

Grassroots Leadership, Personality, and Urban Neighborhood Environments: A Case Study in New Jersey

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Abstract

Grassroots leaders are crucial in stabilizing and improving neighborhood quality. But who are they? What are their demographic and personality characteristics? How do they perceive their neighborhood environments? A survey was conducted of 35 neighborhood leaders and 250 other respondents who chose them. The leaders participated in twice as many types of neighborhood activities as the people who selected them. The leaders were more optimistic, felt that they had considerable control over what goes on in the neighborhood, and coped with neighborhood problems using a multiplicity of outreach methods. Notably they were less reliant on television and radio for neighborhood information. Leaders also trusted the office of the mayor and officials elected to represent them in the state legislature, although much more so in high quality than in poor quality neighborhoods. Leaders were not markedly different from other respondents with regard to demographic characteristics such as age, race/ethnicity, education and perceptions of their neighborhoods.

Keywords: urban neighborhood, grassroots leadership, civic activities, personality

Introduction

Neighborhood planning in the older cities and industrial suburbs in the United States is a problematic endeavor. The national government's policies toward neighborhoods have been disjointed, tending toward extremes and lacking predictability (e.g., helping people vs. helping places; mandating public involvement in decisions vs. ignoring it; building public housing vs. trying to emasculate it and HUD, the Department responsible for it) (Anderson 1964; Bayor 1982; Boger and Wegner 1996; Fainstein and Markusen 1993; Gale 1984; Greenberg 1999a; Keating and Krumholz 1999; Moynihan 1969; Peterson and Lewis 1986; Rich 1993; Rusk 1999; Squires 1989). With a few exceptions, state govern-

ment policy has mirrored unpredictable national government policy (Greenberg 1999a; Orfield 1997; Rusk 1999).

The literature literally contains an alphabet soup of case studies (Atlanta, Baltimore, Camden, Detroit, East Saint Louis, ...) demonstrating how national and state policies have deliberately or unwittingly helped developers and local governments target neighborhoods for money-making schemes (sports complexes, hotels), gentrification by upper middle class people, or for locally unwanted land uses (incinerators, highways) (Carmon 1990; Kotlowitz 1991; Kozol 1991; Lang 1982; Logan and Molotch 1987; Mier 1993; Mollenkopf 1983; Nelson 1988; Pennsylvania Economy League 1988; Saltman 1990; Smith and Wilson 1986). Sometimes the neighborhoods help undermine adjacent neighborhoods by joining political coalitions attacking vulnerable neighborhoods (Keating and Krumholz 1999).

Local grassroots leaders are the main reason why some urban neighborhoods are not parking lots, highway exchanges, or altered in other ways opposed by residents. Urban neighborhood grassroots leaders are people who assume leadership in support of an issue and/or a place without holding a formal government position. Urban grassroots leaders are not mayors, councilpersons, or agency heads. Some may be elected or become employed in a position in government or a non-profit organization that provides them with leadership potential by virtue of their position. But while they are grassroots leaders, they are identifiable by their issues and followers, not by a position of authority.

Books, articles and media stories profile grassroots leaders (Brown and Mikkelsen 1990; Edelstein 1988; Freudenberg and Steinsapir 1991; Greenberg 1999a). The W. K. Kellogg Foundation has made major investments in grassroots leaders. The Foundation reports that grassroots leaders have roots in their communities, are motivated by passion for their community rather than money; and their personalities differ from those who become elected officials or corporate leaders. Yet a recent Kellogg report (1999) describes these observations as "impressions" rather than measured assessments. In fact, despite the importance of grassroots leaders

and the many profiles written about them, I can find no systematic assessment of who they are. The purpose of the research presented in this paper was to test some hypotheses about the people called grassroots leaders. This purpose requires the answers to three research questions:

1. Are residents able to identify their neighborhood grassroots leaders?
2. Are neighborhood leaders different from their counterparts in age, race/ethnicity, education, other demographic characteristics and personality attributes?
3. Are neighborhood leaders more attuned to specific types of neighborhood attributes (e.g., high rates of crime, physical decay, poor schools)?

