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**MISBEHAVING ORGANIZATIONS:  
A STUDY OF HOW COMMUNITY AND FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS  
ASSIST IN DOMESTICATING COMMUNITY RESIDENTS**

A Thesis in

Adult Education

By

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## ABSTRACT

Community organizations (COs), the study proposes, are social actors whose behavior shapes the participation of local residents in community activities. Employing critical ethnography as a research approach, the study examines how COs—through activities they sponsor and/or support—promote and/or inhibit the participation of residents as citizens. Assuming that learning is an outcome of activity, the study argues that behaviors influencing citizen participation also promote and/or inhibit learning for citizen participation. Guiding the investigation is a theoretical framework that draws upon institutional theory of organizations, social constructivism, community theory, and cultural historical activity theory.

Fieldwork for the study was conducted in a low-income, inner-city neighborhood of a major US city. Using standard ethnographic methods of participant observation, interviewing and document analysis, data was collected from four community and faith-based organizations that agreed to participate in the study.

Analysis of the data revealed that in expressing a preference for skills that are legitimated in the broader society, the behavior of COs devalue the skills and knowledge of local residents. Furthermore, COs employ tools and processes that impose pre-defined problems and pre-formulated solutions, which consequently inhibit the citizen participation of local residents. Citizen participation is also inhibited through behavior of COs that affirms taken-for-granted assumptions about specific groups of people based on race, gender and class. The study also found that motives that drive the activities of COs impacted the participation of residents. Implications of these behavior patterns for learning for citizen participation are addressed.

The study illustrates the complex power relationships negotiated by COs with entities within and outside the specific locality. The author proposes a continuum of citizen participation and discusses its implications for adult education in and for community.

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## PREFACE

A broadcast of the formal opening of a new school built in a rural Southern-African village appears on the television news station. The camera crews zoom in on a group of African women adorned in bright colored cloth around their heads and waists. They are singing, dancing, and ululating. Any viewer can clearly see that the women represent village residents who are happy to have a new school in their community.

The reporter, a young white man dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, talks to one of the women. With the help of a translator, the woman tells the reporter that she is happy the school has been built, because now her children do not have to travel long distances every day to go to school. The reporter moves on to interview another person—a white man dressed in khaki shorts, t-shirt, and a wide-brimmed hat to protect him from the sun. She introduces him as a representative of an international development agency. His agency is credited with building the school in the village. The man tells the reporter about the commitment of his organization to build schools in rural and remote areas in Africa to improve education and ultimately aid in the development of the continent.

Standing next to the international development agency representative is a formally dressed African man dressed in a business suit and tie. As an official of the government of the African nation, he expresses gratitude to the international agency for building the school in this village, contributing to the development of his country.

The group of African women continues to sing, dance, and ululate in the background. The reporter does tell the audience anything about the role that these women (or any of the other village residents for that matter) played in deciding and directing the school building project. Neither the reporter nor the interviewees tell the audience about the contributions, if any, made

by the residents in deciding that building a school was a top priority for their village. All we know is that the locals are happy and thankful to the international agency for building a school in their village.

Growing up in Zimbabwe, scenes such as the one I have described here were frequently broadcasted on our local television station. I continue to see these images in international media—images of villagers, mostly from Asia and Africa, receiving aid and supplies from some entity outside their village. The villagers, residents of a community that is the site of a development project, are cast in the role of recipients or helpers, with the role of provider and change agent being relegated to people outside the community who design the project.

I find these images unsettling. How is it that the local villagers are always less-powerful, yet grateful recipients in community-building efforts? My discomfort with the distribution of roles is the impetus for this study. While acknowledging the need for development, I am deeply concerned that the involvement of local residents in deciding the meaning of and priorities for development activities for their own communities is limited. Personal experiences from my own life have stimulated my interest in this topic.

At the time I was born, Zimbabwe, then called Rhodesia, was under an apartheid system of government. This system was based on a racial hierarchy that placed Europeans at the top, bi-racial people (known as “coloreds”) in the middle, and native African people at the bottom. For a considerable portion of my youth, I lived on church missions because of my father’s work as a church minister. My memories of living on missions are good ones. I remember feeling safe and protected inside the mission, particularly during the liberation war of Zimbabwe. Not surprisingly, I thought missionaries were the kindest white people I had ever met. The following

excerpt from a novel by Zimbabwean novelist, Tsitsi Dangarembga (1988), captures my experience relating to white missionaries as an African living on missions:

The Whites on the mission were a special kind of white person, special in the way that my grandmother had explained to me, for they were holy. They had come not to take but to give. They were about God's business here in darkest Africa. They had given up the comforts and security of their own homes to come and lighten our darkness. It was a big sacrifice that the missionaries made. It was a sacrifice that made us grateful to them, a sacrifice that made them superior not only to us but to those other Whites as well who were here for adventure and to help themselves to our emeralds (p.103).

As I reflect back on this time, I realize now that these church missions (intentionally or unintentionally) legitimized apartheid. Church missions are charity organizations that were established by European- and American-based churches. The primary goal of these missions was to convert the locals to Christianity. Initially run by white missionaries, these missions provided humanitarian services to the African population; these services included Western forms of education and healthcare. Missions were designed to save Africans from their "darkness" and "savage ways." The expectations of behavior for workers and clients of the mission were predicated on racial assumptions that placed European culture in a superior position to African culture. Religion was the mechanism used to legitimate these assumptions. These assumptions were built into the structure of the organization, independent of the characteristics of individuals who worked or lived in the missions.

The structure of missions cast missionaries in the role of "saviors" and Africans in the role of "recipients or helpers" to the missionaries. Because these assumptions are built into the

structure of the organization, they persist even after the missions are no longer run by white missionaries. For example, years after independence, many mission schools continue to teach African students that African cultural practices are inferior. They use religion to legitimate this position.

I left Zimbabwe to pursue higher education at a small liberal arts college close to the city of Chicago, which is in the Midwest region of the United States. While there, I would regularly volunteer at a local shelter for the homeless. My experience as a volunteer in this shelter shared some striking similarities with my experiences in the African mission. The shelter provided two meals (dinner and breakfast) and overnight shelter to persons who were homeless during the harsh winter months. These persons would be admitted into the shelter no earlier than 7 pm at night, and they would have to leave the shelter by 8 am the following morning. The volunteers would arrive early enough to warm up the food and set out items for dinner. Some volunteers would assist with distributing bedding, clothing, and toiletries. To my recollection, there was at least one staff person who oversaw the operation each night.

As a volunteer, I played a very specific role at this shelter. I was there to provide a service to the “less fortunate” homeless people. The activities I performed in this role varied from serving food to distributing clothing. While I was glad to participate in this effort, I was somewhat unsettled.

For one, I did not feel we were doing enough to help by giving people food and overnight shelter, only to send them out in the cold the next morning. Second, I was never quite comfortable with the role I was playing. Within the organizational structure of the shelter, I was cast into the role of provider by virtue of my being a volunteer. Of the adults that were in the



shelter, whether as volunteers or clients, I was significantly younger. To be in that position, where a much older person is asking me for permission to get a second helping of food, or a mother is asking me for permission to get more milk for her child, was disquieting to me. By virtue of being a volunteer, I had more power in this situation than the clients of the shelter. As an international college student on a scholarship, I was well aware of the fact that if something were to happen to my scholarship, I was not far from being in the position of these clients. I felt that my provider role masked this reality. I actually identified more with the clients than with the other volunteers providing the service.

Because of my age, race, and income level, I somehow felt like an imposter in this role of provider that came with the structure of the organization. I also felt some frustration with the set-up. It seemed to me that the shelter, while it was providing a much needed service, was structured in such a way that the clients of the shelter were treated as people incapable of making responsible decisions, and taking care of themselves and others. On the other hand, in the role that I was playing as a volunteer, my ability to make responsible decisions and take care of others and myself was taken for granted.

In the two contexts I have described, there are two primary roles performed by participants—provider and recipient. These roles exist independently of the characteristics of individuals who perform them. Church missions legitimated white superiority in a racially segregated society through an organizational structure that cast white missionaries as providers. Similarly, in shelters for the homeless, the role of volunteers as providers legitimated unflattering assumptions about poor people.

My concern about the participation of local people in community building efforts, particularly those that are marginalized by race or ethnicity, gender, age, or location, stimulated my interest in adult education. When I began my graduate studies in adult education, I assumed (as do many dominant theories of development) that local people lacked the skills and knowledge needed to play more directive roles in community building activities. I assumed that if people were better equipped with skills and knowledge, they would be able to play roles that are more powerful. However, as I delved more deeply into this issue, I realized that lack of skills and knowledge is not enough to explain the roles that people play in community-building efforts. This lack of knowledge and skills does not explain why certain groups of people are designated as decision-makers and other groups as mere clients and/or recipients. I came to realize that other factors also shape the roles that people play in development efforts.

This study explores one of these factors—the behavior of community organizations. I have chosen to focus specifically on community organizations because I perceive them to be important vehicles for effective and sustainable community change. In sponsoring and supporting community-building activities, the behavior of community organizations influences how specific groups of people come to play specific types of roles.

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## **CHAPTER 1: COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

### **Introduction**

I have had the opportunity to participate in several community capacity building initiatives as a member of a multi-disciplinary university team. The primary mission of our team is to provide support to community groups in their efforts to improve the quality of life in their communities. I have observed that we tend to work with just the leader(s) of the organizations and no one else. Although the issues being addressed have implications for the entire community, the other residents are minimally involved, if at all, in the activities of the organizations. So where is everyone else? Why are they not more involved? This study explores the issue of resident participation from the perspective of community organizations (COs). Assuming that community organizations are social actors, the study investigates how they (community organizations) shape the participation of residents in activities sponsored and/or supported by the organizations. I focus specifically on the participation of residents as citizens. .

Sustainable and effective community change depends on resident participation. I view COs as important vehicles for sustainable community change. Through their behavior, COs shape how residents participate in community-building activities. COs legitimize roles performed by specific groups of people in activities that they sponsor. By their behavior, COs also facilitate and/or challenge institutional roles in the wider society. Embedded in the structure of many COs is a taken-for-granted hierarchy of roles and related power dynamics that shape the participation of residents.

In investigating the behavior of COs, this study explores the processes by which they legitimize roles played by residents in community activities. To use a common aphorism, this

study goes beyond looking at “who is at the table” and “what they do at the table” to examining the “table” itself—the legitimization of roles played by participants in community-building activities. The issue of role legitimization has important implications for people working in and with organizations that seek to address issues of social inequalities. Unwittingly, these organizations may actually be perpetuating the very inequalities they, presumably, are seeking to alleviate. Instead of empowering residents, COs, through their behavior, may inadvertently assist in the domestication of residents.

In this chapter, I discuss the role played by COs in promoting and/or inhibiting the participation of community residents as citizens (or citizen participation for short). I have divided the chapter into four sections. In the first section, I discuss the notion of participation as conceptualized in two bodies of literature that seem most relevant to my work—development theory and democratic theory. In the second section, I elaborate on the notion of citizen participation and discuss some of its more salient critiques. In the third section, I discuss the relationship between citizen participation and COs. I provide a brief outline of the study in the fourth section.

### **Participation In Development Theory And Democratic Theory**

#### *Participation in Development Theory and Practice*

In development theory and practice, the notion of participation is often linked to concepts such as civic engagement, resident involvement, empowerment and self-reliance. According to Hickey and Mohan (2004), the history of participation in development theory and practice dates as far back as the 1940s. The notion of participation gained prominence in the 1970s as scholars and practitioners critiqued dominant theories of development. These theories were criticized for

being “exclusionary, impoverishing and homogenizing” (Hickey & Mohan, 2004, p.7).

Participation came to the forefront as scholars and practitioners sought alternative approaches to development.

A major sponsor of development projects all over the world, The World Bank, defines participation as, “a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources that affect them” (World Bank, 1995, p.3). Stakeholders include intended beneficiaries (the poor and other disadvantaged groups), borrowers (e.g. elected officials, local government officials who are responsible for devising public policies and programs), indirectly affected groups (e.g. private sector organizations and non-governmental organizations who have an interest in the outcomes), and the World Bank (management, staff and shareholders) (World Bank, 1995).

In contrast to top-down approaches in the dominant discourse in development theory and practice, participatory development emphasizes the importance of local knowledge and direct forms of participation. As an alternative to top-down approaches, participatory development evolved with the aim of increasing the involvement of local residents—who are usually socially and economically marginalized—in making decisions about projects and activities that affect their lives.

Within both developmental perspectives, participation is viewed as both a means to an end, and an end in itself (Berner & Phillips, 2005; Cleaver, 1999; Gaventa, 2004; Morrissey, 2000; Sen, 1999). As a means to an end, participation is said to increase efficiency in development projects in at least two ways: first, by lowering costs as locals take on some of the burden of the project, and secondly, by increasing sustainability of the project as locals become

more invested in the project. As an end in itself, participation is credited with empowering local people with the skills and attitudes necessary for them to be active agents of change in their communities.

Furthermore, participation provides locals with the opportunity to use their local knowledge and understanding as a basis for local actions. Through participation, individuals and collectives can enhance their capacities to improve their own lives. For some scholars, the ultimate goal of participation is to facilitate self-help. In short, participation serves an educational function. As Berner & Phillips (2005) muse, "...self-help can be seen as participation squared. The poor have completed their journey from being recipient, via beneficiaries and stakeholders to become champions of development" (p.18).

### *Participation in Democratic Theory*

In democratic theory, the notion of participation is associated with the works of philosophers such as Rousseau, Mill, and Cole (Pateman, 1970). Here, participation refers to one's role in public decision-making processes with the goal being that participants have equal (or adequate) power to determine the outcomes of these decisions. Here, participation is associated with concepts of citizenship and political participation. The focus in this discourse is on issues such as legitimate representation, systems of accountability, policy advocacy and lobbying, citizen rights education, and awareness.

Citizenship generally refers to either the status of an individual or the standards of proper conduct or practice (Gaventa, 2004; Lister, forthcoming; Smith, 2002). As status, citizenship refers not only to persons with political rights to participate in the process of self-governance but also to persons legally recognized as members of a particular political community who possess

basic rights to be protected by that community's government. As conduct or practice, citizenship refers to responsibilities and obligations that one has to the wider society. Lister (forthcoming) reminds us that citizenship is a force for both inclusion and exclusion. Citizenship includes or excludes groups of people by granting rights or membership to some groups and denying them to others.

Like participatory development, participatory democracy also views participation as both a means to an end and an end in itself. As a means to an end, participation is the vehicle by which citizens exercise their right to self-govern (Pateman, 1970; Smith, 2002). As an end in itself, participation plays an educative role in that, through participation, people learn their rights and responsibilities as citizens (Barber, 1984; Pateman, 1970). Pateman (1970) notes that it is “only by participation at the local level and in local association that the individual could ‘learn democracy’” (p. 38).

### **Citizen Participation as Political Participation**

The foregoing conceptions of participation pay particular attention to who is invited to participate in decision-making and how their involvement influences decisions made in specific bounded spheres, namely: community and social spheres within development theory and governance within democratic theory. As noted above, the educative function of participation is highlighted in both conceptions of participation. However, they differ in the purposes they accord participation and they also emphasize different aspects in the process of participation.

In development theory, the purpose of participation is to influence projects and activities in a particular locale. In contrast, participation as framed in democratic theory emphasizes good governance *beyond* the locale as a primary purpose (of participation). In development theory,



attention is placed on direct participation, while democratic theory is more concerned with issues of representation and deliberation as they relate to political participation (Gaventa, 2004). As observed by Gaventa (2004), participation in democratic theory pays less attention to issues of local knowledge, while this is a primary focus of participation in development theory.

The notion of citizen participation brings together elements of the two concepts of participation from development theory and democratic theory. Citizen participation is regarded as a specific form of political participation. It links participation in the political sphere to participation in community and social spheres (Gaventa, 2004; Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999). In citizen participation, local concerns are framed as political (regional, national or global) concerns. This connection between the local and broader societal spheres is expressed in the following definition of citizen participation found in the *Encyclopedia of Social Work*: “citizen participation...is the active, voluntary engagement of individuals and groups to change problematic conditions and to influence policies and programs that affect the quality of their lives or the lives of others” (Gamble & Weil, 1995, p.483).

In this definition, the focus is on citizenship as practice or activity, rather than as status. In his theory of “Strong Democracy,” Barber (1984) provides a definition of a citizen that complements the concept of citizen participation discussed here. He writes: “Citizens are neighbors bound together... by their common concerns and common participation in the search for common solutions to common conflicts” (Barber, 1984, p.219).

The goal of citizen participation is to change conditions affecting residents’ quality of life and, at the same time, to improve the health of their community. Citizen participation recognizes “the agency of citizens as ‘makers and shapers’ rather than as ‘users and choosers’ of

interventions or services designed by others (Gaventa, 2004). The expectation is, that while engaging in the activity of citizen participation, individuals learn to become stronger and more effective political actors. As political actors, individuals play a role in making decisions on matters that influence their lives.

### *The Problem with Participation*

Despite its ambitious goals (or maybe because of them), the theory and practice of participation comes with its challenges. In development theory, participation has been justly criticized for simplifying communities, presenting them as homogenous and harmonious (Cleaver, 1999; Gaventa, 2004; Guijt & Shah, 1998; Parpat, 2002). In so doing, issues of differences are given limited attention. Consequently, inequalities, oppressive social hierarchies, and discriminations are overlooked.

The theory and practice of participation is also charged with having vague and narrow definitions of what constitutes participation (Benhabib, 1994; Cleaver, 1999; Cornwall, 2003, 2004; Lind, 1997; Lister, forthcoming). In both development theory and democratic theory there is an emphasis on deliberation, direct participation, and individual verbal contributions as evidence of participation. This reveals an underlying assumption that voice is equal to power; yet in practice, there are instances in which silence is the exercise of power and control (Parpat, 2002). Cleaver (1999) observes that the ideas of deliberation and democratic representation may be incongruent with local norms and practices, and an insistence on them might exaggerate and disguise people's actual participation. Some scholars have questioned the appropriateness of direct participation in all situations (Baptiste, 2001; Benhabib, 1994). For example, Baptiste

(2001) convincingly argues that there are conditions in which maximum direct participation is undesirable.

In light of these critiques, observing and evaluating participation poses a challenge. Models for evaluating participation do exist: for example Arnstien's (1969) ladder of participation, Pateman's (1970) categorization of "pseudo participation," "partial participation" and "full participation," and Morrissey's (2000) model for assessing "process indicators," "developmental benefits," and "instrumental benefits" of citizen participation. However, these models are based on narrow and vague definitions of participation and all assume universality.

#### *Citizen Participation in Context*

In this study, citizen participation is defined as the active engagement of local residents in decisions related to defining and framing issues facing their locality, the prioritization of these issues, and the formulation and implementation of solutions to address the issues. Applying Barber's definition of citizen specifically to this study: citizens are neighbors bound together *by locality...by their common concerns and common participation in the search for common solutions to common conflicts facing their locality* (Barber, 1984, p.219). Citizen participation is manifested in actions and activities in which individuals and groups engage; it also includes the motives associated with these actions and activities. Conceptualized in this way, citizen participation is a specific form of resident participation. In other words, not all participation by residents qualifies as citizen participation.

"Citizen" in "citizen participation" denotes ownership, authority, and responsibility for the locality exhibited by the actors. To illustrate this point, consider two residents participating in a street cleaning project on their block. One resident is engaging in this activity because she

believes that she and her neighbors have a responsibility for keeping their block clean. The second resident engaged in this activity is guided by the belief that she is assisting the city municipality to whom she accords the responsibility of keeping her block clean. The action of the first resident constitutes citizen participation, whereas the action of the second resident is resident participation, but not necessarily citizen participation. The actions performed are distinguished by their motives. The first actor is cleaning the street because she perceives herself to have responsibility and concern for the appearance and wellbeing of her block. She is motivated by a concern for the well-being of her block. The second resident does not view herself as having responsibility for the block; she is merely helping those who do. Her motive might be to gain favor with the city officials and/or to take advantage of items donated to volunteers. This illustration reveals the significance of citizen participation to the sustainability and effectiveness of community-building efforts. Block cleanliness is more likely to be sustained by residents who see themselves as responsible owners than residents who view themselves as “city helpers.” Residents who see themselves as owners would view themselves as “employers” rather than “helpers” of the city municipality.

### **Citizen Participation and Community Organizations**

Gamble & Weil (1995) propose that citizen participation primarily occurs in two structures: (1) “citizen-initiated groups that engage in a full range of social and economic problem areas” and (2) “government-initiated advisory and policy-settings” (p. 483). According to Gamble & Weil, these groups facilitate citizen participation in the following ways:

Citizen-initiated groups...are a means through which oppressed groups, which are often marginalized by government structures, can affect positive change in their communities

and provide a vehicle for local, regional and national action on issues of social concern. Government-initiated groups...open public processes to community involvement and allow greater public scrutiny (1995, p.483)

The categorical distinction that Gamble & Weil make between citizen-initiated and government-initiated groups is problematic because citizens and government are co-constituted. That said, groups that work in and for particular communities, regardless of who initiated them, are important players in promoting and facilitating citizen participation. COs would be included in this broad category of groups that work in and for community.

My review of empirical studies conducted on the connection between COs and citizen participation revealed two broad categories: (1) studies in which COs are considered participants in citizen participation; (2) studies in which COs are treated as sites and contexts for citizen participation. Empirical studies that investigate community organizations as participants have been primarily concerned with the extent of influence that community organizations have on public policy. An example of such a study is Gittel's (1980) which investigated the extent to which the participation of community organizations influenced school policy-making in federal, state, and local politics.

The second group of studies investigates community organizations as sites for citizen participation. Studies in this group are primarily concerned with constraints and barriers to citizen participation and the impact of citizen participation on individual participants. The primary unit of analysis is usually individual participants with community organizations being treated merely as sites or contexts for citizen participation. Examples of such studies include Perry & Katula's (2001) study, which investigated the relationship between civic service and

citizenship, and Ohmer & Beck's (2006) examination of citizen participation in neighborhood organizations as it related to residents perceptions of the ability of neighborhood organizations.

My review reveals that the role COs play in promoting and impeding citizen participation has largely been ignored in the discourse on citizen participation. By focusing on COs as social actors whose behavior shapes the nature of citizen participation, this study makes an important contribution to that discourse. A key assumption underlying this study is that the behavior of COs may promote or hinder citizen participation through the legitimization of roles played by participants. Guided by this assumption, this study explores the role played by COs in promoting the active engagement of local residents as owners—that is to say, persons who have the right and responsibility to frame and prioritize issues facing their locale and also to formulate and implement solutions to address these issues. Guided by an assumption that citizen participation is learned behavior, this study explores ways in which COs—through activities they sponsor and/or support—promote or hinder such learning.

### **Outline of Study**

In this chapter, I have discussed the rationale for, and significance of, studying the behavior of COs as social actors. I argue that as social actors, COs legitimate roles played by specific type of actors in activities they sponsor and/or support. This study examines the processes by which COs legitimate roles played by local residents in such activities.

Chapter Three lays out the theoretical framework employed to examine the behavior of COs as social actors. The framework draws upon community theory, organizational theory, social constructivism, and cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). Chapter Three also

includes a critical review of additional empirical studies associated with my topic area and culminates with my presentation of a research problem

Chapter Four describes my research design, which includes a purpose statement, a description of research methods, and my reflections on the research process.

I provide a detailed description of my research site in Chapter Five. This chapter profiles the inner-city neighborhood located in a large US city where I conducted fieldwork for the study.

Chapter Six details the activities of each of the COs that participated in the study. In Chapter Seven, I provide an analysis of the activities described in Chapter Six. Chapter Eight, the concluding chapter, I present key findings of the study, as well as contributions to theory and practice.

## **CHAPTER 2: INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS IN CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

In the previous chapter, I made a case for studying community organizations as structures that legitimate roles performed by participants in activities sponsored and/or supported by community organizations. I have argued that community organizations are social actors whose behavior shapes the nature of participation in activities sponsored and/or supported by community organizations. This chapter builds on the previous by developing a theoretical framework to guide my examination of the role community organizations play in citizen participation. To construct my theoretical framework, I draw from organizational theory, community theory, social constructivism and cultural historical activity theory. Also articulated in this chapter is my research problem—i.e., the void in our understanding of the topic area that this study seeks to address.

### **Constructing A Theoretical Framework For Investigating The Role Of Community Organizations In Citizen Participation**

The theoretical framework employed in this study consists of four main elements: (1) a definition of formal organizations, (2) a definition of community organizations, (3) an approach to understanding the behavior of organizations, and (4) a model for examining actions and activities sponsored by community organizations. I discuss each of these elements next.

#### *A Definition of Formal Organizations*

All organizations are social collectives, but not all social collectives are organizations. In organizational theory, a clear distinction is made between social organizations and formal organizations. Silverman (1971) maintains that social organizations are collectives in which “social life is carried on without a framework of explicit goals or rules which define formal



status structure” (p.8). Formal organizations, on the other hand, are defined as collectives that “have been established for the explicit purpose of achieving certain goals” (Silverman, 1971, p.8). Examples of social organizations include families, friendship groups, and communities, while examples of formal organizations include armies, businesses, and churches. Providing support for Silverman’s definition of a social organization, Blau & Scott (2001) suggest that social organizations emerge whenever people are living together.

The deliberate establishment of a collective for an explicit purpose distinguishes formal organizations from social organizations. Social organizations emerge whenever people are living together and interacting; they are not necessarily established for an explicit purpose. In contrast, formal organizations are deliberately established for an explicit purpose. By this definition, a family is a social organization while a household is a formal organization. Similarly, a community may be considered a social organization and a community organization a formal organization. Accepting this definition, a playgroup established by a group of parents for the purpose of providing their toddlers and themselves with some social activity would qualify as a formal organization because it is established for a specific purpose.

Curiously, informal organizations are not the opposite of formal organizations. Blau & Scott (2001) explain that informal organizations arise in every formal organization as participants respond to opportunities presented and challenges posed to the formal structure in an organization. They write, “The term ‘informal organization’ does not refer to all types of emergent patterns of social life but only to those that evolve within the framework of a formally established organization” (Blau & Scott, 2001, p.208-209).

In the context of this study, I will be using the terms “formal organization” and “organization” interchangeably. To avert any confusion, I will refer to social organizations as social groupings.

### *Components of Organizations*

Historically, the concept of formal organizations is traced back to the concept of “corporate group” put forth by Weber (1947). For Weber,

A social relationship which is either closed or limits the admission of outsiders by rules, will be called a ‘corporate group’ (*Verband*) so far as its order is enforced by the action of specific individuals whose regular function this is, of a chief or ‘head’ (*Leiter*) and usually also an administrative staff...An ‘organization’ (*Betrieb*) is a system of continuous purposive activity of a specified kind. A ‘corporate organization’ (*Betriebsverband*) is an associative social relationship characterized by an administrative staff devoted to such continuous activity” (p.145).

Weber’s conception of a corporate organization consists of three elements—purposive activity, boundaries, and a social relationship. Contemporary theorists, such as Pfeffer (1996), Hatch (1997), Hall (1999) and Scott (1998; 2003) offer definitions of organizations that identify components of organizations. Pfeffer (1996) distinguishes organizations from other social groups as follows:

Organizations, compared to other social groups, are more likely to have a goal of survival and other self-perpetuation, possess more clearly defined and defended boundaries, and often have some formal relationship with the state that recognizes their existence as

distinct social entities, obligated to pay taxes, capable of suing and being sued, and legally sanctioned (p.5).

I identify three key elements of organizations in Pfeffer's definition of an organization: (1) pursuit of specific goals, 2) formal recognition by some government entity, and 3) clear boundaries where inclusion is granted and expulsion is possible. Another contemporary theorist, Hatch (1997) considers a formal organization to be "an interplay of technology, social structure, culture, and physical structure embedded in and contributing to an environment" (p.14). Yet another set of defining elements of an organization are outlined in Hall's (1999) definition of an organization:

An organization is a collectivity with a relatively identifiable boundary, a normative order (rules), ranks of authority (hierarchy), communications systems, and membership coordinating systems (procedures); this collectivity exists on a relatively continuous basis; exists in an environment and engages in activities that are usually related to a set of goals; the activities have outcomes for organizational members; for the organization itself, and for society (pg. 30).

Presenting a slightly different characterization of organizations, Scott (1998; 2003) argues that organizations are composed of five elements—goals, social structure, participants, technology, and environment.

Comparing the definitions and descriptions of organizations offered by Weber, Pfeffer, Hatch, Hall and Scott, I have found that Scott's list of components is the most comprehensive. The five elements he identifies—goals, social structure, participations, technology, and environment—encompass elements identified in the other definitions reviewed here. Goal is a

component common to all the definitions. In Weber's concept of organization, goal is implied in purposive activity. All the definitions, with the exception of Pfeiffer's, include social structure as a component. Social structure encompasses social relationships, normative order, and ranks of authority, all of which are identified as components by Weber and Hall.

Pfeffer, Weber and Hall consider boundaries to be defining elements of organizations. The concept of boundaries is implied in environment. Similarly, organizational outcomes, as presented by Hall, point to the impact of an organization on aspects of the environment. Formal recognition by a government entity, suggested as a defining element by Pfeiffer, is also incorporated in environment. Organizational culture as a component of organizations is unique to Hatch's definition of organizations. I see this component as part of the social structure. I am not convinced that physical structure, as a component of organizations, should be viewed separately from technology (physical objects and artifacts are aspects of technology.) Consequently, I have adopted the definition proposed by Scott in which organizations are comprised of five elements—goal, social structure, participants, technology, and environment. A description of each of these five interrelated elements of an organization follows.

*Social structure.*

Social structure, as a defining element of an organization, refers to the patterned or regularized aspects of the relationships existing among participants in an organization. It consists of formal and informal aspects. Formality, as used here, refers to the extent to which social positions and relationships between them are explicitly specified and defined, independent of persons occupying the position.

Citing Weber, Hatch (1997) informs us that the social structures of organizations consist of three components: hierarchy of authority, division of labor, and formal rules and procedures. The hierarchy of authority refers to the distribution of authority among positions in an organization. Authority is what grants a position holder certain rights, e.g. the right to reward or punish others. The division of labor reflects the distribution or assignment of responsibilities among positions in an organization. The third component, formal rules and procedures, “specify how decisions should be made and how work processes are to be performed” (Hatch, 1997, p.166).

There seems to be some overlap in these three components—hierarchy of authority, division of labor, and rules and procedures—proposed by Hatch (1997). Talking about hierarchy of authority without talking about rules and procedures, or to talking about division of labor without considering the hierarchy of authority would be difficult. This overlap poses a challenge when distinguishing between the components. For example, to describe a hierarchy of authority, I would have to discuss the rights and responsibilities of the formal positions. The division of labor is therefore more or less an expression or reflection of the hierarchy of authority, which makes their physical or conceptual separation difficult if not impossible.

An alternative conception of social structures analytically separates them into three interrelated dimensions—normative, behavioral, and cultural-cognitive (Scott, 2003). The normative structure, which consists of values, norms, and roles, provides prescriptions governing behavior. Norms specify appropriate means for pursuing goals, while values are the criteria used to select the goals to be pursued. In other words, “values define the ends of human conduct,

norms distinguish behavior that is a legitimate means for achieving these ends from behavior that is illegitimate” (Blau & Scott, 2001, p.208).

Roles, a key notion in the social structure of organizations, refer to sets of norms or behavior expectations related to an incumbent position (Bates, 1960; Gross, Mason, & McEachern, 1970, 1970; Morris, 1971). Roles are also defined as a “member’s orientation or conception of the part he is to play in the organization...or the actions of the individual members” (Morris, 1971, p.397). The behavioral structure focuses on actual behavior, particularly on the recurrent behavior (activities, interactions, and sentiments) of a given individual or a class of individuals. The cultural-cognitive structure points to the beliefs and understandings shared by participants about their situation. Scott (2003) contends that “this symbolic order provides a framework—of schemas, models, recipes for action—that help participants to interpret and collectively make sense of their world” (Scott, 2003, p.19). Table 1 lays out the dimensions of a social structure as employed in this study.

**Table 1: The Social Structure of An Organization**

	Dimensions of Social Structure		
	<i>Behavioral</i>	<i>Normative</i>	<i>Cultural Cognitive</i>
<i>Defining Feature of Each Dimension</i>	Actual behavior	Prescriptions for behavior	Recipes for action
<i>Attributes of Each Dimension</i>	Activities Interactions Sentiments	Roles Values Norms	Shared beliefs Taken-for granted understandings
<i>Example of Each Dimension</i>	Who calls meeting to order	Who is expected to call the meeting to order	The taken-for-granted assumptions held about the person who should call the meeting to order—age, position, education, gender, race, etc

### *Participants*

Also referred to as stakeholders, participants are social actors who contribute to the organization and shape the structure of the organization. Customers, clients, owners, exchange

partners, community members, and regulators are among those who are “affected by and have legitimate claim on the organization” (Scott, 2003, p.23) and are therefore considered to be participants of an organization. As social actors, participants are instruments of continuity and reproduction of structure. Actions and activities of participants reproduce or maintain the social structure. Furthermore, participants are instruments of change and producers of novelty and innovation. Without the participants, there is no organization. In any organization, there are different types of participants who have different interests, demands, and contributions.

### *Goals*

Defined as conceptions of desired ends, goals are ends that organizational participants attempt to achieve through their performance of activities. A distinction is made between official goals and operative goals. Official goals are more general while operative goals are more specific. Operative goals “designate the ends sought through actual operating policies and procedures” (Hatch, 1997, p.120). Because organizations have different stakeholders with differing interests, they are likely to have multiple and conflicting goals (Hall, 1999; Hatch, 1997; Scott, 2003).

### *Technology*

Technology refers to the mechanisms used by an organization to transform inputs into outputs (products or services). It is the “the means of achieving something” (Hatch, 1997). The three components of technology are: 1) physical objects and artifacts (e.g. equipment and machinery); 2) activities and processes, i.e. methods of production; and 3) skills and knowledge required to develop and apply machinery and methods in the production of goods and services (Hatch, 1997; Scott, 2003).

### *Environment*

The environment of an organization is the physical, technological, cultural, and social environment in which it is embedded. It simultaneously influences and is influenced by the organization. Hatch (1997) identifies seven sectors making up a complex general environment: culture, political, social, technology, economy, physical, and legal (Hatch, 1997). Other scholars, such as Baum (2002), Hall (1999), and Scott (2003), collapse these sectors into two types of environments with which organizations transact business—a technical environment and an institutional environment. Technical environments, also known as material-resources environments (Scott, 2003), are where organizations obtain sources of inputs for the goods and services they produce and markets for their outputs. Technical environments reward organizations for quality and performance. Outcome controls, such as industry-instituted quality standards for outputs, are employed in technical environments.

In contrast to the technical environment that emphasizes material aspects, the institutional environment emphasizes the symbolic and normative aspects of the environment. From the institutional environment, organizations obtain legitimacy. Institutional environments reward organizations for their use of acceptable structures and practices, not for the quantity and quality of their outputs. Procedural and structural controls are the mechanisms employed in the institutional environments (Scott, 2003). Tax laws for non-profit organizations are an example of procedural and structural controls. Unlike the quality and performance controls, which are primarily concerned with the quantity and quality of material outputs, procedural and structural controls are concerned with the symbolic and normative aspects. Tax laws, as an example of



procedural and structural controls, are not concerned with rewarding organizations for the quality and quantity of outputs but with compliance to official procedures.

Note that technical environments and institutional environments are interrelated and interdependent—material-resource (technical) environment is shaped by the institutional environment and vice versa. Both the technical and institutional environments influence organizations. The influence between organizations and their environments works both ways, as organizations also influence the environment. Making this point, Hall (1999) argues that organizational outcomes impact individuals, communities, and societies.

In light of the foregoing, this study defines formal organizations as collectives that are established for a specific purpose. Organizations are comprised of five interrelated elements—goals, social structure, technology, participants, and environment.

#### *Community Organizations: A Specific Type of Formal Organization*

I begin this section by reviewing typologies of organizations presented in organizational literature. This will be followed by an exploration into how community organizations are defined in community theory and community organizing literature. I conclude the section by articulating the definition of community organization that will be employed in the study.

#### *Community Organizations as a Type of Organization*

In organizational theory literature, there are numerous typologies of organizations based on specific variables and combinations of variables. Some typologies are based on assumptions about the goals or functions of the organization. Two such examples are:

1) Parson's (1960) typology that consists of four types of organizations: production, political, integrative, and pattern-maintenance; and 2) the common classification of

organizations as “for profit” or “non-profit” (Hall, 1999). In addition to goals, there are typologies based on assumptions about participants. Examples of such classifications include Blau & Scott’s (2001) typology based on primary beneficiaries, and Clark & Wilson’s (1961) typology based on incentives. Organizations are also classified by aspects of their social structure, such as level of bureaucratization, compliance, and democratic governance (Hall, 1999). Finally, some typologies are based on assumptions about the interaction between an organization and its environment (Silverman, 1971).

These typologies contribute little to my understanding of community organizations as a specific type of formal organization. Take, for example, the profit/non-profit classification. Community organizations are usually classified as non-profit organizations. However, universities are also included in this category. Although these two types of organizations (community organizations and universities) may share some common aspects, I expect them to differ in important ways that are not highlighted by their non-profit status. I agree with Hall (1999) that these classifications hide more than they reveal.

To assist me in the task of determining what the “community” in “community organization” qualifies, I turn to literature from community theory, community organizing, and development.

### *Organizations in Communities and Community Organizations*

Addressing the question of “what is a community,” community theory literature offers various approaches to understanding the concept of community. Based on the particular perspective, a community may be viewed as a social group (Hiller, 1941), a social system (Bates & Bacon, 1972; Warren, 1978), an interactional field (Kaufman, 1959; Wilkinson,

1970a,1970b,1991), a human ecosystem (Hawley, 1944; Micklin & Sly, 1998; Parks, 1936; Poplin, 1979), and so forth. While these approaches diverge on their conceptualization of community, they have in common —organizations — as an element or component of communities.

Another body of literature concerned with organizations as a component of community is the community organizing and community development literature. In this literature, the focus is on the process of organizing communities for the purpose of community improvement. Organizations in communities are considered important tools or assets in this process. (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001, & Vidal, 2001, & Vidal, 2001; Holmen & Jirstrom, 1994; Kretzman & McKnight, 1993; Ross, 1967).

In both sets of literature (community theory and community organizing), there are frequent references to organizations in communities, yet there is minimal reference made to community organizations. The literature does not explicate the distinction between these two concepts. Notwithstanding this omission, the notion of community action that is central to the interactional approach to community (Kaufman, 1959; Wilkinson, 1970a,1970b,1991) has been helpful to my understanding of community organizations. Community action is discussed in relation to the concept of the community field. A community field consists of an arrangement of actions performed by persons working through various associations or groups to address local concerns (Kaufman, 1959). Action, the unit of study in a community field, consists of three elements: (1) participants, (2) associations or groups through which actions take place, and (3) stages and phases of the action through time.

Associations and groups are vehicles for community action. However, not every action in a community is a community action. Only actions that are oriented to the locality are considered *community* actions. Characteristics of actions that are oriented to the locality include: (1) the principal actors and beneficiaries of the action are local residents, (2) the goals of the action represent interests of local residents, (3) the action is public, and (4) the action expresses a number of interests in local life (Wilkinson, 1970b). Using this concept of locality orientation, the interactional approach to community makes a clear distinction between actions taking place *in* a particular locality, and those taking place *for* the locality (non-community action versus community action).

By applying the concept of locality orientation to organizations, I am able to distinguish between organizations *in* communities and community organizations. Community organizations are organizations in a community that engage primarily in locality-oriented community action. Two characteristics of locality oriented community actions are directly related to two components of organizations—goals and participants. Locality oriented goals represent the interests of local residents. Similarly, local residents are primary actors and/or beneficiaries of locality oriented actions. As noted earlier in my discussion of the components of an organization, actors and beneficiaries are among those who are regarded as participants of an organization. Consequently, I consider the characteristics that qualify “community” in community organizations to be:

(1) Goals representing the interests and concerns of residents of the community in which the organization is located.

(2) Principal participants are residents of the community in which the organization is located.

Like other organizations, community organizations are composed of five components—goals, social structure, technology, participants, and environment. My review of the literature did not reveal any unique characteristics pertaining to the social structure, technology, or environment of community organizations. The two components that are characteristics of “community” in community organization are related to the organization’s goals and the organization’s participants. I discuss these two characteristics of community organizations—goals and participants—next.

### *Goals of Community Organizations*

The literature on communities presents various approaches for considering the goals of community organizations. For example, Zald (1969) suggests the goals of community organizations are oriented to either community service or community change. Representing the social systems approach to community, Bates & Bacon’s (1972) and Warren (1987), suggest that as groups that coordinate and manage conflicts between groups and individuals with differing interests, organizations in communities are coordinative interstitial groups. They propose a typology that groups the organizations in communities by the functions they fulfill in a community, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Functions of Coordinative Interstitial Groups (Bates & Bacon, 1972)**

<i>Coordinative Interstitial Group Type</i>	<i>Community Processes or Functions Performed</i>	<i>Example of organizations</i>
<i>Task oriented or executive</i>	Directs or focuses activities of community	Board of county commissioners, hospital volunteers association
<i>Judicial</i>	Adjudicates disputes	Court systems, grand juries
<i>Legislative</i>	Establishes rules to govern conflict processes	School boards, better business bureaus

<i>Pressure</i>	Focuses energies of change agents on particular organization	Political parties, labor unions, environmental conservation clubs
<i>Buffer</i>	Absorbs or diffuses potentially disruptive conflict directed at specific organization	PTA, company unions, citizen advisory board

According to Bates & Bacon (1972), the purpose of coordinative interstitial groups is to coordinate and manage conflicts between groups with differing interests.

Similarly, representing the “communities-as-social-groups” perspective, Hiller (1941) makes reference to local associations that are concerned with directing community affairs; aesthetic and or recreational aspects of the community; or relief, health, and education of community members.

#### *Participants of Community Organizations*

Much of the literature on community organizing and community-based approaches to development is concerned with the extent to which local residents participate and direct their local development efforts (Chaskin et al., 2001; Kretzman & McKnight, 1993; Ross, 1967). With a focus on community participation, this literature critiques community development efforts that posit community residents as merely beneficiaries. However, the general concern is the role of community residents in community projects, not the role of community organizations, per se.

As defined in this study, participants of organizations include employees, clients, funders, members, etc, etc. For an organization to be considered a community organization, community residents should be primary participants. Since the goal of community organizations already implicates community residents as the primary beneficiaries, I am more concerned with other forms of participation. Given that the topic under study is citizen participation, I have particular interest in the participation of residents in making decisions about problems and solutions in their

communities. Thus, for an organization to be considered a community organization in this study, local residents should be encouraged to participate, as decision-makers.

In the context of this study, community organizations are a specific type of formal organization. Like all formal organizations, community organizations are collectives established for a specific purpose. They are comprised of goals, social structure, technology, participants and environment. The two characteristics distinguishing community organizations from other formal organizations are: locality orientation of goals and community residents as primary decision-makers.

### *The Behavior of Organizations*

. In the preceding sections of this chapter, I defined formal organizations and explained how “community” qualifies organization in “community organization.” Now, I turn to discussing how community organizations (as formal organizations) behave.

### *Analytical Perspectives of Organizations*

Organizational theory seeks to explain the nature and behavior of organizations. Contrary to what the name of this field suggests, organizational theory consists of not one, but numerous and diverse theories of organization. These diverse sets of theories are commonly grouped according to the perspectives that they employ, i.e. the basic assumptions. As Hatch (1997) explains, “in organization theory when a set of basic assumptions underlies multiple theories, the theories come to be known as a distinctive perspective or paradigm” (p.9). Perspectives serve as analytical lenses for the study of organizations. They are used to organize the diverse theories into categories within the field of organizational theory based on their underlying assumptions (Hatch, 1997). From my review of literature on organizational theory, I

have identified at least three ways in which these theories are categorized into perspectives—1) epistemological assumptions, 2) metaphors that capture their functioning, 3) the interaction of the organization with its environment.

Regarding epistemological assumptions, Hatch (1997) suggests four perspectives within organizational theory—classical, modern, symbolic-interpretive, and post-modern. The classical and modern perspectives take an objectivist position, while the symbolic-interpretive and post-modern perspectives take a subjective position. The objectivist position views and treats organizations as an object to be measured and analyzed. In contrast, the subjectivist position views organizations as subjects with meanings to be understood. A second way of categorizing the theories is proposed by Morgan (1986). He employs different metaphors (brain, machine, organism, etc) to represent different ways of thinking about organizations. A third way of categorizing organizational theories emerges, based on assumptions made about the interaction of the organization with the environment. Here, organizational theories are categorized into three perspectives: rational systems, natural systems, and open systems (Baum & Rowley, 2002; Pfeffer, 1982,1997; Scott, 2003). In the section that follows, I briefly discuss these latter three perspectives, because they reflect the historical trajectory of organizational theory and are also the most frequently cited in the literature.

#### *Rational, Natural, and Open Systems Perspectives of Organization Theory*

The rational systems perspective views organizations as a means to an end or as instruments created to attain specific, well-defined goals. The focus of this perspective is on the normative element of the social structure, that is to say, the prescribed behavior of the organization. Rational systems theorists are concerned with organizational goals as criteria for



generating and selecting from alternative courses of action. Participants are considered in so far as they contribute to, or detract from, the attainment of the prescribed goals of the organization. Organizational theories based on this perspective include Taylor's Scientific Management, Fayol's administrative theory, and Weber's theory of bureaucracy.

The natural systems perspective views organizations as ends in themselves. Survival is the overriding goal for organizations from this perspective.. Natural systems analysts are concerned with organizational goals to the extent that they provide a source of identification and motivation for participants (Scott, 2003). Unlike the rational systems perspective, this perspective is concerned with the whole person, not just with the organizationally sanctioned roles they play. Proponents of this perspective stress that organizations are collectives attempting to adapt and survive in their particular environment. Examples of theories employing the natural systems perspective are Mayo's human relations school and Parson's theory of functions (adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency) served by organizations.

Drawing upon the general systems theory, the focus of the open systems perspective is on the interdependent relationship between organizations and their environments. Emphasis is placed on the extent to which organizations are dependent on and penetrated by facets and forces in the wider environment. Organizations are viewed as both systems of internal relationships and as inhabitants of a larger system. Analysts working from this perspective highlight the symbolic aspects of goals. They focus on the significance of the goals for organizational audiences (the public, clients, taxpayers, regulators, and so on). Participants are viewed as meaning-making, socially constructed beings. This perspective is concerned with questions such as, "Who sets organizational goals? and How are organizational goals set"(Scott, 2003, p.296)?

Contingency theory and institutional theory are examples of theories associated with the open systems perspective.

Of the three perspectives, the natural and open systems perspectives are most applicable to my investigation of how community organizations legitimize roles played by actors in activities sponsored and/or supported by community organizations. In combination, these two perspectives provide tools for analyzing the structure of a community organization embedded in a larger system. The natural systems perspective provides a means to analyze the discrepancy between the normative (what should be) and behavioral (what is) elements of the social structure of a community organization. The open systems perspective provides a lens for considering how the environment plays a role in the determination of organizationally sanctioned roles.

Theories of organizations often employ more than one perspective. Recognizing this, Scott (2003) has developed a layered model that combines the perspectives into four categories: (1) closed- rational, (2) open-rational, (3) closed-natural and (4) open-natural. This study draws heavily upon a theory — the institutional theory of organizations—

that falls in the category of open-natural systems perspectives as classified by Scott (2003).

### *Institutional Theory of Organizations*

Institutional theory (sometimes referred to as institutional approaches to organizational theory) recognizes and highlights the social and cultural elements in the environment of an organization (Hatch, 1997; Scott, 1995). This theory assumes that “socially constructed belief and rule systems” shape how organizations are structured and behave (Scott, 2003). Emphasis is

placed on the institutional environment of organizations, which is defined as the meaning system in which an organization is embedded (Palmer & Biggart, 2002).

