

The civic elite: A network perspective on elite consolidation among community-based organizations, 1998–2016

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Interlocking directorates
Community-based organizations
Nonprofits
Elites
Urban governance

ABSTRACT

Is an elite consolidating among the leadership of community-based organizations (CBOs) in U.S. cities? Ethnographers identify a privatized turn in urban governance, with some nonprofit civic leaders becoming a cohesive group with enormous influence in local affairs. However, while researchers propose elite consolidation has occurred and created a more hierarchical, technocratic, and unipolar civic field, these structural changes have not been directly assessed. In this paper, I reintroduce an interorganizational network perspective to elite consolidation and evaluate how interlocking directorates among CBOs in Cleveland, OH, and Austin, TX constitute relationships among civic leaders over twenty years. Results indicate boards of directors are constituting a new civic elite, and that hierarchical interlock tendencies doubled in both cities between 1998 and 2016. The core of the networks appear to be organizations traditionally important in urban governance, though, and community analysis reveals power sharing among elite groups in the cities rather than singular dominant communities, indicating as situation of "elitist pluralism." These findings offer a new perspective on the problem of elite consolidation in civil society, and offer a benchmark for future analysis of civic elites.

1. Introduction

1.1. Community-based organizations in the United States

Nonprofit community-based organizations¹ (CBOs) are a cornerstone of contemporary urban governance. CBOs are the primary providers of publicly funded direct services in poor communities in the United States (Salamon, 1987), and have become the primary vehicles for advocacy as traditional voluntary associations have declined (Skocpol and Fiorina, 2004). Professionalized CBOs embrace many different functions, ranging from arts charities to anti-poverty organizations and local youth groups (Salamon, 1996; Weisbrod, 1991). And yet, action across the dispersed CBO field is today fundamental for local governance given the limited opportunities for alternative modes of voluntary activity and service delivery.

Traditional portrayals of voluntary associations view CBOs as diverse, highly specialized and horizontally integrated organizations (Allard and Small, 2013; Berrone et al., 2016; Marquis et al., 2011; Powell and Steinberg, 2006; de Tocqueville, 1990). Recent research on

community and urban governance, though, has drawn attention to increasing hierarchy, technocracy, and centralization within institutionalized civil society across American communities.

Ethnographers document this trend across contexts. CBOs with close financial relationships to elected officials are creating new forms of machine politics which empower conglomerate nonprofits and undermine autonomous organizations (Marwell, 2004, 2009). Large, well-resourced and professionalized CBOs appear to be displacing grassroots organizations as the key decision makers in urban development (Pacewicz, 2015, 2016). CBOs with access to emerging private revenue streams from foundations are operating as unelected political representatives in poor communities (Levine, 2016; McQuarrie, 2013). And private actors such as corporations appear to be playing an ever larger role in engineering civic participation, creating questions not only about the role of CBOs in civil society but whether some CBOs are "astro-turfing" private causes in the name of the public good (Walker, 2014).

Urban governance researchers disagree about the origins of this transformation but identify a common group driving the change: the

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¹ In this paper I use the term community-based organization to refer to all 501(c)3 nonprofits chartered for service and advocacy, that is, not foundations, not informal voluntary associations, not voluntary organizations incorporated under alternative legal regimes (unions and churches), and not 501(c)'s chartered for electoral politics. I use the term community-based organization as it is the preferred term in urban governance research (Marwell, 2004; Levine, 2016).

directors and executive officers of nonprofit community-based organizations (Marwell, 2009; Pacewicz, 2016). Over the past thirty years these civic leaders have become an indispensable class of private intermediaries in domains ranging from economic development to poverty and education in urban communities (Cordelli, 2020). According to some (Levine, 2016), cities' dependence on these civic leaders have allowed them to consolidate into a civic elite. This emerging civic elite is thought to have structurally altered civil society, with civic leaders now establishing hierarchical relationships between institutionalized organizations and grassroots ones (McQuarrie, 2013), and centering urban governance in a technocratic core of organizations that now privately manages public problems (Lee et al., 2015; Pacewicz, 2015; Safford, 2009).

The consequences of these structural shifts are potentially profound. While some propose that the orientation of civil society around a small cluster of leading organizations can help cities build the necessary partnerships to confront urban challenges (Safford, 2009), Pacewicz (2016) argues that today's newly exclusive and hierarchical civic landscape diminishes pluralist democracy and pushes dissatisfied grassroots actors into partisan politics. Marwell (2004), (2009) argues that civic organizations now play the role of modern political machines, and Levine (2016) and McQuarrie (2013) further argue that the dependence of cities on a small clique of private organizations produces a democratic deficit when the decisions of unelected leaders on how to allocate public monies diverges from local priorities. Finally, hierarchical collaborations among civic organizations can actually reduce the efficiency of nonprofits in confronting contemporary challenges if, as Small, Jacobs and Massengill (2008) propose, broad and participatory partnerships tend to be the most effective collaborations.

Unfortunately, much of the debate about the consequences of elite consolidation has taken place without evidence for the structural changes assumed to be taking place. Rising hierarchy among an emerging civic elite has only been identified in studies of particular neighborhoods (Levine, 2016; Marwell, 2009), or fields of organizations (McQuarrie, 2013), and evidence for technocratic integration is limited to historical research guided by interviews in particular communities (Pacewicz, 2015; Safford, 2009). Current research is unable to state directly whether civic leaders are becoming more integrated as an elite at the level of cities, and whether hierarchy, technocracy, and unipolarity define the civic elite. They also cannot tractably index whether these tendencies are increasing, whether there is variation in these tendencies across communities, or whether only some of these tendencies have emerged in tension with each other. Our sense of the presence and extent of structural change in civil society is clouded as a result.

In this paper, I propose an alternative way to study relationships among civic leaders and assess the structure of power in civil society. Bringing interorganizational networks "back in" to the study of urban governance (Galaskiewicz, 1979, 1985; Knoke, 1990; Laumann et al., 1978; Laumann and Pappi, 1976; McQuarrie and Marwell, 2009), I argue that interlocking directorates among CBOs reflect a fundamental means of integration among civic leaders that may help constitute the emerging civic elite. Shifts in networks of interlocking directorates, then, are a useful means to assess whether hierarchy, technocracy, and centralization increasingly define the structure of relationships among the CBOs that nonprofit directors and staff lead. Interlocking directorates are only one measure of the many forms of influence and interconnections in the civic sector (Levine, 2013; Small et al., 2008), but they are a reproducible lower-bound estimate of organizational power within urban political systems that is easily measurable.

I demonstrate an interorganizational approach to studies of elite consolidation by following longitudinal networks of interlocking directorates in two cities between 1998 and 2016: Cleveland, OH, and Austin, TX. In each city I ask: Have civic leaders become more integrated into a consolidated elite? Has the integration of this elite made well-connected organizations more likely to form interlocking directorates

with only other well-connected organizations? Which organizations occupy the center of the civic networks? And, Is a single community of elites hegemonic over the elite, or does civil society tend to be fragmented into multiple clusters of elites?

The use of two cities to evaluate elite consolidation, meanwhile, gives a preliminary look at a key ecological explanation for elite consolidation: post-industrial shocks. Cleveland, OH has already been identified as a site for elite consolidation in the civic sector (McQuarrie, 2013). Cleveland is one of many post-industrial cities where disinvestment has led to the decline of voluntary activity and rise of professional nonprofit redevelopment networks (Pacewicz, 2015; Safford, 2009). If elite consolidation is identified in Cleveland and not the rising technopolis of Austin, where the economic basis for voluntary activity has only grown, it would underscore the salience of elite consolidation in communities with less native civic capacity. If elite consolidation is identified in both cities, however, it would suggest that elite consolidation is both more widespread and explained by other organizational and institutional mechanisms.

Results show that civic leaders have become more integrated as an identifiable elite through interlocking boards of directors in the two cities. They also show that the tendency for highly-interlocked organizations to interlock with one another and not less connected organizations roughly doubled in both cities between 1998 and 2016, indicating that CBO boards of directors are increasingly joining a hierarchical and insular network. The CBOs occupying the core of interlock networks tend to be organizations traditionally important in urban governance rather than "new" organizations, though. And in both cities, there tend to be multiple communities of organizations among the elite rather than a single hegemonic elite community, suggesting pluralism, or fragmentation among the new civic elite in addition to hierarchical interlock formation. These results provide an original empirical description of the civic elite based on the metric of board interlocks, characterizing civil society in the two cities as a state of "elitist pluralism" that is both hierarchically stratified and increasingly fragmented across multiple elites. Most importantly, they offer an approach to the study of urban governance that unites current interest in elites with extensible methods for longitudinal network analysis built on a well-established perspective on interorganizational networks.

1.2. Community-based organizations and elite consolidation

Community-based organizations are service providers and political actors that shape the allocation of resources in cities. Unlike traditional associations like unions and churches, CBOs are chartered for a public service or advocacy mission rather than in service of a bounded membership (Marwell, 2004). CBOs are frequently the first point of access for many resources in poor communities, including emergency housing shelters, child education and programming, and job training (Marwell, 2009; Small et al., 2008). They are also advocacy organizations that provide a vehicle for mobilization distinct from political parties and informal social movements. CBOs "litigate, lobby, research, publish and organize" collectively on behalf of the communities they serve (Chaves et al., 2004: 293). In both areas, CBOs are not isolated organizations working without regard to one another, but tend to work in fields of advocacy, service provision and fundraising with one another (Baiocchi et al., 2011; Putnam et al., 1994; Sampson et al., 2005; Small et al., 2008).