Previous Research and Research Expectations

A great deal has been written about leadership, in general, and a small amount about neighborhood leaders. This literature led the author to expectations about the answers to the three research questions stated above. Regarding the first question (can people identify their neighborhood leaders), there is no single definition of a leader (Burns 1978; Gardner 1995; Paige 1977). But a common characteristic of leaders is the ability to mobilize others around objectives shared by leaders and their followers. In the neighborhood context, if urban people cannot identify their neighborhood leaders, then the very idea of relying on grassroots leaders is questionable. The literature reports that community groups typically are born around a single issue and die when that issue is no longer present (Miller, Rein and Levitt 1990; Edelstein 1988; Freudenberg and Steinsapir 1991; Halpern 1995; Pew 1999b). Putnam (1996) reports that civic involvement in general has been declining and attributes much of the decline to television watching. Hence, urban neighborhood leaders may come and go and only be identifiable with a single issue.

Yet Putnam's assertions have been questioned (Ladd 1996; Pew 1999b). And we know that the number of grassroots groups have grown substantially since 1970 (Freudenberg and Steinsapir 1991; Miller, Rein and Levitt 1990). Furthermore, the small literature on urban neighborhood leaders suggests that there are leaders, even if neighborhood organizations disappear. For example, in New York City, Leavitt and Saegert (1988) found that older African American females were the leaders. While not well-educated through formal schooling, they valued their neighborhood and schooled themselves about the neighborhood and trained themselves to protect it. They were neighborhood lifers and were clearly identifiable. In a study of public housing projects in two inner-city areas, Greenberg (1998) found residents identified as neighborhood leaders on the basis of

engaging in multiple neighborhood-related activities, including in almost every case working with other community residents. The weight of the evidence suggests that people are able to identify their neighborhood leaders.

Regarding the second research question (attributes of leaders), scholars have profiled and studied U.S. Presidents, mayors, and business leaders (Barber 1972; Burns 1978; Gardner 1995; Halberstam 1969; Holli 1999; Jones 1989; Paige 1977). This literature suggests that leaders are likely to be more educated and affluent, possess a sense of efficacy, desire to control their environment, have the ability to respond to stressful situations with multiple options, and be optimistic. Yet the literature also found that these personality traits were not always predictive — that is, some might be associated with success of research scientists and others more with business leaders. Research also suggests that certain kinds of personalities and leadership styles fit particular circumstances better than others. A successful leader during a financial crisis might be ineffective coping with a racial/ethnic crisis. And the most effective leader during a crisis might be ineffective when there is no crisis.

The variety of leaders examined in the literature is so broad that it would be naive to assume that it directly transfers to expectations for urban neighborhood leaders. Nevertheless, regarding demographic characteristics, the author expected long term and invested residents were the most likely to be leaders. In other words, the leaders would be those who are older, lived in their neighborhoods for at least a decade, own their homes, and have had an opportunity to gain more information about the neighborhood and have a stake in its future. People with more formal education are more likely to be leaders than people with less education. But education about the neighborhood through long-term residence in the neighborhood is more important, I expected, than graduating from high school or college.

The literature shows that Caucasians are more likely to be involved in positions of power than African, Asian, and Latino Americans, and Asian and Latino Americans are the least likely to demonstrate civic participation through voting (Flynn, Slovic, and Mertz 1994; Pew 1999a). Hence, the author expected more Caucasians to be identified as neighborhood leaders than other racial/nationality groups. Males are much more likely to be in positions of leadership in business and government. But neighborhood studies often report women as leaders (Greenberg 1998; Jones and Dunlap 1992; Kanagy, Humphrey and Firebaugh 1994; Leavitt and Saegert 1988; Van Liere and Dunlap 1980). Hence, the author did not expect a disproportionate number of male leaders.