I have selected the institutional theory over other theories in the open-natural systems perspective, because I consider community organizations to be active entities that are both products and producers of their environment. Moreover, I assume that the environment is not only a source for material resources, but also of cultural elements. As noted by Scott (1995), while other theories (such as resource-dependency and population ecology theories) emphasize that organizations are open systems, only the institutional theory “highlights the importance of the wider social and cultural environment as the ground in which organizations are rooted” (p. xvii).

### *Institutional Environment and Organizations*

Of the five components of an organization, as defined in this study, the environment, specifically the institutional environment, is the primary focus of institutional theory. As previously noted, the institutional environment refers to those entities that reward organizations for conforming to societal values, norms, and beliefs. Hall (1999) and Zucker (1987) note that critics of institutional theory express concern over the theory’s potential for tautological reasoning, i.e., “circular reasoning in which variables are defined in terms of each other, thus making causes and effects obscure and difficult to assess” (Hall, 1999, p.291). Critics also charge institutional theory with inadequately considering issues of power and agency (DiMaggio, 1988). Despite these concerns, the institutional theory of organizations remains the only theory of organizations that highlights the significance of the social and cultural environment in which an organization is embedded. It is also the only one that emphasizes the role of ideational forces,

such as knowledge systems, beliefs, and rules, in the structure and operation of organizations (Hatch, 1997; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1995; Selznick, 1966; Zucker, 1977,1987).

Scholars generally agree that there are two approaches to the institutional theory of organizations (Hall, 1999; Hatch, 1997; Palmer & Biggart, 2002; Zucker, 1987). Zucker (1987) aptly refers to these approaches as “environment as institution” and “organization as institution.”

The first approach, “environment as institution,” investigates why organizations take the forms they do. This approach focuses on the role of the institutional environment in shaping the structure and processes of organizations. Exemplifying this approach, Meyer & Rowan (1977) argue, “the formal structures of many organizations...dramatically reflect the myths of their institutional environments instead of the demands of their work activities” (p.341). Institutional rules, e.g. services, techniques, and policies, are adopted by organizations and function as rationalized myths. The principal assumption underlying this approach is that the basic process is reproduction, i.e., “copying of system-wide...social facts on the organizational level” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p.444).

The second approach to institutional theory, “organization as institution,” sometimes referred to as the neo-institutional perspective, seeks to describe the processes by which organizational structure and processes become institutionalized (Hatch, 1997). The primary concern of this approach is the “ways in which practices and patterns are given values and how interaction patterns and structures are legitimated” (Hall, 1999, p.291). In contrast to the “environment as institution” approach, the “organization as institution” approach assumes that organizational structure and processes are sources of institutionalization (Zucker, 1987). Thus, this approach assumes that generation (not reproduction), i.e., “creation of new cultural elements

at the organizational level” (Zucker, 1987, p.450) is the central process. Reflecting this approach, Zucker (1988) views organizations as social actors that generate new categories that are adopted by other organizations and society at large. Perceived as social actors, Zucker (1988) maintains that organizations play a contributing role to the resolution of social dilemmas, thereby constructing and maintaining social order.

The “organization as institution” approach is considered to be a specific application of Berger & Luckmann’s theory of socially constructed reality (Hall, 1999; Hatch, 1997; Scott, 2001; Zucker, 1977). Berger & Luckmann (1966) claim that the theory of institutionalization seeks to explain causes for the emergence, maintenance, and transmission of social order. Applied to organizations, the “organization as institution” perspective seeks to explain how organizations influence their institutional environments and, at the same time, are influenced by them.

The topic under investigation in this study, the legitimation of roles by community organizations, lends itself to the latter approach that views organizations as institutions. Accordingly, I focus the remainder of my discussion and analysis of institutional theory from the perspective of organizations as institutions.

### *Organizations as Institutionalizing Entities*

Institutions, as defined by Berger & Luckmann (1966), are social constructions that are transmitted to new generations as objective realities. As objective realities, institutions appear as self-evident facts that cannot be altered. An example of an institution is education. Education is a phenomenon that we encounter as an objective reality in our every day lives and yet we cannot recollect how it was constructed. The process of institutionalization represents the dialectical

relationship that human beings, as producers of society, have with the social world (society). Berger & Luckmann (1966) identify three moments in this dialectic process—externalization, objectivation, and internalization. The first moment, externalization, is a process whereby people construct society. People then relate to society, the product of externalization, as something other than a human construction. This process of people experiencing society as an objective reality is the second moment of the dialectic process, objectivation. Experienced as an external and objective force, society produces people thus denoting the third moment in the dialectic process—internalization. In internalization, people become products of society as they incorporate the social world into their consciousness in the course of socialization. In short, the dialectic refers to the process of people creating a social world, experiencing this world as an external reality not created from human activity, and consequently being shaped by a socially constructed institutional world.

Berger & Luckmann (1966), contend “institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors.... The institution posits that actions of type X will be performed by actors of type X” (p.54). An action is considered habitualized when it has been repeated enough to become a pattern which can be reproduced in the future with little effort. Reciprocal typification points to shared conceptions of reality. Institutionalization allows actions to be understood apart from specific individual performance. For example, the institution of law posits the actions to be performed by a court judge. Similarly, in the institution of social service (of which community development is a part), actions to be performed by experts and/or providers are posited as distinguishable from actions to be

performed by clients/recipients. As evidenced in these examples, institutionalization formalizes roles.

To summarize, institutions are socially constructed, taken-for-granted realities that shape human behavior. Central to the concept of institutions is the issue of power. Pointing to this issue of power, Althusser (1971) argues that institutions teach “know-how” in forms that ensure subjection to ruling ideology.

### *Organizations and Institutions*

In everyday conversation, “organizations” and “institutions” are words that are often used interchangeably. Given the centrality of these terms to this study, a clear distinction between these two concepts is imperative. I discuss this next.

There is general consensus in the literature that institutions are analytical and not empirical entities. Making this point, Bates (1960) maintains that unlike empirical entities such as organizations and communities, institutions do not have members or boundaries. Instead, institutions cut across concepts of group, organization, and community to provide stability and meaning to social behavior. Scott (2001) describes institutions as “multifaceted, durable social structures, made up of symbolic elements, social activities and material resources” (p.49). Based on this definition, institutions consist of three elements: (1) symbolic aspects, (2) social interactions, and (3) material resources. Symbolic elements consist of rules, norms, and cultural beliefs. These symbolic elements are produced and reproduced through social interaction. Social interaction occurs in cultures, structures, and routines (Scott, 1995). Cultures, structures and routines are therefore carriers of institutions. The backing of material resources provides

legitimacy for rules, norms, and cultural beliefs (Scott, 2001). Organizations are therefore a form of structure through which social institutions are produced and reproduced.

### *Structural Components of Institutions*

Scott (1995; 2001) asserts that institutions are supported by three structures: culture-cognitive, normative, and regulative structures.

The regulative structure constrains and regularizes behavior through explicit regulatory processes such as rule setting, monitoring, and sanctioning of activities. Symbolic elements of this structure include rules, laws, and sanctions.

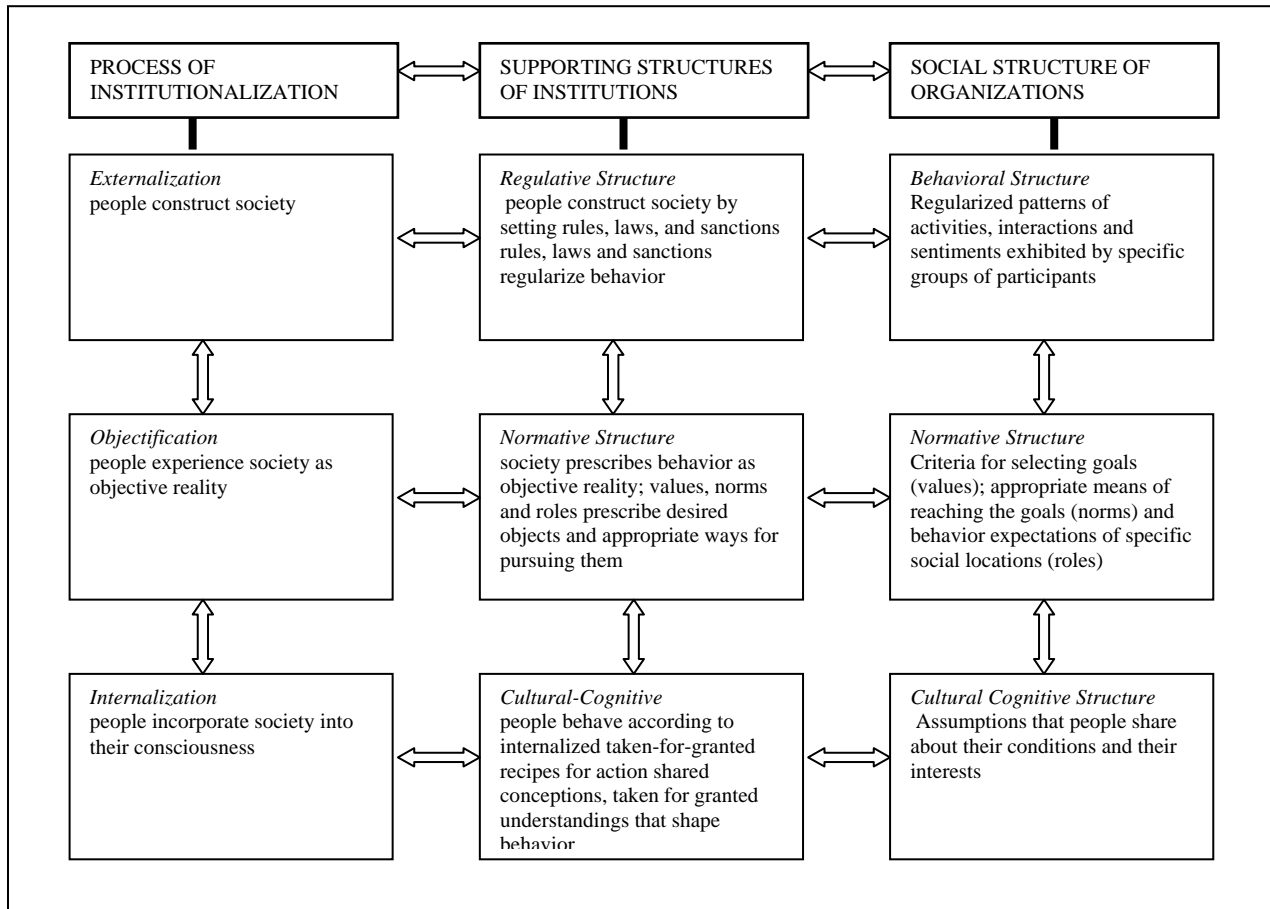
The normative structure defines desired objectives and appropriate ways for pursuing them. Accordingly, norms and values are the symbolic elements of this structure. “Values are conceptions of the preferred or the desirable...norms specify how things should be done” (Scott, 2001, p.55). Indicators of this structure include certification and accreditation.

The cultural-cognitive structure consists of shared conceptions and taken-for granted understandings that constitute the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made. “Cognitive systems control behavior by controlling our conception of what the world is and what kinds of action can be taken by what type of actors” (Scott, 1995, p.xviii). Compliance occurs because practices, routines, and roles are taken for granted as “the way we do things” (Scott, 2001, p.57). For example, the treasurer of an organization is expected to handle financial matters of an organization. This is a taken-for-granted role that one may find in organizations all

over the world. A relationship exists between the three moments of the dialectic process of institutionalization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), the three structures of institutions, and the social structure of organizations (Scott, 2001, 2003). This relationship is depicted in Figure 1



**Figure 1: Institutionalization, Institutions and Social Structure**



### *Institutions, Organizations and Legitimation of Roles*

Institutional theory is instructive to my investigation of how community organizations legitimate the roles played by participants in at least two ways. First, the process of legitimation, which is central to this study, is integral to the process of institutionalization. Second, institutional theory frames the definition of roles in the context of institutions. Following is an elaboration of these two concepts—legitimation and roles.

#### *The process of legitimation*

Among the various approaches to legitimation (Hybels, 1995; Suchman, 1995),

I will focus on the concept, as it is understood from the perspective of the institutional theory of organizations. The historic nature of institutions necessitates explanation and justification (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Hybels, 1995). Explanations and justifications are necessary because the original meanings of passed-on actions are inaccessible as they are transmitted to new generations in the course of institutionalization. What was once self-evident to an individual by means of her recollection is now taken-for-granted as it is transmitted to a new generation. Legitimation refers to this process of explaining and justifying elements of an institution. The process of legitimation is formally defined as:

a process where cultural accounts from a larger social framework in which a social entity is nested are construed to explain and support the existence of that social entity, whether that entity be a group, a structure of inequality, a position of authority, or a social practice (Berger, Ridgeway, Fisek, & Norman, 1998, & Norman, 1998, p.380).

The outcome of the process of legitimation is legitimacy. As put forth by Suchman (1995), “legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that [an entity and its actions] ... are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions” (p.574). Legitimation contributes to the production and reproduction of structure in concrete situations of action and is a mechanism for mediating between structure and agency. Furthermore, legitimation creates pressure for changing or maintaining social order (Walker, Rogers, & Zelditch, 2002, 2002; Zelditch, 2001). The legitimation process is well illustrated in the following excerpt:

...in the early 1960s, several high-prestige colleges abandoned the practice of grading, arguing that grading simply interfered with deep understanding of material and provided

incentives for memorization and cramming, neither of which furthered the goals of education. However, graduate schools and professional programs refused to accept written evaluations of student work in lieu of grades; as students had increasing difficulties entering top graduate and professional programs, grading was reinstated” (Zucker, 1988).

In this excerpt, the abandonment of certain grading practices by the colleges, as well as the refusal by graduate schools to admit students with written evaluations are examples of organizations legitimating (and delegitimizing) a practice. The colleges delegitimized the grading practice on the basis of norms and values. In contrast, graduate schools justified the existence of a particular practice by enforcing admission criteria that required such grades.

#### *Components of the legitimation process*

The legitimation process consists of cognitive and normative aspects. Berger & Luckmann (1966) maintain that legitimation explains institutional order by assigning cognitive validity (knowledge) to institutionalized patterns and also justifies the institutional order by giving normative dignity (values) to its practical imperatives. Put differently, “legitimation not only tells an individual why he should perform one action and not another; it also tells him why things are what they are...” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.94). The following excerpt demonstrates the cognitive and normative elements of the legitimation process:

A kinship structure is not legitimated merely by the ethics of its particular incest taboos. There must first be “knowledge” of the roles that define both “right” and “wrong” actions within the structure. The individual, say, may not marry within his clan. But he must first “know” himself as a member of this clan. This knowledge comes to him through a tradition that

“explains” what clans are in general and what his clan is in particular (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

I may extend this example to community organizations, the subjects of my study. Take for instance, the social structure of a community organization. An individual must recognize him/herself as a member and incumbent of a position (cognitive element). The position comes with certain behavior expectations (normative element).

### *Mechanisms of legitimation*

The literature suggests that mechanisms of legitimacy differ for each of the structures that support institutions (regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive) (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2001; Zucker, 1987). Corresponding processes and mechanisms of legitimation are employed by each structure. Based on these three structures of institutions, the processes of legitimation form a continuum from conscious and legally enforced sanctions to the unconscious (taken-for-granted) beliefs (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2001).

For the regulative structure, the basis of legitimacy is conformity to rules, particularly legally sanctioned rules. Thus, an entity or practice is legitimate when it follows stated rules, laws, or sanctions. Coercive pressures are the primary mechanism for legitimation employed by this structure. Coercive pressures stem from “formal and informal pressures exerted on [entities<sup>1</sup>] by other [entities] upon which they are dependent and by cultural expectations in the society” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). These pressures may be encountered in the form of force, persuasion, etc., etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Writing from the “environment as institution” perspective, DiMaggio & Powell focus on organizations. I have replaced the word “organizations” with “entities” to reflect a broader view of institutional forces.

In the normative structure, legitimation is predicated on morals. Here, moral beliefs and internalized obligations are the primary stabilizing influences of institutions. Normative processes are the mechanics for legitimation. Social facts are transmitted through normative processes. Professional training is an example of a normative process (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2001; Zucker, 1987). The following Socrates' dialogue in *The Euthyphro* might be instructive here:

*Socrates:* What are the subjects of difference that cause hatred and anger? Let us look at it this way. If you and I were to differ about numbers as to which is the greater, would this difference make us enemies and angry with each other, or would we proceed to count and soon resolve our difference about this?

*Euthyphro:* We would certainly do so.

*Socrates:* Again, if we differed about the larger and the smaller, we would turn to measurement and soon cease to differ.

*Euthyphro:* That is so.

*Socrates:* And about the heavier and the lighter, we would resort to weighing and be reconciled.

*Euthyphro:* Of course.

*Socrates:* What subject of difference would make us angry and hostile to each other if we were unable to come to a decision? Perhaps you do not have an answer ready, but examine as I tell you whether these subjects are the just and the unjust, the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the bad. Are these not the subjects of difference about which,

when we are unable to come to a satisfactory decision, you and I and other men become hostile to each other whenever we do? (Plato, 1981, p.11)

For the cultural-cognitive structure, legitimacy comes from the adoption of a common frame of reference. Hence, “the cultural-cognitive mode is the ‘deepest’ level because it rests on preconscious, taken-for-granted understandings” (Scott, 2001, p.61). Primary mechanisms for legitimation are mimetic processes. Mimetic processes, defined as modeling, result from uncertainty (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). When entities are unsure about how to behave, they imitate other entities that are perceived as being more successful.

#### *Definition of Roles*

From the standpoint of institutional theory, roles are manifestations of institutions. Thus, roles, like organizations, are carriers of institutions. Roles make it possible for institutions to exist in people’s experience of daily living, claim Berger & Luckmann (1966). They write,

...on the one hand, the institutional order is real only insofar as it is realized in performed roles and that, on the other hand, roles are representative of an institutional order that defines their character (including their appendages of knowledge) and from which they derive their objective sense (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.78-79).

As an example, the institution of education is realized through the performance of roles such as teacher and student. Roles are sets of norms (behavior expectations), which relate to the behavior of a position incumbent in certain kinds of situations. A position is a set of roles that occurs in a social space. (Bates, 1960; Gross et al., 1970). For example, an individual may play the role of a mother in the social position of an elementary school teacher. The distinction between roles and positions is relational, not categorical. It is through the performance of roles

that we perpetuate existing institutions and generate new institutional patterns. Because they are prescriptions for behavior, roles are a central component of the normative element of an organization's social structure.

Following this theoretical framework, this study posits that the roles played by specific types of actors in activities sponsored and/or supported by community organizations are socially constructed. As such, these roles are affirmed and/or challenged through activities sponsored and/or supported by community organizations.

### *Organizations, Institutions, and Activities*

This study is concerned with the behavior of organizations as entities that shape citizen participation of local residents. Organizational theory and social constructivism provide tools for analyzing actors and their goals. However, these theories do not provide adequate tools for investigating how the actors go about achieving these goals. To this end, cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) makes an important contribution to this study, in that it provides tools to analyze the actions and activities of collective and individual actors as they pursue their goals.

### *Overview of CHAT*

CHAT posits that through historically and culturally situated activity, human beings transform the world, and in the process, they themselves are transformed (Davydov, 1999; Engestrom, 1999a; Leont'ev, 1977; Nikiforov, 1990). Activity is:

... a specific form of the societal existence of humans consisting of purposeful changing of natural and social reality. In contrast to the laws of nature, societal laws manifest themselves only through human activity that constructs new forms and features of reality, thus turning the initial material into products. Any activity carried out by a subject

includes goals, means, the process of molding the object, and the results. In fulfilling the activity, the subjects also change and develop themselves (Davydov, 1999, p.39)

Activity is defined as goal-directed activeness that contains elements of planning, prediction of possible consequences, and a logical framework (Nikiforov, 1990). The goal of an activity is the intended outcome or result of the activity. It is important to note that in any activity, there are many possible outcomes, some of which are unintended.

As framed in CHAT, activity performs two major functions:(1) Activity affects and transforms the material and social environment (externalization), and consequently, it is a means for meeting material and social needs of individuals. (2) Activity is a means of expressing and developing individual knowledge, skills, and abilities (internalization) (Leont'ev, 1977; Nikiforov, 1990).

CHAT assumes learning occurs as people engage in activities; in other words, learning and doing occur together, not separately (Engestrom, 1987). Referring to learning as an activity, Engestrom (1987) writes, “learning activity is mastery of expansion from actions to a new activity...learning activity is an activity-producing activity” (p. 125). So defined, learning (a relatively stable change in behavior or behavioral potential (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2005)) is an outcome of activity. Activities are the processes in and under which learning occurs. Thus, learning occurs in goal-directed activeness in which actors (subjects of learning) create new activities. It follows that learning can be observed through an examination of activities. Applied to this study, I assume that individuals learn as they participate in activities sponsored and/or supported by the organization.



Take the example of local residents organizing to put up a stop sign at a busy road intersection in their neighborhood. The residents believe that erecting a stop sign at this intersection will enhance the safety of the neighborhood. A concern for safety motivates this activity. Participants in this activity or action may learn how to file a petition, how to organize a meeting, how to negotiate with local government and so forth. This example illustrates the simultaneous occurrence of participation and learning in activity. Engagement in the activity (organizing to put up a stop sign) is participation. New activities (such as filing a petition) that participants learn from the activity are outcomes of the activity. Thus, in sponsoring and supporting community-building efforts, community organizations shape the participation (i.e. actions/activities) and learning (i.e. outcome of activities) of local residents. The activities sponsored and supported by the organizations may support and simultaneously impede certain forms of learning. Participation in activities does not always result in learning.

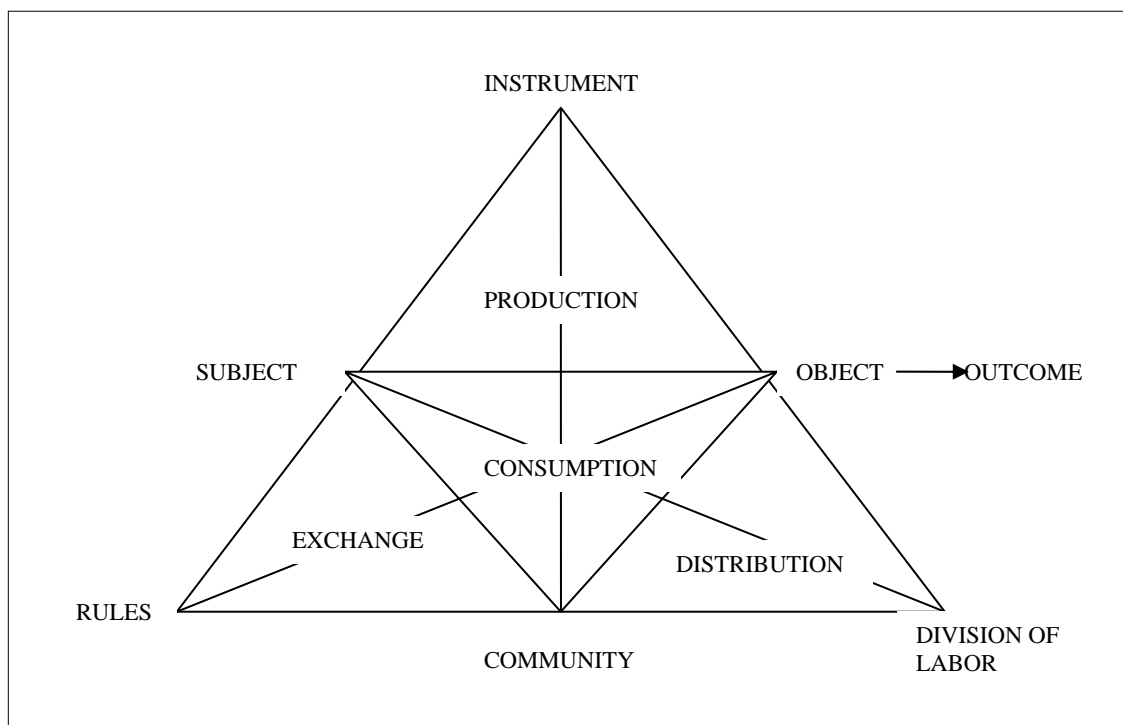
CHAT “approaches human cognition and behavior as embedded in collectively organized, artifact-mediated activity systems” (Engestrom, 1999a). Change and development result from contradictions within and between activity systems. These contradictions are defined as “historically accumulating structural tensions” (Engestrom, 2001, p.137).

In the third generation of CHAT as conceptualized by Engestrom, (Davydov, 1999; Engestrom, 1987,1999a,2001), activity systems consist of seven elements: subject, instruments, object, rules, community of practice, division of labor and outcome (see Figure 1). Activities are oriented to and directed by objects.

As Engestrom (1987) explains, an object is an entity that meets a human need. The object is the reality that the activity aims to transform in order to reach its goal (intended

outcome). The object gives shape and direction to an activity and distinguishes it from other activities. The object of the activity is the issue that is being acted upon, the reality to be transformed. I refer back to my earlier example of local residents trying to make their streets safer. In this activity, the object is the street traffic (the reality to be transformed), with an expected outcome being safer streets. Learning would also be an outcome, albeit an unintended outcome.

**Figure 2: The Structure of Human Activity (Engestrom, 1987)**



The subject refers to the actor whose actions are the focus of analysis. These subjects of activities and actions may be collectives or individuals. Continuing with the street safety example, the subjects may be the groups and individuals doing the organizing. They would be the people setting up meetings, contacting city officials, and so on. The interaction between the subject and object is mediated by instruments (tools and signs). Instruments that may be used in

organizing for the erection of a stop sign may include a petition to be signed by all residents, and communication technology (e.g. phone, computer).

The element labeled “community” in Engestrom’s structure of human activity “is the collection of individuals or groups who are all concerned with the same object” (Daniels, 2004). In the street safety activity illustration, the community of practice might include city offices, neighborhood schools, and motorists, in addition to neighborhood residents. The distribution of tasks and the relationship between the actors define the division of labor. Rules refer to principles that regulate action and interaction among actors (Daniels, 2004). The rules and division of labor would guide the assignment of tasks and roles in organizing for the erection of a stop sign--who does what, who grants permission, etc., etc.

Activity systems are comprised of three levels: activity, action, and operations. Activities are always collective and driven by a motives, which are socially constructed objectives (Swai, 2006). In the example of street safety, the motive is safety. This motive is guided by an understanding shared by the residents that cars going at high speeds on a residential street compromises safety on their streets. To improve the safety of the streets, the residents organize to erect a stop sign at a busy street intersection.

In this example, organizing to put up a stop sign is an action. Another action within this example might be when the organizers call for a community meeting to discuss action steps, or getting residents to sign a petition. Actions are defined as goal-directed processes. Whereas activities are directed by motives, actions are directed by goals. Action is the second level of an activity system, with activity being the first. Activities are achieved through a series of actions. Activities evolve through long, historical cycles in which beginnings and termination are

difficult to determinate (like safety). In contrast, actions have relatively short cycles and clear points of beginnings and endings (e.g. putting up a stop sign). Actions may be individual in nature; however, they are meaningful only in the context of a collective activity system.

Operations are the “methods with which the action is accomplished” (Engestrom, 1987, p.67). Tools and artifacts that mediate between subject and object in actions and activities are crystallized operations. In the erecting of a stop-sign activity, which I have been using as an illustration, an example of an operation might be a signed petition.

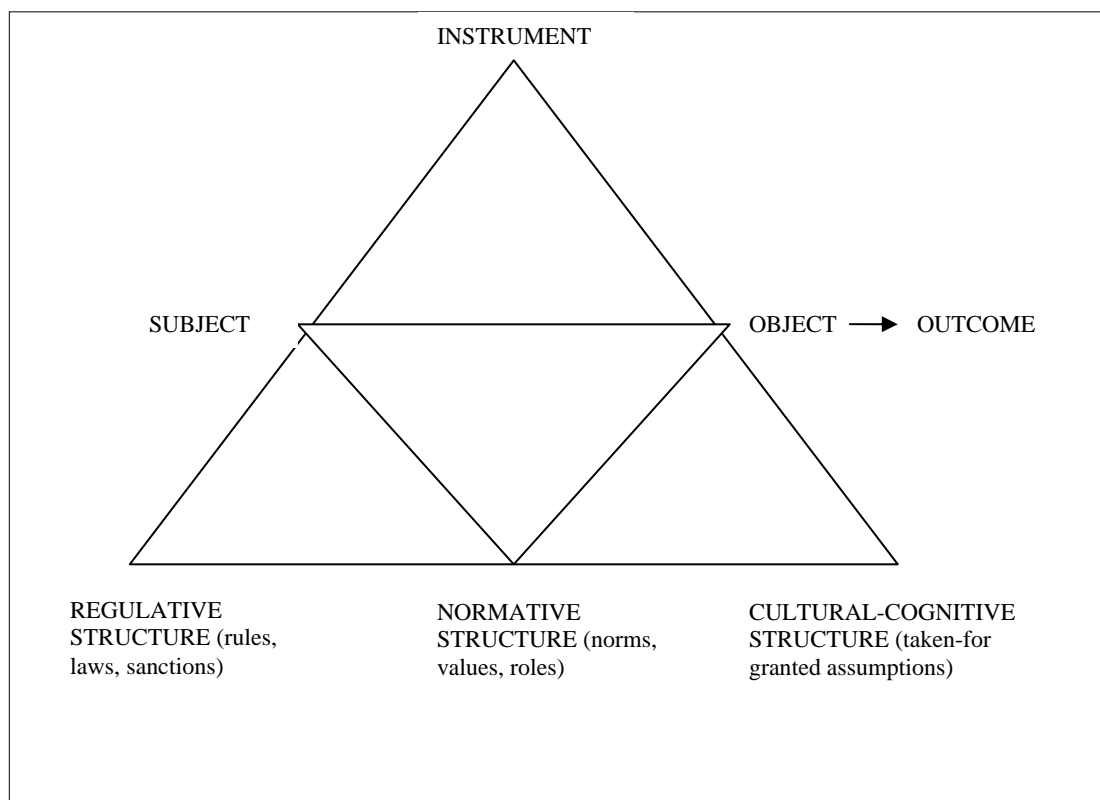
#### *A Modification Structure of Human Activity*

In Engestrom’s “Structure of Human Activity” (Figure 1), the three elements at the base of the structure—rules, community, and division of labor—depict the cultural and historical context that ground the activity. I propose that cultural and historical context is synonymous with institutional environment of organizations. Institutions are manifestations of cultural and historical processes that contextualize human activity. It is through human activity that the dialectic moments of the process of institutional (externalization, objectivation, and internalization) occur.

The institutional environment consists of three analytical components: regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive structures. The rules that contextualize human activity are incorporated in the regulative structure of institutions. Division of labor, another element at the base of structure of human activity, is part of the normative structure of institutions. Where does community, defined as groups and individuals concerned with the same objective, belong in the institutional environment? I perceive this element to be incorporated in all three structures of an institution. All three structures—regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive—are products and

producers of community of practice. Moreover, I have found it difficult to understand who would be included in “community,” as it is a poorly defined concept in the original model of an activity system. Given the centrality of the concept of community in this study, including it in the structure of activity only creates confusion. Based on my argument that historical cultural processes are manifested in institutions, I have integrated the two theories—CHAT and the institutional theory of organizations—to construct a modified structure of human activity that I call “Structure of Human Activity in Organizations ” (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Modified Structure of Human Activity**



In the modified structure of human activity in organizations, I have removed the sub-triangles representing production, consumption, exchange and distribution that are part of Engeström’s original structure. I am convinced by Youn and Baptiste (forthcoming) argument that Engeström’s separation of the four functions of activity—production, consumption,

exchange and distribution—“obscures the co-constitutive character” of the four and de-emphasizes the “organic wholeness and mutual interactions” of the functions.

This structure of human activity in organizations I have constructed provides a framework for investigating the relationship between the behavior of community organizations and the behavior of participants in the activities of community organizations. This structure will aid in observing activities in organizational contexts as they simultaneously transforms object as well as subjects.

#### *Summary of Theoretical Framework*

I conclude this section by summarizing the theoretical framework that guides my investigation into the processes by which community organizations legitimize roles played by participants in community activities. I consider formal organizations to be collectives consisting of five interrelated and interdependent components: goals, participants, social structure, technologies, and environment. Community organizations are a specific type of formal organization with two defining characteristics: (1) Their goals are oriented to a locality, and (2) Local residents are encouraged to be principal decision makers.

Drawing from the open systems perspective of organizations, I assume the existence of a reciprocal relationship between an organization and its environment. The environment of an organization consists of two aspects—a technical environment and an institutional environment. The technical environment is the source of inputs and the market for outputs of goods and services produced by organizations. The institutional environment consists of rules, norms, and common beliefs that simultaneously constrain and enable the behavior of

individuals and collectives. This topic under study necessitates privileging the institutional environment.

Guided by the institutional theory of organizations and the theory of social construction, this study defines institutions as socially constructed, taken-for-granted realities that we encounter in our every day lives as they are manifested through social entities such as organizations and roles. Legitimation is the process of explaining and justifying the existence of institutional elements, such as roles. Roles are sets of norms (behavior expectations). Mechanisms of legitimation include coercive pressures, normative, and mimetic processes.

Employing the framework of cultural historical activity theory, this study assumes community organizations play a role in shaping what people learn as they participate in the activities of community organizations. My review of empirical literature (below) has been guided by this set of assumptions.

### **Review Of Empirical Literature**

#### *Process*

I conducted searches for empirical studies on at least five electronic databases—Dissertation Abstracts, CSA Illumina, PAIS, ProQuest, and Web of Science. The social sciences collection of databases in the CSA Illumina includes databases such as ERIC, Social Services Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, Sociology, and World Wide Political Science. In addition to database searches, I browsed through prominent journals in the fields of Community Development/Community Practice and Organizational Theory and Behavior. I used combinations of the following search-terms to conduct searches: institutional theory, community organization, community organization and processes, legitimation and organization, legitimation

and roles, organization and members, community organization and participants, community organization and learning, and community organization and participation.

As is true in the theoretical literature, there is no general agreement in empirical literature on the definition of a community organization. For the purposes of conducting my literature search and review, I included any group in a community whose purpose was to improve some aspect of that community. Thus, synonyms for community organization used in this search included, among others: neighborhood organizations or associations, community-based organizations, community service organizations, community groups, and social action groups. The presentation of my review is divided into four parts. The first part is a discussion of studies for which community organizations are units of analysis. These studies may contribute to the methodological aspects of this study. In the second part of this section, I review studies that empirically examine the process of legitimation. The third group I review consists of studies that examine the legitimation of roles in activities sponsored and/or supported by community organizations. This study assumes that community organizations may promote or inhibit citizen participation. Hence, the fourth group of studies reviewed investigates the relationship between community organizations and citizen participation.

#### *Community Organizations as Units of Analysis*

I identify three groups of studies among those for which community organizations are the units of analysis. One group of studies provide descriptive accounts of the history of a particular organization (Kempers, 1998; Medoff & Skylar, 1994; Padgett, 2002; Ross & Coleman, 2000). The second group consists of studies that investigate factors contributing to the formation, structure, and activities of community organizations (Cohn, Carroll, & Force, 2003, 2003, 2003;



Herman & Renz, 2000; Hunter & Staggenborg, 1988; Kilburn & Maume, 2000). The concern in the third group of studies is how community organizations relate to or interact with other organizations in their environment (Chaskin, 2003; Daley & Marsiglia, 2000; Daly & Ngau, 1994; Eilbert, 2003; Kaufmann, 2001; Knickmeyer, Hopkins, & Meyer, 2003, 2003, 2003; Sullivan, 2004). My search did not yield any studies that specifically examined the relationship between the social structure of community organizations and the roles played by their members.

### *Legitimation and Organizations*

Organizational scholars generally focus their attention on how the institutional environment legitimizes organizations. The concern is to understand how organizations gain and maintain legitimacy (Finet, 1998; Suchman, 1995). There has also been some attention paid to how the search for legitimacy influences the activities of an organization. For instance, Milne & Pattern (2002) researched the effects of information disclosure (a behavior undertaken by an organization to gain legitimacy) on investors. By definition, organizational legitimacy assumes that the environment is the source of legitimacy (Finet, 1998). Consequently, researchers look at various legitimating forces in the environment such as the media (Adamache, 1996) and other organizations (Tafe, 2001). In studies in which the organization is the object of legitimation, the source of legitimation is the environment. On the other hand, organizational characteristics, such as policies, tend to be the sources of legitimation in studies for which the organization is not the object of legitimation (Hoff, 1999; MacGillivray, 2001; Stompler & Martin, 1994). This is exemplified in a study that explored how the structure of “little sister” organizations—i.e., women’s organizations spawned by fraternities—institutionalize gender inequality by fostering “the belief that women have fewer rights and less value than do men and that women’s worth

depends on their attractiveness to, service to, and acceptance by men” (Stombler & Martin, 1994, p.186).

More specific to community organizations, researchers have examined how community organizations achieve legitimacy (Lune & Martinez, 1999) and the role of organizational legitimacy in the interaction between community organizations and their stakeholders (Atangana-Abe, 2005; Milofsky, 1988; Moon, 2004). My search yielded only two studies in which community organizations are studied as legitimating entities. One study, conducted by Silver (2001), found that as recipients of donations, community organizations legitimize funding organizations by reinforcing funders’ images of themselves as good citizens. The second study, based on research by Tannock (1999), found that discursive practices of a community-based organization reinforce gender and racial inequalities that the organization was explicitly trying to challenge. Both studies illustrate that community organizations are social actors that influence structures in the broader society.

#### *Community Organizations, Legitimation and Roles*

I was unable to find any empirical studies with keywords matching all three concepts central to this study—“community organization,” “legitimation,” and “roles.” However, there are numerous studies that have investigated the impact of citizen participation on societal roles of participants, particularly gender roles (Huang, 2001; Jain, 1982; Ryan & English, 2004; Tickamyer & Kusujarti, 2003; Vromen, 2003). These studies generally find that participation in community organizations and projects results in a change in the roles played by participants. This is well illustrated by Huang’s (2001) case study of a community development project in Taiwan. Findings from this research showed that women transcend the prescribed sex roles of

mothers, home-workers, and volunteers through involvement in a community development project. While such studies address the issue of roles, they are mainly concerned with effects of community participation on the roles of participants and not on ways in which these roles are legitimized.

In other studies, the focus is on the roles and positions that members of community organizations play within the organization. Such studies examine issues surrounding leadership and decision-making in community settings (Bridger, 1992; Gaventa, 1980; Neme, 1997). Ultimately, this group of studies explores the question of power in a community setting. Related to the issue of power, there has been increasing interest among researchers about the participation of persons from groups that are marginalized on the basis of gender, class, religion, etc. etc.(Jain, 1986; Plaat & Barrett, 2005; Rew & Rew, 2003). The central concern of these studies is with providing equal access to positions of power. The legitimation of roles of community members is not a focus.

#### *Citizen Participation and Learning in Community Activities*

Judging from empirical literature that investigates citizen participation, the definition of citizen participation varies. For some studies, citizen participation is a synonym for any form of community participation (Boyce, 2001; Nelson, Pancer, Hayward, & Kelly, 2004, & Kelly, 2004; Ohmer & Beck, 2006), while other studies consider citizen participation to be political participation, a specific type of community participation (Dalton, 2003; Lenk, Toomey, Wagenaar, Bosma, & Vessey, 2002, Bosma, & Vessey, 2002; Stephan, 2005).

Many of the studies investigating citizen participation in community activities focus on individual residents as subjects in community activities. Among these are studies that investigate

the motivations and individual characteristics that enable or hinder participation in activities (Peterson, Lowe, Aquilino, & Schneider, 2005, & Schneider, 2005; Zeldin, 2004). Studies for which organization in communities are the subject generally investigate the organizations' influence on the participation of members (Metzger, Alexander, & Weiner, 2005, 2005), or the impact that the participation of organizations had on federal or state policies (Brooks, 2005; Lenk et al., 2002; Stephan, 2005).

A few studies examine residents as objects (beneficiaries or victims) of community activities. Ohmer & Beck's (2006) study is a good illustration of this group of studies. Their study examined the relationship between citizen participation in neighborhood organizations and residents' perception of their ability to work with their neighbors to address neighborhood issues. Findings from the study suggest that participation enhances the perception of residents' ability to work collectively to address their neighborhood issues.

Numerous studies focus on the role played by artifacts in influencing the perceptions and attitudes of residents towards their community. One such study, conducted by Groff et al. (2005), examined how crime statistics maps influenced residents' perception and fear of crime and resulting participation in community activities. In their study, Seagert & Winkel (2004), found that the prevalence of crime led to citizens withdrawing from community activities.

My literature search did not yield any studies that systematically examined the behavior of organizations as a factor that shapes citizen participation.

### **Conclusion: Framing the Problem**

From reviewing theoretical literature, I have gained analytical tools necessary for me to explore the issue of how community organizations legitimize roles played by their members.

These analytical tools guide how I frame my research purpose and design in the chapter that follows.

Using these tools to review empirical studies, what is apparent to me is that the issue of how community organizations legitimize roles played by their members has received minimal attention. Much attention has been focused on the behavior of individuals in community organizations, but not on the behavior of the community organization, qua organization. In general, many of the studies focus on community organizations as a dependent or outcome variable (i.e. an object)—emphasizing how it is affected by its environments and the activity of its members. This study focuses on a community organization as an independent variable (i.e., an actor)—emphasizing how its behavior shapes the roles played by participants.

Based on existing research, we know that elements in the environment influence community organizations. However, with respect to community organizations, much of this research has focused on the technical environment upon which community organizations depend for funding and other material resources. Few studies investigate the nature of the interaction between community organizations and their institutional environment. Furthermore, the behavior of organizations, as they respond to elements of both the technical and institutional environment, remains under theorized.

While there are many studies that have investigated the topic of community participation, we have limited knowledge about the factors that structure the types of participation undertaken by particular groups of people. Participants of community organizations (both local residents and non-residents), play certain roles in activities supported and sponsored by community organizations. Community organizations shape participation in the way they distribute and

legitimize roles in these activities. This matter (how community organizations shape the participation by the way it distributes and legitimizes roles of participants) has received very little attention in the literature. Furthermore, there is has been limited attention given to how community organizations, in the way they distribute and legitimize roles, shape what participants learn. In an attempt to fill some of this void, this study investigates how the structural behavior of community organizations shapes the participation of residents in activities they (the COs) sponsor and/or support.

### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN**

This chapter describes my research design. It is divided into three sections. In section one, I provide a purpose statement that details my substantive and analytic interests (i.e., what I wish to study, along with the ethical and epistemic principles guiding how the study is conducted). In section two, I describe the strategies I have employed in conducting the research. This section includes details of how I framed the study, collected, and analyzed data. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of my reflections on the research process and products. This constitutes the third section.

#### **Purpose Statement**

My study examines how community organizations—through activities they sponsor and/or support—shape participation of residents as citizens. Learning, regarded as a procesural outcome of such participation (Youn & Baptiste, forthcoming) is also examined. Applying ideas from organizational studies ((Scott, 2003)) and community theory ((Kaufman, 1959; Wilkinson, 1991)), I define COs as formal organizations that meet two criteria: (1) their primary goals are oriented towards the interests of the community in which they are located, and (2) local residents are encouraged to be primary participants (i.e. decision-makers). In examining the behavior of community organizations, I focus on their social structure. Relying heavily on the institutional approach to organizational behavior (Scott, 2003), I divide social structure into three analytic components—behavioral, normative, and cultural-cognitive. The behavioral component points to the activities and interactions conducted by participants. The normative component consists of norms, values, and roles that prescribe the behavior of participants in activities. The cultural-

cognitive component refers to the taken-for granted beliefs and understandings shared by participants.

A key assumption of the institutional approach to organizational behavior is that COs, as formal organizations, interact with their environment. In this two-way interaction, the organizations influence, and are simultaneously influenced by, their environment. Given my allegiance to the institutional perspective on organizational behavior, my focus is (not surprisingly) on the institutional environment of the organization. With Scott (2001) I maintain that the social structure of an organization interacts with the regulative (rules, laws, sanctions), normative (norms, roles), and cultural-cognitive (taken-for granted beliefs) structures of the institutional environment. These structures represent the cultural and historical contexts in and under which particular organizationally sponsored activities occur.

I employ a modified version of Engeström's (1987) structure of human activity to help me systematically observe and analyze residents' participation and learning. Details of the modified model are provided in chapter 3. In brief, the elements of my modified structure of human activity are: subject (the actor), object (that which is being acted upon), instrument (mediating tools and signs), the three structures of legitimation discussed above (regulative, normative, & cultural-cognitive structure), and the outcomes of the activity. Learning is regarded as one possible (though not inevitable) outcome of the activities I analyze.

My interest in examining the social structure of COs leads me to take an ethnographic approach in this study. As a research approach, ethnography provides tools that allow me to systematically observe and interpret cultural processes—of which social structure is a major component. With Wolcott (1999), I consider the purpose of ethnography to be:



...to describe what the people in the same particular place or status ordinarily do, and the meanings they ascribe to what they do, under ordinary or particular circumstances, presenting that description in a manner that draws attention to regularities that implicate cultural process (p. 68).

However, this study employs critical ethnography, a specific type of ethnography.

Thomas (1993), describes critical ethnography as “conventional ethnography with a political purpose” (pg. 4). Critical ethnography appeals to me because I want to do more than describe cultural processes; I want to contribute to changing cultural processes that I consider oppressive to certain groups. “Critical ethnographers use their work,” Thomas (1993) writes, “to aid emancipatory goals or to negate the repressive influences that lead to unnecessary social domination of all groups” (p.4)<sup>2</sup>. This study is concerned with the repressive aspects of community development practice as manifested in the processes by which community organizations promote and impede citizen participation.

I see the residents of a community as the “owners” of the community, as they are the people who claim it as home, and who reap the consequences (good or bad) of whatever occurs within its boundaries. Unfortunately, some behaviors of COs limit and/or devalue the participation of local residents (or certain groups of residents). Such behaviors include those that limit the role of residents to helpers (as opposed to owners) and beneficiaries (as opposed to agents) of positive community change. Wittingly or unwittingly, such behaviors support the construction of local people as lacking the knowledge and capacity to take care of their

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<sup>2</sup> By employing critical ethnography, I distance myself from anthropological and ethnographic traditions that have perpetuated regimes of colonialism, oppression, exploitation, and misrepresentation of non-Western peoples and other marginalized groups (Minh-ha, 1989).

community. Furthermore, such behaviors carry with them the implication that residents of struggling communities are the primary cause for the problems that plague their communities (i.e., the residents are the problem). If local residents are the cause of problem, it follows that viable solutions must come from more powerful, better-resourced and more knowledgeable entities *outside* the community. Another related assumption associated with the blaming-the-victim perspective is that the difficulties facing struggling communities are self-induced—divorced from structural inequalities in the wider society. Framed by such individualistic assumptions, processes shaping community-building activities can be oppressive even while encouraging the participation of local people.

Communities are not homogenous entities. In any community, we can expect to find structures of inequality that distribute power and privilege on the basis of race, gender, class, physical ability, age, and so forth. Many of these structural inequalities mirror inequalities that exist in the broader society. Through their behavior, COs have the capacity to challenge or reproduce these structures of inequality. COs can challenge inequalities by promoting the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable residents to engage as citizens instead of mere clients.

This study posits that COs are contexts for facilitating, and/or vehicles for promoting the participation of local residents as citizens in community-building efforts. Participating as citizens, residents behave as owners who are responsible for the health and well-being of their locality. I consider citizen participation to be an activity. As such, learning for citizen participation is a possible outcome of this activity. In promoting or inhibiting citizen participation, COs also promote or inhibit learning for citizen participation.

The significance of the study is discussed in the concluding chapter.

