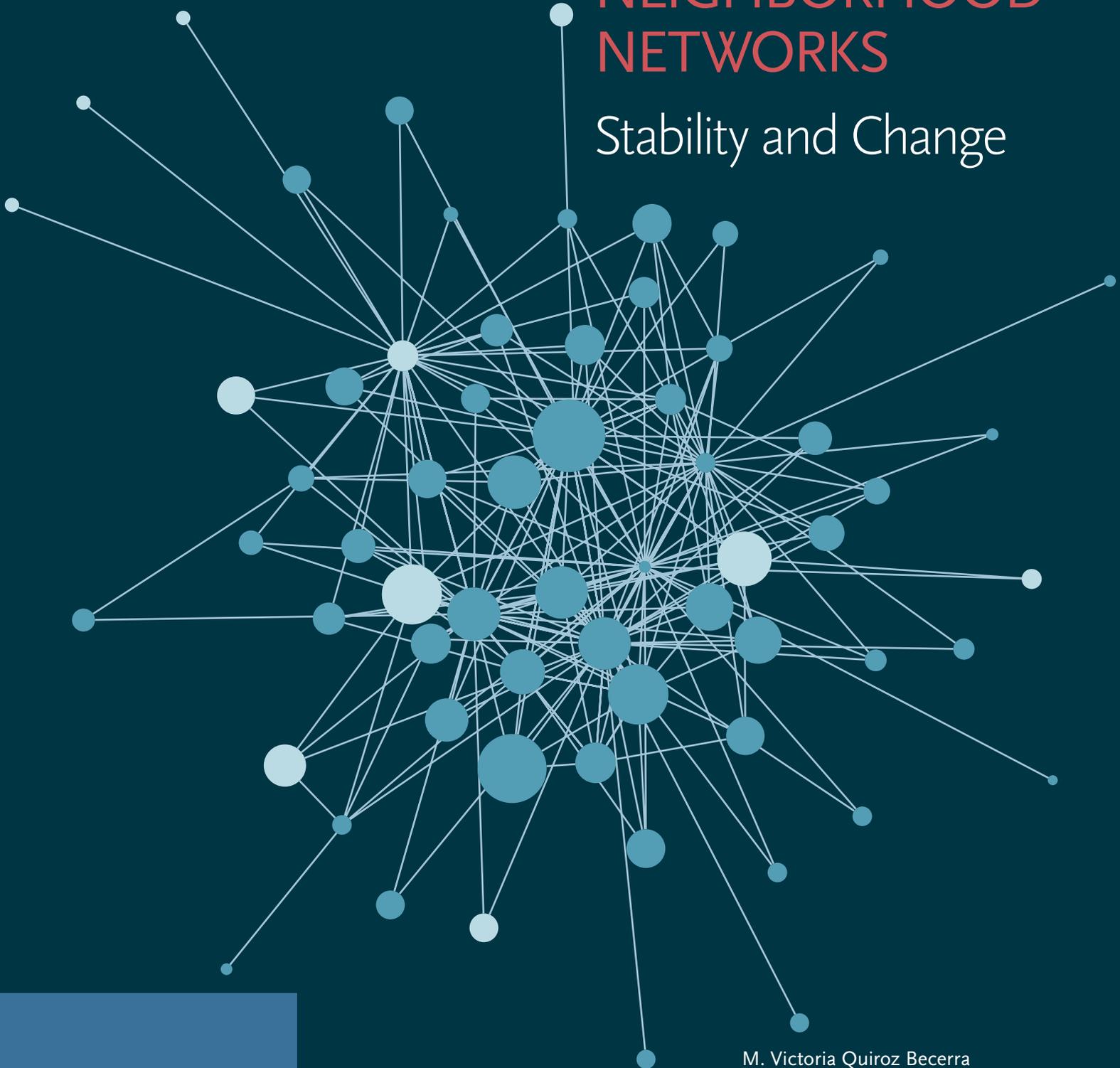


# CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

## Stability and Change



M. Victoria Quiroz Becerra  
David M. Greenberg  
Edith Yang  
Audrey Yu

**mdrc**  
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE  
TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

January 2019



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# Overview

Neighborhood improvement initiatives have long underscored the importance of local organizations working together, sometimes in formal partnerships and sometimes through less formal coordination and engagement. Coordinated efforts may help neighborhoods achieve community improvement outcomes that include leveraging public sector investments and actions beyond what any individual organization could achieve on its own. A community's capacity to improve its neighborhood may hinge fundamentally on the nature, endurance, and evolution of the ties that bind local organizations, and the flexibility of organizational networks to address new challenges.

This report uses social network analysis, drawing from two surveys of local organizations over three years in nine Chicago neighborhoods, and extensive field research, and asks: How and why do neighborhood networks change or remain the same? The report looks at four dimensions of network change: (1) the place of individual organizations within a network, (2) levels of connectivity in neighborhood networks, (3) the extent to which neighborhood organizations collaborate on different issues (comprehensiveness), and (4) the distribution of potential power or influence in a network.

## KEY FINDINGS

- While most organizations in the Chicago study upheld their level of neighborhood prominence, community conveners — organizations that rally others for shared purposes — remained most prominent or rose to a higher level of prominence relatively quickly. Community conveners may help sustain or enhance network capacity to coordinate or mobilize partners for collective efforts.
- Overall, levels of connectivity — the proportion of all possible connections between organizations within a neighborhood network that are realized — declined between surveys for six neighborhoods and remained similar for three neighborhoods. The drop in connections occurred despite declining numbers of network organizations — a development that would normally make it easier for organizations to connect. In some cases, a state budget crisis led to less funding for core activities and this may have weakened neighborhood organizations' capacity to build and maintain partnerships — and advance neighborhood improvements.
- Across neighborhoods, partnerships grew less comprehensive over time, spanning fewer areas of work. In some instances, pressing neighborhood developments such as increasing gentrification or a preoccupation with police violence led organizations to focus on single issues rather than partner with others on multiple issues. These changes might highlight the flexibility of neighborhood networks that face challenges to their communities.
- Overall, the distribution of potential power or influence among organizations within each neighborhood network was stable in the three-year period between 2013 and 2016. This suggests that overall patterns in the way power and influence are distributed in a network might be less susceptible to change in the short term. Depending on the circumstances, this may sustain strong community capacity or hinder improvements to it.

This study highlights the importance of understanding the dynamic nature of neighborhood networks in order to gauge a community's capacity to improve neighborhood outcomes.



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# Preface

The ability of local organizations to improve their neighborhoods is, in part, shaped by how these organizations work with each other and other actors. These relationships are central to achieving collective goals such as better educational opportunities, safe neighborhoods, and affordable housing. Community development initiatives have nurtured community ties to build local capacity. But effective relationships that withstand the test of time require both flexibility to respond to changing circumstances, and stability to reap the benefits of collaboration. The timing of this study — 2013 to 2016 — offers readers the opportunity to understand the resilience and adaptability of organizational partnerships during a time when neighborhoods contended with a major state budget crisis, heightened concerns with police brutality, and the loss of affordable housing in some neighborhoods. This report examines this complicated dynamic in an MDRC study of nine Chicago neighborhoods. The study is one of the most extensive attempts to characterize and measure the strength of neighborhood improvement networks.

Since 2006, MDRC has led an evaluation of community partnerships in Chicago's distressed urban neighborhoods. This research has yielded valuable insights about the importance of neighborhood partnerships to local improvement efforts, initially during a period of extreme economic distress, the Great Recession and the effect it had on neighborhoods in its aftermath, and subsequently during a state budget crisis that affected local services as well as organizational funding.

In 2012, MDRC launched the Chicago Community Networks (CCN) study to deepen our understanding of neighborhood resilience. The work has been funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The CCN study includes two surveys of local organizations and uses social network analysis and qualitative fieldwork to better understand the relationships among them. The initial network survey took place in 2013. The second and final survey occurred three years later, allowing for an observation of changes to partnerships over time and an understanding of how these changes might reflect internal and external pressures.

This report provides an opportunity for funders and practitioners to learn about the evolution of neighborhood networks. It offers insights about changes in neighborhood leadership roles, the expansion and contraction of partnerships in a neighborhood, the extent to which organizations can work together on a range of different issues, and how changes in organizational power or influence are distributed across a network. Those seeking to support community efforts to improve neighborhoods will find the insights in this study valuable to their practice.

Gordon L. Berlin  
President, MDRC



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This report also benefited from the generous and thoughtful support and review of many others, both inside and outside of MDRC. Within MDRC, Nandita Verma and Alice Tufel provided important insights on early report drafts. In addition to reviewing and providing feedback to multiple versions of this report, James Riccio and Carolyn Hill provided guidance and supported the team as we completed this report. Gordon Berlin, MDRC's president, brought longstanding insights about community development to his review and support of this project. We are grateful to Nikki Ortolani, who served as our always prudent resource manager. Gloria Tomlinson made valuable contributions to this project, from assisting during fieldwork and data analysis to skillfully helping coordinate the report. Our appreciation also goes to Anaga Dalal, who edited the report, and Carolyn Thomas, who prepared it for publication. Outside of MDRC, Rob Chaskin, H. Brinton Milward, and Andrew Papachristos provided insights from the field and their research in various reviews. We are also thankful to staff from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation of Chicago for their insightful review of this report. We are indebted to Stephen Nuñez, who not only provided valuable support on social network analysis but introduced us to a new vocabulary and perspective on networks. Thanks to Aurelia De La Rosa Aceves, who managed the project and gracefully led the team in its final stages. Thanks also to Sarah Schell, Deni Chen, and Sara Staszak, who processed and analyzed the survey data.

Our deepest gratitude goes to organizations across the nine neighborhoods who participated in our study, giving their time to provide insights about their practice and their partnerships. They were the source not just of the raw network and qualitative data, but also of invaluable insights about networks and how they matter for community partnerships and policy action. We are particularly grateful to our partners at Austin Coming Together, Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation, Brighton Park Neighborhood Council, Claretian Associates, Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation, Enlace, Logan Square Neighborhood Association, Quad Communities Development Corporation, and the Southwest Organizing Project. This research would not have been possible without them.

Finally, we are still indebted to our late colleague, Keith Provan. His intelligence, wisdom, humor, and generosity are missed by all who were fortunate enough to work with him. He has made a deep and lasting mark on this research.

The Authors



# Executive Summary

Community-based organizations and other local actors tasked with improving neighborhoods do not exist and work in isolation. They are part of larger *networks* of local institutions that encompass different types of formal and informal partnerships. Importantly, the features of networks themselves, not just the individual organizations within them, may affect the broader capacity of communities to improve local conditions and cope with larger forces of change. Local networks of community organizations are not static either; their membership, persistence, structure, and functioning may change over time. The dynamics of this change can heavily influence the strength or weakness of a community's very capacity to deliver positive change for its residents.

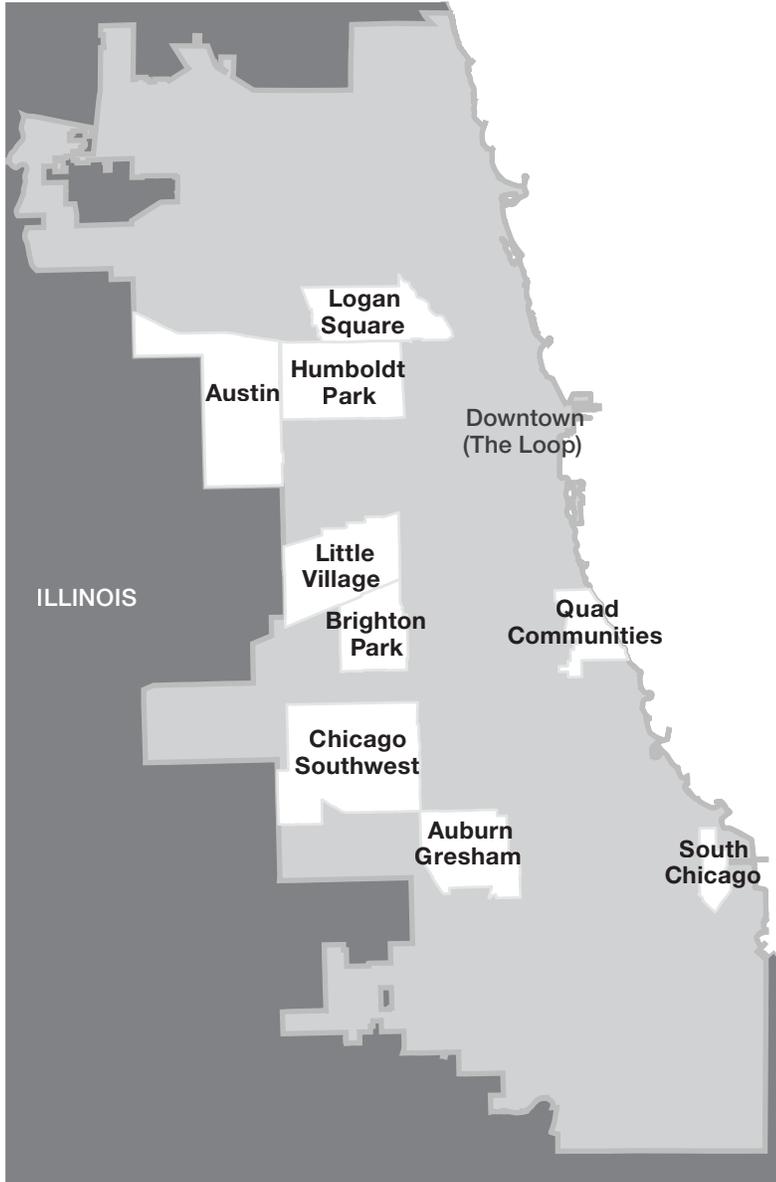
The potential importance of community networks to everyday neighborhood life prompts several important questions for which data are generally scarce. How stable are local networks? Why do some partnerships appear to endure over time while others dissipate soon after their creation? Do leadership patterns in neighborhood networks persist over time? Can new leadership emerge in the short term? Are partnerships that span multiple areas of work more stable than those that focus on fewer areas of work? Do overall patterns of partnership persist over time? This report explores these and other questions using data from the Chicago Community Networks study, which analyzed relationships among community organizations in nine Chicago neighborhoods, shown in Figure ES.1. The study examined the results from two surveys of network organizations in 2013 and 2016, and subsequent in-depth interviews with practitioners and other stakeholders in selected neighborhoods. While many other studies have explored partnerships within communities, few have attempted to quantitatively measure the relationships between community organizations and how they change over time.

## LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY CHANGE INITIATIVES

Federal, state, and local initiatives to improve low-income neighborhoods have long fostered relationships between community organizations and other actors to share information, coordinate activities, and deliver services. Efforts to improve educational outcomes in distressed neighborhoods, for instance, often rely upon partnerships between schools and community organizations to ensure that young people receive supportive and enriching services. Federal improvement efforts have sought to bolster connections between public housing administrators and social service providers. The very premise of comprehensive community initiatives is that funding multiple community organizations to collaborate is

Figure ES.1

Map of Study Neighborhoods in Chicago



a more effective way of tackling complex issues such as housing, education, public safety, and health care, than funding individual organizations to work in isolation.<sup>1</sup>

Operating through partnerships has several potential advantages. It can extend the reach of an initiative beyond the scope of any one organization. It can also help coalitions change public policy by leveraging a broad range of public sector support for neighborhood improvement.<sup>2</sup> Over time, cultivating organizational relationships can help develop the long-term capacity of people and organizations to come together and improve a neighborhood.<sup>3</sup> Research suggests that community partnerships also help to improve other aspects of community life, such as racial and ethnic integration, the effective exercise of political power, and even broader neighborhood outcomes such as community safety.<sup>4</sup> In essence, partnerships are an important dimension of community capacity.

## THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are by nature dynamic and change over time. It is vital to understand the role of change and permanence in making partnerships effective. Research reveals two competing dynamics that are important for understanding the potential effectiveness of partnerships over time: flexibility and stability.

Changes in partnerships can sometimes reflect growth and strategic flexibility. This change may occur when partnerships respond to new challenges and opportunities. For example, a spike in late payments and mortgage defaults may inspire a housing counseling organization to alter its focus and partner with a local block association to reach at-risk homeowners identified by a foreclosure prevention initiative. Neighborhood partnerships might have to confront new challenges such as the loss of affordable housing or funding cuts for social programs. They might also adapt in response to new funding streams or new partners. Adjusting to new circumstances can help partnerships maximize new opportunities and stay on course for the long run.

At other times, it might be important for partnerships to maintain some level of stability in order to establish policies, procedures, and routines that elicit better coordination across

- .....
- 1 Anne C. Kubisch, Patricia Auspos, Prudence Brown, and Tom Dewar, “Voices from the Field III: Lessons and Challenges from Two Decades of Community Change Efforts” (Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, 2010).
  - 2 Robert J. Chaskin and David M. Greenberg, “Between Public and Private Action: Neighborhood Organizations and Local Governance,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 44, 2 (2015): 248–267.
  - 3 Robert J. Chaskin, Prudence Brown, Sudhir Venkatesh, and Avis Vidal, *Building Community Capacity* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2001).
  - 4 Gerald Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Robert J. Sampson, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

partners. For instance, a community mental health program may need to establish legal agreements with a youth development program before sharing patient information. This kind of sensitive coordination has the greatest chance of success when there is a longstanding and trusting partnership between both sides. Stable partnerships are often an indicator of success. Yet, partnerships require both flexibility to grow and evolve, and stability to reap the benefits of collaboration. In practice, this balancing act can be difficult to maintain.

## ABOUT THE STUDY

The Chicago Community Networks (CCN) study, funded by The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, is an extensive attempt to measure partnerships, to use those measures to better understand partnership dynamics, and to draw related implications for practice and research. This mixed methods study collected two types of data: (1) two surveys of community networks in nine Chicago neighborhoods, administered in 2013 and 2016 to organizations and other neighborhood actors such as local schools and elected officials who are involved in community development activities; and (2) in-depth interviews with staff from community organizations and other interested actors.

The CCN study was conducted at a time — 2013 to 2016 — when Chicago neighborhoods contended with a major state budget crisis that delayed payments to community organizations, ongoing struggles with violence in neighborhoods, and heightened public concerns about police brutality. During this time, some neighborhoods also experienced demographic shifts as housing costs increased throughout the city, particularly in neighborhoods directly west and north of the Loop, Chicago’s downtown district. The timing of this study presents an opportunity to understand both the resilience and adaptability of organizational partnerships during a challenging period for many Chicago neighborhoods.

This report uses social network analysis to measure and map relationships among organizations and other neighborhood actors to describe patterns of change in community partnerships during the three years between CCN surveys. This approach documents not only the presence or absence of partnerships over time, but also provides information about the structure of those partnerships, including the distribution of potential power or influence among local actors, the location of particular actors within the network, the strength of partnerships between organizations, and the depth of community partnerships. Figure ES.2 illustrates the building blocks of community networks. This report offers valuable insights about how best to support and strengthen partnerships that enhance a community’s capacity to address challenges over time.

## KEY FINDINGS

Neighborhood partnerships, whether focused on service delivery or community organizing, can change in two ways: at the level of the organization and at the level of the network as

## Figure ES.2

### The Building Blocks of Community Networks

#### THE ORGANIZATION

*A community actor working on neighborhood improvement*

Some elements of organizational success:

- Quality of service models
- Organizational capacity
- Available resources
- Credibility in the community



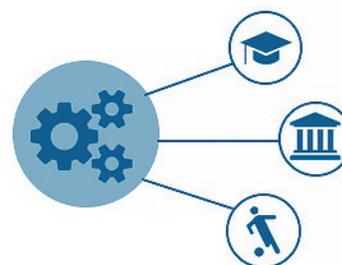
AN ORGANIZATION

#### PARTNERSHIPS

*Relationships between two or more organizations that amplify the reach of a single actor*

The value added by different types of partners:

- Local organizations can help with the same, or different, areas of work.
- Civic organizations can provide access to their facilities. For instance, a youth sports league can provide a youth development organization access to its athletic facilities.
- City agencies can provide an organization access to new tools or resources such as summer jobs for clients.
- Local schools can help spread the word about an initiative that may benefit its students and families.



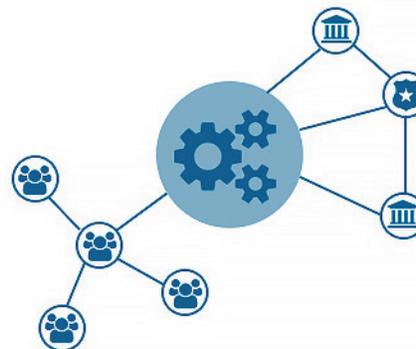
AN ORGANIZATION AND ITS DIRECT PARTNERS

#### AN ORGANIZATION'S POSITION

*An organization's position in a network can have a great impact on its ability to effect positive change*

In a network, an organization can have many connections to other organizations or have a limited number of connections.

- Organizations that have many connections to other organizations can play the role of brokers because they can link two or more organizations that may or may not have worked together to achieve a common goal. As brokers, they can provide information and coordinate the efforts of others to reach shared ends.
- Organizations that have a limited number of connections often play a peripheral role.



