FERTILE GROUND: COMMUNITY GARDENS
IN A LOW-INCOME INNER-CITY CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD
AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This study used interviews to investigate the social connections among low-income African Americans who were developing and maintaining community gardens in an inner-city Chicago neighborhood. Despite a variety of barriers (e.g., limited resources, violence, moral dangers, toxic soil, transient, and aging population), residents come together to care for garden plots on vacant lots. These spaces, adjacent to abandoned housing, become social capital builders. By engaging in activities that require weekly teamwork, community members come to trust, share, and actively envision the transformation of bleak circumstances into places of opportunity for a better life. These activities include site selection, land appropriation, building, growing, harvesting, preparing and distributing the crops they have grown. This research contributes to our understanding of the range of social and economic benefits that community gardens provide. In particular, this research provides insight into how low-income African American community gardeners form social networks that leads to a greater quality of life. The study offers place-based recommendations for block clubs, faith-based organizations, non-profit organizations, companies, landscape architects, city planners, parks and recreation departments that focus on local assets.
In dedication to everyone who toils to be good and beloved stewards of Earth.
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PREFACE

The significance of community gardens as urban public open spaces has been the focus of considerable scholarship in the post 1960s-Civil Rights Era America, an era in which some have credited with the formation of a community gardens movement (Ferris, Norman, & Sempik, 2001) and places of resistance to urban decay (Lawson, 2005, 218). Community gardens can be seen as democratic environments, places that shape both desired and undesired values of people in the landscape, as well as places that address the needs of urban populations in times of crisis. Community gardens attract individuals who follow established rules such as: no stealing, abstaining from the use of vulgar language, and no squatting; and others that do not. As I argue below, the history of community gardens and their creation were major themes in sources during the 1980s. During the 1990s, quality assessment of the use of community gardens received a great deal of attention in text. A solutions-oriented focus among community garden scholarship took precedence during the following decade. Collectively, the past thirty years of community garden discourse has culminated in a trajectory of making urban land use and management policies for community gardens in places like Philadelphia, New Jersey, New York, and Seattle.

I have found that most discussions of creating, accessing, and using community gardens in the literature do not offer critical reviews or research agendas that address inner city, low-income, African American neighborhoods. Even when they have been described as forerunners of the social movements that have resulted in community gardens’ burgeoning proliferation (Bonham, 2002; Hynes, 1996; Linn, 2007; Warner, 1987), the attention given to African Americans is generally cursory and does not form a major portion of discourse. This lack of attention has created a gap in our knowledge regarding the benefits of community gardens for African Americans in general and low-income urban African Americans in particular.
This gap in our knowledge is significant given the unique social and cultural factors of racism, classism and discrimination (Bonham, 2002; Pattillo-McCoy, 2007; Wilson, 2010) that low-income urban African Americans contend with on an on-going basis. Historically, the common ethno-racial background of these gardeners grouping together is due to segregation practices (formal redlining and informal racial steering) resulting in isolating residual boundaries. In addition, today, residential limitations are dictated by persistent poverty, and a personal choice to identify with others who share heritage and culture. These gardeners’ have come from generations of African Americans who have established roots in the neighborhood of family, friends and even foe. Why not move to a more prosperous area when the neighborhood is disturbed? The cost of living elsewhere is a barrier due to the zoning codes and availability of housing types that can be afforded. In addition, the gardeners’ familiar route for visiting comrades, accessing goods and services, and entertainment are lost if they move from the local neighborhood. While it may be perceived that they will have an increase in access to a higher quality of material resources if they move, their network of buddies that also compensated for their lack of money to access these resources are not accounted for.

Community gardens often play a major role in meeting the needs of this group of people living together in a neighborhood; considering that, “today the phrase community garden has come to mean almost any group of people with one place in common — a garden” (Jobb, 1979, p. 36). Given that community gardens provide neighborhoods, which are marginalized and suffer from crisis, with control to meet their needs (Carr, 1992, p.69), and then understanding how they can be most beneficial for this population is especially crucial to fashioning successful urban land use and management policies.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is evidence that community gardens lead to the development of social capital. This evidence comes from studies of Caucasians, immigrants, and a diversity of minorities (Armstrong, 2000; Glover, 2003; Milligan, Gatrell, & Bingley, 2004; Mundel & Chapman 2010; Sokolovsky, 2010; Wills, Chinemana, & Rudolph, 2010). One of the population groups for whom social capital is most critical is low-income African Americans. Surprisingly, I did not find this group to be presented in research examining the relationship between community gardens and the development of social capital. This is a costly omission in the literature. Because this population is economically disadvantaged and racially marginalized, they are most dependent on local social support systems to meet their basic daily needs for survival and identity as a healthy and unified community.

It is not at all clear that the mechanisms that convey social capital through a community garden comprised of a middle-class Caucasian population in a Midwestern city are applicable to individuals from low-income African American neighborhood in Chicago. To what extent do community gardens in low-income African American Chicago neighborhoods promote social capital? Even though designers and scholars have examined similar questions regarding the broader built environment among diverse populations (Brown et al., 2009; Dober, 1963, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2005; Hood, 1997; Jackson, 1980; Jacobs, 1961; Lynch, 1960; McHarg, 1969; Whyte, 1980), few have focused on social capital in conjunction with the ubiquitous community garden (Armstrong, 2000; Glover, 2003; Milligan et al., 2004; Sokolovsky, 2010; Wakefield, Yeudall, Taron, Reynolds, & Skinner, 2007); and none seem to have investigated the critical role that urban community gardens play in the social well-being of low-income African American
gardeners at the neighborhood level. This is a major gap in our knowledge and is critically important to comprehending social health (social capital) for this population. There is only anecdotal research that strongly indicates that community gardens have the lowest cost (Voicu & Been, 2008, p. 243) and highest beneficial impact for “meeting the needs” of urban dwelling low-income African Americans (Armstrong, 2000, p. 324), which await further identification and investigation.

Community gardens may be the public spaces that include the most built elements for the promotion of social capital leading to an enhanced social well-being in socially distressed urban neighborhoods suffering gentrification processes (Fullilove, 2003, 2004). Research has been framed by either cultural built environment characteristics or social relationship factors, which often comprise and extend from community gardens. Vegetation, structures, and graded earth are some of the physical features that have been linked to promoting or hindering social capital. Trees and grass are preferred landscape features that encourage people to congregate in outdoor spaces (Sullivan, Kuo, & DePooter, 2004); gated and locked fences reduce social interaction (Glover, 2004), where near ground level windows, porches, and stoops fronting public spaces serve as access points for neighborly interactions among residents, visitors, and passersby (Brown, 2009); similar minimal elevation changes near one-foot do not discourage people from gathering in public plazas (Whyte, 1980). Social relationship factors are manifested by human interactions within a community garden’s encouraging built environment. Relationships of power (Glover, 2004), cultural diversity (Wakefield et al., 2007), and well-being (Milligan et al., 2004) are some of the factors explored by scholars focused on urban community public health. These studies’ validity is questionable for low-income African Americans because they are a different class, another race or ethnicity, and marginally included among a diversity of minorities
where the voices of gardeners are distant, if even heard.

A recent study shows that community gardens are an essential catalyst for bringing forth an improvement in public health that includes social well-being under marginal conditions. Armstrong, (2000) found that 20 garden program coordinators, representing 63 upstate New York community gardens, reported that these shared built environments were used by participants to engage in social capital related activities. Meetings and other cooperative work that was conducted in, and in relationship to, community gardens resulted in the formation of close social networks among gardeners. Consistent with Armstrong and others (Mundel & Chapman 2010; Wills et al., 2010), Wakefield et al., (2004) suggests from his research on Canadian gardeners that social support formed around sharing in the cultivation and consumption of food can bring together various class, age, sex, and health statuses populations, ethnic and special groups including people with disabilities, battered women, and at-risk-youth. The demographic diversity of both racial ethnicity and class within each of the studies presented does not allow for reliable correlation between social capital and community gardens to be drawn for the population that is suggested to have the highest beneficial impact for meeting their needs – urban dwelling low-income African American gardeners. Thus, in this study, I will examine this gap in our knowledge.

**Background**

We do not understand the extent to which community gardens foster social capital for low-income African Americans residing in urban neighborhoods. Yet, social and cultural studies have broadened our general understanding of landscapes beyond visual and class facades, and they have embraced the common and growing minority populations’ landscape and community relationships (Nieves & Alexander, 2008). The discourse of landscape studies has historically
been rooted in visual studies as an elite artistic perspective, appreciated by a private, mobile, and select few (Whyle, 2007). This has resulted in the marginalization and exclusion specifically of low-income minorities’ voices on the subject of landscape. Even when the landscape looks organized with stately buildings and manicured landscapes, a visually symbolic environment (Anderson, 2011; Kefalas, 2003; Klinenberg, 2003) can hide the disparities of poor social relationships, so to can visually disorderly environments mask resilient networks of social support (Kofie, 1999; McIntyre, 2000).

In addition, research is often constructed for identifying commonalities among various people, which in turn often overshadows uniqueness among different groups. Identities become homogenized when attention is not placed on disparities but on universal applications; even when the general prescriptions yield heterogeneous outcomes. One is left to assume that Black people in particular, have no culturally specific relationships with landscapes that produce social capital. Even if those surveyed do not articulate an extensive comprehension of their own cultural heritage linked to landscape practices (Armstrong, 2000, p. 323), scholars would better serve their audience by contextualizing their research population with a broader historical knowledge that addresses their unspoken heritage.

In recent years, academic scholarship about landscape has grown to include more visual, material, and human behavior interpretative research extending into vernacular landscapes. Whereas the majority of the populations that have been studied in landscape architecture in the United States are from the dominant population, some have centered on the lived experiences of marginalized groups: African Americans, elderly, homeless people, and people with disabilities (Balmori & Morton, 1993; Emerson, Robertson, & Wood, 2007; Klinenberg, 2002; Mitchell, 2003; Schein, 2006). However, culture specific ethnographic studies about African American
populations in the United States have yet to be conducted on the relationship between social capital and low-income urban community gardeners.

Glover’s (2003, 2004, 2005) body of research regarding social capital and community gardeners is an ideal model approach to investigating low-income African American gardener population’s social capital through in-depth interviews of a small group of informants. But, these studies are limited because the majority of the samples reported on are outside of the class and ethno-racial population for discovering the most volatile community garden and social capital relationships. The ethno-racial identities of those surveyed by Glover (2005) are not mentioned. Glover’s qualitative (2003, 2004) and quantitative (2005) studies do not provide reliable data about African American community gardeners’ social capital. Of the fourteen gardeners interviewed, only one was African American in Glover’s (2003, 2004) smaller Midwestern city study. Protecting the identity of the participants hid the voice of the single Black informant. Even if identified, the Black person alone could not credibly represent the neighborhood’s Black population. Their division into two groups further complicated the small mixed group of participants: garden members and volunteers (Glover, 2004). The discipline of leisure studies, which shapes Glover’s approach, appears to not allow for an inclusion of low-income non-home owners, nor does the term “leisure” culturally indicate an African American ‘recreation’ perspective (Holland, 2002). The term leisure implies passive activities, engaged in by individuals with free-time. Leisure is a term that is not commonly used in African American culture. Consider the common and heavily utilized recreation centers, Boy’s and Girl’s Clubs, YMCAs throughout predominantly African American communities in the US and Chicago in particular.

Ethnic-specific inquiry into the ties between social capital and public spaces like
community gardens offer general findings that may apply to African Americans. Leyden (2003) found from surveying a community in Galway, Republic of Ireland, “that residents living in walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods are more likely to know their neighbors, to participate politically, to trust others, and to be involved socially” (1550). While Leyden’s research does not indicate culturally unique relationships between social capital and the built environment for Irish people, it does support an argument that social capital: trust, sharing and building relationships are promoted when users of community gardens interact with each other. It is problematic to apply this knowledge to Black people given the social and cultural context of the research location. Leyden explains that, “Galway has no experience with the racism and “white flight” from the city centers that has historically affected American cities and that in many ways continues to distort decisions regarding where to live” (2003, p. 1547). Historically, the social and cultural geography of place plays a role in a community gardens’ facilitation of social capital. It is true in Leyden’s Galway research study.

In a similar study, Sokolovsky (2010) did find some culturally specific links among social capital facilitation and community gardening with ethnic minorities. He found among the elderly study population, a folk health knowledge where “most gardens in ethnic minority communities maintain an assortment of medicinal plants that are used regularly for minor bodily complaints,” as a result of having limited social capital for accessing culturally favorable professional health services (Sokolovsky, 2010, p. 250). A list of what comprised the minority population in New York City is not found in his study. In the same way, Reitmanova and Gustafson (2009) do not indicate the racial diversity within the Hispanic population they studied in Canada. They do find that the surveyed Hispanic population has some culturally specific landscape and social capital connections. “Many felt deprived of food they enjoyed in their
countries of origin since there were very few ‘ethnospecific’ food suppliers in the city;” and the
seldom times these foods were available, the cost was exuberant (Reitmanova & Gustafson, 2009, p. 51). Thus, culture specific foods were still inaccessible unless grown and shared among
community members in a cost efficient way, like a community garden.

What is grown in a garden is a factor to consider for building social capital in diverse
communities. Glover (2004, p. 155) reported that the introduction of vegetable crops, like
carrots were being considered to attract more low-income African Americans in the
neighborhood to garden, where only flowers have been grown by middle income Caucasians.
Carrots may not be as attractive to African Americans as okra, greens (collards, turnip, and
mustard), watermelon, and sweet potatoes for increasing their participation in a community
garden (Obama, 2012). This observation was not noted by Glover nor reported by the gardeners
who were interviewed. Carrots are not a culturally specific garden food for consumption by
African Americans, as it may be for Blacks from the Caribbean, like Jamaica, where it is a
popular beverage ingredient. Identifying and understanding the ethno-racial cultural background
of a community can affect the ways to build social capital in a community garden setting.
Glover does not identify the ethno-racial characteristic of those in his study.

Likewise the racial identities within the ethnic population were not indicated in Brown’s
(2009) study of a Cuban American immigrant community in Florida. He did find a culturally
unique preference for landscape features that were associated with social capital potential, such
as porches and stoops. Where dwellings with large windows façades, without an elevation of a
few feet were not preferred; there was a preference for stoops and porches. The porch is
distinctly identified as a characteristic of African and African American architectural design
(Brown 2001, p. 90). The porch is a semipublic place where the dwellings’ residents can
converse with passersby and develop friendships for shared resources and activities. Yet, even
with this amount of research, our culturally contextual knowledge of Black community gardens
and their relationship to fostering social capital is not known and understood from the vantage
point within a Black community’s experiences.

Cultural geographer J. B. Jackson once said, “[the] least we know of all our indigenous
American gardens and in some ways the richest in variety, is the garden of Blacks” (1980, p. 38).
While there is an increasing body of evidence that community gardens help build social capital,
Jackson’s assessment has merit for further investigation of African American community
gardens’ impact on social capital today. Like the social capital rich landscapes of Black
churches and historically Black colleges and universities, community gardens in majority Black
neighborhoods have received little critical review in landscape discourse. Some limited research
has added to our understanding of a particular private rural typology of Africanized gardens in
the southern US and Caribbean; including swept yards, reused objects, with esthetic and
utilitarian food production shared with occasional visitors to single family homes (Frischkorn &

This semiprivate landscape culture of Black southern dwelling has been reordered by a
significant number of Blacks migrating to and residing for several generations in northern cities
since WWI and WWII (Black, 2003, 2007). They adapted from an agrarian sharecropper
livelihood to an industrial, technical way of living in order to gain access to greater
opportunities. While facing different challenges, these new urban gardens, tended in a
communal way under spatial limitations, must have helped migrants to form social networks in
cities. Lawson argues that the, “promoters of urban gardens have rarely considered them simply
as places to grow food and flowers; rather, they have viewed them as a means to address much
larger social concerns, such as economic relief, education reform, and civic accord” (2005, p. 287). This point emphasizes the significance of the role that community gardens have in providing the place for the benefits of social capital to occur. Recently, Hou, Johnson, & Lawson (2009), which includes Lawson, reiterates this void in our knowledge about community gardens in the following statement:

Numerous studies and reports have praised and promoted the community garden as a beneficial resource in communities, yet our full understanding of the issues involved in making and sustaining community gardens has lagged behind this appreciation (p. 3).

Thus, community gardens are places of social capital, yet to be fully understood. In summary, positive benefits of social capital could be generated within and/or sustained by activities associated with community gardens in a low-income inner-city African American neighborhood. However, we still do not know what kind of social capital is promoted that can be assessed qualitatively.

**Significance**

With the significant health and resource disparities between African Americans and other populations, learning from this specific population what types of community garden spaces promote mental, physical, and social health means improving the health of one of the most vulnerable populations in America. A community’s mental, physical, and social health is interrelated, so it is contextually important to address the former two factors while focusing on the latter. Landscapes have the ability to improve cognition and attention and reduce stress from simply seeing it to being physically active in it (Kaplan, Kaplan, & Ryan, 1998; Ulrich, 1981).

The benefit of physical activity in the landscape has gained more attention recently for

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1 All statistical data included from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention unless otherwise noted, please see CDC website and/or Hall, M. & Hellmich. (2010). *USA Today*, Tuesday, cover story, interview, “First Lady Says: ‘Let’s move on child obesity.’” 1-2. February 9.
several reasons. If people feel unsafe and have unattractive environmental features that detract them from going outside in an environment, they will engage less in getting to know neighbors that can lead to a safer environment (Kuo, Sullivan, Coley, & Brunson, 1998; Kweon, Sullivan, & Wiley, 1998; Sullivan et al., 2004). While 25% of US adults are obese, it is double that amount among low-income Black women living in urban communities. In addition, nearly forty percent of Black children are obese. These statistics present epidemic proportions of lives at risk to be consumed by diabetes, hypertension, and high-blood pressure as causes of death (Day, 2006, p. 88). These conditions can be prevented and reduced. Youth and parents can grow gardens to supplement their diets and find the space to engage in healthy activities. Behaviors that raise the heart rate for thirty to sixty minutes per day contribute to stemming a national escalating health crisis that includes 25 million Americans. The “10% of Black adults engage in sustained activity for at least 30 minutes a day” can potentially be raised by participating in community gardening (Day, 2006, p. 91) that can socially encourage the other 90% to be active.

Community gardens improve individual psychological well-being, help to positively encourage physical activity, and also promote social capital. According to Milligan et al., (2004), building bridges, combating social isolation, increasing a sense of achievement, satisfaction and aesthetic pleasure are attributed to the flexibility of gardening. Furthermore, greater access to resources (food), improved social ties (knowing neighbors), widening social diversity (across class), learning skills for marketable jobs, having a greater sense of security and sustainability are benefits of public team based projects that are in public places – of which community gardens are exemplars.

In addition, an increase in social well-being occurs through social integration and collective experiencing of nature which takes place in community gardens (Abraham,
Sommerthalder, & Abel, 2010). One of the more extensive literature reviews about social capital and community gardens points to a gap in our knowledge about this important topic:

“The problem is, however, that they fail to grasp socially differentiated meanings of landscape.” Thus, in terms of methodology, there is a need for more elaborative and diverse study designs such as qualitative studies…” (Abraham et al., 2010, p. 66)

Other scholars call for more holistic studies that embrace a socio-ecological model to further comprehend nuances of social capital found in public space, semi-public space, and in-between. Such studies can even yield new knowledge about the roles that “Communal gardeners” play in intergenerational social capital (Milligan et al., 2004). These research findings and other social capital and community garden relationships suggest being the most valuable within a low-income African American neighborhood experiencing an economic recession. Improving the local health of a vulnerable neighborhood, which lacks resources of social networks, land and money, is imperative via a community garden; and the community garden deserves further investigation (Wakefield et al., 2007).

These findings suggest that a community garden is a place where a society is organized to grow, where social capital: a belief, applied ability, and attempt that shared help will achieve a desired change, is evident. Community gardens are significant landscapes that help create social capital by providing a place for people to interact where they have access to friendships and build linkages to resources that improve their daily quality of life. Community gardens appear to be a reliable and telling entity for the presence of a neighborhood’s social capital. Little empirical evidence exists that substantiates the argument that community gardens are the most beneficial to low-income African Americans living in cities than any other community. Some argue that ethno-racial identity is not a significant factor, considering Diez Roux et al., (2001) found that class was a greater factor for poor health when income, education, and occupation are
the same. However, the landscapes of race and culture are still factors given that Diez Roux et al., (2001, p. 105) acknowledges the limitations of their research, “Differences in the geographic areas from which Blacks and whites were drawn also limit the comparison between races.” Like Diez Roux et al., (2001), Isaacs and Schroeder (2004, p. 1139), consider class a “more powerful effect” on health than race in a study on national public health in America. Yet Isaacs and Schroeder (2004, p. 1139), do not dismiss racism, but promote the inclusion of “lower-income whites as well” into what they identify as a primarily race-based disparity reduction focus of public health policymakers. To reiterate, Isaacs and Schroeder (2004, p. 1138) concede, “Having lower–class status and being Black are intertwined to such a degree that it is difficult to separate the two factors.” Similar to public health research, the existing studies share methodological and data limitations that prove difficult to make direct correlations between community gardens and the creation and progression of social capital.
CHAPTER 2
COMMUNITY GARDENS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Definitions of Community Gardens

There is not a single definition of the term *community garden* that gardeners or scholars have found consensus. Yet the definition impacts how we study social capital in relationship to community gardens. This is not surprising given that both words—*community* and *garden*—are broad terms that are not easily defined. We get a general sense of these words from their definitions found in the Oxford English Dictionary. *Community* is a group of people living together in one place, society, people with a common interest, growing in the same place;\(^2\) and *garden* is a piece of ground next to a house, with a lawn or flowers, ornamental grounds laid out for public enjoyment, cultivate or work a garden.\(^3\) Each person can define *community* differently based on who is considered to be included in it. And, based on what is grown in a garden, definitions of *garden* can vary as well.

While there is an array of possible definitions for the term *community garden*, over a generation, scholars have come to define the term as consisting of people, land, and plants. Varying scholars give emphasis to one of the three components of a community garden. People have been prioritized first in the majority of the definitions (ACGA, 2010; Bloom, 2004; Bonham, 2002; Francis et al., 1984; Hoffman et al., 2009; Linn, 2007; NGA, 2010; Warner, 1987); land has been the next most frequently championed element (Bloom, 2004; Francis, 2003; Glover, 2003; Patel, 1991; Warner, 1987); and plants or crops have been given the least attention (Balmori & Morton, 1993; Bloom, 2004; Hynes, 1996).

Community gardens are the result of human activity upon land through the cultivation of

\(^2\) http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/37337?redirectedFrom=community#eid
\(^3\) http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/76724?rskey=QPFKUA&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid
plants. People are a vital component of the design, develop and manage community gardens (Francis, Cashdan, & Paxon, 1984). People politically organize to access resources and market goods and services through community gardens (Warren, 1987). Low-income people often receive help from others as a result of community gardens (Bonham, 2002). Often, a piece of land becomes a community garden through the appropriation of vacant land by landless people for reuse (Bloom, 2004; Francis, 2003; and Warren, 1987). Growing plants in a community garden provides an active and beneficial reuse of land by people. Plants produce food that can be harvested (Balmori & Morton, 1993). Plants have a visual quality that is attractive (Bloom, 2004). These qualities of plants give people a sense of identity and security in the local environment (Hynes, 1996).

Regardless of where the emphasis is placed for defining a community garden, they require these three components. In his description of a process for creating a community garden, Karl Linn (2007), landscape architect and psychologist, describes a process that includes people, plants and land as essential for community garden design:

I surveyed all the existing vegetation, topography, and structures surrounding the sites and then designed the spaces for optimum flexibility of use and maximum participation of users. Whether a particular area became a lawn or a vegetable or flower garden depended on the choices of future tenants and might change from year to year. (Linn, 2007, p. 125)

Linn further states the importance of the collective social quality of a common land that requires human activity to exist, in the following statement:

Unfortunately many community gardens are devoid of sociability settings. Combining community gardens with neighborhood commons became the most successful strategy I found for building lasting, cared-for neighborhood commons (Linn, 2007, p. 12).

The “cared-for” portion of landscape, the active plant life in community gardens, which provides the activity for daily care is what Hoffman et al., calls “outdoor horticultural tasks” (2009, p. 89).
From historical knowledge and current practices, we may understand that a community garden is a group of like-minded people tending a landscape in the public. This language resembles Glover’s (2003) community garden definition: “sections of land are used to produce food or flowers in an urban environment for the personal use or collective benefit of their members who, by virtue of their participation, share certain resources, such as space, tools, and water” (p. 191). Patel (1991), of the cooperative extension services, defines a community garden as: “neighborhood open spaces managed by and for the members of the community. Most typical, the community garden is divided into individual plots and planted with vegetables by landless gardeners. Some families even share” (p. 1).

My definition of a community garden is broader than those stated above: a community garden is a place where social ties and plants grow. Arriving at a socially constructed definition of community gardens through the voices of the community gardeners allows for a focused examination of the processes that show the development of social capital. This definition is in agreement with the majority of the ways others have defined the term community garden as mainly consisting of people and growth. My definition allows for gardeners to define the term further. Unlike Glover’s definition, I place no limitation on the flora grown in a community garden; and unlike Patel, I place no limitation on what a community garden is for, nor do I limit membership of a community garden to landless status. I agree with Hou et al.’s., (2009), use of the term community garden to mean an “area of tillable land made available to groups of individuals, households, classes, and others to garden” (p. 11) for those who are active within a community garden. This malleable interpretation of the term is also presented by the National Gardening Association (NGA), in their motto: “When you garden, You grow.” They further state that their definition of the term garden has a physical and social component. Their mission

4 http://assoc.garden.org/
statement is: “To promote home, school, and community gardening as a means to renew and sustain the essential connections between people, plants, and the environment.”  

Michael Metallo, NGA President states that their, “programs combine gardens and education to address nutrition concerns and food security, advance environmental awareness and conservation, build community and strengthen family bonds, understand other cultures, encourage exercise, and develop cooperation and leadership skills in youth” (National Gardening Association Annual Report, 2009, p. 2).

The American Community Garden Association (ACGA) is dedicated to gardening promotion at the community level. The ACGA’s Motto is: “Growing communities across America and Canada,” and the mission statement is “to build community by increasing and enhancing community gardening and greening across the United States and Canada.” Among the garden organizations, the ACGA is the only one that defines what type of garden they model themselves by. The ACGA states:

Very Simply, it is: Any piece of land gardened by a group of people. We at the ACGA have a broad definition of what a community garden entails. It can be urban, suburban, or rural. It can grow flowers, vegetables or community. It can be one community plot, or can be many individual plots. It can be at a school, hospital, or in a neighborhood. It can also be a series of plots dedicated to "urban agriculture" where the produce is grown for a market.

In addition, ACGA’s inclusive definition that a community garden has a range in geography, flora, scale, institutional association, also pertains to the diversity of people who inhabit them. The ACGA placement of community growth over plant growth is most unique. They seek diverse membership, that is not limited by “gender, race, religion, age, sex, color, disability,  

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5 http://assoc.garden.org/
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
sexual orientation, socio-economic status, language, level of education, geography, national or ethnic origin.”

Several aspects in the mission of the NGA are also included under the umbrella operation of the ACGA, such as, community development, beautifying neighborhoods, and education.

Types of Community Gardens

This form of tended land populated by people and plant goes by many names. Hoffman et al., (2009) uses the terms: community college garden, campus gardening program, (p. 91) cooperative garden, outdoor garden program, and campus garden environment (p. 97) to describe a community garden. Lawson (2005) attests to the term, subsistence gardens being used interchangeably with community gardens during the Great Depression; like community plots, industrial gardens, and vacant-lot gardens (p. 327). In addition, Hou et al., (2009) came across other contemporary interchangeable terms for community gardens: allotment garden, neighborhood gardens, rent-a-garden, and garden patches (p. 11).

As in naming and defining the term, it is as challenging to distinguish the various types of community gardens. I identify three structures that govern the typology of community gardens: control, location, and time. Control of a community garden depends on who has and exercises power to structure its existence. Control of community gardens can be divided into two main forms: formal and informal control. Jobb (1979) defines the terms as follows:

Informal: Usually small and located within walking distance of most gardeners' homes. Usually operate by word-of-mouth, as well as tightly organized plans, at least in the beginning. Sometimes aided but not run by civic clubs, institutions, and agencies. (p. 21)

Formal: Usually administered by an agency of city, county, or state government but not always. Concentrate large numbers of gardeners on single sites. Usually involve applications, fees, and less individual control over the garden's destiny, including

11 http://communitygarden.org/about-acga/
important decisions about soil preparation, weeds, and pest management. (p. 21)

While there are also community gardens that are owned by the city and controlled by the residents of the neighborhood (Bloom, 2004), my research will be focused on the informally controlled community gardens. Social capital formation at the local level, small scale, and early initial stages of neighbors coming together to garden is important for filling in our gap of knowledge about the power inner-city low-income African Americans have to use community gardens for meeting their needs.

The location of a community garden also indicates what form it takes. Carr (1992), places vacant lot community gardens in the informal category and parks, hospitals, work/job/office buildings, and schools in the formal kind. What are missing from the discourse on community garden locations are faith-based properties (p. 69). I have found that the demographic group I am seeking to understand has utilized vacant-lots and often have an affiliation with a neighborhood faith-based building. This presents a different type of informal community garden, given that churches operate independent (and are tax exempt) from the government and are comprised of residents within a neighborhood.

Time is also a factor in determining a type of community garden. Just how long is its existence? Linn (2007), categorizes three time based designs and their uses:

- Lasting neighborhood gathering places [months-year-generations]; Instant commons, where people transform a space in a matter of minutes; and temporary commons, where people come together for a number of days or weeks to transform a gathering place for a special occasion or conference (p. 12).

Linn (2007) found that many of the community gardens he helped to establish no longer existed years later. He hoped for long lasting environments, but found them to be more ephemeral. Gardens take constant care to last in the productive forms humans often fashion to their needs. Public gardening history in the US shows that these forms of places were seldom viewed as
permanent landscapes, merely a “temporary solution better than charity” (Lawson, 2005, p. 27).

Lawson (2005) makes this point further:

> Yet appealing as the idea of urban gardens may be, it has been difficult to sustain the gardens themselves. In the past, programs were developed to be temporary, so that with each new crisis, new organizations and procedures had to be invented, even though similar appeals were used each time to obtain public support and land (p. 287).

This is also reflected in contemporary planning agendas where community gardens are incubators for gentrification (Carr, 1992, p. 353; Linn, 2007, pp. 171, 204). Although less frequently demolished – or instant than transitory landscapes of tenement dwellers and homeless squatters’ communal gardens (Balmori & Morton, 1993), urban dwelling low-income African American community gardeners seldom find lasting areas to tend.

However, community gardens are a start to a long-term commitment in improving the life of a neighborhood. In this study, my research is focused on community gardens that have lasted for a year or more. These types of community gardens have qualities that include all three time ranges. Comparable to other research, my research provides the opportunity to see the development of social capital a range of community garden types, with differences in their location and time of existence. Contrasts can be made between my research and others because my sample is focused on informally controlled community gardens on vacant lots. Therefore, my research can further contribute to our potential understanding of social capital development among the sample.

**Material Characteristics of Community Gardens**

Whereas, community garden components and types are clearly identifiable in research literature for categorization, its characteristics are not. I acknowledge the material culture of community gardens. Due to the great quantity of elements that populate these spaces, there is a
clear need for scholars to examine their meaning. But doing so is not part of this dissertation. Community gardens have numerous characteristics that are as broad as a collection of items in a dresser drawer or garage. Like these two spaces, community gardens serve as an inspiration to gardeners, because they can actively achieve control of needed resources. Their mobility is high and seldom fixed. Research pertaining to this level of material details included in community gardens has not been studied in relationship to social capital, but may impact it. While, I do not specifically focus on this level of detail in this research, it is important to recognize that community gardens are not simply made up of people and plants on the land.

