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**Author**

Oliver, Melvin L.

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Beyond the Neighborhood:  
The Spatial Distribution of Social Ties  
in Three Urban Black Communities 1

Melvin L. Oliver

## About the Author

Melvin Oliver is Associate Professor of Sociology and a faculty Associate of the Center for Afro-American Studies at UCLA. He was Principal Investigator for the ISSR Southern California Social Survey in 1985-86.

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## INTRODUCTION

Sociologists have often considered communities to be coterminous with specific spatial boundaries. Definitions of this sort fostered an overriding concern with interaction and behavior within these limited, and sometimes, artificial spatial domains. The local community was a taken for granted area defined by bureaucratic agencies, by urban mapmakers, or by the presence of certain corporate, racial or ethnic groups. Research was undertaken to determine the range and form of activities that take place inside these spatially bounded areas. Such analyses are inherently limited as they tend to overlook and not consider important activity and ties maintained outside of these geographic units. This is especially the case when one examines issues of the maintenance and nature of interpersonal ties in the urban setting; what has often been characterized as the "community question."

A central concern of sociology throughout its history, the community question refers to "the study of how large-scale divisions of labor in social systems affect the organization and content of social ties" (Wellman and Leighton 1979). Rooted in the classical discussions of Durkheim (1947) on the effects of mechanical and organic solidarity, and of Tonnies (1955) on the transition from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft* organizational principles, this question has occupied much of contemporary urban sociology. The "decline of community" debate, for example, was but one manifestation of this concern (Stein 1960; Nisbet 1969; Kornhauser 1968). However, when urban sociologists have investigated this question on the empirical level, they have often asked the question in the context of particular geographical areas, allowing this

initial choice to constrain where and how they searched for the evidence that constitutes community. For example, while Tally's Corner (Liebow 1967) provides us with a strong and forceful description of the social world of black street corner men, we are left with the impression, which is incomplete at best, of a group of men whose social solidarity is organized around a small geographic space of a few blocks.<sup>2</sup> The world outside this area only intrudes for the occasional work that these men sporadically partake. But what about ties with friends, neighbors and co-workers outside this community? To include these ties would broaden our conception of their social worlds. For investigators of community it would also provide a new perspective on how large-scale social divisions of labor have shaped and affected ties and relationships that constitute community.

This paper explores the distribution of social ties within three black communities. We take seriously the notion that in order to study the personal communities of urbanites we must explore ties both inside and outside neighborhood boundaries. Using data on the interpersonal ties of 352 blacks residing in three contrasting study areas, we explore several questions. First, to what degree are ties neighborhood based or what we term, beyond the neighborhood? Second, are there sub-group differences in spatial location in these study areas; are differences for age, sex, education, and occupational status present? Third, we ask whether differences in the degree of neighborhood embeddedness occur for various attributes of ties; are they equally close, as frequently contacted, or contacted in different ways (i.e., personally or by phone)? Fourth, to what extent are kin, co-workers and co-members spatially dispersed? And finally, in what ways do ties beyond the neighborhood differ from those within the neighborhood in the type(s) of social support that they contain? These questions connect directly to issues surrounding the community question.

#### Spatial Issues and the Community Question

The community question has often been posed as a set of competing hypotheses about the effects of industrialized societies on pre-industrial forms of social organization (Wellman 1979; Wellman and Leighton 1979; Wellman et al. 1983). Implicit in these discussions has been a concern with the persistence of social ties, their nature and quality. Three arguments have been identified. The first argues that large-scale social organizations in industrialized societies have attenuated the extent of social ties among urbanites. Community is said to be lost; communal solidarities are weakened; secondary relations have developed which are impersonal, transitory, and segmental. Kin are seen as unconnected in this scenario, and formal relationships have replaced primary ones for the provision of needed goods and services. Without the force of primary, face to face, and kinship ties social disorganization in the values and behavior of residents may occur. The notion of "mass society" looms large in this perspective.

The second argument is that community is "saved" or "retained". Industrialized societies create a need for highly communal relations so that support, sociability, and social control can be maintained. Through ecological sorting into homogeneous residential and work communities ties are fashioned to neighbors, friends and kin that fit our notion of primary relationships: face to face, full relations and highly functional. This argument supports urban sociologists' fascination with the neighborhood as it elevates it to the principal focus of investigation.

The final argument is that community is neither lost nor saved, but rather a different type of community develops. This is the unbounded community. The unbounded community in contrast to the saved community has ties that are sparsely knit, spatially dispersed, ramifying structures" (Wellman 1979:1207). Instead of the neighborhood being the focus of interaction, ties outside of the neighborhood that ramify into various social and institutional domains provide the individual with varied access to different resources and information. Dense family and neighborhood ties are not the most prevalent in this view. This perspective emphasizes the entrepreneurial character of interaction; individuals pursue ties for the resources and support they provide and not out of locational proximity or ties of tradition as in kinship.

