Living in concentrated poverty
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Living in concentrated poverty

Fenne M. Pinkster
LIVING IN
CONCENTRATED POVERTY

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus
prof. dr. D.C. van den Boom
ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties
ingestelde commissie,
in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Agnietenkapel
op vrijdag 16 januari 2009 te 10.00 uur

doork

FENNE MACHTELT PINKSTER

geboren te Amsterdam
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1. Introduction

Current neighborhoods of poverty in cities in advanced societies are argued to be decidedly different from the lower class or working class neighborhoods in Fordist times. Wacquant (2008) maintains that in the last three decades a new advanced marginality has emerged which is more structural, long-term and disconnected from macro-economic trends and increasingly concentrated in specific, stigmatized neighborhoods rather than dispersed across working class neighborhoods. This ‘advanced marginality’, Wacquant argues, is not only brought forth by economic restructuring but also by political restructuring of the welfare state. As these processes take on different forms from country to country and city to city, the distinct socio-spatial configuration of the proposed neighborhoods of poverty varies (Musterd, 2008). Nevertheless, the social consequences of concentrated poverty are a recurring theme in urban policy throughout Europe and North America and various social mixing and dispersal-of-poverty programs have been developed to deconcentrate poverty (Andersson and Musterd, 2005; Goetz, 2003).

A key concern of social mixing policies is that being poor in a disadvantaged neighborhood context is worse than being poor elsewhere. In this debate, ‘worse’ not only refers to day-to-day livability problems and relatively high crime rates in these areas (Uitermark, 2003; Uitermark, Duyvendak, et al., 2007), but also to a long-term perspective of limited social mobility of residents (Andersson and Musterd, 2005). In the Netherlands concerns about the relationship between segregation and a lack of integration of low-income and often ethnic minority households have recently culminated in the formation of a Directorate for Housing, Communities and Integration at the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, that directly links the process of integration to the neighborhood scale: “Integration begins close to home, in your own neighbourhood [...] There are neighbourhoods in our country that are in a poor state. The cabinet is launching a large-scale offensive to give these neighbourhoods a new outlook, which will encourage integration”. The ‘new outlook’ involves area-based programs of large-scale restructuring that replace a large share of the social housing stock in low-income neighborhoods by owner-occupied housing and more upscale rental units, as well as efforts to improve livability in the area and programs that stimulate individual social mobility directly.

The consequences of living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty have also received much attention in the academic world in the form of neighborhood effect studies. The neighborhood effect thesis assumes that our direct social and physical surroundings contribute to individual outcomes such as our cognitive and moral development as a child or our mental health and employment situation as adults. Where we live influences whom we might meet, where our children go to school and play, and how we view the world. As such, our residential context structures the resources and opportunities that are available to us and the choices that we make to shape our lives. However, this relationship between residential context and individual outcomes cannot be reduced to a deterministic relationship whereby $A \rightarrow B$, i.e. the neighborhood ‘causes’ unemploy-
ment. Rather, the hypothesis is that existing social inequalities resulting from macroeconomic, social and political configurations at a higher scale can be exacerbated at the neighborhood level as a result of unequal neighborhood conditions and resources (Musterd, Murie, et al., 2006), which themselves are influenced by these same macro-structural processes.

The political and academic debate about the role that spatial inequalities play in reproducing social inequalities form the inspiration for this dissertation. The aim was to study the causal pathways or mechanisms through which living in a low-income neighborhood restricts residents’ opportunities for social mobility. There are good reasons for questioning the relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and socio-economic outcomes. Labor markets function on a regional scale and few people work where they live. Given that many of us commute on a daily basis, the question is why this would be different in disadvantaged neighborhoods? Nevertheless, a review of Western European evidence for neighborhood effects on labor market participation reveals that living in a low-income neighborhood over longer periods of time does have negative consequences for the economic prospects of residents (Galster, 2007). This dissertation therefore studies potential explanations for such spatial variations in socio-economic outcomes.

1.1 Studying neighborhood effects

The basic premise in neighborhood effect research on socio-economic outcomes is that the residential context contributes to residents’ aspirations and preferences with respect to work as well as their (perceived) employment opportunities, which in turn leads residents to make certain life choices that subsequently influence their social position (Galster and Killen, 1995). A broad distinction can be made between two different types of research that address the way in which neighborhood context contributes to residents’ social positions, namely research focusing on the magnitude of neighborhood effects and research focusing on explanations of neighborhood effects.

A first set of studies focuses on the relationship between individual outcomes such as children’s educational performance, teenage pregnancies, long-term unemployment or criminal behavior, and a variety of neighborhood characteristics such as population composition or the presence of social problems (for an overview see for example Ellen and Turner, 1997; Galster, 2007; Sampson, Morenoff, et al., 2002). These studies aim to isolate neighborhood conditions from other social contexts and individual characteristics and estimate how much neighborhood matters for individual development. Most of these ‘classic’ neighborhood effect studies concentrate on negative outcomes for disadvantaged residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods. This has to do with the fact that disadvantaged residents are expected to spend more time in the neighborhood than affluent residents and are thus potentially more strongly affected by negative externalities in this social context. In addition, housing mobility studies address the question of how a change in residential context – from disadvantaged to advantaged – might provide positive externalities for disadvantaged residents.

A second set of studies focuses directly on the causal relationship or linkages between neighborhood and individual behavior. The aim of these studies is to uncover the social mechanisms through which neighborhood influences individual action. In the research literature these studies are often described as ‘qualitative’ as opposed to the previously described ‘quantitative’ studies on the magnitude of neighborhood effects. This categorization is misleading, as studies on explanations for neighborhood effects can (and do) employ quantitative research techniques. This also applies to the present study.

1.2 Explanations for neighborhood effects

In recent years many researchers have identified a need for more research on the daily lives of residents in low-income neighborhoods in order to understand the causal pathways behind neighborhood effects (Buck and Gordon, 2004; Ellen and Turner, 1997; Galster, 2003). Various hypotheses have been developed on the social mechanisms that lead to spatial variations in socio-economic outcomes. A distinction is made between two types of mechanisms. On the one hand, residents might be negatively influenced by mechanisms outside the neighborhood such as external stigmatization by employers, a spatial mismatch between neighborhood location and employment opportunities and inferior local public services such as schools and public transportation as a result of political arrangements at a higher scale. On the other hand, residents’ socio-economic prospects might be negatively influenced by mechanisms within the neighborhood relating to the specific social composition of the area. In light of the current social mix programs in the Netherlands, as well as other countries, this research focuses on such endogenous explanations for the negative effects of living in concentrated poverty. Endogenous explanations focus on processes whereby the social identity or behavior of one resident has a direct effect on the social identity or behavior of every other resident. Specifically, empirical evidence has been found for three hypotheses about negative social processes in disadvantaged neighborhoods. These hypotheses are summarized here only briefly since they have been reviewed extensively (for example by Dietz, 2002; Sampson, Morenoff, et al., 2002; Small and Newman, 2001) and are discussed in more detail in the empirical chapters of this dissertation.

Hypotheses about endogenous mechanisms behind neighborhood effects start from different perspectives on social relations. Two hypotheses use an individual perspective and focus on the role that meaningful social relations in the neighborhood such as relatives, friends or acquaintances, play in shaping whether and how residents look for work. First, negative socialization hypotheses suggest that residents might develop deviant norms, values and behavior through interaction with others. With respect to work negative socialization might result in lower aspirations and expectations about one’s career opportunities or deviant work ethics that have elsewhere been described as cultures of poverty or cultures of unemployment (Engbersen, Schuyt, et al., 1993; Lewis, 1968). Generally, a distinction is made between negative socialization through peers and negative socialization through adult role models (Briggs, 1998).

Second, the social network hypothesis focuses on the role local that social relations play in providing social resources and access to information and formal institutions. This hypothesis for neighborhood effects on socio-economic outcomes uses an individual social capital approach (Lin, 2001; Wellman and Wortley, 1990; Wellman, 1992). The assumption is that residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods lack the necessary social resources and information to improve their social
Living in concentrated poverty

Both the social isolation and socialization hypotheses are based on the assumption that local social contacts make up an important part of residents’ social networks. However, it has long been acknowledged that physical proximity does not necessarily lead to social relations (Schnell and Yoav, 2001; Tienda, 1991; Wellman, 1996). Moreover, as Ellen and Turner (1997, p. 810-811) explain: “The importance of […] neighborhood-based networks depends on a person’s connection outside the neighborhood boundaries. Individuals who have strong family, friendship, or collegial networks that extend beyond the community in which they live are less likely to be influenced by their immediate surroundings […] But people who lack these larger networks may be much more dependent on services and supports within the neighborhood. As a result, vulnerable individuals may be severely constrained by a neighborhood in which few people work in decent-paying jobs”. Consequently, in order to establish the relevance of local social relations for labor market prospects, one should study neighborhood contacts in relation to people’s social network outside the neighborhood (Friedrichs and Blasius, 2003; Kearns and Parkinson, 2001).

A third explanation for the negative impact of neighborhood poverty on individual outcomes focuses on (the lack of) social interaction between residents in the public domain. The social disorganization model explains neighborhood effects on the basis of physical and social disorder in disadvantaged neighborhoods which is facilitated by a lack of informal social control and collective monitoring in public space (Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999). In the research literature this is also referred to as a lack of collective efficacy, social cohesion or structural social capital. Although the social disorganization model does not explicitly focus on economic outcomes, it can be hypothesized that neighborhood disorder in disadvantaged neighborhoods resulting from a lack of social control might cause residents to retreat from the public realm into their private homes, limiting their contacts with other residents and thereby limiting their access to informal social resources. This might result in a lack of social resources rather than ineffective social resources as described by the social isolation hypothesis. In addition, it can be hypothesized that negative socialization might occur by seeing how familiar strangers – that is, other residents that are not part of one’s network but that one nevertheless recognizes by face - behave in the public domain (Lofland, 1973). An example frequently referred to with respect to work ethics is how seeing local drug dealers flaunt their money and emphasize their social dominance in the neighborhood might lead children growing up in the area to glamorize criminal careers over a career in the formal labor market and to develop different aspirations about their own careers.

1.3 Contextuality of neighborhood effects

Most empirical evidence for neighborhood effects and their underlying mechanisms has been found in the United States, but recently neighborhood effect research has gained ground in Europe as well. The general assumption is that neighborhood effects are smaller in the European than the American context due to the substantial differences in welfare state interventions aimed at reducing inequalities between people and between neighborhoods (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001; Musterd and Andersson, 2005; Musterd, Murie, et al., 2006). It has therefore been suggested that the relatively heterogeneous population composition in low-income neighborhoods in European cities and the living conditions in these neighborhoods might not reach the necessary thresholds of concentrated poverty to evoke neighborhood effects. This argument is thought to be particularly relevant for social welfare states such as the Netherlands. Levels of socio-economic and ethnic segregation in Dutch cities have been traditionally low (Aalbers and Deurloo, 2003; Laan Bouma-Doff, 2007; Pinkster, 2006) as a result of a large supply of affordable social housing, extensive redistribution programs of the central government and active involvement of the central and local government in low-income neighborhoods (Arbaci, 2007; Musterd and Ostendorf, 1998).

Nevertheless, in recent years a number of European studies have found significant evidence for small negative neighborhood effects on socio-economic outcomes. The most convincing evidence comes from a number of recent Swedish studies (Andersson, Musterd, et al., 2007; Galster, Andersson, et al., 2007; Musterd, Andersson, et al., 2008). These studies are also of interest to the Dutch context because one would expect that neighborhood effects are even less likely to occur in Sweden in view of the specific configuration of the Swedish comprehensive welfare state. The researchers show that a certain degree of socio-economic mix can generate positive effects for the earnings of low-income residents as long as the social distance between residents is not too great. These neighborhood effects vary on the basis of gender and employment status. For example, low-income males who are not fully employed benefit from living amongst middle-income neighbors, while low-income males who are fully employed benefit more from living amongst high-income neighbors. With respect to ethnic neighborhood composition the findings indicate that living in own-group concentrations initially benefits immigrants’ income. However, over time this has a negative effect on their income. In addition, living in a neighborhood context which is dominated by ethnic minorities of different backgrounds also negatively impacts residents’ income, except when the vast majority of residents is employed. The magnitude of these negative neighborhood effects differs from one ethnic group to another.

Empirical evidence from the Dutch context is less systematic, but nevertheless revealed small but significant neighborhood effects on socio-economic outcomes in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty (Klaauw and Ours, 2003; Musterd, Vos, et al., 2003) and in neighborhoods with high concentrations of ethnic minorities (Laan Bouma-Doff, 2005, 2008; Uunk, 2002). In line with the Swedish studies, negative neighborhood effects seem to differ for different groups of residents. For example, Van der Klaauw en Van Ours found that living in a neighborhood with high levels of unemployment had negative consequences for the transition from welfare to work for young native-Dutch residents, but not for older native-Dutch or immigrant residents. So far no studies have been done that explain the differential effects on socio-economic outcomes in the European and specifically the Dutch context. It is therefore unclear how these effects should be interpreted.

1.4 Research approach

The present study aims to understand how differential neighborhood effects on socio-economic
Living in concentrated poverty as the creation of local social networks and the construction of ‘safe’ places in the neighborhood meaningfully attachment to their residential surroundings through diverse social activities such representations disregard the fact that a lot of residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods form a sexual residents are the ‘victims’ of mechanisms of socialization, social networks, etc. However such neighborhood effects emphasize the social pathologies of disadvantaged neighborhoods, whereby individ-
ual actions reproduce detrimental local social practices, they nevertheless serve a purpose in residents’ daily lives. One criticism of neighborhood effects studies on explanatory mechanisms is therefore that they ignore the spatial dimensions of residents’ actions and the way in which they engage and disengage in social life. Consequently, the spatiality of residents’ social lives is a central theme in the present study.

The research uses an exploratory case study approach which can be particularly valuable for studying the causal pathways behind systematic social phenomena and developing new ideas or adapt existing theories about these social phenomena (Gerring, 2007; Yin, 2003). The neighborhood of Transvaal-Noord in The Hague was selected as an extreme case to study the previously described endogenous neighborhood effect mechanisms. Transvaal is one of the most marginalized areas in the Netherlands in terms of both poverty concentration (SCP and CBS, 2007) and ethnic concentra-
tion and the expectation was that, if neighborhood effects and their underlying social mechanisms occur anywhere in the Dutch context, Transvaal might be a likely candidate. At the same time, it represents a mild case from an international perspective and can thus provide an interesting viewpoint on the question of how severe neighborhood conditions need to be to generate neighborhood effects.

The neighborhood of Transvaal is compared to the adjacent socio-economically mixed neigh-
borhood of Regentesse. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used to study potentially detrimental social processes at the local level (Yin, 2003). A survey on social networks was carried out in 2006 in the two neighborhoods (see paragraph 1.4.1). In addition, intensive qualitative fieldwork was conducted in Transvaal over a period of nine months in 2005 and 2006 to study local job search strategies and work ethics resulting from local processes of socialization (see paragraph 1.4.2).

1.4.1 Survey
The survey on social networks of residents in the low-income neighborhood of Transvaal and the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse was carried out amongst potential labor force participants in the age group 18 – 65. Because individual income data are unavailable and a selection question for respondents at the beginning of an interview about one’s personal income was considered to be problematic, the selection criterion of living in social housing served as a proxy for having a low income. Respondents were selected randomly from an address database of social housing units in the two neighborhoods provided by the local government. The survey questionnaires were collected face-to-face in residents’ homes by experienced interviewers from the research office Labyrinth. They specialize in conducting interviews with respondents of ethnic minority background, who also form the majority of social housing residents in this study. Respondents were approached by interviewers of different and where possible matching ethnic backgrounds. The response was 56 % and similar in the two neighborhoods.

As shown in the conceptual framework, the present study explicitly makes a distinction be-
 tween on the one hand socio-economic outcomes such as labor market participation and on the other hand individual economic behavior in the form of job search strategies and the attitudes with respect to work that shape this behavior. This distinction between outcomes and behavior reflects a problematic issue in neighborhood effect research about how to conceptualize the relationship between residential context and individual action. In general, neighborhood effect studies tend to represent disadvantaged residents as passive objects of detrimental neighborhood-based processes and ignore how concrete actions by residents (re)produce and transform such processes (Gotham, 2003). For example, the described hypotheses on the endogenous mechanisms behind neighbor-
hood effects emphasize the social pathologies of disadvantaged neighborhoods, whereby individ-
al residents are the ‘victims’ of mechanisms of socialization, social networks, etc. However such representations disregard the fact that a lot of residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods form a meaningful attachment to their residential surroundings through diverse social activities such as the creation of local social networks and the construction of ‘safe’ places in the neighborhood

1 In the rest of this dissertation ‘Transvaal-Noord’ will be abbreviated to ‘Transvaal’ as the residents call it.
The structured survey questionnaire (see Appendix I) included a number of questions about respondents' employment situation, their job search strategies and the role of neighbors in their search for jobs. In order to study the relationship between social networks and labor market participation, the survey distinguished between social networks as potential job information networks and social networks as actual support networks. Residents' potential access to job information was measured using the position generator method (Gaag, 2005; Lin and Dumin, 1986). This individual social capital tool measures the socio-economic diversity of respondents' networks. Actual support that residents receive from network members to deal with problems in everyday life was measured using the resource generator method, an individual social capital measurement tool that focuses on practical support and advice (Gaag and Snijders, 2005). Finally, to acquire some insight into selection mechanisms between the two neighborhoods the survey also included questions about people’s residential history, their appreciation of the neighborhood and their wish to move out of the neighborhood. The survey data were analyzed using the statistical software program SPSS.

Practical problems encountered in conducting a survey amongst low-income residents

Low educated and ethnic minority respondents are notoriously problematic categories in most survey-based research. In view of the population composition in Transvaal several measures were therefore taken to ensure the validity and response rate of the survey. First, during the test phase of the questionnaire it soon became apparent that the original choice of the name generator method for individual social capital was not suitable for this research population. Not only did the principle of asking respondents for their friends’ and relatives’ names raise privacy issues, the method is also very time-consuming. These two factors caused half of the thirty test respondents to quit halfway through the questionnaire. Consequently, the choice was made to switch to the anonymous resource generator method. Nevertheless, the resource generator method also raised an unforeseen problem. The questions are formulated hypothetically, i.e. do you know anybody who might be able to lend you a large amount of money, for example 3500 euros? In comparison to the survey of Social Network of the Dutch (SSND, Volker and Flap, 2002) that served as a reference for the questionnaire in this study, a relatively large proportion of respondents would answer that they would never borrow money. Even after explaining that the question was hypothetical (what if?), some respondents would still say that the question did not apply (75% compared to 15% of the SSND respondents). Apparently, it is much harder for the uneducated and low educated respondents in this study to envision such hypothetical situations than it is for the ‘average’ Dutchman or woman. As a result, a relatively large number of values were missing for each resource item. Besides adapting the content of the questionnaire, several measures were taken to raise the response level. The choice was made to collect the survey face-to-face in view of the fact that a lot of social housing residents in Transvaal do not have landline phones and quite a number of them do not read Dutch well enough to answer a written survey. Potential respondents were approached by young interviewers with ethnic minority backgrounds which matched those of the respondents whenever possible. An announcement letter was sent in four different languages (Dutch, English, Turkish and Arabic) and interviewers would skip an 1-came-by-note under the door if they did not find anyone at home. Nevertheless, even when respondents were home, some were (initially) hesitant to open the door out of safety concerns or because they were worried about privacy issues. For example, one resident sent an e-mail to explain that he was willing to participate, but only if an appointment was made by the phone. He never responded to the door bell out of concern that the visitors were the social services or a debt collection agency. All of these factors made the process of collecting 400 questionnaires a time-consuming and intensive exercise.

1.4.2 Qualitative fieldwork

The qualitative fieldwork consisted of formal interviews with neighborhood experts and low-income residents. Additional research material took the form of numerous chance conversations with residents, for example in the local public park and playgrounds, attending a large number of neighborhood meetings, child-related activities and local festivities and secondary sources such as local newspapers, websites, etc.

The interviews with 24 neighborhood experts provided insight into the informal social structures within the neighborhood, the role that local social contacts play in residents’ social lives, with particular attention for work-related support, the degree to which the neighborhood experts had encountered processes of negative socialization with respect to work and the degree of neighborhood disorder and social disorganization in the area. The experts were professionals such as neighborhood managers, local social workers, local educational officers and law enforcement officers, as well as ‘professional’ residents such as neighborhood representatives, members of informal neighborhood organizations, cultural organizations, volunteer workers and other informal key figures.

The expert interviews were followed by 46 interviews with low-income residents of Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese-Hindustani origin of the first and second generation, about half of whom were employed. These groups are the largest in the area and were recognized by the professionals as displaying strong localized networks with varying degrees of self-organization and social control within these networks. Residents were approached in local playgrounds and parks and through various formal and informal organizations, quite often with the help of key figures in the community. To engage respondents who otherwise would not have committed to an interview and to overcome potential language problems some interviews were conducted by research assistants of Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds. In order to reduce researcher biases, the assistants were trained during a number of sessions how to work with the interview topic list and sat in on a number of interviews by the primary researcher.

The semi-structured in-depth interviews focused on three different topics (see Appendix II). In order to acquire more insight into selection mechanisms in the neighborhood, questions were included about people’s residential history, the positive and negative aspects of living in the neighborhood and their wish to move out of the neighborhood. A second topic was residents’ personal social networks. A distinction was made between contacts that originated in the neighborhood and relations that resulted from other shared characteristics such as extended family connections, work relations or shared cultural or religious affiliations. Questions were included on the extent to which residents had social contacts with their close neighbors and other people in the neighborhood, and on their perception of their fellow residents. Questions were also included on the actual content of these relations, from recognizing each other on the street to different forms of social support. Similar questions were asked about people’s personal backgrounds, family situation and extended family and friends networks. The final section focused on the residents’ employment situation and history, their job search strategies, the importance attached to work and, more generally, their perceptions of the importance of work and education. The qualitative fieldwork data were analyzed using the statistical software program Atlas ti.
Practical problems in conducting fieldwork in a disadvantaged neighborhood

It is worthwhile devoting a few informal words on the process of doing fieldwork in Transvaal. Many residents in Transvaal are distrustful of strangers in general and outsiders in particular, a category that I as a young, high-educated, native-Dutch, blond female unavoidably fit into (This outsider status was not only explicitly referred to by numerous interviewees but also illustrated by the fact that I was approached in the second week on one of the local playgrounds by a young Moroccan. Within 30 minutes he asked me whether I was married and was I maybe looking for a husband? He was, so he explained, looking for a residence permit). Being unfamiliar with the concept of academic research a lot of residents were initially quite suspicious and reticent about participating and providing referrals. A contributing factor were concerns about further stigmatization of the neighborhood and/or ethnic minority residents and concerns about anonymity with respect to social services and housing associations (as illicit work and illegal subletting often form a source of additional income). This was not only the experience of the researcher, but also of a number of key figures who had considerable social standing in the area and an extensive local social network that they tried to ‘tap’ for potential respondents. As a result, it soon became apparent that conducting interviews with the least integrated and most disadvantaged residents did not just require passing through the neighborhood, but hanging around, being seen and engaging in a lot of informal chats as preparation for ‘real’ interviews. As a result the fieldwork became more and more ‘ethnographic’ in nature, resulting in a wealth of additional research material. Nevertheless, ‘hanging around’ for nine months does not make one an insider and I doubt whether living in Transvaal would ever make me one. Yet, becoming a familiar stranger also had benefits, as acquainted residents increasingly seemed to feel a need to explain ‘how things worked’. For example, a somewhat tense interview with an unemployed resident of Moroccan descent left me wondering why he was so reticent about his employment history and about the education and employment situation of his children. However, an acquainted resident had seen me with the interviewee and provided me with the missing background: yes, the interviewee received welfare benefits, but he actually illegally owned the job agency just around the corner, where one of his sons also worked illegally driving employees to large food production centers. The other son was currently in jail for drug dealing. In ways like this I thus became part of the local gossip chains which provided access to secondary and sometimes unforeseen research material that would have otherwise remained hidden.

1.4.3 ‘Bounding’ the neighborhood

An important issue in neighborhood effect research concerns the question of how to conceptualize or ‘bound’ the neighborhood. Most quantitative neighborhood effect studies have used administrative boundaries to define neighborhoods. However, the relatively large geographical units rarely correspond to the area that residents identify as their neighborhood (Galster, 2008). Various researchers have therefore argued that neighborhood studies should discriminate between multiple scales of neighborhood, depending on the attributes that one is looking at (Galster, 2001; Kearns and Parkinson, 2000; Suttles, 1972). For example, when studying local social relations or residents’ daily activity patterns, the ‘home area’ (an area that lies within a 5 to 10 minutes walk of residents’ home) or the ‘defended neighborhood’ (an area that residents identify with and distinguish from other ‘neighborhoods’ on the basis of morphological boundaries such as roads or canals) might form a more relevant neighborhood scale than the geographical units for which statistical data on population composition are available. Moreover, to complicate things further, even when conceptualizing neighborhood as a home area or a defended neighborhood, determining what constitutes such neighborhoods is a highly subjective process. The fact that neighborhoods are not ‘neatly segregated geographical spaces’ means that they cannot be identified with single types of people and activities and that they are experienced differently by individual residents (Sayer, 2000, p. 114).

Such conceptual difficulties with respect to neighborhood scale and interpersonal differences in neighborhood boundaries apply equally to qualitative studies, which unavoidably have to select respondents for interviews or choose locations for observations. The value of a qualitative research approach, however, is that such different interpretations as to what neighborhood and neighbors mean can be made explicit. As a result, while living within the administrative area of Transvaal was the selection criteria for respondents in this study for both the interviews and the survey, what constituted the neighborhood was not prescribed and left to the perception of the respondents. Nevertheless, the interviews show that for many residents this area functions both as a ‘home area’ - one can walk from east to west or north to south in approximately 10-15 minutes - and as a ‘defended neighborhood’ with which they identified. The research area is clearly bounded by large thoroughfares in the east, west and north and was recognized by many residents as ‘their’ neighborhood (see Figure 2). This is probably also partly due to efforts by the local government to create a unique local identity and to get residents to participate in local activities.

Figure 2: The neighborhood of Transvaal-Noord
1.5 Reading guide

Chapters 2 through 5 use the qualitative and quantitative data to study different aspects of the causal pathways in low-income neighborhoods that might lead to unfavorable socio-economic outcomes. These chapters represent four empirical papers submitted to international journals. The papers use different perspectives to provide more insight into the meaning that the local social context has for concrete economic behavior and long-term socio-economic prospects of residents (see Figure 3).

A basic assumption behind endogenous explanations for neighborhood effects is that the networks of residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods are locally oriented. This assumption is tested in Chapter 2, which focuses on the social network hypothesis. The survey data are used to compare the locality of residents’ social networks in the low-income neighborhood of Transvaal and the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse and show the degree to which local social relations provide access to resources. The findings of the two individual social capital measurement tools indicate that social housing residents in the low-income neighborhood do not differ from their counterparts in the mixed neighborhood in the degree to which they receive social support to deal with the problems of everyday life. However, small differences were found in the socio-economic composition of their networks and access to different social positions.

Chapter 3 further explores the consequences of the differences in network composition of social housing residents in the two neighborhoods for their employment situation. The findings show that having a constricted social network limits residents’ access to job information and negatively affects labor market participation. At the same time, the constricted social networks of social housing residents in the low-income neighborhood cannot simply be explained by the high degree of neighborhood orientation of their networks. Rather, an explanation should be sought in the nature of local social relations.

Chapters 4 and 5 use the qualitative research material from Transvaal to further explore which mechanisms constrict residents’ social networks and influence their job search strategies and work ethics. While Chapter 4 focuses on intra-group processes that are processes within residents’ social networks, Chapter 5 focuses on potentially detrimental mechanisms associated with the public domain in disadvantaged neighborhoods. In addition, these chapters provide insight into the question of how the differential neighborhood effects found in quantitative studies might be explained.

Chapter 4 explores how the job search strategies and work ethics of residents are influenced by the local social context. With respect to job search strategies the fieldwork material indicates that informal job networks in Transvaal constitute an important source of employment. In addition, residents also find work through familiar social institutions in the neighborhood. However, while such local job search strategies might be logical behavior from a short-term perspective, findings indicate that they can have negative long-term consequences for residents’ employment opportunities. In addition, with respect to work ethics the chapter shows how socialization processes within local informal social structures might shape residents’ work ethics and expectations, thereby potentially contributing to unfavorable socio-economic outcomes. At the same time, these processes of negative socialization and the negative processes related to residents’ local job search strategies are selective rather than generic and long-term negative outcomes are often obscured by the short term benefits of such actions.

Subsequently, Chapter 5 explores processes of social disorganization, neighborhood disorder and socialization outside residents’ own social network that might negatively influence the long-term socio-economic prospects in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Because such potential negative influences are thought to be particularly relevant for children growing up in disadvantaged neighborhoods, the question is raised to what extent parents in Transvaal regard their neighborhood as a problematic place to raise their children and which negative influences they identify as a threat to their children’s development. Although parents do not explicitly connect mechanisms of social disorganization, neighborhood disorder and socialization to economic behavior of their children, the associated antisocial behavior such as dropping out of school or pursuing criminal activities undoubtedly have negative long-term consequences for children’s work ethics and employment opportunities. At the same time, the findings indicate that residents develop a variety of strategies to guide their children safely through the neighborhood, which potentially contributes to the long-term differential effects found in quantitative studies.

Chapter 6 synthesizes the findings in the previous chapters. It presents some hypotheses about the way in which the different mechanisms interact and lead to differential neighborhood effects on socio-economic outcomes. In addition, the case of Transvaal is put into a comparative perspective. Finally, the findings are used to formulate a number of suggestions for future research and reflect on current urban policy practices in the context of the Netherlands.

**Figure 3:** Research perspective of different chapters

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References


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Local social networks and social resources in two Dutch neighborhoods

Submitted. Co-authored by Beate Völker.

Abstract
Much research in neighbor relations is inspired by two research questions. First, one wants to know to which degree social contacts are local and in particular whether local social contacts in disadvantaged neighborhoods bear an instrumental disadvantage. Second, one wants to know whether policies aiming at mixing people from different social and ethnic backgrounds result in more diverse networks and therefore in better opportunities for low income residents. To address these questions, we compare the role of local relationships and the social resources they provide in a low income neighborhood and a socio-economic mixed neighborhood in The Netherlands. Contrary to assumptions in the research literature, residents in the low income neighborhood do not differ from their counterparts in the mixed neighborhood in the degree to which they receive social support for dealing with everyday problems. However, networks of low income residents provided less resources in terms of accessed prestige.

