped by the meeting to invite neighborhood residents to a workshop on the new Environmental Bond Act.

The next topic, discussed at length, was the concern over the traffic on Atlantic Avenue. A few months earlier, the city government had changed all the parking regulations on one side of Atlantic Avenue, abolishing parking between 4:00 and 7:00 pm. This was ostensibly done to improve traffic flow out of the downtown Brooklyn area. However, many Boerum Hill residents were very upset because the extra lane increased the speed of traffic, making it even more dangerous to pedestrians, and eliminated the parking for patrons of the stores along Atlantic Avenue. At the Boerum Hill Association meeting there were sketches of "traffic calming" ideas, pre-paid postcards to send to a City Council representative from Boerum Hill to urge him to help, and handouts of articles detailing how bad the traffic situation was on Atlantic Avenue.

The Boerum Hill Community Dog Run then requested support from the members of the Boerum Hill Association for the establishment of a dog run in the neighborhood. Following the dog run, there was a presentation by the coordinator of the Boerum Hill Association's Neighborhood Profile Project, an effort to document the existing land-use in the neighborhood and develop ideas for neighborhood improvement, as well as create a brochure about the neighborhood that can be given to local realtors to promote the

neighborhood (see Scott-Melnyk, 1997; and Chapter 7 of this document). The final speaker at the Boerum Hill Association meeting was from the New York City Police Department's 84th Precinct Community Council, inviting all residents to attend their meetings.

Community Board 2

The Community Board meeting was held on Wednesday, February 12, 1997 at Brooklyn Borough Hall. It was advertised through a mailing to those on the mailing list, and was listed in the community newspapers. The "Community Room" at Brooklyn Borough Hall was filled by the time the meeting started, and the group of approximately 100 included teenagers from a "Community Watch" program who came to observe the meeting. The agenda for the Community Board meeting began, as always, with "Open Session," in which anyone can sign up to speak for a few minutes on any topic of concern. There were three Open Session speakers for this meeting. The first was from the New York City Fire Department, and he spoke about the new initiative to change the system of ambulance dispatch into a community-based system similar to fire houses. He requested community input into the process of choosing adequate sites for ambulance bases. The next speaker was a woman from the public housing developments in Fort Greene, requesting help for senior citizens facing a change in rent collection procedures. The final Open Session speaker was the head of an organization for construction workers requesting

the Community Board's help in getting a local construction project to hire local workers. The remainder of the meeting involved reports from committees and discussion by the Community Board members. As usual, no refreshments were served, but there was a table with informational flyers supplied by both the Community Board office and anyone who wanted to bring flyers to the meeting.

Synopsis

These three meetings clearly illustrate the differences in these types of community-based organizations. As discussed in the previous chapters, the Hoyt Street meeting was social and fun; the few concerns people had were easily dealt with by neighbors. The Boerum Hill Association meeting focused on issues which affect Boerum Hill residents, but also impact the political and business arenas. The Community Board meeting was all business, dealing with several issues with no demonstrable impact on Boerum Hill.

These meetings clearly demarcate the Hoyt Street Association as a block association, and the Boerum Hill Association as a neighborhood association. However, Chapter 7 points out that the Hoyt Street Association is evolving into a neighborhood association. Although other research has not shown neighborhood associations to be socially-oriented, it is possible that the Hoyt Street Association could evolve into a socially-oriented Boerum Hill Association. There is, of course, no rule that says "If you want to grow into a neighborhood association you must change your focus." Although there could

be a niche for a socially-oriented neighborhood association, it is doubtful that many who do not already attend Hoyt Street Association meetings would be inclined to add another organization to their schedules.

Block associations are considered empowering to block members precisely because they afford an opportunity for a smaller group of people to make an impact on their particular face block. That impact gets diffused when the focus is on the larger neighborhood, unless a specific focus is chosen, such as the Hoyt Street Garden. If the organization broadens into a neighborhood garden association, it becomes a specific issue-oriented organization, and no longer functions as a block association or neighborhood association. In fact, several survey respondents who had heard of the Hoyt Street Association but never attended any meetings do think of it as a garden association.

Relationships of Organizations

There are two general ways in which Boerum Hill residents explain the roles and relationships of block associations, neighborhood associations, and Community Boards. The first is one of comparable organizations within nested spheres of space and influence (as shown in Figure 9.1, on the next page). Many residents believe that the three types of organizations perform essentially the same function for different constituencies. This "nested" pattern is one in which block associations address local concerns, neighborhood associations address the concerns of a broader area, and Community Boards serve several

neighborhoods; with Community Boards having the greatest amount of influence on public policy, neighborhood associations considerably less, and block associations the least influence on public policy. An individual's choice of which organization to contact would depend on the area affected, or the amount of influence over public policy desired. The nested view of neighborhood organizations constitutes a blurring of Barber's (1998) definition of civil society in that a government-based organizational form (the Community Board) is considered to be part of civil society.

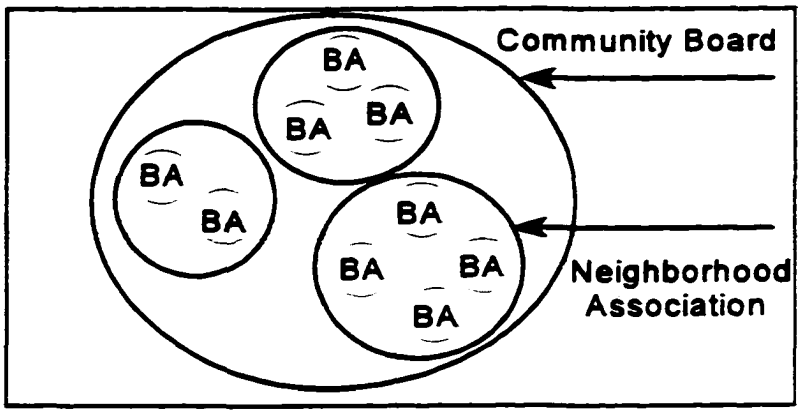

Figure 9.1: Nested View of Relationships among Organizations

The second common interpretation of these neighborhood-based organizations is a differentiation between government-linked and grassroots associations. In this "independent" view, block and neighborhood associations are considered to have neighborhood-focused functions, while the Community Board is perceived as completely separate (see Figure 9.2 on the next page). The pattern of organizational participation for residents with this understanding is one in which block and neighborhood associations are contacted by residents who feel their concerns can be dealt with by neighbors; and

Community Boards, as institutions of the city government, are contacted when residents feel their concerns should be addressed by city officials.

The independent view demonstrates the clear division between grassroots voluntary organizations and government emphasized by Barber (1998). However, as shown in Figure 9.2, there are redundancies between block and neighborhood associations in issues covered, which can be confusing to residents trying to choose the most appropriate venue in which to discuss their concerns on a particular issue.

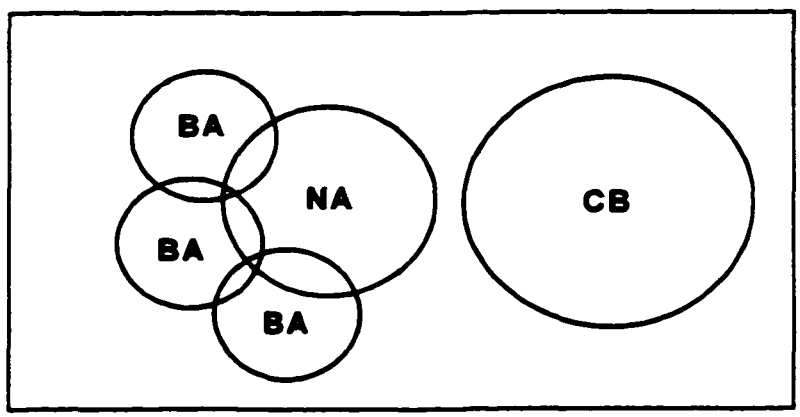

Figure 9.2: Independent View of Relationships among Organizations

Roles of Organizations

Although the "nested" and "independent" views of organizational relationships are common among neighborhood residents, the relationships are actually much more complex. As discussed in Chapters 6-8, neighborhood residents do discern different roles for block associations, neighborhood associations, and Community Boards. Block associations are overwhelmingly considered to have a social focus. Neighborhood

associations are seen as more focused on political issues and neighborhood improvement, and Community Boards have a very specific land-use policy role.

