

“Organizational Networks and Social Mobility Regimes: A Comparison of Working Class
Neighborhoods in Chicago and Seattle”

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Introduction

In this paper, we examine how the dynamics of local community-based organizations and governance structures might be associated with opportunities for social mobility. Because Chicago and Seattle vary substantially in the openness of their social mobility regimes, as well as key social dimensions like racial residential segregation and social capital (Chetty et. al. 2014), we use geographical areas in Seattle metropolitan area and neighborhoods in Chicago for a comparative case study. We anticipate that variation in the characteristics of each area's organization population will shape the structured social capital available within those neighborhoods and may contribute to the opportunities available to young people living there. Wide geographic variation exists in socioeconomic mobility regimes across American metropolitan areas, particularly in the likelihood that young people from disadvantaged circumstances can advance to the middle and upper class as adults (Chetty et al 2014). Our research is fundamentally concerned with understanding whether and how local organizational structures are a possible mechanism that shapes mobility opportunities.

We compare organizational characteristics in a metropolis that has relatively high rates of social mobility with the structure of similar organizations in a low-mobility area. In the coming months, we plan to also examine the degree to which organizations in each location are networked with each other, and to better understand whether density of connections between organizations, network characteristics like segmentation, or the role and location of key actors, might be connected to broader mobility patterns. We focus our analyses on working class communities because vast changes to the occupational structure make it likely that working class youth will experience upward – or downward – socioeconomic mobility, rendering the structured social capital available via local organizations particularly important within these contexts. This

work will contribute to scholarship on organizational networks and neighborhoods, as well as helping to specify the mechanisms through which local contexts shape socioeconomic mobility and how organizations more and less effectively broker access to structured social capital. We hope to identify network characteristics, structures, and processes prevalent in local community organizations that foster greater and fewer opportunities for upward mobility among working class young people.

Motivating Literature

Chetty and his colleagues (2014) have identified the Chicago metropolitan area as having relatively low levels of intergenerational mobility, and Seattle and its suburbs as having relatively high levels of mobility. In general, they find that metropolitan areas with lower levels of racial residential segregation and income inequality, higher quality public schools, greater family stability, and more social capital¹ tend to have higher rates of intergenerational social mobility. Beyond merely identifying these macro-level factors, however, Chetty and his colleagues call for more nuanced study of the mechanisms at play in local communities, and a better understanding of the policies and social processes that affect children's life chances. This research is a direct response to that call, interrogating how local institutions might facilitate the development of social capital. Indeed, until we can better understand how macro-level patterns are affected via micro-level processes (Coleman 1990), our ability to develop effective strategies to impact overall patterns of social class replication and give working class young people a "fair shake" in the new economy will be hampered.

Economic inequality is shaped by multiple factors, operating at different social and institutional levels, encompassing family processes and the local community, as well as structural and policy factors at both the county and state levels (Brady et. al. 2013; Haney 2010;

Moller et. al. 2009; Wickrama and Noh 2010). Small (2009) has identified the critical role that local organizations play in affecting the size and quality of interpersonal social networks, and the meaningful impact that those networks can have on families' ability to access valuable informational and material resources. Within local communities, organizations serve as brokers, helping to bridge structural holes and connect individuals with others outside their networks (Burt 2005). It is the ability of organizations to pull groups of people into interdependent "civic networks" that builds social solidarity across divergent constituencies, allowing diverse groups that share social bonds to collaborate for functional (or transactional) purposes across that difference (Baldassarri and Diani 2007).

Social relationships at the micro-level shape the diffusion of informational resources, particularly as linked to mobility opportunities, although many networks suffer from the problem of informational redundancy. The ability to leverage informational resources from multiple networks and communities is maximized when relationships connect people with others who are not already in their networks (Granovetter 1973). We focus here on nonprofit organizations because of the important role these institutions play in facilitating social cohesion and structuring the diffusion of information and other resources. These institutions likely affect social mobility processes in their role as brokers (Burt 2005; Small 2009), helping adolescents and their parents build structured forms of social capital (most directly expressed through social networks) that can facilitate the acquisition of information and resources that are useful in securing educational, training, and employment opportunities.