Keywords: neighbor relations, social networks, social resources

2.1 Introduction
The undesired consequences of concentrated poverty are a recurring topic in the political debate on low income neighborhoods in the Netherlands as well as in many other Western European countries and in the United States. Recently, the Dutch Ministry of the Interior has expressed strong concerns about segregation in the larger cities: “While the physical and economic infrastructure [of cities] has shown a strong improvement in recent years, the urban social structure continues to be confronted with a concentration of low income households, exclusion, non-participation, health problems, safety issues, and non-integration” (BZK, 2004, p. 17). The debate about disadvantaged neighborhoods centers on the question of how segregation inhibits integration and how living in an area of concentrated poverty exacerbates the already marginalized position of poor, low educated and/or minority residents (Musterd, 2003). Although empirical evidence for such neighborhood effects is relatively scarce and inconclusive in the European context (Galster, 2007), these concerns have nevertheless contributed to policies of social mixing. In Dutch low income neighborhoods renewal programs replace social housing with more upscale rental and owner occupied housing in order to attract more affluent residents.
Living in concentrated poverty isolation might occur. Indeed, while the case of Netherlands (Ostendorf, Musterd, et al., 2001; Musterd & De Vos, 2007): levels of socio-economic thresholds of concentrated poverty to evoke processes such as social isolation (Musterd, Murie, Yoav, 2001), it has also been shown that this is less the case for unskilled, low income and minority residents (Fischer, 1982). Consequently, the ‘limited resource’ or ‘social isolation’ hypothesis for neighborhood effects assumes that the social networks of residents in low income neighborhoods are particularly local oriented and lack useful social resources to improve their lives (Wilson, 1987). This paper builds upon this argument by studying the social relationships of people who reside in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

We use survey data from a case study in The Hague, the Netherlands to compare the degree to which social resources are provided through local relationships. Our interviews were conducted with social housing residents in the low income neighborhood Transvaal-Noord and the socio-economically mixed neighborhood Regentense. A Dutch case study on local social networks can provide an interesting perspective on the question of how severe neighborhood conditions need to be to trigger processes of social isolation. Many neighborhood studies are driven by the assumption that the relatively heterogeneous population composition in low income neighborhoods in European cities and the living conditions in these neighborhoods might not reach the necessary thresholds of concentrated poverty to evoke processes such as social isolation (Musterd, Murie, et al., 2006). This argument is thought to be particularly relevant for social welfare states such as Netherlands (Ostendorf, Musterd, et al., 2001; Musterd & De Vos, 2007): levels of socio-economic and ethnic segregation in Dutch cities have been traditionally low as a result of a large supply of affordable social housing, extensive redistribution programs of the welfare state and active involvement of the central and local government in low income neighbourhoods. Indeed, while the case of Transvaal-Noord represents an extreme case of concentrated poverty in the Netherlands, it constitutes a mild case from an international perspective and it is therefore questionable whether social isolation might occur.

2.2 How neighborhoods influence social resources

Social relations form an important source of information and social support (Coleman, 1988; Granovetter, 1995; Lin, 1999). Whom we know, determines what type of social resources are available to us to shape, change and improve our lives. Some relations help us to get by and cope with everyday problems, by babysitting our kids or lending money to pay the rent. Others are more useful to ‘get ahead’ in life by providing information and new opportunities and connecting us to formal institutions or structures, such as the housing or labor market. This is also referred to as the distinction between expressive social resources and instrumental social resources (Lin, 2001; Wellman, 1993). Expressive resources confirm social positions and are generally more abundant than instrumental resources that are thought to facilitate upward social mobility (Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005). This is related to the fact that expressive resources are generally provided by family and friends from similar backgrounds with access to similar information, while instrumental resources are provided by people with different backgrounds who have access to different information and institutions. Often, similar ties are strong, while dissimilar ties are weak (Granovetter, 1973). A more diverse or heterogeneous personal network with more weak ties is thought to provide better instrumental resources or bridging social capital than a homogeneous personal network dominated by strong ties that provide bonding capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998; Halpern, 2005; Portes, 2000; Putnam 2000, 2004). In the case of low income families, a social network existing of network members of similar socio-economic background is therefore expected to bear an instrumental disadvantage.

Researchers who study neighborhoods and the effects of neighborhood characteristics on individual networks and individual well-being often argue that the population composition of the neighborhood influences the degree to which personal social networks are homogeneous or more diverse and thereby the resources available to residents to improve their social position. The neighborhood is viewed as a potential place of interaction where one meets potential network members and the social composition of this meeting place thereby shapes the resulting personal network (Feld, 1981; Verbrugge, 1979; Volker & Flap, 2007; Wellman, 1996). This restriction to the locale is in particular assumed for low income residents who are expected to be more locally oriented in their social contacts, because of their lack in financial or material resources, e.g. to cover larger distances (Briggs, 1997; Dawkins, 2006; Kleit, 2001; MacDonald, Childrick, Webster & Simpson, 2005; Sampson, Morenoff, et al., 2002; Small & Newman, 2001; Small, 2007; Tigges, Brown & Green, 1998). If low income residents also live in a low income neighborhood, this will, consequently, negatively influence the degree to which these residents have access to the different types of resources. This is also referred to as the ‘limited resource’ or ‘social isolation’ hypothesis (Wilson, 1987). Simply put, it is hypothesized that homogeneous low income neighborhoods lead to homogeneous social networks of residents which in particular lack ‘useful’ instrumental resources for climbing up the social ladder. Consequently, low income residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods are expected to be worse off than their counterparts in more mixed neighborhoods. While local contacts of the former are limited to other low income dwellers, the latter have access to contacts of higher socio-economic positions. For residents in a low income neighborhood, therefore, it can be said that they lack the useful contacts with more affluent and better educated neighbors, even though they might receive various forms of personal support from their neighbors. In contrast, the networks of low income residents in more mixed or affluent neighborhoods are expected to be more diverse, providing the instrumental resources that facilitate social mobility.

While these ideas have been dominant in shaping policy measures, questions can be raised about the actual importance of neighborhood contacts for low income residents and the nature of
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other forms of neighborhood disorder (Ross, Mirowsky & Pribesh, 2001; Sampson, Morenoff, et al., 2002). This perspective on social life in disadvantaged neighborhoods offers the bleakest hypothesis about access to social resources: living isolated not only from mainstream society but also from each other, residents lack any kind of support.

To summarize, there are competing hypotheses about the role of neighborhoods in influencing the structure (homogeneous/heterogeneous) and type of social resources (expressive/instrumental) and networks available to low income residents. There is, however, little empirical evidence to support or reject these hypotheses in the context of the Netherlands, as well as elsewhere. The aim of this paper is therefore to compare the personal social networks of residents in the social housing sector in two urban neighborhoods in their degree of local orientation, socio-economic structure and support. The following research questions will be addressed:

1. To what degree are personal social networks of social housing residents in a low income neighborhood and mixed neighborhood locally oriented?

2. How do the social networks of social housing residents in the two neighborhoods differ in terms of socio-economic prestige, the importance of family ties, and ethnic composition?

3. Do social housing residents in the two neighborhoods differ in the amount of social support provided via their network?

2.3 Research design

To address these research questions a case study was conducted in two neighborhoods in The Hague, The Netherlands. The Hague shows the highest level of residential segregation in the Netherlands and income segregation has increased over a period of six years, despite a decline in low income residents overall (SCP & CBS, 2003). Within this urban context, two research areas were selected with different levels of socio-economic mix. Both neighborhoods are centrally located and were built in the late nineteenth century. The first neighborhood can be viewed as an ‘extreme’ case: the low income neighborhood of Transvaal-Noord is one of the most marginalized neighborhoods in the city. The share of households with an income below the poverty line is more than twice the city average and unemployment is high. The adjacent neighborhood of Regentessekwartier was selected based on the fact that this is one of the few socio-economically mixed neighborhoods in the city. The share of households below the poverty line is still only one third of all households in the neighborhood.
In these neighborhoods, a survey was performed amongst social housing residents between the age of 18 and 65. As the selection of residents on the basis of income is rather problematic - data on personal incomes at the individual level are unavailable and a selection question about one's personal income at the beginning of an interview is rather tricky - residents were selected on the basis of living in social housing. Respondents were randomly selected from an address database provided by the local government of all social housing units in the two neighborhoods. In view of the relatively large share of low-educated and minority residents, 399 questionnaires were collected face-to-face by interviewers of different, and where possible matching, ethnic backgrounds.

To gather information about residents' social networks the survey used a combination of methods. The questionnaire included some general questions about the residential location of respondents, family and friends. Because neighbourhoods are “neatly segregated geographical spaces” (Sayer, 2000) and are experienced differently by individual residents, it was left to the subjective perception of residents whether network members lived 'in the neighborhood'.

In addition, two individual social capital methods, the position generator method and the resource generator method, were used to collect more detailed information about the resources in and locality of residents’ networks. These individual social capital measures were partially adapted from the Social Survey of the Networks of the Dutch (SSND, see Volker & Flap, 2002). The first method, the position generator, provides insight in the degree to which respondents potentially have access to social resources by measuring the different occupational positions of their network members (Lin & Dumin, 1986; Lin, 2001). The assumption behind this measurement instrument is that network members with a higher job prestige can give access to better instrumental resources that are needed to improve their social position, such as finding a job. For disadvantaged residents, such relations with people in prestige-rich positions might thus act as bridging or weak ties. To measure the prestige of respondent’s social networks, they were confronted with a list of 22 occupations, ranging from domestic work to being a judge. If they knew anyone with such a job, they were asked the ethnic background of network members, whether they lived in the neighborhood and the nature of the relationship (family, extended family or friends and acquaintances; in contrast to other studies the categories of friends and acquaintances were combined, because this distinction was not made and understood by respondents). For each occupation or position a prestige score was calculated based on standardized codes for occupations of the Central Bureau of Statistics. These scores were used to create four indicators for socio-economic diversity: the percentage of occupations known, the range in accessed prestige calculated as the difference between the highest position and the lowest position, the prestige score of the network member with the highest occupational position and an average prestige indicator.

The second measurement instrument for social resources, the resource generator, (Van der Gaag & Snijders, 2005) determines the degree to which residents receive various forms of social support in their daily lives from alters in their social network. Questions about practical support in the personal or home domain (i.e. helping out with the groceries in case you’re sick or giving advice in case of family problems at home) provide information about residents’ access to expressive resources. Questions about support in dealing with formal or political institutions, financial support and support with regards to work are used to measure instrumental resources. In this survey, respondents were confronted with a list of 11 examples of personal and leverage support. They were asked whether anyone in their surroundings could provide such support, and if so, what their relationship was and whether this person lived in the neighborhood.

Finally, the survey included questions about respondents’ residential history, their reasons for moving to the neighborhood, the degree to which they were satisfied with the neighborhood and their wish to move. These questions were raised to give some insight into the degree to which residential selection mechanisms might be related to local social networks. A danger in comparative studies is “to mistake neighborhood or other effects for selection effects with a group of ‘upwardly mobile poor’ who differ by internal position or motivation to succeed” (Briggs, 1998, p. 196). The question is thus whether potentially different outcomes in the location, structure and resources of residents’ networks can be attributed to differences in residential context rather than solely to compositional differences of the two neighborhood groups. To address the issue of selection further differences between the two neighborhood groups will be analyzed whilst controlling for individual characteristics of residents such as ethnic background or level of education. Nevertheless, the issue of selection remains a methodological caveat (Galster, 2008).

### 2.4 Research population

In both neighborhoods, our respondents scored lower in terms of level of education and employment than the neighborhood average and belonged more often to an ethnic minority (see Table 2). This is expected considering our selection of respondents in the social housing sector and their

| Table 2: Demographics research area (Source: Statistics Netherlands 2004) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Residents (n)               | Transvaal (Low income) 4350 | Regentessae (Mixed) 5030 |
| Social housing (%)          | 76                         | 27                       |
| Share of families with income below poverty line, of which... | 33                         | 18                       |
| On unemployment benefits    | 53                         | 43                       |
| Share of families with income in highest income group (top 20%) | 5                          | 14                       |
| Average yearly disposable income (per person in euros) | 8,300                      | 12,300                   |
| Working population without job (%) | 50                        | 28                       |
| Household structure (%)     | Single 64                   | 52                       |
|                            | Family, no kids 19          | 24                       |
|                            | Family with kids 37         | 26                       |
| Non Dutch (%), of which...  | Surinamese 18              | 26                       |
|                            | Turkish 24                  | 6                        |
|                            | Moroccan 16                 | 6                        |
|                            | Immigrant non-developed country 19 | 13                  |
|                            | Immigrant developed country 3 | 11                       |
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relatively low socio-economic positions compared to residents in the owner-occupied or private rental sector in these neighborhoods. The two residents groups differ in some aspects: social housing residents in the low income neighborhood of Transvaal are more often unemployed than their counterparts in the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse and the level of education is somewhat lower. The ethnic composition of the two neighborhood populations differs greatly in that residents in Transvaal are more often of minority background and of different ethnic backgrounds. At the same time the two neighborhood groups do not differ in terms of migration history, age or sex.

Table 2: Respondents’ demographics by neighborhood (N=399)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Transvaal (Low income)</th>
<th>Regentesse (Mixed income)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (mean in years)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school (4 years)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school (4+ years)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University/Professional training</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed (%)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational prestige (current or last job in %)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household structure (%), of which</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family, no kids</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with kids</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Dutch (%), of which</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinamese</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant non-developed country</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant developed country</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First generation (imm. as adult)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First generation (imm. as child)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second generation</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to their residential history and intentions to move, no differences were found between the two neighborhood groups. More than one third of the respondents indicated that the move to their current neighborhood was a conscious choice and one in every three residents had family or acquaintances living in the neighborhood before they moved there. In the low income neighborhood of Transvaal, family relations were more important, while in the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse friends and acquaintances were more important. The average length of residence is rather similar in both neighborhoods which is unexpected in view of the fact that one might expect the low income neighborhood to be more of a transition neighborhood or at least a neighborhood that people want to leave, if possible. This does not seem to be the case. In fact, three out of four of the residents in Transvaal feel at home in the neighborhood. Also, the share of residents who want to move does not differ between the neighborhoods, although residents from Transvaal more often want to leave the area.

2.5 Local social networks

Respondents were asked to what degree their family, friends and acquaintances lived within their own neighborhood. Results indicate that social housing residents in both neighborhoods are to a considerable degree locally oriented in their social contacts: one out of four residents indicate that the majority of their family lives in their own neighborhood and one in every three residents indicates that the majority of their friends and acquaintances live within the neighborhood. Thus, the neighborhood can be regarded as a very important place for social interaction. Further analyses show that residents in the two neighborhoods show remarkably similar degrees of local orientation in their social networks, despite the differences in their educational and social backgrounds (see Table 3).

Table 3: OLS Regression analysis for degree of neighborhood orientation of social network (standardized coefficients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Family members</th>
<th>Friends and acquaintances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex (ref=male)</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.144**</td>
<td>-0.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (ref=low)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
<td>-0.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority (ref=Dutch)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinamese</td>
<td>0.192**</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>0.191**</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>0.376***</td>
<td>0.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Western immigrants</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-western immigrants</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with children</td>
<td>-0.100</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income neighborhood (Transvaal)</td>
<td>-0.093</td>
<td>0.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in neighborhood</td>
<td>0.149**</td>
<td>0.154***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model summary

| R2 | 0.113 | 0.049 |
| N  | 319   | 330   |

Statistically significant: *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10; a not measured for resource items
Several other factors determine the degree to which residents are locally oriented in their social networks. In the case of family networks residents of Surinamese, Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds are considerably more neighborhood oriented than Dutch and other minority residents. Younger residents are more neighborhood oriented than older residents, which probably relates to the fact that younger residents are often second generation immigrants who grew up in the neighborhood. Also of importance is how long one has lived in the neighborhood. Finally, families with children are slightly less neighborhood oriented than other households. Gender, employment and level of education, on the other hand, do not influence the degree of neighborhood orientation. In contrast, the share of friends and acquaintances in the neighborhood is much less easy to predict on the basis of individual characteristics such as age or ethnicity. Only the number of years that residents have resided in the neighborhood is positively related to a more localized network.

These findings indicate that the social networks of social housing residents in both the low income and the mixed neighborhood are considerably locally oriented. It does not, however, provide insight into the question of who these neighborhood contacts are and to what degree they provide social resources. Our next steps in the analysis is therefore to look at respondents’ potential access to instrumental resources based on the socio-economic prestige in their networks and the degree to which they actually receive various forms of social support.

**Socio-economic prestige**

The socio-economic pattern of residents’ social networks was measured using a position generator method, as described previously, as an indicator for respondents’ potential access to instrumental resources. The findings are reported in Table 4. On average, our respondents know only about 22 % of the possible occupations, which is low compared to what is known from the Dutch population (49 %, source: Van der Gaag, 2004). There is some difference between the two neighborhoods in terms of this indicator for socio-economic prestige: residents in the mixed neighborhood know slightly more people than the residents in the low income neighborhood. This suggests that there is a small, but statistically significant difference in network size. There is little difference, however, in terms of the highest position accessed, the range of occupations known or the average prestige of the positions accessed. In other words, social housing residents in the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse are acquainted with a slightly larger variety of occupations, but these are not occupations with a higher prestige status.

Table 4 also provides some more insight in the structure of residents’ networks. In terms of neighborhood orientation, almost half of all occupations are accessed through network members that live in the same neighborhood as the respondent. A difference was found between the two neighborhood groups: social housing residents in the low income neighborhood of Transvaal are considerably more neighborhood oriented than residents in Regentesse as far as their accessed prestige is concerned. In terms of the nature of the relations, strong ties are more dominant than weak ties: 60 % of all network members are family rather than friends or acquaintances. Residents in the low income neighborhood refer even more often to family relations rather, of which a considerable share is extended family, than residents in the mixed neighborhood. Finally, in terms of ethnicity, the dominance of the own ethnic group in residents’ networks and the small share of Dutch network members is striking: more than half of the non-family ties have the same ethnic background as the respondents and the majority of them are other ethnic minorities. If we include kinship ties, 84 % of residents’ social network is of similar ethnic background as the respondent. No statistically significant differences were found between the two neighborhoods.

### Table 4: Socio-economic prestige in residents’ networks in percent (N=394)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-economic prestige</th>
<th>Transvaal (Low income)</th>
<th>Regentesse (Mixed)</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Share of occupations known</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25***</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range in prestige (diversity)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest prestige</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average prestige</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of accessed positions through neighbor relations</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>38***</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended family</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21***</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/acquaintances</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>50***</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic diversity (incl family relations)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same ethnic background as respondent</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic background than respondent, but also minority</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic background than respondent, Dutch</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic diversity (excl family relations)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same ethnic background as respondent</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic background than respondent, but also minority</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic background than respondent, Dutch</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Difference between neighborhoods statistically significant:** *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10

### Social support

Another way to gain information about respondents’ access to social resources is to measure the degree to which they receive various forms of social support, using the resource generator as described above. As shown in Table 5, in terms of access to social support, the social housing residents indicate that they know someone in 63 % of the case. These scores are relatively low compared to the findings of the Survey of Social networks of the Dutch (71 %, source: Van der Gaag, 2004). There is also considerable variation between the items in how often residents have access to specific forms of support. In general, personal support seems more abundant than leverage support. Indeed, the lowest scores are found for the most concrete examples of leverage support: providing a summer-job for a family member (38 %), borrowing money (42 %) or helping or advising on finding a job (49 %). No statistically significant differences were found between the two neighborhoods in terms of either personal or leverage support, which contradicts the assumptions in the research literature.
While there are no differences between the two neighborhoods in terms of received support, differences exist in the type of network members providing social support. First, kinship ties form the most important source of support: more than half of all support is provided by family members, mostly by direct family (parents, siblings or children) but also by more extended family (cousins, aunts and uncles). Friendship ties are another important source of support, while the role of coworkers or professionals is minimal. Again, there is considerable variation in these findings for different forms of social support (data not shown): two thirds of the expressive resources are provided by family in contrast to half of all information and financial support and less than half of the work-related support. For these forms of support respondents rely more on professional help.

There is also some variation between the two neighborhoods: networks members in the low income neighborhood are more often family relations than in the mixed neighborhood context, in particular due to the role of extended family in Transvaal.

Table 5: Social support in residents’ networks in percent (N=176)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of social support</th>
<th>Transvaal (Low income)</th>
<th>Regentesse (Mixed income)</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal support</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work support</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and financial support</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support through neighborhood contacts</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>58**</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal support</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>64**</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work support</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>43**</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and financial support</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of location, contacts in the neighborhood form an important role in residents’ support networks: 62% of the network members who provide some form of support live in the same neighborhood as the respondent. However, there is considerable difference in the type of support that neighborhood relations provide: support in the personal domain is more often provided by network members living in the neighborhood than other forms of support, in particular work-related support. Moreover, there is considerable difference between the two neighborhoods in the share of neighborhood contacts in their support network: in the low income neighborhood 66% of all contacts live in the neighborhood against 58% in the mixed neighborhood. The contrast between neighborhoods is greatest with regards to work-related support. Thus, while residents at first glance did not differ in the general orientation of their networks (see previous paragraph), they differ with respect to the residential location of those network members who are most important to them.

2.6 Residential context and neighborhood orientation

In the previous paragraph, a picture emerges of rather homogeneous social networks considerably oriented at the neighborhood, particularly amongst social housing residents in the low income neighborhood. Of obvious interest to this study is the question of whether these differences in neighborhood orientation in terms of socio-economic prestige and actual support remain after controlling for differences in population composition.

To gain more insight into the differences between the neighborhoods in the degree to which socio-economic prestige is neighborhood-based, a multivariate regression model was estimated (see Table 6, model 1) including both personal characteristics alone and residential location. The strongest effects on neighborhood based prestige were found for education and ethnicity: compared to respondents with a low education residents’ with a medium and a higher education are less locally oriented in their networks in terms of accessed prestige. Compared to Dutch respondents residents of Moroccan and Turkish background are more locally oriented. Other characteristics, such as gender, having children, being employed, age and years of residence in the neighborhood do not have an effect on the share of network members in the neighborhood. Note that after controlling for these personal characteristics, a relationship remains between neighborhood context and the degree to which socio-economic prestige is neighborhood based, albeit significant only at the .10 level. For residents in the low income neighborhood of Transvaal network prestige is more locally provided than for residents in Regentesse, the mixed neighborhood.

In addition, Table 6 includes two multivariate regression models for the differences found in neighborhood orientation in personal support (model 2) and work-related support (model 3) to discover whether these differences can be explained by personal characteristics or also by residential location. First, in the case of social support in the personal domain, neighborhood orientation is related to various personal characteristics, such as age (negative) and gender (negative for women). Surinamese and Turkish residents are more neighborhood oriented than other ethnic groups and the longer one has lived in the neighborhood, the higher the share of support provided by neighborhood relations. When controlled for these personal characteristics, neighborhood context is no longer a factor of influence in the degree to which neighborhood contacts are an important source of social support. In other words, the differences in neighborhood orientation in terms of personal support between the two neighborhoods can be largely explained by differences in population composition.

In contrast, in the case of work-related support, neighborhood context remains a factor of influence in terms of the degree of neighborhood orientation with regard to work (p<0.10): respondents in the low income neighborhood are considerably more neighborhood oriented in terms of work related support than respondents in the socio-economically mixed neighborhood. This mirrors previous findings reported in a qualitative study on informal job networks in the neighborhood of Transvaal (Pinkster, 2007). Other factors of influence are the number of years of residence (positive) and whether respondents work themselves (negative).
Living in concentrated poverty

Table 6: OLS Regression analysis for degree of neighborhood orientation of a person’s resources (standardized coefficients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1 Position generator</th>
<th>Model 2 Resource generator (personal support)</th>
<th>Model 3 Resource generator (work support)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex (ref=male)</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>-0.153**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.174</td>
<td>-0.100**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (ref=low)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>-0.215**</td>
<td>-0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>-0.130**</td>
<td>-0.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>-0.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority (ref=Dutch)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinamese</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>0.159**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>0.130**</td>
<td>0.279***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>0.273***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Western immigrants</td>
<td>-0.114*</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-western immigrants</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with children</td>
<td>-0.024</td>
<td>0.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income neighborhood (Transvaal)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.117**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in neighborhood</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>-0.119*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model summary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>0.345</td>
<td>0.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1 Prestige</th>
<th>Model 1 Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex (ref=male)</td>
<td>0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (ref=low)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>0.279***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>0.103***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority (ref=Dutch)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinamese</td>
<td>-0.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>-0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>0.166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Western immigrants</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-western immigrants</td>
<td>-0.218***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with children</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>0.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: OLS Regression on socio-economic prestige (share of occupations known) and support in residents’ network (standardized coefficients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1 Prestige</th>
<th>Model 1 Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex (ref=male)</td>
<td>0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (ref=low)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>0.279***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>0.103***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority (ref=Dutch)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinamese</td>
<td>-0.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>-0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.166</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Western immigrants</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-western immigrants</td>
<td>-0.218***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with children</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>0.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Local social networks and social resources

2.7 Neighborhood orientation and social resources

The next question is to what degree a relationship exists between the degree of neighborhood orientation and the amount of accessed prestige and work-related support, which can be considered as indicators of potential instrumental resources, remain after controlling for personal characteristics. The opposite has been shown for the degree to which one receives social support in the personal domain: differences in neighborhood orientation between the two neighborhoods of expressive resources are an expression of differences in personal characteristics.

In short, differences between the residents in the two neighborhoods in neighborhood orientation of socio-economic prestige and work-related support, which can be considered as indicators of potential instrumental resources, remain after controlling for personal characteristics. The opposite has been shown for the degree to which one receives social support in the personal domain: differences in neighborhood orientation between the two neighborhoods of expressive resources are an expression of differences in personal characteristics. The next question is to what degree a relationship exists between the degree of neighborhood orientation and the amount of accessed prestige and support. A multivariate regression model was estimated which included neighborhood context and neighborhood orientation as well as personal characteristics and other network characteristics to explain the level of prestige and support in residents’ networks. Table 7 summarizes the findings.

With regard to socio-economic prestige of residents’ networks, the level of education of respondents shows a positive correlation with the socio-economic structure of their social network. Ethnic differences, on the other hand, do not matter, with the exception of the very heterogeneous group of non-western immigrants. A possible explanation for this might be that this is a very diverse group of immigrants, many of whom have only recently immigrated and therefore not had time to develop very a large social network. Of the network characteristics, only the share of friends and acquaintances versus the share of family as network members is positively related to the socio-economic prestige of respondents’ networks. The share of neighborhood contacts, on the other hand, does not have an influence and the earlier mentioned bivariate relationship between share of neighborhood contacts and prestige of one’s network can be largely explained by differences in the population, particularly ethnic, composition of the two neighborhoods. A last and interesting finding is that respondents in the low income neighborhood score significantly lower on socio-economic prestige than respondents in the more mixed neighborhood, even when controlling for the share of neighborhood based contacts and share of family ties. Note, that this finding does not imply that these lower resources are all provided through local contacts.

In contrast, the findings for the amount of social support do not differ between the two neighborhoods, nor does a multivariate analyses provide further explanation for the share of support that residents receive (see table 7, model 1). Neither living in a low income neighborhood, nor a high share of neighborhood based support contacts influence the degree of support. This remains the case when analyzing the results for the three types of social support separately.

Table 7: OLS Regression on socio-economic prestige (share of occupations known) and support in residents’ network (standardized coefficients)
2.8 Summary and discussion

An important discussion in the research literature about the role of neighbor relations in transmitting neighborhood effects is whether low income residents in low income neighborhoods are worse off than low income residents in mixed neighborhoods, because they lack useful social resources to improve their disadvantaged social position. The dominant assumption in this debate is that while social interaction patterns in low income neighborhoods reproduce social inequalities, they facilitate mobility in mixed neighborhoods. The aim of this paper was to study the degree to which social housing residents in a low income neighborhood and a socio-economic mixed neighborhood in The Hague, the Netherlands, differed in the availability of social resources, in particular in their access to different social positions and in actual support provided by their social network. Additionally, we studied whether differences found can be attributed to local contacts. To study the relationship between neighborhood and access to social resources, we used two different indicators for individual social capital: a measure of support and a measure of socio-economic prestige. The former measure is an indicator for daily and practical support, while the latter indicates potential instrumental access to resources that are needed to improve one’s social position. Interestingly, we found different results for the two measurements.

On the one hand, the two resident groups differ in socio-economic prestige of their networks in terms of the share of positions known. On this indicator for socio-economic diversity, social housing residents in the low income neighborhood of Transvaal score lower than respondents in the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse. However, no differences were found in terms of knowing people with higher prestige positions: the greater share of accessed positions in the networks of respondents in Regentesse is the result of knowing people with more diverse jobs in the lower ranges of occupational structure rather than people with a higher job status. This means that social housing residents in the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse do not benefit from the proximity of more affluent neighbors. Possibly, this is the result of considerable social distance between residents and social closure of networks of more affluent residents, although further research would be needed to test this hypothesis. The difference between the two neighborhoods in the number of occupational positions known remains stable in a multivariate analysis, where it is controlled for personal characteristics as well as for network characteristics. This also applies to the degree of neighborhood orientation of respondents’ networks: social networks of residents in the low income neighborhood are more constricted in terms of socio-economic prestige, but this is not simply related to the higher share of local social contacts in their networks. An explanation for the remaining neighborhood effect on socio-economic prestige might lie in the nature of local social contacts relating to social closure or processes of socialization or stigmatization of Transvaal residents, but a deeper inquiry of these processes is beyond the scope of this contribution.

On the other hand, the two resident groups do not differ in terms of actual support provided by their networks and their ability to find people to deal with the problems of everyday life, whether these problems are in the personal domain, work-related or related to dealing with formal institutions such as the housing and labor market. Apparently, receiving support is not related to a person’s status or capability, but more to the availability of others. Thus, contrary to the general assumption in the research literature, living in a mixed neighborhood or a low income neighborhood does not matter for the degree to which residents receive actual support. Yet, note that both groups score rather low compared to the Dutch population in general. In addition, there is a difference between the two neighborhoods in the degree to which support is provided by the local network: for social housing residents in the low income neighborhood family and friends live more often in the same neighborhood than for their counterparts in the mixed neighborhood. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that this does not affect the degree of received support.

A final question that can be raised is how we should interpret the dissimilar findings for the two individual social capital measures? The position and resource generator measure social resources in respondents’ networks that serve different goals and that are not necessarily provided by the same people. Thus, the different types of resources complement each other. In fact, it can be hypothesized that the socio-economic prestige in residents’ networks as measured by the position generator is an indication of the usefulness or effectiveness of social support as measured by the resource generator. Following this line of thought, the more diverse networks of residents in the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse might provide more effective support to deal with problems in everyday life. For example, knowing people with more diverse occupational positions may be more beneficial to maintain one’s social position (if not improve one’s social position) because one can tap into more diverse sources of job information, even though these positions might all be at the lower end of the social rank. On the other hand, there is a considerable difference between knowing someone and actually benefiting from this relationship. From this perspective, residents in the mixed neighborhood might know more people, but they might not be capable of deriving actual useful support from these contacts. Simply put, the question is whether it matters that one knows a truck driver as well as a cleaning person rather than only a truck driver. Further research on the way in which network prestige is used in different domains of residents’ life would provide more insight into this issue.

In short, the findings for socio-economic prestige in residents’ networks show that disadvantage residents in low income neighborhoods are slightly worse off in terms of network diversity than disadvantaged residents in mixed neighborhoods, while they do not differ in terms of informal social support to deal with problems in everyday life. Thus, residents in the low income neighborhood are socially isolated in terms of access to prestige, but not in terms of actual support. Although neighborhood context plays only a moderate role in influencing socio-economic prestige compared to individual characteristics, such as level of education and ethnicity, it is nevertheless interesting from an international perspective that such mild forms of social isolation occur even in relatively fragmented and heterogeneous low income neighborhoods such as Transvaal-Noord.
References


Numerous neighborhood effect studies have reported on the negative consequences of living in disadvantaged neighborhoods for various employment outcomes, such as the duration of welfare-dependence and level of income. One hypothesis for explaining this relationship is the social isolation hypothesis which assumes that low-income residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods are worse off than their counterparts in mixed neighborhoods because they rely on other disadvantaged neighbors to find work. These ideas are addressed by comparing survey data on social resources in the social networks of residents in a low-income neighborhood and a socio-economically mixed neighborhood in the Dutch city of The Hague. Findings show that living in a low-income neighborhood influences labor market participation indirectly by limiting residents’ access to job information. However, differences in access to job information cannot be explained by the high degree of neighborhood orientation in the social networks of residents in the low-income neighborhood.