Malleable Relationships

The different roles of organizations lead to relationships that are sometimes nested, and sometimes independent, depending on the issue at hand. The changing relationships are best explained through the use of examples.

Nested Relationships

The proposed McDonald's restaurant is a good example of block associations, neighborhood associations, and the Community Board working in a nested relationship. In order to build the desired driveways for the 24 hour drive-thru service window, the restaurant was required to appeal to the city government for a variance to the zoning laws. Zoning variances must be voted on by the affected Community Board, although their vote is advisory only.

The members of the block association where the vacant lot was located voted 50-0 against the idea of a restaurant. The result of the vote was brought to the Boerum Hill Association, which was asked to represent the block to the Community Board. The Boerum Hill Association then appealed to the Community Board on behalf of the immediate block, as well as other homeowners in the neighborhood, whose property values

could be adversely affected by the restaurant, using arguments based on increased traffic flow and the potential for crime. The Community Board, seeing the strong sentiment opposed to the variance, recommended that a variance not be given. The Board of Standards and Appeals followed the Community Board's recommendation, and denied the application. Although the McDonald's could have been built "as of right" (as their representatives said at all the community meetings), and the variance application was only for approval of driveways, the restaurant was not built after the variance was denied.

The McDonald's example shows that block associations, neighborhood associations, and the Community Board all play roles, yet their influence and power are nested within each other. Each organization can influence the next through its power as representative of many more individuals or groups.

Independent Relationships

In situations that do not involve land-use decisions by the city, the Community Board is less important. One summer during the course of this research there was an effort to remove graffiti from the neighborhood. A block association decided to clean the graffiti from the public school on the block, and asked the Boerum Hill Association for assistance. The Boerum Hill Association was able to put block association members in touch with other block associations that had previously dealt with graffiti problems. Eventually, several blocks agreed to split the cost of renting a machine to blast graffiti from several

neighborhood walls. The Community Board was not needed for this type of neighborhood problem. Although individual members of the Community Board may have been concerned about graffiti removal, it does not fall within the formal jurisdiction of the Community Board. In this example, block and neighborhood associations have similar goals and functions. Community Boards, as part of city government do not have a role.

Conflictual Relationships

The two examples above are cases in which there was agreement among the organizations about the issue at hand. However, neighborhood residents do not always agree with each other. A final example involves the development of a large parcel of state-owned land along the northern edge of Boerum Hill, leased to private entrepreneurs who operate parking lots on the site. The Boerum Hill Community Dog Run (an organization with roots in the Hoyt Street Association) wants to create a neighborhood park with a space for dog walking. Several block associations support this goal. However, the block association closest to the site opposes a park, fearing that it would attract criminal behavior. They are also opposed to a dog run on the grounds that it would be noisy and dirty. The Boerum Hill Association has been trying to broker a consensus between the different factions. Meanwhile, the city has the right to allow almost anything to be built on the site. Any plans would have to go through the Community Board ULURP process. The Community Board could take a position entirely different from the wishes of the block

and neighborhood associations, because the Community Board represents five different neighborhoods, each of which may want something different on this centrally located site. Although this process has been underway for several years (see Scott-Melnyk, 1997) in Fall 1999 it is not yet resolved.

The above examples illustrate the different types of relationships among these three types of neighborhood-based organizations. How aware residents are of these relationships depends on their familiarity with the organizations and the array of issues dealt with by the organizations. Oftentimes, if a resident goes to the Boerum Hill Association or Community Board for help with an issue that is more suited to a different organization, the resident is referred to the most useful organization.

Summary

There is a widely held belief that the same few people participate in all the local organizations. This research found that is not true in Boerum Hill. There are overlaps in membership of block associations and neighborhood associations, as well as between neighborhood associations and the Community Board, but there is little overlap in membership of block associations and the Community Board. However, block association members are more likely to know of the Community Board than nonmembers, even if they have never attended a meeting. Social capital inheres in the roles and relationships of all these civil society organizations. The existence of organizations demonstrates that there

are networks of relationships among neighborhood residents which are capable of being mobilized for a common purpose. However, social capital is not evenly distributed within the neighborhood. Many residents do not participate in particular civil society organizations because they do not know anyone in the organization. That is, they do not feel they have the necessary social capital to access certain organizations. The demographic makeup of the organizations is not representative of the neighborhood as a whole, which hints at the different strengths and weaknesses of social capital within civil society. Although leaders of the organizations would welcome new members, there is no common form of communication through which to extend the invitation. The organizations thus continue their activities, without the participation of large sections of the neighborhood.

The New York City government relies on the connections among residents and organizations as a way of obtaining citizen participation in local government. The Community Board system is one way of dealing with the vastness of New York City by breaking it down into manageable districts. Interested residents can become deeply involved in the high stakes politics of land-use in a very crowded city. Meanwhile, Board members are a link between the government and their fellow residents. As conduits for the voice of the public to city government, these three types of organizations are clearly nested. Block associations represent block members, neighborhood associations represent groups of block associations, and Community Boards represent groups of neighborhood

associations. The goals of these different organizations intermittently match or conflict, but each organization is useful to the other as a point of connection to a larger community.

However, when there is differential participation in organizations, that difference gets magnified at each successive level. Also, in cases of conflict among organizations, the more politically connected organizations are most likely to win. New York City government officials must realize that although there is a system to keep in touch with neighborhood-level grassroots organizations, this system is dependent on social capital networks, which do not necessarily include all neighborhood residents, as discussed in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER TEN:
CONCLUSIONS

Many aspects of neighborhood participation have been discussed throughout this dissertation, from theoretical perspectives on participation to relationships among Community Boards and the New York City Council. In this chapter these disparate threads are brought back together.

Who Does or Does Not Participate?

The first two research questions in Chapter 3 ask who does or does not participate in block associations, neighborhood associations, and Community Boards, and how are they similar to or distinct from each other. This research has clearly found that these questions must be answered differently for each type of organization. Demographically, Chapters 6 and 7 showed that block and neighborhood association members tend to be older, and to have lived in Boerum Hill longer, on average, than non-members. Members also had higher levels of income and education, and were more likely to own their homes than non-members. These findings parallel those of other participation researchers. So few respondents and interviewees had any contact with Community Boards that it is not possible to make demographic distinctions among participators and non-participators in Community Boards. Fewer similarities are in evidence between block and neighborhood association participants when examining motivations for participation.

Another research question asked if perceptions of the neighborhood affect the decision to participate. These data seem to indicate that there is a relationship between satisfaction with the neighborhood and participation, although it is not possible to determine the exact nature of the relationship. Higher percentages of block and neighborhood association members than non-members felt satisfied with the neighborhood, and agreed that not only was there a sense of community both on their block and in the neighborhood, but that they were members of those communities. Many people join organizations because they are concerned about a threat to their block or neighborhood, indicating that dissatisfaction also plays a role in spurring participation. This issue is addressed further in the section below on theoretical perspectives on motivation.

