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VENUES: LOCATING SOCIAL CONTEXT

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To my parents

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	vi
LIST OF TABLES	vii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
1 REIMAGINING SOCIAL POTENTIAL	1
1.1 Introduction	4
1.2 Venues and Social Exposure	21
1.3 Overview	22
2 VENUES: SITES OF SOCIAL POSSIBILITY, SOCIAL INNOVATION, AND SELF-LIBERATION	26
2.1 Introduction	26
2.2 Components of a Venue	28
2.3 Zones of Social Potential	44
2.4 Venue Constraints and the Effect of Externalities	50
2.5 Conclusion	59
3 VENUES AND THE SECULAR LIFE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS	61
3.1 Introduction	61
3.2 Theory	62
3.3 Hypotheses	66
3.4 Research Design	68
3.5 Methodology	83
3.6 Results and Discussion	84
3.7 Conclusion	95
4 VENUES AND THE POLITICS OF THE EVERYDAY	98
4.1 Introduction	98
4.2 Political Networks and Social Contexts	100
4.3 The Politics of the Everyday	102
4.4 Hypotheses	108
4.5 Data and Methodology	110
4.6 Results and Discussion	117
4.7 Conclusion	123
5 TOWARD AN ECOLOGY OF ASSOCIATION	126
5.1 Space Matters	126
5.2 Planting the Seeds of a Social Network	135
5.3 An Ecology of Association	138

REFERENCES 143

LIST OF FIGURES

3.1	Definitions of Community Size	71
3.2	Social Embeddedness and Opportunity Constraint (Unconditional Relationship, R=2)	82
3.3	Provision of Secular Activities and Opportunity Constraint (Unconditional Relationship)	83
3.4	Social Embeddedness and Opportunity Constraint (Conditional Relationship)	91
3.5	Provision of Secular Activities and Opportunity Constraint (Conditional Relationship)	94
4.1	Sources of Political Networks in Daily Life	103
4.2	NGVs per Capita and Republican Vote Share	118
4.3	Marginal Effect of NGVs per Capita on Republican Vote Share	122

LIST OF TABLES

3.1	Venues Constituting Opportunity Constraint	76
3.2	Descriptive Statistics	80
3.3	Hierarchical Generalized Linear Models with Cumulative Logit Link Function, Social Embeddedness as Outcome	86
3.4	Community Context and Provision of Secular Activities	93
3.5	Logistic Regression Models, Provision of Secular Activities as Outcome	94
4.1	List of Necessary Goods Venues (NGVs)	112
4.2	Correlations Between NGVs per 1,000 Residents and Select Covariates	113
4.3	Descriptive Statistics	116
4.4	HLM Models, % Republican Vote Share as Outcome	118

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ABSTRACT

The role of physical space in social life has been a part of sociological research for over a century. However, this role has often been ambiguous. Qualitative researchers often provide rich accounts of individual spaces, such as Anderson's *A Place on the Corner*, whereas quantitative researchers often develop grand spatial models of collective behavior, such as Butts' Generalized Location Systems. Here I introduce a new analytic object, termed a venue, that allows us to extend and unify research involving these different spatial scales. Venues are discrete physical spaces with an ostensible purpose and material culture, such as a restaurant. They are presented as a pivotal component of a multiscale model of social behavior that integrates both the smaller spaces that host social situations and the geographic regions that constitute communities into a coherent analytic framework. To demonstrate this pivotal role, I first describe how venues facilitate the relationship between physical space and social possibility by providing both guidelines for social behavior and opportunities for challenging these behavioral expectations. I then explore the implications of locating venues within a larger geographic region, asking how the features of this multiscale system can influence the lives of local residents. Specifically, I use a novel combination of geocoded survey data and census data to show how venue scarcity can shape the religious and political life of a local community. Scholars often explore these topics through the lens of ideological commitment, but I find evidence that the materiality of everyday life also plays a role in these behaviors: Communities with fewer venues of a certain type (e.g. supermarkets, drug stores, etc.) are home to (1) residents that are more likely to be socially embedded in their religious congregation, (2) residents that are less likely to vote for a Republican Presidential candidate, and (3) religious congregations that are more likely to offer secular activities such as hobby groups and sports teams. Based on this evidence, I argue that venues are a useful analytic tool for understanding how the multiscale role of physical space comes to shape the social life of local communities and their residents.

CHAPTER 1

REIMAGINING SOCIAL POTENTIAL

[T]he contemporary individual may be thought of as a locus formed at the intersection of numerous organizational ambits. . . . Autonomy is an illusion resting on the individual's liberty to choose among organizations in which to participate. One may shop at one store or another, join or not join a club, affiliate with one church or another, or even elect the government under which to live. But the decision to participate is not an option; it is made for the person. (Hawley 1992, 6)

Over the course of five weeks in the summer of 2011, St. Cecilia's Parish was locked in a heated but foreseeable battle with the Archdiocese of Boston. This simmering conflict, which erupted into an unusually public disagreement, involved one of the most mundane activities performed by the Church: the celebration of Mass. Controversy arose when Rev. John J. Unni scheduled a Mass with the theme "All Are Welcome" and openly planned to "commemorate Boston Pride 2011" (Abel 2011). The Archdiocese quickly ordered St. Cecilia's to cancel the service, claiming that it gave the "unintended impression" that the Church condoned homosexuality.

These events pose an obvious question: Why would a Catholic priest celebrate a Mass commemorating Gay Pride when the Church officially condemns homosexual acts as sinful? Rev. Unni's intended liturgy directly conflicted with a theological doctrine he was tasked with upholding. Had Rev. Unni abandoned his Catholic beliefs and become an apostate priest? Was this a case of good intentions gone wrong? What was behind this radically unorthodox approach to homosexuality? In the end, the answer is much less provocative than we might expect.

Located in Boston's Back Bay neighborhood, the area immediately surrounding St. Cecilia's Church has a large number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) residents. When the "predominantly gay" Jesuit Urban Center shuttered its doors in 2007, many of its members sought to worship at St. Cecilia's, creating a substantial LGBT population within the church (Nelson 2011b). Four years after the Jesuit Urban Center closed, the Rainbow Ministry – a group of nearly 200 parishioners that hosted events for members and supporters of the LGBT community – approached Rev. Unni with the idea of an LGBT-themed Mass (Nelson 2011b).

Less than two weeks after their initial reaction, the Archdiocese reversed its decision and the "All Are Welcome" Mass was rescheduled for mid-July (Nelson and Finch 2011). On July 10th, Rev. Unni delivered his message of inclusiveness to a standing-room-only crowd that included the mayor of Boston (Nelson 2011a). In the end, the Catholic Church relented to the demands of worshippers, despite the fact that those demands were in clear contradiction with religious orthodoxy. One of the oldest and most dogmatic institutions in the world decided to violate its own rules, making the impossible possible. Why?

The Catholic Church takes a relatively unique approach to serving its adherents, one based on geographic location rather than congregational membership. While the term "parish" has come to identify Catholic congregations, technically a parish is a territorial unit defined by the Church. Just as local residents are expected to obtain basic services (e.g. water) from the town where they live, Catholics are expected to attend worship services at the church located within their parish. In fact, they are officially discouraged from attending services at a church located in a different parish. As a result, Catholic churches must draw their parishioners from the local area, a constraint with significant implications for the Church as an organization (e.g. Gamm 1999). Since St. Cecilia's parish contained a large number of LGBT residents (and their supporters) Rev. Unni had to decide whether to reach out to this community or to abandon it, as well as all of the resources these individuals could bring to the church. In other words, this was no revolt against Church doctrine led by an apostate priest, or a landmark shift in Church policy. Rather, it was the result of a church surrounded by potential parishioners who, while living a lifestyle at odds with Church doctrine, were necessary for St. Cecilia's viability as a religious organization.

The story of St. Cecilia's Parish illustrates an insight long known to ethnographers: physical space can influence social institutions in surprising ways. How these institutions operate, and in particular how they routinize their most fundamental activities, such as religious worship, are intimately tied to the physical world, its social and non-social features. In other words, we shape our environment—we construct buildings, roads, parks, and a panoply of other spaces to serve a variety of purposes—yet our environment also shapes us.

Because St. Cecilia's has to draw its parishioners from the immediately surrounding area, local residents were able to exert tremendous pressure on the church to alter its approach to homosexuality. The story of St. Cecilia's is easy to understand in terms of social networks and collective action: LGBT advocates mobilized to successfully challenge the practices of a religious organization. However, this influence was only possible because of the geographic constraint of parish boundaries. If Catholics were able to actively seek out more gay-friendly churches, St. Cecilia's may not have become a focal site for contesting Church policy. Conversely, if St. Cecilia's had been able to draw worshipers from outside its parish (i.e. become a commuter church) then it could have avoided addressing the concerns of LGBT advocates.

The parish system thus set up an inherent tension within and around the church, a tension that was independent of whatever individuals or social networks inhabited this space: Catholic parishioners could either (1) remain in the Church but refrain from receiving the sacraments (i.e. Communion), (2) remain in the Church but confess to the sin of homosexuality in order to receive the sacraments, or (3) leave the Church. The first or second options are what the Church would prefer, as it follows religious doctrine, but the concentration of LGBT residents and advocates within St. Cecilia's parish boundaries meant that parishioners could come together to collectively challenge Church policy. In other words, the physical space of the church, in particular its geographic location and its reliance on features of the immediately surrounding area, challenged the practical viability of its organizational commitment to religious dogma.

What follows is an attempt to integrate this nuanced relationship between social structure, individual behavior, and physical space—studied by qualitative researchers for nearly a century (Park and Burgess 1925; McKenzie 1924)—into a novel multiscalar framework for analyzing large scale survey data. In the process it extends and unifies ecological and network-based approaches to social behavior, suggesting a generative theory of sociospatial processes based on the relative accessibility of individuals, locations, and social experiences.

1.1 Introduction

The choices we make are predicated on the options available to us. There are countless ways that these options are limited. Studies of social structure can avoid the task of listing these constraints by asking the inverse: What is possible? What is possible of an individual living in poverty? What is possible of an organization in a crowded market? What is possible of a society experiencing rapid economic growth? This type of sociological imagination understands the reality of the social world by probing its limits. Often these limits are endogenously defined in terms of the very social structures we seek to explain: economic systems, organizational forms, racial hierarchies, and so on. From Marx's *Das Kapital* and Durkheim's *De La Division Du Travail Social* to Padgett and Powell's (2012) autocatalytic account of social innovation, sociologists often produce theories of how social phenomena reinforce, reshape, or reimagine other social phenomena. The question of "What is possible?" is thus recast into the question of "What does society allow?" in light of the social structures shaping our individual and collective behavior. In the case of St. Cecilia's, however, religious dogma does not allow priests to administer Catholic rites to unrepentent homosexuals. Despite this, Rev. Unni conducted a special religious service that invited homosexuals to worship. In the end, what society allowed did not determine what was possible.

While a story of LGBT acceptance, the newsworthiness of St. Cecilia's gay pride mass reminds us that our lives are an unending process of exerting agency in the face of structural constraints arising from religious, economic, social, or cultural systems of meaning that prescribe (and circumscribe) our activities. Typically, a Catholic church would not openly invite LGBT parishioners to worship, leaving these individuals in a contested relationship with the Church. It is the exceptional nature of Rev. Unni's actions that highlight why social potential—our capacity to act and interact according to our own needs and preferences—represents a useful conceptual tool for social scientists. The concept of social potential productively disrupts the stability of social structures, questioning their deterministic influence on individuals by proposing a qualified definition of free will that assumes no social structure is inviolable or permanent.

Often the panoply of social structures shaping our choices, even before we face them, circumscribe our possible actions so completely that we may even question our capacity for self-determination. This stricture arises because we often acquire our understanding of what is possible from the social structures we inhabit, starting from the very language we use to describe these possibilities. For example, the authors of the Declaration of Independence, arguably the most innovative statement on liberal democracy in history, still owned slaves and used the word “freedom” to index a very specific kind of liberty that systematically denied millions of Americans their right to self-determination. Conversely, stating that citizens have rights does not clarify what these rights entail in practice, and so for centuries even the legal definition of personhood has evolved as new understandings of liberty and legal rights have developed.

These challenges may lead us to believe that true freedom is impossible, that the best we can do is to lock ourselves in perpetual battle with the forces that seek to categorize, standardize, and subjectivize us. Yet such a perspective is wholly bound up in an abstract, deterministic understanding of how social structures guide our behavior. From the Magna Carta to the Civil Rights Movement, history is replete with examples of individual and collective behavior leading to novel outcomes that empower us against the constraining forces of social structures.

Acts of resistance are more than spontaneous reconfigurations of abstract social structures, such as the State. Acts of resistance are real. They are impactful precisely because they involve concrete actions, such as violent rebellion or non-violent protest, that upend both official policy and traditional mores. In each case, a social system thought to be immutable undergoes significant change due to exogenous forces. The Magna Carta and the civil Rights Movement are extreme examples involving extensive levels of collective action, but I argue that examples like St. Cecilia’s highlight how important the concept of social potential can be for understanding our capacity for self-liberation more generally. The concept of social potential, of the perpetual possibility of subverting social structures, describes a kernel of self-determination found at the boundary between the social order and daily life. This boundary is not just between different social structures (e.g. feudalism versus capitalism) but between the social and the physical, and we are constantly

afforded opportunities to exert our agency as we give physical form to social structure through our daily routines.

Social potential depends on more than social constraints such as ideological beliefs, behavioral norms, or socioeconomic status. Rather, I contend that deterministic accounts of social structure can be improved by exploring how physical constraints shape the extent to which social constraints delineate social potential (see also Mann 1986). For example, racial discrimination is a real phenomenon that has provoked broad calls for racial tolerance, but members of a racially homogeneous community may be less sensitive to racial discrimination simply because they rarely have the opportunity to encounter someone of a different race. That is, racism is a real structuring force in society, but its salience differs depending on local context.

Building on a long history of research in urban sociology, I argue that physical space structures our lives in predictable ways, and that, consequently, space plays a fundamental role in shaping the social possibilities we experience on a daily basis. In particular, this dissertation explores how ecological forms of constraint relate to the religious and political behavior of local communities, two topics more often associated with ideological belief than physical space. Its goal is to illustrate that physical space so deeply orders our lives that it influences aspects of society often furthest removed from the materiality of daily life.

* * *

Why is a spatial turn in the study of social potential illuminating? After all, there are other exogenous forces that likely contribute to the development of social potential, such as personality traits or even nutrition (Komlos 2014). To further justify turning our attention to physical space, consider what endogenous accounts of social potential (i.e. the social possibilities afforded by social structures) do well and what they do poorly. Such accounts are often innovative, applying new paradigms to old research questions, as in the case of Becker's (1973) marriage markets, or elaborating the complex relationship between social structures and life within local communities, as in the case of Wilson's (1987) urban underclass. This research strategy has consistently

demonstrated how society shapes our individual and collective behavior through the array of social, cultural, and economic processes that constitute our daily lives. Yet this paradigm could be significantly strengthened by elaborating the role space already plays in many of these processes.

The foundational importance of physical space can be found buried within many types of sociological research. For example, Becker's marriage markets are fundamentally spatial, as potential partners are often drawn from one's local community (Blau and Schwartz 1984). Similarly, the urban underclass may have emerged due to largely social processes, but its perpetuation is fundamentally tied to the current spatial concentration of economic disadvantage (Sampson, Sharkey, and Raudenbush 2008). Yet there is little incentive to integrate spatial effects into the study of these topics: If we are studying marriage or poverty, and we can easily identify important social constraints affecting both, then what reason is there to foreground the role of space? Space may not seem central to many social phenomena, but in many cases it is. A lack of interracial couples in a region is only meaningful if that region is racially diverse, and urban poverty is often seen as unique precisely because of its spatial concentration.

These physical aspects of social potential require us to reconsider the importance of physical space, as endogenous accounts of social structure are, in many ways, implicitly invoking spatial logics without the benefit of an integrative framework linking social structure to physical space. If such disparate studies independently hint at the importance of space in our lives then an integrative framework would provide a way to explore how multiple social structures interact with each other in practice. Within the space of a city we can identify dozens of social structures coexisting, jostling for salience and ultimately creating something unique. When dining with others in a restaurant, we shuttle between the role of diner and the role of conversation partner. That is, a physical space can facilitate the perpetuation of multiple social structures, the relevance and meaning of which are in constant flux because the onus is on us to navigate them. Moreover, it is up to us, not society, to decide what is socially possible within these liminal spaces.

In what follows, my basic assumption is that, in light of how spatial considerations shape our behavior, asking "What is possible?" is not the same as asking "What does society allow?" In

particular, I argue that physical space is not an inert part of our lives. Rather, space catalyzes certain behaviors and limits others. Because social structures only gain reality through our actions, where those actions occur—both the setting and the people within it—can provide a critical opportunity for us to question, challenge, or remake the social structures we are being asked to perpetuate. That is, physical space actively and passively shapes our social potential, representing a reactive substrate on which social structures grow.

The Multiscalar Role of Space

A theory of physical space and social potential must grapple with two facts. First, social interaction unfolds at distances measured in feet (or even inches). Second, interaction partners typically spend the majority of their time separated by distances measured in miles. For example, coworkers spend hours together on a daily basis but go home at the end of the workday, while religious worshippers often only gather for a few hours per week. Both forms of interaction are meaningful for different reasons and involve different time scales, but both also share an ambivalent relationship to physical space. It is as if individuals are always shuttling between two different spatial scales, one personal and the other geographic. Consequently, I argue that understanding how physical space structures social potential requires a consistent approach to the multiscalar nature of daily life. This argument begins by considering research advancements since Wilson's seminal work on the spatial concentration of urban poverty. I then propose a novel analytic tool for clarifying the role of physical space in social life.

From Geography to Space

The study of local area effects, often referred to as neighborhood effects, represents the most robust contemporary effort to integrate the role of physical space into sociological research. Emerging not long after Wilson's monograph, these studies explore how geographic context plays a role in a litany of social phenomena, including unemployment, crime, and high school dropout rates (Small and Newman 2001, 30). The common logic of this work is that community context has a unique

effect on individual behavior and collective outcomes, often by constraining access to particular resources. However, fundamental questions emerged regarding what was meant by “neighborhood” in these studies (Small and Newman 2001). As a result, geographically based understandings of social behavior have continually evolved to more precisely characterize local area effects.

How do we define a neighborhood geographically? By what mechanism does a neighborhood exert influence? It is difficult to define the relevant geography for a given social process in an a priori fashion (Kwan 2012). For example, Morenoff (2003) finds that the contextual effects leading to low infant birth weight extend beyond the local neighborhood, suggesting a more expansive understanding of what constitutes the “local area” in local area effects. Researchers have also been quick to acknowledge the importance of identifying the mechanisms underlying neighborhood effects research. Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley (2002, 447) take stock of “studies that investigated variations in some aspect of social processes or mechanisms across ecologically defined units of analysis” and identify a number of specific “social-interactional and institutional” mechanisms: social control, institutional resources, routine activity patterns, and so on. New research on local area effects explores how one of these mechanisms—routine activity patterns—can address both the issue of mechanism and the question of geographic context.

Routine activities are an important link between physical space and social potential. Daily life traces out a geography that we traverse on a regular basis, and this geography in turn shapes what is possible for us to “do” in fundamental ways. It has long been argued that these patterns of behavior lead to mental maps that guide our understanding of our local community (Johnston 1972). Termed activity spaces, sociologists have recently started to examine how these geographies of lived experience can simultaneously address the challenges of identifying social mechanisms and defining the spatial boundaries of social processes (e.g. Matthews and Yang 2013). By basing data collection on what people do in their daily lives it is possible to minimize misidentification of both the appropriate spatial scale (e.g. Fotheringham and Wong 1991) and the relevant geographic area (Kwan 2012).

The most advanced research on activity spaces can be found in the field of transport geography. This work is more technical, often examining the methodological difficulty of collecting data on the routine activities of residents (Schönfelder and Axhausen 2004; Axhausen 2008). Many studies use highly precise spatial data to examine how activity spaces can capture social isolation by identifying non-overlapping travel patterns among residents (e.g. Schönfelder and Axhausen 2003; Farber et al. 2013). This focus on the capacity for social interaction (i.e. social exposure) has recently led both sociologists and transport geographers to converge on the topic of spatial networks (Lee and Kwan 2011; Browning and Soller 2014). In particular, researchers have begun to examine the role of geographic context in the emergence, persistence, and/or dissolution of spatially embedded social networks.

Sociological interest in spatial networks has persisted for at least 35 years (i.e. Wellman and Leighton 1979), but this work has often examined how concepts from urban sociology can be understood in a social network paradigm. For example, many studies examine the so-called “community question” defined as “the study of how large-scale divisions of labor in social systems affect the organization and content of interpersonal ties,” (Wellman and Leighton 1979, 365). In the context of social networks and community life, this question asks how spatially embedded networks are shaped by social processes. Related research has thus framed spatial networks in terms of how larger social systems influence local community ties and, in turn, how these social ties can be used to define neighborhood boundaries (Connerly 1985; White and Guest 2003; Hipp, Faris, and Boessen 2012). This perspective reflects the traditional assumption that the social precedes the spatial.

Another approach to the study of spatial networks, one focusing on the effect of spatial constraints on social behavior, can be found in Huckfeldt’s (1983) study of friendship choice. Huckfeldt reexamines the Detroit Area Study, matching survey responses to census tract data, in order to understand how environmental context influences the development of friendships. He concludes that “the social class content of friendship groups is influenced by the associational opportunities

and constraints imposed by the neighborhood social context,” (Huckfeldt 1983, 667). He goes on to note that:

The interplay between associational preference and the social context in producing a social network is probably more important than this relationship between contexts and networks. Even though individuals demonstrate strong associational preferences, their contextually structured set of associational opportunities makes itself felt in the composition of friendship groups. Thus, the social content of social networks is not solely a function of either the social context or individual choice; it is the complex product of individual preferences operating with the boundaries of a social context. (Huckfeldt 1983, 667)

That is, the ability for individuals to realize their preferences is not solely a function of larger social structures, but also a function of the social possibilities afforded by their local communities. Huckfeldt’s observation regarding the practical constraints on with whom we interact reflects a shift in the causal ordering of physical space and social behavior. Space does not necessarily bend to the will of social structures, but rather social structures are inherently shaped by space.

Huckfeldt’s study suggests that the spatial can precede the social in meaningful ways. Within sociology, multiple studies have confirmed and extended this intuition to explore the role of geographic context in interracial marriage (Blau and Schwartz 1984), the formation of local social ties (Hipp and Perrin 2009), and risky health behavior (Browning, Soller, and Jackson 2015) among other topics. Huckfeldt’s own work (Huckfeldt 1979; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987a; Huckfeldt, Plutzer, and Sprague 1993; Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004) explores the effect of social context on political communication and his approach to social constraint continues to inform the study of political networks in general (Mutz 2006; Mutz and Mondak 2006; Sinclair 2012). The capacity for physical space to shape our social possibilities has thus become a persistent topic within the social sciences. At the same time, scholars have been largely agnostic regarding spatial scale, such that “neighborhoods, workplaces, and organizations” may all be considered social contexts (Huckfeldt, Mendez, and Osborn 2004, 21). This ambiguity is one inspiration for the analytic framework I propose here, locating social interaction within discretely defined physical spaces, though the lack of such a framework has not impeded researchers from producing sophisticated multiscalar accounts of spatial networks.

Huckfeldt's approach to social constraint reflects a similar, more practical concern of transport geographers with the co-constitution of social networks and activity spaces (e.g. Axhausen 2007). Much of this work makes use of what researchers term "network-based space-time prisms" to model the practical accessibility of locations as individuals move through their daily tasks (Tijds Neutens et al. 2008, 95). Using a geometric model to capture how travel time limits the locations we can visit throughout the day, this approach builds on the fact that the locations available to us are a function of our current location, and thus our locational possibilities are constantly changing throughout the day (Miller 1991; Kim and Kwan 2003; Weber and Kwan 2003; Neutens, Versichele, and Schwanen 2010). Within the space-time prism framework, social contexts become synonymous with locations. This perspective refines our understanding of social context by adding substantial analytic precision, both separating spatial scales (i.e. location versus geography) and accounting for the dynamic, processural nature of routine activities.

While individuals' ability to access particular social contexts over the course of the day may not seem inherently interesting to sociologists, transport geographers have also used space-time prisms to estimate the ability of two individuals to access the same location at the same time. Logically, the capacity to jointly access a social context defines the potential for social interaction. Without co-location there can be no (physical) interaction, regardless of whether individuals would choose to interact if given the opportunity. Joint accessibility is thus an important measure of exposure to others, of social potential defined via the geographic constraints associated with travel time (Farber et al. 2013). Researchers have found that joint accessibility influences the size of individuals' activity spaces (Fan and Khattak 2008), how individuals choose to spend their time outside of work (Fan and Khattak 2009), and with whom they associate (T. Neutens et al. 2007; Farber et al. 2015). These studies reinforce Huckfeldt's original claim that social context exerts an independent effect on the formation of social ties, and that they provide a more precise analytic framework for exploring the relationship between social potential and physical space. In particular, they demonstrate that a multiscale model incorporating both location and geography is empirically testable, and that such a model can provide novel insights. My intervention is to synthesize many of the analytic

insights developed by these researchers with a sociological perspective on the implications and practical relationships between each analytic component.

Any geographic location can be jointly accessible, but not all jointly accessible locations facilitate the same kind of social potential. A sidewalk is very different from a workplace, and a home is very different from both a sidewalk and a workplace. Each represents a social context whose joint accessibility provides a particular kind of social potential to individuals. Sidewalks and local street segments play an important role in the formation of local social ties (e.g. Grannis 2009), while individuals who interact in the workplace are likely to have similar educational background but different religious beliefs (Mollenhorst, Völker, and Flap 2008). Alternatively, we are more likely to receive guests in our home than in any other context (Berg, Arentze, and Timmermans 2010). These are specific types of social potential associated with particular kinds of locations, but collections of jointly accessible locations can also coalesce into larger spaces of social opportunity. For example, research suggests that the emergence of a local community—defined as “an arrangement in which individuals derive important personal benefits for well-being from doing things together with others”—depends on the availability of meeting spaces such as parks, churches, and retail shops (Völker, Flap, and Lindenberg 2007). What exactly are these spaces doing? How do locations come to facilitate particular types of social possibilities? Why should we even differentiate between types of social possibilities? These are all questions I begin to answer here, first by defining a new analytic tool, termed a venue, and then elaborating how the rest of my dissertation demonstrates the utility of the multiscalar approach I have developed around venues.

Space, Place, and Location

Transport geographers have deployed a location-based definition of social context to produce a multiscalar model of travel behavior. In their framework, the capacity for two individuals to collocate is a simple mathematical matter of intersecting space-time prisms, but understanding the sociological importance of these potential interactions requires a new analytic approach. Sociologists tend to focus on social context, yet there is little agreement on the spatial scale of social

context. Further, there is no universal understanding of what is meant by space, place, or even location. The success of geographers in settling these debates to produce insightful research suggests that sociologists await a renaissance in spatial analysis if these theoretical distinctions can be disentangled. My contribution is to delineate a particular kind of physical space with an ostensible purpose and material culture. I term such spaces venues in order to emphasize the idea that “things are happening” at these locations. I believe that venues represent an analytic tool that can significantly advance research on space and place in sociology by clarifying the analytic landscape. To demonstrate this I will briefly describe the conceptual issues at stake before moving on to describe how venues resolve many of these issues.

Contemporary sociologists have typically characterized differences in spatial scale by distinguishing between space and place. Often the former refers to areal units while the latter refers to discrete locations. The sociological study of space and place is challenging due to the ambiguous and sometimes contradictory definitions of both space and place. A place possesses a precise, identifiable location, but significant conceptual slippage exists between space, place, and location—for the purposes here location refers to a geographic point with a precise latitude and longitude. That is, place commonly refers to both geographic points and areal units (Gieryn 2000; Logan 2012). Sometimes place indicates a single location, and sometimes it indicates a collection of locations that possess a meaningful spatial relationship (Logan 2012). Alternatively, place can be characterized as possessing some inherent psychological meaning (see Lewicka 2011) that space does not. Gieryn (2000, 465) goes so far as to claim that “space is what place becomes when the unique gathering of things, meanings, and values are sucked out.” Disagreements over whether space and place are purely geographic concepts or represent something more expansive are more than just a difference in analytic perspective. They represent conflicting definitions of what physical space represents for social life, a conflict that is ontologically concerned with what physical space is and does.

If physical space possesses some inherent meaning (e.g. place attachment) then it actively shapes (and is actively shaped by) individual preferences and a litany of social structures, but if

physical space influences social life in a purely spatial manner (e.g. joint accessibility) then its role is to passively structure our behavior. Parks provide a place for public gatherings, but it is unclear whether they simply allow people to congregate or actively direct how people ought to interact. This is not a difference in the extent of influence but a difference in the type of influence.

I argue that these analytic contradictions (i.e. place is both a location and a collection of locations) and pseudo-paradoxes (i.e. space and place can refer to the same location) prevent sociologists from developing a multiscale theory linking physical space and social potential. A public park often facilitates particular forms of social interaction while simultaneously indicating a local community that extends far beyond its boundaries (e.g. the Lincoln Park neighborhood). This slippage creates a kind of analytic limbo: A park may be both a single location and a collection of locations, both a geographic space and a socially constructed geographic identity, both a site of social potential and a site with its own behavioral norms. While geographers have avoided such conceptual imprecision, they have often done so by simply avoiding the question of whether locations have inherent meanings. A solution to the issue thus requires going beyond their straightforward analytic definitions.

Some of the conceptual ambiguity between space and place exists due to distinctions in the active (i.e. psychological, cultural, social, etc.) versus passive (i.e. structural) role of physical space in our lives, but some of it is also due to the indeterminate role of spatial scale. Without a coherent framework for conceptualizing how physical space and social potential interact at (and across) multiple spatial scales, researchers cannot assess whether disagreements about the social role of physical space are due to substantive differences in how space influences our lives or the result of substantive differences in how spatial scale operates.

Locations can have active and passive forms of social influence, but these types of influence are also very different depending on whether a location indicates a discrete space or a relatively large area. A neighborhood provides a social context that is categorically different from a building. The mechanism linking neighborhood characteristics to social behavior is largely ecological (i.e. who is available, what are their personal characteristics, etc.) while the mechanism linking buildings

to social behavior is largely interpersonal (i.e. social exposure, peer pressure, etc.). Recognizing and integrating this distinction into sociological research thus requires constructing a multiscale theory of physical space and social potential.

The immediate challenge in constructing a multiscale model of physical space and social potential lay in the indeterminate role of spatial scale. That is, both active and passive conceptions of physical space deploy flexible definitions of spatial scale in order to incorporate valid intuitions about how we understand the role of location in our lives. It is common to identify the same place with both a particular location and a collection of locations (Almquist and Butts 2015). That is, we experience location as inherently multiscale in a categorical sense (e.g. homes, street blocks, neighborhoods, regions, etc.), but sociological theories of space and place tend to understand this experience as a continuous distinction in spatial scale. Consequently, I suggest that a multiscale theory linking physical space to social potential must fundamentally incorporate spatial scale, but that spatial scale must be specified relative to categorical differences in other characteristics of physical space (Jessop, Brenner, and Jones 2008). For example, transport geographers resolve the issue of spatial scale by distinguishing between points, lines, and polygons.