3.1 Introduction
In the field of neighborhood effects, substantial attention has been paid to the relationship between segregation and social mobility. An important point for discussion is whether being poor in a low-income neighborhood is worse than being poor elsewhere, not only in terms of having to deal with the day-to-day livability problems and relatively high crime rates in the area, but also in terms of unfavorable socio-economic outcomes (i.e. Buck and Gordon, 2004; Friedrichs, Galster, et al., 2003; Murie and Musterd, 2004). In short, the question is whether and how a neighborhood influences the labor market performance of its residents. At first glance, this question might in itself seem irrelevant if one believes that labor markets function on a regional scale and that most people do not work in the neighborhood they live in. As many of us commute daily, why would we assume that a different situation applies to low-income households in disadvantaged neighborhoods? Nevertheless, numerous neighborhood effect studies indicate that living in a disadvantaged neighborhood context can have negative consequences in terms of employment outcomes, such as in the duration of welfare-dependence, the level of income, or the type of job (Allard and Danziger, 2003; Anderson, 2004; Clark and Drinkwater, 2002; Holloway and Mulherin, 2004; Klaauw and Ours, 2003; Mus-
Living in concentrated poverty found in the job search strategies and job information networks of two neighborhood groups and works of social housing residents in a socio-economically mixed and a low income neighborhood. These rarely focus on socio-economic outcomes. By using survey data on social networks, employment and the role of neighborhood.

3.2 Social networks, employment and the role of neighborhood

Social relations are important in shaping our working lives. Social networks can provide resources that shape employment opportunities by providing work-related information, advice and support. A relatively small number of empirical studies have been carried out that specifically address the relationship between neighborhood characteristics, social networks and economic outcomes. However, a lot of questions remain regarding the explanatory mechanisms that operate behind the reported neighborhood effects.

A number of hypotheses have been developed to explain the relatively unfavorable labor market performance of residents of high-poverty neighborhoods. These explanations are described as correlated neighborhood effects because they result from processes outside the neighborhood. On the other hand, individual explanations focus on the supply side of the labor market. Besides human capital explanations, this includes explanations that focus on the social fabric of disadvantaged neighborhoods and the social networks that residents are part of. Such explanations assume that there is some kind of spillover between residents within a neighborhood that functions as a social multiplier to create unwanted outcomes. These endogenous neighborhood effects might be the result of two possible mechanisms. First, neighborhood relations might function as socializing agents, shaping residents’ work ethics by defining what is ‘normal’ and ‘acceptable’ and how important work is for one’s social status. For example, in the case of low-income neighborhoods, residents might develop deviant norms with regards to work through interaction with unemployed neighbors (referred to as the socialization hypothesis). A second mechanism relates to the fact that social relations are an important source of information and informal support when it comes to finding work. In the case of low-income neighborhoods, it is hypothesized that disadvantaged residents lack access to potential or better employment opportunities due to the fact that they interact with fellow residents with weak labor market positions (referred to as the social isolation or limited resource hypothesis). By contrast, disadvantaged residents in more mixed neighborhoods are assumed to benefit from contacts with their more highly educated neighbors.

This article aims to contribute to the debate by studying the degree to which this last hypothesis about social isolation and limited resources resulting from neighborhood-oriented personal networks can explain employment outcomes. Interestingly, while a lot of studies focus on the endogenous mechanisms behind neighborhood effects related to the social context of disadvantaged neighborhoods, these rarely focus on socio-economic outcomes. By using survey data on social networks of social housing residents in a socio-economically mixed and low income neighborhood in the Dutch city of The Hague, this study raises the question of to what degree differences can be found in the job search strategies and job information networks of two neighborhood groups and how said differences influence the employment outcomes in the two neighborhoods.

A number of hypotheses have been developed to explain the relatively unfavorable labor market performance of residents of high-poverty neighborhoods (Briggs, 2003; Galster and Killen, 1995). On the one hand, structural explanations for neighborhood effects on social mobility focus on the demand side of labor. For example, unskilled or low-skilled jobs might be unattainable due to the substantial distance between employment centers and potential employees (referred to as the mismatch hypothesis), or due to discrimination by employers on the basis of residential location (referred to as the stigmatization hypothesis). Neighborhood effects resulting from these mechanisms are described as correlated neighborhood effects because they result from processes outside the neighborhood. On the other hand, individual explanations focus on the supply side of the labor market. Besides human capital explanations, this includes explanations that focus on the social fabric of disadvantaged neighborhoods and the social networks that residents are part of. Such explanations assume that there is some kind of spillover between residents within a neighborhood that functions as a social multiplier to create unwanted outcomes. These endogenous neighborhood effects might be the result of two possible mechanisms. First, neighborhood relations might function as socializing agents, shaping residents’ work ethics by defining what is ‘normal’ and ‘acceptable’ and how important work is for one’s social status. For example, in the case of low-income neighborhoods, residents might develop deviant norms with regards to work through interaction with unemployed neighbors (referred to as the socialization hypothesis). A second mechanism relates to the fact that social relations are an important source of information and informal support when it comes to finding work. In the case of low-income neighborhoods, it is hypothesized that disadvantaged residents lack access to potential or better employment opportunities due to the fact that they interact with fellow residents with weak labor market positions (referred to as the social isolation or limited resource hypothesis). By contrast, disadvantaged residents in more mixed neighborhoods are assumed to benefit from contacts with their more highly educated neighbors.

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3.2 Social networks, employment and the role of neighborhood

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neighborhoods miss the connections to the labor market because they rely on other poorly-connected local residents in their search for work. For example, Betrand, Luttmer and Mullainathan (2000) found a strong and positive relationship between neighborhood-oriented networks and welfare participation. Kasinitz and Rosenberg (1996) also illustrate this point in a case study in New York: “The social networks of local residents are not only limited but are increasingly one dimensional and lacking in what Boissevain (1979) calls ‘multiplexity’ […] With fewer residents in the labor force, the amount and variety of job information declines. As public life has constricted, social ties are increasingly made private, i.e. with people of similar interests. The resulting social networks are more homogeneous and less useful in a dynamic labor market” (p. 190). In another study, Elliott (1999) found that residents in neighborhoods characterized by a higher share of low-income households were more likely to look for jobs through informal channels, probably because they are often excluded from formal recruitment procedures. “To the extent that isolation exists, it appears to involve, first, isolation from jobs filled through formal recruitment procedures. Given exclusion from formal job openings, social isolation then involves increased use of personal contacts to find employment […] In high-poverty neighborhoods, these informal networks contain high proportions of friends, relatives and neighbors and lead to jobs in smaller, predominantly nonwhite settings” (p. 213), Kleit (2001) reports a similar finding in a study on job search networks and strategies of public housing residents. Residents in dispersed public housing had more diverse local social networks than residents in clustered public housing, although they do not use these contacts to look for work. Instead, dispersed residents were more likely to use formal job search methods than their counterparts in clustered public housing sites.

To summarize, a review of the research literature on neighborhood effects, social networks and employment outcomes tells us that the relatively unfavorable employment outcomes of residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods can potentially be explained as follows. Regardless of their residential location, low-income residents are generally oriented locally in their social networks and they often use informal contacts to find work. Low-income residents in low-income neighborhoods have less diverse networks. In addition, they use informal contacts even more often than their counterparts in more mixed neighborhoods. This then leads to a relative labor market disadvantage.

The aim of this paper is to address these assumptions by comparing job acquisition methods and job search networks of social housing residents in a low income neighborhood and a socio-economically mixed in The Hague (the Netherlands). One obvious limitation of this research design is the limited number of cases both in terms of neighborhoods and in terms of respondents, which puts limitations on the possibilities to control for different neighborhood characteristics or other neighborhood mechanisms in multivariate analyses. However, it does provide specific data on social networks that cannot be found elsewhere in larger datasets and therefore permits some interesting insights into one of the mechanisms that might explain neighborhood effects. Specifically, four research questions will be addressed. First, to what degree can differences be found in labor market participation of low-income residents in the two neighborhood contexts? Second, to what degree do they differ in terms of formal or informal job acquisition methods? The third question focuses on whether and how the two neighborhood groups differ in terms of their social networks, with a focus on the relationship between the degree of neighborhood orientation and the potential social resources in these networks. The final question is to what degree differences in job acquisition methods and social networks, if found, can help explain differences in labor market participation.

3.3 The Dutch context

A short note on neighborhood effects in the Netherlands is necessary to understand the context of this study. The hypotheses about neighborhood effects and their underlying explanatory mechanisms, such as the social isolation hypothesis, have been largely developed on the basis of American studies. It has been an ongoing debate amongst European researchers to what degree they are valid in European contexts due to the differences in social welfare and housing systems that reduce differences between neighborhoods (Friedrichs, Galster, et al., 2003; Kesteloot, et al., 2004). These doubts might be most applicable to the case of the Netherlands, where levels of income and ethnic segregation have been traditionally low (Laan Bouna-Doff, 2007; Musterd, 2003) as result of a large supply of affordable social housing in major cities, extensive welfare programs of the national government and active state involvement at the local level. In recent years it has nevertheless been shown through a number of quantitative studies that these factors do not entirely compensate or mute neighborhood effects on employment and social mobility (Klaauw and Ours, 2003; Musterd, Ostendorf, et al., 2003). So far, however, it is unclear whether the relatively heterogeneous population composition of Dutch low income neighborhoods and the living conditions in these neighborhoods reach the necessary thresholds to limit the socio-economic opportunities of residents through processes of social isolation.

3.4 Research design

The study was performed in two centrally located neighborhoods in the city of The Hague. The Hague is characterized by the highest level of income segregation (SCP and CBS, 2003) among cities in The Netherlands and is a city of rather marked contrasts between working class and upper class areas (see Figure 1). Within this urban context, Transvaal-Noord is one of the most marginalized areas of the city and was selected as a research area based on the expectation that if neighborhood effects were to appear anywhere in the Netherlands, the neighborhood of Transvaal would be a likely location. The case of Transvaal is compared to the case of Regentesse, a socio-economically mixed neighborhood that borders Transvaal. In terms of relative distance to large employment centers and access to public transportation facilities residents in the two neighborhoods have similar access to employment opportunities within the city region.

Table 1 provides an overview of demographics of the two research areas. It is worth noting here that the labels of low-income neighborhood and mixed neighborhood are in some respect misleading because, even in the ‘extreme’ case of Transvaal, the majority of households do not fall into the category of low-income households. The low income neighborhood label can, instead, be interpreted as a relative term, referring to the relatively high level of social inequality compared to the city average.
Despite their comparable location, the research neighborhoods represent vastly different worlds. Transvaal-Noord is characterized by numerous social problems such as crime, vandalism, degradation of the housing stock and an unfavorable reputation. Three quarters of the housing stock is social housing. The share of households with an income below the poverty line is more than twice the city average and the level of unemployment is high. The neighborhood has a long history of immigration and its share of non-Dutch residents is amongst the highest in the country. In order to address the accumulation of social problems in Transvaal-Noord, a large share of the social housing stock is to be demolished and replaced by a more mixed housing stock in the coming years.

By contrast, the adjacent neighborhood of Regentesse is socio-economically and ethnically more mixed. Sandwiched between Transvaal and the more affluent areas of the city, it is one of the city’s few middle-class areas and has the reputation of being a decent neighborhood whose residents’ greatest concerns are parking and local traffic. Social housing accounts for a quarter of the housing stock. The share of households below the poverty line, and the level of unemployment, reflect the city average. The share of non-Dutch residents is slightly higher than the city average, particularly due to a substantial group of Surinamese residents, largely of Hindustani background.

A survey was carried out in the two neighborhoods amongst potential labor force participants in the age group 18 – 65. The selection criterion of living in social housing served as a proxy for having a low income, because data on personal incomes at the individual level are unavailable and a selection question about one’s personal income at the beginning of an interview was considered to be problematic. Potential respondents were selected randomly from an address database of all social housing units in the two neighborhoods provided by the local government. Since the middle of the 1990s social housing in Dutch cities is allocated according to a ‘choice based’ or ‘market-oriented’ system by which potential tenants can reply to adverts for rental units anywhere in the city-region (Haffner and Hoekstra, 2006). As a result of a supplementary housing allowance scheme, low income residents have access to a large range of social housing units in terms of location and quality. It has often been argued that this has contributed to relatively low levels of socio-economic segregation in Dutch cities (Kempen and Priemus, 2002). In theory, the rent controlled social housing units in the two research areas of this study are therefore equally accessible to low income households. However, irrespective of their personal income potential tenants are still ranked according to other allocation criteria such as their length of residence and registration. This could result in differential opportunities to move into more desirable units or better neighborhoods, but there are no recent studies to address such selection mechanisms within the social rental sector. To deal with potential selection mechanisms between the two neighborhoods in this research, various individual characteristics are controlled for in the multivariate analyses, such as age, sex, ethnic background, level of education and household characteristics and, in the case of neighborhood orientation of residents’ social networks, years of residence in the neighborhood.

The survey questionnaires were collected face-to-face in residents’ homes by interviewers of different, and where possible matching, ethnic backgrounds in view of the relatively large share of low-educated and minority residents. The survey included a number of questions about residents’

**Table 1: Demographics of research areas in percentages (Central Bureau of Statistics 2005)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Transvaal-Noord</th>
<th>Regentesse</th>
<th>The Hague</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residents (N)</td>
<td>4,220</td>
<td>4,770</td>
<td>47,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social housing</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average yearly disposable income (per person in euro)</td>
<td>8,500</td>
<td>12,300</td>
<td>12,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with income below poverty line, of which...</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On unemployment benefits</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with income in highest income group (top 20%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working population without job</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family, no kids</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with kids</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic background</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinamese</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant non-developed country</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant developed country</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1:** Spatial concentration of low income households in The Hague, The Netherlands. Source: Regional Income Statistics, Central Bureau of Statistics. Map produced by author.
employment situation and location, the job acquisition methods for their current or last position, and the role of neighbors in their search for jobs. In order to study the relationship between social networks and employment outcomes, the survey distinguished between social networks as potential job information networks and social networks as actual support networks. Residents’ potential access to job information was measured using the position generator method by providing insight into the socio-economic diversity of respondents’ networks (Lin and Dumin, 1986; Lin, 2001). The assumption on which this social capital measurement tool is based is that network members with a higher prestige job provide access to better social resources, in particular the type of information that is needed to improve their social position, such as finding a job. Respondents were confronted with a list of occupational positions3, ranging from domestic work to a politician and judge. If they knew anyone with such a job, they were asked the nature of the relationship (kin or friendship4), the ethnic background of these contacts and whether they lived in the neighborhood. A prestige score was calculated for each occupation based on standardized codes for occupations of the Central Bureau of Statistics. These scores were used to create socio-economic prestige indicators of their networks. These included the percentage of occupations known, the range in accessed prestige calculated as the difference between the highest position and the lowest position, the position of the network member with the highest job prestige as an indicator for upward reach and the average accessed prestige indicator. A second method was used to provide insight into the actual work-related support and advice that residents receive from network members. This resource generator is a social capital measurement tool that focuses on practical support and advice in people’s daily lives (Gaag and Snijders, 2005). Respondents were confronted with a list of concrete examples of support and advice, such as support in the personal or home domain (measuring expressive resources) and support in dealing with formal/political institutions or financial support. In this survey, three work-related questions were included. Respondents were asked whether anyone in their surroundings could provide such support, and if so, what their relationship was and whether this person lived in the neighborhood.

Finally, to acquire a greater insight into selection mechanisms between the two neighborhoods the survey also included questions about people’s residential history, their appreciation of the neighborhood and their wish to move out of the neighborhood. A comparison of these findings shows that, despite the great difference in neighborhood conditions, social housing residents in the two neighborhoods do not differ greatly with respect to their residential history, neighborhood satisfaction and wish to move (see Table 2).

Table 2: Residential history and neighborhood satisfaction of respondents in the two neighborhoods in percentages (N=399)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice for neighborhood</th>
<th>Low income (Transvaal)</th>
<th>Mixed (Regentesse)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wanted to live here</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not want to live here</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No preference</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knew people in the neighborhood before moving there</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has moved within neighborhood</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels at home in the neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels very much at home</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels at home</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not really feel at home</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not feel at home at all</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wants to move</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently looking for other apartment</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferably in some neighborhood</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferably in other neighborhood</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No preference</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in neighborhood</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 Data
The respondents’ demographics are reported in Table 3. The response was similar in both neighborhoods (54%). Respondents scored lower than the neighborhood average in terms of level of education and employment status and were also more often of minority background, particularly in Regentesse which was to be expected considering the selection of social housing tenants and their relatively low social positions compared to residents of the owner-occupied or private rental homes in these neighborhoods. The two groups of respondents differ from each other in ethnic composition, educational background and household composition. The two neighborhood groups do not differ in terms of age or sex composition.

Of obvious interest to this study is the difference between the two research groups with respect to labor participation. Social housing residents in the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse are...
Living in concentrated poverty

Table 3: Demographics of respondents by neighborhood in percentages (N=399)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low income (Transvaal)</th>
<th>Mixed income (Regentesse)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Labor market participation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low income</th>
<th>Mixed income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed, of which</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works in neighborhood</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In education</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed, of which</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used to work</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently looking for work</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Occupational prestige (current or last job)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Higher education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low income</th>
<th>Mixed income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None (only elementary school)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (&lt;4 years of high school)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle (&gt;4 years high school)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (University / Professional training)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ethnic background of non-Dutch residents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low income</th>
<th>Mixed income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surinamese</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant non-developed country</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant developed country</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Immigration history of non-Dutch residents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low income</th>
<th>Mixed income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First generation (imm. as adult)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First generation (imm. as child)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second generation</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Household**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low income</th>
<th>Mixed income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple without children</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent family</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with children</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Summary statistics for job acquisition methods by neighborhood in percentages (N=399)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job acquisition method (current or last job)</th>
<th>Low income (Transvaal)</th>
<th>Mixed income (Regentesse)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formally applied</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social services</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal referral</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% informal referral by neighborhood contact</th>
<th>Low income</th>
<th>Mixed income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% job agency in neighborhood</th>
<th>Low income</th>
<th>Mixed income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.6 Access to job information

Since social housing residents in the low-income neighborhood make more frequent use of informal neighborhood contacts to find work, the next relevant question is to what degree living in such a neighborhood context and depending on neighbor relations might influence their access to job information. A position generator questionnaire was used to address this question. Findings for the two neighborhoods are reported in Table 5. In terms of access to job information, four indicators for socio-economic diversity were calculated. Only the first indicator shows a significant, although small, difference between the two neighborhood groups, namely that residents in the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse have a more diverse network than residents in the low-income neighborhood of Transvaal, measured by the number of occupational positions filled by network members. However, there are no differences in the mean occupational prestige, range of occupational prestige or the upward reach of their networks. Moreover, both groups score remarkably lower than the general Dutch population, as was reported in the Survey of Social Networks of the Dutch (Gaag, 2005).

As a result, based on the socio-economic diversity of their networks, respondents in the mixed neighborhood should have a slightly better access to job information than respondents in the low-income neighborhood, but this is limited to information about the lower end of the labor market. In simpler terms, social housing residents in the mixed neighborhood might be acquainted with both a cleaning lady and a truck driver, while residents in the low-income neighborhood may only be acquainted with a cleaning lady. It can be argued that this might provide residents in the mixed neighborhood with better opportunities to maintain one’s social position rather than improve one’s situation by providing opportunities to find a higher prestige job. In other words, the observed difference in socio-economic network diversity might have little implication in terms of upward social mobility, although it might instead influence the chances of becoming long-term unemployed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Summary statistics for socio-economic diversity indicators by neighborhood (N=394)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-economic prestige</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of occupations in network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean prestige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range in prestige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest prestige</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To understand the relationship between access to job information and neighbor relations, respondents were asked about various background characteristics of their network members, such as their place of residence, ethnic background and relationship to the respondent. The findings are shown in Table 6. What stands out in general is the difference between residents in the low-income and mixed neighborhoods as regards the number of weak ties. For example, the substantial difference between the two neighborhood groups in the share of neighborhood contacts in their networks can be explained by the fact that residents of the mixed neighborhood have a larger number of contacts outside the neighborhood, but a similar number of neighborhood contacts. This relative difference in neighborhood orientation remains after controlling for differences in personal characteristics such as age, sex, level of education, ethnic background and immigrant generation, and household composition. The number of family relatives is also similar for the two neighborhood groups, although low-income neighborhood residents have much smaller numbers of non-family relations. The relative importance of family in the social networks of these respondents remains after controlling for compositional differences. By contrast, the relative share of own-ethnic contacts in respondents’ social networks is very similar for the two neighborhood groups. The difference in the absolute number of weak ethnic ties can be largely attributed to the high proportion of non-family contacts in the social networks of residents in the mixed neighborhood.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6: Summary statistics for personal characteristics of network members by neighborhood (N=346)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neighborhood contact (%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/acquaintances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic diversity (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same ethnic background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic background, minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic background, Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic diversity of non-family members (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same ethnic background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic background, minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ethnic background, Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of non-neighborhood ties (mean)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of non-family ties (mean)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of other-ethnic ties (mean)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; *p<0.10

A multivariate regression analysis was performed to ascertained to what degree the small, but significant, difference in socio-economic diversity of respondents’ network can be explained by their residential context and the degree of neighborhood orientation of their networks. The results are reported in Table 7. In the first model, neighborhood is the only explanatory variable. Living in the low-income neighborhood of Transvaal is negatively associated with the share of occupations known. When individual characteristics are included in a second model, the strength of association between residential location and socio-economic diversity declines, but remains fairly significant. In the third and final model three background characteristics of respondents’ network members are added, namely the share of non-family contacts, the share of non-neighborhood contacts and the share of contacts outside one’s own ethnic group. These can be viewed as the share of weak ties. It
is important to note that this model only applies to those residents who indicated that they have at least one network member.\(^5\)

This third model confirms the importance of weak ties in terms of ethnicity and the importance of relations other than family ties for a more socio-economic diverse social network. At the same time, the share of neighborhood contacts does not seem to influence the socio-economic structure of people’s network. Thus, despite the substantial difference between residents in the two neighborhoods as regards the importance of neighbor relations, this cannot explain the differences in socio-economic network diversity after controlling for individual characteristics.

Table 7: OLS Regression analysis for socio-economic diversity of residents’ networks (share of occupations known) as an indication of residents’ potential access job information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1 (Beta)</th>
<th>Model 2 (Beta)</th>
<th>Model 3 (Beta)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low income neighborhood</td>
<td>-0.167***</td>
<td>-0.092*</td>
<td>-0.101*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.092</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (ref= no high school education)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>0.180***</td>
<td>0.155**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>0.372***</td>
<td>0.354**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>0.257***</td>
<td>0.311***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority (ref=Dutch)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinamese</td>
<td>-0.251***</td>
<td>-0.121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>-0.153**</td>
<td>-0.077</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>-0.087</td>
<td>-0.039</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Western immigrants</td>
<td>-0.106**</td>
<td>-0.065</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-western immigrants</td>
<td>-0.318***</td>
<td>-0.311***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grew up in the Netherlands</td>
<td>-0.069</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household (ref-couple)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single or single parent</td>
<td>-0.127**</td>
<td>-0.182***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in neighborhood</td>
<td>0.107**</td>
<td>0.107*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non neighborhood contacts</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contacts of other ethnic background</td>
<td>0.099*</td>
<td>0.099*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-family contacts</td>
<td>0.108***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model summary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R(^2)</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>0.240</td>
<td>0.270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{***} p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10;\)

There are two ways to interpret the remaining negative relationship between living in the low-income neighborhood and socio-economic network diversity. On the one hand, there is always the possibility that the remaining influence of neighborhood is an expression of unmeasured compositional differences between the two neighborhoods that have not been controlled for in the model. On the other hand, the negative findings for low income neighborhood residents could also suggest that other mechanisms are at play. Perhaps it is not the quantity of neighbor relations but rather the quality of these relations that leads to constricted social networks. For example, one explanation might be found in socialization mechanisms amongst residents in the low-income neighborhood which limits their interaction with ‘others’ or ‘outsiders’. While the survey data do not provide evidence to further study these mechanisms, an in-depth case study in the low income neighborhood has shown that there is evidence of socialization mechanisms amongst neighbors that limit their contacts with the ‘outside world’ and keep them oriented around their own group (Pinkster, 2007).

Another explanation for the remaining difference in socio-economic network diversity might be actual or perceived discrimination or stigmatization of residents in the low income neighborhood by the outside world (Laan Bouna-Doff, 2007; Wacquant, 1993). A third and related explanation might be that discrimination by employers has limited residents’ employment opportunities, which in turn has restricted their social networks (Kasinitz and Rosenberg, 1996). So far, however, there is no evidence from the Dutch context to test this hypothesis.

It is important to note that the strength of the relationship between contextual and socio-economic diversity of residents’ networks is much weaker than various other individual characteristics, in particular the level of education, household type and being of a non-western ethnic background (which might be related to either the relatively recent arrival of these immigrants and/or the relatively small size of these immigrant communities). Finally, a relationship was also found between the number of years that residents had lived in the neighborhood and the socio-economic diversity of their networks. As the low-income neighborhood of Transvaal is historically a first destination for new immigrants to The Hague, the effect of this variable might actually be an indication of recent immigration. Unfortunately, no data are available to control for this directly. Nonetheless, especially in view of the small number of respondents and the limitations this puts on the possibilities of multivariate analyses, it is interesting that living in the low-income neighborhood does indeed influence socio-economic diversity.

3.7 Work-related support and advice

Besides the potential job information network, respondents were also asked about the degree to which they actually received work-related support and advice from family and friends as part of a larger set of support items in the resource generator section of the questionnaire. Table 8 reports the findings in the two neighborhoods.

What stands out is the low level of support in general, particularly in the case of the most concrete form of support, namely arranging a summer job. By comparison, during the 1999 survey on social networks (SSND), 61% of the respondents indicated that they knew someone who could help them in this respect (Gaag, 2004). The scores of the social housing residents in this study on the other two items are similarly low. Moreover, at least one third of the social housing residents in this survey do not know anyone who could provide work-related support or advice and only 15
% can name a family, friend or acquaintance for all three items. Further multivariate analysis (data not shown) indicates that the degree to which residents receive work-related support is not related to individual characteristics such as ethnicity, level of education, household type or sex. The only factors of influence are whether someone grew up in the Netherlands and his or her age: first generation immigrants and older people are less likely to know someone who can provide work-related advice or support.

Table 8: Summary statistics for work-related support by neighborhood in percentages (N=341)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low income (Transvaal)</th>
<th>Mixed (Regentesse)</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you know anyone who can...</strong></td>
<td><strong>Do you know anyone who can...</strong></td>
<td><strong>Do you know anyone who can...</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>arrange a summer job for one of your family members</strong></td>
<td><strong>give you advice when you have a conflict at work</strong></td>
<td><strong>help you or give you advice on how to find a job</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Share of yes...</strong></td>
<td><strong>At least one item</strong></td>
<td><strong>All items</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Share of neighborhood contacts</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the degree to which respondents in the two neighborhoods receive work-related support is relatively similar, there is considerable difference in the importance of neighborhood ties, with neighborhood-based contacts being much more important for residents in the low-income neighborhood than in the mixed neighborhood. These differences remain after controlling for differences in population composition between the two neighborhood groups.

3.8 Labor market participation

So far, it has been established that social housing residents in the low-income neighborhood are more likely than the mixed neighborhoods to use informal referrals to find work. Moreover, they have a slightly less diverse job information network but similar access to concrete work-related support and advice. The next question is to what extent the observed differences in job information networks might account for the differences in labor market participation found amongst respondents in the low-income and mixed neighborhoods. To this end, a multivariate logistic regression analysis was performed to study the relationship between respondents’ residential location, personal characteristics and socio-economic network diversity on the one hand and their employment situation on the other. Due to the fact that the survey data are cross-sectional and the research design non-experimental, one should be careful about making causal inferences when studying the findings. As the first model shows (see Table 9), living in the poor neighborhood context is negatively associated with the chance of being employed. However, if the socio-economic network diversity indicator for access to job information is added, the influence of neighborhood context disappears.

Table 9: Logistic regression analysis for effect of individual characteristics, residential context and socio-economic network diversity on labor market participation

### Model 1 (Beta)

| Low income neighborhood (ref-mixed neighborhood) | 0.650*** |
| Socio-economic diversity of network (score of 0-100) | 1.020*** |
| Age | 0.977*** |
| Female | 0.368*** |
| Education (ref-no high school education) | |
| Low | 2.120** |
| Middle | 2.473** |
| High | 4.127*** |
| Ethnic minority (ref-Dutch) | |
| Surinamese | 0.656 |
| Moroccan | 0.253** |
| Turkish | 0.167*** |
| Other Western immigrants | 0.311* |
| Other non-western immigrants | 0.426 |
| Grew up in the Netherlands | 0.589 |
| Household with children (ref-households w/o children) | 1.735* |
| Employment partner (ref-single) | |
| Working | 2.006* |
| Non-working | 0.899 |
| Years in neighborhood | 0.991 |
| Pseudo R2 (Nagelkerke) | 0.02 |

### Model 2 (Beta)

| Low income neighborhood (ref-mixed neighborhood) | 0.712 |
| Socio-economic diversity of network (score of 0-100) | 1.013* |
| Age | 0.957*** |
| Female | 0.368*** |
| Education (ref-no high school education) | |
| Low | 2.220** |
| Middle | 2.475** |
| High | 4.127*** |
| Ethnic minority (ref-Dutch) | |
| Surinamese | 0.656 |
| Moroccan | 0.253** |
| Turkish | 0.167*** |
| Other Western immigrants | 0.311* |
| Other non-western immigrants | 0.426 |
| Grew up in the Netherlands | 0.589 |
| Household with children (ref-households w/o children) | 1.735* |
| Employment partner (ref-single) | |
| Working | 2.006* |
| Non-working | 0.899 |
| Years in neighborhood | 0.991 |
| Pseudo R2 (Nagelkerke) | 0.02 |

### Model 3 (Beta)

| Low income neighborhood (ref-mixed neighborhood) | 0.817 |
| Socio-economic diversity of network (score of 0-100) | 1.013* |
| Age | 0.957*** |
| Female | 0.368*** |
| Education (ref-no high school education) | |
| Low | 2.220** |
| Middle | 2.475** |
| High | 4.127*** |
| Ethnic minority (ref-Dutch) | |
| Surinamese | 0.656 |
| Moroccan | 0.253** |
| Turkish | 0.167*** |
| Other Western immigrants | 0.311* |
| Other non-western immigrants | 0.426 |
| Grew up in the Netherlands | 0.589 |
| Household with children (ref-households w/o children) | 1.735* |
| Employment partner (ref-single) | |
| Working | 2.006* |
| Non-working | 0.899 |
| Years in neighborhood | 0.991 |
| Pseudo R2 (Nagelkerke) | 0.035 |

---

6 Other network characteristics were not added because 1) this model would only apply to those respondents who score more than 0 on the diversity indicator, the result of which is a reduction in N and 2) adding these variables does not improve the model or change the effect of personal characteristics and 3) the relationship between network diversity and the other network variables was already discussed in the previous paragraph.