CBOs are typically viewed as horizontally integrated associations populated by grassroots volunteers who work to improve their communities. A critical literature, though, highlights how the highly educated, technical managers that often lead CBOs have become an independent class of influential community intermediaries. *Elite consolidation* in the civic sector occurs when civic leaders—the directors and executive officers of community organizations—tend to increasingly cultivate close relationships with one another, creating an integrated network of partnerships, affiliations, and referrals that

constitutes participating civic leaders as an elite (Lee et al., 2015; Levine, 2016; Marwell, 2004; McQuarrie, 2013; Pacewicz, 2015, 2016; Skocpol, 2013; Skocpol and Fiorina, 2004). According to urban scholars the consolidation of this civic elite² has given a small group of unelected leaders the ability to set the terms of engagement in urban civil society, including how publicly funded social services provided by nonprofits are used. In turn, the prominence of this elite is thought to have changed both the structure of civil society and which organizations have the most important roles in urban governance.

Scholars identify multiple causes for the rise of the new civic elite. Institutional changes in how Americans participate in civic life undoubtedly played a role. From the 1970s on Americans began to work longer hours and spend more leisure time in private (Kelly and Moen, 2020; Putnam, 2000), join fewer associations (Skocpol and Fiorina, 2004) and give less money to local charities and associations (Smith and Lipsky, 1994). All of these changes elevated the role played by civic entrepreneurs who can monopolize a limited pool of volunteers and donations. Pacewicz (2015) also highlights the importance of the U.S. government's changing orientation to municipal governance. Funding for civic organizations was privatized during the "New Federalism" initiated by the Reagan administration, stemming the flow of funding to civic actors and privileging entrepreneurial CBOs (Boris et al., 2010). The percentage of funding for nonprofits coming from government grants has been stagnant since the 1980s, even as the costs of service delivery and needs have risen (Kerlin and Pollak, 2018). Furthermore, the hypercompetitive grants that the federal government now uses to support urban development in cities are conditional on municipalities developing partnerships with non-partisan professional organizations (Pacewicz, 2015: 853). The consequence of these shifts is that mass associations and organizations which have political affiliations, like labor groups, employer associations and many grassroots CBOs, have tended to receive less municipal recognition than organizations which can leverage independent "expertise." Levine (2016) and McQuarrie (2013) further suggest that the resource dependency of nonprofits on private capital and fees for services has itself elevated the centrality of technocratic urban administrators, since CBOs are now incentivized to locate directors with closer ties to other professional organizations and foundations rather than public officials or local communities.

Ethnographers debate the consequences of the move from mass associationism to privatized management in American civic life. Some, such as Safford (2009), view the consolidation of the civic elite positively. Safford argues that unified and technocratic civic leaders are indispensable for contemporary urban governance, helping communities generate the consensus needed to attract competitive development grants and address shared urban problems. Other scholars focus on the negative repercussions, especially for pluralist democracy. Marwell (2004), (2009) finds that the management of communities by nonprofit employees can become a new form of machine politics when nonprofits leverage community representation as a means to trade political support for the public funding of their organizations. Levine (2016), as well as Pacewicz (2015), (2016) and McQuarrie (2013), further document how the reliance of cities on CBOs gives the employees of nonprofit organizations the ability to act as unaccountable community officials. When private CBOs are deemed more effective at housing and commercial development than public programs, Levine finds that nonprofit leaders have wide latitude to decide when, where, and how public monies will

be spent regardless of the will of neighborhoods (2016: 1268). Organizations that do not fit funders definitions of reputability, meanwhile, will be excluded from grants and community organizing circles (Marwell et al., 2020; Pacewicz, 2015, 2016), creating a division between influential technocratic "insiders" and grassroots CBO "outsiders."

Despite their disagreements about the forces behind the rise of the civic elite, urban ethnographers agree that the rise of the new civic elite has also engendered structural changes in civil society. First, the consolidation of the civic elite is assumed to have created a more hierarchical and insular civic landscape where nonprofit organizations increasingly prefer to build attachments to only influential organizations and not grassroots actors or functionally appropriate collaborators. According to Levine (2016), this combination of hierarchy and insularity is likely to emerge both as a result of the behavior of entrepreneurial civic elites and the grant-giving practices of funder organizations. In an ever more resource competitive environment, CBOs are more likely to appoint directors with connections to well-recognized charities, since CBOs now see their funders as their primary stakeholders and will prioritize building relationships with recognized charities to locate financial opportunities (see also: Faulk et al., 2016). Conversely, since both private philanthropies and government funds now require the organizations they fund to represent the entire community they operate in to receive grants (Levine, 2016: 1271), funders are more likely to support organizations connected to institutionalized actors rather than informal groups.

Second, the cast of organizations at the heart of municipal governance today is thought to be new and notably more technocratic than the organizations that were important in the past. Pacewicz (2015), (2016) identifies organizations oriented to economic development and non-partisan "partnership" as the most important "network elites" in contemporary urban governance—the organizations made most connected and central by their elite directors. These organizations have displaced traditional associations like fraternal orders, Chambers of Commerce and benevolent societies. Safford (2009) attributes the rise of technocratic organizations to the relative robustness of their professional networks in post-industrial and globalized cities, where the interpersonal and local ties necessary for sustaining traditional membership organizations have been frayed. Marwell et al. (2020) also identify technocratic organizations as actively competing with politically-aligned nonprofits with close ties to elected officials. McQuarrie (2013) even suggests that technocratic nonprofits, and particularly community development corporations (CDCs), are displacing grassroots organizations and turning civic life into a kind of "civic monoculture."

Finally, the consolidation of the civic elite is assumed to have created a centralized group of hegemonic organizations in communities, leading to declining civic pluralism. Pacewicz (2015: 842–855) identifies this transformation in his case study of post-industrial "River City" in the Midwest, where a multipolar civil society divided between a Chamber of Commerce oriented coalition and a labor union coalition in the 1970s transformed into a technocratic civil society unified around a single hegemonic group of redevelopment corporations in the 2000s. Safford (2009) identifies the same trend in Youngstown, OH and Allentown, PA. According to Safford, the move to a single hegemonic civic core is actually now essential for struggling post-industrial cities to work together to attract funding to spur economic growth. In each case, the activity of civic entrepreneurs has been deemed essential for the unification of civil societies.

Assumptions in ethnographic literature about how elite consolidation has reshaped civic life are largely unmeasured, though. Scholars consistently note the increasing integration of civic leaders into a single governance network (Stone et al., 2015), but evidence for the corresponding rise of a hierarchical, technocratic and unipolar civil society is limited. Much of the problem stems from the limitations of current methodology to assess these theoretical questions. Evidence for an increasingly hierarchical and technocratic civil society is based on case

² The word *elite* refers to individuals and not organizations (Mizruchi, 1996). Organizations consist of individuals, and the affiliation of individuals with an organization can raise the status and importance of an organization, but that does not make an organization into an "elite." I occasionally refer to how the activity of individuals has made a community-based organization more central to community governance networks, and only in these limited situations do I refer to these organizations as occupying the position of organizational "network elites," consistent with Ma and DeDeo (2018).

studies of organizations bounded by particular neighborhoods, such as Levine's (2016) study of economic development in Boston's Fairmount Corridor, or studies of particular fields of organizations, like McQuarrie's (2013) ethnography of CDCs in Cleveland, OH. Findings for unipolarity in civic affairs, meanwhile, are based on careful archival studies of organizations mentioned by informants in interviews, such as Pacewicz (2015) and Safford's (2009). These methodologies do not allow direct assessment of whether civil society can be characterized as hierarchical, technocratic and unipolar across an entire city, and are not tractable for comparing trends across multiple cities or across time. They also do not allow for the possibility that none, only one, or some of these conditions in tension actually describe contemporary civil society, which would qualify our understanding of how civil society may have changed.

It is important that our knowledge of the structural changes accompanying the rise of the civic elite goes beyond suggestive evidence. Safford (2009) proposes both that technocratic organizations now play important roles as brokers and that grassroots actors remain integral local players, suggesting that urban governance has actually become more cohesive in many places. Another possibility is that collaborations among civic organizations have become more hierarchical while also remaining pluralistic, indicating that today's civil society is divided among many elitist clusters of nonprofit organizations. This would indicate that the rise of a hypercompetitive civic elite has not actually unified urban governance, but only accompanied its fragmentation, a situation analogous to the rise and subsequent disintegration of the American corporate elite in the 1950s and 1960s (Mizruchi, 2013). Finally, it is possible that different structural configurations in civil society have emerged in different areas with varying trajectories of growth, philanthropy, civic engagement and economic activity.

In order to assess these competing possibilities, it would be essential to construct a measure of the relationships among all civic leaders within an urban community and then assess how the whole network of relationships among civic leaders changes over time and shifts the structure of relationships among CBOs. Ideally, this analysis would be conducted comparatively in different cities with contrasting ecological trajectories so that the face validity of identified trends can be assessed.

This perspective was at the heart of research on community inter-organizational networks, which used interlocking directorates among prominent community organizations to study power and cleavages in urban social systems (Galaskiewicz, 1979; Knoke, 1990; Laumann et al., 1978; Laumann and Pappi, 1976). This approach has also begun to re-emerge in recent treatments of urban political sociology (Marwell et al., 2020; McQuarrie and Marwell, 2009). In what follows, I argue that interlocking directorates among boards of directors can be usefully applied today to study power in urban systems. I briefly describe how scholars of urban interorganizational networks conceptualized board interlocks, and demonstrate an approach to using interlocking directorates to directly study the structural hypotheses proposed by urban ethnographers about elite consolidation. I apply this approach to the networks of interlocking directorates among CBOs in two cities between 1998 and 2016: Austin, TX, and Cleveland OH. In both cities, I use interlocking directorates to assess whether civic leaders have formed interlocks that meaningfully constitute an emerging civic elite. I then assess changes assumed to have taken place as the civic elite consolidated: whether CBO relationships have become more insular and hierarchical, whether the organizations brought to the center of contemporary urban governance are newcomers or traditionalist, and whether there are multiple clusters of influential organizations or a single hegemonic cluster in both cities.