### *Research Questions*

In my original proposal for this study, the purpose was to explore how the social structures of COs promotes and/or inhibits citizen participation of local residents and learning for citizen participation. However, while writing up my findings, I found myself repeating the same information for the two questions. I concluded that the factors that promote citizenship participation are the same factors that promote learning for citizen participation. Learning is an outcome of participation in community-building activities. For example, a resident that participates in writing a grant for a youth development program in his/her neighborhood acquires the skills and attitudes necessary to perform this activity. In promoting or inhibiting citizen participation, community organizations are facilitating and mediating participants' learning. In light of this, I refined the research question of the study to reflect this finding. Instead of asking: how does the social structure of COs promote and/or inhibit citizen participation AND learning in activities; I now asked: *How do COs—through activities they sponsor and/or support—shape participation of community residents as citizens?* Secondary research questions were:

- a. What activities are sponsored or supported by the organization? Who participates in these activities? What sentiments do the participants express about their engagement in these activities? What actions are performed by specific types of participants?
- b. What are the roles, norms, and values that prescribe the behavior of participants in activities?
- c. What are the rules, laws, and sanctions that regulate behavior?

- d. What are the shared beliefs and understandings that guide the behavior of participants?
- e. What tools are created and/or used in activities sponsored/supported by COs?
- f. What are the contradictions within and between activity systems?

## **Methods**

### *Sampling*

I conducted fieldwork for this in Hatfield, a low-income neighborhood in the city of Verona.<sup>3</sup> I chose Hatfield as the research site for two reasons—familiarity and convenience. Since 2002, I have been involved in a community capacity-building project in this community. My advisor oversees this project. Based on my involvement in this project, I have become familiar with the community, and with several community organizations. Furthermore, Hatfield is a predominantly African-American community that struggles with issues of marginalization due to race and class. Being of African descent, and coming from Zimbabwe, these are struggles with which I identify. I feel a sense of connection with the community on the basis of these struggles.<sup>3</sup> The second reason I selected Hatfield as the site of my research was that of convenience. Verona is relatively close to my university, so I was able to visit regularly at a relatively low cost and with brief transportation time.

There were two primary units of analysis in this study: community organizations and activities. Employing a purposive sampling technique, I selected organizations in the Hatfield neighborhood that met the two criteria of community organizations set in this study: (1) their stated goals are oriented to addressing community concerns and (2) local residents are either

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<sup>3</sup> The names of people, places, and organizations have been changed to protect the participants.

currently or encouraged to be primary participants. In selecting the organizations, I considered characteristics of organizations, such as: type of services rendered, length of existence, and accessibility to me. Four organizations participated in the study: a social-service agency, a business association, a garden and literacy association, and a church.

My sampling criterion for activities sponsored and/or supported by the organizations was regularity. I sought to observe the “regularly occurring patterns of action” (Carspecken, 1996, p.91) that were oriented either to the neighborhood or to the organization. In these activities, the participating organizations were the subjects of the activities and the neighborhood (including individuals, organizations, and groups within it) were the objects of the activities. As advised by Carspecken (1996), I also paid attention to activities that contrasted significantly from the regular ones. These observations facilitated my identification of typical and atypical activities sponsored and/or supported by each of the participating organizations.

Although the units of analysis were organizations and activities, the units of observations were primarily individuals and artifacts. I observed the social structure of participating organizations and their activities through the actions and interactions of participants, along with the artifacts produced and/or used in these actions and interactions. I selected individuals to observe and to interview. I selected interview subjects that were diverse in terms of demographic characteristics, roles they played in activities and in their relationships to the participating organization(s). I analyzed the materials produced/and or used by the participants. My participation in the activities of the organizations was also an important data source. As a participant observer, I was able to observe how the social structure of the organization shaped my participation in activities sponsored/supported by the organization.

### *Collecting Data: Navigating the Field*

Formal data collection for this study was conducted from July 2005 to February 2006. However, my engagement with the participating organizations dates back to September 2002 and continues today. During the seven-month period of fieldwork, I traveled to Verona twice a month, with an average of 10-14 days in the field each month. In the month prior to the commencement of fieldwork, my time was devoted to preparatory activities such as obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of my university, securing financial support, finding accommodations, and developing my research instruments.

My fieldwork consisted of three distinct and overlapping phases: entering the field, attaining membership, and exiting the field. In each of these phases, I employed one or more of the standard ethnographic data collection methods: participant observation, interviewing and document analysis. What follows is a description and discussion of the data collection process employed in this study. I have organized the discussion into two sections: 1) fieldwork phases, and 2) data collection methods. In reality, these two aspects of fieldwork are integrally intertwined and inseparable. Nevertheless, I have chosen to separate them artificially to preserve the unique and distinct characteristics of each aspect.

#### *Phases of Fieldwork*

My fieldwork consisted of three phases: entering the field (a welcomed guest); gaining access (feeling at home), and exiting the field.

#### *A Welcomed Guest: Negotiating Entry into the Field*

The first hurdle I had to jump as I entered the field was to get each of the organizations to sign an agreement to participate (see Appendix A for Invitation and Agreement to Participate).

By signing that agreement, the organizations granted me entry into their organizations and, by extension, into to their community. For each of the organizations, I directed my request for participation to the person in the role of CEO or executive director. To my surprise, my entry into the field was relatively easy. I attribute this ease to at least three factors: (1) the existing relationship between the participating organizations and my university, and specifically my advisor, (2) opportune timing, and (3) my cultural and racial identity.

For several years prior to this study, there was a well-developed relationship between the participating community organizations and my university. A cross-disciplinary team of faculty had partnered with community organizations in the Hatfield community of Verona, in a community-university initiative. I worked with a professor who was a member of this faculty team, and it was through him that I was initially introduced to the neighborhood.

While fieldwork for this study officially began in July 2005, my interaction with this community started three years prior as research assistant to a professor working on a university-community partnership initiative. In this capacity, I would regularly accompany the professor on his monthly visits to this community. I also had the opportunity to participate in projects with some of the organizations. During these early visits to this community, my primary role was that of a student assisting her professor – he made the decisions, students like me implemented them. The community was familiar with this model of community-university partnership, because several professors involved in the community-university initiative had implemented projects in this community, bringing along students to assist them to do the work. Capitalizing on this framework of a community-university partnership, I used my identity as a graduate student to gain entrance into the community. I have no doubt that my identity as a student of a professor

(from a major university) who is trusted and well respected by the leaders of these organizations eased my entry into the field.

In the implementation of the community-university initiative, volunteers from Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) were hired to be a mediating presence between the professors who were based at a campus located 3.5 hours away from Verona. There was a VISTA volunteer assigned to each specific aspect of the initiative, and each VISTA volunteer was supervised by the professor in charge of a particular aspect. Working closely with a VISTA volunteer who was well liked in the community, the professor with whom I worked was in charge of the community organizing and capacity-building aspect of the project. The commencement of my formal fieldwork coincided with the departure of this VISTA volunteer. As a result, the timing of my fieldwork created a general perception among the organizations that I was there to continue the work of the VISTA volunteer. This volunteer had been based in an office located in the building of one of the participating organizations. This office was offered to me, and I gratefully accepted the offer because of the convenient location. Occupying this office space only served to strengthen the perception that my primary purpose was to continue the community-university initiative. This perception eased my entry into the community, because people assumed they knew what I was doing in their community. It certainly helped that the departing VISTA volunteer was well liked and appreciated by the organizations.

Being of African descent, I share a cultural and racial heritage with African-Americans. African-Americans are the predominant racial/ethnic group in the Hatfield neighborhood. I believe that my cultural and racial heritage also eased my entry into the community. I observed a difference in the reaction of local residence when they encountered white strangers, as opposed



to black strangers. This difference in reaction is illustrated in an incident that took place at the offices of one of the participating organizations in my early days in the field:

One of the community organizations participating in my study was a social service agency where local residents could get access to social service programs sponsored by the city and state. Clients would enter the office, take a number, and then sit and wait until their number was called. Waiting clients would explain the procedure to incoming clients who seemed unfamiliar with the office. On one occasion, a White woman walked into the office during a busy period. I noted that none of the waiting clients attempted to explain the procedure to her. Instead, both staff and clients in the office watched her closely, as if they were trying to figure out her purpose. I realized that I, too, looked at the woman inquiringly. Eventually, one of the staff persons asked her, “Can I help you?” The woman had come to the office for the same reasons as the other clients – to get social services (Excerpt from field notes).

This incident reveals how race played a part in the reception accorded to a newcomer in the neighborhood. The woman in this incident was not treated just like “everybody else,” because she did not look like “everybody else.” The other clients did not automatically assume that she was there to submit an application for a social service program, like everyone else in the office. In contrast, whenever I walked into the office, other clients assumed that I was also a client and treated me as they would any other client.

Early in the process, I realized that there was a distinction between gaining entry and gaining access. My experience in the field contradicted Fetterman’s (1998) premise that the “trust the group places in the intermediary will approximate the trust it extends to the

ethnographer at the beginning of the study” (pg. 33). While my associations with my professor and the community-university initiative mediated my *entry* into the field, they did not automatically come with the trust that is necessary for one to be granted *access* to people and resources. Similarly, while my cultural and racial identity facilitated my entry into the community, this did not mean that I was automatically granted access into the community. Gaining access depended much more on the personal relationships I formed with people, and less on my affiliations and identity.

I will use an analogy to illustrate this distinction between gaining entry and gaining access. If we can consider a community organization to be analogous to a household, gaining entry would refer to being welcomed into the household, while gaining access would refer to being allowed to participate in the life of this house. A guest might be invited to sit in the lounge while members of the household go about their business. The guest becomes a member of the household as he/she becomes involved in the life of the household. For example, when someone feels comfortable enough in a home to go to the kitchen to open the fridge and get himself/herself a drink – he/she is no longer behaving as a guest but more like a member of the household. In the first phase of my fieldwork, I felt like a guest in the community and perceived people with whom I interacted to relate to me as a guest. Contributing to my feeling as a guest in the community was my accommodation situation. At the start of my fieldwork, I was unable to secure accommodation in Hatfield. I rented a room in a nearby neighborhood. I used public transportation to commute to Hatfield every day. This living arrangement limited my time in this community considerably, as I would only be in the community during working hours (when my donated office space was available) or when there was a scheduled community event.

Gaining entry, the first step in the process of attaining access, was devoted to building and strengthening relationships with local residents. As noted by Harrington (2003), “gaining access to data requires that researchers establish roles and relationships that participants find acceptable” (p.616). The delay between being granted entry and attaining access turned out to be actually an advantage, because as a guest, I was able to inquire about things that a member would be expected to know. My experience in the field supports Mitchell’s (1991) assertion that “a high degree of trust achieved early in an investigation may actually curtail researchers’ freedom to look and ask” (p.103). Establishing these roles and relationships was a delicate dance between researcher and the participants, a dance that carried through from the beginning of my fieldwork and continues even beyond exiting the field.

#### *Feeling at Home: Attaining Access*

With time and prolonged interactions, I transitioned from being a guest to becoming an unofficial member of the organizations as well as the community. At the beginning of my third month in the field, I found accommodations in Hatfield. As a resident, I was able to explore and to observe the community in a different way, since I was living inside the neighborhood. I gained greater exposure to the community as I walked to and from my residence. My interactions were less by “appointment,” as had been the case when I was a commuter. Living in the community, I would often encounter participants in their daily course of life, for example, seeing them on the porch as I walked by, or at the grocery store.

I had built reciprocity into the design of this research study. In exchange for their participation in the study, I offered to provide technical assistance to each of the organizations. Spending some time with each of the organizations, I was able to negotiate ways in which I

could participate in their organizations. As I gained more access, I was able to participate integrally in the lives of the organizations. I felt like an unofficial member in three of the four participating organizations. In the social service agency, I took on the role of a staff member; at the church, I was a member of the congregation, and I was the acting secretary of the board at the business association. I felt like a member of these organizations as I participated in routine activities such as planning and attending scheduled meetings, and providing services to clients. It was more difficult to feel like a member of the fourth participating organization, a garden club, because it did not have regular activities. My participation in the garden club was generally limited to interactions with individual members of the organization.

Maintaining a regular presence in the community served me well. Although people knew of my interest to attend organizational meetings, rarely would someone call me to tell me about some scheduled meeting. But being there, I would inevitably find out about the meetings and often I would just stumble into significant meetings or events. For example, one morning I was visiting at the offices of the business association. While I was there, somebody from another organization came for a meeting. They allowed me to sit in on this meeting, which turned out to be very informative. Another example occurred when I was visiting with a board member of one of the organizations. The mail carrier arrived with a registered letter for him. He read aloud the letter to me – it was a letter requesting his resignation from the board of the business association. It was truly a phenomenal coincidence that I would be with him when the letter arrived. Maintaining a regular presence also allowed me to build relationships of trust with people.

*Conditional Exit: Exiting the Field*

By the end of my sixth month in the field, I was exhausted. Between the travel, my work as a graduate assistant, and working for the organizations, I was physically, mentally and emotionally exhausted. Furthermore, I had exhausted my financial resources. Staying in the field longer would have necessitated securing more funds. As it was, I would not be able to complete the data analysis and write-up within the time period I had originally planned. The decision to stop fieldwork was based on the limitations of my resources (physical and mental energy, time, and financial resources). It was not the data that had been exhausted, it was the researcher! While realizing that there was much more data that could be collected, I was confident that I had collected sufficient data to address my research question. Leaving the field, I reassured myself that I would be able to return to collect more data, should I deemed it necessary.

Despite my exhaustion, leaving the field was not so easy. Saying goodbye to all the people with whom I had become accustomed to working with was difficult. I enjoyed being part of these organizations. I felt a twinge of guilt leaving the organizations without anyone to take over the role that I played in the organization. Fortunately, this was not a complete exit from the field. While my fieldwork is over, the community-university partnership continues. I remain involved in the project and I am back to doing day-long visits with my professor and other students. My continued involvement begs the question – have I really left the field? I have found the distinction Snow (1980) makes between extrication and disengagement helpful in explaining my situation. He writes,

Whereas extrication involves physical separation from the field, disengagement is a process that is seldom, if ever, coterminous with leaving the field. Not only does the

field experience itself frequently have an enduring impact on the ethnographer, but once extrication has been negotiated the fieldworker is still confronted with a set of questions and issues concerning his/her indebtedness and moral obligations to those persons studied (p. 109).

### *Data Collection Methods*

I employed standard ethnographic methods of data collection for this study: participant observation, interviewing, and document analysis. I discuss each of these methods next.

#### *Participant observation*

Fetterman (1998) defines participant observation as “immersion in a culture” which “combines participation in the lives of the people under study with the maintenance of a professional distance” (p. 35). Carspecken (1996) advises ethnographers to start with passive observation, or what Spradley (1980) refers to as passive participation. I prefer Spradley’s term “passive participant” to Carspecken’s “passive observer” because passive qualifies the nature of the researcher’s participation, and not the observation. Passive participation or observation occurs when the researcher is present at a social situation, but does not participate or interact with other people. At no point was I a passive participant during my fieldwork. I was never an anonymous observer standing on the sidelines as a bystander. Whether participating as a guest or a member, I remained an active participant observer throughout the duration of my fieldwork.

As I reflect on my early days in the field, I am amused by my naiveté as an ethnographic researcher. Armed with my theoretical framework, I expected to be able to observe immediately organizations behaving through member interactions and other activities. My early days of observation were much like Fetterman (1998) describes, “somewhat uncontrolled and

haphazard” (p. 35). I can recall feeling frustrated, as I would spend many early days by myself, in my designated office or walking around the community. I was frustrated because I did not think I was conducting research if all I was doing was spending all day at the office. I wanted to observe something, but I did not know how to determine what was relevant to my study and what was not. After a few days of writing detailed field notes, I realized that my task was not to look for things to observe. Rather, my task was to describe as best I could everything that was of interest to me and then explain through documentation why I found these things interesting. I learned to be patient with the process as I realized that the cultural patterns and practices would gradually emerge through the descriptions of my observations.

With time, I learned to use my theoretical framework as a flexible observation protocol, with myself as the research instrument. Through participant observation, I gathered data related to the community, the activities of the organizations, and the behavior of individuals within the organizations. I observed and recorded the activities and interactions of persons affiliated with the organizations. I paid attention to the behavior of persons holding official positions in the organization, as well as the routine processes of the organizations, such as the decision-making processes, training, and conflict resolution. I watched what was happening around me – who was talking to whom, who was sitting where, who was wearing what, and so forth. I also observed myself as I performed particular roles within these organizations. For example, as a volunteer staff member of the social service agency, I performed a role played by the staff as I answered phones and processed client applications for services. They trained me for this role as they would any other volunteer. Through such activities, I was able to observe the practices of the organization through my experience as a “member” of the organization.

**Table 3: Participant Observation**

	Participating Organizations			
	<i>Social Service Agency</i>	<i>Church</i>	<i>Garden Association</i>	<i>Business Association</i>
<i>Nature of Participation</i>	Staff member	New member/Guest	Consultant	Secretary
<i>Events/Activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Service delivery to clients</li> <li>○ Community meetings</li> <li>○ Community events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Church Services</li> <li>○ Planning Meetings</li> <li>○ “Recruitment” Activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recruitment Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rewriting of bylaws</li> <li>○ Grant writing</li> <li>○ Meeting preparations</li> <li>○ Minute taker at meetings</li> </ul>

Not surprisingly, conversations were always a part of my interaction. By participating in conversations, I gathered much information. Some of these conversations became informal interviews as they provided me with the opportunity to ask probing questions that helped me to understand the meanings of the activities I observed. Fetterman (1998) defines informal interviews as “casual conversations with specific but implicit research agenda” (p. 38). My definition of informal interviews differs slightly from his. What I considered to be informal interviews were conversations that serendipitously answered my questions and provided information relevant to my study. While I was in the field with a research agenda, these were not conversations that I sought out with the specific intention of data collection. Therefore, I do not consider such conversations to have had the implicit research agenda stated in Fetterman’s definition.

Ethnographers generally depend on the assistance of one or two informants, or key actors, to provide them with historical data and information about the nuances of everyday life (Carspecken, 1996; Fetterman, 1998; Spradley, 1980). Given the nature of my study, I worked closely with at least one individual, usually a leader or a staff member of each of the organizations. These individuals would share with me information about the history of the



organization as well as their lives in this community. They would also provide me with updates and explanations on what was happening in the organizations. I consider four individuals to have been key actors (in varying degrees) for this study.

I employed a two-step process for recording my observations in my field notes. First, I made brief notations of the main events of the day in a notebook. My notebook served a similar purpose to Carspecken's (1996) primary record, which he describes as a "not so thick journalistic record of events" (pg. 45). Spradley (1980) refers to such notes as "condensed accounts," which are useful for recording key phrases and major events (p. 69). In public, I would make mental notations; however, I would wait until I was alone to record these notations in my notebook. I chose to record notes in private, because I was concerned that people would be self-conscious if they observed me watching them and then jotting things down. Below is an example of brief notations entered in my notebook after conducting an interview with a local resident.

- dressed in suit
- opening doors
- relationship with African woman
- not interested in interview
- restaurant

In the second step of the process, I used these brief notations as memory triggers for typing out richly detailed field notes into a laptop computer. The field note entry based on the notations above read as follows:

- Walked up to his store; he is dressed up in a fancy suit. The day before he was wearing sweat pants. I didn't know if he had dressed up for this appointment or what.
- We walked to his truck and he opened the door for me to get in the car; he tried to open the door for me to get out; he opened the door for me at the restaurant.
- He was more interested in talking about a recent relationship he had had with an African woman whose name was Naana. He shared with me his heartbreak from this relationship with her (he couldn't remember what country she was from); tells me he is intrigued by African women. I didn't know how to respond to his intrigue with African women. I decided to not treat it as interest in me, but as a matter of fact conversation. I hoped that approach would dissuade any interest in me personally.
- He raved about this great classy Chinese restaurant that he knew in College City. It turned out to be a Chinese buffet. It certainly was not my idea of classy – I think of it as a cheap joint for college students on a limited budget.
- Conducted interview for about 30 minutes – we stopped when he was ready to stop. He wasn't really into the interview. We stopped to go get more food and then he didn't want to start up again. He did agree to do a follow-up interview.
- Felt like he was more interested in me than anything else. I made sure I talked about a boyfriend in the conversation.

- He considers himself a supporter of the organization, and not a member. He made the distinction between a supporter and a member. Says he used to be a member but now he is just a supporter.

Going by Carspecken's (1996) definition, this "notebook for thick descriptions" is a field journal (pg. 45). At the beginning of my fieldwork, I spent a considerable amount of time each day reflecting and recording my observations in my field journal, entering detailed field notes into my lap top computer at the end of each day. My field journal consisted of detailed descriptions of my observations of the community at large, detailed descriptions and/or summaries of organizational meetings and events, notes from informal and formal interviews, and my reflections as researcher. Spradley (1980) advises researchers to keep two separate journals: an "expanded account" and a "fieldwork journal," with the former being an expansion of field notes and the latter being a record of researcher reflections (pp. 70-71). I chose to record my descriptions and reflections in the same journal because they are both my interpretations.

As I became more active in the field, typing out detailed notes at the end of each day became increasingly difficult. Participating as a member of the organization meant working with the organizations. Take for example my participation at the social service agency where my office was based. During the early days of my fieldwork, I would come in, socialize a little bit in the main office and then head to my designated office to do my work. When my role shifted to volunteer staff member, I never even reached my office. I would spend my entire time in the main office working with the other staff members. I continued my practice of jotting down brief notations in my notebook at the end of each day, but was unable to keep up with the detailed field notes. My adviser suggested that I use a voice-recorder for the detailed field notes rather

than type them out into the computer. Taping the notes was more time efficient; however, I felt the quality of the detail of the taped notes were not as rich as the typed notes. Typing out my notes allowed me to organize my thoughts in a way that taping did not.

### *Interviewing*

Based on my observations and informal interviews in the field, I selected individuals to interview formally. I used these interviews to provide explanations and context for my observations and experiences (Fetterman, 1998). The persons I selected to interview were those that I observed to be participants in activities sponsored or supported by the organizations, and those who were expected to be active participants by virtue of positions they held in the organizations. I also interviewed people who I perceived to have some knowledge about the socio-historical context of the community, and the organizations. People with whom I interacted recommended some interview participants to me.

I formally interviewed 26 people for the study: 20 were female and 22 were African American. Only three of the interviewees were below the age of 40, the rest were above the age of 50. I interviewed nine people who were affiliated with the social service agency, three affiliated with the church, four affiliated with the garden club and six affiliated with the business association. Four of the people I interviewed were affiliated with more than one organization. Demographically, the interview pool was not very diverse. However, it is an accurate portrayal of individuals who actively participated in the life of the organizations. I interviewed local residents, as well as non-residents, who worked closely with the organizations.

To conduct the interviews, I would contact the interviewee to set up a formal appointment. Most of the interviews were conducted at the homes of the interviewee or at the

office of the organization. I usually left the decision about the location up to the interviewees. A few interviews were conducted at places such as the library and coffee shops.

**Table 4: Interview Participants**

<b>Organizational Features</b>	<b>Participating Organizations</b>				
		<i>Social Service Agency</i>	<i>Church</i>	<i>Garden Association</i>	<i>Business Association</i>
<i># Of People Interviewed</i>		13	4	5	9
<i>Gender</i>	Male	3	0	0	3
	Female	10	4	5	6
<i>Age Range</i>	25 - 34	2	1	2	1
	35 - 44	1	0	0	1
	45 -54	4	1	3	6
	55 -64	4	0	0	1
	65+	2	2	0	0
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	African-American	12	3	3	5
	European-American	1	0	2	0
	Asian-American	0	0	0	1

Scheduling these interviews was more challenging than I had anticipated. People who worked full time were not able to meet during the day. Their evening and weekends were set-aside for family and other matters. Making the situation more complex, my flexibility was limited by my mode of transportation. While evening hours were usually most convenient for interviewees, I either walked or took public transportation, and was therefore reluctant to travel at night because of safety issues. If I had a car, I would have felt more comfortable traveling at night. Issues of time and safety also posed a major challenge when scheduling follow-up interviews. Consequently, and unfortunately, I conducted fewer follow-up interviews than I had originally planned.

I would start the interview by explaining the purpose of my research, and then I would ask the participant to read and sign the consent form (see Appendix B for Informed Consent). Once the consent form was signed, I would request permission to record the interview on a voice-recorder. Only one interviewee refused to be recorded on tape. The interviews were semi-structured with mostly open-ended questions. My interviewees fell in two categories: (1) individuals who had primary affiliation with the organization, e.g. board members and staff, and (2) individuals with peripheral affiliation with the organization, e.g. meeting attendees and consultants. The questions I asked during the interview were guided by observations I had made in the field.

I used two interview protocols (one for each of the categories) as checklists to help me keep track during the interview (see Appendices C and D for interview protocols). The questions on the protocols were related to three broad categories of data: the historical, cultural, and social context of the community; activities, interactions, and sentiments of the individual; and organizational processes. With the help of my field notes, I would prepare questions specific to the actions and interactions of the interviewee. One drawback I faced as I conducted the interviews had to do with timing. I asked the participants questions about their participation in events that I had observed. But, in many cases considerable time elapsed between my observation of the events and the formal interview; making it difficult for participants to reconstruct the events. As Fetterman (1998) noted, people tend to filter or forget past events.

All but one of the interviews that I conducted were individual interviews. The exception was a focus group interview that was planned by one of the interviewees. When I requested an interview with her, she decided it would be a good idea to invite two other people. These were

people who she felt were good sources of information regarding the community, and the community organization with which she was affiliated. Although I had not planned for this to be a focus group interview, it turned out to be informative. My initial contact person would set up the focus group sessions and host them at her house. In all, I conducted four focus group sessions.

### *Document analysis*

While in the field, I collected documents that were produced and/or used by the participating organizations. Examples of such documents include organization by-laws, flyers, and correspondence. I also collected documents produced by other organizations (e.g. the City of Verona) that were used by the organizations. Other documents collected were newspaper clippings, feasibility studies, census information, and press releases containing information related to the community or the participating organizations.

**Table 5: Documents Used/Produced by Participants**

Documents	<i>Community Organizations</i>			
	<i>Social Service Agency</i>	<i>Church</i>	<i>Garden Association</i>	<i>Business Association</i>
<i>Internal Docs (created by org)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ By-Laws</li> <li>○ Announcements</li> <li>○ Correspondence</li> <li>○ Brochure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ By-laws</li> <li>○ Strategic Plan</li> <li>○ Annual Report</li> <li>○ Church Bulletins</li> <li>○ Newsletters</li> <li>○ Announcements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ By-laws</li> <li>○ Rules of conduct</li> <li>○ Old minutes</li> <li>○ Brochure</li> <li>○ Website</li> <li>○ Proposals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ By-laws</li> <li>○ Announcements</li> <li>○ Correspondence</li> <li>○ Brochure</li> <li>○ Grant Proposals</li> <li>○ website</li> </ul>
<i>External Docs (created outside organization)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Forms used in program delivery</li> <li>○ Newspaper articles</li> <li>○ Contracts</li> <li>○ City reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Documents from Parent Organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Newspaper articles</li> <li>○ Collaborative proposals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Request for Grant Proposals</li> <li>○ Docs of collaborating orgs</li> </ul>

I retrieved these documents from two main sources. One source was the organizations themselves; the other was archives located in places such as universities and city offices. Some of the organizations had documents such as newsletters from the past, newspaper clippings that

made mention of their organization, and so forth. I sought for documents that had some information about the community, and the activities of the participating organizations. I also took note of documents that members of the organization referenced in their day-to-day activities.

### *Data Analysis*

Data collection, analysis, and writing occurred concurrently throughout the process with a different emphasis being placed on each at different phases of the project. My analysis of the data began during fieldwork. This preliminary analysis enabled me to make decisions about what to observe, and which people to interview. It entailed reviewing field notes to identify actions of participants for further investigation. For example, I observed the behavior of Aisha, a Hatfield resident, at several community meetings. I interpreted her actions as citizen participation. From this preliminary analysis, I requested of her a formal interview.

I conducted comprehensive data analysis until I exited the field. Data analysis and write up were my primary occupations between the months of June 2006 to December 2006. The process of data analysis was akin to doing a picture puzzle without the final picture to guide me. I had the pieces, but was not sure how they fit together. My analysis consisted of three parts: (1) organizing and cleaning the data, (2) mining the data, and writing up findings. These categories are only analytical; in reality, they overlap considerably.

#### *Grouping Pieces of the Puzzle: Organizing and Cleaning up Data*

At the end of my fieldwork, I found myself with four forms of data: (1) hand written primary records containing brief observational notations, (2) electronic field journal containing detailed descriptions and reflections, (3) voice recordings of observations, meetings, and



interviews, and (4) documents produced and/or used by the participants. In organizing and cleaning my data, I concentrated much of my time on recording. I had accumulated approximately 34 taped observations and 30 digital recordings of interviews, meetings, and observations, each averaging about 60 minutes. In all, I had to review approximately 70 hours of recordings.

I listened to each of the recordings, but I did not do complete word-for-word transcriptions of all 70 hours of the recordings. As I listened to the taped observations, I followed along in my field journal and hand-written primary record. I used the voice recordings of my observations to add to the detailed field notes in my electronic field journal. These were not word-for-word transcriptions. I handled the meeting recordings slightly differently from the taped observations. As I listened to the recording of each, I would take summary notes of the content of the recorded meetings. These notes supplemented the observations already recorded in my field journal for the particular meeting.

Unlike the taped observations and recorded meetings, I transcribed the interviews verbatim. With the help of transcription equipment, I transcribed all the interviews (approximately 30 interviews of 26 participants). I spent approximately 90 days to organize and clean up all the data I had collected. At the end of this process, I had two forms of data in electronic form: a field journal organized by date, and interview transcriptions. These files, in addition to the documents produced/used by the participants (some of which were electronic), constituted the data piles that I would mine in the next phase. These piles were more or less organized by their origination, rather than their content. My next task in putting the puzzle together was arranging the pieces in piles by content—classifying the data.

*Classifying and Connecting Puzzle Pieces*

With the pieces of the puzzles cleaned and grouped in neat piles, I felt overwhelmed as I struggled to find a place to start the process of data classification. I found the following advise from Thomas (1993) to be particularly instructive in the process of data analyzing and write-up:

Effective critique need never be packaged as critical. Rather, it should lead the reader, step by step, through the data with as little prompting as possible by painting a picture in sufficiently sharp detail that readers will be convinced by the power of the demonstration, rather than the passion of the researcher (Thomas, 1993).

My primary goal in classifying the data was to determine the pieces (parts) of the picture that I would be constructing. Guidelines suggested by Wolcott (1994), Coffey & Atkinson (1996), and Baptiste (2001) provided helpful strategies for classifying and putting together the pieces of the puzzle. I started by focusing on constructing the major pieces that had to be in the picture – the participants and the context. Guided by my theoretical framework and using data analysis software (N-Vivo), I mined the data to find the pieces I needed to create both a profile of the neighborhood and the activities of each of the participating organizations.

The process I employed for classifying data consisted of the following elements: (1) refining the research questions, (2) coding, and (3) making connections. I used the research questions as the guidelines for classifying data. In the process of classifying data, I found it necessary to refine these questions to make them sharper and clearer, employing the tools of grounded theory (open, axial, and selective coding) to code the data. I coded data in parallel (one question at a time) across all four organizations. With the help of N-Vivo, I coded field notes first. Relying on the modified structure of human activity from my theoretical framework,

I created categories as they emerged during the process of open coding. My categories were actions for which the organizations were the subject. I labeled the categories by the goal of the action. For example, for one organization, I created a category I labeled “developing a new program.” The following codes were included in this category:

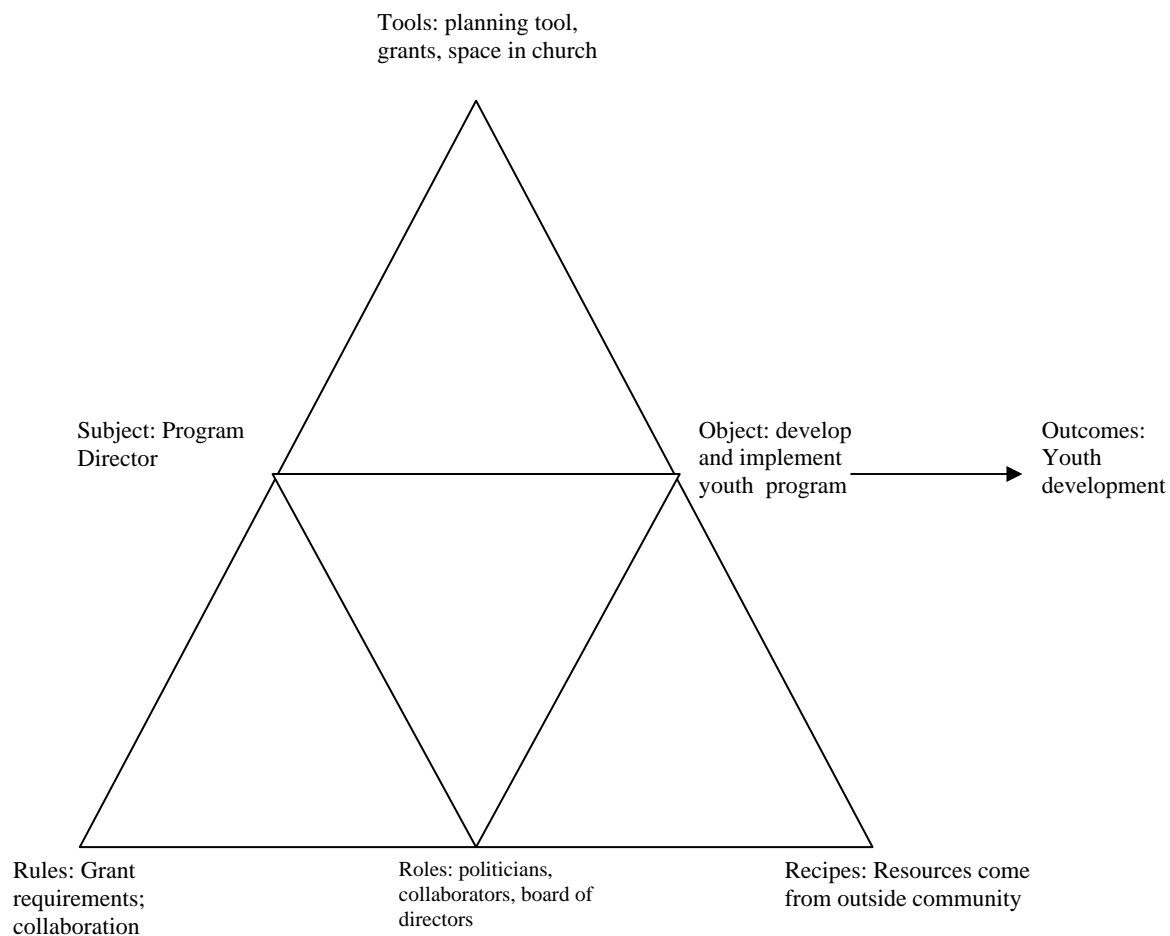
- assisting in writing of proposal
- not interesting in collaborating with HBA
- wants to keep grants a secret
- doesn’t need HRA, has churches
- not losing home or husband for community
- collecting donated items
- using planning tool

By the time I completed coding the field notes, I would have a set of categories/actions. I then used data from interviews and artifacts to supplement data from the field notes that populated the categories. During this process, I would refine the categories and codes within them to represent the elements of an action—subject, object, tools, goal—and the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive structures grounding the actions. See Figure 4 for an example of a profile of an action.

The next step in the process was to make connections between and among the categories/actions of each organization. I grouped together actions that I identified as sharing the same motive. For example, I grouped together actions that were motivated by survival of the organization into activity labeled “strengthening the organization.” For one organization, the activity I labeled “strengthening the organization” consisted of two actions: “recruiting new

members” and “developing a new program.” The modified structure of human activity was a helpful tool for describing activities and actions sponsored and supported by the community organizations.

**Figure 4: Example of a CO Action - Developing a program**



### *Enhancing Research Quality*

Thomas (1993) reminds us that “all ethnography should demonstrate, not assert, and the best critical ethnographies simply describe the terrain and let the readers evaluate the conclusions on the basis of what has been shown” (p.63). Following this advice, research quality in this study

refers to the extent to which the research findings are meaningful and useful to my audience. I used the following techniques suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985) and Carspecken (1996) to enhance the quality of my research: prolonged engagement, triangulation, member checks, peer debriefing, reflexive journaling, and thick description.

I accomplished prolonged engagement by immersing myself in the field, which made it possible for me to observe cultural processes that occurred regularly. Carspecken (1996) maintains: "Subjects become more accustomed to the researcher's presence the more the researcher is there. They are more likely to act as if the researcher were not present if the researcher becomes a familiar part of the setting (p.88)."

Employing the technique of triangulation, I used different sources to confirm information I gathered. For example, I verified my observations through interviewing or document analysis. Triangulation improved the dependability of the research through its corroboration of information.

I employed informal member checks to enhance the credibility of the findings. Lincoln & Guba (1985) describe member checking as a process "...whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stake holding groups from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique to establishing credibility" (p. 314). Much of my member checking was done informally. In informal conversations and interviews, I would ask people to respond to my interpretations.

Peer debriefing was conducted with my advisor. I would meet with him regularly to discuss both the process and the data. Because my advisor was familiar with the context and the organizations, I found his insights and comments very helpful to my findings.

I maintained a reflexive journal (as part of my field journal) in which I entered details pertaining to the method and my reflections on the process. These reflections provided a way for me to reflect on myself critically as a research instrument during the research process. These self-reflections helped me explicate some of my assumptions that shaped my final interpretations.

To address the issue of transferability, I employed the technique of thick description. The decision as to whether the findings are transferable is left to the audience. As a researcher, my responsibility is to provide sufficient information to enable the reader to make this decision.

### **Researcher Reflections**

I have grouped this discussion into three parts: reflections about my identity as a researcher, reflections pertaining to ethical issues in research, and reflections on the limitations of the study.

#### *Reflections on Researcher Identity*

In qualitative research methods such as ethnography, it is generally accepted that the researcher is the primary instrument used in the process (Fetterman, 1991; Willis, 2000; Wolcott, 1999). In this regard, Thomas (1993) advises researchers that “we must always be aware not only of how we might influence and shape the slice of culture we study, but also of how we ourselves are changed by the research process” (p.67). Consequently, my identity as researcher played a prominent role in all phases of the research process – from framing the investigation to the collection and interpretation of data. I will discuss four aspects of my identity here: cultural and racial identity, gender, language, and researcher status. I should note that while this discussion focuses on fieldwork, I do recognize that my identity played a prominent role in

shaping the entire research process. I have chosen to privilege fieldwork because in my experience, reflexivity was most intense during this phase.

### *Cultural and racial identity*

I have found that while there is much written about researcher identity, few scholars address the issue in which the researcher is related in some way to her subjects. Kondo (1986) observes: “most ethnographies, even of the reflexive kind, are products of contexts in which the observer/ethnographer is a visible outsider...these ethnographies depict the Other as ineffably alien, as separate, distinct beings” (pg. 74). Regarding cultural identity as it shapes the research process, much of the focus in the literature has been on researchers who research their own communities in what is termed “native ethnography” (Jacobs-Huey, 2002; Narayan, 1993). My situation does not qualify as “native ethnography,” because while the researcher and researched share defining physical characteristics and a cultural heritage, the researcher is not a part of this culture, or the particular community. I am neither African-American, nor am I from Verona. However, being a Black woman of African descent, I share a cultural heritage with the residents of Hatfield, the research site.

From the beginning of my fieldwork, there was a sense of familiarity that I experienced in my interactions with people from this community. This familiarity was evident in my day-to-day interactions, as people would casually make comments to me such as: “They are trying to take over our community” or “We need to stand together.” In most cases, the “they” referred to White people or the government. As a Black person, I was automatically included in the “we” of this community. Although I was part of a “we” of the Black community, this did not mean I was automatically a member of the community. I am neither a “native” to this particular

neighborhood in Verona, nor to the broader African-American culture. While still a stranger, I was a familiar, not an “out-of-place” stranger. I use the term “Diasporic native” (Nyanungo, 2004) to capture this phenomenon of being a familiar stranger in contexts where I share cultural heritage with the local people.

Given the historical connection between Africa and African-Americans, I do not consider myself to be completely separate and distinct from African-Americans. My connection to African-Americans is based not only on the historical connections, but also on the racial politics that continue to shape the existence of dark-skinned people all over the world. These connections shortened the cognitive distance between me, as a researcher, and the researched. But how did this play out in the field? I experienced a tension between my “Blackness” (racial identity) and “African-ness” (cultural identity). I got the sense that my “Blackness” shortened the distance between my subjects, and myself while my “African-ness” increased it. If one merely looks at my physical appearance, particularly the color of my skin, I would be taken for an African-American. Not until I start to speak, and people hear an accent different from theirs do I become an “other.” My accent was a constant object of humor, as people would imitate my speech patterns and word pronunciation. Because of my apparently “exotic” accent, I would receive romantic attention from men. Despite this appreciation for my accent, when people made comments about Africa and Africans, there were generally not flattering. For example, comments would be made about Africans, particularly Ethiopians, dying from hunger and starvation. Africans were also associated with diseases such as AIDS. There are some complex power and other relational dynamics existing in this tension between my “Blackness” and “African-ness” that I have yet to unpack.



*Gender*

My gender was both an advantage and disadvantage during fieldwork. I think my gender made it easier to establish rapport, because most of the people associated with the participating organizations were also women. This commonality facilitated my learning about differences. For example, women would ask why I did not have any children at my age. This question revealed something about cultural expectations for women of this neighborhood. Some meetings required me to go to residences. I was comfortable doing this when the person was female.

In other ways, I found my gender to be limiting. For one, it precluded me from being able to observe manhood closely in the way that I was able to observe womanhood. I did not have the opportunity to establish such relationships with males in the neighborhood. My relationships with men were not as easy-going as my relationships with the women. Sexual innuendos and romantic interest made me very cautious in my interactions with men. For example, I had to think twice before accepting a generous offer to show me around the neighborhood from a young man. However, this aspect of sexuality was an advantage to some extent. There were men who agreed to be interviewed by me only because they wanted an opportunity to “make a move,” so to speak. I avoided meeting men at their homes and insisted on meeting them in more public locations like coffee shops for this reason. My being female was also limiting because of safety issues I worried about walking the streets alone at night, thus limiting my movements considerably. This was particularly problematic when I was doing interviews. People who worked full time were only available to meet at nighttime. However, I did not feel comfortable traveling alone at night. Thus, my gender was both an advantage and a disadvantage.

### *Language*

Although I speak fluent English, I found myself learning a new language in Hatfield. People used different terms that were unfamiliar to me. My language difficulties were more advantageous than they were limiting. Not understanding the terms people used gave me the opportunity to ask for people's interpretations of their world. For example, the language of welfare and other assistance programs was not familiar to me, but is part of every-day lingo in the neighborhood. When people explained terms to me, this interaction helped me understand these terms from their perspective.

### *Researcher Status*

I came across situations in which I could have pushed the organization to change in some way. For example, not much effort would be needed to assist one of the organizations to make their running of the office much more efficient. However, I felt a tension between my role as a researcher and as an activist. As a researcher, observing the negotiation of this less-than-ideal situation was fodder for data. But I also felt a responsibility to helping the organizations function better. I resolved this conflict by making suggestions for change and offering assistance to implement the suggestions.

### *Ethics and Research*

I faced several ethical dilemmas in the process of conducting this research. I discuss a few of these dilemmas below.

#### *Observing Without Consent*

At the time I was obtaining IRB approval, the issue of consent forms and participation observation was raised. The concern was whether I should observe people who have not signed

a consent form. At the time of submitting my application, the answer to this question seemed simple enough — I would observe people in public settings without their consent, but would obtain consent from the participants to do observations in private settings. If attending a private organizational meeting, such as a board meeting, I was to ask attendees to sign consent forms. I was also to ask permission to record meetings on a voice-recorder. However, this demarcation between public and private was not so simple in many situations that I encountered in the field. For example, neither the staff nor the clients of the social service agency were aware that I was observing them as a researcher. The same was true when I attended church on Sunday morning as a researcher. These were public settings (i.e., open to the public) where people would be engaged in some very private activities. While the organizations had granted me permission to observe, other members of the organizations were usually not aware of this. I struggled with the ethics of observing people who did not know that I was observing them. I found that even those who knew that I conducting research did not seem to realize that I was always doing research. For many people with whom I interacted, I was doing research only when I was taping them with my voice recorder. The way I dealt with this dilemma was to be as sensitive, respectful, and responsible as I can be in the products that resulted from my research.

Another issue related to my status as researcher was the methods I employed for documenting by observations. In this neighborhood, most people seemed to equate research with documentaries. So when I told people I was conducting research, they would think I was making a documentary. This made me very conscious of the way I presented myself. I did not take notes in public, and I only voice-recorded interviews. After a resident made a passing comment about how researchers come to inner city neighborhoods to do documentaries about how “ghetto

people live” for television broadcast, I became very conscious about filming and photographing. I took very few pictures and did not do any videotaping. I did not want to give people the impression that this was the kind of research I was conducting.

### *Protective Writing*

The participating organizations have long and rich histories with one another. People shared with me things about their organizations that they would not wish shared with others. Moreover, people shared very personal aspects of their lives with me. I found myself with an ethical dilemma. How do I write up the story of the organizations while protecting the participants? Changing names is inadequate in this study. Anyone familiar with this city or these organizations will be able to identify participants in this study. My choices were a description with vivid characters or one in which the characters were minimized. It is both easier and preferable to go with the first option, but I worried that this does not protect the participants. I also worried about the possibility that the information I provided might be used against the organizations given the political climate of Verona. Writing up the stories of the organizations with these concerns in mind made it quite a challenging task. Following the advice of members of my dissertation committee, this issue was resolved by delaying the release of the study for publication for a couple of years.

### *Limitations of Study*

A limitation of this study is that the social structure of community organizations is but one of many factors that shape the participation of community members. Consequently, the results of this study will contribute limited understanding to the phenomenon of participation and learning in community organizations. However, despite this limitation, greater understanding of

the relationship between social structure, participation, and learning in community organizations will nevertheless contribute to the research and practice of community building.

The nature of the study was such that I had limited access to residents who were not involved with the organizations in any way. This was a limitation of the study, because the stories of such individuals would have helped me in exploring how the behavior of the organizations contributes to the lack of participation.

Due to budgetary and time constraints, it was not possible for me to spend longer than seven months (July 2005 to February 2006) collecting data in the field. This is a limitation, because prolonged engagement heightens the ability of the researcher to assume an insider perspective (Carspecken, 1996). I do not think I ever “assumed” this insider perspective.

## CHAPTER 4: A PROFILE OF THE HATFIELD NEIGHBORHOOD

### Introduction

Hatfield is an inner-city neighborhood nestled in the city of Verona. Located on the East Coast, Verona is one of the ten largest cities in the USA (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). Hatfield is one of those neighborhoods that actually feel like a community. It is the kind of place where everyone seems to know everyone on their block; and where people greet each other on the street and engage in conversation while waiting for the bus. It is the kind of place where neighborhood residents look out for and respond to one another in their everyday lives. Younger residents will assist the elderly going up the stairs or will give up their seat on the bus for another neighbor. Yolanda is a 26-year old woman who has lived in Hatfield all her life. The strong sense of community in Hatfield is something that she appreciates about her neighborhood. She explains:

At some point everybody sticks up for everybody, like everybody knows everybody, and like that's a good thing right there. Like the people who grew together around here, they look out for each other's kids and stuff like that.