The vitality of civil society, however, largely determines the presence of these channels. The availability of social capital and the benefits it provides depends in large part on the degree to which individuals are connected to one another through formal

organizations (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998). “[C]ooperation and information sharing are facilitated when individuals have the opportunity to interact within organizations. Such activities facilitate information-sharing through repeated interactions and these interactions promote reciprocity” (Rupasingha et. al. 2006, p. 88). Social networks and social capital play a critical role in structuring access to the kinds of information and experiences that lead to educational and occupational success (Granovetter 1973, Lin et. al. 1981). Chicago’s relative deficit in this area, vis-à-vis Seattle, suggests that fewer organizations exist in local civil society, and Chicago’s adults are less likely to belong to an organization than their Seattle-area counterparts. Individuals with fewer institutionally-rooted interpersonal contacts have diminished access to information, and fewer chances to engage in reciprocal exchanges with adults to whom they are more loosely connected. Lower overall rates of involvement in community associations, coupled with much higher racial residential segregation in Chicago, also suggests a mechanism through which Chicago’s working class, and particularly people of color, may be disadvantaged by their relative levels of social isolation.

We are interested in organizational characteristics and organizational networks in working class communities because of the high stakes for young people who live there. The US labor market has become “polarized” in recent decades – with jobs clustered at the top and bottom of the occupational ladder (Autor et. al. 2006; Kalleberg et. al. 2000). This has strong implications for working class social mobility. To a large degree, the futures of adolescents from the top and bottom of the economic distribution are fixed (Harding et. al. 2008). Youth from middle class backgrounds are likely to complete college, laying claim to “good” jobs and benefitting from their parents’ homeownership and relative financial stability. Those from communities mired in concentrated poverty, saddled with inadequate schools and intensive

criminal justice involvement, face long odds as they try to improve their economic circumstances (Duncan et. al 1998; Terriquez 2014). However, organizations can impact whether individuals are able to access and activate social capital (Burt 2005; Pattillo 2007) and vary in terms of whether the brokerage roles they fulfill are purposive or not and driven by organizational or individual agency (Small 2009). It is this organizational brokerage role, and its relationship to social network characteristics, that forms the theoretical basis for this project.

Our Research Sites

The Seattle neighborhoods we examine, part of what is locally referred to as the “South End,” are nestled between the Seattle city limits, to the north, and SeaTac International Airport, to the south. Both Seattle and the city of SeaTac have minimum wages¹ at or above \$15.00 an hour, in excess of the state minimum, which increased to \$11.50 an hour on 1 January 2018, per a ballot initiative approved by Washington voters on 8 November 2016 (WA State Dept. of Labor and Industries 2016). The focal communities are bounded on the west by the Puget Sound and the east by the Duwamish River. All three are racially diverse, with low percentages of adults who hold a four-year college degree, average levels of high school completion, and rates of poverty that are higher than the national average, but not approaching levels indicating severe economic distress.

Our three focal communities, Tukwila, SeaTac, and Burien were incorporated in 1908, 1990, and 1993, respectively. Much of the history of these communities is shaped by the SeaTac

¹ Smaller employers are legally allowed to pay a lower minimum wage, and some workers covered by collective bargaining agreements are “carved out” of the city ordinances (WA State Dept. of Labor and Industries 2018).

airport, which fostered dramatic transformations. The first of these, during and immediately after World War II, saw rapid increases in blue collar jobs associated with the new airport and nearby manufacturing. The Post-War era in the South End also witnessed housing development and explosive population growth. The legality of discriminatory housing practices guaranteed that these working class communities first developed as almost exclusively white. Beginning in the 1980s, increasing airport traffic and the subsequent expansion of SeaTac International Airport created a large number of new (largely low-paid and service sector) jobs. This explosion in low-skilled employment opportunities intersected with the Seattle metropolitan area's absorption of refugees and other immigrants from Somalia, Ethiopia, the former Soviet Union and Vietnam. Airlines and airport services prefer to hire refugees because of the rigorous security clearance procedures to which they are subject, which is largely unavailable for most low-skilled workers. In the span of a few years, the communities of SeaTac, Burien, and Tukwila were transformed from white working-class enclaves into diverse cities hosting immigrants from around the globe.

Indeed, the residents of both SeaTac and Burien had rejected multiple ballot measures in the middle of the 20th Century that would have established them as separate cities – rather than unincorporated areas of King County. It was only in the 1990s, facing rapid airport development and expansion and an increasingly diverse set of neighbors that the two communities incorporated. Much of the public narrative surrounding the successful vote for incorporation used racially coded language, such as providing “established residents” with a broader political voice within the metropolis. Tukwila school district now boasts that its students speak more than 80 Languages. Today, the South County area is the most diverse in King County, and indeed, in the state of Washington.