These resources come in the form of features that make community gardens recognizable: “donated land, materials, human energy, and other necessary sorts of support” (Jobb, 1979, p. 55). “Community gardening is by definition a different experience from ordinary gardening because basic resources—land, water, even sunlight….must be shared” (Naimark, 1982, p. 4). The basic elements required to start a garden are: interested people; a suitable site; and basic resources—including fencing, topsoil, and water—at minimum expense (Naimark, 1982, p. 20). Distinguishing components like compost areas, workbenches, and seating are linked by path systems of mulched over earth. Water sources include fire hydrants (with city permit) and neighboring dwellings’ spigots.

Other detailed characteristics of community gardens are recognizable as built elements. An area of land, in Chicago, for instance, measuring 50 feet by 150 feet, typical of a city lot size, is often used as the place for a community garden (Jobb, 1979, p. 69). It is common for vacant lots of this scale to be appropriated by community gardeners in Chicago. It is estimated that a garden of this size is adequate enough for four to twelve gardeners (Jobb, 1979, p. 77). Typically, ornamental plants are planted in groups and as solitary specimens in choice locations.
directly in the ground or in recycled containers; while edible crops are commonly found in rows, planted directly in the ground or in raised planters to avoid soil contaminants like lead, attendant to urban conditions.

The makeup of the built environment characteristics leads to functions of community gardens. The combination of people, land, and plants as a place that provides food, recreation, exercise (Naimark, 1982), balances to leadership (Francis et al., 1984), development skill sets for employment (Warner, 1987), gives meaning and self-awareness (Balmori & Morton, 1993), promotes neighborhood security/stability (Hynes, 1996), acts as a cost effective use of space and resources (Bonham, 2002), establishes landmarks (Bloom, 2004), facilitates education for social ethics (Lawson, 2005), and is further characterized by its activities that adjust to hybrid environments (Hou et al., 2009).

**Social Capital**

Social capital provides a useful conceptual framework for analyzing the met needs and the benefits accessed as a result of community gardening. The green infrastructure of a community garden is linked to a community’s health by social capital (Moughtin, Moughtin, & Signoretta, 2009, p. 31). There are many labels for the term *social capital*. Some of the defining labels for the term included partnerships, family, friendships, teamwork, relationships, sharing, and collaborations (Blokland, 2008; Fullilove, 2004; Glover, 2004; Goode, 2010; Milligan et al., 2004; Putnam, 2000; Reitmanova & Gustafson, 2009; Reid, 2009; Zukin, 2010). It is a form of togetherness. Among local communities, it is a signature of self-help, where neighbors pool resources to sustain themselves when assistance from agencies has become limited (Lawson, 2005). Over the past century, Hanifan (1916), Bourdieu (1984 & 1985), Putnam (2000), and Fullilove (2004) have been central figures that characterized the term.
Rural Virginia school educator, L. J. Hanifan (Lyda Judson Hanifan), one of the earliest persons to utilize the term formally, described social capital in the early 1900s as:

goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who make up a social unit… improvement of living conditions in the whole community (Hanifan, 1916; 1920, pp. 130-131).

French sociologist, anthropologist, and philosopher, Pierre Bourdieu, positioned social capital in the 1980s as:

“social condition…associated with earliest childhood with possession of high or low income and which tend to shape tastes adjusted to these conditions.” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 177).

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a credential which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 248).

Harvard political scientist, Robert Putnum, outlined three components of social capital in 2000 as:

Trust [element of safety], reciprocity [sharing], and features of social organization, such as networks, norms, … that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefits [collective efficacy, possibility of changing the community for the better].

Psychiatrist Mindy Fullilove, expressed social capital in 2004 as more than the tangible within the built environment:

Interconnectedness on an emotional level… universal net of consciousness anchored in small niches we call neighborhoods or hamlets or villages (Fullilove, 2004, p. 17).

Hanifan (1916) provides a positive social capital definition where Bourdieu (1984) provides a negative form of social capital. The former is inclusive and the latter is exclusive. Putnum (2000) supplies some components of social capital that follow a progression towards collective action. Fullilove (2004) incorporates emotion, heart, and soul into the definition of

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social capital. Essentially, social capital refers to social and community networks linking individual lifestyle factors with broader socioeconomic, cultural and environmental conditions (Moughtin, Moughtin, & Signoretta, 2009, p. 21). I believe that by combining these definitions a fuller meaning from which I can draw will be applicable to the context of urban dwelling low-income African Americans. The common humanity among people, Hanifan expresses, is relevant for this demographic. The economic and ethno-racial hierarchical groupings as suggested by Bourdieu are applicable to my study sample’s history and lived-experience. The three components: faith, love, and hope are synonymous to trust, reciprocity and collective efficacy, as outlined by Putnum, are most informative to my research given the biblical beliefs of many the participants who are affiliated with religious groups. Fullilove’s inclusion of emotional spirit is culturally relevant to low-income Blacks struggle against gentrification. I define social capital as the ties among people that link them to resources that move them from a survival existence to a thriving livelihood.

Among the components of social capital: believing, giving, and imagining, are various nuances that provide details into what types of relationships are formed. Often the loss of relationships brings to our attention what relationships look like. Threats and disruption to relationships are hindrances to stable social capital in a given community. These forms of “root shock” or the original “nostalgia, a term coined in 1688 to describe loss of home as a life-threatening condition,” (Fullilove, 2004, p. 234) transnationalism, ghettoization, destabilization, and gentrification are all detrimental to positive social capital. An increased level of vulnerability is attendant to these conditions for the forms of social capital as listed by Glover:

With references to “bonding” and “bridging” social capital (Putnam, 2000; Gittell & Vidal, 1998), “within group” and “between group” social capital (Foley, Edwards, & Diani, 2001), “integration” and “linkage” (Woolcock, 1998), “social support” and “social leverage” (Briggs, 1998), “homophilous” and “heterophilous” interaction (Lin, 2001),
and “social glue” and “social bridges” (Lang & Hornburg, 1998), recent discussions in the literature underscore the salience of tie strength and its implications for access to social capital. (2004, p. 146)

The most common terms used to describe the relationship within and among groups are *bonds* and *bridges*. Gomez and Muntaner (2005) clearly define these terms:

These associations may be characterized as either ‘bonding’ relationship within community associations and/or ‘bridging’ relationships with associations or institutions external to the community (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). (p. 85)

A “good enough” community has positive bonds and bridges to combat detrimental effects to social capital. Coping strategies allow for neighborhoods to be resilient. Conceptions of identity are some of the areas addressed in the ethnographies that are an indication of a community’s social capital. Social, spatial, psychological sense of community, memory, and symbolic, are five community conceptualizations that impact an individuals’ identity with a community (Adam Witten, & Conway, 2007; Bourdieu, 1984,1985; Brodsky, 1996; Fullilove, 2004; Galea, Ahern, Rudenstine, Wallace, & Vlahov, 2005; Grandison, 2001; Holland, 2002; Kefalas, 2003; Klinenberg, 2003; Laguerre, 1999; Parr, 2008; Diez Roux et al., 2001).

These factors and others are both inside and outside the neighborhood and community of a given social group. Klinenberg (2002) speaks to these relationships for elderly men living alone in Chicago, Illinois when exposed during the 1995 heat wave. Not only was their personal social capital meager, also were municipal services, media coverage, and volunteer access severely limited by social conceptualizations of community. In the same way that adolescents can utilize a community garden to build stronger positive bonds among peer groups so too can the elderly. Both age groups can build bridges from the youth and wisdom of each (Reitmanova & Gustafson, 2009; Sokolovsky, 2010; Wakefield et al., 2007; Zukin, 2010).
Role of Community Gardens and Social Capital

Shared landscapes, visual access to landscapes and cognitive perception of landscapes are three common themes identified from recent research related to social capital and the built environment (Dannenberg et al., 2003; Evans, 2003; Gomez & Muntaner, 2005; Hood, 1997; Kuo et al., 1998; Kweon et al., 1998; Lynch, 1960; Parr, 2008; Putnam, 2000; Reid, 2009; Sullivan et al., 2004; Whyte, 1980). Shared spaces are public spaces that are accessible to others outside of the dwelling areas (Araya, Dunstan, Playle, Thomas, Palmer, & Lewis, 2005; Douglas & Douglas, 2004; Fullilove, 2004). Visual access to landscapes means that it can be seen but may not be occupied physically as public spaces are (Brown, 2009). Cognitive perception of the landscape is based on people’s associations of particular landscape features with cultural meanings (Adams et al., 2007; Blunsdon & Davern, 2007; Chile & Simpson, 2004).

Various combined landscape features that are incorporated into a space can result in a mixed land use (Day, 2006). Several spaces of this kind can be used as a vast network of spaces that act as a tangible support system for fostering social capital from one neighborhood to another. It is critical to have mixed land use for communities that have limited access to land and other resources. To understand the significance of this land use pattern among low-income communities, the voices of African Americans living in a low-income neighborhood can provide some pertinent information.

Empirical Findings

Community gardens may be the public spaces that include the most built elements for the promotion of social capital leading to an enhanced social well-being in distressed or social disturbances due to gentrification processes in urban neighborhoods. Research has been framed by either cultural built environment characteristics or social relationship factors, which often
comprise and extend from community gardens. Vegetation, structures, and graded earth are some of the physical features that have been linked to promoting or demoting social capital. Trees and grass are preferred landscape features that encourage people to congregate in outdoor spaces (Sullivan et al., 2004); gated and locked fences reduce social interaction (Glover, 2004), where near ground level windows, porches, and stoops fronting public spaces serve as access points for neighborly interactions among residents, visitors, and passersby (Brown, 2009); similar minimal elevation changes near one-foot do not discourage people from gathering in public plazas (Whyte, 1980). Social relationship factors are manifested by human interactions within a community garden’s encouraging built environment. Relationships of power (Glover, 2004), cultural diversity (Wakefield et al., 2007), and well-being (Milligan, 2004) are some of the factors explored by scholars focused on urban community public health. The generalizability of these findings to low-income, African Americans is questionable given the differences in class, race or ethnicity. In my work, I will examine the role of community gardens in the development of social capital and will give voice to the gardeners who are too little heard from in literature on community gardening.

A recent study shows that community gardens are an essential catalyst for improving the lives of individuals living under marginal conditions. Armstrong, (2000) found that 20 garden program coordinators, representing 63 upstate New York community gardens, reported that participants who engage in social capital building activities used these shared built environments. Meetings and other cooperative work that was conducted in, and in relationship to, community gardens resulted in the formation of close social networks among gardeners. Consistent with Armstrong and others (Mundel & Chapman, 2010; Wills et al., 2010), Wakefield et al., (2004) suggests from his research on Canadian gardeners that social support formed around sharing in
the cultivation and consumption of food can bring together various class, age, sex, and health statuses populations, ethnic and special groups including people with disabilities, battered women, and at-risk-youth. The demographic diversity of both racial ethnicity and class within each of the studies presented does not allow for reliable correlation between social capital and community gardens to be drawn for the population that is suggested to have the highest beneficial impact for meeting their needs – urban dwelling low-income African American gardeners. Thus, in this study, I will examine this gap in our knowledge.

In summary, community gardens promote social capital (both bonds and bridges) through their planning, construction, and maintenance. Community gardens are essential to neighborhood stability by way of the networks it promotes. Building community (social capital, relationships) is one key function of a community garden. This function extends from meeting the needs of individuals to meeting the needs of others who share in addressing their collective needs.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN

Study Focus

The community garden data for this study is one part of a larger on-going research project entitled: *Negotiating Challenge in Daily Life: Understanding the lives of Urban African American Families*, directed by Professor Robin Jarrett. The larger project focuses on community and family life with a particular focus on resilient coping strategies in the midst of individual and neighborhood impoverishment. As part of the *Negotiating Challenge in Daily Life* project, we examined the role of community gardens in promoting neighborhood resilience.

The Setting

This study took place in the impoverished Lincoln Heights (pseudonym) community. According to 2010 Census data, the median family income was $25,583 (US Census Bureau, 2010b) in this predominantly African American (97.8% of the residents were African American) community (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010a). Forty-three percent of the families lived below the poverty line with an unemployment rate of 29.8% for the population sixteen years of age and older (U.S. Census Bureau 2010b). Seventy-one percent of households with children under age 18 were female-headed (U.S. Census Bureau 2010a). According to the 2005-2009 American Community Survey there were a total of 14,900 housing units in Lincoln Heights, and about 25% of these units were vacant (United States Census Bureau, 2010a). According to gardeners in this study, abandoned buildings have fostered squatting and other illegal activities related to drug activity and prostitution. Lincoln Heights had one of the city’s highest crime rates, with 4,250 crimes committed in 2010 (Chicago Police Department, 2011). Weekly news reports routinely detail Lincoln Heights’ high level of drug trafficking, gangs, shooting and violent crimes.
The Community Gardens

The community gardens included in this research are different from one another but also have some common core components. All of the sites included in this study met the basic requirements for being defined as community gardens: people, land, and plants organized where social ties and plants grow. These community gardens can be classified as Informally Controlled on Lasting Vacant Lots. Their characteristics include: various sizes of land, use of materials and amenities, and shared human resources. The components of these environments engage the community gardeners in social interactions that show trusting and sharing that can foster collective efficacy. See Appendix A for an individual summary of the ten community gardens, which includes the following details: two site photos, name, date established, membership and leadership, location context, planting types, and established resources for each garden.

Sampling and Recruitment

This study includes thirty-four participants, 11 men and 23 women. A purposive sampling strategy (Patton, 1990, pp. 169-186) was used and participants who met the following criteria were recruited and included in this study: 1) self-identified as African American; 2) were at least 18 years of age; and 3) participated in a community garden in the targeted low-income Chicago neighborhood of Lincoln Heights. We focused on gardeners who were part of community gardens that had been established a year or more. Established community gardens provided an opportunity to examine group processes related to social capital.

The Principal Investigator and I identified and recruited community gardeners through local garden groups that assist community gardens throughout Chicago. We met gardeners during community gardening program activities, including monthly group meetings, potlucks, farmers markets, and crafts and planning workshops. These events took place at neighborhood
libraries, parks, gardens, and appropriated vacant lots where farmers’ markets were held. Working with gardeners, we expanded the sample through snowballing (Warren, 2002, p. 88). Snowballing begins with initial interviewees recommending others to be interviewed.

Nearly half of participants are residents of Chicago’s Lincoln Heights neighborhood (for over half of their lives). Participants’ ages ranged from 21 to 87. The average age for participants is 56. The participants, of whom 76% are parents, have various levels of educational attainment ranging from less than 8th grade to bachelor’s degrees and higher. Over half, 19 gardeners, reported annual household incomes below $20,000.00. Nineteen gardeners are employed, 7 are retired, and 5 are underemployed or on disability (four did not report their occupational status). Nineteen of the participants are from one of the ten community gardens. Three or fewer participants each are from the nine other community gardens. Two participants indicated their affiliation with two of the community gardens.

Data Collection and Analysis

In-depth interviews. I conducted in-depth interviews between the winter of 2011 and fall of 2012. At the beginning of each participant interview, I presented each participant of the study with a written description of the study, described the study objectives and procedures, and asked individuals to sign a consent form if they agreed to participate in the study. Participants were made aware of their choice to discontinue participation at any time in the study and that confidentiality would be strictly adhered to. When the interview was completed, participants were compensated for their time with a $10.00 grocery store gift card.

Individual interviews lasted one-and-a-half to four hours and were conducted in participants’ homes or at various community locations (such as a garden, church, or library). The data for this dissertation derives from the interview questions that focused on the role of
community gardens and the development and promotion of social capital. Participants were invited to share insights on the neighborhood, including neighborhood history, institutional and social resources, and neighborhood challenges and dangers. I also asked about the garden history and garden type, garden participants, garden activities, cycle of activities, facilitators and barriers to developing and maintaining community gardens, and individual, social, and neighborhood contributions of the garden.

*Neighborhood observations and photos.* To supplement gardeners’ descriptions of the Lincoln Heights neighborhood in the in-depth interviews, the Professor Jarrett and I used the Neighborhood Drive Through (NDT) observation procedure (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004, p. 325). Focusing on the Lincoln Heights community, we drove through the neighborhood and made observations of streets and traffic, housing stock, housing density, housing maintenance, vacant lots, abandoned buildings, surrounding institutions, residents’ characteristics, and street activity. As a part of participants’ narrative descriptions of their gardens, I took photos of their gardens as they took me on an invited tour.

The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. I used N-Vivo to facilitate the coding process. The initial coding scheme was created from the substantive literature informing the study and topical areas developed in the interview protocol (see Appendix B) and they served as a sensitizing tool (Glaser and Straus, 2008, p. 72). Other codes emerged from the data. Data displays were used to make comparisons between participants. Written memos were further used to identify themes and similarities and differences. I compared our participants’ descriptions of the neighborhood to observational notes and photographs. Photos and interview data were organized thematically and comparisons were made between participants and theses additional sources of data enhanced our understanding of participants’ accounts, and facilitated more
detailed interpretations.

**Insider/Outsider Issues**

As an African American and native Chicagoan, I believe I was able to gain the trust of participants, which allowed their stories to come forth more freely than if I did not share some of these commonalities with them. I was able to make cultural associations given my local knowledge of places, events, and people. The majority of the interviews took place in the homes of the gardeners, where they shared their hospitality. The few that took place in other locations like libraries, restaurants and college campuses, were found to be more convenient to meet between work and home and gardening activities. Food was frequently shared with me as interviewees found common connections through schools, neighborhoods, and past participation in academic programs. Some identified me as a son or grandson, given my age; others found it pleasing when common local dining places were recalled together. One family invited me to dinner when they found out we shared a background in a youth development program, when we named past staff members.

I was also an outsider. While my gender may have played a role in me being an outsider, it was not apparent, given the topic of community gardening. While both men and women participated in gardening, women were the majority. Gender roles are typically divided into lawn, shrub and tree maintenance for men and gardening for women. It was evident that dimensions of masculinity and femininity, tough and tenderness were traversed as they described their family blurred gardening and landscape histories. We shared our knowledge of figures like George Washington Carver and my grandfather Sandy Treadwell who participated in all forms of landscape activities. We also talked about women like my great-grandmother who was a medicinal healer with plant.
My social class background caused some suspicions initially, as a professional, a student, and having an association with a university. Upon finding that I did not carry any hierarchical rankings over them, they in turn, displayed the same. Yet the participants tested me. Initially, they tested my views on various topics, such as how they kept their homes and landscapes, my ideas about Lincoln Heights, and knowledge of crops. At times I had to remain silent to not interrupt their passionate views about behaviors of others. When prompted, I often replied to their comments neutrally. I neither encouraged them nor discouraged them in order to not appear judgmental, in an attempt to not bias their responses or cast aspersions on anyone. I recall receiving a call from a participant a day after an interview asking for their comments to be removed from the record. Before they specified what part of the interview, I gave my assessment, which concurred with theirs. We agreed to keep it given the confidentiality and pseudonyms that would prevent the identification of people, places, and events.
CHAPTER 4

MOTIVATIONS FOR COMMUNITY GARDENING

The measures used in this study to identify gardeners’ motivations to gardening collectively are drawn from their responses to three main questions and three additional supplementary questions: How did you get involved in this community garden? Why do you think other people are involved in the garden? How do you encourage participation in the garden? What type of garden is this? How did you decide on this particular site for the garden? What things do you like best about the garden?

*How did you get involved in this community garden?*

Most community gardeners at many of the sites were found to be motivated by their interest in sharing in the unity around food and relaxing beauty; while faithfully saving money and the environment. For the participants in this study to be engaged in an activity that furthered community unity was most compelling for them to be motivated to join. A few community gardeners from one site capture some basic reasons for becoming involved in community gardening are: *individuals* helping friends, looking for significant others, and joining in with the family.

*Unifying*

Winton: [A friend] called me and said, “Hey want to do this community garden, I need your help.” And I had haphazardly and I’m thinking yeah alright, whatever you need let me know because she’s a friend so you know, a friend calls they need you – alright.

Steven: [T]hat’s another reason that I went along with it too you know uh to meet people you know, get out and meet other people who are ok you know, who are probably are like minded you know, so and I might meet a cute little lady over there, you never know man [laughing].

Lynn: They were leaving me alone. That’s when I started coming because it looked fun.
They were taking pictures and it looked fun when I saw the pictures. Once they did leave me to go watering and so after that I started coming with them.

A few community gardeners from a few sites articulate other motivations to join in community gardening, that are to form larger group associations: faith based activities, youth groups, and senior citizens.

Olivia: [I]t was the first time for the garden so I decided let me do something positive for the church.

Allen: I thought it would be a good thing for all of us to put our resources together, that is up and one another that is planting various vegetables and again to show how these vegetables are grown, but about community effort how you get most out of the garden…. The food. – I like the unifying effect of it. I like to see the kids when they come in and help out and actually work in the garden and I like to see their faces when they see things – squash and cucumbers and they actually pull it off the vine. They get a good education. It is a head start for them.

Curtis: I love to see the smiles on the faces of the women and men who are involved and how they working at what they do. That’s what [it] gives me – great job, seeing someone in their 60’s and 70’s and 80’s digging, tilling dirt and loving doing what they’re doing while they’re doing it. Just getting involved and engaged they know they’re helping people other than themselves.

Gardeners indicated that one-on-one relationships are as important as larger group relationships when considering their interest to be involved in community gardens. A couple of gardeners point out this general sentiment:

Sade: They feel more connection…I knew that would possibly get people drawn closer together.

Earline: I think mostly everybody wants is to see this community get better…It’s a place to come together with community people and do something positive

These are examples of gardeners’ reasons for being involved in community gardens that express their interest in social unification. As we have seen, gardeners often crave social connections. They are inclined to trust the people they meet in the garden and seek to help others by working together and sharing experiences. Desiring to work in organized groups,
gardeners’ strong passion to serve the good of their community demonstrates trust and a motivation to share. Community gardeners’ intentions for community transformation that results from their personal interactions display a level of trust and sharing that result in collective efficacy.

Engaging

Community gardeners have found that food activities have been a significant way to encourage involvement in community gardening. Individual interests of cooking, eating, and learning about food are expressed by a few of the following gardeners:

Steven: I have a strong appreciation for cooking stuff that I grew, you know.

Tasha: I’m interested because I eat a lot of vegetables now. And that really interest me is growing vegetables.

Brian: I got involved because I thought it… would help me to broaden my understanding on agriculture… There wasn’t an interest but when it was brought to my attention, it kind of peaked my interest growing something, actually growing something. Like I said, I was city breed so a lot of these ones are used to and know about picking cotton and having farms and growing watermelons. Things like that. I never experienced anything like that.

Involvement in community gardens became attractive because of those who shared food with them and an educational interest focusing on food as mentioned by a couple of community gardeners from two sites:

Nancy: Well, people I know got involved…. Well, I got interested in it because the food tasted good and then I wanted to be involved in a community garden. I wanted to be experienced.

Tina: I like to garden myself, but basically it was an outlet for the youth because I am the youth coordinator at the community center and it was something that was sort of needed, just something that children can do with their hands and that’s how I got involved. … Healthy eating that was the major piece, the healthy diet in the changing their mindset because a lot of kids did not know how food was grown. They never knew you get a tomato from here or there or what to do. They really didn’t and it’s amazing that some grown up people didn’t know. However, it’s educational and it gives them a different
insight on eating healthy.

Relationships with family and friends are a strong influence for community garden involvement when food was involved as noted by these few community gardeners:

Laurence: One thing was I knew for myself what a garden could do for a family. And I knew that we raised a garden and had a lot of vegetables on it, it would be beneficial to my family.

Elaine: Cause my mama was doing it and she wasn’t planting nothing that I liked. I like to cook so, she wasn’t planting the stuff that I like to cook, and she had tomatoes and mustard and turnip greens and okra and stuff like that. I wanted some collard greens and string beans and herbs and stuff like that and she wasn’t planting none of that. So when I went around there to tell her to, she had already planted her stuff, so I was just like forget it I’ll get one, if y’all take care of it for me, her and my daughter. They just end up like never coming back and I did so I just ended up being the one who took care of it instead of them cause they didn’t, so I did.

I ended up taking care of my mama’s and mine’s. Yeah, and I just started like really, really realizing that I like it a lot. So, the more I realize I liked it the less she ever came and then my daughter is scared of bugs, so she was just lying in the first place, she wasn’t ever going to go in the first place.

The elements of social capital are illustrated by the comments of community gardeners’ motivations of engagement. Trust is shown among the gardeners by their belief that food related engaged with other gardeners would help meet their physical and social needs. The act of sharing is exemplified when food from one person’s garden plot is given to others. Gardeners’ hopes of engaging family members and youth in education broadly is a clear indication that collective efficacy is being promoted among gardeners.

Healing

Involvement in community gardens was also encouraged by the relaxing beauty that acts as a therapeutic stimulant for garden participants. The visual impact of a few community gardens sites interest some of the gardeners to participate, as stated by few gardeners:

Olivia: What I like best about the garden? Just see the, the um, the plants grow and
letting them get so big and how pretty they look. And just, it just look so good. When it first starts blooming out and looking good before anybody gets into it. It just looks so pretty. It just, I, I just love it. I just love it. You know just to see the tomatoes come, the cucumbers come, the lettuce and tomatoes and greens just all there. They are just up there and ready. It’s just so excited to see that.

Travis: I just like to see it grow [laughs] I like to see the things grow and … putting in the work. Actually putting in the work and then seeing your work um manifest. So that’s what I enjoy about it. Once you do the work and then after a while, after a few months or so you actually see your things grow. I think that’s a good thing.

A couple of the few community gardeners at two sites mentioned comforting feelings are generated by the gardens, which entice community gardeners to participate:

Payton: [I]t’s peaceful. Especially when you see the sun coming up, you know, early in the morning, oh man. You just don’t understand. If you’d been to Kentucky you would know what I’m talking about.

Ray: I just get enjoyment, about seeing the plants, come up and … just looking at the plant, be useful to someone, you know.

In addition to the enjoyment and peaceful feeling generated by the esthetic value of community gardens, are the relaxing and therapeutic effects are described by a few community gardeners at a few sites:

Heather: The best thing to me about it is the fact that you can relieve your mind. It’s like I remember being a little shorty. It’s like playing in the dirt and you don’t have to have the cares of the world in your brain and you’re just focusing on, “oh I got to get this grass up, I want this ground watered.” So it’s like a break you know from a strenuous job of life and I’m taking a break to play in this dirt and I’m going to get some benefit out of seeing something grow. Just like a kid with a new toy, it just gives me a break and I’m just grateful about that. Above everything else, it allowed me to put my hands to use and grow stronger in my mind and that’s what I love about it.

Steven: I like the idea of being able to go over there and I kind of relax. I go over there and relax and not just think about doing this to fill my time, so I don’t sit here fighting – thinking about dealing with – this life. All though it’s a little uncomfortable cause I’m looking around – I’m thinking about that guy you know. But you know for the most part once I’ve been over there awhile then I can go on and get into that. Feel like I’m making [it]. It’s just like I used to do when I feel like I ain’t doing nothing with my life, I go clean up my house and make me feel like I’m doing something. See what I’m saying? Well, I use it for therapy and you can call it therapy – therapeutic, yeah!
The attractive nature of gardening is an appealing feature for many participants. Creating an attractive garden often shows trust in neighborhood civility – it is hard to imagine a gardener who thought her garden would be vandalized by neighbors investing time and effort in creating a place that not only produced food but that also looked beautiful. In these shared spaces, gardeners consider their positive youthful experiences that can be made available for children today.

Why do you think other people are involved in the garden?

Some community gardeners at several sites note community gardening as a self-investment in economically healthy foods. The surplus of food produced from community gardens allows for others to be helped when crops are shared. Individuals were motivated by the access to have fresh food and organic food offered by participating in a community garden. In general, food attracts others to participate in community gardens as expressed by these gardeners:

Accessing

Tasha: I’m thinking they were involved because they wanted some fresh vegetables from a garden. That’s what I’m thinking.

Arial: I think for most of the part is because they’re able to plant food that they want.

Olivia: [A] lot of people are getting gardens because that’s a good way to go. They have food for their house.

A few gardeners express a belief that access to fresh and health food is a motivating factor for others participating in the community gardens:

Allen: Well I think they also see the benefit of the garden coming in and having their own fresh food. The freshness of the vegetables because that’s one of the things that’s very prevalent right now is having fresh food instead of having canned food. So in talking to them about the garden they come to understand that “maybe this is something I
can get into maybe I can get me some fresh vegetables.

Sade: This garden has become health for those that need better food… [N]owhere are there fresh produce outlets in the community. So I do think that is one thing that would be a benefit to the group. Growing their own fresh—and many of these people have never had this experience in their life. So it was a first time experience for over fifty percent of the gardeners. They’ve never grown even flowers. So I knew it would be a win for the community. I knew that.

A couple of gardeners from two sites have the impression that the youths’ interest in a fun activity, experiencing gardening for the first time, discovered to their surprise, that growing and food was amazingly exciting:

Lynn: Other people wanted to get food: vegetables, other people just wanted to do for fun like me, but I didn’t know the food was going to be good. I just wanted to do it for fun and I think that’s what other people wanted to do too.

Brenda: Yeah they really like it. And by them being city kids and they parents are not involved in gardens, you know, they really are, they really amazed. They’re like, ‘Can we grow some watermelons?’

Novice, seasoned, and youth gardeners describe here use food in a way that stimulates social capital. The act of growing food is disarming in a way that promotes trust. When shared with other gardeners or members of the nearby neighborhood, food builds social capital among neighbors. Growing plants and food helps move a set of neighbors toward an ideal community village, where intergenerational ties become reality.

Economizing

Similarly, a few community gardeners at one site are also motivated by the cost saving benefits of growing their own food at a more affordable rate than purchasing them at corner, convenience, and grocery stores. Gardeners personally attested to their own interest to save money:

Tasha: Also I wanted to see if there’s a difference between growing your own food and buying it in the store. I didn’t see much of a difference/ (laughter). As in taste,
everything kind of taste the same. Cucumbers, the string beans, tomatoes, small tomatoes, the squash. It kinda it was the same… No! there was a difference I didn’t have to buy it. I was just picking it right off the ground.

Arial: I wasn’t too enthusiastic about it but I told her okay I’ll try it…because she was all going on about you can grow your own vegetables and not have to go to the store and spend all this money…and so forth and so on…so I said ok well ok I’ll try it.

A couple of community gardeners also understood that others are also attracted to garden for the savings it offers:

Travis: Well, …I guess most people, …they feel like, its [a] good thing, they able to save money. [H]ow, us, as people can grow our own food instead of just buying it from the stores. It would save us a lot of money.

Olivia: Well the other people have came and volunteered for this garden because ah they say it’s too expensive to buy… high food in the store. So they became involved because they say with the economy so bad and everything, you can get a pack of seeds for less than a dollar and you can plant these seeds in the ground and before you know it you have a big thing …of them…

In summary, one gardener clearly stated the sentiment of the majority of reasons believed to explain why community gardeners are attracted to participate:

Brianna: Basically eating healthier and the cost of food brought them there. That’s the two main things.

The act of sharing information about food joined gardeners together with others. The beginning of an effort to change the food availability in the community can be seen in the conversations around community gardens crops and produce found locally in stores. These conversations and the actions that follow are examples of the development of social capital in action.

*Connecting*

Forming bonding relationships through sharing was the major motivation for gardeners beyond their individual concerns. Some community gardens from two sites were viewed as
bringing together neighbors through sharing:

Arnel: To plant as much as you want. I think of the garden we had when we were down South. We had all kinds of food. Anything you wanted to eat, we had it because it was big. That’s what I think of when I think of a garden. I like to raise anything that I’ll think I’ll like...