Aspects of these arguments have been evaluated by several researchers who examined the personal networks of urban residents in search of the network characteristics that these perspectives suggest (Laumann 1973; Fischer et al. 1977; Wellman 1979; Fischer 1982; Tsar and Sigelman 1982; Kadushin 1983; Wellman et al. 1983). However, it is disturbing to note that these studies, which take considerable time and resources, were for the most part exclusively white (Laumann 1973; Wellman 1979; Fischer 1982). This

study of black social networks in Los Angeles is the only study of this type with data that can address these issues. Initial results on this question suggest that these three urban areas have networks that correspond most to the "saved" imagery. However, elements of unbounded community are also present, particularly in the suburban community of Carson and the economically heterogeneous community of Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills. And as described in the social science literature, the poor, and characteristically black community of Watts, fits the saved imagery (Oliver 1986).

This analysis further pursues this question by examining more closely the spatial dimension of personal networks. The saved and unbounded ideal types serve as an interesting and meaningful way to examine these differences. Both have contrasting perspectives on the role of space. For the saved scenario, space is an important organizer of social life. Mainly as a consequence of ecological sorting, the neighborhood becomes a receptacle of like situated and like-minded people who become amenable sources of support and sociability. Kin are also seen as important in this scenario. Kin ties in the immediate area are seen as the most likely source of interaction. Because of the propinquity of these attractive contacts, interaction is more often, more intense, and more likely to constitute multistranded forms of interaction and contexts. The content of these ties are also more likely to contain strands of meaningful social support, as well as express reciprocity between ego and alter.

On the unbounded side, spatial considerations are not seen as the major organizer of social life. Instead relations are found in spatially diverse settings. These ties are not expected to be as intense as neighborhood-based ties, nor face to face, but they are thought to contain support; single strands as opposed to multiple strands. Likewise, reciprocity between ego and alter is most likely uneven.

The existence of ties that correspond to the unbound argument do not constitute evidence for a lack of community, but the presence of a different kind of community. In modern post-industrial cities like Los Angeles, residential heterogeneity, cheap and effective transportation, and its scale, density and diversity are all conducive to the cultivation of unbounded ties. People are more likely, in this context, to be bound into multiple social worlds of work, residence, and sociality.

#### The Black Community: From Spatially Determined to Unbounded?

Because of the role that external forces have played in shaping and molding the American black community, it becomes an interesting setting from which to study the community question. Developing in the late 1880's and maturing and expanding after the first wave of black migration from the rural south, black communities in the South, Northeast and, to a lesser degree in the West, were communities that reflected the limited opportunities that blacks had in choosing where they could live. Black urban "ghettos" were a direct result of the discriminatory housing and government policies propagated by local citizens and governments (Drake and Cayton 1970; de Graff 1962; Spear 1967; Kusmer 1976).<sup>4</sup> Racially restrictive covenants for example, insured that blacks of all social classes were consigned to constrained spatial boundaries. The result was that black communities were spatially defined, with boundaries that were easily articulated by white and black alike.

While little systematic evidence is known about the social ties and bonds that developed within these communities, it is not too bold to suggest that this segregation impacted the way in which the social lives of blacks developed. The neighborhood assumed great importance. Neighbors and local social institutions like lodges and churches were the major settings in which social life took place. Because of the presence of a socially stratified population, lower class blacks and higher status blacks were much more likely to cross paths, possibly develop ties, and to maintain relationships of mutual support and sociality (Drake and Cayton 1970). The neighborhood gained this importance precisely because the world outside of it was inaccessible in the main part to blacks. In the context of the community question, blacks forged "saved" networks in which they actively maintained ties and bonds to adapt to deprivations resulting from the pangs of discrimination and exclusion. The developments of "unbounded" networks were literally unavailable to them.

With the breakdown of de jure segregation and the relative openness of the residential housing market to blacks, the significant question now becomes how has this affected the ways in which blacks have formed and sustained personal communities? While it is still the case that blacks have remained, for the most part, residentially solated

from the majority in America's cities, it is nevertheless the case that increasingly the so called "black middle-class" finds its options for where to live much greater than in the past (Farely 1970; Rose 1976). While certainly not anything like a floodgate, the movement of blacks from all black central city neighborhoods to suburban white ones has become an important social phenomenon. Combined with the growing social class differentiation in the black community, this trend has caused some observers to hypothesize that this set of changes have also had repercussions on the social level.

The possibility that "economic schisms" in the black community will be recreated as "social schisms" has been suggested obliquely by several commentators (Wilson 1978; 1981; New York Times 1978; Taylor 1979; Oliver and Glick 1982). In a graphic portrayal, one commentator has brought up the specter of a division of America into three race-class societies; one white, one poor black, and one black middle class (New York Times 1978). Accordingly, the black poor and the black middle class are viewed as becoming increasingly "estranged" from each other. This estrangement is pointed to as vividly being represented in the two societies place of residence; poor black America has inherited the central cities while the black middle class has moved to the suburbs to share a life of privilege with other white suburbanites. The drama was sharply illustrated in the title of the third part of the series: "Blacks open up their Escape Hatch."

