



Social Impact of
the Arts Project

University of Pennsylvania
School of Social Work

**Re-presenting the City: Arts, Culture, and Diversity
in Philadelphia**

Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Seifert

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Diversity is an essential feature of urbanism. Since 1994, the Social Impact of the Arts Project of the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work has sought to understand the ways that arts and cultural institutions in Philadelphia's neighborhoods contribute to the city's social fabric. A central theme of this work is the critical way in which urban diversity and cultural engagement support one another.

In 1938 when Louis Wirth wrote his classic essay on “Urbanism as a Way of Life,” heterogeneity--along with size and density--defined urbanity. For Wirth, heterogeneity had wide-ranging, and often contradictory, impacts on the behavior of urban dwellers. “Social interaction among such a variety of personality types” tended to “break down the rigidity of caste lines.” Diversity, thus, led city dwellers toward an “acceptance of instability and insecurity” that manifested itself in a distinct personality type, what Wirth called the “sophistication and cosmopolitanism of the urbanite.”¹

The heterogeneity of the population also had implications for identity and social organization. According to Wirth, urbanites do not have a single identity that is reinforced in all aspects of their lives. On the contrary, “[b]y virtue of his (sic) different interests arising out of different aspects of social life,” the individual acquires a set of disparate and often competing identities which are often “tangential to each other or intersect in highly variable fashion.”

¹ Louis Wirth, “Urbanism as a Way of Life,” *American Journal of Sociology* 44 (July 1938): 1-24.

Urbanism and heterogeneity feed off two contradictory impulses. Depersonalization and anonymity often threaten the stimulation of diversity; the unlimited opportunities of the city are countered by the risks of predatory and manipulative behavior. "Cities . . . comprise a motley of peoples and cultures of highly differentiated modes of life between which there often is only the faintest communication, the greatest indifference, the broadest tolerance, occasionally bitter strife, but always the sharpest contrasts."

In his essay, Wirth pointed to several aspects of city life that are very much on the minds of contemporary opinion makers. On the one hand, Wirth saw heterogeneity and tolerance as essential to urban life. At the same time, he underlined the problems of social organization and the role of social institutions in making the city's instability and insecurity acceptable.

At the end of the twentieth century, social institutions and heterogeneity remain important concerns, but their meaning and implications have undergone significant changes. Diversity and tolerance are even more prominent as issues today than they were six decades ago. However, in contemporary usage these concepts are less likely to acknowledge race or ethnicity as just one of many "membership[s] in widely divergent groups" that individuals acquire.

In this context, diversity takes on an entirely different meaning. Rather than representing tensions within an individual's identity, diversity happens at the borders of ethnic and racially homogeneous communities. Two decades ago, Ira Katznelson spoke of the "city trenches" upon which the racial battles of the 1960s and 1970s had been

fought. Today, diversity is seen more often as an armistice along still existing trenches rather than a breaching of them.²

Ethnic and economic segregation continues to define contemporary representations of the city. Sociologists and geographers have made a strong case that segregation has persisted over the past two decades.³ Certainly, in a city like Philadelphia, the level of economic and ethnic segregation still gives credence to the "city trenches" view of urban space.

The persistence of "city trenches" has implications for the contemporary interest in civic engagement. In recent years, a number of scholars have pointed to community mobilization as an important revitalization strategy. Yet, if we see strong geographical communities as a solution to many urban ills and at the same time accept their ethnic and economic homogeneity, are we not, to some extent, calling for a reinforcement rather than an abolition of city trenches? If cities simply remain aggregates of ethnically and economically homogeneous neighborhoods, won't strengthened communities preserve segregation?

Beyond "city trenches"

In this paper, we examine the links between civic engagement and ethnic and economic diversity in Philadelphia by analyzing the relationship of the geography of civic and community organizations to their socio-economic context. Specifically, we argue that arts and cultural organizations and engagement do not parallel divisions of

² Ira Katznelson, *City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

³ Douglas Massey, for example, first in *American Apartheid* (co-authored with Nancy Denton) and then in his recent presidential address to the American Population Association, has argued that residential segregation along ethnic and class lines is stronger than ever, not only in the United

race and social class; rather, they tend to concentrate in neighborhoods that are ethnically and economically diverse. Thus, arts and cultural organizations provide an opportunity to avoid the contradiction between support of community institutions and the reinforcement of segregation that baffles many contemporary urban theorists.