Curtis: Because their hearts in it. They want to be engaged and involved; they want to give something to the community, give something back to the community. Um and that’s basically why they’re involved in it. And they want to be a part of a community, and they plan on living here the rest of their lives because they could have left anytime….they want to be here so they want to be somewhat helpful in the community, as opposed to being part of the problem, they want to be part of some of the human solutions. …They get a sense of ownership. I think…a sense of being involved and engaged in this project and a hands-on approach. Many of them have some idle time where they’re not doing anything. They get a chance to get out there and get their hands dirty and get involved and get engaged. Get over there and understand that they are helping people helping other people.

One community gardener points to a social culture of human beings as an inherent human nature that builds connections:

Steven: I think people want to belong man they want to be a part of something that’s good that’s you know, cause like I said this world is a lot, and people are looking for something somewhere to be a part of we all social beast anyway we need each other anyway.

A community gardener was encouraged by shared relationships with family, friends and youth:

Travis: [I]t basically brings families together. Young people are more involved …, well… you have friends together and stuff like that.

It is perceived by a gardener that newly formed families outside of gardeners ‘biological families’ motivate garden activities of sharing:

Sade: So this year, I feel people are empowered. They feel more connection and ownership to the garden because now they have a role. They have a responsibility and know if it doesn’t get done, then the whole thing won’t work. The whole thing will come up lacking and I knew that would possibly get people drawn closer together… Yes, the garden has given him a connection to humanity. So I think it’s become different things. It’s given R a purpose in his elder years. He’s disconnected from his children. He’s estranged from his wife and so I think it’s given him a purpose and that he has a family to
govern. He talks to us like we’re children, he scolds us like we’re children: “Don’t do that, y’all stop!” So I think this is his sense of being that dad, that father, and that elder statesman.

Contributing to many of the gardeners’ motivations to form bonding relationships with community, family, and friends through sharing is a common belief system of faith, as expressed by one gardener:

Aisha: I think when they heard that it was for the community that like kinda motivated them to come out and then once they see that their family can do it together that helped them along. So it was just you know to bond closer to their family and to help out the community. I think that’s what motivated people to come out. I think even to bond closer to the friends because before I came out here, because this is just my you know my new religion. I recently just got baptized and it drew me closer to the friends I work with so.

From the gardeners’ testaments we can conclude that motivations to garden collectively are stimulated by interest in sharing in activities around low-cost and health foods, as well as beautiful outdoor environments with others in a shared faith. The following gardeners’ responses summarize these major perceived motivating factors among the participants in this research for community garden engagement.

Helen: [W]ell when we was talking they said they wanted to raise they own food and they wanted to have plenty so they could share with other people. Instead of going to the store you get one tomato when you plant your tomato you get a whole bunch of tomatoes. So as things stand they prefer the um, plant they own food.

Payton: The costs and their health and the beautification too. That can go along with the greenery too, you know…Well maybe the purity of fresh gardening. Because when you go to these stores and everything and you buy garden vegetables and stuff from the stores. They be putting more stuff on these doggone plants and everything to make them large or whatever, but you know fresh grown things that you ain’t got to worry about no cats pissing on plants or anything like that you got going on. But its food and its cheaper, I believe it might be even cheaper. And for the neighborhood I think that, that should be something nationwide as far as vegetables within neighborhoods like this. It should be, neighborhoods should get together then they grow the vegetables and they sell it within the neighborhood or they give it within the neighborhood. Give the vegetables, potato, I mean the greens and stuff away, give them to churches, to have churches to give them away, just like they have now. It could serve a lot of purpose.
Social connections drawn from these testimonies are wonderful examples of social capital. Gardeners chose to get together with others and garden for social reasons. Gardeners trust in their collective efforts, they share time and energies to foster neighborhood support.

*How do you encourage participation in the garden?*

Most gardeners persuaded others to be involved in the garden by serving as motivating *examples*, providing *explanations* of what they could receive from participation and the sure *enthusiasm* exhibited by other community gardeners. This is similar to how one gardener was encouraged to join a community garden:

*Sensitizing*

Maureen: Well, I am always over here visiting on this block and when they talk to me about it, I help them out and then an intern told me to, they gave me a spot. Actually, this is my first garden and they showed me how to plant the seeds and that’s how I came about being involved.

*Verbalizing*

Some of the gardeners from a few sites were *told* about what active membership in a community garden looked like and what they would benefit from. Gardeners informed both family and friends about the community garden through verbal communication to join.

Tasha: Every time our friends hear that we have a garden, “oh you all have a garden, where?” In [Lincoln Hights]. “Really? How you get involved in that?” Ask sister Sade and brother Nelson and that’s it. That they be interested. Next thing I know they got a plot. (laughter)

Heather: I knew people from there [her previous job at a hospital] and they came by and gave me a hand, ok. “Well this is how you plant this, this is how you do that.” I didn’t know nothing. I felt so ignorant. They just helped.

Russell: Well some live in the neighborhood and some people come from all over. Cause they hear about our vegetables and stuff and they tell they friends about it and this – and that – and they come from all over.
Many gardeners to draw various groups and organizations into having an active relationship with community gardening also use this *word-of-mouth* method.

Heather: I’m gonna ask again a non-profit organization to give me a letter I need some more assistance from Home Depot

Olivia: Well, I was, I told them I say, “you know somethin’, you guys need to come here to the church and help out with the garden,” “Oh I aint’ doin’ that.” And so their mother told them, “look, now she want you to help her out, get over there and help her out” (laughter). That’s how it got started. And I guess, you know, they was probably ashamed when other boys come by and saw them doing it and everything. Now, these, like I say hoodlum boys all gang bangers, we got them comin’ to the church helping out.

Brenda: I see more people getting with people that do have gardens and asking, ‘Would you come help me?’ There’s been more of that… it’s a lot of them. It’s a lot of…that, [people] became involved because there was some pastor said come on, ‘You can do it.’

A spectrum of most people on the block, throughout the neighborhood, and other community members are also attracted to participate in the community garden when they *asked to help* something understood as positive. From one site a few explain:

Brian: [W]ent door-to-door on that entire block to ask each individual if they would like to umm – to participate in it. So they were given first choice for a plot. And some responded.

Sade: I talk to some people on the block and those that know each other within the block and a larger group of us are… in a faith gathering … and you have some…one of the gardeners is my next door neighbor, Mr. B. He’s an Atheist and we welcome him nevertheless, you’re still a child of God. Whether he wants to claim his parentage or not, he is still His son. He and I go through this conversation. We invited him in because he’s a very, very, loner person living by himself with cats and dogs and I said “Where is the human element? Come on brother, you need some socialization with people. Come on now. Don’t worry about the fee; don’t worry about planting anything, just come to the gatherings. And we kind of drew him over and he’s over there now trying to get his plot ready for the spring. And there are people that we know in the community, residents that we met and know through passing and have invited to come over. We wanted to have a very diverse community group, not just have it be our little enclave of people from our faith, but just to have a cross-section of the community. So we’re hoping that we’re creating a real diverse community in that garden.

Aisha: [I]f there is somebody, you know, walking past and say, ‘oh nice garden’ or if
they walking past you just say, ‘oh well why don’t you come over and join’ or ‘you can do this too, you can have your own garden and your fresh fruit and vegetables,’ and things like that so. They don’t let people just pass, they ask them ‘do you want to be a part of it.’

These examples of gardeners’ communication highlight the essentials of social capital present in community garden building. Conversations establish trust among potential gardeners and other neighbors. These shared spaces in the community become welcoming to all. Even without active participation in the garden, others find kind gestures communicate trust, sharing, and hopeful energy.

Exemplifying

The example set by community gardeners showed others exactly what they would be choosing to participate in. Friends, family, and faith groups set examples that encouraged others to participate:

Steven: [T]elling them come … I’ll cook some stuff and ‘check this out’ and ‘what’s in this?’ …”I wish I had time” and “it’s just that,” so I’m talking to them you know and like I said my friends, she wants to come over and pick some string beans you know, my mother’s talking about she wants to come over, my mother’s eighty she walk from here to there she got to stop and hold on, so I don’t know what she talking about want to pick some you know. … I tell people that I do it ...

Sade: So I show ‘em our raised beds and flowers and I’m—‘come on ya’ll we can do this.’ They bit. So I said, ‘next Saturday ya’ll we’re gonna go out and we’re gonna clean it.’ To see them people get out of them cars to—(laughter).

Most gardeners’ examples noted from a few sites entice others in the neighborhood to try their hand in gardening together:

Steven: So you encourage by um serving as an example.

Audrey and Mona: [Y]ou know and so that lets us know it is somebody else watching. It is somebody else just as much as concerned about something as you are. (Audrey) I might not have the right word for it but it’s uh, it’s a chain effect. Not necessarily a chain effect, what’s the word for it? When someone else sees something someone else is doing good they want to do - (Mona) it is, [a] chain reaction.
Curtis: We don’t have to. People encourage themselves. [They] came along last year and just jumped right on in. Can I dig up the green tomatoes or can I cut the limbs back there cuz the tree is too tall. Everybody come out and they want to get involved. We don’t have no shorts on volunteers and people get actively involved and engaged in the process…. Everybody come by and we ask, “help.”

The sure energy and excitement projected by some of the community gardeners was an attractive draw for others to join in community gardening; two examples are provided:

Allen: They see us – one of the things is that when they see us or you doing something and if you are enthusiastic about doing something and you transfer that enthusiasm to them then.

Sade: But they didn’t see it. They didn’t see it so I had to sculpt it an sell it in a way where, “guys, c’mon now, friends. You are the same people that are telling me that you are going to live on the Earth and turn it back into a paradise… Do we have visions of what the Earth looks like after a nuclear Holocaust possibly?... Become demoralized and say we can’t do it? We’re going to tell our god that he done brought us through the great tribulation, he done brought us through … he done parted a red sea… For us to come and look and say oh, I can’t do that take us back over there. I ain’t going. I believe we can do it. So I have to convince these people. I have got to convince this group.

…It worked for a day. (laughter) they were dragging their tails and they were tired. But we were talking spiritual things we were encouraging one another. We were singing and had to you know just put on some spiritual [music or] some hip hop, whatever. We’re trying to build a community here. “You coming back next week? Ya’ll we’re coming back next Saturday. Guys we got the paint, we got this, ya’ll coming back next Saturday?” (Their response) “Yes, P we’re coming back.”

Like verbal communication, actively gardening in a community setting provides an invitation to trust and share among community members. The act of gardening speaks to onlookers’ questions about the unfamiliar or sparks memories of what a community garden is and can offer. Envisioning an actively engaged community project is brought to life in a community garden as presented by these gardeners’ comments.

**Feeding**

Among the inspiring show-n-tells is the element of food that plays a role in attracting most new gardeners, according to a few community gardeners:
Brenda: In fact because I started a garden, a lot of my friends have started gardening. They like, “Girl do you need, gimme one of those tomatoes.’ ‘Grow your own.’ So I got a lot of friends that started gardening last year.

Arnel: The ones that I talk with, I share some of my stuff from the garden and they say good things. They want one too. That’s how…Because they wanted a drove of food. Different things that they wanted to plant, they liked it. In other words, they said that they didn’t have to go to the store. They also donate them. Some haven’t been to the store in over a year. All the stuff they get from the garden. So a lot of people plant because you can plant more in the garden than what you can buy at the store, and you’re saving money.

Nelson: [W]hat encourages em, really encourages em is when one another gives something out of their garden to the other one. I noticed that. ‘Well what’s – happen now, oh I got a big so-n-so,’ ‘but I don’t have any of that,’ ‘well you can have some from mine.’ That’s what really encourages em and that’s another positive side we willing to give and it backs it backs itself up, the one that yields, see that someone going to give him or her, see? So yeah, uh and that’s the concept and that’s what we pushes forward and it’s and it’s paying, yes it is. And you see you see how it is, you see the results you see how it fare, we ain’t been out there but the stuff was in the ground June, it had to come up and start growing July and August, we been there two months.

The power of food as a draw for community garden participation can be summarized by the following gardener’s comment:

Sade: I invite them to come, because we need this in this community. If it takes food to be the catalyst, fine. If it takes brownies to be the catalyst, fine.

A common theme found in the gardeners’ responses to the three main questions used to identify their motivations to gardening collectively is food. Activities related to food attracted the participants in the research to the garden. Whether it was see in the beauty of growing the food, act of preparing food, and most often enjoying its sustenance as an appetizing meal, they were motivated to be community gardeners. Gardeners believed that other gardeners are attracted to garden with them due to their interest in having access to fresh organic food in the same way they were. Food is also used as a tool to encourage participation in community garden among friends, families, organizations, and neighbors. As a tangible element to share the gardeners’ enthusiastic sweat equity, in a labor of love, and their surplus of food was made freely
accessible to any hungry person near to them.

*How did you decide on this particular site for the garden?*

Nearby land, in the community, within the neighborhood, on the block, and often times next door to the garden’s core leadership, made them extremely probable sites for use as community gardens. The high visibility of unattractive clutter collected in these vacant areas made them a prevalent disturbing eyesore on the minds of the gardeners. Gardeners were motivated to change these unused ten sites into community gardens given their vision to improve upon them with some attractive flowers and an abundance of vegetable crops. A few community gardeners explain the choice sites:

Sade: They didn’t look like any of the vacant lots in the community. They had dumped truckloads, of truckloads, of truckloads, of wood chips on it and they were heaped all up and rolled in hills, everywhere there were hills. You can imagine that gathering trash and plastic, plastic bottles, tires, mattresses. It was just a dump of garbage. And I got so deflated. I really did just sit on the curb. But then my other mind said, “CP, this was given to you. This is your assignment. He didn’t say the assignment was going to be a Garden of Eden, he didn’t say the garden was going to be paradise; he said that this was your assignment, sister. Now what are you going to do”? To be honest with you Doug, I had to sit and pray. I had to say father, if this is your will that I do this please give me the strength to do it. Give me the resources. Give me the will God because you know I believe that anything is possible. You know me once I give my word and put my stamp on it I’m a die trying to do it. I’m going to give it everything I’ve got. And I left there, I left there knowing that, go forth, this is possible, you can do it. You can do this. This is for you. As challenging as this looks, as many obstacles as you see over here, this is for you. Now once I had convinced myself, my job was now to convince others. They didn’t see what I saw. They didn’t see it.

Earline: I was working in NH School, and I had an intern from the [Faith] Council on [Urban Affairs] and they wanted to start a garden in ‘Lincoln Heights’. And we were gonna start the garden across the street from the school. And the board of education had the soil tested. And the soil lead was so high they suggested that we don’t even have children play on the soil. We had the alderman involved because we had, we wanted her to sign off to let us have it. It was a city lot and uh, it was, the lead was so high we couldn’t do anything in it. So um, we asked the principal, could we have some land so we could plant the garden on the campus and he said no. So then I organized some community people. [Faith] Council, community people, parents and we met with the principal and he gave us the ok to plant and on the garden on the campus. So we had that
for our test. We had test two places before we came to the school. And all of them had lead. So the place on campus had lead now but um it wasn’t as bad. So we started raised beds.

Ruth: [I]t’s next to my—my house... I started that back in 80s when I got that lot. It was like a vacant lot, they tore down a house and every night somebody would come and dump tires, bricks, sand stuff, and so a neighbor and I would go out there and clean it, I would call the city to come get the tires off. And my one neighbor told me he owned ten feet, then when the other neighbor said he owned seven feet, and so I say it couldn’t be that much deep space this way, so I checked with the city, and umm the city owned the lot. So I purchased the lot from the city of three hundred dollars, so what I did umm, my neighbor started giving me flowers and I started putting flowers on the lot. …Then last year I got involved with [two gardening groups] Association … block club party. And so we partnership with the church here and we built a garden down here on [that block], and so if when Ray came- and when he came here I got him to help me out there in the garden.

From these comments, we begin to understand the local landscape’s potential for supporting social activity. Providing people with a place to gather and transform is essential to the development social capital. These neighbors live and actively engage open spaces for their communal needs.

*What type of garden is this?*

The majority of the gardens are food focused, while only a few are dedicated to flowers. Based on individual choice and group consensus, gardeners found that the sites’ use for growing vegetables was most attractive. In a few cases were gardens having both, ornamental and fruit bearing crops, *vegetables* were the mainstay; some community gardens of most sites illuminate this:

Tasha: Mostly a vegetable garden. Yes, it was mostly vegetables, greens, what—string beans, tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, spinach. A lot of herbs. Basils. It was nice. Parsley, cabbage, gree—yea greens. Turnips. I think lettuce. And lettuce! I don’t know if I said that. And them – other green round things – cabbage.

Nancy: [I]t’s mostly vegetables. They do have in the middle, a section for flowers. They have raised spaces, that we has individuals get to plant what we want and then there are couple of free spaces that are considered community spaces where everything can get
Laurence: Well, it was a vegetable garden. Mostly all vegetation, vegetation is all we had there. And the garden itself, even the things we planted there they would share with people who were coming in the community, visitors. We were showing them our garden and we were able to share some of the produce from the garden.

Three gardens were all originally dedicated to non-vegetable plants. Only one remains without the cultivation of vegetables, given its location on a prior gas station site. The latter two have recently (changed during the course of my research data collection) begun to incorporate edible plants. With additional resources to accommodate the elevated growing conditions to avoid soil toxicity, mainly lead, allowed for the production of vegetables for consumption.

Mona: Right, right, right, a flower garden, but we had wanted to branch off a little bit into that you know but not there…. all these old service stations back in the day had lead tanks in the ground… Its lead tanks in the ground.

Earline: We had test two places before we came to the school. And all of them had lead. So the place on campus had lead now but um it wasn’t as bad. So we started raised beds…We have flowers and we raise strawberries and tomatoes and different stuff like that…So, this year we want to give it to the food pantry.

Ruth: Mostly flowers, I was mostly involved with that, I did get kids in the neighborhood to come and help me after school. On weekends I had the kids behind me or down the street to come and help, mostly children not the men or adult, they helped me in the first garden, we did have kids that did come help us last year but the mulch and bring in the dirt coming from school.

In a few cases were gardens having both, ornamental and fruit bearing crops, vegetables were the mainstay. Flowers are used sparingly as accents of colorful esthetics and as pollinator attractors for increasing production of their food crops.

Brian: Oh, it’s beautiful. It’s a vegetable garden. There’s going to be some changes to make it more productive. They’re going to minimize some of the flowers down the middle. And then they’re going to put in more boxes so we’ll have more vegetables for next year. And the reason for that is because there were some things that we wanted more of like collagens, mustard greens, [and] turnip greens. We need more of that, so there’ll be a specialized box that’s all it produces. These boxes will just be for that, so there’ll be more of it next year.
Sade: [W]e grew all vegetables for their consumption. For their families consumption and they are in raised beds because the soil has such contaminants in it. We had to do it in raised beds to not posse potential health hazards to gardeners. And we also incorporated some flowers into the beds. Know I knew that and I can tell you more because I after some of the training sessions that we had over this winter, that we did not have enough pollinators. We had scattered flowers you may have noticed a few beds had flowers in it. And a flower bed right in the middle – A flower garden right in the middle but we should have had more pollinators too. Because a lot of the squash and cucumbers and things they didn’t do very well, know maybe as a result of not having the pollination. So we are hoping to do better to have every bed punctuated with flowers - incorporated right in the bed. So a little training does go a long way.

These notes regarding gardeners’ choices about how and where to place vegetable and fruit crops directly address issues of social capital. These neighbors show an affinity to socialize around food. More than an impression in this study, there are consistent indications that everyone enjoys a good meal and the promise of eating food grown right here in the community by one’s neighbors. For these gardeners, the social component of gardening is central to their experience of being a gardener.

*What things do you like best about the garden?*

The gardeners’ strong *cultural heritage* of sharing in food production, preparation, and diet has been a considerable link to community gardens in this African American neighborhood. Many of the gardeners, their generations of parents, and their relatives have agrarian roots in the south. Their rural life included vegetable crops grown in Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Mississippi; one gardener referenced similar influential experiences in West Africa.

*Grounding*

Payton: Well my granddaddy (from Mississippi) would always tell me, he said, “Son, well at the time I wasn’t working right there, he said, “Always keep yourself busy. And if you ain’t got nothing to do, always keep yourself busy in the neighborhood, in your tribe, in your town. Do something, don’t just sit back and do nothing. Because if nobody does anything when nobody ain’t got no work to do, nothing will ever get done. So do
something when you ain’t got nothing to do. To the point when you have something to do, you have more access to do something more once you’re working.”

Ruth: Well when I first moved here, see I came here in seventy four, but when I came from Arkansas, we had gardens in Arkansas. Matter fact I worked in a plantation in Arkansas, I worked on plantation from the time I was nine to the time probably about thirteen, I worked on plantation going chopping cotton, picking cotton twelve hours a day they paid me only three dollars to work from six in the morning to six in the evening they only paid me three dollars per day. I did that till I was probably thirteen years old pick cotton, chop cotton same thing and so we farmed and we had chicken we had cows we had vegetables down there so we raised … sweet potatoes, peanuts, corn everything you can name we raised it, in Arkansas. Then we moved to town around by the time I was twelve or thirteen years old, but we would go back and help my godmother pick cotton or chop cotton every once in a while pick okra or peaches or get pecans off the street.

Nancy: My mom did. I was raised in Kentucky. I tell people now that I have two older brothers and two older sisters. My one brother died. We continue to be a fairly healthy group of older people and I true that to the fact that in Kentucky on the weekend it was very segregated, so we ate our meals at home and my mother cooked and we had a garden in our yard. In the summer time, my mother grew vegetables, green beans, tomatoes and so when the fall and winter came, she go in the freezer and cool out what she froze and what was canned. There was a man lived down the street from us who raised chicken and then on Saturdays, there was somebody that came in from the country with milk and eggs. So, we got fed pretty good and then my mother breast fed us. So, when I … basically what I understand now, we got to be healthy people as children, as babies because of how we were fed when we were kids. So, we had a garden all my life; we had a little garden….Yeah. Those little black grapes. They were good, they had seeds in them. My mom made homemade jellies, jams and wine and it was always my job pick that stuff and pull it off the thing. ‘You go out in the garden and get a couple of onions…’ [Dad] He weeded them. He weeded… he didn’t mess with the vegetables too much didn’t put them in, but he did weed because he kept our yard pretty nice. He took care of the lawn and cut the grass and hedges, so he weeded.

Linking

Gardeners are positively linked to the site and each other through sharing garden activities with others. Parents, families, neighbors, youth, and other gardeners found community through sharing gardening together.

Deidra: Well my mom always had a garden and I was always busy doing other things like looking at that perfect pair of shoes. All those flowers, when we moved here they were tearing down [the area] for the [road]. And these people had to leave their beautiful homes and we still have a rose bush that they put in, a little red one but a bigger size than that. And they would bring the stuff from where the people had; they had to leave their
houses because they were going to be demolished for the expressway. And so we would just go get the flowers and bring them back here. And I can even show you, you know the two rose bushes we have from the 50s that they brought back and where they were replanted. Because – this house was bought from whites. We were like the third owners that owned this house that was built in the 1890s.

Russell: I used to help my mom years ago with different gardens. Then I had our kids in our backyard, they wanted to garden, so I went to our relatives would put gardens here and gardens here and then the neighbors would see me and would want to garden, and I’d show them how to plant. And that’s how it started. We just kept gardening all over. See a little spot right out there in the dirt and want me to help and stuff and this and that “yea, you know how to do this?” and I’ll show them how to do it. There you are.

Curtis: The cabbage. I mean. My mom makes sure that she gets the biggest head of the cabbage. Sometimes she cuts it off. And then we have strawberries. She gonna love strawberries. Those are my two attributes of I love you outta the garden. And she has what she needs in terms of tilling it up and digging it up you know. This young man who was digging. She said you got it turn it on. He said I want to dig and turn it over later. So those are the things that I like about the garden. And I love to see the smiles on the faces of the women and men who are involved and how they working at what they do. That’s what gives me great job, seeing someone in their 60’s and 70’s and 80’s digging, tilling dirt and loving doing what they’re doing while they’re doing it. Just getting involved and engaged they know they’re helping people other than themselves.

**Processing**

The food production and processing activities provided gardeners with bonds to other gardeners and their families. *Preparing* food from the garden added to their motivations to garden and share with others.

Heather: I didn’t get to learn anything about canning but because of this gardening association and stuff I am meeting folks who do know about canning and you know be instrumental in helping me out.

Arial: Now this is something I learned because a long time ago, my sister-in-law whose from Georgia, she took us to a farm and we picked beans and greens and all this other kind of stuff and she said when we get home we gon cut em up, snap the beans and cut up the greens and wash them. And she said it’s called blanching where you cook up not all the way done just a little bit. …And with my kids…cause her mother I called her and asked her if she want some stuff outta there…so once everything get grown. This actually…to share with family cause my son lives around the corner from there…I made them come because I had to go away, we went away for a week. I made him come around and water it. So it’s a shared family thing,
Among the gardeners’ most enjoyable activities is the taste of the food from the gardens.

Whether, uncooked or cooked a range of food from the gardens is – simple “Good!”

Nancy: I just call it “My Garden Spot”, but I don’t know. Like I said I got involved because my friends got involved and what I got out of it, it tasted so good and that’s why I got involved to tell you the truth.

Maureen: The food. The okra, the green tomatoes, those green beans were really good. Green beans the most.

Brenda: [She] say, ‘Why don’t you just try em.’ He said, ‘feel the tomato!’ And I’m like, ‘Yeah it feel like Jewel.’ And I said, ‘Yeah it look like Jewel.’ So I actually rinsed it off and made salad and I was like, “this stuff is good. I could do this.” So last year, I did it...

These notes regarding gardeners’ choices about how and where to place vegetable and fruit crops directly address issues of social capital. These neighbors show an affinity to socialize around food. More than an impression in this study, there are consistent indications that everyone enjoys a good meal and the promise of eating food grown right here in the community by one’s neighbors. For these gardeners, the social component of gardening is central to their experience of being a gardener.

Observing

The visual impact of seeing the garden plants’ leaves, flowers, and fruit grow was significant to the gardeners’ link to the people and the place in the community.

Leslie: I like to see all that growing out there. I go out there every morning. My hand on my hips, standing out there looking. <laughs>

Nelson: Well, what I like best about the garden is, is that um to work at it and see something growing, something you had a hand in and then fully realize that your watering and your weed pulling and your dirt pulling contributed to that growing but realizing the almighty God is the one that made these grow, all you did was contribute. And then when you see it like that and you understand that that that’s what, and I think it’s not only me that get that same feeling I think almost every gardener gets that same feeling. He sees it growing, and his contribution to it and realizing the final end of it wasn’t something he did but it was something that only could be done by the almighty
and that putting the credit where it belong and you feel good about it. Yes, and the next thing the vegetables are excellent.

Olivia: What I like best about the garden? Just see the, the um, the plants grow and letting them get so big and how pretty they look. And just, it just look so good. When it first starts blooming out and looking good before anybody gets into it. It just looks so pretty. It just, I, I just love it. I just love it. You know just to see the tomatoes come, the cucumbers come, the lettuce and tomatoes and greens just all there. They are just up there and ready. It’s just so excited to see that.

Summary

Community gardeners’ responses to the six questions regarding their motivations to gardening collectively indicate that they have a desire to share in creating a peaceful environment. They have interest in putting vacant open spaces to use as public food resources in order to make an attractive and relaxing social place. I have identified four main motivations among the gardeners’ responses: social, food, beauty, and relaxation.

Community gardens meet participants’ need for engaging in social activity. The social quality of community gardens attracts others to participate and is listed as what informants like the most about gardening together. All participants choose to garden collectively. Their homes have backyards and areas at the front of their properties that are vegetated; yet their desire to share in a group experience motivates them to participate in community gardening.

The type of community garden that has drawn participation in vacant open space in Lincoln Heights is food. Community gardeners are excited about health benefits of food crops. Also, cost savings on food attracts them and others to participate. In conjunction with being in a social setting, food based community gardens provides an added benefit and necessity of life – eating.

Beautification and relaxation are the factors that may be the initial motivations for participation in the community garden. The visual prevalence of vacant property in Lincoln
Heights drives at the visceral level of the gardeners’ desire to clean up their neighborhood. Dilapidated and abandoned housing and trash-littered vacant lots persist as daily eyesores. This form of degradation prompts community gardeners to take action.
CHAPTER 5

EVIDENCE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

The measures used in this study to access gardeners’ development of social capital related to gardening collectively (see Appendix C). Given that the Community Garden Social Capital Interview Protocol was not designed to solicit a set of gardening activities, no single set of questions addresses all the components of social capital. However, a considerable amount of data is concentrated in eight questions that probe the development of social capital. The first four questions relate to preliminary actions taken prior to garden activities: How does your garden operate (how are decisions made)? Tell me about the rules of the garden? Who takes responsibility for what? What goes into planning for the gardening season? The second four questions relate to experiences of garden activities: What are the relationships of other people involved in the garden? How do you pay for the garden? How would you say the garden has impacted the community? What do you think people get out of participating in this garden?

How was the decision made to have this type of garden?

Having organized meetings with dedicated individuals facilitates the decision process. Gardeners’ shares time together within group settings, such as: block clubs church groups, with children, among family members, and in associations that bridge relationships into partnerships. Trusting individuals and groups to collectively make decision about the type of community garden they envisioned having is a common theme among these participants.

Rooting

Extending from the individuals to their families in the decision making process was evident in the participants responses, on what to do with their gardening space.
Karen: [I]t’s pretty much individuals cause everyone has individual beds so what you wanted to plant, what you would eat, it was one of those, you plant what you eat. [I]t’s pretty much you plant the things that you and your family like to eat. Or something you just wanted to learn to grow. But for the most part it was the who individuality thing.

Winton: Yeah you can grow flowers, we don’t care. You can grow anything you want to grow. But we were experimenting being vegetarians in the family too. And my wife she’s still doing it. So it worked out for us, we didn’t have to run to the grocery store, so we were going to be vegetarians again when the spring comes.

Branching

Groups like families of faith and block clubs provided an extension to the gardeners’ efforts to gather conscious for reaching collective decisions.

Payton: Yeah, T, Brenda, and D from the church on the corner, she’s the pastor’s sister, D with B. And we had a Block Club and we were just trying to do something positive for the neighborhood and the kids and trying to beautification

Heather: I thought that these were personal gardens you know but the information came down where as if you had a block club you could start a community garden so we tried to put both those things into effect … we got in touch with the owner and he said well sure you can use the lot however you want to use it just don’t park your cars over there (laughs) so with that I tried to talk to a few people about helping us get it clean off and we did talk to the people on the block the gangs and whatever most of the folks don’t live over here but you know the people that they are affiliated with their parents live over here so we talked with them and sort of said you know whatever you do you’re doing just don’t mess up the garden, we’re gonna clean it off and they did when dirt was delivered, they did help us put the dirt in place you know and other than that we tried to get a little community to respond with where you guys help us get some beans and stuff to put in the garden maybe one or two did and they say well you give us something you know and okay that great so we got some church members and JD came over and brought a little soil and some mulch and we worked on it and got it together and they did for the most part leave it alone. The kids would try to pull up stuff (laughs) so we sort of kept it away from the fence so…

Ruth: [B]lock club, and so we all get together and umm talk about it, make suggestions, agree, disagree. Like we just finished up the meeting here, we just had the meeting.

Sowing

Gardeners came together as a collective in the decision making process for the direction of the community garden.
Audrey: So with all of us we vote on everything. We vote in everything no one person gets all …

Brianna: [W]e decide on what you want and Ms. [Sade] order it and we plant and it just all came together.

Dispersion

Even those who were unable to attend meetings attest to the democratic process of group decisions making that included several community gardeners.

Nancy: Well, I know there were ongoing meetings to talk about and these meetings started back maybe February or March sometime about kind of what the structures of the garden were going to be and what was there to grow. Unfortunately, I kind of got in late and so I didn’t get to get in on that plan and then some of the education that was offered and I probably needed that.

Maureen: I guess it was that’s what they chose to do. You know that’s what they came to plan and they gave people seeds to plant. So, that’s what they offered to plant so it was what they chose.

These testimonies illustrate the social capital generated by community gardens. Elements of trust, sharing, and collective efficacy are growing from the collective decision making processes. Individual input is valued for furthering to achieve the community gardens’ development among all.