Even people who are not residents of Hatfield appreciate the strong sense of community in the neighborhood. Jennifer is a young White woman who works for a youth-service outreach program that brings high school students (mostly White) from the Verona suburbs to Hatfield. She expressed her observations and her experience of the sense of community as follows:

Just those casual interactions that you have with everyone when you are walking into the street, and into your car or whatever. And everyone kind of knows what's going on with people's lives. That's really neat. It's also kind of neat to see [my suburban] high schoolers come and say, "Why don't I know what's going on with my neighbors, why

don't I ever say hi?" I don't even know their names. And just kind of thinking about, how am I interacting with the people around me? And maybe the set ups in the more affluent communities aren't the best. And there is something really missing – and that missing piece is often real community

In spite of its vibrant sense of community, as a low-income neighborhood, Hatfield is plagued by social ills that are prevalent in neighborhoods of its kind: decreasing population, low educational attainment, high unemployment, and property decline. In combination, these factors create a complex social, economic, and political context that residents negotiate in their daily lives. My aim in this chapter is to provide a sense of this complex context. The chapter is divided into five sections: (1) the residents, (2) working and trading, (3) the value of place, (4) politics of place, and 5) supportive organizations in the community.

### **The Residents**

According to the U.S. Census of 2000, Hatfield is home to approximately 5,000 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In the past 50 years, there have been two major changes in the population of the neighborhood. The first change has been in the racial make up of the neighborhood. Prior to 1950, Hatfield was predominantly a Jewish and Irish neighborhood. Like other neighborhoods in West Verona, the African-American population of Hatfield steadily increased between 1925 and 1970. By the, 1960s African-Americans had become the predominant group in Hatfield, as well as other West Verona neighborhoods. A 74-year-old life-long resident of Hatfield explains when the transition occurred:

The transition to becoming all African American occurred in the fifties – just after Korean War broke out. Lots of Southerners were coming up North looking for housing. Jewish and Irish people started moving to the suburbs.

Today, more than 98% of Hatfield's population is African-American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

The second major change in the neighborhood's population is the significant population decrease that has occurred over the past 50 years. In 1960, the estimated population of Hatfield was 12,500. By 1990, 30 years later, the population had dropped by 54% to approximately 5,800 residents. In the 10-year span between 1990 and 2000, the population dropped by an additional 10% to just over 5,000 residents. This pattern suggests those who can afford to leave the neighborhood do so, leaving behind people who do not have the financial means to live elsewhere. Interviews conducted with residents revealed that many of the people who have left Hatfield are educated African-American professionals such as teachers and nurses. Hatfield today is characterized as a place with a low level of education attainment.

#### *Low Educational Attainment*

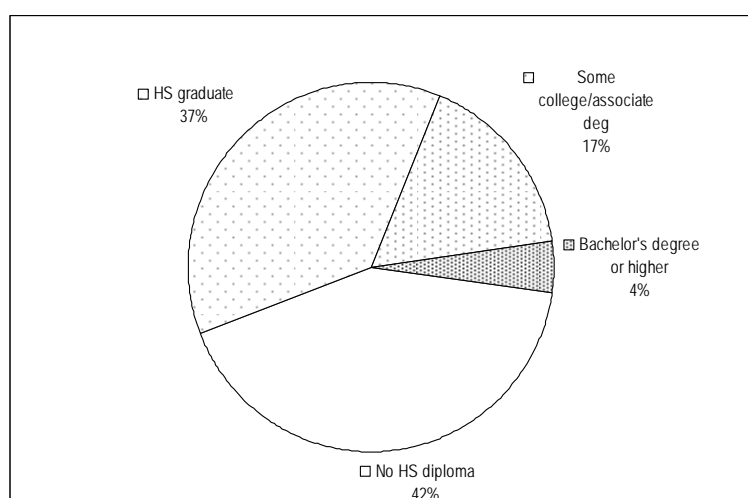
I have been on my block for over 25 yrs, and I'm just talking about the people that are young at this time that I've seen come up. Out of maybe 20 or 25 of them, maybe three have diplomas [high school diplomas]. That house next door to me is four girls between the ages of 18- 25; none of them have a diploma. Most of them have not even went to high school (interview with neighborhood resident).



The preceding description of the educational levels of youth on one neighborhood block is indicative of level of educational attainment among residents of the entire neighborhood. An estimated 42% of residents who are above the age of 18 do not have a high school diploma. This rate is significantly higher than the 29% without a high school diploma in the city of Verona.

Table 6 and Figure 5 illustrate the educational attainment for Hatfield residents aged 18 and over.

**Figure 5: Educational Attainment of 18 & older**



**Table 6: Educational Attainment - 18 and Over**

	<i>No HS</i>	<i>HS graduate</i>	<i>Some college</i>	<i>Bachelor's degree or higher</i>	<i>Total</i>
Hatfield	42%	37%	17%	4%	100%
Verona	29%	33%	20%	18%	100%

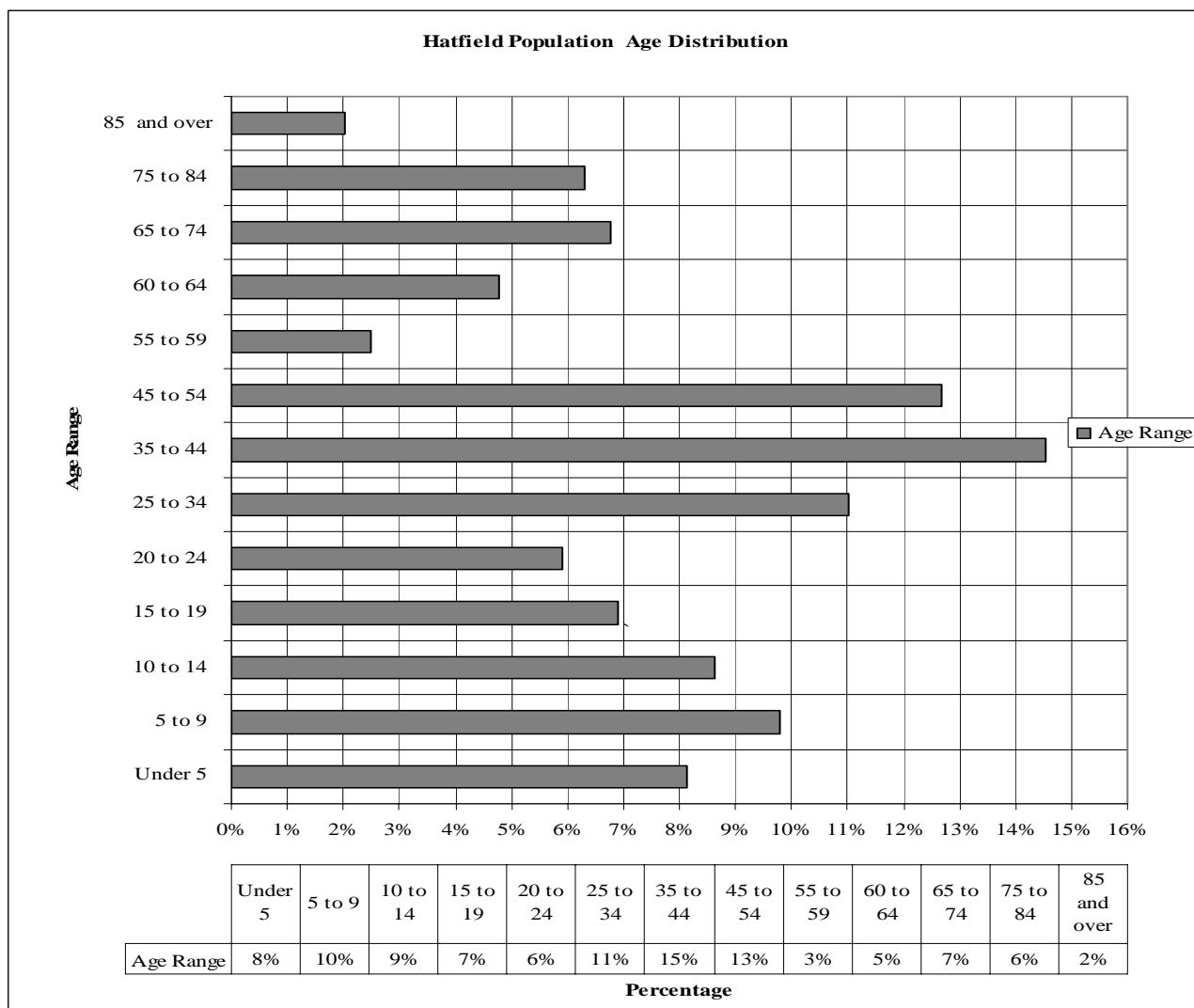
In this neighborhood, grandparents and parents beam with pride when an off- spring graduates from high school and enrolls in college as this not the norm in the neighborhood.

*A Place for All Ages*

On warm sunny days neighborhood children come out and play in the streets, youth (mostly male) hang out on street corners, and the elderly sit and watch the activity from their

porches. Twenty-five percent of Hatfield’s population are youth and children below the age of 19, 45% of the population are adults between the ages of 18 and 60, and 30% of the population consists of senior citizens aged 60 years and over (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Figure 6 depicts the detailed age distribution of Hatfield.

**Figure 6: Distribution of Population by Age**



The US Census estimates that more than 90% of Hatfield residents live in households, while the remainder lives in group quarters (e.g. group homes, shelters, and/or missions). Fifty

five percent of the households are family households and 45% are non-family households (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). The US Census Bureau distinguishes between family and non-family households as follows:

A family [household] includes a householder and one or more people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption; non-family [household] includes a householder living alone or with non-relatives only... non-relatives [are] any household member, including foster children, living in the housing unit but not related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

I suspect that a factor influencing the proportion of family and non-family households is the low rate of marriage in the neighborhood. Almost half of Hatfield's adult population has never been married, and only a quarter are currently married.

More than one third of Hatfield households are inter-generational. There are at least 100 households in which grandparents have primary responsibility for their grandchildren (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). This includes grandparents who have taken custody of grandchildren, because parents are imprisoned or otherwise unable or unavailable to take care of the children.

#### *Homeowners and Renters*

Among the elderly residents, many have lived in Hatfield all their lives. For example, Ms. Hattie is a 62-year-old woman who was born in Hatfield. She, along with two older sisters, continues to reside in Hatfield. One of her sisters lives in the house in which Ms. Hattie was born, and Ms. Hattie lives a few doors down from that house. At one time, Ms. Hattie represented the majority of residents in Hatfield – homeowners who had lived there for at least

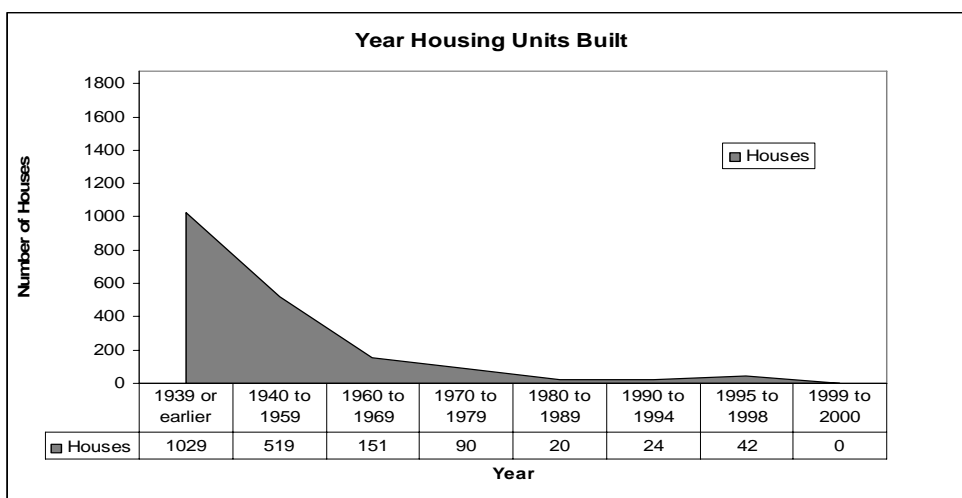
much of their adult lives. Today, there are slightly more renters than there are homeowners living in Hatfield. In 2000, 44% of Hatfield householders had lived in their current residence for less than five years. This data from the US Census supports a common perception of renters as transient.

Renters occupy 52% of the total units in Hatfield, while homeowners occupy 48% of the units. Unfortunately, demographic data on the owners of the rental properties was inaccessible. Approximately 63% of the owner-occupied housing units are not mortgaged. The median value of the homes is \$30,150 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000f), which is almost 50% lower than Verona’s median home value of \$59,700.

### The Value of a Home

According to the Verona Planning Commission, the houses in Hatfield were developed for a working-class population in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Figure 7: Age Distribution of Housing Units



Slightly more than 60% of the occupied housing units are single-unit attached row houses and the remaining 40% are mostly multi-unit row houses. The houses in the neighborhood have

similar floor plans. A typical single-unit house has two or three-stories and a basement. The first floor has a living room, dining room, and a kitchen. The second floor has three bedrooms and a bathroom. If there is a third floor, it is usually similar to the second floor. Due to years of neglect, many of the houses look old. Even the houses that have been well-kept and maintained look old surrounded by boarded up and dilapidated houses. As shown in Figure 7, over half of the houses were built more than 65 years ago.

### *Vacant and Declining Properties*

The vacant properties in Hatfield are indicators of neighborhood deterioration and decline. In 1990, the neighborhood had an estimated 2,807 housing units, of which 75% were occupied and 25% were vacant (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990). The total number of housing units was unavailable from the 2000 census. However, assuming the same number of housing units existed in 2000, the rate of unit occupancy decreased from 75% to 67% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000b). At 33%, vacant housing units in Hatfield are three times that of the City of Verona's 11% of vacant housing units (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a). Aisha, a 53-year-old woman who has lived in Hatfield all her life, describes the Hatfield of her youth as follows:

When I was a kid, this was beautiful. I'm telling you. You walk right here...it was beautiful...green grass; it was...it was beautiful. It was beautiful. Everything was different; the trees were different. They had fruit trees. People could grow fruit trees. They didn't have like these gardens they have but they had fruit trees. We had a lot fruit trees, beautiful flower trees. I mean all through this neighborhood, the smell was so good because people kept their property up. You could actually smell the grass. The grass was

green everywhere. There weren't a lot of vacant buildings. It was beautiful. It really was beautiful (Aisha, Interview)

With the abundance of vacant properties and prevalent property decline, Hatfield no longer looks the way that Aisha describes. Drawing from the views and opinions expressed by neighborhood residents, two factors seem to contribute to the property decline: (1) homeowners are getting older and (2) the number of renters is increasing

As the years go by, many of the homeowners are getting older and unable to keep up their properties. Their offspring have no interest in the properties and just rent them out, or they do not earn enough for adequate property maintenance. Nancy, a neighborhood resident who has lived in Hatfield since she bought her house 32 years ago, explains:

Now it's just like – most of the people that were there when I came have passed on. And it's just like the younger people that inherited the houses didn't want to care for the houses so they started renting them out, and changing them into rooming houses. There was just no concern.

The second contributing factor to property decline, at least from the standpoint of homeowners, is the increasing number of renters. Homeowners generally believe renters are less invested in the neighborhood (compared to homeowners) and therefore less inclined to maintain properties. One resident expressed her concern as follows:

Part of the problem is these apartment that are going up all over the neighborhood.

Before, it was all homeowners. You knew your neighbors were going to be around for a long time. Now with apartments, different people are coming in all the time. They are

not really interested in the community. They are trying to save up to buy their own houses.

This distinction made between homeowners and renters has implications for the residents' sense of responsibility towards the neighborhood. Homeowners generally assume renters are less invested in the overall well-being neighborhood because they do not own property.

### *A Coveted Space*

Housing and real estate is a regular topic of conversation in the neighborhood. People talk about who is buying property, who is selling, and who and what is being built where. In the early 1970s, there was a rumor circulating in the neighborhood about either the zoo or the railroad wanting to take over the neighborhood. Thirty years later, the residents of Hatfield are still afraid of losing their homes and being pushed out of the neighborhood. Residents fear that two nearby universities want to get their hands on the neighborhood to accommodate their growing campuses. They suspect the City of Verona of wanting to bring in higher-income residents to generate more income in property taxes. Residents also fear losing their homes and neighborhood to White people who are choosing to come back to live in the city from the suburbs. The fear of losing is never too far from the minds of people like Mr. Nelson, an elderly resident of Hatfield. At a meeting he attended at a community development corporation in an adjacent neighborhood, he was asked to inform other senior citizens in his neighborhood about a survey to be conducted. I was there when he shared the information with two of his neighbors as follows:

They are doing a survey to find out why seniors choose to stay in homes or go into a senior citizen center. What they're trying to do is get all our ideas, suck them up, and do what they want. They are pretending they want to understand our needs, but they are trying to eventually push us out of homes so they can move in. The city offers grants for housing supplies, but seniors are no longer applying for grants, because they are afraid the city will put a lien on their house. They are afraid to lose their house to their city.

While the fear of losing one's home is a personal concern, it extends to being a neighborhood concern because it has implications for everyone—homeowners and renters. If your neighbor loses his/her home, you might be next!

### **Working and Trading**

How do the residents of Hatfield support and sustain their families? This section addresses this question in two parts—making ends meet; and trading and dealing. Making ends meet discusses the struggles faced by residents to make ends meet, while trading and dealing focuses on the commercial activity in the neighborhood.

#### *Making Ends Meet*

Unemployment in Hatfield is high. The majority of Hatfield residents above the age of 16 are either not included in the labor force or are unemployed. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates only 38% of adults are members of the civilian labor force. The unemployment rate for the neighborhood is 8%. These statistics look even more dismal when compared to Verona's statistics in which 86% of Verona's population is considered members of the labor force and the unemployment rate is 3.4% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000d).



Approximately 62% of Hatfield’s population (ages 16 and over) is classified as “not in labor force” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000e). The category of “not in labor force” includes students, housewives, retired workers, seasonal workers, institutionalized people, and unpaid family workers (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Based on the estimated number of Hatfield residents enrolled in high school, college, or graduate school, students would make up less than 22% of category for “not in labor force” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000c). Employed residents work in a wide range of industries. The employment status and industry for individuals in the labor force is detailed in the Table 7.

**Table 7: Distribution of Labor Force.**

<i>WORK STATUS AND INDUSTRY</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Unemployed - no industry	23%
Educational, health and social services	21%
Retail trade	12%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	9%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	7%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	6%
Public administration	5%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	5%
Manufacturing	4%
Other services (except public administration)	3%
Construction	2%
Wholesale trade	2%
Information (e.g. publishing, broadcast, information processing)	1%
Total number in Labor Force	100%

On average, the residents of Hatfield travel 37 minutes to work (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000e). The most common mode of commuting to and from work is public transportation (52%), followed by driving (33%), and walking (12%). Only 40% of the households in Hatfield have one or more vehicles available. Hatfield is easily accessible by various modes of travel: walking, driving, and public transportation. Ideally located, Hatfield is well served by the Verona

Transport Authority (VTA) with six localized bus routes and one major trolley route that go through the area (Chen et al., 2002).

### *Low Income Levels*

Given the high level of employment, not surprisingly Hatfield is a low-income neighborhood. The median household income for the neighborhood was \$15,642 in 1999, with 48% of the households having incomes of less than \$15,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000g). Verona's median income of \$30,746 was almost double Hatfield's median income of \$15,642. More than 63% Hatfield households have incomes that fall below \$25,000. Consequently, an estimated 42% of individuals residing in Hatfield live below poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000g), which is a significant increase from 37% in 1990 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990). Verona is listed among the top ten cities with the highest rate of poverty in the nation (Catholic Campaign for Human Development, 2005). At 42%, Hatfield's poverty rate is almost double Verona's poverty rate of 22.9%. Getting by is a struggle for residents in this neighborhood. For some families, necessities such as food and heating in the winter are almost a luxury.

Only 58% of households in Hatfield report having income earnings. With the high unemployment rate, the high percentage of people not in the labor force, and low employment earnings, many households are forced to rely on supplemental income: 29% of households receive social security, 15% receive supplemental social security, 16% are on public assistance, and 16% receive retirement income. Welfare reforms introduced in 1996 included an adoption of a lifetime limit on cash assistance of 60 months (Michalopoulos et al., 2003). Considering the extent of poverty in Hatfield, these policies have direct implications for the neighborhood.

Nancy, a social service expert explains:

Because in Montrose, it's a five-year lifetime welfare—After five years, you cannot apply for welfare ever again. That's the new thing. And now they're trying to implement it. You can have as many children as you want to, but after that certain amount that they're coming up with, you're on your own. Whatever that dollar amount that you're getting, you're not getting anymore. The majority [of people in Hatfield] is on welfare. A whole lot them are gonna be dropped. Lots of people in our community already only get food stamps and medical. And the medical is limited to 18 visits a year to a doctor. That's why people come [to our agency] for eviction and all that. Where are you gonna live at for free? If you have no cash benefits, what are you gonna do?

With the welfare reforms, the struggle has become a little more intense for many families in the neighborhood.

Making ends meet is a struggle particularly for senior citizens living in this neighborhood. Having limited and fixed incomes, the seniors struggle with navigating city and state income supplement programs. A senior citizen describes his struggle:

With the little money that we have, they tell us you can't get any assistance if you are \$2 over the limit. How can they say that? We're living from month to month, barely making it. We have nothing. I get SS and disability. My SS went up, and they decreased my disability, and decreased my food stamps. Now I gotta pay money for each prescription I get...

Another senior citizen explains the measures she takes to get around the income limitations of many of the state and city assistance programs:

When I call up for any program, I'm in my house by myself. My sons are there, my daughter is there but I tell them nobody lives here but me. And this is all the income I have. I don't care who is in my house. Because if somebody else in there – they will ask how much do they have and everything.

In spite of these hardships, people do get by. I was surprised to see that many homes can afford to have luxuries such as cable television in their homes.

### *Trading and Dealing*

In addition to employment, residents generate income through trading and dealing. Commercial activity that takes place in Hatfield can be grouped into three categories: formal, informal, and illicit. Formal commercial activity takes place in established business enterprises such as stores and restaurants. Informal commercial activity consists of revenue generating activities that are less public and formal, such as those that take place in private residential homes, for example a home run day-care center. Illicit activities are revenue-generating activities that are illegal, such as drug trafficking and prostitution.

The majority of formal commercial activity takes place on Julian Avenue, a major commercial corridor that runs through Hatfield. Business establishments on Julian Avenue include small markets and grocery stores, dollar and variety stores, take-out restaurants, take-out liquor stores, retail clothing stores, beauty salons, and convenience stores. Formal commercial activity is not limited to the main business corridor, as there are convenience stores situated in the residential areas. However, the majority of these business establishments are not owned or operated by local residents. A few of the establishments do employ local residents. Most commercial activity operated by residents falls into the category of informal or illicit activity.

Residents engage in various forms of informal activity. These businesses take place in people's homes. Examples of informal commercial activity include the following: an elderly woman who makes and sells African-American delicacies; a young woman who braids hair in her clients' homes; a young man noted for his culinary skills who makes food over the weekend that neighbors buy by the plate; and an elderly woman who makes and sells pies for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Two forms of illicit businesses that are observable in Hatfield are drug dealing and prostitution. These activities are often not easy to spot by someone from outside the neighborhood. An entry from research field notes describes a drug deal occurring in Hatfield:

Across the house was a silver Lexus SUV with a white woman sitting at the steering wheel. Her window was rolled down and she was talking to a young black man. It looked like a drug deal to me, but I didn't want to look too closely in the event that I get myself into trouble. This is certainly not the first drug deal I have seen in this community – I don't look very closely, I note it and act as if I haven't seen anything out of place...carry on with my business, so to speak. I guess I have been watching too many cop shows! What struck me about this particular transaction was there were people walking up and down, on both sides of the streets. This is a residential community; some of the people walking by were kids. And yet there didn't seem to be any attempt to hide this deal – this was not a hidden alley. This was a well-lit residential street, at 5pm. People coming home from work, school whatever, and here is a drug deal going down. I even started to doubt that this must be a drug deal. I got a chance to get a closer look once I got into Mr. Mike's house – we could get a good look through the window. He

said to me, “You see that?” It was happening right in front of his front window. I asked him – “Is that what I think it is?” He said, “ Yes, she’s a regular – that woman is smoking that stuff right now. She comes here every day about this time, and every day about this time I am calling the police. And they haven’t been here yet.”

Illicit activities compromise neighborhood safety. Residents will tell someone new to the neighborhood that he/she should be careful to take safety precautions and be aware of his/her surroundings. For example, when Kwame purchased a house and moved into Hatfield a year ago, several of his neighbors strongly urged him to install an alarm system in his new house. Women in particular are warned against walking alone at night.

The sense of safety in the neighborhood is further diminished with the rise in youth violence. In recent times, Hatfield, along with other neighboring neighborhoods, has seen an alarming rise in incidents of youth violence. Juvenile arrests in Verona for violent incidents are reported to have spiked up by 40% between 2005 and 2006. Several schools close to Hatfield are among those with the highest rate for violence and truancy in the city.

### **Politics of Place**

Judging by the party affiliation of its elected officials, Hatfield aligns itself strongly with the Democratic Party. Elected officials at various levels of legislation – federal, state and city— represent the neighborhood. Elected and appointed officials at the local neighborhood level also represent the neighborhood.

#### *Political Representation Federal and State Levels*

At the federal level, a democratic congressional representative who has been in this office since 1995 represents Hatfield in the U.S. House of Representatives. The legislative branch of

the Montrose State government has two houses, a senate, and a house of representatives. In both houses, Democrats represent Hatfield. The state representative for Hatfield is Delroy Weldon. Delroy is also a resident of Hatfield and an active member of one of the community organizations participating in this study. I will say more about Delroy in the next chapter.

#### *Political Representation at City Level*

Verona's mayor is the executive officer in charge of the executive and administrative decisions for the city. The legislative branch of the city is the city council. The city council creates ordinances that govern the city. The city is divided into councilmanic districts with an elected councilperson representing each district. Hatfield is in a councilmanic district that is represented by Councilperson Moesha Weldon, also a Democrat. Moesha Weldon is the mother of State Representative Delroy Weldon and the widow of the late Leonard Weldon. Leonard Weldon is fondly remembered in Hatfield. He served as councilperson, prior to being elected to serve in the U.S. Congress. Before succeeding her husband as councilperson for the district, Moesha Weldon was administrative aide to Leonard Weldon. Moesha Weldon has served three terms in city council. Chairing three city council committees: education, finance, and housing and homeless, Moesha yields a lot of power in City of Verona.

#### *Political Representation at the Local Level*

At the local level, the neighborhood is represented by two elected officials—a ward leader at the ward level and a committee person at the division level, and an appointed neighborhood block-captain for the block. While neighborhood blocks are not political units, neighborhood block captains do act as representatives of their block and their neighborhood.

*Ward leaders.*

Councilmanic districts are made of several wards, and wards are made of divisions. Divisions are the smallest political unit in Verona. A Republican and a Democratic ward leader represent each ward. Many of the prominent elected officials for the neighborhood have at one time or another served as ward leaders. Their party's committee people in the ward select Ward leaders.

Committee people are elected to represent divisions. The role played by ward leaders is explained in an excerpt from a Verona publication below:

The ward leaders form the party's policy-making organization at the city level. This group is generally referred to as the City or County Committee. They elect the party's city chairperson, who supervises the full-time operations of the party office and also serves as the "voice of the party." In addition, each City Committee usually selects ("endorses") candidates for organizational support among those competing for its party nomination in the primary, fills vacancies when nominated candidates are unable to run in a final election, and nominates candidates for special elections to fill vacancies in public office

*Committeepersons.*

The primary role of committeepersons is to "transmit to the party leaders the opinions of the people in their division (their neighbors)" (from a Verona publication.). Through them, party leaders are able to stay in touch with the issues and views of the people in that constituency. Party leadership depends on committee people to seek out and register new voters in the party, provide services to voters, and get people out to vote at election time. A local committee person in Hatfield explains his role as committeeman:



If people in my neighborhood might need a light bulb in the alleyway, or...I'll put it like this. Anything, any problems –they might call me or see me. I point them in the right direction. So for everything that you do for them, when it's time for election to come, the committee people might come to you and say – Who should we vote for? So that's how we get city council, the mayor, the governor...all of them. This is the only time that I get to see the governor, the city council. It's the only time that I get to see these jokers. It's when they have committee people come to a big ballroom and they say – I need you. I need you to get your people to vote for me. And this is what I'm gonna do for your people... I don't work for the ward leader...the ward leader works for city council, the ward leader works for council, the ward leader works for the governor because all of them come to him...and he gotta come to his people. Cause we the people that know the people. Without us, there is no votes.

Committee people look to ward leaders, the councilperson, and the state representative to assist them with problems facing residents in their divisions.

### *Block captains*

Block captains do not hold a political office, but do they do represent the interest of residents on their block. Block captains are not elected by ballot. When someone wants to be a block captain, he or she asks the neighbors to sign a petition indicating their support for the individual. Block captains are affiliated with the city's Sanitation Division within the Streets Department. The primary responsibility of block captains is to organize block cleanings and beautification efforts. Ms. Marilyn, who has been a block captain since the 1980s, explains the position of block captain:

When block captains started organizing, police saw them as a resource and started pulling them in for town watch. We were not competing – our purpose was making sure we had representation of every block, cause every block is different. This is our base, our block captains, when we have a problem, communication is key. Let the people know about it. Block captains standard role is cleanup, beautification, if we want to have a block party... Years ago, when somebody died, you rest assured the block captain went along and got money from every house and gave food or money or whatever was needed in that case, if somebody was sick the block captain would do the same.... some places [city offices] you go to will ask you, do you have a block captain, some of these services don't want to deal with you if you don't have a block captain

The political context of Hatfield is shaped, in large part, by the formal and personal relationships between state, city, and local politicians. Hatfield residents exhibit a mixture of intimidation and reverence to elected politicians at the city, state, and federal levels. In some sense, residents expect elected officials to take care of them, rather than represent them. Take, for example, the way in which Hatfield residents relate to their councilwoman, Moesha. In conversations with one another, Hatfield residents casually refer to the councilwoman as Moesha and her office as Moesha's office. However, their attitude towards her is not so casual. There is reverence in the manner in which residents seem to assume that she has the power to resolve the concerns of individual residents and the community at large. For example, if a resident needs some help securing scholarship funds for his or her child, that parent will contact Moesha's office. The intimidation is evident in the reluctance of residents to challenge Moesha in any way. Residents even dissuade one another from criticizing her in public with warnings such as

“You will lose your house.” Residents assume that Moesha can use her power to harm or help them as she wishes. In contrast to the power accorded to elected officials, the only power residents seem to allow themselves is the power to vote.

### *Characteristics of Community Organizers*

Local political actors are usually community organizers and/or activists. During the time I spent in Hatfield, I met a number of block captains—all of whom were women. I did come across men who were committee people, but committee people are more like political organizers than community organizers. Their role is to keep members of the constituency happy so that they will vote for the “right” party when election time comes. In contrast, block captains are not necessarily affiliated with a political party. Their main concern is addressing the needs, primarily safety and cleanliness, of their block. A resident reflects on the gender differences in community activism:

Men are laid back. You know, they work all day. And just to do free work and all of this just to come home tired. They just don’t participate. Like my husband. I mean he will back me on anything but he won’t get out there and hit the pavements, or get up on the stage and speak or whatever. And I see that in most of the real men around [here].

A retired schoolteacher who owned her own home is credited with being the community organizer who founded one of the most powerful neighborhood organizations more than three decades ago. On the basis of her gender, profession, age, and homeownership status, she portrays the characteristics of typical community organizers in this neighborhood. Typical characteristics of community organizers in Hatfield are: female, above the age of 50, retired professionals with at least an associate’s degree, and homeowners who have lived in Hatfield for

over 25 years. Community organizers in the neighborhood have worked on projects such as: getting the city to put stop sign at a dangerous intersection; attempting to restore a military armory as a museum and library for the neighborhood; and establishing organizations. The most prominent organizers are typically female homeowners, aged 50 and above, who have lived in the neighborhood for at least 25 years and have a history of community activism in the neighborhood (e.g. as block captains or committee persons). Most have attained at least a high school diploma and are retired from professions such as customer service, banking and finance, and health. These characteristics are not typical community residents of the neighborhood. In a neighborhood where 52% of the residents are renters and 64% are below the age of 45, community organizers represent a minority.

### **Supportive Organizations in the Community**

Several groups of organizations in Hatfield provide support services to residents: schools, churches, a senior citizen center, and community-based organizations.

There are three schools in the neighborhood – two charter schools and an alternative public school for children with disciplinary problems. The two charter schools are owned by a nonprofit organization, and that serves children from pre-kindergarten to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The alternative public school is run by a different non-profit organization that works in partnership with public schools and communities to assist disruptive and low-performing students. With permission, community residents are able to use the school facilities for community meetings and other events. For example, Unity Day, an event organized by a local community organization, the Hatfield Residents Association was held on the schoolyard of one of the charter schools.

Churches in Hatfield have a history of community engagement. Participants in a focus group described the historical relationship between churches in the neighborhood and the community:

Churches were always involved in the community, offering programs such as girls' scouts, boys' scouts, Bible School, Sunday School, boys' night, and girls' night. Some of the churches had bowling alleys, basketball court and track right in the church. The churches also allowed their space to be used for dances, basketball, etc.

There are a considerable number of churches in Hatfield. The churches range in sizes and denominations. Several of these churches in the neighborhood continue the tradition of community outreach to residents through activities such as soup kitchens and clothing give-aways. There are also churches that avail their facilities for events such as community meetings.

There is one senior citizen retirement home in the neighborhood, owned and run by the Quaker-affiliated Brothers Rehabilitation Program (BRP). The retirement home is housed in a building that was a hospital at one time. In this retirement home, there is a room designated specifically for use by community groups for meetings and events.

There are also several community-based organizations formed by concerned neighborhood residents specifically to address quality of life issues in the Hatfield neighborhood. Among these are the Hatfield Residents Association, Hatfield Garden and Literacy Association, and Hatfield Business Association.

### **Conclusion**

The Hatfield neighborhood is a struggling neighborhood with great potential. Among those working to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood are four community

organizations that participated in this research study—Hatfield Business Association, Hatfield Residents Association, Hatfield Episcopal Church, and Hatfield Garden and Literacy Association. The next chapter describes the activities of these organizations.

## **CHAPTER 5: THE ACTIVITIES OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS**

### **Introduction**

Four organizations participated in this study: Hatfield Business Association, Hatfield Residents Association, Hatfield Episcopal Church, and Hatfield Garden and Reading Association. In this chapter, I provide an overview and profile of activities sponsored and/or supported by each of the participating organizations. Neither the overviews nor the profiles of activities are exhaustive. The overviews do not provide complete histories of the organizations, nor do the profiles of activities describe all the activities of the organizations. My goal in this chapter is to describe a sample of activities that are sponsored and/or supported by the organizations. The descriptions of the activities are guided by a modified structure of human activity that I have customized for this study (see Chapter 3). Given the research question under investigation, I focus on activities for which the subject is the organization and the object is either the organization itself or the neighborhood. The nature of my participation as an observer was different in each of the organizations. Consequently, I observed different types of activities in each organization. The differences in my participation in the organizations are reflected in the manner in which I tell the story of each organization.

The chapter is organized in four sections, with each section devoted to one of the participating organizations. Each section consists of three parts: (1) an overview of the organization, (2) descriptions of activities sponsored and/or supported by the organization and (3) a discussion of the contradictions within and between the activities of the organization.

## **Hatfield Business Association**

### *Overview: From a Carnival to a Ghost Town*

Julian Avenue is a major business corridor that runs through the Hatfield neighborhood. Historically significant, the avenue is said to be among the first turnpikes in the state of Montrose. Take-out liquor stores, taverns, social service agencies, beauty salons, discount retail shops, and take-out restaurants populate the strip of Julian Avenue that runs through the Hatfield neighborhood. Most take-out restaurants in this neighborhood have a bulletproof flexi-glass sheet that separates servers from their customers. Julian Avenue in Hatfield is also a base for street vendors selling wares ranging from clothing apparel to small electronics.

Driving on Julian Avenue less than seven miles west of Hatfield, you will find yourself in neighborhoods so starkly different from Hatfield that you might as well be in a different country. Although close to Hatfield in proximity, the neighborhoods are worlds apart from Hatfield in terms of socio-economic status. In these neighborhoods, there are no signs of street vendors, discount stores, or fast food take-out places on this strip of Julian Avenue. What you see instead are organic food stores, super-sized Barnes & Nobles bookstores, and classy sit-down restaurants where the servers will even come outside to serve their customers, instead of talking to them through bulletproof glass. The contrast is stark.

As Hatfield residents tell the story, the strip of Julian Avenue in Hatfield I have described is a faint shadow of what it was forty years ago. At one time, Julian Avenue was known as the place to shop. Older residents can recall being able to purchase everything they needed from the strip – quality food, clothes, and medications. There was even a bank and a theatre on Julian Avenue. Today, the building that once housed the only bank in the neighborhood is a pawnshop,



and the former theater is now a delicatessen store. Residents need to leave the neighborhood to get to a pharmacy or a bank. Reggie, a 54-year old man who has resided in Hatfield since he was 7 years old remembered Julian Avenue from his youth:

I wish you could have seen this community 45 years ago, or 35 years ago, or 40 years ago. It was like...It was like almost coming carnival – lights everywhere, businesses everywhere, money everywhere, bars, theatres, every thing...When Xmas came, they had lights going across the street. And down the street, they had big reefs. They had quality stores. They didn't have like little dollar stores, they had quality clothing. Even without the holiday and all that stuff, you could go up there like on a Sunday and you could window shop cause you could see in the windows. Now they got the gates, it looks like a dead town or something you know. [It used to be that] you could look inside and say ooh, I want to get that dress. Or that dress and shoes are pretty and all. You could do that on Sunday. You went to the movies and that's what you did on Sundays. Now you can't do that no more.

So what happened to Julian Avenue in Hatfield, which at one time was a Jewish neighborhood? Hatfield residents usually respond to this question by pointing to the exodus of Jewish residents and many merchants, who were also Jewish, to the suburbs in the 1950s and the 1960s. At that time, the merchants (primarily Jewish) who ran the business establishments on Julian Avenue in Hatfield were also residents of the neighborhood. Over time, the businesses that had been owned and run by Jewish resident merchants either shut down or relocated as Jewish residents relocated to the suburbs.

The African-American families that moved into houses vacated by the Jewish families did not establish businesses. This resulted in Julian Avenue becoming a commercially dormant “ghost town.” In the 1980s, after a decade or two of dormancy, a new group of investors started setting up businesses in Hatfield. The new investors were primarily immigrants from Korea. Hatfield Business Association (HBA) was established during this period of transition as Korean merchants opened businesses in the neighborhood. Although politicians in the African-American community were distrustful and suspicious of the Korean merchants, HBA welcomed and supported the new business owners. One of the first members of HBA explains:

The Koreans came in with their money and that’s what brought Julian Avenue back. We had several meetings because there was an anti-Korean movement going on in Verona. You had this undercurrent of black leadership that was saying don’t support the Koreans and yet the blacks weren’t doing anything to bring life back to the community. [The argument for not supporting the Koreans] was support your own black businesses—even though they didn’t exist. The leadership of Verona tried their best to turn all African Americans in the communities against them [the Koreans]. That’s what we [HBA] were trying to do [embrace the Koreans]. That was our objective.

HBA viewed the establishment of businesses by the Korean merchants as a step towards the economic development of the neighborhood. They saw it as a strategy for increasing employment opportunities for local residents, as well as generating revenue for enhancing the quality of life of the neighborhood. However, HBA also recognized that some “persuasion” would be necessary for the neighborhood to realize any benefit from the presence of these new businesses. Without persuasion, the possibility of businesses exploiting the neighborhood was

high, as the businesses were likely to take all the profit they made from the community. HBA was formed as an organization that would serve as a bridge between the businesses and the neighborhood. In the words of a long-time HBA member:

Our [HBA] objective was to enhance and bring better support for the neighborhood. We had a program. We had a plan. We had an objective. Monies...we wanted monies from these business. And we wanted monies on a consistent basis from these businesses, and input from these businesses. Of course we wanted to build recreation centers, we wanted to build libraries, we wanted all these things back then.

In some sense, HBA acts as a neighborhood watchdog as it attempts to encourage local businesses to invest in the community. The organization concentrates its efforts on businesses owned by persons who do not share the same race and/or ethnicity as local residents. Community, in the context of HBA, seems to be defined more by race and ethnicity than by territory or place.

*Activities Sponsored and Supported By Hatfield Business Association*

I observed HBA sponsoring and supporting at least three sets of activities: (1) staying alive, (2) strengthening the organization, and (3) managing businesses. Staying alive is an activity motivated by the organization's need to survive. Going beyond survival, HBA engages in actions aimed at strengthening its capacity to meet its objectives. The third activity, managing businesses, is an activity motivated by HBA's understanding of what business establishments owe to the community. In these first two activities, the object of the activity is the organization itself. In the third set of activities, the object is the neighborhood.

*Staying Alive*

HBA was founded by Brother Tariq Hassan, a well-respected community activist and life-long resident of Hatfield. Brother Tariq passed away approximately five years ago. Since his passing, HBA has faced numerous challenges that have threatened the survival of the organization. For instance, due to some complications with property ownership, HBA was forced to vacate its offices, ideally located on Julian Avenue. Without an office on the avenue, the legitimacy of the organization as an organizer of businesses on the corridor was diminished considerably, and the survival of the organization threatened. The activity of staying alive is motivated by the organization's need to survive in the face of these threats. This activity consists of two components: (1) carrying on a legacy and (2) negotiating identity.

*"...I'm listening to a dead man": Carrying on the legacy*

For a while there, about a year [after my husband's passing], I still kept on an answering machine at the business. I didn't realize that I had done that until it was brought to my attention. A friend of ours, both his and mine, called once and left a message for me and then she called me and she said, "Khadijah, when I realized who I was leaving the message for after the voice came on, I said dag – I'm listening to a dead man." I said, oh – my goodness. I never thought of it that way, but the reality was what it was....

These are the words of Sister Kadhijah, the CEO of HBA, talking about carrying on after her husband passed away. It was then that Sister Khadijah took over the reigns of the organization. In the years that she shared her life with her late husband, Sister Khadijah supported her husband's efforts in community organizing and came to embrace his mission and vision of HBA as she worked alongside him. She explains:

I watched this man who seemed to have this great spirit and wanted to make a difference... And he taught me of his history. And I could see how it connected to mine, dealing with the transition of a community, of neighborhoods. I just began to work under him, and listen, and learn of his goals, what his mission was. His mission was to implement that collective because of the fact this area was changing so rapidly, and then the Jews were moving out and then the Asians were moving in. And the blacks were predominant [home] owners still in the area. And that's what I embraced it for. Also cause I wanted to be able to make a difference. And I think the best way to do that is that you have to get involved... I kinda became his right hand...so pretty much I worked directly under him as assistant director and in administration primarily. I would do all of the office management work – letters, scheduling, assist and accompany him when he had like hearings to go to, which he did, and that kind of thing.

Five years after Brother Tariq's passing, HBA continued existence is because of Sister Khadijah's efforts. She has made concerted efforts to maintain the name and address of the organization to facilitate continuity. For example, when the HBA office shut down, she had the office phone number transferred to her mobile phone to ensure that communication would remain. Sister Khadijah has also built on relationships established by Brother Tariq with entities both within and outside Hatfield. She sought the support of people and entities that previously worked with Brother Tariq, such as the group of professors at ~~the~~ Montrose University that has provided various forms of technical assistance to HBA over the years.

*Negotiating identity*

As a result of Sister Khadijah's efforts, HBA has continued to have a presence on the corridor. However, championing the legacy of her husband has resulted in Sister Khadijah feeling "buried in his image." She explains it as follows:

I wanted to maintain a legacy as a respect to the pioneer. But I didn't want to become buried in his image. And that's what I was hoping people wouldn't do. Even though you're embracing someone else's vision, and learning someone else's direction or their plan, I still needed to have my own self-identity. And I think that's something that we as women sometimes don't do often enough. We forget about ourselves and we embrace other people's...our spouses dreams and expectations of what they want to do. And even today when I come in contact with folks who still know that I was his wife, they still say – this is Mrs. Hassan, you know, Tariq Hassan. They're still relating me to like that. They knew me as Mrs. Hassan – I said call me Sister, had to get them out of that, I'm Sister Hassan, so they can start identifying me as an individual beyond that. People started learning Khadijah, who I was.

To a great extent, Sister Khadijah is perceived as an extension of her husband, with HBA being seen as the pet-project of a grieving widow. Consequently, she struggles to be taken seriously by entities from which she seeks support. In her words:

As a woman, I've been told because I'm a woman trying to do this, and they pat me on the back "don't get discouraged" you know what I mean. I say that's because people limit the ability of the woman. A woman is a spirit, woman is human, woman is a woman. It just so happens to be a woman, with the same mind...Why can't you take me serious? My biggest challenge has been to be taken serious...to be able to interact with

other entities that can help make this happen – I’m talking dealing with my elected officials, dealing with the entities that can help with... the financial resources providers that can help make this happen.

People consider Sister Khadijah and HBA to be one and the same: HBA is Sister Khadijah (albeit, as an extension of her husband), and Sister Khadijah is HBA. As one merchant put it:

She [Sister Khadijah] is the heartbeat, she is HBA. That’s her – that’s her baby, that’s her project, that’s her. If you support that, you are supporting her.

Something that stands out to me in this activity is that the survival of the organization seems to be propelled more by personal concerns than it is by community or organizational concerns. Sister Khadijah is committed to continuing the legacy of her husband. Her supporters (and non-supporters) relate to her more as a dedicated widow, than as a community organizer. Sister Khadijah’s gender is both an advantage and disadvantage in this activity. It is an advantage in that it legitimates her role as the leader of HBA. Society generally looks favorably upon a woman who is committed to her husband’s dream, especially after his death. However, supporting Sister Khadijah as a grieving widow is different from supporting her as a community organizer. Sister Khadijah has struggled to be recognized as a community organizer independent of her husband.

Being able to identify the organization with a person has helped HBA remain visible in the neighborhood. However, while continuing the legacy of the founders and negotiating a new identity has kept HBA alive, it has not been sufficient for HBA to carry out its work. In the

activity of strengthening the organization, I describe a series of actions undertaken by HBA to move forward with its work and its mission.

### *Strengthening the Organization*

Lack of resources is one of HBA's major challenges. The organization has been unable to access resources ordinarily available to community organizations from the city and state. For instance, when HBA lost its offices on Julian Avenue, the organization requested permission from the City of Verona to take over an abandoned building ideally located on Julian Avenue. Their request was denied. Apparently, HBA was denied support because of sanctions placed on the organization as a result of some political *faux pas*. Somewhere along the line, HBA lost favor with two very powerful politicians: Moesha Weldon (the elected city council person for the district), and her son, Delroy Weldon (the elected state representative for the area). Without the support of these two politicians, accessing support at the city and state level has been virtually impossible for HBA. Councilwoman Moesha Weldon chairs a citywide committee with overall responsibility for all matters related to housing and neighborhood development in Verona. Consequently, she has the power to influence decisions regarding support to neighborhood organizations, such as granting or denying permission to use abandoned buildings.

In addition to political roadblocks, HBA competes for resources with more well established organizations. One of these organizations is the Mercy Center. Like HBA, the Mercy Center is organizing businesses on the Julian Avenue business corridor. For now, Mercy Center is concentrating its business organizing efforts in neighborhoods just outside of Hatfield. However, the word on the street is Mercy is looking to extend its operations to Hatfield and beyond. Should they succeed, HBA would be put out of business. In addition to Mercy Center,



HBA also competes for resources with Hatfield Residents Association (HRA<sup>4</sup>). Designated by the City of Verona as the neighborhood advisory council (NAC), HRA is responsible for coordinating and supporting all the community organizations in Hatfield. Delroy Weldon, the state representative, is the president of HRA. Moreover, Delroy is well connected. For one, he is the son of Councilwoman Moesha Weldon. Given the contentious relationship between HBA and the Delroys, HBA cannot count on HRA's support. These obstacles intensify HBA's struggle to survive. To strengthen its capacity to move around these obstacles, HBA engages in two actions: building collaborations and restructuring the organization. They are described below.