1.3. Interlocking directorates as interorganizational networks

Connections among the boards of directors of community organizations have been studied by researchers ever since the elitist-pluralist debate (Bachrach and Baratz 1979 [1970]; Dahl 2005 [1961];

Domhoff, 1978; Hunter 2017 [1953]; Mills 2000 [1956]) In the community power tradition, understanding who sat on the boards of prominent local organizations was important for studying "Who Ruled." Interlocking directorates, meanwhile, were used to assess the dispersal or concentration of power (Domhoff, 1978, 1990). A board interlock is a relationship that occurs when one person affiliated with an organization is also affiliated with another organization. Early community power theorists were keenly interested in who sat on the boards of influential organizations like local Chambers of Commerce and large businesses, why interlocks formed, and what the structure of connections inferred about democracy in the United States (Hunter 2017 [1953]).

Scholars used graph theory to formalize the study of relationships among community organizations in the 1970s. For example, Laumann and Pappi (1976) introduced interlocking directorates as one of many kinds of influence networks among local organizations in their foundational study of how consensus is generated in urban governance systems. In their work, Laumann and Pappi found that corporations, nonprofits and other agencies that shared interlocking directorates tended to take similar stances on local political issues such as school choice, religious freedom, and urban development (Laumann and Pappi, 1976). Interlocking directorates also tended to overlap heavily with other forms of information and resource sharing, and the most central actors within these networks tended to be the most influential opinion leaders in communities. Galaskiewicz (1979), (1985) later proposed that the structure of relationships among local organizations tended to originate out of a struggle by local philanthropic and private organizations to escape resource dependency. Galaskiewicz's major studies did not explicitly use interlocking directorates as a measure of interconnection, but did include profiles of corporate and philanthropic boards as part of the analysis of the flow of grants and philanthropic activity (1985). These scholars did not separate inter-relationships among CBOs from their study of the overall urban system, though, or privilege board interlocks versus other relationships. Classic interorganizational research also did not track the longitudinal trajectory of interlocks.

Research on interorganizational networks declined after the 1980s (for a comprehensive review of the literature to that point, see Knoke, 1990). However, nonprofit scholars have recently returned to boards of directors. Researchers see board of directors as serving two interrelated functions in community-based organizations: oversight of operations and resource acquisition (Callen et al., 2003, 2010; Miller-Millesen, 2003). The presence of an interlocked director influences positive factors like task efficiency and grant acquisition (Esparza and Jeon, 2013; Faulk et al., 2016). But, when nonprofits establish interlocks, they appear less to be a means for one organization to control another, and more a strategic method that CBOs use to obtain information about opportunities and resources in their communities (Burris, 2008: 3; Esparza and Jeon, 2013). Recent literature has not yet described the features of whole networks of CBOs across cities, though, as was the goal in classic interorganizational research.

Corporate governance scholars extensively studied the causes, dynamics and consequences of interlocking directorates among private organizations even as research on nonprofit organizations wavered (for a review of early work on corporate interlocks, see Mizruchi, 1996). Similar to nonprofit researchers, contemporary corporate governance research tends to view interlocks as "pipes" that spread information across dyads and which position corporations to be influential organizations (Benton, 2016). However, corporate governance scholars have also viewed corporate board interlocks as collective resources that make action possible among the leaders of corporations, in other words, as ties among individuals and not just firms (Westphal and Zajac, 2013). Early sociological work on corporate interlocks explicitly theorized interlocks as a mechanism for maintaining solidarity among class elites (Davis and Thompson, 1994; Mizruchi, 1982, 1989, 2013; Zeitlin, 1974). Recent treatments of corporate interlocks find evidence that directors who hold multiple board seats view themselves as a cohesive group with shared group interests (McDonald and Westphal, 2011). Cohesive substructures

of interlocking directorates among corporations also tend to spread governance practices among directors and preserve cohesive blocs of organizations with shared orientations to managerial control (Benton, 2016).

All of this suggests that a CBO's centrality within networks of interlocking directorates is indicative of an organization's influence or power, and that interlocking directorates could reflect a fundamental means of integration for the new civic elite. CBOs that tend to be highly interlocked with other organizations and central within networks of interlocking directorates will have, to paraphrase Scott (1991: 188), more power to set the parameters of the environment in which all large community organizations act. The directors who sit on these interlocked boards of organizations, meanwhile, are more likely to feel themselves to belong to a cohesive elite with shared interests and similar attitudes toward organizational governance (Benton, 2016; Heemskerck and Takes, 2016). Board interlocks are not exhaustive of all forms of interconnection between civic leaders and civic organizations (for alternative measures, see Levine, 2013). However, interlocks represent an important dimension through which civic leaders can become integrated as an elite, which is consequential for the worldview and behavior of civic leaders and their organizations. Granovetter (quoted in Heemskerck, 2013) recognized that:

...actors do not behave or decide as atoms outside a social context, nor do they adhere slavishly to a script written for them by the particular intersection of social categories that they happen to occupy. Their attempts at purposive action are instead embedded in concrete, on-going systems of social action. (Granovetter 1985: 487)

This interorganizational network perspective identifies board interlocks as an "opportunity structure that nobody actively seeks, but that nevertheless emerges" (Heemskerck, 2013: 95). The current debate about elite consolidation in the nonprofit sector invites researchers to use this perspective to identify whether hierarchy, technocracy, and unipolarity in fact define the opportunity structure of contemporary urban governance created by civic leaders.

2. Empirical expectations for elite consolidation

When interlocking directorates are associated with influence and resources for organizations and cohesion among civic elites, changes in the structure of interlocking directorates are a useful means to characterize power in institutionalized civil society. There are four fundamental descriptive questions related to the theory of elite consolidation that should be tested empirically.

First, all ethnographic research on elite consolidation assumes that civic leaders have increasingly integrated into a civic elite. If elite consolidation has occurred, then, we should expect that the proportion of CBOs integrated through interlocks has increased and that the proportion of CBOs integrated through a single network of boards has increased since the 1990s. In the language of social network analysis, this can be formulated as saying that the proportion of isolate organizations has declined and that the proportion interlocked through the largest component of the interlock networks in cities has grown. The decline in isolates would indicate that an ever larger number of CBO leaders are reachable through interlock networks, while the elongation of the main component would indicate that interlocking directorates form an important means through which the civic elite is constituted as a single entity.

Hypothesis 1A. (Elite Consolidation: Integration of Isolates): *between 1998 and 2016 the proportion of community-based organizations isolated from interlocking directorate networks has declined in cities.*

Hypothesis 1B. (Elite Consolidation: Integration of Main Component): *between 1998 and 2016 the proportion of community-based organizations integrated through the largest component of interlocking directorate networks*

has risen in cities.

Changes in the topology of these interlocking directorates, meanwhile, can be used to assess whether the consolidation of the civic elite has accompanied structural changes in civil society. First, per Levine (2016), we should expect the propensity for highly interlocked organizations in a community to interlock with other highly interlocked organizations, and not less interlocked organizations, to increase over time.

Hypothesis 2. (Hierarchy): *between 1998 and 2016 the most interlocked community-based organizations in cities became increasingly likely to form interlocking directorates with each other and not with organizations that have few interlocks.*

Third, while there are multiple perspectives on what kind of CBOs will be the most important players today, the portrait of civil society raised by most recent research argues that the core of contemporary civic networks contains large, professionalized organizations that operate in economic development, business, and philanthropy (Levine, 2016; Marwell et al., 2020; McQuarrie, 2013). We should expect to find these "technocratic organizations," and not partisan organizations or human services based organizations, at the core of networks created by civic elites.

Hypothesis 3. (Technocracy): *between 1998 and 2016 the core of interlocking directorate networks was occupied by philanthropies, urban development organizations, and organizations related to private business activity.*

Finally, the prevailing view of elite consolidation is that civic elites have made a single community of highly interconnected organizations hegemonic over all other communities of organizations in the civic elite. In other words, not only are highly connected organizations becoming more insular in their pattern of forming interlocks as interlocks have become integrated, but a single dense cluster of interconnected organizations is disproportionately central to all interlocking directorates. The topology of interorganizational CBO networks thus tends to lead toward a single community.

Hypothesis 4. (Unipolarity): *As of 2016, interlocking directorates are centralized in a single community of well-connected organizations and not shared evenly among multiple well-connected clusters of organizations.*

3. Analytic strategy

The goal of this analysis is to evaluate structural changes in interlocking directorate networks among CBOs. I utilize one-mode networks of CBOs, as is traditional in research on interlocking directorates (Borgatti and Everett, 1997; Everett and Borgatti, 2013). Using a panel of all CBOs located within the counties enclosing two cities, I first use interlocking directorate networks to establish whether civic leaders became more integrated as an elite. I then assess whether highly connected CBOs tend to increasingly connect with other highly connected CBOs. I also describe which organizations tend to be the most central actors in each network, and describe how interlocks are distributed among the most interconnected communities of the CBO-by-CBO networks of the elite.

3.1. Data and case selection

Data cover 1998–2016, and come from Forms 990 filed with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS, 2016). Forms 990 are documents filed by 501(c)3 nonprofits annually in order to obtain tax exempt status, and are the primary source of information on community-based organizations. Data comes from two sources that cover intervals within 1998–2016. Data for the first interval, 1998 to 2003, comes from a historic database (the "Digitized Data" file) of all nonprofits that filed Forms 990 and Forms 990-EZ maintained by the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS). Data for the second interval, 2013–2016, is obtained from

the e-filer database posted at Amazon Web Services. The new IRS e-filer data release provides complete financial information for all e-filing nonprofits³ from 2010 to the present (IRS, 2016). The IRS e-filer database is the largest and most detailed source of information on CBOs currently available excepting individual paper filings with the IRS. Neither database is comprehensive of all community-based organizations,⁴ though, and exclude organizations not required to file Forms 990 or Forms 990-EZ with the IRS, such as churches and organizations with net assets below \$25,000. These data allow trends in interlocking networks to be compared in intervals in the late 1990s and the mid 2010s in both cities, comprising four panels of twenty network cross-sections.