Tell me about the rules of the garden?

Rules establish social order for living values of respect according to the community gardeners. Social norms are constructed collectively among them. By trusting that each member will follow the community garden rules, they share in creating their envisioned environment of agreeable social interaction. Values of respect are evident in the groups’ efforts to maintain the community garden through a range of rules. Some of which, were absolute and others that functioned without any detection. Peaceable agreements are made when rules are broken because of a shared commitment to keep relationships of trust. They remember that they are
building to achieve a desired outcome of improving the community. The gardeners’ effort in finding understanding helps to resolve conflicts.

“No rules,” some gardeners said, attesting to their impression of the do’s and don’ts of community garden activities. Some participants of the community gardens experienced no challenges. There were never any lines crossed of unspoken rules. Community gardeners seem to get along without written or otherwise articulate rules. Trust in each other’s respect for the other and sharing in a behavior of common rhythms produced a wholesome and congenial code of conduct. These gardeners just understood each other.

Understanding

Earline: So we don’t have, no rules.

Brianna: I don’t think there are any. We work together in unity and we all agreed on the same. I don’t think we have no rules.

Maureen: It’s pretty much, no rules, nobody need no babysitter and none like that. It’s a community garden, you come and you get vegetables or whatever, and if you see something down, pick it up. That’s pretty much it. Everybody pretty much sees after the garden because they want the produce. You want it to grow. So, you water something, if somebody else didn’t water it, then you water it.

Distinguishing

Some of the rules addresses by several of the community gardeners are absolute. These rules address safety concerns and cordial behaviors for a sociably hospitable community garden environment.

Payton: Well with the garden, there is no rift raft, no alcohol you know. I respect it you know, because I don’t want fools to come over say, “You sitting right there drinking a beer under this tree, I can do it too, cause he ain’t here,” that don’t matter, I don’t play that, I don’t play the dozens [vulgar name calling].

Olivia: I, well, my only rules is for the garden is that, um, when you come out there to work in the garden there’s no playing because sometimes you want to play, then they look at what they doin’ and they pull up the wrong thing. I get awfully upset about that
so there’s no playing around, no monkeying around, do what you gotta do, do it right and we won’t have no problems. …Oh yeah, we always give them a little uh, we give them a little bologna sandwich with, snack or something. We always give them something. And they enjoy it. Mmmhmm. Yeah, I believe that’s why they come and do it because they know they’ll have something to eat.

Communalizing

A few general rules were found to be used by community gardeners. These rules encourage gardeners to share in respecting and helping each other out. As a result of following these basic rules they strength their ability to trust one another. Numerous gardeners shared this information; here are a few:

Brenda: [J]ust to make sure it stay weeded, make sure it stays clean, do their job. Anybody can go eat in that garden, it’s free, they can just get what they want.

Brianna: Yeah, we did it because some people didn’t come back out there and we didn’t want them to go to waste. We would ask them of course sometimes and they would say, “Sure!” so it won’t go bad or burn or whatever. If somebody wanted something out of our garden, they would say, “Can I have it?” and we would say, “Sure!” In my garden, I had so many peas I would just tell them to just “Take them!” so it wouldn’t go bad or the squirrels eat them.

Brian: Yea, there are some rules. I don’t have the rules. The just redid the rules last Saturday. They was suppose to be giving everybody a sheet. One of the rules is that you want to respect everybody’s plot. Meaning that, before I go into your plot I want to let you know that, “Doug I was out there and seen a real nice cucumber - are you going to get it.” I ask you. And you say, “Well naw you can go out there and get it.” And then I would go in there and get it, just the cucumber – nothing else. So you want to respect everybody’s space. And that’s only being respectful for the garden arrangement. It’s a community garden. But what it mean by a community garden, we all water everybody’s on your watering day. And if you want something out of what’s going to be the community plot – which is – it will be all okra or all turnip and mustards and collards. You can go in there but to go into somebody’s individual plot – we want to be respectful of that.

Correcting

However, seldom did community gardeners take corrective measures when rules are broken to enforce civility. To ensure that they share in following the same rules, gardeners
modify their behaviors accordingly when informed about violations of rules. In some instances gardeners were perhaps unaware of them prior to breaking a rule. Here are a few of several gardeners how express this theme:

Olivia: Well, I, well, I have a time out for them. Those who want to sit here and act crazy and silly and stuff I have them go sit around the front where all the guys are, you know, sitting down. You know, you wanna do something, let the guy who’s doing, you know, we got the little bricks we put around there, he can help him out. But in the garden; stay out of it, you know. We, you know how kids are, trying to be funny. All kids are like that, you know. … Play- too playful, too playful especially when it comes to gardening because that’s something that, that’s true to my heart and don’t mess it up.

Karen: The um – just actually seeing how the things just grow and I always enjoy the fellowship. Like everyone there shares from the garden theirs. One of the brothers – MH had some um broccoli. I mean the best sweetest broccoli – I said, when he walked up, I’m sorry I stole about three or four broccoli – I said “they just so good.” [So you did break the rules?] I did – I did. But they – it was delicious.

Nancy: Yeah, I did something that I wasn’t supposed to do and she called me up and told me about it. You know I put some fertilizer, I put some Miracle Grow in plot and you are not supposed to. It’s all supposed to be organic. So, that’s the only real rule I know about. I don’t know whether or not showing up for the schedule for working, for being there to weed and to do all that, to my knowledge there is no published schedule and so I don’t if there rules around when you are supposed to be there, I hope not because I have been breaking them terrible.

Establishing rules for community gardening activities is aided by the social capital that gardeners have with one another. Structuring social relationships for civility is paramount for positive interaction among gardeners. Where legal and moral rules may structure behaviors and customs in other settings, gardeners’ informal measures aid in developing social conventions: decorum of trust, sharing, and vision among gardeners.

_How does your garden operate and who takes responsibility for what?_

Social capital is evident in the roles of responsibility among community gardeners. Leadership, individual initiative, and collective efforts are areas where responsibilities for the community gardens are expressed. Entrusting of direction for the activities, shared responsibility
of duties, and working together to achieve an envisioned goal are examples of social capital described by community gardeners.

Women comprise the majority of the community gardeners in my study, two-thirds. Women, nine-tenths, also dominate the roles of responsibility for the community gardens’ leadership. Men are encouraged as much as women, in taking responsibility if not serving as leaders in a different capacity. Grandfathers, fathers, and other male figures as well as grandmothers, mothers, and various female figures inspire the next generation to continue in a tradition of gardening. While men serve more intense labor roles typical for the gender, women define an essential part as key leaders common to and beyond traditional gender roles. Women serve as organizers, administrators and labors for these community gardens.

Women

One woman was assigned by a pastor to lead the congregations’ community garden efforts which is an indication of trust for responsibility and sharing duties:

Olivia: Like I say, the pastor told me, well, once I started going to the meetings and everything, the pastor said, “well since you’re going to the meetings sister B, you are over it, so therefore I became over it (laugh). Even if I didn’t want to, I’m over it now. After that came about, so I’ve been doing it ever since.

Most of the women took an initiative to lead in establishing and developing community gardens. Their leadership is trusted by those whom they teamed-up with:

Deidra: See, it’s easier for me. I’m not a people person. I’m the one who gets all the paper work done. I find the [NS group], I did the [green org] stuff, and then I can always find somebody to do the work.

Curtis: Well the overall planner of the garden is Lois, who go out and maintain the help and get the resources and there’s Tina and then they got several that help us cultivate and till and get involved in keeping the garden up, so that’s how that’s basically run.

Nancy: Well Mrs. Sade seems to take the responsibility for the success of it… So, I think not only does she take responsibility for making sure that it can plant it in place and
things that are needed after those. She also takes responsibility for scheduling and involving other people and, you know, what needs to be done.

Leadership recognizes the need to share the numerous responsibilities that are attendant to community gardening:

Sade: This year we’re gonna do better. We’re gonna do better J, I promise. Of course as you know, I’m the coordinator of the garden. I’m the garden coordinator, so in that role what I do, or what I’ve done in the past is to go out and seek funding, the resources, the relationships. I coordinate the schedule and then I got to a place where I felt like Moses. Remember when Moses came down with the tablets and he was doing so much and God told him “Moses, you’re doing too much. I’ve got to give you somebody to help you. You need some help. You’re going to wear yourself out. That was his father-in-law, Jethro, told him “you gone wear yourself out.”

Women and Men

Some gardeners see a trust and sharing of leadership among men and women communally gardening. One garden site exemplifies leadership that has gender equity:

Aisha: Well we all play a part like you said Ms. Sade is the, she the start and then the guys would the heavy jobs and then the women’s would come in and assist you know, wherever need to be assist at … Basically, and then when we would get out there Mr. Nelson would tell us what to do …He was like the protector of everything and told us what to do basically

Nancy: Yeah, but she would say no. Mr. Nelson. was very informative about what you got to wait for, you know what kind of condition the weather has to have, the land has to be like. So, we got list of seed…I guess that had been donated and you checked off what kind of seeds you wanted to put in and got that back to Mrs. Sade and then you got your seeds, a pair of work gloves and a bag which is kind of the first day you started. Then, the guys that are there they kind of turned around the dirt in all of the spaces and Mrs. Sade is the lead person because she is the person who got.

Helen: Well I’m not too sure about that, but I know that brother Nelson is basically well since he has the most experience with the garden he’s the one who tells us what to do how to do it and has sister Sade help us as well. So I think he was the one who responsible for making sure that everything got cleared out and set up and ready to go. And that like everyone makes sure they pull their weeds out of their garden or make sure aw you have to come over and water your garden and it’s just like he makes sure everything, he’s like the backbone, he makes sure everything looks perfect. We would be lost without him.
Communal

Individual initiative shown among gardeners, family, and neighbors expresses the sharing of responsibilities in maintaining their shared landscape. Gardeners are trusted to follow a schedule to grow the crops in their plots.

Brian: Right, right. Mine was Monday evening. Monday evening. Monday evening. Like I say, it would take cause – you had to do each box. And you couldn’t just water on the top, you had to water in the bottom. It’s a certain way you had to water it. I learned that. (laughter) You had to water in the bottom. If you water on top you knock the flowers off the top and then you kill your vegetables. So you had to water in the bottom.

Travis: Well, normally sometimes I would, like um, Mr. Nelson, he, I normally help him out with the uh, watering the grass and stuff like that, picking out the weeds in the garden and stuff like that sometimes. Whenever I’m, whenever I’m um available, if I have to work I usually assist him in doing that…Like once a month, cause I usually have to work…he did he just asked me but sometimes, if I don’t have anything to do I’ll probably just um take the initiative to go and help out.

Trust among family members taking on their assigned tasks they also share responsibility for other gardeners beyond individual responsibility. A father and son relationship depicts the responsibility they share for the garden when availability and parental reinforcement matter.

DJ (Winton’s son): It was a weekend. It was Friday. I think it was Tuesdays?

Winton: It was a Saturday. Yeah, it was all the week but I, ours was on Friday because we could make it on Friday…that was our days to go watering. He got drafted, obviously.

The garden effort collectively extends to neighbors, who share and trust in the community garden teamwork ethic.

Tasha: Oh you’re right! It was some neighbors across the street. They were. Yeah I forgot about them. It was neighbors who lived in the neighborhood. They were really nice too. They let us water the garden every evening. So yeah, it was others who were—yeah, in the neighborhood.

Collective agency is a result of leadership and individual initiative of many community gardeners. Everyone shares in activities that represent their trust in each gardener being
responsible for the other. These community gardeners’ collective agency leads to sharing and trusting relationships with non-gardeners.

Arnel: We all do. Well, we all did the men and the women, and the children.

Aisha: And that was like planting the different fruit and things like that but everybody you know, had they own – duties to do. So it wasn’t like it was just on one person, everybody participated…Ok, like um Mondays and Tuesdays we would go out. We would check the garden make sure everything was coming up right, we would water, we would take the grass up that wasn’t supposed to be there and then make sure the squirrels didn’t you know.

_Mans’ resourcefulness_

Men are noted as trusted and shared contributors to the collective community garden responsibilities.

Allen: Then we got me and Mr. Nelson and some of the other men we are the ones who take care of helping to cleaning it off it – was an effort on all our parts. But we were the ones who took the lead on that.

Brianna: Well, the men would get the water hose from the neighbor next door and bring it over. We will help him with the water hose moving from one side to the other. And they would water and then we would take turn watering and then we’ll plant. We all worked hand together.

Nancy: Although there are some other people for the lack of better terms have jobs and tasks that they do over there because I know the guys are taking main responsibility for watering because they got the hoses right across the street.

_Woman’s’ resourcefulness_

The women are a major force among the community gardeners, taking on a large share of the responsibility communally. The water source used mostly by the men is made accessible by a woman.

Aisha: Ummm, we all, everyone that’s gardening, we have so many people in the community that have gardened but everyone that has gardened here, you have different families have different plots. So it’s me, and my grandmother, then you have the Brian family, then Sade family and we are all related spiritually. You have the people that’s in the neighborhood, like the woman who helps us I believe, who waters the garden I think
she has her own plot…Umm the community I really don’t know. I just know they did a really big part in helping us out with the garden because you know I remember a young man coming and he was the one who was like helping dig and you know, put the dirt into the barrel and bring it out and I do remember the woman brought the hose out for us to water the gardens so.

Nelson: Well uh, Sister Sade do. And I try to, and we have uh meetings where we bring up these different things that if we see something getting seeming going out of hand or if someone wants to bring up a certain thing about a certain thing about their spot, or if they disagree on certain thing. We talk about it. And we bring it right back to home again, remember now, this is a community garden. And and we act accordingly, like last night. Uh one of the youngsters say ‘I had come back and saw those squash over there and by the time I got back someone sure had gotten em.’ ‘I said, ‘well remember now, this is a community garden, if you didn’t get it then and another person got it.’ But I had it, cause he want it so I gave him mine. See I didn’t only say it, I lived it.

Togetherness

One of the leaders describes how she delegated responsibilities of the community garden to others.

Sade: Delegating, so I’ve learned to become a more effective delegator this season. Someone’s keeping the schedule; someone’s keeping the calendar of activities. I’m still a coordinator role of relationships and delegating and all that. Master gardener R and my son L- but everyone has a role. So I felt that if I empowered these people to give them a role, they’d feel more vested in the garden. Last year every day of thinking: “If y’all call my name one more time!” you know and the Levitical writings they have a saying “Meshum” at the mouth of the Rabbis either they’ll say something and then say “Meshum” at the mouth of Doug Williams so that’s saying gives it more, more weight, because Doug said it. Doug said this, [Sade] said this, [Sade] said that, C said this. I’m thinking “would y’all stop? What do you keep saying my name for? Take some responsibility and just do the thing! Don’t keep saying P said it.” So this year I want to empower- everybody has a hat. They’ve got to wear their hat, it’s their responsibility and see after that. It’s very diced up this year. All my roles have been kind of spread out. One person is seeking the soil donation. One person is seeking the seeds. R and L are growing the plant plugs. B and M are getting the new [laughter] (I: water – [referring to the water hose]). R and L are seeing the buffalo boxes in the ground and get the hoses set up- everybody has a job. I couldn’t say that last year. I was so gung-ho about it last year thinking “we’ve got to get this thing done.” It’s a wonder I did not wear myself out. Seriously, now that I look back at in hindsight – they says hindsight is 20/20- it’s a wonder I did not wear myself out.

Collective agency that is founded by individuals and their leadership is further explained by the following comments:
Tasha: Each of us had a day of watering. Everybody had days of the week for watering. Brother R he was out there all the time, he really take care of the garden. By us not being in the neighborhood too much. I mean living out here. I was in [Lincoln Heights] like earlier in the day so I didn’t go too often.

Allen: Well we got it set up where we have meetings now – pretty much we have a secretary, someone who takes notes of the garden. We have someone who is going to go get water, seeds, and things of that nature.

Share the responsibility with others is just as important as sharing with the next generation of community gardeners to secure a future for their collective efforts.

Nelson: But among us a lot of things are sort of already understood, you know. And this really ain’t like things get so much out of line cause that not our way of doing things. That’s why it’s been so successful. Uh we know that we have to share. We know that we got one day of watering. You know, and that like uh Saturday uh one of the brothers, brother-Man, we watered. I take Sunday cause nobody else didn’t want it. And uh, Tuesday brother P he does the watering, for Monday brother-Man, he does the watering, on Wednesday, I take Wednesday cause the other brother he, he can’t move that much so I filled in for him. But every day, and that’s another thing, uh we’re going to have our own, see they seeing things now, everybody want to do things for us, I’m telling you. The city have our already given us permission to use the water hydrant…

Deidra: Well, sustainability is the biggest challenge because I’ve been here forever, Mrs. D has been here for over 50 years, K’s been here for about 10 and she’s new on the block. And we had a neighbor who moved here a couple years ago, C. He’s interested. I’ve got A interested. But it’s real difficult to just keep people interested. You know, because I was fortunate enough in order to turn a space over to K. Now she takes the three pictures and does all the paper work to Neighbor Space and so I don’t have to do that anymore.

Russell: …Yea but we only got very few. Over the years, they died off and stuff and this and that. We still got enough to maybe count on one hand to help with decisions but we still have a few that help us…. Well, it’s a thing where we just get it together, we gather and have a little meeting and decide on what we going to grow, you know. Some kids say they want to grow carrots, beets, tomatoes and some may say they want to grow something else and it doesn’t matter that’s what we grow, you know? And we just get out there and do it. …Well, it’s this thing where usually kids decide they want to plant a certain item or whatever vegetable, well whatever they grow that’s theirs. But it’s more than that, they get along by swapping each other’s plant seeds once they are mature and stuff and this and that. So we never really had no problem about that, you know. They family, you know?

While men, women, and children are involved in sharing responsibilities in the community garden, many make their commitment as a church group to participate. Community
gardeners began with the core group of faithful few that has extended to neighbors from blocks around.

Laurence: Well, they’re all…I’ve seen, almost have to say that the one group, one church group, that really took an active part in the garden did a lot of the planning, they done a lot of the watering and uh they, they came and was very active when others was not. This group of church people did and uh they was one that first came around and told us about the garden itself. And they did this they stayed with the program until the end. Yeah, these people would stay there from, they would come in the afternoon and they would stay till at least it was dark or when they couldn’t even see anymore then they would leave.

Maureen: It’s a neighborhood effort. Everybody pretty much gets involved. Everybody, whoever has a box open there, they come they water; they water the other boxes and stuff like that. It’s pretty much a community effort. There is no one person that sees to the whole garden…Well, no it just pretty much did it naturally. Once you came over and you would plant your box, you would meet somebody else who is coming to water their box, you meet other people. It just happened, it wasn’t planned. They came, they started off with the community garden and the community got involved and it has just taken off. It’s good for the neighborhood.

From these quotes, we learn of the social capital among both gardening women and men. Their networks shape the collective dreams, sharing and trust among gardeners. Both genders exhibit unique strengths; yet they are at their best when they are combined in building community gardens.

*What goes into planning for the gardening season?*

Plans for community garden activities are a *collective effort* that involves organizing *activities* into *time* schedules. The collective effort of gardeners, garden leaders, block clubs, and various groups involved in community gardening activities over days, weeks, months, and seasons are often structured yet open for gardeners’ involvement at any time. The combination of gardeners and the sharing of activities provide for growth in their social capital: trust, sharing, and collective efficacy.
Trust

Trust is shown by the relationships among gardeners and garden leadership. Leaders trust the other gardeners and gardeners trust leaders. Often the range of time shared between the gardeners and the leaders is seasonal. This is a sign that trust is apparent in the relationship, given the gardeners’ time apart from leadership supervision in assisting in the completion of community gardening tasks.

Community gardening activity planning helps to improve communication. Through communication, one can learn to trust others.

Nancy: She said …. I think what has happened in the past is that my friends, who live next door to her, she tells them and then they call me and they said they were tired of being in the middle and that they told me you call or she call you instead of us having to be in the middle all the time. She and I have started to communicate more directly.

Eventually the gardener’s trusted friend encouraged her to trust in the community gardens leadership:

Nancy: Well Mrs. Sade put together a written plan of what kind of seeds were available and when kind of everything is gonna start. I remember every moment like “we are gonna start today, we are gonna start today.”…Yeah, but he would say no. Mr. Nelson was very informative about what you got to wait for, you know what kind of condition the weather has to have, the land has to be like. So, we got list of seed…I guess that had been donated and you checked off what kind of seeds you wanted to put in and got that back to Mrs. Sade and then you got your seeds, a pair of work gloves and a bag which is kind of the first day you started. Then, the guys that are there they kind of turned around the dirt in all of the spaces and Mrs. Sade is the lead person because she is the person who got…. to take the responsibility for the success of it. Although there are some other people for the lack of better terms have jobs and tasks that they do over there because I know the guys are taking main responsibility for watering because they got the hoses right across the street. So, I think not only does she take responsibility for making sure that it can plant it in place and things that are needed after those. She also takes responsibility for scheduling and involving other people and you know what needs to be done. ….A couple of meetings in March and then we really didn’t plant till May.

Not only do gardeners learn to trust leadership, leaders learn to trust other leaders and their garden membership.
Nelson: Well uh, sister Sade do. And I try to, and we have uh meetings where we bring up these different things that if we see something getting seeming going out of hand or if someone wants to bring up a certain thing about a certain thing about their spot, or if they disagree on certain thing. We talk about it. And we bring it right back to home again, remember now, this is a community garden. And we act accordingly ...well once a month usually and uh sometimes even more, sometimes we have like two or three times a month. Or when we meet in the garden sometimes, we have uh, after we do a few things we take a break and we have some water and some pop and stuff and then we discuss the things.

When the community garden leadership is a friend, it helps to foster trust with a new gardener, especially when the leader’s knowledge has been demonstrated many times.

Brenda: Well, it was Ruth. That was Ruth! Um, Ruth is our garden person and um our flower person and she knows so much about it, she’s so knowledgeable so I entrust everything of our garden into her. Whatever I don’t know, I ask Ruth. I don’t go to nobody else but Ruth. And Ruth always comes over here and checks on things. ...And you know we’re in the same block club. Ruth, Ruth and I, we’re all in the same block club so Ruth’s all, ‘This is what we’re gonna do.’ ‘Alright then.’ [laughs]. ...Well I just told Ruth what I was gonna do and she said that was right. So, I’m playing by Ruth. So after we get those seeds done and they start blooming then Ruth will tell us the next step. Well, she’ll tell us when to actually put them in the ground. I know how to do that. But I still live by Ruth, Ruth is our leader.

A son’s trust continues further when mothers’ leadership and her friend’s leadership in planning garden activities that have been demonstrated for years.

Curtis: The two partners here, they meet every day so they be planning every day, it’s an ongoing plan, Lois and Ms. Tina they plan it every day. They either drinking coffee together on the porch, they eating bacon or something in the house, so they planning as they go along. Those are the two that do the planning right there. So those are your two planners and they plan the garden all year round. ...[A]ctivities, generally we start growing as early, planting as early as March, sometimes but we waited until April this time because it was still cold. And then what we do is make, and what happens is that...we keep it cultivated, keep it watered, keep it growing, and notice you have to thin it out because they bunch up. And if you thin it out you get more and grow more and have it reach its peak...we start the harvest and get little baskets and put them in little baskets and gleam for ourselves the ones that want, what they want, and then we put these baskets together and make sure the people in the community get part of this community garden’s produce.

A father leads his family to trust in the community garden’s leadership in planning activities when the goal is to help the community.
There may have been a meeting. I didn’t go. All of the preliminary stuff that Sade was doing, just like I said, I didn’t really have time. So, I just said, “just let me know what you got and I’ll do that.” So, I know she did, she had some meeting before that I didn’t attend. I said well whatever; I trust your decision as long as we trying to help people, I’m in.

Youthful community gardeners at the elementary level are encouraged to trust garden leadership who shares decision making with them, as his mother taught him in his youth.

Well, it’s a thing where we just get it together, we gather and have a little meeting and decide on what we going to grow, you know. Some kids say they want to grow carrots, beets, tomatoes and some may say they want to grow something else and it doesn’t matter that’s what we grow, you know? And we just get out there and do it. ...I never start planting until after Mother’s Day. That’s when you really get out there and start to dig up the garden and stuff and this and that. By me, you know, growing my own little plants and stuff, I could be still in the inside more or less. So, I got plenty of time to wait for the weather—the ground to get right around me before I get my plants in. So, I go by my mother’s experience. ...(Meeting and get out there to do it)

A community’s trust in leadership is also a part of the relationships forged by community garden planned activities.

Earline: We’ll have days and then we’ll send the information out. We’re trying to recruit people to the garden. ...We usually try to end up after, right after school starts. We might go a couple of times in the fall for leaves or something like that, but we like to go through the summer. Spring and Summer.

Involving

When more community gardeners work together, the level of sharing is greater. This is also true when a greater frequency of time is spent together among gardeners. The greater the level of social interaction, the greater the amount of sharing that does occur. Effective communication for planning and engagement in planned community garden activities is a result of an increase in sharing information among gardeners and the time undertaking activities in a community garden.

Communication and activity planning seasonally among community gardeners is effective for a few of participants in this study. Meeting, word-of-mouth, text messages, and
flyers encouraged some shared participation in garden activities.

Elaine: This year I think because of it the garden just started so we would do everything via text message or word of mouth or something like that if it was going to be something going on. …And we’ve had a garden meeting and we going to continue to have those too so that we can give input and everything on how to make everything work. …There like right now because it’s-we had our first garden meeting about like a month and a half ago, two months ago, but she’ll let us know, Sade, will let us know when the next one’s going to be because right now it’s not really nothing to do…right cold outside.

Lynn: Yeah it was scheduled. We would have meetings and we would have people visiting in to see the garden and when it was getting cold, when it was time to close the garden, we had two meetings to clean up around it. …They have fliers that they passed out. It says something like “Garden clean up…..snacks gonna be provided. We are closing the garden for the winter.”

Monthly community garden meetings and interactions in the garden increase the level of sharing in the community garden experience in comparison to seasonal planning and activity.

Various groups of gardeners and the variety of activities are greater as a result of additional planning. Groups of friends, seniors, block clubs, churches, students, and other community gardeners join in meetings during picnics to watering.

Brian: [T]hat was done at the meeting, at the garden meeting last week. We had a garden meeting. They had it over here …It a seniors building, one of the peoples that’s at the garden got us the day room over there. …Yea! It’s several people in that building. I think they paid a little something and we used the day room. Nice little meeting place – for the meeting. Quite a few friends came for the meeting.

Travis: [N]ot that I know of. Normally when I’m there if I’m not helping out like watering the grass and um helping others with the plots its basically what we doing, we have we throw picnic out there other, yeah, so yeah sometimes they from what I been hearing they throw like little picnics, for the people that have their plot out there. …Well I think as, while we planting the stuff we clean as we go. So, it really ain’t about the end of the day when everybody’s leaving the garden, we really don’t have anything else to do because we clean as we go. …[B]asically, each person has take part in um cleaning, so.

Payton: Well we collaborate between the block club and people that’s going to do the work or even we get students from the church up here to assist us to help us grow or we try to get people within the neighborhood to do something which is kind of sometimes hard because their schedules different, working and everything. But we just go to meetings and have meeting and discuss it together and we decide what we going to do. …Once a month.
When community gardeners meet *weekly* or on several days per week they share in the greatest level of communication and gardening activities with one another, than seasonal or monthly planning and activity. The majority of the responses from participants in this study are those that meet more frequently than seasonally or monthly.

One gardener noted the monthly activity became more frequent as activities in the garden also fostered planning onsite with other community gardeners during breaks.

Nelson: Yeah, well once a month usually and uh sometimes even more, sometimes we have like two or three times a month. Or when we meet in the garden sometimes, we have uh, after we do a few things we take a break and we have some water and some pop and stuff and then we discuss the things.

Karen spoke of the entire growing season with weekly meetings filled with a schedule of activity in the garden from March to October. While some gardeners participated during set *days*, there are other days where everyone is encouraged to join in.

Karen: Weekly is, um I think it’s, if I’m not mistaken you can, you can pretty much can go whenever you want if you feel comfortable out there being by yourself. But they really advise you to go with at least 2 or 3 other people. Um so, usually like anywhere between, 2 for me, anywhere between 2 to 3 times a week, monthly wise I know October, if not maybe a little sooner, but I know October, will be the last month. I think March, April is the opening month. So yeah, that, that’s I think that’s the time schedule. …yeah its um usually text – my best friend. ….its usually like she’ll text me like, I’m going to the garden after work, you want to go – sure, I’ll meet you there – but, Wednesdays are usually the gardening day for everyone. Wednesday and Saturdays, are the two days where its like, everyone is out. Um any other day in between is pretty much kind of ah. People will send a text like, “hey they’ll be a group in the garden if you want to go.” Or we’ll send a text like, “who looking to go to the garden today.” “Okay I’ll meet you there.” So yeah, Wednesday and Saturdays are usually the gardening days but anything else is kind of like fly by the sea. Yeah.

*Watering*, one of the most frequent requirements to community gardening activity drew families and neighbors to garden together often.

Tasha: They were saying that so we were supposed to go back. I think it was probably every—really it was like every day. —oh my God I forgot. I don’t know if they told you every day [or] every other day. …Yeah, our day of watering after it got started was on Friday evenings. So, that was— …holding the hose getting the water from across the
street. And we just watered everyone’s plot got watered. Even the plants in the middle. So we didn’t complain…we just did … it. [A neighbor helped?] Yeah, he stayed across the street. I don’t know his name. He stayed across the street. He was really nice. Anytime we wanted use that water hose it was fine with him or his wife. Yeah it was fine.

Gardeners that included women and men working together on established days at specific hours brought them together to sharing planning and activity.

Brianna: We’ll call each other or we will see them at the meeting. Mr. Brian would say, “Well, I’ll go out on Tuesday so you all are coming out?” So we will tell him, “yes we’ll meet you out there,” so we communicated on the phone or when we was at the meeting to make plans. …We would go like every Monday or Tuesday after 6pm. We would meet the men there. But we would usually call a meeting. Ms. Sade would let us know and tell us to be here at this time and we get there. …They were putting the dirt over into the plots. And we would put the flower into the wheel barrel and they would take over there and dump it. I think we was about even/even. They did the very hard, hard jobs. I know Mr. Nelson and another friend would cut down those trees because it was some many trees and stuff so they did the big hard, hard jobs and we did our share too. …Carrying trees and whatever they have to do with the pack, and digging and planning and water. It’s tiresome but fun. …Yes. Sometimes, we had a couple of picnics and those were planned ahead of time.

Informing

Technology plays a role in the ease of contacting gardener to come together to plan and be active in the community garden.

Arial: Actually Sade would send us all a text message and say we are gonna try and meet at the gardens. Everybody try to meet to for all the things they can’t get to during the week cause unfortunately just about everybody that’s out there works. So it’s kinda hard for us to get out there during the week. So the things that can’t get done during the week she would send us a text message we’re gonna meet at the garden at such and such time…come on out and lets do whatever needs to be done. And that’s usually what we’ll do, those of us that can show up. Like I said I’ll go on the weekend regardless if everyone is there or not because that’s the only time I can go. Especially now because we’re in registration and I don’t get off work until very – very late.

Basic or old fashioned methods of organizing community garden planning and activities to share in are done in simple schedule books.

Olivia: What I do is, I got a, I have a book that I run down. Ok, so like Mondays and Tuesdays I might be there for up until like eleven o’clock to maybe about two three o’clock. And then, we take turns. Like I say there’s two guys and about four women so
we take turns with this right here. And this one man um, he’s there almost all the time so he does most of the watering everything to make sure, and he’s a country boy so you know, he knows a little bit too so it’s been pretty good. So we have, no one is going to stay there longer or more than they have to because he’s really been doing mostly all of it but, always coming, in fact, by me being over there, I come there almost every day just to make sure everything is alright. I’m like right down the street so I walk down there.

