Neighborhood Change and Urban Policy

Kenneth Temkin and William Rohe

Abstract

Theories of neighborhood change have concentrated on explaining the process within one disciplinary paradigm despite repeated calls for a model with a multidisciplinary perspective. Consequently, policies to stabilize neighborhoods tend to be theoretically myopic with respect to their recommended course of action. This article provides a synthetic model of neighborhood change based on three major schools of neighborhood change: ecological, subcultural, and political economy. In addition, it provides a discussion of policy implications of each perspective including the synthetic model outlined in this paper.

The process of neighborhood change, to date, has not been analyzed from a multidisciplinary theoretical perspective. As consensus grows that one's neighborhood plays a large role in determining access to education, employment, and an improved quality of life (Anderson 1991; Galster and Hill 1992; Wilson 1987), it is unfortunate that our understanding of neighborhood change remains a prisoner of intellectual parochialism. A review of the literature indicates that scholars of neighborhood change tend to focus on variables which are easily analyzed within a single discipline's paradigm (Birch 1971; Bond and Coulson 1989; Hoover and Vernon 1959; Muth 1973). Economists, for example, often concentrate on the declining amount of capital stock embedded in a housing unit over time (Henderson 1985). Sociologists often stress a neighborhood's changing functional role within a larger urban area's system (Berry and Kasarda 1977). Geographers model neighborhood change as a spatial process, and so study border effects and other spatially related phenomena (Bailey 1959, Deskin 1981). Although separate disciplines have made significant contributions to our understanding of neighborhood change, calls for a multidisciplinary approach (Schwab 1987) have largely gone unheeded.

Our goals, then, are to present a synthetic model of neighborhood change and to explore the implications of that model for neighborhood stabilization, upgrading, and deconcentration policies. Throughout this paper we assume a rather broad definition of neighborhood change which encompasses a variety of objectively measurable changes to a neighborhood's physical and social environment. Unlike previous models of neighborhood change, the theoretical framework developed here demonstrates how neighborhood change is not the result of seemingly inexorable ecological forces, nor is it solely a function of economically motivated individuals and institutions acting either alone or in concert. Over a given period of time, neighborhoods within a single city can follow one of three trajectories: stability, decline, or upgrading. We argue that a neighborhood's trajectory results from its ability to position itself favorably with external sources of financial, political, and social resources and that this ability is largely dependent on the physical, social, and locational characteristics of the community. Consequently, neighborhood stabilization policies that exclusively concentrate on the physical characteristics of a community (housing stock, commercial establishments, etc.) are likely to be ineffective, as they do not enhance a neighborhood's access to the resources needed to maintain a stable and attractive residential environment. Similarly, efforts designed to strengthen a community's political power via promoting either horizontal and/or vertical integration (Rohe and Mouw 1991; Warren and Warren 1977) may not be enough to forestall neighborhood decline if physical deterioration is an everyday concern of neighborhood residents.

Kenneth Temkin is a doctoral candidate in the Department of City and Regional at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514-3140 USA.

William Rohe is the Dean E. Smith Professor of Planning in the Department of City and Regional at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514-3140 USA.

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The next section contains a critical review of the three major perspectives on neighborhood change along with an analysis of how each theoretical framework has influenced urban policy. After our discussion of both the contributions and shortcomings of each neighborhood change perspective, we present a synthetic model of neighborhood change which draws on all three perspectives. A third section discusses the policy implications of our model and is followed by a concluding section presenting a future research agenda.

■ Ecological Perspectives

We define ecological perspectives broadly to include all those that are, at their core, highly deterministic. These perspectives are the intellectual progeny of urban ecology, yet encompass the work of both sociologists and economists. Although urban economists rely more on formal mathematical modeling of urban phenomenon than do urban sociologists working within an ecological framework, we see the underlying assumptions regarding urban space and individual autonomy of sociologists and economists similar enough to group them under one category. We are in agreement with Logan and Molotch (1987, 7) when they write, "[t]he Chicago school has been stimulated by, and helped foster, complementary intellectual programs in urban economics and urban geography."

Early ecologists, while acknowledging the importance of cultural forces on urban form, believed more fruitful research would come out of concentrating on the "biotic" forces in human nature. Consequently, human ecological theory focused on the impact of larger social and economic forces rather than the role of individual agency (Gottdiener 1985). Neighborhoods, in these explanatory models, are predetermined to change as time takes its inevitable toll on people and things. A neighborhood's fate rests solely on its relative position within an urban hierarchy, as measured in terms of spatial or social characteristics such as the distance to "higher use" commercial or industrial areas and the economic status of current residents. There is great variation among the ecological perspectives however, in their views on the specific causes of neighborhood decline. We will discuss the three major variations in the ecological literature: invasion/succession, filtering, and the border model.

Invasion/Succession

The earliest model of neighborhood change was the idea of "invasion/succession," developed by Burgess (1925). Burgess, like the other early urban ecologists, viewed an urban area as an analog to a natural, equilibrium-seeking ecological system. Competition for space, via bidding for urban land, gave rise to a particular urban form. Urban areas were not static, and neighborhoods underwent changes when sectors of the city experienced an invasion of a more dominant land use. This invasion was followed by succession, as a more dominant use replaced its predecessor.

Although highly sophisticated for its time, Burgess's invasion/succession model has been criticized for using plant ecology as its theoretical base (Saunders 1986). Later models within the ecological tradition have not challenged the fundamental assumption that neighborhood change is inevitable, but have used economic theory, rather than plant ecology, to explain a process very similar to invasion/succession. The application of economic theory to neighborhood change is evident in the filtering, bid rent, and border models of urban dynamics. We will discuss each model and how they have influenced urban policy.