The one research question which this research was not able to adequately address was: "Does organizational participation vary across the lifespan?". The community survey asked respondents if they had ever participated in any of these organizations in Boerum Hill, and if they had done so elsewhere. These data were not conclusive. Additionally, respondent age and the presence of children under age 18 was examined for differences related to participation. While participators were generally older than non-participators, there was no difference in presence of children at home. Conclusions at a finer level of analysis are not possible with these data.

Theoretical Perspectives on Motivation for Participation

Chapter 2 discussed the fact that much of the literature on community participation is fragmented, generally drawing upon only one theoretical perspective to examine a complex phenomenon. Part of this fragmentation is clearly purposeful. For example, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), who attempted to identify the antecedents to political participation, did not try to view participation through the lens of community organizing. Similarly, the many Community Psychology studies of participation in block associations (such as Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Mackin, 1997; Prestby et al., 1990) do not attempt to study the relationships of block associations to local government.

This dissertation research sought an understanding of how each of the theoretical perspectives explains the choice to participate, in order to add to the knowledge base of participation in neighborhood-based organizations. Figure 10.1 (on the next page) summarizes how the three major perspectives explain participation in each of the three types of organizations. Each organizational type is ranked by the extent to which interviewees indicated that their participation in that type of organization stems from political, social, or community organizing concerns. A rank of 1 indicates the most important reason given for participation. A blank box indicates that the perspective has little bearing on participation in that organizational form.

	Political (Civic Duty)	Social (Meet Neighbors / Empowerment)	Organizing (Based on Particular Issues)
Block Associations	2	1	3
Neighborhood Associations	2	3	1
Community Board	1		2

Figure 10.1: Reasons Given for Participation in Each Organizational Form

The first thing to note about Figure 10.1 is that political perspectives do explain participation in all three types of organizations. This is because of the universality of the concept of "civic duty." Although not all respondents and interviewees felt any such duty, those who did were able to find outlets for this sentiment in each type of organization. Also, Verba et al.'s (1995) formulation of non-participation as a function of the lack of resources, engagement, and recruitment—based on participation in the political arena—rings true with each level of neighborhood-based organization studied here. It is not surprising that the political perspective is most important to participation in Community Boards, as that is the organization with the greatest access to the political process.

Social perspectives best explain participation in block associations. Residents use block associations as vehicles to develop and strengthen social capital in the neighborhood. Also, although this research could not fully address issues of empowerment, it appears that block associations are more useful for developing a sense of personal empowerment than

neighborhood associations or the Community Board. This is a concept promulgated by one of the leaders of the community organizing movement, Saul Alinsky, in that he pushed for small victories as important to organizing people around a cause (Alinsky, 1946). Although organizing around an issue is clearly useful when trying to create or re-form a block association, people remain for the social aspects of participation, and/or other issues the group addresses.

People do not participate in the Community Board (either as members or interested public) for social reasons. Neighborhood associations appear to give some social benefits, but these are not sufficient for maintaining participation.

Community organizing is most strongly related to participation in neighborhood associations. Neighborhood associations are organized, in part, around dealing with issues that affect the neighborhood. They are very useful for residents who are concerned about issues relating to neighborhood improvement and property values. Similar to block associations, many residents first join with neighborhood associations through concern over a particular issue. However, residents often find that the neighborhood association is working on other issues of interest, which is a catalyst to membership. The organizing framework has a similar function in explaining participation in Community Boards; and, as discussed above, is useful for starting block associations.

Chapter 3 contains a table of hypothesized choices of organizations based on a person's interests, which appears on the next page in Figure 10.2. Check marks (✓)

indicate early hypotheses as to which organization would serve each interest. Here ✗ marks are added to indicate the actual findings from this research.

CONCERNS / INTERESTS (ordered from general to specific)	CHOICE OF ORGANIZATION				
	BA	NA	CB	Other	No Participation
Civic Duty	✓✗	✗	✓✗	✗	✗
Social interests / Sense of Community	✓✗	✓✗		✓✗	✓✗
Desire to influence government in some way		✗	✓✗	✓	✓
Neighborhood planning		✗	✓✗	✓	
Neighborhood preservation	✓✗	✓✗	✓	✗	✗
Concern with neighborhood problems	✓✗	✗	✓	✓✗	✗
Interest in fighting neighborhood crime	✓✗	✗	✓	✓✗	
Personal goals such as job, public office	✓	✓✗	✓✗	✓	✓
Need services provided by the organization	✗	✗	✓✗	✓✗	

Figure 10.2: Hypothesized and Actual Choices of Organizations Based on a Person's Concerns / Interests
Note: BA=Block Association, NA=Neighborhood Association, CB=Community Board

Figure 10.2 shows that participation in organizations based on issues is not as easily predicted as originally hypothesized during the development of this research. There are two main reasons for this discrepancy. First is a problem of questionnaire design. For example, very few respondents can be classified as having no sense of civic duty at all. Also, most respondents were interested in fighting neighborhood crime, yet there is no ✗ in the Community Board box for crime-fighting because no one indicated it as an important reason for participating in the Community Board process. Secondly, the original hypotheses (as presented in Figure 3.1, represented by the ✓marks in Figure 10.2) were

based on only a few research reports on studies of neighborhood associations. One of the original premises behind this dissertation was the necessity for more research into these different organizational forms. Many studies of grassroots neighborhood organizations lump block and neighborhood associations together, as if they are measuring the same organizational type (e.g. Perkins et al., 1996). This dissertation has demonstrated that this grouping strategy does not make sense; yet when this project was being developed and the original hypotheses were advanced, it was not possible to locate a variety of published research on neighborhood associations alone.

As indicated above, the findings of previous research generally were upheld in the claim that political motivations are more closely tied with the political organization (Community Boards) and social motivations lead people to participate in block associations. Neighborhood associations are harder to pinpoint because of their dual nature—active in politics, yet helping to solidify a sense of community among those who belong to the organization.

Benefits and Costs of Participation

Chapter 2 discussed the research which looks at participation as a series of individual cost/benefit analyses. Abraham Wandersman has been involved in many studies of community participation, especially examining benefits and costs. In 1987, Wandersman et al. examined perceptions of benefits and costs of participation in block

associations among participators and non-participators. As mentioned in Chapter 3, they found that block association participants felt they received more benefits and experienced fewer costs than non-participants assumed was the case. Similarly, in a study of motivations for volunteering, Hodgkinson and Weitzman (1996) found that volunteers reported more benefits of volunteering than non-volunteers. In 1999, Chinman and Wandersman published a meta-analysis of studies of benefits and costs to participants in many types of voluntary associations. They conclude:

> In general, a relationship between participation and benefits exists across several types of organizations. More specifically, (a) Normative and Social benefits seem to be the most important benefits experienced by voluntary members, (b) greater participation is associated with members experiencing greater benefits, and (c) activity level is a more accurate measure of participation than membership (members vs. nonmembers). Similarly, a relationship between participation and costs also exists across several types of organizations; however the relationship is more complex. Costs are associated with greater participation in some organizations and are associated with less participation in others. . . . Although members who participate a great deal may experience costs, we would argue that they experience a greater amount of benefits, as evidenced by the studies using the benefit and cost ratio. (p. 59)

Schlozman et al. (1995) drew upon the work of James Q. Wilson to create four categories of benefits: selective material benefits, social gratifications, civic gratifications, and collective policy benefits. The authors point out that collective policy outcomes are the only type of benefit that can be shared by those who don't participate—Olson's (1965) free rider problem. The authors found that for their respondents who had participated in "informal community activity" (which could include block and neighborhood associations),

or a "local governing board" (analogous to the Community Board), civic gratifications were strongest and material benefits were least important. For informal community activity, policy and social benefits appeared in order of importance, but they were very close together. For local governing boards, the order was reversed, with social benefits more important than policy gratifications. This finding does not match the present research, which may be due to the small number of respondents involved with Community Boards.