Regarding personality, I expected urban neighborhood leaders to be more optimistic than those who selected them. At the neighborhood scale, a leader has to be able to reach out

to neighbors and local officials. So the author expected leaders to reach out to multiple sources, using personal contacts, secular and religious organizations, and government organizations, and just about every other source. I also expected them to feel that they have more control over neighborhood activities than their non-leader counterparts.

The most uncertain expectation was the relationship between leadership, neighborhood engagement, and trust of authority. In general there is not a consistent relationship between civic engagement and trust of authority (Pew 1999b). But that general observation, the author believes, is confounded for neighborhood leadership by the way residents perceive their neighborhoods. Those who live in poor quality neighborhoods stressed by crime, physical decay, and pollution were expected to mistrust their local officials, whereas those who live in good quality neighborhoods with few problems were more likely to trust their elected officials (Greenberg 1999b). Hence, I expected mixed results with regard to leadership and trust of authority.

Lastly, regarding the third research question (neighborhood awareness), leaders were expected to be more aware of problems in their neighborhood, especially crime and physical decay, which are the major stressors to residents (Greenberg 1999b; Ross and Mirowsky 1999). Despite the expectation that leaders would be more aware of problems, we were expecting neighborhood leaders to rate the quality of their neighborhoods about the same as followers. This expectation rests on the hypothesis that leaders would be more optimistic and optimists tend to understate the severity of conditions (Weinstein 1984).

Data and Methods

The study was designed to allow residents at least 18 years old to identify people they considered grassroots leaders in their neighborhoods and then to compare the leaders and those who identified them. The design was implemented with a convenience sampling approach. Thirty-five Rutgers University students were identified who lived in New Jersey communities and were willing to administer the survey in their neighborhoods. These students lived in a wide variety of New Jersey cities and suburbs. Briefly, the political jurisdictions ranged in population size from 6,000 to 275,000 with a median of 43,000. Median family income in 1989 ranged from \$22,000 to \$65,000, and the median of \$43,400 was two percent higher than New Jersey's as a whole.

The 35 students were asked to gather between 7 and 10 surveys from their neighborhoods. Each was taught how to administer the survey. The students were deliberately asked not to select people randomly. Rather they were asked to speak to people they already knew and hence were likely to

have the same neighborhood definition and selection of neighborhood leader. A key element of the survey methodology was explaining to the respondents that the survey was voluntary, confidential and that they should not place any identifiers on the survey instrument. Respondents were also asked to nominate a neighborhood grassroots leader to the surveyor. The student was then asked to interview the neighborhood leader most frequently nominated who was willing to be interviewed. Hereafter, those who selected the "leaders" are called "selectors" or "followers." Summarizing, this is a convenience sample comparing non-randomly selected selectors and leaders they chose, which means that the results need to be interpreted with due caution.

The use of students or other community members in this fashion is obviously different from the typical mail or random-digit-dial phone survey methods that we teach in survey research classes. In this case, none of the orthodox sampling methods would have worked because of the design. In addition, however, unorthodox sampling methods are increasingly going to be needed to reach otherwise hard to sample populations and to implement innovative research design protocols.

Sampling size was determined by the number of expected resident neighborhood actions. A series of other studies using five neighborhood actions found an average of 1.4 activities per person (Greenberg 1998, 1999b). The goal was to determine if the selectors interviewed in this study had a relatively similar level of neighborhood activity because it was important to avoid or at least know if the selectors were themselves atypical in their neighborhood involvement practices. In statistics, "power" is the probability that a test rejects the null hypothesis at a specified significance level. I wanted a sample size with a power of at least 95 percent and a two-tailed alpha error of 0.05 to distinguish sample mean results of 1.1 to 1.7 from 1.4 neighborhood actions. A sample of 240 has a power of 95 percent of detecting the targeted differences. The goal of the survey was to obtain at least 240 surveys from followers.