3.9 Conclusion

An important explanation in the research literature for neighborhood effects on employment outcomes can be found in the social isolation hypothesis that focuses on the relationship between living in disadvantaged urban areas, informal job acquisition methods, neighborhood-based social networks and their limiting effect on residents’ social resources and opportunities to find work (as described for example by Elliott, 1999; Kasinitz and Rosenberg, 1996; Kleit, 2002). The aim of this study was to address this hypothesis by comparing the resources in, and the degree of neighborhood orientation of, the social networks of social housing residents in a mixed neighborhood and low-income neighborhood in the Netherlands.

As expected, a first comparison showed that residents in the low-income neighborhood of Transvaal and the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse differ substantially in labor market participation, in the use of informal contacts to find work and in the importance of neighbors in their social networks in general and in their job search in particular. Subsequent analysis showed that the negative impact of living in a low-income neighborhood on labor market participation is transmitted through residents’ social networks. In particular, social housing residents in the low-income neighborhood have less diverse social networks in socio-economic terms than social housing residents in the mixed neighborhood. The higher socio-economic network diversity of residents in the mixed neighborhood mainly relates to having network members with a wider variety of low status jobs rather than to having network members with higher status jobs that could provide better information. While such network diversity at the lower end of the job market does not necessarily lead to better upward social mobility, this study shows that it does make it easier to maintain one’s labor market position by having access to a wider variety of job information.

In short, the research findings suggest that living in a low income neighborhood in the Netherlands is associated with constricted social networks, which limits residents’ employment opportunities. Several critical comments can be made about these findings. First, there are obvious methodological limitations to this case study, for example in the possibilities for generalizing on the basis of two cases and controlling for variations in neighborhood composition. The relatively small number of respondents also limits the possibilities for further exploring potential selection mechanisms. Moreover, if one accepts these methodological limitations, one should still be cautious not to overstate the importance of neighborhood context. Much stronger effects on access to job information were found for ‘hard’ factors such as level of education and ethnic background.

Nevertheless, this study suggests that localized social networks in low-income neighborhoods play a role in shaping individual employment opportunities, even in a neighborhood characterized by a relatively heterogeneous population composition, a long tradition of active state involvement at the national and local level in alleviating social exclusion, and relatively good access to employment opportunities through public transportation. Indeed, from an American perspective the neighborhood of Transvaal represents a ‘mild’ case of concentrated disadvantage instead of an extreme case, which is in the Dutch context. This raises the interesting question of how severe neighborhood conditions need to be to trigger processes of social isolation. From a European perspective the findings shed new light on the way in which neighborhood effects are mediated. Thus far, it has been assumed that informal networks at the local level are not very important in shaping individual opportunity structures due to extensive support programs of European welfare states (Kesteloot, et al., 2006). The present study shows, however, that the role of neighborhood-based social networks of low-income residents cannot be discounted in explaining geographical variations in labor market participation.

In broad lines the research findings thus support the social isolation hypothesis, but they also offer some ideas for further exploration. First, the social isolation hypothesis does not distinguish between different types of social resources. This study suggests that a distinction between access to job information through social networks and access to more goal-specific, day-to-day forms of work-related support and advice is useful. While respondents in the low-income neighborhood differed from their counterparts in the mixed neighborhood in terms of access to job information through their social networks, they had similar access to work-related support despite the fact that they were more neighborhood and family-oriented in their social networks. Of course, the resource generator method used in this study measured the level of support, but not the quality or effectiveness of support and advice provided by relatives and friends. A more qualitative research approach might be more appropriate to show potential differences in the effectiveness of work-related support.

Second, the research findings raise the question of how social networks of low income residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods become constricted in terms of job information. The fact that no significant relationship was found between the degree of neighborhood orientation and the composition of respondents’ social networks implies that an explanation for the limited scope of residents’ social networks in the low income neighborhood lies in the nature of neighborhood contacts rather than just their number. One explanation could be that processes of socialization and social control amongst residents limit their willingness and possibilities to interact with people outside their ‘own’ group and to venture outside their neighborhood, thereby restricting their relationships to other locals whom are either unemployed or only work in a specific sector and/or in particular types of unskilled jobs. Such within-group processes are central to Lewis’ culture of poverty thesis (1968) and subsequent studies on deviant norms, values and behaviors in disadvantaged neighborhoods (i.e. Briggs, 1997; Small and Newman, 2001; Wilson, 1987). They have also recently been found in the Dutch context (Piva, 2007). Another explanation for the limited scope of their networks could be stigmatization of residents of low-income neighborhoods by the ‘outside’ world in general and by employers in particular (Kasinitz and Rosenberg, 1996; Wacquant, 1993). So far, there is no evidence in the Dutch context for such forms of place based discrimination.

To summarize, it is hypothesized that processes of negative socialization and stigmatization over time lead to constricted social networks of residents in low income neighborhoods, consequently limiting their employment opportunities which further restricts their social networks. Although such social mechanisms are often mentioned alongside the social isolation hypothesis in explaining neighborhood effects (Friedrichs, et al., 2003), few studies address the question of how they interact and cumulatively contribute to negative neighborhood effects on employment. Further qualitative, longitudinal research into the interaction between different neighborhood effect mechanisms could thus increase our understanding of the observed relationship between neighborhood context, access to job information through social networks and labor market participation.
References
Living in concentrated poverty

Science Quarterly, 88, 320-343.

Neighborhood-based networks, social resources and labor market participation
4. Localized social networks, socialization and social mobility in a low-income neighborhood in the Netherlands

Published in Urban Studies (2007), vol. 44 (13), pp. 2587-2603.

Abstract
The assumed negative effects of living in a low-income neighborhood on the social mobility of already poor residents are central to the current political debate about disadvantaged neighborhoods in the Netherlands. A case study in The Hague addresses the question of which social mechanisms in the daily life of residents might contribute to reduced social mobility in the long run. On the basis of interviews with neighborhood experts and residents about local social networks, job search strategies and work ethics, evidence can be found for limited opportunity structures and negative socialization processes. However, the findings suggest that these mechanisms work more subtly than generally assumed in the research literature, as the specific socio-spatial context also provides opportunities and negative effects are selective rather than generic.

4.1 Introduction
Social mixing is a key ingredient in urban policy throughout Europe. In the Netherlands, the ideology of social mixing has strongly influenced the current Big Cities Policy which targets the population composition of low-income neighborhoods through physical restructuring of the largely social housing stock. Central to the Big Cities Policy is the idea that neighborhoods should 'form a safe, healthy and social environment, and not a source of deprivation' (Ministry of BZK, 2004, p. 19). Social mixing addresses livability, safety and neighborhood management issues in disadvantaged urban neighborhoods (Uitermark, 2003), as well as the unwanted exclusionary consequences of the concentration of poverty for individual residents. Indeed, the Dutch government has expressed strong concerns about the relationship between segregation in the larger cities and faltering social mobility of residents: 'While the physical and economic infrastructure [of cities] have shown a strong improvement in recent years, the urban social structure continues to be confronted with a concentration of low income households, exclusion, non-participation, health problems, safety issues, and non-integration' (Ministry of BZK, 2004, p. 17). The foremost focus of social mixing programs is on diversifying the housing stock to accommodate more affluent households, and therefore on achieving a socio-economic mix, but the debate on mixed neighborhoods is increasingly influenced by the troubled relationship between the segregation and integration of immigrants in Dutch society (Van der Laan Bouma-Doff, 2005; Musterd, 2003).
Living in concentrated poverty

Whether the concerns about the negative effects of concentrated poverty and the expected benefits of social mixing through tenure-diversification are founded is a source of discussion in the academic world (Galster, 2005; Musterd and Andersson, 2009). This discussion not only deals with the question to what degree residents’ opportunities are influenced by their social and physical surroundings, but also the question of which mechanisms in daily life contribute to these long-term neighborhood effects. In the case of the Netherlands, research on the existence of neighborhood effects on social mobility – seen as a change over time in the residents’ socio-economic characteristics, such as income, labor market attachment and labor market performance – has led to mixed conclusions (Van der Klaauw and Van Ours, 2003; Van der Laan Bouma-Doff, 2005; Musterd, de Vos, et al., 2005). Given that there is a correlation between the population composition at neighborhood level and individual socio-economic mobility, neighborhood effects seem to be selective in that not every resident in a disadvantaged neighborhood context is affected by their residential surroundings in the same way or to the same degree. Neighborhood effects differ depending on a number of different personal characteristics, such as age, labor market attachment, ethnicity, education, although it is unclear how interaction between these social distinctions might lead to differential individual outcomes and how the observed correlations come into being in the daily life of residents. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that additional qualitative research in these neighborhoods is needed to study which social mechanisms in the daily life of residents contribute to their reduced social mobility (Buck and Gordon, 2004; Ellen and Turner, 1997; Galster, 2003). Such qualitative studies might offer what Hedström and Swedberg (2001) call explicit or generative explanations that help us understand how individual actions of residents in the daily life of disadvantaged neighborhoods express themselves on the aggregate level as neighborhood effects. Moreover, in view of differential neighborhood effects found in Dutch quantitative studies, qualitative case studies might help us understand why neighborhood effects are selective and apply to some groups of residents, and not to others. This article discusses such a qualitative case study in a low-income neighborhood in the Netherlands that addresses the question of whether in the daily lives of residents social mechanisms at the neighborhood level might contribute to reduced social mobility in the long run.

4.2 Mechanisms behind neighborhood effects

Various mechanisms have been identified in the research literature which can help us understand how neighborhood effects arise. Some of these explanations focus on the specific population composition and social structures within disadvantaged neighborhoods and would therefore be influenced by the social mixing policies that are currently used in the Netherlands. Hypotheses about such mechanisms therefore formed the starting point of this study. Explanations for neighborhood effects that take the population composition as a starting point identify social interaction at the local level as being the deciding factor in mediating neighborhood effects (Briggs, 2003; Galster, 2005; Sampson, Morenoff, et al., 2002; Small and Newman, 2001). While it is widely acknowledged that people’s activity patterns and most of their social interactions surpass the neighborhood level, it has been shown that this is less the case for unskilled, low income residents (Fischer, 1982). As a result, poor residents in poor neighborhoods are worse off than their counterparts in more mixed neighborhoods: their social contacts are limited to other unskilled, low income residents. Negative interpretations of these relations between residents are twofold.

First, as a result of interrelations at the local level, poor residents in poor neighborhoods lack the useful social resources in their personal networks that are necessary to ‘get ahead’ in life (Granovetter, 1995; Lin, 1999; Wellman, 1993). Although they might receive various forms of social support within the neighborhood to help them cope and get by (Briggs, 1997; MacDonald, Shildrick, et al., 2005), they lack the necessary ‘weak’ ties to more affluent and educated people, who can form a bridge to and familiarize them with formal institutions or structures such as the housing market or labor market, and help them escape their marginalized situation. In the case of employment and social mobility, poor residents in poor neighborhoods consequently lack the necessary information and access to jobs. In other words, the informal socio-spatial context of the neighborhood limits the opportunity structures of residents when it comes to work. A methodological difficulty in studying such processes is how to determine whether relations between neighbors are ‘weak’ or strong ties. Quite often this is determined on the basis of social distinctions such as class, ethnicity or family background. For example, similar ethnic backgrounds between neighbors are expected to result in an exchange of social support. Such relationships are therefore interpreted as a strong tie. In contrast, social relations between people of different backgrounds, for example of socio-economic status or class, are considered to be weak ties. Through these ties, more educated, well-positioned individuals can provide useful resources and opportunities described as ‘bridging’ capital to other, unskilled individuals. Such a distinction is also made in the public debate about social mix policies in the Netherlands. It is assumed that living in a neighborhood with a high share of low-income families and immigrants leads to few useful social resources and little knowledge of the Dutch language, thereby limiting their opportunities on the labor market. However, it is not ethnic background, class or lifestyle per se that defines whether a tie is strong or weak, but the opportunities, social support and shared resources that result from this relationship. It is therefore important to establish whether living in the same neighborhood leads to interaction and what resources and opportunities are embedded in these interrelations. This includes questions about what local social contacts mean in terms of social, emotional or financial support in general, and in particular in terms of job information and job search strategies.

A second set of social explanations for neighborhood effects focuses on norms, values and behavior that are shared by residents (Briggs, 1997; Friedrichs and Blasius, 2003; Small and Newman, 2001; Wacquant, 1995). It is hypothesized that, through their contacts with their neighbors, poor residents in poor neighborhoods develop deviant attitudes and behavior when it comes to education, employment and the labor market. Such socialization hypotheses are inspired by Lewis’ culture of poverty-thesis (1968) and Wilson’s (1987) and Massey and Denton’s (1993) description of life in the American ghetto of the 1980s. For example, explanations based on socialization processes deal with the negative impact of the lack of role models for children, and the contagious quality of criminal behavior amongst youths and unemployment amongst adult residents. When it comes to employment and social mobility, socialization hypotheses usually focus on deviant work ethics. These socialization processes might be the result of direct interaction within locally oriented social
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within group processes where the above-mentioned mechanisms of socialization and limited op-
jects, 2003; Blokland, 2003; Dekker and Bolt, 2005; Kleinhans, 2002). The question is whether this
1. To what degree are low-income residents in a disadvantaged neighborhood locally
2. How does the formal and informal local social context contribute to residents’ em-
employment opportunities and work ethics?

Several studies on neighboring in the Netherlands have found that the neighborhood has lost its
meaning when it comes to social relations. For example, most residents in restructured and now
socially mixed areas have little to no contact with their neighbors (Van Beckhoven and Van Kem-
pen, 2003; Blokland, 2003; Dekker and Bolt, 2005; Kleinmans, 2003). The question is whether this
principle holds true for poor residents in low-income neighborhoods. For example, in a Dutch
study on residential segregation and inter-ethnic social ties Van der Laan Bouma-Doff (2007) shows
that there is a strong and negative association between ethnic concentration and the probability of
maintaining contact with native Dutch. She therefore concludes that “contrary to scholars who argue
that the neighborhood is no longer a significant context in individual lives, it is still linked with social
action” (p. 1013). Like this study, however, most research on disadvantaged neighborhoods focuses
on issues of social cohesion or interaction between different groups of residents, rather than on
within group processes where the above-mentioned mechanisms of socialization and limited op-
portunity structures might be present.

4.3 A Dutch case study

The focus of this article is a case study in a low-income neighborhood in The Hague in the Nether-
lands. The aim of the study was to gain a greater insight into the degree to which social mechanisms
within the neighborhood, resulting from the local population composition, influence residents' em-
ployment opportunities and work ethics. On the basis of the research literature, two research
questions were formulated:

The case study was conducted in Transvaal-Noord in The Hague, a low-income neighborhood7
where the percentage of families with an income below the official poverty line is more than twice
as high as the city average. It can be expected that, if neighborhood effects and their underlying
social mechanisms exist anywhere in the Dutch context, Transvaal might be a likely candidate. The
case study included interviews with neighborhood experts as well as low-income residents8. Inter-
views with neighborhood ‘experts’ provided an insight into the informal social structures within
the neighborhood, the degree to which different groups of residents were locally oriented in their
social life and the degree to which the neighborhood experts had encountered the processes of neg-
ative socialization and limited opportunity structures in their neighborhood work. Experts were
both professionals, such as neighborhood officials, local social workers, local educational work-
ers and law enforcement, as well as ‘professional’ residents, such as neighborhood representatives,
members of informal neighborhood organizations, cultural organizations, volunteer workers and
other informal key figureheads. A total of 24 professional interviews were conducted and numerous
neighborhood meetings, activities and festivities were attended.

The professional interviews were followed by thirty interviews with low income residents of
three largest ethnic groups in the neighborhood, namely with Moroccan, Turkish and Hindustani-
Surinamese residents. These groups were recognized by the professionals as displaying strong
localized networks with varying degrees of self-organization and social control within these net-
works. Residents were approached at local playgrounds and parks and through various formal and
informal organizations, quite often with the help of informal key persons or former respondents.
The semi-structured, in-depth interviews focused on three different topics. In order to acquire
more insight into selection mechanisms in the neighborhood, questions were included about peo-
ple’s residential history, the positive and negative aspects of living in the neighborhood and their
wish to move out of the neighborhood. A second topic was residents’ local contacts. A distinction
was made between contacts that originated in the neighborhood and relations that resulted from
other shared characteristics, such as extended family connections, work relations or shared cul-
tural or religious affiliations. Questions were included on the extent to which residents had social
contacts with their close neighbors and other people in the neighborhood, and on their perception
of their fellow residents9. Questions were also included on the actual content of these relations,
from recognizing each other on the street to different forms of social support. Similar questions
were asked about people’s personal backgrounds, family situation and extended family and friends
networks. The final section focused on the residents’ employment situation and history, their work
search strategies, the importance attached to work and, more generally, their perceptions of the im-
portance of work and education. Besides these formal interviews, numerous chance conversations

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7 The neighborhood was selected on the basis of the lowest scale of administrative boundaries. These boundaries overlap to a large degree with actual physical boundaries in the form of major thoroughfares.
8 As the selection of residents on the basis of income is rather problematic – data on personal incomes at the individual level are unavail-
able and a selection question about one’s personal income at the beginning of an interview is rather tricky – residents were selected on
the basis of living in social housing.
9 In the interviews, neighborhood was defined in subjective terms: it was left up to respondents to determine which social relations in
their support network lived ‘in the neighborhood’.

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with other residents, for example at community centers, neighborhood meetings and at the local public park, provided additional interview material.

4.4 The research area
The centrally located quarter of Transvaalkwartier in The Hague is divided into three neighborhoods housing a total of 14,600 inhabitants and covering around 81 hectares. Transvaalkwartier was developed at the start of the 20th century for the lower working class, a function that it has kept throughout the 20th century. Transvaal-Noord is the most marginalized of the three neighborhoods (see Figure 1). The majority of the housing stock here consists of socially rented dwellings (76%). In 2000 almost half of the households in Transvaal-Noord had an income below the poverty line, and two thirds of all households received some form of housing subsidy through the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (Central Bureau of Statistics). In 2003, the average income of neighborhood residents was amongst the lowest in the city and more than half of the residents had a what was determined as a low income10. The share of residents dependent on social benefits was almost twice the city average. Many families struggle financially to keep their heads above water and a side-effect is that a lot of residents are in debt and many social housing units are sublet illegally to earn people some extra money. This has, in turn, attracted illegal immigrants and has led to overcrowding.

Figure 1: Spatial concentration of poverty in The Hague, Netherlands. Source: Regional Income Statistics (2000), Statistics Netherlands. Map produced by author. 1 cm : 5 km.

Since the late Sixties, Transvaal has been a destination neighborhood for immigrants. In 1980, only 3.5% of the Dutch population were of ethnic descent, but the student body of neighborhood schools in Transvaal was already largely of non-Dutch origin. The first immigrants were from the former Dutch colony of Suriname, followed by Moroccans and Turks. More recent newcomers are of Ghanaian and Chinese origin and throughout the year Transvaal is home to a substantial group of labor migrants from Poland and Bulgaria. The influx of immigrants has caused large numbers of Dutch inhabitants to leave the neighborhood, and Dutch people currently make up only 11.3% of the local population (The Hague Department of Statistics, 2004). Those who still live in the neighborhood raised there children there and have seen them leave the area. Most stay because of the cheap housing prices in the neighborhood. Very few of them would raise their children in Transvaal in the current situation. At the moment, the largest ethnic groups are Turkish (24.8%), Surinamese (24.7%, the majority of whom are Hindustani-Surinamese), and Moroccan (16.6%). Just over half of these residents are first generation. Through family reunion and marriages in their country of origin, Moroccan and Turkish immigrants continue to account for a substantial share of newcomers, while the share of Surinamese residents is slowly decreasing, particularly due to the fact that there are few newcomers and the majority of second generation immigrants tend to leave the area.

Transvaal-Noord does not have a favorable reputation. The area has considerable crime problems, from drug dealing and prostitution to problems with petty crime and intimidation by groups of young male residents. The largely social housing stock is of low quality and the small apartments are not equipped to house large immigrant families. The open staircases of multi-family housing blocks make it easy for local youths, junkies and prostitutes to ‘hang around’ without being seen, which exacerbates the safety problems in the area. The maintenance of public spaces is also a problem. Streets are often littered with trash, old newspapers and plastic bags, and vandalism and graffiti are visibly present. Due to these problems and in combination with the concentration of low income households and ethnic minorities, Transvaalkwartier has been designated as a restructuring area under the Major Cities Policy. The first new private dwellings in the southern part of the quarter were finished late 2005. Large parts of Transvaal-Noord are scheduled for demolition between 2008 and 2011. Only one third of the 4200 residents in Transvaal-Noord will be able to return.

4.5 Interaction at local level
Neighborhood experts characterize Transvaal as a neighborhood with strong informal social structures on the one hand, and a considerable lack of social cohesion on the other. Although seemingly a paradox, they coexist due to the fact that most residents are locally oriented in their personal social network, but have little to no contact with their direct neighbors or other residents of different social backgrounds.

10 Defined as the bottom 40% of the national income distribution.

In Dutch population statistics, residents who are born outside the Netherlands or have a parent born in another country are classified as minority residents. Third generation immigrants are classified as Dutch. In the case of Transvaal, the actual share of residents with a non-Dutch ethnic background might therefore be higher than statistics indicate. However, Turkish and Moroccan residents of the second generation often marry someone from their home country. Their children are again registered as second generation.
Informal social structures

Informal social structures at the neighborhood level consist of close-knit family relations in extended ethnic (family) networks that reach much farther than the nuclear family. The majority of many residents’ families live in the area and these family connections were quite often the initial reason for moving to the neighborhood. Family connections offer an essential source of social, emotional and financial support in residents’ daily lives. The story of a Turkish resident provides a typical example. As he explained, ‘You live in your own community. People help each other. For example, if there’s a funeral, money is collected for the surviving relatives. Everyone contributes a little, but you can fill a glass with small drops. […] For Turks, family has a different meaning than for Dutch people. They take care of each other’. The man, in his mid-forties, is the youngest of four brothers who came to the Netherlands with their parents when he himself was in his early teens. He has an extensive family network of ‘more than fifty family members’ in the neighborhood. He is the only one of his generation who has learned to speak Dutch due to the fact that he was good at sports and a member of a largely Dutch sports team during his late teens. Although he is unemployed as a result of back troubles after years of construction work, he is always busy. He spends his time helping out his many family members as an interpreter and translator. During our conversation, for example, he received a phone call from a tax auditor concerning his brother’s small grocery store. In return for helping his brother and others navigate through Dutch society with his language skills, they help him out with the costs of repairing his car, cooking dinner when his wife is ill and providing short-term loans when necessary, ‘of course, without paying interest, or anything like that’.

Close family relations such as these are part of larger social structures which mainly follow ethnic lines. However, it is not simply a case of communities based on shared ethnicities as there are numerous Turkish and Moroccan groups that have (as) little (as possible) to do with each other. For example, Moroccan residents with an Arab background have little to do with Moroccans with a Berber background, and Turkish residents from Ankara have little to do with Kurdish Turks from the mountain regions in the East. A young man of Berber-Moroccan origin of the second generation laughed as he explained, ‘my parents lived in a small village in Morocco. Now the whole village lives here in Transvaal! Everyone is like family. My parents could never live anywhere else.’ Thus, ethnicity intersects with other shared backgrounds such as a shared religious affiliation and/or shared geographical origins that form the basis for extended ethno-cultural (family) networks. In the words of another respondent, ‘almost everyone is a distant cousin or nephew’. This results in extended social support networks that are an important reason why many residents feel at home in the neighborhood.

The informal social structures have over time become visible in the urban landscape, both in the informal interaction patterns on the street and in the formal social and economic infrastructure. Many shoppers stop repeatedly on the street to greet friends or acquaintances in chance meetings. Indeed, various public spaces in the neighborhood seem to be an important meeting place for residents, although there is always a strong demarcation between groups. For example, in the popular neighborhood park, youth volunteers in the playground can point out precisely which benches are occupied by Turkish or Moroccan women, and by their respective husbands a bit further away. They can also tell you that the Moroccan women are from a relatively liberal background, as their daughters are generally not veiled. The more religious Moroccan women meet in a playground two blocks down the street. Different groups of residents are also represented in the formal social and economic infrastructure of the neighborhood. For example, there are numerous mosques in the area whose followers adhere to different Islamic traditions, and many coffee houses that serve as meeting places for residents of different backgrounds. Turkish and Hindu/Gurant-Surinamese entrepreneurs are the dominant force behind local shops and businesses.

A lack of social cohesion

Despite the importance of local contacts in the social life of individual residents, there is a considerable lack of social cohesion at the neighborhood level. Neighborhood experts talk about a ‘social vacuum’ alongside the strong informal social structures described above. Indeed, public life seems to be delineated by anonymity. In this respect, the missing nameplates on mailboxes and front doors are a telling sign.

Interaction in multi-family housing blocks with a shared stairwell between neighbors of different ethno-cultural background remains limited to greetings and sometimes small talk. As one volunteer at a community center explained, ‘few people know their neighbors. I can’t even talk to them, because they don’t speak the same language. Can you imagine seeing water leaking through your ceiling, because the neighbors didn’t close the faucet, and not being able to explain it to them? It creates a lot of tension.’ Only residents without family in the vicinity or those residents who prefer to distance themselves from their own group, have more meaningful contacts with their neighbors. Quite often these are single mothers, whose children form a link with neighboring families. They help each other out with various domestic activities such as minding each other’s children, exchanging dinner or helping to serve coffee at birthday parties. These relationships sometimes cross ethnic lines, as viscosity is the most important criterion for these contacts. Still, such forms of social support between neighbors seem to be an exception.

The anonymity between neighbors goes hand in hand with a perceived lack of social control and safety on the streets. Groups of local youths and drug addicts add to these feelings. Some of them just hang around, while others actively engage in illegal activities ranging from vandalism to drug dealing. Despite extensive efforts by local neighborhood workers to involve residents in reducing such activities, people say that they are afraid to call the police about disturbances on the streets late at night in fear of retribution. Indeed, many residents do not open their doors after dark.

To summarize, local contacts play a considerable role in people’s personal social networks, although they do not seem to result in stronger social cohesion at the neighborhood level. Rather, shared ethnic, cultural, religious and geographical backgrounds become intertwined with the neighborhood in different unconnected, informal social structures. According to neighborhood experts, as well as residents’ personal stories, these informal social support structures with their more formal economic and social facilities are an important reason for people to stay in the area and raise their children there, despite the high crime levels and considerable livability problems in the area. This
is certainly the case for first generation immigrants and to some degree for the second and third generation as well, although there are some variations between ethnic groups. In particular, Hindustani-Surinamese residents stimulate their children to translate a higher socio-economic status into a better living environment and to exchange their old neighborhood for middle class areas in the city or surrounding suburbs. To a lesser degree, this phenomenon is also found amongst some Turkish and Moroccan groups. Still, a minority of second and third generation residents also remain in the area because their entire social lives are located there. The question is to what degree these local social contacts influence their employment opportunities and work ethics to the degree that living in the neighborhood becomes a pitfall for social mobility.

4.6 Employment opportunities

The research literature discussed above hypothesizes that the local social context limits employment opportunities through mechanisms related to the social resources in neighborhood social structures. In other words, due to their locally oriented social networks, residents of Transvaal are thought to lack the necessary information about job vacancies and the labor market, with this resulting in chronic unemployment. The findings in Transvaal, however, suggest that the influence of the local social context is more subtle.

Informal job networks

The first way in which the local social context is important for individual socio-economic outcomes is through informal job networks that originate in the neighborhood. In Transvaal, local contacts are an essential condition for residents to find work. Some of the resulting jobs are actually located in the neighborhood, in ethnic shops and businesses or on local market stalls run by fathers, uncles or second cousins. Most jobs, however, are located outside the neighborhood and the relevant information is provided through chains of multiple actors that I refer to as informal job networks. Over the years, some of these networks have been formalized in privately-owned, independent employment agencies that specialize in unskilled labor, for example in construction or in the fruit and vegetable sector and at the flower auction in Aalsmeer. Like other businesses and services in the area, these agencies generally focus on specific groups of residents, mirroring the informal ethno-cultural social structures described earlier. There are, for example, several different Turkish and Moroccan employment agencies as well as agencies for migrant workers with other EU passports. The owners are generally key persons in these job networks who used to live, or still live, in the area. The continuity of their workforce depends entirely on informal contacts, many of whom live in the area, including family members, more distant ‘cousins’ and also word-of-mouth referrals. For the residents in question, the benefit is that they can pop in daily to see if there is work, as many of these jobs are temporary. The benefit for the employment agencies is that they can guarantee workers in the short term and can collectively organize transportation. For example, male employees often meet at a central point in the neighborhood to be bussed collectively to their next shift. Vans also pick the women up at home because many of them are traditional Muslims and are not expected to travel to work without a chaperone. Another such collectively organized service involves providing dinners for workers, so that they can adhere to the particular requirements set by their religious background. Thus, these job networks, which have sometimes been formalized into job agencies, provide concrete opportunities for work and fulfill more secondary requirements to make working possible.

There is a considerable difference between ethnic groups and generations as regards the degree to which these informal job networks constitute an important job source. In general, local social contacts are essential for first generation Turkish and Moroccan immigrants to find work, but hardly at all for Hindustani-Surinamese people who are traditionally more oriented towards public sector jobs. For second generation Turks and Moroccans, a much smaller number of residents use local connections to find work. Those who do, often start with summer jobs during the vacation. Some of them are college students looking to earn their next year’s tuition fees, but many of them are high school dropouts or students of the least advanced secondary schools who have a problem finding work due to their lack of training.

Obviously, the positive side of these informal job networks is that they lead to jobs. From this perspective, interrelations at the neighborhood level do not result in limited opportunity structures to the degree that residents are unemployed and unable to find work due to a lack of information. However, this is only part of the story as there are also drawbacks. Particularly for the first generation, one of the consequences is that most of them never learn Dutch due to the fact that the majority of their coworkers is from their own ethnic group. The 48 year old Turkish resident, who has lived in the area for 19 years, has worked in the vegetable production sector for the same amount of time and who still only speaks three words of Dutch, is no exception. Many neighborhood experts have stressed the negative consequences of this for the second generation, as many children start elementary school with a substantial language deficiency. In the words of one frustrated volunteer, ‘at school they speak maybe 25 hours of Dutch, but in the playground they speak Turkish or Arabic. At home, they speak Turkish or Arabic. When the television is turned on, they watch Turkish or Arab TV channels. So they start with a language deficiency and it only gets worse: the more Dutch you know, the more you pick up at school. And vice versa.’

Another drawback is the limited scope of the job networks both in terms of career opportunities and in terms of acquiring a variety of work experience and of developing work-related skills. Job seekers always end up in the same type of unskilled job, quite often with the same companies. Another consequence is that many residents have little to no experience or skills when it comes to job applications (partly because no references are normally required other than family ones, but also because some of the work is under the table). This is a particular problem for second generation youths who have always found sideline or summer jobs via their extended families and have therefore never had contacts with the formal job market. After they have finished their schooling or professional training and start looking for a ‘real’ job, they lack the knowledge and skills to navigate through the job market and apply successfully for jobs. As one youth worker explained, ‘even placing a phone call to express your interest in a simple dishwashing job and to ask for an interview is difficult for some students. They just don’t know how one makes polite, formal phone inquiries’.  