Data come from the population of nonprofits that filed Forms 990 in the counties enclosing two cities: Cleveland, OH and Austin, TX. I have selected these cities as test cases for evaluating elite consolidation because they are theoretically relevant to recent debates about elite consolidation. Midwestern manufacturing cities transitioning to post-industrial economies have been the quintessential field site for ethnographies of elite consolidation (McQuarrie, 2013; Pacewicz, 2016; Saford, 2009). The collapse of manufacturing and resulting decline of local philanthropic resources, experienced most acutely in the Rustbelt, is frequently viewed by researchers as the shock that led to technocratic urban governance today. Researchers of these cities argue that increasing resource dependency by CBOs on competitive and private funding, and the absence of local donor support, facilitated technocratic governance because local leaders were forced to orient to new revenue streams that traditional and confrontational associations could not attract. Cleveland, OH is the field site that generated McQuarrie's theory of "civic monoculture" (2013), which posited that an increasingly small set of highly resourced CBOs have displaced grassroots organizations as community representatives. As a result, dynamics in Cleveland should be most relevant for evaluating the theory of elite consolidation using an interorganizational approach.

Austin, TX, meanwhile, provides a negative case to evaluate against Cleveland. Austin, similar in size to Cleveland in the mid 1990s, experienced a rapid economic take-off after 2000 as part of the technology boom (Auyero, 2015). Austin's population grew exponentially between 2000 and 2016, providing a context of growth for changes in urban governance in contrast to the context of stagnation represented by Cleveland. Austin thus provides a point of comparison to evaluate elite consolidation since elite consolidation is usually located in resource poor contexts (Marwell, 2004; McQuarrie, 2013), and not growing, dynamic municipalities where many would be expected to have the resources to participate in voluntary activity. Including Austin in the

assessment of elite consolidation is also consistent with recent calls to broaden the variance of cases of interest in urban regime research (Stone et al., 2015), evaluating a theory primarily developed for declining industrial centers in the context of "new cities" where the social, demographic and political aspects of urban governance are less studied.

I examine elite consolidation using CBO-by-CBO interlock networks. Between 1998 and 2003, my sample includes all organizations in Cleveland, OH and Austin, TX that filed Forms 990 and Forms 990-EZ. Between 2013 and 2016, my sample includes all organizations that e-filed Forms 990 and Forms 990-EZ. Some organizations enter or leave the sample during the study periods. CBOs that enter the study filed Form 990s for the first time after reaching the size required for reporting or re-reported after a period of exemption, while CBOs that left the sample either closed or declined to the point of exemption. In Cleveland, the total number of unique CBOs ranges between 2,433 in the 1990s and 1,930 in the 2010s. In Austin, the total number of unique CBOs ranges between 1,495 in the 1990s and 2,081 in the 2010s. These networks are substantially larger than networks used by classic interorganizational governance research and most research on corporate boards, with some exceptions (Benton, 2016).

I construct undirected one-mode networks of the CBOs in both cities for each year from 1998 to 2003, and 2013 to 2016 using Part VII of the Forms 990 (Part V in pre-2008 Forms 990) and Part IV of the Forms 990-EZ. Part VII requires nonprofits to report all directors and executive officers.⁵ In analysis no distinction is made between board members and other executive officers listed when locating civic leaders. The identity of each civic leader is constructed by parsing the first and last names of directors and executive officers from Part VII, removing middle names, initials, and honorific titles and converting to lower case.⁶ The CBO-by-CBO adjacency matrices then enter 1 in a cell (i, j) if CBOs i and j share a civic leader, and a 0 otherwise.

3.2. Methodology

Social network research is rich with alternative measures of centrality and power. A variety of indicators, from community detection and spatial analysis to blockmodeling, have been used to understand hierarchy in interorganizational networks (among corporations recently, see: Carroll and Sapinski, 2010; Heemskerk, 2013; Heemskerk and Takes, 2016). In this study, I use the rich-club coefficient of the CBO-by-CBO networks as an index of hierarchy (Zhou and Mondragon 2004). The rich-club coefficient of a graph is an index of the propensity of nodes at degree k to connect with other nodes of degree equal to or greater than k normalized over the number of ties that could occur

³ Raw director data from AWS was provided to the researcher by the Nonprofit Open Data Collective. E-filers represent about 60–65% of all Forms 990 and Forms 990-EZ filers in the United States. Cleveland and Austin have more e-filers than the U.S. as a whole. In 2016, Cleveland's e-filers represented 76 percent of all organizations and Austin's e-filers represented 86 percent of all organizations, based on comparisons of AWS records to lists of active organizations kept by the National Center for Charitable Statistics. Paper filers are more likely to be small organizations with fewer financial assets, and a result are more likely to be isolates with no interlocking directorates. The exclusion of these isolates means that the analysis is likely to actually underestimate the relatively propensity for well-interlocked nonprofits to interlock to other well-interlocked nonprofits.

⁴ There are no assessments of the number of 501(c)3's that do not file. The National Center for Charitable Statistics (2020) estimated that 35 percent of all tax-exempt organizations registered with the IRS in 2016 were required to file a Form 990, Form 990-EZ, or Form 990-PF, but this includes all 501(c) organizations. Among 501(c)3's, those that do not file are either specifically exempt (like churches), or are too small to be required to file a full base form. About 65 percent of 501(c)3's are estimated to file Form-990EZ's, the rest filing full Forms 990 or Forms 990-N "Postcards" that do not report accounting information. The result is that this analysis largely describes institutionalized civil society, rather than informal civil society.

⁵ Part VII requires reporting of officers, directors, trustees, key employees, and up to five of the organization's highest compensated employees (usually those who make above \$100,000 in reportable compensation).

⁶ This algorithm was made available to the researcher by the Nonprofit Open Data Collective. In separate analyses (available from the author), fuzzy matching using Levenshtein distance was used to generate name matches between organizations as a robustness check on the validity of exact name matches on a cross section of the Austin network and two other cities in Texas. Levenshtein distance is a metric that captures the number of deletions, insertions, or substitutions necessary to transform one string into another (Bengfort et al., 2018: 201). ERGM models were deployed on the networks, and two thresholds were evaluated, the first generating a match if 10 percent of a name could be altered to turn the name into another, the second matching if 25 percent or less of name could be altered to turn a name into another. Key descriptive and inferential results did not change across any of the cities using fuzzy matching at any threshold, suggesting that exact name matches are efficient.

Table 1
Statistics for CBO One-Mode Interlock Panels.

Year	N	Mean Degree	Proportion Isolates	Proportion Main Component	Mean Geodesic of Main Component	Components
Cleveland, OH						
1998	1382	7.84	0.44	0.49	3.17	26
1999	1561	7.24	0.48	0.49	3.26	21
2000	1582	5.63	0.55	0.42	3.34	21
2001	1654	7.59	0.47	0.49	3.29	25
2002	1600	9.75	0.32	0.60	3.60	27
2003	1634	9.88	0.33	0.52	3.42	42
2013	1372	4.62	0.37	0.53	4.03	46
2014	1483	4.48	0.36	0.54	3.89	52
2015	1552	4.78	0.35	0.57	4.06	51
2016	1612	4.98	0.35	0.56	4.02	49
Austin, TX						
1998	739	2.31	0.51	0.40	3.87	30
1999	855	2.46	0.47	0.42	3.88	43
2000	885	1.79	0.58	0.34	4.16	37
2001	988	2.49	0.48	0.43	4.13	42
2002	1016	2.34	0.48	0.43	4.11	46
2003	1040	2.54	0.45	0.44	4.10	46
2013	1296	2.18	0.44	0.40	4.86	73
2014	1477	1.99	0.46	0.39	5.00	84
2015	1644	2.02	0.45	0.41	5.13	83
2016	1689	2.17	0.43	0.44	5.16	87

Note: Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) are included within the networks if registered as appearing in the county enclosing the city of interest. An interlock tie is defined as an officer of one CBO being reported as an officer of more than one CBO. Mean Degree refers to the average number of interlocks across CBOs. The proportion of isolates is the number of CBOs that have no interlocks, while proportion main component refers to the proportion of CBOs in the largest interconnected component of the graph. Geodesic distance is defined as the number of connections along the shortest path between two nodes. Mean geodesic refers to the average shortest path between all CBO pairs in the main component. Components refers to the number of connected sections of the graph, including dyads.

among nodes with degree equal to or greater than k in a complete graph, for all degree k^7 . The advantage of the rich-club coefficient is that it allows a direct assessment of the tendency for well-connected organizations to interlock over time through comparison of the coefficient slopes in each network. If the slopes of the coefficients are stable between 1998 and 2016, it indicates that the inequality in interlocks among CBOs has not changed over time. If the slopes rise over time, meanwhile, it indicates increasing hierarchy and insularity of ties within the network.

In order to identify the organizational "network elites" within each city—the organizations made most connected by their directors—I use the Louvain network community detection algorithm, following Ma and DeDeo (2018) and Heemskerck and Takes (2016). Louvain network community detection groups nodes into communities which maximize their modularity, Q , the fraction of edges within a community minus the fraction of edges expected to occur in that community expected at random in a degree preserving model. As modularity approaches one, it indicates that a community is highly inter-connected. Communities can then be disambiguated into single nodes that attribute the ties that occurred between CBOs in different communities to the community itself, allowing communities to be ranked in centrality. I employ Louvain network community detection on the largest integrated component of the networks. I use PageRank⁸, a variant of power centrality, in order to rank the centrality of communities within the component. I define the "network elites" of CBOs as the 15 organizations with the highest degree in the community with the highest PageRank score in the network.

⁷ At every level of k , I again normalize this index over a the mean of rich-club coefficients generated from 1000 random graphs with the same degree distribution. This is to account for the fact that in certain degree distributions it becomes impossible to avoid connecting high degree hubs.