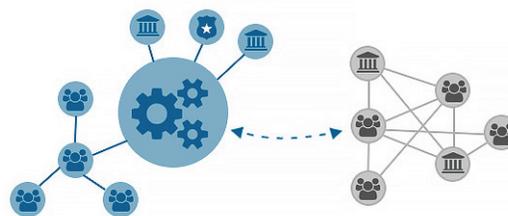
AN ORGANIZATION IN A NETWORK

#### THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF A NETWORK

*A network may consist of organizations that are well connected and well coordinated, or largely separate and functioning somewhat independently of each other.*

Types of networks:

- Well-connected networks consist of organizations that have many intersecting partnerships that facilitate close collaboration and coordination across a network.
- Fragmented networks may contain two sub-networks of organizations that do not interact with each other. This can make it difficult to involve the entire community or reach everyone in the neighborhood who may benefit from a single organization's services.



TWO SUB-NETWORKS OF ORGANIZATIONS

a whole. In the former instance, organizations can change by becoming more or less well connected and rise or fall in prominence accordingly.

At the network level, change occurs when working in partnership becomes more or less common in a neighborhood, or when there is variation in the number of issues that organizations work on together — something known as comprehensiveness. In addition, the ways that power or influence is concentrated in one or a few organizations can change at the network level as well. The CCN study measured change at both the level of individual organizations and at the level of the network as a whole. The key findings relating to permanence and change in Chicago Community Networks between 2013 and 2016 are highlighted below:

- **Organizations that acted as conveners or lead agencies maintained or increased their network prominence, which may have sustained or enhanced the capacity of some networks to mobilize partners or coordinate collective efforts.**

Many community initiatives rely on recognized, trusted, and well-connected organizations to play the part of conveners or lead agencies. Being well connected or prominent within a network allows these organizations to coordinate work among various partners, serve as conduits of information, and in some cases, connect other actors to resources. However, the position of any organization within a network may change with the addition of new organizations, the exit of established ones, and the changing roles of others. As a result, individual organizations can become more or less prominent, or central in a network. For organizations that act as conveners or lead agencies, changes to their prominence can affect their ability to perform a coordinating or convening role. Separately, the *kinds* of organizations that are prominent in a network may impact a network’s effectiveness. For instance, responses to the first CCN survey suggest that Chicago neighborhoods with prominent community organizing groups had greater success mobilizing local organizations for policy change than neighborhoods where aldermanic officials were the most prominent local actors.<sup>5</sup>

The CCN study shows that between 2013 and 2016, convening or lead organizations maintained or increased their prominence in their respective neighborhood networks. Qualitative research suggests that in some cases, convening organizations had the capacity and financial stability to seize new opportunities at a time when other organizations in the neighborhood were under stress. In other cases, the rise in prominence of a convener was associated with new sources of funding amidst leadership turmoil at other organizations. This finding suggests that at least in the short term, convener or lead organizations may be able to rally organizations despite broader network changes. These organizations might also be able to maintain information flows and continue coordinating work to keep initiatives afloat.

- **Throughout the Chicago Community Networks, overall levels of connectivity, or ties between organizations, declined or remained stable during the study time frame.**

.....  
5 David M. Greenberg, Aurelia De La Rosa Aceves, Mikael Karlström, Stephen Nuñez, Victoria Quiroz-Becerra, Sarah Schell, Edith Yang, and Audrey Yu, *Network Effectiveness in Neighborhood Collaborations: Learning from the Chicago Community Networks Study* (New York: MDRC, 2017).

**Where connections declined, the collective capacity of communities to address community challenges and advance improvement efforts was likely to be weakened.**

Fostering organizational partnerships has been the goal of many community efforts. Working in collaboration with others has advantages to working alone. Partnerships allow organizations to share best practices, coordinate efforts, and attract new resources. In social network analysis, the overall proportion of organizations in a neighborhood that are connected and working together is known as a network’s density, or level of connectivity. Changes in levels of connectivity can arise for a variety of reasons. Consider the example of an educational program that promotes partnerships between schools and service providers. Community events can also impact connectivity. For instance, a collective response to the loss of affordable housing or a push for a local ordinance to protect renters can catalyze new alliances in a neighborhood. Partnerships, however, require careful management and maintenance if levels of connectivity are to endure over time.<sup>6</sup>

In the CCN study, the overall levels of connectivity across neighborhoods declined or remained the same. This change occurred despite a decline in the overall number of neighborhood organizations during this study. In fact, from 2013 to 2016, approximately 13 percent of organizations in the CCN study closed their doors. Fewer organizations might normally suggest an increase in connectivity among the remaining organizations.<sup>7</sup> But this was a time when Chicago’s nonprofit sector faced unprecedented funding challenges. Indeed, many organizations closed during this period. Case studies suggest that fiscal strains forced organizations to divert time and resources away from collaborating with others to raising funds and maintaining their own operations. Reduced funding is also likely to have created fewer opportunities for collaboration. Networks seem vulnerable to changes in funding and seem to adapt to these changes, in part, by reducing partnerships. Declines in levels of connectivity are likely to limit the ability of neighborhoods to come together and coordinate work to improve neighborhoods.

- **Levels of comprehensiveness — the degree to which organizations work across multiple policy or programmatic areas — declined across neighborhoods. A focus on fewer areas of work may reflect strategic adaptations to address more urgent challenges in a neighborhood.**

Comprehensiveness,<sup>8</sup> or the degree to which organizations in a network interact across multiple domains such as education, housing, public policy, and organizing, has become a guiding principle for many community improvement initiatives. Neighborhoods with partnerships that span various domains of work — that is, with high levels of comprehen-



6 John Kania and Mark Kramer, “Collective Impact,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 9, 1 (2011): 36-41.

7 Fewer organizations mean that there are fewer potential partnerships and thus the proportion of those partnerships that are realized increases as the denominator decreases.

8 In the networks literature this is known as multiplexity. See Keith G. Provan, Mark A. Vezie, Lisa K. Staten, and Nicolette I. Teufel-Sone, “The Use of Network Analysis to Strengthen Community Partnerships,” *Public Administration Review* 65, 5 (2005): 603-613.

siveness — are generally better positioned to tackle the multiple and complex problems facing a neighborhood and leverage additional resources. In addition, organizations that work together on multiple fronts tend to persist over time. However, like other aspects of community networks, levels of comprehensiveness are not static and may decline as organizations turn to new issues, or as funding streams dry up. Although high levels of comprehensiveness are a desirable feature of networks, lower levels of comprehensiveness are not necessarily detrimental to the success of an initiative if, for example, working across fewer domains enhances community efforts to address one or a few particularly urgent or high-priority issues.

Across CCN neighborhoods, there was an overall decline in levels of comprehensiveness during the three years of this study. Specifically, the study found a smaller proportion of organizations working together on five or six domains of work than on one or two domains of work. In follow-up interviews, organizations said they were shifting their focus from multiple causes to singular, pressing concerns in their neighborhoods. For instance, in Logan Square, community organizations began to prioritize the accelerating loss of affordable housing. In Auburn Gresham, some local organizations began to focus more collective attention on the growing alarm over police brutality. The ability of local organizations to redirect their attention to new and urgent challenges highlights the importance of network flexibility in response to evolving circumstances. Conversely, declining levels of comprehensiveness could dampen the ability of neighborhood networks to tackle complex issues.

- **The distribution of power or influence in Chicago neighborhood networks remained stable over time, which, depending on the circumstances, may sustain strong community capacity, or slow improvements to that capacity.**

At the neighborhood level, leadership of certain activities can rest with one or a few organizations. Alternatively, leadership can be shared among a broader group of organizations within a network.<sup>9</sup> In some cases, it might be important for a single organization to coordinate local efforts for a more efficient neighborhood response. In other cases, a collaborative approach could be more effective because including more organizations can inject new ideas and vitality into the network and strengthen its collective voice by making influence within the network more representative of the broader whole. Changes to the distribution or concentration of power or influence in a network have important implications for the effectiveness of different community efforts and the need to build consensus and trust.

The CCN study suggests that the ways in which neighborhoods concentrated power or influence in a few, or many, organizations remained stable throughout the network during the short time period of the study. This suggests that overall patterns in the distribution of power are less prone to rapid change and that networks may be inclined to institutionalize existing power structures. It may therefore take longer to change the norms and dynamics that shape how neighborhood organizations relate to each other.

.....

9 See Greenberg et al. (2017).

## CONCLUSIONS

A common goal of many community initiatives is to increase and strengthen partnerships among organizations and other actors, because these connections are essential to the collective capacity of a neighborhood network.<sup>10</sup> Understanding how organizational networks are maintained and strengthened over time and how patterns of relationships shift within a network may be important for assessing the effectiveness of community initiatives. This understanding can help policymakers and other stakeholders support the work of community organizations. Knowing what aspects of networks are more or less prone to change in the short term might be important for determining how to foster new organizational partnerships or strengthen existing ones to enhance a community's long-term capacity to improve the lives of its residents.

.....  
<sup>10</sup> Kubisch et al. (2010).



# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

Federal, state, and local initiatives to improve low-income neighborhoods have long fostered partnerships and relationships among community organizations and other actors, to share information, coordinate activities, and deliver services. At the federal level, efforts to improve educational outcomes in distressed neighborhoods have required partnerships between schools and community organizations to ensure that young people receive supportive and enriching services.<sup>1</sup> Other federal improvement efforts have sought to bolster connections between public housing administrators and social service providers.<sup>2</sup> For instance, state programs that build supportive housing for formerly homeless men and women living with mental illness have required collaboration between housing and mental health providers. And foundations have supported what are known as comprehensive community initiatives, which are efforts to fund multiple community organizations that address a wide range of local issues, including housing, safety, and health.<sup>3</sup>

This strategy of working through partnerships has several potential advantages. It can extend the reach of an initiative beyond the scope of any one organization. It can also help coalitions change public policy by leveraging a broad range of public sector support for neighborhood improvement.<sup>4</sup> Over time, cultivating organizational relationships can help develop the long-term capacity of people and organizations to come together and improve a neighborhood.<sup>5</sup> Research suggests that community partnerships also help to improve other aspects of community life, such as racial and ethnic integration, the effective exercise of political power, and even broader neighborhood outcomes such as community safety.<sup>6</sup>

Although community partnerships have been extensively documented, their effectiveness has rarely been measured. The Chicago Community Networks (CCN) study is an attempt

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- 1 See Department of Education (n.d.).
- 2 See Department of Housing and Urban Development (n.d.); Smith et al. (2010).
- 3 Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, and Dewar (2010).
- 4 Chaskin and Greenberg (2015).
- 5 Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, and Vidal (2001).
- 6 Gamm (1999); Sampson (2012).

to do just that: measure and analyze community partnerships to better understand their underlying dynamics. The goal is to develop improved practices and generate more robust research findings. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation funded this work. The CCN study builds on MDRC’s earlier evaluation of the New Communities Program, a comprehensive effort to engage community-based groups in Chicago to simultaneously attack multiple problems in distressed urban neighborhoods. (See Box 1.1 for more about the New Communities Program.)

The CCN study uses social network analysis, a toolkit for the measurement and mapping of relationships among a set of actors in order to describe the underlying patterns or structure of local partnerships. The CCN study measures not just the presence of local partnerships, but their specific structural properties and how they are used to improve neighborhoods and respond to local problems. This study is based on two surveys in 2013 and 2016 of nine diverse Chicago neighborhoods, depicted in Figure 1.1. These surveys were followed by in-depth interviews with leaders of community organizations and local elected officials in selected neighborhoods. A prior report examined the 2013 survey and interview data to measure the content and nature of partnerships, and to explore how specific partnership patterns facilitated local improvement efforts, while others reflected fragmentation and mistrust.<sup>7</sup>

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF CHANGE AND STABILITY TO NETWORK EFFECTIVENESS**

This report incorporates results from 2016 when the second round of the CCN survey was conducted, providing new information about whether and how partnerships tend to endure over a relatively short period of time, and the ways they change. The question of how and why neighborhood networks change or remain the same guides the analysis of the three-year period between 2013 and 2016. It is vital to understand the role of change and permanence in making partnerships effective.<sup>8</sup> Research shows that two competing dynamics underlie this effectiveness: flexibility and stability.

Changes in partnerships can sometimes reflect growth or strategic flexibility. This may occur when partnerships respond to new challenges or opportunities. For example, a spike in late payments and mortgage defaults may inspire a housing counseling organization to alter its focus and partner with a local block association to reach at-risk homeowners identified by a foreclosure prevention initiative. Network management literature identifies

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7 Greenberg et al. (2017).

8 Milward and Provan (2006).

## Box 1.1

### New Communities Program

In 2002, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation funded the New Communities Program (NCP), a 10-year, \$47 million initiative to improve conditions in distressed urban neighborhoods in Chicago, Illinois. NCP operated on the premise that collaborative planning and implementation can help local organizations solve shared problems and improve the quality of life for neighborhood residents. NCP was a comprehensive effort to engage community-based groups to attack multiple problems simultaneously — in the areas of education, workforce development, housing, social services, and public policy. The goals of the initiative were three fold: build the capacity of individual community organizations to function as intermediaries throughout the neighborhood; develop a foundation of mutual trust among neighborhood organizations to strengthen partnerships and better coordinate program implementation; and leverage external resources to advance the quality and scale of various improvement projects.

The NCP manager was the Local Initiatives Support Corporation of Chicago (LISC), which monitored progress on plans; managed and disbursed flexible seed grants and technical assistance; and brokered relationships within neighborhoods, and between neighborhoods and city agencies, funders, and other powerful agencies. In times of conflict, LISC served as a mediator for community groups. In times of crisis, such as the Great Recession of 2007-2009, LISC brought additional resources to the community.

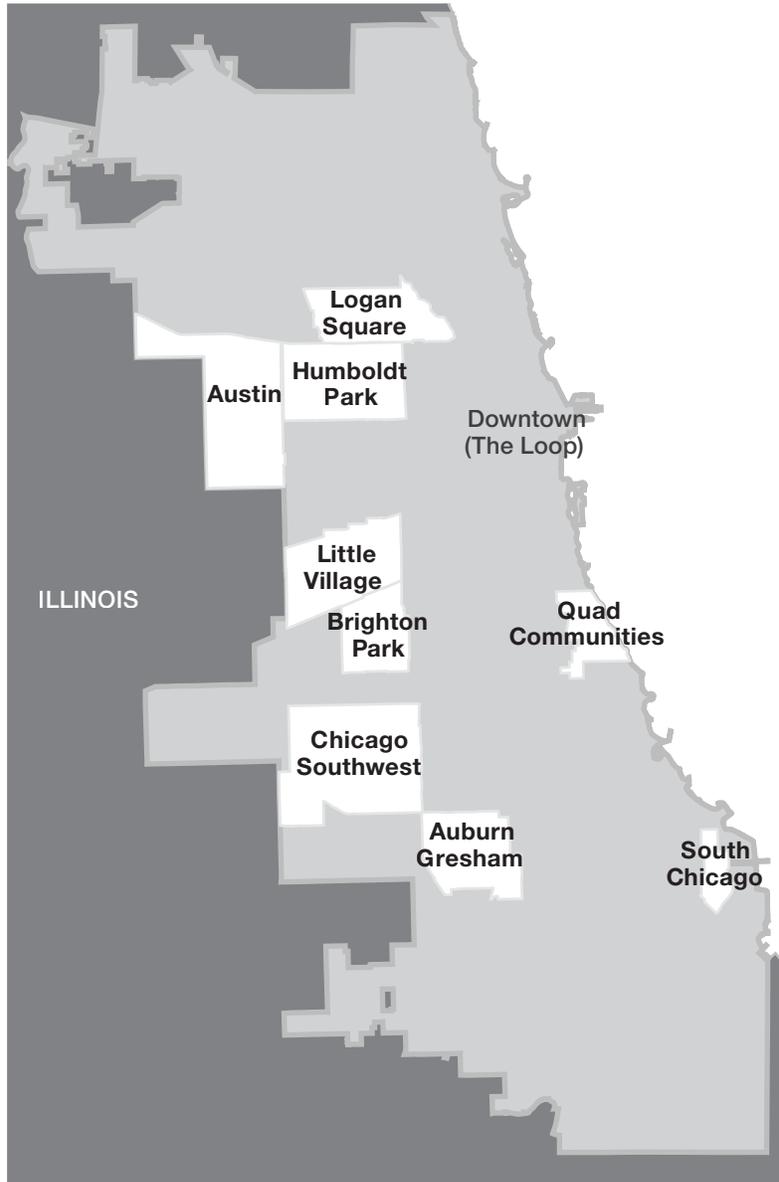
NCP focused its efforts on 14 neighborhoods, each with a lead agency charged with defining a quality-of-life plan in collaboration with local partners. Lead agencies varied in size and capacity. The NCP initiative provided funds for neighborhoods to carry out quality-of-life plans, which addressed a variety of local challenges, including unemployment, struggling schools, and gang violence. The role of LISC varied by neighborhood because the agency did not issue implementation guidelines for local organizations. As a result, some lead agencies acted as conveners to distribute funds, and to coordinate and facilitate local partners. Others, particularly community development corporations in traditionally disinvested or gentrified neighborhoods, determined there were few viable partners and took it upon themselves to implement project plans on their own.

In 2006, MDRC was selected to lead an evaluation of NCP in partnership with the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall, Metro Chicago Information Center, and Wayne State University. Notable findings from the evaluation were as follows:

- During the program, there were approximately 850 new improvement projects — many with multiple components — and an accumulation of more than \$900 million in total funds that included both grants and loans.
- NCP improved collaborative partnerships among local neighborhood agencies.
- Some partner organizations were able to access new funding streams and promote strong collaborations with the help of a high-capacity lead agency.

Figure 1.1

Map of Study Neighborhoods in Chicago



this concept of partnerships changing in response to new challenges or opportunities as network adaptation; it is linked to long-term network effectiveness.<sup>9</sup>

In other instances, it can be just as vital to maintain partnerships because it often takes time to establish policies, procedures, and routines across a network of organizations, sometimes making it harder to work in partnership with others than alone.<sup>10</sup> For example, a community mental health program may need to establish legal agreements with a youth development program before sharing patient information. Or a community policing initiative may need time to build trust with neighborhood groups that are suspicious of law enforcement because of past bad experiences. In both examples, if partnerships were dissipated after a year, they would be unlikely to reach their desired outcomes because it takes time to build trust and develop formal and informal processes among local groups. In many situations, stable partnerships are one of the key indicators of network success.

But partnerships require both flexibility to grow and evolve, and stability to reap the benefits of collaboration. Balancing these competing priorities is hard to do. Mistrust among organizations or internal organizational demands can undermine partnerships and affect their ability to balance the need for flexibility with stability.<sup>11</sup>

Partnerships can also be affected by shocks to their environment, such as cuts in resources, or neighborhood crises. For instance, during the three years over which two surveys were conducted for this study, Chicago neighborhood organizations faced a major state budget crisis that delayed their funding. The neighborhoods under study also experienced ongoing struggles with gun violence and heightened public concerns about police violence. In addition, some neighborhoods experienced demographic shifts as housing costs increased west and north of the Loop, Chicago's downtown district.<sup>12</sup> The results from the 2016 CCN survey, therefore, provide an opportunity to understand both the resilience and the adaptability of network partnerships during a challenging period for many Chicago neighborhoods.

In terms of the budget crisis, the Illinois State Legislature was unable to agree upon a full budget for fiscal year 2016. As a result, the state was unable to pay the many nonprofit organizations that provided social and other services on its behalf.<sup>13</sup> In interviews with MDRC, organizations said the lack of funds forced them to cut services, exhaust lines of

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**9** Milward and Provan (2006).

**10** Provan, Isett, and Milward (2004).

**11** For an overview of the evolution of the New Communities Program, including how partnerships evolved, see Greenberg, Verma, Dillman, and Chaskin (2010); Greenberg et al. (2014).

**12** Real Estate Center's Institute for Housing Studies (2018).

**13** United Way of Illinois (2016).

credit, jeopardize existing federal programs that required a local match, or close their doors altogether.<sup>14</sup>

During this study, gentrification presented another challenge to some CCN neighborhoods and might have led to a decline in Chicago’s low-income population.<sup>15</sup> For instance, the effects of gentrification touched two predominantly Latino neighborhoods in this study, Logan Square and Humboldt Park. These neighborhood changes were, in part, catalyzed by development projects, including the 606,<sup>16</sup> an elevated trail that made the neighborhoods more attractive to affluent young adults; and policy changes, including a 2015 citywide increase in property taxes that further reduced affordable housing.<sup>17</sup>

This report should be of interest to funders and decisionmakers who aim to strengthen community capacity. The study does not evaluate a particular program or intervention, but instead describes and measures the evolution of partnerships, a central element of community capacity, over time. The 2013 and 2016 CCN surveys describe the overall patterns of collaboration that occur in neighborhoods for multiple programs and partnerships. Comparing results across these surveys provides insights into the structure, stability, and instability of neighborhood partnerships. Understanding how and why neighborhood partnerships change in the short term may help to generate insights into how to strengthen community capacity in the long term.

## POTENTIAL PATTERNS OF CHANGE

Neighborhood partnerships, whether focused on service delivery or community organizing, can change in two ways: at the level of the organization and at the level of the network as a whole.

At the level of the organization, organizational actors within a network can change the roles they play and become more or less prominent. This is because over time, new organizations form, or existing organizations may enter, leave, or change their roles in a partnership. Organizations may leave network partnerships because their priorities have changed, they

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**14** MDRC’s interviews with organizations in late 2017 and early 2018.

**15** Loury (2017).

**16** In 2013, the Trust for Public Land, a nonprofit with an office in Chicago, released a plan for the 606 development, a trail to be built on the now defunct Bloomingdale elevated train line that runs from east to west. The project was completed in 2015.