12 As Suriname used to be a Dutch colony, many of them spoke Dutch when they arrived in the Netherlands and were of middle class origin, and therefore more capable navigating their way in the formal job market.
The formal social infrastructure

Another way in which the local social context is important for individual employment opportunities is through the many social institutions within the neighborhood such as local welfare organizations, community centers, schools and youth centers, as well as subsidized private institutions such as religious and cultural centers. This highly developed formal social infrastructure is the result of thirty years of state intervention in the neighborhood and many of these institutions employ local residents and offer traineeships and volunteer positions for residents making the transition from welfare to work. For the institutions, the benefit is that their staff speaks foreign languages and know how to work with clients of different cultural backgrounds. For residents the threshold they have to cross in order to make job enquiries at local institutions is low because they are already familiar with them. Various neighborhood management and livability programs constitute another source of employment through accessible, unskilled jobs such as street surveillance, street maintenance and the supervision of youth activities. The more skilled job openings are often filled by Hindustani-Surinamese people due to their knowledge of the Dutch language and the fact that they are generally more oriented towards the formal job market. Trainees are often second generation Moroccan and Turkish women who are excluded from the informal job networks and who are familiar with the formal institutions from their own childhood. Local jobs also seem particularly attractive to single mothers who can work close to home and their children’s school, and the unskilled job openings are often filled by first generation immigrants who speak little Dutch but are forced to work under current employment regulations.

The reason for this attraction is that local institutions have years of experience with minority residents and are therefore perceived to be more tolerant towards minority employees who want to adhere to their own cultural or religious customs, such as fasting during Ramadan or wearing a headscarf. The other side of the coin, however, is that this positive socialization in Transvaal is mirrored by stigmatization and negative experiences elsewhere. A second generation Moroccan trainee explained, ‘At the other school which I applied to, they told me that I had to take off my head scarf when teaching, because parents might have a problem with it. I don’t want to do that… it’s part of my religion. Here, I can be myself. I don’t stand out… when I walk around the neighborhood, I look like everyone else’.

The positive side of the story is, of course, that the local social context provides employment opportunities. At the same time, some neighborhood experts mentioned that the limited scope of students and other residents in their job search might also have a negative side. Quite often, local institutions have an unfavorable reputation, not so much due to the low quality of schooling or counseling, but simply due to the marginalized clientele. Thus, in the eyes of future employers, this might make the employees of local institutions (even) less attractive as potential candidates. There is, however, little concrete evidence to support these assumptions.

4.7 Work ethics and socialization

Another hypothesis in the research literature about the way in which the local social context influences individual socio-economic outcomes is through processes of socialization and deviant work ethics within the informal local social structures. In the case of Transvaal, there is indeed some evidence that such mechanisms are at play. Both neighborhood experts and residents’ personal stories provided examples of deviant work ethics amongst adults whereby unemployment seems to be the dominant norm. One resident, for example, described her friends’ responses to her finding a job after years of social benefits: ‘why would you work for ten euros more, if you can stay at home?’ Indeed, her friends emphasized that she would just lose all the financial extras, such as extra money to replace a broken refrigerator, that come with being dependant on social benefits. She received the same response, for that matter, from the responsible official at Social Services who didn’t understand why a single mother with three kids would choose to work. Another very concrete example is the exchange of information amongst locals regarding staying on benefits in a period when the state increasingly tries to force people to re-enter the labor market. One strategy that has recently been found to be effective in avoiding employment in city re-entry jobs as street cleaners is to invent a medical condition. As one respondent explained, ‘Suddenly, all these men in their fifties developed dust allergies. Don’t think this is a coincidence… they are looking for an excuse not to have to work and hear about it from each other. Dust allergies are impossible to disprove. Many people test positive even if it never bothers them’.

Moreover, the interviews with neighborhood experts and residents provided examples of how deviant norms and values of first generation residents also play an active role in limiting the opportunities of the second generation. For example, some parents take their sons from school prematurely in favor of an extra income for the household. This is related to the informal job networks described above. Because a job is easily found, some parents choose the extra household income or contribution to a house in their homeland rather than the further education of their children. Their rationale is why study for a future job, when you can get one right now? As a result, some high school students refrain from further professional training to fill unskilled job vacancies. The effect, of course, is not unemployment, but it does stagnate the social mobility opportunities of the second generation in the long run. For daughters, a different mechanism applies. Education is not considered a necessity, as they are not supposed to work and their job lies at home. Particularly amongst more conservative Muslim communities, daughters leave school early for the purpose of marriage. As illustrated by one of the respondents, ‘My neighbors are Turkish and have lived next door to us for twenty years. They are quite accessible compared to other Turkish residents. The father came to the Netherlands as a young boy and his Dutch is quite good. He used to say that he wanted opportunities for his children that he never had. Then one day, his sixteen-year old daughter appeared on my doorstep, crying. Her parents had told her that she was to marry a man from her grandparent’s village in Turkey and would have to drop out of school. It is just what is expected within these communities’. Another example was provided by a Moroccan woman in her late twenties who was interviewed at a community center: ‘I came to the Netherlands when I was five and went to school here, but when I got married at sixteen, I quit. It’s the normal thing to do… then it turned out that I can’t have children and I might as well find a job to earn some money. But I have no education and my Dutch is much worse than ten years ago, so now it’s really hard to find a job. Now I am sorry that I dropped out of school’.

In addition to these classic forms of collective socialization concerning work, socialization processes also influence individual economic action more indirectly. Social control within infor-
mal social networks is considerable and in-group rules of conduct indirectly limit residents’ options as regards deviating from the group standard and developing skills or experiences that could lead to better job opportunities. This is illustrated by the story of a resident who was quite active in a neighborhood association where he represented the interests of his own ethnic group. Thanks to the resulting neighborhood contacts he learned Dutch and through his activities at the neighborhood association he became familiar with the housing regulations and the appropriate institutions. He found out that he could apply for a ground floor apartment due to physical disabilities and he was allocated a newly built apartment. This was frowned upon by his friends and acquaintances, who jealously criticized him for representing his own, rather than group interests. In the end, he left the neighborhood association. He now has few contacts outside his own ethnic group and his Dutch is much less fluent than it has been.

Another example of how rules of conduct and social control within local social structures indirectly influence individual economic action is how various rules of conduct restrict the work options of Moroccan and Turkish girls, even when they are allowed to work. For example, a second-year university student of Moroccan descent explained how she had found a very interesting sideline job that matched her educational background. As she explained, ‘My father is proud that I am in professional training, but didn’t want me to take this job. He was worried about what the neighbors would say about me traveling late at night by myself. Such gossip would shame my family’. In the end, she negotiated living with a relative in one of the suburbs. Her situation was an exception, however, as her father had remarried and was more focused on his new family. Others, she explained, are not always so lucky.

Thus, amongst some groups of residents there is little tolerance for those who act differently or go beyond the social boundaries of their own group. As long as an individual’s actions remain within what is perceived to be normal behavior or are used for the interest of their own group, they are accepted. As soon as they are perceived to serve only their own interests or deviate too much from group norms they are disapproved of and the individual in question is put under pressure to conform. Such forms of socialization are much more subtle than the more explicit shared attitudes towards work, but can be just as limiting.

While some of these examples might be written down to family rather than neighborhood effects, they cannot be separated from the neighborhood level. The socialization mechanisms are shaped in a rather segregated socio-spatial context in which the parents’ norms and values are continuously reinforced through local interrelations with likeminded others. This can be illustrated by the story of the Moroccan student with the evening job. Her father was not against her taking this job in itself. Instead, he was worried about people’s opinions, as was illustrated by his willingness to permit her to move in with her sister away from the scrutiny of their social circle, which allowed her to take the job. Thus, the socialization mechanisms that influence individual economic action are preserved and reinforced through the tight social control within the local social structures, and therefore cannot be separated from the neighborhood. Indeed, it seems that the only way to escape them is to move away.

These examples of collective socialization mechanisms behind neighborhood effects should, however, be nuanced to some degree. While they are rather common amongst first generation residents, there is a considerable difference between ethnic groups as regards the degree to which they are passed on to the second generation. For example, receiving benefits is the norm amongst Hindustani-Surinamese women of the first generation and the practice is largely accepted because of their responsibility to raise their children properly. However, a different set of norms apply to the second generation who are expected to engage in professional or university training and obtain a high-status job. For this group of residents, therefore, collective socialization towards work is related to the norms about good motherhood. Mothers are encouraged to accept a marginal income-position to guarantee a secure and stable upbringing for their children. Some negative socialization mechanisms can therefore be understood in the context of intergenerational mobility and are not reproduced in the next generation.

Besides differences between ethnic groups, there are also differences within ethnic groups. Part of the explanation for such differences might lie in the cultural and religious background of the parents, as well as the level of education of the parents. This can be illustrated by the stories of two Moroccan men, who both work(ed) in the fruit and vegetable industry and who differ greatly in their aspirations and attitudes towards the education and career opportunities of their children. One is of ‘Berber’ origin from the northern mountain region. He did not finish elementary school, is illiterate and arrived in the Netherlands with no knowledge of other languages as a result of which he has learned little Dutch over the years. He shows little interest in his children’s schooling or work, and does not see why he should spend part of his income on a costly education as there is plenty of work available though his neighborhood connections. The other man has an Arab background. In Morocco, he finished high school and came to the Netherlands with some knowledge of Moroccan, Arabic and French. This made it easier for him to learn some Dutch. Long ago, he accepted the fact that, as an immigrant, his work options were limited and took a job as a tomato picker. However, he wants his children to have a better life. During the interview, he proudly summed up their educational and career achievements.

4.8 Discussion

The case study in Transvaal-Noord has provided some additional insight into the mechanisms behind neighborhood effects that are related to the specific population composition of disadvantaged neighborhoods. Of course, the possibility of generalizing the research findings and applying them to different social groups or other neighborhoods is limited due to the exploratory nature of this study, the choice for an extreme case and the relatively small sample of interviews. While the study can help us understand how social mechanisms behind neighborhood effects come into being within a specific social context, it cannot answer the question of how widespread such mechanisms are. Indeed, even in the extreme case of Transvaal, many residents seek to improve their situation and hope some day to translate this into a better living situation in better neighborhoods or suburbs. Another consideration is that the described social mechanisms are not only shaped in space, but also in time. To understand how neighborhood effects are reproduced over time and how they influence social mobility in the long run would require a longitudinal research design. Despite these
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obvious limitations, the case study shows how the socio-spatial context of a low-income neighborhood can have a negative influence on social mobility.

The limited resource and negative socialization hypotheses in the research literature assume that interaction patterns between residents of disadvantaged neighborhoods can explain the correlation which was found between concentrated poverty and individual socio-economic outcomes. The first step in testing these hypotheses is, therefore, to explore the degree to which the personal social networks of residents are locally oriented. In the case of Transvaal, the majority of residents is indeed locally oriented in their social contacts and dependent on these contacts for various forms of social support. Some of these strong ties already existed through family connections before they moved to the neighborhood and formed the original reason for settlement in the area. At the same time, they are continuously being strengthened and reinforced through larger informal social structures of different ethno-cultural backgrounds within the neighborhood and consequently become an important reason for residents to stay in Transvaal. What is distinctive, therefore, is not so much the fact that residents are locally oriented in their social networks, but the degree to which these networks form a pitfall rather than a springboard for social mobility.

First, in line with the limited resource hypothesis, it appears that local contacts indeed limit employment opportunities, although not to the degree that they lead to unemployment. Rather, in the case of Transvaal, local informal job networks do provide work opportunities, but these opportunities are limited in scope and are subject to obligations. Moreover, the informal job networks indirectly limit future opportunities because people do not develop the language and communication skills to become independent of these job networks. Thus, the influence of local social relations on work opportunities is at the same time both positive and negative: they lead to work, but not ‘the right kind of work’.

Second, evidence was also found to support the negative socialization hypothesis that states that shared deviant norms and values with regard to work influence individual economic action. The interviews with experts and residents provided some classic examples of collective socialization regarding unemployment that are reinforced through considerable social control within local social structures. However, some of these examples should be viewed in terms of intergenerational mobility, as a strategy by parents to ensure successful socio-economic performance by their children. Socialization might lead to reduced social mobility for specific groups of residents, but it is not always reproduced in the next generation. Additionally, there are more subtle processes of socialization at play that indirectly influence employment outcomes. General rules of conduct limit the freedom of individuals to develop secondary skills or gain useful work experience to improve their socio-economic position in the long run. Thus, being locally oriented in one’s social contacts not only has negative socio-economic consequences due to more obvious socialization mechanisms with regards to work, but also generates more general rules of conduct within these networks and high levels of social control which are further strengthened by the proximity of group members within the neighborhood.

To summarize, the case study in Transvaal shows that the limited resource and negative socialization hypotheses used as explanatory mechanisms for neighborhood effects should be nuanced to some degree in order to understand how neighborhood effects come into being in the Dutch context. Moreover, an additional finding is that the local social context not only influences individual socio-economic outcomes through informal social structures, but also through the formal social infrastructure. The contribution of the formal social infrastructure to individual opportunities can be interpreted both positively and negatively: while it provides jobs, these might be jobs with few career opportunities in the long run. Undoubtedly, this is the result of extensive involvement of the Dutch welfare sector in urban renewal programs in the last two decades and the resulting concentration of welfare and community services in disadvantaged neighborhoods. It is therefore not surprising that such social mechanisms stemming from the local population composition have not been found in American studies.

A difficult question with regards to these mechanisms behind neighborhood effects is which residents fall into the category of aspiring social climbers and which residents might be potential victims. In the context of Transvaal, social distinctions on the basis of socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicity, gender, religious differences and differences in geographical background can help explain why different groups of residents are affected differently by the neighborhood context. From the first moment that they arrive in Transvaal, they become part of different informal networks with different norms, values and rules of conduct that shape their own opportunities and attitudes and those of subsequent generations. Within the same neighborhood this leads to different socio-spatial configurations that generate negative neighborhood effects for some groups but not for others. Additionally, there is considerable variation between these groups in the type of mechanism at play. For example, in the case of Transvaal, classic examples of negative socialization in the form of ‘contagion’ mechanisms were found amongst Hindustani-Surinamese residents of the first generation and amongst Moroccans of ‘Berber’ origin, but not amongst Hindustani-Surinamese of the second generation or Moroccans of Arab origin. The strongest example of inter-ethnic variations is the difference between Hindustani-Surinamese residents and Moroccans and particularly Turkish residents in the degree of self-organization in informal job networks. Hindustani-Surinamese are oriented much more towards the formal job market and therefore miss both the positive and the negative effects that informal job networks offer. A final example of inter-group variation is that the more subtle forms of socialization through rules of conduct seem to be particularly present in conservative Muslim communities, specifically limiting the employment opportunities of women.

In order to understand these variations, a more differentiated framework for neighborhood effects should be used. After all, even when most residents in a low-income neighborhood are locally oriented in their social relations, one cannot assume that living in this neighborhood limits the socio-economic opportunities of all residents because residents become part of different social structures. Moreover, in the case of those ‘affected’, one cannot assume that the same mechanism accounts for negative neighborhood effects amongst different groups of residents.

A final issue that should be raised is how social mixing might influence these differential neighborhood effects. Certainly, the fact that residents with similar backgrounds live close together facilitates the growth of the informal job networks described above as well as the high levels of
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Social control and strong socialization. As these are deeply embedded in the local social structures, it seems unlikely that these mechanisms would persist to the same degree if group members were spread out throughout the city. Consequently, this might also diminish the negative neighborhood effects for certain groups of residents in the area. However, it might also reduce the positive neighborhood effects for those residents who depend on their informal social structures and on the formal social infrastructure for various forms of social support and jobs. Given that demolition of a large share of the social housing stock in Transvaal-Noord is scheduled for 2008, an important question is to what extent the existing social structures might be replaced by new ones. While this question obviously has to be answered through a longitudinal study of the neighborhood, two hypotheses might be formulated on the basis of the research findings. An optimistic hypothesis might assume that the current local ties will be replaced by new useful ties with more affluent neighbors which will also result in positive socialization. A more pessimistic hypothesis is that the dilution or disappearance of the local informal social structures will leave residents empty-handed and prolong the existence of the current social vacuum between residents of different backgrounds.

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5. Watch out for the neighborhood trap!
A case study on parental perceptions of, and strategies to counter, negative neighborhood influences on child development


Abstract
Neighborhood is seen as one of the many social contexts that shape children's cognitive, emotional and social development. However, the neighborhood context does not simply 'imprint' itself on children, but can be mediated or moderated by other social contexts, in particular the family context through parenting practices. Based on a case study in a low income neighborhood in The Hague, The Netherlands, this paper addresses the question of which negative neighborhood influences parents identify as risk factors to child development and which strategies they develop in response to the perceived negative neighborhood influences.

Key words: parenting strategies, child development, neighborhood effects

5.1 Introduction
An important topic in the field of neighborhood effects is whether growing up in a disadvantaged neighborhood hinders child and adolescent development. This is related to the fact that young people's lives are to a large degree constrained to the family home and its direct surroundings and to the fact that children are viewed as particularly vulnerable to potential negative influences in the neighborhood. Research on neighborhood effects and child development indicates that there is a correlation between neighborhood disadvantage and children's educational achievement, problem or antisocial behavior, youth delinquency, dropping out of school, teenage pregnancy and even adult employment opportunities (Brooks-Gunn et al. 1997, Holloway and Mulherin 2004, Ingoldsby and Shaw 2002, Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Living in disadvantaged neighborhoods is therefore associated with numerous unfavorable short-term and long-term development outcomes.

The neighborhood is, however, just one of the social contexts that can influence child and adolescents outcomes. A wide range of literature in the fields of sociology, psychology and criminology focuses on the various other social contexts that shape child development, such as the family, school and peer context. It is generally acknowledged that these contexts are stronger predictors for youth outcomes than the residential context. However, there are relatively few studies that com-
bining the different perspectives, despite the fact that these social contexts are - in part - nested within and interact with neighborhoods. When studies do consider how residential context interacts with other social contexts, they often use proxy indicators of neighborhood disadvantage and (in)stability to predict child development patterns (i.e. Beyers et al. 2003, Caughy and O’Campo 2006, Rankin and Quane 2002). Unfortunately, this often does not provide insight into the specific social mechanisms within disadvantaged neighborhoods that shape child development (Caughy and O’Campo 2006). In order to acquire a better understanding of how children’s development process is shaped within specific neighborhood contexts, there is therefore a need to study the interplay between neighborhood conditions and other social contexts, such as school, family or peers, from a qualitative perspective (Rankin and Quane 2002).

This paper aims to address the question of how neighborhood effects are related to, and mediated by, other social domains in which children grow up, specifically the family context. The assumption is that neighborhood does not simply ‘imprint’ itself on children, but that it is moderated or mediated by the family contexts due to the fact that parents adapt their parenting strategies to the social conditions in their neighborhood. Because there is very little empirical evidence to support this premise (Kohen et al. 2008), the following research questions are addressed. First, to what degree do residents in a low income neighborhood regard their neighborhood as a problematic place to raise their children and which negative influences do they identify? Second, to what degree are these negative influences moderated or mediated through parental strategies? These questions are explored using interviews with residents living in a low income neighborhood in the Netherlands about their perceptions of and experiences as regards the extent to which the neighborhood forms a risk factor in children’s lives. There are several reasons to choose for this approach. Interviews with residents can provide an insight into the possible mechanisms that drive neighborhood effects (Galster and Santiago 2006). They can also show whether and how their perceptions of negative influences in the neighborhood might lead to parental strategies to protect their children from dangers in public space (Furstenberg et al. 1999, Valentine 1997). The following section provides an overview of the literature on the relationship between residential context and parenting techniques. The next section describes the research context and case study design. This is followed by two sections on the findings with regard to parents’ perceptions of negative influences at neighborhood level and with regard to the way in which they deal with these neighborhood processes. The last section discusses the degree to which parents mediate or moderate neighborhood effects through a variety of parental strategies.

5.2 The interplay between neighborhood and family context

The extent to which parents perceive their neighborhood as a potential risk to child development is relevant because parents (might try to) manage the degree to which children are exposed to and influenced by the neighborhood context. A study by Galster & Santiago (2006) shows that a solid majority of parents in high-poverty neighborhoods perceive the neighborhood as an important and potentially corrupting influence on child development. They identify different social mechanisms that might negatively affect their children. These mechanisms have been reviewed extensively by other authors (Ingoldsby and Shaw 2002, Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000, Sampson et al. 2002, Small and Newman 2001) and are therefore only summarized here. Parents identify a variety of mechanisms that relate to the quality of social interaction in such neighborhoods. First, the low levels of social control and collective monitoring in the area (Sampson and Raudenbush 1999) are seen as problematic because they make it more difficult for parents to consistently enforce desirable social norms. Second, parents worry that children might develop deviant norms, values and antisocial behavior, for example with regards to employment, criminal activities or teenage pregnancies, through interaction with undisciplined peers (Jong 2007) and ‘bad’ adult role models (Briggs 1998). Third, they also worry that exposure to violence and crime could lead to high levels of stress and possibly victimization. By contrast, Galster & Santiago reveal that parents were not concerned about negative influences to child development through local institutional resources and public services, stigmatization or a lack of social resources in their network. However, the parents in this study were only allowed to identify one mechanism, and that might underestimate the occurrence of such negative neighborhood mechanisms on child development.

Parents’ perceptions of their social surroundings help shape their parenting practices. Valentine (1996), for example, has shown that parental fears about potential threats to their children’s innocence have increasingly led them to shield their children from public space. This is not only due to concerns about traffic safety, violence and abuse by adults – referred to as stranger-dangers – but also concerns about their own child’s exposure to other children. While parents tend to perceive their own children as vulnerable and innocent (‘angels’) when they venture out in public space, they view other people’s children as potential threats (‘devils’) to the moral order in society and they then fear that their children might be harmed by their contemporaries. These concerns might consequently lead parents to restrict their children’s activity patterns outside the home. A similar conclusion was reached in two Dutch studies. A study on the changing nature of children’s daily lives concluded that playing outdoors has become less common since the 1950s because parents and children perceive the streets as unsafe, opportunities to play outside have become restricted and middle-class culture has favored the acquisition of cultural resources through adult-organized activities (Karsten 2005). Another Dutch study on socio-spatial networks of adolescents shows how parents use protective and restrictive measures to structure a ‘safe adventure’ for their children when they venture out into public space ( Emmelkamp 2004).

Parents thus create socio-spatial boundaries for their children based on their perceptions of dangers in public space, even in relatively problem-free residential environments in the above mentioned studies. By comparison, parents in neighborhoods with high neighborhood poverty and/or residential instability carry a much heavier burden (Furstenberg et al. 1999, Furstenberg 2001). The lack of collective monitoring at the neighborhood level and a wide range of social problems in the close vicinity of their home increases the burden on families to structure and organize the daily routine of their children’s life (Beyers et al. 2003). Parents can respond to the burden of raising a child in a high-risk environment in different ways. Some parents try to compensate for, or moderate, the negative influences in the neighborhood. Depending on the level of risk, they shift the balance between the need to monitor and restrict their children’s behavior and the need to stimulate...
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disadvantaged neighborhood context might negatively influence parenting strategies even though traditions in the relationship between residential context and parenting, namely that living in a disadvantaged neighborhood might use to moderate negative neighborhood influences. The first two strategies are examples of preventive strategies, while the last two can be viewed as proactive strategies. Family protection strategies include avoidance of dangerous areas or specific places after dark and limiting interaction with neighbors. Child-monitoring strategies include banning children from playing outside or strictly supervising such activities. Parents also use in-home learning strategies that “play a critical role in keeping children attached to school authority, classroom routines, teacher directives and conventional peers” (p. 56). Lastly, parental resource-seeking strategies are aimed at finding additional or better resources to foster children’s development. These can include informal social resources inside and outside the neighborhood, in particular through extended family relations, to protect their children against unwanted neighborhood influences. They can also include the use of additional resources through formal institutions, such as community centers and religious organizations. Specifically, parents in disadvantaged neighborhoods might choose to send their child to a (private) school outside the neighborhood (Furstenberg et al. 1999). There can be different reasons for such a decision. Parents might be worried about the quality of education in local schools. There is considerable evidence that a disadvantaged school composition is associated with lower levels of educational attainment. This relationship between school composition and school performance has also been demonstrated in the Netherlands (for an overview see Karsten et al. 2006). Another, non-academic reason for parents in low income neighborhoods to choose non-neighborhood schools might be that the school is not just a place of learning, but also a place to develop friendships with peers. Thus, choosing a non-neighborhood school might also provide access to social resources that are unavailable in the neighborhood. Furstenberg et al. suggest that such a strategy is closely tied to social class and ethnicity: often the better educated and non-minority parents tend to opt for non-neighborhood schools.

In contrast to parents who respond to neighborhood risk by using a variety of parental strategies to monitor their children’s lives outside the household, other parents adapt their parenting behaviors to neighborhood norms and monitor their children less (Anderson 1999, Chung and Steinberg 2006, Jarrett 1997). It has been hypothesized that strong social ties amongst parents accompanied by collective socialization in relation to child-rearing practices might result in lower levels of parental monitoring and might thus lead to problem behavior such as substance abuse and anti-social behavior, particularly amongst teenagers. For example, Valentine (1997) found that mothers in working class neighborhoods experienced social pressure from other parents to grant their children the freedom to play outside. These studies therefore introduce an interesting contradiction in the relationship between residential context and parenting, namely that living in a disadvantaged neighborhood context might negatively influence parenting strategies even though parental monitoring in such a residential environment is more important than in more affluent neighborhoods.

In short, a review of the literature on parenting in low income neighborhoods shows that there is a mutual relationship between neighborhood and family management practices. On the one hand, families can buffer or moderate neighborhood effects through parental monitoring. On the other hand, parental behavior is negatively influenced by neighborhood characteristics, in particular the degree of social organization in the neighborhood and exposure to crime. Indirectly, a neighborhood might therefore negatively influence youth outcomes through parenting behaviors.

5.3 Research design

The question of how neighborhood effects are mediated or moderated by the family context is addressed using empirical data from a case study in a low income neighborhood in the Netherlands. Most empirical evidence for negative neighborhood effects on child development has been found in the United States and there is only limited evidence of such an effect in the Netherlands (i.e. Drukker et al. 2003, Kalff et al. 2001). In Dutch studies on neighborhood effects, an important question is to what degree social conditions in the relatively heterogeneous low income neighborhoods meet the necessary threshold to evoke neighborhood effects and their underlying mechanisms. Levels of socio-economic and ethnic segregation are relatively low (Bouna-Doff 2007, Musterd 2003) as a result of a large supply of social housing, extensive national welfare programs and active state involvement at local level to avoid neighborhoods with extreme poverty concentrations. With this in mind the present research was conducted in an extreme case in Transvaal-Noord in The Hague. It was expected that if neighborhood effects and their underlying social mechanisms occurred anywhere in the Dutch context, Transvaal might be a likely location. At the same time, from an American perspective, Transvaal is actually a moderate case and it is therefore interesting to see whether neighborhood effect mechanisms also occur here.

The neighborhood of Transvaal-Noord has the lowest median income of the city and the share of households with an income below the poverty line is more than twice as high (see Table 1). The neighborhood has been popular with immigrants since the late sixties and now has one of the highest proportions of minority residents in the country. The area houses a relatively large number of families with children and almost half of all the residents are younger than 25.

Transvaal-Noord does not have a favorable reputation. The area has considerable crime problems, from drug dealing and prostitution to problems related to petty crime and intimidation by groups of young male residents. The largely social housing stock is of low quality and the apartments are small. The open staircases of multi-family housing blocks make it easy for local youths, junkies and prostitutes to ‘hang around’ without being seen, which exacerbates the safety problems in the area. The maintenance of the public spaces in the area is also a problem. Streets are often littered with trash, old newspapers and plastic bags, and there are problems relating to vandalism and graffiti. In view of these difficulties, Transvaalkwartier has been designated an urban restructuring area by the Ministry of Housing.
Table 1: Demographics in percentages (Statistics Netherlands, 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic background</th>
<th>Transvaal-Noord</th>
<th>The Hague</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native-Dutch</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinamese</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant non-developed country</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant developed country</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fieldwork was carried out over a period of nine months. It included formal interviews with neighborhood experts and low income residents as well as many chance conversations with other residents, for example in the local public park and on playgrounds, and attendance to numerous neighborhood meetings, child-related activities and local festivities. The interviews with 19 neighborhood experts provided insight into the informal social structures within the neighborhood and the social problems in the area. Experts were professionals, such as neighborhood officials, local social workers, local educational workers and law enforcement, as well as ‘professional’ residents, such as neighborhood representatives, members of informal neighborhood organizations, cultural organizations, volunteer workers and other informal key figures. The expert interviews were followed by 46 interviews with residents of Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese-Hindustani origin of the first and second generation. One of the topics in these semi-structured, in-depth interviews was the degree to which those inter-
viewed considered the neighborhood to be a good place to raise children. Respondents were asked to explain why they considered the neighborhood a good or bad place to raise children, with particular attention for their own experiences. Subsequently, parents were asked how they dealt with perceived negative influences in the neighborhood. The respondents were approached at local playgrounds and parks and through various formal and informal organizations, quite often with the help of informal key persons or other respondents. Most respondents have children, but some are young adults (18 – 25 years) who have grown up in the area and still live with their parents (see Table 2). Although they don’t have children themselves, they are all actively involved in raising younger brothers and sisters. The interview material and field notes were analyzed using the qualitative data-analysis software Atlas.ti.

5.4 Perceptions of the neighborhood

Despite the substantial social problems in Transvaal-Noord, a recent survey indicates that the majority of social housing residents (79 %) feel attached to the neighborhood and that the proportion of residents who want to move away is similar to adjacent middle-class areas (Pinkster forthcoming). An important reason for this is that a lot of residents have friends and family in the area and that they appreciate the neighborhoods’ central location, good accessibility and the considerable number of ethnic shops and services in the area. In this respect, there are no significant differences between families with children and other household types. However, perceptions about the quality of the neighborhood are very different if one compares adult and child perspectives. In the interviews, most residents are negative about the neighborhood as a place to raise children and they describe a variety of negative neighborhood influences on child development.

Table 2: Number of children by ethnic background of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic background</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>3-4</th>
<th>&gt;4</th>
<th>Young adults w/o children</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moroccan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinamese</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most important reason why parents consider Transvaal to be a problematic place in which to raise their children is that the streets form a place of danger due to crime in the area. To some degree, this reflects the stranger-danger anxieties that were described by Valentine (1996) about parents who worry about their child falling victim to crime in public spaces. However, in the case of Transvaal, the dangers in public spaces do not necessarily take the form of strangers. A lot of parents know quite well which residents pose a threat to their children. These ‘strangers’ are often children or adolescents themselves, as a single mother of Turkish descent explains:

“A few weeks ago, the police was at my door. My oldest son – he’s fifteen – was caught shoplifting when coming home from school. I just didn’t believe it at first, he’s a good kid. Really, he is... never any trouble, never any disrespect. He told me and the police that he was bullied by some kids into stealing for them. They had said that they would kill him, if he told anybody. He was so scared, he didn’t know what to do”.

In addition, parents worry about emotional stress suffered by their children due to the presence of drug addicts, prostitutes and young dealers in area. Some children are afraid to play outside. Others have trouble getting to sleep at night due to the noise. A Turkish father with two children, age 7 and 4, explains:
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“...My kids are afraid to play outside because of those junkies. You know, sometimes they really go crazy and scream and yell. I worry when they’re outside, because there are needles lying around... everyone knows what you can get from dirty needles”.