⁸ PageRank ranks nodes as central if they are connected to other well-connected nodes, similar to other power centrality measures. PageRank is based on a random-walker model, and can be interpreted as a consensus measure of power (Brush et al., 2013).

Finally, I compare the distribution of PageRank among the top ten largest communities to assess the hypothesis of unipolarity within interlocking directorate networks.

4. Results

4.1. Integration and hierarchy

Table 1 reports descriptive summaries for each one-mode network panel. Table 1 offers a general assessment of the trajectory of interlocking among community-based organizations in Cleveland and Austin. The table indicates that civic leaders became more integrated through boards of directors in Cleveland and Austin between 1998 and 2016. Interlocking became more common among CBOs in general, as the percentage of organizations that were isolates, with no interlocks, declined in both cities: from roughly 44 percent to 35 percent in Cleveland, and from 51 percent to 43 percent in Austin. At the same time, the rise in interlocking produced a modest increase in the size of the main component in each city, with the percentage of organizations integrated into the largest component rising from 49 percent to 56 percent in Cleveland, and from 40 percent to 44 percent in Austin. There are only also only a few dozen components in Cleveland, and never more than a hundred in Austin. Moreover, most of these components are dyads, and the largest component tends to dwarf the next largest in size. For example, the largest component in Cleveland in 2016 consisted of 906 organizations, and the next largest contained 16 organizations. In 2016 in Austin, meanwhile, 63 of the 87 components were dyads, and the second largest component had only 7 organizations. In other words, a single dominant network of interlocking directorates tended to integrate the boards of community-based organizations in the two cities by the 1990s, and continued to grow. The appearance of this dominant network empirically confirms the emergence of a civic elite.

Table 1 also points to structural differences between Cleveland and Austin. Cleveland's civil society had hundreds more organizations and had less isolates and a larger main component than Austin in the 1990s. This is expected given Cleveland's historical differences in size and civic

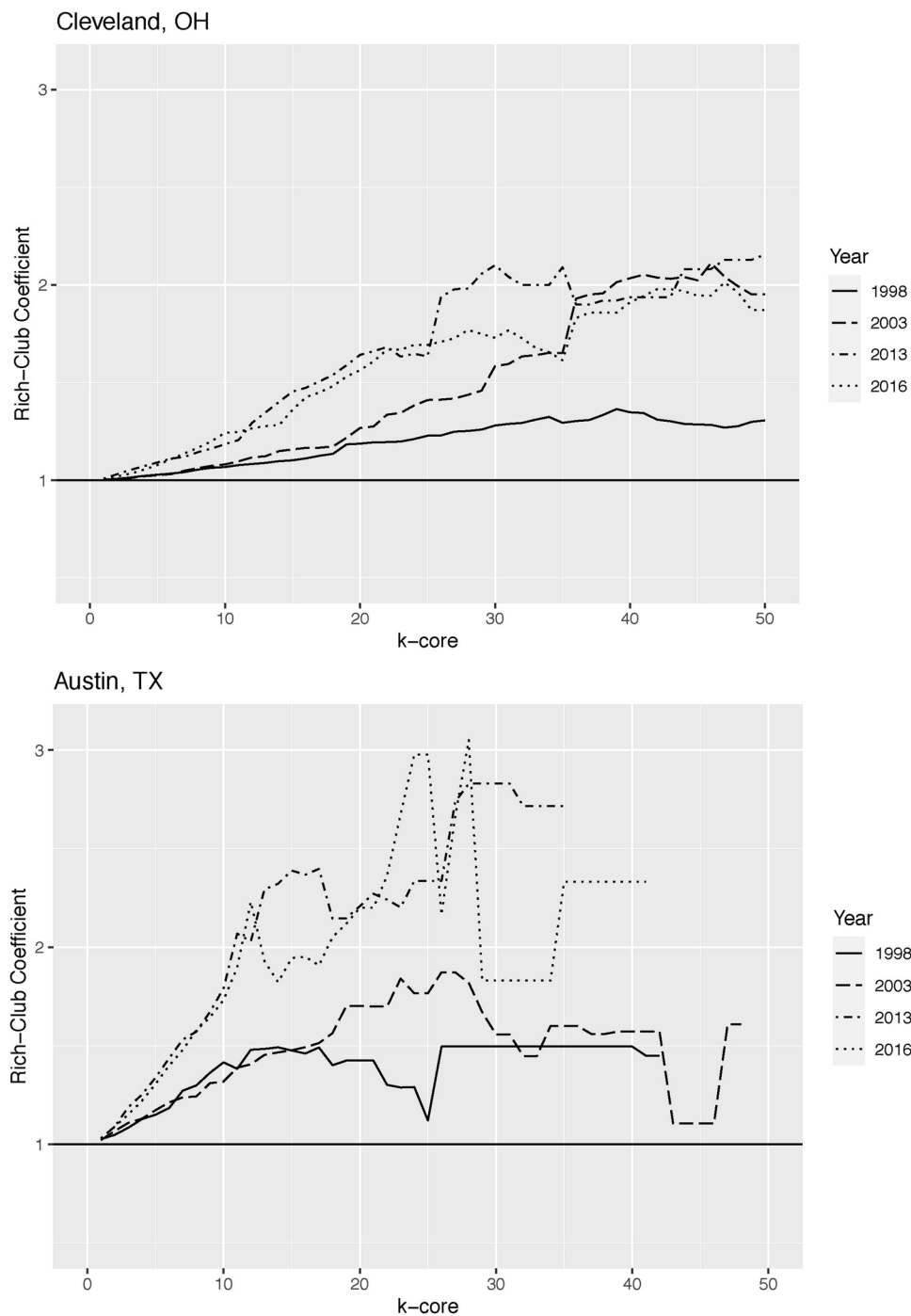


Fig. 1. Rich-Club Coefficient of Cleveland and Austin Networks as a Function of k -core, 1998–2016.

Note: High degree CBOs increasingly preferentially connect to other high degree CBOs. The rich-club coefficient grows as a function of k -core level for the full network, and the coefficient becomes more exponential in the most recent time period ("dotted lines"), compared to the 1990s ("solid lines"). In other words, nodes with high degree are increasingly far more likely to connect to each other, compared to a null model that preserves the degree distribution but otherwise breaks interlock correlations. Normalized values over 1 of the rich-club coefficient are reported.

activity. The gap in isolates and size of the main component in the two cities has remained steady over time, even as the difference in civic density has declined. Austin's civil society doubled from 739 organizations to 1689 organizations as Austin grew. Cleveland's civil society remained stable between 1998 and 2016.

Notably, the overall rise in the number of interconnected organizations did not accompany an increase in the average number of interlocks in either city. The pattern of board interlocking tended to parallel trends among large American corporations (Carroll and Sapinski, 2010). The average number of interlocks among CBOs sat between 7 and 10

interlocks in Cleveland in the 1990s, meaning that Cleveland organizations were about as interlocked as Fortune 500 companies at the same time (Westphal and Zajac, 2013). Also like corporate interlocks, the networks of both cities could be described as small worlds (Davis et al., 2003; Uzzi and Spiro, 2005; Watts, 1999): the average geodesic or "path length" between CBOs in the main component of Cleveland is between 3 and 4 interlocks over the time period, and never rises above 5 in Austin. However, and again following contemporary corporations, the average number of interlocks in Cleveland has declined and path lengths in both cities rose as the civic networks grew and became more extensive. Austin

Table 2
Network Elites of Interlocking Directorate Networks in 2016.

Name	Degree	Major NTEE
Cleveland, OH		
University Circle Incorporated	90	Community Improvement
Greater Cleveland Sports Commission	71	Recreation & Sports
Greater Cleveland Partnership	65	Community Improvement
United Way of Greater Cleveland	65	Philanthropy
Playhouse Square Foundation	58	Arts
The Cleveland Orchestra	57	Community Improvement
Cleveland Leadership Center	52	Public Benefit
College Now Greater Cleveland Inc.	51	Education
Business Volunteers Unlimited	49	Community Improvement
Ideastream	48	Community Improvement
Downtown Cleveland Alliance	44	Housing
Boy Scouts of America Greater Cleveland Council 440	42	Youth Development
Convention and Visitors Bureau of Greater Cleveland Inc.	41	Community Improvement
Cleveland Museum of Natural History	41	Arts
Global Cleveland	40	Human Services
Austin, TX		
Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce	42	Community Improvement
Boy Scouts of America 564 Capitol Area Council	29	Youth Development
Boy Scouts of America Capitol Area Council Tom Wooten Trust	29	Youth Development
Greater Austin Performing Arts Center Inc.	27	Arts
Austin Partners in Education	26	Education
Headliners Club in Austin	26	Recreation & Sports
Austin Area Research Organization Inc.	23	Community Improvement
American Youthworks	16	Education
Real Estate Council of Austin Inc.	16	Housing
Capital Area Food Bank of Texas Inc.	15	Food
Austin Trinity School	14	Education
Austin Community College Center for Public Policy and Political Studies	13	Education
Headliners Foundation of Texas	13	Arts
Workforce Solutions - Capital	13	Employment
Foster Angels of Central Texas Foundation	11	Human Services

Note: The Network Elite consists of the fifteen organizations with the highest degree in the network community (from Louvain) with the highest page rank. The National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) is a field classification for nonprofits attributed by the IRS.

organizations never reached the relatively high degree of Cleveland organizations, so by the end of the time period, the level of interconnection in both cities tended to more closely approximate the S&P 1500 (Benton, 2016: 681), rather than the largest corporations of the Fortune 500.

The decline in average interlocks and rising path lengths of the networks suggest that well-connected civic organizations tended to become selective about who they formed interlocks with as the civic elite integrated. Is there evidence of rising hierarchy and insularity in interlock formation? Fig. 1 reports the rich-club coefficient as a function of k degree for the CBO-by-CBO networks in Cleveland and Austin at four time points: 1998, 2003, 2013, and 2016. Fig. 1 provides evidence for both rising hierarchy and insularity among community-based organizations in both cities. Looking horizontally, the figure indicates that highly interlocked organizations have been more likely to form ties with organizations of the same or greater degree than organizations with few interlocks since at least 1998. This hierarchy is indicated by the fact that the rich-club coefficient tends to rise in every trend line in both cities as a function of k .