Survey Instrument

The 74 questions in the survey instrument were based on survey items used in previous research on neighborhood quality (Greenberg 1998, 1999b). The survey began by listing 20 potentially stressful neighborhood land uses and activities. Respondents were asked if these conditions existed in their neighborhood (scored 0 if it did not). If the characteristic existed and bothered the respondent, the characteristic was scored as a 1. If it bothered them so much that they "want to leave," it was scored as a 2. The 20 potential problems included land uses such as hazardous waste sites, junk-

yards, and odors and smoke from these and factories; physical deterioration, including abandoned buildings, inadequate street lighting, and behavioral problems such as crime, vandalism, and homeless persons/panhandling. It also asked if costly housing, poor quality schools, and absence of recreation were bothersome.

The second section of the instrument asked how respondents rated their neighborhood quality on a four-point scale, where 1 indicated "excellent," 2 was "good," 3 was "fair" and 4 indicated "poor." That question was immediately followed by one which asked that they compare the quality of their present and previous neighborhood. The choices offered were "better," "the same," or "worse."

Section three asked 11 questions that measured resident trust of authority and desire for control of neighborhood activities. For example, respondents were asked to indicate how much they trusted people they meet in the neighborhood, the mayor and officials elected to represent them in the state legislature, and their trust of science and technology to protect them and future generations. They were also asked to indicate how much control they believed they had over what goes on in the neighborhood and if they desired more control. Each of these questions was scaled 1 to 5, where 1 indicated "strong agreement" with the statement, 3 was "neutral," and 5 was strong "disagreement" with the statement.

The fourth set of questions asked about respondent's age, gender, education, and race/ethnicity. These were followed by inquiries about the respondent's length of residence in the neighborhood and type of residence (own, rent, other). Next, respondents were asked to indicate if they had engaged in nine activities during the last two years. These included attending a meeting about the neighborhood, calling the police, and four other activities associated with neighborhood participation. In order to separate neighborhood activism from other activities, which may not be focused in the neighborhood, respondents were asked if they voted in an election, became involved in a political campaign, and joined a group to discuss books, gardening, or other activities of mutual interest. These activities are not necessarily neighborhood-oriented.

The next 11 questions asked respondents to indicate the sources of information they relied on for "accurate" information about their neighborhoods. The 11 included mass media sources (television, radio, newspapers), and personal contacts (friends, peers, secular organizations, religious-based organizations).

The final 15 questions focused on personality. The Life Orientation Test (LOT) measures optimism-pessimism. LOT consists of 12 questions, (eight measure optimism-pessimism; four are filler questions) which measure optimism along a five point scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree).

The scores from the eight questions are summed to produce a score ranging from 0 (pessimist) to 32 (optimist) (Scheier and Carver 1985). Studies typically report average scores of 19 to 22 in the United States (O'Brien, VanEgeren, and Mumby 1995). The last set of questions asked how people respond to stressful neighborhood events. Measured on the same five point scale, respondents were asked if they reached out to family members, neighbors, and local officials (Stone and Neale 1984).

Statistical Analysis

To evaluate the first research question (Are people able to identify their local leaders?), I compared the number of different neighborhood activities engaged in by followers and the people they nominated as their leaders. Regarding the second and third questions (How do leaders and followers differ from their counterparts in demographic and personality characteristics and their perception of the neighborhood environment?), I compared the leaders and their selectors. Depending upon the form of the data, these bivariate tests were done with Chi-square tests of cross-tabulated data or t-tests of means.

Bivariate analyses have the limitation of potentially obscuring interrelationships among intercorrelated attributes. In this case, I used multivariate analyses to explore differences between leaders and selectors with regard to demographic and personality characteristics, as well as environmental perception. Specifically, two methods, stepwise discriminant analysis and stepwise binary logistic regression analysis were used. The results were almost identical using both methods. The discriminant analysis results are presented here because the author finds them easier to understand.