Within geography, a categorical distinction in scale is made between points (i.e. locations) and polygons (i.e. geographic regions). This distinction provides the ability to discuss travel behavior in a spatially precise manner. Lines (i.e. transportation systems) link both points and polygons through travel time. This framework based on geometry incorporates multiple spatial scales while still allowing researchers to ask how the characteristics of each type of feature influence human mobility, such as the features of a location and our capacity to travel to this location given our own location within a geographic region. Further, it fundamentally distinguishes spatial scale from social structure. Even if psychological or social meaning is present, the geometric distinction between points, lines, and polygons prevents conceptual slippage regarding how the meaning associated with a physical space develops and what its implications are for social behavior.

Sociologists do not have such convenient conceptual distinctions available to them as points, lines, and planes, but they do have at least one analogue: human ecology (Hawley 1950), macrostruc-

tural sociology (Blau 1977), and, most recently, local area effects (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002). This research tradition links social phenomena such as migration, economic development, and demographic trends to geographic space. However, this approach is often associated with the ecological fallacy, where researchers erroneously infer individual behavior from aggregate data. The importance of mechanism for neighborhood effects research is a direct response to this criticism, but all three sociological approaches to space are conceptually similar to how geographers characterize spatial effects: Geographic areas (e.g. polygons) fundamentally shape our lives in ways that are categorically different from how much smaller physical spaces (e.g. point locations) influence social behavior.

If neighborhoods are akin to polygons, what would be sociological versions of points and lines? In other words, how could we conceive of locations and distances in sociological ways? Ecological approaches in sociological research include distance as an inherently meaningful metric – occupational distance, social distance, physical distance – so for the purposes here I will assume that we already have a basic idea of what a sociological “line” would be in a spatial framework (Laumann 1965; Carroll 1984; McPherson 2004). In fact, some of the most cutting edge spatial networks research in sociology examines how multiple types of distance jointly affect human behavior (Butts 2007). Still, what is the sociological version of a point? How do we conceptualize the social meaning of physical locations? Social network analysis invariably characterizes individuals as points in a graph connected by lines representing social relations, but this again puts the social before the spatial. To characterize the independent role of physical space in social potential I propose identifying a new analytic object that I term a venue.

Venues

Venues are discrete physical spaces that possess an ostensible purpose and a material culture. The type of social potential associated with jointly accessible locations can be understood in terms of Gieryn’s (2000) description of place as physical space possessing meaning. However, venues represent a particular kind of place categorically defined at a particular spatial scale, distinguishing

it from geographic concepts of place based on areal units. Further, venues are not simply any space that possesses meaning. Venues have a reason for being—a purpose—and a means of carrying out that purpose. For example, restaurants are discrete spaces whose ostensible purpose is to serve food to customers and whose material culture varies according to type of cuisine and style of dining. They are locations that possess meaning and order our behavior, but they are also physical spaces that facilitate copresence, the most basic form of social potential. More than that, when we enter a restaurant we understand what kinds of interactions to expect since diners and waitstaff possess distinct roles strongly guiding their behavior. Yet even the largest restaurants encompass a relatively small physical space, one part of the larger built environment. Thus I claim that venues represent a sociological corollary to points, and that they are categorically different from local areas which are the sociological corollary to polygons.

Venues have long been a part of sociological research. For example, McKenzie (1924) describes how the needs of a community are first provided by general stores, churches, schools, and homes, until growth leads to the development of more specialized "services" such as the grocery store, restaurant, and barber shop. Tying these services to the cultural milieu of Chicago's Gold Coast neighborhood, Zorbaugh (1935) describes bohemian residents choosing to frequent particular restaurants, studios, and tea rooms. Studying Boston's West End neighborhood, Fried and Gleicher (1961, 311) note that "favorite recreation areas, local bars, and the settlement houses in the area all served as points of contact for overlapping social networks" and argue that space fundamentally structures interpersonal relationships. Similarly, Greenbaum (1982) argues that contexts that bring people together (e.g. church, daycare, etc.) help facilitate the development of multiplex ties among neighborhood residents, a sentiment later echoed in Small's (2009) examination of day care centers as sites for the cultivation of social capital. The persistent relevance of venues within sociology suggests that researchers have long been aware that these spaces have unique effects on social behavior.

A common characteristic of venues is their ability to simultaneously perpetuate social systems and promote social innovation. For example, Habermas (1991) argues that coffeehouses were

pivotal for developing new forms of political communication at the end of the 19th century. Writing on the specific importance of buildings, Gieryn (2002, 35) argues that these spaces “stabilize social life. They give structure to social institutions, durability to social networks, persistence to behavior patterns . . . And yet, buildings stabilize imperfectly.” This observation reflects the dual active and passive role of venues in social life. They allow us to gather, and they often suggest how we should interact, but venues cannot force us to behave a certain way. Only proprietors and fellow patrons can ultimately decide what the space of a venue means and how to make use of it. Consequently, sociologists “must respect the double reality of buildings, as structures structuring agency but never beyond the potential restructuring by human agents,” (Gieryn 2002, 41). Venues thus represent zones of social potential, not just because they are jointly accessible locations but also because they provide the opportunity for social play.

This duality between stability and change is a fundamental analytic component of venues, moving beyond the idea that physical space acts as a mere container for discrete types of activities. We often assume that spaces do what they say they do, and no more. Restaurants serve food, hospitals treat patients, and so on, even if the story is not so simple. That is, we think of such spaces as having a uniform set of behavioral expectations that define their existence and what goes on within them. Such thinking reflects Goffman’s (1963, 21) observation that “the possibility that the same physical space can come to be used as a setting for more than one social occasion, and hence a locus for more than one set of expectations, is regularly recognized in society and typically restricted.” While the possibility is recognized, in practice we often prefer a physical space to operate with one set of expectations for behavior. I contend that these basic expectations arise from an ostensible purpose, but that each social occasion within a venue is capable of modifying or otherwise challenging these expectations.

Many stories unfold within a venue, but no single story encapsulates what a venue is or does. Rather, venues provide a motif. We are free to engage in many other activities, so long as we follow this motif. This flexibility is what opens the door to innovation and defines one aspect of venues as zones of social potential. In other words, we can change venues since the actual use of a

venue is shaped by, but also independent from, the ostensible purpose it serves. Mismatch between the purpose and use of a venue is often the result of patrons' reaction to how its physical space plays an active and/or passive role in social life.

The ostensible purpose of a venue plays an active role in guiding the social interactions within the physical space it occupies, but the less strict these behavioral norms the more likely patrons will use a venue in creative ways. The coffeeshops that Habermas describes originally existed to serve coffee, but they came to act as liminal spaces where men from different social classes could talk freely about political matters. This liminality was only possible because class-based behavioral norms had not developed around the consumption of coffee. As a result, patrons were left to develop these norms themselves, leading to the emergence of a more egalitarian style of political discourse. In this instance, the active role of physical space catalyzed social innovation due to its ambiguous social norms.

Alternatively, venues may be used for unintended purposes when its passive role as a jointly accessible location is greater than its active role in shaping social interaction within the physical space it occupies. A church in a small town or economically disadvantaged area may indirectly facilitate social potential by fulfilling latent demand for a communal meeting space. While religious worship is the ostensible purpose for visiting this venue, its jointly accessible location provides a place for residents to gather when few such spaces exist. In this instance, the passive role of physical space structures social potential by providing the opportunity to interact. I explore this example further in Chapter 3.

In one sense, venues act as zones of possibility by promoting or allowing unintentional uses of their spaces, but I also argue that they act as zones of possibility even when stabilizing social life. When the purpose and use of a venue are aligned we may say that the behavioral norms and/or institutional practices associated with that venue are reinforced. However, a venue's ostensible purpose will involve some but not all of these social structures. If the activities associated with this ostensible purpose leave time for unrelated activities then patrons have the opportunity to socialize as they see fit.

In fact, the ostensible purpose and material culture of a venue provide us at least one shared interest: striving toward a common goal. For example, Small's (2009) daycare centers provided access to certain forms of social capital precisely because the physical space of a daycare center actively cultivated trust among mothers through the shared experience of child-rearing. If these daycare centers had been used for something other than their ostensible purpose, such as a place for single mothers and single fathers to meet, then it is unlikely that these mothers would have developed relationships with social implications outside the setting of the daycare center. Thus venues can facilitate a kind of social potential that may spill over into other parts of our lives.

The spillover effect of venues on social life can also involve their passive role as physical spaces. A venue's ostensible purpose may actually encourage us to interact with fellow patrons, counteracting the tendency to self-segregate (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). Goffman called such spaces "open regions" and suggests that "the assumption of mutual regard and good will built into open regions guarantees a rationale for discounting the potential nefariousness of contact among the unacquainted, this being one basis for sociable accessibility," (Goffman 1963, 136). Thus venues facilitate the possibility of benign intergroup contact by providing a kind of common ground. More recently, Anderson (2011, 3) describes cosmopolitan canopies "where the display of public acceptance of all by all is especially intense, becoming one of the defining characteristics of the place." Venues may thus become defined by their very capacity to encourage intergroup tolerance. In many of his examples these places provide an opportunity for cross-racial encounters that, however fleeting, can positively affect how patrons of different races view each other. I explore this last example further in Chapter 4.

1.2 Venues and Social Exposure

Why reimagine the role of space when so much work has already elaborated the relationship between geography and social potential? The conceptual frameworks provided by human ecology and neighborhood effects researchers are productive at generating novel, testable insights. However, by privileging social explanations over spatial effects, this work focuses on a particular form

of social potential based on personal characteristics. In other words, asking “What is possible?” using this framework often means asking “What is socially possible?” based on the characteristics of local residents (racial, socioeconomic, or otherwise) and in light of spatial considerations such as the practical availability of particular resources (e.g. Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls 1999). I argue that this reinforces the saliency of personal characteristics (e.g. low socioeconomic status) for spatial analysis, such that the study of spatial effects is becoming synonymous with the study of marginalized or otherwise disadvantaged populations. Yet space affects us all to one extent or another, even if it affects our social possibilities unequally.

One solution to this issue is to shift from a paradigm based on personal constraint to a paradigm based on ecological constraint. I argue that, instead of asking what is possible for individuals to do given their personal background, we should ask what is available to individuals in their local community. This is conceptually similar to current approaches insofar as those living in areas experiencing economic deprivation will have fewer choices, but it generalizes this phenomenon by suggesting that all individuals face practical limitations in who and what is easily accessible. Put another way, a particular set of individuals and venues are linked by physical proximity and constitute a unique social system (e.g. neighborhood, town, etc.) with significant implications for the realization of personal and organizational goals (Curley 2010).

This dissertation explores the unique role of venues in constituting the social opportunities encompassed by an easily traversable geographic region. It views venues as sites of social exposure, both in terms of joint accessibility but also in terms of their role as open regions. The discrete space encompassed by a venue serves as both a place to meet and a place of shared striving. Here I consider how this kind of social exposure influences individual and collective behavior.

1.3 Overview

My primary innovation is the concept of the venue—a discrete physical space with an ostensible purpose and a material culture. Chapter 2 elaborates how venues facilitate three forms of social potential: (1) social possibility, (2) social innovation, and (3) self-liberation. Social possibility is

our capacity for face-to-face social interaction, for forming a social tie based on this interaction. It reflects a traditional understanding of social constraints in terms of physical constraints, such as the lower likelihood of interracial marriage in racially homogeneous communities (Blau and Schwartz 1984). Social innovation is our capacity to create, reject, or reimagine social structures. It reflects another pragmatic definition for the purposes of understanding how a venue and its patrons reflexively and iteratively shape the behavioral expectations within a discrete physical space. Social innovation thus represents the subversion of social structure, whereas social possibility may be facilitated by social structure. Finally, self-liberation is our capacity to realize our individual freedom, our individualism (Simmel 1908). As a fundamentally agentic aspect of social potential, it represents our ability to fulfill the social desires and take the social actions that make us unique as individuals.

Key to my argument is describing how venues serve as zones of social potential that allow us to individually and collectively determine how we ought to behave. This potential relies on both the unexpected opportunities for social interaction these spaces provide (e.g. social possibility) and the liminal moment just before we decide whether to follow the behavioral expectations we are presented (e.g. social innovation). However, our capacity to shape venues also provides a persistent liminal moment of self-liberation, one where we are capable of molding venues to suit our needs and desires. This ability becomes especially important when the venues within our local community fail to provide us the opportunity to realize these goals. I thus argue that venues are critical spaces for the evolution of community social life, as it is collectively and individually experienced.

Following this exposition, Chapter 3 discusses how community context affects the use of venues. Using a novel synthesis of within-organization survey data—the United States Congregational Life Survey, conducted in 2001 and comprised of 122,404 respondents nested within 443 religious congregations—and ecological data distributed by the Census Bureau—the ZIP Code Business Patterns data, a ZIP code level enumeration of over 1,000 types of businesses published annually—I elaborate three findings: (1) respondents are, on average, more racially similar to fel-

low congregants than to other local residents, (2) respondents located in communities with few secular venues are more socially embedded within their congregations, and (3) congregations located in communities with few secular venues are more likely to offer secular activities, such as hobby groups and sports teams. My findings suggest that religious organizations tend to supplement rather than compete with secular spaces for social interaction. They also illustrate how geographic proximity complicates assumptions within organizational ecology about the practical independence of different market sectors (i.e. religious markets and retail markets).

Chapter 3 also addresses the tendency for research on the population ecology of organizations to study a single market sector at a time. This reflects intense research focus on firms, whose relevant competitors and intended customers may be ambiguously defined, but whose organizational field remains fundamentally tied to the products and services being offered. I propose a new approach to organizational ecology as the nesting of social fields. A field-based perspective allows researchers to invert the traditional relationship between resource spaces and market sectors. Rather than defining the dimensions of a resource space according to the characteristics of a particular market sector, such as the types of consumers in the market for a new car, fields make it possible to explore the local interaction of multiple sectors coexisting in the same geographically bounded community, such as residents who require a means of transportation but not necessarily a car. My research shows how this kind of market overlap can induce religious organizations to serve a more secular social role when few secular venues exist within the local community.

In Chapter 4, I demonstrate that communities with fewer “necessary goods” venues (NGVs) (i.e. businesses selling food, fuel, and medicine) are home to voters less likely to support presidential candidates that appeal to group-threat. This proposition follows from two basic principles: (1) local residents in these communities, since they must frequent the few NGVs that are available, are more likely to interact with people they would rather avoid, and (2) exposure to strangers cultivates a form of cosmopolitan tolerance that reduces the political salience of race, ethnicity, and sexuality. The centrality of immigration reform and opposition to gay marriage to Republican presidential campaigns led me to hypothesize that this effect will penalize Republican candidates. Combining

county level election results, census data on the characteristics of local residents, businesses, and religious institutions, and traffic volume data from the Department of Transportation's Highway Performance Monitoring System, I find broad support for this exposure hypothesis across the past four presidential elections. These results suggest how the built environment subtly influences political outcomes and advances a new approach to the study of political networks without recourse to political communication.

Chapter 4 also introduces a new way of conceiving political networks that does involve social networks with explicitly political form or content. Political networks researchers tend to focus on political communication or the political socialization provided by voluntary associations, but I argue that exposure to difference through physical copresence can have political implications. I present NGVs as a mechanism through which such exposure can occur, and thus a conduit for political networks whose ties are fleeting but whose effects on our political behavior are real.

I conclude in Chapter 5 by describing how venues make at least two unique contributions to sociological research: (1) venues provide a way to understand how social life operates at two spatial scales—the interpersonal and the geographic—that co-constitute each other, and (2) venues highlight the ongoing negotiation between agency and structure in everyday life. I briefly review each of these contributions in light of my research findings before describing how they illustrate that venues are the reactive substrate on which social networks grow. I end by sketching a conceptual outline for conceiving of venues as the conduits through which spatial networks flow.

CHAPTER 2

VENUES: SITES OF SOCIAL POSSIBILITY, SOCIAL INNOVATION, AND SELF-LIBERATION

2.1 Introduction

Social potential, our capacity to act and interact according to our own needs and preferences, is a primordial force in our lives. It shapes everything from our romantic partners to the clothes we wear. One component of social potential is physical accessibility. Who we befriend is often a function of who we see on a regular basis, even if we would not befriend these individuals under other circumstances. This reflects the dual sense of possibility and constraint that physical space imparts to social life. That is, what is physically available to us may not be what we prefer. While in one sense this constrains our capacity for self-determination, I argue that these constraints can facilitate unexpected social potential precisely because we are forced to “make do” with what is available. To explore the different facets of this productive tension, I present a theory of venues as zones of social potential. Defined as discrete physical spaces with an ostensible purpose and material culture, I argue that venues catalyze three facets of social potential—social possibility, social innovation, and self-liberation—by both facilitating social interaction and providing a liminal social space. This chapter elaborates how the features of a venue and its external environment are systematically related to its social potential. Before outlining my argument, I walk through some working definitions in order to avoid confusion.

First, it is important to define what is meant by social structure. In this chapter, I define social structure as nothing more (or less) than “regular patterns of interaction” (Martin 2009, 7). This excludes temporary events, such as crises, to focus on the quotidian aspects of social life. More specifically, I understand social structures to be broad collections of behavioral expectations with the goal of encouraging regular patterns of interaction that, in turn, perpetuate an abstract system of meaning across time and space. This definition is a pragmatic creation for the purposes of maintaining (1) the ability to discuss how an abstract system of meaning is realized in daily life,

as well as (2) the ability to imagine how this system may be subverted without the need to identify its specific features.

This shorthand is employed since the purpose of referencing social structures here is not to elaborate their inner workings or boundaries, but rather their enactment in physical space and our potential to subvert their guidelines for behavior. In this sense, social structure is used as a synonym for the demands placed on us by bundles of behavioral expectations we associate with broadly defined systems of meaning, such as the money economy, Catholicism, or American culture. Further, I assume that social structures are perpetuated by individuals acting in concert to enact their behavioral expectations, contributing individually to the collective stabilization and reproduction of these social structures. For example, I assume that exchanging pieces of paper for various goods or services perpetuates behaviors that stabilize and reproduce the abstract system of meaning that we term the money economy.

Next, it is important to differentiate what is meant by social possibility, social innovation, and self-liberation. I present each as one facet of social potential, but each also represents a precise theoretical concept. Social possibility is our capacity for face-to-face social interaction, or forming a social tie based on this interaction. It reflects a traditional understanding of social constraints in terms of physical constraints, such as the lower likelihood of interracial marriage in racially homogeneous communities (Blau, Becker, and Fitzpatrick 1984). Social innovation, on the other hand, is our capacity to create, reject, or reimagine social structures. It reflects a pragmatic definition for understanding how a venue and its patrons reflexively and iteratively shape the behavioral expectations within a discrete physical space. Social innovation thus represents the subversion of social structure, whereas social possibility may be facilitated by social structure. Finally, self-liberation is our capacity to realize our individual freedom, our individualism (Simmel 1908). It is a fundamental aspect of social potential in that it represents our ability to fulfill the social desires and take the social actions that make us unique as individuals.

This chapter consists of three parts. First, I describe the analytic components of a venue and the types of social possibility and social innovation facilitated by each component. Next, I elaborate

how the synthesis of these components constitutes a zone of social potential that provides the opportunity for self-liberation through self expression. Finally, I explore how factors external to a venue can influence the kinds of social possibility, social innovation, and self-liberation it can facilitate, elaborating three archetypal examples and their effects, before briefly summarizing my argument.

2.2 Components of a Venue

Venues are discrete physical spaces with an ostensible purpose and material culture. To understand the unique social potential associated with the synthesis of these features, I first describe each component and the types of social potential it independently facilitates. I begin by elaborating how the ambiguity of overlapping social structures within a discrete physical space can provide patrons the capacity for social possibility and social innovation. Next, I describe how a physical space's ostensible purpose can facilitate similar forms of social potential. Finally, I describe how the material culture of a physical space can differentiate similar spaces, distinguish between ostensible purposes, and encode local meaning in ways that catalyze both social possibility and social innovation. In the next section I walk through how the three analytic components of a venue—discrete physical space, ostensible purpose, and material culture—combine to produce zones of social potential within a local community.

Social Exposure and Imperfect Interpretations

Social possibility requires the availability of interaction partners. Many scholars have turned their attention to virtual access to interaction partners, to our capacity to carry on relationships with people we rarely (or never) see in person. While real, these relationships are not yet a dominant form of social interaction, and the Internet has not fundamentally changed our propensity to engage in face-to-face social interaction (Mok, Wellman, and Carrasco 2010). Thus I focus on the physical availability of interaction partners and its consequences for social tie formation. I first elaborate

how discrete physical spaces facilitate the realization of social structures. I then examine how these spaces generate interstitial opportunities for social innovation due to the inherently ambiguous meaning of the activities within an enclosed space. In the next section, I characterize how an ostensible purpose serves to both stabilize the social order within a venue and generate social potential.

* * *

Abstract systems of meaning such as the money economy or Catholicism are made real through our everyday activities. Trade exists in the form of the free exchange of goods between two individuals, and religious worship exists in the form of collective ritual. Our actions realize these social structures by enacting the guidelines for behavior that they prescribe. A money economy requires that we act as if pieces of paper carry value beyond their raw material, that exchanging paper for a meal in a restaurant is not only normal but so natural as to be unremarkable. If we failed to act in this way, if a restaurant owner refused to accept paper in exchange for food, then there would be no money economy. In this sense, social structures are performative and only exist insofar as their effects are physically expressed by individuals.

This characterization of social structure captures an important facet of how physical space and social structure are related: Social structures, such as the money economy, are inscribed in the world in concrete ways. This inscription can occur through many mediums, such as written language, but I focus here on the built environment as a physical trace of the social order. Government buildings, banks, warehouses—these discrete physical spaces all exist because of social structures. In fact, our capacity to differentiate between these spaces relies on our ability to discern their distinct meanings based on these social structures.

Physical space has social meaning only to the extent that social structures provide it with this meaning. The space of a restaurant is meaningless if we cannot recognize that its physical structure, and the objects inside, indicate a place where food is served in exchange for money. For example, if this space did not somehow realize the social structure of the money economy then it could be misinterpreted as a soup kitchen. Thus restaurants have objects like registers and credit

card readers for collecting money. At the same time, restaurants also involve particular kinds of social interactions between patrons and employees. These interactions give reality to an array of behavioral expectations which we might collectively define as the social structure of a restaurant. However, this definition erases the fact that restaurants do not constitute unique systems of meaning. Rather, restaurants combine multiple systems of meaning in order to serve food in exchange for money.

Following this example further, there exists a combination of economic activities and social activities that occur as part of the dining experience, in particular through restaurant servers that must navigate behavioral expectations associated with both social structures. There may be behavioral expectations that are unique to restaurants, but not all of these social norms are unique to restaurants, and thus restaurants can be seen as hosting overlapping social structures. Even if we grant that almost all of the social norms within a restaurant are unique to restaurants as a class of spaces, part of being a restaurant also involves enacting the abstract system of meaning associated with the money economy. Since this latter social structure can be found in countless other physical spaces, we are able to identify at least two distinct social structures coexisting in the same physical space. As a result, the social interactions within the space of a restaurant are inherently overloaded with meaning due to the presence of overlapping social structures, as when a server presents a patron with the bill for a meal.

More generally, what does it mean for social structures to overlap within the same physical space? I argue that this overlap introduces ambiguity into the social context that individuals experience within this space, in turn providing an opportunity for these individuals to produce novel ways of negotiating the social structures in question. However, making sense of this ambiguity and how it contributes to the potential for social innovation requires a more precise way of understanding social interaction within physical space. To add precision to this discussion, I rely on the basic framework developed by Goffman to describe social interaction in public places.

Goffman's (1963) theory of social interaction in public places emphasizes both what constitutes interaction and how to conceptualize the discrete physical spaces hosting this interaction. He

begins by defining copresence as the state where “persons . . . sense that they are close enough to be perceived in whatever they are doing, including their experiencing of others, and close enough to be perceived in this sense of being perceived,” (Goffman 1963, 17). This definition provides a qualitative account of what it means to share space, and can be contrasted with spaces such as the public street (i.e. Grannis 2009) where “the region of space in which mutual presence can be said to prevail cannot be clearly drawn, since persons who are present at different points along the street may be able to observe, and be observed by, a slightly different set of actors,” (Goffman 1963, 17). Thus copresence requires a certain physical boundedness guaranteeing that, within this discrete space, all perceive all.

To differentiate collectivities whose members are copresent from those whose members are not, Goffman (1963, 18) defines a gathering as “any set of two or more individuals whose members include all and only those who are at the moment in one another’s immediate presence.” Thus a gathering is a collectivity defined by the copresence of individuals and, once copresent at a gathering, one cannot leave without physically exiting the space of the gathering. This simple observation has far reaching implications, beginning from the basic role of the physical world in shaping our behavior at a gathering.

Gatherings are not static social entities. Rather, its constituent members are often changing, and those copresent at any given time constantly navigate multiple moments where they strive to express their desires given what is available to them, both physically and socially, within the bounded space they share. To emphasize the spatial component of these gatherings, Goffman (1963, 18) defines a situation as “the full spatial environment anywhere within which an entering person becomes a member of the gathering that is (or does then become) present.” That is, a situation is a real assemblage rather than a state of affairs, and involves both the physical structure of the space and the individuals within this space. How do these aspects of a situation influence a gathering? Goffman suggests that the physical structure of situations actively shapes how we interact: “The physical character of many scenes of social interaction has a bearing on the discrepancy between what one intends to do and what one unconsciously begins to do,” (Goffman 1963,

118). We may want to interact with a particular person at a gathering, but the room hosting this gathering may be so large or so crowded that we simply cannot find them. What is possible thus subtly shapes our actions, irrespective of our original goals. In this sense, physical space can truly limit our social potential.

By elaborating the definitions of copresence, gathering, and situation, it now becomes possible to describe the fundamental social ambiguity associated with physical space and the social potential it facilitates. This ambiguity arises from two features of social interaction that coalesce into a unique state of uncertainty. First, since “copresence renders persons uniquely accessible, available, and subject to one another” we experience situations as extended moments of social possibility (Goffman 1963, 22). Because of this, we may be approached at any time by anyone else who is part of the situation, as “there are imaginable circumstances when any two unacquainted persons can properly join each other in some kind of [social] engagement—circumstances in which one person can approach another—since it will always be possible to imagine circumstances that would nullify the implied danger of contact” (Goffman 1963, 124). This is the fundamental nature of social possibility within discrete physical spaces. So long as we are part of a gathering in such a space, it will always be possible for us to interact with others in the same situation, and the only way we lose this social possibility is to physically leave this situation.

I use the term social exposure to indicate this perpetual state of social possibility within a situation, a state of being devoid of social structures that precedes social interaction in any given situation. This differs slightly from Goffman’s (1971, 207) observation that “it is social situations which provide the opportunity for relationship formation” since social exposure is not a phenomenon that varies based on situation. Rather, it is a way of capturing a liminal moment of copresence without social structure, or even social content, and in this capacity evokes a feeling of uncertainty regarding what is about to occur. Habermas (1991) discusses how coffee shops in the 18th and 19th centuries facilitated the development of an egalitarian form of political communication, one which allowed members of different social classes to discuss political matters. This transgression was possible because the consumption of coffee in these spaces did not yet possess

class-based behavioral norms, leaving patrons to decide for themselves whether to enact, reject, or alter the social structure of class. In the end, the behavioral norms associated with social class were not a part of these spaces, and a new social structure called the public sphere was created. I contend that this outcome relied on the liminality of social exposure to impel patrons to decide how to act, and which social structures to enact, reject, or alter. In this sense, social exposure can facilitate both social innovation and, in the act of innovating, social possibility.

The other way that physical space introduces social ambiguity to situations is through our tendency to imperfectly interpret behavior. Acts of verbal communication often involve a degree of uncertainty regarding their intended meaning, if only due to a speaker's tone. Similarly, unintentional communicative acts, such as body language, are often noteworthy precisely because of their ambiguous meaning. To this end, Goffman (1963, 13) notes that "the exchange of words and glances between individuals in each other's presence is a very common social arrangement, yet it is one whose distinctive communication properties are difficult to disentangle." The simplest forms of face-to-face communication require that we incessantly interpret and reinterpret the information intentionally or unintentionally provided, challenging us to constantly decide between multiple social meanings as interactions unfold.

This difficulty is not limited to communicative acts, but extends to physical interactions, which "tend to be inherently ambiguous in the sense that any one sign can designate relationships of different names, different terms, and different age—or can entirely and intentionally mislead," (Goffman 1971, 196). The implication is that simple acts, such as holding hands, can upend assumptions regarding the relationship between two individuals depending on context. If a man and a woman are walking together in public and decide to hold hands this is often seen as a modest sign of physical affection. However, if two women are walking together in public and decide to hold hands it may be seen as a transgressive act that challenges what is considered a proper relationship between women.

Knowing when and how to enact behavioral expectations may be seen as a matter of situational propriety, such as knowing how a dining experience unfolds and behaving accordingly. In this

sense, the behavioral norms of a situation collectively “give body to the joint social life sustained by a gathering, and transform the gathering itself from a mere aggregate of persons present into something akin to a little social group, a social reality in its own right.” (Goffman 1963, 196). However, this account downplays the constitution of these behavioral norms, moving directly to the generation of an encapsulated social reality. For example, at some point in time the proper way of behaving in a restaurant was unknown. It is difficult to imagine that these norms of behavior developed out of thin air or by the explicit demands of any one social structure. Rather, it is easier to imagine that the concept of a restaurant arose from the processual definition of behavioral norms over time as patrons and employees determined them. In fact, this is precisely what Habermas describes happening in the case of coffeehouses and the emergence of the public sphere.

The negotiated development of behavioral norms is pivotal to social innovation. Given an array of possible social structures to enact within a situation, it falls on members of these gatherings to negotiate which are most relevant. Key to this negotiation is the ambiguity produced by social exposure and our tendency to imperfectly interpret. A gathering of individuals who are able to interact with each other, but who will not always be able to accurately interpret this interaction, represents a liminal moment where members of the gathering individually and collectively choose which type of social structure to engage during interaction. Thus a restaurant may take on a transactional air if diners and staff maintain rigidly economic forms of interaction, whereas another restaurant may cultivate a feeling of genial familiarity if diners and staff largely bracket the economic nature of the dining experience. The behavioral norms associated with situations are thus flexible. Interpretations of particular statements and actions within a restaurant contribute to this flexibility by giving us innumerable opportunities to reassess how we believe we should act and which type of social structure we should use to understand the situation. As a result, a discrete physical space possesses an inherent potential for social innovation.