*"... We can't do it by ourselves": Building Collaborations*

HBA employs collaboration as an instrument for getting around the obstacles of resource limitations and political sanctions. Below is a definition of collaboration explicated by Sister Khadijah:

We can't do it by ourselves, sometimes we need to connect with other entities that can help us set our pace, or help us stabilize our objectives. In our community, we have several entities who are grassroots organizations, designed and developed as grassroots organizations. They are feeling the struggle too. So if we partner, or connect with them on a project or two, I think that helps to open the door to us reaching some of the goals that we set for our organization. That's why we don't mind sharing the pot. I believe, if you are not selfish about keeping projects that you initiate, then that might help it escalate

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<sup>4</sup> The Hatfield Residents Association is also participating in this study.

a lot quicker. There is a difference between collaborations and partnerships. With collaboration, you still maintain your separate identity. Partnership means you connect – that everything means, your name is on a lot more, you are not independent.

Her definition can be summarized as follows: collaboration is project-based support between independent organizations. Collaborating with other entities, HBA is able to meet its objectives without losing its unique identity as an organization. Although project-based, collaboration has implications for long-term relationships. This is because the exchange of support between organizations can happen at different points in time. For example, if HBA receives support from a particular entity on a project they are working on today, there is an understanding that HBA will support this entity on some future project of the collaborating entity. Understood in this way, collaboration is about building and investing in long-term relationships.

A good example of how HBA uses collaboration as an instrument for reaching its goals is the Julian Park incident. Julian Park is a public park on Julian Avenue to which HBA has strong connections dating back to the 1980s. The park is contested territory, with HBA and Mercy Center both vying to be official overseers of the park. The two organizations, HBA and Mercy Center, sit on the board of Weed & Seed (a federally funded crime-prevention program). In their capacity as board members, HBA and Mercy Center were appointed to co-chair the planning committee for a recent Weed & Seed annual event. As told by Sister Khadijah, the representative from Mercy Center refused to co-chair the event with Sister Khadijah, insisting that Mercy Center chair the event alone. In response, Weed & Seed refused to take sides, maintaining that if Mercy Center chose to pull out, their organization would continue to work

with HBA. That is exactly what happened! HBA chaired the event on its own. Sister Khadijah views this incident as a major victory for HBA. Through their collaboration with Weed & Seed, HBA had “won” the battle for control over the park against a strong competitor.

One of HBA’s strongest collaborative relationships is with Change Advocates, a non-profit organization assisting low-income people to establish their own businesses. The founder and CEO of Change Advocates, Sonya, is a seasoned community organizer who has more than 15 years of experience working with non-profit organizations. Sonya’s association with HBA started when she agreed to provide consultancy services to HBA in the areas of grant-wring and board development. Working together, Sonya and Sister Khadijah have developed a mutual friendship, a “sister-hood.” It is through this collaboration that HBA acquired new office space. The two organizations have been sharing a rented office suite located in a building owned by an associate of Sonya’s. Since HBA has been struggling with finances, Sonya has been covering rent payments for both their offices.

A new strategy for working around the obstacles to accessing city funding presented itself when Sonya was hired as business outreach coordinator for the *Empowerment Zone* initiative, a federally-funded economic revitalization program sponsored by the City of Verona.

Sonya describes her responsibilities as business outreach coordinator as follows:

I actually work with the businesses to help them legitimize themselves in some instances, and try to identify some of the things that are going to help them to be able to better sustain themselves. HBA is a business association, and it works with businesses. That’s what it should be doing... My job is to be the consciousness of the community. Cause you can say from one side of your face you want the community to revive, and

decrease the blight and the whole nine yards, while on the other side of your face you can be saying but I want to control these people. I want to make the poor neighborhoods nice but I wanna control you as well. As a people, we need to know that even when we are getting help, it is being deemed as control. If I feel like you are competing with me, then I'm gonna stop feeding you. So I can't forget that I'm only being fed what is beneficial for someone else's dream, or someone else's benefit. It's not necessarily looking out for those who have the greatest needs.

Working as business outreach coordinator, Sonya continues to provide consultancy services to HBA, only this time she represents the City of Verona. Although the City of Verona pays her salary, Sonya sees herself as someone working for her community. For Sonya, "community" seems to define socio-economic class and race, not necessarily territory. Sonya's personal struggles of living on welfare, in subsidized housing as a single mother of two, are still fresh in her memories. She refers to these experiences when she talks about her commitment to working in and for low-income African-American neighborhoods.

Because Sonya has been hired to provide similar services as those provided by her non-profit organization, Change Advocates, there is an inherent conflict of interests. She has resolved this conflict by shifting focus from her own non-profit organization to helping other organizations, such as HBA. She hopes that these other organizations will help her organization in the future. She explains her reasoning:

Well, I decided that while working on HBA, I can't work on me at the same time, in the same space. I want them to help her, and I feel confident that she's gonna reach back and help me. I think that in order for me to do what I'm gonna do, I need to quit [Change

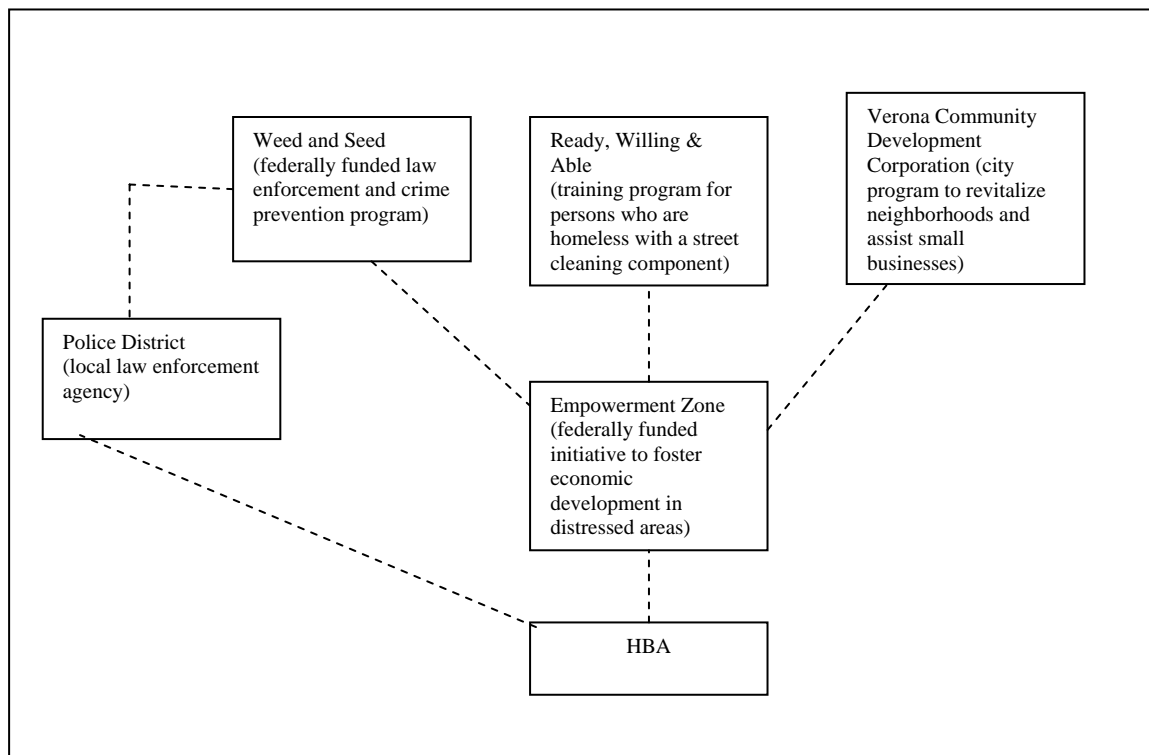
Advocates] cause I've a conflict of interest. My hands are tied right now by me working for the city, so I don't want cut off my nose to spite off my face. So right now I need to just set me down and focus my interest in other groups that can later on help me. I can't do both, I'm afraid I'll lose both. So I decided that the bigger and better thing will be help to her [Sister Khadijah], and then let her reach back and help me. I think she'll do that. It's like making a decision in investing good money.

Working for the city, Sonya helps HBA develop into a stronger organization. A stronger HBA would be in a better position to support Change Advocates when the time comes. In this way, the collaboration between HBA and Change Advocates potentially benefits both organizations. Sonya's connection to the city facilitates HBA gaining access to a network of well-positioned and well- resourced programs in the city. Figure 8 depicts the entities in the network to which HBA is now connected. Sister Khadijah (representing HBA) is invited to sit on the board of several of the organizations, to participate in programs organized and delivered by the organizations, and to collaborate in the activities of these organizations. Sister Khadijah's participation in these organizations allows her to take advantage of organizational and board development workshops and seminars sponsored by organizations in this network.

Through establishing relationships with these external entities, HBA is able to survive in the face of severe resource limitations. In addition to accessing resources, these relationships legitimize HBA as a community organization. The recognition of HBA by city and federal entities affirms HBA as an organization working in the Hatfield neighborhood. The object in the action of "building collaborations" is the external environment—garnering resources and dealing with obstacles in the environment. In the next action I describe, "cleaning house," the object of

the action shifts from dealing with the external environment to the internal workings of the organization.

**Figure 8: Network of HBA Resources**



### *Cleaning House: Restructuring the Organization*

Prior to the restructuring of HBA, Sister Khadijah often lamented that she was tired of saying “we” when she actually meant “I.” HBA’s former board had not pulled its weight. The board members came to board meetings but left Sister Khadijah to do all the running around for the organization. Part of the reason for this was that Sister Khadijah’s leadership style did not leave room for board members to play any role in decision-making. She wanted board members to help her carry the load, but she did not want to share control of the organization with them. Following the advice of consultants, HBA recently restructured the organization. I discuss two processes employed in this action: making new rules—and forming a team.

Making new rules: developing bylaws.

HBA was incorporated in the 1980s as a program under Bookcase Incorporated, another community organization also founded by Brother Tariq. In time, HBA came to have a much stronger presence than Bookcase, the parent organization, which is now essentially defunct. However, because it was a program within Bookcase Incorporated, HBA operated under Bookcase's bylaws and its non-profit status. At the advice of consultants to HBA, Bookcase's non-profit status is now being transferred to HBA. This new direction necessitates the formulation of new bylaws for HBA. A legitimate non-profit organization is expected to have by-laws. With this understanding, funders and prospective board members are among the entities that regularly request to see HBA's bylaws. The bylaws also serve as guidelines for the administration of the organization.

Five people representing three entities: HBA, Empowerment Zone, and Montrose University participate in creating new HBA by-laws. HBA is represented by Sister Khadijah and Omar. Sister Khadijah provides the vision guiding the mission of this organization. Another participant from HBA is Omar, an HBA board member. His participation is limited to brief appearances at some meetings. His attendance is a symbolic gesture. He is there to show his moral support for Sister Khadijah. However, his contribution to the actual writing of the bylaws is minimal. As a consultant representing the *Empowerment Zone*, Sonya helps to put Sister Khadijah's vision into the language and format typically found in the bylaws of non-profit organizations. The third entity participating in this action is Montrose University. Fungai, a professor at Montrose University, is also a consultant on the project. He does not participate in the writing of the bylaws; instead, he reviews the final document and suggests revisions to the

content and format of the bylaws. As participant observer, I assist with typing and formatting the document, asking questions of clarification along the way.

The original bylaws of Bookcase Inc., along with templates and examples of bylaws used by Sonya for other organizations are among the tools employed in developing HBA's new bylaws. In the process of creating these new bylaws, Sister Khadijah has acquired some new skills on the computer.

There are occasional disagreements during the formulation of the new bylaws. On these occasions, Sonya's views usually prevail as the expert on non-profit organizations and as someone with a great deal of experience in developing bylaws. Sister Khadijah does not argue with her on the technical aspects of the bylaws; her major concern is that the bylaws are reflective of her vision. There is some contention generated by the bylaw articles related to the duties and responsibilities of the board of directors and executive officers. Sonya insists that HBA's bylaws have to follow the structure of organizations prescribed by template (s) for non-profit organizations.

Sister Khadijah struggles with the idea that she cannot have both legislative power (as chair of the board) and executive power (as chief executive officer or executive director) in the organization. Sonya stands firm on this issue and basically forces Sister Khadijah to choose between having the power of vote (as president of the board) or the power of influence (as CEO and paid employee of the organization). Sister Khadijah chooses to be CEO, since she is already playing in the organization as the only staff (unpaid) member of HBA. I suspect that financial reward is the primary consideration for Sister Khadijah's choosing the position of CEO over that of chair of the board—CEOs are paid employees; board chairs are not. HBA is already her main



occupation; getting paid for it makes sense. Sister Khadijah's struggle reflects a leadership style in which she controls all aspects of the organization. She agrees to go against this style because of Sonya's insistence that she has to follow the accepted norms for structuring non-profit organizations.

#### No Room for Radicals: Forming a Working Team

According to HBA's bylaws, the management of the business, property, and affairs of the organization should be the responsibility of the board of directors. HBA needed to form a new board to take on these responsibilities. The process of forming a new board consisted of two elements: (1) terminating "problematic" board members and (2) inviting new people to the board.

The word on the street was that HBA had lost favor with Moesha and Delroy Weldon (the city council person and state representative) due to the actions of the then chair of HBA's board, Glover. Glover, a 60-year old African-American male, has had a business establishment on Julian Avenue for close to 20 years. After returning from the Vietnam War, he became very involved in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Glover worked with Brother Tariq on the HBA project from its inception. An articulate man, Glover is very interested in politics and had some strong views about politics and politicians as revealed in the following interview excerpt:

I have always loved America. I love this country. I love America not because of the people who run America. I love America for what is supposed to stand for. I was brought up to believe that America is that place where everyone could be free. The reality of that is something different. To say I'm free – and to find out that you are not free. To believe that freedom means to be free, and find out that what freedom means is

total control. You are free as long as I allow you, as long as you are doing what I allow you to do...I have learnt that in order to get anything done in this city, you have to have political backing. Unless you have that – nothing will change. I no longer believe that things will change. I think they will change, but not the kind of change we are advocating. Black people have gone without for so long that when you give them little, they are content. They are so grateful for the little, they don't want to ask for more. For example, there are over 1,000 people unemployed in this community. If we get 10 jobs, the politicians are satisfied. They are no longer concerned about the rest. That's my problem with the black politicians – they are not representing the interest of black folks in this community.

Not surprisingly, Glover has a reputation of having been a black radical “back in the day.” I occasionally saw him debating politics with patrons and employees in his shop. He brought his radical politics with him when he served as president of HBA. Sister Khadijah was uncomfortable with Glover's politics, saying:

His approach is different. He will say things to other people to the media, or to other individuals as president of HBA. But these will be his personal views, but is presenting them in his capacity as president of HBA and so he is representing HBA. These are not HBA's views.

HBA's views, according to Sister Khadijah, are those that the organization has agreed upon. Glover's radical views allegedly resulted in some negative consequences for HBA with the two most power politicians in the area closing their doors to HBA, and essentially cutting off access to city and state support for the organization. Sister Khadijah felt compelled to ask

Glover to resign from the board. Coincidentally, I just happened to be in Glover's shop the day he received the letter requesting his resignation. The entry in my field notes from this day reads:

I stop by Glover's shop on my way to HBA. While I'm there – he receives a registered letter. He knows it is from Sister Khadijah before he opens it. He opens it and reads it. He says, "They're trying to kick me out. This letter says they are going through a transformation and with immediate effect; I am no longer on the board. They are trying to kick me out." Observing him, he didn't seem to be very upset by this. His immediate reaction seems to be of slight amusement. It almost seems like he was expecting it. I got the sense that he felt sorry for Sister Khadijah. I didn't sense disappointment or anger; I think I did sense sadness. As he continued to talk, his comments led to his disappointment with black politicians in Verona and the race issue.

Interviewing Glover a few weeks after he had been forced resign, I ask him how he felt about the resignation. He responds:

My problem with HBA is the fact that...actually it wasn't a problem of mine. It was said by some people from the city level that they weren't gonna do anything for HBA unless I was no longer a part of it. So when I was asked to resign, I didn't oppose that. I just accepted it. Because my thing is I want to see changes on Julian Avenue... But because of some political issues that I got involved in, and I voiced my opinion, I expressed my right as a citizen. And because these people are in powerful positions, and they can cut off support systems and things that will enhance the business corridor. They wouldn't respond to anything that we requested. So when I was asked to resign, I didn't have any problem resigning. But I'd like to see the area progress. If I am an interference in that

progression, I would rather step down. So that's why I don't have a problem. I'm not angry with anyone. I'd like to see success especially for the African-American people.

Evidently, the removal of Glover from the board is a concession made in response to the sanctions. The goal is to make amends with the politicians that have the power to withhold resources from HBA. What remains to be seen is if this action yields the intended results of gaining the favor of the two most powerful politicians in the area.

The next step in forming a new board is to bring in new people to serve on the board. To do this, Sister Khadijah compiles a list of people to invite to sit on the board of directors. With Sonya's counsel, Sister Khadijah invites people she believes possess skills needed by the organization. For example, she wants a treasurer who has bookkeeping or accounting experience. Sister Khadijah agrees with Sonya that a homemaker who does not have formal accounting qualifications or experience would not qualify for this position. Sonya explains:

Someone who is a housewife does not have adequate qualifications [to be treasurer] – she would have to be an assistant to the treasurer. It's a delicate position, requires someone with more professional skills than just housekeeping. If she has an interest, maybe we can provide her with some training...and then after the training, she can fill that position. As assistant to the treasurer, she will learn. Keeping your dollars straight as far as the government is concerned will be death of you if don't do it correctly; they don't care if you have lack of knowledge – you shouldn't be in that position. Some people will say we don't have any money so what's the point...but you should prepare for when the money starts coming in.

Sister Khadijah sends out invitation letters to approximately 20 potential board members. These are not “blind invitations.” The people invited are people that have been supportive to Sister Khadijah and HBA. Not all who are invited are interested in sitting on the board. Individuals who are interested but are unable to commit to attending meetings every month are offered a spot on the advisory committee. Sister Khadijah tells the attendees at the first board meeting:

You were selected based on your longevity with either Bookcase or HBA, the rapport that has been established throughout that time span, your expertise, your professional positions in the community, as business persons and as community representatives

The new board members are mostly African-American males, and several of them are practicing Muslims. They represent businesses and non-profit organizations on the corridor, with most being owners or executive directors of these organizations. Many are either former or current residents of Hatfield (or nearby neighborhoods). A couple of the members are also block captains or committee people in the neighborhood. When asked about their commitment to HBA, board members generally express a desire to see the neighborhood become cleaner and safer, because this is where they lived and/or worked.

Considering Sister Khadijah’s desire to control the organization, her nomination for presidency of the board is not surprising. For the position of chair of the board, Sister Khadijah nominates Omar. Omar is an African-American male in his fifties with 15 years of affiliation with HBA. A practicing Muslim, Omar first became involved with HBA after meeting Brother Tariq at a religious event. Chairing HBA’s board is Omar’s first experience as chair of a board. He had been a member of the previous board of HBA and has been a consistent supporter of the

organization since Sister Khadijah took over as leader of the organization. Although he has a bachelor's degree in business, Omar is neither a business owner nor is he affiliated with any establishment on Julian Avenue. I suspect that Sister Khadijah nominates him on the basis of his commitment and loyalty to her. Prior to being voted into the position of chair of the board, Omar viewed his role in HBA as assistant to Sister Khadijah. He says:

My title is assistant to Sister Khadijah. That's my title – Assistant to the Sister.

Whatever she needs, that's what I do. I'm the VP for her, I can be spokesperson for her, secretary sometimes... Oh gosh – anything, advisor where she can bounce things off me, showing up for HBA meeting, being supportive, being a catalyst to ideas...it's been a lot. Being patient, and also being diversified enough to wear any hat she wanted me to wear at any point. It's a whole lot, whatever she needs.

A few months after his election as chair of the board, there is little change in Omar's perception of his duties and responsibilities in the organization. Regarding his role as chair of the board, Omar says:

I chair the meetings, and I oversee the body to a degree of the board of directors. I have to chair the meetings. That means keeping the protocol in line, the structure of how we do our meetings, make sure we have our agendas and itineraries completely as much as possible looked into to at our meetings, communication lines, representation, representation of the organization as the chair, representing the board of directors also. I do a lot of things as a direct arm of our president and executive director, Sister Khadijah. The president [Sister Khadijah] doesn't like me to word it like this, but I told her I'm her assistant and she's my boss. Meaning that anything she needs done, I'm her liaison to

make sure that she has someone there to fulfill some of the needs, the many needs of the president. In essence, it's almost functioning as the vice-president although we don't have an office of vice-president. I act as assistant to the president. The president [doesn't like me to say that] because she says that she is not my boss, that we are a team and I'm one of her team members, we are partners. I'm her subordinate, and I just like to say whatever you need...in this submissive position in my role, understanding the great works of our president. So I just open myself to whatever she needs like that.

Even after accepting this new position, Omar's understanding of the role he plays in the organization does not really change. Following the bylaws of HBA, as Chair of the Board, Omar should be Sister Khadijah's boss. I suspect that Sister Khadijah nominated Omar as Chair because she trusts that he understands that, regardless of what is written in the bylaws, Omar would not try to "boss her around." She trusts that they would work as a team – and not employer and employee.

Omar believes his involvement with the organization gives him a voice and provides a platform for him to participate in determining what happens in the community in which he resides. He describes what he means by having a voice:

With HBA I get a voice. I get a chance to [sit in meetings] with different departments of commerce, the chamber of commerce, the black chamber of commerce, city hall, the city council, oh man...I can name so many different meetings that I've sat in...with people who are calling shots. People who are deciding what's gonna happen and affect lives of the people in our community for the next 10, 20, 30 years. And just to be there and hear what they say, and hear how they think, and how they make it happen. And then

sometimes make some input. And some of the great leaders we have had at the HBA meeting, where we have invited the mayors, the council people, the governors, the bankers, and we have had a chance to express what we want for people in our community. Some things were taken and affected, and some were not – but at least they know. HBA gives me a venue or platform to have a voice... it gives me a platform to network, to train, to get educated. And to be effective – to be involved, to go do something, roll my sleeves up.

Omar appreciates the opportunity to meet with decision-makers. He does not necessarily see his role as a decision-maker, but more of an assistant to the decision-makers. His role is to give his input, while decision-making is the terrain of “the people who call the shots,” politicians and city officials.

With Omar as president/chair of the board, Sister Khadijah has been able to resolve her struggle to control the organization. While Omar professes that he will follow her “script,” there is a delicate dance of power occurring between them. For instance, at meetings ostensibly chaired by Omar (as president), Sister Khadijah usually sit right next to Omar and will interject to get him back on track when she thinks he is not “staying with the script.”

Now that HBA has a committed group of people serving on the board, the challenge is to get them to work effectively. After several months, the involvement of the members has not gone much beyond attending monthly board meets. The members of the board are generally not involved in other aspects of the organization. This lack of involvement is most apparent in the preparation of a grant that HBA submitted to the City of Verona. Being eligible to apply for the grant is a major milestone for the organization. For Sister Khadijah, “throwing HBA’s hat in the



ring” signals that HBA has gained legitimacy and recognition as a player in community politics. Sister Khadijah relies on the support and assistance of representatives from other entities, namely the *Empowerment Zone* and Montrose University, to help her put this grant together. She does not call on her board members because she believes they are too busy running their own businesses. She is reluctant to draw them into the task because they have full time jobs and family obligations to contend with. This sentiment reveals that Sister Khadijah expects the work of HBA to be of a relatively low priority in the lives of the board members. She expects the work of HBA to come after work and family. This presents a contradiction. On the one hand, highly skilled professionals are the preferred board members, and on the other hand, because of their professional responsibilities, they are not expected to make the organization a priority. This may not be an issue for a fully-staffed organization, but in HBA’s situation, in which Sister Khadijah is basically the only (unpaid) staff, I am left wondering if HBA’s new board can meet the promise of strengthening the organization.

### *Managing Businesses*

When Sister Khadijah introduces HBA to new people, she refers to it as a business association that serves as a liaison between the business community and the residents. A popular refrain in the neighborhood is: “They [Asian merchants] are taking from the community and giving nothing back.” As liaison, HBA views its role as ensuring that businesses that were benefiting from the patronage of residents contribute to enhancing the quality of life for neighborhood residents, i.e. “giving back to the community.” The activity of managing businesses is motivated by an understanding that businesses should give back to the community.

The activity consists of at least three actions described here: (1) targeting bad businesses (2) recruiting members and (3) taking back for the community.

*Liquor is Cheaper than Water: Targeting “Bad” Business*

A cursory survey of the merchants of Julian Avenue in the neighborhood of Hatfield reveals a pattern in which Asian merchants are behind the counters of many of the take-out restaurants, liquor stores, and discount stores. Li is a Chinese-American woman and part owner of a deli that sells take-out liquor on Julian Avenue. She also sits on the board of the Asian Business Association (ABA). The Asian Business Association was formerly known as the Korean Business Association. According to Li, the name change reflects the change in the ownership of businesses on the corridor. As they became more successful, the Koreans moved onto to “better,” more affluent neighborhoods. Korean merchants are now approximately one third of the businesses of the corridor. Other Asian business owners on the corridor include people of Chinese, Cambodian, and Vietnamese origin. The new owners basically took over the businesses that had been established by the Koreans in the mid 1980s. In some cases, the name of business remains the same even after ownership has changed.

I interviewed Li at a Starbucks in downtown Verona. She talked to me about the advantages of opening a take-out liquor establishment (known as Stop ‘N’ Go) in Hatfield. She says:

Stop ‘N’ Go’s (SNG) have an established clientele in the area already. It’s not like they bought a new business and opened it up. They bought existing businesses that’s already been there, and the clientele is there. I think that’s the advantage of it. In this area for example [downtown Verona], you can still find SNGs, but they don’t have enough

clientele here – this is basically all professional people. We’re not allowed to drink except nighttime. Over there [Hatfield] it’s a different kind of market, with different kind of people. They accept SNG, the clientele is basically low income. Here it’s higher income. The product you would carry is a different kind of product. [Hatfield] people would not come over here to buy the products because here is much more expensive. Over there [Hatfield] its much cheaper. Like that bottle of water [points to water in display case], you can get anywhere in Hatfield for a dollar, here it’s a \$1.90. Like Starbucks, it’s okay to open it here. No one is gonna drink it in Hatfield. It has to do with the cost of the product, because these are catering to more affluent office people. Like I said, it’s different products for different kind of folks. You see what I’m saying, it’s a different kind of environment, different. It’s more low income. And with low-income, you have to cater low-income products. Because, it’s different clientele. [The merchants] never ask, like they don’t promote as you know – they don’t really put out fliers, they don’t really go out in the community, pass out menus or anything like that. They just open their door, and you have demand and supply. So they basically display their product what the community desires, and that’s about it.

She perceives Hatfield as an inferior place to conduct business. Thus, when a business owner had made enough profit, he or she relocates to more desirable neighborhoods. What makes Hatfield an inferior neighborhood would be the residents who Li defines as “low income.” It seems Li views the establishment of businesses in neighborhoods such as Hatfield as a service to an undeserving community – without the Asian businesses, there would be no stores in Hatfield. In her words:

Once you push the Asian people out of the African-American community, you have no convenience store, you don't have SNG, you don't have Chinese take-out. You don't have anything in your community because Seven-Eleven would not go there. It is because they don't want to target to that kind of neighborhood, the lower income, the troubled area. Can you imagine if you put a Seven-Eleven in Hatfield? Those people are gonna take stuff, put in their pocket and just take it out. People gonna steal, people gonna rob. Why do you think we put flexi-glass. Cause we get robbed all the time. Even then we get robbed in the shop. So you tell me, is Seven-Eleven gonna go in there? No!

The “people who gonna steal, rob” that Li refers to here are the residents of the Hatfield. Li is representative of the kind of business owners that HBA targets to contribute to their efforts to enhance the quality of life for residents in the neighborhood.

I had an opportunity to spend an afternoon behind the counter in a Stop ‘N’ Go owned by a Chinese-American couple. Working in the store was a Vietnamese woman who takes care of the register, and an African-American man who was cook and security for the establishment. The store is open from 9 am to 2 am every day. In the four hours that I conducted observation in the store, there was a steady stream of customers—people stopping buy to buy a can or two of beer on their way home from work, or on their way home from picking up their kids from school. There was more liquor variety in that store than I ever imagined. Stop ‘N’ Go stores may be the most profitable enterprises in Hatfield. However, these establishments are associated with negative and/or criminal activity. Sister Khadijah explains:

The majority of what they sell out of that establishment is liquor, or beer, hard liquor and stuff like that. And what it does is it pulls...it's like a haven for people who drink – those

guys and girls who drink in the area. They hang out there and they trash the area with the bottles. The next day you come to work and you find beer bottles and trash all over.

Li does not dispute the association of SNGs with criminal activity and alludes to the stores taking advantage of this activity. She said:

You can buy liquor for less than water, and the merchants compete with each other by lowering the price. My organization [Asian Business Association] has been telling its members that if you sell things cheap, you will get cheap customers and that's how you get into trouble. We are trying to respond to the community concern for being a watering hole for "undesirables."

To combat negative activity associated with these establishments, the City of Verona has passed an ordinance making it harder for such establishments to obtain and maintain their liquor licenses. The effort to tighten the permit process for SNGs is led by Moesha Weldon, a Verona City councilwoman, and her son, Delroy Weldon, a state representative. Recently, HBA joined forces with Hatfield Residents Association (another community organization in my study) to protest the license renewal of a take-out liquor store in Hatfield.

Representing the owner of the targeted establishment, a representative of the Asian Business Association (ABA) arranges a meeting with Sister Khadijah. The ABA representative is trying to negotiate an agreement with HBA so that HBA will withdraw from protesting the liquor license of the establishment. HBA wants the business establishment to take more responsibility for the activity inside and outside the store. HBA recommends that the store stop selling products that can be used as drug paraphernalia and discourage loitering inside and outside the business. HBA also asks for ABA to attend meetings organized by HBA, contribute

to HBA's community events, and sign up as HBA members. The new city ordinance creates a need for the Asian Businesses to connect with the neighborhood, thereby legitimating the role that HBA played as liaison between businesses and community. In this interaction, HBA represents the interests of the residents of the neighborhood by keeping "bad" businesses in check.

### *Recruiting members*

HBA asks merchants to sign up as fee-paying members of the organization. The membership fees are used to sponsor HBA's initiatives aimed at improving cleanliness and safety for businesses and also supporting community outreach. In return for their membership, the merchants are promised a cleaner and safer environment and improved relationships with resident patrons. The membership fee for HBA members is approximately \$1 a day/\$365 a year. However, HBA has very few, if any, paying members. Not even the members of the board are fee-paying members, as this is not a requirement to sit on the board. Merchants are more willing to support specific HBA initiatives than to sign up for membership. Reggie, an African-American merchant who has a shop on the corridor, explains the difference between "supporter-ship" and membership:

I'm a supporter. Cause I'm really not a member. I never became a member. She [Sister Khadijah] asked me and I told her that I would support her...I never paid the fee to be a member. I don't really make a lot of the meetings. And um, but I support like, if they have an event or they doing something, I support them by helping them with the parade. I supported by helping them with the Weed & Seed program. And any other way that I can support them, I will support them. But I'm not a paying member because there is a

lot of things that I'm not fully agreeing with the way that they do things. But I was highly impressed with Sister Khadijah and her energy. It motivated me and I always told her that anything that she does I will try to support her. It's just that, HBA, is a good thing, but for the African-Americans that's opened businesses, I don't think its ever been really all that great. I thought the fee was a little too high. Because when we open up a business, we don't have the funds as our competitors. Our competitors or our neighbors, they have more funds than we have. Most Koreans, when they came into the corridor, they had 60K or 100K. So if you ask them for close to \$300 a member, that's not a big thing. There's a couple of things happened that I overlooked when I opened up my business, nobody from HBA came out to my business. None ever came out and interviewed me or even asked me. I got applications from somebody else who said oh, I'll bring the application down. But I notice every time a Korean comes in, they will be right there, give them an interview and...at least give me a chance to say no. And I don't have the time, but I would like [to start] 100% Afro-American association, I think that they should have an Afro-Community Business Association of Julian Avenue. Not to knock HBA, but to help them.

Reggie is not only a business owner; he is also a resident of Hatfield. Sister Khadijah invited him to sit on the board of HBA, but he declined. Like many of the merchants on the corridor, Reggie is not interested in becoming an official member of HBA, but he does support activities sponsored by HBA. It is very telling that he does not consider HBA an organization that represents the interests of African-American business owners. Indeed, HBA does not actively promote African-American businesses. Although the economic situation of the

neighborhood is a primary concern, HBA does not look to the neighborhood to address this concern. Instead, HBA has looked to merchants from outside the neighborhood to develop the economy of the neighborhood. Supporting or sponsoring local residents to become business owners is not a priority for HBA. Framed in this way, the behavior of HBA supports the construction of local residents as consumers and recipients, and not as producers of wealth. In contrast, business merchants who establish businesses in the neighborhood are assumed to be wealth producers. HBA's limited focus on the development of business ownership by local residents suggests to me that the organization does not expect the residents to be producers, or to play a role in the economic development of the neighborhood.

HBA's membership recruitment efforts are targeted primarily at Asian merchants on the corridor. There are no special efforts made to recruit organizations such as social service agencies and churches on the corridor. Street vendors (mostly of West African origin) on Julian Avenue are not recruited for membership either. I suspect HBA's reasons for not focusing on these groups had to do with a taken-for-granted assumption of which businesses generated more revenue. HBA assumes the Asian businesses make more money from the neighborhood, and that the money they make leaves the neighborhood. We could say HBA was taxing "foreign" investors who were perceived to have no connection to the community (defined by race and ethnicity).

Strategies employed by HBA to recruit members included regular store visits and monthly merchant meetings. Sister Khadijah walks the corridor making door-to-door visits and distributing flyers, brochures, and membership forms to the stores. A challenge encountered by HBA in its recruitment efforts is language barriers. Many of the merchants have limited English-



speaking abilities, or at least claim to when Sister Khadijah tries to recruit them. Hatfield residents humorously comment that the Asian merchants had no trouble understanding English if you are giving them money, but have trouble understanding English when you are asking for money.

HBA holds monthly general merchants meeting to which merchants are invited. Community residents are also welcome to attend the meetings. Meetings are held at the local police station. Individuals who attended HBA general meetings represent a wide cross-section of entities: Asian merchants, West African street-vendors, African-American merchants, community organizations, city programs, the mayor's office and the police station. At the meetings, merchants raise concerns about crime, security, and cleanliness on the business corridor. At one of these meetings, I met Boris. He caught my attention when he introduced himself as a representative of African vendors on Julian Avenue. Coming from a former French colony in West Africa, Boris struggles a little with English. In an interview, Boris explains to me his reason for attending HBA merchant meetings:

I hear about it [the HBA community meeting] by Sister Khadijah. Because she always was coming on Julian Avenue and distribute the paper. And when I look at it, all the time my mind say I gotta be on in this association. If I'm here, they seen me long time, they always giving people information for their meeting. And that make me decide to come see the meeting, it's important to come see this meeting and listen to what they say. And be in the association too. In my experience, I just think that this association is gonna be for helping people be safe, and working together.

Concentrating their efforts on Asian merchants, HBA overlooked the needs and potential contributions of other groups of merchants who may have been more supportive of HBA's vision to enhance the quality of life for neighborhood residents. It seems HBA's idea of fee-paying member is akin to that of a taxpayer. What is most important is that the members pay their dues and contribute to community outreach efforts when requested. Unlike members of the board, fee-paying members are not expected to share in the vision of the organization and/or community, or to participate in making decisions about how the money is to be spent.

*Taking Back for the Community*

As mentioned earlier, HBA's main contention with the (Asian) merchants is that they are taking from the community and not giving back to it. On this issue of giving back to the community, an Asian business owner remarks:

I think the business owners don't mind giving back. We as a business don't want to give because we don't know who is in need. So we don't mind. But the worst part about people in the community is that they want to take advantage of other people. I don't appreciate a guy on the street that wears brand name shoes, brand name jacket, brand name pants, or timberland boots, asking me for money. Go get a job. Why do you buy Timberland when I wear Payless? Why do you have to wear Timberland and then be on the corner asking for my money? I have to go work from 9 till like 7/8 at nighttime, seven days a week to support my family. Why can you not go get a job? See, in the community, I believe, the most innocent people is the orphans. Any other people, it's not by accident, they put themselves to be homeless. OK. As long as you don't take advantage of other people, these business owners – I'm talking about in general, not only

Asian, we're that kind hearted. But when we feel that we've been taken advantage of, that's when people don't give.

HBA provides opportunities for the merchants to "give back" through community outreach initiatives. One such opportunity is an annual turkey-give away held at thanksgiving. HBA distributes turkeys to "needy" neighborhood families. The names of "needy" families are provided by local churches and social service agencies. The turkeys are purchased with donations received from entities that include members of HBA's board, Korean merchants, the Asian Business Association, and some city agencies. Donors are also invited to participate in distributing the turkeys. Some of the business owners came out or sent a representative to help with the distribution of the turkeys to local families.

### *Contradictions of Business*

I have described three activities sponsored and/or supported by HBA: staying alive, strengthening the organization, and managing businesses. In the activity of staying alive, the focus on personality seems to undermine the goal and mission of the organization. Participants and supporters of HBA activities seem to be motivated by a desire to support Sister Khadijah, rather than the mission of the organization. It seems to me that if the motivation for an action is support for a particular person and not specifically to address a community concern then the action is not an instance of citizen participation. While the action does ultimately benefit the neighborhood, this is not intent of the action.

The activity of strengthening the organization consists of actions that help HBA address external obstacles and internal weaknesses. Collaboration has become a successful strategy to address external obstacles. Collaborating with other entities has strengthened HBA's position

and ability to access resources. However, it has also resulted in a situation in which HBA relies on its collaborators more than it does its own members. HBA has been successful in reaching its objectives with much support of its collaborators, and little participation by its members.

Collaboration, as a strategy for addressing external obstacles, might actually contribute to the perpetuation of internal weaknesses. Also contributing to the weakness of the organization is a leadership style that privileges control over shared responsibility. The collaborators represented other organizations. As representatives of other organizations, collaborators were either unable or unwilling to be a part of HBA. They preferred to remain independent entities. Sister Khadijah's desire to control the organization works against the goal of strengthening the organization, as it limits the participation of board members.

In the activity of managing businesses, there is an inherent contradiction—whose interests does HBA represent? The Asian merchants came to the area precisely because of the low socio-economic status of the neighborhood residents. It would be against their interests to change the socio-economic status of the neighborhood. Perhaps this contradiction partly explains the reluctance of merchants to sign up for membership. The improvement in the quality of life in the neighborhood would threaten the survival of these businesses, as these establishments depend on low-income clientele.

The activities described here reveal four types of participants in HBA activities: owners, supporters, funders, and recipients. Owners are persons who control the organization. It is their vision that guides the organization. They make the rules, choose the members of their team, and delegate responsibilities. The second type of participants are supporters. Supporters may be official (such as board members) or unofficial (such as volunteers at specific events). They assist

the owner in his/her efforts to realize the mission of the organization. Participants in the third category, funders, include entities that an organization depends upon for resources. In the case of HBA, political offices and “foreign” business merchants fall into this category. These are the entities that are expected to meet the needs of the neighborhood. The final category of participants is recipients. For HBA, recipients are broadly referred to as “community,” with community implicitly defined more by race and ethnicity than by territory or place.

The final observation I will make on HBA’s activities has to do with the construction of local residents. The activities of HBA suggest a dependence on external entities to solve the problems of the neighborhood. The problem that HBA seeks to address is the weakened economy of Hatfield. Their strategy for strengthening the economy looks outwards and not inwards. In other words, it looks for support from entities outside Hatfield, instead of ways to generate solutions or strengthen entities from within the community. Unwittingly, the activities of HBA do little to challenge the construction of residents as lacking in resources, and abilities necessary to build their community.

### **The Hatfield Residents Association**

#### *Overview: The Neighborhood-Watchers*

Residents of the Hatfield neighborhood tend to refer to the Hatfield Residents Association (HRA) simply as “Hatfield.” At first glance, this seems to be a convenient shortcut for the name of the organization. I came to interpret this as more than just a nickname, but as a reflection of the residents’ perception of HRA as the voice of the neighborhood. Formed 30 years ago, HRA is the most established and most powerful community organization in Hatfield.

An excerpt from a major newspaper in Verona relays the story of HRA's establishment in 1976 stated:

[Hatfield] area blacks are refuting a cliché that says: ' They want to live that way because they don't care. If they don't care, why should we?' Members of the [Hatfield Residents Association], Inc. say they have heard that statement over and over. They do care, they say. Mrs. [May Wallace], president of the group, said it was formed nearly a year ago by people who were dissatisfied with how their community was deterioration...Last January, she said, several neighbors met with city officials complaining about poor neighborhood conditions. "They wanted to know what the city had planned for the community. When we learned they (the city) weren't planning anything for the Hatfield area as far as redevelopment, we got angry. We started knocking on neighbors' doors and started organizing," Mrs. [Wallace] said. At the meeting, officials told the group that they needed to form a neighborhood organization in order to get any money from the city's Community Development Fund. The group's membership grew fast, said Mrs. Wallace, mainly because many residents feared losing their homes to the University of Montrose and Excel University. The group has 250 members." In February 1977, a second meeting was held with [the Mayor of Verona] and members of the group...the mayor said he would try and find money for redevelopment of their community after he studied the organization's proposal. The group also was officially designated a community organization for the redevelopment of homes in the area, Mrs. [Wallace] said. She added

that the organization intends “on placing renewal in the hands of those who benefit most from it” (Verona Evening Bulletin<sup>5</sup>; July 6, 1977).

HRA was formed in 1976 by a group of residents who were worried about losing ownership of their homes and neighborhood, and concerned with exclusion of their neighborhood from urban renewal plans. These same concerns continue to motivate the activities of HRA today. In day-to-day conversations with residents, I identified three groups of entities that residents perceive as threats to their neighborhood. Property developers are the first group of entities. Residents fear developers are buying up neighborhood homes and redeveloping them for occupation by a higher income class. This will eventually push out the lower-income residents. Universities form the second group of entities. The word on the street is that the two universities located in close proximity to Hatfield are looking to expand their campuses. Such an expansion will eventually drive out the current residents. City and state politicians comprise the third group of entities.

Residents are concerned that the city, or at least some departments of the city government, put the interests of developers above the interests of the residents. An example of this happened with an abandoned armory. Several community activists approached political representatives for permission to turn this armory into a museum and library for the neighborhood. They were not granted permission. Instead, the city sold the building to a prominent developer. He converted the historical armory into a storage facility. Another aspect

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<sup>5</sup> The actual name of the newspaper has not been used in an attempt to protect participants.

of giving priority to developers instead of residents is that the city will benefit from tax revenues that will be generated from high-income housing that developers are putting in place.

Whether real or imagined, this fear shapes the behavior of residents in this neighborhood. HRA is the neighborhood organization through which residents could fight back and/or mitigate the risk of losing ownership of their homes. HRA was formed as tool to be used by Hatfield residents to address external threats to their neighborhood.

*Activities Sponsored and/or Supported By Hatfield Residents Association (HRA)*

I observed HRA engaging in two activities: representing the neighborhood and sustaining the organization. HRA is recognized at the city-level as the official representative of the Hatfield neighborhood—it is the voice of the neighborhood. Acting in this capacity, HRA represents the Hatfield neighborhood. The second activity is sustaining the organization. Through contractual arrangements with the City of Verona, HRA sustains itself through the provision of social services to people with low incomes.

*Representing the Neighborhood*

The City of Verona sanctions and legitimates the role of HRA as the voice of the community through a contract awarded to HRA to serve as the neighborhood advisory committee (NAC). HRA has been the NAC for Hatfield for over 20 years. As a NAC, HRA is contracted by Verona's Office of Housing and Community Development (OHDC) to fulfill three purposes:



provide citizens with an adequate opportunity to participate at the neighborhood level in an advisory role in the planning, implementing, and assessing of activities to be undertaken by OHCD in specific geographic areas

contribute to the direct delivery of services funded by OHCD by referring clients to housing counseling, weatherization, counseling and Basic Systems Repair Program (BSRP), counseling as well as city sponsored services (e.g. code enforcement), neighborhood clean-up, town watch and neighborhood security, and recycling activities

be the representative organization to provide information, services, and assistance including, but not limited to: property and housing, community organizing, and education and outreach. (From “Scope of Services, Neighborhood Advisory Committee”).

In its role as the “voice of the community,” HRA represents community residents in negotiating what happens in the neighborhood. For example, when a housing development firm wanted to build a senior citizens center in the neighborhood, it needed to get HRA’s approval first. Actions in the activity of representing the neighborhood include the following: (1) choosing people to represent the community, (2) organizing community meetings and events, and (3) taking back from the takers. The goal of electing representatives is to select (and de-select) residents to sit on the board of HRA as representatives of the neighborhood. Community meetings and events are organized to bring the neighborhood together to share information and address pressing issues. The third action, taking back from the takers, is a play on the notion of “giving back to community.” In this action, the goal is to persuade the “takers” to give back to the neighborhood. I discuss each these actions in more detail next.

*Choosing People to Represent the Community*

If HRA is the voice of the community, the board is the mouthpiece. Members of the board are expected to lead the fight against threats to the neighborhood. HRA's bylaws reflect a taken-for-granted assumption that people who live and work in the neighborhood should determine what happens in the neighborhood. According to the bylaws, any individual who is at least 18 years old and resides or has a regular place of business within the Hatfield neighborhood is eligible to sit on the board. There are no stipulations about the length of residence stated. For HRA, community and neighborhood seem to be synonymous. Census tracts and a zip code define the boundaries of the community.

HRA's board consists mainly of elderly residents who are homeowners that have lived in the neighborhood for most of their lives. The executive officers (president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer) are formally elected by ballot. The elections are organized by a volunteer neighborhood election committee and supervised by the City of Verona's Office of Housing and Development. Anyone living in the right zip code is eligible to vote. The rest of the board is appointed either by invitation or by self-nomination.

Three factors stand out as shaping the participation of residents as members of HRA's board: availability of time, perceived ability and willingness to fight for the neighborhood, and familial and political affiliations. Ms. Hattie is an example of someone who served as a board member because she had the time. At 62 years old, Ms. Hattie has lived in Hatfield all her life. For over 25 years, she has lived in a house that is only one block away from the house in which was born. The captain of her block, Ms. Hattie was at one time a self-nominated board member of HRA. Although her tenure as board member is over, she remains tangentially involved, as some of her closest friends

and neighbors are current board members. She explains why she became a board member: “I had been out of work for 20 years on disability. My mind was sitting here like going crazy. That’s why I got involved.”

Jamal has been a board member for a less than two years. At 54 years of age, Jamal is a successful entrepreneur, homeowner, and life-long resident of Hatfield. Holding down two jobs, Jamal is a busy man. Unlike Ms. Hattie, it was not available time that motivated Jamal to get involved. He requested to sit on the board after receiving some encouragement from a fellow resident mistrustful of HRA’s leadership. The story of how he came to sit on the board follows:

I had been away, I went to jail. I come home, and coming home I came home a changed person. When I came home I wanted to give back to my community. I wanted to start putting myself into my community. Someone said to me that you need to join HRA. And I asked why, and they said, you just need to. And so because I had respect for them, I joined. And from that – I understood why.... We was talking about something. And then they said to me – you know, you’ve changed. They said you need to join HRA. Why? They said you need to join if you care the way that I see that you are caring because some people... they can’t be trusted.

Another person encouraged to get involved in HRA by other residents was Reggie. Also in his mid-fifties, he has lived in the neighborhood since he was about 7 years old. At one time, Reggie was the vice-president of HRA. He explains to me how he came to be involved with HRA:

My neighbor, she was a coordinator – she lived next door. She let me know about the meetings and that’s how I started. That was my first venture into community activism or

community affairs. At one meeting, I asked the guy so many questions. I believe the people in Hatfield were really impressed with me. I'm sure after that, they wanted to put me in a leadership role. Because most of the people in the audience had never really talked to...how can I say...it was a black community and there you had all these gentlemen, Caucasian developers. I think they really felt intimidated. I always dealt with multi-racial events and I wasn't intimidated and I knew the questions that should be asked. So I think that they were impressed at the time the way I handled myself, and how I dealt with these folks. And they encouraged to me do other things. So I really got involved...I really got involved.