More broadly, the findings suggest that, at the same time that we acknowledge the dominant tendency toward increased segregation, we need to recognize the extent to which there are *zones of diversity* within the geography of segregation. We could view diverse areas of the city as “no man’s lands” within a landscape of trenches. However, we propose an alternative. These zones of diversity are the *focus* of another view of the city, one in which heterogeneity is central to urban geography. Diverse neighborhoods and the social institutions that serve them provide an avenue for moving beyond the urban impasse, for reconciling our beliefs in community and cosmopolitanism.

Cultural policy and urban policy cannot afford to ignore the connections between diversity and cultural engagement. Arts and cultural institutions and engagement give identity to diverse urban neighborhoods. Community arts and cultural institutions are among the most prominent and numerous organizations in these neighborhoods. At the same time, diverse neighborhoods furnish a large part of the audience that supports regional and community cultural institutions. Finally, diverse neighborhoods with high levels of cultural engagement are often the engine of economic revitalization for urban communities.

Certainly, a different image of the urban life will not change the facts of poverty, conflict, and despair that characterize contemporary cities. However, as we seek to

States, but internationally. Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid:*

transform those realities, an effort to “re-present” the city with a focus on strengthening the neighborhoods and institutions that foster integration and diversity may point us in a more promising direction.

This paper grows out of our broader study of the connections between arts and cultural organizations, other types of community institutions, and the socio-economic context in which they operate. We wanted to find out:

- Where are arts and cultural organizations located in metropolitan Philadelphia?
- How is the geographical pattern of arts and culture compared to that of other types of social institutions?
- What neighborhood characteristics are related to the presence of arts and cultural and other types of social institutions? To what extent is the presence of particular types of institutions associated with the economic and ethnic diversity of a neighborhood?
- Do diversity and the presence of neighborhood cultural organizations influence regional cultural participation?

Measuring diversity

We used four data sources to answer these questions: (1) the United States census tabulations for block groups in Philadelphia metropolitan region; (2) an “arts and culture data base,” developed by the Social Impact of the Arts Project, on nonprofit arts and cultural organizations within the metropolitan area; (3) a regional inventory of

Segregation and the Making of the Underclass (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

other types of community and social institutions: (4) a data base on levels of regional and community cultural participation in Philadelphia's census block groups.⁴

We used the census data to define two dimensions of neighborhood diversity.

- **Economic diversity** was measured using data on poverty and the percent of the working population in professional and managerial occupations. A block group was defined as economically diverse if it had a *poverty rate* higher than the median for the city of Philadelphia's block groups (17 percent) *and* if the proportion of the civilian labor force in *professional and managerial occupations* was above the median for the city's block groups (19 percent).
- **Ethnic diversity** was measured by examining the representation of African-Americans, whites, Latinos, and Asians within the block group. A block group was identified as homogeneous black or white if more than 80 percent of the residents were of that race. A Latino block group was one in which more than 40 percent of the residents were so identified. The remainder of the city was considered ethnically diverse.⁵

Tracking voluntary organizations

The arts and culture data base consists of a compilation of all known arts organizations in the five-county region (Southeastern Pennsylvania). The core of the

⁴ The block group consists of an aggregation of approximately six to eight (6-8) city blocks. The five Pennsylvania counties of metropolitan Philadelphia include approximately 3,600 block groups, about half of which are within the city of Philadelphia. For more details on the data, see Social Impact of the Arts Project, *Report to the William Penn Foundation* (April 1998) and the SIAP website: <http://www.ssw.upenn.edu/SIAP>.