In Chapter 5, Table 5.7 presents survey respondents' perceptions of the three types of organizations. Originally, it was planned to use these data to understand residents' perceptions of benefits and costs of organizational participation. Unfortunately, most of the non-participators did not feel prepared to answer the questions. Although the resultant data cannot be analyzed as methodically as in the studies reviewed by Chinman and Wandersman (1999), the results do nonetheless reflect the findings of Schlozman et al. (1995). Twelve of the twenty statements about organizations (in Table 5.7) are derived from the Citizen Participation Study as cited in Schlozman et al. These items group into social, civic, material, and collective benefits in ways predicted by Figure 10.1. That is, social benefits were most often cited by participants in block associations, followed closely by neighborhood association participants. Civic gratifications were important to respondents familiar with all three types of organizations, although most strongly associated with block associations. Material benefits were not nearly as important to respondents as civic gratifications, yet they were most important to those who participate in neighborhood

associations. It is not surprising that material benefits would come to neighborhood association members, given their focus on property values and the strong economy. Finally, as predicted, collective policy benefits were most important to those who were familiar with the Community Board, followed by neighborhood association participants.

Relationships of Organizations

Two research questions for this dissertation ask about the relationships of these organizations to each other and to city government. Chapter 9 shows that, although residents generally perceive the relationship among block associations, neighborhood associations, and Community Boards to be either nested or independent, these relationships actually vary based on the issue at hand. This research also found a desire on the part of residents for more clarity on the roles and relationships among neighborhood-based organizations. If residents better understood the role of Community Boards there would probably be higher levels of participation by Boerum Hill residents.

Social Capital and Neighborhood-based Organizations

Chapter 2 discussed the role of social capital in recruitment to and participation in neighborhood-based organizations. Block associations, neighborhood associations, and Community Boards are clearly a vital part of the civil society in neighborhoods, yet the very mechanism which allows participants to participate also serves to exclude. It is clear that

residents gain access to these organizations through the relationships they have with neighbors. As shown in Chapters 6 and 7, participants in these organizations clearly feel a greater sense of community than non-participants, which may reinforce participation. As discussed in Chapter 2, the relationship between participation in neighborhood-based organizations and feeling a sense of community has a cyclical quality in which each reinforces the other. However, many neighborhood residents do not feel that they have access to these organizations in the first place.

Race, Class, and Length of Residence

When Boerum Hill was chosen as the location for this research, it was the result of a search for a neighborhood with racial, ethnic, and economic diversity. Based on the 1990 Census figures, Boerum Hill filled this bill. Those data showed that there was not a direct correlation between race and class; not all of the wealthier people were White, nor were all the poorer people Black or Hispanic. However, the vast majority of surveys and interviews for this dissertation were conducted in 1996; six years after the Census was taken, and during the midst of a housing boom in Boerum Hill. The population was probably already quite different by 1996. For example, many of the residents in the old rooming houses were single White men. As the rooming houses disappeared, these tenants moved on instead of staying in the neighborhood.

One aspect of race and class unlikely to have changed in six years, is the disparity between old and new residents; "new" residents in this case being those who arrived after 1962. Although there were several White families who had lived in the Boerum Hill area for over 50 years, the vast majority of the long-term residents were Hispanic at the time of this research. Although many own their homes—which have skyrocketed in value—these older residents do not necessarily have much income. Most of the long-term Hispanic residents felt very disconnected from the new neighborhood residents. There was a different sense of community before the Boerum Hill Association was established, which several Latino interviewees said they miss. Although several long-term residents do participate in neighborhood-based organizations, most do not because they do not feel any connection to the newer residents.

The disconnect between long-term and newer residents in Boerum Hill has a lot to do with the intentions of the initial gentrifiers. As detailed by Kasinitz (1988), the founders of the Boerum Hill Association explicitly focused on renovating the houses in Boerum Hill. This was not only too expensive for many of the longer-term homeowners, but insulting as well. The focus on house and neighborhood beautification created a different kind of community than already existed. Gentrification is well known as a process through which those with resources attempt to impose their values and standards on an existing neighborhood (Anderson, 1977; Carpenter and Lees, 1995; Kasinitz, 1988; N. Smith, 1996; Spain, 1993). These attempts were not universally opposed in Boerum Hill.

Many long-term residents reported that they appreciated the improvements the neighborhood has undergone. However, they did not feel that they were a part of the community that has developed since the 1960s.

Most of the Latino residents of Boerum Hill are long-term residents, and many do not participate in neighborhood-based organizations because they do not feel they have been invited to do so. Hispanics were most likely to say that they would attend a meeting if they knew someone who already participated, but that otherwise they would not. They recognize a community in the neighborhood, and feel that they are not part of it. Hispanic residents have their own forms of community and social capital links; they often do not have relationships with those with connections to the organizations studied in this research.

African American interviewees said that they did not feel such a separation from the White community in Boerum Hill. They were more closely matched to White respondents in terms of income and time in the neighborhood. Black non-participators did not report that they felt unwelcome or uninvited. In fact, they felt free to participate in meetings for which they saw advertisements. The difference for Black respondents, which was shared with Hispanic respondents, was a lack of interest in the issues covered by these neighborhood-based organizations. Although there is no evidence to indicate the existence of "Black issues" and "White issues" in Boerum Hill, the few African Americans interviewed felt more inclined to participate in a block association than the Boerum Hill

Association because they were not interested in focusing their energy on the issues the Boerum Hill Association generally deals with. This is not to say that they were not interested in increasing property values or cutting down on traffic; more to the point, these were not issues on which they would be willing to spend their time.

The Available Pool

Although Black interviewees said they were not interested in the issues dealt with by the Boerum Hill Association, they are willing to participate when an issue important to them comes up. This was true for the vast majority of survey respondents, as mentioned in Chapter 5. Eighty-six percent of survey respondents (103 people) indicated that they would be willing to work with an organization if asked, yet only 36 percent (43 people) reported that they had ever been asked to do so. Eighty-four percent of those asked (37 people) did participate. Several interviewees who can be considered members of the pool of residents available to be mobilized around issues, said that they don't participate in neighborhood-based organizations because they feel others are doing so for them. This sentiment was primarily expressed by those who said they think neighborhood-based organizations make a big difference in the neighborhood, but that they were busy with other organizations and issues. For example, one African American interviewee was very active in national level political issues. She said that she would get involved with her block association if necessary, but knowing that others were dealing with block level issues

allowed her to spend time on other issues. She was careful not to rank national above local in importance, just that someone must do each, and she chose to focus on the national level because she felt local issues were well taken care of.

Who do these Organizations Represent?

The opinion that one's ideas are well-represented by active participants points to the representativeness of neighborhood-based organizations. As mentioned in Chapters 6 and 7, many neighborhood residents chose not to participate in block and neighborhood associations based on their knowledge of these organizations. Others did not know anything about the organizations, and therefore did not participate, yet they were not making an informed choice not to participate. However, the organizations still act as though they do represent the entire population; non-participation implies tacit approval. This occurs at both the block and neighborhood levels, but the consequences are more serious at the neighborhood level. For example, one block association in the historic landmarked section of Boerum Hill placed barrels as flower planters along the sidewalks. One survey respondent thought the barrels were silly, and asked the block association not to put one in front of his house; they complied. Although he was able to voice his displeasure, others who were not familiar with the block association's plans might not have had the opportunity to do so.