Socialization mechanisms

Parents are not only worried that their children might become victims of crime, but also that they might become victims in more figurative terms: they worry that their children will become morally ‘corrupted’ through interaction with others. As a Moroccan resident states:

“This neighborhood is a breeding ground for criminals. If you’re a teenager, you’re not going to work for a few bucks as a clerk in a grocery store if you see these youths with an expensive scooter in the newest sport shoes across the streets earning ten times as much by dealing drugs. They hear about how they can earn some extra money, and that’s how it starts”.

This phenomenon of describing one’s own child as innocent (‘angels’) corrupted by others can be observed even amongst parents of youths who are described as ‘devils’ by the rest of the neighborhood. These parents describe their children’s ‘fall from grace’ as a process of victimization by other, corrupted neighborhood youths. Such a process of negative socialization, whereby traditional values of respect and education are exchanged for illegal activities and dropping out of school, is not only associated with hanging out in the street, but also with the context of local schools. Some parents see the school as a place where their children make the ‘wrong’ friends. As a young father of Moroccan descent explains:

“The biggest problem is that kids develop wrong friendships in school. If you’re friends are skipping classes, you end up doing the same. I have been there. And then you’re out there – on the streets – hanging out with your friends and everyone knows what goes on there”.

The worries about acquiring the ‘wrong’ friends on the street and in school start at a relatively early age, when children begin elementary school. When parents talk about the composition of the student population of local schools, their main concern is the school as a source of potential playmates rather than the negative consequences of a minority school composition for their child’s cognitive development. Although they often refer to the low level of language acquisition amongst children in local schools, they refer to this as a symbol of corruption via peers rather than an example of the low quality of education in the classroom. Their worry is that their child will learn the language of the street during breaks and in the hallways. “I don’t want my child speaking Moroccan Dutch” 14 was a comment heard frequently during the interviews.

Negative socialization is not only mentioned in relation to peers but also in relation to the type of role models that children might encounter in the neighborhood. A young woman of Moroccan descent explains why she understands that her brother moved to another neighborhood when his first child was born:

“This is not a place to raise children. The guys who hang around the neighborhood are a bad influence on kids. Kids think they are so cool, but they are involved in nasty business. They set a bad example. You don’t want your kids anywhere near those people”.

Parents therefore worry about the bad example set by young criminals with their lack of respect towards the police, other residents and even younger children.

According to residents, the risk of ‘moral corruption’ not only stems from concrete social interactions, but also from the more general social climate in the area. A lot of residents and professionals complain about the lack of monitoring of children’s behavior in public places, by parents as well as by the general community. A native-Dutch woman, who has lived in the neighborhood for 35 years and volunteers at an organization that coordinates outdoor activities for children in neighborhood playgrounds, complains:

“Kids run around without any supervision. Where are the parents? If it wasn’t for the children’s activities we organize, the kids would be bored and would start misbehaving and breaking things. They play soccer until late at night, make a lot of noise and write graffiti on our door. I have seen it happen”.

Some residents point out that it is not so much the lack of monitoring per se, but rather the lack of shared norms and values amongst residents of very different backgrounds about what is considered to be ‘proper’ behavior for children in public space. As a father of Moroccan descent with a three year old daughter explains:

“Parents are very important when it comes to keeping kids on the right track. Of course, everyone wants what is best for their child, but when you are raising kids, you have to start with the little things…. For example, in the square here, when kids eat ice cream they throw away the wrappers and nobody corrects them, not the parents, not anyone. One might think that it is just a piece of paper but before long the square is littered with junk. In this neighborhood, it is just very difficult to get people to enforce rules like that. Now if you teach your child to clean up after themselves, they will also start correcting other kids. So you have to start small”.

Such expressions of social disorganization and limited collective efficacy have been described by Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls (1997). They suggest that a lack of social cohesion amongst neighbors combined with their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good opens the door to anti-social and criminal behavior. In the case of Transvaal residents clearly identify such a lack of collective efficacy. As a result, they also indicate that they themselves are hesitant to correct children’s

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14 Even though street slang is a multicultural product, including many Surinamese and Antillean words, parents generally associate street slang with a Moroccan Dutch accent, because in Transvaal problem youths are mostly, although not exclusively, of Moroccan background. A Moroccan Dutch dialect is thus viewed as a sign of corruption.
behavior in public space. A Surinamese-Hindustani father with two adolescent children explains:

“Last Saturday I was on my balcony and saw a mother walking by with two children, maybe 7 or 8 years old. The kids were spitting on the cars and the mother didn’t say anything about it at all! And then I wonder… why should I say something if even the kids own parents don’t correct such behavior?”

The consequence is that residents tend to turn a blind eye, even in situations where most residents actually disapprove of children’s behavior. This is also demonstrated by a recent experience of a young woman of Moroccan descent:

“What I will never forget… I was eating an ice cream across from the playground… A few guys started throwing rocks, even though kids were close by. When I said something about it, they got really aggressive and when another woman tried to intervene, they shoved her against her car. Nobody else did anything to help and all the kids saw that. I decided right then that I would never raise my kids in such an environment, even though I grew up here myself.”

To summarize, residents worry about mechanisms of negative socialization, as a result of concrete relations with peers and adult role models, but also as a result of the more general social climate which opens the door to antisocial or criminal behavior. The experiences of residents are such that negative social influences are largely intertwined and reinforce each other.

5.5 How families avoid risk

To deal with the described negative influences at the neighborhood level parents adopt different strategies to ‘protect’ their children. The most extreme version of this is to move out of the area when their children get into trouble or even before they have children. One such example of ‘voting with one’s feet’ was provided by a Moroccan resident whose son at the time of the interview was living in a judicial youth institution. The father had just started looking for a house in the new suburbs, so that when his son had fulfilled his sentence, he would no longer be able to hang out in the neighborhood with his crime buddies: “If we stay here amongst his friends, he doesn’t stand a chance of improving his life”. Most parents, however, do not go to such lengths. Some indicate that they do not have the financial means to leave the neighborhood, but, more importantly, a lot of parents do not want to leave for reasons such as being close to family and friends. These parents nevertheless develop various strategies to limit their children’s exposure to the negative influences described above. As a Moroccan father of five children explains:

“Look, the fact is that as a parent in Transvaal you have to work extra hard to raise your kids right. The neighborhood matters for how they grow up and because of the crime, the street kids, the drugs, parents have to work extra hard”.

Spatial restrictions

One way to actively try to avoid exposure to the negative influences described above is to construct specific socio-spatial boundaries for children in public space. A lot of parents put restrictions on where and when their children are allowed to play outside. The severity of such restrictions differs. For example, some parents allow their children to play outside without supervision, but only during the daytime in certain playgrounds or in front of their houses. Other parents only let their children play outside under supervision and some parents will ban their children from playing outside altogether. A mother of Moroccan descent with two children, aged 5 and 3 says,

“You get the wrong friends if you hang out in the neighborhood, everyone knows that. I saw it happen to my brother. That’s why I keep a good eye on my children. They are not allowed to go to school by themselves or play outside without me. I make sure I always know where they are so they don’t hang out with those kids… They are trouble”.

A Turkish mother with three children, aged 11, 8 and 6 says,

“In Transvaal, the streets are dangerous. People can’t be trusted here. They are trouble. That’s why I never send my kids out on errands or let them play outside in the neighborhood. When they get home from school, they can watch TV. And if they really want to play outside, we take the car to Zuiderpark, where the playgrounds are safer”.

Some parents indicate that their children themselves realize the dangers of the streets and develop their own strategies to avoid specific places. For example, a Turkish mother describes the reason why her fifteen year-old daughter has been cutting school recently:

“When I confronted her, she told me that she’s afraid to go out by herself. See, I leave for work at five in the morning and come back late afternoon. So she has to go to school by herself. But she’s afraid, because there are these guys hanging around the neighborhood who are up to no good. Everyone knows they deal drugs and they harass other residents. My daughter is afraid to run into them”.

In addition to setting spatial boundaries in public space, parents also try to keep their children away from specific private spaces in the neighborhood, most notably schools. A number of parents worry about their children getting the wrong friends through neighborhood schools and choose a non-neighborhood school, specifically with a more native-Dutch student body. Often, a decision like this has a considerable impact on the daily routines of parents, who have to drive 20 minutes to suburban schools willing to accept their children. Some parents also depend on help from extended family, such as uncles or brothers who make financial contributions to ensure the children get into a private school that the parents could otherwise not afford. For example, some parents will send their children to Muslim schools in Rotterdam, organizing the half-hour car ride to school col-
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Social restrictions

Parents also use various strategies to shape their children’s social identity and social lives. A first strategy to limit the possibility of negative peer influences and role models through neighborhood peers is by actively managing their children’s circle of friends. For example, a Turkish single mother background with four children explains why she actively chooses ‘proper’ playmates for her children:

“The neighborhood has changed in the last few years. I used to have nice neighbors, but they have all moved away. I can understand that. If I could move, I would too. The people who have taken their place are different. They never say hello and they don’t think about anybody but themselves. There have been several fights in the last year, for example between parents because a child accidentally kicked the soccer ball against someone’s window. It’s not good for my kids to be around such people. So my kids are only allowed to play with the neighbors children. They are good people, not unlike the rest of these antisocials”.

A Moroccan father also explains how he tried to influence his sons’ friendships:

“When they were small I didn’t have the money to send them to a school outside the neighborhood but I made sure that they were involved in sports activities outside the neighborhood, like soccer and tennis, so that they didn’t have time to hang out in the neighborhood too much and would develop other friendships. And when they would played outside, they were only allowed to play with reliable, good kids and only under our supervision”.

Another strategy used by parents to structure their children’s social life is not just to choose their neighborhood peers is by actively managing their children’s circle of friends. For example, a Turkish single mother background with four children explains why she actively chooses ‘proper’ playmates for her children:

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Parents therefore adopt both spatial and social strategies to protect their children from negative neighborhood influences and to monitor their behavior. While some parents use a variety of strategies, other parents lack the time and resources to monitor their children so strictly. This partly explains why, on an average afternoon, there are always considerable numbers of unsupervised children and youths hanging around the streets of Transvaal. As mentioned above, a lot of respondents explicitly portray these children and the lack of monitoring by their absent parents as one of the social dangers of the neighborhood. However, the absent parents and even parents of problem youths often share the same concerns about negative neighborhood influences as the ‘good’ parents, but they feel powerless to do anything about it.

The story of the single mother of Turkish descent, whose fifteen year old son was recently arrested by the police for shoplifting, provides a striking example of the way in which parents’ social positions limit their options to protect and monitor their children. As divorce is still frowned upon in her own community, her social support network is small. She suffers from back problems, which makes the climb to her third floor apartment difficult. As a result, she is often unable to accompany her children outside. Having had little education and being unemployed, she tried but failed to send her son to a non-neighborhood school:

“Our neighbors are Kurdish, just like us. We help each other out. For example, my husband and I, we work long hours. So our neighbors pick up our children from school. I would never let them come home by themselves. There are always troublemakers hanging around the neighborhood. I don’t know what we would do without our neighbors”.

Some parents emphasize that the presence of friends and family in the area has a positive influence on children because they help to reinforce their cultural, religious and ethnic identity. They indicate that the negative neighborhood influences described do not apply to them because their own community can cushion their children from the problems of the streets. In a way, therefore, these parents distance themselves from public life in the neighborhood altogether. A Turkish resident illustrates how collective monitoring in his community leaves little room for neighborhood influences on child development:

“If we catch them trying to sell stolen goods, we make sure that their families know about it. My nephew was working in a grocery store and was caught trying to sell a stolen mobile phone by his boss. Well, his boss is a friend of his father and called him immediately. The family decided that the boy should get away from here and stay in Turkey for a while. So you see, we take care of our own. Not like Moroccans, who always look away. That’s why you see so few Turkish youths on the streets and so many Moroccans.”

Parents therefore adopt both spatial and social strategies to protect their children from negative neighborhood influences and to monitor their behavior. While some parents use a variety of strategies, other parents lack the time and resources to monitor their children so strictly. This partly explains why, on an average afternoon, there are always considerable numbers of unsupervised children and youths hanging around the streets of Transvaal. As mentioned above, a lot of respondents explicitly portray these children and the lack of monitoring by their absent parents as one of the social dangers of the neighborhood. However, the absent parents and even parents of problem youths often share the same concerns about negative neighborhood influences as the ‘good’ parents, but they feel powerless to do anything about it.

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“...it was horrible. I saw those kids. They have no manners. I saw how they disrespected their teacher. They don’t want to study and their Dutch is so bad. They all talk like rappers, with Moroccan words. And then I had to enroll him there. It was the only place close to home where they accepted him. I didn’t have a choice.”

As a result, although she has a similar socio-economic background to many of the other respondents in this study, her household situation, health and the size of her social network negatively influence the degree to which she has succeeded in developing spatial and social strategies to shield her children from unwanted influences at the neighborhood.

Although one has to be careful about generalizing on the basis of a limited number of in-depth interviews in a qualitative case study such as this, the interviews do provide some insight into variations between parents in terms of parental strategies as a result of different backgrounds. Although the low income and minority parents in this study have similar socio-economic backgrounds in terms of income, differences in terms of educational background nevertheless influence the degree to which they create spatial and social restrictions for their children. For example, parents who are slightly better educated are more likely to choose a non-neighborhood school. They are also more likely to distance themselves from other residents and to select their children’s friends. Less educated parents, on the other hand, often hold less secure, unskilled jobs involving evening or night shifts. Struggling to make ends meet, they are simply not at home to supervise their children or restrict their venturing out into the neighborhood.

Household characteristics also shape parenting practices. In relation to the previous example, there seems to be a marked difference between single parents and couples with children in the degree to which they succeed in monitoring their children. Some single mothers indicated that being home to structure their children’s lives and protect them from unwanted neighborhood influences was an important reason to stay on welfare rather than to try and find a job. As one Surinamese-Hindustani single mother with two adolescent children explains:

“I got a job when my youngest son was 12. I figured I had done my job well. I raised my kids from when they were small. I showed them how the world works. For example, my son…. I never let him go to school by himself. It is just not safe here. And then when he started high school and taking the tram, I would walk him to the tram stop and wait for him there when he came back. But when I started work, I worried. What if something happened on his way home? What if he got into trouble? So every day I made him call me when he got home.”

Moreover, larger families seem to experience more problems in monitoring their children. In the relatively small apartments in the area, parents with four or five children simply do not have the space to keep them indoors all the time and they have to divide their attention between them. As a result, their adolescent children often hang around outside unsupervised. This is partly related to ethnic differences, as Moroccans or Turks tend to have larger families than Surinamese, but there are more ethno-cultural differences in parental strategies. For example, although a lot of respon-

dents depended heavily on informal support from friends and family to raise their children, Turkish residents are the ones who most strongly emphasize this as a strategy for positively socialize their children.

5.6 Discussion

To summarize, the case study in the low income neighborhood of Transvaal shows that residents’ concerns about negative neighborhood influences on child development are overwhelming social in nature. They refer either to the risks associated with interaction with specific social actors (‘corrupting’ peers, negative role models, dangerous strangers) or to more general social problems in the area, such as a lack of shared norms and values and low collective efficacy. While this last mechanism of low levels of monitoring and social control might seem a less direct or extreme form of negative neighborhood effects, the findings of this study suggest that it is in fact the lack of social organization that opens the door to the more direct negative effects through peers, role model and exposure to crime. This is supported by Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) who found that a lack of social cohesion and common values is an important factor when explaining crime and disorder. It can therefore be hypothesized that, rather than being inherently different mechanisms, the explanatory models for neighborhood effects of social disorganization, exposure to crime, negative socialization through peers and role models continuously reinforce each other and actually involve the same people. For example, the criminal behavior of which children might become victims is the same behavior of peers or role models that might ‘corrupt’ children in a moral sense. In Transvaal the stranger-dangers described by Valentine (1996) therefore do not really involve strangers but other local youths or adult residents whom many parents and children know by sight. Interestingly, residents are much more explicit about negative neighborhood mechanisms than about the outcomes of such mechanisms. They vaguely refer to short-term consequences of immorality such as antisocial or criminal behavior, dropping out of school or simply behaving like ‘those’ undisciplined youths. Rarely do they discuss long-term consequences for educational achievement, employment opportunities and social mobility, which have been found in quantitative neighborhood effect studies in the Netherlands (Bouma-Doff 2005, Klaauw and Ours 2003, Musterd et al. 2003, Pinkster 2007, Sykes 2008).

It is important to mention some of the limitations of the chosen research approach. An important question is to what degree residents are able to see and understand the more subtle or indirect ways in which the neighborhood context might hinder child development. Second, as a result of the chosen research approach it is also difficult to determine decisively the extent to which both the consequences of the described social mechanisms and the mechanisms themselves are imagined or real. Residents’ perceptions about negative social influences might be based in part on local ‘ghost’ stories and on negative stereotyping of local youth problems by the media. On the other hand, interviews with professionals of local welfare, youth and law enforcement institutions support parents’ perceptions about risks of victimization and negative socialization. Third, an important question is to what extent parents overstate the importance of the neighborhood context in child development and thereby externalize problems that might originate at the individual or fam-
ily level. However, even if parents unjustly ‘blame the neighborhood’, their perceptions of negative neighborhood influences are real in their consequences through the parental strategies they adopt to protect their children from the neighborhood.

Parental strategies in Transvaal include both social and spatial restrictions. First, parents restrict the degree to which their children can move around freely in the public domain. To varying degrees, specific places are “off-limits”. This not only includes public places but also neighborhood schools, because in the perceptions of many parents the neighborhood and school context are inextricably linked as places that involve the same mechanisms and the same actors. To some degree, the spatial restrictions described are similar to the socio-spatial strategies used by parents in other neighborhood contexts to negotiate a ‘safe adventure’ for their children in public space (Emmelkamp 2004, Karsten 2005, Valentine 1996). What differs, however, is the fact that the ‘dangerous’ spaces that parents identify are right outside their front door, in their own street and on their way to school. Second, some parents also use a variety of social strategies to limit exposure to unwanted neighborhood influences, such as choosing ‘proper’ friends for their children, creating social distance between themselves and the ‘other’ residents and enlisting social resources to deal with the day-to-day reality of raising children in a high-risk environment.

If we look at these parenting practices in light of the distinction between promotive and restrictive strategies (Furstenberg et al. 1999, Jarrett 1997), it appears that parents in Transvaal tend to use restrictive rather than promotive strategies. Even strategies that might help to promote children’s development are often motivated by restrictions. An example is the choice for a non-neighborhood school. While such schools are often of a higher educational quality, the decision is almost exclusively formulated in terms of separating the child from negative peers in local schools. Moreover, what is remarkable about these restrictions is that they are applied at a very early age. It is often claimed in the research literature that neighborhood influences are greater for adolescents who venture more outside the home (i.e. Fauth et al. 2007, Ingoldsby and Shaw 2002). However, in the case of Transvaal a lot of parents worry about negative peer and role model influences at a much earlier stage when children enter elementary school. A number of parents emphasize the importance of enforcing rules and placing restrictions at an early age. Many suggest that if it goes wrong at the age of eleven or twelve, it is too late to intervene.

Finally, some differences were found between parents in the degree to which they use social and spatial restrictions to protect their children from negative influences within the neighborhood. Some parents appear to do very little to limit neighborhood risks for their children. These ‘other’ parents are seen as part of the problem by the parents who actively monitor their own children’s lives and are accused of mediating or reinforcing the negative neighborhood mechanisms. Indeed, it can be hypothesized that youths in poor neighborhoods such as Transvaal, who go to a neighborhood school and are not monitored in their socio-spatial activities, are most likely to be vulnerable to victimization or negative socialization. At first glance, the lack of monitoring by their parents might seem to be the result of different (lower) standards about parenting practices, as often mentioned in the research literature. However, ‘bad’ parents in Transvaal share the same concerns about their children’s development as the ‘good’ parents and identify similar mechanisms of peer influences and negative role models as risks for their children’s development. In fact, even parents of ‘devils’ (Valentine 1996) attribute their child’s problems to negative neighborhood influences. At the same time, a lot of parents feel overwhelmed by, and powerless in the face of, the substantial social problems so close to their home and they do not have the social and financial resources to effectively develop strategies to deal with these problems. Consequently, the lack of monitoring by these ‘bad’ parents is not so much the result of negative socialization amongst parents with regard to monitoring and parental strategies, but rather the result of parents’ struggle with their own marginalized social position.
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6. Conclusion

It is generally acknowledged by researchers involved in studying neighborhood effects that a better understanding is needed of the specific processes within neighborhoods that, for better or worse, shape the prospects and lives of residents. The theoretical questions they raise about the role that neighborhood – and specifically the social composition of the neighborhood – plays in shaping individual opportunities and outcomes also reflect an important theme in urban policies in Europe and the United States concerning the social costs and consequences of concentration of poverty. In the case of the Netherlands, policies of social mixing not only aim to increase the level of social control and social cohesion in these neighborhoods (Uitermark, Duyvendak, et al., 2007) but also to enhance the prospects of its disadvantaged residents (Andersson and Musterd, 2005; Ostendorf, Musterd, et al., 2001). The aim of this research was to contribute to the academic and political discussion about the negative relationship between living in a disadvantaged neighborhood context and the socio-economic prospects of residents.

6.1 Endogenous mechanisms behind neighborhood effects

In order to understand the causal pathways behind neighborhood effects on socio-economic outcomes the study focused on social processes related to the specific social composition of low-income neighborhoods that shape the job search strategies and work ethics of residents. The findings show that such economic actions are influenced by the actions and social position of other residents through mechanisms of social isolation, mechanisms of socialization, mechanisms of social disorganization and mechanisms relating to the formal social infrastructure in the area.

6.1.1 Social networks and informal job search strategies

A first hypothesis in the research literature about the way that living in a low-income neighborhood context might negatively influence residents’ socio-economic outcomes focuses on residents’ social networks. It is hypothesized that the social networks of disadvantaged residents in low-income neighborhoods do not provide the necessary resources and support to ‘get ahead’ in life and improve one’s social position. The argument is that disadvantaged residents tend to have a local orientation in their social life and that, consequently, living in a neighborhood context characterized by a disadvantaged population composition results in resource-poor social networks. With respect to work, it is assumed that residents’ job search strategies are less effective because their social networks lack relevant job-related information and support.

The social isolation hypothesis was addressed by studying the job search strategies of social housing residents in the low-income neighborhood of Transvaal-Noord and the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse and by comparing the locality of, and resources in, their social networks. The findings show that social housing residents in Transvaal more frequently use informal contacts to find work than residents in Regentesse and that these contacts more often live in the neighborhood.
This finding is interesting because it is usually assumed that the neighborhood is not the relevant scale for studying integration or exclusion from the labor market. However, informal job networks in Transvaal—sometimes formalized in private job agencies—are essential when it comes to linking residents to unskilled or low-skilled jobs throughout the region: while employment opportunities themselves are not local, the information about work and the social connections which help people to find jobs are. The locality of, and the resources present in, residents’ social networks therefore become relevant.

The survey results indicate that local social contacts make up a substantial proportion of the personal networks of social housing residents in both neighborhoods. When comparing the two neighborhood groups, local social contacts are more important in terms of social support than for residents in the low-income neighborhood than in the mixed neighborhood. Nevertheless, residential context does not influence the overall availability of social support in people’s daily lives. What differs, is who residents turn to for help or information: Social housing residents in Transvaal more frequently turn to someone in the neighborhood than social housing residents in Regentesse. This difference in neighborhood orientation is greatest in relation to work-related support such as information and advice about finding a job.

A relevant question in this context is whether the support provided by local social contacts is equally effective in both neighborhoods. One indication of the ‘usefulness’ of available support is the socio-economic status of support-givers in respondents’ personal networks. In terms of access to socio-economic prestige the survey results indicate that the respondents score much lower than the Dutch population (Völker, Pinkster, et al., 2008). A comparison of the two neighborhood groups reveals that social housing residents in Regentesse have more diverse networks than social housing residents in Transvaal, although the higher socio-economic diversity of residents’ networks in the mixed neighborhood relates mainly to having acquaintances, friends or family with a wider variety of low status jobs rather than higher status jobs. This suggests that social housing residents in the mixed neighborhood do not benefit from the proximity of more affluent neighbors. Nonetheless, a more diverse network at the lower end of the job market provides more effective support when looking for a job: it makes it easier for residents in Regentesse to maintain their labor market position. In short, social networks of residents in the low-income neighborhood restrict access to socio-economic prestige, because they are more constricted in terms of socio-economic prestige.

The fieldwork provides a greater insight into the largely neighborhood-based social networks of residents in Transvaal. The majority of local contacts are based on existing family relations or shared cultural, religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds rather than simply on living in the same apartment building or in the same street. Some of these ties existed even before residents moved to the neighborhood and they help to incorporate new residents into existing informal social structures of people with similar background. Proximity subsequently plays a role in creating new ties amongst residents with similar (marginalized) social positions and strengthening existing social relations: people meet each other in the streets or in shared private spaces in the neighborhood such as religious institutions, coffee houses or grocery stores. For many residents, these ties also form an important reason to stay in the area.

With respect to work, local social relations in Transvaal form an important source of job information and job opportunities through informal job networks. For many residents the (initial) use of informal contacts to find work is a logical job search strategy. As Waldinger and Lichter (2003) have shown, in segmented labor markets employers tend to prefer network hiring as a recruitment mechanism which makes social networks essential when it comes to providing access to entry-level jobs for low-skilled workers. However, over time such informal job search strategies can have unforeseen negative implications because the informal job networks are limited in scope: they only provide access to a limited segment of the labor market. As a result, residents tend to spend their entire life working in the same economic sectors alongside their neighbors. They do not develop the language, communication and work skills and social contacts outside their ‘own’ group which would allow them to become independent of these job networks. Consequently, the dependence on informal neighborhood contacts to find work leads to a constriction of personal social networks which, over time, narrows residents’ access to employment opportunities.

To summarize, localized social networks of social housing residents in low-income neighborhoods influence individual employment opportunities in two contradictory ways: in the short term they provide access to work, but job opportunities through informal contacts are limited in scope and reinforce residents’ dependence on their own constricted social networks. In the long run this limits their chance to improve their employment situation. Processes of social isolation thus occur, but not to the degree that it leads to exclusion from the labor market altogether. The paradox is that residents consciously choose the short term benefits of informal job networks but rarely foresee the long-term drawbacks of such actions.

6.1.2 Negative socialization

A second hypothesis in the research literature about the way that living in a low-income neighborhood context might negatively influence residents’ socio-economic outcomes places the emphasis on their work ethics and expectations. The argument is that people develop norms and values about what is ‘right’ or ‘appropriate behavior’ through interaction with others. Specifically, disadvantaged residents in low-income neighborhoods characterized by numerous social problems such as unemployment, teenage pregnancies, high school drop-out rates and crime might adopt similar deviant behavior because they have come to view such behaviors as normal through their interaction with neighbors.

The present study uncovered various forms of socialization amongst residents in the low-income neighborhood of Transvaal. Some occur within residents’ personal social networks, while others are associated with the public domain either through concrete interactions with residents who are not acquaintances, friends or family and who are viewed as strangers, or through indirect interaction whereby people see certain behavior in the street and emulate it without actually knowing the ‘other’.

Socialization in localized social networks

A first example of negative socialization within residents’ personal social networks concerns their
attitudes to work. Unemployment rates in Transvaal are high and some residents actively try to stay on unemployment benefits based on the idea “why work for a few euros more”. They explicitly discuss this with each other and exchange information with friends and acquaintances on how to avoid current workfare programs. Nevertheless, such ‘deviant’ behavior is not necessarily reproduced in the next generation. For example, the attitudes of single mothers of Surinamese-Hindustani origin with respect to work are strongly connected to their standards of good motherhood. They stay on welfare in order to raise their children in the best possible way but apply very different standards to their children, in whom they instill a strong work ethic coupled with the expectation that they find the best possible job to improve their social standing.

These classic examples of ‘negative’ socialization explain unfavorable outcomes such as unemployment or dropping out of school for some residents, but they are not very widespread. Other indirect forms of socialization are much more important when it comes to limiting residents’ opportunities and structuring their behavior with respect to work. This includes a wide range of rules of conduct in people’s social networks and norms and values about what constitutes ‘appropriate behavior’ which limit the range of choices that people consider with respect to work without being directly related to work. These processes of socialization might therefore be described as ‘indirect’. For example, parents of conservative Muslim background might limit their daughters’ freedom when it comes to making their own choices as regards employment, not because they consider the work itself unfit, but because it might be considered inappropriate to travel by oneself at night or to work with non-Muslim men. Such rules of conduct are not just set by the parents themselves, but also by their relatives and friends who live nearby. Proximity serves to reinforce them simply because an individual’s behavior is visible to others. As a result, parents prioritize forms of ‘appropriate’ behavior over others. The unintended outcome of these social practices is that their daughters take a job that keeps them close to home and provides them with much fewer career prospects, or simply remain unemployed.

Another example of the way in which social practices amongst residents shape their employment situation and career prospects concerns the informal job networks mentioned in the previous paragraph. Shared norms about reciprocity make it difficult for individuals to refuse when they are ‘offered’ a job through a friend. For example, young adults are sometimes pressured by their family to take an unskilled summer job in a familiar context rather than to step outside their network to find work that matches their educational background and skills. The end result of such indirect socialization processes can be described as a form of underemployment rather than unemployment.

Socialization in the public domain

Socialization not only occurs amongst relatives, friends and acquaintances, but also outside informal social structures in the public domain. The interviews in Transvaal revealed that a lot of parents are concerned about the people and behavior that their children are exposed to in public space. Parents express concerns that their children will adopt attitudes and behavior that deviate from the norms and values that are upheld within their own social network through interaction with ‘strangers’ in the streets. These strangers may be undisciplined peers, who are at best a nuisance to other residents and at worst a danger to public order and whose friendships can cause their children to drop out of school and/or become involved in anti-social behavior and criminal activities. They may also be older role models. According to parents, such processes of negative socialization are facilitated by neighborhood disorder and a lack of social control in public space. This issue is discussed in more detail in the following section.

In short, evidence was found for various processes of socialization amongst residents of Transvaal that might limit their prospects for social mobility in the long run. Interestingly, within local social networks such mechanisms of negative and indirect socialization are reinforced by high levels of social control, while negative socialization in the public domain is reinforced by low levels of social control. In some cases, processes of socialization are directly related to work and induce residents to turn their backs on the labor market. In most cases, however, unemployment or underemployment might be the indirect result of socialization within residents’ personal networks with respect to other domains of life such as family life, gender roles, mutual support networks.

6.1.3 Social disorganization and neighborhood disorder

A third explanation in the research literature for neighborhood effects focuses on neighborhood disorder and the lack of informal social control in public space. The social disorganization hypothesis assumes that residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods lack the willingness or capacity to develop and enforce shared norms and values in the public domain. In the research literature no explicit link is established between processes of social disorganization and residents’ economic behavior and labor market prospects.

A lot of residents in Transvaal referred explicitly to the lack of mutual trust and willingness to intervene in or correct other people’s and children’s behavior in public space for fear of conflict or retribution. For similar reasons, residents indicate that they are scared to phone the police. For example, one resident explained that the last time he notified the police about a fight between local youths in the square in front of his house he called anonymously and did not turn on the lights so that the youths wouldn’t be able to see that his family was awake. Such a lack of willingness to intervene also applies to less serious forms of deviant behavior such as children throwing trash around or kicking a soccer ball against houses. The combination of social disorder and lack of collective monitoring causes a lot of parents to worry about their children’s moral and social development. Yet their own withdrawal from the public domain has an impact on the range of behaviors that other residents and particularly children are exposed to. This indirectly contributes to the previously described process of negative socialization amongst local youths.