⁵ These diverse block groups were subdivided into those that were black and Latino, black and white, other diverse block groups in which more than 10 percent of the population was Asian-American, and other diverse block groups.

data base is registered nonprofit arts and cultural organizations. The inventory includes as well unincorporated groups involved in the arts and humanities, including participatory groups, such as artists' collectives, choral groups, or community theaters. Finally, we include non-arts organizations--such as churches, recreation centers, or social service organizations--that provide arts and cultural programs to the broader community.⁶ The data base includes variables on the location, size, and type of each organization and, wherever possible, its mission, activities and constituency. Approximately 1,200 organizations are included in the data base.

In order to compare arts and cultural organizations with other types of community and social institutions, we have developed an inventory of social organizations throughout the five-county region. The regional inventory contains approximately 15,000 organizations.⁷

Measures of organizational access

⁶ Data on arts and cultural organizations were drawn from a variety of sources, including city and state cultural agencies' grant applications, the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance and state cultural directories, the IRS nonprofit master file, and listings in newspapers and magazines. We included religious institutions that sponsor a specific cultural program, such as an after-school program, but not church choirs and similar groups.

⁷ For the present analysis, organizations in the regional data bases were classified into seven major categories: (1) arts and cultural organizations; (2) culturally-related associations and groups (such as, historical reenactment, mummery clubs, "friends of" cultural institutions or historic sites); (3) neighborhood improvement groups (such as resident and civic associations, town watch, community councils); (4) houses of worship (churches, synagogues, mosques); (5) youth and social service organizations (including youth organizations, social service organizations, and volunteer fire and ambulance associations); (6) social and fraternal organizations (including social clubs, fraternal organizations, religious clubs and orders, and veterans' organizations); (7) special interest, professional, business, and labor organizations.

We calculated the number of organizations within one-half mile of each block group in the Philadelphia metropolitan area as an index of organizational access.⁸ Based on these calculations, we used two measures of organizational presence:

- ***Frequency.*** The *number* of social organizations within one-half mile of (the boundary of) the block group.
- ***Dominance.*** The *proportion* of all social organizations within that one-half mile area that are of a particular type.

This distinction proved to be important because of the finding that social organizations of all types tend to cluster in particular sections of the metropolitan area. Therefore, we must distinguish neighborhoods with many groups of a particular kind (frequency) from those in which a particular type composes a large proportion of all groups (dominance).

Geographic distribution of arts and cultural organizations

Metropolitan Philadelphia is home to approximately 1,200 nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and informal associations. We have identified an additional 200 groups that are engaged in culturally-related activities--such as, "friends of" cultural

⁸ Although the scale of block groups provides a high degree of precision in describing the socio-economic profile of the metropolitan area, it poses a difficulty in assessing organizational access. In many cases, the location of community organizations is constrained by zoning and the availability of office space. The presence of particular kinds of organizations *within* a block group, therefore, is not an accurate measure of accessibility to the residents of that block group. For example, one block group that includes a commercial strip may be home to a number of organizations while an adjacent block group, composed solely of residential properties, has none. An analysis that treated the former as having access to a high number of organizations and the latter as having no access would be misleading.

To remedy this problem, we used a geographical information system to aggregate the number of organizations of particular types that are within one-half mile of a particular block group. Thus, each organization was counted in every block group within one-half mile.

institutions or historical sites, historical and genealogical research, or historical reenactment.

As we would expect, Philadelphia's Center City (what would be called "downtown" in other cities) has the greatest aggregation of arts and cultural groups. People living in some sections of Center City have 225 cultural organizations accessible within one-half mile. At the other extreme are the roughly twenty percent of all block groups that have no cultural organizations located within one-half mile. Although many of these areas are located in the extreme outlying sections of the metropolitan area, the residents of some sections of the city itself have no cultural organizations within walking distance.

Although Center City is certainly the dominant concentration of arts and cultural organizations, more than 80 percent of the metropolitan area's cultural organizations lie outside of Center City. Neighborhoods to the north, south, and west of Center City are also home to many arts and cultural groups. For example, the Bella Vista neighborhood of South Philadelphia includes old time residents with more modest assets as well as newcomers who are more likely to be college-educated professionals or immigrants. Whites, African-Americans, and Asians all call sections of the neighborhood home. The neighborhood's cultural institutions--ranging from established organizations like the Fleisher Art Memorial to newer organizations like the Philadelphia Folklore Project and the Traci Hall Dance Company--are actively engaged at promoting the necessary dialogue between different parts of the neighborhood. Farther from Center City, Broad Street in North Philadelphia is now home to a variety of African-American and Latino cultural groups, most notably the New Freedom Theatre (Figure 1).