Has the black middle class escaped the spatial domination of the past, social worlds inhabited by diverse social classes, for lives in suburban white communities where class interest can form the basis of personal communities? In the words of the community question, have liberated and unbounded networks replaced the retained networks for those blacks that have moved out of central city urban black communities?

#### DATA AND METHODS

Thus far blacks have been totally neglected in extant large-scale urban studies of social networks (Laumann 1973; Fischer 1982; Wellman 1979). The researcher interested in survey analysis of networks in the black community has been seriously hampered by the absence of significant numbers of blacks in these surveys. The research reported here uses the only mass survey of urban black personal networks yet to be conducted. Through an adaptation of Fischer's (1982; also McCallister and Fischer 1978) techniques for generating egocentric personal networks and the novel use of Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) a sample of 352 blacks from three different black communities in the Los Angeles metropolitan area were queried in the spring of 1983.

#### Measuring Networks

We generated our networks by utilizing five open-ended questions (Craven and Wellman 1973) to develop an interactional network, a social support network which the respondent views as one they can draw on, and the network of associates that draws on the respondent for social support. Five questions in all were asked.<sup>6</sup> For each network generating question the interviewer was instructed to record up to eight different names. The computer selected the first two unique names given for each network generating question to create a roster of up to ten names for each respondent. We asked detailed questions about this sub-sample's relationship to the respondent, and their individual characteristics. Computer programming assisted in making roster questioning as efficient and easy as possible. To decrease the chance of interviewer bias all interviewers were black.

The study sampled adult blacks, 18 years or older from the communities of Watts, Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills, and Carson in metropolitan Los Angeles. Random digit dialing was used to generate phone numbers to over 3,600 potential respondents in the three areas (Frey 1983:68-71). Subtracting disconnected numbers, businesses, residences not eligible for the study (e.g., non-black households, households outside of the study area, etc.) 846 eligible respondents were contacted. Of these, 352 consented to be interviewed for a response rate of 41.6 percent. The interviews range from 30 minutes to one hour and a half, depending on the size of the respondents' network.<sup>7</sup>

The data reflect a more economically and socially upscale population on some significant demographic characteristics than what is found in the census. This is not entirely unexpected, for with telephone surveys the more educated and high-income respondents are more likely to cooperate than those with low education and low incomes. And considering that the study surveys blacks, a population that is notoriously

difficult to sample at the lowest economic levels, the discrepancies are not large. Moreover, the distributions on all the relevant demographics were not so severe that they threaten our ability to make comparisons between communities. Examining the data by community, we note that the same trends that are present in the census surfaced in this data; respondents from Watts were less educated and more likely blue collar than respondents from Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills and Carson. And the direction of differences between the two more affluent communities were likewise consistent and in the right direction. The sex distribution is the most highly skewed; 66 percent of the respondents were female. Thus caution should be used in interpreting our data as purely representative; but to the degree that we examine differences between communities the results should accurately reflect real differences.

### The Study Areas

The communities studied differ on various dimensions; social class, racial composition, and place in the metropolitan system. In this section we briefly describe each area.

First, Watts is a traditional central city community forged in an era of racially restrictive covenants and other racially conditioned constraints that denied blacks access to other areas in the urban metropolis. Today, this area fits the classic stereotype of the urban black community. The community residents are employed in low-level jobs that generate low incomes, unemployment is high, and public assistance is important to the welfare of a significant number of people in the community. The community itself has high density, a poor housing stock, a low level of retail development, and is "institutionally incomplete" (Breton 1964) with the dominant social institutions being churches and liquor stores. It is to communities such as this that the traditionally negative view of black community organization has been applied.

The second community, Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills is also an inner city community, but it differs from Watts in its social class composition. An economically heterogeneous area, this community is the home of Los Angeles' black middle class and is well known for an excellent housing stock that rivals other affluent areas of the city. Unlike other affluent communities, however, the community is simultaneously home to economically less marginal households as well. Probably its distinguishing feature is its "institutional completeness," that is, its churches and other social organizations, retail establishments, restaurants, art galleries and book stores all of which cater specifically to black tastes. This area is a prime candidate for "saved" networks.

The final community represents black movement out of the central city and into the suburbs. Carson is a working to middle class suburban community that is not contiguous to the traditional black community of Los Angeles. Close to the bustling aircraft and electronics factories in the south bay of Los Angeles county, Carson is a bedroom community with traditional suburban tract single-family housing. Reputed to be the most racially integrated city in the state of California (33 percent black, 31 percent white, 22 percent Hispanic, and 14 percent Asian), Carson contains all the retail and social amenities of more established but older suburban cities. If liberated networks are found among blacks, the social structure of a community like Carson would certainly cultivate them.