The working-class Chicago neighborhoods we study are similar to each other, and to the comparison communities in Seattle’s South End in that they all have relatively low concentrations of poverty but also low median household income, and the proportion of adults with at least a high school diploma but less than a college degree is above the national average. These neighborhoods vary in racial composition, population stability, adult educational attainment, concentration of low-wage workers, and youth activity. This variation exists despite the fact that the communities are contiguous, clustered on the northwestern side of Chicago. The communities of interest in Chicago are Portage Park, Belmont Cragin, Galewood, and North Austin. This area in Chicago is largely born out of factories, such as tin plate and sheet iron processing plants, as well as the Mars Candy plant, which still operates today. Even though many of the factories have shut down or moved elsewhere, this part of the city still holds strong as a home for working-class families.

Information on each of the five factors identified by Chetty and colleagues as critical for is presented in Table 1 for the Seattle and Chicago metropolitan areas. While measures of family structure and school spending for the cities are similar, Chicago has much higher levels of residential segregation, and a moderately higher level of economic inequality, than does Seattle, as well as substantially lower levels of social capital. That two metropolitan areas with divergent patterns of intergenerational mobility are so similar on some metrics, and diverge so widely on others, comports with Chetty’s recommendation that a more detailed investigation of the possible mechanisms that structure patterns of mobility at the local level is warranted. We believe that Chicago’s lower levels of social capital may be directly linked to the presence and configuration of community based, non-profit organizations.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Some of the basic demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of each metropolitan area are presented below, in Table 2. Note that not all racial categories are included here. The Seattle communities (combined) have multiracial, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Alaskan Native/American Indian populations that are proportionately larger than the national average. Table 2 also presents selected aggregated socioeconomic characteristics for each of these South End communities, and for the Chicago neighborhood sites, to demonstrate the rough comparability of these geographic areas. We also include measures for the United States, to provide a point of comparison, and empirical support for the selection of these communities as “working class”.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

We anticipate that Chicago’s high level of racial residential segregation and the tight linkage between organizational resources and the city’s aldermanic ward structure (Vargas 2016) may build redundancies into the networks that organizations are able to provide to their constituents. We also suspect that those local institutions that work to intentionally bridge spatial and racial divides may be most effective at brokering useful social network connections for working class families. Conversely, we expect that the racial diversity and relative political fluidity in Seattle’s working class communities will create greater baseline levels of cross-racial and spatially diffuse network brokerage. However, it is likely that specific actions and practices of local organizations remain critical in helping working class families tap into forms of structured social capital.

The histories of these metropolitan areas, and particularly the degree to which racial and ethnic minority groups have competed or collaborated to obtain prized social goods, also evidences stark divergence. Chicago has a long-standing history of racial and ethnic

diversity, with episodes of marked political and economic contention between blacks and Latinos, the area's largest non-European ethnic groups (Johnson and Oliver 1989). The city appears to have settled into a détente in recent years, with each group preserving its local influence through political gerrymandering, a process facilitated by the vestiges of discriminatory housing policy and more recent gentrification processes that have maintained high levels of racial residential segregation. The Seattle region, conversely, has historically been dominated, both demographically and politically, by European-origin whites. Communities of color – Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, black and Latino – were crowded into contiguous neighborhoods within the city, and blocked from residentially locating in the South End communities until recently. Seattle's history, then, is one of intentionally built cross-racial collaborations to advocate for increased access to valued social goods (Santos and Iwamoto 2015). These divergent approaches should create moments of union and disunion (Baker and Obstfeld 1999) in mobilization strategies by organizations in each of these metropolitan areas, as well as distinctive relationships between not-for-profit and civic organizations and the local governance structures.

Data

We use public data distributed by the Internal Revenue Service on tax-exempt organizations (state-level "EO" or Exempt Organizations records). These are organizations that are not required to pay taxes because they fall under the 501(c) section of the tax code, which identifies organizations eligible for exemption from federal taxation. Perhaps the most widely-known of these are charitable organizations covered under subsection 501(c)(3). The data are organized by state, and include basic information, such as the organization's name and mailing address, which we used to restrict the number of organizations to only those within our specified

geographic areas. In Seattle, we retained observations for all organizations reporting a mailing address in one of three working class suburbs. In Chicago, we first restricted the data to only those in one of the four ZIP Codes that encompass the neighborhoods of interest, and then geocoded the addresses to eliminate records for any organizations that fell outside of the spatial area of interest.