Arts and cultural groups make up a large proportion of all social organizations in a variety of different neighborhoods. In a number of upper-middle class suburbs--like Swarthmore--cultural organizations compose more than a sixth of all social organizations. In a set of ethnically diverse neighborhoods within the city--including Mount Airy and Germantown--arts and cultural groups make up more than a third of all social groups. In contrast, although the African-American neighborhoods of North Philadelphia are home for many arts and cultural organizations, the large number of churches, community improvement groups, and other social organizations often overshadow them.

Geographic distribution of all social organizations

In addition to arts and cultural organizations, metropolitan Philadelphia encompasses over 14,000 community organizations of other types. These range from churches and other religious institutions to social service agencies, neighborhood groups, and social clubs (Table 1). The distribution of non-arts organizations is similar to that of arts and cultural organizations. Indeed, neighborhoods that have many arts and cultural groups almost invariably have high a large number of other kinds of organizations as well.

Although neighborhoods with many institutions of one type tend to have many institutions of other types as well, houses of worship do stand out. Churches and other religious institutions, because they are present in virtually all sections of the metropolitan area, are not a strongly correlated with the presence of other types of organizations. Churches and other houses of worship are the most dominant type of institution across the metropolitan area. In over half of the block groups in the region,

churches represent over 25 percent of all institutions.⁹ Although churches and other religious institutions are present throughout the metropolitan area, they are the dominant institutions most often in the suburbs.¹⁰ Inside the city, neighborhood improvement associations are most often the dominant institutions (about 32 percent of city residents live in a neighborhood in which these groups are dominant). Thirteen percent of city residents and six percent of suburban residents live in neighborhoods in which arts and cultural groups are dominant institutions (Figure 2).

Neighborhood socio-economic characteristics

Much of the literature on contemporary cities points to the abandonment of the poor urban neighborhoods by social institutions.¹¹ Yet, our analysis of the relationship of demography and accessibility of social institutions tells a very different story. Residents of neighborhoods with higher than average poverty, more high-school dropouts, higher unemployment, fewer homeowners, and fewer family households enjoy access to more social institutions than residents of other neighborhoods. Neighborhoods with a higher proportion of African-Americans have more institutions than those that are predominantly white. Finally, neighborhoods with a higher proportion of young adults (ages 20 to 39) have more institutions of all types. When other factors are held constant,

⁹ Arts and cultural activities that are part of religious observances--like church choirs--are not captured by our data. Other research, including the Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts conducted for the National Endowment for the Arts and the Social Impact of the Arts Project's survey of community participation, confirm the important role that arts and cultural activities play in many churches. See Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Seifert, "Working Paper #7: Cultural Participation and Civic Engagement in Five Philadelphia Neighborhoods" (unpublished manuscript available at <http://www.ssw.upenn.edu/SIAP>).

¹⁰ A particular institution is defined as dominant if its proportion of all institutions accessible to a block group is twice as large as its proportion of institutions across the entire metropolitan area. For example, for a neighborhood to be defined as having houses of worship as dominant, 52 percent of all organization accessible to that block group would have to be houses of worship.

three factors show the strongest relationship to the total number of social institutions within one-half mile of a block group: the proportion of non-family households, of African-Americans, and of families living in poverty.

Although arts and cultural organizations are generally located in the same neighborhoods that have other types of institutions, there are two subtle differences. First, block groups with more college graduates and more professional or managerial workers are more likely to house arts and cultural institutions. Second, whereas African-American neighborhoods have the highest number of other social institutions, ethnically diverse neighborhoods have more arts and cultural institutions.