Results

A total of 250 non-leader and 35 leader responses were gathered during the months February and March 2000. It is difficult to precisely compare the demographic characteristics of respondents to the State of New Jersey as a whole because the only comparable data for the state are drawn from the U.S. Census taken in 1990. With that caveat in mind, the respondents as a group were more highly educated than the 1990 New Jersey population. Almost 34 percent of the followers had graduated from college compared to 25 percent of New Jersey residents. Forty-two percent of followers were home owners compared to 65 percent of New Jersey residents in 1990. Twenty-six percent of respondents self-identified as Black American, 12 percent as Asian American, and 14 percent as Hispanic Americans compared to 13, 4, 10 percent of New Jersey residents, respectively. Sixty-six per-

cent were female. In short, the follower respondents were more likely to be female, have more formal education, be Black, Asian and Hispanic, and be renters than residents of the State of New Jersey as measured by the 1990 U.S. Census.

While the selectors were different from the State of New Jersey with regard to the above demographic characteristics, notably, these 250 had an average of 1.54 activities (out of 5), which was not significantly different ($p < .05$) from the 1.4 observed in previous studies. With regard to number of neighborhood activities the followers are similar to groups studied previously.

A final preliminary calculation was to determine if the LOT scale (optimism-pessimism) was a single reliable scale. A Cronbach's alpha test was run on the data with a reliability score of 0.81. Scores of 0.80 or more are considered evidence of excellent reliability.

Were leaders more involved in neighborhood activities than their selectors? Leaders were more likely to be involved in all six neighborhood civic activities (see Table 1). Sixty percent or more had attended a public meeting, called the police, and volunteered for a civic, church, or school function in the neighborhood at least once during the last two years. Forty to 59 percent had contacted an elected official, organized a neighborhood function, and helped neighborhood children with academic work or sports. In other words, neighborhood leaders chosen by the selectors obviously were more involved in different types of neighborhood activities.

The 35 leaders were also more likely to have been involved in a political campaign, voted in an election and joined a group of people to discuss books, gardening, or other activities of mutual interest. But of the three, only becoming

involved in a political campaign was a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$).

A total of 58 bivariate tests were made between followers and leaders. Thirteen (22%) were significantly different at $p < .05$ (Table 2). By chance, only 3 ($0.05 \times 58 = 2.9$) would have been expected. Regarding neighborhood conditions, the leaders had higher problem scores than their selectors for 19 of the 20 potential problems. But only the score for three of the 19 were significantly different. As predicted, one of these was crime. The others were related to environmental contamination. In addition, as hypothesized, leaders' ratings of their neighborhood and assessment of whether their present neighborhood was the same, better or worse than their previous neighborhood was almost exactly the same as their corresponding followers. For example, 29 percent of leaders and 29 percent of their counterparts rated their neighborhoods as fair or poor quality.

As expected, leaders were older (average age 31) than their followers (average age 26); they were more likely to be home owners (51%) than their selectors (42%); and had lived in the neighborhood longer than them (54% vs. 50% for more than a decade). Leaders were more likely to be White (57% vs. 44%) and less likely to be Asian (5.7% vs. 11.6%). The only two significant demographic differences were that leaders tended to be male (53% vs. 34%) and were less likely to be Hispanic (2.9% vs. 14.4%). While males were more likely to be leaders than their selectors, in fact, the male propor-

Table 1. Comparison of Neighborhood Activities of Leaders and Selectors

Activity	Leaders (n=35)	Selectors (n=250)
Attended a public meeting (0,1)	0.60*	0.36
Contacted an elected official (0,1)	0.57*	0.22
Called the police (0,1)	0.69*	0.43
Volunteered for a civic, church, or school function (0,1)	0.71*	0.43
Organized a neighborhood function (0,1)	0.40*	0.10
Helped neighborhood children with academic work or sports (0,1)	0.49*	0.23
Total neighborhood activities (0-6)	3.45**	1.77
Joined a group of people to discuss books, gardening, or other activity of mutual interest (0,1)	0.26	0.20
Voted in an election (0,1)	0.69	0.54
Became involved in a political campaign (0,1)	0.29*	0.10

* Statistically significant difference at $p < .05$, z-test of proportions.