Standard phone calls and face-to-face contact worked when the time arose for gardeners to gather in planning and to be active in the community garden.

Steven: Phone calls, Ms. Sade calls me or I’ll call them, or sometimes I’ll see her and L leaving and I’ll say are y’all going over there? That was before I started going by myself now I just go by myself you know, but I try to go with them too if there’s something they need the help with, like Mr. Nelson had to help him dig up this fence, there was, that he wanted to get out of there and stuff like that and weeds and weeding the place, but uh primarily it’s a phone call, yeah. …Well we would, I was told we got at least till October, you know the end of, sometime around the in October, probably going to end up picking stuff anyway and even before that cause stuff is growing, it grows you know, I don’t, a number of times I’ve picked greens out of there and I’ve got me some nice green beans you know I’m going to go back and get some more when they grow up more and big squash, zucchini squash you know, but that’s the only one you know, my first born. [laughing]

Availability

Where time was limited to after working in the various places of employment, gardeners could stop by after work and spend time with others due to the garden being constantly occupied with various garden activities.

Allen: Yea – well we will set that up at one of the meetings. …A lot of time we will stop by the garden after work and stop by the garden and make sure you know to show that there is somebody that is somebody their attending to the garden. Also to get weeds out of the garden and stuff like that. And if there’s any damage or anything that’s been done – to take care of anything like that – to cut the grass – we got some grass out there in front of the garden on the street side. So we got to take of that – cutting the grass and things like that. …We must look at it being in Chicago. The growing season is about the last week in May to about October, because that’s when the frost set in. So we try and get things planted and out in the zone for our weather. Like I say, from the last week in May to about October, to the first frost.
Expectations were high for participation on a *given day of the week* by most community gardeners. Where times seemed to be without a set schedule everybody often came together as a team throughout the week.

Aisha: Well first, what I like about it is everyone works as a team, because at first I felt what would happen if everybody did their own plot or fill up their own barrels. But it’s like we actually different people set up many plots, not just your own but we get like, I think each person gets like three plots that they helped create. And everyone came in to help clean it and everybody helps water it like it’s a sister that comes down and waters everybody’s and then you have brother Nelson who makes sure everything goes smoothly. So it’s basically like teamwork. …It’s not a schedule most of the people come out throughout the week, but most people come out on Saturdays since they don’t have to work. They mostly get here at one-thirty, but today my grandma and me came a little bit late so. …We meet at the garden site and we just like anything we need to do, we just like, ask questions as we go or if someone sees something isn’t going right they’ll let you know like how is the correct way to do it. It’s like everybody helping everybody. It’s just basically communication that goes on throughout the day.

*Extending*

As a result of the trust and sharing built within the community garden groups, emerged some forms of collective efficacy. One of the main drives to the formation of many community gardens was also the envisioning of a cleaner block and neighborhood. Gardeners took on *cleaning* the areas beyond the boundaries of the community gardens: alleys, neighboring properties with the aid of city resources.

Tina: There is really no schedule. It is open to groups especially in the summer time, we kind of capitalize on the groups that come visit in, out of town and that’s the schedule usually that’s three to four days a week if they’re here. The youth have a schedule that they are supposed to come and do something within the community, not only our garden, but they go to other gardens as well. They also clean the alleys, clean the yards different things. So all of that’s involved it’s not just this garden or another garden, they have other activities to do in order to stay in the program. That’s part of the program, they have to give back, they have to learn to give back. So, they work in the community as well gardens, they work for some of the seniors that can’t get out, one of the things we did from this garden here and the youth were involved, we did milk crate gardens. Some of the seniors don’t have a yard, so what we did, we got milk crates and we planted greens and they also needed a little vegetables every day. So, we planted, let the youth plant milk crate gardens that’s why you see some gardens out there in the yard. So, some people just have a porch on a second floor or third floor.
Heather: …. [Y]eah, she’s [the alderman] aware of our efforts over here and like when we wanted that lot that area over there cleaned up right on the corner they did the one across the street there was the lot just growed you know real dangerous or whatever so they were working on that lot over there but this one here it was right next to the alley and the gang-infested area they just let it grow and so much debris out in the alley you go over and you try to clean that up, it stays in that house that’s vacant. It was a difficult thing to deal with and so she supported us by you know getting rid of some of the vacant houses over here, I guess it was her but I don’t know. But I know that her presence was visible on the block. She saw that we did need help and if we needed it from the Sanitation Department as far as the alleys and things like that to get rid of the rodents we just did that we went to her office and we had a meeting and she came through to see us on several occasions and just lended whatever support that she could in order to help us and so hopefully she will remain alderman and we won’t have to start all over again. …you know if like I need to clear my head I can go get my rake, you know what I mean, just raking the garden, so it’s not something I have a particular time set aside to do this, it’s for therapy, umm to help the community, uh to be able to share with the elderly and you know, just umm for the aesthetic value of it that we want to move forward with it and I refuse not to do that, the only way it doesn’t come about is that I will be laid low in my bed again.

In some cases, safety and housing services were combined with gardening efforts to improve the community.

Tina: We just had one [meeting with the police district] about 2-3 weeks ago and that was in conjunction with [Grand] Housing services who did the plan of gardens in that vacant lot right there. So, we collaborate, its collaboration all the way. They worked with two blocks it wasn’t this block, nor this garden. They were with those two blocks there and lift a church, St. [Luke’s] Church and the community center we opened up our doors to them to invite all the seniors and whoever else wanted to come to that meeting to talk about getting help and other help that’s being provided by [Grand] Housing Service and also to talk about their plan of their gardens. You know, whoever is taking advantage we try to make it be available. That’s what you talk about collaboration.

The gardeners’ comments suggest that interactions are most productive when social capital is nurtured frequently. Planning takes preparation, time, and communication for community gardens to grow. Social capital is imperative for leaders and followers to share the responsibility to manage community gardens.
What are the relationships of other people involved in the garden?

Inclusion

Relationships are commonly formed among the local population and are often identified among a shared faith community. In as much as the relationships are likened to congregational gardening, community gardening is more the evident reality. Gardeners also noted other relationships that included: various volunteers, schools, co-workers, friends, and family members. The gardeners’ relationships are an affirmation of the hyper local level interactions from frequent face-to-face contact on a practical social level.

From multiple sources come a variety of relationships of those who engage the community gardens.

Tina: Most of them from out of town are usually from another ethnic group and they volunteer and they come here and it’s an exchange, it’s like a cultural exchange program. A lot of things they have heard, a lot of things accustomed. So, they do their pretty; they checkout [Lincoln Heights]. Believe you me and it is such a cultural exchange the fact that they meet Mr. B. That’s the highlight and some of these people are from rural areas that maybe only have 200 to 300 people. They have never been around blacks and it’s a cultural shock both ways and the fact they see us with gardens, a beautiful garden. They see the children eat from the garden; they also eat from the [Greater] Chicago Food Depository, they give meals four days a week. So, they eat healthy and the children that do come to the community center they eat healthy and we promote healthy eating all the time and now we also work with CLOCC Consortium [to lower obesity in Chicago] to lower obesity in Chicago children. We work with CLOCC, we are also members of CLOCC and the CLOCC sponsors health in communities and we are members of that. So, we usually go to one of the big sessions that they have, we are invited to go every year, bring our youth, mostly the older youth and we go to their session that they have and they are also for arrangements. And they’re also 4-H members.

Earline: Children. Students. I should say students. Cause [the] School has been involved. We’ve had kids come from the suburbs. We’ve had a synagogue. So, it’s mostly young people.

At home, most community gardeners are in the outdoor environment reinforcing their relationships with family and friends while gardening together.

Earline: Families.
Travis: [Y]ou have some families but the majority of us up there is friends.

Congregations have a major calling on the gardeners’ relationships to the community garden.

Nancy: [Share the same faith] most of them and I didn’t realize that when I got involved I didn’t know that, but that was an interesting fact for me because I am [another faith] and I probably told Mrs. P that I was [this faith] and I said to my friend that I hope that difference didn’t mean we would be able to share that garden and I was hoping that wouldn’t make any difference, but then I was also hoping that they wouldn’t try to convert me.

Sade: [A] larger group of us are from the [place of worship] and we are in a faith gathering [weekly]… Couples. There will be several couples joining this year. But I think it’s the design of work. You have most of your males- husbands, fathers of households - working; they don’t have a lot of free time. But I do find that those fathers and husbands are able to engage the family and come out on a Saturday afternoon or Sunday mornings and work their plot for ten minutes. Just work your plot for ten minutes and you will see so many benefits for your family.

Arial: I think what’s important about it even though a lot of us are from the [place of worship], there is still…it’s open to the ones in the neighborhood who want to come in.

Maureen: [I]t’s mostly church members. They are mostly all church members and then there are a few people like I said myself being from the block you know a few block members they come together and talk about the garden. It’s become a conversation piece.

Community gardeners’ relationships are as much from the neighborhood as they are from a group who share a similar faith.

Sade: I talk to some people on the block and those that know each other within the block … and you have some…one of the gardeners is my next door neighbor… And there are people that we know in the community, residents that we met and know through passing and have invited to come over. We wanted to have a very diverse community group, not just have it be our little enclave of people from our faith, but just to have a cross-section of the community. So we’re hoping that we’re creating a real diverse community in that garden.

Brenda: And you know we’re in the same block club. … They send the kids. I have one lady over on…and she helps. She gets out early in the morning and she knows all the kids by name I’m like, ‘Come here baby. Come here honey.’ She know ‘em by name.
Ruth: Well there quite a few individuals … names I couldn’t recall no more than the ones that are in our neighborhood, I have cards of various individuals and everything but right off the top of my head I can’t recall no more than [SJ] and some of her associates [PD, BD, JP].

Also, relationships built with organizations make a difference. Trust and sharing in the effort to maintain and provide resources for community gardens is essential to fruitful relationships to endure.

Heather: [An employee from Green Space] brought the wheel-barrel and the first decent shovel and umm it was then I have gotten several other shovels and rakes and umm the feeder and all of these kind of things that you work with your lawn and garden with and so I mean I forgot all of those things, I do see, you know if like I need to clear my head I can go get my rake, you know what I mean, just raking the garden, so it’s not something I have a particular time set aside to do this, it’s for therapy, umm to help the community, uh to be able to share with the elderly and you know, just umm for the aesthetic value of it that we want to move forward with it and I refuse not to do that, the only way it doesn’t come about is that I will be laid low in my bed again.

Community gardening provides a useful way to build social capital. Social capital is present among these gardeners prior to community garden activity. But because of their common gardening activities, social circles are developed further and merged with others when participants engage in community gardens.

_How do you pay for the garden?_

The funding activities of these community gardens exemplifies both bond and bridge relationships built upon trust and sharing for creating and maintaining them. Bonds are characterized by the buy-in among members who elect to support the garden through self-funding, and from immediate beneficiaries who garden regularly and/or assist in maintaining the garden. Bridges are denote as relationships beyond the day-to-day participants that are formed; they provide access funding for acquiring land, major purchases for supplies and materials (large quantities, structures, and equipment).
Communalizing

While participants indicate that the charge is not to make a financial profit but to serve to build community, the bonds and bridges formed are a requirement to establish and sustain these community gardens. Pertaining to bond relationships, several community garden participants noted that they did not pay or were unaware of any fee or funding sources used for the community garden.

Brian: I have no idea. I haven’t got a clue.

Sade: We’re in the business of blessing people at [Lincoln Heights]. I don’t do it to be a strain. I don’t want any individual to feel that this is an economic thing. This thing isn’t about economics, this thing is about people. And if you have it in the seed - come, and if you don’t, come. And I’m subscribing to what Bible would say. He said “bless the hand that gives, but bless the hand that didn’t have it, but had the willingness to want to give, but didn’t have it”…come on, we’re here together. Where there’s a deficit here, we’ll pick it up. We don’t worry about it. That’s how it’s being maintained with the fees. Where there’s a deficit in the fees, we still make it happen. It’s still going to happen. This is about people. This isn’t about trying to get together some funds.

Laurence: Okay, you say I been paid for? Well this, I generally do not know. Honestly, all I know I did fund this water. And funding the water, this was something that I could do, because where I’m at now, it won’t be, I don’t think, for long, I’m not only what you call a leader and the water is not a certain amount I have to use. But as far as the people. I ask this question before to one of the gentlemen’s at the end of the garden because I just send people so active and people so involved until it seems like me. You know, when you see people who is so prompt in everything, something motivating them and what is I? And I ask one of the gentlemen about that, were they paid for this, was this something that they just wanted to do, just what was going on. He said well this a community thing and it was something that they seen that needed to be done to bring the community closer together and that they was working for when they go. And then I was asked if I would participate and what not and that’s where I fitted in. But when it comes down to finance, whenever, that I do not know because I do know this, I can say. Anything that is this good, somebody had to back it, you had financial backing somewhere and I do believe that somebody is backing the program not just someone out in the community say, “Here it is y’all, a certain amount of money, y’all plant a garden.” I don’t think it happened like that but I do think you got paid organizers, people that go around and get this thing done. See if because if you don’t have people like this that is really involved what not, it just don’t do things see, and I know for a fact that when a person that you have gas to buy, you have clothes and all like that, well, I knew there were things they were compensating for what they’re doing. And me being minister, I just said to myself because I didn’t get the answer I wanted on that because I would just tell that it was a voluntary thing that
people were doing and maybe I said that they didn’t want to discuss that with me because they would maybe put a bad taste in the neighborhood that this people was out to do this and get that and they been doing this just because they were getting paid for it and what not.

For several others, the funding is paid as a fee that all gardeners pay if able. It is used to cover the cost of materials, but only partially. Paying into the cost of materials gives an added investment for gardeners’ commitment to being and staying active.

Arial: [W]e had to …I think it was $25 per person and that paid for them making the beds, I mean the water for the beds, the dirt and everything to start the beds and the little seeds…and the umm sprouts…the ones that’s already done in the little containers. Yea so that covered all that.

Karen: [E]ach person that, like if you want a bed, there is a 20 or 25 dollar fee…you know, for thee um, to help pay for the materials, the seeds, um also I think if I’m not mistaken to also help with the watering because they had like T. She opens her house up so that we can use the water and things like that so. Yeah it’s like voluntary. Well its fee base first if you want a bed. And then after that its voluntary whatever you want to donate you can.

Other community gardens have funded their garden without a fee-based system. They have gained the trust in a shared commitment to improve the neighborhood through local community networking.

Earline: They took the tools more than one time. So some people in the neighborhood just different ones helped us to get more tools, but it’s a battle.

Olivia: [T]he church members just give a little funds.

Self-Sacrificial

However, more frequently the gardeners themselves self-invest in the community gardens they participate in. Whether it is monetary or material resources, gardeners support their community garden.

Ruth: So I purchased the lot from the city of three hundred dollars, so what I did umm, my neighbor started giving me flowers and I started putting flowers on the lot. Just trade and switching all across town, everybody, “I got this plant, and I got this.” And so this how it started.
Tina: We had some grants, but it’s also money out of your pocket, you know, it’s always money out your pocket in order to buy. Mrs. B and Mr. B, we spend money.

Audrey: [S]o for the past I could say 20 years the lot has been maintained by us…(Mona): Before the lot was even received raised beds my dad and a few other neighbors were keeping the lot clean you know and cut…(Leslie): We pay outta our pocket.

The investment that community gardeners make builds strong bonds. One gardener describes his mother’s and her senior garden members’ protective love for their community investment:

Curtis: [T]he garden is paid for by donations, basically out of our pockets is where we buy the seeds and help is basically volunteer help, to dig up and cultivate it. I mean we generally chip in and raise enough money to help pay for the water bill and things of that particular nature. It’s a real community garden, the communities doing it. …[W]e don’t have to pay no taxes or anything on the use of the land, because the land was just there. You know they try to take the land we’ll have a protest out here with all the senior citizens in the community…have more walkers and canes and things of that nature and their little scooters rolling by…and they’ll back off real soon.

Networking

The community gardeners formed just as significant bridge relationships as they have of their bonds. Funding sources that bridge relationships to resources outside of the network comprised of community gardeners are: block clubs, garden crop sales, community centers, city government, religious institutions and organizations, cooperative extension services, non-profit organizations, botanical gardens, volunteers, private companies and organizations, and philanthropists, grants, and various donations. These financial resources are used to pay for the cost of land use (i.e.: purchasing, renting, leasing), materials and supplies (i.e.: tools, soil, planters, seed/plants, food/snakes.), and maintenance cost (i.e.: machinery repairs, tillers, mowers).

Where a block club is an example of a bond relationship, a network of community organizations is an example of a bridge relationship; even block clubs extend the social network
of local gardeners. Revenues from minor sales of produce harvested from the community
gardens to those outside of a community are also a bridge relationship.

Brenda: Right and plus you know, I’m president of the federation of block clubs. So I
have like 65 block clubs. And if I’m using tools I’m going to [Community organization A] or [Community organization B], and we share.

Russell: [W]e always gets our own funding out of our pockets. You know and it’s a
little money we’ve made off sales of our vegetables.

*Corporations* invest in communities by making charitable contributions; community
gardeners access the resources they offer.

Heather: I went to the Home Depot, this is a non-profit organization this is a community
garden and we’re requesting a gift certificate would you help us out? Aw man, they were
not hearing it. So I got my little letter stood over there went through the manager, I go to
corporate offices cause you gotta do this, the whole nine yards. Finally after I started
umm, 4th of July, July was darn near over before I got a $50 gift certificate (laughs) from
that Home Depot. So I just had to keep, stay on the case with them, look we’re not for
profit here this is a community organization and you guys should be willing to help! I
mean geez you’re the neighborhood what helps us we help you. You could use us like
we can use you. So it took some doing but they finally came around and helped us out
that little bit and oh ok thank you.

On the *local government* level, city officials and department are resourceful for
community gardeners to access support beyond the neighborhood network.

Deidra: So I was trying to get the lot from the alderman... And that was when we were
in the [a particular] ward. But they wanted like 9,000 dollars for it which was way out of
my budget and my mom’s so after the 90 census, we got redistricted … So this is towards
the fall so I was telling [the alderman], “I wish I could have that lot” and he said I’ll take
care of it so he got the then alderman to pass an ordinance in city council the way they
would have done it if I were a contractor building on it. I got the lot for three hundred
dollars (laughter).

Brenda: Out of my pocket. I get tools from um Streets and Sands, from the empathy
church, uh [Community organization ET] actually um, some program came through and
granted them a lot of tools. People always call me, we’ve just been blessed. So I put the
tools out here in the shed.

Tina: Thank God for some of the grants that we got to do some of the bigger things like
building arbors and fencing and all those types of things and tilling and tillers. They even
stole the tillers, so, you know, they do steal from us I forgot about that. We were given
the tillers by the Chicago Botanic Garden. They didn’t give it to everybody, they gave it to us because we had been dealing with them and working with them and when they give presentations or need something for their own benefit, they would call on us to do it, call on us to give presentations or to tell other gardeners how do we do it in the city. So, urban gardening is our forte.

Non-profit organizations have the most bridge relationships to community gardens among those included in the research sample.

Mona: So when our former precinct captain …decided to network through the alderman’s office and the mayor’s youth program. Then that’s when the lot was really being maintained even more. She had uh the raised beds were put in by [LightGreen]. …They were literally doing it themselves, but then after they came of you know got older and everything they couldn’t do it any longer. So then the city was cleanin it. And so when our former precinct captain Ms. H decided to network through the alderman’s office and the mayor’s youth program. Then that’s when the lot was really bein maintained even more. She had uh the raised beds were put in by [LightGreen]. And the kids and her… The kids and her and initially our block club members, but we were already as a family were taking care of the lot anyway for years. And so once T learned that the mayor loved you know community gardens things like that - … But now uh our block uh now pays a neighbor that lives in the area. We pay him like $50 a month…Well it is a 501 c3 so they have to use that money so it was stated one time that you weren’t at a meeting, to pay him once the Spring break you know to clean the lot. $50 a month you know so I don’t know if that.

Earline: [A]pply for a grant with them and that just, they supply some of the supplies for the garden… [W]e have a sponsor who’s from the [Faith based non-profit organization] that lives [outside of town]. And every year he invests in the garden. He usually gives funding for maybe four or five children to work during the summer.

Deidra: It’s a 501c3 non-profit organization,…which was a private foundation, non-profit organization which would buy the land, insure it, and they put a $17,000 rewards system on it. And all we have to do is keep it as a garden… all you have to do is send them three photographs of the year in the garden and they come out and do a site visit. And the guy that comes in to check the water system every year says we have one of the best because ours looks like a real garden.

Multiple sources of funding, material resources, and labor assistance are the norm for community gardens’ bridge relationships.

Tina: So, we had two or three different methods so we try to funding from where ever we can in this collaboration. We have collaborated with [Greenhelp], like I said Growing Power out of Milwaukee. These are our major ones. We have had some small grants from the city, department CDBG. For our youth program, in conjunction with
organization called [Real Food] and that’s with the other church on the next block. So we have collaborated to do what we need to do and to get these gardens done, but it’s all over the community and we have collaborated and we receive funding or we give events together in order to raise funds. We used our community site in order to raise funds from the community to buy things.

Payton: Two years ago… So she got together and we went to Block Club and DP and I and we converted together and converted together then we got the grant, which I knew about a grant that could be established for that, because it’s a lot of governments grants…paid over $1000 for books pertaining to grants… Well [Healthy Places] does something as far as grants, and I got literature up there about neighborhood grants and everything. Next thing I want to try and do is see can I spoke to somebody today about grants about the alley; I want to do something with the alley. [Healthy Places] See if I can talk with CTA because the L tracks are there, I want to try and get permission from the CTA since they own that property, to put some grass back there maybe paint those iron beams back there and put some plants going around.

Community gardeners invest themselves, and often, their financial resources, in the development of gardens. In doing so, bond and bridge relationships are built with other gardeners who have also invested their labor and money in the garden. Teamwork is supported through the financial activities of community gardening.

*How would you say the garden has impacted the community?*

Together, community gardeners are engaged in growing, eating, and sharing food that impacts the community. Community gardens’ food activities allowed them to form stronger bond relationships with neighbors. Most frequently, community gardeners note that social interaction is a major impact on the community in general as a result of the community garden.

Deidra: People stop to look and it gives them something to chat about, because we live in a community where people really don’t talk to one another but they will talk over flowers just like I was joking on the bus that too bad the Bears didn’t get into the Super Bowl because that give people, black and white people, an excuse to talk to each other. Everybody’s talking about the Super Bowl but we go to the election and the snow but you really don’t want to go to the election.

Laurence: Well, I’ve said this before and I’m going to say it again. It has brought the community closer together and brought knowledge about things as to who is who in the community. Like I said earlier, there was a lot of great people in the neighborhood that I
didn’t even know lived here and I been here for the last thirty years and I didn’t see no people that I really did know. And if it hadn’t been for the garden, I may – would have never known these people.

Aisha: I think the same thing. I think it’s a bonding thing and comes to know the people you live with. I’m pretty sure the people that live on this block already say hi and bye to each other, but when they are actually working together they get that opportunity to know each other more so it gives them the actual ability to be neighbors like no one just saying hi and bye but actually get to talk to the neighbors. I’m pretty sure that they talk to each other about the gardens so to communicate on the positives of it.

Activities of trust and sharing among these community gardeners have led to an increase in social well-being. Among the general impact of community gardens to bring people together and strengthen the bonds in communities, is critical healing which is most essential for the residents of Lincoln Heights’ social stability.

Sade: Yes, the garden has given him a connection to humanity. So I think it’s become different things. It’s given Nelson a purpose in his elder years. He’s disconnect from his children. He’s estranged from his wife and so I think it’s given him a purpose and that he has a family to govern. He talks to us like we’re children, he scolds us like we’re children: “Don’t do that, y’all stop!” So I think this is his sense of being that dad, that father, and that elder statesman.

So I think it’s become – One of our gardeners had a very, very difficult onset with a mental health challenge. So much so that they had left home, were sleeping in the streets, sleeping in cars, sleeping in the bus stations. We didn’t know where he was and he was not compliant with his meds. So when we finally found him, some of his family members got him in the emergency room and got him compliant with his meds. We invited him out to the garden for the next few days and he’s been there ever since. The garden has become his anchor and given him a purpose and helped him stay compliant. You know, because we talked about it.

…And they do, yes, yes. So we have quite a few people in the garden with mental health challenges, physical challenges, social challenges, you name it. So this garden was more than I ever could have imagined it could address so many issues in different ways and have profound impacts. In terms of the gentleman I was telling you about, his wife didn’t want anything with him-nothing. His children couldn’t get him to take his medication, but he comes out there and he starts calling E.R. “dad.” You hear him going “hey dad, hey dad!” and Mr. R. will say “son, did you take your medicine today?” I guess he needs someone to be concerned about him being compliant. He even calls “Dad, do you think
you need me to help you with anything?” I’m thinking wow! He’s going the mile to work at his own recovery and I like that. I can’t wait for this garden season to start up because it’s addressing so many things that we need outside of gardening. This is not just about gardening.

So as you can see, this garden is doing, Doug. I don’t know how much of this you can pull out from other stories, but pull it out. Get it out of there because this gardening thing is bigger than we give it credit for. And the garden is acting as a catalyst because it’s allowing us to show our humanity in different ways that we may not take risks to do in other ways. I wouldn’t get to work and tell people some of things I would share here about this garden. I don’t know if it would be because it would distract from my persona at work.

We’re at a very pivotal place in [Lincoln Heights]. We are at the point now where the tip over - we’re either going to lose this through lack of engagement, or we’re going to help stabilize it by having engagement, having gardens are one way to have engagement in the community. Sometimes they have to be self-funded. People can’t see it, but if people can’t sow the seeds for the future then pay it forward then do it. I just so happen to work at a place that will give money away for a living, - that’s what they do - what a blessing. They have compiled a portfolio of retirement to match my annual salary three times over as my retirement benefit. Will I spend it all, will I eat it all, will I wear it all? You know what I’m saying? Pay it forward somewhere, I didn’t work for it, well, I worked for it but the blessings of someone else’s hard work and labor through the grace, so I’m just trying to do what I can. And I say now, truly, and I say this in a real serious note we are at a very, very pivotal place in [Lincoln Heights]. We’re getting ready to either stabilize this community or we’re gonna to lose this, because we’re at the tip-over place. We’re at the tip-over place where the gangs are numerous the drugs are numerous the police are becoming very complacent, not very reactive, because people are like hey - it looks as if people out here—the stuff is so entrenched.

Not that I think this is a panacea, I’m not a fool you know. I don’t think these gardens are a cure-all for the community, but in terms of making a difference, making a positive impact, and stabilizing the community, yes, I believe that. I believe that with all my heart. Because if we can do it in one part, can’t we replicate this exercise in twenty-five different places? And stabilize twenty-five different places in the community, to engage twenty-five different groups in the community? I believe it would. I believe in that. And maybe this is a larger model, but when you stand back and look at -- I had a conversation with a president last September, I said B. I said, don’t you feel that all these new communities that we’re putting up. It lacks the part of the model to have green space incorporated in to the communities. Where’s the green space? Where’s the
gardens? Where’s the parks for the kids? I mean, surely were doing this affordable housing we’ve got the brick and mortar of it, but where’s the model of engagement in these new communities? And you can tell the question mark went off in his head. Now think about it. There is none outside of what they had in the projects and now there are new mixed communities, what’s to say I’ll go over and meet my neighbor at the front door and what to say “Mr. Williams, how are you doing?” What’s to say that we’ll have those interactions? But the garden will create the environments to have that type of interaction. I don’t know, I’ve got to do more of this.

The impact of community gardens in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood on social capital is impressive. Passersby to new and longtime members, social capital is beneficial to all. The comments made by gardeners show an indelible mark of solidified trust and sharing among participants.

*The impact of the community garden on families as considered by the gardeners was:*

Having fun growing, sharing, and trading their harvest among gardeners provides families bonding time around food grown in the community gardens.

Brenda: They like, ‘I came and got that big ole’ cucumber, and I took it home and my sister ate it all!’ Or um, ‘I’ve been having my…cucumber,’ stuff like that, fun, it’s been fun.

Travis: [W]hen I’m there sometimes I see families out there. In their, and then the…older ones that’s out there in the garden they try to get their young ones involved too. Because if you do that, that also impact the younger people that’s around the neighborhood to get more involved too, but like I said it’s a slow progress right now cause we just started so. … Not trading, but nor normally when um T. out there with her grandmother, they use, they normally do that for me. [Laughs]

Karen: It’s actually like families, like my best friend for example, that’s an activity that her and her kids look forward to. Me and my kids, we look forward to doing. And the other teens that come they look forward to coming out there. Be it the companionship or the work or however it goes they look forward to coming out there to be with us to pull up – to pick the vegetables, and things like that. So I really think it’s giving them something to look forward to besides the norm.

Community gardens build relationships that foster *intergenerational* bonds and links with extended kinships.
Nelson: Yeah, yeah that’s Miss B. and her granddaughter. …[W]ell one thing that’s affecting families because it’s, like her and her grandmother, they working closer together. And with children, they learning some things about how things grow… One brother brings his children out there, and we had some bohemians, one sister from the Bahamas came and her boys and they love it because they know a little bit about it cause out there they got them a garden. See the poorer an area is the more people who raise they own stuff. So this young fella he knew how to pick stuff without tearing up the vines, the oldest one did the youngest one he didn’t know yet, but the older one, so yes uh it’s, it has uh, now that’s the if the system lasts that’s the far reaching good affect it’s going to have, children will be, uh these children in this area here the ones that will be with their parents and then participating they’ll be more educated in uh gardening and how to sort of provide food for themselves.

Nancy: I don’t know about the people in community in general, but certainly seeing teenagers coming or young people coming to work in the garden with their grandparents or to come working with their parents, it gives some opportunity for bonding and for cross generation and educational and relation sharing and love sharing and so just from the people I have seen participating, it’s a really good thing.

This unifying impact of community gardens built from trust and shared relationships extend into families’ special needs regarding mentoring.

Sade: My son also has a mental health challenge and this has given him a purpose. [He] is very introverted, has a very, what they call blunting effect, he doesn’t show his emotions. He’s very yes-no, cut-dry, no eye contact.

Yes, it’s a sense of community and being concerned about one another. He’s on his page, being compliant with his meds. [He] has a social connection a few times a week. I’m at work, I leave him alone most mornings at 6:30pm. I’m not back until 7,8,9 o’clock most nights so he’s left to himself for his own devices for a large part of the day. So what I have to do is get him a buddy system for him to work with different men in the community, or help family members- just kind of farm him out to get him to do things, but in ways that are just constructive for him.

The following is a detailed account of an exemplary case that shows the impact a community garden has on a child, his adoptive family, and their faith group.

Sade: DJ is a foster child. His family has him in foster care. The mom was very perturbed. She’s had him now for about four years. I don’t think it’s DJ’s issue, I think it’s the mom’s. That’s just my stuff – you don’t need to write that. But, they gave him back last year, but September they gave him back to the foster system. And that father, Winton became so depressed. I don’t know, I didn’t see the young guy in the meetings, I saw the mom and she looked very disturbed. Winton had become very introverted – very salty – very short. I thought “something is not right. I don’t know what it is, and don’t
want to get into your business.” Two or three weeks I hadn’t seen DJ and thought I’d ask Anita because a whole month had passed. So I’m gon ask - “Where’s DJ?” She said Ask Tasha “Sade I gave him back, I couldn’t do nothing with that little boy” I thinking sister “you’ve had him for four and a half years. Tasha was it so challenging? I mean, ask us. We’d be happy to babysit, or keep him for the weekend to give you a break. Whatever we need to do, we’ll do it but you guys need to go back and get him. You put him back into a system that is penalizing children because families are unstable. Don’t do that. Please don’t do that. Winton say, I say “brother you need to go and get him, please. He needs to be here.” The whole congregation needs him. The garden needs him.” I, you know, it’s hard to see a grown man cry because you know they might not have made the best decision listening to his wife. She may be perturbed, she may be disturbed, she may have some issues, but that family needs that little boy just for the solidarity and the joy that he brings and being able to holler and say “DJ, sit down” through the joy he brings you. And sure enough, when we get to the meeting, who is sitting there. They went back and got him. And I said, now, don’t let me convince your family to do something that you’re not prepared to do. But this congregation needs this little boy. We’re here for you all, and if it’s becoming that challenging for you guys, talk to us about the issues. If it’s economic, we can help you. If it’s having time off or time out, we can help you. But don’t put him back in a system where they’re penalizing children because their families are dysfunctional, because their families are discombobulated. Don’t penalize the kid. And that dad has not been happier. Winton, he’s a different man today.