Filtering

One of the earliest reformulations of the invasion/succession approach, as introduced by Hoyt and expanded upon by others, was the idea of filtering (Hoyt 1933; Smith 1963). Filtering models explain neighborhood change as a function of decisions made by landlords, ultimately affecting the desirability of a community's housing stock relative to newly built housing. Filtering models predict that landlords invest decreasing amounts of capital for the maintenance of aging buildings because the costs of maintaining a housing unit at a particular quality level increase with the age of the unit (Sweeney 1974). Thus, as a neighborhood's housing stock ages, the quality of the units decreases as property owners invest less and less capital. As new housing becomes available on the urban fringe, more affluent residents move there creating vacancies in the older housing stock. These vacancies are then filled by residents of lower socioeconomic status. Neighborhood decline, then, is a function of the aging of housing stock as well as the construction of more appealing housing on the periphery.

One of the tenets of this model is that social mobility and spatial mobility are inherently intertwined. Declining physical characteristics of a community aren't necessarily bad, because there is always a community which is relatively more attractive. In addition, filtering of the housing stock in a particular neighborhood provides an opportunity for potential in-movers to improve their housing conditions by moving from areas that are relatively less attractive. This benign view of neighborhood change is best exemplified in the neighborhood lifecycle literature (Hoover and Vernon 1959; Birch 1971) and continues in more recent work (Rothenberg et al. 1991). In discussing the benefits of neighborhood succession to lower-income households, Birch (1971, 86) concludes that, "...[neighborhood] evolution is hardly a drawback. It is a process which brings higher quality neighborhoods within their reach." Rothenberg et al. (1991, 286) echo these sentiments when they say, "[t]he goals of policy vis-a-vis neighborhood dynamics clearly should not be to halt neighborhood deterioration."

Bid Rent and Border Models

The other major ecological perspective deals with consumer decisions, specifically how changes to income, family structure, and/or a neighborhood's social structure affect a household's bid for housing in a particular neighborhood. This approach is based on the economic analysis of residential location, whereby families trade off proximity to the central business district for housing services (Muth 1969). As a family's income rises, the importance of housing services relative to the convenience of a short commute to work increases, so we observe higher-income families forsaking small dwelling units near the city center for larger houses in more distant neighborhoods as they move through the family lifecycle (Fujita 1989). Consequently, neighborhood change results from the individual decisions of consumers experiencing changes to their family and income characteristics.

Border and tipping models of neighborhood change were developed to explain individual residential location decisions using a more complete description of housing services: namely, to incorporate the current and expected demographic characteristics of neighborhood residents in the definition of housing services. Under these perspectives, a neighborhood undergoing racial transition will experience a greater-than-expected out-migration as in-movers are perceived to be of lower social status. In addition, potential neighbors affect bids for housing in a community. Thus racial transition in nearby communities will affect expectations, resulting in racial transition along the border (Leven et al. 1976).

Neighborhood change models that take the characteristics of neighbors into account are based on a more complex and realistic definition of the residential choice process. However, they are still deterministic in the sense that neighborhoods will change over time, either by a slow and seemingly natural aging of the community's housing stock, or in a more chaotic and rapid process where preferences for a neighborhood are affected by the changing social characteristics of community residents.

Ecological models of neighborhood change make neighborhood stabilization initiatives difficult to justify for two reasons. As noted earlier, these models assume that neighborhood change has a positive impact on both in-movers and out-movers. They also assume that a neighborhood's fate is not within its own hands, thus localized interventions are doomed to fail. To the extent that these models support intervention at all, it would be to attenuate neighborhood change brought about by racial prejudice described in border and tipping models, so that the natural and "efficient" amount of neighborhood change resulting from natural economic forces can be realized.

Ecological models of neighborhood change have had a great influence on urban policy recommendations. Filtering models have been used to justify supply-side initiatives to foster construction of housing with the idea that construction in any submarket will start a string of moves and eventually result in improving the housing consumption of all residents within a metropolitan area. Schill (1992, 812) calls for elimination of regulatory barriers to the construction of moderately priced housing in the suburbs. As a result "...residents...would move to newer and more desirable accommodations, and the apartments they formerly occupied would filter down to lower income households. Much as it has for the urban poor, increased quantities of newly constructed unsubsidized housing would over time reduce the cost of suburban housing."

Farley and Frey (1994) indicate that newly built housing may also lead to less racial segregation. In a study of segregation changes in the 1980s, the authors point out that "...a high percentage of new housing is linked to declines in segregation,...new housing developments are less segregated than the old ethnic ghetto. Also, a high rate of housing construction may encourage residential mobility throughout a metropolitan area" (Farley and Frey 1994, 40).

Demand-side subsidies, such as the Section 8 program, are consistent with bid-rent models of neighborhood change. The bid-rent model predicts that city residents would be spatially distributed around a central business district (CBD) by income, as lower-income families place greater value on their leisure time compared to higher-income families and less value on housing services (Henderson 1985). However, spatial concentrations of low-income residents have been hypothesized to have concentration effects which lead to an increase in crime, low educational attainment, and out-of-wedlock births (Wilson 1987). Therefore, housing subsidies are necessary to induce inner-city residents to seek out apartments in neighborhoods more distant from the CBD. This deconcentration effect is a primary goal of the Moving to Opportunity program. The program's aim is to is to help low-income families move away from areas with high concentrations of poverty.

Border models of neighborhood change assume that the potential of having lower-status neighbors, which is a function of the distance of any neighborhood to a lower-status neighborhood, affects the value of housing in a community. Galster (1991, 141) writes, "...increments in the supply of housing needed by the minority community have occurred through the peripheral expansion of this community's boundaries into formerly all-white neighborhoods.... The frequent repetition of this spatial dynamic reinforced white households' beliefs that residence in integrated areas was undesirable."