Each organization was hand-coded based on a combination of the subsection under which it qualifies for tax exempt status, the reported classification of the type of organization (the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities, or NTEE code), the organization's name, and information gleaned from the website or additional documentation from reporting organizations Guide Star, Pro Publica, and Charity Navigator. In many cases this was a simple process. For example, an organization classified by its NTEE as having an educational purpose and named "The Learning Tree" – a name clearly designating an educational function – would be coded as an educational organization. An organization with a name that seemed less directly connected with the reported NTEE purpose would be examined more closely. For example, a Chicago organization with an NTEE code of P30, indicating children's and youth services, called "Jasmin Integrated Group," does not clearly identify an organizational focus on children and youth. To confirm the classification of this organization, we conducted an internet search of the organization's name and town, locating the group's website, which clearly states a purpose of supporting children with disabilities and their families. In this internet search we also located a Pro Publica page with links to several years of organizational tax returns and their subsections. While the tax return offers important minute information, the tax return subsection filed for each organization is also telling. For example, the 501(c)(3) tax return subsection covers organizations with a broad range of purposes, including education, religion, and social services. The 501(c)(6)

subsection, conversely, is more narrowly defined to include business leagues, chambers of commerce, and similar trade associations. The IRS data on each organization also includes up to four numeric codes indicating each organization's purpose. Our current dataset has N=832, with 370 organizations from Seattle and 462 organizations from Chicago.

For demographic information about each geographic area, we use the American Community Survey from 2017 at the neighborhood level. We also utilize archival research for situating each geographic area within its local history to help us contextualize the patterns we are observing. To date, we have primarily gathered this information for the Seattle site, using local newspapers and other primary source documents available at the Highline Historical Society. Over the coming months, we will broaden our scope to cover a greater array of information about Chicago and the neighborhoods we are focusing on.

Findings

We present descriptive statistics here as our preliminary findings to show the difference in organizational population qualities for community organizations in each of our geographic areas of interest. We found many differences between organizations in Seattle and Chicago. First, Table 3 shows population counts for the total population of each neighborhood and geographic area total, as well as percent of population under 19 years of age, since we are primarily interested in how emerging adults interact with community organizations.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

In Table 4, we present findings on organizational presence in both cities. Here, you'll see that Seattle has 36.65 non-profits per 10,000 residents, while Chicago only has 19.12 non-profits per 10,000 residents. Clearly, the number of organizations per capita in Seattle far outweighs the number of organizations per capita in Chicago. Table 5 breaks this organizational presence down

further by identifying the total count of each category of organization and count per 10,000 residents of each geographic area. In Seattle, the categories with the highest organizational presence are religious organization, professional organization/unions, and educational organizations. In Chicago, religious organizations far outstripped all other categories in terms of representation among the population. In fact, Chicago's organization per capita presence pales in comparison to Seattle's with the exception of religious organizations.

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

[TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

Table 6 focuses on the financial aspect of the organizations. Here, you'll see that Seattle organizations have significantly higher mean income and revenue than is true of organizations in Chicago. For income, Seattle nonprofits averaged \$12,000,000 in their most recent reporting year while Chicago only averaged \$371,811. Similarly, in terms of revenue, Seattle averages over \$43,000,000 and Chicago averages just under \$350,000. Here it is important to note that we believe Seattle revenue and income are skewed to the right, while Chicago revenue and income are skewed to the left. Our next steps include looking at this data more closely.

[TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE]

Table 7 details the average time since organizational founding. Here, we can see that the organizations in the Seattle geographic area have, on average, had a longer organizational life than those in Chicago. Lastly, we break this information down by youth-focused organizations. This information is found in Table 8, which shows the total youth population for each of the geographic areas in Seattle and Chicago, as well as the number of youth organizations in each. Using this data, we calculated the number of youth organizations per 10,000 youth residents. Here, we find that Seattle has a greater number of youth organizations per 10,000 youth

residents, suggesting that there is a stronger presence of community organizations for emerging adults in Seattle.

[TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE]

[TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE]

Conclusion

Our preliminary findings are consistent with our hypothesis that organizational structure may be linked to differences in rates of social mobility. The descriptive statistics that we present in Tables 4-8 consistently show that our area of interest in Seattle has a stronger non-profit presence than our area of interest in Chicago. That is, Seattle has more community organizations per capita both generally and for youth, higher earning organizations, and older and more established organizations. Thus, while we are still in the pilot stage of this project, we believe that our work so far shows that organizational structure in a local community may provide an explanation to differences in rates of social mobility.