Characterizing physical space in this way diverges from Goffman’s understanding of social interaction in public places, but my interpretation is common in work by social network analysts studying the role of social context. This research often begins from a structural perspective where

the social order arises from the formation of interpersonal relationships and their concatenation into larger networks (and thus systems of meaning). Huckfeldt (1983) describes how the content of our social networks are dependent on the pool of potential interaction partners found in the social contexts (i.e. spaces) we frequent on a regular basis. Research on political communication networks suggests that this basic form of social exposure influences our political beliefs (Mutz and Mondak 2006). Conversely, Small (2009) describes how social capital can form between mothers whose children attend the same daycare center, not in spite of their original purpose for enrolling their child in the daycare center but precisely because of this purpose and how it is achieved. Accordingly, in the next section I explore how the ostensible purpose of a discrete physical space relates to its social potential.

Purpose, Possibility, and Innovation

Often there is a reason we find ourselves in a situation. Typically we have a purpose for being there, whether that purpose is explicitly social or not. Here I will explore how purposive copresence acts to shape the social potential we experience within discrete physical spaces. We often assume that the purpose of a situation is aligned with the purpose for which a physical space exists, that the physical space exists to facilitate the situation it hosts. In other words, a discrete physical space has an ostensible purpose for its existence and we enter this space because we seek to fulfill this purpose. The ostensible purpose of a restaurant is to serve diners food in exchange for money and thus we enter a restaurant to carry out this purpose. However, the ostensible purpose of a situation may not fully align with the kinds of social interaction that transpire. Dining at a restaurant may actually involve business transactions between diners, or romantic entanglements, or any number of interactions that have little to do with the exchange of money for food. As a result, it is important to (1) distinguish between interactions associated with a space's ostensible purpose and interactions that are unrelated to this purpose, as well as (2) develop a coherent way of understanding how a space's ostensible purpose stabilizes social structures even as it opens up new social possibilities.

Distinguishing between interactions associated with a space's ostensible purpose and interactions that are unrelated to this purpose can be difficult. Who is to say that a space cannot have multiple ostensible purposes? Why cannot the ostensible purpose of dining at a restaurant involve both the exchange of money for food and the facilitation of a social relationship? In this case, there is an exception that proves the rule, that demonstrates that a restaurant is a space that's ostensible purpose is solely to serve food in exchange for money. A lone diner can still enter a restaurant and participate in carrying out this purpose, but if a restaurant's ostensible purpose also involved interaction with a dining partner then this lone diner would have failed to achieve the purpose of entering a restaurant and others would view his behavior as strange or improper. Since dining alone at a restaurant is not an especially unusual or transgressive act, we can tentatively conclude that social interaction between dining partners is not part of the ostensible purpose of a restaurant.

One useful approach to distinguishing between activities that are related or unrelated to a space's ostensible purpose is to identify the exact goal this space allows patrons to fulfill. Identifying this kernel of purpose is often hard, as in the case of a church. The ostensible purpose of church attendance is religious worship, but depending on many factors a church may also facilitate secular social activities. It is debatable whether we can call a space a church if it does not facilitate some form of social activity not directly related to religious ritual.

Triangulating the activities associated with the ostensible purpose of a space is an exercise in negotiating ambiguity. A helpful heuristic for this negotiation can be found in Goffman's distinction between main and side involvements within a situation. The main involvement in a situation represents "an obligation to have a particular purpose" and identifies the social activity that we are expected to prioritize within this situation (Goffman 1963, 51). Side involvements are secondary, social activities we can engage in because there is no prohibition against them. Ambiguity still exists, as "what is defined as a dominating involvement at one time can be defined as subordinate at another," however the main/side involvement distinction allows us to identify and categorize the types of social behavior observed in a situation (Goffman 1963, 45). It thus makes it possible to describe how strongly a space's ostensible purpose guides the behavior of those within it.

A main involvement is effectively defined by the ostensible purpose of a space. It is the social activity we perform in order to fulfill the goal we sought to achieve by entering this space. However, the possibility that involvements and their social interactions can change in importance also implies the possibility that the social behavior in spaces can change. Our decision regarding whether to elevate a side involvement to the level of main involvement represents a subtle opportunity for social innovation, for at least temporarily privileging one social structure over another. However, our capacity to individually enact this inversion depends on how tightly coupled a space is to its ostensible purpose.

In the case of restaurants “eating is defined as the dominating involvement, and yet it is also seen as something that perhaps ought not to engage very much of the individual’s attention,” thus the situation is weakly coupled to its ostensible purpose (Goffman 1963, 52). As a result, it is easy to view the act of dining at a restaurant as more about business or romance than it is about eating food, even if its ostensible purpose involves eating food. Yet, as much as eating may be of incidental importance, the fact remains that the reason a restaurant exists is to serve food in exchange for money. The social structures associated with main involvements are thus often reinforced regardless of the side involvements that may exist. This tendency to stabilize the social structures of a situation makes a space’s ostensible purpose unique, as it imposes certain limits to our behavior by providing guidelines for successfully fulfilling this purpose. If we do not follow these guidelines then this purpose is not achieved. To an extent this constrains us, but in practice it also generates social potential.

Assuming that social structures imply the existence of roles, the behavioral expectations associated with each role “can be seen as an arrangement which opens up the incumbent to engagement with certain categories of others,” (Goffman 1963, 125). This form of social possibility is based on the fact that, by fulfilling the ostensible purpose of a situation, unacquainted strangers are given reason to approach each other due to the social roles they inhabit. For example, a waiter is expected to approach diners with which he has no previous social relationship, and vice versa. This encouragement to form social ties, however transitory, provides the potential to form durable rela-

tionships and extends to many situations where some form of social interaction is required, such as sports stadiums.

Daycare centers are another space that facilitates social possibility via its ostensible purpose. Small's (2009) work on the cultivation of social capital among mothers suggests that the ostensible purpose of a daycare center directly catalyzed the formation of friendships that extended beyond its confines. He describes how "enrolled mothers so often make friends because centers generate multiple opportunities and inducements for parents to interact. Through their rules and norms of interaction and their requests that parents help conduct many of their regular tasks and operations . . . centers created opportunities for friendships to form and even induced such networks inadvertently;" (Small 2009, 51). The space of a daycare center thus combines with its ostensible purpose to not only provide social exposure but to actively encourage the formation of relationships through communal participation in fulfilling this purpose.

However, some situations are more likely to generate trust than others, and thus some spaces are more likely to encourage the formation of durable social ties than other. In the case of daycare centers, trust is cultivated due to a shared interest in childrearing. Concern with the welfare of children represents a fairly deep shared interest between parents, but there are countless other ways that shared interests facilitate social possibility. Again, Habermas suggests that coffeehouses played a key role in fostering the development of the public sphere, a new form of political discourse based on the free exchange of ideas. Yet this was not the ostensible purpose of a coffeehouse. Coffeehouses existed, first and foremost, to serve coffee. Rather, it was the lack of social norms surrounding the consumption of coffee that allowed elites and non-elites to simultaneously reject and create social structures, to innovate. I argue that this is an example where the material culture associated with a space and its ostensible purpose generated the potential for social innovation. In the next section I explore further how the material culture of a space can influence the social potential we experience.

An Actor-Network Theory of Material Culture

Discrete physical spaces that exist for an ostensible purpose must have a means for realizing this purpose. These means often constitute the bulk of the items we observe when we enter a situation. That is, spaces have physical features that shape what is socially possible. However, these features consist of more than architectural elements such as the boundaries of a room, columns, or entryways. A space is often unrecognizable without the array of objects that inform us of its ostensible purpose, that allow us to fulfill our purpose for entering it. Often there is tremendous flexibility in how a space realizes its ostensible purpose. For example, restaurants exhibit great diversity in both the types of food they serve, the decorative elements they display, and even the implements used for serving food. I define as material culture the collection of objects that are part of a discrete physical space with an ostensible purpose, and I argue that the intimate but malleable connection between material culture and ostensible purpose has substantial implications for the social potential we experience. More specifically, I contend that ostensible purpose and material culture go hand in hand to both guide our behavior and provide the opportunity for social innovation.

One type of social potential generated by material culture is the capacity to fulfill an ostensible purpose while encouraging side involvements that facilitate social possibility. Bar stools both allow patrons to order drinks and place patrons in close proximity to each other, encouraging the development of temporary but potentially durable social ties. Similarly, restaurant tables often seat multiple diners, and sometimes seat multiple dining parties, again facilitating the maintenance or formation of social ties.

Another form of social possibility facilitated by material culture is the differentiation between similar spaces. We often choose between spaces to enter, a choice that requires us to compare these spaces. All restaurants will possess a physical space filled with objects that allow it to serve food in exchange for money. If all restaurants serve food in exchange for money, what makes one restaurant different from another? How do we compare restaurants? Fortunately, the material culture associated with a particular restaurant is often unique. We are able to choose between restaurants precisely because one serves Chinese food and another serves French food, one is

decorated with elegant floral arrangements and another is decorated with Aztec masks, and so on. Each restaurant both develops and maintains its own material culture. While price enters into the decision-making process as an economic constraint, if the price of dining at two restaurants is equivalent then we choose a restaurant based on this litany of objects and their features: in short, their material culture.

This differentiation via material culture occurs in many spaces whose ostensible purpose is consumption (Silver, Clark, and Yanez 2010; Silver, Clark, and Graziul 2011; Silver and Clark 2015). Additionally, the reasons that we have for choosing one restaurant over another are often due to comparable decision-making on the part of fellow diners at the restaurant we choose. In other words, where we dine reflects something about us, about our aesthetic preferences (Silver and Clark 2016). This shared aesthetic is itself a commonality upon which we can build relationships. Though shared aesthetic preferences are qualitatively different from shared goals, such as childrearing, the material culture of a space facilitates social possibility based on such commonalities.

Beyond allowing the comparison of spaces with the same ostensible purpose, the material culture associated with a space plays a fundamental part in differentiating between ostensible purposes, and thus between different types of situations. The distinction between a restaurant, a bar, and a coffee shop is based on a distinction between their ostensible purposes: to serve food, alcoholic beverages, or coffee in exchange for money. These differences are fundamentally based on the objects being exchanged: food, alcoholic beverages, or coffee. Thus these objects allow us to distinguish between the behavioral expectations associated with restaurants, bars, and coffee shops. In other words, how we dine, how we drink alcoholic beverages, and how we drink coffee are all different because of the history of this activity and the material culture that has developed around it. To understand how this contributes to social possibility, I introduce an actor-network theory of material culture that will describe why venues are analytic objects that are distinct from the situations they host.

Actor-network theory (ANT) is one way of broadening how we understand social networks to include physical objects (Latour 2005, 71). From this perspective, objects become a way of encoding meaning in physical space, of stabilizing social structure through our incessant interaction with and through objects as mediums for generating shared meaning: “we have to accept that the continuity of any course of action will rarely consist of human-to-human connections . . . or from object-object connections, but will probably zigzag from one to the other,” (Latour 2005, 75). In this sense, objects are actors similar to individuals, having a life of their own and, when we recognize their meaning, demanding that we interact with them in particular ways.

The basic insight of ANT is that inanimate objects can be part of social networks, and that these objects are thus imbued with a socially constructed meaning that remains in flux. For example, handing someone an empty plastic cup on a hot day is a meaningless gesture if we do not agree that plastic cups are made for holding liquid. Without shared meaning, objects become artifacts rather than tools or symbols. Additionally, the shared meaning of an object is dependent on context. Being handed a plastic cup in a bar means something different than being handed a plastic cup in an expensive restaurant. Finally, the shared meaning of an object can change over time. We might imagine that being handed a plastic cup in 1964—when the first plastic cup was patented—might be a confusing or exotic experience, whereas being handed a plastic cup 50 years later in 2014 might arouse displeasure given the environmental impact of plastic waste. In each case, it is our interaction with and through objects that integrates them into a web of meaning made real through both our social networks and our interactions involving these objects. The iterative, relational nature of an object’s meaning implies that material culture is not a static feature of a space.

But what does ANT have to do with social possibility? Since the meaning of a space’s material culture is always in flux, ANT provides a way of understanding how this meaning changes, and thus how these objects come to encourage or indicate the development of different types of side engagements. In this case, social possibility is best understood in the inverse, in terms of social constraint. That is, the material culture of a space not only allows us to carry out an ostensible purpose, it also indicates how we are expected to behave. In the context of nightclubs in a small

college town, May (2014) describes how the expectations associated with a space's material culture can intentionally limit the kinds of social interactions that are possible, though I will argue that even this constraint can enable social innovation.

May focuses on the use of dress codes to limit young Black men's access to nightclubs in a town he calls Northeast (May 2014, 69). In the process, he observes that "beyond their general use as a means of social control, dress codes are also embedded with cultural expectations about taste as reflected in style," (May 2014, 70). Put differently, the clothes patrons wear are part of a situation's material culture, and these clothes are expected to reflect shared cultural values. However, the case of dress codes at nightclubs in Northeast is problematic due to a special relationship that exists between the ostensible purpose of these situations, their material culture, and the items of clothing prohibited.

The types of clothing prohibited by dress codes at these nightclubs include athletic jerseys, plain white T-shirts, sleeveless shirts, jean shorts, and sweatpants (May 2014, 73). This is notable since May (May 2014, 71) reports that "fashionable among many young urban Blacks today are the clothing styles associated with hip-hop culture." Further, these styles continue to be "emphasized internally and externally as a way for Blacks to represent a collective Black identity," (May 2014, 71). There thus exists a direct, historical relationship between the clothing prohibited, Black identity, and hip-hop music. This cultural nexus is further highlighted by the fact that "it is within the context of nightclubs that play hip-hop music and that Whites frequent that dress codes are most consistently enforced," (May 2014, 74). The irony does not escape young Black men who are denied entry to these nightclubs due to dress code violations. Summarizing comments made by one such individual, May relays the conviction that "club owners wish to play the music that originates from urban Blacks, but they do not accept urban styles of dress that are closely associated with African Americans," (May 2014, 76). I argue that, by attempting to dissociate hip-hop music from its material culture, these clubs are actually doing much more than simply prohibiting entry to young Black men.

It is true that the dress codes May describes are a means to restrict access to nightclubs in Northeast. By defining what forms of material culture—what objects and what meanings associated with those objects—are permissible in these situations, clubs have effectively excluded an entire subset of the local population from entering these spaces. This is the opposite of social possibility and self-liberation. It is a strong form of social constraint that, for example, limits the formation of interracial social ties within these nightclubs. So where can social possibility be found in these spaces? More precisely, how can ANT help us understand how the material culture of these nightclubs is evolving? The answer to the first question goes a long way to answering the second.

The social potential afforded by nightclub dress codes represents a profound effort to decouple the historical connection between clothing, Black identity, and hip-hop music. Its profundity lay in the larger implications of this decoupling: by prohibiting young Black men from displaying symbols of Black identity in the form of clothing, even as these nightclubs fulfill their ostensible purpose (i.e. employing music to encourage social interaction among patrons) through the use of hip-hop music, these nightclubs reinforce the adoption of Black culture by White patrons. Every time White patrons enter these situations and hear hip-hop music in a public setting without its material culture being present, the material culture associated with hip-hop music loses its original meaning. As hip-hop music becomes a normalized part of the nightclub experience, the material culture of hip-hop becomes further racialized as symbolic of a Black identity that is not permitted in a nightclub. Each time, individuals interact with objects—whether physically through clothes or aurally through music—whose meanings change due to the absence of one and the presence of another, culminating in a new sense of both.

While problematic, this represents a kind of social innovation in terms of expanding the cultural reach of a music genre to include a new group of individuals, a group of individuals defined by race but who nonetheless can now employ a shared enjoyment of hip-hop music to potentially form a social tie (or use hip-hop music as an expressive medium for social interaction). Such social innovation and social possibility is modest, but reflects the two forms of social potential that

have been described so far. I now turn to describing how the synthesis of discrete physical space, ostensible purpose, and material culture create zones of social potential that facilitate a third form of social potential: self-liberation.

2.3 Zones of Social Potential

Until now, I have made little distinction between situations as events and the spaces that host situations. Situations are temporary affairs, gatherings in physical space that are expected to persist for a limited time. However, this physical space persists regardless of whether or not a gathering is taking place. How can we make sense of spaces that are only intermittently full of behavioral expectations and social interaction but devoid of social life otherwise? To answer this question, I introduce a new analytic object termed a venue. Venues are discrete physical spaces that possess an ostensible purpose and material culture. As such, they synthesize the social potential associated with each of these elements. In this section, I elaborate a case for the cumulative and unique effect of this synthesis on our lives, in particular the capacity for venues to facilitate the development of individuality.

Venues have long been a part of the social scientific literature. For example, McKenzie (1924) describes how the needs of a community are first provided by general stores, churches, schools, and homes until growth leads to the development of more specialized "services" such as the grocery store, restaurant, and barber shop. Zorbaugh (1935) describes the restaurants, studios, and tea rooms frequented by bohemian residents of Chicago's Gold Coast neighborhood. Studying Boston's West End neighborhood, Fried and Gleicher (1961, 311) note that "favorite recreation areas, local bars, and the settlement houses in the area all served as points of contact for overlapping social networks" and argue for the importance of space for structuring local interpersonal relationships. Greenbaum (1982) argues that contexts which bring people together (e.g. church, daycare, etc.) help facilitate the development of multiplex ties among neighborhood residents, while Anderson (1978) famously explores the social life of those who frequent a bar and liquor store in the South Side of Chicago.

These examples of venues within the social scientific literature demonstrate their percolating relevance over time within urban sociology. However, what makes venues distinct from situations? Put simply, restaurants are venues while dining experiences are situations. The former is persistent while the latter is episodic. Thus I argue that venues are unique because of their persistence in time as zones of social potential. This argument begins by elaborating what it means for the social potential associated with the physical space, ostensible purpose, and material culture of a venue to persist in time, then considers how their synthesis constitutes a unique analytic object useful for studying a wide array of sociological topics.

First, the discrete physical space of a venue is its most durable feature, and typically the feature that allows it to persist in the absence of a gathering. This space is often a building or the rooms within a building. Gieryn (2002, 35) observes that buildings “stabilize social life. They give structure to social institutions, durability to social networks, persistence to behavior patterns.” Thus the discrete physical space of a venue represents an opportunity to reinforce social structures, and its persistence in time provides a material foundation for the social order. However, Gieryn (2002, 35) also notes that “buildings stabilize imperfectly” and that we “deconstruct buildings materially and semiotically, all the time.” Given Latour’s insight regarding the social nature of objects, if discrete physical spaces somehow encode meaning then we must allow the possibility that these meanings are malleable, negotiable by the individuals that inhabit them on a regular basis. That is, how we view a venue and what it represents is not static, always leaving the capacity for an evolution in the kinds of situations it hosts and so also the social potential it facilitates.

Second, the ostensible purpose of a venue involves executing a series of activities that include some form of social interaction. A persistent physical space where this purpose is fulfilled represents a landmark for achieving this purpose, and thus a landmark indicating the opportunity to engage in a particular kind of social interaction, regardless of whether it is populated or not. For example, the space of a restaurant remains recognizable as a restaurant whether or not diners or staff are present. It may be devoid of social life for the majority of the day, or even the majority of

days, but since it is a restaurant we know that there is some point at which we may enter it and be served food in exchange for money.

This limited accessibility introduces a temporal form of social possibility based on diners' capacity to jointly access a venue. A restaurant that only operates in the evening will not be accessible to those who work in the evening, precluding their involvement in the main or side engagements unfolding within. Conversely, a restaurant that operates 24 hours a day will provide the capacity for those with unconventional work schedules to not only engage in a dining experience, but also engage in side involvements and social ties that may persist outside the space of the restaurant. In a fundamental way, the persistence of a physical space serving an ostensible purpose represents a durable site of social possibility. Moreover, whether intermittently accessible or always accessible, the social possibility associated with a venue is recognizable through knowledge of its ostensible purpose.

Third, the material culture of a venue allows it to (1) be recognized as a persistent space for fulfilling a particular ostensible purpose, (2) advertise how it fulfills its ostensible purpose, and (3) encode the historical meaning of the venue for the local community. The objects found within or immediately around the physical space of a venue provide clues to its ostensible purpose. These clues are important even if patrons are present, as the activities that unfold in a venue may seem similar from afar but actually index very different meanings. In the case of two restaurants located in a Roman piazza, meal cost might be readily signaled through the presence of linen napkins versus paper towels. Without this clue we might assume that two diners eating similar looking meals at each restaurant will pay a similar price, when in fact the meal involving linen napkins will likely be significantly more expensive.

When patrons and staff are absent from a venue, its material culture becomes even more important for identifying its ostensible purpose, as well as how it fulfills this purpose. A menu is often posted near the entryway of a restaurant listing the dishes served and their prices. If the restaurant is closed, and its interior is darkened or otherwise obscured, then this menu plays a critical role in both making the venue recognizable as a restaurant and indicating to us what kind of food it

serves and how, and thus what kinds of social possibility we will experience. For example, if a menu indicates a fine French restaurant then we may guess it will be more likely to facilitate side involvements associated with romance than if the menu indicated a fast food restaurant. For any number of reasons, a fine French restaurant is more romantic than a fast food restaurant, and so posted menus, as a common part of these venues' material culture, help us choose the appropriate restaurant to achieve our goals. However, fast food restaurants are not always considered unromantic, a fact that is only possible because the meaning of a venue and the objects within it are constantly evolving.

Finally, the material culture of a venue also encodes its local historical meaning in ways that can dramatically shift how patrons perceive it. For instance, the constant, iterative zigzag between person and object within a venue often results in an evolution in how we interpret its material culture. Over time the objects used to fulfill the ostensible purpose of a venue can accrue unintended meanings, both personal and communal, positive and negative. An old restaurant may have chairs that, after years of use, are in a state of disrepair. Someone who frequently dines at this restaurant may feel nostalgia regarding these chairs, whereas potential new diners may view them as an indicator of the quality of the food served and dine elsewhere. In this case, the object itself changed, but a similar trajectory can be described for objects that do not undergo physical changes.

When the material culture of a venue does not physically change while taking on new meaning we are able to observe how objects often catalyze social possibility more than they stabilize social structures. This type of shift in the meaning of material culture is evidence that objects change more slowly than the meanings we attach to them. For example, the material culture of a venue can come to embody its historical role within a local community. A fast food restaurant in a community with many restaurants may retain the transactional social atmosphere associated with how it fulfills its ostensible purpose, minimizing the likelihood that romantic side involvements develop. However, a fast food restaurant in a community with few other restaurants may develop a more robust set of social expectations as it becomes a familiar space for social events, increasing the likelihood of romantic side involvements. Finally, a fast food restaurant located next to a

high school may develop into a venue whose primary side involvement is romantic, given its easy accessibility by high school students. Assuming all three are part of the same chain of fast food restaurants, the material culture of each fast food restaurant did not physically change even while the meaning associated with this material culture changed depending on the presence or absence of other venues. Before exploring the role of such externalities in the next section, I briefly reflect on the uniqueness of venues as zones of social potential that facilitate the development of individuality.

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Venues, as persistent zones of social potential, provide unique opportunities for self-liberation. These opportunities are related to (yet distinct from) the social possibilities and social innovations facilitated by these spaces. Just as a venue's ostensible purpose can naturally guide us to interact with strangers and thus form new social ties, it can also act as a means of self-expression. Even if the social possibilities within a venue remain completely unrealized, even if these spaces only facilitate the most mundane, banal activities imaginable, a venue that's ostensible purpose is fulfilled has made its patrons part of a group who have engaged in a similar activity: "the mere formal fact of occupying a particular social position creates among the similarly characterized members of the most diverse groups a sense of solidarity and, frequently, actual relationships," (Simmel 1908, 253). Patrons may not have engaged in a joint activity, or even the same activity, but just as a stadium ties sports fans and professional sports teams together through a shared interest, patrons of a venue are tied to each other in a meaningful way. I contend that this connection, and the social meaning associated with it, constitute a crucial form of self-expression that allows us to distinguish ourselves from others and thus develop our uniqueness as individuals.

The concept that individuality arises from our capacity for self-expression can be traced to Simmel's description of individual freedom. In a broad sense, Simmel (1908, 252) views our capacity to enlarge our social circle as a prerequisite for individuality, for acting under our own impulse as opposed to the demands of society. The smaller our social circle the more embedded we are in a system of mutual obligations and behavioral expectations that reduce our capacity to

exert our agency. However, the expansion of our social circle requires the availability of opportunities for developing new relationships that are not based on either proximity or obligation, as “any association, which is based on local relationships or is otherwise brought about without the individual’s participation, differs from affiliations which are freely chosen, because as a rule the latter will make it possible for the individual to make his beliefs and desires felt” (Simmel 1922, 130). While Simmel references voluntary associations as the setting where this occurs, I embed the situations involving these social groups in physical space. In this way, venues which are freely entered provide individuals the potential for self-expression that is vital for cultivating individuality.

The capacity for self-expression provided by venues is thus fundamentally linked to our capacity for self-liberation. That is, such capacity for self-expression is itself a form of freedom: “That we follow the laws of our inner nature—and this is what freedom is—becomes perceptible and convincing to us and to others only when the expressions of this nature distinguish themselves from others.” (Simmel 1903, 335). We cannot be individuals if we cannot express that which distinguishes us from others, as our uniqueness simply cannot be realized. Venues thus represent opportunities for self-expression that are necessary for achieving uniqueness as individuals.

For example, the case of two women holding hands takes on special meaning within a venue. Situations where this act will be seen as transgressive may prevent these women from showing affection. Ellingson and Schroeder (2004, 123) observe that cultural norms against homosexuality are so strong within the Hispanic community of Chicago that “knowing who is in the [sexual] market is problematic because there are few places in which to find potential partners.” As a result, many Latina lesbians travel great distances to other parts of the city to find lesbian-friendly spaces for meeting partners. In this case, these women have sought out a venue where holding hands will not be seen as transgressive, one where the discrete physical space, ostensible purpose, and material culture all coalesce to produce an opportunity for these women to express who they are, to engage in hand-holding as an act of self-liberation.

However, an increased capacity for self-expression has a paradoxical effect on our freedom as individuals: the more opportunities we have to express our desires, the more dependent we become

on access to these opportunities, and thus the less free we become. This topic is central to Simmel's understanding of individuality: "individual freedom is freedom that is limited by individuality. Out of the uniqueness of that which can complement and free him, a specificity of needs whose correlate is the availability of the largest possible circle of possible selections, since as one's wishes and inner drives become more individual, it becomes that much less likely they will find satisfaction in a narrowly bounded domain," (Simmel 1908, 269). In this sense, social constraint in the form of a limited ability to access the "largest possible circle of possible selections" appears to limit our freedom. Latina lesbians may find the opportunity for self-liberation in Chicago, but doing so may involve traveling great distances, limiting the frequency with which they are able to engage in these acts of self-expression. However, I argue that such limitations can also enhance the social potential of venues. In the next section, I discuss the effect of such externalities on venues and their inner lives.

2.4 Venue Constraints and the Effect of Externalities

The example of romantic side involvements within a fast food restaurant reminds us that venues do not exist in a vacuum. Who and what surrounds a venue has a real effect on the social possibilities that can be found within. Such dependency on factors external to a venue highlights the multiscale nature of venues and their properties. By this I mean that venues involve two distinct spatial scales, one being the discrete physical space of a venue and the other being the geographic region surrounding a venue. Travel time introduces a practical limit to the set of venues we can access on a regular basis, forming a bounded space similar to a venue but on a geographic scale. What are the constraints associated with this local environment, and what are their implications for the social potential within venues? Moreover, how rigidly constrained are venues and their patrons by features of their local community? I begin to answer these questions in this final section. I start by describing the productive tension that exists between social constraint and social possibility due to the multiscale nature of venues. I then enumerate three forms of venue constraint and the types of social potential they facilitate.

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The physical boundedness and malleable meanings associated with a venue facilitate social potential even as they constrain our behavior. This potential is based on the fact that (1) multiple social structures overlap within the space of a venue, that (2) this space makes us part of a collective which we can only leave if we physically exit the venue, and that (3) the combination of these features produces a liminal moment where we are able to decide which social structures to enact, reject, or alter. This combination of features exists at a spatial scale measured in feet, whereas the features of the local community are measured in miles. Can we find a similarly productive tension between social potential and social constraint operating at a geographic scale? I argue that we can, and that this tension provides a unique capacity for self-liberation through the venues in our local communities.

If we accept that venues are spaces where social structures are enacted, and that travel time induces a practical boundary to the size of a local community, then we may say that communities are bounded geographic regions that contain overlapping social structures. Venues do not physically overlap, but their geographic proximity implies that they constitute a discrete set of accessible locations. The exact boundaries defining this set of accessible venues will depend on the location of individuals and how far they are willing to travel. Yet we can state with some certainty that a restaurant in Chicago and a restaurant in New York are not part of the same local community. In this sense, geographic boundaries are not as rigidly defined as the physical boundaries of a venue or situation, but they are real enough to allow us to say that local communities exist and that these communities often host multiple venues facilitating multiple social structures.

Independent of the venues that are present, local communities maintain their own collective identity through the individuals that inhabit these geographic regions. When we enter a community we become subject to its customs. Our physical presence makes us part of the community and thus requires us to negotiate the behavioral expectations that are present, even if this merely involves following decorum. Conversely, only when we physically leave a community do we cease to be part of it, cease to be subject to its rules. As with venues, the constraints we experience when we

enter a community may seem limiting but can in fact facilitate social possibility. Trivially, traveling to a geographic region provides access to individuals that we would otherwise not be able to meet. Similar to venues, communities also facilitate social exposure and thus the social innovation it encourages. However, the liminality associated with social exposure in venues take on a somewhat different form at the larger spatial scale of the local community.

Practical constraints produce communities that contain bounded sets of venues, as well as host collectivities that cannot be exited without physically leaving the community. So how do these constraints facilitate social possibility and social innovation? In venues, I proposed the existence of liminal moments when we have to choose which social structures to enact, reject, or alter. In communities, I propose that venues collectively provide a similar, persistent liminal moment through our capacity to reshape their features. This collectivity is best viewed as an ecology of venues that is constituted by the opportunity to blur the boundaries between different types of venues in order to realize our personal and collective goals.

Scholars tend to think of local businesses and voluntary organizations as fulfilling a kind of market demand for goods and services within a community, and that communities are thus subject to market forces. However, markets presume a level of choice that is often absent in the case of venues. In a broad sense, markets provide an ordered way of matching supply to demand. However, communities possess a limited set of venues easily accessible to residents, irrespective of the demand for particular venues and their goods or services by community members. Given this constraint I view venues as a scarce resource. Simmel's insight on the paradox of individuality suggests that this scarcity implies a constrained capacity to express oneself, to realize one's individuality. I propose that the reverse is actually true: given a limited number of venues within a local community, local residents will shape venues to suit their needs and preferences. While the venues available to us guide our behavior through their ostensible purposes, the zones of social potential they facilitate are not just a means for episodic acts of self-liberation, but rather they are also a means for remaking local communities through self-expressive acts whose effects persist in time and space.