**17** In the neighborhoods surrounding the 606, single-home prices increased by 48.2 percent upon breaking ground for the 606 in the third quarter of 2013. The west side of Chicago, where the population is predominantly low-income, Latino, renters, and large households, was impacted the most. See Smith, Duda, Lee, and Thompson (2016). In Logan Square, the median sale price of all properties has nearly doubled in the last five years. In Humboldt Park, the median list price indicates a similar trend. From 2013 to 2014, the median sale price increased by 62 percent. See Culler (2014).

have been forced to close, or have fewer staff who can coordinate with other organizations to maintain viable partnerships.

Because of these changes, individual organizations can become more or less prominent, or central in a network. As described in Chapter 2, the kinds of organizations that are prominent in a network may have important implications for the ability of the neighborhood to come together. The first CCN survey suggests that Chicago neighborhoods where community organizing groups were more prominent tended to develop more effective partnerships than in neighborhoods where aldermanic officials were the most prominent local actors.<sup>18</sup>

At the level of the network, partnerships can change in the following ways:

First, the proportion of organizations in a neighborhood that work in partnership might be high or low depending on various circumstances. In social network analysis, this refers to the level of connectivity, or density of ties, among organizations in a network. Changes in levels of connectivity can reflect overt and intentional efforts by a range of actors to build and expand partnerships in a neighborhood. Or, connectivity can be affected by community events that inspire new neighborhood partnerships. Partnerships, however, require careful management and maintenance if levels of connectivity are to endure over time.<sup>19</sup>

Second, comprehensiveness, or the degree to which partners in a network interact across multiple domains of work such as education and housing, may change over time.<sup>20</sup> A neighborhood where partnerships span various issue areas (that is, where comprehensiveness is higher) might be in a better position to tackle multiple and complex problems facing the neighborhood.

Third, a network's distribution of potential power across organizational partners may change over time. The measure of how power is distributed across organizations in a network is known as centralization in social network analysis. At the neighborhood level, the leadership of certain activities can rest with one or a few organizations. Alternatively, leadership can be shared among the broader group of organizations within a network.<sup>21</sup> Whether community efforts concentrate power in a few or many organizations may impact the effectiveness of community efforts and the need to build consensus and trust.

A common goal of many community-level initiatives is to increase the number of partnerships, or to strengthen existing community partnerships.<sup>22</sup> Understanding how organizational networks are maintained and increase over time, and how relationship patterns

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**18** See Greenberg et al. (2017).

**19** Kania and Kramer (2011).

**20** In the networks literature this is known as multiplexity. See Knoke and Yang (2008).

**21** See Greenberg et al. (2017), pages 29-30, for a more extensive description.

**22** Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, and Dewar (2010).

shift within a network, may be important for assessing the effectiveness of community initiatives. This understanding can also help policymakers and other stakeholders support community organizations as they pursue neighborhood improvements.

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study uses social network analysis to measure the structure, or underlying patterns, of local partnerships or neighborhood networks.<sup>23</sup> This analytical approach documents the presence or absence of partnerships and provides rich insight into the distribution of potential power or influence among local actors as well as the strength and depth of community partnerships.

Figure 1.2 illustrates the building blocks of community networks. It shows different ways that individual organizations can fit into a larger network of community organizations, and the network's overall structure. It also suggests ways in which the structure of local partnerships may influence an organization's capacity to implement programs. First, an individual organization's ability to implement a project successfully may depend on the quality of its own program models and resources. Second, an organization's reach can be extended by partnerships with other community organizations, such as between a youth organization and a school or sports club. Third, the position of an organization within a community network may impact its ability to help a neighborhood coalesce around policy change. Finally, overall patterns of connection or fragmentation can influence a network's success in achieving community-wide improvements.

The CCN study is a mixed methods study that collected two types of data using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies: (1) 2013 and 2016 surveys, described in the Appendix, of organizations and other neighborhood actors involved in community development activities in nine Chicago neighborhoods, and (2) field research that included interviews with organizations that were connected in different ways to neighborhood networks. Notably, during the 2013 and 2016 surveys that were conducted for this study, 13 percent of organizations closed their doors. As Table 1.1 shows, the range in the percentage of respondent organizations that closed their doors spanned from very low (less than 5 percent in Auburn Gresham, Brighton Park, and Chicago Southwest, where only one organization in each neighborhood was closed) to as high as 22 percent (in Humboldt Park and Quad Communities).<sup>24</sup> The patterns of closures have implications for the roles of individual organizations in a local network and for the functioning of the network as a whole. The Appendix includes a more detailed analysis of organizational closures.

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<sup>23</sup> For more on social network terms and their relevance to community action, see Greenberg et al. (2017).

<sup>24</sup> An organization was considered closed in 2016 when MDRC was notified of their closures while fielding the 2016 survey, or when survey responses showed that an organization had not been listed as a partner, nor had it responded to the survey.

Figure 1.2

## The Building Blocks of Community Networks

### THE ORGANIZATION

*A community actor working on neighborhood improvement*

Some elements of organizational success:

- Quality of service models
- Organizational capacity
- Available resources
- Credibility in the community



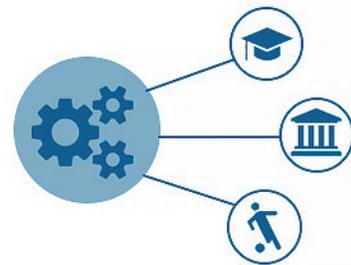
AN ORGANIZATION

### PARTNERSHIPS

*Relationships between two or more organizations that amplify the reach of a single actor*

The value added by different types of partners:

- Local organizations can help with the same, or different, areas of work.
- Civic organizations can provide access to their facilities. For instance, a youth sports league can provide a youth development organization access to its athletic facilities.
- City agencies can provide an organization access to new tools or resources such as summer jobs for clients.
- Local schools can help spread the word about an initiative that may benefit its students and families.



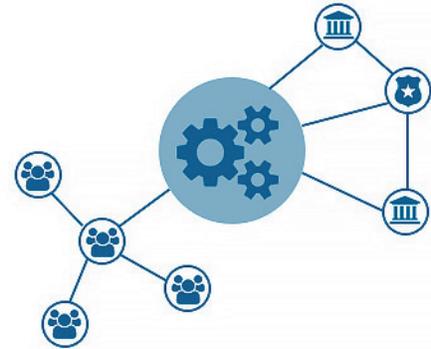
AN ORGANIZATION AND ITS DIRECT PARTNERS

### AN ORGANIZATION'S POSITION

*An organization's position in a network can have a great impact on its ability to effect positive change*

In a network, an organization can have many connections to other organizations or have a limited number of connections.

- Organizations that have many connections to other organizations can play the role of brokers because they can link two or more organizations that may or may not have worked together to achieve a common goal. As brokers, they can provide information and coordinate the efforts of others to reach shared ends.
- Organizations that have a limited number of connections often play a peripheral role.



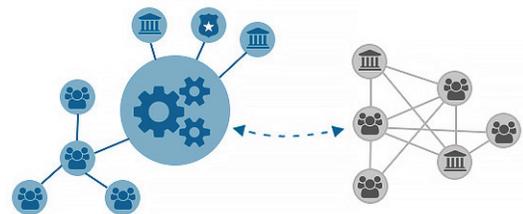
AN ORGANIZATION IN A NETWORK

### THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF A NETWORK

*A network may consist of organizations that are well connected and well coordinated, or largely separate and functioning somewhat independently of each other.*

Types of networks:

- Well-connected networks consist of organizations that have many intersecting partnerships that facilitate close collaboration and coordination across a network.
- Fragmented networks may contain two sub-networks of organizations that do not interact with each other. This can make it difficult to involve the entire community or reach everyone in the neighborhood who may benefit from a single organization's services.



TWO SUB-NETWORKS OF ORGANIZATIONS

**Table 1.1**  
**Organization Closures in 2016**

<b>Neighborhood</b>	<b>Number of 2013 survey respondents that closed by the second survey in 2016</b>	<b>Number of 2013 survey respondents</b>
Auburn Gresham	1	30
Austin	7	40
Brighton Park	1	21
Chicago Southwest	1	36
Humboldt Park	7	32
Little Village	4	34
Logan Square	5	30
Quad Communities	6	28
South Chicago	3	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>276</b>

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data collected in the 2013 and 2016 Chicago Community Networks study surveys.

This table displays characteristics for those organizations that responded to the 2013 Chicago Community Networks study survey. Nonrespondents and organizations that only responded to the 2016 survey are not included.

An organization was defined as closed if it notified researchers of its closure, the survey revealed that the organization had zero partnerships by the second survey in 2016, or if independent research revealed that the organization had ceased to operate by 2016.

The first network survey, conducted in 2013, provided data about patterns of connection among community organizations and other actors in the neighborhood, whereas field research helped the study team interpret survey results, associate patterns of network activity with broader outcomes, and trace the processes by which these structures and outcomes were connected.<sup>25</sup> This report focuses on how neighborhood networks changed or persisted between the first and second surveys. It uses social network analysis to measure the extent of change and uses field research to understand the factors associated with these changes. In addition, Chapter 2 includes correlation analyses to further understand factors associated with changes in the position of individual organizations. The Appendix includes further details about the methods of analysis and data.

The nine neighborhoods under study in this report are shown in Figure 1.1. Seven of those nine participated in the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation-funded New Communities Program (NCP), an effort to strengthen community capacity and community improvement by fostering collaboration and stronger partnerships among local organiza-

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<sup>25</sup> Greenberg et al. (2017).

tions.<sup>26</sup> Box 1.1 provides further details about NCP. MDRC’s research on NCP-participating neighborhoods provides detailed qualitative insights about some of the conditions and processes that made it possible for neighborhoods to build and strengthen partnerships, some of the challenges of sustaining collaboration over time, and the added value of partnerships. While this work underscores the importance of partnerships for achieving community-level goals, it does not quantify relationships across entire communities.<sup>27</sup> The current study builds on earlier NCP research and offers another way to understand local partnerships using social network analysis. Social network analysis offers the possibility of understanding patterns of partnership, the ways power and influence are distributed in a network, and the depth of relationships. This study is one of the few studies to measure and interpret changes in neighborhood partnerships over time.

## STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

This Introduction follows an Overview, Preface, and Executive Summary.

Chapter 2, which follows this Introduction, examines the concept of centrality, or the notion of an organization’s relative position of prominence in a network, and how that changed over the course of the CCN study. Chapter 3 discusses the extent to which organizations in a neighborhood partner with one another and how this changes over time. Chapter 4 discusses collaboration among network partners that span different areas of work and how this changes over time. Chapter 5 examines the concept of centralization, which is the measure of power distribution among organizations at the level of the network, and how that changed over the course of the CCN study.

Chapter 6 provides a conclusion to this report, with practical policy considerations for improving community partnerships. It is followed by an Appendix and a list of References.

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**26** There were 14 New Communities Program (NCP) neighborhoods in all. NCP neighborhoods included in the current study are Auburn Gresham, Chicago Southwest, Humboldt Park, Little Village, Logan Square, Quad Communities, and South Chicago. Austin and Brighton Park were not part of NCP.

**27** Greenberg et al. (2014).



## CHAPTER 2

# Centrality: Organizational Prominence Within Neighborhood Networks

To understand the effectiveness or capacity of a local community network, it is essential to determine who the key players are and how they derive their power. What, specifically, are the types of organizations that rise to prominence in a community, and what are the circumstances that either keep them in a position to influence others or jettison them from such a position?

In some neighborhoods, organizations may advance to a central position of influence in an organic way, or some may be selected as a lead or backbone organization.<sup>1</sup> These prominent organizations are usually recognized, trusted, and well connected enough to galvanize community improvement efforts involving multiple partners. For example, the MacArthur Foundation's New Communities Program (NCP) designated lead agencies to execute a quality-of-life plan and charged them with managing the implementation of these quality-of-life plans.

In this study of Chicago community networks, there are two concepts for understanding power or influence within networks. The first refers to the position of an organization in the network. This concept of power is known as centrality. It is the focus of discussion in this chapter. The second concept refers to the dispersion of potential power in the network as a whole and is known as centralization. This concept of power is discussed in Chapter 5.

## MEASURING CENTRALITY OVER TIME

Centrality measures an organization's relative position of influence or power in a network. An organization's prominence or position of influence can differ by the kind of role it plays

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1 In the Collective Impact model, a backbone organization is a staffed, independent organization that plans, manages, coordinates, and supports an initiative. It is one of the five conditions for success. See Kania and Kramer (2011).

in a network. The role considered in this section is of an organization that is part of a well-knit group of well-connected actors that form a powerful cluster or cadre in the center of a network.<sup>2</sup> This kind of prominence or well-connected centrality indicates the extent to which an organization has ties to other well-connected organizations.<sup>3</sup> Well-connected centrality can range from zero (when no other organizations in a neighborhood nominate the organization as a partner) to one (when all other organizations in the neighborhood nominate the organization as a partner). Figure 2.1 illustrates well-connected centrality. To understand changes to an organization's relative position of prominence in a network, this analysis used standardized, well-connected centrality scores to compare changes in the position of individual organizations between the 2013 and 2016 surveys. The analysis paid particular attention to changes in the position of organizations that were once lead agencies or conveners. As noted, many initiatives rely on organizations that act as conveners to coordinate community-wide efforts.

Analyses of the 2016 survey suggest that lead organizations or community conveners appear to maintain or increase their level of prominence between 2013 and 2016. Figure 2.2 illustrates the position of the lead or convening organization during the survey years, as measured by its overall rank in terms of well-connected centrality. In some neighborhoods, such as Auburn Gresham or Logan Square, community conveners had relatively high well-connected centrality scores in both 2013 and 2016. In other neighborhoods, such as Austin or Humboldt Park, the relative prominence of the lead organization appears to have increased over the same time period.<sup>4</sup> For example, Bickerdike, the lead agency in Humboldt Park, ranked thirty-third in 2013, but fourth by 2016.

A correlation analysis shows that overall prominence in 2013 is associated with prominence in 2016, the time period of the study. However, there were exceptions and the correlation of an organization's 2013 position to its 2016 position was not always perfect.<sup>5</sup> Table 2.1 shows, for example, that among the most prominent organizations in 2016, 70 percent were also most prominent in 2013. Among organizations with moderate prominence in 2016, 75 percent also had moderate prominence in 2013. Yet among the 19 least prominent organizations in 2016, a little less than half had low prominence and a little more than half had moderate prominence in 2013. Overall, while some organizations (such as former NCP lead agencies) gained prominence, organizational prominence was generally stable during the

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- 2 The other role that an organization may play is that of a broker, which indicates the extent to which an organization is an exclusive connection to other actors in a network.
- 3 This measure of prominence corresponds to whether *other* prominent organizations nominated an organization as a partner, and therefore could not be influenced by whether the organization itself over-reported its partners. See Chapter 4 in Greenberg et al. (2017) for more information about different measures of centrality.
- 4 This report uses standardized centrality scores that fall between the values of zero and one so that the largest value in the neighborhood networks is always one. This allows for comparison across time periods and neighborhoods.
- 5 This analysis is detailed in the Appendix.

## Figure 2.1

### Visualizing Well-Connected Centrality

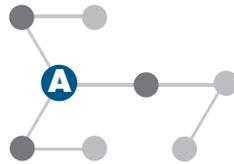
WELL-CONNECTED CENTRALITY MEASURES HOW WELL CONNECTED AN ORGANIZATION IS TO OTHER WELL-CONNECTED ACTORS IN THE NETWORK. IN SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS, THIS MEASURE IS ALSO KNOWN AS WELL-CONNECTED (EIGENVECTOR) CENTRALITY.

**TERM**

**Well-Connected Centrality**  
 How well connected an organization and its direct connections are.  
 Here, organizations A and B have the same number of direct connections (dark grey circles). However, organization B's direct connections themselves have more ties. As a result, organization B's eigenvector centrality is higher.

**ILLUSTRATION**

**Low Level of Well-Connected Centrality**

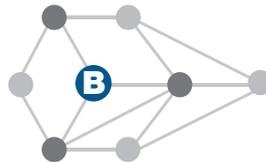


The direct partners of organization A (dark gray circles) are not connected to many of the other organizations in the network (light gray circles). As a result, organization A, which has a central role in the network, is understood to have a low level of well-connected, or eigenvector, centrality.

**IN THE CCN STUDY**

Being tied to other well-connected groups can also be important for community action. For example, an organization charged with coordinating a foreclosure prevention initiative that needs to reach out to different segments of the community might need to be tied to other well-positioned groups. It is more efficient to work closely with groups that themselves can bring in many other partners.

**High Level of Well-Connected Centrality**

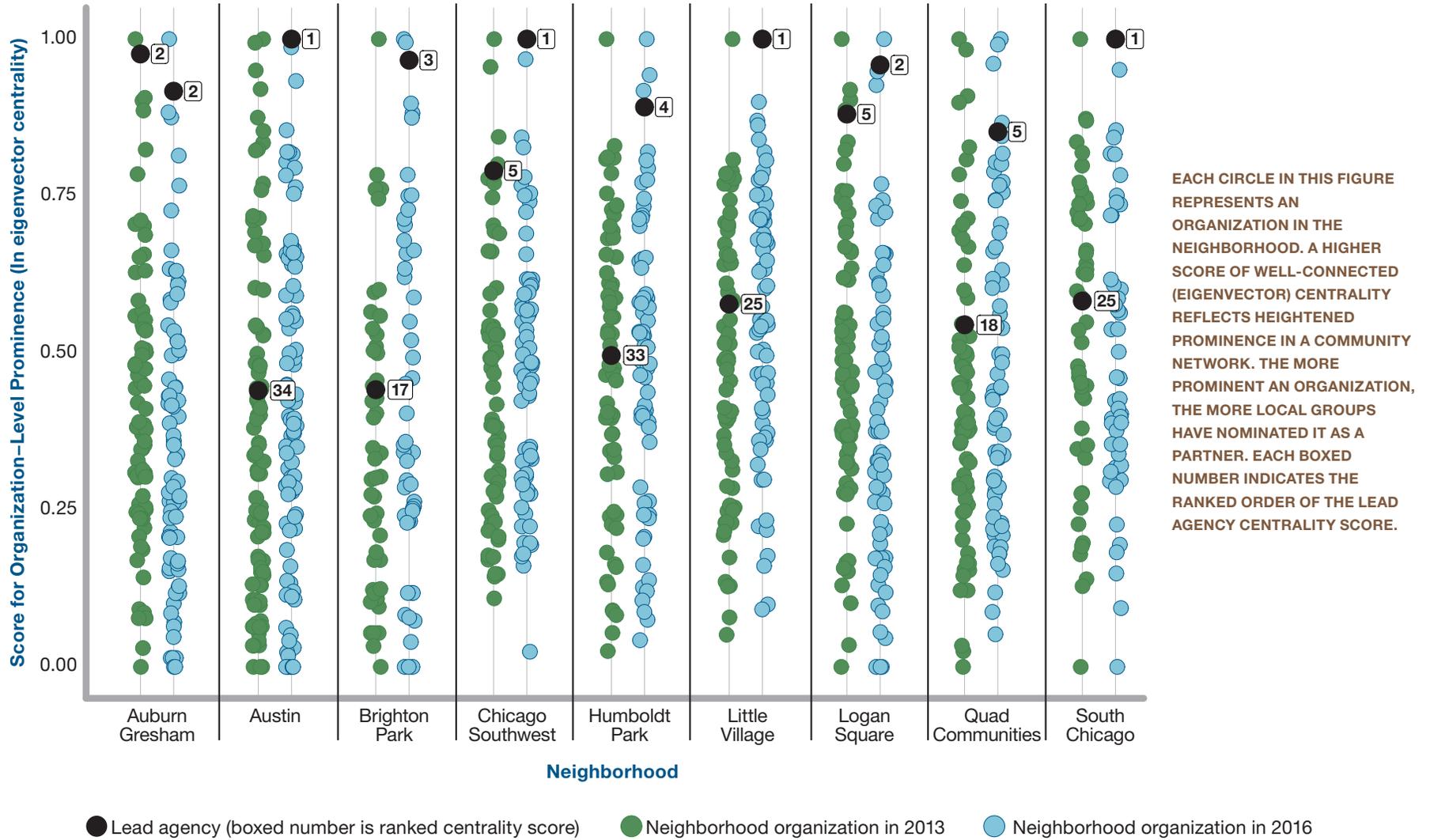


Here, organization B has a central role in the network as well, but its three direct partners (dark gray circles) are well positioned because they are connected to the other organizations in the network (light gray circles). As a result, organization B is said to have a high level of well-connected network centrality, or a higher eigenvector centrality. As such, it may be able to coordinate efforts more efficiently and with more groups in a network.

- Direct connection to organizations A and B.
- Indirect connection to organizations A and B.

Figure 2.2

Changes in Well-Connected Centrality, or the Prominence of Lead Agencies



**Table 2.1**  
**Characteristics of Organizations, by Level of Prominence**

<b>Characteristic, 2013</b>	<b>High neighborhood prominence in 2016 (top 25th percentile)</b>	<b>Medium neighborhood prominence in 2016 (25th-75th percentile)</b>	<b>Low neighborhood prominence in 2016 (bottom 25th percentile)</b>
High prominence (%)	70.4	20.2	0.0
Medium prominence (%)	29.6	74.5	57.9
Low prominence (%)	0.0	5.3	42.1
Average budget (millions of dollars)	2.7	2.3	1.2
Median budget (millions of dollars)	2.0	1.3	0.6
Number of paid staff	81	49	17
Sample size	71	94	19

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data collected in the 2013 and 2016 Chicago Community Networks study surveys.