At the neighborhood level, the Boerum Hill Association is seen as speaking for the entire neighborhood. Those who do not participate do not have a voice in the process. This should be a concern for all neighborhood residents when the organization pushes its agenda with city government. For example, as part of the Neighborhood Profile Project, the Boerum Hill Association is working on expanding the historic district. Although many homeowners within the proposed district are in favor of historic landmark designation, others may not be well-informed about the process. When the Boerum Hill Association presents their proposal to the landmarks commission, it will likely be received as expressing the will of the community. Kasinitz (1988) makes the point that many long-term residents had to sell their houses when the first landmark designation was made because they could not afford the maintenance required in the special district; this could happen again if the district is expanded.

This is not to suggest that the Boerum Hill Association refrain from advocating its agenda and working to improve the neighborhood. Rather, it is important for the Community Board, City Council, and other government officials to understand that the Boerum Hill Association does not speak for the entire neighborhood. Not only do they not speak for everyone, but those who are missing from the process are often the minority populations, which, when combined, make up the majority of the population of Boerum Hill. Although cynics express the opinion that government officials and politicians rely on the non-participation of particular groups in order to further their own agendas, it can be

argued that they should appear to be interested in the opinions of non-participators as well as organization members.

Organizations in Transition

Chapter 6 described the cyclical nature of block associations, and Chapter 7 discussed the Hoyt Street Association's growing pains as it straddles the boundary between block and neighborhood association, as well as the Boerum Hill Association's emphasis on developing new leadership. Yet this dissertation amounts to a snapshot in time. Organizations are constantly in flux as residents move into or out of the neighborhood. As old residents leave, they take some of the social capital and institutional knowledge with them. In some ways this is liberating to the organizations as it allows them to re-formulate their identities. In other ways it is detrimental as important links among neighbors are severed. These organizational challenges do not occur in Brooklyn alone. An example of a neighborhood association in Washington, D.C. that has also had to change with the times helps to demonstrate this point.

North Washington Neighbors, Incorporated, generally referred to as "Neighbors, Inc." was also founded more than 30 years ago. In 1958 residents of the Manor Park neighborhood received a grant from the Agnes Meyer Foundation to create an organization to fight the racial blockbusting that was taking place in several nearby neighborhoods. The organization expanded its reach to several more neighborhoods, and

became an umbrella neighborhood association, quite successful at stopping the race baiting and block busting that had occurred elsewhere. In the early years—as with the Boerum Hill Association—Neighbors, Inc., publicized its efforts. "Annual home and garden tours, monthly open houses, a garden club, and a children's singing group were among the other means used to attract newcomers and bring residents together" (Caplan, 1988, p. 267). In fact, as an example of the political connections of neighborhood associations, Caplan notes that U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy spoke at the first Neighbors, Inc., Art and Book Festival in 1963.

Through the 1960s and 1970s the neighborhoods served by Neighbors, Inc., were racially integrated, filled with middle class families. By the late 1990s, these neighborhoods were attracting wealthier new residents. There was no gentrification or displacement as in Boerum Hill, but as people's fortunes improved and the 1960s receded, Neighbors, Inc., had to redefine itself in order to remain relevant. Many of the long-time members of Neighbors, Inc., still lived in the area, and were disheartened at the perceived lack of interest by newcomers. In fact, many newcomers started new organizations to deal with neighborhood issues that long-term participants felt could be handled by Neighbors, Inc.

This reflects the pattern observed in Boerum Hill of block associations re-forming when a critical mass of new residents has arrived on the block. With Neighbors, Inc., because newcomers did not have the connections to the organization or misunderstood its purpose, alternative organizations rose in its place. As Neighbors, Inc., grew, block

associations sprouted under the umbrella. Newcomers saw the smaller, more focused groups as more responsive to their needs. Neighbors, Inc., continues to exist, but it is far less of a presence than it used to be.

Leadership

The above discussed issues of representation and organizations in transition are both directly related to the leadership of an organization. All neighborhood-based grassroots organizations require strong leadership, whether a single person or an entire board of directors. Many survey respondents on blocks with dormant block associations said that they would contact the most recent association leaders if an issue arose. It may be that those blocks without block associations do not have any residents willing to take on the tasks associated with running an organization.

However, strong leadership can lead to organizational cultures which are not representative of the population at large. This is why the Boerum Hill Association is trying to attract new members who might be willing to take on leadership roles. The president of the Boerum Hill Association during the course of this research remained president for six years (1993-1999) because no one was willing to step forward and take over. She wanted to pass the position to someone else who might have had different ideas about the direction in which to steer the Boerum Hill Association, but it took six years before anyone

came forward; at that point, it was only her announcement that she would step down which motivated a volunteer.

Leadership of a grassroots neighborhood-based voluntary organization is a double-edged sword—an opportunity to make one's mark on the block or neighborhood, and a responsibility to ensure that the organization is in fact welcoming all those one intends to welcome or represent.

Implications

This dissertation provides a case study of participation and non-participation in three types of neighborhood-based organizations. This examination of why people do participate in these organizations, why people don't participate in them, and how the participators choose among the organizations is linked to research in many disciplines. What then are the implications of this research? There are different lessons for different audiences.

Academic Researchers

Academics studying neighborhood-based organizations must recognize the differences among these types of organizations. Whether one is studying block associations and empowerment, organizations as one aspect of political participation, or the nonprofit sector as a whole, residents' perceptions of these types of organizations are quite different,

and affect their participation in them. Clearly these organizations should be grouped as organizations that focus on the concerns of the residents within a geographic area, but each organization has a separate and important role in its neighborhood.

Additionally, it is important that academic researchers go beyond their traditional disciplines when examining such a complex topic. Although all aspects of participation literature are not covered here, variation in motivation to participate was not small. It is clear that more researchers are using increasingly expansive understandings of why people participate in organizations; but when different organizational forms are grouped, complex theoretical frameworks are called for. For example, social perspectives explain participation in block associations fairly well, while participation in neighborhood associations is better explained by political or community organizing frameworks. These differences require further exploration, but this research has shown the usefulness of drawing from a wide base of knowledge.

Organization Leaders

For the leadership of neighborhood-based organizations, a lesson to be drawn from this research is the importance of outreach. Whether the organization is speaking for a larger constituency, or attempting to organize residents to participate in an event, continuous outreach is key. Grassroots voluntary organizations are generally run by busy people, who do not have the time to knock on every door in the neighborhood. Be that

as it may, the right to speak for others brings with it the obligation to make sure they are part of the process. This is as true for neighborhood organizations as it is for the United States Congress. It is even more important that organizations try for representativeness when the non-participators are dissimilar from the participators.

Policy Makers

This research also has public policy implications. There is a fundamental lack of knowledge among neighborhood residents about the existence and role of Community Boards. Those who are familiar with the boards see them as an integral part of the decision-making process, but very few residents know that they are an available resource. Broader visibility is needed. As mentioned in earlier chapters, Berry et al. (1993) found that residents are more satisfied with government when they feel there is a way for them to have a voice in the process. Many respondents reported frustration with New York City government, yet they did not know all of their options.