**Statistically significant difference at $p < .05$, t-test of difference of means.

Table 2. Bivariate Comparisons of Leaders and Selectors: Demographic, Personality, and Neighborhood Characteristics

(Only differences significantly different at $p < .05$ are shown in the table)

Characteristic	Leaders (n=35)	Selectors (n=250)
Respondent is male (1,0)	0.53	0.34
Respondent is Hispanic (1,0)	0.03	0.14
Odors, smoke from factories a problem (0,1,2)	0.23	0.10
Hazardous waste sites a problem (0,1,2)	0.23	0.08
Crime a problem (0,1,2)	0.40	0.22
Have control over what goes on in the neighborhood, (% agree and strongly agree)	60	28
Trust elected officials elected to represent neighborhood in state legislature (% agree and strongly agree)	47	20
Pessimism-Optimism (0-32)	23.6	20.3
Coped with neighborhood stress by reaching out to neighbors, (% agree and strongly agree)	52	36
Coped with neighborhood stress by reaching out to local officials, (% agree and strongly agree)	47	22
Always or frequently rely on following source for accurate and reliable information about neighborhood, %:		
Community (secular) organizations	44	27
Religious organizations	33	24
Government information	38	12

tion of leaders (53%) is not notably different from the male population of the United States. In short, the demographic results were in the expected direction, but not as strong as expected.

By far, the biggest differences between leaders and followers were in measures of personality (8 of the 13 statistically significant differences, or 62% of significant differences compared to only 45% of indicators). Sixty percent of leaders felt that they had control over what goes on in the neighborhood compared to only 28 percent of followers. Almost half of leaders trusted elected officials to represent the neighborhood in the State legislature compared to only 20 percent of their selectors. They also were more optimistic (average 23.6 vs. 20.3; range is 0 to 32) and coped with neighborhood stresses by reaching out to neighbors, local officials, and they also used information from secular, religious organizations, and from the government. In short, they were many-source information seekers, as expected.

Discriminant analysis is a systematic way to capture associations among multiple neighborhood characteristics, respondent characteristics and leadership. The method chooses the indicators that most strongly discriminate between leaders and followers.

Initial bivariate analyses using cross-tabulations and means described above reduced the number of potential dis-

criminating variables to a manageable number. Additional variables were eliminated after the initial set of discriminant analyses showed that they did not make a statistically significant contribution to explaining variation in neighborhood quality. The ability of potential discriminating variables to make a contribution is judged by the F statistic. A high value of the F statistic means that the among-group variance is greater than the within-group variance, which means that the independent variable discriminates leaders from followers. Overall, 11 of the 26 personality variables (42%) and only 4 of the 32 (13%) demographic were significant discriminators.

Table 3 displays the discriminant analysis run. A discriminant analysis produces discriminant functions which are linear combinations of the original independent variables. The method produces one less discriminant function than the number of categories of the dependent variables, in this case, one discriminant function for the binary category leader-selector.

There are two ways of assessing the statistical success of a discriminant analysis. One is to examine the canonical correlation of the function with the dependent variable. The canonical correlation is the correlation of the function with the binary dependent variable. The correlation was 0.503 ($p < .001$), which is a moderately high correlation. The second way of assessing the strength of the results is to use the dis-

Table 3. Discriminant Analysis of Leaders and Selectors Differences (Variables with a correlation of > 0.1 with the function are shown.)