## FINDINGS

### Size of Networks

The series of open-ended questions elicited 2437 people from the combined sample of 352. The mean number of people named across all five-network generating questions was 7.05. Not surprisingly, associational networks were the largest; Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills had the largest associational networks while Watts and Carson were significantly smaller (4.43 to 3.31 and 3.46). Emotional and material support networks are consistently smaller than associational networks. Significant differences between communities are found in both giving and receiving emotional support. Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills has larger networks than the other two communities for both these categories. However, in regard to the over-all size of networks, these differences are not statistically significant. Respondents in each area have abundant sources of social support and are involved in networks tied to several different people. The abundance is reflected in the finding that small networks, identified as three or less ties, are relatively rare (9 percent)

in the sample. In contrast, large networks, those with nine or more ties, are relatively numerous; about one quarter of the sample has networks of this size (24 percent). Clearly, in all three areas, ties are abundant and conform most to the community saved scenario.

In order to examine more closely the social character of these ties we asked detailed questions of a sub sample of 1,777 people from the 2,437 named. This sub sample was asked detailed questions about the relationship of network members to themselves as well as about the social characteristics of members of the network. The remaining analysis uses the sub-sample of 1,777 network members, unless otherwise noted.

#### The Extent of Ties Beyond the Neighborhood

The major empirical question in this analysis is to what degree are social ties based in neighborhood or extralocal orbits? We were able to ask each respondent questions which gave us the geographical location of a sample of their social networks. Table 1 shows the spatial distribution of social ties according to whether or not the tie is in the household, the neighborhood, in Los Angeles or outside of the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

As can be observed, in each community ties beyond the neighborhood predominate. But in the more economically secure areas of Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills (62 percent) and Carson (60 percent) ties beyond the neighborhood are found much more often than among Watts respondents (50 percent). But what is important is the fact that social ties are primarily outside of the neighborhood, thus validating the notion that the neighborhood is not the exclusive source of associational and social support ties for modern black urbanites. Furthermore, such a finding suggest that research should look beyond the neighborhood to understand the intricate nature of black social structure if a complete understanding of the black community, or any other American community for that matter, is to emerge. In the language of the community question, these findings suggest that black neighborhoods have bundles of saved and unbounded networks. While the neighborhood is certainly important, for the more economically secure black respondents ramifying networks outside of the local community appear to have taken on new and important meanings for them.

Table 1. Spatial Location of Network Members Given by Study Areas.

SPATIAL LOCATION	STUDY AREAS		
	WATTS	CRENSHAW-BALDWIN HILLS	CARSON
In Household	17	17	20
In Neighborhood	33	21	20
In Los Angeles	41	52	49
	> 50	> 62	> 60
Outside Los Angeles	9	10	11
	100%	100%	100%
	(649)	(586)	(527)

Chi-Square = 37.19  
 Sig < .000  
 N = 1762

To note the prevalence of ties outside of the neighborhood however, incompletely addresses the ramifications of the spatial location of social ties. Are respondents with certain characteristics more likely than others to have ties beyond neighborhood boundaries? For example, are males, more likely than females to have ties that are

dispersed geographically? We asked this question for four different groups; sex, age, education, and occupational status. We discovered that for sex, age and education there were no significant differences. Younger blacks and older blacks were equally as likely to have ties beyond the neighborhood. Males and females also showed no differences. And surprisingly education was not significantly related to whether ties were neighborhood or extra-local.

The only status grouping that made a difference was occupational status. Table 2 represents a rather complex table that shows the percent of ties beyond the neighborhood that respondents from different occupational groupings had by community. Reading down the table for each community we see that Watts had strong differences by occupational grouping for the percent of ties that were not based in the neighborhood. The higher the status the more likely ties were outside of the neighborhood. Whereby only 43 percent of Watts' lower blue collar ties were outside of the neighborhood, 59 percent of its upper white collar respondent's ties were located beyond the neighborhood. In the other two communities no occupational status effects of this type were found. More telling is the finding that for blue-collar blacks in the more economically secure areas of Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills and Carson, they are just as likely as their white-collar counterparts to have ties outside of the neighborhood. This contrasts significantly with Watts' blue collar residents.

Table 2. Percent Ties Beyond the Neighborhood by Respondent Occupational Status for Study Areas.