The Community Boards could also be funded and staffed as centers of information dissemination for neighborhoods. They already collect information about many events and opportunities in their districts, yet their budgets are woefully inadequate to enable them to play the role of information clearinghouse. It would enhance the ULURP process if more residents were involved at public hearings or working on committees of the Community Board. Portney and Berry (1997) report on cities with systems of

"neighborhood associations" that are similar to, but more powerful than Community Boards. "Neighborhood associations" in St. Paul, Minnesota and elsewhere are city government organizations run by community volunteers, with actual decision-making power over zoning and other issues. The authors claim that these organizations

> . . . promise a greater ability to build community mainly because they tend to be the only type of organization among those examined here that provide face-to-face opportunities for people to be in the presence of other people with whom they might disagree on important social and political issues. Issue groups, crime watch organizations, and self-help or service organizations, although providing opportunities for civic engagement, are not generally thought of as providing abundant opportunities for being confronted by contrary views. (p. 637)

This research has shown that citizens are not presented with contrary views in block and neighborhood associations. As with St. Paul, Community Boards are the only organizations which foster diverse opinions. In block and neighborhood associations, because the stakes are not recognized, those with contrary views generally opt out of the process. It is vital that more people with contrary views join in. Proactive participation goes a long way toward avoiding later conflicts. Portney and Berry demonstrate the importance of city governments helping to strengthen neighborhood-based organizations.

Summary

Finally, the normative nature of community-based organizations must be considered. Participation in block associations and neighborhood associations is generally viewed as a positive aspect of civil society. As found in this research, however,

neighborhood-based organizations are often viewed with suspicion as accessible to only one group in the neighborhood, be that group homeowners or newcomers, or those with an interest in politics. Putnam's controversial 1995 article "Bowling Alone" expresses concern that fewer citizens are interacting with their neighbors. Although Putnam's conclusions have been disputed by many authors (e.g. Foley & Edwards, 1997), the dispute centers around the concern that Putnam unfairly casts the United States as a less participatory society now than we once were. Whether there is more, less, or different community participation now than 40 years ago, it is clear that citizen and community participation is important to society, in part to ensure that all voices are heard. Unfortunately, too many organizations become focused on the agendas of too few people, allowing the organization to maintain a narrow mission. Organization leaders, city governments, and researchers should promote wider participation as a way of bringing new voices to the table.

Future Research

As expected, in answering some questions, this research has raised new ones. First of all is the need for more longitudinal studies of community participation. Perkins et al. (1996) report follow-up research conducted up to seven years after the original study. There is a need for more long-term analyses. This is especially true for studying causation and the role of empowerment in communities.

Secondly, this study would be stronger with more comparative data. It would be interesting to study the same issues in other neighborhoods of New York, and in other cities. For example, Washington, D.C. has a similar hierarchy of neighborhood-based organizations, with Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs) serving as the counterpart to New York's Community Boards. Like Community Boards, ANCs have advisory powers only; unlike Community Boards, ANCs are elective offices, with each member representing approximately 2,000 citizens. Does it makes a difference in representativeness to have appointed instead of elected citizen representatives?

Third, the block and neighborhood associations found in Boerum Hill generally work well with each other, and with the Community Board (although this aspect of the relationships among the organizations was not known at the outset). There are bound to be other neighborhoods in New York City or elsewhere with a similar structure of organizations, in which the relationships among the organizations are more contentious. How do the roles and relationships of organizations differ when the organizations are competing for resources or participants? Put another way, what does the civil society of a neighborhood look like when the organizations aren't civil?

Fourth, as indicated in Chapter 4, several blocks within the Boerum Hill neighborhood were omitted from this research based on housing type. Studies of the organizational involvement of residents of large apartment buildings and residents of busy commercial areas would be useful to add texture to this picture of neighborhood life. What

are their social capital networks like? Do they use similar channels to government? Many members of the Boerum Hill Association do live in these more commercial situations, indicating that they are not unwelcome by the neighborhood groups. However, their experiences of block associations may be very different than those of residents of more residential areas.

Finally, it would be useful to study participation in neighborhood-based organizations across neighborhoods with differing race and class mixtures. Boerum Hill is a solidly middle-class neighborhood. Do people with fewer resources receive similar attention from their elected representatives? These and other questions are well beyond the scope of this dissertation; I hope someone takes them on.

THE END

APPENDIX

1. Community survey instrument
2. Informed consent form for interviews
3. In-depth interview guide for participators
4. In-depth interview guide for non-participators
5. In-depth interview guide for government officials

COMMUNITY SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Hello, my name is Stephanie Scott-Melnyk. Could you please give me about 15 minutes to answer an anonymous survey about your neighborhood and the community organizations in it? I'm trying to find out what people in the community think about these organizations and the work they do. I'm a graduate student at the City University of New York, and this is my dissertation research. Would you be willing to participate now? DATE: _____

IF NO: Okay, thanks anyway.
IF YES: Great! This will be kept completely anonymous, and you are free to refuse to answer any questions you don't want to.

SENSE OF COMMUNITY / SOCIAL INTEGRATION

1. What do you call this neighborhood? _____
2. How long have you lived in this neighborhood? _____
3. In this house/building?_____

4. Do you recognize and speak to anyone who lives on your block when you meet them on the street? Y • N IF YES: About how many people do you speak to?
almost none • very few • some • a lot • almost everyone

5. Do you feel there is a sense of community on this block - that people on this block feel connected with one another? Y • N • D.K.
6. IF YES: Do you feel that you are a part of that community? Y • N • D.K.

7. Do you feel there is a sense of community in this neighborhood - that people in this neighborhood feel connected with one another? Y • N • D.K.
8. IF YES: Do you feel that you are a part of that community? Y • N • D.K.

9. Do you feel that you are a part of any other community? Y • N • D.K.
IF YES: What community is that? _____

10. Are you satisfied with this neighborhood as a place to live? Y • Not Sure • N

11. Do you think that in the next 2 years this neighborhood will get better, stay the same, or get worse?

12. How important is being involved in your neighborhood to you? Not important, somewhat important, or very important? D.K.

13. What difference do you think neighborhood organizations make in your neighborhood? A big difference, a little difference, or no difference at all? D.K.

INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES

14. I'm going to name some ways people have said they usually get news about their neighborhood. Please tell me if any of these are ways you find out about what's going on in your neighborhood:

Neighbors • Family • Friends • Local Shops • Talking to People at Local Organizations • Community Newspapers • Citywide Newspapers • Community Newsletters • Newsletters from Elected Representatives •Television News • Radio News • Coworkers • Flyers • Schools • Churches • Other

15. If you wanted to get something changed in this neighborhood that was not part of your building/property, what would you do? [For example, an abandoned lot filled with trash, a tree blew over and needed to be removed, get more trees planted on your block, a pothole needed to be fixed, an abandoned car, get more street lighting] _____

ORGANIZATIONS

I have a list of groups and organizations some people participate in. I would like to know if you have had contact with any of these types of organizations, in any neighborhood in the past year. The categories are: No contact, Minimal contact, Some contact, Lot of contact, Great deal of contact AND, if you have had contact, would you consider yourself a Member or Officer of this organization?

16. SPORTS TEAMS .....N • M • S • L • G/M • O
17. COMMUNITY BOARD .....N • M • S • L • G/M • O
18. HOBBY/GARDEN CLUBS....N • M • S • L • G/M • O
19. BLOCK ASSOCIATION.....N • M • S • L • G/M • O
20. NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH. N • M • S • L • G/M • O
21. ARTISTIC/DANCE/MUSIC GROUP.....
.....N • M • S • L • G/M • O
22. POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS.....
.....N • M • S • L • G/M • O
23. YOUTH GROUPS / SCHOOL-BASED....N • M • S • L • G/M • O
24. NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION.....N • M • S • L • G/M • O
25. SOCIAL CLUBS .....N • M • S • L • G/M • O
26. ORGANIZATION BASED IN CHURCH/MOSQUE/TEMPLE.....
.....N • M • S • L • G/M • O
27. PROFESSIONAL GROUPS / UNIONS....N • M • S • L • G/M • O
28. VETERANS' / ALUMNI ORGANIZATIONS .....
..... N • M • S • L • G/M • O
29. OTHER ORGANIZATIONS..... N • M • S • L • G/M • O

I am particularly interested in why people do or do not have any contact with block associations, neighborhood associations, and their Community Board.