Managed integration polices, such as those implemented in Shaker Heights, are consistent with the border model of neighborhood change. In addition to regulating the racial characteristics of in-movers and out-movers, Galster (1991)

calls for a program which directs tax credits to homeowners living in communities undergoing racial transition. These credits would, presumably, compensate white homeowners for any decline in property values brought about by the perception that a neighborhood is "open" to minority homebuyers. The decline in the value of the house is a function of the change in characteristics of potential neighbors, and so this policy recommendation is consistent with the border model of neighborhood change.

■ Subcultural

The subculturalists' backlash against ecological models of neighborhood change started in the 1930s and has continued to the present day. Subculturalists argue that noneconomic factors such as social networks, socially determined neighborhood reputations, and the degree to which neighbors feel a sense of attachment to their community influence a neighborhood's stability over time. Researchers working within this school take issue with the human ecologists' abandonment of cultural factors in understanding neighborhood change.[1]

Firey (1945) was one of the earliest critics of human ecology. He felt that human ecologists, in their rush to develop a general theory of urban dynamics, developed an unrealistic notion of urban space that was devoid of any intrinsic meaning or value to urban residents. Firey suggested that urban space was made up of symbolic areas that evoked strong emotions, and so the symbolism of certain communities and the sentiment of residents towards their neighborhood were important factors in shaping urban areas.

Subcultural approaches to neighborhood change begin with a relatively simple premise: all neighborhoods within a city do not follow the same trajectory over time. If neighborhood change is a function of extra-local changes in a city's social and economic makeup, why do some neighborhoods remain stable while others show signs of decline? The idea that all neighborhoods within a city are doomed to decline, while at the same time enhancing the well-being of its residents, is severely questioned. There must be other factors, besides changing city conditions, which cause neighborhoods to change. Rather than concentrate on ecological variables, subculturalists place an emphasis on the study of the nature of social networks within a neighborhood, the level of commitment and attachment to a community, and its image or symbolism. These social factors lead to the subcultural idea that "[n]eighborhoods do not have to decline. There is nothing inherent in the aging process that requires older neighborhoods to wear out as does a tire after 30,000 miles" (Ahlbrandt and Cunningham 1979, 25).

The earliest examinations of collective efforts to maintain neighborhood stability were based in neighborhoods that attempted to retain either ethnic or racial homogeneity in the face of racial or ethnic transition (Gans 1962; Suttles 1968, 1972). Unfortunately, such a view of neighborhoods leaves an impression that solidarity can only be achieved on ethnic or racial lines, and ignores the ever-increasing identities urban residents can assume in postmodern society. Neighborhood defense can occur not only in blue-collar ethnic parts of a city, but also in communities with a particular lifestyle, such as an acknowledged homosexual or bohemian sector of a city (Abu-Lughod 1994; Castells and Murphy 1982; Godfrey 1987; Stoecker 1994).

Varady (1986, 13–14), for example, seems to make an overly strong connection between neighborhood stability and ethnicity, pointing out that the Hill, a "...prototypical Italian-American community [in Saint Louis], was clearly the most stable and viable [neighborhood]...by controlling the housing market." Such a connection leaves policymakers interested in promoting stable residential areas with a Hobson's choice to support upgrading efforts in white ethnic communities in order to maintain the city's tax base knowing full well neighborhood residents are illegally excluding minorities from the area's housing market (Varady 1986, 13–14). Varady's argument is consistent with viewing city politics in terms of racial or class differences. As Swanstrom (1993, 57) points out, this view may be incomplete, and in doing so many contemporary urban scholars are "...unable to account for the rise of new social movements in many of our cities. Labeled post-Marxist or postmaterialist, these movements are motivated not by the politics of interest but by the politics of identity. These include feminists' demands for day care, safer streets...the new social movements cannot be accounted for by economic motives or class interests."

Rather than a choice whether or not to abet the efforts of racially exclusive ethnic enclaves in a neighborhood defense, policymakers must deal with an increasingly fractious urban political landscape where neighborhood groups are attempting to influence larger issues with respect to the use of urban land, namely the continual tension between a neighborhood's expression of a particular cultural identity (sometimes, but not exclusively ethnic) and its value in land markets. For example, Gordon (1994, 230) shows how residents in the East Village, a New York City neighborhood "...are organizing to fight gentrification...[t]heir vision is of a neighborhood where recent immigrants, artists, youth, the poor, and working people can find space, shelter and privacy for a reasonable price."

Neighborhood defense approaches, whether a function of a community's desire to preserve an ethnic or lifestyle enclave, assume Firey's definition of urban space, namely that symbolism and sentiment must be included in any study of urban form. Neighborhoods are not arrayed on an isotropic plane, differing solely by land use patterns resulting from varying land values (Ley 1974). Neighborhood residents may derive satisfaction from a perceived unique social and cultural milieu which causes community

residents to take proactive measures to maintain their neighborhood's identity (Fischer 1975).