If venues individually provide us the capacity for self-expression, then they must also do so collectively. Key to their collective capacity for self-expression is their ability to facilitate side involvements unrelated to their ostensible purpose. Venues can and do change in order to allow or encourage social interactions that are not necessary for fulfilling their ostensible purposes. Whether done preemptively to fulfill a niche for a particular kind of social interaction, or in response to how patrons use the space of a venue, the possibility of loosening the relationship between physical space and ostensible purpose provides an extended moment of liminality where individuals can literally reshape venues to suit their goals and desires. A coffee shop may exist to serve coffee in exchange for money. If college students frequently use a coffee shop to do work for extended periods of time then it may come to pass that the coffee shop adds more electrical outlets and seating in order to facilitate this side involvement. In this sense, spaces within a community can be molded by our will, and thus the limited options that might constrain our individuality can be made into persistent vehicles for self-liberation. However, this process is often initiated due to the ecology of venues within a community, in particular in response to limitations in the types of venues available or the types of individuals within these venues. Thus I turn now to these externalities, the constraints they pose, and the social potential they facilitate.

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The population ecology of organizations tends to assume that organizational ecologies are distinct from each other. For example, newspapers (Carroll 1985), restaurants (Freeman and Hannan 1983), and churches (McRoberts 2003) each jostle for position within their own ecological spaces that are independent of each other. However, these ecologies are defined through an organization's ostensible purpose and thus its main involvements. In the case of venues, when we consider either the tastes represented by material culture or the side involvements that are possible, it is difficult to make such a clear distinction between the organizational ecology of restaurants and that of churches. In fact, Chapter 3 is an empirical exploration of how churches – whose ostensible purpose is religious worship – can come to facilitate secular social events when other venues, such as

restaurants, are scarce. Thus I proceed here as if venues constitute an ecological space undifferentiated by ostensible purpose but defined by the needs and desires of local community members. This definition leads to a number of novel forms of both social constraint and social possibility due to the presence, absence, or use of venues by local residents. I explore the effect of these externalities on social interaction within venues by considering three forms of social constraint associated with venues—opportunity constraint, robust constraint, and associational constraint—that also provide the capacity for social possibility and social innovation.

Opportunity Constraint

Opportunity constraint occurs when a particular type of venue is scarce within a community. Consider the case of restaurants. Whether restaurant scarcity occurs because there are few restaurants relative to population size or because the nearest restaurants are prohibitively far away, opportunity constraint means that it is difficult to access a restaurant, and thus the ostensible purpose and social possibilities it facilitates: It is hard to dine out in a neighborhood with few or no restaurants. Since we have no or few opportunities for dining out, there exists a fundamental limitation in our ability to be served food in exchange for money. More generally, the ostensible purposes of scarce venues are difficult to fulfill, as the means for fulfilling these purposes are either absent or difficult to access. However, the venue scarcity that defines opportunity constraint facilitates at least two forms of social possibility.

One form of social potential facilitated by opportunity constraint is our tendency for social innovation in the face of such limitations. As a consequence of opportunity constraint, some of our goals become harder to achieve. If these goals begin and end with the ostensible purpose of a scarce venue then we experience only limitation, and thus lack the capacity for self-expression that Simmel describes. However, many times our goals extend beyond the ostensible purpose of a venue to encompass the side involvements it makes possible, such as romantic dates at a fine French restaurant.

If the side involvements often found within a scarce type of venue can be carried out in another more locally abundant type of venue then it is possible for the latter to act as a surrogate for the social possibility afforded by the former. That is, if there are many coffee shops in a community with few restaurants then we may expect to observe more romantic dates in coffee shops than we would in a community with many restaurants. This is a social innovation where the ostensible purpose of the surrogate venue does not change, but our capacity for self-expression is restored through our ability to alter the types of social interactions that normally take place within.

The social innovation and expressive capacity associated with a surrogate venue requires significant decoupling of its physical space and ostensible purpose. Where these two features are already loosely related the surrogate venue is often easily able to accommodate new (or more) side involvements. The ostensible purpose of a coffee shop (i.e. to serve coffee in exchange for money) is quickly fulfilled in practice, though patrons may remain in a coffee shop for some time after achieving this goal, thus providing ample freedom to conduct a variety of side engagements. However, the main involvement of a venue may be nearly all-encompassing, in which case opportunity constraint may induce two social innovations as patrons decouple the physical space and ostensible purpose of a surrogate venue in order to engage in side involvements that were not previously possible.

Another form of social possibility facilitated by opportunity constraint is social exposure to individuals we would rather avoid. If a community is venue scarce in a broad sense (i.e. few restaurants, coffee shops, supermarkets, churches, and so on) then local residents will be more likely to encounter each other at the few venues that are available (Fischer 1982, 60). Thus opportunity constraint can increase our social exposure to others in the community, others that we may prefer to avoid. Without alternative spaces to perform necessary tasks (e.g. buying food, fuel, or medicine) it becomes hard to avoid these community members.

This restriction on the expression of personal preference may limit our individuality, as well as our capacity to cultivate and maintain homophilous social ties. At the same time, it also actively exposes us to difference (social, racial, economic, cultural, or otherwise) that we would have oth-

erwise avoided. This can have profound influence on how we view the social world. Chapter 4 explores how such social exposure to heterogeneity can affect our political behavior by cultivating a form of cosmopolitan tolerance among local residents, as repeated exposure to heterogeneity reduces the saliency of political appeals that rely on group difference. However, this type of social possibility assumes that there exists some form of diversity among local residents. What if little such heterogeneity exists? How does this influence the social possibilities associated with venues? I consider this type of venue constraint next.

Robust Constraint

Robust constraint occurs when significant homogeneity exists in the patrons of a venue. Whether this is due to homogeneity in the local residents or homogeneity in those who decide to enter the venue, robust constraint means that the social possibilities of a venue are fundamentally limited, especially when it comes to realizing the benefits of social capital. This is due to the fact that "who one meets at certain places and social contexts is not random; the sociodemographic composition of these contexts constitutes the opportunity structure for meeting particular others and largely affects the resulting personal network," (Völker, Flap, and Mollenhorst 2009, 28). Put in terms of network advantage, meeting dissimilar others with access to novel resources can be difficult if the venues we frequent are entirely populated by people with the same economic, racial, and cultural characteristics as ourselves. However, a high degree of homogeneity can actually facilitate social possibilities based on the commonalities shared by patrons. That is, venues exhibiting robust constraint can bring people together in powerful ways.

Consider an example where a venue facilitated technological innovation. Saxenian (1996) writes how bars facilitated the kind of informal, creative collaboration now synonymous with Silicon Valley. She observes that "virtually all [of Silicon Valley's founders] were white men; most were in their early twenties. Many had studied engineering at Stanford or MIT, and most had no industrial experience. None had roots in the region; a surprising number of the community's major figures had grown up in small towns in the Midwest and shared a distrust for established East

Coast institutions and attitudes,” (Saxenian 1996, 30). Saxenian goes on to describe how former employees of Fairchild Semiconductor Corporation played a central role in founding many Silicon Valley firms, leading to unexpectedly intimate ties among competitors. Within this context, she notes that “the Wagon Wheel bar in Mountain View, a popular watering hole where engineers met to exchange ideas and gossip, has been termed ‘the fountainhead of the semiconductor industry,’” due to its influence in fostering technical innovation (Saxenian 1996, 32). In this sense, the robust constraint associated with a bar both catalyzed social ties among highly homogeneous patrons and, in turn, novel technological advancements.

To a lesser extent, Small’s (2009) daycare centers also provide an example of robust constraint leading to social possibility. The common bond of childrearing between mothers is not the only similarity they shared. They also shared a working mother lifestyle, thus the use of daycare centers. Even their reliance on daycare centers indicates that many other aspects of their lives are similar, as it indicates that, for whatever reason, informal childcare (in the form of friends or relatives) or babysitters were not viable options. However, there also existed significant racial and economic diversity among mothers, providing the potential for accessing information and resources that would be otherwise unavailable. In this sense, robust constraint associated with a daycare center helped cultivate enough trust among mothers to provide social possibilities whose effects extended beyond the daycare center.

While complete homogeneity may be truly limiting, robust constraint can provide a useful way to leverage commonalities into social possibilities. Since the level of commonality is, by definition, higher than normal among patrons in a robustly constrained venue, we may observe more intense or far reaching social possibilities. Small’s daycare centers are remarkable because we could not imagine a way in which the situations they host could generate the kinds of social possibilities he observed. Similarly, the Wagon Wheel bar represents a unique historical nexus of social possibility that patrons and other observers claim contributed significantly to the development of the semiconductor industry. However, this last example might also exhibit features of opportunity constraint. Was the Wagon Wheel the only bar in Silicon Valley at the time? Saxenian never says,

but, in an article about Intel founder Robert Noyce, Wolfe (1983) suggests that over time multiple bars served as a social nexus for members of the semiconductor industry, so it seems unlikely that opportunity constraint was a significant factor. Yet this begs the question: What would the joint effect of opportunity constraint and robust constraint be on the social possibilities within a venue?

Associational Constraint

Associational constraint occurs when a particular type of venue is scarce within a community and significant homogeneity exists in the patrons of these scarce venues. As such, it is the combination of opportunity constraint and robust constraint. The Black church in the American South represents an apt example of associational constraint. The systematic exclusion of African Americans from certain neighborhoods, business establishments, and voluntary associations imposed significant opportunity constraint by denying access to many venues. It also imposed equally sizable robust constraint by attempting to limit interracial socialization in general, to the extent that churches became one of the only venues where African Americans could congregate and these churches were, in turn, overwhelmingly homogeneous racially.

Sociologists of religion suggest that the unique social environment of the American South forced Black churches to facilitate multiple spheres of social life (Nelsen, Yokley, and Nelsen 1971; Ellison and Sherkat 1995; Sherkat and Cunningham 1998). Moreover, these venues became “semi-involuntary” institutions, since African Americans who decided not to participate were effectively cut off from community life. Similarly, the social ties that form within these venues are more likely to encompass multiple spheres of life (e.g. religious and economic) and thus intensify both reciprocal obligations between individuals as well as the strength of social ties in general. In this way, associational constraint multiplies social possibilities within the Black church, introducing a plethora of side involvements unrelated to religious worship and intensifying the relationships that are formed. Thus the effect of associational constraint on social possibility may be understood in terms of the additive effect of both opportunity constraint and robust constraint.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have introduced a new analytic object for understanding the role of physical space in shaping the social possibilities we experience: the venue. Venues are a synthesis of a discrete physical space, ostensible purpose for this space's existence, and the material culture found within, that facilitates multiple forms of social possibility and social innovation. By synthesizing Goffman's understanding of social behavior in public spaces, Latour's processural approach to integrating objects into social networks, and Simmel's description of individual freedom, I have argued that venues are more than physical manifestations of the social structures they facilitate. Rather, venues are living, breathing parts of the social order, both stabilizing it and facilitating its evolution as patrons realize intentional, unintentional, and expressive goals.

Key to my argument has been uncovering the multiple ways that venues provide us the opportunity for expressing our agency through acts of self-determination. These opportunities culminate into zones of social potential that allow us to individually and collectively determine how we ought to behave. At its heart, this potential relies on both (1) the liminal moment just before we enact social structure within a venue and (2) the unexpected opportunities for social interaction these spaces provide. However, our capacity to shape venues also provides a persistent liminal moment of self-liberation made possible when physical space and ostensible purpose become decoupled, allowing us to develop side involvements. In this interstitial social and physical space, we are capable of molding venues to suit our needs and desires, an ability that becomes especially important when the venues within our local community fail to provide us the opportunity to realize these goals.

Without venues, discrete physical spaces are static features of our lives. Without venues, discrete physical spaces are defined by their unitary purpose, and often subject to the market forces associated with this purpose. However, these spaces often permit patrons to conduct an array of activities unrelated to their ostensible purpose. Moreover, communities often imbue such spaces with collective meanings associated with these unrelated activities. When discrete physical spaces possess an ostensible purpose and material culture, the concept of a venue allows us to identify and

interrogate the directed yet dynamic nature of social interaction among patrons. Further, through a multiscalar approach to the relationship between physical space and social potential, the concept of a venue allows us to integrate the effect of community context on discrete physical spaces, their uses, and the social potential they facilitate.

Venues are ubiquitous way-points in our lives. They are the spaces we enter and exit on a routine basis. They are where we meet each other for work and play, friendship and sexual liaison. We pass through venues so frequently, so effortlessly, that we give little thought to the way they influence who we meet and how we interact. The fundamental insight I have explored here is that venues provide guidelines for whether or how we should relate to each other within their shared spaces, but we are the ones that choose whether or how to follow these suggestions, turning these spaces into sites of social possibility, social innovation, and self-liberation.

CHAPTER 3

VENUES AND THE SECULAR LIFE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

3.1 Introduction

The search for a generalizable framework for linking communities to the organizations they host involves a wide variety of scholars, including urban sociologists, organizational sociologists, and economists. Many times research on this topic examines the organizational ecology associated with a particular market sector, with significantly less concern for the physical locations that organizations inhabit within a community (Carroll 1984; Freeman and Audia 2006). This tradition fits neatly with the view that participation in voluntary organizations is essentially governed by market forces of supply and demand, where residents and organizations match themselves based on a series of criteria, such as personal goals, organizational goals, or similarity in personal characteristics (McPherson 1983a). Yet studies of organizational ecology almost exclusively involve corporate firms. Firms differ in important ways from organizations such as churches and police departments that are more intimately tied to a geographic region and that tend to engage in a range of activities indirectly related to their ostensible purpose. Religious activities can often be classified as spiritual, financial, or social, depending on how one interprets, for example, the passing of a collection plate among worshipers. Such cases challenge the utility of population ecology models that see organizations as competitively related through a resource space, market segment, or organizational field, since the meaning (and thus legitimacy) of the same action can be interpreted in different ways based on equally applicable but distinct criteria. I demonstrate a novel methodological approach for quantitatively evaluating the effect of this ambiguity on individual and organizational religious behavior within a community.

Key to my thesis is the structuring role of geography in shaping behavioral norms. Studies of organizational ecology have increasingly abandoned geographic space as a coordinating force, and studies that do consider its role often frame geography in terms of markets, agglomeration and/or interorganizational ties (Freeman and Audia 2006). These approaches tend to treat geography as a

container for ecological processes and often ignore its practical influence on individual behavior, in particular the role that travel time plays in structuring individuals' daily lives. I assert that practical limits on how far residents are willing to travel define a community context, and that features of this context give rise to a religious field defining acceptable religious behavior.

This chapter has two goals, one theoretical and one methodological. First, it highlights the relevance of interstitial organizations, those organizations whose activities can have ambiguous meanings due to their engagement with multiple, sometimes competing sets of goals and norms, for both organizational sociologists and urban sociologists. I argue that these organizations represent a challenge to traditional population ecology models, and that they require new ways of rethinking old analytic tools such as the niche. Second, this chapter furthers much needed work on how to integrate individual, organizational, and ecological processes into a coherent analytic framework. With the increasing availability of geolocated survey data, this task is quickly becoming of paramount importance to quantitative researchers.

3.2 Theory

From early work on restaurants (Hannan and J. Freeman 1984) and newspaper organizations (Carroll 1985), to studies on the semiconductor industry (Podolny, Stuart, and Hannan 1996) and voluntary organizations (McPherson 1983a; Popielarz and McPherson 1995), to research on intercommunity competition (Audia and Kurkoski 2012) and religious organizations (Wollschleger and Porter 2011; Scheitle 2007) it is clear that population ecology, specifically the concept of an ecological niche, has long been a useful tool for studying the effect of environmental context on organizational behavior (Freeman and Audia 2006; Popielarz and Neal 2007). I contribute to this literature by asserting that the sites where organizations are physically located constitute analytic objects I call venues—discrete physical spaces with an ostensible purpose and style of fulfilling this purpose. Examples include restaurants, supermarkets, and churches, but also multi-national firms. I further assert that the geographic location of a venue places it in social relation to a constellation of other venues which, by virtue of physical proximity, constitute a community. Finally,

I argue that both venues and the communities they constitute can be most usefully understood as social fields, and that through this analytic frame it becomes possible to generalize the concept of a niche across markets.

Venues as Social Fields

Martin (2011, 274–280) lists five shared characteristics of social fields, which I paraphrase here: (1) A social field explains changes in some actors but does not predicate these changes on the actions of other actors, (2) social fields influence actors to behave in different ways depending on the position of actors within the field and their particular attributes, (3) the potential of social fields to influence actors is structured according to position within the field, (4) a social field without actors only has the potential to be influential, and (5) actors have particular attributes that make them more or less susceptible to the influence of social fields. To assert that venues are best understood as social fields, it is important to clearly define how venues exhibit these characteristics.

The ostensible purpose of a venue is what impels actors to behave and interact in particular ways. It explains the behavior of individuals in terms of a common goal that guides their activities regardless of the particular people involved (Characteristic 1). A restaurant's ostensible purpose is to serve customers food in exchange for currency. The details of how a restaurant's customers and employees interact to complete this task are irrelevant to how this purpose structures the social and physical space of the restaurant. Venues also rely on their ostensible purpose to indicate how particular actors ought to behave, both socially and as individuals (Characteristic 2), and these behavioral norms are tied to actors' relationship to this purpose (Characteristic 3). Restaurant customers and employees, by virtue of the social positions their roles bestow upon them, are directed to engage in distinctly different actions (e.g. ordering from the server, bringing beverages to a customer, etc.) to achieve their common goal. Of course, individuals who do not enter a venue are not affected by its potential demands on them, nor are they part of the social structure its ostensible purpose would impose (Characteristic 4). Trivially, without customers and employees a restaurant lacks the ability to influence actors, but retains the potential to do so even as an empty space, so

long as it is seen as a restaurant. This final caveat implies an important interpretive component to venues as social fields.

The physical space of a venue represents the essence of its existence as a field. While an ostensible purpose gives this space structure, both literally and figuratively, it is those who inhabit this space that are the ultimate arbiters of its use. A venue's purpose is ostensible since it may come to serve other, unrelated purposes. Those who enter a venue have a choice to adopt the behavioral norms presented to them, or to challenge these norms in various ways. Thus, as actors with agency, individuals consciously or unconsciously decide whether to acknowledge the structuring influence of a venue's ostensible purpose (Characteristic 5). This decision is based on both personal characteristics and the collective recognition of what constitutes a particular type of venue. Most Americans would agree that a restaurant without seats would challenge the definition of restaurant, perhaps to the point that customers must decide for themselves whether to engage such a space as a restaurant or as something else entirely. This represents the cultural and interpretive aspect of a venue, as the style of fulfilling an ostensible purpose can sometimes violate collective understandings of how to work toward a particular goal. Such normativity raises an important question: Through what process does a venue decide how to fulfill its ostensible purpose?

The style with which venues fulfill their ostensible purpose can often be understood in market terms. Restaurants differentiate themselves from each other based on the types of food they serve, how they serve this food, and their décor—all of which can be thought of as dimensions of comparison that potential customers use to decide where to dine. A venue's style of fulfilling its ostensible purpose can also be understood in terms of population ecology and niches (Hannan and J. Freeman 1984), or as shaped by larger community features such as demographic instability (Carroll and Torfason 2011). I argue that this style is also affected by community-level social fields constituted by other geographically proximate venues.

Venues within a Community: Fields within Fields

According to Fligstein and McAdam (2012) strategic action fields, their action-oriented interpretation of fields, exist in an environment constituted by other strategic action fields. They posit that fields stand in relation to each other according to the various ways one field can influence another, such as the relationship between franchises and their parent company. Part of this taxonomy of relations includes an important distinction between proximate and distant fields: “Proximate fields are those strategic action fields with recurring ties to, and whose actions routinely affect, the field in question. Distant fields are those that lack ties and have virtually no capacity to influence a given strategic action field,” (Fligstein and McAdam 2012, 18). They suggest that a product division within a large firm represents an example of proximate fields, in particular a vertical relationship between fields of strategic action where the division is nested within the firm. Fligstein and McAdam contrast this to the horizontal relationships a product division maintains with fields constituted by its suppliers, customers, and so on (i.e. fields distant to the firm).

I assert that distant fields are functionally synonymous with the assumptions most studies of ecological and/or market competition make regarding the singular focus of an organization. Firms are often highly directed in their organizational goals, such as selling as many newspapers as possible, and since much research on organizational ecology involves firms it is only natural that this research tends to treat organizational fields as relatively independent arenas of competition. However, in practice it is difficult to claim that firms are not proximate to some collection of other fields with which they must maintain ongoing relationships. This is especially true in the case of venues, where geographic location encodes field proximity.

Martin (2003, 29) rightfully cautions against topographic accounts of fields, as actors’ relative position in space does not necessarily imply a meaningful inter-subjective relationship or shared goal. For example, a Blau space defined by the demographic characteristics of residents (see McPherson 2004) can place individuals in relation to each other via some measure of distance based on age, race, and so on, but this structure does not put residents into a social structure of shared striving toward a common goal. This is acutely true in the case of geography, where

distance is a purely physical relationship. However, when practical concerns such as travel time constrain how far individuals can (or are willing to) travel, geography does act to structure fields within the local community in socially meaningful ways. This structuring role arises from the topography of geographically proximate venues. Clusters of venues are vertically integrated into larger fields precisely because their locations imply a social structure ordered by the particular (types of) venues available to local residents. I argue that this is the reason why some churches retain elevated social roles in a community. When residents are unable to access secular social venues, I expect that religious venues (i.e. churches) will become more salient sites for social interaction as they are made to supplement the lack of spaces that would normally fill this social niche.

3.3 Hypotheses

As venues, churches are vertically integrated into at least two fields, one religious and one secular, in part due to their historical role as social institutions. My overarching conjecture is that the level of social activity within a church is a function of external forces independent of any one church or the characteristics of any one worshiper. This is in contrast to rational choice accounts of religious behavior that view churches as strategic competitors in a religious market and that argue marginalized populations as more likely to turn to religion for secular social support (Iannaccone 1988; Finke and Stark 2005). In particular, the religious markets research tradition treats religious life as fundamentally separable from secular life, where decisions about religious participation can be understood largely in terms of religious goods (e.g. salvation), reflecting analytic intuitions similar to firm-based approaches to organizational ecology (Finke, Guest, and Stark 1996; Iannaccone and Bainbridge 2009). Preliminary evidence for my conjecture comes from early Chicago School studies on church adaptation to urbanization through the provision of extensive secular activities and financial investment in secular businesses (Douglass 1927; Drake 1940) and more recent studies on church adaptation to local economic conditions (McRoberts 2003) and community change (Ammerman 1997; Eiesland 2000). These studies consistently find that religious and secular life

are fundamentally intertwined, though they do not present a generalizable analytic framework for linking the two beyond invoking ecological metaphors of adaptation, succession, and so on.

At the individual level, I hypothesize that a lack of secular venues where residents can socialize will lead congregants to form more and closer friendships within the church. This hypothesis reflects the basic incorporation of social life into the sacred space of a church. It represents an important test of the intuition that churches contribute to a secular sense of community by helping to facilitate a local secular social field when other social spaces are relatively scarce.

Hypothesis 1: Congregants in communities with fewer secular social venues will exhibit higher levels of social embeddedness than congregants in communities with many secular venues.

At the organizational level, I hypothesize that a lack of secular venues will be associated with congregations offering activities that are often considered secular in nature, in particular sports teams, hobby clubs, and other social, recreational, or leisure activities. This hypothesis reflects the belief that venues are capable of constituting multiple community level fields at the same time, and that the historically ambiguous nature of religious life predisposes churches to take on a greater role in constituting a local secular social field when pressed to do so by a scarcity of secular venues.

Hypothesis 2a: Congregations in communities with few venues per capita will provide more opportunities for ostensibly secular socialization among congregants.

A competing hypothesis can also be posed, based on the idea that churches are directly competing with other venues for the time and resource of potential worshipers. This hypothesis reflects more orthodox approaches to organizational ecology, where organizations are located in a shared resource space (in this case constituted by the demographic characteristics and personal preferences of local residents) and a viable survival strategy consists of matching competitors' product offerings.

Hypothesis 2b: Congregations in communities with many venues per capita will provide more opportunities for ostensibly secular socialization among congregants.

Unfortunately it is also possible that churches do not waste resources trying to compete with secular social venues, when they exist, because such a strategy is considered likely to fail. However, even if this were true it would do little to explain why churches would expend these resources in cases where they already enjoy a relative monopoly over social life. Controlling for the competitiveness of the religious market, rational choice approaches to religious behavior would suggest that such an outcome makes little strategic sense.

3.4 Research Design

Data Sources

United States Congregational Life Survey, 2001 The data for my analysis come from the United States Congregational Life Survey (USCLS), a novel multi-sited survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center on behalf of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Religious organizations were identified through a hypernetwork sample based on General Social Survey respondents (McPherson 1982). Eventually 443 congregations were recruited and, on the weekend of April 29, 2001, 122,404 congregants within these congregations completed a survey about their religious beliefs and behavior. Uniquely, the USCLS also included a module for church leaders regarding the history, organizational structure, and other characteristics of the congregation as a whole. Using this data, researchers have been able to further explore rational choice and market-based theories of religious behavior (Scheitle and Finke 2008; Hill and Olson 2009; Thomas and Olson 2010), the relationship between social embeddedness, group belonging, and theological beliefs (Scheitle and Adamczyk 2009; Stroope 2011a, 2011b; Stroope and Baker 2014), and the relationship between health and religious participation (Krause and Wulff 2005; Krause et al. 2014), among other topics.

The USCLS survey has a significant advantage over traditional surveys: Congregants are nested within their congregations. The nesting of respondents within congregations allows me to directly estimate collective characteristics, such as proportion same race congregants and average age. The

multi-level structure of the survey also provides access to organizational data, such as the age of the congregation, its estimated size, the activities it facilitates, and its geographic location. Access to the ZIP code of each congregation made it possible to construct measures of local community context from a combination of ecological data sources described below. A similar nationally representative sample of over 100,000 religious attenders who are not nested in congregations would be less useful for studying the effect of community context, even if the full postal addresses of respondents were provided. Without a sense of how fellow congregants respond to their shared environment it is impossible to make claims concerning the social role of a church.

ZIP Code Business Patterns, 2001 Ecological data on the distribution of venues within a community are derived from the ZIP Code Business Patterns dataset distributed by the Census Bureau. This data is derived from the Business Register, a database that incorporates information from the Economic Census, the Social Security Administration, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. It provides ZIP code tabulations of over 1,000 types of businesses categorized according to the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) and is intended to represent the population of each business type operating within the United States during a given year.

Religious Congregations Membership Survey, 2000 Quantitative measures of the local religious market experienced by each congregation come from the Religious Congregations Membership Survey (RCMS) conducted in 2000. This dataset provides overall religious adherence rates and a detailed enumeration of adherence rates by denomination for each county in the United States. For simplicity and comparability to previous work, denominational adherence rates were aggregated into four major religious traditions (i.e. Catholic, Mainline Protestant, Evangelical Protestant, and Other Religious Traditions) according to the typology developed by Steensland et al. (2000).

United States Census, 2000 The Census Bureau provides census data that has been georectified to the ZIP code level. This effort was undertaken to allow researchers the ability to match ZIP code level data to census data in a consistent manner. By defining local community context using clusters of ZIP codes it is possible to use this data to calculate important measures of the local human ecology surrounding a congregation.

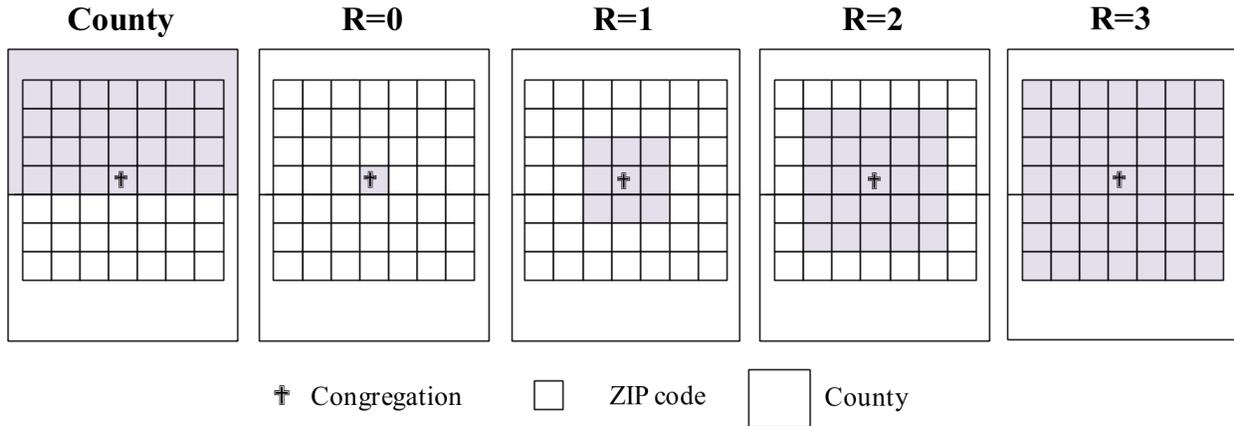
Measurement and Variables

Constructing Community Context

The combined analysis of survey data and ecological data requires specifying the geographic boundaries of each community, though this is a problematic task. This specification is necessary from a practical point of view, as community context must be defined in relation to an ecological unit of analysis, but it also introduces uncertainty regarding the exact geographic scale at which religious fields operate. This is known as the modifiable area unit problem (MAUP) in geography, where the effects of ecological data on outcomes of interest can vary significantly in size and direction depending on the scale one chooses (Openshaw 1984; Fotheringham and Wong 1991). Research on religious markets often uses a county level unit of analysis (e.g. Olson 1998) but there is no a priori reason to believe that religious markets, religious ecologies, or religious fields operate at this scale.

The USCLS does ask respondents how long it takes to travel to religious services, but this data is missing for approximately two-thirds of respondents and unlikely to be missing at random. Accordingly, responses to this item were not included in analysis. However, the wording of the question and analysis of the non-missing data support the idea that attendees reside quite close to their congregation. Possible responses ranged from "1-5 minutes" (23.5% of respondents) to "More than 30 minutes" (3.6% of respondents), with the majority of respondents (54.6%) indicating that it took them 10 minutes or less to travel to religious services. For this reason I take a pragmatic approach to the modifiable areal unit problem based on concentric rings of adjacent ZIP codes.

Figure 3.1 Definitions of Community Size



Each set of ZIP codes represents one way of defining the geographic boundaries of the community relevant to religious life within a particular congregation, with $r = 0$ referring to the ZIP code where a congregation is located, $r = 1$ referring to the ZIP codes immediately adjacent, and so on, up to $r = 3$. Figure 1 depicts this approach graphically. Since RCMS data are only available at the county level, I also depict the possibility that these different definitions of community context could span county boundaries. In all cases, a congregation's ZIP code is used to determine the county to which it belongs. In other words, no attempt is made to incorporate data from other counties since this would require inferring sub-county characteristics using county level data (i.e. calculating a value based on the proportion of the community in each county). This is undesirable as it would assume, for instance, that Evangelical Protestant churches are uniformly distributed across the geography of each county.