RESPONDENT'S OCCUPATIONAL STATUS	STUDY AREAS				Difference Between Study Areas	
	CRENSHAW-				CHI-SQUARE	GAMMA
	WATTS (N)	BALDWIN (N)	HILLS (N)	CARSON (N)		
Lower Blue Collar	43 (209)	68 (126)		60 (73)	sig < .000	.29
Upper Blue Collar	42 (73)	62 (50)		70 (43)	sig < .009	.38
Lower White Collar	52 (195)	57 (129)		60 (153)	NS	.11
Upper White Collar	59 (76)	62 (229)		60 (198)	NS	-.01
Differences Within Study Areas						
Chi-Square	sig < .05	NS		NS		
Gamma	.17	-.04		-.03		

The explanation for this may lie in the social class composition of the Watts community. Two processes may be at work; one that is based on geographical constraints and one that is based on economic constraints. Given its strong working class composition, Watts may provide a fertile ground for social contacts for its blue-collar residents, while at the same time providing population constraints to higher status residents in establishing ties in the neighborhood. Higher status residents would find fewer opportunities to make contacts with other high status residents and would therefore have to go outside of the immediate neighborhood to make those connections. Combining to make ties with those outside of the neighborhood more difficult for lower class residents of Watts are constraints that derive from low incomes and limited access to transportation. Watts is notoriously known for its inaccessibility to other parts of the city by public transportation (McCone Commission 1965). Low status Watt's residents may have to adapt to this situation by intensifying local ties at the expense of ramifying non-local ties.



## The Characteristics of Ties

The arguments about the community question contain a set of imagery about the nature of social ties in industrialized and post-industrialized urban

Table 3. Spatial Location of Ties by Selected Characteristics.

CHARACTERISTIC	SPATIAL LOCATION		N	CHI-SQUARE
	% IN NEIGHBORHOOD	% BEYOND NEIGHBORHOOD		
<b>Closeness</b>				
Not at all	43	57	44	$\chi^2 = 3.37$
Somewhat close	44	56	321	DF = 3
Close	39	61	333	NS
Very Close	44	56	1056	
			1754	
<b>Frequency of Contact</b>				
Every day	69	31	674	$\chi^2 = 328.23$
Once a week	31	69	624	DF = 3
Once a month	26	74	293	sig < .000
Less than that	11	89	163	
			1754	
<b>Type of Contact</b>				
In Person	73	26	525	$\chi^2 = 315.53$
By Phone	19	81	427	DF = 3
Both Ways	36	64	798	sig < .000
			1750	
<b>Race of Tie</b>				
Black	43	57	1601	$\chi^2 = 305$
Non-black	41	59	152	DF = 1
			1753	NS

settings. Ties beyond the neighborhood are hypothesized to be less close, less frequently contacted, not face-to-face, and to represent more full relationships; that is they are more multistranded than ties outside of the neighborhood. Tables 3 and 4 address these issues and, for the most part, confirm them.

Table 3 examines selected characteristics of social ties given for whether the tie is in or beyond the neighborhood. Both retained and unbounded arguments about community agree that there are qualitative differences between ties in and beyond the neighborhood. These findings indicate that neighborhood ties are seen more often than those beyond the neighborhood and are also more likely to be face to face than mediated by phone contact. However, these indicators do not necessarily mean that ties beyond the neighborhood are perceived as less "close" than ties in the neighborhood. When the respondent was asked to rate how "close" they perceived members of their network to be the findings indicated that closeness and spatial location were unrelated; ties in the neighborhood are not perceived as any more close than ties beyond the neighborhood.

We also examined an indirect measure of how ramifying ties are; the degree to which they provide access to different sets of resources and contacts. A proxy that we use is the racial status of the tie; the extent to which they were non-black. Non-black ties would represent ties that provide access to very different sources of support, information, and institutional domains. What is clear from Table 3 is that black networks are just that; black. Only 9 percent are non-black. 8 And the percentage of non-black ties in the neighborhood is no greater than the percentage out; that is even when controlling for community. These extra-local ties don't ramify racially. And this finding has important social implications. An argument that has often been made about the value of racial integration--both in the schools and residentially--is that it will allow blacks and whites meaningful contacts that will open up new opportunities and avenues that were previously closed to blacks. These "weak ties" were presumed to offer blacks entry into previously excluded "inner circles" and access to important sources of "information" that would contribute to future success and mobility (Granovetter 1973). But what is clear from this data is that even for blacks who live in racially integrated

settings and whose children presumably attend racially integrated schools, the bulk of their meaningful social ties still tend to be in their own racial group. The notion that racial integration at the residential and school setting will lead to the social integration of individuals may be a faulty one. If so, then social policy should be based less on these types of social rationales and more on issues of equal access to our nation's major institutions.

To gain a sense of the fullness of the relationships involved in these ties we computed two measures of multistrandedness (Verbrugge 1979). The first is the mean number of connections that a tie evidenced. We computed this by giving a

Table 4. Mean Differences on Degree of Multistrandedness as measured by Number of Connections and Number of Relationships.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-Statistic	
Mean Number of Connections				
In Neighborhood	761	1.71	.885	
Beyond Neighborhood	1,001	1.23	.564	2.46*
Mean Number of Relationships				
In Neighborhood	761	1.89	.037	
Beyond Neighborhood	1,001	1.87	.034	1.11

\*sig < .000

Table 5. Percent Ties Beyond the Neighborhood by Relation for Study Areas.