Subcultural enquiries into neighborhood change concentrate on the factors behind a neighborhood choosing to defend itself and on the role of social networks, attachments, and social identity in warding off potential neighborhood change through neighborhood defense strategies. As opposed to ecological models, where population mobility leads to unambiguous welfare gains for all city residents, subcultural models assume that incumbent neighborhood residents, for whatever reason, may desire to remain in a particular community, and will take measures to ensure its demographic continuity. Such stabilization polices may restrict access of the city's residents to vacancies in the neighborhood. Consequently, these polices may make some city residents better off while making others worse off (Kolodny 1983).[2]

Subcultural models of neighborhood change have also influenced urban policy. Policies consistent with ecological approaches primarily promote individual mobility as a means for improving the lives of urban residents. This approach assumes that an individual has little attachment to a neighborhood, or that a dwelling unit with more amenities provides a more attractive residential option. These polices are consistent with the "community lost" view of urban areas that was derived from the theories of mass society (Kornhauser 1959; Nisbet 1962; Slater 1970). Subcultural models of neighborhood change, in contrast with ecological models, provided theoretical ammunition to neighborhood preservation efforts. Ethnographers did not find a large amount of urban alienation and anomie within urban communities. Instead, the notion of a community found was developed to describe neighborhoods within supposedly impersonal and anonymous cities. As Wellman and Leighton (1979, 380) write, "saved ideologies have argued the necessity for preserving existing neighborhoods against the predators of ignorant and rapacious institutions. The saved argument has been the ideological foundations of the neighborhood movement which seeks to stop expressways, demolish developers and renovate old areas."

However, as we argue later in this paper, subculturalists may take an overly myopic view as to the appropriate steps needed to stabilize urban neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the sense of community that so enchanted urban subculturalists may have led to unsuccessful neighborhood stabilization efforts which concentrated solely on enhancing a sense of place while neglecting the neighborhood's visibility and power in the local political economy.

■ Political Economy

A major premise of the political economy perspective is that urban areas are used by powerful elites to facilitate capital accumulation. Molotch (1976) characterizes cities as "growth machines" where municipal decisions on distributive issues are made away from the public's view and benefit land owners, developers, and others who stand to gain from unrestrained economic development. Other theorists working in a neo-Marxist framework believe that urban space contains a fundamental contradiction between those who view urban land solely as a commodity to be exploited for profit (exchange value) and those who view urban land as necessary for everyday life (use value) (Castells 1977; Harvey 1973; Lefebvre 1974). Hence, interest in urban land is a dialectic between exchange and use values, where capitalists exploit the exchange value of urban land at the expense of use values of urban residents. Urban land is seen as a necessary outlet for investment in the face of the falling rate of profit in the primary sector of the economy (Harvey 1973; Logan and Molotch 1987).

Logan and Molotch (1987) suggest how the dialectic involving exchange and use values affects neighborhood change. They believe neighborhood stability is most likely where use and exchange value are congruent. Once a neighborhood's exchange value is enhanced by a change in use values, a "rent gap" occurs such that the current use of a particular parcel of urban land is less than other more profitable uses (Smith 1979). Consequently, land use is altered, perhaps from a working class community to a more upscale neighborhood. This perspective suggests that the contradiction between use and exchange values is often resolved in favor of capital's interests.

Other scholars, less beholden to Marxist theory, have studied the roles of institutional actors, such as real estate and insurance agents, bankers and public officials, in neighborhood change (Palm 1985; Squires and Velez 1987). Rather than serving the pernicious wishes of global capital, however, these scholars suggest that institutional actors make decisions based on their own perceived self-interest, and that these decisions have an important impact on neighborhood change. Real estate agent practices, such as steering and block busting, help shape urban space, as do the decisions of the financial and insurance agents to approve or deny applications from various neighborhoods within the city (Galster 1990). Institutional models assume that a neighborhood's fate, to a large degree, is determined by powerful forces allocating scarce resources throughout a metropolitan area. A neighborhood's stability, then, is a function of actors outside of the neighborhood, rather than the actions of its residents.

The policy implications of the political economy schools of neighborhood change are consistent with their emphasis on institutional forces outside the community. Fair Housing laws and the Community Reinvestment Act, for example, are largely the result of research on real estate steering, blockbusting, and redlining. Political economists advocate the development of ideological urban grassroots movements organized to counter urban growth regimes. Castells (1983,

316) writes, "...for the new city dwellers to survive, they need, more than ever, to reconstruct a social universe, a local turf, a space of freedom, a community." Soja (1989, 96) makes a similar point when he points out, "[t]he urban social movements that were receiving such contemporary attention were essentially rooted in the political response of those subordinated, peripherized, and exploited by the particularities of this increasingly global spatial planning process."

The policy implications of the political economy framework are an important addition to subcultural and ecological models of neighborhood change. Too often, policies based on subcultural models have exclusively focused on building a sense of community or enhancing local attachments through grass roots organizing. Neighborhoods must successfully compete for both resources and influence if they are to resolve the exchange-use contradiction in their favor (Davis 1991; Stoecker 1994), while policies based on ecological models of neighborhood change ignore the role of the state and other important institutional actors in affecting neighborhood change (Gottdiener 1985).

■ A Synthetic Model of Neighborhood Change

Attempts to combine all three approaches to neighborhood change in a holistic theoretical framework have been attempted (Galster 1987; Grigsby et al. 1987; Williams 1985). These synthetic models of neighborhood change recognize the importance of resident attitudes toward their neighbors and their neighborhoods in predicting how housing markets in individual neighborhoods will be affected by changes in metropolitan area trends. Their major weakness, however, is that these social variables are mentioned without considering how they may interact or alter market outcomes in specific neighborhoods.

Grigsby et al. (1987, 31) present a model of neighborhood change that shows how metropolitan area-wide changes affect individual neighborhoods. In their model, a change in social and economic variables, such as the number of households, per capita income, and cost of housing relative to other goods and services is the predominant factor in explaining neighborhood change. Changes in social and economic conditions initiate key actors in the housing market, such as owners, developers, and bankers to reassess their strategies in a changing environment. These actors, in turn, make decisions regarding alterations to the existing stock, new construction and moving cognizant of the large scale changes occurring in the area.