30. Is there is a block association that serves this block? Y • N • D.K.
31. Is there a neighborhood association that serves this area? Y • N • D.K.
IF YES: Which one?_____

32. Do you know which Community Board serves this area? Y • N • Not Sure
IF YES: #_____

33. Have you ever been in contact with a block association, neighborhood association, or Community Board in this neighborhood? Y • N IF NO, SKIP TO #43

BLOCK ASSOCIATION (if #19 or 33 is yes):
34. Do you still have contact with the block association? Y • N • Defunct

35. How did you originally find out about it? _____

36. On the whole, would you say you have had a positive, negative, or mixed experience with your block association? P • M • N

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION (if #24 or 33 is yes):
37. Do you still have contact with the neighborhood association? Y • N • Defunct

38. How did you originally find out about it? _____

39. On the whole, would you say you have had a positive, negative, or mixed experience with your neighborhood association? P • M • N

COMMUNITY BOARD (if #17 or 33 is yes):
40. Do you still have contact with the Community Board? Y • N

41. How did you originally find out about the Community Board?_____

42. On the whole, would you say you have had a positive, negative, or mixed experience with the Community Board? P • M • N

IF HASN'T HAD CONTACT WITH ALL 3 TYPES:
43. Have you ever tried to contact any of these organizations in this neighborhood?
Y • N IF YES: Why? _____

44. What happened?

OPINIONS OF ORGANIZATIONS

I have a list of statements that may or may not reflect your opinions of these organizations. I'd like to know if any of these statements apply to your thoughts about the block association, neighborhood association, and Community Board in this neighborhood. 45. Do you know anything about any of these organizations in this neighborhood? Y • N IF NO, SKIP TO 67

	BA	NA	CB
46. The org'n helps me learn about what's going on in my com'ty /meet neighbors	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
47. The organization helps bring the neighborhood together	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
48. Most of the issues they deal with don't affect me	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
49. I disagree with their ideas for the neighborhood	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
50. I don't like the people who are involved	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
51. I don't feel welcome or like part of the group	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
52. I participate in the organization because neighbors pressure me to	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
53. The organization gives me a chance to influence government policy	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
54. The organization gives me a chance to further my job/ make business contacts	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
55. I participate because I might want to run for public office someday	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
56. The org'n gives me a chance to fulfill my duty as a member of the community	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
57. The organization is good for solving/addressing neighborhood problems	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
58. The city doesn't pay attention to this kind of organization	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
59. I use the services the organization provides	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
60. The organization doesn't publicize itself enough	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
61. The org'n is important in neighborhood preservation / keeping up property values	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
62. I don't have the time it takes to be involved	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
63. It is difficult to get to their meetings/meetings are at a bad time	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
64. The organization gives me a chance to help fight crime in my neighborhood	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
65. The org'n gives me a chance to make my community / city a better place to live	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK
66. Any other comments?	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK	Y•N•DK

67. Does anyone else in your household have contact with the block association, neighborhood association, or Community Board?
Y • N • D.K • N.A. IF YES: Who, and which organization? _____

68. If a local block association, neighborhood association, or Community Board asked you to help them protest or work on an issue you cared about, would you? Y • N • D.K.
69. Has any group ever asked for your help? Y • N
70. Did you help them? Y • N

71. Have you ever participated in a neighborhood-based organization when you lived in a different place? Y • N • N.A.

IF YES: Was your past involvement a positive, negative, or mixed experience?
P • M • N

DEMOGRAPHICS

Now I'd like to finish with some questions about yourself and your household. This information will be kept strictly confidential.

72. How old are you? _____ 73. Male/Female

74. How do you identify your racial/ethnic background? African American/Black • White • Hispanic/Latino • Afro-Caribbean • Asian • Mixed/Multiracial • Other:___

75. What is your living arrangement? Married/Living with partner • Live alone • Living with family • Living with roommates

76. How many people live in your household? _____

77. Do you have children? Y • N 78. Do your children live with you? Y • N
IF YES: How many?_____ 79. # Under 18?_____

80. Are there children under age 18 living in your household who are not yours? Y • N IF YES: How many?_____

81. How far have you gone in school? Less than High School • High School graduate • Business/ technical school after High School • Some College • Associate's Degree • Bachelor's Degree • Graduate or professional school after college

82. Are you employed? Y • N IF YES: What kind of work do you do? _____

83. Would you say your total household income for 1995 was: (If roommates, personal income) Less than $25,000 • $25,000-$50,000 • $50,000-$75,000 • $75,000-$100,000 • More than $100,000

84. Do you own or rent your home? Own/co-op • Rent

85. Do you ever attend religious services? Y • N • R
IF YES: Do you go regularly or occasionally?

86. Are you registered to vote? Y • N • N.A. Did you vote in the:
87. May 1996 School Board Election? Y • N • N.A.
88. 1993 City Council/Mayoral Election? (Giuliani) Y • N • N.A.
89. 1994 Governor's Election? (Pataki) Y • N • N.A.
90. 1992 Presidential Election? (Clinton) Y • N • N.A.

That is the end of the survey. Do you have anything else to add about anything we've talked about?

Thank you very much for participating in this survey. I'll give you my card with your survey #, so if you have any questions or think of anything you'd like to add, you can call me. Also, I'm going to be doing some longer interviews with people I meet through this survey. Would you be willing to sit and talk with me further about these issues sometime? If so, I need your name and telephone number or address so I can contact you to set up an interview. Thank you. I'll call you soon.

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT
[ORIGINAL WAS ON CUNY LETTERHEAD]

This statement is to explain Stephanie Scott-Melnyk's dissertation research so you can decide if you would like to participate in an interview.

Ms. Scott-Melnyk is interviewing residents of this neighborhood to find out why they do or do not have contact with local block associations, neighborhood associations, and the Community Board. She is also conducting a survey of 100 residents of this neighborhood. This research will be used to help understand what neighborhood organizations mean to local residents. This research may be used in the future to inform City government policies or the policies of various neighborhood organizations, but right now this research will not change anything in this neighborhood.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions you don't want to, and you can stop the interview at any time. Also, you will not be paid for your participation in any way. The interview will take about 1 to 1½ hours, depending on how much you have to say.

There are many ways your privacy will be maintained in this project. Your name will not be used in any reports of this research. If you agree, the interview will be tape recorded. Ms. Scott-Melnyk will be the only person who will listen to the tapes. She will transcribe the tapes, and change your name and the names of any people you talk about in the interview (except for public officials like the Mayor or the Borough President). Once transcribed, the tapes will be erased, and your name will not be on the transcript. Ms. Scott-Melnyk will not discuss anything you say with anyone else in the neighborhood. Everything you say will be kept anonymous.

If you have any questions about this research, you can call Professor Leanne Rivlin at (212) 642-2563. Professor Rivlin is Ms. Scott-Melnyk's dissertation advisor. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a participant in this study, you can call the Office of Sponsored Research at the CUNY Graduate School at (212) 642-2059.

If you have no other questions, and would like to participate in an interview, please sign below indicating that you agree to participate. Thank you.

I, _____ understand Stephanie Scott-Melnyk's research as it is stated above, and agree to be interviewed by her. I DO/DO NOT permit Ms. Scott-Melnyk to tape record my interview.

Signed: _____ _____
Participant Stephanie Scott-Melnyk

Date: _____

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARTICIPATORS

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me about your knowledge of organizations in your neighborhood. Do you mind if I tape record our conversation? As you know, this research is for my doctoral dissertation, so it might be published someday. Your name will not be used in anything I write. I brought your survey form with me so we can talk more about what you've already told me.