Discriminating Variable (Value for an individual respondent)	Leader, mean values	Selectors, mean values	F- value	Correlation with Function 1: Leader/vs. selector
Optimism (0,1,...,32)	23.6	20.3	9.1**	0.389
You have control over what goes on in the neighborhood (0,1,...,5)	3.4	2.7	8.1**	0.380
I rely on government agencies (publications, meetings, presentations) for accurate information about neighborhoods (1,2,...,5)	3.0	2.2	8.1**	0.436
I rely on television for accurate information about neighborhoods (1,2,...,5)	3.1	3.5	7.4**	-0.331
I rely on religious groups (local church, youth groups) for accurate information about neighborhoods (1,2,...,5)	2.9	2.4	5.9*	0.276
Costly housing is a neighborhood problem (0,1,2)	0.29	0.44	5.6*	-0.282
I rely on community groups (community/civic, local university/college, local library, continuing education) for accurate information about neighborhoods (1,2,...,5)	3.2	2.7	4.6*	0.202
Trust officials elected to represent this neighborhood in our state legislature (1,2,...,5)	3.2	2.8	4.1*	0.258
The mayor's office really cares about this neighborhood (1,2,...,5)	3.1	2.8	3.2	0.137
Respondent is Hispanic (0,1)	0.03	0.14	2.3	-0.138
Respond to neighborhood stress by reaching out to local officials (1,2,...,5)	2.0	1.5	2.2	0.192
Rely on personal contacts (Friends, family, peers) for accurate information about neighborhoods (1,2,...,5)	4.1	3.8	1.7	0.202
Total problems score (0,1,...,38)	5.8	4.2	2.6	0.174
Respondent self-identifies as White (0,1)	0.57	0.44	1.8	0.169
Respond to neighborhood stress by reaching out to neighbors (0,1, ...,5)	2.0	1.5	1.3	0.140

**Predictor is significant discriminator at $p < .01$

*Predictor is significant discriminator at $p < .05$

criminant model to predict a leadership (yes or no) category for each respondent and to compare that predicted rating with the actual one. The mathematical model created by discriminant analysis accurately classified 80 percent of the respondents' ratings of their neighborhoods. More specifically, 73 percent (24 of 33) of identified leaders were correctly classified, as were 81 percent (173 of 214) of followers. In short, the independent variables were moderately effective at capturing underlying correlates of leaders.

The leader-selector function is dominated by personality variables. The first five discriminating variables (measured by their F values) are optimism ($r = 0.389$), having a feeling of control over what goes on in the neighborhood ($r = 0.380$), relying on government agencies ($r = 0.436$) and religious groups for accurate information about the neighborhood ($r = 0.276$), and not relying on television ($r = -0.331$). These five variables capture the essence of the difference between the leaders and followers: optimism, a sense of control, and willingness to rely on a variety of sources rather than digested mass media reports on television and the radio.

The importance of personality variables is highlighted by two other discriminant analysis runs. In one, the strongest demographic and neighborhood variables were inserted into the model and the personality variables were excluded. This analysis accurately classified 60 percent of respondents. A second run was done in which only the optimism-pessimism score and the response to the question about feeling of control over events in the neighborhood were entered. These two variables alone accurately classified 65 percent of responses, that is, more than all the demographic and neighborhood perception characteristics.

The bivariate and discriminant analyses found that only one of the seven trust variables significantly discriminated between leaders and followers. In the literature presentation, the inconsistent relationship of trust and neighborhood participation was noted, and the author suggested that neighborhood quality was a confounding variable. As a follow-up, differences in neighborhood activity and trust were explored among the 35 leaders controlling for neighborhood quality. Ten of the 35 respondents rated their neighborhood as "fair" or "poor" quality and 25 rated it as "excellent" or "good" quality. The 25 respondents who rated their neighborhood high quality engaged in an average of 3.5 neighborhood activities and their counterparts in the poorer quality neighborhood averaged 3.3 neighborhood activities, an insignificant difference. With regard to trust, a consistent difference was observed. The 10 leaders from the poorer quality neighborhoods were less trusting than their counterparts. Six trusted people they meet in their neighborhood, 6 felt that local residents should have the authority to close a facility in the neighborhood that they think is not run properly, only 2

believed the mayor's office really cares about the neighborhood; and only 4 trusted officials elected to represent the neighborhood in the state legislature; and 4 believed their friends and neighborhoods. The levels of trust were higher for every one of the leaders in neighborhoods classified as excellent or good quality.