NOTES: This table displays column percentages, where the values displayed are conditional on the column characteristics.

Prominence (or well-connectedness) is a measure that reflects how many relationships an organization has with partners who are themselves well connected. A higher score indicates a higher level of prominence.

This table only displays characteristics for those organizations that responded to the Chicago Community Networks study surveys. Nonrespondents are not included. In the survey, nonrespondents were not ascribed connections unless a respondent reported them as partners. Because of this, nonrespondents were more likely to have low prominence compared with respondents.

study period. Only two CCN neighborhoods — Logan Square and Brighton Park — registered shifts in the prominence of their organizations during the time period of the study.

What are some of the characteristics of organizations that maintained high levels of prominence throughout the study period? Table 2.1 charts some of the organizational characteristics of 184 organizations in 2013 against their 2016 organizational prominence on a scale of relatively high, medium, or low gradations of well-connected centrality. In reviewing these results, it is important to keep in mind, as detailed in the Appendix, that organizations responding to both rounds of the survey were generally ranked higher in well-connectedness. As a result, survey findings primarily apply to changes in prominence among more well-connected organizations.

Table 2.1 also shows that organizations that were more prominent in 2016 started off in 2013 with larger budgets and more paid staff members than other organizations in their network. Table 2.1 thereby suggests that an organization’s 2013 position along with its budget and staffing levels may have contributed to its ability to convene and collaborate with others by the end of the study period. Although structural advantages can help propel an organization to prominence, there are also specific actions such as leading a grassroots campaign or using persuasive messaging to mobilize others that an organization can take to raise its profile.

What follows are two case studies that illustrate how organizations may rise in prominence within their networks.

**In  
Focus**

***Gentrification and Budget Pressures Help Shift  
Community Leadership in Humboldt Park***

In Humboldt Park, the Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation, a local nonprofit organization that acted as lead agency under the New Communities Program (NCP), grew in prominence from 2013 to 2016.

At the onset of the CCN study, Bickerdike was well known and well regarded by other neighborhood actors. However, the role it played as an NCP lead agency was primarily to further partnerships and collaboration with *other* organizations. Often, Bickerdike itself did not benefit from this work either in terms of direct financial support or visibility. For instance, Bickerdike helped to create the Community of Wellness collaborative in Humboldt Park. This partnership attracted funding for multiple partners around health careers, outreach activities, HIV/AIDS awareness raising, and programs that encourage physical activity. While Bickerdike helped create and foster the collaborative, it did not receive any of the funds that it helped to generate. Bickerdike was seen as an active community partner, but not one that participated in the implementation of concrete programs, and this may have dimmed the perception of its prominence.

All of this changed when Bickerdike expanded its role in response to mounting gentrification pressures in the historically Latino and low-income communities it served. This had the effect of greatly heightening Bickerdike’s visibility as a prominent actor during the study period.

In a 2010 MDRC study of Chicago’s New Communities Program, Humboldt Park was classified as part of a cluster of neighborhoods that “have witnessed considerable growth in the last decade and are home to large (and growing) Latino communities, amid relatively modest levels of housing investment.”<sup>6</sup> (See Box 2.1.) According to another study, Humboldt Park experienced accelerating gentrification between 2013 and 2016. This led to demographic changes in the neighborhood and a strain on the local housing market.<sup>7</sup> Observers identified the 606 development, a public park that featured an elevated trail, to be an attractive amenity that accelerated the demand for rental units in the neighborhood. These emerging pressures in Humboldt Park, and the resulting spike in demand for affordable housing, created an opportunity for Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation to further expand its efforts to improve the neighborhood.

Between 2013 and 2016, Bickerdike divided its efforts between managing its current properties and developing new and existing affordable housing projects in Humboldt Park and Logan Square. In Humboldt Park, the Bickerdike Redevelopment Corporation invested in the preservation and rehabilitation of its existing affordable housing, including the North

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<sup>6</sup> Greenberg, Verma, Dillman, and Chaskin (2010).

<sup>7</sup> Smith, Duda, Lee, and Thompson (2016).

## Box 2.1

### Historically Disinvested Neighborhoods

The New Communities Program (NCP) included 14 Chicago neighborhoods with a range of socioeconomic conditions. MDRC used the following quality-of-life indicators to classify these neighborhoods: community safety, housing market activity, and commercial vitality. The two most common types of NCP neighborhoods were either disinvested inner-city neighborhoods facing population declines and a large proportion of low-income residents with low levels of housing investment; or neighborhoods that experienced considerable growth since the beginning of the millennium with large and growing populations and relatively modest levels of housing investment.\*

MDRC's early work on the New Communities Program suggests that all neighborhoods led successful planning processes that often brought organizations together with no prior history of collaboration. However, historically disinvested neighborhoods had a much harder time moving from the planning to the implementation phase. This was particularly true in neighborhoods where fewer organizations had the capacity to implement projects, or when mistrust among organizations derailed implementation efforts. This finding propelled interest in learning how the three neighborhoods classified as disinvested in MDRC's later Chicago Community Networks study — Austin, South Chicago, and Quad Communities — have changed over time.

**Changes in leadership:** In the three historically disinvested CCN neighborhoods, lead agencies or conveners became more prominent. Austin and South Chicago are part of the United Way Neighborhood Network Initiative, which may have buttressed their leadership capacity.

**Connectivity:** In terms of levels of partnerships or connectivity, Austin and Quad Communities remained more or less stable from 2013 to 2016; in South Chicago the level of connectivity decreased. At the same time, Austin and Quad Communities had higher numbers of organizational closures compared with South Chicago. However, the number of closures in these two neighborhoods was similar to other neighborhoods such as Humboldt Park, which was not classified as a historically disinvested neighborhood. The fact that levels of partnership or connectivity remained more or less stable in Austin and Quad Communities might speak to the resilience of partnerships in these neighborhoods and the possibility of building partnerships over time, despite the challenges of external pressures.

**Comprehensiveness:** The levels of comprehensiveness, or collaboration across different areas of work, declined in Austin and Quad Communities. Conversely, levels of comprehensiveness increased in South Chicago.

**Changes in power or influence:** The ways in which potential power or influence is distributed in a network remained relatively stable in all CCN neighborhoods, including the three historically disinvested CCN neighborhoods.

\* For details on this classification, see Greenberg, Verma, Dillman, and Chaskin (2010).

Humboldt Building and West Town Housing. The organization also expanded its development efforts, financing new projects including the Rosa Park Apartments, Harold Washington Unity Coop, and Nelson Mandela Apartments. These projects brought together both local and outside nonprofit organizations and developers. For a new mixed-income development, Bickerdike and another nonprofit developer collaborated with a for-profit developer and entered into market rate housing.

This work, in turn, raised the profile of Bickerdike as a prominent partner in housing and other domains. Figure 2.2 illustrates the evolution of Bickerdike's prominence in Humboldt Park: as lead agency (in black), it moved from a 2013 ranking of thirty-third most prominent organization to fourth by 2016.

Bickerdike's increasing visibility as a community leader also occurred during a far-reaching state budget crisis. During this time, some organizations in the neighborhood shrunk in scale or shut down altogether. In contrast, Bickerdike's funding was not dependent on the state, but instead reliant upon foundations and activities related to its housing development and property management work. From this relatively solid financial position, Bickerdike next chose to partner with experienced youth-serving organizations to provide services to the young residents of its properties. In turn, these organizations began collaborating with Bickerdike and this might have contributed to raising its prominence in the education domain.

Throughout the budget crisis, some organizations could not maintain their positions of prominence in the neighborhood network because of changes to their internal leadership structure. One formerly prominent organization, for instance, was hit particularly hard by the state budget crisis and lost its long-time executive director, leading to a decrease in visibility and partnerships for that organization. In comparison, Bickerdike's leadership was consistent throughout this period, even allowing it to support other emerging organizations. In one such instance, Bickerdike's leadership not only helped establish one emerging organization, West Town Bikes, but also helped secure community approval for the organization at Humboldt Park's historic Puerto Rican cultural and commercial strip.

**In  
Focus**

***Funding Boosts and Leadership Transitions Elevate  
a New Organization in Austin***

Austin is the largest neighborhood in the Chicago Community Networks study. It is located on the west side of the city and is predominantly African-American. Historically, Austin has experienced disinvestment as wealth and capital flows moved elsewhere, although its northern region has a larger base of homeowners.

Collaboration among community organizations has been challenging in Austin due in large part to widespread mistrust among groups, many of which have taken leadership roles at one time or another. A 2010 MDRC report classified Austin as part of a cluster of histori-

cally disinvested neighborhoods.<sup>8</sup> (See Box 2.1 for further details.) A relatively new group in 2013, Austin Coming Together (ACT) was among the most prominent organizations in the neighborhood by 2016. As shown in Figure 2.2, ACT (depicted in black) was ranked thirty-fourth in prominence in 2013. This changed dramatically in 2016 when ACT was ranked the neighborhood’s most prominent organization by other well-connected local actors who viewed ACT as a partner. What explains the dramatic shift? It was an influx of funding and leadership transitions among other neighborhood organizations.

Austin Coming Together was founded in 2011 with seed or starter funds from the JP Morgan Chase Foundation. ACT was originally founded to help coordinate the work of community organizations in Austin. But breaking into Austin’s expansive and established neighborhood improvement community soon proved tricky. According to those familiar with the neighborhood, relationships among organizations are often fraught with tension and mistrust, making it harder for new organizations to establish their value.

ACT’s early work included attempts to build collaborative initiatives in the areas of early childhood education, youth programming, workforce support, and economic development. While ACT had some initial success convening organizations to discuss potential partnerships, it faced several challenges when it came to implementing programs and engaging larger and more established organizations in the work. This was only exacerbated by the underlying atmosphere of mistrust — measured by CCN as the lowest in the study neighborhoods — among local community organizations. According to one observer, “organizations are willing to work with each other on events and stuff where their interests intersect, but it’s really hard to get people to share leadership over a planning process or kind of a long-term initiative.” In part due to these challenges in collaboration, ACT was ranked thirty-fourth in prominence in 2013, in terms of its rate of well-connected neighborhood centrality (Figure 2.2).

One year later, the United Way enlisted ACT to expand its Neighborhood Network Initiative.<sup>9</sup> The subsequent influx of funds marked a turning point for the organization. ACT organized a planning process that deepened its engagement with many of its existing partners and helped it to develop a common agenda — Thrive 2025 — with concrete goals to guide com-

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<sup>8</sup> Greenberg, Verma, Dillman, and Chaskin (2010).

<sup>9</sup> United Way of Metro Chicago established the United Way Neighborhood Network, a collective impact-based initiative, for challenged neighborhoods in the areas of education, health, and income. The neighborhoods were selected based on need and existing organizational collaborations, and United Way investment. For participating neighborhoods, United Way serves as the backbone organization that works in partnership with community leaders and helps create shared planning and measurement platforms, offers training in best practices, assists capacity building and leadership development, supports coalition investment, and provides long-term sustainable funding. There are ten participating neighborhoods, including five in this study: Brighton Park, Austin, Little Village, Auburn Gresham, and South Chicago. The lead partners in these neighborhoods include Brighton Park Neighborhood Coalition in Brighton Park, Austin Coming Together in Austin, Latinos Progresando in Little Village (Enlace Chicago is a partner), Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation in Auburn Gresham, and Claretian Associates in South Chicago.

munity work. Two years later, in 2016, ACT received funds from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation to engage in a quality-of-life planning process that was similar in scope to the New Communities Program. In 2016, ACT held a community summit for 200 to 225 community residents that kicked off the planning process. In the lead-up to this summit, ACT conducted extensive community outreach that might have contributed to its increased visibility and the growing perception of its prominence.

While ACT was receiving increasing financial support and recognition for its work, some well-established community organizations in the neighborhood experienced internal transitions. In 2011, the long-time executive director of the Westside Health Authority retired, and in 2012, the long-time leader of the Westside Ministers Coalition passed away. These leadership transitions may have led these organizations to recalibrate their existing work and partnerships. For instance, the monthly meetings that the Westside Ministers Coalition held for years were poorly attended during the transition period when the Coalition was without a leader but resumed a few years later when new leadership took the helm. These transitions left a void in community leadership, which ACT was able to fill given the additional financial support it received.

As Figure 2.2 illustrates, ACT became the most prominent community organization in Austin by 2016. But this was not a development that occurred without tension or controversy. Some leaders expressed suspicion and others resentment that such a relatively new organization received funds that they felt were better spent on established organizations. While it is difficult to tell at this point, these tensions might play a role in the longer-term sustainability of the networks that ACT is currently helping to build.

## **EMERGING THEMES**

Two major themes emerged in CCN research related to centrality, which is an organization's relative prominence in a network. On the one hand, organizational prominence in Chicago's community networks was relatively stable during the three-year period of this study. On the other hand, some organizations that initially had a convening capacity and intentionally sought to bring organizations together either maintained their level of prominence, or became more prominent, as measured by well-connected centrality, over time. The cases of Bickerdike in Humboldt Park and ACT in Austin suggest that the rise in prominence of organizations might be related to their ability to take advantage of funding opportunities, as well as changes in the neighborhood or vacuums related to leadership transitions among other organizations. The prominence of an organization within a network, however, should not be equated with trust or potential power or influence in the entire network, as this is contingent on the overall distribution of power across the full network. Chapter 5 turns to this issue of organizational power at the network level.

## Connectivity: Building A Culture of Collaboration

One question at the center of network community effectiveness is how closely organizations collaborate with each other. Community initiatives often seek to grow and build partnerships among local organizations. The resulting rise in connectivity or density of relationships among neighborhood groups can serve to better coordinate local improvement efforts. In fact, silo busting — the deliberate attempt to disrupt parallel and uncoordinated work by organizations that are working “in silo” with limited interaction on similar issues — is a major goal of federal and foundation support for local groups. Research shows that local organizations that work well — and work often — together are more likely to bring about positive change in their neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup> Sustaining partnerships over time is, however, a complex task in practice since partnerships require commitment, time, and resources to be sustained. For instance, during the first two years of MacArthur’s New Communities Program, neighborhoods regularly engaged in planning processes that gave organizations the opportunity to interact with each other, and this sometimes led to more productive partnerships. In some cases, however, collaboration did not persist if organizations did not continue to work closely together. This section focuses specifically on the extent of and changes in collaboration during the three years between the 2013 and 2016 Chicago Community Networks (CCN) surveys.

### MEASURING CHANGES IN CONNECTIVITY OVER TIME

In this report, connectivity or density refers to overall levels of partnership among community organizations in a network. The CCN surveys asked organizations in the network to name all of their partners over a 12-month period. Organizations were also asked to indicate one of three levels of interaction with each partner in each area of work: a low level of interaction that includes an exchange of information; a medium level of interaction to coordinate targeted neighborhood improvement efforts in consultation with other organizations; and a high level of interaction or collaboration that includes dividing up responsibilities, sharing resources, or working together to assess progress.

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 1 Provan and Kenis (2008).

A network’s overall level of connectivity is defined as the proportion of all possible partnerships that have been realized between organizations. For example, if organizations are only collaborating with one other organization in their local network, the network is said to have a relatively low level of connectivity or density.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, if all organizations in a network collaborate with half of the other organizations in the network, the network is thought to have a relatively high level of connectivity and would be considered a denser network. Figure 3.1 illustrates levels of connectivity in two different domains of work in Humboldt Park using a form of network visualization known as a circle diagram. The figure shows that the network of organizations working in the education domain (left) is denser than those working in the public policy and organizing domain (right). That is, more potential partnerships are realized in the education domain than in the public policy and organizing domain.

The study found that overall levels of connectivity in Chicago neighborhoods remained stable or declined between the 2013 and 2016 surveys. In the majority of the neighborhoods under study, overall levels of connectivity remained more or less stable during this time. Connectivity declined the most in Logan Square and South Chicago, by about 10 percentage points. In Logan Square, this decline represents a reduction of about 40 percent of the partnerships that existed in 2013.

Although 13 percent of the Chicago neighborhood organizations that were studied for this report closed their doors and were not replaced by 2016, there was no resulting increase in connectivity among the fewer organizations that remained. What is also of note is that levels of connectivity declined in only one of the CCN neighborhoods that MDRC classified as historically disinvested (South Chicago). Neither Austin nor Quad Communities registered any change in connectivity, though both were also classified as historically disinvested neighborhoods. These results suggest that partnerships are vulnerable to change in the short term.

Levels of reported connectivity by domain of work, whether focused on education, workforce development, community well-being, or housing and commercial real estate, also appear to have remained stable, on average, with some variation across neighborhoods. For example, most of the collaborative education partnerships that existed in Humboldt Park, Logan Square, and Auburn Gresham in 2013 declined in intensity or disappeared in 2016.

A closer look at Logan Square, one of the neighborhoods that experienced a relative decline in connectivity, helps to illustrate these points.

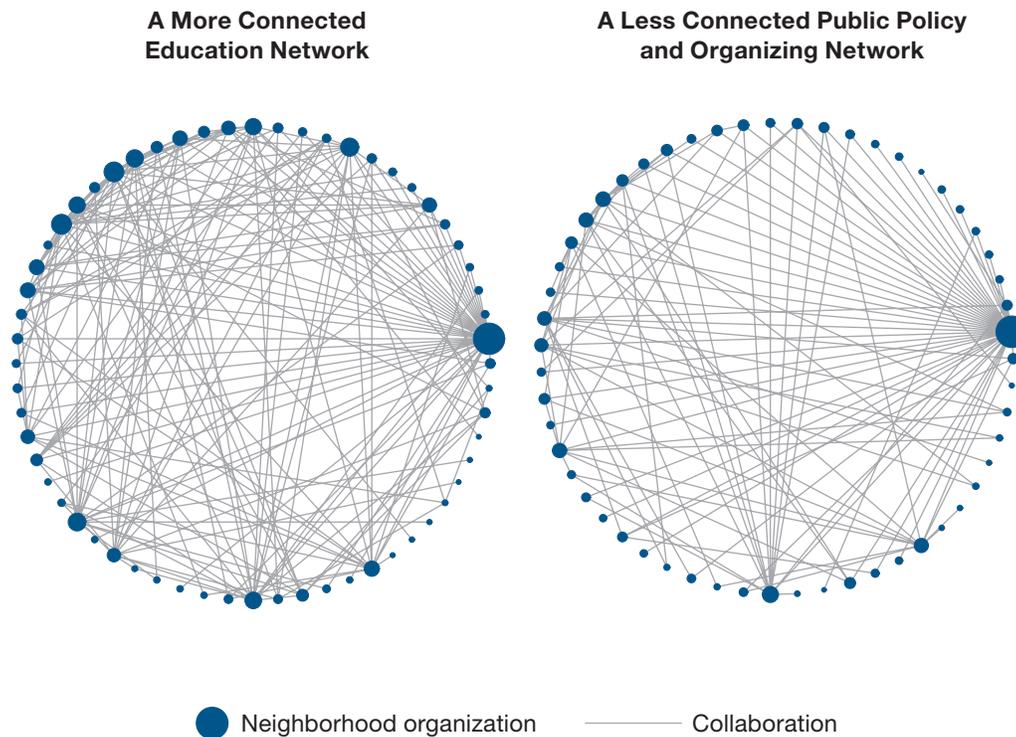
**In Focus** *Sustaining Partnerships Amid Budget Cuts and Demographic Change in Logan Square*

Figure 3.2 focuses on connectivity among organizations in Logan Square, where network connectivity declined between 2013 and 2016. The top of Figure 3.2 shows the overall web .....