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IDENTIFICATION OF NEIGHBORHOOD

I'd like to start by asking you to define and describe your home neighborhood to me. I have a map of this part of Brooklyn, and I'd like you to trace the areas you consider to be part of your neighborhood. This will help me understand exactly which places you are talking about. Okay, now could you tell me a little about your neighborhood?

NEIGHBORHOOD SATISFACTION

What would you say is the best thing about living in this neighborhood?
What would you say is the worst thing about living in this neighborhood?

You said that in the next 2 years this neighborhood will (get better, stay the same, get worse). Why do you think that? Do you think you'll still be here then?

GENTRIFICATION

While I was conducting the survey a lot of people talked about the changes in this neighborhood because of gentrification - wealthy people moving here and buying houses. Do you have any thoughts on this issue? Have you noticed a change in the population in the time you've lived here?

NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE

If you wanted to get something changed in your neighborhood that was not on your property/ building, (plant trees, get garbage cleaned up, crime prevention, stop a business from opening, get a pothole fixed) what would you do? On the survey you said you would do X. Does that apply in all situations? [Probe with specific examples of neighborhood issues] Have you ever done that before? What were the results? Do you think it is possible for people to make change in their neighborhoods?

INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES

You said in the survey that you usually get information about your neighborhood from X sources. Do you feel you get enough information about your neighborhood, or do you
~~~~~~

wish you knew more about what's going on here? IF WANTS MORE: What other sources do you think would be helpful?

ORGANIZATIONAL INVOLVEMENT - (All kinds, not just BA/NA/CB)
You said you participate in [these] organizations. Could you tell me a little more about your involvement in them? How did you get involved with them? What do you like and dislike about them? Which organization do you find the most worthwhile? (If participates in more than one organization) Could you compare your involvement in these organizations?

CONTACT OVER TIME (If applicable)
You said that you participated in a neighborhood-based organization, when you lived in a different place (or earlier here). Where was that? And how long ago? How was that experience similar to or different from your experience in this neighborhood? IF DIFFERENT: Why was your experience there different? (Is the difference related to your life, the place, or the group?)

IF APPLICABLE: You said that if a neighborhood-based organization asked you to help them protest or work on an issue that you cared about you would do so. What kinds of issues would those be? [For example, issues that I know about in this neighborhood are: a McDonald's that wanted to open at 3rd Avenue and Atlantic; parking problems; the Gowanus reconstruction and the traffic from that; the Smith Street reconstruction; the Dean Street reconstruction; Atlantic Center; graffiti; and the murder of a lesbian in the neighborhood a year or so ago] Do you think you generally agree or disagree with your neighbors on these kinds of issues? [If Disagree] Why do you think that?

BA/NA/CB INVOLVEMENT
You said you have had contact with X organizations. I'd like to know about your involvement in each one. How did you hear about it? What were your goals of your initial contact? Were your goals satisfied? Did you continue to participate? Why? You said you have had a (positive, negative, mixed) experience with this organization. Could you elaborate on that? What would have made your experience better?

ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONS
What do you think the role of this organization is in the neighborhood? Do you think it fulfills this role? Why or why not?

PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONS
How would you describe the people who usually participate in this organization? How easy or difficult is it for new people to become involved with this organization (either to

attend meetings or become members)? Why? How easy or difficult is it to take on a leadership role?

BENEFITS & COSTS

In the survey we went through a list of opinions about these organizations. Could you tell me more about the things you like and things you dislike about the organizations you know about?

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THEM

Do you think there is any kind of relationship between Block Associations, Neighborhood Associations, and the Community Board?

FOR OFFICERS OF ORGANIZATIONS

MEMBERSHIP

What are the requirements of membership in this organization? Do members pay dues? Do you think this organization serves a particular constituency? How easy or difficult is it to get new people to join the organization and to keep members? Why do you think that is? Have you ever tried to rally neighbors to protest something going on in the neighborhood? How easy or difficult was that?

HISTORY OF ORGANIZATION

Could you tell me about the history of this organization? Do you know when it was founded? By whom? Why? How has this organization changed in the time you've known it?

CLOSING FOR EVERYBODY

Do you have anything else to add about anything we have or haven't talked about? Well thank you very much for your participation in my research. If you are interested in this research, please feel free to call me, and I can talk about the findings with you or send you a copy of the results.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR NON-PARTICIPATORS

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me further about your knowledge of organizations in your neighborhood. Do you mind if I tape record our conversation? As you know, this research is for my doctoral dissertation, so it might be published someday. Your name will not be used in anything I write. I brought your survey form with me so we can talk more about what you've already told me.

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GENTRIFICATION

While I was conducting the survey a lot of people talked about the changes in this neighborhood because of gentrification - wealthy people moving here and buying houses. Do you have any thoughts on this issue? Have you noticed a change in the population in the time you've lived here?

NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE

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INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES

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You said you participate in [these] organizations. Could you tell me a little more about your involvement in them? How did you get involved with them? What do you like and dislike about them? Which organization do you find the most worthwhile? (If participates in more than one) Could you compare your involvement in these organizations?

CONTACT OVER TIME (If applicable)
You said that you participated in a neighborhood-based organization, when you lived in a different place (or earlier here). Where was that? And how long ago? How was that experience similar to or different from your experience in this neighborhood? IF DIFFERENT: Why was your experience there different? (Is the difference related to your life, the place, or to the group?)

BA/NA/CB INVOLVEMENT
You said you have had no contact with block associations, neighborhood associations, or the Community Board. Is that still true? Do you know anything about these organizations? If so, why don't you participate in/use them? IF DOESN'T KNOW THEM: Would you be interested in being in contact with a local neighborhood-based organization? Why/Why not?

IF APPLICABLE: You said that if a neighborhood-based organization asked you to help them protest or work on an issue that you cared about you would do so. What kinds of issues would those be? [For example, issues that I know about in this neighborhood are: a McDonald's that wanted to open at 3rd Avenue and Atlantic; parking problems; the Gowanus reconstruction and the traffic from that; the Smith Street reconstruction; the Dean Street reconstruction; Atlantic Center; graffiti; and the murder of a lesbian in the neighborhood a year or so ago] Do you think you generally agree or disagree with your neighbors on these kinds of issues? [If Disagree] Why do you think that?

IF KNOWS ABOUT THEM BUT DOESN'T PARTICIPATE:
ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONS
What do you think the role of this organization is in the neighborhood? Do you think it fulfills this role? Why or why not?

PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONS

How would you describe the people who usually participate in this organization? How easy or difficult is it for new people to become involved with this organization (either to attend meetings or become members)? Why?

BENEFITS & COSTS

In the survey we went through a list of opinions about these organizations. Could you tell me more about the things you like and things you dislike about the organizations you know about?

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THEM

Do you think there is any kind of relationship between Block Associations, Neighborhood Associations, and the Community Board? [This will be asked about only the organizations the person knows about]

CLOSING

Do you have anything else to add about anything we have or haven't talked about? Well thank you very much for your participation in my research. If you are interested in this research, please feel free to call me, and I can talk about the findings with you or send you a copy of the results.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

What is role of Community Board to citizens? (Esp. service delivery) How are they fulfilling it? Is CB a way for a regular citizen to be involved with government?

How does (should) Community Board interact with citizens?

Examples of topics it would be appropriate for citizens to contact Community Board about?

Relationship of Community Boards to neighborhood-based organizations: BA/NA (BH Association feels is voice to CB.)

Should residents know about Community Boards? What do you think about 75% of respondents not having any contact w/ CB?

Relationship of Community Boards & City Council? My respondents say they would go to City Council person before CB. Is this expected?

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