From a measurement standpoint, it is also difficult to be certain that the area traced out by this specification of community context coincides with the actual geographic context influencing the local religious behavior. In geography this paradox has been termed the uncertain geographic context problem (UGCoP) (Kwan 2012). For congregation level outcomes the overlap between religious field and geographic context is tautologically defined, as each church is assumed to exist in a community context exerting pressure to provide or facilitate certain activities. It is certainly possible that more distant venues affect religious life (e.g. a large shopping district located outside

the geographic boundaries used here) or that respondents differ in how far they are willing to travel to seek out religious goods versus other types of goods (e.g. film entertainment) but the overall geographic proximity of congregants suggests that church life is tied to a relatively small geography. The UGCoP may also be an issue for the study of individual level outcomes, since respondents may live in a location outside of the community context defined here. Again, while possible the extent of the problem is likely limited given that the majority of respondents report living quite close to their congregation.

Social Fit The concept of an ecological niche is a useful way of understanding how organizations compete for members/customers within a shared environment (Hannan, Carroll, and Pólos 2003; Popielarz and Neal 2007). I define organizational niches as locations within an abstract space whose dimensions are defined by the resources that organizations are competing to obtain in order to survive (McPherson 1983a). For example, voluntary organizations competing for members can be located in a Blau space where one dimension is age and the other dimension is years of education. The competitive relationship between two organizations can be inferred by how close or far one is to the other in this resource space, correlating directly with whether they pursue the same types of individuals. As a mathematical construct this space is both analytically precise (i.e. dimensions are defined a priori as demographic characteristics, organizational competencies, etc.) and easily integrated into quantitative analysis (i.e. distance, clustering, and granularity can be represented as continuous, categorical, or nominal variables).

For analysis here I employ the logic of niches to construct a measure of how similar respondents are to other members of their organization versus local residents. This case is not well-explored in the niche literature since it invokes a multilevel framework that violates a basic tenet of population ecology, namely that models involve populations and not their individual members (Hannan and J. H. Freeman 1977). Brass et al. (2004) suggest that a network paradigm would be a plausible alternative, but my decision to employ field theory stems from the challenge of obtaining precise data on network ties and the ambiguous nature of these ties (e.g. are they religious or social?). That

is, even if such data could be collected it would be difficult to claim knowledge about the precise mechanisms through which religious behavior is defined. Though such mechanisms deserve study they are beyond the scope of what is possible here.

The inclusion of a social fit measure is inspired by extensive research showing that individuals prefer to interact with those who are similar to themselves (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). From this insight it is logical to conclude that the inclusion of ostensibly social activities into church life may reflect a kind of banding together of minority community members (Nelsen, Yokley, and Nelsen 1971). For this reason it is important to analyze the effect of venues controlling for the social fit between respondents, their church, and their community. The measure developed here is a novel way to incorporate the concept of a niche into the study of how individuals and organizations react to their environment, and provides a systematic way of combining survey data sources with ecological data sources.

Mathematically, I define social fit as the difference between two Euclidean distances in a resource space defined by the demographic characteristics of respondents. For continuous characteristics, such as age, these distances are calculated from three points in space corresponding the respondent, the organization, and the community. In the latter two cases a summary statistic is used to indicate where the organization and the community are located. For instance, a respondent may be 32 years old, other members of the organization may have an average age of 34 years old, and community members may have an average age of 22 years old. The two distances calculated are between respondent-organization and respondent-community with social fit defined as the absolute value of the former subtracted from the absolute value of the latter:

$$\overline{Age}_{Org} = \text{Mean age of organization members}$$

$$\overline{Age}_{Local} = \text{Mean age of residents in the local community}$$

$$SocialFit_{Age} = |Age_{Respondent} - \overline{Age}_{Local}| - |Age_{Respondent} - \overline{Age}_{Org}|$$

This guarantees that a positive value for social fit indicates that a respondent is more similar to other organization members than community members, while a negative value for social fit indicates a respondent is less similar to other organization members than community members. In

the example above, social fit based on age is $|32 - 22| - |32 - 34| = 10 - 2 = 8$, indicating that the respondent is more similar in age to other organization members than community members. For a nominal categorical variable, such as race, distance is understood in terms of the proportion of each group with the same personal characteristic:

$PropSameRace_{Org} =$ Proportion of organization that is same race as respondent

$PropSameRace_{Local} =$ Proportion of local residents that are same race as respondent

$SocialFit_{Race} = PropSameRace_{Org} - PropSameRace_{Local}$

For analysis, I calculate and include a social fit measure based on race, due to the historical role of churches as coordinating institutions for minority populations. For simplicity of interpretation this is the only measure of social fit included, though higher dimensional measures incorporating additional personal characteristics can be trivially calculated.

Opportunity Constraint Another novel measure used in analysis is what I term opportunity constraint. Opportunity constraint arises when communities have relatively few venues that facilitate social interaction. This community context constrains local residents in the sense that it becomes more difficult to meet new people and/or socialize in public. However, opportunity constraint is not necessarily anti-social. Fischer (1982) suggests that it forces local residents to interact with a more diverse range of people than they would prefer, which could encourage pro-social behavior in racially and economically diverse residential communities where residents would be less likely to interact given the opportunity. Conversely, opportunity constraint is not necessarily tied to an urban/rural or rich/poor divide. Ex-urban communities may be just as constrained as economically disadvantaged city neighborhoods if local residents are routinely willing to exit their community. Opportunity constraint is operationalized in terms of venues per capita, where fewer venues per capita indicates higher opportunity constraint.

Dependent Variables

Individual Level At the individual level, social embeddedness is the dependent variable. Social embeddedness is measured through a survey item asking each attendee "Do you have any close friends in this congregation?" Respondents were then provided four possible responses: (1) No, I have little contact with others from this congregation outside of activities here; (2) No, I have some friends in this congregation, but my closest friends are not involved here; (3) Yes, I have some close friends here as well as other close friends who are not part of this congregation; (4) Yes, most of my closest friends are part of this congregation.

Organizational Level At the organizational level, whether a congregation provides secular social activities is the outcome variable. Secular social activities are defined as the sum of three binary indicators of whether or not a congregation provides sports teams, hobby or craft groups, or other leisure or recreational groups for congregants. Other activities could have been included in this measure, such as arts/music groups or youth groups, but the three categories selected are the most distinctly secular of those included on the survey completed by congregational leaders.

Independent Variable

The independent variable of interest here is the number of venues per 1,000 residents within the community. This measure is geographically specific, capturing the relative abundance or scarcity of venues while adjusting for population size. At the same time, it is only weakly correlated with population density, a more classic measure of urbanity ($R = -0.02$, $p = 0.676$, $n = 420$). Thus I present this measure as a novel approach to quantifying the urban landscape through the built environment, in contrast to human ecology approaches focusing on the characteristics of local populations. The specific venues chosen to constitute this measure are listed in Table 3.1. They were identified in an *ad hoc* manner as the most likely to serve as spaces for social interaction.

Table 3.1: Venues Constituting Opportunity Constraint

NAICS	Description
451120	Hobby, toy and game stores
451130	Sewing, needlework, and piece goods stores
451211	Book stores
512131	Motion picture theaters
519120	Libraries and archives
624410	Child day care services
712110	Museums
712130	Zoos and botanical gardens
712190	Nature parks and other similar institutions
713110	Amusement and theme parks
713120	Amusement arcades
713910	Golf courses and country clubs
713920	Skiing facilities
713930	Marinas
713940	Fitness and recreational sports centers
713950	Bowling centers
713990	Other amusement and recreation
722110	Full service restaurants
722211	Limited service restrauants
722212	Cafeterias
722213	Snack and non-alcoholic beverage bars
722410	Drinking place (alcholic beverages)
812111	Barber shops
812112	Beauty salons
812113	Nail salons

Note: Venues selected using 6-digit North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS) Codes for particular industries.

Control Variables

Individual Level Income, age, college education, gender, and presence of a child at home are included as personal characteristics that may affect the likelihood that respondents form friendships within their congregation. Income was coded as (1) less than \$10,000, (2) \$10,000 to \$24,999, (3) \$25,000 to \$49,999, (4) \$50,000 to \$74,999, (5) \$75,000 to \$99,999, (6) \$100,000 or more. Age is measured in decades (e.g. 22 years old is coded as 2.2) while college education (Bachelor’s degree or higher = 1), gender (female = 1), and the presence of a child at home (child at home = 1) are coded as dichotomous variables.

A series of dichotomous variables indicating respondents’ race are also included. Specifically, seven racial categories were used: Black or African American, Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin,

Asian or Pacific Islander, Native American, Other, and Multi-Racial, with White or Caucasian as the reference category. The historic role of churches in the lives of racial minorities and immigrants would suggest that members of these groups are more likely to see the church as a social context for forming friendships.

Additionally, frequency of church attendance, length of church attendance, and theological exclusivity are included as behavioral and ideological characteristics related to congregational social embeddedness. Frequency of attendance is measured on a six point scale: (1) Never, (2) Hardly ever, (3) Occasionally, (4) Once a week, (5) A few times a week, and (6) Every day/most days. Length of attendance is also measured on a six point scale: (1) Less than 1 year, (2) 1 to 2 years, (3) 3-5 years, (4) 6-10 years, (5) 11-20 years, and (6) More than 20 years. Theological exclusivity is measured through a five-level Likert item that asks attendees "[a]ll the different religions are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth?" and provides responses that range from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The last is included since researchers have found that higher levels of theological exclusivity can affect the propensity for individuals to form friendships with people who do not share their religious beliefs (Scheitle and Adamczyk 2009).

Finally, two measures are included that capture local community context. One measure is the proportion of local residents that are the same race as the respondent. This indicates the general ease with which individuals are able to form same race relationships (i.e. engage in racial homophily outside of venues). The other measure is racial social fit.

Organizational Level Again using Steensland et al. (2000) to categorize denominations, congregations were grouped into four religious traditions: Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant (including Greek Orthodox congregations), Catholic, and Other (including Buddhist and Jewish congregations). Past research suggests that each tradition has a distinct way of negotiating place and social integration (Finke and Stark 2005; Gamm 1999). The number of regular participating adults and children, as well as the mean theological exclusivity of each congregation, are also included in analysis as potential within-congregation contextual effects. Larger congregation size

is expected to discourage the formation of close relationships, while the key finding of Scheitle and Adamczyk (2009) is that a theologically exclusive church environment enhances the direct relationship between personal theological exclusivity and social embeddedness.

Additionally, three dichotomous variables capture congregational efforts to facilitate social interaction. These are included in analysis due to their clear potential to confound ecological processes. The first two indicate the presence of prayer groups and small groups, respectively. While similar, they are treated separately since the latter may not be explicitly religious in nature. The third indicates the presence of traditionally secular activities (i.e. sporting activities or teams; hobby or craft groups; other social, recreational, or leisure activities). All three are expected to increase the likelihood that respondents form friendships with their congregation.

Two additional contextual measures are also included. Population density is included to account for the likelihood that individuals will meet and form friendships outside of venues. Religious market share, measured as the proportion of a county's respondents that belong to a congregation's religious tradition, is also included. While Olson and Perl (2011) report that denominational population share is significantly related to the likelihood that respondents' friends are in the same denomination, but not related to the likelihood that these friends are in the same congregation, the USCLS provides a much larger sample of respondents to assess these relationships.

While the preceding are geared toward exploring individual religious behavior, I am also interested in the behavior of congregations as organizations embedded in multiple community fields. Thus the likelihood that a congregation facilitates traditionally secular activities is also analyzed. This measure provides insight into a congregation's capacity to facilitate secular forms of social interaction, and thus engage in other organizational fields.

Alternatively, the deprivation theory of sect membership (Iannaccone 1988; Glock 1961) suggests that social embeddedness may be higher for traditionally marginalized groups, especially African Americans (Ellison and Sherkat 1995; Nelsen, Yokley, and Nelsen 1971). I extend this concept to include groups that are simply racial minorities within their own community. Thus I include two measures tied to the racial make-up of both congregation and local community. The

first is simply proportion non-white respondents within the congregation, capturing historic minority status of congregants. The second is the average level of racial similarity between congregants and local residents, measured as the average proportion of local residents that are the same race as respondents from the same congregation. This captures current minority status of congregants, allowing me to explore the role of associational ecology in the form of homophily seeking behavior.

Finally, average income and number of regular participating adults and children are included in models of congregation level religious behavior. The first correlates highly with average education and indicates the average wealth of the congregation. Congregations' size indicates the extent to which such activities are even possible, in the sense that specific activities require a certain minimum number of interested congregants. I expect that both contribute to the organizational capacity of and demand for congregations to offer secular activities.

County Level Three county level measures are included to capture relevant features of the local religious ecology. First, religious pluralism is included, measured as a Herfindahl index based on four religious traditions where higher values indicate more monopolistic religious markets. Boronovi (2008) finds that, while unrelated to church attendance, religious pluralism is associated with a higher probability of individuals volunteering for religious organizations. Assuming that volunteering is more strongly associated with congregational friendships than church attendance, this suggests that religious pluralism may have an indirect effect on social embeddedness. The second measure included is adherence rate (i.e. the number of religious adherents per 1,000 residents). This is assumed to indicate the relative likelihood that local residents attend religious services. Finally, location in the American South is indicated by a dichotomous variable, owing to its historically high levels of religious participation.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics for all variables used in analysis can be found in Table 3.2. It is worth noting that the average value for social fit is positive regardless of how community context is geographi-

cally defined. This agrees with a significant amount of research suggesting that individuals prefer to interact with people similar to themselves (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001).

Table 3.2: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
<i>Individual Level</i>					
Social embeddedness	107,321	2.67	0.90	1	4
Frequency of attendance	108,238	4.90	0.84	1	6
Length of attendance	111,007	4.12	1.68	1	6
Income	97,077	3.56	1.50	1	6
Theological exclusivity	108,805	2.77	1.26	1	5
Gender (1 = female)	104,186	0.61		0	1
Child at home	113,420	0.60		0	1
Bachelor's degree	113,434	0.41		0	1
Race: White	113,434	0.72		0	1
Race: Black or African American	113,434	0.04		0	1
Race: Hispanic or Latino	113,434	0.11		0	1
Race: Native American	113,434	0.04		0	1
Race: Other	113,434	0.00		0	1
Race: Multi-racial	113,434	0.01		0	1
Age (years)÷10	106,018	5.10	1.79	1.50	10.10
Social Fit (race, R= 0)	103,440	0.05	0.19	-0.90	0.89
Social Fit (race, R= 1)	104,227	0.09	0.20	-0.84	0.93
Social Fit (race, R= 2)	104,227	0.11	0.20	-0.82	0.93
Social Fit (race, R= 3)	104,227	0.12	0.21	-0.84	0.93
Racial Homophily (R= 0)	103,440	0.68	0.29	0.00	1.00
Racial Homophily (R= 1)	104,227	0.64	0.28	0.00	0.99
Racial Homophily (R= 2)	104,227	0.62	0.27	0.00	0.98
Racial Homophily (R= 3)	104,227	0.61	0.27	0.00	0.97
<i>Congregation Level</i>					
Secular activities (1 = cong. provides)	424	0.68		0	1
Prayer groups (1 = cong. provides)	424	0.84		0	1
Small groups (1 = cong. provides)	413	0.58		0	1

Table 3.2: Descriptive Statistics (continued)

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Mainline Protestant	427	0.39		0	1
Evangelical Protestant	427	0.28		0	1
Catholic	427	0.23		0	1
Other Religious Tradition	427	0.07		0	1
> 75% Non-white	450	0.13		0	1
Regular participations	415	766.07	1077.32	10.00	7200
Religious market share	413	0.36	0.22	0.01	0.93
mean(Child at home)	436	0.56	0.13	0.00	0.94
mean(Income)	436	2.38	0.63	0.54	4.06
mean(Theological exclusivity)	436	2.97	0.71	1.41	4.86
Population density (per sq. mi., R= 0)	422	2635.47	7772.87	1.07	88511.55
Population density (per sq. mi., R= 1)	431	1873.51	6050.16	0.89	77318.41
Population density (per sq. mi., R= 2)	431	1670.35	6030.84	1.32	77966.05
Population density (per sq. mi., R= 3)	431	1386.91	5418.83	1.31	70081.38
Venues per 1,000 residents (R= 0)	421	3.10	2.34	0.21	21.81
Venues per 1,000 residents (R= 1)	431	2.61	0.92	0.74	7.17
Venues per 1,000 residents (R= 2)	431	2.65	0.69	1.06	5.87
Venues per 1,000 residents (R= 3)	431	2.59	0.56	1.19	5.06
$ \overline{Venues}_{R=0} - \overline{Venues}_{R=1} $	421	1.43	1.85	0.01	18.71
$ \overline{Venues}_{R=1} - \overline{Venues}_{R=2} $	431	0.70	0.61	0.00	4.56
$ \overline{Venues}_{R=2} - \overline{Venues}_{R=3} $	431	0.52	0.45	0.00	3.22
$ \overline{Venues}_{R=3} - \overline{Venues}_{R=0} $	431	0.43	0.36	0.00	2.47
mean(Social Fit, race, R= 0)	422	0.08	0.19	-0.39	0.89
mean(Social Fit, race, R= 1)	431	0.13	0.22	-0.36	0.93
mean(Social Fit, race, R= 2)	431	0.14	0.21	-0.30	0.93
mean(Social Fit, race, R= 3)	431	0.15	0.21	-0.34	0.93
<i>County Level</i>					
Located in South	191	0.37		0	1
Adherence rate (per 1,000)	189	629.41	162.89	266.54	1280.70
Religious Tradition Herfindahl Index	190	0.43	0.11	0.27	0.86

Figure 3.2 depicts the unconditional relationship between social embeddedness and opportunity constraint for a community context geographically defined by R=2 (results are similar for other definitions). It shows a modest association between the social embeddedness of respondents in their congregation and fewer venues per capita ($R = -0.02$, $p < 0.001$, $n = 106,191$). This is not an ideal depiction of this relationship given the ordinal nature of the social embeddedness measure, but it does reflect modest support for Hypothesis 1.

Figure 3.2 Social Embeddedness and Opportunity Constraint (Unconditional Relationship, R=2)

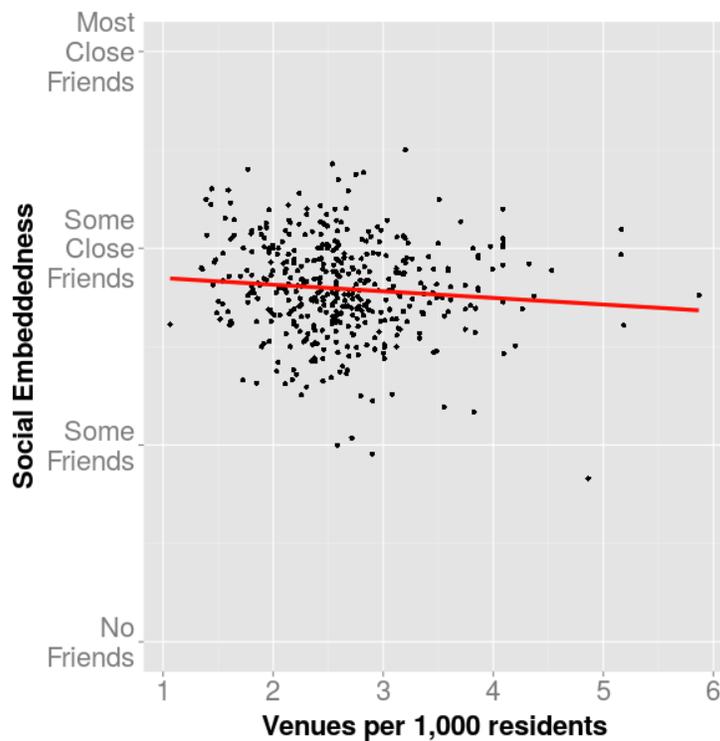
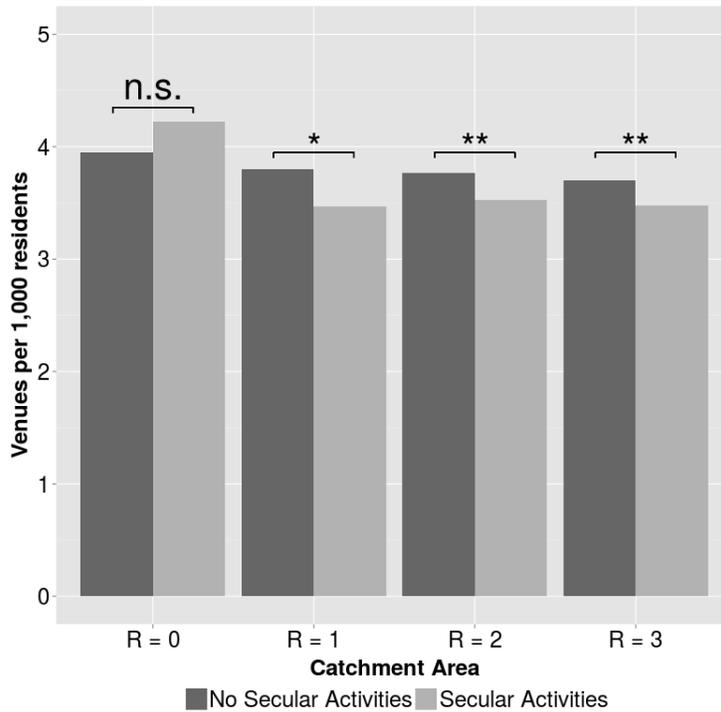


Figure 3.3 depicts the unconditional relationship between the provision of secular activities and opportunity constraint across all four geographic definitions of community context. Here a clear pattern emerges: While there is no relationship between the provision of secular activities and venues per capita when community is defined as the ZIP code where a church is located, any geographic definition more expansive than this indicates that there are significantly fewer venues per capita in the communities of congregations that provide these activities. This initial result provides support for Hypothesis 2a.

Figure 3.3 Provision of Secular Activities and Opportunity Constraint (Unconditional Relationship)



Note: One-tailed significance tests. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

3.5 Methodology

The primary methodological concern for testing Hypothesis 1 is that the nesting of congregants within congregations violates the assumption of independent and identically distributed cases in ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) represents a technique explicitly developed to address this issue (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). Thus the basic modeling strategy here is to estimate hierarchical generalized linear models (HGLM), employing an ordinal logistic link function to estimate the effect of opportunity constraint on respondents' level of social embeddedness. In these models, two levels of analysis are used: individual and congregation/community. County level variables, such as religious market share and religious pluralism, are treated as congregational characteristics. All models were estimated using Stata 13's meologit command utilizing adaptive quadrature with seven integration points.

A conscious choice was made to parameterize geography such that Hypothesis 1 can be tested without use of spatial econometric techniques, such as geographically weighted regression. Because geography has been parameterized through variables, HGLM models assume a uniform effect of all ZIP codes on the community context experienced by congregants and their congregation. A more traditional spatial method would involve a weighting scheme for the ZIP codes constituting a community, ideally estimated by maximizing a fit statistic.

While the use of different radii for defining community context does not involve an algorithm for determining such a weighting scheme, estimating models for each definition of community context does produce a series of fit statistics that follow a similar logic, and is similar to the strategy Hipp and Boessen (2013) use to define “egohoods” for the spatial analysis of crime data. The best fitting model represents the definition of community context that best captures variance in the data. While not ideal, a method has yet to be developed to adequately incorporate hierarchically nested survey data into a spatial econometric framework. The one benefit of this approach is that logically consistent parameter estimates across models provide at least some insight into the seriousness of the MAUP in this particular research context.

For Hypothesis 2, a series of independent samples t-tests are estimated comparing congregations that do or do not provide secular activities. Following this, logistic regressions were estimated for each geographic definition of community context. As before, ZIP codes are assumed to have a uniform effect on the likelihood that opportunity constraint affects the provision of secular activities. All models were estimated using Stata 13.

3.6 Results and Discussion

Hypothesis 1: Generalized Hierarchical Linear Models

The models associated with Hypothesis 1 are reported in Table 3.3. Each HGLM employs a cumulative logit link function to estimate the odds that a congregant is in the next higher category of social embeddedness, accounting for the nesting of congregants within congregations. Models

1 and 2 are effectively reproductions of Scheitle and Adamczyk's (2009) results, with the addition of three indicators of social activities within the congregation. The additional variables do not alter Scheitle and Adamczyk's results substantially, even though the provision of social activities is significantly related to social embeddedness.

Model 3 begins to include measures of community context, adding county level measures of religious market share, religious pluralism, and whether a congregation is located in the South. Only religious pluralism exhibited a statistically significant relationship with social embeddedness. Contrary to expectations, this relationship is negative. That is, respondents were more socially embedded when the religious market was more monopolistic. It is possible that accounting for additional contextual factors, such as the facilitation of prayer groups, may explain this disparity.

Table 3.3: Hierarchical Generalized Linear Models with Cumulative Logit Link Function, Social Embeddedness as Outcome

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4 (R= 0)	Model 4 (R= 1)	Model 4 (R= 2)	Model 4 (R= 3)
<i>Individual Characteristics</i>							
Female	1.011 (0.82)	1.016 (1.13)	1.015 (1.03)	1.019 (1.25)	1.016 (1.10)	1.016 (1.08)	1.016 (1.05)
Child at home	1.071*** (4.78)	1.088*** (5.48)	1.090*** (5.51)	1.091*** (5.52)	1.090*** (5.46)	1.092*** (5.53)	1.092*** (5.55)
Bachelor's degree	0.923*** (-5.28)	0.939*** (-3.90)	0.938*** (-3.92)	0.947*** (-3.34)	0.947*** (-3.33)	0.946*** (-3.41)	0.946*** (-3.39)
Frequency of attendance	1.481*** (46.77)	1.481*** (42.51)	1.479*** (42.02)	1.481*** (41.47)	1.481*** (41.32)	1.479*** (41.24)	1.479*** (41.20)
Length of attendance	1.411*** (75.83)	1.428*** (72.97)	1.430*** (72.22)	1.428*** (70.68)	1.428*** (70.54)	1.429*** (70.77)	1.430*** (70.80)
Age (10s of years)	1.005 (1.13)	1.013** (3.24)	1.014** (2.74)	1.017** (3.28)	1.017** (3.23)	1.016** (3.15)	1.016** (3.10)
Income	0.992 (-1.66)	0.995 (-0.95)	0.994 (-1.08)	0.993 (-1.20)	0.994 (-1.09)	0.994 (-1.06)	0.994 (-0.99)
Theological exclusivity	1.054*** (8.99)	1.032*** (4.15)	1.034*** (4.37)	1.035*** (4.40)	1.033*** (4.20)	1.034*** (4.26)	1.034*** (4.25)
Social Fit, race				1.806*** (9.45)	2.060*** (12.27)	2.163*** (13.18)	2.108*** (13.36)
Racial homophily				1.724*** (9.60)	1.377*** (4.58)	1.391*** (4.60)	1.406*** (4.59)
<i>Congregation Characteristics</i>							
Congregation size (log10)		0.977 (-1.69)	1.000 (0.04)	1.053** (3.03)	1.041* (2.39)	1.034* (1.96)	1.030 (1.75)
Offers secular activities		1.039 (1.22)	1.031 (0.82)	1.008 (0.21)	0.960 (-1.06)	0.947 (-1.37)	0.956 (-1.14)
Offers prayer groups		1.124** (2.88)	1.102** (2.37)	1.043 (1.00)	1.071 (1.63)	1.056 (1.30)	1.063 (1.45)

Table 3.3: Hierarchical Generalized Linear Models with Cumulative Logit Link Function, Social Embeddedness as Outcome (continued)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4 (R= 0)	Model 4 (R= 1)	Model 4 (R= 2)	Model 4 (R= 3)
Offers small groups		0.999 (-0.06)	0.978 (-0.83)	1.121*** (3.84)	1.057 (1.85)	1.056 (1.87)	1.026 (0.91)
Evangelical Protestant		1.209** (3.27)	1.164* (2.50)	1.148* (2.16)	1.074 (1.13)	1.084 (1.28)	1.098 (1.48)
Catholic		0.634*** (-9.76)	0.622*** (-7.95)	0.748*** (-4.63)	0.741*** (-4.89)	0.724*** (-5.25)	0.718*** (-5.36)
Other		1.543*** (6.12)	1.584*** (6.32)	1.830*** (8.13)	1.933*** (8.83)	1.881*** (8.43)	1.820*** (8.00)
mean(Theological exclusivity)		1.121** (2.91)	1.152** (3.43)	1.153*** (3.39)	1.141*** (3.12)	1.117* (2.53)	1.143** (3.08)
<i>Community Context</i>							
Population density (z-score, ZIP)				0.802*** (-11.14)	0.816*** (-10.57)	0.823*** (-10.44)	0.851*** (-9.24)
Venues per 1,000 residents (ZIP)				1.007 (1.02)	0.929*** (-4.99)	0.944* (-2.37)	0.992 (-0.28)
South (county)			1.018 (0.65)	1.081** (2.76)	1.035 (1.11)	1.089** (2.92)	1.076* (2.51)
Adherence rate (z-score, county)			1.029 (1.45)	0.974 (-1.26)	1.032 (1.42)	1.008 (0.36)	1.003 (0.16)
Rel. trad. market share (county)			0.881 (-1.28)	0.900 (-1.03)	0.984 (-0.16)	0.993 (-0.07)	0.991 (-0.08)
Rel. trad. Herfindahl Index (county)			1.073** (2.63)	1.061* (2.10)	1.022 (0.74)	1.066* (2.26)	1.074* (2.51)
<i>Cross-Level Interactions</i>							
Theological exclusivity × mean(Theological exclusivity)		1.093*** (7.59)	1.103*** (8.91)	1.097*** (7.66)	1.098*** (7.73)	1.100*** (7.84)	1.098*** (7.78)
<i>Random Effects (Cong. Level)</i>							
var(intercept)	0.3407	0.1167	0.1181	0.1169	0.1150	0.1162	0.1171

Table 3.3: Hierarchical Generalized Linear Models with Cumulative Logit Link Function, Social Embeddedness as Outcome (continued)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4 (R= 0)	Model 4 (R= 1)	Model 4 (R= 2)	Model 4 (R= 3)
var(Theological exclusivity)		0.0058	0.0052	0.0061	0.0060	0.0059	0.0058
κ_1	-1.80	-2.17	-2.09	-1.61	-1.80	-1.86	-1.89
κ_2	-0.67	-1.03	-0.95	-0.48	-0.66	-0.72	-0.76
κ_3	2.22	1.89	1.97	2.45	2.26	2.20	2.17
Level 2 units (congregations)	436	381	375	367	364	364	364
Level 1 units (individuals)	87,806	77,026	75,835	73,802	73,368	73,368	73,368
Degrees of freedom	13	23	27	31	31	31	31
Log-Likelihood	-97,733	-85,037	-83,805	-81,379	-80,928	-80,949	-80,964

Note: Reported values are odds ratios, z-statistic in parentheses. Indicators for six racial categories were included but not reported.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, z-statistics in parentheses.

Four versions of Model 4 are estimated using measures based on four different geographic definitions of community size. The variables in question are population density, experienced racial homophily, racial social fit within the congregation, and opportunity constraint. Different combinations of measures/areas could also be estimated, but without theoretical justification for such combinations it is impractical to search for the best fitting combination.

Many relationships are consistent across the four versions of Model 4, suggesting robustness to changes in areal unit size. For example, as expected, population density exhibits a relatively strong negative association with social embeddedness irrespective of the size chosen to define the local community. Similarly, racial social fit within the congregation and experienced racial homophily are both positively associated with social embeddedness across all four versions of Model 4. While the former is relatively intuitive, it is unclear why the latter should be the case, except for the possibility that residents are generally more apt to develop relationships in racially homogeneous communities.