The striking feature of these patterns is that they challenge our conventional image of the city. Typically, in Philadelphia, a strong correlation with poverty implies a strong relationship with race. At the same time, there are few social phenomena that simultaneously have a strong relationship to high educational and occupational attainment *and* a high poverty rate. Furthermore, arts and cultural organizations are most often located near block groups that are racially diverse, rather than in those that are overwhelmingly white or black. More than other social institutions, arts and cultural organizations thrive in economically and ethnically diverse neighborhoods.

Neighborhood diversity

We were surprised by the number of diverse neighborhoods in Philadelphia and by their importance for arts and cultural activity. We have found that more social organizations of all types are present in poor and African-American neighborhoods. Furthermore, arts and cultural institutions are more likely to be located in sections of the

¹¹ William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (New York:

city that are both poor *and* have a high proportion of managerial and professional workers and in sections that have a mixed racial composition. Thus arts and culture locate in types of neighborhoods that are generally invisible in the dominant representation of the city.

Many of Philadelphia's neighborhoods are economically diverse. Approximately 11 percent of all block groups (including 8 percent of the region's population) had more than 21 percent of their labor force in professional or managerial occupations and a poverty rate over 17 percent. Economic diversity is more common in the city than the suburbs; 17 percent of the city's population lives in economically diverse neighborhoods. Economic diversity, although not the dominant fact of city life, are not as infrequent as common representations would lead us to believe.

Two types of neighborhoods compose the economically diverse sections of the city. Many predominantly African-American neighborhoods are economically diverse. In addition, a number of economically diverse sections of the city are also racially mixed with higher than average numbers of young adults, nonfamily households, and renters.

Many economically diverse neighborhoods are predominantly African-American. One consequence of the history of racial segregation is that many "middle-class" African-Americans continue to live in neighborhoods with high poverty rates. In Philadelphia, high rates of property ownership and the requirement that municipal employees live within the city has also encouraged African-Americans with white collar occupations to stay in economically diverse neighborhoods. The rowhouse

Alfred A. Knopf, 1996) is representative of this literature.

neighborhoods of West Philadelphia, for example, are home to many poor people as well as to large number of municipal and other white-collar workers.

Minority neighborhoods that are economically diverse challenge the conventional image of concentrated poverty in the “inner city.” Large sections of North and West Philadelphia, as well as smaller pockets in South Philadelphia, have poverty rates in excess of 40 percent. However, a third of all block groups in the metropolitan area with poverty rates over 40 percent are economically diverse. These areas, in spite of their high poverty rates, do not conform to an image of social isolation. North Philadelphia, for example, is not a homogeneous stretch of economic desolation but is honeycombed with neighborhoods with a higher than average number of professionals and managers (Figure 3).

We often overlook, as well, the amount of ethnic heterogeneity in cities like Philadelphia. True, 85 percent of the region’s population lives in racially homogeneous neighborhoods, in which more than four-fifths of residents are members of a single ethnic group. However, within the city of Philadelphia, ethnic heterogeneity is significantly more prominent. Whereas 92 percent of Philadelphia suburbanites live in a racially homogeneous block group (of which 91 percent are homogeneous white), the proportion is only 77 percent within the city. Nearly one quarter of Philadelphia city residents live in an ethnically diverse block group. Eleven percent of Philadelphians live in an integrated white/African-American neighborhood; five percent live in a Latino/African-American neighborhood; four percent live in a neighborhood with a significant Asian-American population; and three percent live in other diverse neighborhoods.

Diversity is a significant aspect of city life. Taken together, about one quarter (25 percent) of all block groups in metropolitan Philadelphia--home to 19 percent of the population--are either economically or ethnically diverse. Four percent of metropolitan residents live in a neighborhood that is both economically and ethnically diverse. Within the city, 37 percent of all block groups (including 33 percent of the population) are diverse on at least one dimension. Seven percent of city residents live in a block group that is both economically and ethnically diverse (Figure 4).

Neighborhood diversity, arts and cultural organizations, and cultural participation

Economic and ethnic diversity matters because these “zones of diversity” are the institutional heart of the region. Although they are home to a small proportion of the region’s population, diverse neighborhoods are home to more arts and cultural organizations as well as other social institutions. In addition, cultural participation rates are higher in diverse neighborhoods than in other sections of the city.