He went home that night. He said he called, “I was touched by what you all said, ‘Go get that young man. Go get that lil fella. We need him, we need him in the garden. We need him in the congregation.

Oh yes, yes sir! But they went back and they got him as a result of having these conversations and I don’t think it was our convincing. I think they needed to convince themselves that DJ was a part of that family. They’d had him since he was three years old and when you said you got him, you said how traumatized he was, and then you’re going to put him back?

And will that be his picture of the human family, that is all just--. We don’t want to send that message to him. And they’re doing fine. They’re doing very well. I have not seen Tasha as happy as she is now; I have not seen Tasha; as happy as she is now.

But they had given him back for a couple of weeks and I’m thinking “sister…come on now. He’s a part of this family, you need him. And believe it or not, he needs you. And they went back and they reconciled it, and they needed to. I say, “who will help me put the dirt in the beds like you did last year? You’ve got to come to and help!”

Gardeners’ expressions of social capital show a profound impact on their families. Love, hope, and faith in families’ commitment to supporting each other are most apparent. Community gardening extends this family unity to others in the community and is a profound testament to an
increase in their neighborhood’ sense of community.

*The impact of the community garden on kids as considered by the gardeners was:*

Community gardens impact on *kids* is related to providing a fun and recreational space to learn in.

Brenda: Exactly, and I like them from the ages 6 to 15. …The young folks, they’ll get up, they’ll be on my porch; they’ll be on the yard, sitting and waiting.

Mona: Right and some of the kids have now started using it to play ball on the lot. And we enjoy hearing the laughter. You know the funning around that kids are supposed to do. You know instead of tote’n a gun or breakin into somebody’s house.

Exposure to gardens in the city is important to educating the *next generation* of gardeners and agriculturalists.

Lynn: Well because we live in a city, we don’t get too much exposed to gardening and that teaches teens and kids how to garden and then I know that when they started the garden, it wasn’t those boys standing on the corner no more. So, it got them way from the corner and then told us to do something outside the house.

Arial: Actually I think that’s pretty good because we have a lot of teenagers well not a lot but teenagers come out and help to keep it going and I think they are learning a lot about it too. And umm hopefully some of them might take up agriculture, who knows?

Community gardens are a teaching opportunity for sharing knowledge. It is an avenue to addressing healthy eating and reducing *childhood obesity*.

Nelson: See the poorer an area is the more people who raise they own stuff. So this young fella he knew how to pick stuff without tearing up the vines, the oldest one did the youngest one he didn’t know yet, but the older one, so yes uh it’s, it has uh, now that’s the if the system lasts that’s the far reaching good affect it’s going to have, children will be, uh these children in this area here the ones that will be with their parents and then participating they’ll be more educated in uh gardening and how to sort of provide food for themselves.

Curtis: Dramatically because some of things we pull from this garden, we deal with the kid’s café. Some of the food is not there on the plate, we take it from the garden and cook it in the garden and feed those kids with a nutritional standpoint. There got a program called 54321, which deals with the nutritional aspect and dealing with childhood obesity. So I mean, most kids don’t like spinach and greens and this stuff, so we add that on to
their meal that they got on their plates. They get that and some of the seniors don’t get as much fiber as they need to get and you can get that in calcium and Vitamin D and we know that. And they come on and get it on those turnip bottoms and those red tomatoes you have. So they understand the nutritional value.

Community gardens are accessible and inclusive *outdoor educational classroom* for various children activities.

Earline: In the summer the children would stop in there and seem like they really enjoy it. …Right now, it’s a good place for them to come because they don’t have nowhere to go. So it’s utilized as a park more than anything else. And I see teachers from time to time bring their children down there too. And there was a daycare down the street and they used to walk their children down, sit down in the garden and read to their children, so people are aware it’s there.

Gardeners understand that children need access to supportive environments and that when gardens provide this support, their gardens grow not only food but also, community.

Community gardens foster communication built from trust. While they are gardening, adults are free to engage youth in shared values. Legacies are transmitted by the behaviors exhibited in these neighborhood common grounds.

*What do you think people get out of participating in this garden?*

The participants recognized several *benefits* they received from community gardening activities. These benefits included those particular to individuals, families, and communities. A majority of the benefits are *psychological*, *physical*, and *spiritual* at the individual level.

Gardeners acknowledged having a sense of ownership, belonging, and community from garden activities. A few made note of the physical exercise provided by laboring in the garden. Some spoke about their feeling and impressions of miracles and communion with a belief in God related to gardening.

Nearly half as many categories of benefits are noted by gardeners at the community level than at the *individual* level; however, three key components of social capital are identified from
benefits attributed to community gardens. The following are gardeners’ responses related to how the community garden has built relationships of trust, sharing, and hope among the gardeners.

**Gathering**

Bonds of trust are built and strengthened when *gardening together* among those with common interests in gardening, such as family and friends. Community gardening is fun as a recreational activity when experienced with others. Both joy and jokes are an indication of trust established and increased among familiar and new acquaintances when community gardens are active.

Tasha: [I]t was kind of fun. Joy. (laughter) Just working together. It was just kind of fun. Personally, I thought it was kind of fun. Getting to know everybody. More so well when you not in the [place of worship]. [J]ust getting to know each other personally. Just having fun talking—it was just fun.

Aisha: In the garden yeah, as well as the many ways that we get closer together. It was fun. You have your hot days where it’s too hot to garden but when you get here you’ll have someone say come on sister you can do it. I mean you just do it, I mean you can do. It’s just fun. Me and my granny joke with the friends and whoever is in the garden so it takes your mind off of a lot of other little things that’s going on.

Relationships of trust are bridged among those with different interests when community gardens are populated and visible to others. Community gardening *encourages* welcoming behavior and discouraged unwelcoming behavior. Neighbors are more trusting of each other in the outdoor settings created by community gardens. Community residents are provided with an opportunity to be outdoors and comfortably communicate and interact with each other.

Nelson: [T]here’s two of the positive things and another positive thing is, is that even the roughnecks in the area they see something growing and they ask, they stop to talk more. Yeah, that’s positive. Before they just walked by, eh, doing whatever their thing is. They don’t do that no more. They look over and say, ‘Hey, what’s uh so what’s over there man?’… Oh it’s going, it’s going to uh blossom into something uh like I said, there’s been some very positive things that have come out of it already. Uh, the people, even the roughnecks like I say, see certain things that just by walking by and they see it and they, there’s a communication uh, things that wasn’t there before… You know,
communication is one of the things that has caused gaps and caused all kinds of things, but what is some form of communication many times end up also a way of working out things.

Maureen: Since, I have something to do I am being part of something, other than just being in the house like I said, a lot of them are retired and don’t have anywhere to go. You know access to do other things like that and that’s right here on the block for them and that’s a good thing….It’s made it better, it’s made the neighborhood better. Like I said, that it’s less hanging out. They have no reason to. Now, when you come out and you see bunch of older people in a garden you wouldn’t stand there and drink a 40 oz. You know hang out, you and your buddy started dice gang, you don’t want to do that there. You have to go somewhere else. So, the community [Garden] has been good for [the block].

Gardeners expressed sharing among others with examples that grew in number from the general, to food activities, and giving food to others. In general, a person can help themselves and their families through the practicality of gardening as a community. Furthermore, the sharing among gardeners and people throughout the neighborhood builds community.

Arial: Honestly I think it gives people a little more of a self-esteem to be able to take care of yourself…take care of your family to see that your able to do something…and me being a city girl and not knowing that much about it…even just to know that I can do it…if I have to do it which is now if I have to is the situation for most people…but if you have to you able to do things for yourself.

Curtis: [T]hey get a sense of ownership. I think…a sense of being involved and engaged in this project and a hands on approach. Many of them have some idle time where they’re not doing anything. They get a chance to get out there and get their hands dirty and get involved and get engaged. Get over there and understand that they are helping people helping other people.

Shared garden activities engage gardeners, families, other groups, people in the neighborhood, and private and civic entities. Time spent with others in the garden is simply enjoyed individually, which provides for relationships to be propagated among those share their time in the garden together.

Elaine: Well, my daughter goes with me and she’s twelve and she goes to the garden with me and some of her friends go with me, and they like it. They like running around seeing the stuff growing and everything and she even got to be on the news, so she really enjoyed that.
Karen: They I mean, they just, they get out there, it’s like they get lost. It takes them from like how it used to take me as a kid. From that every day, goings-ons, to wow! This is just us and it you know like this is just what the world is to them like they in. So yeah! …Besides experience and um? The word I’m looking for is – (food that too) Companionship and the relationships that you make with other gardeners. That bonding over something as simple as planting – gardening. Also seeing that taking away the fact that they can actually [do] something that they can actually do something that they thought they could not do. [Discovering that] It is easy to do. They are actually producing the food that they eat or that they family eats or things like that.

Brenda: [Y]eah, ‘Girl gimme some of your tomatoes, gimme some of those cucumbers.’ And then I met all the gardeners …Mhmm, so once you get started and you start noticing other people and you get to talking to them. So they’ll come by look at yours, and you’ll go by look at theirs. And like I said there’s so many people that have gardens, so if they take yours you know that, Mr. E down here will give me some and um, I can’t even think of the man’s name, he’s gonna always give me some. And they share. They have so much. So if somebody’s garden get picked, it’s ok… The comradity [friendliness] and competition, competition is a lot of fun. It’s really a lot of fun and I think it really joins the community.

Serving

Specifically sharing food was mentioned most frequently by the gardeners. Gardeners gave food to fellow gardeners, their families, various groups, and others in the community, freely. This activity was a clear result of the abundant amount of food made available from the garden and the gardeners choice to not let it go to waste when understood they could not eat it all themselves.

Brian: Cherries [tomatoes]. I set mine in the window seal. So they can redden up. I just eat them just like that. I wash them off and pop one in my mouth. I shared them with different ones. I ask them what they want. First I tell them what I have. And then I share. Those going to my wife. The lady she know - she likes green tomatoes. It’s a lot of them out there. (laughter) so don’t let no frost come – not just yet.

Helen: Well besides feeding they family, I think they get uh relaxation from it. I know I did…Well I know at the end of October we was able to, um well Mr. Nelson gave most of the neighborhood some food out the garden so I think they benefit from it pretty much. Some of the groups that gardeners share with include various faith-based institutions and the elderly.

Olivia: [Y]ou know every summer we have a friends and family day [at the place of
worship]. So we told the people to give out clothes, we feed them. Little small things we try to do, good things for the community. So we told them you know, if you want something, vegetables or if you want some tomatoes, just get a little bit because everybody needs some. So we got a little bit so then the next couple of weeks we started growing, most started growing, so my church members said “hmm”, so they start getting a little bit here, a little bit there and then all of a sudden they done whipped me out. They done whipped me out so by, I want to say by the mid-August all of that stuff were gone. Yeah, them old folks came in with they little bags and everything and they just got it. So, but I did manage to keep me lettuce and tomatoes and cucumbers. Fresh, the taste was just so different than going to the store.

[W]e had cookouts in the summertime, we had to um, in fact all the salad stuff came from the, from the garden. We had big things of salad, tomatoes, cucumbers, and all that came from the garden so it was really nice. And the first lettuce that we had from the garden, cause someone had bought something from the store and she said that it even taste different. It’s just so, it ‘aint artificial. I said ‘naw because it’s straight from here. So you can taste the difference. You know, if you, if you really grew up in this uh, growing a garden or going to the store buying it. If you knew the difference you’d taste the difference. Like a tomato here just tastes so different. The tomatoes are so good.

Russell: Well yea, now that people come out and they meet other people, they see the atmosphere and stuff and this and that, they feel safe but like I said this is something we run in the daytime so you know. By me being here all my life I know quite a bit of people and this and that. We never had no problem within the years we been doing this so, you know, we have a pretty nice market for stuff. And we also have all kinds of other ethnicities that come shop with us. We have people from all over that come shop with us. They hear about us and they come out and see our little garden and they fall in love with our garden and they come shop with us, you know. And were known for giving stuff away and you know, all we don’t sell we say we’re going to give it away and people know that. That’s why a lot of them come kind of late because they greedy (laughing).

Well we have a churches we give it to, we got some schools that we donate it to, we got senior citizens buildings we give it to, so we have plenty of people we give it to. But by growing it, you know it’s not a strain on us, you know, we got so much of it. So what we don’t sale, we just give it away…Well, you know this is something else I do, I be delivering to some of the people. I take stuff to them. But if we had a market, it would be inside so they would be inside…

I like doing that (laughing). They say he live on the corner….prices too high and stuff and this and that. Give me what you want. That’s just how I am. But we try to have a set price because you know, we have to pay bills and stuff and this and that. …I’ll give it to them and that’s just how I am. We grow it, so what the hell you know. Like you said if we don’t give it away, it’s gonna spoil. I get plenty…might as well give it away.

Based on the majority of their responses, gardeners shared with the neighborhood for the most part.
Leslie:  They be coming out for some vegetables. They ask when they gonna be ready.

Lois:  The seniors don’t come out, but we fix boxes for them and donate to them, what can come out.

Laurence:  Well, we get the produce but they get a feeling, a sense of doing something to help themselves help the community and they get an inner feeling on that, see, that what I’m doing is something helping the community and cause a lot of people who plant a garden, they have plots there, they haven’t gotten anything out of themselves. They just feel good about giving it to others, so the garden itself has really helped others and a lot of people feel that, “Although I want to take anything from the garden but I can really give from it.”

Well, we like greens, my family loves greens, collard green. They had collard and turnips that they left over. Squash we had over there. Yellow squash. And had cucumbers and then we had some other things going on. And then we had “butterbeans,” those, we, we love butterbeans, We didn’t grow them exactly on our plot, it was actually in someone else’s plot but we shared them. And we had some of their stuff and we shared and it worked out real good like that.

Enabling

Community gardens inspire communities to hope for an improved future for their neighborhood as a result of established trust and sharing. They imagine how to improve their surroundings. Community gardens clarify to participants that a belief in a vibrant community is possible. Individual motivations for self-improvement are pursued in the interest of community betterment.

Brianna:  I think they get out [of it], “if we can do it, they can do it too.” And come together as friends and get along and plant more gardens because we gone need it in the near future…It would build up the community. You see this beautiful garden out there, people are going to wonder like “Hey, how they do that?!?!?” ‘Just get involved.”…If we divided, we give them a little section, an inch, and they can plant one tomato. That’s enough for the whole neighborhood…They will have to find more plots. There are a lot of houses that are torn down. All they have to do is look at what we doing and go down whenever Ms. P went and put that bid in and get them a plot.

Sade:  Not only that, they don’t care. They’re very demoralizing. And then all summer, they were just encouraging us, “Hey y’all, whatcha all doin? Can we come over? Oh, Yes, please come by.” So it became a place where people were welcome, they were warm, they felt safe, they felt a part of something. They knew it was a larger mission than what they have seen before. They couldn’t believe, they just couldn’t believe what
was going to happen. They just couldn’t believe it. And to be honest with you I could not either. It was like a miracle coming up out of the desert… I hope it helped, I hope it helped,

Nelson: I think sometime in September I’ll going downtown to take a course in organic gardening. And uh in recognition uh another one course seminar in recognition uh edible…certain weeds out there, certain things out there, is edible, we just don’t know it. My grandfather, they knew it, yeah, certain…And uh, we going to another seminar on herbal, you know herbal recognition, herbal things that carry certain uh things that help certain things of the body that puts into the body herbal, yeah. They going to have, they had uh uh a beginning of it last Saturday and I had to go to my sisters some sisters that was a hundred and one, so I missed it. They had it at the library. …So we getting uh, and it’s helping me and it’s going to help the community too. But it’s helping me to be able to have the background that I got from my grandfather and when I came, this this, later study of it I’ll be able to bring the two together see?

Summary

Social capital among community gardeners is evident in their responses to eight questions regarding: decisions, rules, responsibilities, planning, relationships, financing, impact, and benefits of community gardening. The elements of social capital: trust, sharing, and collective efficacy are all present in this order based on the information they shared in interviews. Their social capital extends from trust to sharing and from sharing to collective efficacy.

First, trust is present in the core group of community gardeners. Bonding relationships among community garden leaders and its general members are apparent in their planning and decision making efforts. Next, sharing is demonstrated by the collective activities (see Appendix C) of everyone involved in building bridges, taking on responsibility of paying into and being awarded for their experiences of sharing. Thirdly, community gardeners’ collective efficacy is relatable to their initial success of planning and developing community gardens, which leads them to foreseeably make improvements collectively, among other broadly shared challenges that can have an impact on the entire community.
CHAPTER 6
IMPLICATIONS BEYOND COMMUNITY GARDENS

The measures used in this study to access the implications of gardeners’ social capital beyond the community gardens are implied and expressed in some of their responses to six questions and several specific responses to other exploratory questions that engaged collective efficacy. How does the garden reflect the people who live in this community? What would you like to change about the garden? Where would you like to see this garden in five years? What would you need to make this happen? What are some of the activities that members of the garden participate in away from the garden? Where are some of the safe places in the neighborhood that you feel safe?

How does the garden reflect the people who live in this community?

Impressive

Community gardens positively reflect that together a community can use the landscape in order for clean, attractive, social, and safe places to change neighborhoods for the better. Gardeners believe that those who live in Lincoln Heights find community gardens are assets that reflect positively upon them. Two examples from several gardeners share brief reflections:

Lois: Well, they come back. They praise it.

Travis: Reflect? For real, so for the most part it reflect positivity. Because you know most, most times its not, [Lincoln Heights] is not the most pleasant place so, when you do things like that in the community its sort of like softens the hearts of people that that’s looking from the, from the um, basically from the outside looking in. When they see things like that because you normally in poor neighborhoods, they don’t think about growing stuff like that only suburban areas who have the funds to do so, so I think it reflects a good, um it’s um basically positive thing to do. It reflects positivity.

Uniting

Community gardens show that residents in a low-income urban community can come
together to make their neighborhood better.

Earline: I know this is a community garden. We started this garden out with the partners being the alderman, the church across the street, the school, and parents and children which was the community. That’s why it’s called the community garden.

Nancy: Well, I think it gives some of the younger people, even some of the gang members that pass…I think it gives them an opportunity to see what some of their other neighbors are like. That their other neighbors are working cohesively, that they are calm, and happy out there working together and I see some of the guys walk by and look, some of the girls walk by and look and I find it very interesting, nobody comes over and bothers the garden, at least from my experience, nobody comes in and tears stuff up and it’s easy to access, it’s not like you couldn’t just go in. So, I think it’s building some respect for the people that are doing the garden from those who may not be involved.

Beautifying

Community gardens are not only an indication of a community’s coming together for a positive activity but also to clean-up the neighborhood.

Deidra: Naa - They’re just a reflection of the fact that I did not want crack houses on my block so I had crack houses torn down. Then, when you get rid of so much property you have to do something with it. You clean it up and it’s easier to maintain and to garden than it is to keep it a vacant lot.

Brenda: How does the garden reflect, that they’re doing something. They’re doing something good, that’s healthy. Um, we have a lot of flyers out here about community gardens and their…and they’re taken a part. So it’s kind of, it’s a good thing. It’s a good thing. And seems like the ones that do have gardens really take pride in them and they try to keep them weeded and nice, you don’t see a lot of raggedy gardens. Cause people that do it, you know, they take it serious. So they really keep it clean. And then because they don’t want rats and stuff, you know, they take pride in their gardens. So it’s really a good thing.

Mirroring beauty, community gardens present an attractive image of neighborhoods they are found in.

Brian: It reflects well on them. Because it has a beautification type atmosphere, we got the flowers there now. It makes and empty lot into something with nothing….Well they walk by and they say how nice it look and all like that. But that’s about it. You know we be out there and, “Man this show looks nice, it look different over here, it looks better” you know so – These are the young people saying these things I don’t know – We’ll see. (laughter)
Ruth: The neighbors on each side of me, they started, I started, the ladies down the street started probably by then she gave me plants I started then the neighbors on the side of me she started then my other neighbor “can you buy me some flowers” I bought him some flowers. Then the lady down the street “can you come put some flowers, can I have that” … and so it can catch on then it will make the neighborhood look nice and everybody, especially like the block when you try and get people to do it. It makes the neighborhood look better, the street and the block.

Neighborhood

Community gardens compel people to hold conversations; making them social magnet places for area residents that come in contact with them.

Arnel: I think it reflects well on them because a lot of them stand and look. A lot of them would come by and talk and smile. That’s pretty good because we have four on that block that participate.

Sade: So how does the garden reflect the community? As I said there’s already an established garden there and if you walk up and down the alleys you’ll see a number of these people gardening in their back yard. There’s a lot of tomato plants, and pepper plants, and okra plants in their back yards. So I think this garden is only an extension of what they do on their own property but this is being done collectively. In my mind, what better way can you knit/get people together in a community that lacks trust – that lacks stability – that lacks connectedness? Than to have people - Because even people who don’t garden will come over. They’ll come over and talk to us when they see us out there, they’ll come and get a chair and sit. They will set a spell. People want to do that. So I think if the city- even the community will think about doing more green space – and maybe not a garden, maybe just a meditation garden as just some green space with some benches to allow people to have a place to come and gather- a gathering place in the community. That’s the way this garden is reflecting. It’s become a gathering place in this community.

Cordiality imitates from community gardens upon the neighborhoods that they are located in, which results in safer communities. Here are a few shared examples from gardeners:

Brianna: I think it shows that we can get along and work together and I think they like it, because it keeps down a lot of gang activity from over there because the police patrol the areas over there sometime when we were over there so I think that scared them.

Sade: I thought we were going to be so disrespected and so violated. I really did. I didn’t think those gang members were going to allow us to stay there but now what’s interesting is they’ve become our biggest advocates. They have become the biggest protectors. We had some guys to come in trying to take the wire fence. They [gang members] said “Come on, that stuff belongs to the people, don’t come in here trying to
take their stuff.” And I’m thinking “what a way to advocate?! – To protect us?!” So they’ve been our protectors.

Deidra: So that’s just it. See that’s how you keep yourself safe in a neighborhood like [Lincoln Heights], make friends with the drug dealers because it’s the drug dealers that can keep the bangers under control. See the real danger is the bangers because the drug dealers are business men. They want their customers to come and go in peace because if they don’t come and go in peace it’s bad for business. And so they like order. A lot of the drug dealers like flowers. The little petty ones like to hide their wears in there. But the big one they like it – you know. In fact one of the drug dealers I was proctoring for ACT last fall and the same day when they had for Green Coop giveaway. So one of the drug dealers went and picked up my plants for me.

*Change* is a culminating impression that is placed into view regarding the presence of community gardens in neighborhoods. The following are a few gardeners giving a voice its transformative qualities:

Lynn: Well, I know that when we started the garden on the block, the block got more – quiet and people … kind of respected the garden. So, it made the people in the neighborhood better.

Karen: It actually reflects on them in a positive light on how they want some type of change – or some type of relief in the area and in the community.

Audrey: I think it represents new birth, life, that there is a possibility for change. Once something looked like it was lost and then it’s been revived. I think simple things can bring about a change, bigger things. … Pride.

From these gardeners’ images of self-reflection we come to understand this community’s social capital from their frame of reference. A sense of safety comes, in part, from community garden interactions that build trust. While gardeners share a common demographic, they benefit much more for sharing experiences in a common environment. From these comments gardeners express a sense of positive change that they have dreamt might be possible.

*What would you like to change about the garden?*

Heat, intense labor, and lack of knowledge are some of the factors that gardeners wish to change about their experience with community gardening. The most frequently mentioned
factors that disconnect people from community gardens: lack of motivation, knowledge, and fears about gardening, can be managed and overcome through gardening education.

A lack of *motivation* was noted as the most frequently separating current and potential community gardeners from being active gardeners. Inspiring education efforts within the group of gardeners and beyond them into the neighborhood could remedy this lack of motivation as a moot point. While the initial group of gardeners can serve as garden ambassadors to non-gardeners building off of the existing motivated gardeners into the community and beyond, meanwhile, lack of motivation points to the potential of educational remedies.

*Enlightening*

*Motivational* education is needed to encourage home gardeners to be invested in their community garden which gives the neighborhood added value.

Payton: Well the ones that live down there they love the scenery but they don’t participate in the beautification you know I guess they say, well this is my house and that’s all I’m going to beautify is here I’m not gone do nothing across the street. That’s the cops you know.

Laurence: No I haven’t heard anything like that,” but you gonna help some people who just don’t wanna be involved because we just got some people who are just indifferent and I’ve really seen the way “a boy” the way he works out there all the time. Well that means that somebody is noticing you and noticing us and that we are really interested in what we are doing. But you got some people that gonna have their own way of criticizing and what not and, I mean, we respect that so it really don’t bother. And just encourage us more to just keep doing what we’re doing.

Youth can benefit from successfully *inspiring* experiences that provide an understanding of the benefits gained from community gardens and the rewards in taking it on as a responsibility.

Brenda: Exactly, and I like them from the ages 6 to 15. 15 on up, they not interested in no garden. They’ll be one to take some fruit, but they not gonna be a part of it. When I get my teens involved it’s more like open mic, I have them like taking pictures, they’ll do that. But they’re not into cleaning, they not gonna, nuh-uh. When we out here cleaning
up, the teenagers are not part of it, they sleep, because we start early. The young folks, they’ll get up, they’ll be on my porch, they’ll be on the yard, sitting and waiting.

Nelson: Uh, well for one thing, uh we tried to get the ones that’s coming there we don’t do uh, or we do something like a screening, like I talking to that young fella. I told you about him right? So we try to keep challenges like that out of the picture. See what we want to do is for them to focus on raising stuff, doing your part, carrying your load of responsibility, see. Now if you don’t care to do this then don’t take a spot here. Cause all these people are doing that and you going to make them feel bad if you don’t do what you want to do and they doing what they supposed to do. We don’t want that, so we exclude it. Those that want to and you got a lot that do, they really do, yeah. Now, they might not know exactly how, but you see now they got experienced gardeners, like myself and others, sister Sade, there ain’t too many that’s experienced, M, he understand something about it, but then you got some that work like him, he works. So we try to have those that work, those that don’t, we try to fill in for them. But those that they the ones that ain’t doing no work we they walking along they’re peeping over telling body what they want they said they want somebody to give them something for nothing see and it won’t work there. Eee community garden ain’t for them. What I mean you know until they accept the whole package, yeah. We got a couple young men, one guy just got out of prison and uh he was talking with me and he was saying the challenge he had with trying to find a job and uh he’s in a, it’s not a halfway house, it’s [nearby], that that new division right there, …on this side of the street, all new place, yeah so he stay there and that’s for people that’s trying to get their life straightened out, and they don’t have a job, got a studio place there and they go up in there to that uh church called it to be built, they got a certain grant from the government, and they built that place for him. He’s there, so he got a garden spot. So he came back and he did a lot of work out there and he helped us move a lot of dirt into the boxes and he wasn’t back for two weeks and then he came back and I know what’s going on with him cause I went to school for seminary on addicts

Again, education about gardening as a community can provide the support to learn and be successful at gardening.

Sade: But a lot of people don’t know how vegetables are grown exactly. So it’s a learning process and it’s a good thing. We had enough space but see – what people are not aware of how things are grown and planting – it was like a trial and error this time. Cause this is the first time. So they would plant like some greens and tomatoes and things like that and some of the vines over grew some of the lower growing plants. So they learned from that. I believe that a lot of times that it is because of the fact that – first of all they don’t have the knowledge of how things grow. So people have gotten away from it. People need leadership primarily. They may seen us doing it and they was like they got them a plot – a little spot in the garden. Because someone has to take the lead in doing these kind of things. Once you see someone kind of that the lead in doing these kinds of things- then you can get other people, they chime in also.

Arial: …like I said my first time I learned some things that I wouldn’t do next time…like
planting so much of one thing in one area or learning that I should plant the cucumbers on the outside of the box instead of the inside…well not on the outside but closer to the edge so they won’t go in and strangle up everything else that’s all around it…And I think for the most part…especially for most of us that are new to this are learning from it…so it’s a learning experience and you learn that there are different things that you can try the next time to do things a little better like one friend that was talking about how the cucumbers were strangling my vegetables…I shoulda did like I did the tomatoes…get the wire thing and put it around it so it’ll grow up and grab on to that and wont grab on to the vegetables…so I know next year I can do that.

Being informed about community gardening can reduce the foreign perception that gardening is unfamiliar terrain and thus unattached.

Brenda: It probably would have just been a country thing; that some country people do. I just think that it’s more accepted now. I think it’s just the time for it, it’s the perfect time. Because, like when I moved here if somebody told me something about a garden, I don’t think it would have been a very nice conversation, ‘I’m not gonna have no garden, you just crazy. You not gonna get nothing in here, no I don’t even want it.’ Well we get some houses here, so there’s the space for it.

Laurence: But the main thing was that just people was able to do things that they never done before. We had some people come, one lady, I know, in particular, she saying that she never been raised a garden and she was thrilled to see how her garden...

Overcoming

Fear of crawly creatures, attendant to the conditions for gardening, is cause for a reeducation of the value of insects to the success of the community garden.

Arial: I don’t like bugs crawling on me. I thought she was joking until I looked it up and its actually true. If it’s not a watermelon patch around anywhere and you smell a watermelon it’s a snake somewhere. Again for me… I’m really not a bug-oriented person. Although, when I do go out there I do kinda oil up with bug… I really don’t like things crawling on me.

Brenda: Well, let me tell you about my garden. When I retired [Ruth] said, ‘Girl you got this big old yard.” She said “you need to put some tomatoes and stuff out here” And I was like, ‘ [Ruth] I’m not doing that.’ She said, ‘Well what are you going to do?’ She said, ‘I’ll help you” I said, ‘Girl I am not doing that. I’m not a farmer. I don’t do the vegetables, I don’t do none of that.’ So she um, came by and she just took a hole and she started working, and she’s like ‘Come on over here and do this!’ And I’m like, “Girl, worms? I’m not doing that!’ So once she started you know, teaching me how to do it I still was like afraid of worms, so I had gloves I went and bought all the equipment cause I
had to protect myself. ...Yeah I didn’t want to eat the vegetables because of the worms and all of that.

The same suitable weather conditions that allows for the proliferation of community garden crops also makes for an environment for wildlife numerous to a point of being threatening pests to crops and gardeners.

Karen: Once you get into the teens okay this not for me grandma, I’m not going out there snapping no peas, I’m not going, picking no greens, I’m sorry it’s too hot. But when I go now so as I walk in mom like the bushel, well the bag over there go out there and get them tomatoes or go get this and um. I had completely forgot, the last couple of years when I went, and we were in the kitchen cooking and she was like go outside and get the green tomatoes, I’m like okay where they at, who car, she was like [I laughs] get the basket. Come here let me show you right there the third row. I’m like oh you want me to do it. Auntie I’m not going out. No, mmh mhh. She was like get out. I’m like aunti you got gardens snakes out there. She, girl they aint going to bite you. Get out there. And she literally made me, made me take my kids out in the garden that why they founded that like momma we want a garden, I’m like [I laughs] okay but when I got out there I, it was like I loved it, it was just so quiet and just so peaceful.

Aisha: The weather. Well there’s storms, I know when I went out of town there was a big hail storm that kinda…. the things that we were doing a little bit. Umm also the extreme heat. I also ….from squirrels and some rabbits been eating off the stuff.