The premise underlying their model is that a metropolitan area's housing market is actually made up of many different submarkets that are all affected differently by large scale changes. As a result, changes ripple throughout city neighborhoods by affecting the supply and demand for various housing submarkets.

The shortcoming in this approach, and the primary difference between our model and Grigsby et al.'s, is the idea that the basis for different impacts of large-scale changes in a metropolitan area's social and economic characteristics on various neighborhoods is predicated on the quantity of housing within each submarket found in a particular neighborhood. In Grigsby et al.'s framework, neighborhoods change is a result of large-scale changes in housing submarket conditions that occur beyond the borders of the neighborhood. Consequently, there is little neighborhood residents can do to stop unwanted change from occurring because the driving forces of neighborhood change are impersonal changing conditions within various housing quality submarkets. For example, the authors write "...[i]t is easy to see that if a community loses households, some of them in middle and upper-income brackets, neighborhood succession will occur" (Grigsby et al. 1987, 37). Here, loss of households results from a general population loss in the city, and so this change affects the neighborhood through the change in demand for housing in the neighborhood. Our approach views a neighborhood's loss of population as the result of the interaction of metropolitan area-wide changes and the social characteristics of the neighborhood. Grigsby et al.'s model does not account for a neighborhood's potential for successful strategies to promote stability by means of formal collective action or informal social behavior. The social institutions within each neighborhood may be different, thereby leaving the door open for varied neighborhood trajectories among neighborhoods with similar physical characteristics.

Varady (1986) uses Grigsby et al.'s model as a starting point to empirically examine social processes that affect neighborhood stability and upgrading. He examines the factors that help predict neighborhood stability including confidence in the future of the area, residential mobility, and house repair activity. In addition to the ecological variables such as race and income, Varady includes measures of neighborhood cohesiveness, local social interaction, and resident perceptions of neighborhood problems in his empirical analyses. The problem with his model is that these social activities are mainly analyzed separately. He only makes tentative steps in demonstrating how they fit within a larger explanatory framework. Thus, while his study provides important insights into the effect of social variables on neighborhood change, it stops short of providing a synthetic model of neighborhood change that demonstrates how changes to area-wide social and ecological variables interact in individual neighborhoods to determine varied neighborhood trajectories.

The model presented below avoids the limitations of the synthetic models by going beyond proposing a new set of variables that should be considered in predicting neighborhood change. Our model outlines a complex process in which neighborhoods are involved in a competition for

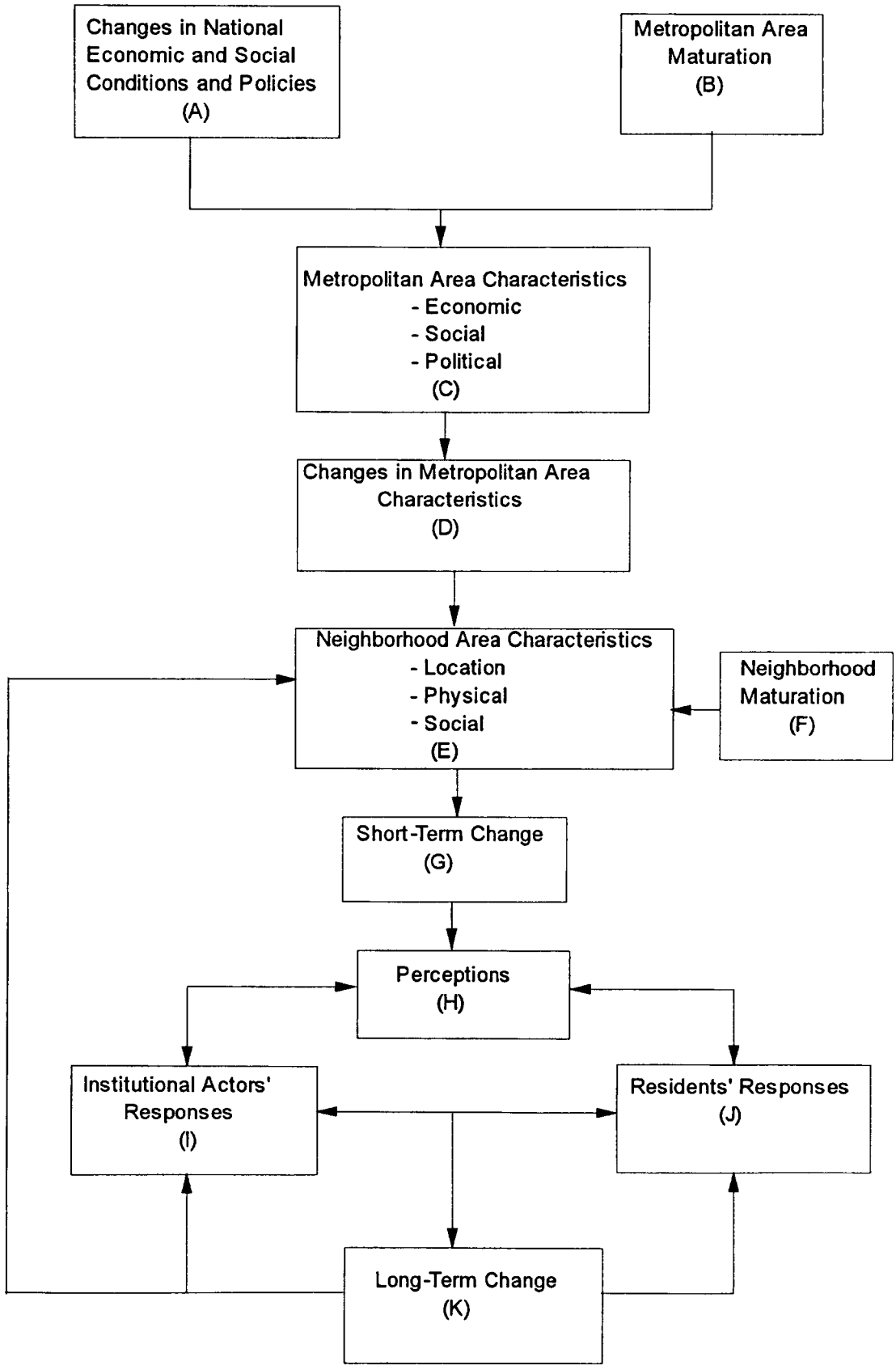

Figure 1. A synthetic model of neighborhood change.

scarce resources necessary to promote neighborhood stability bounded by the political and social environment of the metropolitan area.