The present study suggests that there is an indirect relationship between social disorganization and long-term socio-economic prospects of individual residents. First, social disorganization is associated with higher levels of neighborhood disorder, including crime and violence (Samson and Raudenbush, 1999). Many parents in Transvaal worry about the short-term effects of exposure to violence and other dangers in public space on educational attainment, for example as a result of stress or lack of sleep. Moreover, as mentioned previously, parents in Transvaal link the phenome-
non of social disorganization to negative socialization of their children with respect to educational and work ethics. To study such effects directly one would need a different, longitudinal research approach than the approach used here. Another finding is that neighborhood disorder brought about by low levels of collective efficacy also contributes to residents’ tendency to retreat within their own networks. Such forms of interaction between endogenous mechanisms behind neighborhood effects are discussed in more detail below (paragraph 6.2).

6.1.4 Employment opportunities through formal social infrastructure

Another way in which living in a low-income neighborhood context can influence residents’ socio-economic prospects is related to the formal social infrastructure. Transvaal is characterized by a dense web of public institutions such as community centers, welfare organizations and youth centers as well as private, subsidized institutions such as cultural and religious centers. Formal social institutions can be a resource for residents in terms of support, education and training and they facilitate social interaction amongst residents. In addition, they form a familiar and accessible entrance to the labor market through various (un)skilled jobs, volunteer jobs and internships. Paradoxically, these jobs might have few long-term prospects and also function to keep residents within the neighborhood and their own social networks. Thus, similarly to the previously described informal job networks, the formal social infrastructure provides employment opportunities which might have unintended, negative consequences for residents’ social mobility in the long run.

The role that local social institutions in Transvaal play in shaping employment opportunities is very much context-dependent and related to the specific configuration of the Dutch welfare state, its strong presence at the local level and its long history of intervention in low-income neighborhoods. In the American context explanations for neighborhood effects focusing on institutional resources and public services generally address their lack of quality or absence in disadvantaged neighborhoods due to structural forces outside of the neighborhood such as the local tax base system. By contrast, in Dutch low-income neighborhoods there is generally an abundance of formal resources and public services. However, as mentioned above, their contribution to residents’ employment opportunity structures is not exclusively beneficial.

It should be noted that neighborhood effects attributed to local institutional resources have generally been described in the research literature as ‘correlated’ neighborhood effects rather than endogenous neighborhood effects, because these effects are thought to be generated by processes outside the neighborhood and are thought to affect all residents equally (Dietz, 2002). However, this line of reasoning does not quite apply to the case of Transvaal. The local social infrastructure is shaped by policies of the municipal and national government, but many of these policies are place-specific rather than generic and are developed directly in response to the local population composition. The formal social infrastructure is also shaped by local power dynamics as some groups of residents are more effective than others in influencing the local policy agendas and service provision of welfare institutions. In addition, some public services target specific disadvantaged groups within the neighborhood and not all residents are equally connected to formal social institutions.

6.2 The relationship between mechanisms

The described causal pathways through which living in a disadvantaged neighborhood context impacts residents’ economic prospects are related in significant ways. On the one hand, processes relating to social disorganization, socialization, social isolation and the formal social infrastructure might interact and cumulatively contribute to negative outcomes. On the other hand, certain mechanisms might operate alongside each other but have contradictory results. Several examples help to clarify this point.

A first example of the way in which neighborhood effect mechanisms might reinforce each other concerns the relationship between processes of socialization and processes of social isolation. As mentioned previously, the social networks of residents in the low-income neighborhood of Transvaal are more constricted in terms of socio-economic diversity than the social networks of residents in the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse. This is not related to the degree of neighborhood orientation of one’s networks (see also Chapter 2). Rather, the limited scope of residents’ social networks results from the nature or quality of neighborhood contacts: processes of indirect socialization amongst residents limit their willingness and possibilities to interact with people outside their own group and to venture outside their own social network. Geographical proximity strengthens the ties and facilitates high levels of social control in these networks, which restricts residents’ relationships to others in the neighborhood whom are either unemployed or only work in a specific sector and/or in particular types of unskilled jobs. This, in turn, reduces their job search opportunities.

Similarly, processes of social disorganization in the public domain reinforce processes of socialization and social isolation within existing social structures. For example, one way that parents deal with the negative influences in public space is to retreat into one’s own communities and depend on the support from friends and relatives to raise and socialize their children (see Chapter 5). Processes of social disorganization in public space thus increase residents’ dependence on existing relations with residents of similar social backgrounds and limit the chances of building new relations with ‘others’. The effect of this is twofold. On the one hand, meaningful local social relations form an important resource when it comes to protecting residents from harmful elements in the public domain. As a 27-year old woman of Moroccan origin once said: “for you [the researcher], Transvaal is not really a safe place in the evenings, but for me… I live here and I know a lot of people and they keep an eye out for me. So I’m quite safe on my own". This protective role of local social relations was also illustrated in Chapter 5 with respect to the role that relatives and friends play in monitoring and socializing children to keep them in school and away from criminal activities. At the same time, these same social relations can limit opportunities on the labor market through processes of direct or indirect socialization and informal job networks. This shows how local social relations have contradictory implications for individual residents.

In short, the magnitude of neighborhood effects measured in quantitative studies results from layered and complex processes in the day-to-day lives of disadvantaged residents in low-income neighborhoods. The examples above illustrate how the mechanisms behind neighborhood effects sometimes reinforce and sometimes compensate each other. The research literature has paid
little attention to the way in which social processes in low-income neighborhoods interact to reproduce social inequalities. Further qualitative, longitudinal research would increase our understanding of the way in which these mechanisms are related and of the sometimes contradictory meaning of local social relations and local social institutions in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

6.3 Differential effects and selective mechanisms

The processes described above are not as pervasive as is sometimes suggested in the literature on neighborhood effects. They are selective rather than generic. As a number of European, quantitative studies on neighborhood effects have shown, living in a low-income neighborhood does not affect all residents to the same degree (Andersson, Musterd, et al., 2007; Galster, Andersson, et al., 2007; Klaauw and Ours, 2003; Musterd, Vos, et al., 2003; Musterd, Andersson, et al., 2008). The present study illustrates how these differential effects are explained by the selectivity of the negative mechanisms within the neighborhood.

First, mechanisms of socialization and social isolation do not affect all residents in the same way because they are part of different informal social structures based on social distinctions such as socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicity, gender, religious differences and differences in geographical background. These informal social structures operate on the basis of different sets of norms, values and rules of conduct and contain different types of informal social resources. As a result, residents are affected differently by previously described processes: for some residents deviant social norms with respect to work are helpful in understanding their employment situation (or lack thereof), while other residents are hampered more by mechanisms of social isolation when it comes to finding work. By way of an illustration, different mechanisms in Transvaal contribute to the employment situation of residents of Turkish background. Turkish informal job networks (note the plural) are particularly well developed. While male residents seem to benefit equally from associated short term employment opportunities (and are hampered by long-term processes of social isolation), the informal job networks differentially affect women depending on their religious orientation: in more liberal Muslim communities, the described processes are relevant for women, while women in more conservative Muslim communities are not expected to work and are thus excluded from these job networks. For them, socialization processes with respect to work are more relevant in explaining their (lack of) employment status.

Second, residents are also differentially affected by the resources, opportunities and restrictions associated with the formal social infrastructure. For example, local employment, volunteer and internship opportunities in welfare institutions seem to be more attractive to women than men, specifically to first generation female residents of Hindustani-Surinamese descent and second generation female residents of Moroccan and Turkish descent. These jobs are attractive to the first group because they want to work close to their children’s school and to the second group because, as women, they are generally excluded from informal job networks, because they grew up in the area and these institutions are familiar to them or because some of them have difficulties finding alternatives outside the neighborhood. Thus, not all residents benefit to the same degree from the resources or employment opportunities provided through local social institutions. This depends on factors such as the length of residence, residents’ Dutch language skills, the amount of alternative social support and opportunities provided by their own network and other background characteristics such as ethnicity or gender.

Third, differential neighborhood effects can also be explained by the fact that neighborhood does not simply imprint itself on residents. As was shown in Chapter 5 with respect to the effects of social disorganization in the public domain, parents develop a variety of strategies to distance themselves and their children from what they consider to be negative social influences at the neighborhood level. However, there is considerable variation in the type of strategy that parents might use and the degree to which they are effective in shielding themselves and their children from other ‘undisciplined’ or ‘dangerous’ residents. For example, larger families and single mothers find it more difficult to monitor their children than couples with fewer children. As parents’ responses to the neighborhood context vary depending on their perceptions of neighborhood risks, their own time and resources and the support of others in monitoring their children, some families moderate and others mediate the role that neighborhood processes play in shaping individual opportunities.

In short, living in a low-income neighborhood such as Transvaal has a very different meaning for and therefore impacts low-income residents differently depending on their social identity and family context. As illustrated in a number of examples above, differentiation occurs along multiple social dimensions. Above all, residents’ level of education seems to be an important indicator of the degree to which local social processes contribute to labor market participation and social mobility. Residents ‘who are better educated’ are less likely to be locally oriented in their social network and are thus less likely to be influenced by processes of negative socialization, less likely to turn to local social institutions for formal support or job opportunities and more likely to develop parental strategies to protect their children from negative neighborhood influences. These findings suggest that socio-economic differences between residents in poor neighborhoods are an important determinant for the degree to which residents’ lives are spatially bounded to the neighborhood (Fischer, 1982) and for the degree to which residents’ are potentially exposed to negative influences at the neighborhood level. In other words, there is inequality in the degree to which neighborhood effects apply, not just between neighborhoods but also within neighborhoods. For those residents who are more locally oriented in their social lives other background characteristics - such as ethnic, cultural, religious background, geographical origin and household composition - are important when it comes to differentiating which processes contribute to limited employment opportunities and social mobility.

15 which in the case of the respondents in Transvaal should be understood in relative terms, i.e. having a low level or medium level high school degree and possibly some type of professional training.
16 At the same time, this also means they are disconnected from informal job networks and other forms of social support. It can be hypothesized that this creates new difficulties in finding a job, specifically for those whose educational background, work experience or career history is not sufficient to ensure a job directly through the formal job market. This particularly seems to be the case for the downwardly mobile, who have lost a ‘proper’ job as a result of health problems or who have moved to the neighborhood as a result of financial problems related to divorce.
6.4 The research findings in a comparative perspective

An important question with respect to generalizing the findings described above is to what degree they are unique to the specific research context. In other words, to what extent are the findings in the current study exceptional and place-specific? How are the findings influenced by choosing the particular case of Transvaal? A recent European study provides an interesting opportunity to reflect on these questions. A comparative, qualitative study in 22 neighborhoods in eleven cities in six countries (Murie and Musterd, 2004; Musterd, Murie, et al., 2006) questioned the role that the neighborhood context plays in reproducing social exclusion with specific attention for the way in which this is influenced by the type of welfare states and different types of labor markets and social networks. The study concluded that distinctive resources at the neighborhood level that affect the experience of social exclusion are not systematically related to the type of welfare regime, regional economic circumstances or location (peripheral-central) of the neighborhood. Rather, they suggest that neighborhood resources for economic integration will differ based on intrinsic spatial characteristics, the composition of the material and social infrastructure and local histories of settlement and reputation.

In the case of Transvaal, several such intrinsic spatial characteristics have contributed over time to the local informal and formal social context that now forms a resource for, as well as an obstacle to, the employment opportunities of individual residents. As is common in Dutch pre-war neighborhoods Transvaal is quite mixed in terms of economic activities and this has facilitated the emergence of local (ethnic) businesses including the job agencies described in Chapter 4 that link residents to large employment centers throughout the region. The neighborhood is centrally located and easily accessible by public transportation, which means that jobs outside the neighborhood are also physically accessible. The neighborhood has a long history of migration which has contributed to the strong informal social structures described above. It also has a long history of government interventions starting from the early 1970s, which explains the dense web of public services and social institutions in the area. Finally, in terms of public meeting places, the presence of a large open air market as well as numerous squares and playgrounds contribute to public life in Transvaal. Thus, while Transvaal constitutes an extreme case from a Dutch perspective in terms of poverty concentration, it shares several place-specific and historic conditions for the described neighborhood effect mechanisms with other prewar, centrally located neighborhoods in Dutch cities. At the same time, while Transvaal constitutes a mild case in terms of poverty concentration from an international perspective, it is quite exceptional in terms of the high volume of resources provided through public policy intervention at the local level.

The study in Transvaal specifies and nuances the conclusions reached in the comparative European study (Musterd, Murie, et al., 2006) with respect to the type of resources for economic integration produced at the neighborhood level. The European study uses Polanyi’s framework for economic integration to study the dynamics of social exclusion. This framework relates different spheres of economic integration – through market exchange, redistribution and reciprocity – to different spatial scales. With respect to labor market participation the researchers note that “the city and urban region are the most relevant spatial scales for the functioning of the labor market and thus for labor market participation opportunities” (p. 225-226). Alternative resources and opportunities might also be provided by the welfare state through redistribution arrangements that are shaped at both the national and urban scales. The neighborhood is considered to be the relevant scale for providing resources and opportunities through mutual reciprocity. By contrast, the findings in Transvaal show how the neighborhood scale may also be relevant for the other spheres of integration. First, social support provided by co-residents is not merely a substitute for the market economy, but can also form a prerequisite for finding work. In other words, resources provided through mutual reciprocity at the neighborhood level can be directly relevant for labor market participation: local (in)formal job networks in Transvaal link residents to jobs in the formal labor market both in and outside the neighborhood. Second, in the case of Transvaal resources and opportunities also flow from redistribution arrangements at the local level in the form of employment opportunities through local welfare institutions and place-specific community projects. Again, such local resources through redistribution are not a substitute, but a condition for finding a job.

In short, both informal social resources and formal social institutions at the neighborhood level are important when it comes to linking residents to the formal labor market. At the same time, it can be hypothesized that resources through mutual reciprocity and redistribution at the neighborhood scale are less effective in terms of economic integration due to their limitations with respect to the scope of employment opportunities coupled with the fact that they further tie residents to the neighborhood. This hypothesis is supported by recent findings in quantitative studies that moving into a neighborhood with high levels of own-group concentrations initially benefits social mobility, but forms a disadvantage in the long run (Musterd, Andersson, et al., 2008).

6.5 A qualitative perspective on neighborhood effects research

The previous paragraph on selective mechanism and differential effects shows how a qualitative research approach on neighborhood mechanisms might be used to interpret or reflect on findings from quantitative studies on neighborhood effects. Quantitative and qualitative studies on neighborhood effects are often presented as opposites. Qualitative case studies like this can provide an insight into causal pathways through which residential context structures individual action, although it is difficult to generalize. They cannot indicate how widespread neighborhood effects mechanism might be and how important neighborhood context is in shaping individual outcomes compared to other social contexts and individual characteristics. Quantitative studies are aimed at measuring the magnitude and significance of neighborhood effects, but are faced by numerous methodological problems due to the complexity of the relationship between neighborhood and individual action. In a minor attempt to bridge the gap between these two research domains, the present study reflects on two basic issues in quantitative neighborhood effect studies, namely the question of when mechanisms for neighborhood effects might occur and how neighborhood effects are related to selection effects.

17 In a way, this question reflects the classic struggle of geographers regarding how to reconcile context-dependence and spatial specificity with general social theory (Sage, 2000). Thrift has called this the problem of translation (p. 23): “It is very difficult to relate what are usually very abstract generalisations about social phenomena to the features of a particular place at a particular time and to the ‘individuals’ [...] within that place”.

122 123
6.5.1 Conditions for endogenous mechanisms and the issue of thresholds
A recurring question in the field of neighborhood effect research is under what conditions neighbor-
hood effects and their underlying mechanisms occur. The hypothesis is that neighborhood ef-
fects might only occur after a certain degree of concentrated poverty has been reached. In relation to
mechanisms of socialization, for example, it has been suggested that a critical mass or dominance of
a certain type of people should be reached within a neighborhood in order to trigger such processes.
In quantitative models, several techniques have been developed to measure such thresholds (Galster,
2008).

The case study in Transvaal provides an interesting opportunity to reflect on the social condi-
tions within neighborhoods that might result in the described mechanisms. While the neighbor-
hood can be considered an extreme case in the Dutch context in terms of concentration of poverty, it
is actually a mild case from an international perspective. The population composition in Transvaal
is quite heterogeneous and social life can be described as fragmented: social distinctions on the basis
of socio-economic, ethnic, cultural background, gender, religion and differences in country, region
or city of origin separate residents into different, close-knit informal social structures or communi-
ties that hardly interact. Each of these communities on its own forms only a small proportion of all
residents. Nevertheless, in some of these informal social structures the described social mechanisms
of socialization and social isolation shape the socio-economic prospects of individual residents.

The fact that endogenous mechanisms occur in heterogeneous and socially fragmented
neighborhoods such as Transvaal suggests that the occurrence of endogenous neighborhood effect
mechanisms is not necessarily related to the size of a social groups or their dominance within
the neighborhood. Rather, this is determined by the strength of the ties within these informal social
structures and the degree to which members of these social structures are stigmatized by and mar-
ginalized from the larger society. This means that quantitative studies that try to provide an insight
into thresholds for neighborhood effects might need to measure and incorporate intra-group char-
acteristics relating to the nature and quality of local social interaction into their models.

6.5.2 The issue of selection versus neighborhood effects
Another much-debated issue with respect to neighborhood effect research concerns the reciprocal
nature of the relationship between residential context and individual characteristics. The question
is to what extent spatial variations in individual outcomes can really be attributed to processes
within the neighborhood context rather than to unmeasured differences in background charac-
teristics between residents. In quantitative studies this is referred to as the problem of selection
bias. Various techniques have been developed to measure appropriate individual characteristics
(see for an overview Galster, 2008) in order to isolate neighborhood effects from selection effects
and properly estimate the magnitude of neighborhood effects, but the issue of selection remains a
problem.

The issue of neighborhood effects versus selection effects is less relevant in qualitative stud-
ies which focus on the mechanisms behind neighborhood effect because their aim is to study causal
pathways directly. As the present study shows, even though people with inherently different char-
actersitics sort into different neighborhoods, the resulting residential situation nevertheless limits
residents’ economic opportunity structures through the described mechanisms relating to social
isolation, socialization and the formal social infrastructure. In fact, the case study in Transvaal sug-
gests that selection mechanisms and neighborhood processes are related: selection mechanisms
through which people filter into the neighborhood are influenced by the same social distinctions
that determine their social lives once they have settled there. In other words, residents’ background
characteristics influence both the process of selection and the degree of incorporation into the
neighborhood in different informal social structures.

In addition, the survey findings in Transvaal show that the local social context, consisting of
informal social structures as well as formal social institutions, is one reason why some people settle
in the area. For example, one third of social housing residents in Transvaal already knew people in
the area before they moved there and for many it was an important reason to settle and stay in the
area (see Chapter 3 and 4). These initial contacts in turn form a bridge to other local social contacts
of similar social backgrounds which strengthens their attachment to the area and gives them fur-
ther access to informal social support and job connections. Local social relations can thus play the
role of pull factor in explaining why people move into specific disadvantaged neighborhoods in the
first place. This suggests that, for some residents, selection into neighborhoods like Transvaal is in
itself influenced by the social characteristics of such neighborhoods.

6.6 Suggestions for future research and reflection on urban policy
The research findings provide numerous ideas for future research, some of which have already been
mentioned above and in previous chapters in relation to specific findings. A first line of research re-
lates to the fact that the occurrence of the described mechanisms behind neighborhood effects are
very much context dependent. The case study in Transvaal shows that endogenous mechanisms for
neighborhood effects on social mobility cannot be explained by the degree of poverty concentration
alone. Other neighborhood characteristics also play a role (in addition to differences in terms of
welfare state regime and regional economic prosperity, see Musterd, Murie, et al., 2006; Waquant,
2008). A systematic comparison between different types of low-income neighborhoods would in-
crease our understanding of place-specific conditions for neighborhood effects and the local social,
economic and spatial conditions that contribute to or facilitate the described informal social struc-
tures and local social infrastructure. These might include factors such as the local history of im-
migration, the economic structure of the neighborhood, the history of government intervention in
the area and the presence of public meeting places. From a Dutch policy perspective, for example,
a relevant question would be whether the described positive and negative consequences of local so-
cial processes also occur in the mono-functional postwar Dutch neighborhoods that are currently
at the center of the attention of urban restructuring programs.

A second line of research is to study how the mechanisms of negative socialization and social
isolation and mechanisms relating to the formal social context in low-income neighborhoods such as
Transvaal develop over time. In paragraph 6.2 it was suggested that different endogenous mecha-
nisms sometimes reinforce and sometimes compensate each other. A longitudinal approach could
show how residents become incorporated in the neighborhood in different informal social structures and what the cumulative, long-term effects are of the described mechanisms. This specifically applies to children growing up in disadvantaged neighborhoods like Transvaal. For example, how are children affected in the long run by the negative neighborhood influences in the public domain described by parents and how effective are parental strategies in countering these negative influences? To what degree do these parental strategies consciously or unwittingly reinforce mechanisms of social isolation and negative socialization within their own network? To what degree do processes of social isolation and socialization within parents'/networks restrict their children's opportunities? All of these questions suggest that more insight is needed in the intergenerational mechanisms of social isolation and negative socialization within their own network.

A third line of research is more policy oriented and concerns the question of how residents in low-income neighborhoods such as Transvaal might be affected by social mixing policies such as the restructuring program in the Netherlands. What happens to the described social processes when a large share of residents is forced to move? Clearly, geographical vicinity and place-specific characteristics play a role in reproducing the informal social structures with their informal job networks, high degree of social control and mechanisms of socialization. However, their contribution to residents' employment opportunity structures is not entirely negative, not all residents are equally (negatively) affected and the informal social structures form an important source for social support in the day-to-day life of residents. Consequently, the following hypothesis might be formulated about the consequences of restructuring for low-income residents of Transvaal. First, current relations might be replaced by new relations with more affluent neighbors, with potentially positive externalities. Yet recent research suggests that the least successful movers end up in similarly marginalized neighborhoods (Slob, Kempen, et al., 2008 have called this the 'spillover' effect), which does not increase the opportunity to develop relations with more affluent neighbors. Moreover, various studies on social cohesion in newly restructured – and thus more mixed – neighborhoods have found few ties between old low-income and new middle to high income residents (Beekhoven and Kempen, 2003; Dekker and Bolt, 2005). The present survey reaches a similar conclusion: findings in the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse show that social housing residents have few relations with their more affluent neighbors.

Obviously, geographical vicinity is not enough to close the substantial social distance between neighbors of different socio-economic backgrounds. Moreover, it takes time to develop new and meaningful relations with neighbors. The effect of social mixing policies might therefore be twofold. On the one hand, the described negative mechanisms could disappear. On the other hand, the risk is that low-income residents away from their social support networks are left without the necessary contacts to find work and the accessible employment opportunities through local social institutions. Following this line of thought, it is problematic that no substantial research program has been developed to evaluate the effects of restructuring for individual residents as was done in the United States for federal housing mobility programs (Goetz, 2003). Up to now, evaluation research has been almost exclusively place-based and has addressed improvements in the restructured neighborhood. Indeed, many local and central government actors, housing corporations and private developers have shunned for a wider perspective on housing market mechanisms such as selective residential mobility of low-income groups and the consequences of these residential changes for their opportunity structures (Volkskrant, 10/7/2008, 21/7/2008). Nevertheless, the findings in this case study add to the Dutch body of research that calls for a people-oriented focus on evaluation of social mixing policies.

6.7 Conclusion

Living in a disadvantaged neighborhood context differentially influences residents’ socio-economic prospects in sometimes contradictory ways. The case study shows how even in relatively fragmented and heterogeneous low-income neighborhoods such as Transvaal - mechanisms of socialization, social isolation and social disorganization, and mechanisms related to the formal social infrastructure can restrict residents’ long-term economic opportunities by influencing their job search strategies and work ethics. However, living in a low-income neighborhood context is rarely the single cause of unemployment or limited social mobility. Rather, neighborhood-based processes reproduce already existing inequalities that result from macro structural processes relating the labor market and the welfare state (Wacquant, 2008). This also means that - depending on their social identity and family context - residents differ in the degree to which they want, and are able, to distance themselves from negative influences at the neighborhood level. As a result, residents cannot be viewed simply as 'victims'. They develop a variety of strategies to negotiate their way around the neighborhood and create linkages to the labor market. They build meaningful relations with other residents. Many feel at home in the neighborhood and do not want to move. Clearly, life in disadvantaged neighborhoods such as Transvaal is not all bad. Unfortunately, this complex and differentiated perspective on life in disadvantaged neighborhoods is often lost, not just in policy practice but also in academic research (Gotham, 2003; Manzo, Kleit, et al., 2008). Neighborhood effect studies generally focus on the negative implications of concentrated poverty. To be fair, many European researchers have tried to downplay the role of neighborhood and emphasize the importance of personal characteristics in perpetuating social inequalities. However, nuanced and identifying the subtleties of negative neighborhood effects is not the same as demonstrating the potentially positive contribution that residential context, for example through local social support networks, plays in people's lives. The danger is thus that researchers may unwittingly reproduce the current negative representations in (Dutch) policy practice of low-income neighborhoods as a 'problem'. One way in which researchers might put such negative representations into perspective is by studying whether and how neighborhoods of concentrated poverty form meaningful contexts for the people who live there.
References


APPENDIX I: Survey Questionnaire

This is a translation of the Dutch questionnaire on social networks used in this study. It should be noted that in translating any questionnaire some nuances and terms specific to the Dutch language, culture or institutional setting might be lost. Such caution is particularly relevant for this questionnaire, in which an attempt was made to make the wording as plain and simple as possible to match the respondents’ low educational background and the potential lack of Dutch language skills of first generation immigrant residents. For those interested in the Dutch questionnaire a copy can be provided by the author (e-mail: f.m.pinkster@uva.nl) on request.

Introduction
Hello, my name is…… (name interviewer) from Onderzoeksbureau Labyrinth. I am here on behalf of the Universiteit van Amsterdam. We recently send you a letter to announce that we would be approach you for an interview. Do you have some time to participate and answer some questions for us? The interview should take about half an hour.

Selection question

Q 1) Might I first ask you how old you are?
O 1) Years:...........................................

Interviewer: The interview is meant for residents between 18 and 65 years old. If the respondent is older than 65 or younger than 18, explain the age selection criterion. Thank the respondent for their willingness to participate and ask if there are others in their household between 18 and 65 years old who might be able to participate.

About the interview
Before we start I want to shortly tell you what we would like to talk to you about today. We would like ask you some questions about your life in .......... (name neighborhood) and what role neighborhood contacts play in your life. Of course, for everyone this is different. Some people have lived here for years while others just moved here. Some might feel more at home than others and some might have more contact with their neighbors than others. It is exactly these differences between residents that we are interested in.

In answering our questions there are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in your own experience. Of course your name will remain secret and everything we talk about will be anonymous. If you have any questions during the interview or our questions are not clear, please let me know. Do you have any questions before we begin?
Interviewer, please include questions here:

NEIGHBORHOOD AND RESIDENTIAL HISTORY
Read: The first questions are about the neighborhood and your residential history.

Q2) Neighborhood
O 1) Transvaalkwartier
O 2) Regentessekwartier

Q3) Sex
O 1) Male
O 2) Female

Q4) How long have you lived in this neighborhood?
O 1) Years............
O 2) Don't know / No answer

Q5) How long have you lived in this house?
O 1) Years............
O 2) Don't know / No answer

Q6) When you moved to the neighborhood, did you choose to live here?
O 1) Yes, I chose to move to this neighborhood
O 2) No, I would have preferred another neighborhood
O 3) No, I just ended up here
O 4) Don't know / No answer

Q7) Did you know anyone in the neighborhood, before you moved here?
O 1) Yes  -> go to b)
O 2) No  -> go to Q8
O 3) Don't know / no answer  -> go to Q8

a) Who were they?
O 1) Parents
O 2) Brother / sister
O 3) Cousins / aunt / uncle
O 4) Children
O 5) Friends
O 6) Don't know / No answer

b) Was the fact that they lived here an important reason to move here?
O 1) Yes
O 2) No
O 3) Don't know / No answer

Q8) Can you indicate how much you feel at home in the neighborhood?
O 1) Completely at home
O 2) Slightly at home
O 3) A little at home / a little not at home
O 4) Not really at home
O 5) Absolutely not at home
O 6) Don't know / No answer

Q9) Can you tell me what is positive and what is negative about this neighborhood?
Interviewer: please ask about different positive and negative aspects and describe below.

Positive aspects:

Negative aspects:

Q10) How would you describe the contact between people in your neighborhood? Would you describe it as...
O 1) Very good
O 2) Quite good
O 3) Neither good, nor bad
O 4) Not good
O 5) Bad
O 6) Don't know / No answer

Q11) Would you like to move?
O 1) Yes  -> go to Q12
O 2) No  -> go to Q13
O 3) Don't know / No answer  -> go to Q13

a) Are you currently looking for another home?
O 1) Yes  -> go to Q14
O 2) No  -> go to Q15
O 3) Don't know / No answer  -> go to Q15
b) Are you looking in this neighborhood or in another neighborhood?
   - This neighborhood → go to Q13)
   - Other neighborhood → go to Q13)
   - No preference → go to Q13)
   - Don’t know / No answer → go to Q13)

Q22) Why do you want to stay in this neighborhood?
   Interviewer: respondent can give three answers in order of importance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Market</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious institution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Friends and family in neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel attached to neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheap housing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other reasons:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know / No answer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONTACT WITH NEIGHBORS
Read: The following questions are about your contacts with neighbors in this building.

Q23) How many of your neighbors do you have a chat with? Is that...........
   - With all of them
   - With most of them
   - With just a few of them
   - With no one → go to Q24)
   - No answer → go to Q24)

b) Are they....................? (more than one answer possible)
   - Of Dutch descent
   - Of Turkish descent
   - Of Moroccan descent
   - Of Surinamese descent
   - Of Antillean descent
   - Of other minority background

Q24) How many of your neighbors do you visit at home? Is that...........
   - All of them
   - Most of them

b) Are they....................? (more than one answer possible)
   - Of Dutch descent
   - Of Turkish descent
   - Of Moroccan descent
   - Of Surinamese descent
   - Of Antillean descent
   - Of other minority background

Q25) Which neighbors can you call when you need help with something?
   - All of them
   - Most of them
   - Just a few of them
   - No one → go to Q26)
   - No answer → go to Q26)

Q26) Do your neighbors ever bother you?
   - Yes
   - No → go to Q27).
   - No answer → go to Q27).

b) How do they bother you? Do they bother you with.... Interviewer: read out the list below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
<th>1. Yes</th>
<th>2. No</th>
<th>3. No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noise</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trash</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kids</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(cooking) smells</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
c) When your neighbors bother you, do you talk to them about it?
   O 1) Yes  -> go to d)
   O 2) No  -> go to d)
   O 3) No answer  -> go to d)

d) Why not?

BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS
Read: The following questions are about your family and ethnic background.