Looking vertically, however, indicates that hierarchy has risen over time. Moving from the solid line (baseline 1998) to the dotted lines

(2016) shows that the gap in the rich-club coefficient between highly connected organizations and organizations with few interlocks has widened. In Cleveland, for example, organizations at the top of the degree distribution were roughly 40 percent more likely be connected to other organizations of similar degree than were organizations at the bottom of the degree distribution in 1998. In 2016, meanwhile, organizations at the top of the degree distribution were 200 percent more likely to interlock with other well-interlocked organizations.

The trend is even more visible in Austin, where hierarchy rises at a near exponential rate in 2013 and 2016. Austin has fewer organizations at the very top of the degree distribution, meaning trends become erratic and flatline beyond $k = 30$. However, the widening gulf in hierarchical interlock tendencies is already suggested at $k=20$. In 2016, organizations at $k=20$ were more than twice as likely to connect to CBOs of similar or greater degree than organizations with the same number of interlocks in 1998. It is also important to note that rising hierarchy is already visible in both networks by 2003 as compared to 1998, indicating the trend was present by the early 2000s.

4.2. The network elites

What organizations occupy the center of these increasingly hierarchical networks among the civic elite? Recent discussions of elite consolidation have tended to argue that the organizations most central in contemporary community governance are development organizations, non-partisan philanthropies, and organizations related to private capital and business. Table 2 reports which organizations comprised the "network elites" of the interlocking directorate networks⁹.

Table 2 provides little qualitative support for the notion of a technocratic heart in contemporary urban governance. On the one hand, Cleveland's "network elites" display many qualitative aspects of technocracy. Eight of the fifteen network elites in Cleveland operate in urban re-development, housing, or the business related fields. Two of the three most connected organizations, the University Circle Incorporated and the Greater Cleveland Partnership, are a chambers of commerce and business lobby, which while traditional can be described as having technocratic business-related goals. The only human services organization among the "network elites," meanwhile, is the immigrant naturalization-focused Global Cleveland, and is at the bottom of the list. These organizations roughly coincide with the kind of technocratic organizations that ethnographers have tended to find in struggling post-industrial cities attempting to attract economic growth.

At the same time, Cleveland's "network elite" contains a large proportion of organizations dedicated to the arts, culture, media and sports, such as The Cleveland Orchestra and Ideastream, a media foundation. Arts organizations have long been thought of as organizational homes for traditional elites because their patrons and members tend to be wealthy (Marquis et al., 2011), but not because they are technocratic. The "network elite" also comprises the United Way and the Boy Scouts, traditional civic funders and membership organizations long identified as central in community affairs. Cleveland's "network elites" can actually be compared to the "network elites" Galaskiewicz (1979: 72-73) found in "Towertown" in the 1970s Midwest, suggesting persistent traditionalism.

Austin's civic network displays even greater evidence of traditionalism. As in Cleveland, a chamber of commerce is the most connected CBO, and a business-think tank, the Austin Area Research Organization, ranks among the most interlocked organizations. However, the most interlocked organizations in the community after the chamber of commerce are the Boy Scouts, and organizations related to the Arts. In general, the "network elites" tend to be business groups, Arts philanthropies, and traditionally popular voluntary organizations and charities. Education related organizations also make a presence, potentially

⁹ Based on community membership, the power centrality of the community, and degree, as discussed above.

Table 3
Most Concentrated and Least Concentrated Fields Across Communities.

Field	Gini	Field	Gini
Cleveland, OH		Austin, TX	
Employment, Job-Related	0.56	Health	0.43
Education	0.50	Mental Health	0.42
Community Improvement	0.44	Arts	0.42
Philanthropy	0.42	Crime-Legal Related	0.40
Recreation, Sports	0.41	Human Services	0.37
Public Safety	0.25	Religion	0.25
Youth	0.21	Agriculture, Food	0.22
Public, Social Benefit	0.21	Public Safety	0.15
Civil Rights	0.17	Animal-Related	0.13
Crime-Legal Related	0.17	Civil Rights	0.12

Note: Fields reported are the top five most concentrated and bottom five least concentrated.

Table 4
Multipolarity of Interlocking Directorates in 2016.

Community	Number Nodes	Average Degree	Page Rank	Community	Number Nodes	Average Degree	Page Rank
Cleveland, OH				Austin, TX			
1	143	15.12	19.46	1	94	6.61	13.20
2	106	10.74	10.01	2	75	4.63	7.28
3	89	7.91	7.43	3	49	4.61	5.30
4	87	7.29	6.22	4	49	4.59	5.11
5	72	5.47	4.28	5	45	3.51	4.09
6	64	6.81	4.45	6	43	3.91	4.23
7	56	8.84	5.07	7	42	5.17	5.12
8	47	5.00	3.76	8	40	3.23	3.79
9	46	5.09	3.14	9	39	2.97	3.87
10	45	7.33	3.99	10	39	3.41	3.98

Note: Ten largest communities are shown. Communities are detected from Louvain algorithm.

owing to Austin's role as a state capital.

The most important difference between the interlock networks of Cleveland and Austin may be the important role of overtly partisan-affiliated business organizations in integrating the organizational "network elites" in Austin. Traditional business-focused organizations have the most interlocks and are the most central actors in both Austin's largest and second largest communities¹⁰. The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, as Table 2 shows, is the dominant interlocker within the largest community. The Texas Association of Business is the most interlocked organization in the second largest community. In this community, the Texas Association of Business acts as a mediator between several groups of interlocked manufacturing organizations, conservative advocacy organizations, and health insurance lobbies.

Nonprofits without the partisan ties of manufacturing groups and Chambers, such as the re-development oriented Greater Cleveland Partnership, are generally more central in Cleveland. In fact, Cleveland's second largest community excludes economic organizations and consists of a network of Jewish charities. In this cluster, the Jewish Federation of Cleveland anchors a network of disparate service providers with historic ties to the Jewish community, including: Mt. Sinai Health Care, the Jewish Community Care at Home Federation, the Bellefaire Jewish Children's Bureau, and the National Council of Jewish Women. Cleveland's "Jewish" provider network recalls Salamon's (1987) description of the importance of ethnic-based charities in jumpstarting civil society. Its existence indicates that scholars of elite consolidation may have underestimated the extent to which these historic civic networks continue to play an important role in cities with philanthropically active populations. Future research on elite consolidation should closely consider the role these communities play in integrating civic elites

across organizational communities.

4.3. Communities – unipolarity or multipolarity?

In Austin and Cleveland the civic elite is integrating into a hierarchical nonprofit field. This integration is occurring around a group of organizations that have traditionally been central in urban governance. These measures do not describe whether these "network elites" are hegemonic over the elite as a whole, though—whether the elite are defined by the single dominant community or by multiple communities of interconnected organizations. To what extent are Austin and Cleveland consolidating around a unitary group of elites?

The average modularity for all communities in the elite calculated by Louvain network community detection rose from 0.42 to 0.54 across the panel in Cleveland, and from 0.54 to 0.69 in Austin, indicating moderate but rising levels of clustering among organizations. The corresponding

number of communities detected by Louvain network community detection thus grew in parallel in both cities. While 10 communities existed in Cleveland's main component in 1998, that number doubled to 20 by 2003 and remained at 21 in 2016. Austin's communities doubled from 12 communities in 1998 to 22 communities in 2016.

Austin and Cleveland's civic elites were split along different lines despite their common trajectories of fragmentation. Nonprofit sector differences do not appear to have been the primary cleavage between communities in either city, as the number of sectors in communities tends to be high and only rises linearly as communities grow. Nonprofit fields are differently concentrated in the two cities, though. Table 3 reports the Gini coefficient for the distribution of each field across communities. The Gini coefficient in Table 3 can be read as an index for the concentration of fields in the same interlock communities. Table 3 indicates that, in Cleveland, nonprofit sectors focused on education and labor-markets tended to be the most closely interlocked, while in Austin the most inter-connected sectors were Health, Mental Health and the Arts field. The formation of closely inter-connected communities in Job Training and Community Improvement in Cleveland is consistent with McQuarrie's (2013) description of Cleveland. In mobilizing labor markets and real-estate, the concentration of these fields in the same communities is suggestive of the role that civic elites have played in steering the city's economic rehabilitation following de-industrialization. The emergence of highly connected health fields in Austin, meanwhile, points to alternative potential blocs of interconnected organizations. Hospitals, hospice care and other nonprofit medical services can also act as important labor-market institutions, and in cities like Austin with less pressure for job-retraining and abandoned commercial redevelopment, health institutions may form an alternative consolidated industrial sector. No sector in either city approached a Gini coefficient of 1, though, indicating that sectors rarely form completely homogenous communities.

Rising modularity points to increasing structural differentiation

¹⁰ Visualizations of these communities as detected by Louvain network community detection are available in the Appendix.

among groups in the network, and suggests multipolarity. However, it is possible for multiple communities to exist in a core-periphery structure around the more central community, since the network elites could be at the center of relations between other peripheral communities. To evaluate this, I compare the average degree of CBOs within each community reported by Louvain network community detection, as well as the PageRank of each community. Table 4 reports the Page Rank, Size, and Average Degree of the top 10 largest communities.

Table 4 points towards multipolarity rather than unipolarity among elites. While the largest communities in each network tend to stand a head above the rest in terms of average degree and power centrality within the network, PageRank power centrality tends to be shared evenly among the elite communities. Indeed, the Gini coefficient for PageRank among the top ten largest communities is 20 % in Austin, and 30 % in Cleveland, where 0 would equal perfect equality in power centrality among the communities. This power distribution is as egalitarian as the famously egalitarian income distribution of Sweden (Gini of 24.9 percent, [Central Intelligence Agency, 2013](#)), and is almost identical to the level of power sharing in interlocks among Chinese foundations reported by [Ma and DeDeo \(2018\)](#).