Diversity and the location of social organizations

Diverse neighborhoods are more likely to have many social institutions within one-half mile than more homogeneous neighborhoods. The average economically diverse block group has 175 groups of all kinds within one-half mile, compared to only 57 groups in neighborhoods with below average poverty rates (Figure 5).

Neighborhoods with concentrated or above average poverty, although they have fewer groups than diverse neighborhoods, have more social organizations than more prosperous neighborhoods.

The same pattern holds true for ethnically diverse neighborhoods. Predominantly African-American neighborhoods have many more organizations than

predominantly white neighborhoods. However, integrated black/white neighborhoods and those with an Asian presence have even more groups. Neighborhoods that are both ethnically and economically diverse have, on average, 221 social organizations within one-half mile; ethnically and economically homogeneous neighborhoods have only 65 (Figure 6).

Diversity is even more strongly related to the presence of arts and cultural organizations. Whereas block groups with below average poverty have on average only five cultural organizations within one-half mile, the economically diverse sections of the region have nearly 20 arts and cultural groups. Block groups that are ethnically diverse generally have more organizations within walking distance than homogeneous neighborhoods. Finally, neighborhoods that are diverse economically and ethnically have 27 cultural organizations within one-half mile, more than five times the average.

Arts and cultural organizations are more likely to be dominant in diverse neighborhoods. In neighborhoods with high or concentrated poverty, houses of worship and neighborhood improvement groups are the most common types of organization. In more prosperous neighborhoods (those with below average poverty), social and fraternal organizations and special interest, professional, and labor organizations tend to be most prevalent. Arts and cultural organizations are dominant in economically diverse neighborhoods. In ethnically and economically diverse neighborhoods as well, arts groups compose 10 percent of all organizations, nearly twice their proportion in homogeneous neighborhoods (5.6 percent).

Take the example of Mount Airy, a diverse section of Northwest Philadelphia. As Barbara Ferman, Theresa Singleton, and Don DeMarco have noted in their study of the

neighborhood, Mount Airy developed a national reputation as a stable, integrated neighborhood after African-Americans began to move into the community during the 1950s. According to Ferman, Singleton, and DeMarco, one of the critical contributors to the maintenance of diversity in Mount Airy was the presence of strong community organizations committed to a vision of ethnic diversity. A number of cultural organizations, including the Allen's Lane Art Center, the Mount Airy Learning Tree (an adult education program), and the Sedgwick Cultural Center have been critical to Mount Airy's continuing legacy.¹²

Mount Airy is only the best known of the diverse neighborhoods in the city. The Olney section of North Philadelphia has experienced an explosion of diversity since the 1980s. In 1980, most of the neighborhood was homogeneous white with below average poverty. By the 1990s, a significant number of Latinos and Asians had made the neighborhood their home, and many block groups had become economically diverse. Urban Bridges, a church-affiliated community organization in Olney, has developed a variety of cultural-based interventions that pull together children and parents from the diverse segments of the community.

Our research shows that the "fit" between arts and cultural activities and diversity operates on two levels. For individuals, artistic and cultural expression provides a means of forging identity. For example, the Asian Arts Initiative collaborated with the Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial on a program that explored the dual consciousness experienced by many Asian-Americans.

¹² Barbara Ferman, Theresa Singleton, and Don DeMarco, "West Mount Airy, Philadelphia," *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research* 4:2 (1998): 29-61. The article was part of a special issue on "Racially and Ethnically Diverse Urban Neighborhoods" edited by Phillip Nyden.

At the same time, arts and cultural engagement provides a means through which inter-group conflict can be addressed. Taller Puertorriqueno--a distinguished arts and cultural center in Philadelphia's *barrio*--sponsored a series of programs on the relationship between African-Americans and Latinos in North Philadelphia. It used dialogues, performances, and visual art works to explore a set of issues that--in other settings--could lead to conflict and violence.