Other factors that influence board member election or appointment have less to do with the personal characteristics of the individual, and more to do with the individual's affiliations, such as familial and political connections. For instance, the current president of HRA, Delroy Weldon, comes from a well-known political family. His late father, Leonard Weldon., was, at one time, the city councilperson for the district before serving as a congressional representative. Older residents of Hatfield remember Leonard Weldon fondly. He grew up around Hatfield and was respected for having used his political connections to help the neighborhood. Residents say, "Leonard Weldon was a man who never forgot where he came from," because residents could count on him to help the neighborhood when he held political office.

Moesha Weldon, Leonard's widow and mother of Delroy is a formidable political figure in Verona. She took over as city council person for the district after her late husband left that position. Many residents believe Delroy was elected to be president of HRA because of his father's legacy and connection to the City Council as the son of Moesha Weldon. Not long after

winning the election for HRA's presidency, Delroy went on to win another election for the office of state representative. People who worked the polls on the day of board elections recall that some of the older residents did not even know who Delroy was; it was enough for them to know who his father was. Commenting on Delroy's election to be president of the board, one resident had this say:

...he is riding on his father's coattails. What has he done? Nothing. You understand what I'm saying. ...well, you know...his father was a good man, so the son might just be like his father. So our older generation remembers what the father done because of the age. So you get these little old people on your team because they know what your father did and they figure you're that same type of person. So they don't question the things that you do.

Once elected HRA president, Delroy appointed his wife as a member of HRA's board. On the door of an abandoned house in the neighborhood, a campaign poster still hangs from the last elections. The poster displays the younger Delroy's smiling face beneath a caption that reads: "...continuing the legacy." As far as the neighborhood is concerned, Delroy has not lived up to his father's legacy.

The chief complaint against Delroy has to do with his leadership style. He is charged with not involving other board members in decisions and activities of the organizations. Consequently, his leadership style precludes the board from acting as a board, that is, as decision-makers. Moreover, he intimidates the other board members. People are afraid to speak up or challenge his decisions and actions. The by-laws stipulate there are to be nine board meetings each year. However, hardly any board meetings have been held for the past seven

months. The excuse given is that Delroy cannot fit it into his schedule. Delroy forbids the board to meet without him, but he apparently does not have the time to schedule and attend board meetings. Some residents are of the opinion that the board is partly responsible for allowing Delroy to intimidate them. Board members are too laid back, and lack the necessary knowledge and skills to act as board members should.

The neighborhood had elected Delroy with the hope that he would use his political connections to channel resources to the neighborhood. His election reveals a taken-for-granted assumption about where power lies. Delroy is not the typical Hatfield resident – he stands out as someone from the ruling class. By electing him as president, HRA supported the construction of typical local residents as relatively powerless, needing powerful connections to speak and represent them.

#### *Organizing Community Meetings and Events*

The NAC contract that formalizes HRA's role as the representative of the neighborhood requires HRA to organize at least four community meetings per year (one per quarter). In addition to these meetings, HRA also sponsors other programs and events for neighborhood residents. In the past, these events have included summer basketball camps for neighborhood children and a neighborhood community unity day. Community meetings, programs, and events are usually held at one of the schools or churches located in the neighborhood, since there is no community center.

The meetings are scheduled around Delroy's availability. If he is not able to attend a meeting, it will be cancelled. In collaboration with the Delroy, Ms. Aretha, HRA's CEO, makes all decisions about when community meetings and events were to be held. The other board

members are not consulted or even informed about the meetings. On occasion, Ms. Aretha may ask one of the office staff to assist with a specific task related to one of these events. These tasks are usually simple tasks that do not require any level of decision-making and leave little room for creativity and/or flexibility. For example, she might ask someone to mail letters at the post office, to call up the school to schedule a room for the community meeting, or to accompany her to the bank so that she will not need to park the car.

As HRA's CEO, Ms. Aretha creates publicity fliers for the meetings, and agendas to distribute at the meeting. The fliers are posted mainly on the storefront window of HRA's office. No special efforts are made to notify the other board members of upcoming meetings or to distribute the fliers through the residents. The agenda for community meetings usually consists of persons wishing to present some information to the neighborhood. The presenters represent a range of entities—housing counseling agencies, real-estate developers, environmental groups, media groups, city officials, etc., etc.

As president of HRA, Delroy chairs community meetings and events. However, often he seems to be chairing the meeting in the capacity of state representative, not as the leader of a community organization. In his addresses to neighborhood residents, he presents himself as the person responsible for taking care of neighborhood needs, addressing concerns, and bringing resources to the community. When Delroy does acknowledge the contributions of others to HRA or the neighborhood, it is done in a manner reminiscent of a teacher giving praise to an outstanding student. At one meeting, a community resident brought up a concern about the slow or lack of response of the police to respond to emergency calls from the neighborhood. Delroy handled this by telling the resident that the next time that happened she should call his office and

he would talk to police. He insinuated that the local police knew better than to ignore him. At another community meeting Delroy announced the following:

We've been working with Brothers [a developer] for a number of years and we become development partners. Recently, my mother and I met with executives from Brothers. We were able to resolve some differences and I am now looking to moving forward with a working relationship. I can tell you this, I can't say much more but I can tell you this. Something very good is about to come to the community. I can't say much because the board members don't know yet, so I have to tell them and then we can share with the community. I was a chief negotiator for many years and I know that you don't tell people things before you are ready because otherwise someone may sabotage it.

The "we" he refers to is not the board of HRA, but rather him and his mother. With the exception of the CEO of HRA, no one else at the organization knew any details about this "gift" that was about to be presented to the community. The gift turned out to be a community center – something that I had heard community residents express as a need in their neighborhood. However, the community residents did get to decide if this was the highest priority for the neighborhood. A community resident shared with me her frustration with the community meetings:

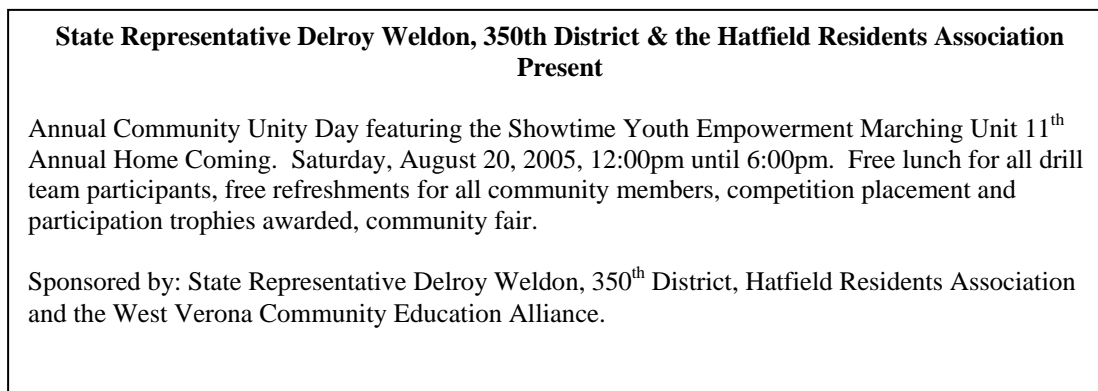
I'm not impressed with those politicians, at all. You know, what are you doing? It's like everything is just like so top secret. So what's the purpose of us having a meeting? This is what you are bringing to us, but we as the community, we as neighbors, we have issues, and we have concerns, too. And they need to be addressed, too.



Perhaps this explains why HRA community meetings, chaired by Delroy, are so poorly attended by neighborhood residents. I attended one meeting where there were more presenters than there were neighborhood residents. In the end, the meetings and events organized by HRA seem more like political forums for the state representative, supported by HRA. Take for example the Unity Day event, an annual event organized by HRA.

Ms. Aretha created and distributed fliers for the event that read as follows (Figure 9):

**Figure 9: Unity Day Poster (Recreated)**



The posters even included a picture of Delroy. Anyone reading the poster would assume that Delroy was not part of HRA. A similar message was conveyed on the media advisory memo issued by Delroy's Office of the State Representative (see Figure 10). The publicity of this event demonstrates the blurry line between community activities sponsored by HRA and those sponsored by the State Representative's Office. This was also reflected in the activities of the Community Unity Day Event itself. Delroy, and his mother, Moesha Weldon, City Councilwoman, led the parade that launched the event. There were approximately 10 people who gave speeches at the event: four affiliated with the state representative's office or city council, two affiliated with the mayor's office, three affiliated with Delroy's church (which is not

located in Hatfield), a boxing champion (who is not from Hatfield), and the coordinator of the drill-team championship.

The speakers were the “VIP guests” of the event. As VIPs, they had special seating and special food away from the rest of the event guests. So where was HRA? HRA was briefly mentioned as Delroy presented Ms. Aretha, the CEO of HRA, with an Outstanding Citizen Award. He presented this award to her as the state representative.

**Figure 10: Unity Day Press Release**

**MEDIA ADVISORY**  
Weldon to co-host event with Hatfield Residents Association Aug. 20

**STATE CAPITAL, Aug. 12** – State Rep. [Delroy Weldon] D-Verona., will co-host a community celebration next Saturday with Hatfield Residents Association.

The association’s Annual Community Unity Day will feature a parade, marching bands, vendors and free hotdogs, hamburgers and soft drinks.

Hatfield Residents Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to making a difference in the lives of Hatfield residents. The association helps people find affordable housing, pay utility bills and find access to food, clothing and household necessities.

**WHAT:** Hatfield Residents Association’s Annual Community Unity Day

**WHEN:** Saturday, Aug. 20

Media coverage is invited.

HRA’s connection to this event would not have been immediately evident to anyone attending the event. The display of HRA’s name on publicity materials and t-shirts distributed to attendees gave the impression that HRA was more of a sponsor, rather than a host of the event. The real host was the state representative. Residents were guests (notably, none were VIPs) who had the opportunity to hear about all the great things that the State Representative was doing for their community. Ms. Aretha was the primary organizer of the event, in close consultation with Delroy’s state office. None of the other board members were

involved in planning the event, although a few agreed to volunteer at the event. For example, one board member helped with the transportation of tables and chairs, and another acted as the master-of-ceremony for the event.

*Taking Back from the Takers*

When developers and contractors interested in some property in Hatfield need neighborhood input or approval, they come to HRA. For example, when a developer wants to know if the neighborhood is safe enough to develop rental units for university students, they contact HRA office. Housing developers and contractors are among the entities that Hatfield residents perceive as “taking from the neighborhood.” Residents believe entities doing business in the neighborhood owe something to the community. They should “give back” to the neighborhood. Ms. Aretha, HRA’s CEO explains:

We are going after the developers and contractors that did things in this community to give back to this community. We say to them, OK – well you did this, and that and the other. What did you do for the community? They may say, oh well, the community didn’t ask me for nothing. I tell them, well, I’m here. This is what is what we need. This, that and the other. We don’t beat around the bush. We say to them, you have [x number of houses]. And the apartments that’s in the houses. So you are making thousands and thousands of dollars a month. And you have to give back to this community. You’re not giving nothing back. You’ve been robbing, raping our community. Now it’s time to give back all the years that you have been taking from our community.

Many residents share this view and extend it to the merchants who are also perceived as profiting from the neighborhood.

Representatives of HRA sometimes use strong-arm negotiation tactics to “take back” on behalf of the community. One of the primary targets for the action of “taking back” is Brothers Rehabilitation Inc. Brothers Rehabilitation is a real estate development agency that has been developing properties in the area for more than 30 years. One of Brothers’ first projects in Hatfield was the development of a nursing home for senior citizens. After some negotiations between Brothers and HRA, an agreement was reached to designate a room for community use at the nursing home established by Brothers, with HRA as the overseer of the community room.

More recently, Brothers “agreed to donate” a building that is to be the site of a community center for the neighborhood. By all accounts, this does not seem to have been an amicable agreement. An external party had to be called in to mediate negotiations between HRA (represented by Delroy) and Brothers. By Delroy’s own admission at a community meeting, Brothers was told the following: If you do not give HRA the building, you can no longer do business in this neighborhood.

The relationship between HRA and Brothers is ambiguous. In some projects, the two organizations are presented as partners. Take for example the letter (Figure 11) issued on Brothers letterhead and distributed to neighborhood residents.

I was unable to find any information about the nature of this “conjunction” This must have been a top-secret venture, as most of the board members or staff with whom I interacted did not seem to know anything about it. With the exception of Ms. Aretha, neither the board nor the

staff had any knowledge about the building negotiations for the community center. Most found out from rumors circulating in the neighborhood.

**Figure 11: HBA and Brothers**

<p>Brothers Rehabilitation Program, Inc Affordable Housing Development</p> <p>Dear Housing counselors and future Homeowners</p> <p>Brothers Rehabilitation Program, in conjunction with Hatfield Residents Association, is happy to announce the sale of 7 affordable home for moderate to low-income individuals. These homes are located in the West Verona historic neighborhood of Hatfield...If you have questions, please contact Brothers Rehabilitation Program.</p>
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The action of “taking back” on behalf of community cast neighborhood residents as victims of exploitation. There was a concerted effort to exclude the residents from participating in this activity. In the case of the community center, the residents were expected to be grateful, but not even the residents elected as board members were not trusted to participate in any way in the process of securing the center. To some extent, Delroy is as guilty of exploiting the neighborhood as the developers that he went after. He is exploiting the neighborhood for his political gain with HRA being one of his primary tools.

### *Sustaining the organization*

The mission of the organization shall be: To develop a community that can be self-sufficient, empowered and determined to keep rising. Our main focus is taking the community’s assets and building upon them, through education, employment, and recreational needs (Mission Statement on HRA Bylaws).

This is the stated mission of HRA. However, on a day-to-day basis, HRA is primarily a social service agency contracted by the City of Verona to provide utility assistance programs

targeted to persons with low and moderate income. Helping people get help, that is to say, helping people get access to available resources is the primary activity of HRA office. Through these activities, HRA sustains its operation. My discussion of this activity focuses on two actions: working for the city and rendering services.

### *Working for the City*

The formation of HRA occurred two years after the U.S. Department of Housing and Development (HUD) started the Community Development Block Grant program in 1974. The CDBG program provides annual grants to eligible local government units, such as cities and counties, to address community development needs (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2006). The City of Verona has been a recipient of this grant since 1974. CDBG funds the *Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD)* in the City of Verona. The City Council's *Committee On Housing, Neighborhood Development And The Homeless*, chaired by Councilwoman Moesha Weldon (Delroy's mother), oversees OHCD. Through contractual arrangements with OHCD, HRA is a "Neighborhood Advisory Committee" (NAC) as well as a "Neighborhood Energy Center" (NEC). As an NEC, HRA is contracted by the Energy Coordinating Agency, a non-profit organization also contracted by the OHCD, to provide energy services to low-income households. The graph (Figure 12) below shows the flow of federal funds to HRA.

As a Neighborhood Energy Center (NEC), HRA is contracted to do the following:

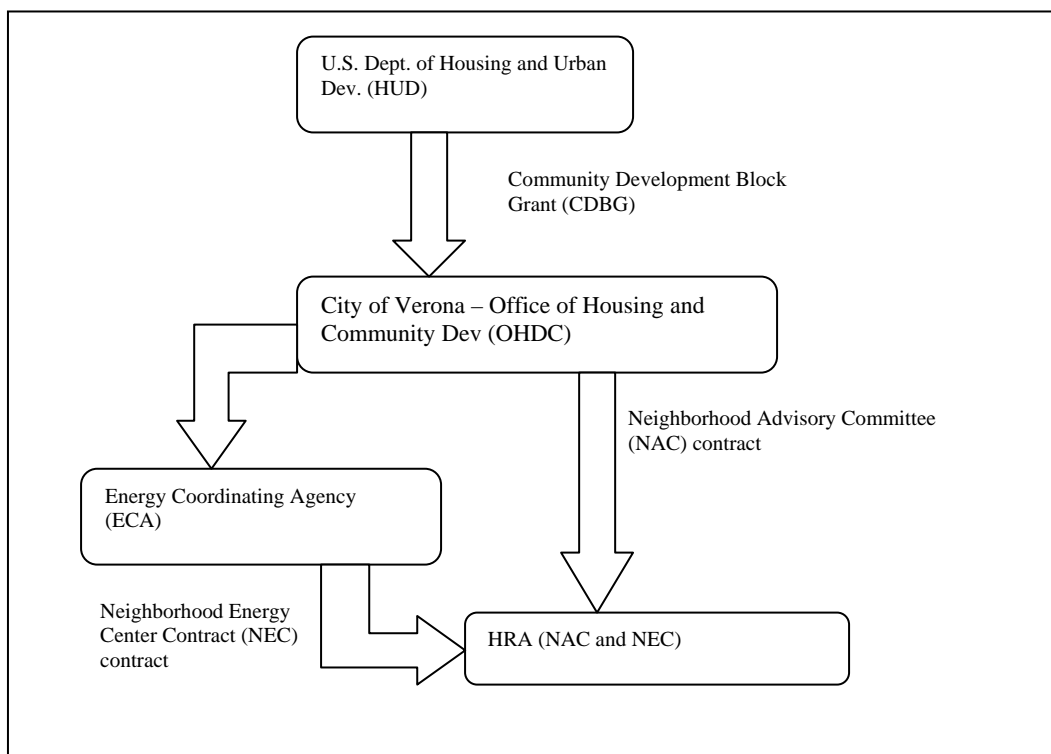
Provide comprehensive energy and related home repair services and other services.

Comprehensive energy and related home repair services and other services will consist generally of intake for fuel assistance programs, weatherization, outreach, energy

education, energy counseling, conservation services and budget counseling to resident of the service area (Letter of Agreement between the ECA and NEC).

Through these contracts, HRA receives payment for providing social services to people with low-income. The money received covers office administration costs and staff salaries. The contracts are the primary source of revenue for HRA. It seems HRA depends on the city to sustain the organization. When the city revokes the contracts, which has happened in the past, HRA offices shut down.

**Figure 12: Trickle Down of Federal Funds**



Through these contracts, HRA receives payment for providing social services to people with low-income. The money received covers office administration costs and staff salaries. The contracts are the primary source of revenue for HRA. It seems HRA depends on the city to

sustain the organization. When the city revokes the contracts, which has happened in the past, HRA offices shut down.

### *Rendering services*

Since providing these services is the primary activity conducted on a day-to-day basis, HRA is basically a neighborhood-run city agency providing clients with assistance related to energy and housing needs. This action of rendering services consists of four elements: (1) the service-providers, (2) the clients, (3) services offered, and (4) tricks and tools of the trade.

### The Service-Providers

Three full time workers and a cadre of volunteers staff the office. The all female full time staff consists of a CEO, an Executive Director, and a Social Service Expert. With ages ranging from 48 to 58, the women have known each other for much of their lives. They are all either current or former residents of Hatfield. The staff has more than 25 years combined experience providing social services. The position of CEO is a relatively new one, established by the current board president, without the agreement of the board or consultation with the other staff. As one resident expressed:

Not many non-profits have CEOs. This is a first for HRA. The president decided it. This was a job created for her...that's the first time they ever had a CEO. They never had no CEO. He [Delroy] brought her in there talking that CEO shit. They never had no darn CEO. This ain't no damn Blue Cross Blue Shield, or nothing like that. They ain't no CEO. There ain't never been CEO. He [Delroy] came up with that position for her.



The CEO, Ms. Aretha, and the board president, Delroy, work closely together. I sense that there are few decisions Ms. Aretha makes without consulting Delroy. For example, there was a situation in which someone came into the office waving a gun and threatening to shoot somebody. Ms. Aretha called Delroy to ask what she should do. She shut the office down for the day only after he gave permission to do so. On another occasion, she called Delroy to ask for permission to shut down the office for the day because the heating system was not working. Every week, Ms. Aretha gets a copy of Delroy's weekly calendar from his office (as state rep). From her behavior, clearly she sees Delroy as her boss and herself as the boss of the other staff members, which consist of an executive director and social service expert. Ms. Aretha's actions suggest she views HRA as an extension of Delroy's office as state representative.

Assisting HRA's office staff in the day-to-day operations are participants of a Welfare-to-Work program. Recent welfare reform in the State of Montrose mandates that welfare recipients participate in a work activity for 20 hrs/week at an approved site. The participants are required to submit signed time sheets to the welfare agency in order to get their welfare checks. For HRA, the Welfare-to-Work program is both a resource and a community outreach program for assisting their targeted clientele. Although mandated by the welfare program, the participants are considered volunteers at HRA. There are up to eight participants of the Welfare-to-Work Program working at HRA at any given time. The participants are mostly young unmarried women (below the age of 35) with children. The volunteers are a mixture of Hatfield residents and non-Hatfield residents.

One of the participants working at HRA, Yolanda, is a 28-year old mother of two who has lived in Hatfield all her life. Yolanda dropped out of high school when she became pregnant

with her first child at 16. At 28, Yolanda has never been employed. Her situation is like most of the participants working at HRA—they have limited work experience, and no high school diploma. Because of their limited writing and reading skills, several of the volunteers are not allowed to do any office paperwork. As one full-time staff member put it, “It’s better not to do, than to do bad.” Instead, they are delegated to tasks such as cleaning up the office, making copies, and running errands. The staff is duly concerned about the situation of the young women who are assisting in the office. One staff member expressed the following:

I think that if the welfare department really wants to get these girls off of welfare, you just can’t throw them into the work system and expect them to survive. Because sometimes these girls get embarrassed about what they don’t know. And they’re not gonna complete it, they’re not gonna go through it. Some of them are like, I don’t want to do this – I can’t be bothered with this. When you want us to make them ready for the workforce, but they’ve nothing...some of them never even had a job. And do you notice how they talk. You know – I don’t see this working but I don’t think I know if they really care whether it works or not. They’re doing their job, they’re placing them somewhere... I don’t know, but I don’t really see a real future in putting them out there and not offering them nothing. That’s my biggest issue. We ought to make it mandatory that they do 2 hrs here on their GED, and 2 hrs here. In 6 months, somebody could have had their GED. That’s helping the community, cause they’re not gonna get no government jobs if they don’t have a diploma. So what you gonna offer them, McDonald’s?

HRA has yet to come up with a strategy for addressing this concern. The concern applies not only to the officer volunteers, but also to a significant portion of the resident population of Hatfield.

There is another volunteer in HRA office, Charles. A tall, pleasant man in his fifties, Charles likes to hum and sing along to the music on the radio. Charles is mentally challenged and lives with his sister just a few blocks away from HRA office. His sister sends him out of the house every morning with instructions not to return until nightfall. The staff at HRA let him spend the daytime hours at the office rather than wondering aimlessly on the streets. He helps out in the office by taking out the garbage, lifting heavy items, and doing small chores as the staff requests.

### The Clients

Clients that come to the office are mostly African-American women and senior citizens. Many of the clients are recipients of welfare, disability, or social security programs. Those that do work are employed at minimum wage. The clients tell very moving stories about the hardships they face in their lives: the tired-looking single mother of four trying to make it on a minimum wage income, or the 35-year-old woman who has just been laid off, and is scared and doesn't know what to do. The first few days that I worked as volunteer office staff, I would literally be moved to tears several times a day as clients shared their stories of hardship. The other staff members teased me about being so sensitive to the stories told by the clients. However, after a few months of doing this work, I found I was not as moved by the stories as I had been at the beginning. I reflected on this in my field notes:

A woman came in and told me this sad story of her child being sick, and the hardships associated with the illness. I realized that I wasn't as affected by this story as I would have been a few months ago. A few weeks ago, this story would literally make my heart hurt. Now – I felt sad, sympathetic but not moved. In my mind, I thought – yeah – your child being sick, that's bad, but there's a woman a few days ago who is in a far worse situation... Most of the clients coming into the office have heart-breaking stories. Like the grandmother who has custody of six grandchildren and her 15-year old granddaughter just had a baby, and she is feeding all these people on her social security check and some food stamps — a really sad story. I wondered if after doing this work for a while, stories like this start to seem normal, not an out-of-the-ordinary situation. My not being affected by this woman's sad story made me think that maybe I have started to accept these stories of such hardships as normal.

I wondered how residents perceived conditions of poverty. Is it accepted as something “normal” in the way that one accepts an incurable disease? From my observations and conversations, I got the sense that residents of Hatfield did perceive it that way. They sought a little help to get by, but did not really expect to change; they just expected conditions to become a little more bearable. One of the staff members shared with me that, while she likes helping people, she is frustrated that things do not change. The same people come back for help year after year. She says:

I've always been somebody who likes to help people and make one little difference in their life. Even if didn't change their life, it's something, it's a

little something that will help them, whether it was big or small. I always liked helping people...But the stuff right here, I think it's starting to get to me cause it don't seem like people are trying to change or maybe they can't help not to change... It's like they're not trying to change or maybe they don't have it in them to change. And it just seems like hopeless sometimes, and it starts really getting to you. It starts really messing with your head...Like some people that you see, that keep doing the same thing every year since I've been working there. And they haven't changed yet.

Working in the office gave me some sense of issues faced by neighborhood residents, for example, the issue of illiteracy. Some of the clients who come to the office are unable to read and/or write. Take for instance this situation as recorded in my field notes:

A woman has a complicated situation in the office – something to do with her adult child continuing to live her as a dependant. I asked Ms. Beverly [staff] what should I do about this, and she said to have the woman write a letter explaining her situation and then submit that letter with her application. The woman said okay – she took the pen I gave her and started to write on the paper that I had given her. I glanced over and noticed that the woman was not actually writing – she was just scribbling stuff, illegible stuff. I realized that this woman could not write. I don't even know how to describe what she wrote...they were actual letters, they were recognizable letters but they didn't make any sense. But she didn't say to me: I can't write. She just wrote this thing – I didn't know how to handle it sensitively. After all, this is occurring in a crowded office with over 20 people within earshot. I don't know why the woman just didn't say to me, “Sister, help me out here.”

At the end of each workday, the staff holds an informal debriefing in which they discuss incidents such as the one described above. However, the discussions do not go beyond the debriefing session. The CEO did talk about the possibility of HRA organizing adult basic education programs in the future to address the issue of illiteracy. However, she does not brought up at community meetings, nor discussed with the members of board besides Delroy.

There are subtle power negotiations that take place in interactions between clients and the office staff. Some clients treat staff members as gatekeepers with the power to deny them the assistance they seek. These clients make obvious attempts not to displease the staff member in any way. They are afraid to say anything wrong that might jeopardize their application. When I worked with such clients, I felt like I had a lot of power. On the other end are the clients who considered themselves experts of the system. Such clients challenged the staff on the proper way to fill out required paperwork. When I would work with such clients, I felt like I was the client's personal clerk. These clients are experienced recipients of the particular service for many years, and are confident of their knowledge concerning this program.

On occasion, the clients provided assistance to the staff or to other clients on some specific issue. For example, when a client who was employed at a mortgage company came to the office, she advised (upon request) one of the staff members on an issue she was facing with her mortgage.

### Services Offered

HRA assists persons struggling to make ends meet under conditions of poverty. HRA office is open every weekday, with the exception of holidays, from 8:30am to 5pm. HRA office occupies the first floor of two-story building ideally located on Julian Avenue. The front of the office is a wall-sized window facing Julian Avenue. People often wave to the office staff as they pass by. The main office is a long room with two rows of bright-colored, well-worn chairs for clients to sit on while they wait for service. People come to HRA from all over Verona (not just Hatfield) to get assistance with utility bills, housing issues, food vouchers, and referrals. HRA processes client applications for several energy programs that provide grants to low- and middle-income households who are in a crisis situation with their primary or secondary heating sources. HRA is also contracted to counsel clients and assist them with application processing. To get a sense of activity, below is HRA's summary report (Figure 8) for the months of November and December 2005. This is from a report submitted to the agency that issues checks for services provided.

**Table 8: HRA Office Activity**

<i>Report Summary</i>	<i>November</i>	<i>December</i>	<i>Total</i>
Number of Crisis grants	311	102	413
Number of LIHEAP grants	224	98	322
Number Budget counseling sessions	146	32	178
Number of clients who receive Full Energy Counseling	121	130	251
Number of clients who attended weatherization workshops	0	25	25
Number of food referrals	23	13	36
Number of housing referrals	0	0	0
Total Number of Clients served	420	173	593

Note: clients may receive more than one service

People do not come to HRA only for the services listed above. HRA seems to be the place where people come when they do not know where to turn. For example, a young woman

came to HRA for advice on what to do after the police had taken her baby to the Department of Health Services (DHS) after a domestic dispute. One of the staff members in the office told her what she needed do, the forms she needed to fill out, the places she needed to call, what documents she would need to take with her, and so forth. The young woman came back to the office a few days later with her child to thank the staff for their help. As one of the staff explained:

You would be surprised the different issues that come through here - not only for utilities and things like that. They come in there for everything. They come in there for if their children is in trouble, what resources they have. They come there if a child's been missing and they don't know.

HRA also provides services such as free photocopy service to local residents. For a neighborhood where there is no copy center, this is a much-valued service. There is no publicity of the services offered by HRA – no brochures, no posters. I assume that because HRA has been providing these services of over 20 years, people just know where to go.

#### Tools and Tricks of the Trade

In addition to the furniture (desks and chairs), the office is equipped with a copy machine, four desktop computers, two printers, a fax machine, and telephones. The ECA provides each of the NECs with a copy machine and one desktop computer. The other computers in the office are donated through an outreach program of a major state university. The computers are used sporadically for tasks, such as creating fliers for community meetings, and creating monthly reports as required by the ECA. Most of the staff has limited computer



proficiency. They tend to use the computer only in response to an external demand, such as a requirement for reports in electronic format from the contracting agency.

Each of the energy programs requires at least two forms to be filled out manually. The forms are distributed to the office by the ECA. Filling out duplicate information on multiple forms is tiring, and also increases risks of making errors. However, there seemed no way around this, as each of these forms required the client's signature. HRA has no say in determining the application process; they just follow instructions from the contracting agencies. The full-time staff provides brief training to volunteers on the application process. After going through the training, volunteers are to ask questions when he/she cannot figure out something. How well one performs on the job is evaluated when applications are checked at the end of the day, before they are submitted to the main program office in the city. A volunteer found to be making too many errors will be reassigned to a different task.

After so many years of working at HRA, the staff has accumulated a wealth of information regarding the different services and programs available for people in some complex situations. "Treating people as people" is a value upheld by the staff in the office. On numerous occasions, I heard people compliment the staff on the manner in which they dealt with clients. One client told the staff that she was impressed with how they treated another client that she, the first client, found to be "nasty looking." The staff is very patient, caring, and sensitive. If someone comes into the office just wanting to vent about something he/she is unhappy about, he/she can find a sympathetic ear in HRA office. Staff members are just as courteous when they meet clients on the streets. From my experience working in the office, I came to learn that people value the staff's assistance and expertise.

Regarding the energy programs and similar services, the staff tends to place a higher priority on helping the clients, rather than adhering to the strict income guidelines for each program. For example, if someone is slightly over the income limit, the staff will go as far as to try to find ways to qualify a client who might otherwise be disqualified. They were careful to bend the rules without getting in trouble.

### *Contradictions of Representation*

In the activities of representing the neighborhood, HRA's goal is to protect the neighborhood and assist residents. Hatfield residents elected Delroy to be the primary representative (as board president) because they assumed this would strengthen the organization's position to access resources that would enhance the quality of life in the neighborhood. They assumed that his political position and connections would benefit the neighborhood. However, either they did not anticipate or they underestimated the contradiction between the interests of the neighborhood and the interests of Delroy's political office. Delroy's power as a political figure rests in his ability to "take care of his constituency" which is in contradiction with a constituency that wants to take care of itself. Towards the end of my time in the field, at a community meeting the board formally impeached Delroy Weldon as president. The public nature of the impeachment conveyed that HRA's board was answerable and responsible to the community. By impeaching Delroy, the board (as representatives of the neighborhood) denounced Delroy (and his allies) as representing his own political interests, and not the interests of the neighborhood. It took a lot of courage (and support from community activists) for the board to take this step, because Delroy represents access to power and resources. This step was especially courageous in light of a neighborhood mythical belief that

anyone who upsets the Weldon's may lose his or her home. This myth is supported by stories of people whose homes have either been demolished or foreclosed because of tax-related issues after challenging Moesha Weldon.

Another contradiction presents itself when we consider the second activity, providing social services. If HRA's primary funding is from its activity as a social service agency that provides service to low-income households, the organization is "benefiting" from the hardships in their neighborhood. These are not activities that promote a change in the neighborhood; rather they are services that merely help people make ends meet without necessarily changing the conditions of poverty. Furthermore, this activity suggests that the problem facing the community is poor residents, rather than conditions of poverty. Unwittingly, this activity legitimates the construction of residents and lacking and unable to take care of themselves.

How does a neighborhood protect itself from entities upon which it depends? On the one hand, HRA wants to protect its neighborhood from exploitation from entities such as the City of Verona and property developers. However, they also depend on these entities for resources. What will happen if the City of Verona revokes contracts from HRA? How will the organization survive? What role do the residents, whom the neighborhood represents, play in the survival of the organization? These questions point to the complex contradictions that HRA negotiates.

### **Hatfield Episcopal Church**

#### *Overview: Becoming a Church of and for the Community*

HEC is one of many churches in the Hatfield neighborhood. Walking around the neighborhood, there is at least one church on almost every block. HEC stands out among the churches in its efforts to connect with the residents of Hatfield. Established 150 years

ago, the church has a long rich history, as summarized in the following press release excerpt:

Hatfield Episcopal Church, has gone through two major transformations in its 150 year history in order to speak to the people of the time. Founded [in a different section of the City of Verona] in the 1850s the church building was moved stone-by-stone and rebuilt at its present West Verona location in 1880s to follow the residential flow of people. This move was the first transformation. The second transformation occurred with the response to a change in neighborhood demographics progressively transitioning from white to black. In the 1940s the vestry of the largely white Hatfield Church offered to merge with the Black Episcopal congregation, to become an interracial congregation. (excerpt from press release, HEC).

Concerns over diminishing membership precipitated the move to become an interracial church. In the 1940s, the racial demographics of Hatfield were changing as the proportion of African-Americans in Hatfield was increasing. Over time, HEC has gone from being an interracial congregation to being an African-American congregation. Father Mark, the first rector of the merged HEC, served the church for over 42 years. Although 20 years have passed since he retired as rector of HEC, many Hatfield residents continue to refer to Hatfield Episcopal Church (HEC) as Father Mark's church. Once again motivated by concerns with diminishing membership, and desiring to connect with the neighborhood, HEC is in the midst of its third transformation since its establishment more than 150 years ago.

Approximately 70% of the 170 or more members, all of whom are African-American, have been members for at least 40 years. I interpret this to be an indicator of the strong loyalty

to the church that members hold. Not surprisingly, members have developed strong supportive relationships with one another. In the past, HEC employed a member recruitment strategy of inviting local teenagers to participate in confirmation classes. From these confirmation classes the participants became, and remained, members of the church. Confirmation marks the official entry into the Episcopal Church. With more than 70% of its members having reached the age of 65, HEC has an aging congregation. Many of the younger (middle-aged) members are the children of long-time members. In light of the low percentage of younger members, the church is notably concerned about its survival.

Most members of the church are not residents of Hatfield. In fact, only one member is identified as a resident. All the other members commute from other parts of the city. This has not always been the case. At one time, a considerable number of HEC members were also Hatfield residents. This situation changed when people relocated to other neighborhoods as the conditions of Hatfield deteriorated. They left the neighborhood, but retained their membership at the church.

Most of the members are highly educated professionals who are now retired. They represent fields such as education, medicine and law. On the basis of education and profession status, the profile of the HEC congregation stands in sharp contrast to the residents of the neighborhood. For one, 42% of the adult population of Hatfield does not have a high school diploma. This contrast would reveal itself in conversations I would have with people at the church and in the neighborhood. At church, when I introduced myself as a university student, people would ask me details, such as—are you working on your master's, or doctorate? I even had someone ask me a question about my research methodology. In these conversations, people

would share stories with me of what they know about the dissertation process—either from their experience or that of close friends, siblings, or offspring. In one instance, the person turned out to be the mother of someone who received her PhD from the same university I attend. In contrast, most people in the neighborhood assumed I was working on my bachelor's degree when they found out I was a university student. On one occasion, a neighborhood resident asked me if I was working on bachelor's or master's degree. When I told him that I was working on my doctorate, his humored response was, "So you're an uppity nigger?" (He told me he considered himself a "regular nigger"). I imagine that most Hatfield residents would consider the highly educated members of HEC to be "uppity-niggers."

In general, black Episcopalians are perceived as elitist. A member of the HEC explains: Most people think that black "Episcopalians are elitist, they are light skinned; they see themselves as separate from the masses of black people."

Some HEC members would agree that their church exhibits an elitist attitude towards neighborhood residents. Self-critical members of the congregation admit that the members tend to look down on people who are not professionals, as would be the case with the residents of Hatfield. A long time member of HEC explains:

Well they [HEC members] think the people who live in this place are beneath them. They consider themselves professional people. I think that's what it is. I'm telling you I wasn't accepted, cause they didn't know what I was doing. I was just coming in and minding my business, going on home. So they assumed I was an "underling." We've never really reached out to the people in this community. First place they felt these people in this community weren't right folk. And again, what's the right folk?

The “right folk” apparently do not live in Hatfield. While black Episcopalians are perceived as elitist, the Episcopal Church has a reputation for promoting social justice, especially during the civil rights era. A member of the church who has studied the history of the Episcopalian church explains:

During the civil rights period, a lot of the people who were getting things done were Episcopal priests. The Episcopal Church was putting a lot of money into the black struggle, into the black community. Now maybe they were doing it for the wrong reasons, but they were doing it, they were at least putting their money where their mouth was.

One of the most well known black Episcopalians is Thurgood Marshall, a civil rights lawyer and the first African-American Supreme Court Justice.

The leadership of the HEC recognizes that while the church building is located in Hatfield, the membership of the church does not reflect the neighborhood, and that the church is disengaged from the neighborhood. They also recognize that the isolation from the neighborhood threatens the survival of the church. As in the previous transformations of the church, the survival of HEC depends on how it responds to its environment. The church has at least three choices – to move the building to a different neighborhood, to transform the church, or to transform the neighborhood. The activities of HEC center around the latter two, transforming the church and the neighborhood. A year ago, the church officially committed to transforming itself from being a church in the community to becoming a church of and for the community—a church that responds to the needs of the neighborhood, and encourages neighborhood residents to join the church.

A discussion of HEC transformation activities follows. Because of the research topic guiding this study, I focus on actions and activities related to neighborhood residents. However, this is not to suggest that these are the only, nor the most important activities, sponsored and supported by HEC.

*Activities Sponsored and/or Supported by Hatfield Episcopal Church*

The two primary activities sponsored by the church with regard to the neighborhood are: (1) transforming the church and (2) transforming the community.

*Opening Doors: Transforming the Church*

I remember years ago, some of the kids who had come to the summer camp who stayed over at the end of summer. At that time, you had to have your head covered when you went to church. I remembered there were eight little girls. And they sat right on the front pew. And there was this little old lady. I used to call her the witch. She never missed a Sunday. Always sat on the end seat and nobody better seat in her seat. She tapped one of those little girls on Sunday and said to them “in this church you have to have something on your head. You can’t come into church without something on your head.” And I remember those little girls...I think that’s the first time I really ever said anything to someone who was much older, and said to her “if it bothered you that much, these children – they loved coming to church, you take out a handkerchief and put it on their heads or something rather than telling them that they can’t ever come back.” That’s what I guess I’d always preached about – fellowship, you know and opening the door. But this was not an open church. Even today. I say we enjoy, we love each other. But we don’t, we keep saying we need to reach out to community but I don’t think we mean it because



we haven't done it. (Interview with a life-long church member who ran the summer camp)

Motivated by survival, HEC is engaged in transforming the church from being a “closed church” to becoming an open church. The church needs new and younger members to join its aging congregation if it is going to survive. Through this open church concept, the church hopes to be one that opens its doors to welcome and embrace neighborhood residents as part of the church. The pastor, with the support of individual members and member teams, are the primary actors behind this activity. The series of actions in this activity are aimed at either inviting local residents to the church and/or changing the beliefs and attitudes of exiting members. Actions within this activity include: (1) creating a new service, (2) supporting community events, (3) praying with and for the community, and (4) communicating the message.

*Creating a new service: Come as you are*

The main Sunday Worship Service at HEC has many formal rituals. People who attend service are dressed formally. The priest wears a specific robe for the procession and sermon, and changes to a different robe for communion. Candles are lit, bells are rung and specific people burn incense at specific times during the service. People curtsy when leaving or entering the pew. The members appreciate the mix of quietness and conversation that characterize Episcopal services as an alternative to the more dynamic typical services in African-American churches.

The leadership of the church is concerned that the formality of this service is unappealing to neighborhood residents, and particularly to the younger people that the church is trying to recruit. The first time I attended service at HEC, I was overwhelmed by all these rituals. I felt self-conscious dressed in casual attire and worried about not doing the right things during the

service. To accommodate people who would be attracted to a different type of service, HEC has designed and implemented a new contemporary service as an alternative to the traditional service. The new service is designed to be an open, participatory service in which people are encouraged to “come as they are.”

A worship design team, consisting of volunteers from the church and led by Pastor Zora, organized the service. Meeting on Monday nights, the team planned out the new service, and its launching. Pastor Zora presided over the meetings. A handout with notes from prior meetings was distributed to help the meeting stay on track, and a flip chart was used during brainstorming. The new service was well publicized: fliers were distributed throughout the neighborhood, special invitations were mailed out, a press release was published in a newspaper, and a large sign was posted at the entrance of the church. The launching of the new service was combined with some social activities specifically targeted to Hatfield residents. One of the social activities was a dinner HEC hosted for young neighborhood families. Another was a “fun-day” oriented toward people of all ages with a live jazz concert, spoken word (poetry), and games for children.

The events were well attended, but mostly by existing HEC members. Quite evident is the fact that HEC members are very supportive of their church. A handful of neighborhood residents attended. Volunteering at the “fun-day” event, I was assigned the task of assisting with refreshments. My partner at the refreshment stand was somewhat skeptical of the “strangers,” i.e. neighborhood residents. She made some rather uncomplimentary comments about the neighborhood guests, which I noted in my field notes:

My partner at the refreshment table would make comments about the “strangers” that would come in. For example, two women who came in – obviously not from HEC

and several packages of snacks. As they walked off, my partner commented "...a couple more of them and they'll be nothing left for anybody else." She would note how often the guests returned for more.

Reflecting on the HEC's members' attitude towards neighborhood guests at social events, HEC members remark:

Well I looked at fun day and I see the neighborhood people sat together. Our people sat where they always sit during coffee hour on Sunday. I think I can truthfully say there wasn't anybody who got up and said something to those neighborhood people who came on fun day. And that bothers me.

I am appalled at how unwelcoming the church is. I am appalled that when there are guests to the church, they are often sitting on tables alone. I am appalled that there are no people that try to help visitors feel welcome. We need to be serious about welcoming strangers

I observed HEC members greeting guests at their church and events, but they soon gravitated to socializing with other HEC members. This was certainly true of my experience as a guest at the church. People who did not know me would greet me and leave me alone. I noticed a marked change after interviewing one of the members. Because of the time we had spent together, I was no longer a stranger to her. She took me under her wing and adopted me as a daughter. We

would sit together when I came to church, and she would introduce me to other people. She still sends me greeting cards at holidays.

The contemporary service is now a regular part of Sunday service at HEC. However, there has not been an overwhelming response to the alternative service by neighborhood residents.

#### *Supporting community events*

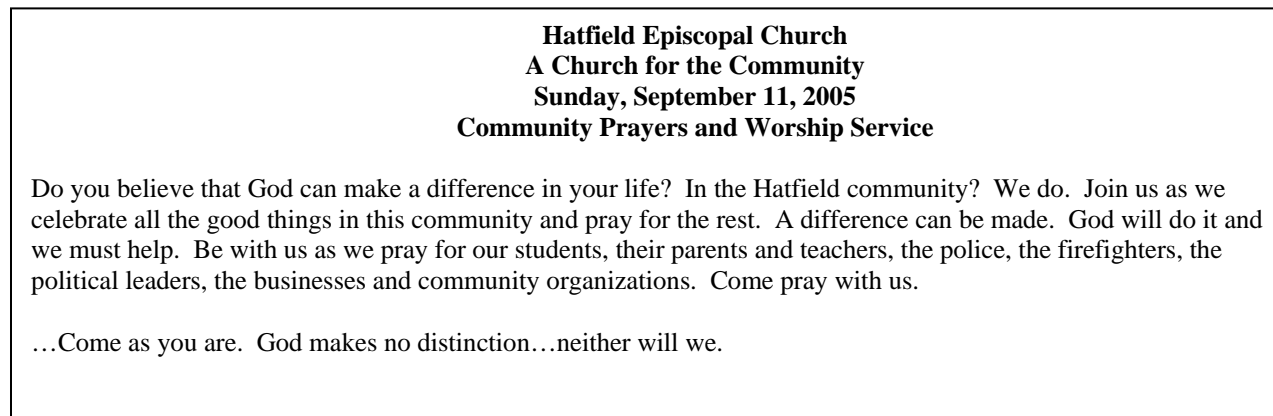
Pastor Zora makes every effort to attend advertised community meetings and events as representative of HEC. If given the opportunity, she usually invites residents of the community to view and treat HEC as a community church. In such settings, she does not usually invite people to attend service; she merely tells them that she and the church are here for the community. One such event was the Community Unity Day event organized(ostensibly) by the Hatfield Residents Association. A team of HEC members, along with Pastor Zora, set up a vendor table at the event. Their table was one of the most popular because they were giving away water and candy. In addition to the water and candy, visitors to the table received gift packages that included candy and written materials inviting people to attend service and other upcoming church events. A community interest/need survey and a prayer request form were also included in the package. As an incentive, the survey came with a chance to win a prize for those who submitted completed surveys. Weeks later, some of the neighborhood residents from unity day at the “fun-day” event organized the launching of the new service. If nothing else, HEC was successful in getting people to come to the church.

#### *Praying with and for the neighborhood*

The church hosted a community home coming day. The idea behind the event was that church members would pray for and with the community. As with other events organized by the church, this event was well publicized with posters and invitations illustrated in Figure 13.

A large sign publicizing the event was posted outside the church, and fliers were distributed to neighborhood organizations. The event started with a neighborhood procession led by the pastor, acolytes, the choir (singing), and HEC members walking a block around the church. While there was no representation by neighborhood residents or organizations, the residents who live within that block witnessed the event.

**Figure 13: HEC Publicity**



### Communicating the Message

Everyone who attends any of the events, sponsored or organized by the church, is usually asked to provide his or her name and address, which is then added to the church database. This database systematically enables the church to stay in contact with members and visitors. Letters, announcements and newsletters are sent to both members and visitors—following up and keeping people informed of events and activities at the church.

In addition, this mode of communication is a vehicle for transmitting the message of transformation to both existing HEC members and neighborhood residents. The sometimes-subtle messages say to existing members, “Open your hearts and embrace new people” and to neighborhood residents, it says, “Come join us.” Take for example this message from the pastor published in the church newsletter:

...I have had the pleasure of being the pastor of this congregation for a little over two years and this church has committed itself to reaching out to a new generation of Hatfield residents and continuing to work with those who know what we are capable of... We want to be your neighborhood church. We want to be a place where you can come and feel comfortable, get refreshed and strengthened to face whatever challenges life throws your way. But as much as we want to give, our efforts will mean nothing if you will not become a part of this resurgence. In the end, we are all in this together. We can support each other to make all of our lives better.