Next Steps

In the months leading up to the 2019 Population Association of American Annual Conference, we will work on further cleaning the data, particularly related to organizational resources, as many organizations are currently listed as having \$0 in annual income. We believe this could be for several reasons: it could mean that these organizations are no longer functioning, or it could mean that these organizations have filed their tax return in a different year, as is practice for some non-profits. In order to determine which explanation is most relevant for this project, we will look at IRS data for targeted \$0 income organizations for both the Chicago and Seattle datasets that we have.

Once our data has been fully cleaned, we will further analyze the current data quantitatively, looking at how certain organizational characteristics might be related to demographic information in the geographic areas of interest. While our preliminary findings indicate that there is a difference between Seattle and Chicago's network of organizations, we hope to show more concretely that this network of organizations can be connected to the broader context in which the networks are situated.

Finally, we plan to develop a phone survey to be administered to a sample of organizations in each metropolitan area, to identify the degree of interconnections within each area. While this will not be a formal network analysis (yet), we plan to assess whether differences emerge in the patterning of inter-organizational ties, measured by aspects such as referral of clients, collaborative events or programs, and circulation of board members or staff between organizations.

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TABLES

Table 1. Key Social Indicators Linked to Mobility Regimes in Chicago and Seattle

	Residential Segregation	Gini Coefficient	Social Capital Index	Percent Children with Single Mothers	School Expenditure per Student
Chicago	.431	.521	-0.533	20.8	\$6,148
Seattle	.107	.424	-0.125	19.5	\$6,604

Source: <http://equality-of-opportunity.org/index.php/data>, Online Data Table 3 (Commute Zones)

Table 2. Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics for Seattle and Chicago Sites

	Population	Pct. HS Dropouts	Pct. College Graduates	Pct. (NH) White	Pct. (NH) Black	Pct. Latino	Pct. Below Poverty
Seattle Site	160,978	15.6%	23.0%	51.6%	7.7%	18.5%	16.6%
Chicago Site	341,814	25.5%	17.5%	29.3%	16.9%	49.9%	19.6%
United States	314,107,084	13.6%	29.3%	62.8%	12.2%	16.9%	15.6%

Source: <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

Table 3. Population Counts for Seattle and Chicago sites

		Total Population	Percent Population Under 19 Years Old
Seattle	Tukwila	20,144	27.10%
	Burien	51,671	26.20%
	Seatac	29,140	22.90%
	SEATTLE TOTAL	100,955	
Chicago	Portage Park	64,841	23.50%
	Austin & Galewood	97,643	29.10%
	Belmont Cragin	79,159	32%
	CHICAGO TOTAL	241,643	

Table 4. Organizational Presence for Seattle and Chicago sites

	Seattle	Chicago
# of Orgs	370	462
# of Orgs Per Capita	0.003664999	0.00191191
Per 10,000 Residents	36.65	19.12

Table 5. Organizational Presence by Category

Categories	Seattle		Chicago	
	N	Per 10,000	N	Per Capita
Arts/Rec	16	1.58	18	0.74
Education	42	4.16	32	1.32
Social	24	2.38	13	0.54
Health	17	1.68	7	0.29
Youth	24	2.38	34	1.41
Sports	6	0.59	4	0.17
Social Services	32	3.17	33	1.37
Community Development	9	0.89	15	0.62
Housing	5	0.50	6	0.25
Advocacy, Political Org	17	1.68	7	0.29
Fundraising, Volunteering	3	0.30	6	0.25
International	8	0.79	9	0.37
Religious	57	5.65	195	8.07
Business	7	0.69	8	0.33
Professional Orgs, Unions	47	4.66	10	0.41
Ethnic	10	0.99	24	0.99
Environment	13	1.29	4	0.17
UNCODED	46	4.56	37	1.53
TOTAL	370	36.65	462	19.12

Table 6. Financial Information

	Seattle	Chicago
Mean Income	\$12,000,000	\$371,811
Mean Revenue	\$43,334,166	\$348,125

Table 7. Time Since Founding

	Seattle	Chicago
Mean Years	34.12	26.55

Table 8. Youth Breakout for Seattle and Chicago

	Seattle	Chicago
Total Youth Population	25670	68983
# of Youth Orgs	24	34
Youth Orgs Per 10,000 Youth Residents	9.35	4.93