Discussion

Before discussing the results, it is important to reiterate that this was a convenience sample that is not representative of the residents of the State of New Jersey. Accordingly, the implications of the results should be interpreted with caution. I regard this as a small step toward understanding urban neighborhood grassroots leaders through survey research rather than relying solely on anecdotal information drawn from case studies. Clearly, additional studies are required to determine if the findings for these 285 people hold in other locations. For example, our research center has begun further studies in the context of the national government's brownfields redevelopment program. Brownfields are unused or underutilized parcels of land that are contaminated or perceived to be so. We are currently studying the role of neighborhood leaders in 60 cities that were the first to have received funding from the National government to remediate the sites and return them to productive use. Have they really played an important role in the brownfields remediation process?

With the data caveat noted, the analysis shows notable differences, especially in personality attributes of neighborhood leaders and other people. Leaders are more optimistic and have a stronger sense of efficacy about their ability to influence activities in their neighborhood. The findings of the Kellogg Foundation that grassroots leaders are committed to working with others is evident in the finding in this study that urban neighborhood grassroots leaders reach out to local officials, neighbors and family members, and they use a wide variety of sources to keep informed about the neighborhood. In fact, the only sources they rely on less than followers are television and radio. In short, leaders are identified mostly by personality. Some demographic characteristics, notably those related to investment, such as long-term residence in the neighborhood and home ownership were associated with leadership. But demographic attributes, in general, were much less powerful flags of urban neighborhood leaders than personality indicators. Lastly, as expected, leaders were more aware than their counterparts of neighborhood problems, but their rating of their neighborhood quality was almost identical to others, which I think is attributable to their optimism.

The implications of these findings are salient in the context of U.S. policies toward places. Senator Daniel Patrick

Moynihan (D-NY) (1996) concludes that the problems confronting the United States are difficult to resolve because they are about values. As with environmental pollution, abortion, gun control, smoking, health care, and other public policy issues, Americans' collective value of neighborhood preservation and redevelopment has changed. For example, in 1973, when national urban policies were being dismantled, 42 percent of respondents to a Roper poll felt that too little was spent on solving city problems. This proportion shrank to 35 percent in 1987. But as crime, drugs, and severe poverty increased and have been reported in the mass media, public support for government intervention increased, reaching 55 percent in 1994 (Roper Reports 1994). Strauss and Howe (1991) and Howe and Strauss (1993) suggest that our past is our future — that is, there are cycles in American history and policy. If so, the United States will galvanize around civic-minded goals that include stabilizing and redeveloping stressed city and older suburban neighborhoods within 25 years. However, while we wait for this cycle to reappear, if it ever does, the reality is that grassroots leaders, sometimes assisted by non-profit organizations, appear to be the only reliable defense neighborhoods have against depletion by being resource-starved by government and private investors, or being the next parking lot for a baseball team's new stadium, conference center for a university, or county incinerator site.

This paper shows that grassroots leaders are known to their neighbors. It also shows that they are involved in multiple issues, and so grassroots leaders are available to be focal points of neighborhood interaction. Even as civic participation grows and declines, if elected officials, businesses and non-governmental organizations in addition to the W. K. Kellogg and Annie E. Casey are truly interested in residents' values, views, and suggestions for improving their neighborhoods, it appears that there is a group of people who should not be difficult to find. The findings of this research flatly reject the idea that it is a bad idea to invest in urban neighborhoods because there is no one there who cares enough about the neighborhood to fight for them.

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