2 For a more detailed definition of the term “density,” see Greenberg et al. (2017).

Figure 3.1

## Examples of High and Low Connectivity in Two Humboldt Park Networks, 2013



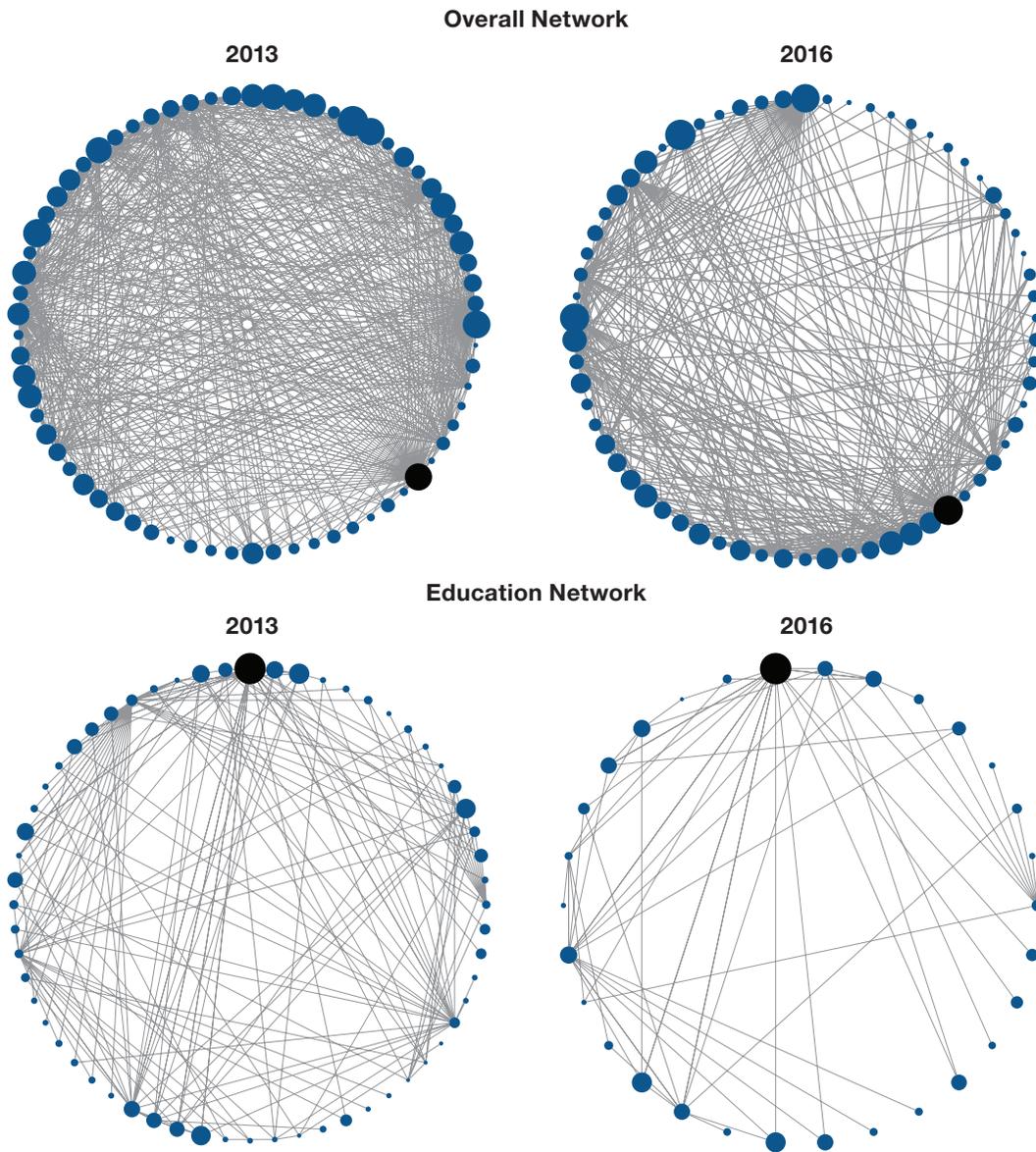
SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data collected in the 2013 and 2016 Chicago Community Networks study surveys.

NOTES: The network graphs show level 3 undirected education and public policy and organizing networks. This refers to the depth of connection between partners. Level 3 is collaboration (level 2 is coordination and level 1 is communication). The direction refers to who nominated the organization as partner, so that “outdirected” is when an organization nominates another, whereas “indirected” is when an organization has itself been nominated. The displayed network graphs have network densities of 0.039 and 0.023, respectively, representing high and low connectivity networks of approximately the same size (number of partnerships). Organizations are represented by the circles on the perimeter of each of the figures above. Larger organizations are better connected than smaller ones.

of connections between all organizations in 2013 (top left) and again in 2016 (top right). The sparser web in 2016 compared with that in 2013 illustrates a decline in connectivity between the two survey periods. The bottom panel of Figure 3.2 shows changes in connections from 2013 to 2016 in the education domain. The Logan Square Neighborhood Association, the black circle, is a prominent community organization that has maintained many partnerships. In the neighborhood as a whole, partnerships declined in the domain of education.

Figure 3.2

## Changes in Network Connectivity in Logan Square



**THERE WAS A NOTICEABLE DECLINE IN THE LEVEL OF CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN THE 2013 AND 2016 SURVEYS FOR BOTH THE OVERALL LOGAN SQUARE NETWORK AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S EDUCATIONAL NETWORK.**

● Lead agency    ● Neighborhood organization    — Collaboration

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data collected in the 2013 and 2016 Chicago Community Networks study surveys.

NOTES: The Overall Network graphs depict organizations that were nominated by their partners as communicators, coordinators, or collaborators in the Logan Square neighborhood in the 12 months preceding the fielding of the survey.

The Education Network graphs depict organizations that were nominated by their partners as collaborators in the Logan Square neighborhood in the 12 months preceding the fielding of the survey. Organizations are sized by relatively well-connected (eigenvector) centrality scores. Organizations are positioned randomly.

As in other neighborhoods in Chicago, Logan Square experienced rapid demographic change as gentrification took hold from about 2000 to 2014. During this time, the neighborhood’s low-income population declined by 28.7 percent. The ethnic composition of the neighborhood changed from 65 percent Latino in 2000 to 46.8 percent Latino by 2014. At the same time, population density declined, and incomes went up.<sup>3</sup>

While many factors have contributed to these demographic changes, observers note that the most relevant was the 2013-2015 development of the 606, a public park that uses an old, elevated rail line to connect four neighborhoods in northwest Chicago (Logan Square, Humboldt Park, Wicker Park, and Bucktown).<sup>4</sup> The area immediately adjacent to the 606 trail experienced sharp increases in housing prices and a boom in housing construction beginning in 2013.<sup>5</sup>

The rapid demographic change in Logan Square has had a direct effect on enrollment in local schools.<sup>6</sup> Some local schools have seen a decline in student enrollment and have lost their funding as a result. As a principal at one of the local schools noted: “The biggest impact is that Chicago Public Schools is based on student-based budgeting, so a decline in enrollment could mean a decline in funding, which — in the year they were speaking about [2016] — is over a million dollars.”<sup>7</sup> In addition to diminished public school funding, the state budget crisis impacted partnerships with local organizations. The 2013 Chicago Community Networks survey revealed that schools were often central to neighborhood life, and that the education domain was the densest of all domains of work. Many community organizations partnered with schools and with each other to provide services to students. The decrease in funding from the state, however, significantly jeopardized the work of those organizations that partnered with local schools to provide after-school programming and other family support services.

For example, Teen REACH, a state-funded initiative that provides after-school programs to high-risk youth, was shut down or significantly reduced in scope of work because of missed and late payments that were caused by the budget crisis. In addition, several schools lost or reduced their after-school programming. Other community organizations scrambled to



**3** Biasco (2016). During the time period of this study, there was an 11.2 percent decrease in population density in the nine CCN neighborhoods and a related decrease in household size. Median annual household income in CCN neighborhoods increased by 13.8 percent during this period to \$53,426. Since 2000, the share of the population earning less than \$25,000 annually decreased by 28.7 percent. Metropolitan Planning Council (2015).

**4** See The 606 (2018).

**5** Smith, Duda, Lee, and Thompson (2016).

**6** The Chicago Public School network that includes Logan Square, Fullerton Network, lost almost 6,000 students from 2012 to 2016. Chicago Public Schools (2013). Student enrollment for the 2012-2013 academic year totaled 30,493. Student enrollment for the 2016-2017 academic year totaled 24,570. Chicago Public Schools (2017).

**7** Interview in Logan Square conducted in 2018.

find alternative sources of funding so they could continue to provide services and keep their organizations afloat. As one organization noted: “What has changed horrendously is we’re still owed money from June [2017] ... it’s a constant struggle for us that they [the state] pay so late ... which is ridiculous that you have to spend your time getting paid for something you’ve done already.”<sup>8</sup> The time that organizations were forced to spend recovering unpaid funds, looking for additional funding, maintaining operations, and managing staff cuts may have reduced their capacity to maintain existing partnerships, or create new ones.

The impact of demographic changes in Logan Square extended beyond the education domain. For some faith-based organizations, for instance, changing demographics resulted in smaller congregations that precipitated budget and staff cuts. In Logan Square, faith-based organizations have served an important role in advocacy coalitions. But the increasing strain of financial pressures has severely hampered the ability of these organizations to continue mobilizing for change. In general, the results of the Chicago Community Networks study points to overall declines in levels of connectivity in the public policy and organizing domain in Logan Square from 2013 to 2016.

## EMERGING THEMES

Funding challenges and demographic changes appear to have influenced partnerships in the Chicago neighborhoods under study, both directly and indirectly. In direct terms, reduced funding for education led to fewer resources for services to neighborhood schools, and this in turn resulted in fewer opportunities for community organizations to partner with schools around the provision of services. Indirectly, new fiscal strains forced organizations to divert time and resources to raising funds instead of trying to collaborate. In addition, demographic changes have altered the traditional constituency of community organizations such as faith-based groups. This may have played a role in shifting their focus away from building collaborative partnerships with other organizations in their network. The implication is that levels of partnership are vulnerable to change in the short term. An open question, however, is whether a short-term decline in partnerships persists over the long term. It is unclear whether partnerships that dissolve at a time of distress can be taken up again in the future when circumstances change, or whether it will be necessary to start relationships anew.

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<sup>8</sup> Interview in Logan Square conducted in 2018.

## Comprehensiveness: Partnerships Across Areas of Expertise

Sometimes partnerships among organizations span multiple areas of focus within community development initiatives. For instance, an organization focused on educational opportunity may join forces with a housing rights organization to expand its reach. This report uses the term “comprehensiveness” to refer to partnerships that span domains of work. It has become a guiding principle of many community development initiatives, such as the New Communities Program (NCP), which operates on the principle that community improvement has a better chance of succeeding if organizations coordinate strategies across their respective areas of expertise. The quality-of-life process of NCP provides a compelling example of the advantages of having organizations work together across areas of expertise at both the planning and implementation stages.

Comprehensiveness is often valued within community development efforts because it is considered a better approach to the complex, layered, and often intersecting problems that face low-income neighborhoods. Moreover, comprehensiveness has been associated with sustained partnerships. That is, organizations that work together across domains of work tend to maintain their relationships over time even if there are changes in one area of work.<sup>1</sup> Comprehensiveness has also enabled community improvement initiatives to leverage various sources of funding that might help them withstand financial challenges to individual organizations or areas of focus.<sup>2</sup> This chapter examines the nature and implications of comprehensiveness in the nine Chicago neighborhoods under study.

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1 Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, and Dewar (2010); Provan, Fish, and Sydow (2007).

2 Greenberg et al. (2014).

## MEASURING COMPREHENSIVENESS OVER TIME

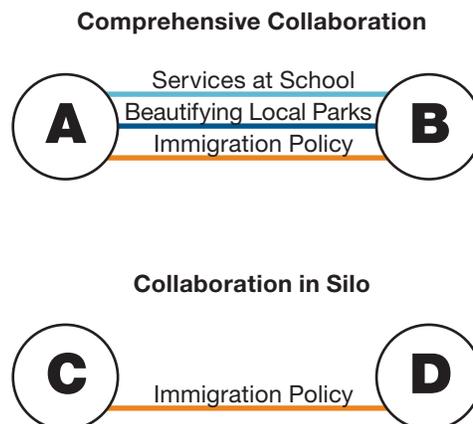
The notion of organizational comprehensiveness in a community network is illustrated with a hypothetical example in Figure 4.1. In this figure, organizations A and B collaborate in three different areas of work, while organizations C and D collaborate on only one area of work. The partnership between organizations A and B is thereby said to be more comprehensive than the partnership between organizations C and D.

The Chicago Community Networks (CCN) surveys asked respondents to name the areas they worked on with each of their partners. It also asked them to define the intensity of the interaction, namely whether this interaction included communication, coordination, or collaboration. (See Chapter 3.) It is likely that a less intense interaction will span more domains of work, because it is easier to merely communicate about work in multiple domains than it is to actually coordinate efforts, strategies, and goals across multiple areas. Data from surveys were analyzed to create a measure of comprehensiveness for the networks in each CCN neighborhood. This measure captured both the average number of domains covered by each partnership, and the level of intensity of the relationships in each domain. Comparing these two dimensions in 2013 and 2016 sheds light on the extent to which actors in a neighborhood interact with each other across areas of work, the depth of that interaction, and how it changes over time.

Figure 4.1

### Collaboration Across Areas of Work (Comprehensiveness)

IN A NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK, ORGANIZATIONS (SHOWN BELOW AS CIRCLED LETTERS) THAT WORK TOGETHER ACROSS MULTIPLE ISSUE AREAS ARE SAID TO HAVE MORE COMPREHENSIVE PARTNERSHIPS THAN ORGANIZATIONS THAT COLLABORATE ON ONLY ONE AREA OF WORK.



Analysis of the two rounds of the CCN survey suggests that comprehensiveness declined across most neighborhoods during the three-year study period.<sup>3</sup> As Figure 4.2 shows, the percentage of partnerships that include five or six areas of work is lower in 2016 than 2013. Conversely, partnerships that include one or two areas of work are higher in 2016 than in 2013. Between 2013 and 2016, comprehensiveness stayed the same in Chicago Southwest, Little Village, and Brighton Park and increased in South Chicago. This may speak to some of the advantages of networks that combine public policy and organizing efforts with service delivery, as observed in past research.<sup>4</sup> Both Chicago Southwest and Brighton Park have well-established community organizing groups that have often combined service delivery with advocacy work. In Little Village, local organizations have developed what they call tables that bring together actors in the neighborhood to think strategically about how best to coordinate their work on a range of issues facing the neighborhood. However, the case of Logan Square, which is examined in more detail below, suggests that other factors might be more relevant for determining levels of comprehensiveness in a neighborhood.

Notably, the overall percentage of comprehensive partnerships that include public policy and organizing as a shared area of work significantly declined from about 40-50 percent in 2013, to 10-14 percent in 2016. Surprisingly, organizations did not band together to seek redress to budget cuts through a collective approach.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, Humboldt Park organizations in 2009 did coordinate efforts and build strong alliances with elected officials and other state agencies to try to protect funding for social services.<sup>6</sup> One explanation for the muted call for concerted action in 2016 is that decreased levels of connectivity in the domain of public policy and organizing suggest that relationships with state agencies were not as strong as in 2013.

During this study, a surge of gun violence presented a catalyst for Chicago organizations to work together across issue areas.<sup>7</sup> Mounting tension between community relations with the Chicago Police Department added to the sense of urgency. In 2015, a video was released of the shooting of Laquan McDonald by a white police officer. This set widespread protests into motion and led to the resignation of Chicago's police superintendent, and murder charges for the officer involved. Instead of a collective response by neighborhood organizations, however, interviews in Austin and Auburn Gresham suggest that the response was individualized in these neighborhoods. Interviews also suggest that organizations working on



3 Additional analyses indicate that measures of communications and coordination, in addition to measures of collaboration, declined over time. In addition, to assess whether changes in comprehensiveness were statistically significant, two sample t-tests with empirical p-values from random permutations were conducted for each neighborhood.

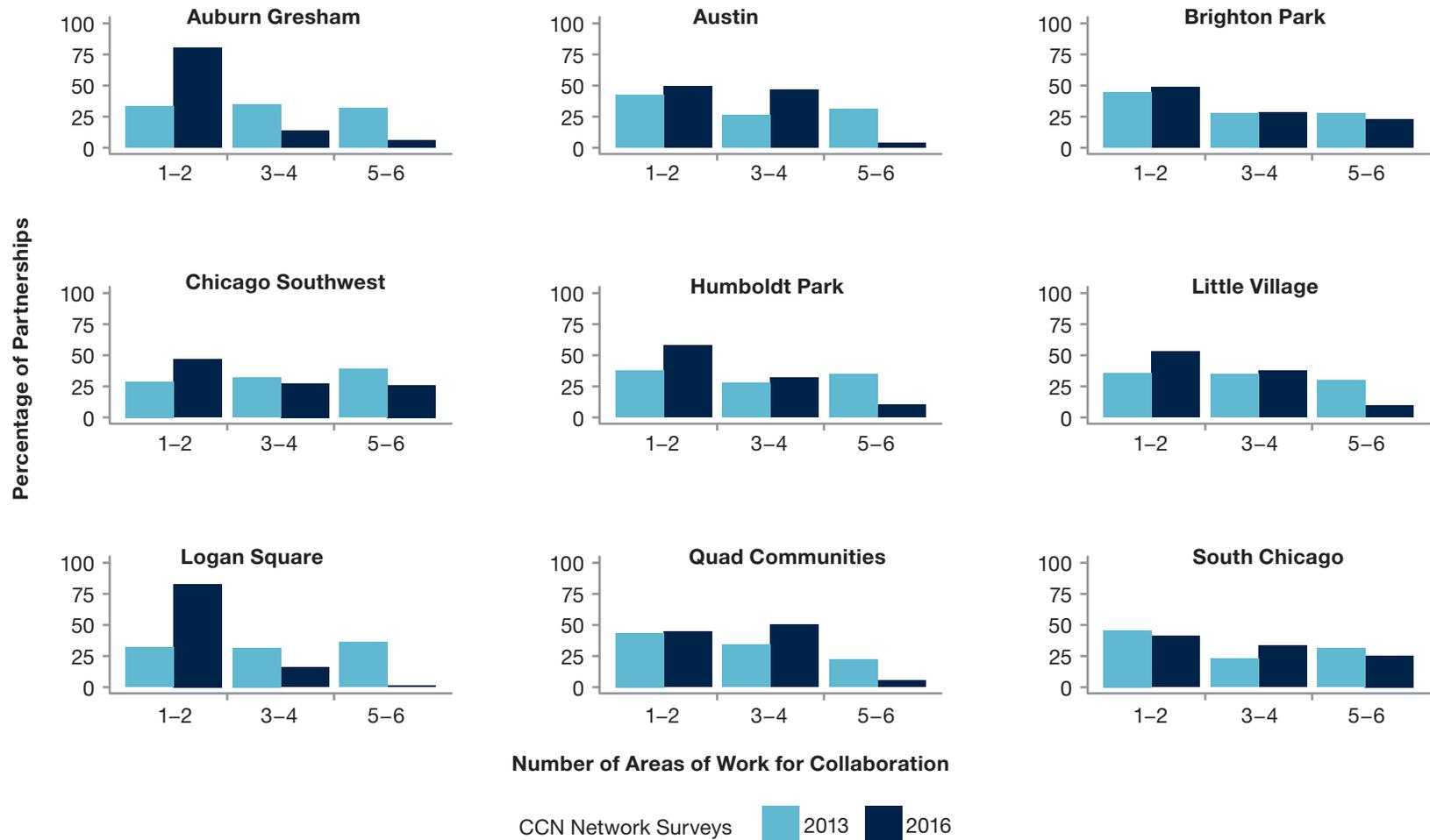
4 Greenberg et al. (2017).

5 Social movement theory suggests that actors will mobilize for change when there are structural opportunities to pursue change. See Tarrow (1994).

6 Chaskin and Karlstrom (2012).

7 "What's Behind Chicago's Surge in Violence?" in *Chicago Tribune*. Editorial Board (2017).

**Figure 4.2**  
**Changes in Comprehensiveness, or Collaboration Across Areas of Work, by Neighborhood**



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data collected in the 2013 and 2016 Chicago Community Networks study surveys.

NOTES: Comprehensiveness (or multiplexity) is defined as work that occurs across multiple areas of work with the same partner. Overall levels of comprehensiveness across CCN neighborhoods declined during the study. Partnerships that span five or six domains of work are said to engage in more comprehensive collaboration. Since the CCN survey identifies six areas of work, the research team characterized each partnership using a comprehensiveness score from 1 to 6. For instance, in Auburn Gresham in 2013, about 30 percent of all partnerships spanned one to two areas of work (a comprehensiveness score of 1-2). That percentage rose to 75 percent in 2016.

gun violence further increased their focus on this work, leaving other organizations to focus on other matters. Referring to the decline in partnerships that collaborate across domains of work, one interviewee suggested: “I would say that a couple of organizations increased their focus on violence prevention, adding stronger organizations as partners and letting others turn their efforts to other areas. And I think that’s why the number of shared work domains was decreasing.”<sup>8</sup> In addition, some organizations deemphasized neighborhood partnerships and instead joined citywide coalitions to demand an end to police brutality, or directly engaged local police precincts.

**In Focus** *A Fight for Affordable Housing in Logan Square Puts Comprehensive Partnerships on the Back Burner*

The demographic changes in Logan Square had repercussions in several areas of work, but especially in the area of affordable housing. The neighborhood has experienced a boom in construction and a demand for housing near the new 606 elevated trail. According to one study, housing prices spiked once ground was broken for the trail in 2013, particularly along its western edge, where most low-income residents live.<sup>9</sup> In response to the heightened demand for housing, developers began buying existing homes, renovating and then reselling them for substantially higher prices. Some interviewed for this study said this practice jeopardized the struggle to provide affordable housing to low-income residents in Logan Square. Others saw these changes as a boon for the neighborhood. These divergent perspectives have generated some tension in the neighborhood and even resulted in the collapse of a few long-standing partnerships.

Several community organizations in Logan Square have joined citywide coalitions that advocate for tenants’ rights, leading to new partnerships with neighborhood organizations that are working in this domain, or working on local ordinances to slow the pace of gentrification.<sup>10</sup> For instance, the Logan Square Neighborhood Association galvanized neighborhood support for a local ordinance that would heavily fine developers who demolish existing housing along the trail to make room for new buildings. The fees would be deposited in a Trust Fund whose board includes local organizations, residents, and aldermen.

The housing crisis in Logan Square drove many local organizations to focus their efforts on affordable housing, which might have prevented them from forming alliances that cut across different issue areas. In the words of one staff member at a neighborhood organization, “I know [naming several organizations], have been working with groups and neighbors to talk about how to keep affordability intact, particularly for the western part of the neighbor-

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**8** Interview conducted in Auburn Gresham in 2018.  
**9** Smith, Duda, Lee, and Thompson (2016).  
**10** The Keep Chicago Renting Coalition worked in support of a local ordinance that ensures that renters in foreclosed properties are granted certain protections, such as honoring existing leases. The ordinance was passed in 2013 and amended in 2015 in favor of tenants.

hoods that surround the 606.”<sup>11</sup> This focus on housing is similar to the focus on education by some groups, described in Chapter 3, in response to demographic changes and budget cuts. This movement to specialize advocacy efforts in response to changing realities on the ground might have led to lower overall levels of connection and comprehensiveness in Chicago community networks.