On the other hand, some relationships do change depending on the geographic definition of community context. Monopolistic religious markets and location in the south are both significantly positively associated with social embeddedness, except for when the community context is defined using $R = 2$. Comparing fit statistics across models, the $R = 2$ model also happens to be the best fitting. This may indicate that the social processes linking social embeddedness and religious life to community context (i.e. venues constituting community fields, human ecology, and practical geographic boundaries due to travel time) are operating most strongly at this geographic scale. To conclude that this is the case it would be necessary to perform on-site fieldwork or an extensive survey of travel behavior, but these results suggest a testable hypothesis regarding the geographic scale of local social life.

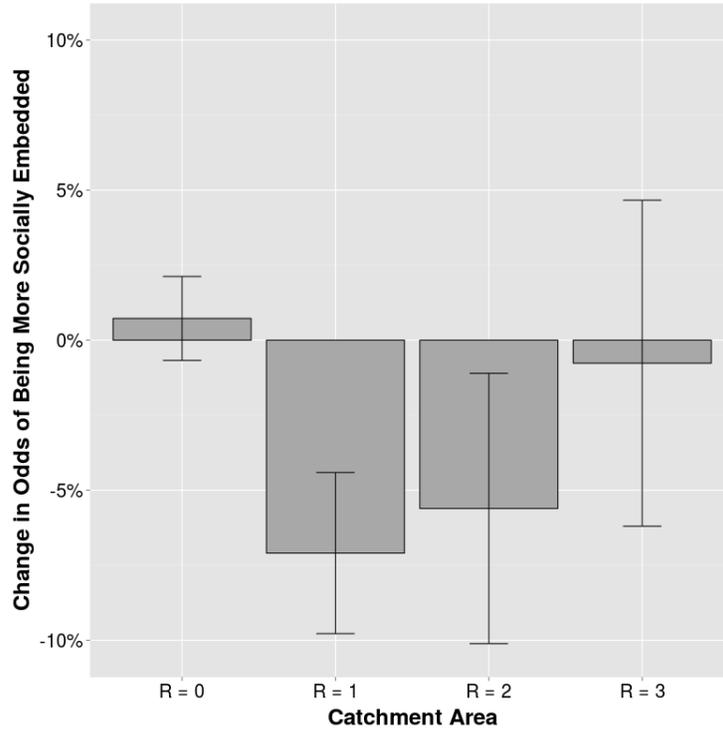
Three trends across models are worth mentioning before turning to the estimated effects of venues. First, there is never a significant relationship between offering secular activities (e.g. hobby groups) and social embeddedness. Second, small groups and prayer groups seem to have little to no effect on social embeddedness once larger community contexts are considered. Without

considering measures of local community context (Model 2 and Model 3), congregants were more likely to be more socially embedded in congregations that offered prayer groups. Otherwise, it is only when we consider a local community context defined by a congregation's ZIP code (Model 4, $R = 0$) that we see a significant, positive relationship between social embeddedness and small groups. The effect of prayer groups is insignificant in all four versions of Model 4, while the effect of small groups is insignificant for the three versions of Model 4 that include increasingly larger definitions of local community context ($R = 1$, $R = 2$, $R = 3$). Small groups are differentiated from secular activities due to their quasi-religious connotations, but they are also not explicitly religious as compared to prayer groups. Even though secular activities had no significant relationship with social embeddedness, the declining importance of prayer groups and small groups given different measures of local community context supports the idea that, net of religious factors such as frequency of attendance and theological beliefs, individuals do turn to churches for the purposes of socialization regardless of church programming.

The second trend worth noting is that the social embeddedness of Evangelical Protestants is not significantly different from Mainline Protestants (the baseline) once we define community context to include adjacent ZIP codes, regardless of the radius chosen. This suggests a potential challenge to the prevailing belief that there is something fundamental about Evangelical theology or practice that leads to higher levels of social commitment to the church. Rather, such a conclusion may be confounded by the possibility that Evangelical congregations are simply located in more socially isolated or opportunity constrained communities. Finally, the last trend worth noting is the decreasing importance of congregation size on social embeddedness. The steady decline in magnitude and statistical significance of this relationship may indicate an area for further research, in particular the potential for large congregations to act as replacement social communities when residents are particularly immobile for whatever reason (e.g. McIntosh, Sykes, and Kubena 2002).

The estimated relationship between opportunity constraint and social embeddedness changes depending on how one defines community size. Figure 3.4 depicts the shifting relationship between opportunity constraint and respondents' odds of being more socially embedded in their

Figure 3.4 Social Embeddedness and Opportunity Constraint (Conditional Relationship)



Note: Bars represent percent change in the odds of a respondent reporting the next higher level of social embeddedness given one additional venue per 1,000 residents. Error bars represent $\pm 1.96 \cdot SE$ where SE is the standard error of the odds ratio as calculated using the delta rule.

congregation. For $R = 0$, defining community context as the ZIP code where a congregation is located, there is a slight positive association between venues per capita and social embeddedness, though it is not statistically significant. For $R = 1$, which includes immediately adjacent ZIP codes, respondents in communities with more venues per capita tended to be less socially embedded in their congregation. This same relationship is found when using the $R = 2$ and $R = 3$ definitions of community size, but in the last case the association is not statistically significant. These results suggest moderate support for Hypothesis 1. Accounting for many potential confounding variables is no guarantee of robustness, but in this case finding a consistent relationship between venues per capita and social embeddedness once larger geographic definitions of community context are considered would suggest that churches do participate in multiple community level fields, including the field constituted by secular social life.

Hypothesis 2: Logistic Regression Analysis

Testing Hypothesis 2 is a two-step process. In the first step, I compare the average levels of opportunity constraint (i.e. number of venues per capita) in the communities of congregations that do versus do not offer secular activities. The top half of Table 3.4 reports the t-statistics of a series of independent samples t-tests which support Hypothesis 2a, that congregations in communities with higher opportunity constraint (i.e. fewer venues per capita) are more likely to offer secular activities (see also Figure 3.3). At the same time, it is important to test for a u-shaped relationship between opportunity constraint and the provision of secular activities, since the literature predicts that congregations may provide these activities when there are very few or very many alternatives.

The second step is to rule out the possibility of a u-shaped relationship. To do this, a new measure was created from the absolute value of the mean-centered opportunity constraint measure. Lower values of this new measure indicate more average communities, while higher values indicate communities with either relatively many or relatively few venues per capita. If a u-shaped relationship exists, then congregations that provide secular activities should score higher on this measure of extremity than congregations that do not provide secular activities. The bottom half of Table 3.4 reports a series of independent samples t-tests to see if this is the case. When the relationship is statistically significant, I find that the opposite is true: Congregations in less extreme community contexts are more likely to offer secular activities than congregations in communities with very high or very low opportunity constraint.

If congregations in extreme community contexts are less likely to provide secular activities then Hypothesis 2a and Hypothesis 2b cannot both be true, but Table 3.4 also suggests that congregations in communities with fewer venues per capita are more likely to provide secular activities. Thus, Hypothesis 2a has the most support.

The second step in testing Hypothesis 2 is to condition the relationship between the provision of secular activities and the prevalence of venues on a number of potential confounding variables. Table 3.5 reports the results of logistic regressions estimating the probability that a congregation provides secular activities. As for Hypothesis 1, the areal units used to measure features of the

Table 3.4: Community Context and Provision of Secular Activities

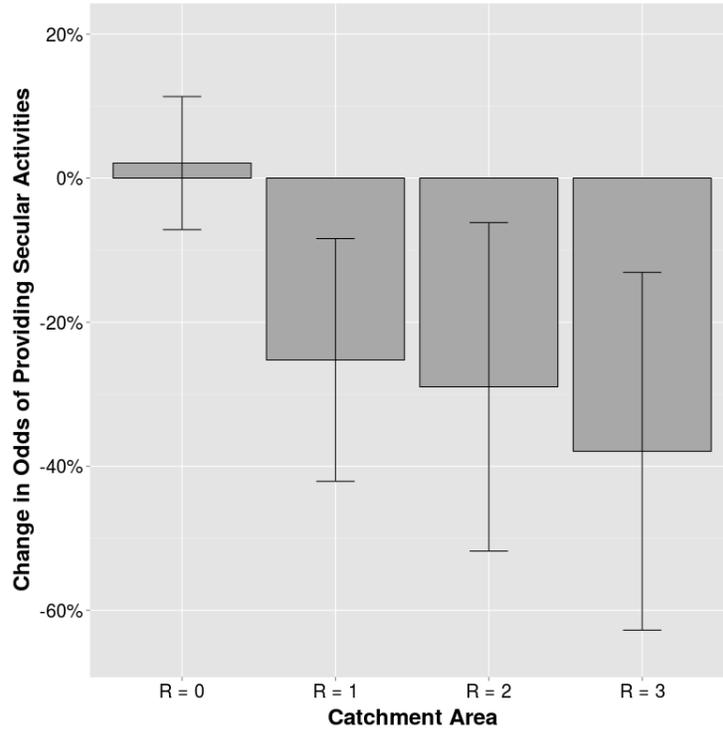
Measure	Radius	No Secular Activities (n=123)		Secular Activities (n=271)		t-statistic
		Mean	Std.Error	Mean	Std.Error	
Venues per 1,000 residents	R= 0	2.960	0.242	3.113	0.118	-0.63
	R= 1	2.750	0.091	2.524	0.053	2.26*
	R= 2	2.745	0.067	2.571	0.039	2.37**
	R= 3	2.671	0.056	2.524	0.032	2.43**
Venues per 1,000 residents	R= 0	1.589	0.195	1.307	0.087	1.52
	R= 1	0.746	0.062	0.675	0.035	1.07
	R= 2	0.576	0.043	0.481	0.026	1.96*
	R= 3	0.479	0.037	0.395	0.021	2.13*

Note: One-tailed significance tests. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

local associational ecology are an important factor. As before, measures based solely on the ZIP code where a congregation is located show no relationship between venues per capita and the provision of secular activities. Similarly, the measure that only encompasses the surrounding ZIP codes exhibits a modest relationship in the expected direction. For example, one additional venue per 1,000 residents in the local (R = 1) community is associated with an approximately 30% (8% - 46%, 95% C.I.) decrease in the odds that a congregation will offer secular activities. Figure 3.5 depicts these predicted changes for all four geographic definitions of local community context.

This robust, positive relationship between venue scarcity and the provision of secular activities sheds new light on the earlier finding that there is no significant relationship between the provision of secular activities and social embeddedness within the congregation. This suggests that the actual process of friendship formation within a congregation may be unrelated to church programming efforts but religious organizations act as if a relationship did exist. That is, there may exist a mismatch between the goals congregants have when joining a congregation and how congregations believe they should help their congregants achieve these goals. It may be that regular worship services provide all the opportunities congregants need to form durable friendships. As a result, secular activities may arise after the fact as fellow congregants repurpose the church setting to compensate for a lack of social venues in the local community. In this interpretation, congregations

Figure 3.5 Provision of Secular Activities and Opportunity Constraint (Conditional Relationship)



Note: Bars represent percent change in the odds that a congregation offers hobby or craft groups, sports teams, or other social, recreational, or leisure activities given one additional venue per 1,000 residents. Error bars represent $\pm 1.96 \cdot SE$ where SE is the standard error of the odds ratio as calculated using the delta rule.

are still responding to venue scarcity by compensating for the lack of secular venues but the causal ordering is reversed and the presence of secular social activities follows from individual behavior rather than strategic organizational decision-making.

Table 3.5: Logistic Regression Models, Provision of Secular Activities as Outcome

Variable	Base	R= 0	R= 1	R= 2	R= 3
<i>Congregation Characteristics</i>					
At least 75% non-white	0.750 (-0.60)	0.494 (-1.39)	0.611 (-0.89)	0.750 (-0.51)	0.879 (-0.22)
Average income	0.757 (-1.09)	0.628 (-1.68)	0.702 (-1.25)	0.723 (-1.15)	0.749 (-1.02)
Congregation size (log10)	2.577*** (6.31)	2.525*** (5.89)	2.472*** (5.86)	2.516*** (5.95)	2.509*** (5.97)
Evangelical Protestant	0.336*** (-3.63)	0.319*** (-3.64)	0.297*** (-3.84)	0.295*** (-3.86)	0.300*** (-3.83)

Table 3.5: Logistic Regression Models, Provision of Secular Activities as Outcome (continued)

Variable	Base	R= 0	R= 1	R= 2	R= 3
Catholic	0.194*** (-3.84)	0.170*** (-4.05)	0.175*** (-3.96)	0.160*** (-4.14)	0.163*** (-4.11)
Other Tradition	0.547 (-1.19)	0.447 (-1.55)	0.510 (-1.30)	0.514 (-1.28)	0.542 (-1.18)
<i>Community Context</i>					
Population density (ZIP)		1.341* (2.02)	1.402* (2.29)	1.271 (1.60)	1.244 (1.47)
Social Fit, race (ZIP)		2.182 (0.97)	0.442 (-1.08)	0.317 (-1.38)	0.240 (-1.66)
Venues per capita (ZIP)		1.028 (0.52)	0.705* (-2.53)	0.677* (-2.01)	0.613* (-2.02)
South (county)	1.702 (1.93)	1.661 (1.72)	1.551 (1.47)	1.573 (1.50)	1.537 (1.38)
Adherence rate (county)	0.965 (-0.21)	0.971 (-0.17)	1.027 (0.15)	1.027 (0.14)	1.029 (0.16)
(constant)	0.033*** (-4.48)	0.064*** (-3.24)	0.063*** (-3.23)	0.055*** (-3.40)	0.053*** (-3.45)
N	388	376	377	377	377
χ^2	74.93	79.92	84.77	82.78	82.88
Degrees of freedom	8	11	11	11	11
Log-Likelihood	-205.6	-193.2	-192.7	-193.7	-193.6

Note: Reported values are odds ratios; t-statistics in parentheses.

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

3.7 Conclusion

I started with the premise that fields allow researchers to better understand how organizations whose actions can have multiple interpretations coalesce into a local community. I conjectured that secular venues help to determine how actively churches help to constitute the secular social field of a community, in particular that the absence of secular venues “activates” religious venues as more relevant sites for social life than they would be otherwise. Analysis of individual and organizational outcomes using a novel synthesis of within-organization survey data and ecological data support this conjecture. These results have helped me achieve my theoretical goal for this chapter: To

highlight the analytic import of social fields and interstitial organizations, such as churches, by drawing attention to their unique position within communities. In doing this I have also highlighted a way to generalize the concept of a niche across markets by relating these proximal fields—both horizontally and vertically—within a bounded geography. By elaborating the historical or practical ways that fields are connected it becomes possible to identify conditions under which interstitial organizations act as bridges, filling gaps when other organizations more central to a particular organizational field are absent.

Another practical example of an interstitial organization stepping in to fill a gap can be found in police departments. Police departments are often asked to engage in multiple fields of strategic action that have contradictory goals, one where law enforcement officers engage in state-sanctioned acts of physical coercion, and another where these same officers are expected to be integral members of the community working to peacefully prevent violent criminal acts. Recent protests illustrate that the constant interpretation and reinterpretation of police actions require a deeper understanding of how to best navigate such ambiguity. This chapter suggests that part of the solution may be to recognize institutions as fundamentally geographically located, and that the absence of particular organizational actors in the immediate area can shape what is asked of police departments beyond their ostensible purpose (e.g. expectations to introduce pro-social community programs or develop long-term interventions for at risk individuals). This may be one reason why local residents may perceive police officers as failing to serve their needs even if they are fulfilling formal expectations.

The best way to understand the methodological implications of this chapter is to consider what it has failed to do. It has failed to produce an explanation of fields that could be called phenomenological. Due to the kinds of evidence presented, its results are grounded in both field theory and general linear reality. Yet this contradiction has been fruitful insofar as it does not involve a mechanistic answer to the question of what constitutes religious behavior. The ambiguity inherent in this concept is preserved empirically by invoking venues as both local social fields and components of multiple, overlapping community level fields. Further, it has presented a logically coherent way

to integrate within-organization survey data with ecological data by proposing a novel measure of how individual respondents experience both organizational context and community context.

Finally, my analysis demonstrates that venues represent a promising analytic approach to studying how organizational ecologies are linked in practice. Work on religious ecology and religious markets tends to view religion as a separable component of community life. This approach parallels research on the population ecology of organizations, but I found that at least one aspect of secular life—the abundance of secular venues within the local area—influences individual and organizational religious behavior. Without exploring the role of venues as a conduit for local social life it would be difficult to conceive of mechanisms that link religious and secular life. Prior work used the personal characteristics of congregants to infer the importance of religion due to economic or social deprivation. Consideration of venues and their role in community life extends this view to account for the religious behavior of those who are not economically or socially deprived, *per se*, but who may lack the capacity to form and maintain local friendships due to features of the built environment.

CHAPTER 4

VENUES AND THE POLITICS OF THE EVERYDAY

4.1 Introduction

Efforts to understand the political implications of social networks have involved two broad research agendas. One tradition focuses on the capacity of social networks to convey political information (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987a, 2006). The other tradition examines how social networks induce political attitudes and behavior through various forms of peer pressure (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948; McClurg 2003). These approaches are often difficult to disentangle since "existing scholarship has documented the presence of network effects for a number of political behaviors but has not documented the mechanism that drives these effects," (Sinclair 2012, 15). That is, researchers often approach political networks as a particular type of social network, one that involves political communication. This working definition effectively erases the analytic distinction between a social tie and a political tie. The co-constitution of semantic meaning and social interaction may challenge the necessity of such a distinction, but research on political networks could be greatly improved through the application of analytic approaches that address this endogeneity (e.g. Quintelier, Stolle, and Harell 2012). To this end, I propose a general framework that allows researchers to better distinguish between apolitical social interaction and political behavior. This approach begins from the simple premise that political networks do not need to involve political communication, broadly defining political networks as social networks with political implications.

I demonstrate the utility of this paradigm by testing how the scarcity of particular types of venues—discrete physical spaces with an ostensible purpose and style of fulfilling this purpose—can influence the voting behavior of local residents. The venues I study are businesses that sell food, fuel, and medicine. Purchasing these three types of consumable goods is a necessary part of life for the vast majority of Americans. Necessary goods venues (NGVs) thus represent physical spaces that the majority of voters will enter on a regular basis, exposing them to strangers that may

be very different from themselves. Such exposure will be more likely in communities with fewer NGVs since there will be fewer options for obtaining these goods (Fischer 1982). Conversely, the mere exposure effect suggests that even observing an unfamiliar person increases our affect toward both that person and those with similar characteristics (Pettigrew 1997, 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp 2008). I assert that this robust finding from social psychology implies that regularly sharing the same space as strangers can promote generalized trust (see also Stolle, Soroka, and Johnston 2008).

In the language of social networks, I argue that the episodic formation of weak ties (Granovetter 1973) with strangers will cultivate a form of cosmopolitan tolerance among voters (Pichler 2009). I expect tolerance to develop through a cognitive mechanism that lowers the overall salience of difference rather than through intergroup contact that increases affect toward a single group. By regularly challenging the relevance of group distinctions in daily life, I expect that communities with fewer NGVs will be home to voters that are less responsive to affective appeals to group difference (i.e. group threat).

Consequently, I hypothesize that, net local economic conditions, voters in these communities will be less likely to vote for a Republican presidential candidate, as these candidates have recently tended to promulgate political platforms that oppose illegal immigration and support the traditional definition of marriage, two issues that implicitly draw group distinctions. Using a multilevel modeling framework to account for state-level differences, I test this hypothesis for the 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012 presidential elections. Prior to this I elaborate how a typology of venues as social contexts, including a better specification of the differences between social contexts, social settings, and social environments, can help advance research on political networks. Using this typology, I describe how cognitive biases may play an important role in rendering involuntary social interaction politically relevant. The intent of this chapter is to suggest how venues may be used to study the effect of quotidian social networks on a range of political outcomes.

4.2 Political Networks and Social Contexts

Political networks can be defined as social networks whose structure or content relate to political outcomes. In practice scholars often deploy a narrower definition that involves political discussion networks. For example, researchers have focused on regular discussion partners and/or explicitly political communication (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987a; McClurg 2003; Quintelier, Stolle, and Harell 2012), how voluntary organizations socialize citizens into the practices of participatory democracy (Putnam 1995), and how the flow of political information across social networks represent a contemporary reimagining of the public sphere (Walsh 2012). In nearly all cases, the social interactions being studied are intimately related to politics, political practice, political behavior, or political attitudes. This affinity reinforces a definition of political networks based on Granovetter's (1973) concept of strong social ties (e.g. regular interactions, resilient relationships, high network density): "Citizen's social networks describe the collection of individuals tied to them by social connections, such as friendships, family relationships, or work colleagues. ... A political network consists of a subset of these social peers with whom an individual discusses politics, elections, or government" (Sinclair 2012, 3). In this section I argue that a more general definition of political networks is warranted, and that research on political discussion networks already provides guidance on how to construct such a definition via the network effects of social contexts.

A strong tie conception of political networks makes it more difficult to study the independent effect of social networks on political outcomes. For over a decade public intellectuals have raised concerns that American social life is changing in ways that endanger both political socialization and deliberative democracy (Putnam 2000). If scholars accept that apolitical changes in society may affect political behavior then there is no reason to restrict attention to explicitly political interactions. Put another way, if interest in political networks remains limited to social ties with political structure/content then scholars will not be well equipped to conceptualize the effect of exogenous influences.

One line of research working to systematically integrate exogenous factors into the study of political networks examines the role of social context. This tradition still tends to rely on a strong

tie definition of political networks, but has made significant progress in developing a conceptual model of how social contexts influence social networks. The general argument is that our daily lives involve a relatively constrained set of social contexts in which to meet potential interaction partners, and that this constraint shapes our ability to realize social preferences (Huckfeldt 1983). For example, we may prefer to interact with friendly, sociable people, but our workplace may contain few such coworkers, requiring us to either abstain from interaction when possible or socialize with people we would otherwise not. Political sociologists and political scientists have then studied how this constraint influences political attitudes and political communication (e.g. Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004; Mutz 2002).

The political networks literature on social contexts is clear about its goal of separating network effects from contextual effects, but less clear about the best way to do so. For instance, there is a well-defined conceptual framework for relating networks to contexts: "[T]he construction of a communication network occurs within pronounced constraints on supply. People reside in neighborhoods, workplaces, and organizations that circumscribe their opportunities for social interaction," (Huckfeldt, Mendez, and Osborn 2004, 21). Thus political discussion networks are not freely constructed from like-minded individuals. Rather, they are fundamentally structured by the social contexts we inhabit. Despite this solid conceptual foundation, there is little agreement on an analytic framework for studying the effect of social contexts on political communication. Context matters, but how and why it matters remains up for debate.

Complicating this research agenda is ambiguity in the definition of social context, both in terms of spatial scale and unit of analysis. For example, contemporary work exploring the effect of social cross-pressures on political participation defines social context in terms of heterogeneous political discussion networks (e.g. Mutz 2002). Other research defines social context in terms of geographic area, in particular neighborhoods (Huckfeldt 1979; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987b). Still other research blends both definitions to understand their reciprocal relationship in shaping political behavior (McClurg 2006) or incorporates multiple spatial scales into the same analysis (Huckfeldt, Plutzer, and Sprague 1993). Perhaps most telling of this ambiguity is the tendency to

discuss, as noted above, "neighborhoods, workplaces, and organizations" (i.e. geography, physical space, and social structure) as analytically identical.

To improve the utility of social contexts for studying political networks I introduce a novel analytic framework that (1) characterizes the structural features of social contexts and (2) locates social contexts in discrete physical spaces that I term venues. The first move allows researchers to identify meaningful differences between social contexts while the second move introduces a more precise way to incorporate multiple spatial scales into the analysis of social contexts. The next section first elaborates structural features of social contexts as they relate to political networks before discussing how the analytic distinction between social context, social setting, and social environment can be made clearer through the lens of venues.

4.3 The Politics of the Everyday

Four Types of Social Contexts

Often little conceptual distinction is made between a workplace, a local business, and a voluntary organization, even though the social context associated with each is quite different. These three examples could be understood in terms of their place within overlapping economic, cultural, and/or social systems, but doing so misses why social contexts are important as an exogenous influence: Our interactions unfold within a limited number of social contexts. This constraint implies that features of these social contexts, and even their very presence or absence, inherently structure social networks in meaningful ways. I argue that scholars can more precisely specify how the social influences the political if they focus on the purely structural effect of social contexts.

To capture the structural influence of social contexts, I distinguish them along two dimensions: (1) agency and (2) social tie strength. By agency I mean the practical ability of individuals to choose whether they enter (or exit) a particular social context. For example, employees are often required to interact with coworkers for purely economic reasons. However, workplace relationships do not necessarily imply strong personal relationships between employees or particularly dense

Figure 4.1 Sources of Political Networks in Daily Life

		Tie Strength	
		Strong	Weak
Agency	Voluntary	Voluntary Associations	Lifestyle Choices
	Involuntary	Institutional Memberships	Utilitarian Activities

social networks (Burt 2005). Thus I include a second dimension based on the expected strength of social ties within a social context. This dimension uses the analytic distinction between strong and weak ties to distinguish the kinds of social influence we expect to be present (Granovetter 1973). For example, relationships in a church are likely to be more intense and more prevalent than relationships formed in a supermarket line. Yet both are social contexts that constrain available interaction partners, as well as how we are expected to realize this interaction potential.

I assume that social contexts exist on a continuum along each of these dimensions. For example, some workplaces, such as family businesses, involve stronger ties between employees. To demonstrate the utility of this schema, however, it is easier to first consider categorical differences. Figure 4.1 presents such limit cases, providing examples of the four types of social contexts implied by categorizing social contexts according to agency (voluntary versus involuntary) and social tie strength (strong versus weak). Voluntary associations, such as a religious congregation, represent social contexts that individuals freely enter or exit and typically involve the formation and maintenance of strong ties. Lifestyle choices represent social contexts that individuals freely enter or exit but typically involve weak ties, often born out of convenience, such as watching a professional sporting event. Institutional memberships represent social contexts, such as a family, that

individuals are either forced to enter or have extraordinarily high exit costs, and typically involve strong ties. Utilitarian activities represent social contexts that individuals are effectively forced to enter, but involve weak ties (often of short duration) such as buying groceries at a supermarket. To illustrate what is meant by each category, I will briefly describe the political science literature on each type of social context before focusing attention on the last category, involuntarily entered social contexts involving weak social ties.

Voluntary Associations (Voluntary, Strong ties)

Much research on political networks and social capital tends to assume that politically relevant social interaction occurs in social contexts that are voluntarily entered and involve strong ties among participants (e.g. Campbell 2004). Individuals often enter these contexts due to shared interests. For example, bowling leagues are a social context with relatively strong expectations for members to interact regularly in meaningful ways and members join these leagues because they share at least one important interest: bowling. In a Tocquevillian sense, voluntary organizations also help socialize individuals into civil society and the practice of deliberative democracy (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). Voluntary associations are thus at the heart of most arguments regarding the decline of political participation, often depicted as so important to civil society that their absence is cause for alarm.

Lifestyle Choices (Voluntary, Weak ties)

A fair amount of political science research also exists on social contexts that are voluntarily entered but involve weak ties among participants. For example, Habermas (1991) describes the emergence of the modern public sphere as a transformative moment for the practice of political communication. He suggests that the development of a particular type of social context, one where the expectations of proper society are suspended, was a critical factor leading to this innovation. From an entirely different perspective, Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague (2004, 21) argue that political networks with weak ties (i.e. low network density) are a requirement for the survival of polit-

ical disagreement, implying that discussants must be able to easily enter or exit social contexts when such disagreement would create psychic distress. These approaches highlight the potential of voluntarily created bridging ties for creating novel discursive outcomes. They also reflect social contexts associated with lifestyle choices, where we freely interact for a common purpose but where we usually do not form strong relationships. A music event, a party, and an amusement park are all social contexts associated with a lifestyle more than a commitment.

Political scientists are beginning to explore how individuals' lifestyle choices may reflect partisan orientations. The logic is that lifestyle choices provide insight into underlying personality traits or shared experiences that inform political attitudes and behaviors. This has raised the possibility that "people choose their social contexts based on lifestyle considerations that are related to political views" (Mutz 2006, 46; see also Bishop 2009). For instance, even though joining a country club is possible if an individual is financially well-off doing so is not a foregone conclusion, and the choice to not interact with country club members may reflect a political position (Brooks 2010). Researchers have already started studying the political meaning of particular lifestyle choices, and the results of these studies are often considered part of an ongoing examination of the so-called Culture Wars (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005; Bishop 2009; Sinclair 2012).

Institutional Membership (Involuntary, Strong ties)

Political scientists often locate processes of political socialization in social contexts that involve strong ties and are involuntarily entered and/or have extraordinarily high exit costs. I use institutional membership to describe this category since institutions often involve highly prescribed relationships between members and potentially enormous consequences for exit. The family is the quintessential example of this social context, and research suggests that families play a critical role in the intergenerational transmission of political participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Verba, Schlozman, and Burns 2005) as well as an array of political orientations, including partisan identity (Niemi and Jennings 1991; Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers 2009).

Utilitarian Activities (Involuntary, Weak ties)

There is relatively little research on the political effects of social contexts that are involuntarily entered and involve weak social ties. I describe this category in terms of utilitarian activities involving contexts where interaction is often transactional and almost always focused on satisfying a basic need. Examples include grocery shopping, purchasing gasoline, and doctor appointments. In one of the few studies on social contexts of this type, Mutz and Mondak (2006) argue that workplaces help to cultivate political tolerance by exposing individuals to a wider range of political views than they would otherwise choose to entertain. The suggestion is that other social contexts that are more voluntary in nature or involve stronger social ties would inevitably lead to more homogeneous political networks and thus less exposure to the rationales behind differing political opinions. In their case the utilitarian activity is employment, the economically productive component of daily life. Here I consider utilitarian activities that involve consumption, an equally ubiquitous part of daily life.

Venues

The analytic distinction between social contexts, social settings, and social environments is often subtle, and sometimes completely absent (as in the case of neighborhoods). This ambiguity can often make it difficult to characterize their independent effects. For clarity, I distinguish between each according to temporal scale, which in turn naturally categorizes each according to spatial scale. Social contexts involve focused interaction in a joint activity which has a common goal, whether that goal is social, political, economic, or otherwise (Feld 1981). The purposive component to social contexts suggests that they are often transient events whose direct effects do not persist over time and which are highly localized in space. I assert that social settings, such as religious rituals, structure social contexts by guiding how individuals ought to interact. They provide behavioral guidelines and, in so doing, persist longer than the individual social contexts they facilitate. Similarly, social settings often exist in larger spatial scales that host the highly localized interactions involved in social contexts. Finally, social environments encompass relatively perma-

ment features of individuals' social lives. They are constituted by the social settings and individuals that regularly inhabit these settings. As a result social environments exist at a larger spatial scale than social settings, but do not necessarily constitute a continuous geography (Mutz 2006). Often, however, it is useful to consider neighborhoods as social environments that influence political behavior (Huckfeldt 1979).