The connection between diversity and the presence of cultural organizations is critical to a uniquely urban quality of life. As one of our informants noted: "Quality of life is not how nice a house you have. It's the neighborhood you live in... Culture is such a broad thing—it's not just going to the ballet or the orchestra... it's all art, an experience of participation that moves you emotionally."

Patterns of cultural participation

Neighborhood economic and ethnic diversity and access to many local cultural institutions are strongly related to *regional* cultural participation. We used the participant data bases of over twenty-five regional cultural institutions to examine the socio-economic characteristics of neighborhoods with high levels of cultural participation. We found two distinct patterns of regional participation.

The most common pattern of cultural participation, which we call the *mainstream* pattern, identified parts of the city that had high levels of participation in the city's largest cultural institutions, like the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The second pattern, which we call the *alternative* pattern, highlighted sections of the metropolitan area with high levels of participation among a set of newer

and more experimental cultural institutions, including the Painted Bride Arts Center and the Wilma Theatre.

These two patterns of regional cultural participation were strongly correlated with the presence of arts organizations in the participant's neighborhood. Neighborhoods with many cultural organizations had an average of 120 cultural participants per thousand residents, more than twice the average for the metropolitan area.

The mainstream and alternative cultural participation patterns differed, however, on their socio-economic characteristics. Mainstream cultural participation was strongly related to economic status. Neighborhoods with high mainstream participation also had high median incomes and low poverty rates. In contrast, alternative cultural participation was strongest in economically and ethnically diverse neighborhoods.¹³

We also analyzed patterns of participation in community arts in four neighborhoods in the city. We found that nearly three-fourths of the participants in community arts programs came from *outside* of the neighborhood in which the program was located. Moreover, these outside participants were more likely to come from the diverse neighborhoods that also had high rates of alternative regional participation.¹⁴

Diverse neighborhoods are not simply the homes of many of the city's cultural institutions. They provide the audience for many of Philadelphia's regional cultural institutions and for community arts programs in other parts of the city. These findings

¹³ Mark J. Stern, "Working Paper #6. Dimensions of Regional Arts and Cultural Participation: Social Status and Neighborhood Institutions' Influence on Rates of Participation in the Philadelphia Metropolitan Area," (September 1997). Available at <http://www.ssw.upenn.edu/SIAP>.

¹⁴ Mark J. Stern, "Working Paper #8. Community Revitalization and the Arts in Philadelphia" (December 1997). Available at <http://www.ssw.upenn.edu/SIAP>.

make a compelling case for improving the links between cultural and urban policy. Efforts to stabilize and strengthen cultural institutions in diverse neighborhoods of the city would help address issues of segregation at the same time that they could support the city's cultural sector. From another perspective, strengthening community arts institutions also helps build the audiences for regional cultural institutions.

The social impact of the arts

We have presented a dizzying array of evidence on the distribution of social organizations across the five-county Philadelphia region. How do these findings affect our understanding of the role of social structure and civic engagement in contemporary Philadelphia?

First of all, at the same time that we acknowledge the forces of isolation and polarization, it is important to recognize that within the city there is a notable counter-tendency. More than one third of all city residents live in a block group that is either economically or ethnically diverse. An image that captures only *city trenches* gives an incomplete view of the realities of urban Philadelphia.

Secondly, urban neighborhoods are homes to a wide array of social organizations. The concentration of these institutions in neighborhoods across the city undercuts the notion that poor, minority areas are suffering from social isolation. Certainly there are profound social and cultural problems that disproportionately affect the poor communities of Philadelphia, but the paucity of social infrastructure is not one of them.

Finally, the intersection of economic and ethnic diversity and the concentration of social organizations provides a way out of the contradiction noted earlier in this

paper: the conflict between the desire to dismantle economic and ethnic segregation and the desire to strengthen communities. Robert Putnam, in his widely cited book *Making Democracy Work*, uses the term “social capital” to refer to the role of social networks in building trust and cooperation between community members. Alejandro Portes and Patricia Landolt, in a response to Robert Putnam, warn that a concentration of community organizations should not be seen as a self-evident good. Rather, in many cases, social capital has been used as a powerful force of exclusion and privilege. As Ports and Lancelot note, “The same strong ties that help members of a group often enable it to exclude outsiders. Consider how ethnic groups dominate certain occupations of industries...”¹⁵ If all of the communities in the city were segregated by ethnicity and economic status, there would be no way to strengthen geographic communities without also reinforcing segregation and polarization.