RELATION	STUDY AREAS					
	CRENSHAW- WATTS	(N)**	BALDWIN HILLS	(N)	CARSON	(N)
Kin	56	(318)	54*	(260)	55*	(239)
Non Kin	49	(331)	68	(326)	64	(286)
Comember	46	(242)	53*	(202)	49*	(185)
Non-Comember	53	(407)	67	(384)	65	(342)
Coworker	57	(69)	60	(74)	64	(64)
Non-Coworker	49	(580)	62	(512)	59	(462)

\* sig < .05

\*\* Number in parentheses represent the base from which the percentage was computed.

point for each time a person was mentioned as providing or receiving some form of support in our network generating questions. The second, is the mean number of relationships that a person had; kinship, neighbor, coworker, comember. As Table 4 shows neighborhood-based ties are as predicted, more multistranded in terms of the ways in which they are connected. Ties in the neighborhood are more likely to be based on multiple types of connections (X=1.71) than those outside of the neighborhood (X=1.23). Thus neighbors tend to provide multiple strands of support while those beyond the neighborhood are more likely specialized supporters. Only one strand of support or type of associations flows through the ties of those beyond the neighborhood. Surprisingly

there are no differences in the mean number of relationships of those ties within and outside the neighborhood.

#### Kin, Comember and Coworker: The Relational Basis of Social Ties

A major part of the community question concerns the extent to which kin form significant and meaningful parts of an individual's social network vis a vis other forms of relationships, particularly those of co-workers and co-members. Our initial concern is to what degree are kin represented in the neighborhood based orbits of our respondents. The retained argument declares kin to be heavily based in the neighborhood. Our data only partially supports this view. As Table 5 shows, in all three neighborhoods kin are less than half the time found in the neighborhood. Not quite what the retained argument predicts. But on the other hand, it is nevertheless true the non-kin are even more likely to be extra-local; particularly in Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills and Carson. Kin are found both in the neighborhood and outside the neighborhood. Spatial constraints that can potentially limit the immediate availability of kin for social ties seem to be transcended by our respondents. This shows the powerful influence of kinship in organizing social organization in the black community (Billingsley 1968; Martineau 1977; Allen 1978; Martin and Martin 1978; Taylor 1979). In the more economically secure areas unbounded networks are as well realized for non-kin.

The unbounded argument stresses the importance of non-kin ties that are work and organizationally based. Table 5 provides information on these types of ties as well. An interesting trend emerges in this data. Co-Workers tend to be extra-local while co-members tend to be strongly local. Almost six of every ten co-workers in each community reside outside of the neighborhood whereas co-members are found only half the time outside the neighborhood. Co-members, particularly in the more economically differentiated communities of Crenshaw- Baldwin Hills and Carson, are more likely than those who are not to be based in neighborhood settings. This runs counter to the unbounded arguments expectations. Co-members are not necessarily outside the boundaries of the neighborhood, but rather within it. A likely explanation is that co-members are in neighborhood based organizations that bring neighborhood people together like church and street clubs. For these black urbanites kin and organizational involvement are more conducive to neighborhood based social orbits than work relationships which take one beyond the neighborhood.

#### The Flow of Social Support

The final issue we examine concerns the degree to which ties based in neighborhood settings are differentiated from ties found beyond the neighborhood in terms of the nature of social support that flows between ego (the respondent) and alter (those named as part of the social network). The retained argument implies that ties in the neighborhood are more likely than ties beyond the neighborhood to generate support. moreover, neighborhood ties are also hypothesized to more likely be reciprocal in nature than ties outside the neighborhood which are usually single stranded.

We were able to determine whether respondents had people in their network who provided emotional support and material support as well as whether those people in the network received emotional or material support from the respondent. Using the "provider" and "receiver" designations we were able to compute a "reciprocal" category as well. Table 6 reports on the degree to which ties were beyond the neighborhood for the various support categories for each study area. We have set this table up so that we can compare differences within areas as well as differences between areas. Examining differences between areas first we note that Watts (39 percent) and Carson (41 percent) appear to be the most neighborhood dependent for emotional social support. Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills by far appears to be the most expansive in terms of gaining emotional support from outside of the neighborhood (54 percent) as well as in providing it to others elsewhere (70 percent). It seems clear that those who receive emotional support from Carson (66 percent) and Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills are much more likely than those in Watts, based on emotional receiving (51 percent), to be beyond the neighborhood. A closer look within each area shows that Watts is decidedly more neighborhood based than either of the other two areas. The differences appear most decidedly in the receiving end. Reciprocal ties in all three areas are about the same; a little under half of Watts reciprocal ties are outside the neighborhood (49 percent) while a little more than half for the other two areas (55 percent and 53 percent) are beyond the immediate area. Watts pattern on

emotional support clearly reflects a retained imagery while the other two communities are more in line with the unbounded scenario.

For material support the pattern is somewhat repeated. Material "providers" are for each area, more likely beyond the neighborhood. The differences that

Table 6. Percent Ties Beyond the Neighborhood by Support Functions Given for Study Areas.