## EMERGING THEMES

Many community development initiatives have emphasized the importance and value of organizations partnering across domains of work. These partnerships help neighborhoods address complex issues that could benefit from collaboration with organizations that provide expertise on a specific issue.

But this study shows that declines in comprehensiveness are not necessarily detrimental to community improvement efforts. Sometimes cuts in funding might limit the areas of work that an organization takes up and this may impede its ability to partner with other organizations. In other instances, organizations may be called upon to respond to neighborhood crises that limit their ability to build cross-sectoral partnerships, causing them to instead focus more intensely on one single area of work. The decline in levels of comprehensiveness that were observed in the CCN survey data might be related to neighborhood crises that required immediate and focused responses by community organizations in a single area of work, rather than across several areas simultaneously. This flexibility in responsiveness may ultimately enable neighborhood networks to address immediate needs in service of their longer-term resilience and strength.

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<sup>11</sup> Interview with organization staff in Humboldt Park conducted in 2017.

CHAPTER  
5

## Centralization: The Distribution of Power and Influence Among Organizations in Neighborhood Networks

The concentration of potential power or influence in a network, something known as centralization in social network analysis, can shape the very way a network functions.<sup>1</sup> Should a network of community organizations operate by building consensus among the majority of its members, or instead drive toward efficiency at the hands of one or a few powerful members who attempt to represent the broader interests of the whole? According to the results of this study, both approaches can be effective. Different realities on the ground and the imperatives of neighborhood objectives can drive the way a community network distributes power and influence. One of the most acute considerations for how a network might distribute power is the impact of local conditions on building trust, especially when conflict or disagreement emerge.<sup>2</sup> This chapter analyzes changes in the structure of neighborhood networks and provides two examples from the Chicago Community Networks (CCN) study that highlight different ways of concentrating power in a network.

Policymakers have long considered whether there is greater value in having a *single* organization coordinate local efforts, or whether it is more effective to have a *collaborative* approach with a formal or informal board that collectively makes decisions. The former approach may promote efficiency, but at the expense of inclusion and with the added risk of disrupting a community network by causing individual organizations to feel disenfranchised. The latter, collaborative approach may promote inclusion, but at the expense of efficiency, and with the added risk of frustration that results from a consensus-building exercise that is mired in inertia and indecision. Some researchers have found that the concentration of power, also referred to as a “hub-and-spoke” arrangement in which the “hub” coordinates

1 Provan and Milward (1995); Fried, Bruton, and Hisrich (1998); Powell, White, Koput, and Owen-Smith (2005).

2 Sampson and Graif (2009).

the activities of the “spokes,” is more efficient.<sup>3</sup> And yet, the CCN study found that this may not always be the case. For instance, in some networks where power is concentrated, a tightly knit cadre of political elites who are inaccessible may engender mistrust and political stalemate among members of the broader network. Hub-and-spoke network dynamics may not therefore serve community partnerships in some circumstances.<sup>4</sup>

The discussion in Chapter 2 about centrality, the relative power and influence of an organization in a network, does not explain the full picture of power or influence in a network as a whole. Some organizations, for instance, are connected to more powerful members, and some to less powerful. The power and influence of any one organization — whether it is a broker that bridges two organizations, or not — is thereby amplified, or at the very least affected by the nature of its ties to other organizations. In social network analysis, this broader measure of power distribution at the network level is known as centralization; it measures the degree to which power or influence is concentrated across a network of community organizations in a neighborhood.<sup>5</sup> It is the focus of this chapter.

## MEASURING CENTRALIZATION OVER TIME

Figure 5.1 illustrates two main ways of measuring centralization. One is by looking at the distribution of actors that broker one or more relationships within a network. The bottom panel of Figure 5.1 depicts a few organizations (in blue) that are the exclusive connectors to relatively peripheral organizations (in gray). This distribution of power has been associated with a greater ability to impact public policy because different constituencies must connect to decisionmakers in order to demonstrate the importance of an issue. Having a core set of organizations that act as brokers can help decisionmakers connect with disparate groups that might not otherwise interact. The third panel of Figure 5.1 depicts another way of understanding and measuring power distribution in a network in which well-connected organizations are tied to other well-connected organizations. This model of power distribution has been associated with a greater ability to implement projects, because it enables a more efficient coordination process than might prevail when power is more widely shared among more organizations. This report analyzes well-connected centralization scores from 2013 to 2016 in an effort to measure change in the distribution of potential power or influence among the Chicago neighborhoods under study. Understanding changes in the distribution of potential power or influence is important because these changes inform the ability of communities to implement projects, build trust in the community, or increase the reach of initiatives.

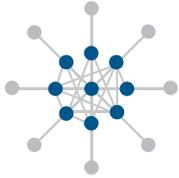
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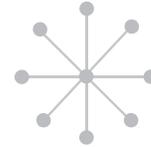
- 3 Provan and Milward (1995).
- 4 Greenberg et al. (2017).
- 5 Centrality, described in Chapter 2, relates to the position of individual organizations within the network. Centralization, in contrast, refers to how concentrated power or influence is within the network as a whole.

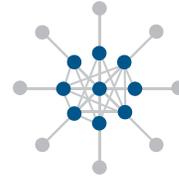
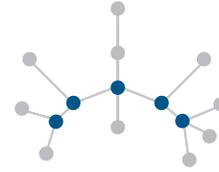
## Figure 5.1 Visualizing Centralization

CENTRALIZATION REFLECTS THE OVERALL CONCENTRATION OF POWER IN A NETWORK SYSTEM BY EITHER A SINGLE GROUP OR A SMALL NUMBER OF GROUPS. MEASURES OF CENTRALIZATION DESCRIBE THE HIERARCHY OF A NETWORK – THAT IS, WHETHER MANY OR JUST A FEW GROUPS ARE CENTRAL. THE FIGURES BELOW REFLECT DIFFERENT TYPES OF NETWORK CENTRALIZATION.

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TYPE OF NETWORK CENTRALIZATION	ILLUSTRATION
<p><b>Centralized Network</b></p> <p>One group or a small number of groups dominates connections</p> <p>.....</p> <p><b>Decentralized Network</b></p> <p>No single group dominates</p> <p>.....</p> <p><b>Well-connected (eigenvector) centralization</b></p> <p>A relatively tight network of well-connected actors (represented by the dark blue circles)</p> <p>.....</p> <p><b>Brokering or betweenness centralization</b></p> <p>A small number of organizations (represented by the dark blue circles) that are the exclusive connectors to relatively peripheral groups (represented by the light gray circles)</p>	      




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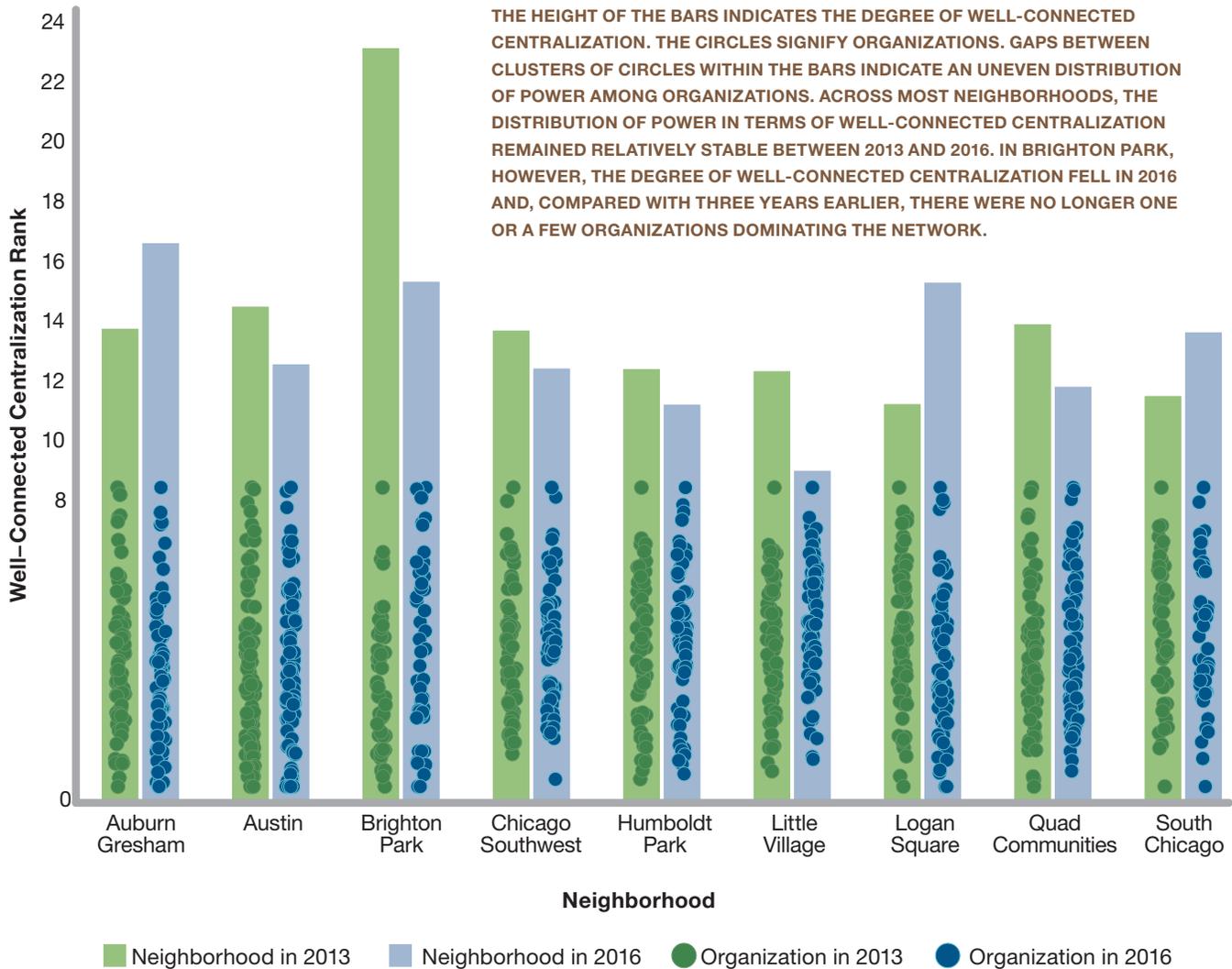
CCN analyses indicate that the distribution of power within each neighborhood was relatively stable for most of the three-year period of this study.<sup>6</sup> In Figure 5.2, the bars represent the centralization score for each neighborhood network. The figure suggests that the distribution of potential power throughout the networks under study generally remained unchanged. The circles within each bar in the figure represent all the organizations in a neighborhood relative to their position of potential power or influence in the network, with more powerful organizations at the top. Although Figure 5.2 indicates that the distribution of power is not static, it also suggests that the overall power structure of partnerships is less susceptible to change in the short term. The figure also suggests that networks tend to institutionalize existing power structures. This, in turn, informs general patterns of

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<sup>6</sup> Additional statistical tests are being conducted to determine the statistical significance of this finding.

Figure 5.2

## Changes to Centralization, or the Concentration of Power, in Neighborhood Networks



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data collected in the 2013 and 2016 Chicago Community Networks study surveys.

NOTES: In this figure, organization-level power is defined in terms of well-connectedness (eigenvector) centrality, while the concentration of power in a neighborhood is defined in terms of well-connectedness (eigenvector) centralization.

Each neighborhood's concentration of power is represented on two levels: The height of each bar represents the overall level of centralization of the neighborhood, using a measure that ranges from 0 to 100 (the full range is not shown); and the circles within each bar (each representing an organization) represent the distribution of organization-level well-connected centrality scores that underly the neighborhood's overall level of centralization. When organizations in a neighborhood all have similar centrality scores, power is not concentrated in any one organization, and the circles within a bar show few gaps between them. By contrast, when one organization in a neighborhood has a much higher centrality score than the others, its circle is plotted much higher on the axis, with a large gap between this organization and the rest. Furthermore, because well-connected power is now concentrated in this one organization, the overall level of centralization in the neighborhood is high.

hierarchy that may not be easy to disrupt in the short term. It may therefore take longer to change the norms and dynamics that shape the ways in which neighborhood organizations relate to each other.

During the three-year period of this study, the overall distribution of power generally remained stable within issue areas (results not shown). What follows are two examples from the field that illustrate how the concept of centralization has played out in the Chicago neighborhood networks under study.

**In Focus** *Auburn Gresham Gold Schools Thrive in a Well-Connected Network*

Auburn Gresham is a small, predominantly African-American neighborhood on the southwest side of Chicago. The neighborhood boasts a higher rate of homeownership than adjacent low-income communities, nice homes, and a stable population of older residents. Auburn Gresham has relatively few large and well-established organizations. The local alderman and the Catholic Parish of St. Sabina with its activist pastor have often played a critical role in collective community improvement efforts. There are also several grassroots efforts and community civic activities in the neighborhood.

Figure 5.3 depicts Auburn Gresham’s education network, where power appears to have become more concentrated in a tighter, interconnected network of organizations between 2013 and 2016. This is illustrated by a 2016 sociogram (a graphic representation of relationships) with more features of a hub-and-spoke model. This pattern suggests that a core group of well-connected organizations is surrounded by less connected or influential organizations that are peripheral to the network. As a result, the core group is in a greater position of potential influence since it can directly connect to other well-connected organizations as well as to peripheral ones. Auburn Gresham’s focus on educational collaboration, for which its funding was constant, may help explain the general stability in its overall distribution of power relative to the increase in well-connected centralization in the area of education.

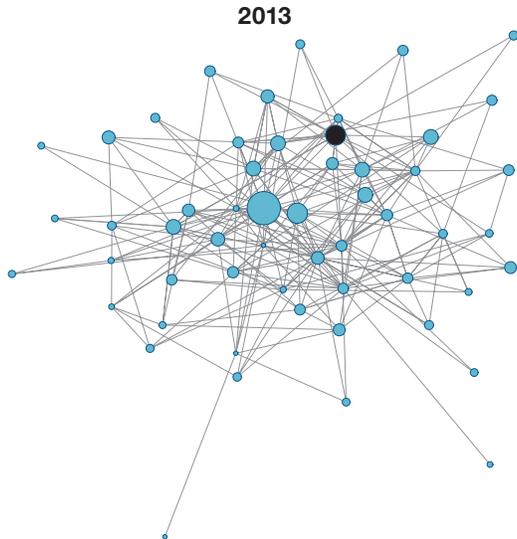
Building on its previous work on education,<sup>7</sup> the Greater Auburn Gresham Development Corporation (GAGDC) launched an Auburn Gresham Gold School’s initiative (AG Gold) around 2012. The AG Gold Schools initiative seeks to improve the academic outcomes for students by providing professional development to teachers in local schools, health supports for children, workforce development services for parents, and increased parent engagement. The initiative is a collaboration that is led by GAGDC. It includes local schools; Chicago Public Schools at the city and network level; a local charter school that houses a

7 GAGDC worked in collaboration with a charter school to implement the Elev8 program, an educational initiative of Atlantic Philanthropies that was intended to improve the achievements and life outcomes of low-income middle school students through four main components: (1) extended-day learning opportunities; (2) school-based health care; (3) social supports for students and families; and (4) parent, student, and community engagement.

Figure 5.3

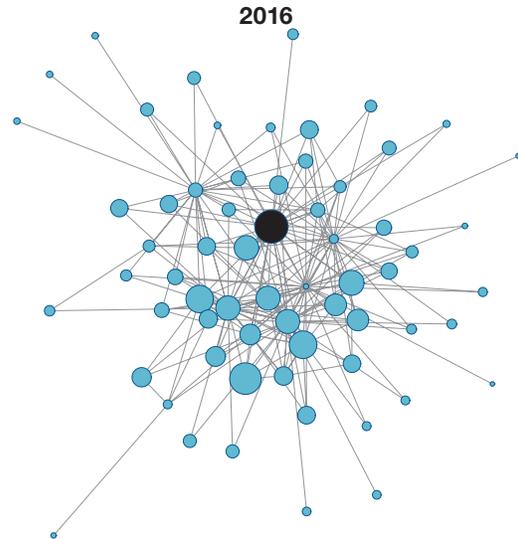
## Changes to Centralization, or the Concentration of Power, in the Education Domain

### Little Village Education Network



2013

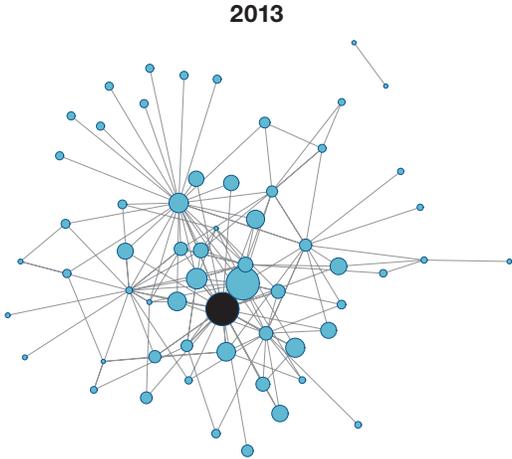
IN 2013, THERE WAS AN OVERALL HIGHER LEVEL OF CENTRALIZATION IN THE LITTLE VILLAGE EDUCATION NETWORK. THERE IS ONE ORGANIZATION THAT DOMINATES THE NETWORK.



2016

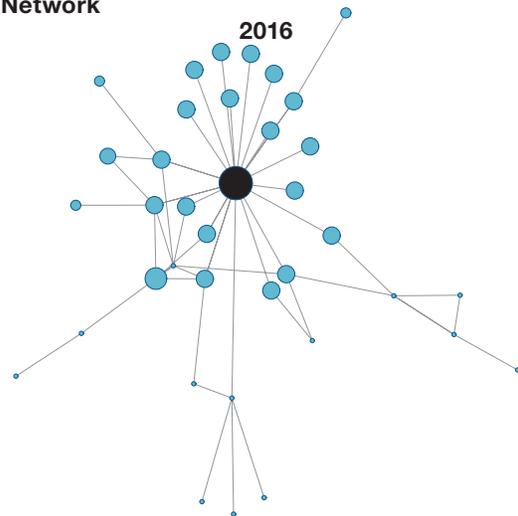
IN 2016, THERE IS AN OVERALL LOWER LEVEL OF CENTRALIZATION IN THE LITTLE VILLAGE EDUCATION NETWORK. THERE IS A CLUSTER OF SIMILARLY SIZED ORGANIZATIONS IN THE NETWORK, INDICATING LESS CENTRALIZATION OF POWER.

### Auburn Gresham Education Network



2013

IN 2013, THERE IS A SMALL CLUSTER OF ORGANIZATIONS, INDICATING LESS CONCENTRATION OF POWER.



2016

IN 2016, THERE WAS A MORE CENTRALIZED NETWORK, WITH THE POWER CONCENTRATED IN ONE ORGANIZATION.

● Lead agency    ● Neighborhood organization    — Partnership between two organizations

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data collected in the 2013 and 2016 Chicago Community Networks study surveys.

NOTES: Network graphs depict partnerships between organizations that were nominated by their partners as collaborators in each neighborhood in the 12 months preceding the fielding of the survey. Organizations are sized by relative well-connected (eigenvector) centrality scores. The lead agency in the neighborhood is pictured in black.

community health clinic; and community partners working on health, mental health, and workforce development. The initiative has been supported by private foundations such as the Kellogg Foundation and the McCormick Foundation. In 2016, GAGDC was invited to participate in the United Way's Neighborhood Network Initiative. The Auburn Gresham Gold School's initiative has received further financial support through this initiative. In early 2018, the AG Gold School's initiative was operating in five local schools and included paid staff at each school and after-school programming in most of the schools.

This influx of monies into an already well-funded collaboration may have had two effects on the overall education network. First, it increased the resources for schools and community organizations and kept this core group of implementation partners together during the three-year time frame of this study. As shown in Figure 5.1, this kind of well-connectedness is a concentrated form of potential power. Second, increased funds for the education network may have sparked additional interest in education, which might help increase the concentration of power in a few well-connected organizations that are seen as experts on the issue.

**In Focus** *Diffusing Power and Authority in an Educational Collaborative in Little Village*

Little Village is located on the west side of Chicago and is home to one of the largest Mexican communities in the Midwest. The neighborhood has many community organizations that collaborate across different areas of work. It has often been characterized as a neighborhood with high levels of trust among organizations. The current 22nd Ward alderman and his predecessor have played important roles in catalyzing and fostering collaboration in the neighborhood, particularly around issues of education and safety. In 2013, Enlace, an organization that once played the role of convener,<sup>8</sup> led a quality-of-life planning process in Little Village. The process involved some 80 neighborhood organizations and 650 residents. Education emerged as a key area of focus. In response, organizations in Little Village came together to create the Education Collaborative to implement the primary goal of the quality-of-life plan: Increase the educational level of all residents of Little Village. The Education Collaborative then created subcommittees that focus on four areas: early childhood education, elementary and middle school students, high school to postsecondary readiness, and adult education.