Our analysis indicates that many social institutions fit Portes and Landolt’s image. Social, fraternal, and veterans groups and special interest, professional, and labor organizations tend to be concentrated in neighborhoods with low poverty and low minority representation.

However, two findings of the study counter Portes and Landolt’s contention. First, there are a variety of integrated, heterogeneous neighborhoods in the city that are home to a large proportion of the city’s population. Second, these neighborhoods are home to many of the city’s social institutions. Neighborhood and community

¹⁵ Alejandro Portes and Patricia Landolt, “The Downside of Social Capital,” *The American Prospect* 26 (May-June, 1996): 19. For a more theoretical view on social capital, see Alejandro Portes, “Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 22:1 (1998): 1-24.

improvement groups and arts and cultural organizations, in particular, predominate in these diverse neighborhoods.

The current literature on social capital differentiates between *bonds* that strengthen the ties within a group or community and *bridges* that link different communities to one another. Cultural engagement builds both bonds and bridges.

Community cultural programs help build their local neighborhoods. This is demonstrated in a recent study we completed of Philadelphia and Chicago. In those two cities, neighborhoods with many cultural institutions--especially those in diverse neighborhoods--were far more likely to experience declining poverty during the 1980s. Although some of this is attributable to processes of gentrification, the vast majority of it occurred in neighborhoods that remained ethnically stable. Not only do arts and cultural institutions improve the quality of community life; they appear to serve as a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization.¹⁶

At the same time, cultural institutions and participation build bridges. In contrast to a community development corporation or civic association, cultural organizations draw people from local neighborhoods and from the wider region into some of the city's poorest neighborhoods. In a society with so few connections between the rich and poor and among different ethnic groups, this quality alone underlines the unique contribution that cultural institutions can make to American society. If we want to strengthen urban communities and address issues of economic polarization and racial segregation, we would be well advised to focus on those social institutions that are currently serving the "zones of diversity" within the city.

To do so has the potential to change more than communities. The development of boundaries is a powerful force in shaping perception and identity. We can differentiate *us* from *them* only by drawing a boundary between us. Unless we question the reality of “city trenches,” we help to strengthen them. From another perspective, if we see the reality of diverse neighborhoods and the importance of the cultural institutions that call them home, we challenge dominant beliefs about the limits of urban revitalization. What if the diverse sections of the city were viewed--by public officials, funders, and the general public--as central to social life, rather than as marginal to it? This gestalt could alter our perception of urban reality and, by influencing our actions, help to transform that reality. It might help us “re-present” the city in a new way, one that leads out of the impasse in which urban policy is now entrenched.

Sixty years ago, Louis Wirth framed quite precisely the dilemma of urban civic engagement. City residents are attracted to the heterogeneity of social life that allows for the development of multiple identities but are required to live in homogeneous neighborhoods defined by race and class. As a result, individuals have been forced to accept a predominant identity, defined by their place of residence, which squelches their potential for growth and change. We have ended up with involuntary “communities” that distort individual identity on the one hand and breed apathy on the other.

The solution to this conundrum does not come from the suppression of individuality that some latter-day communitarians have suggested.¹⁷ Rather, we contend that it lies in undercutting the structures that enforce a system of involuntary

¹⁶ Mark J. Stern, “Working Paper #9: Is All the World Philadelphia: A Multi-city Study of Arts and Cultural Organizations, Diversity, and Social Capital,” (unpublished manuscript, March 1999).

segregation and strengthening those that promote community engagement in *communities of choice*. Then, we may be able to construct a vision of urbanism that is worthy of a new century.

¹⁷ Amitai Etzioni, *The Spirit of Community: The Reinvention of American Society* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993).