Collective efficacy is foretold by the remarks addressing change by community gardeners in Lincoln Heights. Claiming open spaces in the block has empowered gardeners to imagine a variety of possibilities. Their efforts are energizing local residents to take an active role in initiating trust and sharing relationships around food focused community gardens.

Where would you like to see this garden in five years?

Beyond their current state, gardeners’ collective efficacy measures to improve the garden and community are practical yet extensive. Simple additional resources are a priority for the basic established community gardens, like tools and seating, appropriation of vacant land, and support for growing more and a wider variety of crops. Larger ideas for the community garden included building facilities: greenhouses, amphitheaters, and community centers for educational
and performance programing, child daycare services, and business for community employment. Collectively their future vision extends from community gardens into meeting their

*neighborhood needs:* acquiring amenities for existing garden spaces, access and use of more available land to garden, increasing the crop production, offering educational opportunities, and gaining economically through the development of local controlled businesses.

*Necessities*

Gardeners could move beyond the garden to further address other common concerns, by having some of their practical needs met. Every community garden had a wish list compiled by its users. Some *essential* and *basic* resources that could improve their community gardening experience. Permanent *seating* and other accommodations in the gardens are noted as needed by participants.

Aisha: In another five years I mean we have a lot of plots out here but I would like to see nothing but plots and probably like a bench or something that people could relax on and you know I just want it to be like someone’s backyard where you feel at home. So somewhere everyone cannot just come and garden but come to relax and probably have like I don’t know a little party or something.

Maureen: So, you really got to put something into it, but I mean from this stand point it’s a good thing if they can get something like may be benches, you know so when they do come they just bring their individual chairs now, but that’s just for temporary thing, because they go the low temporary fence now and that’s nice…

Gardeners noted that *fencing*, specific *vegetation*, *water* access, and other accommodations for the gardens are needed resources.

Audrey: But see that’s we eventually want it to be fenced off and then locked out at night. You know and like I say have a gazebo area out there and some trees and some sitting area and some swings. Uh sliding board a little area for children to play on. Nothin real picky, somewhere where the little kids’ll be safe and on a residential street. They’ll be closed off. Don’t have to worry about them getting and running out into the street. They can run around and play as much as they want right there and don’t have to worry about any cars. … (Some of these other lots would eventually like for them to be vegetable gardens. … You know and have and be able to take our tools and be able to
get to it to work it the way it should be. For instance like watering. You know that’s an issue. You know cuz like for the garden we use our water. I actually invested in getting hoses to extend out there. Matter of fact I probly bought 1 too many. You know to extend from our house over and water. …Mona: But before [they] had it was a hydrant put across the street because some kinda way it had been so many accidents there they closed that and shut it down but they replaced it you know and she had a hose line that she received from the fire department where she could bring it across and water it because one while that’s what she was doin. And then another while she had asked us a while years back.

Heather: I just know to fine tune it and improve on the technique again next year and then too I wanna put something other than the vegetables. I’d like to have some flowers out there just for beautification you know and whatever to hopefully discourage the squirrels uh cause they gave us a rough time on the ground too. …[B]ecause all the ground is not the same. We got some good soil and then we got some sandy soil and then we got some sinkhole areas back there that I know we’re not going to be able to do anything with other than maybe if you can grow some wild flowers up there or something on that end but just enough to get the lot to look good so if there’s somebody passing by “Oh that’s cute, aw that’s nice” and that’s about the science of it. …Hopefully they will bring more soil and some mulch and that’s the biggest thing that we really need because the seedlings and whatever we’ll pretty much deal with them I’m sure if they bring soil they’ll probably bring some seedlings too. …Yeah we have some development and so we look for better this year. …I’d like to have up a sign first of all so that people could understand this is [Lincoln Heights] community. I did a paper on it and I called it the Garden Spot. But anyway, I’d really like to see some beautiful perennials out there a couple of them to really wake up a person’s senses. You know to even if you’re seen and you feel like you’re smelling something gorgeous I don’t want it to be too chaotic I’d like to have a what a trellis out there or an arbor or something for a vine to grow on …They used to have a vine growing outside with a swing on the porch. Oh that was nice you know…perhaps this year we can garden some new lawn and I can have a few of the older, … people put those things out and have some lemonade or you know I’m thinking it would be nice and you know…

Proportion

While gardeners planned to improve the space currently under production with the expansion of resources, they also look to provide much bigger areas of land to add to meet the need for more gardening spaces.

Earline: We have some more space besides the garden. I would like to see it expanded. Karen: You know actually they were talking about expanding it. You they just tore down the other – it was an abandon house next door. They just tore down so that lost open. They were actually looking to open that up because the um, one of the other congregation at the KH they want to be a part of it. Because now just [another] park.
Our congregation, but the other congregation, [the other] Park they want their garden. But it will be like one huge big garden. So I’m not sure if they opened it up or if they are going to wait to next year. But they are actually looking into expanding it to the next lot.

One of the most readily available ways to increase the land base for gardening in the community is the reuse of vacant property.

Ruth: I wish it could be one almost every block and that everybody on that block could get together and raise the fresh tomatoes. …So it’s like five vacant lots there, and so this guy told me that we can raise the garden there, so we going to have somebody come and clean all- we going to have volunteers to help us clean up and get started so we can start a vegetable garden. …Right, they going to get they own plot there, and they go- the people from the community going to get they own space. So like you, if you want a section there, R can have a section, I can have a section, D can have a section, everyone- cause it’s like five big lots. So you could have a space, it going to be a community garden- and this gone be a community garden [spoken with a strong conviction]. …But it will be a community garden and, I’m going to have a plot that my personal garden is going to be there in the community garden. It’s a community garden with my personal garden in the community garden.

Brian: Well Doug it has been truly a delightful experience and I would encourage all the people who don’t have a plot to engage in some type of dialogue so we can get more plot or more land to put in plots. All the vacant lots around here – Please – they can get – just find out just send out circulars. Would you be interested in a community garden in your block? At least every block got a vacant lot. It an’t a block around this neighborhood that don’t have a vacant lot. That vacant lot can be turned into something that going to be resourceful for that block or for that community area. That’s something that they really need to look into.

Some gardeners imagined that not only expanding the gardens they participate in but also the expansion of other gardens throughout the community.

Curtis: I would love to see this in five years replicated. I would love to see this garden across the street on those 4 lots you see over there. I would like to see chain fence on the back and the front. I would like to see rows of collard greens, corn, and cabbage and the rest of it. I would like to see young people engaged and involved and working from their hands with the dirt, and feeling and understanding what agriculture is all about and how not only growing some things, but how do we help the people in the community as a whole, nutritionally and emotionally and physically. And have them engaged and package this stuff. Sell them for a reasonable price, not to make a profit, but only to put back into the garden. I would like to see that replicated throughout the city. So that everybody would have fresh produce after this. That’s what I would like to see.

Sade: Yeah, just lean over the fence. So I’m telling you, if we can replicate this a couple
of times again which I’ve been trying to help do in [Lincoln Heights]- I’ve been trying to help start two more. If we can replicate this, we can address some of these major problems that we see that are not so economic. It’s not about the economy, it’s about the lack of engagement. It’s about the lack of community engagement. So as far as it depends on me, I’m going to do my part. …Space. The space- it’s not large enough, as challenging as it may look to others. …Expansion in my mind would be a fantastic part of the fantasy. It’s not a really fantastic part of the fantasy, it’s a part of the goal and the dream. It’s that the house would be to the immediately to the north- of the south of the garden that’s abandoned. That house in the demolition part, that house has been ordered for demolition, so that would give us potential growth. Uh, the lot immediately north- south of that house is empty and we’ve been waiting for potential gardeners that were coming here last year but haven’t manifested themselves yet. We’re hoping that they don’t show up and that will allow us an opportunity to develop Forty more beds to give forty more families, not so much in the immediate community because I’d like to see people across [some of the major thoroughfares], I would like forty more families to be involved. And maybe they can take what they see here back to parts of the community – unstable parts of the community. So that’s my vision that it becomes social, social space, with a fixed open canopy open space. You ever see that space in the forest preserves, the openings? I’d like to have one of those as gathering space. I’d like to have water fixtures. I’d like to have additional raised beds. I’d like to have places for artists to come and do artistry boards on the perimeters of the garden. I’d like a place where they can have music play in the garden. I’d love a place for my granddaughter to come and do her poetry jam because she’s quite a poet. She’s going to do a poetry jam this summer for us in the garden.

Specification

Growing specific types of crops are among the improvements to be made in each community garden. Flowers, vegetables, and fruits are among the individual choices to be further incorporated into the community gardens.

Heather: I just know to fine tune it and improve on the technique again next year and then too I wanna put something other than the vegetables I’d like to have some flowers out there just for beautification you know and whatever to hopefully discourage the squirrels uh cause they gave us a rough time on the ground too. …I’d like to have some perennials back there just to look good and then maybe an area where you know you can just use it until something else comes about with it

Arial: Cause I know this time the beds that haven’t been taken cause C. said it’s too late for anybody to come and really plant so we’re gonna take those and just plant community things like greens and umm cabbage and things like that in each bed. So the community will have like a bed that they can go to and get greens out of or cabbage out of or this and I think that’s important. …I would love to put some strawberries out there some watermelon out there but I talked to other people and they said that those things have to
be planted along the edge of the garden because they take over. So we couldn’t put them in that little bed because it would take over the whole bed and spread out. So I’m learning…

Several community gardeners seek to incorporate both fruits and vegetables into their future garden plans. Herbs are also on their crop production lists to be added to the gardens.

Brenda: [T]hat I would like to try some new fruits, some new vegetables and another one and they wanna do strawberries and they want to try some more upside down things that they have.

Elaine: Watermelon, some watermelon and corn. I don’t think we can do corn though because I think the rats will probably eat it. I didn’t have every herb I wanted. I like herbs so I would like to do everything. I would like to do onions and garlic those are the things that we didn’t do that I would like to do and potatoes yeah.

Specifically fruit trees are just as attractive to have in the community gardens when considering their future plans.

Ray: We really looking for an apple and a peach tree. We- we- we can collect pairs because the people in the neighborhood got bad trees, but we a really looking to someone that got peach trees, and apple. I know squirrels are really into apples and peaches, but sometimes you know they might escape and have some peaches or pears- peaches or apples, you know.

Allen: In five years we are going to implement more boxes into our garden. But then again we are going to try other things like fruit trees – right now we are only doing vegetables – so we are going to try to do fruit trees. Like maybe some apple – there are various apple trees that are in the [Lincoln Heights] neighborhood. So we are going to see which ones can grow best in our garden. That’s one of the things that we are going to implement – fruits also.

Some gardeners express an interest in finding particular crops to satisfy their lifestyle: from the fast yielding plants, natural and cultural uses and the removal of plants that inhibit the growth of choice crops in the community gardens.

Winton: But, I’m going to do my research this time because I’m looking for stuff that grows a lot and it grows fast. That’s what I’m looking for.

Travis: …[D]oing it organically, I would like to see that grow and how I can have an effect on that is by me doing what I’m continuing to do now just show my support for it. …I think more, more than enough crops, things that I’m familiar with already. Like if I
get introduced to some new things then, might, might see us out there growing something different. [laughs] But other than that you know just joy of um black community so, you know they focus on things that they cook with their soul food meal. So

Brian: I would like to see some fruit trees. Maybe peaches and pears – put some fruit trees in there. Maybe – some cherries. Yea that would be nice. …Well we gone have to clear out them stumps back there. Get them old trees out there – they messing up your sunlight. On that south side. The old tree in the front wouldn’t let something grow in a couple of plots in the front. Cause something wouldn’t grow.

Structuring

Centers for educational activities and programming regarding food processing, youth involvement, institution building, and economic opportunities are all developments that start with and extend beyond community gardens. Gardeners value educational opportunities beyond growing food.

Ruth: I have a peach tree and an apple tree. But we looking for you know, more to give more, for canning because we going to have a canning seminar at uhh green- at uhh [Free Space] this fall we going to have a canning seminar.

Heather: I didn’t get to learn anything about canning but because of this gardening association and stuff I am meeting folks who do know about canning and you know be instrumental in helping me out. My son unfortunately lost his home down in St. Peters, Missouri but he had mason jars and they did it down there. Ok so now I got a box of mason jars and lids waiting to put it to use. So one lady will do some beets for me and show me how to do that and stuff will just begin to grow. I just think it will happen that way so it’s just a good idea all the way around. So who knows, the church will come down and have a meeting in the yard or something or will have a dinner or something and they’ll be enough greens out to cook a pot of greens and we’re just looking forward to doing a lot of stuff like that.

Youth programing is of interest to community gardeners as much as education is for them.

Earline: I would like to see the leadership um led by young people uh, whoever is coordinating the garden I’d like to see a youth being the assistant where they are able to be proud of what they have been able to do by recruiting our young people. One thing I would like, for teachers in the school to take some classes where they can share some ideas with young people, where they can move this garden to the next level, to be able to feed people in the community. We have quite a few food pantries. If we could have fresh vegetables to go to the pantry the children will be the ones to uh, harvest the
vegetables. And learn more about it while they’re doing nutrition classes. That’s what I’d like to see.

Winton: And I talked to the guy about doing some stuff there and I talked to Sade about it but you know my vision is that we could use some of this space partly with another community. It just makes sense. Other community organizations in the area and that’s like we could do some things in the garden and we could just walk right there. It’s right there, it’s not even a half a block, and it’s not even, its right on the corner so I have some preliminary conversation about doing some things over there. Because I know they’ve got space, they’ve got rooms they’ve got some equipment – coming in and do some youth programs, and involve them in some of helping with some of the training that we do with the kids as well.

Moving beyond the exterior of the community gardens, gardeners seek a vested interest in having community centers as places to support various activities for all community members.

Russell: I would like to see more buildings put up, more activities for the kids around here.

Mona: In 5 years I would say the garden would be producing what it should produce. Because the first 2 years is kinda experimental and everything because some things do come up and some don’t. And to be able to train the children or whoever comes in that wants the knowledge to learn how to garden and just be overall for the community. You know for the community and to embrace it and outline areas to embrace it. Because that lot like you know like we were sayin we worked so hard on it and once it was showin promise and then all of a sudden somebody came in and just destroyed it. Audrey: Last year I did become really depressed about it. And I really didn’t wanna do anything in it and my personal garden showed me reflection. Audrey: We definitely need community centers. Mona: Mmmhumm. Audrey: Definitely need community centers, we definitely need community centers; Mona: that are outlying the parks, because everybody you know is not able to get to a park, you know and having a community center you know; … Audrey: it’s a safe haven. Mona: yes a safe haven for seniors and for children, you know cuz like; Audrey: you can’t play outside all the time.

Greenhouses are vital to community gardens functioning year-round, which can offer employment that has been previously limited by seasonal conditions.

Maureen: Funds. It would take funds because I would like to see something like a greenhouse type of thing, where they could get a building as supposed to being out in the open like this because its’ all you got the funds for you know or we’ll give it a shot, we’ll give it a try. I would like to see it grow to something, to an establishment that employed people in the community. It was fun, it’s nice and like I said I would like to work, and get some of that community employment. …Five years from now, I would like to see them have some type of building and grow into something other than just the lot
with.

Curtis: Well. The problem with year round structure is the dollars is just not there because like I said you saw hoops but you don’t see plastic over the doors. I mean, I would like to see finance efforts for greenhouses all year round. Like I said. A [organization] does have one and I saw that in south Chicago. They just put one in the last three months. I would like to see half of that, that place I talked about with greenhouses so we can have fruits and vegetables year round. I would like that worm farm embedded in that because worm poop is worth a lot of money. But it is really expensive and it’s remarkable and you can make a lot of money off it. So not only is there a growing aspect to the greenhouses, there is a worm poop selling aspect to it too so the kids can make some money too.

Again, farmers markets will serve to allow for the sale of crops grown in the community garden.

Earline: We need something that will give these children a stipend. These children don’t have jobs in the community, so we need something like that. So once I get a coordinator, that’s something I think I’m going to pursue, I know how we can get some funding. In the summer these kids don’t have jobs. Give them a little start for working in the garden. Encourage them and they will help too. …I would like to see our garden um, um we’ve had a couple of tours in our garden but I would like to see um, like they go to [the other neighborhood] and other places and tour communities. I would like to see [Lincoln Heights] with gardens with young people working in them and gardens being tour as a place to raise fresh vegetables for families and highlight the youth work. That’s what I would like to see happen. Youth get recognition for doing the work and farming in [Lincoln Heights].

Audrey: And who knows what that would take. Maybe over here in this green area we could start our own lil farmers market during the Summer. Mona: Right. Audrey: That brings hope and possibility. Mona: Because it’s so much hunger. Audrey: and hope it’s going to something to help those in need and the community. Audrey: To start and entrepreneur program you know wit gardening. You know even if it it’s a seasonal thing that would be a jump start for something. Audrey: You know farmers get older and they can’t do it anymore you know and their children seek out other means of employment. You know so like I say you don’t know the circumstances. But I really do think that there’s alotta good resources with community gardens in [Lincoln Heights]. You don’t know you know, I just know the possibilities that you can teach the children and share with them how small possibilities become; Audrey & Mona: big possibilities. Audrey: And having a garden what it can flourish to a restaurant. Cuz alotta restaurants now are goin so green they want fresh stuff. Stuff that hasn’t been chemically treated. Mona: Yes and in alotta urban people that have gardens in their communities are supplying those restaurants. And I figure if we, we figure if we were to do something like that here restaurant tourists would come in here and be willin and able for to have a big restaurant here, sit down and have natural food from right here. You know from home grown in.
The culmination of *job* creation from community garden activities results in gardeners’ interest to supply and manage a grocery store, given their lack in the neighborhood.

Russell: Right, right. I’m working on that. That would be a nice thing too. You know we have a few of them in the city like that, year round. I’m pretty sure it would work out, you know, once the people know about it. I mean, everybody got to have these vegetables. …Well the Jewel’s went out of business. You got a little Aldi’s here. So, you know we ain’t really got anything here. So, we got to think about something like that. I’m pretty sure it would work you know. But like I said we’re working on that. …Jobs, jobs, that’s the number one, jobs. …Well, if we had more people like us, you know it would be a great thing you know but you know it’s the economy, the economy.

Payton: Ok, I’m talking to you brother, and I’m thinking about, I got things on my mind about this organic food store I want to try to build on the other side of the [roadway]. Solar power panels, like I said I worked for [a] Construction [company] building these solar panels and everything, I got connects with all of that and I want to bring the meat also here, and that meat, if I bring that new meat it will blow people’s mind. Yea. It’s healthier and it tastes better. It’s a taste you never tasted before. Have you ever had any Ostrich? I have had Ostrich on a cracker. A white guy, years, CB when I was working in U. S. cans, bought some and put it on a cracker, I thought it was tuna, I said, “let me have a piece of your tuna.” yea this… Naw this ain’t no fish! What is this? Ain’t never taste like, ain’t no rattlesnake or nothing? He said naw naw, its Ostrich. Yea, it’s pretty good, they said you can make hamburgers out of em, you can make any kind of roast beef out of it, you make it dressing out of it. Down in Mississippi, down on a farm, these eggs are about that big. One egg about that big. …Ah naw, if you scramble an ostrich egg, boy you’d be eating for a month. It be like eating a whole turkey like. But I think it cost too much because I think the eggs cost about twelve dollars an egg. But yea I would want to present that, and I would like to bring that down to the gazebo as far as something new, something to subsidize the surroundings with new leaf, a new flower, something new that they haven’t had any experience with before.

These gardeners describe a practical, tangible, and achievable measure of belief in what they will be able to accomplish in the future. Seeds have become agents of improvement. Where once weeds cluttered their vision, now lay clear rows of fruitful progress towards a reality that they are creating.

*What would you need to make this happen?*

Community gardeners’ improved trust and sharing are being galvanized into collective efficacy efforts for the future of the community gardens’ mission and action plan. Through
networks of organizations associated with the community garden, resources: land, crops, and equipment can be acquired to meet the immediate needs of the gardeners that are currently lacking. In conjunction with their community gardens are larger plans envisioned by gardeners that are being supported by their collective efficacy efforts that include everyone organized and planning.

Community gardeners are taking the initiative to make the changes to improve their gardens and larger community as they see needed.

Karen: I would like to see it more – lush – more full. More participants and more participation. Getting it there personally, more dedication from myself an others as well. Just being to – wanting to be a part of it. That’s the main key, having dedicated individuals how want to be a part of it.

Steven: I would like to see it like I said earlier, for one be something that more people from here participate in and we can use it to supply our store that’s owned by us you know to um produce good vegetables and fruit what have you for us and if other communities want to do it do theirs too you know and um and also have a um um um non-capitalistic you know enterprise not designed to make profit for somebody you know, to but it be designed so that number of people can have a place to go and take care of themselves and build a life around that you know, even to the point of having farms and you could have people you know there’s jobs that people could have and they don’t have to go to no college and get no degrees cause this, they act like it’s a crime to not be highly educated like you don’t have a right to have a way to take care of yourself cause you’re not highly educated you know, first thing honestly with education it dumb for the world, it’s just as bad as it’s always been you know so, but anyway uh I would love to see it come to um be something that produces like that you know a place that we can buy our food from that we own it and it’s a place designed to give as many people in this community a way to take care of themselves and to build a life around as possible.

Individual community gardeners unite with various organizations to make larger impacts to improve the broader community. People from church, school, city, and green oriented organizations play a role in shaping the development of improvements gardeners champion.

Heather: I know that the people at that church will help again and if I have to go back door to door to get a few more folks out then we’re prepared to do that. If I planned for something years ago I might be able to... Ok let’s see, earlier in the year I got some lawn furniture and I had….a table and a bar and perhaps this year we can garden some new lawn and I can have a few of the older, taller people put those things out and have some
lemonade or you know I’m thinking it would be nice and you know we could take a little bit and perhaps those who have been in the neighborhood… I am meeting folks who do know about canning and you know be instrumental in helping me out.

Olivia: So I’m going go talk to the principal which is Mrs. M and ask them you know, if they mind donating the raised beds to us. If they can, it would be really helpful to us to have extra stuff for us. If not, there’s a guy across the street from me, he does palates.

Deidra: Especially you know, I’ve got a hose I can do [the job with] and the [Community Area] has a water system but, you know, when I do that [Chicago Green House] that’s gone have to be out the hydrant so I’ll be at the mercy of the water department. And they cut back so much, I might call them on Monday and they’ll – might not show up on Thursday when I might not be here. Then I’ll have to call them back again. And you know it might be two or three weeks until I get water unless I just drag some from my house.

Social capital works in conjunction with economic capital to succeed in making the changes community gardeners envision.

Tina: Well, seeking funding and trying to work out a plan. Now there are two gardening organizations and now that I have more time.

Nelson: See this is big, see to them they can sorta see well maybe some of this well a whole lot of it went into this because look how it blossom, naw naw won’t work, won’t work wrong people. So, it you know that’s a lot of money man. Do you know one-point-five million how many gardens that you could set up? One-point-five million! That’s almost two million dollars. Lumber, seed, organic soil, hose, rakes, - that it. Yeah see, we’ve come nowhere near that kind of money, see. And then, see what’s going to really set this thing off is going in that direction too is that as these different big companies see they going to donate certain things. And they already doing it, to this type of environment, this type of involvement, yeah. …that was uh law that the mayor passed about three or four days ago, that’s going to have an offshoot in the direction of these gardens, it ain’t direct and we know that see we be watching all that, see, it’s going to have an offshoot and when they see this with the human eye, see the human eye is always going by what it see, see they not visualizing as like me and sister pew what we see without seeing and now here it is but we saw it and we started working towards that ends, see. So they starting now, so they starting say well hey, and like now they going to give us five benches they going to give us a uh certain amount of things to make a patio and then a overhead thing, I can’t think of what it called…

Bonds and bridges of social capital are captured in the statements. These gardeners know that trusting each other is essential to achieving success. Sharing the efforts with a network of resourceful agents makes it possible to strengthen the grassroots foundation they have built.
What are some of the activities that members of the garden participate in away from the garden?

The gardeners’ activities among themselves that are away from the garden give some indication that their social capital is not limited to the garden site. These activities may also be the precursor to social capital generated by the community garden. Spending time together provides gardeners with a shared understanding and activities for the improving their collective wellbeing.

Restorative

Sharing in recreational activities is the most common way that community gardeners gather away from the garden. Sport games, amusement parks, zoos, campus visits, libraries, dances, and card games are the choice activities among gardeners.

Winton: We did the zoo. JD (Winton’s son): We did Great America.

Helen: Oh we have picnics and we go different places: Bowling, skating, basketball, football.

Olivia: Now for me, I’m one of the senior citizens and so we, I take them, when they have something for the senior citizens at Navy Pier. And they … have the McCormick Place. And we take them, um, now a day the senior citizens are into line dancing. But you know they be getting down.

More than half of the recreational activities away from the garden included food as noted by the community gardeners.

Russell: And we have other little bitty, little events. We have little farmer market parties off and on and stuff and this and that. And we have little—somebody’s birthday, we’ll have a little party for them, a little garden spot, you know. So, we do a little something to help the seniors around here. But other than that, it’s not really too much to really do, you know. But that market just do wonders, which you can do it all year round, matter fact, I’m working on that. … We won all different kinds of awards, going to dinner, over the years. C—go through all that stuff, I don’t get involved with that. …But I mean we had worked five years…like I said lunches and stuff and this and that.

Travis: …[T]he majority of them … if they have time cause normally people have personal things they have to do but normally if it’s a good day where many of the ah
people that have nothing else to do they’ll go bowling or have movie nights somewhere or have a gathering at someone’s house. We have food and drinks and have like encouraging things to talk about, you know.

Some recreation is a *sport* that is food related; which eventually leads back to eating as a social gathering away from the garden.

Sade: It’s interesting; he was cutting a tree down yesterday. He’s actually still cutting trees down. I think I knew that but I was blown away yesterday, when they were showing me he cut down a tree as big as that. I said “Stop. have you done cut a tree down as big as that tree over there?” Yea me and Brian” There’s a few fishers in the garden. There’s a few skaters in the garden, there’s a few people getting ready to go on a cruise so there’s a lot of cruisers in the garden. Socially (some bowlers, some play baseball) They’re just people, they do a lot of stuff. I knit. I’m knitting all over the place. I can’t think of much else. What dose IH. and them do – Those girls are always home together. They love to be together. You’ll never find another family like that. No, I won’t say never, never is an absolute. It’s a rarity that you’ll find a family as close as they are. The mother had nine children and she lost two of them– just lost her last year. They’re as close as you will ever see people out of the same family. They’re close and they’ll say “My mother raised us like this. We were raised to be close like this” and I love seeing that, because you don’t see a lot of that today. Allen, he’s a fisher. He’s also a handyman and does all this electrical lights- exhaust fans, and exhaust fans and B is a nurse’s aide. Me, I work in philanthropy as you know. I’m trying to think of some secular things. I just want to know when they are in the garden. I know they’ve got big appetites when you come through the garden hungry.

Community center involvement by community gardeners accounts for some of the activities away from the garden. A few of these activities are recreational with food and *health* related focuses.

Curtis: No. it’s a garden. We can take it directly because we can’t tell me what to do in the schools but the center had a kids café program, we can utilize the vegetables out of the garden and supplement what they don’t have on their plates…. around the corner here. Ms. W is the executive director. She’s the youth director and educational director. And we’ve been in business for the last twenty years. …Well generally what they tend to do after they’re not doing the garden, they come around to the … center and engage and involve in the community organizing community information, sharing and gathering in the … Center. And I have to add a little anecdotal piece on here too because most of the seniors involved they like going to the boat as well, you know there are so many pastimes, and they old enough to go to the boat and do some of that. …Yeah it’s the riverboat we’re talking about. They don’t go just for the money they go for the camaraderie, they go for the music they’ve been playing the years, they put their coins in the slot machine which you don’t put coins in slot machines no more. And with that,
they participate in every social event that goes as it relates to crime and violence, as it relates to community organizing, as it relates to senior needs, youth needs in the community, healthcare needs in the community, um energy needs in the community. They’re engaged and involved in all those.

*Ritual*

*Churches*, like community centers, also engage the community gardeners when they are away from the garden.

Curtis: …So, we have community centers like where we are; …We take up a little money or spend money out of my pocket to get refreshments and we hold meetings. We just had one about 2-3 weeks ago and that was in conjunction with [one of the] Housing services who did the plan of gardens in that vacant lot right there. So, we collaborate, its collaboration all the way. They worked with two blocks it wasn’t this block, nor this garden. They were with those two blocks there and lift, a church… and the community center we opened up our doors to them to invite all the seniors and whoever else wanted to come to that meeting to talk about getting help and other help that’s being provided by [the] Housing Service and also to talk about their plan of their gardens. You know, whoever is taking advantage we try to make it be available. That’s what you talk about collaboration.

Nancy: I don’t know other than that they do have church related activities that they might participate in. I know that last Saturday, somebody got married.

*Revive*

Local activities on the block away from the garden are often practical, as in cleaning thrash from and maintaining vacant spaces in the neighborhood.

Deidra: Oh, right, right. See, when I was little what you call spring break used to be called clean up week. And we had to clean. We had to sweep the street, and fix up stuff, and help the neighbors that couldn’t paint their fences and then they gave us a block party. But there was no reward without work.

Ruth: Oh well I do-I’m a tree keeper, I go around- I took tree keeping core with uhh, [*country wide*], so I tree keep I go around cutting peoples trees- cutting trees (laughs) I prune people trees so - yeah. Yeah and so I prune the trees down at the park where we are building a park and also out at [the] Park and then they have a day for a work day, and then you go out and you volunteer to put it on the internet. We’ll be uhh, work day and so and so and so and so planning, and mulching and pruning the tree, and so you can go if you want to.
Some neighborhood organizations included gardeners that are as diligent protecting their crops from death as they are in securing the residents from violent crimes.

Curtis: [STOP], that functions as the umbrella organization um for most of the activities we’re involved and engaged in. It came out of need in 1991, we had [nearly a 100] homicides in this community. I was asked by a community of people, [many members of clergy] and business and community leaders to come in and get involved and engaged and try [to investigate] some of these homicides and violence that’s been going on. But in knowing my background, most of them know me growing up, knew I was a former gang leader and understand the dynamics inside and outside of that and I knew most of the players who were still involved in some form or fashion on a level and the people had a lot of respect for me in this community. So I was in that way agreed to an organization called [STOP]. In 1991, when I put the [STOP] treaty together to stop the violence in this community, homicides dropped in the following year by 37% with that and [STOP] became a household order where we had alternative activities for them to do. We gave education plans, we had peace marches and we got profit organizations involved and institutions wanted to give me some and they gave in this community and got more involved in gangs and brought a collaboration of business, treasury, social leadership together to help stand the time of balance we put together. Billboards: saying it’s time for [STOP] to stop the killing. They were all that on the peace initiative. Everyone started jumping on board with the peace initiative. We didn’t mind that. We can be imitated but never duplicated. You know what I’m saying. We wanted to replicate this for a new paradigm for the world.

Tina: We at the …Center a lot of times what we do they have a thing called meetings with Caps Meetings, they call it Caps Meetings, but they may have the meeting for this police district say for instance this little district is [XYZ] or whatever. …We hold community meetings right in our Peace community center where the people are safe and they already know that they are going to be safe in there and be as safe as you can be, things happen, but they already know that this is a safe haven. They don’t mind coming to community meetings and doing things in the safe haven.

Gardeners get together in more places than the garden site itself. While it is essential to their social capital growth to be active in their gardens, it is proof that friendships do not cease upon exiting the gates that delineate their planting beds. Community gardens reinforce their social networks in other social places they inhabit.

Where are some of the safe places in the neighborhood that you feel safe?

Community gardeners mostly found safe places in their neighborhood to be inside of
residences and in their places of worship. The outdoor environment is regarded as unsafe, yet during daylight hours it is navigated under safety precautions. To their astonishment, many of the gardeners were shocked upon their reflection on their community garden spaces as being one of the few or solely mentioned safe outdoor environments.