These results can be read together with previous findings. Elite leaders of CBOs are consolidating relationships in both Cleveland and Austin. However, the "network elites" at the heart of these civic networks does not appear to be a "new elite", but rather consists of the kinds of organizations that researchers identified at the center of civic networks as early as the 1970s—officers of chambers of commerce, highly visible membership based organizations and charities, and elite cultural institutions. At the same time, the civic networks in each city are becoming increasingly structurally heterogeneous even as they become more hierarchical, creating multiple communities of elites rather than a hegemonic elite. Put another way, what has changed in these two cities is not the composition of the elites in urban governance, but rather the fact that their elites are increasingly fragmented and hierarchically integrated.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Scholars have long debated the consequences of Americans' turn away from membership associations and towards the professional "check-book associations" that CBOs embody ([Painter and Paxton, 2014](#); [Skocpol and Fiorina, 2004](#)). Only over the past two decades, though, have scholars of urban politics begun to take note of an emerging civic elite among the CBOs at the center of contemporary governance. According to scholars working in multiple traditions, the leadership of the most important community-based organizations in cities has increasingly consolidated into a single leadership class that is more likely to prioritize building relationships with other elite actors, and not grassroots actors or functionally relevant partners in service provision. In general, these organizations have been thought to be highly resourced organizations closely connected to business, urban development, and philanthropy, all connected together in a single dominant core.

This paper has leveraged interlocking directorates to provide a means to evaluate structural trends in the consequences of elite consolidation in two cities, Cleveland, OH, and Austin, TX. Results support both the hypothesis that civic leaders have become more integrated as an elite, as evidenced by declining isolation and rising main component access among boards of directors, and the hypothesis of rising hierarchy in structure of CBO relationships, as indicated by increasing preferential attachment among well-interlocked organizations to other well-interlocked organizations. Results counter the hypotheses of rising technocracy and unipolarity, though. The organizational "network elites" at the center of civil society in the two cities do not adhere to the portrait of new technocratic organizations and consist of organizations that have been central actors in urban governance since the 1970s. The Gini coefficient of PageRank scores

among the communities revealed by Louvain network community detection also indicated that there are multiple influential communities of organizations rather than a single dominant community in each city.

There are important differences in relationships among the civic elite between Cleveland and Austin. Austin's largest communities tended to be integrated through partisan-affiliated business organizations, indicating that partisan ties have not totally disappeared in civic networks. Cleveland's network, though, gave greater prominence to economic development organizations that lacked ties to Chambers of Commerce or manufacturing. Cleveland more closely adhered to the portrait of civic relationships offered by Pacewicz, Safford and McQuarrie. Cleveland's second largest community was also a network of Jewish-affiliated service providers, indicating the continuing importance of ethnic-based civic organizations in cities with philanthropically active populations. And, while nonprofit sectors did not create the cleavages between communities in either city, organizations focused on labor markets, education and community development tended to make up the most concentrated fields of organization in Cleveland. The health sector formed an alternative integrated economic sector in Austin, pointing to other possible sectoral sources of integration among the civic elite.

In general, however, nonprofit leaders in Cleveland and Austin encountered the same paradoxical environment: an institutionalized civil society that is simultaneously more integrated and more fragmented into many competing circles of influence. This "opportunity structure" ([Heemskerck, 2013](#)) poses difficult choices for CBO leadership to navigate. Through boards of directors, CBO leaders will be more aware of one another through the system of references, appointments and collaboration that define interlocking directorates. Since board interlocks tend to lead to membership in mutually exclusive communities of organizations, though, civic leaders that seek collaborations will be forced to make difficult choices about which clique they affiliate with. The opportunities embedded in these interlocks will also be unequal across organizations. The apparent preference for connecting to the well-connected means that new and poorly networked organizations will face few opportunities to join the institutionalized cliques of civil society. This inequality in opportunities creates a structural resource disadvantage for emerging organizations, who are often the most responsive to emerging policy needs and who bring new activists and ideas into organizing circles ([Klinenberg, 2018](#)).

This "elitist pluralism" in civil society could have different consequences for communities than those currently envisioned by researchers. Current debates about the consequences of elite consolidation assume that the integration of the civic elite has created a hierarchical, unipolar, and technocratic civil society. In this line of thought, [Safford \(2009\)](#) proposed that unipolarity among civic elites can help unify civic leaders to successfully manage urban crises, while [Pacewicz \(2015\)](#), (2016) was concerned that unipolar urban governance regimes would lead to the alienation and polarization of those excluded from civic leadership networks. However, the combination of hierarchy, traditionalism, and fragmentation found in this study invites a different set of potential outcomes. Findings of increasing hierarchy among the civic elite do underscore [Levine's \(2016\)](#) concern that communities can suffer if the organizations that represent communities can act as insular and autonomous representatives. The clustering of interlocking directorates across multiple elite communities, though, suggests a community power structure that is tessellated and mosaic rather than unified and absolute. Fragmentation among elites is usually associated with pluralism, a situation where competition among elites enables the representation of multiple perspectives and a better functioning democracy ([Dahl 2005 \[1961\]](#) [Dahl 2005 \[1961\]](#)). In Levine's case, neighborhoods may witness competing visions in urban development instead of a single consensus as civic elites become more autonomous. It is possible that this fragmentation, alongside the continued importance of traditional civic organizations, has actually strengthened the structural basis for robust civic life.

On the other hand, a combination of hierarchy and fragmentation

among elites in Cleveland and Austin may pose other challenges. The lack of a hegemonic elite among CBOs recalls Safford's (2009) original point that fragmentation can create collaboration problems for service providers facing declining funding, rising urban challenges, and increasing skepticism to established institutions and their expertise. CBOs are most effective at fighting social problems, from income inequality to climate change, when they bring together their resources across working areas (Berrone et al., 2016; Klinenberg, 2018; Small et al., 2008). Civic networks that are both pluralistic and hierarchical will be suboptimal for collective action. Indeed, Baldassarri and Diani (2007: 772) propose that pluralism emerges most vibrantly when there are many overlapping "cross-cutting" ties among movement organizations, not stratified hierarchical ones. Finally, the integration of elites into a complex structure without a unitary elite may foreshadow an inability among civic elites to reach consensus. The situation recalls Mizruchi's (2013) description of the rise and collapse of the American corporate elite. After the Second World War, manufacturers became increasingly unable to unify their policy visions as they became integrated during the consolidation of the postwar American economy. According to Mizruchi, the consequence for the corporate elite was an inability to adjust to economic change, and eventual usurpation by economic outsiders during the shareholder activism surge of the 1980s. If the stage of civil society is set for escalated confrontation because grassroots actors are now shut out, as Pacewicz claims, then it may also be set for fewer hopes of resolution.

These findings are limited to Cleveland and Austin and do not have purchase on whether these structural trends describe all community-based organizations across the United States. These findings are also descriptive, indicating at maximum which trends have occurred in the formation of interlocking directorates among the new civic elite. They do not assess the impact of these tendencies as asserted by previous ethnographic literature, leaving open the positive and negative consequences of elite consolidation. These results also describe behavior among organizations, and not among both organizations and directors, collapsing the two-mode nature of the data onto a one mode projection that erases important information about the behavior of directors themselves in order to understand a singular trend (Benton, 2016; Valeeva et al., 2020). Finally, this analysis cannot hope to disentangle the chain of causation behind interlocks, which likely involves a mix of behavioral features among civic elites, organizational strategies, and institutional incentives, as well ecological contexts. At a minimum, the analysis suggests that historical and demographic differences across cities will create different opportunities for civic communities to emerge, such as business lobbies in Austin and Jewish charities in Cleveland. Evidence for similar structural changes in Cleveland and Austin also suggests that the dynamics driving changes are more than strictly ecological.

Nonetheless, this paper offers a benchmark on which to evaluate quantitative studies of civic interlock networks through the interorganizational approach. Based on administrative data from the full population of 501(c)3 nonprofits that filed with the IRS, the study critically establishes that a dominant main component of civic leaders was present in the two cities as of the 1990s, and that this component appears to continue growing in the period covered by digitized data. The exclusion of paper filers in the later period, meanwhile, suggests that estimates for rising hierarchy are likely conservative compared to data that includes all smaller nonprofit organizations. And, while the findings in this paper have emphasized the role of community-based organizations in order to engage existing debates in urban governance researchers, the findings here covered all 501(c)3 nonprofits aside from foundations, indicating that elite consolidation is ongoing in the nonprofit sector and is worthy

of attention by public administration scholars at large.

Evidence of structural change in both a city associated with the trend—Cleveland—and in the unexpected context of Austin, also invites meta-analysis of trends in elite consolidation across American municipalities. Researchers can utilize methodologies for studying tie formation, such as exponential random graph models (ERGMs), stochastic actor oriented models (SAOMs), and relational event models (REMs), to better understand the dynamics associated with interlocking directorates among CBOs. Studies of adolescent social networks in schools have used multi-level meta-analysis of sets of 100 or more ERG models to study trends in the micro-mechanisms of tie formation across various contexts (McFarland et al., 2014), and future research can integrate dynamic network models with ecological factors to adjudicate between theoretical explanations for structural change. On the other side of the coin, researchers studying elite consolidation should use these indexes of structural change to understand changes in volunteering, political participation, and the efficacy of nonprofit organizations in solving common urban problems like food insecurity and poverty. In any of these projects, it will be critical to understand the bipartite structure of interlocking directorates and consider both the behavior of organizations and directors in forming interlock networks (Benton, 2016; Valeeva et al., 2020). SAOM models, in particular, have already been used to understand the bipartite structure of corporate networks, and provide a promising avenue for understanding the role of resource dependency, popularity dynamics, and other factors in interlock formation.