Our revised model of neighborhood change draws from the three theoretical approaches described above. Consistent with ecological models, we believe that neighborhood stability is affected by larger structural changes to a metropolitan area's economic and social characteristics. However, these changes do not cascade upon a featureless isotropic urban landscape devoid of symbolic meaning and sentimental attachment. Borrowing from subcultural approaches, the model recognizes the importance that social characteristics play in neighborhood change. These characteristics include the degree of attachment felt by residents to their neighborhood; the pattern of social interactions among residents in the area; the use of any local commercial, religious, and cultural facilities; and a belief that the neighborhood offers a unique cultural milieu within the larger city. These characteristics make up the social fabric of a neighborhood and provide indications of its horizontal integration, that is the degree to which residents interact with and form attachments to the neighborhood. A strong social fabric is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for a successful neighborhood defense.

To successfully resist the forces of change, neighborhood residents must be able to influence larger political, financial, and other institutional actors whose decisions affect neighborhood stability or change. This focus on the institutional actors is consistent with the political economy framework. We reject, however, the deterministic notion that the city's "growth machine" always wins when there is a direct conflict between use and exchange values. Neighborhoods can collectively shape their futures, but they must do so in a complex social and uncertain political and economic environment.

The forces of neighborhood change originate from two sources: changes in national economic, social and political conditions (A)and metropolitan area maturation (B) (see Figure 1). The migration of blacks from the rural south to urban centers in the northeast and midwest is one example of the first source of change. The shift in the national labor market from manufacturing to service jobs is another. Furthermore, policy changes, such as the recent reduction in defense spending, have affected metropolitan areas throughout the country. The population and physical infrastructure of metropolitan areas, however, undergo maturation that is independent of the external sources of change. The indigenous population moves through the lifecycle and this affects their decisions on commuting, housing consumption, and residential location.

The model recognizes that the impacts of both changing national conditions and policies, and metropolitan maturation will depend on economic, social, and political characteristics of specific metropolitan areas (C). The shift from manufacturing to service industries, for example, has hurt some communities while benefiting others. The nature and extent of changes in the characteristics of metropolitan areas (D) depend on their existing characteristics. For example, Schill and Nathan (1983, 6) point out how "[n]ot all northeastern and midwestern cities are old, isolated and declining. The population of Columbus, Ohio, grew by 44 percent from 1950 to 1970 and continued to grow-though at a slower rate during the seventies."

Similarly, every area of a city will be not be affected by aggregate metropolitan area changes. Changes to individual neighborhoods will depend on their locational, physical, and social characteristics (E). For example, an in-migration of minority residents to a city does not mean that all its neighborhoods will experience a concomitant in-movement of minority residents. In addition, maturational forces (F) may not have the same effect across all communities. As Galster (1987) points out, in some neighborhoods, families moving through the lifecycle choose to remain by either modifying their existing dwelling unit or limiting their search for different housing within the community.

In the short run, changes in metropolitan area characteristics and maturation lead to relatively small changes in the neighborhood physical and social characteristics (G). The perception of these changes (H) may lead to a variety of responses on the part of both institutional actors (I) and local residents (J). Institutional actors may take actions that exacerbate the change, such as redlining or block busting, or they may take actions to halt the change, such as increasing public investment in the area. Similarly, residents may take actions that accelerate change, such as moving, or take actions that dampen change, such as organizing residents to resist change.

It is important to recognize that the responses of institutional actors and the residents are not independent. Residents may react to the responses of institutional actors in an attempt to change them, as in the case of a neighborhood organizing against the cutback in municipal services (Susser 1982). Similarly, institutional actors may attempt to change resident responses, as in the case of managed integration programs (Smith 1993). It is the interplay of these resident and institutional responses that will largely determine the nature of the longer term change in a neighborhood (K).

Our model of neighborhood change may best be understood with the use of a metaphor. Imagine a piece of cheesecloth whose weave varies in density from very tight to very loose. If a liquid is poured onto the cheesecloth, areas with a tight weave will be relatively impervious, and the liquid will run off to areas of looser weave. Like cheese cloth, urban neighborhoods vary in density of their social fabric. Those with tightly knit social fabrics are more resistant to change while those with looser social fabrics are more susceptible to change.

Although we emphasize its importance, a strong social fabric is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for neighborhood stability. There are many examples of tightly knit communities unable to successfully defend themselves from the sources of change. Indeed, Berry et al. (1976) identified a "fight-then flight" response of white neighborhoods in Chicago faced with a potential influx of black residents. Neighborhoods with a strong social fabric must reach out to institutional actors who allocate municipal and financial resources across a metropolitan area. Neighborhood stability requires a committed group of residents who can successfully articulate their concerns to sympathetic power brokers who control the resources needed to maintain a stable residential milieu.