Q17)

a) Do you share your home with anyone? Interviewer please check the appropriate category. The respondent is:
   O 1) Single  -> go to Q19)
   O 2) Single parent with children  -> go to Q18)
   O 3) Couple without children  -> go to Q19)
   O 4) Couple with children  -> go to Q19)
   O 5) Older than 18 living with parents  -> go to b)
   O 6) Other:.................................................................  -> go to Q19)
   O 7) Don’t know / No answer  -> go to Q19)

b) Which parent do you live with?
   O 1) Father
   O 2) Mother
   O 3) Both parents
   O 4) Don’t know / No answer

Q18)

a) How many kids live at home?
   O 1) Number: ...............  -> go to Q19)
   O 2) Don’t know / No answer  -> go to Q19)

b) How many are older than 18?
   O 1) None
   O 2) Number: ...............  -> go to Q19)
   O 3) Don’t know / No answer  -> go to Q19)

c) How many of them are in high school?
   O 1) None
   O 2) Number: ...............  -> go to e)
   O 3) Don’t know / No answer  -> go to e)

d) How many of them are in elementary school?
   O 1) None  -> go to e)
   O 2) Number: ...............  -> go to d)
   O 3) Don’t know / No answer  -> go to Q19)

Q19)

a) Where were you born?
   O 1) The Netherlands  -> go to c)
   O 2) Suriname
   O 3) Dutch Antilles
   O 4) Morocco
   O 5) Turkey
   O 6) Elsewhere:............................................................
   O 7) Don’t know / No answer

b) How old were you when you moved to the Netherlands?
   O 1) Years:............................  -> go to Q20)
   O 2) Don’t know / No answer  -> go to Q20)

c) Where was your father born?
   Interviewer see Table 3

d) Where was your mother born?
   Interviewer see Table 3

TABLE 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suriname</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch Antilles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know / No answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviewer: only ask residents with Surinamese background:

e) Are you Hindustani-Surinamese?
   O 1) Yes
   O 2) No
   O 3) Don’t know / No answer
PERSONAL NETWORK
Read: The next questions are about your social network.

Q20) Where does your family live? Do they live....
   O 1) All in the neighborhood
   O 2) Majority in the neighborhood
   O 3) Half in the neighborhood, half elsewhere
   O 4) Majority outside the neighborhood
   O 5) All outside the neighborhood
   O 6) I have no family
   O 7) Don’t know / No answer

Q21) Where do your friends live? Do they live....
   O 1) All in the neighborhood
   O 2) Majority in the neighborhood
   O 3) Half in the neighborhood, half elsewhere
   O 4) Majority outside the neighborhood
   O 5) All outside the neighborhood
   O 6) I have no family
   O 7) Don’t know / No answer

SUPPORT IN NETWORK
Read: I would like to ask you some more detailed questions about your contacts in and outside the neighborhood. Of course, this information is also anonymous and no one can find out who your relatives or acquaintances are.

The next questions concern people who you could turn to in case you need anything. The questions concern people who are not part of your household, like family members, friends, colleagues or other people such as community workers, who could help you or give you advice at short notice, for example within a week. We will give you a number of examples of help or advice. For each of these you can indicate who you might be able to turn to.

Interviewer: See table 4 for questions 23-33. The support items represent hypothetical situations. For every support item the respondent should indicate whether they know anyone, and if so, what their relationship is and whether this person lives in the neighborhood. If the respondent does not know anyone, you can skip questions b and c.

PRESTIGE IN NETWORK
Read: The next questions are about the work background, place of residence and background of your relatives and friends.

Interviewer: See table 5 for questions 34-55. Please fill in the first person that someone thinks of. If the respondent does not know anyone, you can skip questions b and c.
## Living in concentrated poverty

### Daily Activities

Read: The following questions concern your daily activities.

**Q55)** Do you work?  
- a) Yes → go to Q64)  
- b) No → go to Q56)  
- c) No answer → go to Q64)  

**Q56)** What do you spend most of your time on during the day?  
- a) School → go to Q57)  
- b) Housework → go to Q57)  
- c) Volunteering → go to Q57)  
- d) No answer → go to Q57)  

**Q57)** Are you looking for work?  
- a) Yes → go to Q58)  
- b) No → go to Q59)  
- c) No answer → go to Q59)  

**Q58)** What type of job are you looking for?  
- a) Economic sector and job description → go to Q59)  
- b) No answer → go to Q59)  

**Q59)** How are you looking for a job?  
- a) Interviewer: more than one answer possible → go to Q60)  
- b) Walk-in application → go to Q60)  
- c) Social services → go to Q60)  
- d) Formal job application → go to Q60)  
- e) Informal via family or acquaintance → go to Q60)  
- f) Other: → go to Q60)  
- g) Don't know / No answer → go to Q60)  

**Q60)** Is this job agency located in your neighborhood?  
- a) Yes → go to Q61)  
- b) No → go to Q61)  
- c) Don't know / No answer → go to Q61)  

---

**Table 5: prestige in network**

- a) Do you have a relative, friend or acquaintance who is...? (only one answer possible)
  - 0. does not know anyone
  - 1. first degree family (children/parents/siblings)
  - 2. second degree family (uncle/aunt/cousins)
  - 3. friends/acquaintance

**Q33)** Doctor

**Q34)** Mailman

**Q35)** High school teacher

**Q36)** Manager of a middle-sized company

**Q37)** Construction worker

**Q38)** Real estate agent

**Q39)** Union employee

**Q40)** Lawyer

**Q41)** Plumber

**Q42)** Accountant

**Q43)** University employee

**Q44)** Politician

**Q45)** Secretary

**Q46)** Cleaning personnel

**Q47)** System administrator

**Q48)** Nurse

**Q49)** Truck driver

**Q50)** Judge

**Q51)** Salesperson

**Q52)** Policeman

**Q53)** Production worker in factory

**Q54)** Civil servant

**Appendices**
### Living in concentrated poverty

**Q60.** What is your highest educational degree?

- **a)** Have not finished elementary school
- **b)** Elementary school
- **c)** Mavo / Vmbo
- **d)** Havo / Mbo / VWO
- **e)** HBO / WO
- **f)** Education abroad
- **g)** Don’t know / No answer

**Q61.** At what age did you finish this degree?

**Q62.** What was your last job?

- **a)** Economic sector and job description
- **b)** How many hours did you work? (No answer= 99)
- **c)** How many years did you do this job? (No answer= 99)
- **d)** Did you work in your own neighborhood or elsewhere?
  - **e)** In the neighborhood
  - **f)** Elsewhere
  - **g)** Don’t know / No answer

**Q63.** How did you find this job?

- **a)** Walk-in application
- **b)** Social services
- **c)** Job agency

**Q64.** Formal job application

**Q65.** Informal via family or acquaintance

**Q66.** Other

**Q67.** Don’t know / No answer
Living in concentrated poverty

f) What type of training?
   O 1) Vmbo
   O 2) Havo / MBO
   O 3) HBO / WO
   O 4) Certificate training
   O 5) Other:……………………..

Q65) a) How did you find your current job?
   O 1) Walk-in application
   O 2) Social services
   O 3) Job agency
   O 4) Formal job application
   O 5) Informal via family or acquaintance
   O 6) Other:………………………..
   O 7) Don’t know / No answer

b) Was this job agency located in your neighborhood?
   O 1) Yes
   O 2) No
   O 3) Don’t know / No answer

c) How did you find out about this job opening?
   O 1) Through relative, friend or acquaintance
   O 2) Newspaper / internet, etc.
   O 3) Other source:………………………………
   O 4) Don’t know / No answer

d) Did he or she live in your neighborhood?
   O 1) Yes
   O 2) No
   O 3) Don’t know / No answer

e) Did you live in this neighborhood at that time?
   O 1) Yes
   O 2) No
   O 3) Don’t know / No answer

Q66) a) What is your highest educational degree?
   O 1) Have not finished elementary school
   O 2) Elementary school
   O 3) Mavo / Vmbo
   O 4) Havo / Mbo / VWO
   O 5) HBO / WO
   O 6) Education abroad

   O 7) Don’t know
   O 8) No answer

b) At what age did you finish this degree?…………………………………

Q67) a) Is this your first job?
   O 1) No
   O 2) Yes
   O 3) No answer

b) What did you do previously?
   O 1) School
   O 2) Did not work due to health problems
   O 3) Take care of family
   O 4) Other:……………………………………

PREVIOUS JOB

Q68) a) What was your previous job?
   O 1) Economic sector and job description:……………………………..
   O 2) No answer

b) How many hours a week did you work? ……………………………
   (No answer= 99)

c) How many years have you had this job? …………………………..
   (No answer= 99)

d) Do you work in the neighborhood or elsewhere?
   O 1) In de neighborhood
   O 2) Elsewhere
   O 3) Don’t know / No answer

Q69) a) How did you find your previous job?
   O 1) Walk-in application
   O 2) Social services
   O 3) Job agency
   O 4) Formal job application
   O 5) Informal via family or acquaintance
   O 6) Other:………………………………..
   O 7) Don’t know / No answer

b) Was this job agency located in your neighborhood?
   O 1) Yes
   O 2) No

Appendices
Living in concentrated poverty

Q70) I would like to ask your opinion about a few statements concerning work. Please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, do not agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree.

TABLE 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Do not agree or disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Work is very important to me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I understand why people won't work for minimum wage if they can get benefits.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Children should stay in school as long as possible in order to get a good job.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. If someone can't do their job anymore, for example because of health reasons, they should find another job.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DAILY ACTIVITIES OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS
Read: I have some final questions about the daily activity patterns of your family members. Interviewer: do not ask these questions to singles but go to question 74.

Q71)

a) What does your husband / wife / partner do?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q72) Are there any other family members who have a job?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q73) Report answers in Table 7

a) Who are they?

b) What type of work do they do?

c) How many hours a week does they work?

d) Do they work in the neighborhood?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In de neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know / No answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) employment situation family members</th>
<th>b) Economic sector and job description</th>
<th>c) Hours / week</th>
<th>d) Work in neighborhood?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1...................................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2...................................</td>
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<td>3..................................</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4..................................</td>
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<td>5..................................</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX II: Topic list interviews

This is a translation of the topic list used to conduct the qualitative interviews with residents in the low income neighborhood of Transvaal. It should be noted that in translating this list some nuances and terms specific to the Dutch language, culture and institutional setting might be lost. For those interested the Dutch topic list can be provided by the author (e-mail: f.m.pinkster@uva.nl) on request.

Introduction
Before we start I just want to shortly tell you again what we will talk about today. I will try to get a picture of your life in Transvaal, how you like the neighborhood, about your contacts with neighbors and other people in the neighborhood, like friends or family, and about your daily activities. So I am interested in your experiences here in the neighborhood. Of course, anything we talk about is anonymous. If you have any questions during the interview or my questions are not clear, please let me know. Do you have any questions before we start? …

First I would like to ask you if it is ok if I record our conversation. That way I don't have to write as much while we talk. This recording will only be used by me and will not be given to others. Is that ok? …

To start, maybe you could shortly introduce yourself, tell me who you are, your age and for example how long you have lived in Transvaal…

PART A. Home and neighborhood

• Residential situation
  ○ Residential history
  ○ Current housing situation:
    - Household situation
  ○ Reasons for moving

• Neighborhood attachment: How do you like living in Transvaal?
  ○ Positive aspects
  ○ Negative aspects
  ○ Do you find this neighborhood a good place to raise children?
    - Reasons, ask for examples and own experiences
    - Positive aspects
    - Negative aspects
    - How do your children experience these negative processes?
    - Parental strategies: How do you deal with them?
PART B. Contacts with neighbors and other residents

- Neighborhood social composition: How would you describe the residents in this neighborhood?
- Socio-economic/ethnic composition
- Behavior
- Interaction between residents
- Do you feel at home amongst these residents?

- Wish to move
  - Reasons

PART C. Composition and locality of social network

- Family
  - Location: Where does your family live?
  - Parents / children / siblings / other family members
  - In case of relatives in the neighborhood
    - Frequency contact
    - Type of contact
    - Importance
    - Examples, i.e. If you think of the last time you talked to relative in the neighborhood, who was it and what happened?
  - Have any relatives moved away? Why?

- Friends and acquaintances
  - Location: Where do most of your friends live?
    - Mostly outside the neighborhood, equally in the neighborhood and elsewhere or mostly in the neighborhood?
  - Are there any (other) people in the neighborhood with whom you have a good relationship?

PART D. Employment and job search strategies

- If working
  - Type of job
  - Location job
  - Job search strategy
  - Employment history
  - Attitude with respect to work
    - How do you like your job?
    - Is your work important to you? Why?

- If not working:
  - What do you do during the day?
  - Attitude with respect to work: are you looking for work
    - If yes: Job search strategy
      - How important is it for you to find a job?
      - What do you family and friends think about your job?
      - Are there any people who are helping you to find a job?
      - Expectations
    - If no: Why not?
      - What do you family and friends think about this?
      - Expectations: If you were looking for a job, how easy would it be to find one?
  - How do you get an income?
  - Are there people who help you get by?
  - Employment history

- Educational background

- Daily activities family members
Summary

The social consequences of concentrated poverty are a recurring theme in urban policy throughout Europe and North America and have contributed to various social mixing and dispersal-of-poverty programs. A key concern of these policies is that being poor in a disadvantaged neighborhood context is worse than being poor elsewhere. In this debate, ‘worse’ not only refers to day-to-day livability problems and relatively high crime rates in these areas, but also to a long-term perspective of limited social mobility of residents. These negative consequences associated with living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty have also received much attention in the academic world in the form of neighborhood effect studies. The basic premise in neighborhood effect research is that existing social inequalities resulting from macroeconomic, social and political configurations at a higher scale can be exacerbated at the neighborhood level as a result of unequal neighborhood conditions and resources.

The aim of this research was to contribute to the academic and political discussion about the negative relationship between living in a disadvantaged neighborhood context and the socio-economic prospects of residents. A review of Western European evidence for neighborhood effects on labor market participation reveals that living in a low-income neighborhood over longer periods of time has negative consequences for residents’ economic prospects, although the residential context does not equally affect all residents. However, it is generally acknowledged that a better understanding is needed of the specific processes within neighborhoods that, for better or worse, shape the socio-economic prospects and lives of residents. This dissertation therefore studies the causal pathways or mechanisms through which living in a low-income neighborhood restricts residents’ opportunities for social mobility. The central research question is how social processes relating to the population composition in low-income neighborhoods shape the socio-economic prospects of individual residents. A basic assumption is that unfavorable socio-economic outcomes over time in areas of concentrated poverty result from concrete economic actions of individual residents and that these actions are influenced by the actions and the social position of other residents.

The research uses an exploratory case study approach. The neighborhood of Transvaal-Noord in The Hague was selected as an extreme case and is compared to the adjacent socio-economically mixed neighborhood of Regentesse. The expectation was that, if neighborhood effects and their underlying social mechanisms occur anywhere in the Netherlands, the neighborhood of Transvaal-Noord might be a likely candidate. At the same time, it represents a mild case from an international perspective in terms of poverty concentration and can thus provide an interesting viewpoint on the question of how severe neighborhood conditions need to be to generate neighborhood effects. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used to study potentially detrimental social processes at the local level: a survey on social networks (N=399) was carried out in the two neighborhoods and intensive qualitative fieldwork was conducted in Transvaal-Noord over a period of nine months in 2005 to study the job search strategies and work ethics of residents. The fieldwork...
Living in concentrated poverty

Some data consisted of 24 interviews with neighborhood experts and 46 interviews with disadvantaged residents as well as many chance conversations and attendance of neighborhood meetings and events. The findings show that the short-term and long-term socio-economic prospects of individual residents are influenced by the actions and social position of other residents through mechanisms of social isolation, mechanisms of socialization, mechanisms of social disorganization and mechanisms relating to the formal social infrastructure in the area. These have been described in four empirical papers that have been submitted to international journals.

Social networks and informal job search strategies

A first explanation in the research literature for the relationship between concentrated poverty and individual labor market prospects is that the social networks of disadvantaged residents in low-income neighborhoods do not provide the necessary resources and support to ‘get ahead’ in life and improve one’s social position. This social isolation hypothesis was addressed by studying the job search strategies of social housing residents in the low-income neighborhood of Transvaal-Noord and by comparing the locality of, and resources in, their social networks. The findings indicate that local social contacts form a substantial share of respondents’ networks, particularly in the low income neighborhood. The two neighborhood groups have similar access to actual support to deal with problems of everyday life, but small differences exist in the socio-economic composition of their networks: the social networks of residents in the low income neighborhood are more constricted in terms of socio-economic prestige.

The constricted localized social networks of social housing residents in the low-income neighborhood influence individual employment opportunities in two contradictory ways. On the one hand informal job networks in the neighborhoods provide short-term access to work: social housing residents in Transvaal more frequently use informal contacts to find work than residents in Regentiesse and these contacts more often live in the neighborhood. Informal job networks in Transvaal are thus essential in the short run when it comes to linking residents to unskilled or low-skilled jobs throughout the region: while employment opportunities themselves are not local, the information about work and the social connections which help people to find jobs are. On the other hand, the job opportunities through informal contacts are limited in scope due to the constricted nature of residents’ networks. This limits their chances in the long run to improve their employment situation. In short, processes of social isolation occur, but not to the degree that it leads to exclusion from the labor market altogether.

Negative socialization

A second hypothesis in the research literature about the way in which living in concentrated poverty influences and individual socio-economic outcomes is that disadvantaged residents in low-income neighborhoods adopt deviant behavior and norms and values with respect to work because they have come to view such behaviors as normal through interaction with neighbors. In line with the research literature, the present study uncovered various forms of socialization amongst residents in the low-income neighborhood of Transvaal which are relevant for residents’ economic behavior.

Social disorganization and neighborhood disorder

A third explanation in the research literature for neighborhood effects focuses on neighborhood disorder and the lack of informal social control in public space, although this hypothesis is rarely explicitly linked to socio-economic outcomes. The present study reveals an indirect relationship between social disorganization in low income neighborhoods and long-term socio-economic prospects of individual residents. First, social disorganization is associated with higher levels of neighborhood disorder, including crime and violence. This causes residents to retreat within their own networks, reinforcing the intra-group processes of socialization and social isolation described above. In addition, problems with violence and crime can also lead to stress and lack of sleep which may influences residents’ educational and work performance. Second, a lot of residents in Transvaal referred explicitly to the lack of mutual trust and willingness to intervene in or correct other people’s and children’s behavior in public space for fear of conflict or retribution. Their withdrawal from the public domain has an impact on the range of behaviors that other residents and particularly children are exposed to and indirectly contributes to the previously described negative socialization mechanisms with respect to educational and work ethics in the public domain.

Employment opportunities through formal social infrastructure

Finally, living in a low-income neighborhood context can influence residents’ socio-economic prospects through mechanisms relating to the formal social infrastructure. Transvaal is characterized by a dense web of public institutions such as community centers, welfare organizations and youth centers as well as private, subsidized institutions such as cultural and religious centers. Formal social institutions can be a resource for residents in terms of support, education and training and they facilitate social interaction amongst residents. In addition, they form a familiar and accessible entrance to the labor market through various (un)skilled jobs, volunteer jobs and internships. Paradoxically, these jobs have few long-term prospects and also function to keep residents within...
the neighborhood and their own social networks. Thus, similarly to the previously described informal job networks, the formal social infrastructure provides employment opportunities which paradoxically have unintended, negative consequences for residents’ social mobility in the long run. It should be noted that the role of local social institutions in shaping employment opportunities is very much context-dependent and related to the specific configuration of the Dutch welfare state, its strong presence at the local level and its long history of intervention in low-income neighborhoods.

The relationship between mechanisms
The described causal pathways through which living in a disadvantaged neighborhood context impacts residents’ economic prospects are related in significant ways. On the one hand, the processes relating to social disorganization, socialization, social isolation and the formal social infrastructure sometimes interact and cumulatively contribute to negative outcomes. For example, the fact that the social networks of residents in Transvaal are constricted can at least in part be explained by the fact that processes of socialization amongst residents limit their willingness and possibilities to interact with people outside their ‘own’ group and to venture outside their own social network. Geographical proximity strengthens the ties and facilitates high levels of social control in these networks, which further restricts residents’ relationships. Similarly, processes of social disorganization and negative socialization in the public domain reinforce processes of socialization and social isolation within existing social structures by causing people to withdraw in their own networks. On the other hand, certain mechanisms have contradictory consequences. For example, meaningful local social relations form an important resource when it comes to protecting residents from harmful elements in the public domain, these same social relations can limit opportunities on the labor market through processes of direct or indirect socialization and informal job networks. This shows how local social relations can have contradictory implications for individual residents.

Differential effects and selective mechanisms
The described mechanisms of social isolation, negative socialization, social disorganization and mechanisms relating to the formal social infrastructure are not as pervasive as is sometimes suggested in the literature on neighborhood effects: they are selective rather than generic. As a number of European, quantitative studies on neighborhood effects have shown, living in a low-income neighborhood does not affect all residents to the same degree. One explanation for such differential neighborhood effects is the selective nature of the described local social processes. First, mechanisms of socialization and social isolation do not affect all residents in the same way because they are part of different informal social structures based on social distinctions such as socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicity, gender, religious differences and differences in geographical background. These informal social structures operate on the basis of different sets of norms, values and rules of conduct and contain different types of informal social resources. As a result, residents are affected differently by previously described processes: for some residents deviant social norms with respect to work are helpful in understanding their employment situation (or lack thereof), while other residents are hampered more by mechanisms of social isolation when it comes to finding work. Second, residents are also differentially affected by the resources, opportunities and restrictions associated with the formal social infrastructure. Whether residents benefit to the same degree from the resources or employment opportunities provided through local social institutions depends on factors such as the length of residence, residents’ Dutch language skills, the amount of alternative social support and opportunities provided by their own network and other background characteristics such as ethnicity or gender. Third, differential neighborhood effects can also be explained by the fact that neighborhood does not simply imprint itself on residents. Residents develop a variety of strategies to distance themselves and their children from what they consider to be negative social influences at the neighborhood level. However, there is considerable variation in the type of strategy that they might use and the degree to which they are effective in shielding themselves and their children from other ‘undisciplined’ or ‘dangerous’ residents. As residents’ responses to the neighborhood context vary depending on their perceptions of neighborhood risks, their own time and resources and the support of others in monitoring their children, some families moderate and others mediate the role that neighborhood processes play in shaping individual opportunities.

Conclusion
It has often been suggested that the relatively heterogeneous population composition in low-income neighborhoods in European cities and the living conditions in these neighborhoods might not reach the necessary thresholds of concentrated poverty to evoke neighborhood effects and their underlying mechanisms. This argument is thought to be particularly relevant for comprehensive welfare states such as the Netherlands that aim to reduce inequalities between people and between neighborhoods through a wide range of national and local welfare arrangements. Nevertheless, this case study indicates that – even in relatively fragmented and heterogeneous low-income neighborhoods such as Transvaal – mechanisms of socialization, social isolation and social disorganization, and mechanisms related to the formal social infrastructure can restrict residents’ long-term economic opportunities by influencing their job search strategies and work ethics. However, living in a low-income neighborhood context is rarely the cause of unemployment or limited social mobility. Rather, neighborhood-based processes reproduce already existing inequalities: the described mechanisms differentially influence residents’ socio-economic prospects in sometimes contradictory ways. Depending on their social identity and family context residents differ in the degree to which they want, and are able, to distance themselves from negative influences at the neighborhood level. This also means that they cannot be viewed simply as ‘victims’. They develop a variety of strategies to negotiate their way around the neighborhood and create linkages to the labor market. They build meaningful relations with other residents. Many feel at home in the neighborhood and do not want to move. Clearly, life in disadvantaged neighborhoods such as Transvaal is not all bad. Unfortunately, this complex and differentiated perspective on social life in disadvantaged neighborhoods is often lost, not just in policy practice but also in academic research. One way in which researchers might put such negative representations into perspective is by studying whether and how neighborhoods of concentrated poverty form meaningful contexts for the people who live there.
Armoede en de ruimtelijke spreiding ervan zijn belangrijke aandachtspunten op de politieke agenda van nationale en lokale overheden in de westere wereld. Zo ook in Nederland, waar sociale menging een belangrijk sleutelwoord is in het huidige competitiedebatte. Een van de drijfveren voor het mengingsbeleid is de vrees dat ruimtelijke concentraties van kansarmen de ontplooiingskansen van veelal allochtone bewoners zou belemmeren. De zogeheten ‘Rotterdamwet’, die het mogelijk maakt om de instroom van kansarme huishoudens in achterstandswijken te beperken en zo spreiding af te dwingen, weerspiegelt deze bezorgdheid over negatieve gevolgen van segregatie voor maatschappelijke emancipatie en integratie. Veelzeggend is in dit opzicht ook het feit dat er onlangs een minister-post is gecreëerd die de werkgebieden Wonen, Wijken en Integratie bijeen moet brengen. Ook in de wetenschappelijke wereld is er veel aandacht voor de negatieve gevolgen van armoedeconcentraties. Buurteffectonderzoek is gebaseerd op het idee dat onze persoonlijke ontwikkeling - van concreet gedrag tot de normen en waarden die dat gedrag sturen - allerlei worden gevormd door de sociale en fysieke omgeving waarin wij leven. Waar we wonen, beïnvloedt bijvoorbeeld wie we tegenkomen, waar onze kinderen naar school gaan en buitenspelen en hoe we tegen de wereld aankijken. Hoewel er zeker geen sprake is van een één-op-één relatie, structureert de woonomgeving zo ons dagelijks leven en geeft mede vorm aan de kansen die wij in het leven krijgen en aangrijpen om ons te ontwikkelen.

Doel van dit onderzoek is om een bijdrage te leveren aan de politieke en wetenschappelijke discusies over de belemmerende invloed van de buurt, met specifieke aandacht voor de sociaal-economische perspectieven van bewoners in achterstandswijken. Europees onderzoek toont aan dat er een samenhang bestaat tussen de sociaaleconomische en etnische samenstelling van de buurt en de individuele arbeidsvertwijden van bewoners. Er is echter nog nauwelijks onderzoek gedaan naar de causale mechanismen hierachter. Aanhankelijk bij de aandacht voor sociale menging in het stedelijk beleid richt dit onderzoek zich daarom op de manier waarop formele en informele sociale structuren in achterstandswijken vormen geven aan de arbeidsperspectieven van bewoners. De hoofdvraag luidt: In hoeverre kan er een relatie worden geconstateerd tussen sociale processen voortgekomen uit de kansarme bevolkings samenstelling van achterstandswijken en de sociaaleconomische positie van bewoners? Een belangrijke aanname in het onderzoek is dat beperkte sociale mobiliteit van bewoners in achterstandswijken voortkomt uit concrete economische handelingen van bewoners, die beïnvloed worden door de handelingen of sociale positie van medebewoners.

Het onderzoek heeft de vorm van een exploratieve casestudie, die is uitgevoerd in de arme buurt Transvaal-Noord in Den Haag en de aangrenzende sociaaleconomisch gemengde buurt Gentesserkwartier. De verwachting was dat, als er ergens buurteffecten in Nederland plaatsvinden, de kans groot is dat deze zich in Transvaal-Noord zouden manifesteren met het oog op de hoge armoedeconcentratie in deze buurt. Tegelijkertijd is de buurt vanuit een internationaal perspectief juist een milde ‘case’ van armoedeconcentratie. De bevindingen kunnen dan ook inzicht geven in de
Living in concentrated poverty.

In de buurt vestigde zich deels sociale, culturele, religieuze of etnische achtergrond of al bestaande relaties voordat men zijn ontstaan omdat men in dezelfde portiekflat of straat woont, maar relaties die voortkomen uit beide buurten geldt echter dat hun contacten in de buurt beperkt zijn tot contacten met medebewoners. Het onderzoek laat zien dat lokale contacten een belangrijk deel uitmaken van de sociale netwerken van kansarme bewoners in de twee onderzoeksbuurten en tussen de samenstelling en locatie van hun sociale netwerken. Het onderzoek laat zien dat lokale contacten een belangrijk deel uitmaken van de sociale netwerken van sociale huurders, vooral in de achterstandswijk. Voor kansarme bewoners in beide buurten geldt echter dat hun contacten in de buurt beperkt zijn tot contacten met medebewoners met vergelijkbare (lage) sociale posities. Deze contacten zijn meestal geen ‘burencontacten’, die zijn ontstaan omdat men in dezelfde portiekflat of straat woont, maar relaties die voortkomen uit gedeelde sociale, culturele, religieuze of etnische achtergrond of al bestaande relaties voordat men zich in de buurt vestigde.


Negatieve socialisering


Arbeidsparticipatie via de lokale sociale infrastructuur

Tenslotte vormt ook de formele sociale infrastructuur in achterstandswijken, bestaand uit een hecht netwerk van welzijnsinstellingen, culturele en religieuze instellingen en tal van buurprojecten, een mogelijke verklaring voor de negatieve relatie tussen armoedeconcentraties en de arbeidsmarktperspectieven van individuele bewoners. Niet alleen vormen dergelijke instellingen een bron van steun, informatie en training voor bewoners, maar ze bieden ook een laagdrempelige entree tot de arbeidsmarkt via lokale (vaak ongeschoolde) banen, stages en vrijwilligersplekken. Net als de informele werknetswerken kan dit op termijn echter negatieve gevolgen hebben voor de arbeidsperspectieven
van bewoners, omdat zij hierdoor blijven ‘hangen’ in hun eigen netwerk en de doorstroommogelijkheden naar andere werkgevers beperkt zijn door externe stigmatisering van deze instellingen en hun werknemers.

De relatie tussen mechanismen


Selectiviteit van mechanismen

Een belangrijke kanttekening bij dit onderzoek is dat de hierboven beschreven sociale processen binnen de buurt niet voor elke bewoner even vormend zijn voor het zoeken en vinden van werk op korte termijn en sociale mobiliteit op lange termijn. Er is een grote diversiteit onder bewoners in de mate en combinatie waarin zij te maken krijgen met dergelijke processen en de daaruit voortvloeiende negatieve buurteffecten. Dit hangt af van de sociale structuren waar zij deel van uitmaken op basis van hun sociaaleconomische, etnische, culturele en religieuze achtergrond. Terwijl voor sommige bewoners processen van socialisering een verklaring kunnen vormen voor hun arbeidsmarktstatus, vormt voor andere bewoners sociale isolatie een belemmering. Weer andere bewoners profiteren juist in positieve zin van de nabijheid van familie en vrienden. Daarnaast verschillen bewoners in de mate waarin zij gebruik maken van de voorzieningen en vacatures bij lokale sociale instellingen. Dit hangt bijvoorbeeld af van hun etnische achtergrond, geslagt, hun beheersing van de Nederlandse taal en de mate waarin zij toegang hebben tot informele steun via hun sociale netwerk. Ten slotte verschillen bewoners ook in de mate waarin zij in staat zijn om zich te distantiëren van de beschreven negatieve buurtgebonden processen. Bewoners ontwikkelen uiteenlopende strategieën om zichzelf en hun kinderen te beschermen tegen negatieve invloeden in de buurt. Of ze hier in slagen hangt bijvoorbeeld af van hun percepties over risico’s in de buurt en de mate waarin ze zelf tijd hebben of over sociale hulpbronnen beschikken om toezicht te houden op hun kinderen.

De sociale betekenis van de buurt

Kortom, wonen in een kansarme buurt beïnvloedt op verschillende en soms tegenstrijdige wijze de arbeidsperspectieven van bewoners. Het onderzoek laat zien hoe – zelfs in een sociaal gefrag-
The social consequences of concentrated poverty are a recurring theme in urban policy and have received much attention in academic research in the form of neighborhood effect studies. This dissertation explores the ways in which living in a disadvantaged neighborhood negatively affects residents’ labor market participation and long-term socio-economic prospects. By way of a case study in the Netherlands, the research focuses on explanations for neighborhood effects relating to the population composition of low-income neighborhoods. These include neighborhood-based processes of social isolation, negative socialization, social disorganization and mechanisms relating to the formal social infrastructure.

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