An important part of our social environment is the built environment. The built environment has little social character in itself, but it does contain many different social settings, such as bars, gas stations, and book stores, that each shape the social contexts we regularly inhabit. Each of these social settings are hosted in a discrete physical space with an ostensible purpose and style of fulfilling this purpose. I term such spaces venues. For example, a church exists for religious worship and carries out this purpose according to religious doctrine. I introduce venues as a new analytic object for the study of political networks, as they are often sites that host social settings and thus influence the social contexts we experience.

Venues host social settings whose behavioral norms and topics of conversation are independent of the particular individuals who inhabit them. They play an important role as stable, immediately recognizable spaces typically associated with a particular kind of social context. Venues provide richly nuanced sites for the study of political behavior. When a community has few spaces for discussing politics there is a tendency for the venues that remain to host political discussion networks: During presidential election years small diners across the state of Iowa become pivotal campaign stops. This example is relatively straightforward, but it is easy to imagine less clear and more subtle ways that venues and political life may intersect (e.g. What happens when the few venues available within a community are bars and political discussion often occurs within these settings?). For simplicity, I restrict interest to the special case of venues that host utilitarian activities (i.e. involuntary, weak tie social contexts) such as grocery stores and gas stations.

4.4 Hypotheses

The banality of utilitarian activities distinguishes them from more well-studied social contexts. Shopping for groceries or buying medicine is such a regular, transactional part of our lives that we rarely make note of these events, except perhaps as a nuisance. Given how automatically we carry out these tasks it is natural that few have studied their potential effect on our political orientations. However, Mutz and Mondak (2006) suggest that when individuals are forced to share the same social setting for a common purpose their interactions have political implications. In their study, heterogeneity in the political attitudes of discussion partners was associated with higher levels of political tolerance, presumably because they were exposed to different viewpoints. The assumed importance of political communication for this process is clear, but there is little reason to believe that individuals must talk about political matters in order to become more tolerant of difference. Rather, I argue that it is the experience of difference that is most important, and thus the capacity for exposure to difference is central for the development of tolerant attitudes. I base this argument on studies of the mere exposure effect, a cognitive phenomenon whereby banal interactions contribute significantly to how we feel about those who differ from us.

The mere exposure effect suggests that our affect toward an unfamiliar person is increased the more we are exposed to him or her (Zajonc 1968). This represents a generalization of Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory. While Allport provides a series of conditions under which intergroup contact increases affect between members of two groups, the mere exposure effect relaxes many of these conditions. For example, he suggests that a certain level of cooperation and interaction are required. Further, Allport's theory is fundamentally communicative, requiring a certain level of information exchange which makes each group more relatable to the other. The mere exposure effect simply requires that one person recognize the presence of another (Pettigrew 1998). This barest level of interaction has the potential to cultivate a generalized form of tolerance through simple familiarity with dissimilar types of people (Pettigrew 1997; Pettigrew and Tropp 2008).

While the workplace is typically not a social setting where individuals are merely exposed to each other, there are many other settings where the mere exposure effect is relevant. The vast ma-

majority of our economic transactions involve purchasing consumable goods such as food, fuel, and medicine, items of practical necessity. These purchases occur regularly and, out of convenience or routine, often involve frequenting the same businesses. I argue that these necessary goods venues (NGVs) host social settings that expose us to people we would, for whatever reason, not be exposed to otherwise. For example, a neighborhood with one grocery store and any kind of racial or economic diversity will require individuals from different backgrounds to share the same space. Thus I expect that communities with few NGVs will be home to residents more comfortable with difference, as the salience of group-based distinctions will be combated on a regular basis. In network terms, I assume that episodic weak tie formation, under the guise of physical copresence, satisfies the conditions under which the mere exposure effect operates. Within social contexts, this gives meaning to encounters when previous research has focused on more stable forms of association (Huckfeldt 1983). This, in turn, expands the number of venues that may have unexpected political influence. Put simply, if physical copresence has the potential to engender tolerance then even a convenience store may have political implications.

Here I explore the implications of NGVs and the mere exposure effect for presidential elections. Electoral behavior in a presidential election is an ideal subject for studying the contextual effects of utilitarian activities since it maximizes the number of social environments that can be studied (e.g. counties) and presidential campaigns are forced to make broad appeals to the electorate. Variation in social environment is essential for studying the effect of NGVs, but significant variation in campaign platform would make it difficult to claim that this effect is uniform across these environments. Fortunately, presidential candidates cannot afford to present a fragmented national policy platform and thus it is possible to consider how voters across the country respond to this messaging.

My basic hypothesis is that presidential candidates that appeal to group-threat will find less support among residents of communities with fewer NGVs. That is, I expect that the mere exposure effect will lower the political salience of race, ethnicity, and sexuality in these communities. Republican presidential candidates have tended to put forward campaign platforms that depict is-

sues such as terrorism, illegal immigration, and gay marriage as urgent threats, thus I predict that counties with fewer NGVs will be less likely to vote for Republican presidential candidates:

Hypothesis 1: Counties with few NGVs per capita will exhibit lower Republican presidential vote share.

At the same time, NGVs exist in social environments that vary in geographic size depending on population density. Higher population density suggests higher NGV density, implying that local residents are able to travel shorter distances to obtain food, fuel, and medicine. My analysis uses county level data, but it is likely that the social environment experienced by residents in high population density counties will be smaller than the county. When voters' daily lives unfold at a sub-county level, it is likely that NGV prevalence at the county level will be a poor measure of their exposure to difference (Kwan 2012). As a result, I introduce a second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: NGV prevalence will exhibit little to no relationship with Republican presidential vote share in high population density counties.

This proposition also considers the possibility that population dense counties involve more interaction (and thus exposure) outside of venues (e.g. on sidewalks and other public spaces) (Grannis 2009).

4.5 Data and Methodology

Data

To test my hypothesis I synthesized multiple county-level data sources: (1) County level election results for the 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012 United States presidential elections come from CQ Press, (2) Census data from 2000 and 2010 provide basic demographic data for each county, (3) the Religious Congregation Memberships Survey data for 2000 and 2010 provide information on

the religious make-up of each county (Grammich et al. 2012; Jones et al. 2002), (4) The Local Area Unemployment Survey, collected and published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, provides average county level unemployment data for each election year, and (5) The 2008 Highway Performance Monitoring System dataset from the United States Department of Transportation provides traffic flow data for all U.S. counties.

Finally, to capture the prevalence of necessary goods venues I employ annual County Business Patterns (CBP) data published by the Census Bureau. This data incorporates information from multiple Federal sources, including the Internal Revenue Service and the Social Security Administration, to provide a county level enumeration of all entities that fall under the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS). This taxonomy classifies over one thousand different types of businesses and organizations according to the activities they facilitate (e.g. religious worship, production of consumer goods, rendering of services, retail sales, etc.). Here I use 6-digit NAICS codes to identify necessary goods venues (see Table 4.1).

Measures

NGV Prevalence Often little distinction is made between different spatial scales when studying the effect of social contexts. As a result, objects as disparate in size as individual buildings and city neighborhoods are presumed to have similar effects. Venues distinguish between spatial scales by focusing on the discrete physical spaces that host social settings. While neighborhoods are notoriously ambiguous geographically, a venue has a precise location and physical form (e.g. a department store). Venues thus imply a qualitatively different form of copresence and interaction than neighborhoods. This does not negate the importance of the neighborhood as a social context or social setting, but does require the use of different measures for each scale.

Here I assume that each venue constitutes its own independent social setting. I am interested in settings that exhibit two properties: (1) provide a necessary consumable good, and (2) possess minimal expectations regarding patron interaction. This excludes venues such as restaurants that require patrons to be co-present for an extended period. I focus instead on retail businesses such as

supermarkets, gas stations, and convenience stores. To account for the relative abundance of these spaces I construct a measure, NGV prevalence, based on the number of venues per 1,000 residents. Table 4.1 provides a list of the businesses included in this measure.

Table 4.1: List of Necessary Goods Venues (NGVs)

Venue	NAICS Code
Supermarkets	445110
Convenience stores	445120
Drug stores	446110
Gas stations (with convenience store)	447110
Gas stations (without convenience store)	447190

One natural analytic concern is that NGV prevalence is a proxy for other features of the community, such as economic conditions or demographic characteristics. To this end, Table 4.2 reports the correlation between NGV prevalence and a number of other covariates as measured in 2000. It shows that NGV prevalence has, at best, a moderate correlation with other community characteristics. The strongest Pearson correlations involve logged population density ($R = -0.51$, $p < 0.001$, $N = 3109$), median household income in 2000 ($R = -0.41$, $p < 0.001$, $N = 3109$), and the H-Index of racial segregation in 2000 ($R = 0.27$, $p < 0.001$, $N = 3109$). The correlation between NGVs per capita and unemployment rate is actually insignificant ($R = 0.03$, $p = 0.10$, $N = 3107$). This null relationship confirms the intuition that NGVs are relatively inelastic with respect to transient measures of economic deprivation, since they provide goods that residents regularly purchase regardless of their immediate economic circumstances. At the same time, the correlation between population density and NGV prevalence is cause for concern from a linear modeling perspective. Since their collinearity could affect regression estimates I decided to exclude population density from analysis. To check the robustness of my results, all models were also estimated with population density included. At no point did results substantively differ from those presented here.

Table 4.2: Correlations Between NGVs per 1,000 Residents and Select Covariates

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
(1) NGVs per Capita	1.000								
(2) Unemployment rate	0.029	1.000							
(3) Pop. density (log)	-0.515**	-0.152**	1.000						
(4) Median house. inc.	-0.405**	-0.485**	0.501**	1.000					
(5) % Black or AA	-0.044*	0.241**	0.230**	-0.181**	1.000				
(6) % Hispanic	-0.061**	0.210**	-0.087**	-0.040*	-0.107**	1.000			
(7) % Asian	-0.261**	-0.106**	0.476**	0.455**	0.026	0.156**	1.000		
(8) % Other	-0.002	0.149**	-0.148**	-0.121**	-0.101**	-0.011	0.000	1.000	
(9) H-index Race	-0.272**	0.106**	0.440**	0.130**	0.243**	0.082**	0.264**	0.235**	1.000

Other Measures of Social Environment

Residents' social environments are constituted by multiple overlapping macrostructural social features. These properties of the community are irreducible to its constituent members and include familiar demographic (e.g. percent African American or Black residents) and residential segregation measures (e.g. index of racial dissimilarity) (Blau 1977). To capture residents' aggregate exposure to difference I utilize four measures to capture (1) percent African American or Black, (2) percent non-White Hispanic, (3) percent Asian, and (4) percent other race, including multi-racial individuals, within each county. In addition to this, I calculated an entropy index (H-index) based on five racial categories (White, African American or Black, Hispanic, Asian, and other race) and tract-level census data. This index ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating more residential diversity, and has become popular in the sociological literature on residential segregation due to its attractive conceptual, mathematical, and spatial properties (Reardon and Firebaugh 2002). By utilizing census tract data to determine the demographic characteristics of local residents I am able to control for the possibility that racially similar residents are spatially concentrated (i.e. that potential exposure to difference is limited by practical constraints such as travel time).

Another potential source of exposure to difference involves the structure of local road systems. Counties with few Interstate Highways or similar restricted access roadways are more difficult for non-residents to reach. Consequently, I expect that residents of these counties will be exposed to fewer strangers on a regular basis compared to residents of counties with many restricted access roadways. Using 2012 data from the Highway Performance Monitoring system I calculated

the average annual daily traffic on each county's restricted access roadways (i.e. Interstates and freeways). This measure provides insight into long-distance mobility within counties that would expose dissimilar individuals to each other, such as when commuters travel to work in metropolitan counties home to residents that are quite different in terms of economic, social, or cultural characteristics.

Finally, I introduce a categorical measure based on population density to account for the mismatch in spatial scale that likely occurs when NGV prevalence at the county level does not reflect the social environment experienced by residents of population dense counties. Unfortunately there is no clear way to distinguish between high and low density counties. For example, there is no a priori reason to use the 90th percentile of population density over the 85th percentile of population density. For simplicity I use the mean population density of counties in 2000 (240.7 residents per square mile) to split counties into two categories. This approach incorporates the skewed nature of population density, which is beneficial since Hypothesis 2 concerns extreme values of population density. As a result, counties categorized as low density have, on average, 51.1 residents per square mile (s.d. = 51.2) while counties categorized as high density have, on average, 1499.3 residents per square mile (s.d. = 4414.2).

Potential Confounding Variables

A series of other measures are included as standard predictors of voting. For example, given evidence that higher levels of county unemployment are associated with lower Republican vote share (McVeigh and Sobolewski 2007), average annual unemployment rate is included to account for economic conditions surrounding each election. Additionally, median household income, median age, and a binary indicator whether a county is located in the South are all included in analysis, as each represents a personal or contextual characteristic known to be associated with partisan voting preferences. Each measure (except location in the South) is expressed as a pair of variables, the first being the level in 2000 and the second being the change in level from 2000 to 2010. This accounts for the temporal mismatch between Census data and Presidential election data by ensuring

that each measure's level and overall trend are captured, providing a more accurate characterization of each county's social environment. Finally, similar sets of measures are constructed for percent Evangelical Christian adherents and percent Catholic adherents. These measures are included due to research showing that the Christian Right is a source of political mobilization for the Republican Party (Regnerus, Sikkink, and Smith 1999). Descriptive statistics for all variables used in analysis can be found in Table 4.3.

Methodology

While all data sources are county level, their synthesis produces a complex data structure. That is, electoral results, unemployment rates, and NGVs per capita are each measured at four distinct time points. Repeated measures for approximately 3,100 counties would suggest the use of fixed effect panel models. Such an approach fully accounts for the time-invariant characteristics of counties. However, in my analysis county characteristics are only time-invariant because of the temporal mismatch between Presidential elections and the decennial census. Since focus here is on the former, the time-varying component of the latter has been captured by including both level and change in county characteristics. As such, a fixed effects approach that discounts these variables would fundamentally misunderstand what they represent. Alternatively, a random effects model would assume that all unmeasured time-invariant characteristics of each county are independent of measured covariates, a relatively untenable assumption (Vaisey and Miles 2014).

One solution to this conundrum is to employ a hybrid fixed/random effects model (Allison 2009). A hybrid model of this type applied to panel data typically involves drawing causal inferences regarding the effect of NGV prevalence on Republican vote share. However, this approach raises concerns regarding both causal direction and causal mechanism. Those who tend to vote for Republican Presidential candidates may simply prefer areas with more NGVs per capita (i.e. selection effects). Alternatively, it is possible that because an area voted for a Republican Presidential candidate the prevalence of NGVs went up (i.e. reverse causality). The existence of a mechanism for reverse causality seems logically strained, given that Presidential elections have little real ef-

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
<i>County-Election Level</i>					
% Republican vote share	12434	58.43	13.40	5.98	95.86
NGVs per 1,000 residents	12436	1.25	0.53	0	7.17
NGVs per 1,000 residents (centered)	12436	0	0.37	-3.62	5.12
Unemployment rate	12432	5.88	2.42	0.85	27.05
Unemployment rate (centered)	12432	0	0.63	-2.81	2.83
<i>County Level</i>					
Median age (2000)	3109	37.38	3.97	20.60	54.30
Median household income (2000)	3109	35,264	8,837	12,692	82,929
% Black or African American (2000)	3109	8.75	14.48	0	85.97
% Non-white Hispanic (2000)	3109	6.21	12.05	0.08	97.53
% Asian or Pacific Islander (2000)	3109	0.76	1.56	0	30.66
% Other race (2000)	3109	2.66	6.60	0	94.03
H-index race (7 categories, 2000)	3109	0.08	0.08	0	0.71
% Evangelical adherents (2000)	3108	43.82	27.26	0	100
% Catholic adherents (2000)	3108	24.80	22.75	0	97.93
Δ Median age (2000-2010)	3108	2.99	1.81	-5.10	13.5
Δ Median house. inc. (2000-2010)	3108	8,829	4,563	-5,903	43,889
Δ Black or A.A. (2000-2010)	3108	0.08	1.74	-14.18	27.69
Δ Non-white Hispanic (2000-2010)	3108	2.12	2.42	-5.12	22.50
Δ Asian or Pac. Islander (2000-2010)	3108	0.30	0.63	-1.31	9.34
Δ Other race (2000-2010)	3108	0.48	0.73	-5.02	11.81
Δ H-index Race (2000-2010)	3108	-0.01	0.03	-0.56	0.26
Δ Evangelical adherents (2000-2010)	3108	1.41	9.20	-49.07	100
Δ Catholic adherents (2000-2010)	3108	-1.11	7.09	-60.30	46.20
NGVs per 1,000 residents (mean)	3109	0	0.93	-2.38	8.40
Unemployment rate (mean)	3108	0	0.77	-1.59	6.25
Average annual daily traffic [†] (log, 2012)	3110	2.84	2.89	0	7.95
South (1 = South, 0 = non-South)	3110	0.46		0	1
Urban (1 = urban, 0 = non-urban)	3110	0.13		0	1

[†] Restricted access roadways only (i.e. Interstates and freeways)

fect on the daily lives of voters. However, selection effects are certainly possible in this case and their presence cannot be determined using ecological data. As a result, I adopt the hybrid model in spirit (i.e. simultaneously estimating within-subjects and between-subjects effects) but deploy a multilevel modeling framework to avoid the implication that I am estimating causal relationships.

Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) techniques are especially appropriate for studying presidential vote share since there are significant state-level effects influencing the electoral behavior of voters (e.g. the uneven distribution of campaign resources). In fact, multilevel modeling and HLM were specifically developed to account for cases where subjects are nested within larger groups (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Gelman and Hill 2006). Here there are three nested levels of analysis: states, counties, and county-elections. States vary from election to election in terms of down-ticket candidates and strategic importance, so at the state level of analysis I estimate random intercepts/slopes for dummy variables associated with each election. At the county level I estimate random intercepts to account for unmeasured between-county heterogeneity. Taking advantage of the nesting of county-elections within counties, I transform NGVs per capita and unemployment rate into four variables: (1) mean NGVs per capita in each county, (2) deviation from mean NGVs per capita in each county, (3) mean unemployment rate in each county, (4) deviation from mean unemployment rate in each county. These measures allow me to parse out the within-county effect of NGVs per capita and unemployment from the between-county effect of each, a strategy that effectively reproduces Allison's (2009) hybrid model. The benefit of this approach is that I am able to remove autocorrelation within counties and, in the process, determine whether changes within counties are more (or less) important than differences across counties.

4.6 Results and Discussion

The four graphs in Figure 4.2 present LOESS (locally weighted scatterplot smoothing) lines illustrating the relationship between Republican vote share and venues per capita in the past four Presidential elections. It indicates a modest positive relationship, with fewer NGVs per capita associated with lower Republican vote share. While this depicts the unconditional relationship, Table 4.4 reports results from four HLM models estimating the conditional relationship.

Model 1 serves as a baseline model that includes more standard personal and contextual variables. It confirms prior findings regarding the effect of unemployment (negative association with Republican vote share, both within counties and between counties), location in the South (positive

association), percent black or African American (negative association), and percent Evangelical Christian adherents (positive association) that persist across all models.

Figure 4.2 NGVs per Capita and Republican Vote Share

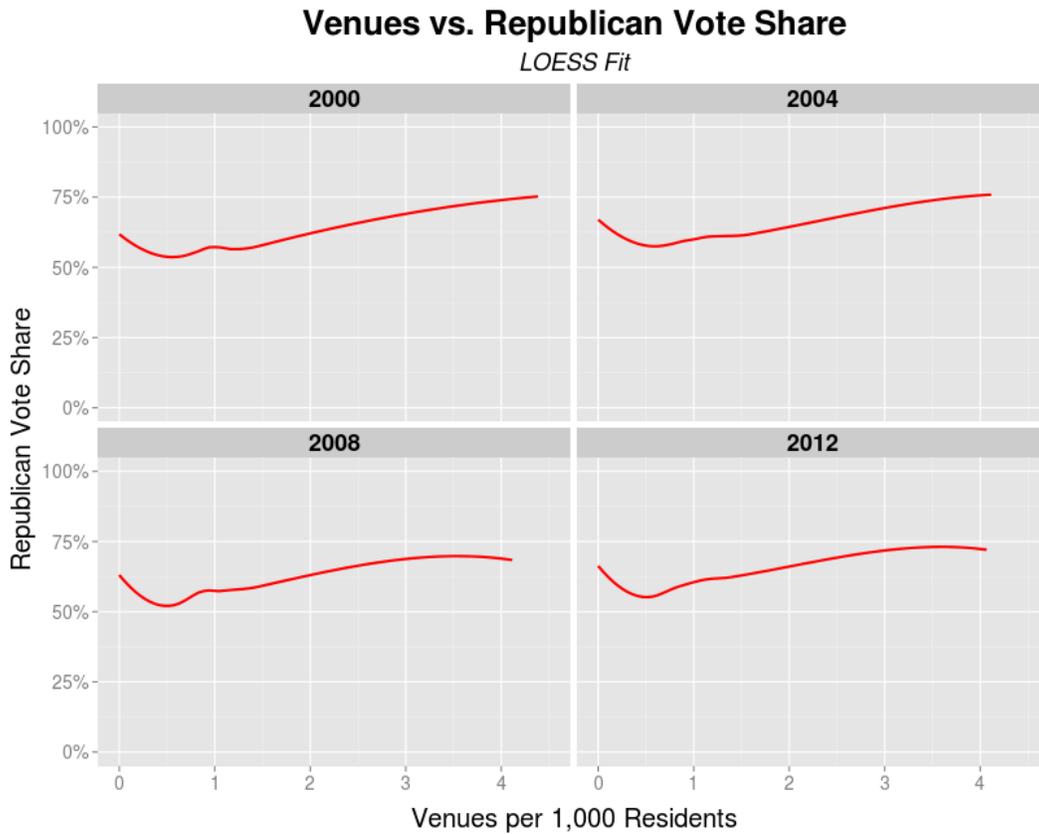


Table 4.4: HLM Models, % Republican Vote Share as Outcome

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Unemployment rate (centered)	-0.674*** (0.10)	-0.674*** (0.10)	-0.672*** (0.10)	-0.676*** (0.10)
Unemployment rate (mean)	-3.109*** (0.27)	-3.139*** (0.27)	-2.915*** (0.27)	-2.880*** (0.27)
Median age (2000)	-0.180 (0.18)	-0.243 (0.18)	-0.756*** (0.19)	-0.709*** (0.19)
Median household income (2000)	-0.572*** (0.22)	-0.437* (0.22)	0.202 (0.23)	0.387 (0.23)

Table 4.4: HLM Models, % Republican Vote Share as Outcome (continued)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
% Black or African American (2000)	-7.358*** (0.22)	-7.308*** (0.23)	-7.362*** (0.22)	-7.254*** (0.22)
% Non-white Hispanic (2000)	-2.222*** (0.23)	-2.225*** (0.23)	-2.268*** (0.23)	-2.281*** (0.23)
% Asian or Pacific Islander (2000)	-3.042*** (0.27)	-3.009*** (0.27)	-3.003*** (0.27)	-2.735*** (0.27)
% Other race (2000)	-2.437*** (0.20)	-2.482*** (0.21)	-2.543*** (0.21)	-2.596*** (0.21)
% Evangelical adherents (2000)	3.209*** (0.34)	3.206*** (0.34)	3.463*** (0.34)	3.477*** (0.34)
% Catholic adherents (2000)	-2.173*** (0.29)	-2.128*** (0.29)	-2.022*** (0.29)	-1.875*** (0.29)
Δ Median age (2000-2010)	0.907*** (0.17)	0.855*** (0.18)	0.819*** (0.18)	0.739*** (0.18)
Δ Median household income (2000-2010)	1.165*** (0.17)	1.130*** (0.18)	0.938*** (0.18)	0.875*** (0.18)
Δ Black or A.A. (2000-2010)	-0.283* (0.14)	-0.259 (0.14)	-0.360** (0.14)	-0.206 (0.14)
Δ Non-white Hispanic (2000-2010)	1.532*** (0.17)	1.509*** (0.18)	1.426*** (0.17)	1.475*** (0.17)
Δ Asian or Pacific Islander (2000-2010)	-0.245 (0.21)	-0.250 (0.21)	-0.307 (0.21)	-0.219 (0.21)
Δ Other race (2000-2010)	0.050 (0.17)	0.050 (0.17)	0.066 (0.17)	0.081 (0.17)
Δ Evangelical adherents (2000-2010)	0.438* (0.18)	0.450* (0.18)	0.550* (0.18)	0.524* (0.18)
Δ Catholic adherents (2000-2010)	-0.193 (0.16)	-0.196 (0.16)	-0.147 (0.16)	-0.177 (0.16)
South	3.802*** (1.15)	3.811*** (1.15)	3.757*** (1.14)	3.869*** (1.12)

Table 4.4: HLM Models, % Republican Vote Share as Outcome (continued)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
2004 Election	3.337*	3.337*	3.319*	3.336*
	(1.34)	(1.34)	(1.33)	(1.31)
2008 Election	-0.618	-0.618	-0.694	-0.682
	(1.34)	(1.34)	(1.33)	(1.31)
2012 Election	2.558	2.558	2.456	2.474
	(1.35)	(1.35)	(1.34)	(1.32)
Average Annual Daily Traffic [†] (log10)		-0.145**	-0.147**	-0.108*
		(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
H-index, race (2000)		0.045	0.174	0.354
		(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)
Δ H-index, race (2000-2010)		-0.012	-0.009	-0.062
		(0.16)	(0.15)	(0.15)
NGVs per 1,000 residents (centered)			-0.402***	-0.377***
			(0.08)	(0.08)
NGVs per 1,000 residents (mean)			1.543***	1.637***
			(0.18)	(0.18)
High population density (HPD) county				-3.754***
				(0.63)
HPD county×NGVs per capita (centered)				-0.733
				(0.39)
HPD county×NGVs per capita (mean)				-1.382*
				(0.57)
(constant)	54.510***	54.942***	55.060***	55.278***
	(1.06)	(1.07)	(1.06)	(1.05)
<hr/>				
State				
sd(R.year)	6.616***	6.600***	6.550***	6.455***
	(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.39)
County				
sd(constant)	6.906***	6.899***	6.816***	6.780***
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Residual	2.827***	2.827***	2.823***	2.822***

Table 4.4: HLM Models, % Republican Vote Share as Outcome (continued)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
sd(constant)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Level 3 units (states)	49	49	49	49
Level 2 units (counties)	3106	3106	3106	3106
Level 1 units (county-elections)	12422	12422	12422	12422
Degree of Freedom	22	25	27	30
Log-Likelihood	-35988	-35984	-35932	-35913

Note: Except for unemployment, NGVs per 1,000 residents, average annual daily traffic, and indicator variables for location in the South and high population density, all variables have been standardized (mean = 0, s.d. = 1).

† Restricted access roadways only.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1, z-statistics in parentheses.

Model 2 adds relatively novel measures of each county’s social environment: H-index of racial exposure (level and change) and average annual daily traffic for restricted access roadways. Controlling for variables in Model 1, the H-index is not related to Republican vote share, but average annual daily traffic is associated with significantly lower Republican vote share. The latter finding is consistent with the logic that traffic volume is an indicator of exposure to difference.

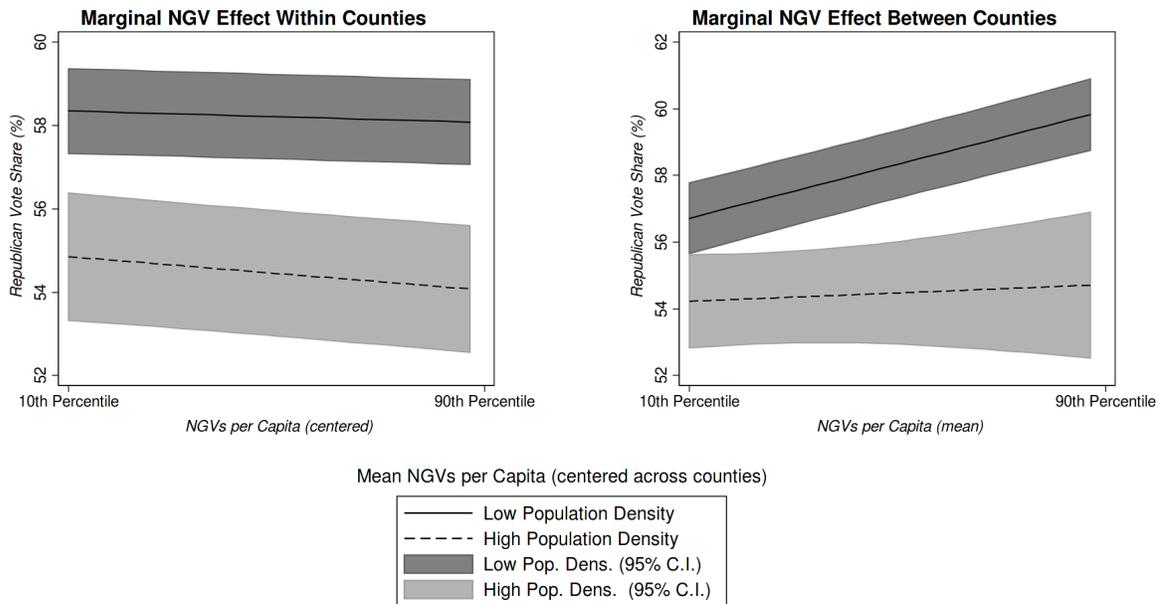
Model 3 includes the within-county and between-county measures of NGVs per 1,000 residents. Surprisingly, when measured relative to counties’ mean NGVs per capita over the four elections, NGV scarcity is associated with higher Republican vote share. While statistically significant this effect is small in magnitude, especially given the fact that within-county variance in NGVs per capita is smaller than between-county variance. In support of Hypothesis 1, counties with lower mean NGVs per capita over the four elections also exhibited lower levels of Republican voting, and the size of this effect is substantially larger than that of deviations from this mean value.

Model 4 adds the interaction of within-county and between-county measures of NGVs per 1,000 residents with an indicator that distinguishes high population density (HPD) counties from

low population density (LPD) counties. As HPD counties are more population dense, it is not surprising that they exhibit a Republican vote share that is, on average, 3.75% lower than LPD counties. In support of Hypothesis 2, coefficient estimates for multiplicative interaction terms suggest that the effect of mean NGVs per 1,000 residents is contingent on residents living in a LPD county. The effect of deviations from this mean value do not appear to be mediated by my categorical measure of population density.

To capture the practical implications of Model 4, Figure 4.3 depicts the marginal effect of NGVs per 1,000 residents on Republican vote share, holding all other variables at their mean value and varying the values of each measure of NGVs per capita from the 10th percentile to the 90th percentile. Since the 95% confidence intervals always “overlap” in the figure, it is clear that the statistically significant effect of within-county change in NGVs per capita does not have practical significance. Conversely, the 95% confidence intervals at the 10th/90th percentile of mean NGVs per capita do not overlap, suggesting that between-county variation does have practical significance for electoral outcomes. These results tend to confirm both hypotheses.