Another mode of communicating the message of transformation to HEC members is through Sunday morning sermons. Approximately 65% of HEC members regularly attend service and listen to the pastor’s sermon. A theme that threads through Pastor’s Zora’s sermons is that Christians should use their spiritual gifts to make a difference in the world. For example, in one sermon – Pastor Zora proclaimed that faith is ultimately about service to the world, not loyalty to the church. Considering that loyalty is one of the strongest attributes of this congregation, it was evident to me that in this sermon, Pastor Zora was challenging the congregation to change. She often preaches that the main commandments are to love God, and to love your neighbor, and that one cannot exist without the other. She points out that the

neighbors of the church are the residents of the neighborhood. This is a consistent theme in Pastor Zora's sermons. I reflected on this after listening to a sermon Pastor Zora preached around Christmas time:

Preaching the story of Jesus' birth, her [Pastor Zora] focus is on Mary as someone who obeys God's calling. Mary was represented as a social actor – as someone who answered God's call to serve the world in a particular way. She said we all have callings, they may not be like Mary or Moses, but we are all called to serve the world in a particular way. This is a passage I've heard referred to in many sermons, but usually when I hear it, the message is that we, like Mary, should be preparing for the birth of Christ. We should be preparing our hearts and minds for the coming of the Savior. It seems to me Pastor Zora keeps focusing on challenging people to play their role in the world. I think for Pastor Zora, being a good Christian means being a good citizen.

Some of the members are resistant to this message of change. People seem more open to changing the environment, and less to changing themselves in response to the environment. So they are supportive of people coming in, but resist the idea that they have to change to accommodate the new people. A contributing factor may be the age of the congregation. This is an elderly congregation. After 40+ years of behaving a particular way, changing may be harder than it looks.

In general, the actions within the activity of transforming the church have resulted in increasing awareness and appreciation in the neighborhood of the church's efforts to engage with the neighborhood, but not in an increase of neighborhood residents joining membership. There have been positive responses to invitations to social events at the church. While membership has

not increased significantly, the neighborhood residents are beginning to recognize the church's efforts to connect with the neighborhood.

### *Transforming the community*

The second activity sponsored by the church is transforming the community – helping to make the community a different place. While closely related to the first activity, transforming the church, it differs in that the object to be transformed is the neighborhood itself, while in the first activity the object is the church. This activity is motivated by both survival and religious or moral beliefs. Reaching out to the neighborhood is anticipated to strengthen the church's relationship with the neighborhood, thus making the church more relevant. After all, reaching out to the less fortunate, and using your gifts to help others is what good Episcopalians do. Giving to the less fortunate is considered a positive indicator of church performance. A high percentage (81%) of Episcopalian congregations in the US support food pantries and soup kitchens (*Episcopal Overview: Findings from 2005 Faith Communities Today Survey*, 2005).

What does it mean for the church to transform the community? Pastor Zora explains:

We are called to transform the community and that for me doesn't mean everybody has to become a Christian. I don't want to transform it like that. I just think that we have to take responsibility for the people who are around us. And for me, the church is right here in this section of the city, so we have to take responsibility. We have a better way, if we have our ideas then it's up to us, it's incumbent upon us to reach out, not to make them different but just to allow them to see that the possibilities are there. So I think that there should be a seamless connection between the church and the community. I have always had this idea that the church is a place for activists. Cause I believe that the point when



the church was at its best in some sense was during slavery, or in the early days where church was a place where insurance companies started, where burial societies started for black people. There weren't any other options; the church took the forefront. However you describe civil rights, the church was in the lead. We've lost our prophetic edge so part of what I'd like to do is to see us get that back. I think that there is a seamless connection between the church and the community.

The HEC has a history of connecting to Hatfield residents through outreach efforts such as educational programs (summer camp, afterschool, Bible School) and youth recreational programs (such as dances and young people's fellowship meetings). Older residents of Hatfield have fond memories of participating in social activities, such as dances, and also sporting activities at Father Mark's (HEC) church. The engagement with the neighborhood diminished considerably after Father Mark retired. The rector that immediately followed Father Mark did not make community outreach a priority. The congregation wants to reestablish its connection and relevance to the neighborhood as it was during the leadership of Father Mark. The church has conducted at least two actions to transform the neighborhood: (1) calling the right priest to serve the church, (2) responding to neighborhood needs.

#### *Calling the Right Priest to Serve the Church*

After experiencing some disappointing and challenging situations with the rector that immediately followed Father Mark, the congregation of Hatfield Church was extra careful in choosing the person who would serve as the next rector. (Pastor, priest, and rector are used interchangeably at HEC.) HEC leadership established a search committee to help the congregation choose the priest right for their congregation. The search committee formally

surveyed the congregation to determine the qualities members desired in their rector. A member of the search committee recalls the results of the survey:

Everybody said they wanted somebody who could preach really good, somebody who knew how to reach out to the community...the outside community. Someone who could enrich the spiritual life of the church. Most of the people, they didn't care whether it was a woman, but they wanted a black priest.

These survey results indicate the value that the HEC congregation places on connecting with the community. Findings from this survey guided the selection of Pastor Zora as the third rector of HEC. For Pastor Zora, strengthening the connection between the neighborhood and the church is a top priority. She views her role as priest of the church as follows:

I'm called to be the priest of the community, and just not for this particular religious body. You remember this whole idea in Catholic and Episcopal Churches of having parishes so that it's not just a congregation that the priest is responsible for the souls of, but people in the geographic area. So that's how I view it. So this is a parish, and so the people in this geographic area, I am somehow responsible for their souls, more directly responsible for the souls of people who walk in the door. My whole thing is that I just want people in this community to know that if they have no place to turn, when it all comes down, when life throws them such a curve, when they are feeling like they have no more options, that this church is there and they are already a part of this church.

Pastor Zora is in her early 50s, making her much younger than the majority of the members of the church. For her, being a priest in a neighborhood such as Hatfield provides her with a forum for promoting social change for the black community. She explains:

I saw there was a lot of pain in the black community. And I think that our brightest and our best should really be working to help. So becoming an Episcopal priest, I suspected that I might have support on some level to do some things. Mainly because of the way they supported their priests. And God called me here, where there is plenty of work to do. I felt as though I might have some money, and at least some support to help make some changes.

While the congregation and Pastor Zora both desire the church to be more responsive to and engaged with the community, there seems to be some conflicting ideas of how this should happen. Pastor Zora is more interested in changing the neighborhood, while many of the members are satisfied with helping the neighborhood.

#### *Responding to neighborhood needs*

The second action sponsored by the HEC to transform the neighborhood is responding to identified neighborhood needs. HEC responds to the needs of the neighborhood directly and indirectly. Directly, the church organizes programs for neighborhood residents. Indirectly, HEC supports neighborhood groups working to address community concerns.

Indirect responses to neighborhood needs are mediated through neighborhood groups. Pastor Zora has established connections with local neighborhood groups to support their efforts to make a difference in the neighborhood. For example, the church entered into a partnership with Hatfield Garden and Reading Association (an organization also participating in this study) to develop a youth enrichment program with the church as a site. The church also allows neighborhood groups to use church space (the community or parking lot) for meetings and other events. Occasionally, church members will volunteer to assist the neighborhood in some effort.

Direct responses to neighborhood needs include the following: organizing a children's choir for the neighborhood, collecting books to furnish an empty library at a local school, purchasing and distributing Christmas gifts to the children, and sponsoring an addiction recovery program and facilitating clothing giveaways. A HEC member, or team who has a special interest or gift in the particular area, usually spearheads these initiatives. Pastor Zora plays a supporting role in these situations. Christmas 2005, the congregation purchased and distributed gifts to more than 150 children in the neighborhood. I was at the church on the day the children came to pick up their Christmas gifts and observed the following:

There were piles and piles of wrapped gifts on all the tables, with several packages for a child. The two elementary schools had sent letters for parents to provide names and details of children to receive gifts. With each gift was a prayer card, church newsletter, an invitation to the Christmas service, and Christmas dinner. Visitor cards were placed on each table for people to complete. Some were even filled out. I'm sure that these people will be added to the mailing list. Today is also the children's choir rehearsal day and the children's creative writing class. The director of the children's choir would tell people about the choir as parents and children came in to pick up the gifts. The neighborhood resident that facilitates the creative writing class also used the opportunity to recruit children to participate in the writing class. (Field notes)

### *Contradictions of Transformation*

The congregation is supportive of outreach efforts to the neighborhood (such as donating Christmas gifts to neighborhood children). However, the generous spirit is not extended to neighborhood residents regarding their becoming part of the church. In other words, while HEC

members are willing to help the residents, they are not so open to accepting the residents into their circle as they are. HEC members would be more welcoming if the residents were more like them in terms of education and socio-economic class.

The activity of transforming the neighborhood is framed as one-way support: The HEC supports the neighborhood. This is not surprising, given that the church does have more resources in relation to the other community organizations—space, members with professional experience and connections to other resources. These resources allow HEC to provide services to the neighborhood. However, this promotes a paternalistic relationship between the neighborhood and the church, and consequently perpetuates the elitist attitude of HEC members. So while related, the two activities (transforming the church and transforming the neighborhood) contradict each other. Neighborhood residents may welcome the outreach efforts, and yet these same efforts increase the distance between church members and residents. As one member expressed:

And while we are doing all these things, it is still a closed church. It is not a community church. But I can see how we are going out to the community. They [members] say they're [residents] not coming, they're not coming. But I say...but they can tell when they come in, that they not welcome.

Hatfield residents generally mistrust the intentions of churches in the neighborhood. Churches are sometimes perceived by the neighborhood groups as competitors for grants made available for community development initiatives. Moreover, the outreach efforts of churches are viewed more as membership recruitment strategies, than neighborhood support.

## **Hatfield Garden and Literacy Association**

### *Overview: From the Block to the Neighborhood*

On warm sunny summer days, Jacaranda Street is bustling with activity—teenagers practicing dance moves on porches and street corners, young mothers adorned with infants on their hips leisurely strolling down the street, and older residents greeting neighbors passing by as while they sit on their porches. Jacaranda Street is home to several of the most prominent community activists in Hatfield, and the home of the Hatfield Garden and Literacy Association (HGLA).

HGLA began as a block club organized by a group of neighbors concerned with issues on their block. Ms. May, a founding member, relates the history of the organization:

We started really as this block, my block group – Jacaranda Block – that’s how we started out. We were just basically organized so that we would have some kind of recognition with the other organizations. So that when we went there, we wouldn’t just have to say I’m so and so, but we could say I’m so and so and I’m part of such and such. That’s how we started out. We were just Jacaranda Block. We were neighbors, right across the street, the one on the other side. So we would band together just by the fact that we was neighbors. Our mission was to address block issues, strictly block issues-- street cleaning, holes in the streets, loud noises, trash, cars, abandoned cars, city services. When I would go to a meeting and they would ask me what group do you represent and I would say Jacaranda Block. We would go meetings like the Police Meetings, the Community Relations Police meetings, and any time they had any type of political meetings. They would ask what group are you affiliated with...and we’d say we don’t

have nothing. The program director was really astute in things like that. She said look, since we say what we are, let's really make what we are. So we got our paperwork together.

And so Jacaranda Block Club was formed. A few years later, the Jacaranda Block Club became the Jacaranda Garden Group when:

We applied for that lot in the corner. That's when we got to be a garden group. In the late 1980s, the city was really pushing neighborhood groups to take over the maintenance of neighborhood lots because they had no plan for them. What they were they were trying to do was go give you a broom and a pail and you make the city beautiful. They weren't coming around and making it. They gave you the mop, the shovel, dirt, seeds for you to make it pretty. Therefore, in order to do that, they also thought that if we give you the supplies, you also have to have access to land to put your skills to use. A lot of these lots became vegetable gardens, flower gardens, under the auspices of community groups. That's how the city justified giving all this land, or leasing the land and hoping that organizations would keep them clean. That's how we became that garden group because the city gave us a plot of land, and we had to do something to it. What resources the city was giving out at that time was garden supplies, landscaping supplies. They weren't interested in giving us any books, or start a library or anything. Now that I think about it they were trying to take us back to slavery, you know, back to those times. (Ms May, Founding Member)

HGLA used the garden as a site to deliver a program aimed at providing local youth with landscaping and business skills. With this educational program, HGLA added a new dimension

to its mission—literacy. Jacaranda Gardening Club was subsequently renamed “Hatfield Garden and Literacy Association.” HGLA’s official mission is:

To enrich the minds of our neighborhood youth by offering training, and hands on experience in the landscaping entrepreneurship and money management field, and to share our harvest with our neighbors; and in addition, it’s our objective to enrich their minds with history through our “literacy program” (obtained from Articles of Incorporation)

Evident to me is that both the president and program director view HGLA as a potential income-generating enterprise. They hope to develop some program that will result in creating employment and generating income for the current members and the community at large. The group has its sights set on two possible revenue-generating enterprises: a landscaping operation and/or a youth enrichment program.

*Activities Sponsored and/or Supported by Hatfield Garden and Literacy Association*

HGLA presented somewhat of a challenge to me in my role as participant observer. In the seven months that I conducted fieldwork, the organization did not hold any meetings nor organize any events. Consequently, the nature of my interaction with the organization was more of a consultant than a member. In this role, I participated in actions motivated by a desire to strengthen the organization.

*Strengthening the Organization*

The goal of the activity to strengthening the organization is to enhance the capacity of the organization to realize its objective to establish a revenue-generating program. Two actions in



this activity are: (1) developing a recruitment campaign and (2) planning a youth enrichment program. The following section describes these two actions.

*We need additional people: developing a Recruitment Campaign*

Our people are beginning to break down. Everyone is getting tired. I've been sick, physically sick, mentally sick. This hampers anybody trying to do anything. And those that are most active are breaking down, and therefore we can't muster up enough strength to get the others moving. Tamara has had the flare up I think with her breast again and then something happening to her knee. Holly has been battling with her son. You see, therefore everybody...Diane is really getting into the Alzheimer's' bit. We've all been just scattered around, we just need additional people. This is why again we go back to membership recruitment. We have to go back to membership recruitment to bring more people in to keep our organization alive. (Interview, Ms. May)

For Ms. May, membership recruitment is imperative for the organization's survival and its ability to realize its objectives. Without new members, HGLA will not be able to engage in any community building efforts. At its strongest, the organization had as many as 20 members. However, those days are long gone now. HGLA currently has six members, and most of this small group is struggling with illness and other personal issues. Ms. May explains:

As the years went on, a lot of those people that were members were older people and of course you know we can sit down and read off a litany of those that were members that have passed away. They've passed on – Mr. Jones, Ms. Smith...you know, some really good backbone community, community activist people. Just not those two, and we can think of many more that were working but can't work anymore either through

sickness...they can't come out anymore. All these people were the backbone. But they are up in age, some of them have passed on, some of them are up in age that they need nursing homes and everything else. And we have not been able to replace those people.

I worked with Ms. May to develop a recruitment campaign for HGLA to get these much-needed new members. Processes involved in creating a recruitment campaign included: framing problems and solutions, formulating recruitment strategies and making plans for implementation.

#### Members Wanted: Framing Problems and Solutions

The bylaws of the organization state the qualifications for membership as follows:

All individual members of the association must be persons of at least 18 years of age having a regular place of abode or a regular place of business within Hatfield.

Currently, there are three types of members in HGLA – members of the board of directors and, administrators donors. There are six people making up the board of directors and administration of the HGLA. There are apparently no donors at the moment. Four of the six members hold executive offices: president, vice-president, secretary, and treasure. The remaining two hold the administrative positions of program director and garden coordinator. The position of program director is akin to that of executive director or CEO in other organizations.

The program director is closely related to three members of the board – one is her husband, another is her mother-in-law, and another is her sister. The other two members live on the same block as the program director. They have been neighbors for more than 40 years. The membership of the organization does not reflect the neighborhood-wide mission of the

organization. Appointment to the board is by invitation only. People are invited to join only when there is a vacancy on the board. Holly is the most recent member of the group. She lives on the same block as the president and program director. Some of her children had been involved in HGLA's youth program. When the position of secretary became vacant, HGLA's program director, Tamara, invited her to come on board as the new secretary.

The board as currently constituted has two challenges: (1) major health issues which make many members unable to contribute consistently (2) personal relationships that get in the way of professional relationships. For example, there was a situation where Ms. May felt betrayed by the actions of one of the other members. Ms. May threatened to quit the organization because of this incident, although the matter was not connected to the work of the organization in any way. Yvonne is a community organizer who worked closely with HGLA for approximately two years. She observed how the personal relationships played out in the organization:

I think that it can take on a very personal note, rather than a business note. When someone takes something personally as, like family, they may not have as much interest in the program, they may feel like they are doing it out of loyalty or friendship. And they might not have as much enthusiasm, or excitement, or loyalty to the cause or to the organization. Their interest may not be as strong as the person who is bringing them together. I think they could be like just family relationships and family politics that can come in and ...basically employ your family in a way. Like your family member is your treasurer so how you feel about them I think can somehow...or if there is something that they said or did might have made you upset in a totally non-professional context and then

it can get sort of brought in...I think if they weren't related to her [Tamara], they would be slightly different. It may not be like huge issues but if these people were not related to her on that personal level and more on a business level, it might more emphasize that...as it is, the [personal] tie is more important, and not necessarily the organization.

Unlike board membership, which is by invitation only, donor membership is open to anyone willing to pay the \$5 membership fee. According to HGLA's promotional brochure, paying members are entitled to sharing in garden harvests, discounted landscaping, lot cleaning, and snow removal services. In recent years, HGLA has been unable to provide these services for their donors because it does not have the people to do this work. This is the problem that HGLA hopes to resolve through member recruitment.

Ms. May identified three types of members to target for recruitment: inner-circle members, working members, and non-working members. Inner-circle members would join the board of directors, i.e. the decision-makers. Ideally, inner-circle members would possess the following qualities: commitment, desire, and community-mindedness. Ms. May explains:

We would want people that are community minded, that are determined, that would be willing to stay with us to make a commitment and stay. People whose desire is towards the better good--either for children, or even just for their street, or their house. Being able to maintain their house, where they live, that would be somebody community minded. That would worry about the children crossing, about the street, the stop sign on the street. Someone that you can get into a conversation with and they are talking about, yeah we could do such and such. Those are the type of people that we would like to bring into our inner circle.

Working members would carry out the decisions made by the board of directors as members of working committees. The plan was for HGLA to reward working members with stipends and/or free or discounted services. The final group of members would be the non-working, fee-paying members. HGLA would provide services to this group of members for a fee. In essence, Ms. May wants to establish a landscape enterprise consisting of a board of directors, and clients.

#### Formulating a Recruitment Strategies

Ms. May and I worked on the plan at her home. While we talked, Ms. May would work on household chores such as folding laundry, preparing dinner, or cleaning up the kitchen. None of the other board members was invited to join us. In fact, Ms. May preferred to keep the project between us until it was complete and ready to be presented. Prior to her early retirement, Ms. May worked in social work and law offices. She drew on these experiences in the process of creating a recruitment campaign. Our discussions culminated with a proposal for a recruitment campaign (see Figure 14).

Ms. May insisted that inner-circle members be recruited by recommendation from other board members. She explains:

When I do the inner circle member that's almost on a private...you know what I mean. You don't want to hand out fliers for that. You want to go person to person. I'd ask every board member to either suggest people or to bring people.

According to Ms. May's plan, people who possessed the qualities desired (community-mindedness, commitments, and interest), but lacked the knowledge or experience, would not be turned away.

Figure 14: Proposal for Recruitment Campaign

**Hatfield Garden and Literacy Association (HGRA)**  
**Proposal for Recruitment Campaign**

*Overview*  
 There are three types of memberships available within the structure of HSGLA:

- inner circle members (Executive board and board of directors)
- working members (Committee members)
- non-working members (Service Recipients)

The first phase of the recruitment campaign will be to recruit persons for the “inner circle” and “working committees.” These people will support the design and implementation of programs that our organization will offer to the non-working members.

*Proposed Recruitment Strategy*  
 Each board member will submit the names and addresses of three (3) persons as prospective members. Prospective members should possess the following qualities:

- Community minded
- Committed and reliable
- Interest or desire

Training will be provided to any member with desire but no working knowledge of the specific area  
 The President will compile all the names submitted by board members  
 Recruitment packages will be assembled to be sent to each of these persons. Included in the package will be:

- A letter of introduction and invitation to meeting
- A recent brochure
- President will mail packages to each person

After packages have been mailed, referrers will be responsible for following up with the three persons whose names they submitted.

*Timeline*  
 Meeting for prospective members should take place in early December, before the holiday season goes into full swing. It is our hope that we will have new members as we start off our programs for 2006.

Instead, HGLA would provide and/or facilitate training:

If you don't have the skills, we'll teach you. Cause you know like financial matters, whatever bank we should be dealing with, that bank president should be able to sit down with our financial treasurer and her people and explain whatever system they have, like if you open a savings account. Would it better to wait until you have savings account, take all the money out and put in a CD and let that mature you know what I mean? What do you do with any money? As for the garden, the Horticultural Society has classes. We as

an organization should be able to pay for our garden coordinator to go to these particular things, or to the university when they have a garden seminar and things like that.

### Making Plans for Implementation

Once we had completed the proposal for a recruitment campaign, the next step was for Ms. May to present the proposal to her board. For various reasons, this meeting never took place. First, the organization does not schedule meetings for July and August because of anticipated summer vacations. Second, several of the board members had pressing family and health issues that took priority. So what will happen to the recruitment plan we created?

I later found out that this was not the first time that Ms. May has worked on a recruitment campaign with someone. A year prior to working with me, she had worked on the same project with Yvonne, a community organizer. Yvonne describes the project of putting together a recruitment plan:

I did work with May on membership for HGLA as a whole. That was a tricky process. May and I sat down and talked about how she would recruit members and what their role would be in their organization. Other board members didn't understand the importance of member; understand what they mean for an organization. May wanted more members, she wanted more people involved, she wanted there to be more people to do things, and she understood that the members were like the life of the organization. And so we sat down and mapped out the whole process of...we talked about what they would, and how to treat them, things like that. We talked a lot about how the members would be involved in the decision-making. May was pretty open about the members being included in the meetings, and the meetings being open to everyone and not just the board. And having

members involved in committees, involved in actually the planning process as well and implementation of projects. So we mapped a whole recruitment process that involved the board members making lists of people they knew and then going and meeting with those people and talking to them. But then it went to her board and Tamara, in particular, Tamara wanted to set a limit on the number of members. And I don't think they ever got to the steps we had laid out. When it got to the board, there was some hesitation on how much...they raised concerns about how much the members would be involved in the decision-making process.

What seems to be, on the surface, a simple and straightforward recruitment campaign, is actually a tool in a subtle power struggle between the president and the program director. The president is trying to get more decision-makers involved in the organization, while the program director is resistant to the idea. The program director is wary about bringing in new people into the inner-circle. There is also some tension regarding the focus of the organization. The program director is trying to turn the focus of the program from gardening to literacy. The president, on the other hand, wants gardening to remain the focus of the organization. Next, we turn our attention to the program that Tamara, the program director is championing—the youth enrichment program.

#### *Developing a Youth Enrichment Program*

As Program Director, Tamara is planning to establish an enrichment program for youth in the neighborhood. Tamara is the most powerful person in the group. Yvonne is a community organizer who worked closely with JGRA. Her perception of Tamara's role in the organization is as follows:



Although the board is often involved, the program director really sets the mission and really sets the priorities. She will take stuff back to her board but you get the impression that she basically calls the shots. And also she is the one working on this full time. So it's her full time job. Whereas the rest of the board they have other jobs...but she is actually the legs of the organization.

The youth enrichment program is framed as an extension to the youth gardening program that HGLA established over 10 years ago. HGLA hopes the program will increase its ability to secure resources and enhance the legitimacy of HGLA in the neighborhood. Tamara is pushing the organization in this direction because she believes this is the kind of project that will get funded through grants and corporate donations. With grant funding, the organization would be able to pay its administrative personnel—namely, the program director and staff.

HGLA thinks of non-formal education for youth and adults as its niche in the “market” of community needs. No other community organization in Hatfield focuses on this area. The enrichment program would legitimate HGLA's claim of non-formal education as its domain. I discuss the action of developing a youth enrichment program in two components: (1) roles and responsibilities (2) ways and means.

#### Roles and Responsibilities

As program director of HGLA, Tamara has been working on developing the youth enrichment program. While the board is kept informed of the project, Tamara is adamant that they need not be involved in the planning and/or implementation of the program. She sees her role as administrator as separate from the roles of the other board members. She explains:

This is a part of the daily operations. No board member should be involved in daily operations. The only people that would actually have some sort of interaction would be chair heads, if they are part of a finance committee – chair of a finance committee, or policy committee or your human resources to something to that effect. Then that's when they get involved and create policies for...on special projects. I am supposed to show to board members that I have a plan. Your board is to sit there, while you are going through this. And they will say...I think something is wrong with the category here, I think that we could actually – if I could advise you to make this change because you might want to think about doing something this way. Everybody like this plan? Yes. All in favor say "I". I's have it. Go on with your plan – we'll check on you in 6 months. If you are building an empire, everyone should do their job. If I had a building right now, outside of my home office, I would actually have my secretary; my administrative assistant would be partly responsible for gaining some of that information for me. She would actually do some of the groundwork. I would expect my staff to do that. So – you can say, okay – until you have staff why don't you get the other folks to do it? Because I would like for them to do their own jobs. And this is the problem with a lot of the organizations. Folks don't know what their responsibilities are – and this is why people get to cross paths, or step on toes, people become disgruntled, be discouraged and quit. Your organization folds – I go back again to say, they don't know how to do their own jobs.

Drawing on her experience sitting on other boards and participating in board training workshops, Tamara holds firmly to the lines between the board and administration. These are

clearly drawn and apparently non-negotiable, based on Tamara's belief that this is how organizations should be run. The other members seem to defer to her because of her experience with other organizations.

### Ways and Means

By design, Tamara is the force behind the activity of developing this enrichment program. HGLA is surprisingly well resourced. The organization has a fully functioning office equipped with several computers and an all-in-one printer. The drawback is that the office of HGLA is currently based in Tamara's house. This is where much of the equipment (computer, copier, fax, etc) for the organization resides, along with the official documents of the organization. Because the office is in the program director's home (and not cut off from the rest of the residence), other members of the organization have limited access. For example, when Ms. May needed a copy of the bylaws – she had to call Tamara to get it. The organization would like to have a separate office space. The plan is that the site of the youth program would become an office base for the organization. However, in order to deliver the enrichment program, HGLA needed a site, equipment, funding, and personnel.

Things were looking good for the program when Tamara found a local church, the Hatfield Episcopal Church, with space available for such a program, Represented by Pastor Zora, the church welcomed the idea of using their church as a site for a youth enrichment program. The church viewed this as a way to increase its engagement with residents of the neighborhood. However, the promise of this collaboration was never realized. The two organizations could not quite agree on the nature of this collaboration. HGLA wanted the church to essentially be a landlord or leaser. On the other hand, the church wanted to participate in some way in the

curricular and operational aspects of the program. HGLA was open to allowing church members to volunteer in the program, but HGLA balked at the idea of the church participating in decision-making, or shaping the direction of the program. Unable to resolve this issue, the project has reached a stalemate. Tamara is adverse to the idea of HEC having any legislative or programmatic input into the program. She interprets it as the church trying to take over or control the program. In her words:

I think I should be President and CEO of the program. The enrichment program needs to have the type of the flow where the leadership and the management team is put together. I feel like I have hands on with the entire process and knowing which way that the flow would go. To me, that would make more sense to be able to steer. It would give me flexibility. The church won't like it. That's how churches are. In my experience, I've found that a lot of the faith-based organizations like to maintain the control of the process because of their beliefs, could be moral beliefs.

Both Tamara and the pastor are rather frustrated. Tamara is frustrated because the pastor insists in trying to "control" the project, and the pastor is frustrated because Tamara seems to have halted communications and activity on the project. The one thing that the two organizations seem to have agreed on is that the program needs an advisory board that includes members from both organizations and field experts. Membership of this advisory board would not be limited to the neighborhood of Hatfield.

Funding for the program is anticipated to come from external grants. I worked with Tamara on a grant that she was to submit to the Montrose Department of Community and Economic Development. She resented having to write out the grant, because in the past she had

been able to get the grant without completing an application. She had to do it now because there is “a new regime in office” at the department. In years before, she was able to get the grant without completing the application requirements through personal connections she had at the department. She believes that the reason that she did not get the grant the year before was because she was “blackballed” because of some political issues with the current State Representative, Delroy Weldon. She has since resolved these issues with him and is confident that HGLA will be awarded the grant this year. Grant writing is not one of Tamara’s strengths. She is highly adept at formatting electronic documents, but less so at writing the documents. However, she is reluctant to ask for help or accept it when offered. For example, Pastor Zora at Hatfield Episcopal Church has offered to work with her on writing grants. Tamara declined the offer, viewing it as a ploy for the church to control the program. For different reasons, Tamara did not trust my help either. She worried that I would share information about grants available with the other organizations with whom I was working.

Like the recruitment campaign, what remains to be seen is if anything will come from the plans of the enrichment program. Tamara continues to express interest in pursuing it. The major challenge she faces, as I see it, is negotiating the tension between her need for absolute control and her need for help both within the organization, as well as in interaction with other organizations.

### *Contradictions of Control*

HGLA recognizes that it needs the involvement of others to strengthen its position and capacity to achieve its goals. However, the organization struggles to negotiate the tension between maintaining control and strengthening the organization. The leadership seems to view

admitting that it needs help as a sign of weakness. Entities in a position to offer assistance are interpreted—particularly by Tamara, the program director—as stronger and Tamara assumes that stronger entities will control or take over the agenda. Unable to resolve this contradiction, HGLA remains somewhat stagnant—sacrificing strength for control.

In its current configuration, HGLA is an organization for community, not by community. That is to say, it is an organization providing services to the community without involving the community in determining the nature of the services. Residents are potential clients or employees of the organization, rather than co-owners.

## **CHAPTER 6: SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND THE PARTICIPATION OF RESIDENTS**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter, Chapter 5, described activities sponsored and/or supported by the participating organizations. Drawing from these activities, this chapter demonstrates how the social structure of participating organizations shape the participation of residents as citizens in activities they (the organizations) sponsored and/or supported. In the first section of the chapter, I present research findings in the form of a story written from the perspective of a fictional character, Maya. Although fictional, Maya's character is a collage of characteristics typical of actual residents of Hatfield. Maya represents the local residents who rarely participate in community-building activities. The second section of the chapter is a summary of patterns of CO behavior that shape citizen participation in activities.

### **Maya's Story**

Before I go into the discussion, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Maya. I am a 27 years old. I am a single mother of two—a 12-year old boy and a six-year old girl. My children and I live with my mother, a 48-year old life-long resident of Hatfield. Like my mother, I have lived in the Hatfield neighborhood all my life. I dropped out high school at 15 when I became pregnant with my first child. I have tried to go back to school to get a GED, but so far, I have not been successful. My children and I get by on the food stamps and welfare check that I receive every month.

Although I am not active in any of the organizations, I do know a lot from my experiences with the organizations, and materials produced by the organizations such as brochures. I also know things about the organizations from the people I know who are active

members in the organization. You know, in this neighborhood everybody talks – you cannot keep a secret about anything going on. For each of the organizations, I will identify some elements of the social structure and discuss how these elements might shape my participation, or the participation of residents like me, in the activities of the organization.

*Participating In Hatfield Garden and Literacy Association*

I am really interested in what HGLA is trying to do for the community. Because I have children, I would like to see more things available for them in the neighborhood. We do not have any playgrounds, library, or even tennis courts for children in this area. And our children are not doing well. They are failing in school, dropping out of school, and getting involved in drugs from an early age. I think what HGLA is trying to do for the kids in the neighborhood is very important and I would like to contribute.

However, because I do not live on Jacaranda Avenue and am not a close relative or friend of any of the board members, it will be hard for me to get to part of the “inner circle.” Although the by-laws of the organization state that membership in the organization is open to all Hatfield residents above the age of 18, in reality, the inner circle is not open to everyone. Once the program is underway, they will be looking for volunteers. At that time, the organization will welcome my participation. They will probably ask me either to volunteer my time for the program, or pay fees to assist in the administration of the program. That is how they ran the gardening program in which my son participated. They asked local residents to be members for a fee. What contributions can I make if I cannot participate in designing and planning programs? I guess I just get to help them to do whatever they want to do. I just get to do what they ask me to do.



Even if I could get on the inner circle, the organization is structured such that the program director does all the planning and designing, and the rest of the board members approve or disapprove her decisions. HGLA has strict rules separating the activities of board members from administrative members. The rules are based on an understanding that non-profit organizations should be run in such a way that the board stays out of program administration. Someone who was recently invited to join the board showed me the pledge of commitment (see Figure 15: Board of Service Commitment Pledge (partial)) that new board members are required to sign. By signing the pledge, the board members indicate that they understand they are not to interfere with the administrative aspects of the programs. Basically, board members are to concern themselves with the mission of the organization, but leave the running and administering to the program director (the administrator).

**Figure 15: Board of Service Commitment Pledge (partial)**

<p><b>Hatfield Garden and Literary Association</b>  <b>Board of Service Commitment Pledge</b></p>
<p>I, _____, recognizing the important responsibility I am undertaking in serving as a member of the Board of Directors of this organization, hereby pledge to carry out in a trustworthy and diligent manner the duties and obligations in my role as a Board member.</p>
<p>My role:</p>
<p>I acknowledge that my primary roles as a Board Member are (1) to contribute to defining the organization's mission and governing the fulfillment of that mission, and (2) to carry out the functions of the office of Board Member and/or Officer as stated in the bylaws.</p>
<p>My roles as a Board Member will focus on the development of policies that govern the implementation of institutional plans and purposes. This role is separate and distinct from the role of the Program Director or Coordinator, who determines the means of implementation.</p>
<p>.....</p>
<p>I pledge to refrain from intruding on administrative issues that are the responsibility of management, except to monitor the results and prohibit methods that conflict with Board policy.</p>

Tamara, the program director, created the rules. She knows a lot about how non-profit organizations should be run, because she has a lot of experience sitting on the board of other organizations and participating in board training workshops. She even conducts board training workshops for other organizations. She has learned also from associating with “successful” non-profit organizations, such as Mercy Center. You can tell Mercy is a successful organization because they get lots of funding that allows them to employ a full time staff and run programs. Like Tamara, Ms. May, the president, also knows quite a bit about how to run an organization. They are both well educated and prior to their health complications, they both had good jobs at places like banks, law firms, and social service agencies. Unlike them, I do not know much about how organizations should be run. I have not even graduated from high school. Like the other members of the inner-circle, I would have to defer to Tamara and Ms. May because of the experience and skills they bring from their professional backgrounds. The other members are more like me. For example, the secretary has a high school diploma and works as a housekeeper at a hotel in the city. This is her first time sitting on the board of an organization.

Participating in the activities of HGLA is going to be tricky, because everything is so secretive within the organization. If one of the board members is working on something, he/she will keep it from other people until a proposal is ready. They go out of their way to keep other people out of the creative process. The way things are done is that someone (for example, the project director or the president) develops a proposal that is then presented to the other board members. The other members then choose from the set of options presented to them, but they do not participate in creating these options. It is as if they mistrust the other members of the

organization. I don't know if they behave this way because they think other members are not creative; or maybe they are afraid to lose control of the project.

Once other people get really involved, it will shift the locus of control. I think control is really important in this organization. People want to keep control concentrated among a few trusted people. Maintaining control may be important because of personal motives that drive the activities of the organization. The original members of the group want to make sure that they are around to reap the benefits of the organization when it becomes a successful entity. If they lose control, other people may take over and push out the original members of the organization. The "inner-circle" members do not want to take this risk. Whatever the case, the need for control makes it hard for people like me to optimally participate. It also makes it hard for the organization to work with other organizations with whom they could collaborate. Look what happened to the project with the church!

Another thing: I do wonder if the programs that HGLA has planned for our children will really solve the problem. It seems they just assume that the problems of poor academic performance, school drop out rates, and drug activity will be solved by having recreational activities for the children. But how do they know that? How do they know what is causing these problems? The organization doesn't make any efforts to involve the community in framing the problem and formulating the solutions. They don't hold any community meetings or anything like that. They just assume that anything they offer the neighborhood will be a benefit. They assume that the implementation of these "solutions" is a greater benefit to the neighborhood than the neighborhood coming with these solutions together.

*Participating In Hatfield Episcopal Church*

When the new pastor came to Father Mark's church, she came around knocking on everyone's door to introduce herself and invite people to the church. I was surprised that she was a woman. I didn't know they had female priests in that church. She has come by several times. And they always seem to have activities over there where they are inviting neighborhood people. I think the church is really trying to reach out to the community.

I took my children to the church one day. I didn't feel very comfortable. Most of the people were much older; there was hardly anybody my age there. You can tell the people who go to that church are rich from the clothes they wear and the way they speak. And everybody seemed to know each other really well. It was like they were all one family. I didn't feel like I belonged there. But my kids enjoyed it. They liked the free snacks. They got to play on the piano and stuff like that.

How can I participate in the church? Well, I can become a member of the church if I want. Membership in HEC is open to anyone after he/she has been baptized and confirmed. According to a brochure I picked up at the church, members are expected to do the following:

We ask that they attend service on a regular basis, have an active prayer life, read and study the Bible, and financially support this congregation. We also ask that members support the work of this parish by discovering their gifts and using these gifts to help serve God and this community.

The brochure also says in the Episcopalian denomination, members of the congregation can play a direct role in governance of their church as members of the vestry, who are elected by the congregation. The brochure states their role.

The vestry is responsible for assisting the rector in managing the affairs of the congregation. They help to establish the vision of the parish and work to help that vision to be lived out. They are responsible for maintain the building and financial matters of the congregation.

The vestry is similar to the board of directors of other organizations, with the rector being the lead administrator of the church. The policy manual of HEC gives the rector primary responsibility for administering, hiring, and terminating employees. The vestry chooses the rector to serve the church. However, the selection and termination of a rector has to be approved by the bishop, who heads the regional governing body of the Episcopal Church.

The rules of governance reflect how HEC determines and prioritizes roles. HEC by-laws state that only individuals who have contributed \$500 or more per year to the financial support of the congregation are eligible to be elected to the vestry. Moreover, only members that contribute beyond \$300 can participate in electing the vestry. Many members of the church view pledges to be an indication of one's dedication and commitment to the church. There are no incentives stated in the by-laws for members who serve the community or attend service regularly. If the leadership of the church is trusted only to those who are able to contribute so much money, that has major implications for the type of roles available to people like me who struggle to make ends meet. It is as if they assume that people who are unable to afford these monetary contributions are somehow less able, less committed, or less responsible. So just because I can't afford to give \$500 to church, I would be excluded from participating in the governance of the church.

I had the opportunity to attend the annual meeting of the church. Two of the things that made an impression on me at the meeting were: (1) the openness and (2) the language. Openness here refers to the presentation of information in the annual report. For example, the church budget was presented in great detail. Everyone in the church knows how much the pastor earns and the raise she received. They know how much of the church funds were used for building upkeep and community events. Not only are they informed, they are expected to question proposals made and participate in making decisions about any changes proposed. At this meeting, it seemed any member of the church was able to participate. It did not matter how much they gave to the church.

The other thing that impressed me was the language that is spoken at the church. People talked about things and used terms that I didn't know. For example, when the budget was presented, there were members who asked specific questions about the money-market accounts. I don't know anything about money-market accounts. But at this meeting, it seemed I was the only person who didn't know. It certainly was taken-for-granted that everyone knew what it was, because there were no attempts or requests for explanation. On my block, we talk about social security and welfare checks – not money markets. Rich people have a language of their own it seems!

The church seems like it's run by women—the pastor is a woman and the majority of the vestry is female. You hardly see the men. The activities I have attended at the church were organized by women. The men just help out. I have heard members describe the men as “passive” and “weak.” One member told me the following:

It is the women that are running the church. The men who are left, they are not strong men. We don't have strong men. They don't say a whole lot. We don't have the strength of the men that we used to have. We used to have very, very strong men who were vocal in everything, and not only in their opinions but they were good financial givers, we had excellent male participation in HEC. That was back when we had an all male vestry. We were really very male-oriented. Probably the women didn't even try to run. Women wouldn't get votes. Other women wouldn't vote for them. They would vote for the men. And that's the way it was. It was an all male vestry and the only reason that a woman got on was probably because she had a lot of clout. We were only gonna get on there if some of the men didn't want it or something cause you just weren't. It's just the way it was. Then we got to the time when the strong men died out, and then women were able to get on.

Women are in leadership roles because the men are deemed weak. The actors may have changed, but the script on gender roles remains the same, because the leadership roles are still considered masculine roles. As a woman, I wonder how this would affect my participation in the church.

I receive the newsletters from the church. I have noticed that the messages from the pastor are a lot like the sermon I heard the one time I attended church service. She really tries to teach people that, as Christians, they have a responsibility to share their fortunes/blessings with those less fortunate. Through her teachings, she challenges members to put these beliefs into practice. In other words, "the haves" must help the "have nots." In the context of HEC, the "have nots" are the neighbors of the church. So I would be considered a "have not." I represent

the people that members of the church should reach out to in order to live out the obligations of the church. From this perspective, the problem the church is trying to address is not the conditions of the neighborhood, but the spiritual wellbeing of their members. But at least they are trying to do something. Some churches only worry about the material wellbeing of their members and nobody else. I appreciate all the stuff they are doing for the kids in the area. Last year, both my kids got Christmas presents from the church. That was really nice. I don't go to the services or anything like that, but my kids go to the children's choir and other programs they have over there. My kids really seem to like it over there. I am just happy they have some place to go, so I don't have to worry about them running around on the street. Especially my 12-year old son. You know, at that age, the local drug dealers will be taking an interest in him.

*Participating In the Hatfield Residents Association*

From the time I was a little girl, I have always known that HRA is the place to go when you are having problems paying your bills. Everyone in the neighborhood knows that. I have gone there myself to get some help. I am glad that we can go to HRA to get services like that instead of going all the way to the city.

HRA provides services to people who are not able to meet their basic survival needs—food, shelter, energy. The city contracts the organization to provide services to low-income people like me. So when we need help, that's the first place we go to get help. It is really like a local city office. You go there with all your documents, take a number, stand-in line, and wait for someone to help you. If they can't help you, they will refer you either to another service organization or to the councilwoman or state representative. For example, my boyfriend went to HRA to complain that the contractors that are working on houses in the neighborhood are not



employing locals to work on their crews. He was very upset about this situation, and wanted something to be done, because he did not think it fair that the contractors were not helping to alleviate the unemployment situation. How can you be building in our neighborhood and not even want to give us the jobs? When he went to HRA, the staff members advised him to take his issue to the councilwoman or the state representative. The councilwoman and state representative are the people responsible for taking care of issues like that.

HRA organizes community meetings several times a year. I usually find out about the meetings when I go to the office. There will be fliers posted on the windows. If I don't go to the office, or don't pay attention to the signs on the window, I probably won't know anything about the meeting. It used to be that they would put fliers at every door in the neighborhood but they don't do that anymore. The last time I went to the meeting, they had people there giving us information about different things like the environment and housing counseling services. The chair of the meeting is Delroy Weldon, the state representative. The meetings give residents like me the opportunity to tell him our complaints about issues we are confronting in the neighborhood, for example police not responding to our calls. We really don't go to the meetings to talk to our neighbors; we go there to talk to people who we know can do something about the problems in the neighborhood, like the politicians. That's their job – to take care of our issues.

At the meetings, a lot of people just want to talk about their houses and issues around homeownership. For a lot people like me who do not own homes, this issue is not so important to us. We are just trying to figure out how to be able to pay the rent so we don't get evicted and

have to move again. People will say that the renters are a problem because they are transient and have little interest or investment in the neighborhood. People say things like:

Part of the problem is these apartments that going up all over the neighborhood. Before, it was all homeowners. You knew your neighbors were going to be around for a long time. Now with apartment, different people are coming in all the time. They are not really interested in the community. When I was coming up it was homeowners. Now we have a lot of apartments. And a lot of Section 8 people, I don't have anything against Section 8 people, but there is a tendency of saying, I'm not gonna be here long so I'm not gonna get involved in this, that, or the other... And at community meetings, Section 8 people really don't come out, it's mostly homeowners. Not mostly, it's all homeowners that really come out.

But if only 48% of the people who live here own their homes, it means that renters make up over half the residents. I am not a homeowner. I live in my mother's house. But that doesn't mean I don't have concerns about the neighborhood as well. I think they should be trying to address issues that are important to people who do not own their own homes. If they think of renters as part of the problem, does that mean they don't want them in the neighborhood? There is an assumption that people who have lived in the neighborhood for a long time are owners of the neighborhood; everyone else is a guest. Except if you are like me, and your family has been lived in the neighborhood for generations, then you are from here and not a guest. But people who moved to the neighborhood five years ago, they just live here but they are not from here. They are guests in our neighborhood. At the meetings, they don't bring up issues pertaining to such people.

I am not sure how I can participate in HRA. To be a member of the organization, you either have to work for the organization, or be on the board. I would be happy to work at HRA—it is close to home, and you get paid for helping people in your neighborhood. The office is really laid back; everyone is really nice. I don't know if they would hire me on the staff. Maybe if I start out volunteering at the office, they could hire me when they get an opening. That's how a few of the workers were hired. But maybe they won't hire me because I don't have a GED and don't have any work experience. The people who work in there are mostly older women who have a lot of work experience from other places.

Only women work in the office. I think part of the reason for that is because in order to do that kind of help, you need to be a very caring, sensitive, and nurturing person. These are qualities that women usually have, so in a way, this is "women's work." HRA clientele is also mostly female for similar reasons – women are the people responsible for taking care of the home and children. Welfare programs primarily support women with children because they know that parenting, taking of care of children and families, is women's work. And these are the people that usually qualify for the programs at HRA.

Now for the board – nobody would vote or nominate me. They wouldn't vote for me because they would assume I don't have anything to bring to the neighborhood. People in the neighborhood look for people that they think have access to resources, like Delroy Weldon. People voted for him because they thought, with his political connections, he would be able to bring a lot of resources to the neighborhood. Another reason that they wouldn't vote for me is that I am young and don't have any work experience. The other people on the board are older people who own their own homes and have lived in the neighborhood for all their lives. They

are like the parents and grandparents of the neighborhood. They assume a responsibility for and ownership of the neighborhood. Besides, I have young children and so I wouldn't be able to attend their meetings at night. Because I am not one of those out-spoken people, people assume that I can't do a lot to help. I guess the only way that I can participate is to help out when they have events like Hatfield Unity Day. I can help with tasks like passing out fliers, setting up for the event, and cleaning up after the event. They always need volunteers to help at those events. I don't mind doing that because sometimes you get free stuff like t-shirts and bags. Last year, when I volunteered at the unity day, I was able to take home some of the leftovers. That really helped out at our house.

HRA really does help a lot of families in the neighborhood. I don't know what we would do without the services that they offer. But the help they offer doesn't change anything in terms of the conditions of the neighborhood. Take my situation, for example. I need food vouchers because with the pittance I get from welfare, I really can't feed three mouths on that. If I try to get a job, without a high school diploma, I won't get paid enough to support my family. The services that HRA provides help me get by, but they don't help me change my situation.

#### *Participating In Hatfield Avenue Business Association*

I remember when Sister Khadijah married her husband, Brother Tariq. I was in high school at the time. Everyone in the neighborhood knew and respected Brother Tariq. He did a lot for the neighborhood. She is carrying on his legacy—just like the widows of politicians who become politicians themselves after their husbands pass on. They take over the office. Councilwoman Moesha Weldon did that as well. She has carried on the legacy of her late husband, Councilman Weldon. That is an honorable thing for a wife to do after her husband

passes on. I support Sister Khadijah when I can because of that. The other reason that I support her is because she really went through a rough time with all the trouble with the politicians and all. It really wasn't fair what they did to her. So if I can support her in any way, I will. I am always one for supporting the "underdog."