As of 2018, the Education Collaborative comprised between 30 and 40 member organizations, including representatives of the City College of Chicago, service providers, local schools, and community organizations. The Collaborative held regular meetings convened by Enlace where members coordinate work and ensure that their individual work is in line with the stated objectives and strategies of the quality-of-life plan. There is, however, not a single strategy or program that is shared by all organizations. Additionally, Enlace shifted its role over the

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8 Enlace was a lead agency under the New Communities Program.

years from convener to that of a member letting other organizations take over the leadership of a collaborative effort. As an interviewee suggested, “Enlace convenes the majority of the neighborhood coalitions, I think because it has the capacity to do this. In the past, we’ve sometimes started coalitions that seem to be needed, but pass to other organizations who have the capacity to lead that work.” Because Enlace passed along some of its initial convening role to other organizations, it probably helped to create an overall education network that does not concentrate power in one or a few organizations. Additionally, because the Collaborative does not adhere to a single or limited set of strategies, it might contribute to dispersing power across partners. The Chicago Community Networks study has shown that in Little Village, the distribution of power in the education network became even less concentrated from 2013 to 2016. The top of Figure 5.3 shows that, generally, there is not a single or small set of well-connected organizations that stands out in this neighborhood.

## **EMERGING THEMES**

The distribution of power in a network generally remains in place over time, according to the results from the Chicago Community Networks study. In the short term, this study suggests that the distribution of power in a community network is not prone to rapid change. Where there is change, however, it is in certain domains of work. The two case studies featured in this chapter suggest that the successful implementation of some concrete program activities, such as those in Auburn Gresham, might require structuring partnerships with a greater concentration of power. This concentration of power might not be necessary when the work involves more coordination on the part of partners, as is the case in Little Village.

CHAPTER  
6

## Conclusion

Community capacity-building has been a major goal of neighborhood initiatives for approximately 30 years. The Ford Foundation’s Neighborhood and Family Improvement Initiative, the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Making Connections Initiative, and Chicago’s New Communities Program all sought to develop the ability of neighborhood organizations to work together to improve the lives of their residents. A major component of community capacity is determined by patterns of collaboration among local organizations and between those organizations and powerful actors that may exist beyond the neighborhood.<sup>1</sup> This study of Chicago Community Networks (CCN) is based on two surveys of neighborhood organizations in 2013 and 2016; it is one of a few studies to quantitatively measure whether and how this dimension of community capacity changes over time.

The CCN surveys captured short-term changes to neighborhood networks over a three-year timespan. The timing of this study presented an opportunity to assess how organizational partners respond to funding and other challenges. During the CCN study, community organizations experienced stress related to state budget cuts that may have forced approximately 13 percent to permanently close. Study findings can therefore help identify the features of neighborhood networks that are more or less susceptible to change. This report has attempted to show how policy choices, especially those related to overall levels of funding and other factors such as the loss of affordable housing and community safety concerns, appear to shape the nature and form of community partnerships at the level of the entire neighborhood. This report also examines how neighborhood networks balance the need for flexibility to grow and evolve, with the need for stability to sustain partnerships and reap their full benefits. This concluding chapter summarizes the insights gleaned from this study and assesses how they may help strengthen or build community capacity in neighborhood networks.

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<sup>1</sup> Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, and Vidal (2001).

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Lead agencies can help community networks during challenging times.**

Many community development and other initiatives rely on lead agencies or conveners to help coordinate and manage collective efforts. In their role as conveners these organizations benefit from being well connected to other organizations in the neighborhood and can more easily coordinate efforts, facilitate information flows, and manage collective initiatives. The CCN study found that convening organizations tended to maintain or increase their place of prominence within their neighborhood network. That is, conveners were and continued to be well connected to other actors in the neighborhood.

For initiatives that rely on a convening or lead organization, this finding should be encouraging because it speaks to the ability of convening entities to maintain a level of stability that is essential for solidifying and growing partnerships over time. Also, convening organizations that maintain some level of prominence may be able to continue coordinating efforts when other organizations are consumed by challenges such as internal transitions in leadership, or budget cuts.

During the CCN study, many community organizations were under financial stress due to a budget impasse in the state of Illinois. During these challenging times, conveners can be particularly important for neighborhood networks because they can serve as a bridge to outside resources and may be able to take advantage of new funding opportunities.

- **New leaders can have a successful impact on neighborhood networks, but not without challenges.**

A question in the field is whether the capacity to convene and coordinate work in a network can be built from scratch.<sup>2</sup> Communities that coordinate efforts might be in a better position to share resources, distribute work among partners, and react effectively to sudden developments in their neighborhoods. Findings from the CCN study suggest that it is possible to support the growth of new community leadership in the short term. The case of Austin Coming Together (ACT) makes this point as the organization rose from relatively limited visibility in 2013 to become the most prominent actor in its network three years later as a well-connected organization. ACT attracted new funding to lead an inclusive planning process by which it established itself as a credible partner. Moreover, its rise to prominence took place at a time when other prominent organizations experienced leadership transitions. This example makes clear that it is possible to invest in an organization that can increase the capacity of the entire neighborhood by building new relationships among organizations and attracting new resources to the neighborhood.

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2 Greenberg et al. (2014).

But this approach is not without challenges. Supporting new leadership can be difficult when there are existing tensions among organizations. Past research suggests that convening organizations must navigate existing tensions within a community to successfully create new relationships.<sup>3</sup> In the case of Austin Coming Together, there was suspicion and criticism from well-established organizations even though ACT was intentionally inclusive during the planning processes that it led. The lesson from this example is that investments in new community leadership need to be carefully orchestrated to account for the necessary trust and buy-in from existing and established members of a network who may see a newcomer as a threat or as a naïve outsider.

- **Long-term investments might be necessary to alter how power or influence is distributed in a network.**

Although there were changes in individual community leadership roles during the CCN study, the overall distribution of power or influence in Chicago networks as a whole remained unchanged. During the three-year period of this study, there were no changes to any neighborhood network's concentration of power and influence among a few actors or among many organizations. This suggests that at a very broad level, the overall structure of neighborhood networks and their distribution of power or influence seem less prone to change in the short term.

Understanding the overall structure of neighborhood networks and how it might change over time is important because this is relevant to implementation outcomes. Scholars have suggested that networks that concentrate power or influence in a few actors are more effective because this structure facilitates the coordination and integration of community efforts to improve social outcomes.<sup>4</sup> When this structure is absent, it may take longer to either build it or create it by modifying existing distribution patterns of power or influence. Efforts to create particular governance structures may therefore require longer-term investments to develop relationships that can facilitate effective coordination.

- **Unsteady funding streams can hamper partnership building.**

The CCN study measured connectivity, or levels of partnership in Chicago neighborhoods in 2013 and 2016. It showed that these levels remained stable or declined in this three-year span. This report makes clear that funding streams that support the operation of community organizations continue to play an important role in determining neighborhood partnership levels. Although a significant number of CCN organizations closed during the study, the organizations that remained did not grow closer and develop more network partnerships as a result. This suggests that levels of partnership are particularly susceptible to change in the short term. According to CCN case studies, declines in levels of partnership might be related to state budget cuts that forced some organizations to decrease services, close

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3 Greenberg et al. (2014).

4 Greenberg et al. (2017); Provan and Milward (1995); Raab, Mannak, and Cambré (2013).

programs, or even to cease operations. The case of Logan Square illustrates that a decline in partnerships can lead to declines in service delivery or the diminished coordination of community improvement efforts.

Some studies suggest that maintaining levels of funding is a necessary although insufficient condition for ensuring the effectiveness of a network.<sup>5</sup> This study suggests that funding is important for maintaining levels of partnership in a network and that a more interconnected network can facilitate improved community efforts. Without adequate resources, organizations might have limited time to cultivate partnerships because staff must instead fundraise or administer existing programs. Reductions in funding can also lead to reductions in services and programs that might result in fewer opportunities for partnership and collaboration. Lower levels of network partnerships might indicate a reduced capacity for neighborhoods to come together to address community issues.

- **Networks that respond to changing circumstances may do so at the expense of collaboration on multiple issues (comprehensiveness).**

Over the three years of the CCN study, the number of partnerships that spanned several areas of work declined. In some cases, this decline in comprehensiveness was in response to neighborhood crises such as the loss of affordable housing or police brutality. This might speak to the ability of neighborhood networks to pivot and respond to a changing environment. That is, focusing on one area of work — as opposed to several areas of work — might simply be a response to changing priorities or a response to neighborhood crises. The resulting decline in levels of comprehensiveness captured by the CCN study might not be a detriment to community capacity. On the contrary, neighborhood networks demonstrated their flexibility by responding to changing circumstances. But this flexibility might come at the expense of comprehensiveness. Lower levels of comprehensiveness in community networks are not desirable to the extent that working across domains of work can help tackle complex issues facing neighborhoods.

Research suggests that when partnerships span different issues, they are more stable.<sup>6</sup> The reasoning is that if partnerships in one area of work come to an end, the relationship can continue in another area of work. The value of stability to community networks is that it engenders a greater level of commitment to a partnership and a heightened level of trust between partners.<sup>7</sup> As a result, declining levels of comprehensiveness can weaken the capacity of partnerships to strengthen their commitment to a network and build trust between each other.

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5 Raab, Mannak, and Cambré (2013).

6 Provan et al. (2003).

7 Provan et al. (2003).

## VALIDATING A DECADE OF RESEARCH

The CCN study demonstrates how social research can measure changes in networks of community organizations. This was not an evaluation of any one program or effort. It was a broader attempt to capture an operational profile of community partnerships that occur through both formally funded initiatives and informal collaborations. In particular, this study builds on a decade of MDRC fieldwork that examines community partnerships in Chicago neighborhoods.

The focus of MDRC's previous work was an assessment of the New Communities Program (NCP), a 10-year comprehensive community initiative supported by the MacArthur Foundation. NCP invested \$50 million in 14 Chicago neighborhoods to help local organizations work together to improve their communities. For the past 12 years, MDRC studied neighborhoods that were part of that initiative. MDRC's work documented how different neighborhoods came together to develop quality-of-life plans and followed neighborhoods as they implemented those plans. This work provided valuable insight into how to build organizational capacity to achieve collective goals. It also illustrated the added value of collaboration among network organizations and it showed how partnerships can leverage additional funds for community improvement efforts. MDRC's fieldwork also offered important lessons for neighborhood organizations seeking to build partnerships based on trust.<sup>8</sup> The CCN study takes this work one step forward by providing a means of quantitatively measuring some of the patterns of collaboration that MDRC previously documented. This report uses social network analysis and offers a new toolkit for assessing organizational relationships and how they develop and change over time and across neighborhoods.

In turn, the CCN study provides insights about change in various types of neighborhoods. For instance, in its previous work in Chicago, MDRC classified some neighborhoods as historically disinvested. The CCN study helps to measure partnership changes in these neighborhoods and compares them with neighborhoods that were not previously classified as historically disinvested. The CCN report suggests that patterns of change in networks, whether related to levels of connectivity or comprehensiveness, did not apply solely to disinvested neighborhoods. The implication is that although historically disinvested neighborhoods may face a unique set of economic challenges, other factors and processes that are unique to the nature of networks themselves may affect the patterns of organizational partnerships in these neighborhoods. Social network analysis thereby provides a quantitative way of assessing patterns of collaboration among community organizations.

The network changes documented in the CCN study between 2013 and 2016 occurred over a short span of time. The study sheds light on what aspects of networks are more or less prone to change in the short term. This insight can provide valuable lessons to funders and policymakers who are seeking to create or strengthen neighborhood partnerships that aim to improve the lives of their residents.

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<sup>8</sup> Greenberg et al. (2014).



# Appendix



## BACKGROUND

The two surveys conducted in 2013 and 2016 for the Chicago Community Networks (CCN) study gathered information about characteristics of over 300 organizations in nine Chicago neighborhoods. The CCN surveys also profiled the interactions between organizations and the strength of their relationships. The surveys are distinct from other network survey instruments given their attention to the intensity, quality, and nature of local partnerships. That is, the survey asked organizations to identify not just their relationships, but also the frequency of their interactions and the areas in which they worked together.

The research team actively engaged local practitioners in putting together the survey sample and neighborhood rosters, interpreting network survey findings, validating survey results, and determining the appropriate analyses for the network data. The team also conducted interviews to help validate survey findings and to develop cases of successful and unsuccessful cooperation that shed light on the importance of networks. They conducted over 80 post-survey interviews, showing network maps to participants as part of the protocol. These qualitative data built on several hundred interviews previously conducted through MDRC's study of the New Communities Program.

This appendix presents a description of the survey fielding efforts and documents data issues, decisions, and limitations. It also provides additional details on the analysis methods used in the report, including more specific measurement definitions and some sensitivity analyses, and provides more analytical details about some of the network findings in the final CCN report.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The CCN surveys queried different aspects of CCN organizations. They were designed to allow different staff members at each organization to address different parts of the survey as appropriate. The surveys collected information about organization characteristics (type or organization, size, budget, and activities); relationships with other organizations, including the intensity of those relationships; perceived influential organizations and people within a neighborhood; and self-assessed strengths and challenges.

The core of the analyses presented in the CCN reports are derived from survey responses to the relationship questions. Respondents identified their existing relationships with other neighborhood organizations and reported on the intensity of those relationships within different areas of work.

Intensity is defined by the level of interaction between organizations. Groups could say that they *communicated* with their partners within a specific area of work — generally indicating low levels of direct interaction that involve groups describing their work to each other

(for example, attending a meeting, having occasional phone calls, or exchanging emails). Alternatively, a local group could actively *coordinate* with a partner organization to target their advocacy efforts in consultation with the other group. Finally, they could *collaborate*, the highest level of interaction, by having regular meetings, dividing responsibilities, sharing formal or informal resources, or working together to assess progress.

In addition to questions about intensity, the survey asked whether the partner was a trusted contact to assess the quality of the relationship. Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with the following statement: “I trust this organization to fulfill their mission in a way that’s good for the community.” Answers were on a scale from 1 to 5 and ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The definition of trust allowed organizations to consider intent, priorities, and capacity when answering.

To explore how relationship patterns may differ by area of work, the surveys asked whether respondents communicated, coordinated, or collaborated in each of the following six areas of work: education; community well-being (including youth development, public health, and safety); housing and commercial real estate; public policy and organizing; public spaces, community image, and the arts; and economic and workforce development.

The surveys were administered online. The first survey was administered in 2013 and the second survey in 2016. Late in the fielding period during the first survey, a paper version of the survey was administered to increase response rates. The paper survey instrument included the same questions, but the sections were presented in a different order for logistical printing reasons. The second survey was administered entirely online. The questions on the two surveys were identical except for some wording adjustments on questions about areas of work.<sup>1</sup>

## **SAMPLE SELECTION AND SURVEY ADMINISTRATION**

The first CCN survey was administered in Chicago between February and October of 2013. This section of the appendix describes how the sample was selected, how it changed over the fielding period, and decisions the research team made to encourage survey responses and to target neighborhood organizations identified by field researchers as most likely to be involved in the areas of work pertaining to the survey.

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1 The 2013 survey asked organizations to estimate the percentage of time and resources allocated to different areas of work. The validation checks for respondent answers did not allow for entries that did not add up to 100 percent, which resulted in many missing responses. The 2016 survey was simplified to only capture information about an organization’s primary area of work.

## Selecting the Sample

The first CCN report describes the nine Chicago neighborhoods that are a part of this study.<sup>2</sup> For both CCN surveys, MDRC worked with field researchers in Chicago and lead agency staff throughout the Chicago neighborhoods under study to construct a list of their local and citywide partner organizations. The initial list was compiled from in-depth research on these neighborhoods and included organizations that may or may not have directly partnered with the lead agency. The fielded survey sample only included local organizations from the initial list.<sup>3</sup> The survey also listed a roster of all the local and citywide organizations that were identified in the initial organization list identifying relationships across the network.

In the first survey, the complete roster included 613 organizations.<sup>4</sup> Survey fielding was launched in February of 2013 with an initial fielded sample of 393 organizations. The first survey employed one round of sample snowballing, which means that after some data were collected, MDRC researchers investigated the responses to the organizational relationships' section of the survey and added organizations to the sample and to the organizational roster based on those responses. If a respondent listed an interaction with an organization that was not on the original roster, the organization was either added to both the sample and the roster, or just to the roster if it was not a local organization, in April of 2013.

In the second survey, the complete roster included 612 organizations. Survey fielding was launched on April 21, 2016, with a fielded sample of 315 organizations. The second survey did not employ a round of snowballing, so the fielded sample and roster did not change during survey fielding in the 2016 survey.

## Fielding the Surveys

The first survey launched online in February of 2013. A link to the survey was emailed to staff identified as the organization's main contact. They could either complete or forward the survey to another staff person to complete. After six weeks of data collection, in April of 2013, MDRC used survey responses to reassess the initial fielded sample to determine whether to add organizations to the roster list for use in the organizational relationships' section of the survey. Organizations were added to the roster if a respondent wrote in an organization that was not on the original roster. In April and May of 2013, a total of 89

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<sup>2</sup> Greenberg et al. (2017).

<sup>3</sup> For example, researchers would not have included "Chicago Public Schools (CPS)" in the fielded survey sample but would have listed it on the organization roster if research partners and lead agency staff had indicated that CPS has partnerships in the neighborhood. However, specific CPS schools in the neighborhood with community partnerships would have been fielded.

<sup>4</sup> Some local organizations are listed on the rosters for multiple nearby neighborhoods. For example, Bickerdike and Logan Square share a border, so many organizations work with partners across both neighborhoods. The analyses presented in the first report also included 883 additional write-in partners that were not on the neighborhood roster.

organizations were added to the roster (75 in April, 14 in May), including the 9 lead agencies, which were inadvertently left off of the original roster list. In addition, 36 organizations were added to the sample in April, and 23 organizations were culled from the sample in May.

During the summer of 2013, MDRC undertook two activities to focus the survey effort. First, MDRC culled the sample based on organizational capacity and purpose and on organizational resources. Organizations that had three or fewer incoming connections at that point of the fielding period (that is, three or fewer survey respondents indicated having an interaction with the organization) and indicated low capacity (as determined by whether an organization was a 501(c)3 organization with a 990 form) and few financial resources (as determined by total assets, revenues, and expenditures) were culled from the sample. A total of 23 organizations were removed from the sample after May.

Second, MDRC added a field component to the survey effort, sending field researchers out with paper versions of the survey, as well as mailing out paper survey instruments to the remaining fielded sample. From July through September of 2013, surveys were administered using both online and paper modes. Lead agency staff also helped reach out to their partner organizations to encourage survey responses. The sample included 276 respondent organizations.

The second survey fielding effort was much more straightforward. MDRC researchers and staff at the lead agencies collaborated with the survey firm to encourage organizational partners to respond to the survey, despite citywide funding reductions and staff turnover. The survey was fielded to 315 organizations. Survey fielding ended in December 2016, with 229 organizations, or about 72 percent of the organizations in the fielded sample, responding to the survey. During and after the fielding period, 35 organizations were discovered to have closed or moved. Respondent organizations made up 82 percent of the remaining 280 organizations.

A total of 174 organizations were respondents in both the first and second surveys, which accounts for 55 percent of fielded organizations in the second survey and 63 percent of respondent organizations in the first survey.

## **MISSING DATA AND DATA IMPUTATION DECISIONS**

Although most of the survey questions had an adequate number of responses, some items had large amounts of missing responses. In particular, the first survey response file was missing data for over 40 percent of the respondents on the budget amounts for fiscal years 2011 and 2012, and over 15 percent of the file was missing data on the organization's founding year, primarily because the respondents did not know the answers to these questions. Additionally, because organizations were added to the survey roster during the fielding period, respondents who completed the survey early were not explicitly asked about their interactions with the organizations that were added in April or May. As a result, if the re-

spondent did not write in one of these organizations, information about the relationship between the responding organization and the later-added organizations is unknown.

The second survey response file was missing data for 45 percent of the respondents on the budget amounts for fiscal years 2014 and 2015. Over 13 percent of the respondents were missing data on the organization's founding year.

MDRC researchers used a number of different methods to reasonably impute missing data so that all survey respondents could be included in the social network analysis. With the exception of the missing organizational connections and strength of connections described below, data were imputed in the same way for both rounds of the survey.

### **Imputing Missing Organization Founding Year Information**

For respondents with missing data on their organizations' founding years, MDRC researchers were able to retrieve data from publicly available sources (for example, the organization's website) for about half of the missing responses.

### **Imputing Missing Budget Information and Other Missing Data**

MDRC used multiple imputation analysis to deal with the remaining cases of an organization's founding year and an organization's budget. Multiple imputation assumes that the missing data among the survey respondents are missing at random; that is, no one grouping of survey respondents is systematically missing more or less data than any other group. If missing data are not missing at random, survey results may be biased. (For example, if respondents from organizations with large budgets were more likely to skip the organizational budget questions than organizations with small budgets, the measures of capacity within the network might be biased.)

In the first stage of this analysis, multiple imputation produced five full datasets (see the "Methods of Analysis" section below for more details) with non-missing data in the following way:

- A joint multivariate normal distribution and no monotone missing pattern, allowing for the assumption that the data were missing at random.
- A "data augmentation" algorithm (belonging to the family of Markov Chain Monte Carlo procedures), which imputed data by conditioning the missing data on non-missing related data. As a simplified example, larger budgets were imputed for organizations with larger numbers of paid employees.

## Imputing Data for Missing Organizational Connections

For the organizations that were added to the survey sample and the roster during the fielding period in the first survey,<sup>5</sup> imputing organizational interactions and strengths of relationships are susceptible to data error. Assuming a respondent had no interaction with an organization that was added later may yield an underestimate of all the aspects of network structure discussed in this report. Assuming an interaction is likely to result in an overestimate. Researchers also considered assuming a reciprocal connection to organizations in which respondents indicated an existing connection, but this would also result in an overestimate of a network's ability to connect and collaborate. Similarly, assuming similar reciprocal relationship strength may not be accurate.