	STUDY AREAS			Difference Between Study Areas
	WATTS (N)*	CRENSHAW		
		BALDWIN HILLS (N)	CARSON (N)	
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT				
Provider	39 (134)	54 (129)	41 (121)	sig < .02
Receiver	51 (138)	70 (146)	66 (131)	sig < .00
Reciprocal	49 (90)	55 (119)	53 (19)	NS
MATERIAL SUPPORT				
Provider	55 (134)	58 (116)	56 (111)	NS
Receiver	53 (163)	69 (129)	(116)	sig < .00
Reciprocal	50 (42)	59 (75)	44 (34)	NS
Differences Within Study Areas				
Chi-Square	NS	sig < .05	sig < .01	

\* Number in parentheses represent the base from which the percentage was computed.

appear are in the extent to which material "receivers" are in or out of the neighborhood. And here, as in the case of emotional receiving, the pattern is for the more affluent areas to have material receivers who are more likely beyond the neighborhood (71 percent and 69 percent) than for Watts (53 percent). This pattern suggests an interesting interpretation of the direction of resources, both emotional and material for the more affluent areas. Resources appear to be going outside of these areas to communities and people beyond their own neighborhood. Far from the emphasis of the community question's concern with the ramifying character of extralocal ties, these results suggest that at least for these more economically secure areas, ties to others outside of the community connect them to more needy and less resourceful people. The implications of this analysis are further discussed un the conclusion.

#### CONCLUSION

This paper began by critically discussing the tendency of urban sociologists to make the local neighborhood their focus of inquiry at the expense of looking at social ties and activities beyond neighborhood boundaries. This concern is made all the more important when we examine significant bodies of literature on the Afro-American urban

community. The dominance of participant observation methodologies has tended to reinforce an image of the absolute importance of the neighborhood, often conceived as a smaller unit such as the street corner or the apartment building, in structuring the social and personal communities of black urban residents. This paper has tried to utilize a network analytic perspective to establish that the local neighborhood is not necessarily the only locus of community for urban blacks, and that to gain an understanding of the social organization and dynamics of the urban black community one's analysis must go beyond the neighborhood.

As an analytic framework we reviewed the way this issue has been conceived in the context of Wellman's exposition of the "community question." His conception of community "retained" and community "unbounded" provided us with two competing perspectives of the importance and role of space in organizing the personal communities of urbanites. Using these contrasting hypotheses we examined the social ties of a sample of 352 blacks from three contrasting urban areas.

Our findings were overwhelmingly in support of the notion that in order to meaningfully understand the social world of black urbanites one must look beyond as well as within the neighborhood. For all three communities at least half of their social ties were beyond neighborhood boundaries. This finding in itself points to the importance of a more spatially expansive view of the social organization and life of black urban inhabitants than previously used. The concentration on the street corner or the apartment building does not include half of the socially significant ties that blacks forge, whether they are located in economically deprived areas like Watts, or relatively affluent areas like Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills, or suburban communities like Carson.

However, the analysis also attempted to bring this discussion into the wider auspices of the community question and its competing hypotheses about the role of space in post-industrial societies. In many ways the analysis was consistent with aspects of the community unbounded argument--ties beyond the neighborhood were for the most part infrequent, less personal, and less multi-stranded than neighborhood ties. But there were some differences. For example, we found that these ties were not evaluated as being any less close than neighborhood ties, despite their infrequent contact, less personal contact, or solitary purpose.

While the findings for the most part showed no differentiation among the three areas we examined, some differences were noted. Partially confirming the unbounded argument was our examination of the role of kin in the neighborhood and non-kin outside the neighborhood. Kin tended to be more neighborhood-based than non-kin in the two more affluent areas. But Watts showed little difference between kin and non-kin on this attribute. While not statistically significant, non-kin in Watts were more likely to be neighborhood based than kin. This shows the importance of the maintenance of kin ties for less affluent black urbanites in a community like Watts where ties to those kin who have moved away are important for sources of social, emotional and material support.

While the findings on kin support the unbounded argument for Crenshaw- Baldwin Hills and Carson, the findings in regard to co-member ties support strongly a community retained scenario. Indeed, all three areas evidence this high degree of neighborhood embeddedness on this issue. What explains this is the organizational infrastructure of black communities which were initially developed as a consequence of exclusion from the wider society, but which have been maintained and continued over time, which encourages neighborhood based or locally organized social ties. Those ties to co-members are organized within highly specialized and, in some cases, institutionally elaborate organizations such as lodges, fraternal organizations, churches, and street clubs.