But I don't really know how I can help in that organization. They write grants and things like that all the time. That is not something that I can do. I have a hard enough time writing a letter, let alone a grant. They ask for all these things in the grants, like the by-laws and budgets of the organization. You have to know how to do things like that. And the grants have to be written in a particular way. You really have to be careful about the language and style of writing; otherwise they disqualify you. Although I attended a grant-writing workshop one time when I was helping out with the organization, I really couldn't follow what they were saying. It was targeted to people who already knew something about writing grants. Grant writing is like a game – it comes with specific rules for how things should be done. If you want to play in the game you have to follow the rules. The organization that is awarded the grant wins the game. I know that most people in the neighborhood are like me – we don't know the rules of the grant writing game. So HBA ends up enlisting the help of people who already have this expertise. People like me can't really participate in the organization in that capacity.

Sister Khadijah probably wouldn't ask me to sit on HBA's board. The organization wants people with professional skills and backgrounds to bring to the table. So most of HBA's board members work full time, with most of them either owning or running a business. They want these people on the board, even though they know that the organization will be a low priority for members of the team, coming after family and employment. Community work is a

lower priority to family and making a living. For HBA, skills and experience are more important than desire and availability. I have more desire and availability than I do skills.

Besides, HBA does not want troublemakers, i.e., people who might jeopardize HBA's chances of getting resources by challenging people in power. They might see me as a troublemaker, because I think residents should be more involved in politics. I would always be afraid I might say the wrong thing.

I have my own ideas about what the neighborhood needs, and what should happen on the business corridor. I don't think Sister Khadijah is open to new ideas if they might change her vision for the corridor. The CEO has a vision of what she wants for the organization and neighborhood, and she wants people on her team that will see and follow this vision. Sister Khadijah wants to control the organization, based on her commitment and dedication to the legacy and vision of HBA. Her consultants have been encouraging her to formulate rules that would distribute the control of the organization. The consultants showed her documents that show that this is how a non-profit organization should be run—the legislative and executive functions are separated. Sister Khadijah conceded, although this is in conflict with a belief she holds firmly. She believes that a person should be able to control his/her organization without being answerable to anyone. The other people on your team should help you, but you are the captain of the team. She tried to get around the conflict between the advice of her consultants and her desire for control by nominating someone who she expects to follow her script as president of the board.

The current president of HBA was nominated not based on his qualifications or background, but rather, on his loyalty to the CEO of the organization. So the most powerful

position on the board is given to someone who considers Sister Khadijah as the boss of the organization, contrary to what is written in the by-laws. As CEO of HBA, Sister Khadijah chose people to sit on the board who she expected to be able to assist her in realizing her vision for the organization. The board members are encouraged to use their skills and experience, but are expected to stay within the script established by Sister Khadijah.

The organization does some good things for the people in the neighborhood. I also know that they try to clean up Julian Avenue. That's hard work because that street, like other streets in the neighborhood, is always getting trashed. HBA is trying to make the corridor cleaner and safer to attract "better" businesses, such as chain stores, into the neighborhood. They assume that these businesses will foster the economic development of our neighborhood and that the residents will benefit from this. These businesses are expected to bring with them jobs for residents. Unemployment is a major problem for us in this neighborhood so we need employment opportunities. But I am not sure that this is the solution to the problem. What makes HBA so sure that this is what the neighborhood needs? They don't even have meetings to discuss this with the neighborhood. They have meetings for merchants, but not for residents, although residents are welcome to come to the meeting.

HBA behaves (or would like to be regarded) as the representative of the neighborhood regarding businesses matters. They go to the Asian merchants and ask them to "give back" to the neighborhood. I think that's a good thing – all these entities that profit from our neighborhood should contribute to our neighborhood in some way. Last year, my family received a Thanksgiving turkey through a turkey give-away program that HBA sponsors as a vehicle for "giving back" to the neighborhood. They get money from the merchants on the

corridor and buy turkeys to give to residents. But my question is: How does HBA make decisions about what residents in the neighborhood need? HBA assumes the authority to speak on the behalf of neighborhood residents. I am not sure where this authority comes from. It is good that they are trying to do things for the neighborhood. Certainly, my family and I benefited from the Turkey-Give-Away program. Rather than turkeys, maybe we could have purchased some books for the school library. Neither one of the schools here have books in the library. And we wonder why our children are failing. I don't know if HBA is even aware of that. They are trying to help the neighborhood, but I don't think they know what the community needs.

I would like HBA to do something to support local people who have enterprising ideas. So rather than trying to get people to come here to open business in our neighborhood, we can support local residents who are trying to establish businesses. For example, Reggie's shop on the corner there, HBA should be supporting him to help him build a strong business establishment in the neighborhood. Or the people who do legitimate businesses out of their houses, or on the streets – HBA could help them in some way. My neighbor can really cook – he makes the best catfish. People come from all over the neighborhood to buy plates from him when he cooks during the weekend. I wish there was some way he could get help to set up a restaurant on the Avenue. You know, to help the community develop its economy. That way we won't be as prone to exploitation from people who come from outside the community.

I have now come to the end of my story of my participation in these organizations. I hope my story has helped you see how the social structure of each of the organizations creates opportunities as well as barriers for people like me to participate in the activities of the organizations.



### **Rules, Roles, and Recipes: How COs Shape Citizen Participation**

In the preceding section, on the lips of Maya, a fictitious character, I employed a narrative form to describe how specific elements in the social structure of each of the participating organizations shaped or shapes the participation of residents as citizens. In this section, I synthesize Maya's story, highlighting emerging patterns and contradictions.

As conceptualized in this study, citizen participation refers to occasions in which local residents participate as owners in defining problems and formulating solutions that guide community-building activities. Put differently, citizen participation is a measure of local residents' involvement as *subjects* that contribute to the regulative structures of community-building activities. On the question of how the social structure of COs promote and/or inhibit citizen participation, my analysis has revealed six patterns of behavior: (1) constructing community, (2) the right people for the job, (3) tools that rule, (4) recipes for action, (5) motivation matters and (6) dimensions of citizen participation .

#### *Constructing Community*

I found that while each of the participating organizations is located in and oriented towards the same locality, they differ in their construction of community through their behavior. For HBA, race/ethnicity is more prominent than geographic territory in its construction of community. Members of the community are African-American; people of other races or ethnicities are "outsiders." For another organization, HRA, investment in homeownership and historical connection to the neighborhood qualifies someone as a member of the community. Renters without some historical connection to the neighborhood are not considered community members: "They live here but they are not from here." For the church, HEC, community

members are defined in relation to church members. If someone whose socio-economic profile fits that of Hatfield residents (as contrasted to HEC members), that person is considered a member of the community, whether or not he or she resides in Hatfield. An illustration might help here. Imagine a community that is located in the mountains. Imagine, also, that there are special characteristics to this place that inhabitants want to preserve and nurture. Their way of life is built around these special characteristics. Ultimately, the inhabitants see value in the territory itself. The behavior of community organization in this study reflects an opposite view of place from this illustration. In their construction of community, place or geographic territory is given little or no special value. While the location of their neighborhood is appreciated, the concern for the place is generally limited to the extent to which the place meets the needs of the residents.

The construction of community that emphasizes residents without valuing special characteristics of the locality does not encourage residents to see value in their locality. This results in residents looking outside their neighborhood for resources and solutions for addressing concerns in their neighborhood. Moreover, these constructions of community legitimate specific groups of residents as “belonging” to the locality. For example, HRA’s perception of homeowners as more invested in the neighborhood.

### *The Right People for the Job*

In general, the organizations privileged the participation of individuals who were educated, had professional work experience, and had connections to resources outside the neighborhood. A good example of this is the election of Delroy Weldon as president of the Hatfield Residents Association. The residents of Hatfield elected him to represent the

neighborhood because of his political connections. Similarly, HBA invited individuals who have professional and educational experience to sit on its board. In the case of HEC, the preference for participants who are highly educated professionals is implied in the organization's rules regarding eligibility to sit on the governing board. In HGLA, this pattern is revealed in the manner in which members defer to better-educated and more experienced board members.

In privileging people who are educated, experienced, and connected, the organizations exclude residents who do not possess these attributes. For a neighborhood such as Hatfield, where most of the residents are neither highly educated nor well connected, the implications are significant. Invariably, the behavior of the organizations supports the construction of local residents as lacking the ability to take care of their own neighborhood. The behavior suggests that the residents are not the right people for the job of building their community. Moreover, this behavior places greater value on skills, knowledge and abilities that are legitimated by entities beyond the neighborhood, and not on the skills, knowledge and abilities of local people. For example, a resident who has worked at a well-known restaurant is recognized as having greater skills than someone who cooks and sells to neighbors. Similarly, someone with formal training and work experience as an accountant is held in higher esteem than someone who only has experience as the treasurer at their church. By restricting the participation of local residents to clients and helpers, the behavior of the COs also inhibits *learning* for citizen participation as it denies residents the opportunity to gain these skills through participation in the activities of the organizations.

### *Tools That Rule*

The organizations were sanctioned by rules embedded in two types of tools—resources and strategies and processes—that were employed in activities sponsored/and or supported by the COs.

#### *Outside resources*

COs that participated in this study generally depended on resources from outside the neighborhood to implement community-building efforts. HRA depends on contracts from the city, HGLA and HBA depend on grants and donations from outside the neighborhood, and HEC relies on the support of its non-resident members. These resources are a category of tools that the organizations use in their activities. The resources available to COs come with rules that regulate the behavior of the organizations. For example, HRA's contracts from the city stipulate how the organization should be structured, and they require the organization to perform particular activities. Similarly, grant proposals require an organization that is applying to fulfill certain requirements in order to be considered for the organization. These requirements are rules that sanction the behavior of the organization. If the organization is unable to meet these requirements, it will not get the resources it needs. The residents of Hatfield do not get to participate in setting these rules; instead, they are imposed upon them. The rules privilege certain skills and knowledge as exemplified in requests for grant proposals. In a neighborhood such as Hatfield, such rules determine who gets to participate in what ways. Those who are able to write grants are more likely to be at the forefront of making decisions and directing the activities.

*Pre-formulated solutions for pre-determined problems*

Another category of tools is strategies and processes employed for addressing community concerns. Some of the strategies and processes employed by the organizations are packaged as pre-formulated solutions for pre-defined community problems. An example of this would be the youth enrichment program that HGLA plans to establish to address challenges faced by youth in the neighborhood. The program implies a solution (activities for youth) to address a problem defined as “at-risk” youth. Another example is the contracts awarded to HRA to provide social services to people with low-income. The provision of social services is a pre-formulated solution to the pre-defined problem of people’s inability to meet their basic survival needs (i.e. poor people). By viewing residents as unable to take care of themselves, the pre-formulated solutions for pre-determined problems relegate local residents to the role of clients of benevolent providers.

On the subject of citizen participation, the adequacy of the definition and/or solutions proffered is less of an issue than the processes undertaken to create these tools, i.e. processes undertaken to define the problems, formulate solutions, and secure resources to address these problems. What are the opportunities available for local residents to contribute to these processes? In the activities described in this study, there were limited opportunities for residents to participate in problem definition or in developing solutions. Ironically, the tools and processes employed by the organizations only serve to support the existing power structures. With resources and solutions primarily coming from outside the neighborhood, these tools perpetuate the neighborhood dependence on entities outside the neighborhood, and ultimately, perpetuate residents being viewed more as objects of community-building activities, and less as subjects of the activities.

As tools that mediate the CO-sponsored activities, resources and tools impose pre-formulated solutions for pre-defined problems. This leaves little room for residents to consider alternatives, or to struggle to understand and address the conditions of the neighborhood. Without this struggle, the opportunity for local residents to see themselves as subjects that create alternatives is greatly diminished. Instead, these behaviors promote the view that residents are the objects of the activity, the problems that need fixing. Perceived as such, residents are not regarded as entities that have the responsibility for and skills needed for providing and/or accessing tools and resources for addressing community concerns. The COs unwittingly devalue the worth of neighborhood residents.

#### *Recipes for action*

Taken-for-granted assumptions that provide a reference for participants in this study emanate from schemas and scripts for behavior based on gender, class, and race.

#### *The people to trust*

Local residents generally take for granted that African-American politicians look out for the interests African-American residents. In contrast, residents view non African-American merchants and developers with suspicion. Ironically, while the motives of non African-American entities are viewed with suspicion, their ability and skills to provide resources is not in question. The opposite is true when it comes to the African-American residents (and Black people in general): their political interests and agendas are taken for granted as noble, but their skills, abilities and access to resources are not. This assumption is exemplified in HBA's focus on the activities of non African-American businesses for promoting the economic development of the neighborhood. While HBA is suspicious of the Asian merchants' agenda, they take for

granted their ability to contribute to the development of the neighborhood. On the other hand, HBA does little to support the contributions of local businesses to the economic development of the neighborhood. HBA does not assume that black owned businesses may exploit the neighborhood as much. This assumption prevails despite examples of exploitative politicians and enterprises.

### *The care-takers*

An assumption that underlies many of the activities sponsored by the COs is that persons who are more powerful, or have more access to material resources (e.g. money) have a responsibility for taking care of those who have less. In the case of HEC, assumption is embedded in the expectation that church members should share their blessings with those who are less fortunate. What this seems to imply is that those with fewer material resources have less responsibility and authority for addressing concerns. However, this reliance on other entities (politicians, community organizations, etc., etc.) to provide for residents perpetuates their role as clients. The residents seem to accept this role as they continue to look to other entities to take care of issues in their neighborhood. The leadership of COs reproduces this pattern as they strive to maintain their control over the organization, whatever the cost. Assuming that providers as more powerful, they strive to maintain a position where they are providers to other residents. This pattern of behavior mirrors the political climate of Verona as it is enacted in Hatfield. The power of the politicians lies in the ability to take care of the residents, i.e. provide for the need of the residents. A good politician is one that takes care of the needs of the people. Applied to community organizations, a good community organization is one that takes care of community residents. Residents are encouraged to help the “care-takers” but are perceived as troublemakers

when they challenge the “care-takers.” This belief directly contradicts the goal of citizen participation, which is to encourage all residents to share in the ownership and responsibility of taking care of their locality.

The COs participating in this study were generally concerned with helping poor people or alleviating poverty. Framing the problem as “poor people,” the activities of the organizations reveal a taken-for-granted assumption about the nature of the problem. Poverty is viewed as an end in itself, not as an indicator of social injustice. If the problem is framed as “poor people,” the residents become the object of the activity. An example would be HRA’s activity of providing services to assist low-income families. In that activity, there is little room to participate in capacities beyond client or recipient. The organization itself is a client of the city, and operates (unquestioningly) as such. If the problem were to be framed more broadly, this would leave room for the residents to participate as subjects rather than just objects of the activity, even while living under conditions of poverty. If such were the case, HRA could engage in activities beyond assisting people to meet their basic needs. For example, HRA could organize the community to influence policies and rules that perpetuate conditions of poverty for residents (for example, changing rules governing grant distribution). If people are participating in activities as objects, they are more likely to learn to behave as objects, not as subjects of the activities.

### *Women’s work*

Women are at the forefront each of the organizations that participated in this study, and the activities that they sponsored/and supported. They frame community work as “helping people,” and “taking care of the community.” Community work seems to be an extension of



“women’s work” in the home. It is associated with the nurturing role typically associated with women. I suspect that this association of community work with women is partly responsible for the absence of men in the activities of the organization. While acknowledging the importance of community work, the men in this study generally perceived themselves as supporters or assistants to the women who were “helping” the community. For example, Omar perceived himself as an assistant to Sister Khadijah in HBA – he was there to help her with anything she did. This attitude is reminiscent of men who “help” their wives with housework in the broader society. However, while women generally run the organizations on a day-to-day basis, there remains an expectation that men, “real men,” should take on leadership positions. This was particularly evident in HEC where the absence of men in the governing body of the church was interpreted as an indication of the absence of strong men. Similarly, there were men on HRA’s board but only women running the day-to-day operations of the organization. This suggests a scenario where men participate in making decisions, but leave the women to carry them out. This is another reflection of gendered assumptions shaping citizen participation.

#### *Motivations matter*

Motivations behind activities sponsored and/or supported by the COs influenced the nature of citizen participation.

#### *Control as Ownership*

In general, the leaders of the participating organizations exhibit a strong desire to maintain control of the organization. Some do so through intimidation tactics (as in the case of HRA), and others through rule setting (e.g. HGLA), and secrecy. Maintaining control appears to

be more important than strengthening the organization. The need for control inhibits citizen participation because by definition, citizen participation requires sharing control.

What explains this need for control? At first glance, it may appear that the individuals in leadership positions are just power-hungry, insecure, and so forth. There may be other explanations for this behavior. Perhaps this behavior reflects a resistance to being relegated to the role of client. If one understands organizations to be structured such that only officers such as “president” or “CEO” have legislative authority (everyone else is regarded as helpers or beneficiaries), then the CEO is more in a position of “citizen” than any other member. The CEOs are the owners that control and direct the process of change with other members helping them. In such a structure, sharing control without losing power is not feasible. As a result, a resident who wants to act as a citizen must either take over as CEO or establish his/her own community organization.

I watched organization leaders struggle with this idea of sharing control and responsibility with other members of their organization. They would choose to take on all the responsibility just to maintain control. I think this behavior reflects organizational structures that people experience in their day-to-day lives—workplaces, schools, government, etc.—where the person at the top has all the power. The leaders of the organizations are mimicking organizational structures with which they interact. In mimicking these structures, they reproduce existing power structures from the broader society.

#### *Personal Hardships are not Community Concerns*

Ms. May is the president of one of the organizations that participated in my study. I arrived at her home one day to work with her on a recruitment project for the organization.

When I arrived at her house, I found her talking with the pastor of her church. She was asking him to assist with food donations of any kind, because feeding her family was becoming increasingly difficult. A few days later, I visited the home of another community activist, Ms. Donna. She was dealing with the challenge of supporting a son who had recently been released from prison. On another occasion, I shivered while conducting an interview at the home of a community organizer who could not afford to pay her heating bill. Another resident was refused medical treatment at a hospital after a heart attack because she did not have medical insurance. I could go on and on with examples like this to make the point that the community organizers who are the force behind these organizations do not live comfortable lives. And yet, their personal hardships are talked about separately from the hardships of the community.

The goals of the activities sponsored by the community organizations are disconnected from the personal hardships that the members face in their own lives. The examples given above are not issues that the organizations seek to address in any systematic way. Personal hardships, although shared by many in the community, are not treated as community issues. Consequently, they do not promote the involvement of local residents in working to address the issues affecting their lives.

#### *Dimensions of Citizen Participation*

My data suggest that citizenship participation is not an “all-or-none” phenomenon. Thus, when observing the participation of a resident, we might ask, “in what ways is she participating as a citizen?” instead of “is she behaving as a citizen?” Citizen participation exists along a continuum with two dimensions: (1) legislative involvement, i.e., the level of involvement in defining concerns, formulating and implementing solutions, and (2) locality orientation, i.e., the

extent to which actions are motivated by concern for well-being of the locality. Guided by these dimensions, I have created a preliminary continuum of citizen participation with four types of participants—client, assistant, supporter, and owner—with client being the “least citizen” and owner being the “most citizen.” See Table 9.

**Table 9: Continuum of Citizen Participation**

<i>Dimension of Participation</i>	<i>Type of Participant</i>			
	<b>Client</b>	<b>Assistant</b>	<b>Supporter</b>	<b>Owner</b>
Legislative involvement	None	Low	Medium	High
Locality-orientation	None	Low	Medium	High
Example	Recipient of HBA’s turkey donation at Thanksgiving but know little about HBA	Assists with HEC-sponsored action program because Pastor Zora asked, and my other friends are involved	Assists HRA publicize meetings because I think it’s important for people to attend meetings	Presents proposal for program to address needs of youth
<b>Level of Citizen Participation</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>

These four types of participation apply to an individual resident’s involvement in a specific activity. A person may be a recipient in one activity and a supporter in a separate activity. For example Ms. May is involved as an “owner” in the activity of creating a recruitment campaign for HGLA, but she is a “client” in HRA’s activity of heating and utility assistance.

## **CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

In this concluding chapter, I discuss some of the insights I have gained from the study. These are insights I believe to have significant implications for theory and practice. The insights I discuss are: (1) interacting with the environment, (2) the risk of citizen participation; (3) negotiating the tension between private interests and public concerns; (4) constructions of community and (5) learning in and for community.

### **Connecting Ties: Interacting with the Environment**

The theoretical framework employed in this study combines theories from participatory development, organizational theory, community theory, and cultural historical activity theory (CHAT). My theoretical framework was instrumental in my analysis of the actions and activities of the organizations. However, during my analysis of the activities, I realized that the framework was rather weak when exploring the relationships that the community organizations have with each other and with entities outside the neighborhood. While the institutional theory of organizations is instructive in exploring the interaction between an organization and its environment, it does not provide tools adequate for examining the interaction between and among community organizations and entities, both within and outside their communities.

Fortunately, Warren's (1978) conception of vertical and horizontal patterns of relationships between community social-system units and other systems provide tools that address this weakness in my original framework. Warren (1978) defines communities as social systems, and considers organizations within a community to be social-system units or sub-systems. According to Warren, a vertical pattern is the structural and functional relation of a community's social units and sub-units (such as community organizations) to extra-community

systems. Vertical patterns are relationships that orient local organizations to social systems beyond the community. He provides the following examples to illustrate the vertical pattern of relationships:

Our community's bank was also the central office for a whole system of branches located in other communities. The vertical relationship between the local unit and the other units of the system was downward. Often the relation is upward, from a church to a denominational headquarters, from a local chain store to the district office, from the local branch plant to the national headquarters, from a local health association chapter of the national association (p. 164).

By contrast, a horizontal pattern is the structural and functional relationship between the social units and sub-systems within a community. With horizontal relationships, Warren proposes, "The community units, in so far as they have relevance to the community system, tend to be on approximately the same hierarchical level (a community unity level)" (Warren, 1978, p.164).

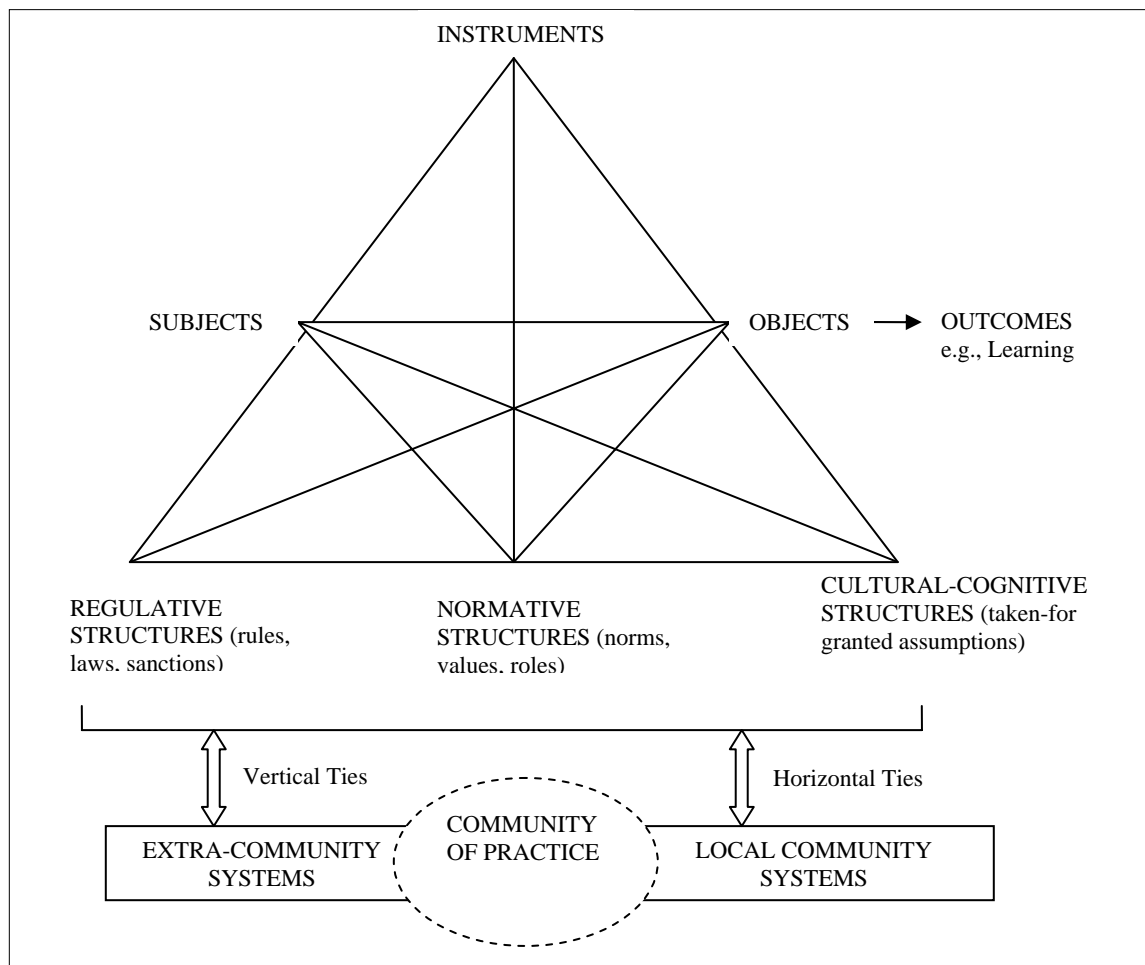
Elaborating on the relationship between the community and the larger society, Warren writes:

Although it has been recognized that every community is a part of the larger society, it has not been equally emphasized that the larger society is a part of every community.... A clear recognition of the way institutions of the larger society are "built into" every community and behavior patterns of the larger society are enacted in every community will make possible a somewhat different model for the relationship of the community to larger society. It makes possible a realization that the larger society need not be "related" by the investigator to the local community, for it is already there (Warren, 1978, p.242)

In the context of this study, vertical and horizontal patterns provide tools to investigate the nature of the interaction between and among the community organizations and entities in their environment. I am therefore further modifying Engeström's (1987) structure of human activity (see Figure 16) to incorporate Warren's vertical and horizontal ties (see Chapter 2 for details). In Chapter 2, I used institutional approach to organizational behavior (Scott 2001) to effect the first modification to Engeström's model. There, I argued that institutions are, in fact the true carriers of cultural and historical processes. In our everyday lives, I argued, we encounter institutions as objective social structures that are passed down from prior generations. Culture and history are preserved and transmitted in structures that bolster and legitimate our institutions, I argued. Three such legitimating structures were discussed: regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive. In Chapter 2, I replaced the base of Engeström's model—rules, communities of practice, and divisions of labor—(which, I believe, represents the cultural-historical contexts of human activity) with these three structures of legitimation. However, missing from my earlier modification is a vehicle through which institutional structures are transmitted. I have addressed this weakness by incorporating vertical and horizontal ties into the structure of human activity. Vertical and horizontal ties are carriers of institutional structures that contextualize community-building activities.

Community organizations exist in environments with networks of vertical and horizontal relationship patterns. Supporting the importance of understanding vertical and horizontal relationship patterns, two prominent organizational theorists, Scott and Meyer (1991) comment: "Vertical and non-local linkages among organizations must not be overlooked if we are to understand the structure and functioning of organizations in contemporary societies" (p. 177).

**Figure 16: Modified Structure of Human Activity, Version 2**



In this new version of the structure of human activity, the concept of community of practice is reintroduced and reinforced. According to Wenger (200), community of practice consists of three characteristics: (1) focus on a domain of shared interests; (2) community formed through engagements in joint activities and discussions; and (3) shared practice. Interacting with entities within extra-community and local systems, the subjects of activities participate in a community of practice, thus drawing upon and contributing to a shared knowledge base. With the incorporation of communities of practice, this proposed structure of human activity potentially contributes to the investigation of learning in and for community. It provides a



framework for exploring the complex nature of learning in social relationships centered on the politics of place. The structure highlights learning in and for community as a possible outcome of activity that occur in contexts much broader than the specific locality and/or organizations.

I see two possible types of horizontal and vertical ties that connect community organizations to extra-community and local systems: (1) ties of dependence (2) ties of interdependence. Ties of dependence are one-way ties in which community organizations are overly dependent on external entities for survival and success. Such dependency is also expressed in under-appreciation, under-reliance, and under-utilization of members and resources *within* one's own organization and community. Also, in such one-way relationships, if the dependent community organizations cease to exist, entities in the environment are unaffected, because the relationship is more parasitic than symbiotic. The one-way relationship is exemplified in the relationship between Hatfield Residents Association (HRA) and the city of Verona. When support from city government is revoked, HRA shuts down. However, when HRA ceases to exist, it does not seem to affect city government.

By contrast, in ties of interdependence, community organizations and entities with which they interact are symbiotically connected to each other—deliberately so. I added “deliberately so” to underscore the fact that most relationships exhibit some elements of interdependency—but not all would admit to it. The relationship between the city of Verona and at least three of the four organizations in my study serves to illustrate my point. Three of the four participating organizations in my study exhibited dependent ties to the political system (represented by the city government). The city government depends a great deal on the neighborhoods constituting it for its authority, legitimacy and resources. However, in their relating to the city this mutual

dependency is not evident in the behavior of three of the four participating organizations in my study. They operate, instead, as subservient clients of the city. This subservience to the city contributed to the way the organizations related to its members and other community residents. This is how the three organizations generally understood their relationship with city government: residents elect politicians to represent them; the elected officials are expected to ensure that resources are channeled from the city to the community; COs are often conduits for channeling these resources; residents support the candidates (politicians and leaders of community organizations, who in some cases are one and the same persons) for reelection based on how well they serve as channels.

Guided by this recipe-for-action, the organizations make little, if any, efforts to influence the rules that guide the distribution of resources to ALL communities in the city. In fact, in some cases, the organizations discourage wider political participation. This is exemplified, for instance, in the behavior of the business association (HBA) where it forced a board member (who was trying to act in the interest of the broader society) to resign. The member's conduct and views toward certain elected officials were regarded by HBA as potentially "blocking the channel" of city resources.

Regarding this issue, the primary concern of at least three of the four community organizations in my study, is that elected officials "give back" to the community. The behavior of the organizations, shaped by this tie of dependency, promotes the behavior of residents as clients. This vertical relationship with extra-community systems transmits historical and cultural processes in the form of institutional elements. In this example, the COs are connected to the institution of government through rules and sanctions that regulate their (the COs) behavior. In

essence, the community organizations behave as clients of the city, in much the same way that the residents are clients of the organizations. Not only do the community organizations not challenge the dependency created by the unequal power structure, they reproduce the relationship of dependency in their behavior towards residents of their community. Ultimately, the community organizations reproduce clients for the wider social system.

Unlike the three organizations, Hatfield Episcopal Church (HEC) promoted the members of its organization to act as “owners” as opposed to “clients” of the church. Members of the church participated in making decisions regarding all matters of the church, including allocation of resources. Although the church is supported by the regional diocese of the Episcopal Church, HEC is run primarily on the resources of its members. If members of the church did not take responsibility for their church, the church might cease to exist. What I have described for the church, would be ideal for the residents of the community. What makes the church members different from the members of the other community organizations? I plan to conduct further analysis of data collected for this study to shed light on this issue, which has important implications for how community organizations are structured.

### **The Risk of Citizen Participation**

In the Hatfield neighborhood, even people who work full time in minimum wage paying employment have a difficult time feeding their families. For example, a single mother of three, working a full-time job at minimum wage does not earn enough to meet the basic needs of her family. The COs generally addressed this issue through activities geared at helping people in dire need. HBA organized a Turkey-Give-Away for needy families at Thanksgiving. HRA provided food vouchers. HEC sponsored clothing give-aways for local residents. While these

activities help struggling families, they do not encourage residents to act as citizens. If anything, they encourage residents to act as clients. How can community organizations address this situation in ways that promote citizen participation? In Table 10, I lay out three types of activities with different implications for citizen participation that COs may sponsor or support to address this community concern.

**Table 10: Types of Activities**

Social Structure of COs	Types of Activities		
<i>Activity Type</i>	<i>Helping Individuals</i>	<i>Changing Individuals</i>	<i>Changing Structures</i>
<i>Behavioral Structure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Organize facilitate food donations for families who are needy</li> <li>○ Distribute food vouchers to families who qualify according to program guidelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Organize financial education seminars for neighborhood residence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Organize to increase minimum wage standards</li> <li>○ Organize to regulate food prices</li> </ul>
<i>Normative Structure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The “haves” and the “powerful” should help provide food for those who are unable to afford (the “have-nots”.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The “have nots” are unable to take care of themselves because they make unwise money choices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ We should change the rules that contribute to conditions of hardship faced by the “have-nots” who are working as hard as anyone else.</li> </ul>
<i>Cultural-Cognitive Structure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The “have-nots” are unable to feed their families because they are unable to take-care of themselves.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If people knew better, they would act better and be able to change their circumstances.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Extra-community economic and social policies contribute to hardships faced by the “have-nots.”</li> </ul>

In a community like Hatfield, COs would ideally strive to sponsor all three activities—helping individuals, changing individuals and changing structures. The activity of changing structures would do more to promote learning for citizen participation as residents collectively work to address the issue and influence policies and programs related to the issues. COs that participated in this study focused on helping individuals. In general, the residents were afraid to challenge the extra-community entities that influenced their lives. For example, members of

HRA's board were afraid to challenge Delroy because they were afraid they would lose their houses. The fear of losing the little they have kept residents in check. This fear also influenced how three organizations in the study behaved as reflected in the ways in which they dealt with city offices. The church was an exception because it did not depend on city offices for resources, nor was its primary mission to address the needs of the residents. In contrast, the other three COs depended on city resources to meet their objectives of serving the community. If the COs were to challenge policies and programs assisting low-income families, they faced the risk of losing the few programs that they had for helping individuals in their communities. This seemed too high a risk to take. In a political climate such as Hatfield, changing structures requires taking risk.

When local residents take greater control of their communities, they risk repercussions, such as sanctions, that might make conditions worse for residents. In community development literature that addresses citizen participation, the negative repercussions of citizen participation or the environmental threats facing communities is largely ignored. In this study, the repercussions loomed large in the schemas for action that framed the actions of residents. This issue has important implications for community educators and organizers working to promote citizen participation in community building efforts.

### **Negotiating the Tension between Personal and Public Concerns**

Tamara, the program director of Hatfield Garden and Literacy Association (HGLA) is developing an after-school program with her as the director (a paid position) of the program. Tamara, who is currently unemployed, views this as an opportunity to make income. The success of such an enterprise would certainly address some of her personal hardships. In this

situation, the activity of the CO is motivated by a private interest or personal need. The logic behind this motivation is simple: there are organizations that make money from addressing the needs of low-income neighborhoods. If residents establish such organizations, they too can make money from addressing the needs of people in need. Unfortunately, this only perpetuates the construction of residents as clients—with the only difference being that it will be local residents providing services for other local residents. However, while the motive is personal, the objective of the activity is a public concern. In the example of Tamara, the objective is to develop a youth program. What is true of Tamara is also true of the leaders of HBA, and HRA. Their personal interests are motivations behind the activities sponsored and/or supported by the organizations.

As an activity, citizen participation implies personal motives for actions undertaken. In Chapter 1, drawing upon democratic theory and participatory development theory, I defined citizen participation as the active engagement of local residents in making decisions regarding the definition and framing of issues facing their community, prioritization of these issues, and the formulation and implementation of solutions to address the issues. By this definition, personal motives should drive the activities of the COs. However, findings from the study suggest that citizen participation is also impeded by private interests. Returning to the example of Tamara, she is reluctant to involve other people that may pose a threat to her opportunity. This also fuels her desire to control the organization at all cost. When do private interests promote citizen participation, and when do they impede it?

Citizen participation is promoted when private interests or personal concerns are treated as common concerns. Thus, an activity in which people are struggling together to find a common solution to a common concern promotes citizen participation. Carrying on with

Tamara's example, to promote citizen participation, HGLA would have to frame the activity as employment creation to address the concern of unemployment shared by many in the neighborhood. Framed as such, the activity would leave room for other residents to join in the struggle is search of "common solutions for common conflicts" (Barber, 1984, p.219).

### **Constructions of Community**

Guided by the interactional approach to community and the concept of community action (Kaufman, 1959; Wilkinson, 1991), I defined a community organization as a formal organization that has goals oriented towards the specific locality in which it is located; and encourages local residents to participate as decision-makers. This definition of community privileges place or territory. My data demonstrated that the activities of the organizations employed definitions of community that privileged other aspects, such as race/ethnicity and socio-economic class.

Citizen participation, as conceptualized in this study, is an activity oriented to addressing issues and concerns facing residents in a specific locality. Like citizen participation, community action, refers to actions that are oriented to a specific locality. Both these concepts focus on the things to be changed about the locality—the issues and problems to be addressed. Community organizations that participated in this study framed issues and problems as located in the residents. For example, the African-American residents are exploited by Asian merchants; or local youth are at risk of dropping out of school. The locality or territory was more a site than an object of the activities of the COs.

. These findings suggest to me that there is a relationship between constructions of community and citizen participation. My initial thought on this topic is that activities that focus on problems faced by residents contribute to residents not perceiving their territory, and by

extension, their skills and knowledge, as valuable. I suspect that activities that encourage residents to value their territory are more likely to encourage citizen participation. It seems to me the force of locality orientation in citizen participation rests in the assumption that residents see value and hope in and for their locality. This is a topic that I will be exploring deeper in the future.

### **Community Organizations as Mediators for Learning**

Adult educators interested in social change advocate for education that promotes people to participate in critically examining their reality, defining problems, and formulating alternative solutions for issues confronting their locality, i.e. to act as citizens. Given what we know about citizen participation, how can educators and community organizers intervene in ways that facilitate learning for citizen participation? I have argued in this study that learning is an outcome of activity, and that citizen participation is an activity for which learning is a possible outcome. One of the findings of this study is that citizen participation can be manifested in varying degrees and that specific types of activities promote different types of participation (see Table 9 in Chapter 6). Consequently, specific activities promote different types of learning. As structures that sponsor and/or support activities, community organizations mediate learning in and for community. The role of community organizations as mediating structures is not given much attention in adult education literature. More attention has given to learning mediated by organizations in the workplace. Many questions need to be explored on this topic: What types of learning occur in specific types of participation? What types of learning are promoted by specific activities? How do people learn to become clients?



## Conclusion

In advocating for residents to behave as citizens, i.e., owners, I am not suggesting that, by virtue of residency, people have the best interests of the neighborhood. I am aware that residents of any locality have different levels of attachment and connection to the place. Some residents live in a community because they cannot afford to move elsewhere. Other residents move to the neighborhood in anticipation of real estate values increasing as local residents are forced to relocate. There are also residents who are more interested in exploiting the conditions of the neighborhood for personal gain. I also do not assume that all residents prefer to play the role of citizen. After all, being a citizen comes with great responsibility. I suspect there are residents who prefer leaving this responsibility to other people. Regardless of, and perhaps because of these variations, I think community organizations have an important role to play in promoting and facilitating residents to participate as citizens in community-building activities.

I entered into this study expecting to find ways in which community organizations actively resisted the relegation of community residents to the role of client. What I found is that the organizations do more to inhibit citizen participation than to promote it. I completed the study with more questions than when I started. I plan to continue investigating this phenomenon because I believe citizen participation is the ideal vehicle for changing unjust conditions and the structures that perpetuate them.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Greetings,

My name is Naomie Nyanungo. I am a graduate student at the Pennsylvania State University where I am pursuing a doctorate degree in Adult Education with a concentration in Community Education and Organizing. Community organizations all over the world share a common concern: how to improve community participation. To help address this concern, I am conducting a study to investigate how community organizations shape the participation of their members. I am interested in finding out how the structure and behavior of community organizations influences who participates and how they participate in the work of the organization. I am writing to request the participation of your community organization in my study.

The participation of your organization in this study would entail the following three activities:

- Allowing me to participate in your organization as a participant or “engaged” observer for approximately 6 months (July to December 2005). This would mean that I would attend some of your organizational meetings and other activities arranged by your organization. I plan to take brief notes during the meetings. With your permission, I may video-tape and/or audio-tape some of these meetings. In addition, in my role as participant observer, I would assist your organization with projects you are currently working on wherever possible. Skills I have to offer include grant writing, and organizing.
- Providing me with access to organizational documents such as the constitution and meeting minutes.
- Participation of members of your organization in at least one, but no more than three in-depth interviews. Each interview will last between one and two hours. With the permission of the interviewee, the interviews will be audio-taped. Questions asked in these interviews will be related to participants’ involvement in the organization.

Please note that all information gathered in this study will be confidential. When published, every effort will be made to make sure that the information will not be linked to your organization, or any specific member of your organization.

By participating in this study, you and your organization will be contributing to our understanding of how community organizations work. With this knowledge, we will be better equipped to assist community organizations all over the world become more effective in improving the standard of living for their communities. I hope you will give my request due consideration. If you agree to have your organization participate in this study, please fill out the attached form and send it to me at the above address.

Should you have any questions about my study, do not hesitate to contact by phone at (814) 466-2788 or email at [hnn107@psu.edu](mailto:hnn107@psu.edu). You may also contact my academic advisor, Dr. Ian Baptiste, by calling (814) 865-1958 or emailing him at [ieb1@psu.edu](mailto:ieb1@psu.edu).

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

H. Naomie Nyanungo, Doctoral Candidate in Adult Education program

**Agreement to Participate**

<b>Name of organization</b>	
<b>Name of organization representative</b>	
<b>Position of representative in organization</b>	
<b>Address of organization</b>	
<b>Phone #</b>	
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Does your organization agree to participate in this study?    ___ Yes                    _____ No</b>	
<b>Signature:</b>	

## APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

The Pennsylvania State University

**Title of Project:** Community Organizations as Social Actors  
IRB 21296

**Principal Investigator:** Hleziphi Naomie Nyanungo; 315  
Keller Building, University Park, PA 16802; (814) 863-4364;  
[hnn107@psu.edu](mailto:hnn107@psu.edu)

**Faculty Advisor:** Ian E. Baptiste; 305B Keller Building,  
University Park, PA 16802; (814) 865-1958; [ieb1@psu.edu](mailto:ieb1@psu.edu)

ORP USE ONLY: IRB# 21296 Doc.# 1  
**The Pennsylvania State University for Research  
Protections**

**Approval Date:** 07/11/05 M. Becker

**Expiration Date:** 07/05/06 M. Becker

Social Science Institutional Review Board

1. *Purpose of the Study:* The purpose of the study is to explore how the structure and behavior of community organizations shape the participation of their members
2. *Procedures to be followed:* You will be interviewed once. However, up to two follow-up interviews may be necessary. The interviews will be audio-taped. In addition, I will be conducting direct observations of your participation in the community organization. I will also analyze some of the public documents that are produced by your organization.
3. *Discomforts and Risks:* There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Some of the questions are personal and might cause discomfort. You can choose to decline answering any questions that are you do not feel comfortable in answering.
4. *Benefits:*
  - a. You may gain greater appreciation of your contribution to this organization, and to the community.
  - b. This research might provide some insight into effective strategies for community organizations trying to improve community participation. This information might assist community organizations in designing and implementing projects that are successful in addressing community needs, while increasing community capacity.
5. *Duration:* Each interview and follow-up interviews will take approximately 2 hours. Your total time commitment for this study will be no more than six hours (spread over a six month period).
6. *Statement of Confidentiality:* Only the person in charge will know your identity. In reporting the findings of this study, I will use direct quotations from the interviews. However, I will not use any unique identifiers which may lead someone to identify you. If this research is published, no information that would identify you will be written. To further protect your identity, neither the name of the project nor its location will be revealed. Interview tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet in Keller Building for a period of 1 year. They will be destroyed in December 2007. Only the PI (myself) and my faculty advisor (Ian

Baptiste) will have access to this cabinet. The Office for Research Protections and the Social Science Institutional Review Board may review records related to this project.

7. *Right to Ask Questions:* You can ask questions about the research. Please contact H. Naomie Nyanungo at (814) 466-2788 ([hnn107@psu.edu](mailto:hnn107@psu.edu)), or Dr. Ian Baptiste at (814) 865-1958 ([ieb1@psu.edu](mailto:ieb1@psu.edu)) with any questions about the research. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact Penn State's Office for Research Protections at (814) 865-1775.

8. *Voluntary Participation:* You do not have to participate in this research. You can end your participation at any time by telling the person in charge. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

9. You must be 18 years or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

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Participant Signature

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Date

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Interviewer Signature

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Date

## **APPENDIX C: INTEVIEW PROTOCOLS**

**Interview Protocol for Organizational Supporters/Clients** (*Individuals who support organizational events but do not consider themselves to be members*)

### **Background information**

- Please tell me a little about yourself – Where were you born? Where did you grow up?
  - Career background
  - Education
  - family
- Tell me about how you come to be living and/or working (or worshipping) in Hatfield?

### **Impressions of Hatfield**

- What do you like about living/working in Hatfield? What don't you like about living/working in Hatfield?
- Has there been any effort to maintain the things that you like, and address the things that you don't like? Talk to me about these efforts, or their lack.
- Are you aware of any groups working in this community?
  - Tell me what they are doing?
  - What contact, if any, do you have with these groups?

### **Organizational Involvement**

- Have you been involved with any groups in this community? Which ones?
- Please describe your involvement with [organization] for me? How do you feel about your involvement?

### **Organizational Events**

- Tell me about a recent community event that you attended.
  - What was it (meeting, open house, etc)? How did you find out about it?
  - Why did you attend? What were your impressions of the event?

### **Organizational Behavior**

- Have you considered becoming a member of this organization?

- What are your impressions of the role that this organization plays in this community?
  - If you could make any suggestions for how this organization could be a better serve its clientele, what would they be?

## **Interview Protocol for Organizational Associates/Members**

*(Individuals identifying themselves as currently or formerly involved with a participating organization)*

### **Background information**

- Please tell me a little about yourself – Where were you born? Where did you grow up?
  - Career background
  - Education
  - family
- Tell me about how you come to be living and/or working (or worshipping) in Hatfield?
- What do you like about living/working in Hatfield? What don't you like about living/working in Hatfield?
- Has there been any effort to maintain the things that you like, and address the things that you don't like? Talk to me about these efforts, or their lack

### **Organizational Involvement**

- How did you come to be associated with this [organization]?
- Please describe your involvement with this organization?
  - How long have you been involved with the organization? Do you, or have you held any official positions in the organization?
  - How did you come to be appointed/elected into this position
  - Responsibilities you undertake as a person in this position
  - Challenges and limitations that come with this position
  - Benefits you derive from involvement
- What sorts of activities do you do for the organization?
  - When do you get do these activities?
  - What are your feelings about your interactions and activities?
- What are some of the reasons you continue to be involved with this organization?

### **Organizational Events**

- Can you tell me about some memorable event that was organized by the organization?
  - What makes this event so memorable?
  - How did your organization go about putting this together? Walk me through it from start to finish.
  - What was your contribution in the planning and implementation of this event? What did you find satisfying and/or challenging in your role?



- Recently, [organization] put together the [name of event.] Talk to me about the idea of the event came about. What was the planning process for this event? What was your role in putting together this event?

### **Organizational Behavior**

- Who are the other members of this organization? What are their roles?
- What strategies does [organization] use to encourage people to participate?
- As an organization, whom do you serve and how do you serve them?
- What are your thoughts about the ways your organization serves its clientele?
  - If you could make any suggestions for how this organization could be a better serve its clientele, what would they be?

## **VITA**

### **HLEZIPHI NAOME NYANUNGO**

Hleziphi Naome Nyanungo was born and raised in Zimbabwe. She completed her primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe. After finishing high school at Queen Elizabeth Girls High School in Harare (Zimbabwe), Nyanungo attended North Central College in Naperville, Illinois where she majored in International Business Administration and Organizational Communications. She graduated in June 1994 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree. Following her graduation, Nyanungo worked as an International Project Coordinator at Magnetrol International Inc., a manufacturing firm headquartered in Illinois. While working full time, Nyanungo enrolled in a Masters program at her alma mater, North Central College. She graduated with a Masters in Business Administration degree (with a concentration in marketing) in 1997. In 2001, Nyanungo left full time employment to enter the Adult Education program at The Pennsylvania State University as a doctoral candidate. She received a Doctorate in Adult Education in May 2007.