Change is continually lapping at the shores of urban neighborhoods. Small, short-term changes within a community, however, do not have to lead to a large-scale change in the community's demographic makeup. These larger changes are more likely to occur in areas with weak social fabrics, or areas that are politically isolated and unable to successfully influence the decisions of institutional actors. Compared to previous conceptualizations, our model places less emphasis on the age of the housing stock and location of the neighborhood and more weight on social relations within neighborhoods and between neighborhoods and institutional actors.

For example, a potential or actual shift in the proportion of black residents in a neighborhood is often the cause of neighborhood change. Because race remains a "master status determining trait" (Berry et al. 1976, 256) an in-movement of minorities will often start a process in which neighborhoods undergoing racial transition are less attractive to whites than to blacks (Schnare and MacRae 1978). Consequently, racial change is often modeled as an inevitable process of tipping, where whites leaving a neighborhood are replaced by black in-movers, thereby resegregating a racially mixed area. We view models using this framework as explaining a process that occurs *after* a more important stage, namely a dynamic in which blacks initially begin to explore housing opportunities in a neighborhood that is perceived as "open" to minorities.

It is important to keep in mind that socially determined reputations of neighborhoods affect the searches of minority residents when seeking out new homes. In a study of racial transition in Detroit-area suburbs, Farley et al. (1993, 33) write, "...blacks and whites shared the same color-coded perceptions of the metropolis, largely agreeing about which suburban locations are open to blacks....blacks who seek better housing seldom search in suburbs such as Dearborn and Warren where they think they are not welcome." Dearborn's relative racial stability is in sharp contrast with Southfield, a Detroit suburb undergoing racial transition in a process akin to tipping models.

As our model argues, the scope of black in-movement is affected by a neighborhood's collective actions in response to the appearance of blacks initially moving into the neighborhood. A neighborhood with a strong commitment to excluding minorities may initiate informal pressure on black in-movers in order to establish a forbidding reputation, as in Dearborn. Consequently, changes in the demand of housing by minorities does not affect all neighborhoods in a city equally. Not every neighborhood in northeast and midwest cities experienced an increase in black residents in the wake of the postwar black migration from the south. Similarly, as an increasing number of blacks have achieved higher incomes, upwardly mobile blacks have not found housing in all white neighborhoods. Racial transition, then, occurs in a subset of neighborhoods where white residents either did not want to exclude blacks or in neighborhoods where exclusionary efforts failed. In either case it is important to understand the antecedent activities that occur before tipping.

■ Policy Implications

As discussed earlier, neighborhood stabilization polices are difficult to justify using ecological models of neighborhood change because they evaluate urban dynamics using a utility maximizing individual as a unit of analysis. Consequently, ecological models often assume an increase in housing services results from a move to a more desirable part of the city. Any neighborhood stabilization policy would reduce the mobility of urban residents, decreasing the ability of people to upgrade their level of housing services by moving to more desirable neighborhoods. As the subculturalists point out, however, certain neighborhoods provide supportive cultural milieus, which cannot be recreated once community residents are dispersed. Thus, promoting mobility would lead to the destruction of urban communities that provide a unique blend of social and cultural supports to their residents.

These conflicting perspectives are evident in two recent administration programs: the empowerment zone (EZ) and moving-to-opportunity (MTO) programs. The EZ program is an example of what has been called place oriented approaches to urban problems while the MTO is an example of a person oriented approach (Ladd 1994). To assist local efforts to stabilize and upgrade distressed areas, the EZ program offers tax breaks for businesses locating or expanding in the selected zones. It also offers grants to sponsoring governments for a wide variety of physical, social, and economic improvement activities in the EZ target areas. The MTO program is designed to assist residents of high-poverty areas to move to low-poverty areas, which are likely to offer greater job and other opportunities. Program participants are offered Section 8 Certificates, housing counseling and home finding assistance to facilitate their moves.

If used in the same area, however, these two programs will work at cross purposes. MTO participants are likely to be exactly the kinds of persons who are needed to assist the revitalization of EZ communities: those who desire and are willing to work for a better living environment. To avoid this problem, place-based programs like EZs and people-based programs like MTOs must be carefully targeted to distinct neighborhoods within a city or metropolitan area.

The question then becomes, on what basis are areas selected for enrichment or for voluntary deconcentration? We suggest that neighborhoods should be selected for enrichment or voluntary deconcentration based on their potential for offering a healthy social environment for their residents over a significant period of time. This potential, as explicated in our model, is directly related to the strength of the social fabric within the community coupled with its ability to influence the decisions of actors who allocate scarce financial resources and municipal services across a metropolitan area. Since a neighborhood's stability is contingent on the presence of both a strong social fabric and political power, we believe enrichment policies would be most effective in communities where only one of these is missing. In these communities a community organizer can work to develop either a strong social fabric or a heightened degree of political power (Alinsky 1971; Cunningham and Kotler 1983; Rubin and Rubin 1986). Organizing, then, is most likely to be successful in areas that have strengths on which to build, such as a set of loosely knit neighborhood groups or a cadre of residents committed to changing conditions in the area. Unfortunately, many cities have areas that have declined beyond the point that community organizing, no matter how well intentioned, is likely to succeed. These are areas where crime and fear of crime are high, employment opportunities are scarce, and physical decay abounds. If organizing efforts would not be able to significantly change the social fabric or the political power of the neighborhood, then voluntary deconcentration is called for.