Acknowledgement

I thank Pamela Paxton, Jesse Lecy, Ji Ma, Edward Walker, Richard Benton, and the members of the Problem Solving Sociology Network for their critical support on this project.

Appendix A

Fig. A1 illustrates the topology of the largest community in Cleveland, the second largest community, as well a cluster of interlocked health and housing human service organizations. As Fig. A1 demonstrates, both of the largest communities in Cleveland tend to be centered around highly interlocked Social Benefit organizations. However, the content of the two largest clusters is substantially different. The "Secondary Elites" in Fig. A1A and B actually comprise a network of Jewish charities interconnected through the Jewish Federation of Cleveland. Other organizations in the network include: Mt. Sinai Health Care, the Jewish Community Care at Home Federation, the Bellefaire Jewish Children's Bureau, and the National Council of Jewish Women. The community thus embraces organizations with many different fields but who share a common cultural history.

Fig. A1A–C is a community that embraces two cliques of housing development corporations and a clique of hospitals. Close inspection of Fig. A1A–C indicates that these cliques are "federated organizations"—that is, hospitals and community development corporations that are independently chartered nonprofits of a single organization. Fig. A1A–C suggest that, if nonprofits tend to increasingly subdivide their organizations into smaller organizational chapters, interlocking directorates may increasingly cluster and fragment simply because of organizational subdivision.

Fig. A2A visualizes the network structure of three exemplary communities in Austin, and demonstrates how organizations play different roles in integrating boards of directors across different groups of elites. Fig. A2-A demonstrates how the topology of Austin's dominant

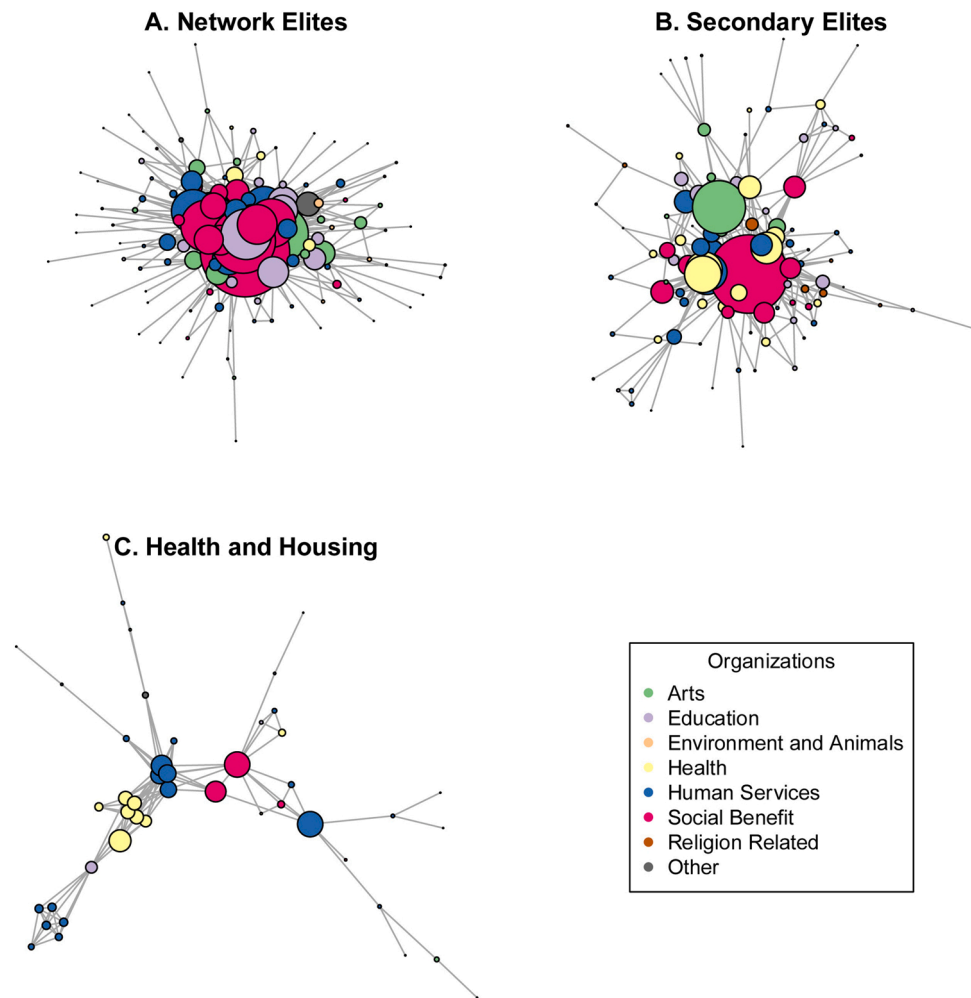


Fig. A1. Network Visualization of Communities in Cleveland, OH.

community, reported in Table 2, is dependent on a hub of Social Benefit, Arts, Human Services and Education organizations. The central Social Benefit organization is the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, which acts a focal hub among the "network elites" of Austin. The Chamber is closely interlocked to the Austin Area Research Organization, a business-oriented think tank, the Boy Scouts, and the Headliners Foundation, an institution for journalism and public relations, as well other leading arts and educational organizations. Through these intermediaries, the Chamber operates as a hub in the spoke of Austin's central community.

Fig. A2-B highlights Austin's second largest community. This community is also integrated through a dominant business-related Social Benefit organization—the Texas Association of Business—but this association tends to overshadow the community rather than operate in conjunction with other hub organizations. Indeed, the Texas Association of Business actually integrates three other distinct groups—a network of medical associations, a group of arts and humanities philanthropies, and a mixed network of manufacturing groups, conservative advocacy

organizations and health insurance lobbies. The repeated dominance of business groups in Austin, Texas is also suggestive of the role of corporate-connected CBOs in organizing Austin's civil society.

Fig. A2A–C, finally, highlights how some communities in Austin actually consist of distinct clusters of organizations that are thinly connected by intermediaries. Two groups emerge in this third human services oriented community: a group of housing organizations and community development corporations, and a group of organizations focused on domestic violence and child abuse. The community is only connected through GENAustin, an organization focused on empowerment for girls and young women that shares directors from both other organizations focused on youth and organizations focused on housing issues. Fig. A2A–C, also reveals a recurring substructure within interlocking directorate networks—a nearly complete clique of community development corporations. Closer inspection of this clique reveals that each organization is an affiliate of the Texas Housing Finance Corporation. The recurrence of these "affiliate cliques" indicate that interlocking directorates often unify independently charted, but federated

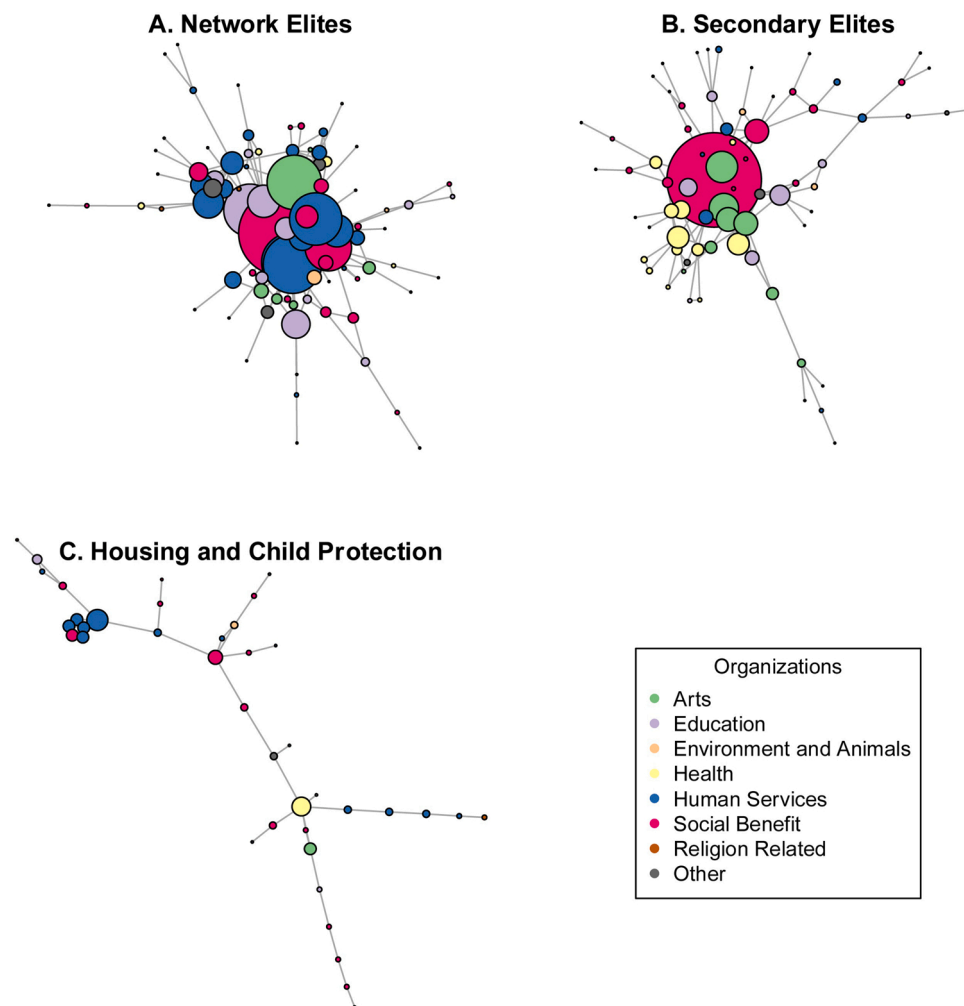


Fig. A2. Network Visualization of Communities in Austin, TX.

nonprofits that actually tend to operate as a super organization. Future research should explore ways of disambiguating these clusters to understand their role in CBO interlock typology.

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