MDRC decided to assume connections only to responses about lead agencies, which were added to the roster in May. For any organization where lead agencies indicated a connection to the organization, the organization was assumed to have a reciprocal connection and strength of connection to the lead agency if they had responded to the survey before the lead agencies were added to the roster. Although this may slightly underestimate the measures of network structure this report considers, it is not unreasonable to conclude that these assumptions would have only affected weak relationships or infrequent contact. It is likely that in an organization with strong relationships or frequent interactions with an unlisted organization, the respondent would have written in and rated a connection with the unlisted organization. However, the findings require some caution, since organizations with whom lead agencies claimed to have strong ties did not consistently write in the lead agency as an additional organization in their responses.

Organizations that did not provide survey responses were assumed to have no outgoing connections.

## METHODS OF ANALYSIS

The analysis methods that produced the report findings are provided in the first CCN report.<sup>6</sup> This section provides additional details on network definitions, as well as some variations of analyses that were performed as sensitivity tests to confirm the findings in the report.

The report estimates density, organizational prominence (measured as standardized betweenness and eigenvector centrality scores), network power (measured as betweenness and eigenvector centralization), trust, and comprehensiveness (multiplexity) using the following conditions:

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<sup>5</sup> No organizational partnerships or strengths of partnerships were imputed for the second survey, which did not undergo a round of snowballing and did not erroneously leave the lead agencies off the roster when survey fielding began.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 2 in Greenberg et al. (2017).

- In the first CCN report, a connection for a particular area of work is defined as a relationship at the coordination or collaboration level, based on how respondents ranked the interaction with a roster organization. Respondents rated the strengths of their relationships in specific areas of work according to these categories:
  - **No interaction**
  - **Communication.** *Low levels of direct interaction.* Attended meetings where this group described their work, or your organization described work to this group. Occasional phone calls or emails.
  - **Coordination.** *Medium levels of direct interaction.* Target your efforts in consultation with this group, where you both direct your projects to best serve community interests.
  - **Collaboration.** *Highest level of interaction.* Meet or speak regularly. Partners who may divide up responsibilities, share formal or informal resources, and/or work together to assess progress.

In analyses relevant to specific areas of work, the final report examined only connections at the collaboration level when examining whether neighborhood networks changed over time.

- In the first CCN report, if organizations wrote in a partner organization that was not listed on the roster, these organizations were included in the network analysis, regardless of the variation between the number of organizations added in each neighborhood. In the final report, these “write-in” organizations are excluded from the analyses for the purposes of comparing network statistics over time.
- Both local neighborhood and citywide organizations were included in the network analysis.
- Organizations with no reported connections are isolates. Isolates were included for some network calculations such as density, but necessarily excluded for measures of centrality and centralization.

The research team conducted sensitivity analyses to make sure that the network measures did not substantially change by including or excluding data points. The team recalculated the network measures listed above by:

- Including only the collaboration connections for areas of work networks
- Excluding all organizations that were not listed on the roster (or write-ins)
- Excluding nonlocal organizations
- Excluding isolates who did not list a particular domain as their primary area of work
- Excluding write-ins, non-local organizations, and isolates

Because the statistics for the overall Chicago network (all neighborhoods combined) did not substantially change with these exclusions, this report does not examine results specific to differences in the above lists across neighborhoods.

The CCN reports examine some network measures to describe connectivity, hierarchy, trust, and comprehensiveness, as defined in the first report, as well as online.<sup>7</sup>

Measures of connectivity (density), prominence (brokering and well-connected centrality),<sup>8</sup> and distribution of power (brokering and well-connected centralization) were analyzed by neighborhood and by domains of work. Trust and comprehensiveness (multiplexity) were analyzed by neighborhood. Measures of organizational prominence were standardized or rescaled such that their largest value in the neighborhood network is always one, to allow for comparability across neighborhoods and across time.

In this final CCN report, network change is described using a mix of survey data from both survey rounds and qualitative data collected from field visits. The report describes changes in organizational prominence (measured by well-connected centrality), connectivity, comprehensiveness, and power (measured by well-connected centralization). Well-connected centrality and centralization, rather than brokering centrality and centralization, were used to look at changes across time, because the brokering measures, which reflect the extent to which an organization is the sole connector of other groups, can be especially sensitive to single organizations dropping out or joining networks, compared with the well-connectedness measures, which reflect connections of organizations to other well-connected organizations.

To assess whether measured differences in network characteristics within neighborhoods are statistically significant, two-sample t-tests with empirical p-values from random permutations were conducted. The same test was also applied for organizational-level analyses conducted among survey respondents across all neighborhoods. It is necessary to use random permutation to calculate the p-values because network measures such as the standardized well-connected centrality score are not independently distributed — every organization's centrality score depends on the centrality scores of the other organizations in the network.

Although statistical tests were performed to establish confidence in changes that occurred across time in the nine Chicago neighborhoods, interpretation of these results still requires

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7 Greenberg et al. (2017). Network measures of hierarchy, including betweenness (brokering) and eigenvector (well-connected) centrality are also defined and explained at <https://www.mdrc.org/chicago-community-networks-study/introduction-social-network-analysis>. More details about brokering and well-connected centrality can be found at <https://www.mdrc.org/chicago-community-networks-study/power-community-networks>, and comprehensiveness (multiplexity) is described in more detail at <https://www.mdrc.org/chicago-community-networks/comprehensiveness-in-community-partnerships>.

8 The technical term for brokering centrality is betweenness centrality. Well-connected centrality refers to eigenvector centrality.

caution; as described earlier, just 75 percent of the second survey respondents were also first survey respondents, so organizational characteristics are potentially biased. However, a descriptive analysis of the respondent organizations, combined with in-depth qualitative data collected over the last decade, provide rich information on network adaptability and resilience in Chicago.

## **SUPPLEMENTAL FINDINGS ON NETWORK CHANGES OVER TIME**

### **Strains in Neighborhood Leadership and Organizational Closures**

Survey responses provide information about characteristics associated with whether an organization remained open after 2013. As discussed earlier, the inferences from this analysis are limited, since respondents are likely to have more capacity (including capacity to respond to the survey) and more partnerships than nonrespondents. Appendix Table A.1 presents characteristics of organizations that responded to the survey in 2013, by whether they were still operating in 2016. As expected, organizations that remained open had larger budgets and more paid staff in 2013. Almost half of the organizations that closed in 2016 reported having annual budgets of less than \$500,000 in 2013, compared with a third of those that remained open. Most organizations worked with a mixture of funding sources; organizations that relied on corporate and foundation grants in 2013 may have been more vulnerable to closing than organizations that received funding from other sources. Yet almost a fifth of the organizations that closed in 2016 were government agencies (compared with less than a tenth of the organizations that remained open).

Appendix Table A.1 also compares organizations' relative prominence rank in their neighborhoods with whether they were open or closed in 2016. It shows that, on average, organizations that remained open in 2016 were less prominent in 2013 than organizations that were closed in 2016. (A rank of 1 is the highest rank.) This may be a result of state funding cuts affecting a handful of prominent organizations. State funding can help an organization's visibility and support its ability to partner with others, but may also make it more vulnerable to the kinds of cutbacks that occurred in 2015.

### **Detecting Meaningful Patterns in Organizational Prominence Over Time**

Chapter 2 of this final CCN report describes patterns of organizational prominence between 2013 and 2016. This section of the Appendix provides additional details about the analyses that were performed to validate the team's overall finding that organizations that were prominent in 2013 also tended to be prominent in 2016.

## Appendix Table A.1

### Characteristics of Respondent Organizations in 2013, by Survival Status in 2016

Characteristic	Open in 2016	Closed in 2016	P-Value
Prominence (well-connected centrality) percentile rank in network	43.2	34.1	0.053 *
Budget (millions of dollars)	2.3	1.8	0.988
Less than \$500,000 (%)	37.6	42.1	0.717
\$500,000-\$999,999 (%)	10.1	15.8	0.529
\$1 - \$3 million (%)	22.8	15.8	0.455
More than \$3 million (%)	29.5	26.3	0.773
Funding source (%)			
Government	78.6	83.3	0.573
Corporate / foundation grants	63.2	79.2	0.092 *
Membership or direct donations	59.7	58.3	0.903
Number of paid staff	56	47	0.643
Number of strengths	4.1	4.2	0.225
Number of challenges	1.8	1.8	0.624
Age (years)	37.9	38.0	0.498
Number of domains with partnerships (comprehensiveness)	2.28	2.35	0.355
Government agency (%)	8.5	18.8	0.165
Public school (%)	18.3	11.4	0.261
Hospital (%)	2.1	2.9	0.796
Organizations represented	241	35	

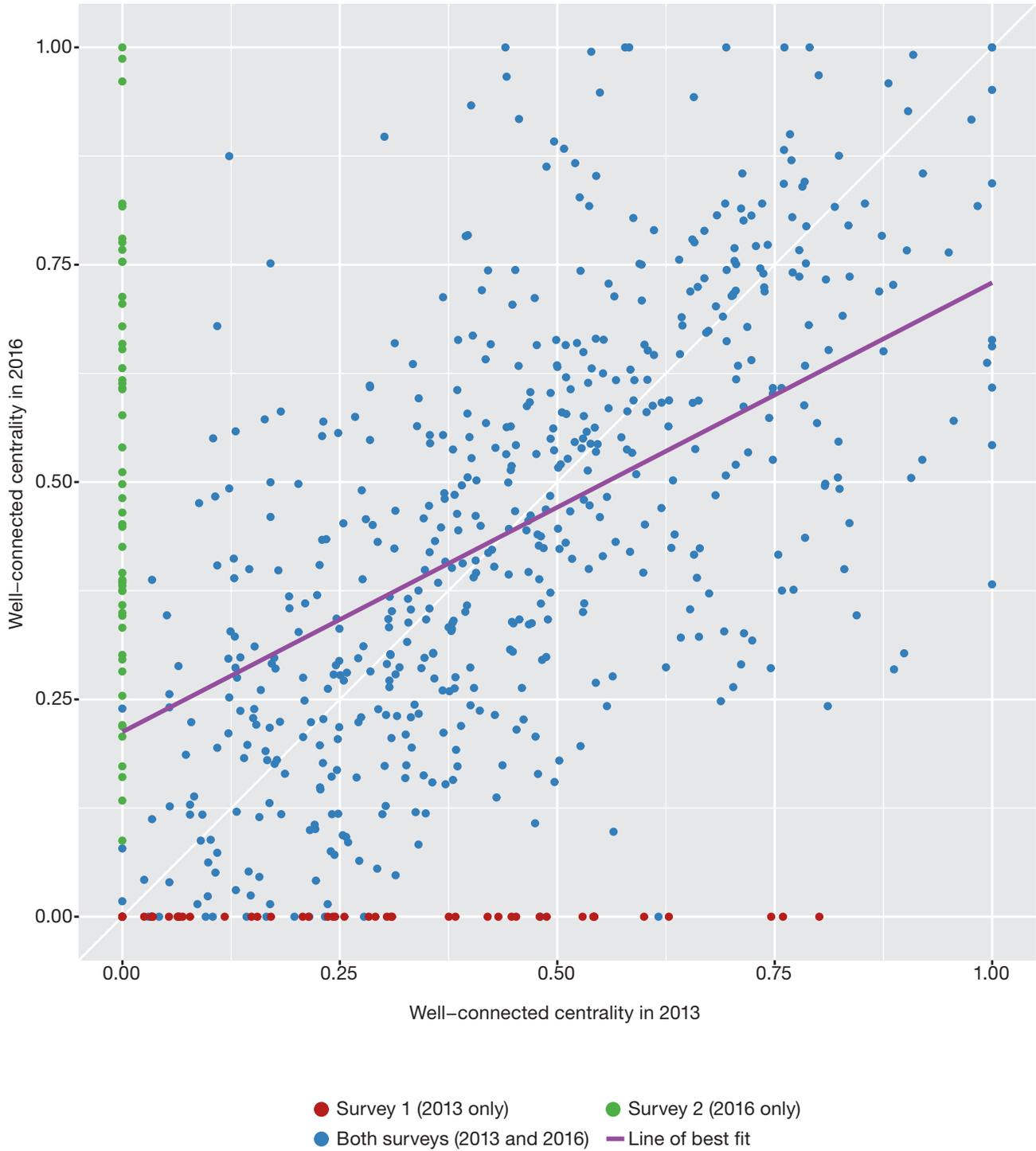
SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data collected in the 2013 and 2016 Chicago Community Networks study surveys.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: \*\*\* = 1 percent; \*\* = 5 percent; \* = 10 percent. Two-sample t-tests with empirical p-values from random permutations were conducted.

The results of a correlation analysis are presented in Appendix Figure A.1, which shows organizational prominence, as measured by well-connected centrality, in 2013 on the x-axis and prominence in 2016 on the y-axis. The Pearson's *r* statistic (Appendix Table A.2) was then used to inform the strength of these correlations. The analyses pooled the organizations in all nine neighborhoods together, and then examined each neighborhood separately (Appendix Figure A.2).

## Appendix Figure A.1

### Well-Connected Centrality in 2016 versus 2013, All Organizations



## Appendix Table A.2

### Pearson Correlation Coefficient of Prominence Over Time

Neighborhood	Pearson's r	Degrees of freedom
All neighborhoods	0.653	560
Auburn Gresham	0.758	73
Austin	0.653	77
Brighton Park	0.540	47
Chicago Southwest	0.748	57
Humboldt Park	0.609	61
Little Village	0.710	62
Logan Square	0.597	62
Quad Communities	0.709	61
South Chicago	0.715	44

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on data collected in the 2013 and 2016 Chicago Community Networks study surveys.

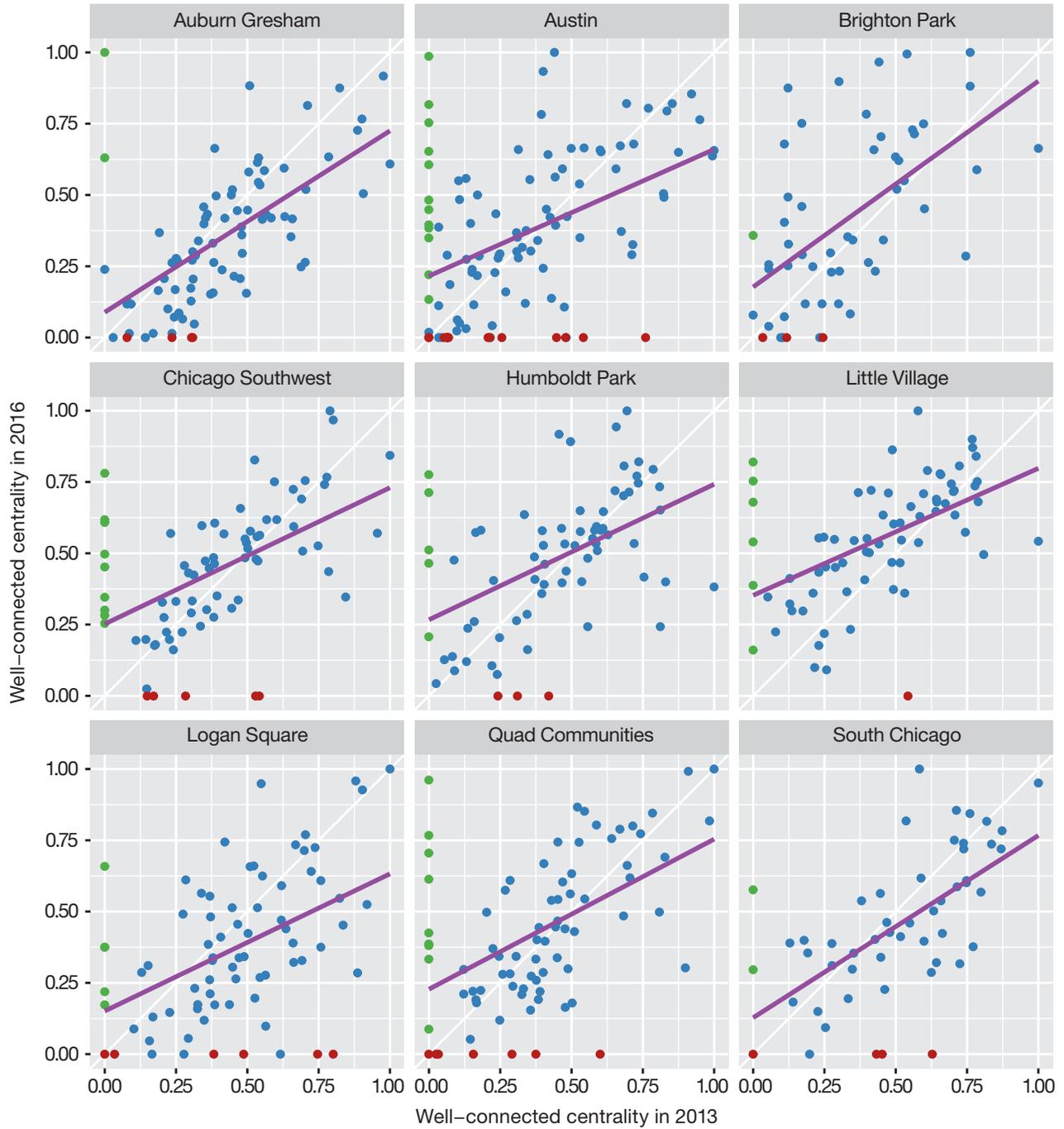
Chapter 2 discussed an overall positive association between organizational prominence in 2013 and in 2016. That is, organizations that were more prominent in 2013 also tended to be more prominent in 2016 (and vice versa). Variation exists, however, and the relationship is not perfect.

Appendix Figure A.1 is a visual representation of this correlational finding; it shows all organizations' well-connected centrality scores in the nine CCN neighborhoods. The blue dots represent organizations that were on rosters for both the 2013 and 2016 surveys. Red dots are organizations that were on the neighborhood rosters only in the 2013 survey, and green dots are organizations that were on the rosters only in the 2016 survey. The few blue dots on the x-axis represent organizations that were on the rosters in both surveys but were not nominated as partners in 2016, so they had a well-connected centrality score of zero. Similarly, the blue dots on the y-axis are organizations that were not nominated as partners in 2013. If all the dots fell perfectly along the best fit line, this would represent a perfect positive correlation (and a Pearson's  $r$  value of 1). On the other hand, if the dots formed more of a cloud-like shape around the line, this would indicate many outliers and a less stable association of prominence between the three years.

This figure shows a pattern that falls in-between the two extremes. Appendix Table A.2 indicates a Pearson's  $r$  of 0.65 for all neighborhoods, indicating a moderately strong correlation.

## Appendix Figure A.2

### Well-Connected Centrality in 2016 versus 2013, All Organizations, by Neighborhood



- Survey 1 (2013 only)
- Survey 2 (2016 only)
- Both surveys (2013 and 2016)
- Line of best fit

Neighborhood level analyses, as demonstrated in Appendix Figure A.2, generally show the same positive association, with Auburn Gresham and Chicago Southwest exhibiting the strongest positive association of organizational prominence over time, and the organizations in Logan Square and Brighton Park exhibiting slightly more variation in prominence over time than organizations in the other neighborhoods.

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# Earlier MDRC Publications on the Chicago Community Networks Study

## ***How Communities Work Together:***

*Learning from the Chicago Community Networks Study*

**2018-2019.** Website: <https://www.mdrc.org/chicago-community-networks-study>.

## ***Network Effectiveness in Neighborhood Collaborations:***

*Learning from the Chicago Community Networks Study*

**2017.** David M. Greenberg, Aurelia De La Rosa Aceves, Mikael Karlström, Stephen Nuñez, M. Victoria Quiroz-Becerra, Sarah Schell, Edith Yang, and Audrey Yu.

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NOTE: A complete publications list is available from MDRC and on its website ([www.mdrc.org](http://www.mdrc.org)), from which copies of reports can also be downloaded.

# ABOUT MDRC

**MDRC IS A NONPROFIT, NONPARTISAN SOCIAL AND EDUCATION POLICY RESEARCH ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO** learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. Through its research and the active communication of its findings, MDRC seeks to enhance the effectiveness of social and education policies and programs.

Founded in 1974 and located in New York; Oakland, California; Washington, DC; and Los Angeles, MDRC is best known for mounting rigorous, large-scale, real-world tests of new and existing policies and programs. Its projects are a mix of demonstrations (field tests of promising new program approaches) and evaluations of ongoing government and community initiatives. MDRC's staff members bring an unusual combination of research and organizational experience to their work, providing expertise on the latest in qualitative and quantitative methods and on program design, development, implementation, and management. MDRC seeks to learn not just whether a program is effective but also how and why the program's effects occur. In addition, it tries to place each project's findings in the broader context of related research — in order to build knowledge about what works across the social and education policy fields. MDRC's findings, lessons, and best practices are shared with a broad audience in the policy and practitioner community as well as with the general public and the media.

Over the years, MDRC has brought its unique approach to an ever-growing range of policy areas and target populations. Once known primarily for evaluations of state welfare-to-work programs, today MDRC is also studying public school reforms, employment programs for ex-prisoners, and programs to help low-income students succeed in college. MDRC's projects are organized into five areas:

- Promoting Family Well-Being and Children's Development
- Improving Public Education
- Raising Academic Achievement and Persistence in College
- Supporting Low-Wage Workers and Communities
- Overcoming Barriers to Employment

Working in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada and the United Kingdom, MDRC conducts its projects in partnership with national, state, and local governments, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.