Figure 4.3 Marginal Effect of NGVs per Capita on Republican Vote Share



Controlling for many potential confounding variables, the relative scarcity of NGVs within a county is associated with lower Republican vote share. However, this relationship is only of practical importance in the case of between-county variation, and actually inverts when considering within-county changes in NGVs. The former result suggests that the effect of NGVs is relatively stable over time, while the latter result suggests that changes in NGV prevalence may have unanticipated effects. One possible explanation is that the influence of NGV scarcity on aggregate electoral behavior involves a fairly long time lag between changes in the availability of NGVs and changes in political behavior. It may be possible to test this hypothesis with the inclusion of more elections, but the NAICS system replaced a different categorization scheme following the 1996 presidential election, introducing uncertainty about the comparability of measures from each period. Further, County Business Patterns data only extend back to the 1988 presidential election. Still, moving forward it will be important to find ways to make use of available historical data and integrate new electoral data in order to more precisely study the effect of within-county variation in NGVs.

Similarly, the effect of NGV scarcity is contingent on at least one measure of urbanity. This variable was constructed to capture the conceptual distinction between counties where interaction is either more or less likely to occur within venues, as well as the analytical concern that the social environments of densely populated areas are smaller in geographic extent. The definition used here is unconventional, so all models were also estimated using various permutations/definitions of urban and rural derived from the United States Geological Survey's urban-rural continuum. There were no substantial differences in the results, though in some cases the marginal effects of NGV prevalence become insignificant. I attribute this discrepancy to the urban-rural continuum capturing characteristics of economic geography more than transport geography or population density.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a new way to conceptually distinguish between political networks and social networks through the exogenous effect of social contexts. This approach character-

izes social contexts according to whether individuals voluntarily or involuntarily enter them, and whether individuals are expected to form strong ties or weak ties. I described how political scientists have studied three of the resulting categories (voluntary strong tie, voluntary weak tie, and involuntary strong tie social contexts) before drawing attention to the fourth category (involuntary weak tie social contexts). After presenting research findings on the mere exposure effect and its relationship to social psychology, I suggested that counties with few venues hosting involuntary weak tie social contexts (i.e. gas stations, convenience stores, supermarkets, and pharmacies) cultivate a form of cosmopolitan tolerance among residents that reduces the political salience of race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. I hypothesized that this would penalize presidential candidates appealing to group-threat based on these distinctions, expecting that this will disproportionately affect Republican candidates due to broad recent appeals to the urgency of terrorism, illegal immigration, and gay marriage. Using data from the past four elections in a multilevel modeling framework, I found support for this hypothesis.

Central to this chapter has been the role of venues as everyday spaces with political implications. Some spaces host explicitly political social contexts, either in the form of interaction involved (e.g. voluntary organizations) or the content of this interaction (e.g. political communication). However, many venues host persistent social contexts that are not explicitly political in nature yet likely have indirect influence over our political beliefs and behavior. I have focused on a small subset of these venues—necessary goods venues that we are effectively forced to enter on a regular basis—that expose us to others who may be very different from ourselves in race, class, or culture. Without considering the political implications of these venues, we are left with an incomplete picture of political life as somehow independent of our daily life.

It is difficult to accurately infer ecological relationships based on mechanisms at the interpersonal level. However, demonstrating a systematic relationship between the presence of particular types of businesses and electoral behavior illustrates how more precise analytic characterizations of social contexts can help scholars further explore the political implications of quotidian social networks. Further, this analysis was based on the concept that political psychology is influenced

by cognitive biases, such as the mere exposure effect. I would suggest that studying the politics of the everyday through the lens of such psychological mechanisms will benefit future studies of the political effects of social networks. At minimum, it is clear that a more precise specification of the relationship between social networks, social contexts, and political outcomes would benefit multiple constituencies within political sociology specifically and political science more broadly.

CHAPTER 5

TOWARD AN ECOLOGY OF ASSOCIATION

The purpose of this dissertation was to demonstrate how the physical impacts the ideological, and in the process demonstrate the utility of a particular kind of multiscale framework for sociological research. I first asked how sociologists can conceptualize space in a multiscale manner, introducing venues as locations that exist at a particular spatial scale. By distinguishing between venues and geographic areas, I elaborated how the space within a venue facilitates social interactions, both allowing us to interact and guiding us in how to interact. I then discussed how the social potential facilitated by venues can influence individual and collective behavior within a community.

Using a novel combination of geocoded survey data and ecological data, I deployed insights from human ecology, organizational ecology, and spatial analysis within a multilevel modeling framework to study how venue scarcity shapes the religious and political behavior of local residents. I found that residents of communities with fewer venues of a certain type (e.g. supermarkets, drug stores, etc.) are less likely to vote for a Republican Presidential candidate and more likely to be socially embedded in their congregation, and that congregations in these communities are more likely to offer secular activities such as hobby groups and sports teams. These results lead me to conclude that the materiality of everyday life—through the multiscale influence of physical space—has significant consequences for a range of ideological behaviors. But what do these results mean for sociological research writ large?

5.1 Space Matters

Place matters. Where we are located is broadly relevant to many aspects of our lives (e.g. Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2013). I now argue for a similarly broad corollary: Space matters. If place refers to a meaningful location, whether a single room or a metropolitan region, space refers to the physical nature of a location. Without this distinction between the abstract and concrete features of a location we misidentify the mechanisms through which communities act to shape our

lives. A fast food restaurant is a place for eating a quick meal, but the physical space of such a venue provides countless opportunities for patrons to interact and form relationships. Our common understanding of what a fast food restaurant is and does would suggest that these opportunities are rarely realized. Yet there are cases, such as when a fast food restaurant is one of very few venues within a community, where it would be even more unusual if patrons did not somehow use this space to form or maintain relationships. Thus, the flexible use of physical space eclipses its current or traditional meaning in defining how a location shapes our lives. While its meaning may strongly influence our behavior, there is always the possibility of reimagining or reinterpreting what a place is or does. In light of this, I have emphasized the social possibilities associated with physical space, elaborated a theory linking social potential, physical space, and the traditional meaning of a place, and provided two empiric studies of how these three components interact to influence both how we practice religion and how we vote.

In Chapter 2, I discussed why and how space represents an independent force in our lives, stabilizing social structures even as it catalyzes social innovation. Key to this has been my concept of a venue. As a discrete physical space with an ostensible purpose and a material culture, a venue synthesizes abstract and concrete features of location. Its purpose and culture give it meaning, while its space gives it physical form. By separating the analytic components of space and place in this way, venues provide at least two unique sociological contributions: (1) venues provide a way to understand how social life operates at two spatial scales—the interpersonal and the geographic—that co-constitute each other, and (2) venues highlight the ongoing negotiation between agency and structure in everyday life. I briefly review each of these contributions in light of my research findings before describing how they illustrate that venues are part of a larger landscape of social potential that forms the reactive substrate on which local social networks grow. I conclude by outlining how venues and human ecology coalesce into an ecology of association shaping local social networks.

Social Life at Geographic and Interpersonal Scales

In Chapter 1, I described how venues allow us to describe the fundamentally multiscale nature of our lives. We interact with each other at distances measured in meters, but even family members spend significant time separated by distances measured in kilometers. As we engage in a series of interactions over the course of a day we thus constantly shuttle between two spatial scales: the interpersonal and the geographic. One is concerned with those immediately in front of us, while the other is concerned with those who could potentially be in front of us. This distinguishes between two approaches to place: Place may refer to either one location or a collection of locations, and both may share the same name, such as “home” referring to both a house and the town where it is located. These two concepts of place refer to two spatial scales with categorically different effects on our lives, effects that cannot be disentangled without considering venues. To illustrate this difference, consider how to answer a simple question—“Where are you?”—in the course of a phone conversation.

Explaining our whereabouts to another person requires determining which spatial scale is most relevant to the conversation. For example, we may refer to the room we are sitting in (e.g. “the kitchen”), the building containing that room (e.g. “my house”), or the city where that building is located (e.g. “Chicago, IL”). There exists a hierarchy to these places, one where smaller spaces are nested within larger spaces – rooms exist within the buildings that constitute cities. However, cities refer to collections of locations (i.e. geographic regions) whereas buildings and rooms refer to a single location. As a result, when we say we are “in” a city we do not mean that we are simultaneously inhabiting all locations within its geographic region. Rather, we are inhabiting one of the locations within this region. This distinction is not about the size of the spaces involved, as rooms, buildings, and cities all range in size. It is a categorical difference in how we understand these places as either single locations or collections of locations. Analytic ambiguity in the terms space and place render this difference invisible, as both may be used to describe either type of place.

Venues add analytic precision by describing one type of place: a single location defined as a discrete physical space with an ostensible purpose and material culture. This definition situates venues at the intersection of the interpersonal and the geographic, delineating a space for social interaction that possesses a precise location within a larger region. Because of this, venues are ideal for highlighting the practical relationship between single locations and collections of locations. They give form to the ambiguous relationship between spatial scale and social life by embodying the processes through which the geographic influences the interpersonal and the interpersonal influences the geographic.

Venues, as collections of locations, exist at a geographic scale. They collectively trace out a geographic region whose boundaries are arbitrary yet meaningful. For example, our ability to access local venues—restaurants, grocery stores, churches, and so on—depends on where we live. These venues constitute a geographic region we could call a community, a region arbitrary in terms of its definition relative to where we live but meaningful in terms of the social possibilities afforded by the venues that constitute it. That is, the venues available to us facilitate a local social ecology whose features depend on the features of these venues. If a town has many churches and few other venues then it is likely that many more social relationships will arise through ostensibly religious activities than if a town had few churches and many other venues.

In Chapter 3, I demonstrated that churches are part of a larger social ecology, where churches compensate for the absence of local venues by hosting secular social activities in addition to religious activities. When fewer secular venues exist in a local community, churches are more likely to facilitate secular social activities and congregants are more likely to form more/stronger relationships with each other. Thus what goes on within a venue is fundamentally tied to what goes on outside of it, and accounts of individual venues or local markets would benefit greatly by expanding the scope of investigation to include community context.

Venues, as single locations, exist at an interpersonal scale. Through their ostensible purpose and material culture, venues induce spatial concentrations of individuals with similar goals or preferences. These gatherings are important conduits for connecting geographically dispersed commu-

nity members, providing places for us to meet, interact, and form relationships. Venues provide crucial opportunities for social interaction that facilitate both social possibility (i.e. the capacity to interact) and social innovation (i.e. the capacity to decide how to interact).

Venues are unique compared to other public spaces insofar as a venue's ostensible purpose focuses the activities of patrons in a way that other public spaces do not. This focus allows like-minded individuals to find each other and, in turn, experience the social possibilities associated with joint activities or parallel independent (but related) activities (Silver and Clark 2016). That is, by bringing patrons together for a common purpose, venues simultaneously expose us to each other and provide at least one natural topic of conversation. For example, a coffee shop induces coffee drinkers to share space with each other. The activity of drinking coffee can be conducted socially or individually, but during this activity it is always possible for patrons to approach each other knowing that they share at least one common interest: coffee. The ostensible purpose of a venue thus facilitates social possibility in terms of the potential for meeting others based on a common interest or goal, in terms of our exposure to individuals we would otherwise not have been exposed to except for this common interest or goal.

Conversely, the presence of a venue, such as a coffee shop, indicates the presence of a local constituency with interest in a particular shared goal, thus contributing to the local identity of a community through the individuals who share this goal. A town with a thriving coffee shop (i.e. a single location) is a different place (i.e. collection of locations) than a town without such a venue. A town without a coffee shop is still likely home to coffee drinkers. However, without a space for expressing a collective identity built around drinking coffee it is less likely that residents (or others) will consider coffee an important part of local life.

The interpersonal and the geographic find common ground within the space of a venue. Community context and ostensible purpose coalesce to provide both a space of shared striving as well as an indicator of what residents value, of the kinds of products and experiences they prefer. As the intersection of spatial scales, venues provide a unique perspective on community life. Without venues, it becomes difficult to understand how local community life is embodied in its built envi-

ronment. We can conceive of a geographic region, enumerate its residents, and draw inferences about their beliefs and behavior by combining this data with a similar enumeration of its public spaces. However, unless we understand that these spaces possess an ostensible purpose that guides rather than defines our behavior we are forced to interpret deviations from this purpose as evidence of dysfunction.

A coffee shop that struggles to sell coffee but thrives as an informal meeting space is not a successful coffee shop, at least financially. Yet such a venue may represent a vital part of the community's social fabric. Put another way, if we strictly define spaces by their ostensible purpose, and how efficiently or effectively they fulfill this purpose, then we assume all spaces with the same ostensible purpose play an equivalent role within community life, regardless of community characteristics or history. More often than not, this assumption is untenable. Venues allow us to understand these cases of what I term social innovation.

Challenging Authority and Remaking Convention

The bounded physical space of a venue is a unique social setting, one where patrons must choose how to react to behavioral expectations associated with its ostensible purpose and material culture. Yet venues host multiple social structures, economic, cultural, or otherwise, that overlap within the same space. A restaurant is home to both economic and non-economic social structures, as dining out often involves social interaction not strictly associated with paying for a meal. Each social structure maintains a set of behavioral expectations and, at any given point in our dining experience, we must decide which set of behavioral expectations is appropriate. Moreover, we can also decide to subvert these expectations by ignoring them and enacting new or different social structures with their own behavioral expectations. Key to this decision-making process is recognizing that a venue's ostensible purpose does not fully circumscribe our behavior, that it often provides us great flexibility in deciding how to fulfill this purpose and what other activities we carry out in the process.

The capacity for social innovation within a venue arises from our capacity to choose which social structure to make real by following its guidelines for behavior. This choice is rarely made for us. Even the simple act of ordering food requires patrons to decide how to engage their server in conversation. In the strictest sense, we may engage in a purely transactional exchange of information (and money) to achieve our ostensible purpose, ordering and paying for a meal with minimal communication. However, many restaurant patrons and staff expect their interactions to be more personal, to follow social propriety unrelated to the economics of a restaurant's ostensible purpose. Given this common expectation, how do we then determine how to act? Often there is no clear answer, especially given that the appropriateness of each type of interaction—transactional and sociable—will vary throughout the course of the meal and depend on the “success” or “failure” of prior interactions. Sometimes we leave a restaurant having befriended a member of the staff, and sometimes we leave offended at how we have been treated. The former is a case of successfully introducing and sustaining a set of behavioral expectations associated with friendship, weaving these interactions into those associated with a restaurant's ostensible purpose. The latter is not always a case of poor service, but rather a failure to successfully negotiate a shared set of behavioral norms.

It is common (and thus normal) to deviate from the standard set of behavioral expectations associated with a venue's ostensible purpose. We may view these deviations as dysfunctional, but to do so ignores social innovations such as forming friendships with the staff at a local restaurant. These innovations are novel insofar as they represent unexpected social outcomes given the ostensible purpose of a venue, but there are many ways that venues catalyze social innovation. Chapter 3 explores one of the simplest forms of social innovations that venues can facilitate – the use of a venues for activities unrelated to its ostensible purpose. I demonstrate how the behavioral expectations we associate with organized religion are more fluid than we might expect when communities have few secular venues, illustrating social innovation in what constitutes local religious life.

Practical limits on how far people are willing to travel mean that we can access only a limited number of venues on a regular basis. As a result we are presented a set of choices that may or may not fit our actual preferences. We may enjoy participating in theater, but without a local

theater it can be difficult to express this interest. However, a community without a local theater may still possess a thriving theater community. For example, churches often possess physical spaces (e.g. large meeting rooms, multipurpose worship spaces, etc.) that can be used to host theatrical performances. Yet churches are not the only venue that could facilitate a local theater scene. If a town has a community center or suitable public park then churches may be less vital for facilitating these activities and, incidentally, less likely to influence their content. In either case, whether churches or other secular venues step in to fill the void, our capacity to fulfill our desire for particular activities is intimately related to the landscape of venues available to us. Even if this landscape does not provide an explicit opportunity to fulfill our desires, it is often possible for us to find a way to achieve our goals by repurposing one of the venues that are available.

These examples describe social innovation as an intentional act, but venues can catalyze social innovation in unintentional ways. In Chapter 4, I describe how venues that provide goods that are necessary to our daily lives (i.e. food, fuel, and medicine) are a unique class of venues with the capacity to influence the political behavior of local residents. This capacity rests on our inability to avoid these necessary goods venues (NGVs) and the effect this has on communities where NGVs are scarce. I demonstrate that, in low population density counties, NGV scarcity is associated with lower vote share for Republican presidential candidates in the United States, from 2000 to 2012. I argue that this relationship only makes sense if we view NGVs as important sites for reducing group threat. Since community members must enter NGVs on a regular basis, a scarcity of NGVs will expose residents to groups they would prefer to avoid. Over time, NGV scarcity reduces the saliency of group differences by repeatedly exposing us to those who are different from us and, in turn, reduces the saliency of group threat as a device for political mobilization. Venues can thus facilitate unexpected social outcomes simply by fulfilling their ostensible purpose.

More broadly, venues facilitate social innovations that contribute to the idiosyncrasies that differentiate communities from one another. Venues with the same ostensible purpose are often not viewed (or used) the same way in different communities. A fast food restaurant in a busy city neighborhood and a fast food restaurant in a small town may share the same ostensible purpose and

material culture, but their meaning to local residents likely differs. One aspect of this difference is community context, such as whether or not other venues exist. If other venues are scarce then a fast food restaurant may facilitate many different kinds of social interactions and/or act as a gathering space for local residents. If other venues are abundant then it is less likely that a fast food restaurant would exhibit such a variety of interactions or represent such a socially meaningful space.

When patrons decide to regularly engage in activities unrelated to a venue's ostensible purpose these activities differentiate such a venue from other venue's with the same ostensible purpose. Thus a disconnect exists between a venue (e.g. fast food restaurant) as an economic enterprise and the role a venue (e.g. fast food restaurant) plays within the social life of a community. This disconnect both makes venues unique and provides a way for venues to embody the local history and culture that makes communities unique.

As patrons shape the use of venues they also shape the community where these venues are located. The ostensible purpose of a venue indicates what activities must occur within its space, but when venues consistently host unrelated activities of a particular type these spaces (1) perpetuate local culture in the form of regular practices perpetuated purely through convention and (2) capture the historical development of these regular practices. That is, when activities unrelated to a venue's ostensible purpose become institutionalized as a part of that venue, this process of institutionalization represents a process of collective meaning-making within the community. If a fast food restaurant becomes a regular gathering place for older residents then it is no longer merely a fast food restaurant but rather a meaningful space beyond its ability to fulfill its ostensible purpose. Similarly, the community where such a fast food restaurant is located no longer possesses a venue like many others but has made it unique, has imparted local meaning to it.

Finally, as a venue begins to regularly host activities unrelated to its ostensible purpose, this integration into community life becomes part of a community's local history. The custom of using a venue for a particular activity unrelated to its ostensible purpose (e.g. as a gathering space) develops over time. Once institutionalized, this custom becomes evidence of how patrons of a particular time and place responded to their environment, how they chose to "make do" with the

options presented them. Viewing venues in this way, as vehicles of history, provides a new perspective on phenomena such as gentrification, where economic prosperity can be met with deep concern by local residents. If venues embody the local history of a community, then changes in their form or use threaten the social fabric of local life, a jarring prospect independent of issues such as increases in cost of living. In other words, local traditions are constituted by more than idiosyncratic practices. Rather, they are also constituted by the collective meanings we attribute to venues as part of these traditions.

5.2 Planting the Seeds of a Social Network

The social possibilities and social innovations made possible by a venue are different aspects of the social potential they facilitate. Combined with our capacity to use venues to express our individuality, a unique sociospatial substrate is formed both within and around the discrete physical space of a venue. This substrate is constituted by both the venues within a geographic region and the locations of their patrons, embodying a landscape of social potential catalyzing the development and maintenance of social networks. After briefly reviewing the importance of human ecology for understanding this landscape, I describe how my work provides an opportunity to integrate ecological forms of analysis and social network analysis into a coherent framework, giving unique insight into the development of local social networks.

Reintegrating Ecological Approaches

The venues within a community are part of a larger landscape of social potential, but the individuals that populate these spaces are equally important for shaping what is possible within them. This idea is introduced in Chapter 2. In particular, the concepts of robust constraint and associational constraint both conceive of circumstances where a venue is frequented by a homogeneous stream of patrons, leading to unexpected forms of social possibility and social innovation. Empirically, I introduced a novel measure of social fit in Chapter 3, comparing the proportion of same race

congregants to the proportion of same race local residents. This accounted for the availability of same race interaction partners within the community at large. My analysis demonstrated that social fit is strongly related to congregants' social embeddedness. It thus suggests that, in addition to the availability of particular venues, the availability of particular individuals plays an important role in both the formation of social ties and the types of social potential that venues facilitate.

A long research tradition within sociology has explored social potential in terms the individuals that can be found within a geographic region. For example, Blau and Schwartz (1984) find that interracial marriage is less likely in areas whose residents are racially homogeneous. Alternatively, McPherson (1983a) finds that voluntary organizations within the same bounded geography will compete for individuals within an organizational ecology defined by the demographic traits of local residents, such as college educated individuals of a certain age. In the first case, social interaction occurs in an interpersonal setting, whereas in the second case social interaction occurs in an organizational setting. I collect these studies under the umbrella term of 'ecological approaches' to emphasize the role of geographic space in shaping social potential and to minimize the distinction between dyads and groups. In this sense, neighborhood effects research represents the latest ecological approach to emerge within sociology.

The volume of research employing ecological approaches to the study of social behavior provides fertile ground for a multiscale approach to social potential, both conceptually and analytically. Venues can be easily introduced into theories of social process from community studies and neighborhood effects research. In fact, scholars have long identified venues as part of these processes (see Zorbaugh 1935; Greenbaum 1982). Similarly, indices of spatial segregation and macrostructural approaches to characterizing geographic regions provide guidance on how to measure relevant properties of these areas, such as demographic composition. However, venues and ecological approaches are not just easily reconciled. Venues also provide an important and intuitive mechanism linking two categorically different scales of analysis. That is, venues link the interpersonal and the ecological through their capacity to facilitate the formation and maintenance of social networks.

Venues, Ecologies, and Networks

Venues, as the physical spaces where individuals co-locate, are the missing analytic piece that eases the development of ecological approaches to social network analysis. These spaces facilitate the chance and repeated interactions that give rise to social networks and house both individual and organizational actors, while their spatial distribution can affect the likelihood, frequency and nature of interaction between these actors by making such interactions more or less costly in terms of travel time. Before I explore the implications of venues for spatial networks at a geographic scale in the next section, I first consider their capacity to extend our understanding of social ties as analytic objects.

Many studies of social networks assume that relationships between actors can be captured in terms of discrete types of interaction. This assumption has been challenged many times (e.g. Emirbayer 1997) but locating these relationships in physical space provides an intuitive way of understanding why it is problematic. Consider the case of extended social interaction within the same space (e.g. the workplace, a church, etc.). Extended interaction often leads to the development of durable social relationships, but if the relationships among actors can be understood through a collection of categories then how do we conceive of marriage between fellow parishioners? Is this a religious tie, a social tie, a romantic tie, all three, or something more?

The complex, multifaceted nature of social relations would suggest that social ties are always ‘something more’ than the sum of their parts. More complicated still, these ties often take on different meaning in different social contexts. Enumerating the venues available to local residents allows us to contextualize the different components of the relationships they form. An interracial married couple may report regularly attending Catholic religious services. The simplest interpretation of this behavior would be that these individuals are observant Catholics. This interpretation would change dramatically if we learned that this couple lives in a small town with few venues and significant racial segregation. It would change further still if we discovered that the Catholic church was the only religious venue with any sort of racial diversity. Under these circumstances, the social tie between this couple, and their activities within the local community, take on signif-

icantly more nuance than either ecological approaches or social network analysis could provide alone. Only through venues can we truly emplace social life by integrating where we interact, with whom we interact, and how where we interact shapes with whom we can interact.

The capacity of venues to add significant detail to our understanding of social ties arises from their particularistic nature. I have referred to venues in general and types of venues more specifically, but the true analytic power of venues lay in their absolute uniqueness. Each venue inhabits its own unique physical space, exists at a unique location in a unique community, and as a result possesses a unique character. This character can be understood in terms of its history, including the large and small ways that a venue's patrons shape its use, its behavioral norms, and even its construction.

By encapsulating a particular social, historical, and cultural moment within its physical space, each venue provides patrons a social context like no other. Because of this, the social ties formed within or perpetuated by a venue are imbued with a meaning that is at once entirely dependent on those involved and profoundly shaped by the ostensible purpose, style of fulfilling this purpose, and material culture associated with this space. A friendship can form in any shared space, but the friendships formed in a church can be very different from the friendships formed in a tattoo parlor, and formed in very different ways. Trading specificity in the type of social interaction for specificity in the location of social interaction is a theoretical and analytic inversion that produces a fundamentally different (and, I argue, richer) depiction of everyday social life.

5.3 An Ecology of Association

The synthesis of venues, ecologies, and networks represents a novel multiscale framework for studying the relationship between physical space and social potential. I term this synthesis the ecology of association in reference to Huckfeldt's discussion regarding the role of "associational preference and . . . social context in producing a social network," (Huckfeldt 1983, 667). While the spatial scale of the social context he describes is ambiguous, my contribution is to provide a

multiscalar account of social context and its effect on social networks that clarifies the relationship between interpersonal and geographic perspectives regarding physical space.

Extending work by Jessop, Brenner, and Jones (2008) on sociospatial relations, associational ecology integrates territories, places, scales, and networks to provide a framework for studying community life. It is based on the embedding of social networks within discrete physical spaces that are distributed across a geographic region. It posits that bipartite networks linking individuals to social groups are primarily the result of interactions within these spaces, termed social venues. The primary innovation of an ecology of association is the introduction of social venues, such as public libraries, coffee shops, or bars, as the conduits through which social networks flow. While novel, the seeds of this concept can be found within contemporary research deploying an ecological approach to social life.

A basic intellectual genealogy of human ecology reveals distinctive shifts in what researchers understand as the environment. By deemphasizing the physical world, work on the role of ecological niches has often come to reference positions within a resource space without physical analogue. Building on the success of this approach, an important line of research that has started to integrate physical space and organizational ecology is McPherson's ecology of affiliation (McPherson 1983b, 2004). In an ecology of affiliation, voluntary associations inhabit demographic niches within a community and compete for a limited pool of potential members. Competitive relationships between organizations are conceived as overlapping demographic niches (i.e. individuals who are potential members of either or both organizations).

McPherson builds on Blau's (1977) macrostructural theory, where structural parameters such as age and race constitute the resource space for these associations. As the topology of these resource spaces change over time, the composition of an association changes as its demographic niche also shifts, often due to larger demographic trends (McPherson and Ranger-Moore 1991). In this context, McPherson voices concern that voluntary organizations may inadvertently reinforce the social distance between individuals of different social or economic status (McPherson 1981a, 1981b). At the same time, Blau and Schwartz (1984) suggest that higher levels of heterogeneity

and inequality are associated with more intergroup and status-bridging relationships. Understanding McPherson's concern requires understanding the microsociological basis of macrostructural theory.

The assumption that individuals seek out similar alters for social interaction, termed homophily, is central to ecological approaches, and figures prominently in McPherson's research linking populations and associations. Overwhelming evidence supporting this assumption enables researchers to reify groups of individuals through shared personal characteristics, since social distance within a parameter space (i.e. social dissimilarity) has a real effect on the likelihood that interpersonal relationships will form. It is at this point that ecological forms of analysis begin to intersect social network analysis, as Feld (1981), McPherson and Smith-Lovin (1987), and Kossinets and Watts (2006, 2009) all suggest that foci of social interaction are the sites where homophily unfolds between individuals. Ecological processes thus operate through social venues, as they are the physical sites where these foci reside, where social networks are made real through the activities of patrons.

Propelling a New Spatial Sociology

One exciting prospect for associational ecology is the potential for integrating geographic characteristics into the study of both individual and group behavior. This potential encompasses the role of population distributions and the built environment in collectively shaping the ability of individuals to interact. Whereas Hawley and others have operationalized many of these characteristics by attaching a cost function to the physical distance between locations, the addition of macrosociological features, social venues, and even transportation networks, provides a much richer understanding of how physical space shapes our social possibilities. Specifically, introducing venues provides neighborhood effects researchers additional leverage in understanding the social processes operating within a geographic region. There are currently two clear directions to explore in this context, one involving spatial processes and another involving cultural change.

The composition and spatial distribution of individuals within a local geography constitute the opportunity structure that residents or visitors experience. This is a basic premise of Blau's macrostructural theory that could easily be applied to the study of spatial networks, given the intuitive finding that the composition of a social network is influenced by the composition of its potential members (Rivera, Soderstrom, and Uzzi 2010). However, defining potential social network ties in terms of the macrostructural properties of a geographic region does little to emplace these relationships. How do potential ties come to be realized? A continuous function describing the stochastic process of tie formation can, at the very least, address the influence of geographic distance on this process (e.g. Butts 2007). At the same time, this modeling approach cannot provide significant insight into why two individuals would be more or less likely to form a social tie, except to introduce mathematical terms describing personal traits or contextual factors thought to influence tie formation.

By inverting this analytic question to explore the role of venues as holistic spaces instead of as static social contexts (i.e. "How do venues influence social tie formation?" rather than "What contextual effects influence social tie formation?") it is possible to avoid reifying the importance of minority status, behavioral norms, or other social structures when studying the social potential residents experience in their daily lives. Chapter 3 makes this point explicitly: Opportunity constraint shapes the social potential associated with religious venues, regardless of who attends the church and controlling for macrostructural features of the local community. Such a conclusion is difficult to reach if researchers begin by considering the historical importance of race, class, and ethnicity in structuring the role of religion in our lives. There are many other topics of study—such as health behavior (Walton 2014), criminology (Tita and Radil 2010), and economic development (Silver, Clark, and Graziul 2011)—where an ecology of association approach can help overcome latent biases in how we understand the spatial aspects of social processes by allowing researchers to explore the independent role of physical space in shaping social potential.

Finally, venues represent an eminently flexible, methodologically agnostic tool for analysis. Mixed methods approaches to the study of spatially embedded social processes are becoming stan-

standard practice within the social sciences. This trend requires researchers to find common analytic ground between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and between interpretive and positivist accounts of social reality. Venues are analytic objects capable of bridging these gaps.

As sites where social interaction unfolds, these spaces can be studied in aggregate as indicators of local demand for particular goods, services, or experiences, or they can be studied as ethnographic sites of meaning-making, negotiation, or conflict. That is, they are structural features of a community that also sustain its local culture (Silver, Clark, and Yanez 2010; Silver and Clark 2015). For example, an ethnographic study of a coffee shop and a market analysis of coffee shops in a metropolitan region are both concerned with the range of meanings, geographic location, and socioeconomic traits associated with retail coffee consumption. In this sense, venues are both flexible and parsimonious, integrating the rich social experiences of everyday life into the abstract social systems that many researchers seek to characterize and understand. By studying venues, rather than individuals or organizations, researchers can integrate analytic approaches as diverse as human ecology and ethnography via the concrete physical spaces that facilitate social interaction.

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