Targeting limited resources to neighborhood improvement programs is a difficult task fraught with ethical, moral, and practical considerations. Yet, it is better to understand and directly face these considerations than it is to ignore them and make large investments that are not sustainable. If improving people's lives is the ultimate objective, helping people move out of severely impacted areas may be the best solution. It is important to note that our policy recommendations do not advocate abandoning people who live in neighborhoods that are beyond repair. On the contrary, we propose improving their quality of life by allowing them to move to areas with greater opportunity. Rosenbaum's (1994) studies of the Gautreaux program in Chicago have shown substantial benefits associated with voluntary moves from inner-city public housing to better quality neighborhoods. Given the limited resources available for cities, even in the most favorable political times, we see no alternative to a policy of voluntary deconcentration of the most severely distressed neighborhoods.[3]

We are aware of the enormous political complexities implied by our approach to neighborhood resource allocation. Neighborhoods targeted for deconcentration contain a broad range of stakeholders who would be harmed by such a policy. Property owners; politicians representing the area at the municipal, state, and federal levels; merchants; and existing tenants would all be affected by reducing the number of people living in neighborhoods the city targets for deconcentration. We feel, however, that voluntary deconcentration of the worst off areas and enrichment of other neighborhoods is in the best interests of both individual households and the city as a whole, and that it is worth the political fight.

■ Conclusion

Our model of neighborhood change places a great deal of emphasis on the social fabric of the community and the perceptions of the neighborhood by outside actors. Unlike deterministic models of neighborhood change, we view neighborhood change as a "dialogical" process (Caulfield 1994) whereby larger citywide change is distributed across neighborhoods as residents of neighborhoods interact with larger social forces impinging on the community. Too often, factors affecting the stability of a community, such as zoning changes, major road expansions, or the siting of potentially divisive public projects, are viewed as exogenous and outside the purview of a neighborhood (Fogarty 1982). Our dialogical model takes into account the process by which projects are sited in a neighborhood. Location decisions regarding public projects are not random, but are the result of a political process whereby neighborhood organizations can influence the decisions of municipal officials. As Mollenkopf (1983, 190) states, "[n]eighborhood activism created a new 'political space' which allowed, and sometimes forced, urban politicians and administrators to interact with new contenders of power...[this] ended the days in which corporate officials and redevelopment administrators could quietly formulate and execute large-scale development plans on their own."

Our model also points to the information needed in any design of community development strategies. Policymakers must have information regarding the social fabric of neighborhoods and the perceptions outsiders have of the community in order to predict neighborhood trajectories and design stabilization or improvement efforts. Unfortunately, census data does not have information on level of attachment felt by residents, the use of local commercial facilities and the pattern of social interactions within a neighborhood. Measures of these concepts are critical, however, to a successful community development strategy.

Therefore, cities must supplement census information with a social census in order to determine the strength of each neighborhood's social fabric. An example would be the Pittsburgh neighborhood study which surveyed residents in all neighborhoods in Pittsburgh (Ahlbrandt 1984). The sample size was sufficient to be representative at the neighborhood level.

Once a social census is completed, enrichment policies must not be attempted on foundations of sand—that is, in communities where little social fabric exists and the possibilities of improving the physical and social neighborhood context are slim. Conversely, declining neighborhoods with a strong social fabric should not be targeted for relocation policies. It is here that community enrichment efforts have the greatest opportunity for success.

Moreover, our theoretical model relates social fabric and political power with neighborhood stability. More work is necessary to determine the precise level of all aspects of social fabric and political power that are consistent with a supportive and healthy residential environment. Future research projects will benefit from analyzing the results of the social census we advocate for municipalities. This partnership provides an opportunity for local officials and urban analysts to work together in order to assess the long-term viability of urban neighborhoods.

■ Notes

1. To be fair, Park, Burgess, and McKenzie acknowledge the importance of cultural factors on urban form. Nonetheless, although Park (1988, 33) describes how human society has two levels, the biotic and cultural, he asserts that, "[t]he cultural superstructure rests on the basis of a symbiotic substructure..." and so human ecology "...is concerned with a social order that is based on competition rather than on consensus, [and so] is identical, in principle...with plant and animal ecology."
2. Ecological and subcultural models of neighborhood change are not only distinguished by their different policy implications, but also have different definitions of knowledge and research questions. Subcultural models are based on the notion that community is alive and well in our modern industrialized society. Rather than urban society destroying *gemeinschaft*-style relationships and creating an urban psychological state of anomie, neighborhoods and localized friendships continue to bind people together. In addition, the physical spaces of urban areas are not differentiated solely by objective qualities, such as distance to the CBD, or age of the housing stock, but are divided into many spatially bounded subcultural entities, which affect location decisions and the propensity of communities to defend an urban cultural milieu. Consequently, subcultural models analyze a notion of space much more complex than the physical, isotropic space of urban ecology.

   Perhaps in recognition of the ontological complexity of urban space, many subcultural studies rely on case study, ethnographic, and other non-positivistic methods of inquiry. Because many of the notions are important to subcultural studies of neighborhood defense and are not amenable to easy quantification, a "blind spot" has developed among scholars working within the more deterministic neighborhood change frameworks. We feel the ontological and epistemological differences between subcultural and ecological models has been a major stumbling block to the construction of synthetic models of neighborhood change.
3. Deconcentration policies we have in mind should in no way be confused with the kind of forced displacement that resulted from urban renewal. We envision spatially targeted deconcentration policies to be based on providing Section 8 vouchers or certificates to residents in particular neighborhoods. The recipients would be provided help and counseling in seeking out apartments in neighborhoods containing a more stable residential environment. In addition, landlords in these communities would be encouraged to accept Section 8 tenants in their buildings. Eliminating the "take one-take all" provision of Section 8, whereby a landlord who accepts one Section 8 tenant cannot refuse another may help to limit the hesitancy of landlords in accepting Section 8 tenants. In any event, tenants are under no obligation to leave the neighborhood, but we believe many Section 8 tenants would choose to live in more stable neighborhoods if they were provided with information about available apartments in other parts of the city.

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