The final set of findings show that support flows rather unevenly in the ties of extralocals depending on which community and what type of support one examines. The clearest findings were: 1) Watts, when compared to the two more affluent areas, was the most neighborhood based in terms of all aspect of social support; 2) Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills and Carson tended to have ties to both emotional and material receivers who were beyond the neighborhood. These findings are suggestive in terms of the issues brought out earlier about the increasing social class differentiation of the black community and its effects on the social ties of black urbanites. Watts' apparent reliance on internal resources suggests a turning inward. This can particularly be argued for emotional support, but for material support, the type that is the rarest commodity for residents of Watts, over half of all ties are to people beyond the neighborhood. Who are these people? It would not be too far fetched to suggest that those receivers, both emotional and particularly material, that Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills and Carson are tied to are less well off blacks in areas like Watts. Because of the social mobility of blacks in

Crenshaw-Baldwin Hills or Carson it does not follow that they are no longer tied to their lower class brethren who are still in need of the social resources, both emotional and material, that the middle class has to offer. The implication of the community question is that ties outside of the neighborhood connect people to different resources and institutional domains. For blacks, who make a residential move to a more affluent area, extralocal ties may represent not access to new resources but the maintenance of old ties. Indeed, our finding about the racial composition of ties suggest that blacks don't necessarily break into different sets of resources and institutional domains easily.

Clearly the most interesting issues brought up in this paper refer to questions about social differentiation in the black community and the role of neighborhood based networks. The comparison of Carson, our suburban area, and Watts our low-income central city community, is instructive here. It appears that Carson is much more unbounded than Watts. The issue in the social differentiation literature is just who these unbounded ties are. As mentioned earlier, they are to other blacks, for the most part, and the tendency for these extralocal relations to be ones in which resources flow from ego to alter suggest that these may be to other less well off blacks. If so, that would suggest that the economic schism has not had the effect so much of producing social differences but may very well be the basis of maintaining and cementing ties.

Certainly this is a hypothesis that our future work will attempt to address by further teasing the connections presented in this paper. In particular, we need to map out those ties beyond the neighborhood and attempt to locate them in terms of the types of areas and locales in which they are situated. One suggestive hypothesis is that greater differences in the extralocal ties of these three areas will emerge as we gain a better sense of where these ties are. This paper has been only a faint reminder to all researchers interested in the social organization of communities, and black communities in particular, that we must look beyond the neighborhood to gain an understanding and sense of the new and emerging communities that are being produced in the post-industrial city.

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2. Tally's Corner is but the most well known example of several works on the black urban community that exemplifies this tendency (i.e., Hannerz 1969; Rainwater 1970; Stack 1974; Anderson 1978; Valentine 1978; Williams 1981). Participant observation studies by their very nature tend to breed a concern with activities and interaction within limited spatial boundaries. The street corner, the apartment building, or the scope of a few blocks has often been the focus of these studies. The argument here is not that these works have failed us; indeed they are indispensable in our attempt to understand the social structure of urban black life; but what we argue is that they have left out significant portions of the social milieu of black life that need to be considered to understand the dynamics of black community life.

3. The descriptions of the various arguments associated with the community question are taken from Wellman's (1979) now well-known discussion. We have chosen to use the labels that he most recently used in describing these arguments; community lost, retained, unbounded (Wellman et.al. 1983). They provide a description of the arguments without any normative orientation (i.e., liberated).

4. A full discussion of the mechanisms used to constrain the residential choices of blacks in Los Angeles is found in Ford and Griffin (1979).

5. For a full discussion of CATI see Sure and Meeker (1978) and the special issue of Sociological Methods and Research edited by Freeman and Shanks (1983).

6. The first three questions asked for those people who they: 1) "get together with...to talk, socialize and enjoy themselves"; 2) talk to when they "...are concerned

about a personal" matter, and; 3) get "help" from when they have a "tough situation" by being able to get some "money" or other "help." The last two questions attempted to determine who comes to them for: 1) talk when they need "personal advice about their personal matters or personal decisions"; 2) and "money" or "to do something for them when they have had a difficult situation to get through." These questions determine respectively the social interaction aspect of the network, the emotional providers, emotional receivers, material providers and material receivers.

7. The low response rate reflects difficulties that one encounters when conducting research in minority and low-income populations. For one of the few examinations of this issue see James E. Blackwell and Philip Hart's discussion (1982:17-19. The use of CATI solved several problems involved with survey research of blacks; access to poor and dangerous neighborhoods by interviewers, interviewer falsification, etc. However, problems of respondent participation tended to be the most significant problem associated with our research. This was anticipated at the onset and an attempt was made to induce participation through the use of a small monetary gratuity for cooperation (\$5.00). Many black populations have been researched without any personal or social compensation. Some urban blacks have come to see research in the social sciences as another form of exploitation. Since this research was accomplished with limited funds, we were unable to do call backs to refusals or to attempt to ascertain if there were any patterns among those who did not participate. One source of non-participation may have been the length of the interview. During the introduction potential respondents were told that the interview would take 30 to 45 minutes, which was a conservative estimate. It could be that potential respondents found such a time commitment to be too much. Since there were relatively few respondents who once they started the interview ended it because of the length, it is possible that if no time expectation had been given that the response rate would have been greater. If this is the case, then there is a possibility that a great deal of the non-response was random, and therefore not potentially biasing to the results.

8. This figure is not derived from Table 3.

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