**Perception**

Gardeners found their neighborhood to generally be unsafe. However, those that found it to be safe relied on various negotiation strategies to increase their feelings of safety. Many gardeners relied on their respected reputation over generations in the neighborhood like their social networks, family and community members, to find safety in Lincoln Heights.

Community gardeners expressed their *general feeling* of being safe in the community; both outdoors and indoors.

Steven: Well I feel pretty safe. No, they don’t, nobody don’t bother me. At home…and up and down this street.

Arnel: I feel kind of safe. … So I feel pretty safe when I’m out there in [Lincoln Heights]. It seems pretty safe over …that block seems to be OK. I think where the garden is at seems to be pretty safe.

One gardener noted the increase of established authority in the *presence of police* for their feeling of being safe in the neighborhood.

Maureen: [I]t’s gotten better because of programs like CAPS and programs of that nature….Yeah, they have also built some new police stations, but they also they have lately in the last couple of months I want to say, really since Rahm Emanuel has been elected you can see the policing has picked up. They are more visible now and there is less room for a lot of unlawful activity to go on and it makes the neighborhood better. So, within these last few months it’s really been, it’s a good thing to see you know, it’s a shame that you have to have all this, but hey if that what it takes to get the streets back safe for the people that live here, then that’s what it takes. …I feel very safe in my neighborhood. I feel very safe in my neighborhood. …Because I know this neighborhood and I just don’t have no problems and I don’t bother nobody and nothing like that and I don’t have any problems. …Yeah, I mean it’s safe to me. I mean for somebody who has never lived here; it’s a pretty good neighborhood to move in, but you
know you take your chances, as it with anywhere. Just try not getting involved with the wrong people or hope that don’t cross your pathway and you should be okay. At home, at the garden, I feel safe at the garden. On the street or block where I know is a community block you know, you tend to feel more safe as to walking through a block where there are bunch of apartment buildings you know because those people move in and out all the time, so it’s not really a community. It’s just a place of transition, I’ll call it.

*Precaution*

Other gardeners *used the patterns* of human behavior in response to natural environment regulators, both daylight hours and temperature.

Aisha: And no one has to worry about anything because it’s the daytime.

Winton: I think maybe winter time, you know when it’s real cold outside and you have less people outside that might be the better time, but even then.

Some community gardeners, of both genders have a ‘*no nonsense attitude*’ about not taking any fear of threats to their sense of safety in the neighborhood.

Payton: Well Cowboy feels very safe because they know me through years and I’m a happy spirited person but I’m too up to be down and too down to be up. Too hot to trot, too cool to skate. Don’t take no mess and don’t lay none out and through the family and everything I’ve never had any problems over the years, never. …Yeah so I’ve never had any problem. It’s respect because back in the days I would play basketball and I would get to know the ruffians before I got to know the casuals by playing basketball then you know then you beat them in basketball you cool. (Laughs) …So, I mean I’ve never had any problem with the gangs or anything. Never been gang related either. Momma didn’t play that… And behind that is an ordinance—a police ordinance because there nothing but cops that live down the street down there. You got four houses, that’s four cops.

Ruth: Well I feel pretty safe in my neighborhood because I’m not afraid of the people you know, and uh they know I’ve been in here they know I will call the police. I have signs listed in my home saying this is a police watch … I will call the police because everybody on my block know me, they call me Channel 5, Channel 7, Channel 2… and every time something happen they think that I have something to do with it. I call the police, putting speed bumps, which I did, I have speed put up in the alley at first then I had a speed bump put out here on Princeton, down on the other end. I went to my alderman, they speeding down the street; we need something to stop them. And so whatever I ask them for they give it to me so all my neighbors know I go and talk to the police and go talk to the alderman and I get stuff done.
Ruth - continues: And so yes ah, I’m not afraid of them just like they got gangbangers and drug dealers on the block, I call up the captain and tell him. I say yea, “So and so house is selling drugs” they come out and kick the door in, so they know I’m not afraid neither of the kids with my kids here. These are not uh people my age, I’m like fifty five and these kids like twenty something and thirty something. My oldest is thirty four so these kids grew up with her, they’ll tell me so and so sell something, so I’ll tell the police on them, so and so house is selling drugs, they go and kick the door in. … But I’m not afraid I fear for other people… we have those Jamaican people sits out front all day and night, so its really like security when they’re out there, once they start not being there, people start doing stuff, so they watch at your house, watch people go in your house, “oh she’s not home”, so they’ll tell you. I don’t like people sitting out, I don’t think people should be sitting out but can’t complain they be watching out for your house (laughing) like security. …You just got to speak up, more people got to speak up… I got out there “take it to the next corner, take that stuff on the next block” you know. …So if more if our men speak up we wouldn’t have this crisis in our neighborhood… I feel safe, if I don’t I go down there and tell them it they be cursing, I tell them move or leave the park. If they don’t leave the park, there is a police officer right in the park, I go and get the police officer, they should be right in front of the park. All they do is call me names down the street. That old so-in-so, I don’t care, run around afraid of them. …I’m friendly and I go and just talk to people. Most of them are people who talk to me, but it’s not a lot of bad people on the block, but its people coming from this … house down there by [the] Park that there like bad people they steal off the freights and stuff and they do bad things. They know not to come down here because I’ll call the police you know.

The majority of the gardeners utilized their reputation as a longstanding community member within a network of known community family members and organizations to maintain their sense of safety. The social capital of community gardens strongly indicates that it is an additional contributor to their protective networks of safety.

Russell: Well, by me being here, like I said, for 58 years, I don’t have a problem with that. Because I’m considered like the mayor of the neighborhood around here. So I really have no problem. They give me a little respect by me being one of the elderly people around here.

Laurence: Right now in our neighborhood, I feel pretty safe because, really not to brag on it, the people have given me a lot of respect in the neighborhood. The people respect me and they respect my family because one thing that we do is that we get people to go to church, be able get people to participate in the community organizations and things and we have been real active in the neighborhood. I think that it has a lot to do with our safety. But now in the meantime, we have had a lot of police activity in our neighborhood meaning that they do come and go. And we feel pretty safe now. At one time, we didn’t have adequate street lights, but now we’re getting new street lights and everything so that the neighborhood can be more illuminated at night. Right. That’s what
makes me feel loved. I do believed that when you’re involved with people and people know you, see there’s a thing that people look out for you, people look out for you. I thank God and, not to brag, we never had a major problem on my property or anything. But we did have some protection because we did raise some dogs and things and people are leery of my dogs, but eventually, we didn’t need the dogs. And they were sold out to work, to be security dogs for agencies. Because at one time we did work for a security agency and they bought the dogs.

Tina: But that’s the reason why we have what you call [Our Safety], we are members of [Our Safety] and we have carts, and we designate certain places, this is a safe haven. Our new site is a safe haven, if the children come on this block; it is a safe haven on this block. If they, if we have, I just had one, I brought one home because I needed a new one and it says “this is a safe haven site.” There should be signs posted in the windows. They’re going to be starting that. This is with the [OurSafety] youth workers. Youth organization, I didn’t, I don’t have one with me, however…I don’t have one right now…I’m sorry. I just wanted to show it to you because it says this is a safe haven and that’s what our new site is considered a safe haven and actually this particular block, a lot of the blocks they went around…you weren’t with them [sir] were you… and they went around. Mr. Curtis has a group in the [OurSafety] and they went around and posted that this is a safe haven and have, they have a different telephone numbers of people they can call or if this house is a safe haven. So, we started a lot of stuff like signs in the one that say ‘Safety’ and they calm the whole neighborhood, even calm the neighborhood when we had the Bulls won, we were all out there and all the signs say ‘Safety,’ give it to someone and it immediately changes the whole attitude. You know, you are excited, having fun, but setting fire and car windows and we were out there, you know, during all of this and that’s what we do.

Tina – continues: They respect us because they know that we are not going to take any gun, we don’t play that. We the [Our Safety] organization, we hit the streets and as far as [the Reverend] and his wife and we have a network, it’s a network of us, all of us in the community here and that’s the reason why Mr. Curtis sits on the porch, we sit on the porch at 2, 3 or 4 o’ clock in the morning. I walk the streets when I get ready because I feel like this, if I have to be a prisoner in my neighborhood, then I mind as well just give up, you know. Now, I have had a stroke, I lost my vision on my right side, but I still walk my neighborhood and I know it’s really, it’s worse because I don’t know a lot of people. Now, I used to know, we used to all, everybody knew everybody. But now and I am not saying in the derogatory way, since they tore the projects down, a lot of the people are scared, there is fear on both the sides. You know, people, and there is a, what you call, it’s a culture shock for a lot of different things and also it’s what you would say, it’s misplaced animosity. A lot people because when people lived in the projects, they kind of thought that [Lincoln Heights] was out in the suburbs. We thought we were this and we thought we were that, that was their perception and the perception is the same way going back the other way of these or that project people. They had communities within their own community just like we do and the children grew up and some of them never knew violence, you know, because one floor in the projects may be a whole community of family and friends and that’s the same way they are now, they have
reunions too. So, we need to get the, get out of that, us against them, you know, they and them. So, when people move here a lot of times they wouldn’t even let their children come to the after school program because they were so afraid, but then we had to make a believer out of them and let them come here. This is a safe haven because we have commanded the respect; Mr. B. has commanded the respect. Every, all of us in the [Our Safety] organization have commanded respect, we give respect and we also command respect and we also get known in the neighborhood. There is no such thing as I’m hiding from my neighbor or my neighbor’s children. That’s out. I made a vow a long time ago, if I must go, I’m going to go out fighting, fighting for the right to sit on my porch when I get ready, go to my neighborhood local or wherever I want to go and come home, although I know that you have to play safe, I do that too. But I’m also, if I take a notion, I walk from here to the peace center at 2 o’clock in the morning, if they are having something or whatever I want to do, okay. And I just pray to god for protection because I feel like I can’t, can’t live like that, can’t live in a vacuum.

One gardener’s approach to being safe in the community is a dynamic summary of the various ways to achieve a sense of safety as expressed by all of the community gardeners.

Deidra: My theory is: you do not leave before your time. And, you know, it was a very safe suburb where they shot the congresswoman. Now [this famous celebrity] family was murdered three blocks from here. But that was family. That could’ve happened anywhere, even in Beverly Hills. ‘Cause sisters, or junkie husbands, baby’s daddy that could’ve happened anywhere. But as far as safety, it doesn’t bother me. I come home from meetings sometimes, well I used to come home late at night but then the busses stopped running. But I’ve come home from something where I had to get off the train and then walk from the train, which is the red line where the expressway is at two in the morning. It doesn’t bother me. Because when it’s you’re time it is you’re time. …Yeah. Deidra – continues: You see, it’s not a black man approaching me that scares me because a lot of single women, especially white women, will cross the street. A single black man isn’t a danger to me. But if there’s like a, 18 to 25 year olds are the most dangerous because they were raised with a sense of entitlement. And uh, they think nothing of stealing something from somebody else to get what they want, and that’s why they’re dangerous. …And get away. So you think in terms of exits.

Deidra – continues: …Nobody’s ever bothered that garden because the main drug dealer loves them flowers. So that’s just it. See that’s how you keep yourself safe in a neighborhood like [Lincoln Heights], make friends with the drug dealers because it’s the drug dealers that can keep the bangers under control. See the real danger is the bangers because the drug dealers are business men. They want their customers to come and go in peace because if they don’t come and go in peace it’s bad for business. And so they like order. A lot of the drug dealers like flowers. The little petty ones like to hide their wears in there. But the big one they like it – you know. In fact one of the drug dealers I was proctoring for ACT last fall and the same day when they had for [a green organization] giveaway. So one of the drug dealers went and picked up my plants for me.
Refuge

In close proximity to their homes and the homes of friends are places that community gardeners found to be safe refuges for everyone, from children to seniors.

Laurence: …Right now, the safest place for the children would have to be in their own homes and in their own yards.

Tina: …[S]eniors. So, that they can have a garden right on their porch because most of them are afraid to come outside so we take the garden to them. So, we advocate healthy eating and we want the children to know this is how you do it help the seniors because you don’t want the children that can’t go to everybody’s yard, everybody’s yard is not safe. So, let the seniors have their own little garden, a milk crate garden.

Place of worship are believed to be safe places according to some of the gardeners, due to the faith of those who choose to congregate in peace.

Earline: Oh, I feel safe in [the place of worship]. And uh, so far I feel safe at home. I just don’t hang out late at night on the street, on the porch or in the yard because it seems like that’s where a lot of things happen.

Ray: I’m still trying to figure it out right now, but the most safe place I’ve been maybe is at the community church. That’s about the most safe place I’ve been this year, is the community to church?

Like both the homes and worship houses, various other buildings provided a sense of safety in Lincoln Heights.

Payton: The library, the library is a safe haven.

Nancy: I feel safe at the clinics that I know about.

Helen: Not too many places, like the restaurant I guess we can go in there and can come out safely: McDonalds, Burger King, Dunkin Donut…

Russell: The only safe place I ever known, you might not be safe there: the police station. We got a police station about five blocks away. That’s about the safest place I know, maybe.

Defenseless

Parks are places outside of the built envelope of architecture where community gardeners
regard them as safe places in the neighborhood. Park-like recreation and feelings of being on
vacation interest one gardener to find refuge outside of Lincoln Heights.

Steven: Ghana, ok.

Brenda: I feel safe at the park. I spend a lot of time at the park.

The most common open space and of any one place that participants found to their
surprise are community gardens.

Tasha: I think that was pretty good. It was a nice location. The area was pretty nice I
was kinda surprised. And I would go over there alone and no one bothered—I was
shocked—[Lincoln Heights]! No one bothered you. I don’t know if they bothered the
garden any but they didn’t I don’t think.

Sade: My house. …I’ve got bars to the second floor windows now so of course I feel
like I’m in prison. I feel like I live at 26th and California because I mean am I the
prisoner or am I the homeowner because I’m trying to keep all these elements out. But I
basically feel seemingly somewhat safe in the community. We feel safe in the garden.
Now that’s interesting, and that’s an open space. It’s not behind bars, it’s not behind
closed doors, it’s open. It’s not gated, doesn’t have any electronics, but we do feel safe
there, and I can’t for the life of me tell you why. I think because we’re out in the public.
We have shed all our vulnerabilities. We’re out there, we’re vulnerable, but we’re
together so it’s created I think in us a sense of we’re Ok. We’re not going to harm each
other. We know that. Thus far we haven’t had any harm, as a matter of fact, the gang
members look out for us. They come buy and they watch us. They give us little, because
they see that we’ve gotten on the radar now. They say you guys better leave those people
alone, they’re with the city district. They come through the alley. They come up to the
fence and look and encourage us. So they don’t bother us. If you can’t feel safe in your
home or house of worship but you feel safe in a garden, that’s a paradox. I’ve got to
think on that one. That one I have to think about. That’s deep. I’ll have to differ.

Summary

The implications of the community gardeners’ social capital beyond their gardens are
substantial. It is indicated by the responses to how the community garden represents the
community, what can be improved, and its future. In addition, the gardeners’ activities away
from the garden and the places they regard as safe show how community gardens play a role in
the larger context of community building and extending the network for a safe neighborhood.
Community gardeners’ recreation activities away from the community garden highlight their interest in education, which can improve their ability to better serve the broader community. Reflected in the changes they have made for clean and safe environments, more social spaces are made bountiful with food. In order to achieve the construction of a safer community in image and reality requires funding for jobs. Overall, the social capital building experiences of community gardeners working towards improving open spaces with the enhancement of employment are viable and achievable visions extending from the community garden.
CHAPTER 7

MISSIONS AND CHALLENGES

This study contributes to our understanding of the extent community gardens generate social capital. In this section I further address the main question by assessing the challenges community gardeners faced in achieving their missions. The missions of the community gardens are: to promote healthy communities by trusting in educational opportunities, sharing in improved access to eating better foods, and envisioning local economic growth.

What would you say is the mission of the garden?

Economic empowerment is mentioned the least among the listed missions purposes for their community gardens, yet its significance is no less important as an aim of the missions.

Steven: The mission, I hope that’s the mission, to do away with these stores and maybe we as a community could open up a co-op type little grocery store, a little store and supply that store and jobs could be for people who live here working in that store, you know. And it wouldn’t be some single person making profit it would be for – to give a number of people a way to make a living, you know. So I’m hoping that’s the mission but now what it is by the architects I don’t know, you know.

Brian: Well, my understanding is that this garden is going to be something that will be a source of survival especially the way the economics system is going. Things need to tighten up. You can go out there and still get you a meal. All you have to do is watch over it now. But yeah, it may be something that we have to rely upon.

Educating youth is an important goal listed among the missions of these Lincoln Heights community gardens. The garden provides an opportunity to teach values, that includes morals and habits of responsibility and resourcefulness. A few among several gardeners inform us about this mission:

Earline: The mission of the garden is to improve the quality, this according to our mission, to improve the quality of life for people in [Lincoln Heights]. But to improve, it requires a, that life in the garden piece, meaning put children to learn some skills and to share it and show them they can do some things and be able to raise their own fresh vegies. See I grew up in the South. Everything we ate was fresh. We didn’t go to, I think
the only thing I can remember my mother buying, was flour . . . and my dad [bought it too]. We raised our syrup, we raised our meal, peanuts, milk, everything, meat, everything. We ate, and I think that’s why older people are living longer, because they had a foundation. We didn’t know anything about chips and all that, only peppermint, and all that candy. All we got when we were growing up was a peppermint stick. We didn’t have all this junk that they got today. So I think that makes a difference. …So our mission is to improve the knowledge of the young people. I say to them all the time, if you learn how to have a better life, then you can teach your children. But if you don’t know, then you can’t teach it to them. So that’s our mission and also one of our missions is to improve the community through the beautification of the lots. These children get out here and help beautify that lot next door to you. Put some flowers or something on it and make it look good, you know. Maybe that would instill something in the child.

Tina: Well, the mission is one of the things to get to keep the youth involved and that’s why we had the spiritual meditation garden and we have people come from all over the world to come to the youth program…, where we have the spiritual meditation garden. That’s our sister partner garden to this, to [community] garden and we have people come from, volunteer to come to partner with us all summer long, all year round, but mostly the summer. So, one of the things that they do is they experience coming over here to this [community] garden and working in the garden during the summer and telling them that’s part of our mission when they come to the, and want to work with inner city groups. …Youth are involved in so many different you know healthy eating, we promote healthy eating. Growing Power we went out of town with that. We also partner with Heverent International, they sent us to the global farm that they have and we went to Merrill to their global farm. So, they got to learn a lot about that, so the older youth chance to go somewhere and find out how really the world and how do they eat and how do they make it. So, we have done quite a few things with youth and as far healthy because we believe one of our missions is to make this a more healthy community, but they have to get out and find out what’s going on in the world, what’s global and what’s happening, they need to know more about what’s happening at the candy store over the corner.

A relevant goal of educating not only the youth, but also the entire community, about eating health economically is prominent for gardeners. Numerous gardeners stated this; here are a few of their responses:

Brenda: That more people would take part in it, and understand the value of good food, good healthy food. And with the economics, you know the way is, this is about what we’re gonna have to do.

Sade: You get health benefits, you’re getting fresh produce bonuses and particularly in a community like [Lincoln Heights] it’s really a fruit desert, it’s really a fresh produce desert, not a food desert because I can get all the hamburgers I want, I can get all the fried chicken I want. I can get all the pizza and puffs, pops, - and sodas, ho-hos, zingers,
and donuts [I want]. But I can’t get a fresh head of cabbage. I can think of one or two stores in the community where I can get something like that on a sporadic basis, but nowhere are there fresh produce outlets in the community. So I do think that is one thing that would be a benefit to the group. Growing their own fresh—and many of these people have never had this experience in their life. So it was a first time experience for over fifty percent of the gardeners. They’ve never grown even flowers. So I knew it would be a win for the community. I knew that. …It’s not about the economy; it’s about the lack of engagement. It’s about the lack of community engagement. So as far as it depends on me, I’m going to do my part. …Sometimes one person CAN make a difference.

The most paramount and culminating mission for the community gardens, having received the most numerous responses is to improve the community. They have firmly set out to create safe and peaceful places where hope, change, health, assistance, food, beauty, and a diversity of people can confidently build community together. Some of what all community gardeners believe is found in these comments:

Elaine: I guess to provide hope.

Maureen: To beautify the community, to get more involved, to change the environment of the neighborhood. I think is the purpose of the garden, to change the environment.

Sade: I think the mission of the [community] garden is to create a place of green space in the community, a place of peace. To give those residents that are involved a place where they know they can get together and come mingle with other residents and talk and build community and feel safe and build relationships and do some things like I talked about back in the day. They don’t have that. I think that’s why this is such a foreign experience for some people because they’re not used to doing what you and I are doing today and that’s a one-on-one interchange. We can communicate through this; we can communicate through that, but to have a one on one. We’re a little intimidated by this because we’re not bringing the skills to do this, to have this one on one conversation. So that’s why I think this garden would be knitting together people, families, relationships, and diversity. I got a call the other day from a Caucasian woman and she said that, “I see that garden over there. I know I’m a white woman.” Sister, trust me when I tell you that we want people. If you’re a green person, you may be white on the outside but you’ve got some green in you. So if you’re green, come on and join in with us. We’d love to have you. Please come on. So I think this garden is going to be a force to be reckoned with. Not just this one but gardening in general. …I think that we can recreate some of that sense of community in the neighborhoods. But we’ve got to create a sense of community. The bricks and mortar can’t do it. We’re going to have to create the sense of community.
Financial vitality, access to information, and healthier dietary choices are important goals identified and actively sought out by this group of gardeners. Each element in this three-part goal has a greater chance of being achieved when social capital is grown. Sharing resources, knowledge, and food makes the networks of community garden sound places of social capital agency.

What would you say are some of the challenges in the garden?

Cultural

The challenges of positively engaging people coupled with economic resources to access land and amenities, buffer nature, and labor efficiently are what community gardeners’ face as they work to meet their mission. Peoples’ violent behavior in the neighborhood impedes on peaceable missions of community gardens.

Steven: The world that it’s in you know the city that it’s in [laughing], that’s about the only thing I could see that I would like to change about it is the people that you got to live in this world with and out there and encounter but not just that garden you know period… Well, there’s a gentlemen uh who used to live in that house that’s boarded up right there next to it and they say he’s a terrible person you know he’s been to prison, he’s a thug…Yeah, right there right. And Ms. P. told me about three weeks maybe a month ago that she and her son were out and this guy came out cussing her out telling her get the f out of here and this you know and you know he’s a pretty frightening person from what I’ve heard you know even the people around there are afraid of him you know and I really feel sorry for her son, cause he’s a kind of a meek kind of guy anyway you know and I admit I’m not the bravest person in the world too and a horrible person talking to my mother like that I hope I would just go on and give my life up and not let them him talk to her that way but I feel sorry for him you know cause he, what could he do you know this thug you know, so uh, and your question was what problems was it?

Elaine: The neighborhood, the people around you, seeing more than one or two fights last year. Yeah, large groups of people walking through arguing and stuff like that and having to hurry up and leave even when it’s nice outside and warm and you watering the garden and stuff cause the best time to water’s in the evening but you got to hurry up and get away from over there because the neighborhood is really bad. So even though it’s like kind of like it will always be a few steps away from being an oasis that it really could be because of where it is.
Likewise, gardeners experience *internal conflicts* of interest when non-communal behavior arises.

Ruth: They’ve been pretty cooperative, we only got one guy … he taking it personal so we need see if we will not name the park after him, I know he going to get upset. Cause he want to put a star on the top of the gazebo, we say, a star – we have to vote on that - I want somebody to come put a star. He think it’s his park. So that’s the problem we’re having now with him. We usually agree.

Sade: You know what I find to be the most challenging thing in this garden? It’s what you find common to mankind, generally so, and that’s respect. Now they, don’t get disrespectful of course, because for the most part these are Godly people but they can be disrespectful in a sense where they are not mindful of boundaries. I said “hey guys, this is me. I said I don’t care how good them tomatoes look, I don’t care how good them beets look, do not go over there and violate him and disrespect his bed. Don’t do that. I don’t care how enticing it is, I don’t care how weak you are, don’t do that.” And I find that that’s our biggest problem- temptation of the stomach and trying to enjoy the fruit of somebody else’s labor. It creates a sense of distrust among others. Because when they come they won’t come and divulge and lay bare and say, “I did it.” They say, “sister [Sade], you know I had some zucchini in my bed yesterday and I came back today and the zucchini was gone and I know who go it! I said to myself, I know who got it. And it wasn’t that person. “Are you sure? Are you certain?” I’m gone try to be the negotiator – you know – now it may have been somebody else – so why would you say it was that person? “Well they was looking at it. They kept looking at it – looking over in my bed and they kept say in Oooo, I like the way they look.” So I say, I’m go lay bare and be honest with you. And you can just take it and if you said something. You may owe that person an apology. I don’t know it’s on you. So we need to go and speak to that individual right now so I would like to get this straight – all right. …So, we go through our sermons of creating boundaries and being respectful of each other’s bed.

Poor work *ethic* among some potential and community gardeners appears to weaken their mission for the gardens.

Nelson: See they got to understand that. And this ain’t just your garden it’s our garden. Ain’t just your spot it’s our spot, see? So this is what were, that’ that’s the community understanding that we are ought to have, that’s a little hard uh to get that over to some but uh they, so far they cooperating very well.

Helen: I guess it’s getting everybody to do what they had to do cause a lot of friends didn’t show up to a cultivate the ground like they was supposed to, so we had to do they part plus our part. So that was a challenge. …Right now I think we getting ready to do a little bit more so I have to wait and see but we um could have a little more participation in it and maybe it’ll grow bigger but we see this year.
Deidra: But one year I did grow some down [their] in the middle of a lot but everybody wanted the free food but nobody wanted to do the work so I only did that for a couple of years because it was too much. I had to drag the water from either down here or across the street or wait until they open the hydrant for me. And so I had to abandon that. … I wish I had more water, more conveniently located.

Not only at times are the working commitments of some gardeners lacking, so too are the number of laborers. A couple of a few gardeners explain this challenge:

Russell: Well, I’d say so many different challenges that you know. We’ve had people that come and go and stuff and this and that and we just keep on continuing doing our thing. You know, sometimes it’s only a few of us but we just keep doing it, something we like doing. We just keep the tradition going. You know, we just keep on going.

Deidra: Well, sustainability is the biggest challenge because I’ve been here forever, Mrs. D has been here for over 50 years, K’s been here for about 10 and she’s new on the block. And we had a neighbor who moved here a couple years ago, C. He’s interested. I’ve got A interested. But it’s real difficult to just keep people interested.

Labor efficiency in community gardens is truncated by trees, time, and training according to some.

Nelson: On the south side, south side of the garden. Front and back, cause you got the tree back there and you got another tree in the front and you got some of the shade coming across. But on this side there’s no shade and man that sun beams down and uh we’ve been concentrating on …In fact that tree, might be a little challenging with the squirrels but, and squirrels, you know that big tree that’s a walnut, black walnut tree you know what a black walnut tree is?

Nancy: Well, for me just kind of figure out when I can go. I do some private duty nursing for patients, so my time is not always my own. So, for me the biggest challenge is to go when everybody else is going to be there. I would just like to go by myself and do whatever I want to do, but it doesn’t work like that. So, that’s the biggest challenge for me.

Travis: Well, the only thing I would say would be difficult for me is picking the weeds. Cause they kind of hard to, to distinguish from a regular plant and a weed [laugh]. So, and I’m still learning so, that, that has been a challenge for me. Other than that, like the watering and stuff like that it’s not really that hard to do that …the plant, the real, the real plants the weeds that’s kind of like a challenge for me.

Environmental

Community gardeners seek to buffer their mission against natural climate patterns,
weather events, and pests that are attendant to the outdoor environment. A few of several gardeners replied:

Aisha: The weather. Well there’s storms, I know when I went out of town there was a big hail storm that kinda…. the things that we were doing a little bit, umm also the extreme heat. I also ….from squirrels and some rabbits been eating off the stuff. But other than that everyone has been respectful. We haven’t had any problems or complaints or anything like that. …Change about it? My only issue in the garden is the squirrels. The squirrels eat up everything so if I had a way to lock them out I’d be happy to do so.

Audrey: You know um whereas companies that, trim trees, carving companies, they were dumping the stuff on the lot and we hadn’t ordered any. …Mulch and it was piled to that thing out there and see mulch is not good in an area where the people aren’t gardening on, rodents. When they’re not taking care of dumping their garbage properly. Cuz that’s a haven for them. …Mona: And pickin up their dogs stuff. …Audrey: You know so mulch is only good if you can cover the foundation with a good sand so if they do try to dig to burrow in they can’t. Because the sand is gonna constantly be movin so we wouldn’t have to worry about them burrowin in. Because we actually had mulch removed from that lot because when rat patrol came through and treated it I never forget one night I was comin in from work and you shoulda seen this this mouse struggling from off the lot that was eventually dying but he was struggling to get away from that lot. It was something to see. … Mona: Yeah I had it treated because one night I just seen something you know poppin up you know in spots. I’m like, what is that. So I come outside of the fence and I just stood there and then I said, oh snap a bunch of mice, rats well you know. … Audrey: Rodents. … Mona: Rodents and they was like mmm I had something good for you all. Then I called 311, called contacted rat, rodent control or whatever and they came out and they did some sprinkling. I said I don’t care how much you put on that lot just lay it down. … Audrey: And then they eventually requested the mulch be removed. …But and then some of it was from fly dumping and we just we got in touch wit the alderman and called 3112 – we said it needs to be removed because there it’s a problem.

Material

Access to land, economic resources, and amenities is a battle community gardeners are faced with.

Lynn: I think it was big, but the way it was broken up was too small because I wanted us to grow more stuff, but because there are so many people, we each had our own section. I wish we had a bigger [area].

Sade: Space. The space- it’s not large enough. As challenging as it may look to others … I am challenged by not having enough space. If we had more space, we could have a
greater impact. We could have a larger impact. We could have a larger engagement in the community. I am only limited by the space we have.

Along with spatial needs are community gardeners’ structural needs for the accommodation of growing crops year-round.

Tina: One of the things I would love to see this, because I would like to see Ms. B busy in the wintertime. When she’s in the house and now that I have more time, we can have the greenhouse and be out there in the wintertime. I would love to see some vegetables growing in the wintertime in that greenhouse right there. That was our goal in the first place and it was a vision and I would just love for this vision to come to fusion and now that I have more time to devote to trying to get that, that’s exactly what happens and I hope we can get that covered and get it to where it is self-contained with vermeil composting so it can make its own heat and we can go out there in the winter time and eat some fresh green tomatoes. I don’t want say fried because that’s supposed to be unhealthy, but I want some fried green tomatoes.

Benches and lighting are practical resources that community gardeners lack in some locations; as drawn to our attention by the following comments:

Arnel: The only thing I’m hoping is that we get those benches that we can sit, so most of us won’t be standing. You know, get the benches and maybe a table so when we do come out and bring out the fried tomatoes, we’ll be able to sit out and enjoy them.

Brianna: We could put some sitting benches out there, that would work then we could sit out there a little bit longer. We have flowers but benches and tables. Lights on the streetlights, so we could stay out there a little bit longer.

Fences are in short supply at many of the community garden sites, where they could be of considerable use.

Payton: Well there’s no challenge but I would like to have a fence around it. You know, to secure riff raff because people know me but still I don’t trust everything that I don’t see. Yea, just add once you get everything put up. I don’t think I’m going to put anything down that it could be more or less stolen. But you know as far as people with that graffiti atmosphere thing, you know. I like to have fence up to protect from that graffiti. I don’t want no graffiti on my gazebo.

Brian: It faces a lot of challenges. Somebody been coming in there chopping off your collard greens. Not members – Naw. Cause we don’t have a fence – a real perimeter fence like people down the street. So the collards you clip them – I meant that you clip them and they come back. But somebody just came in there and just (chomp sound) chopped of the whole thing and took them. A lot of them. They must do it after we leave.
or whatever. …Look at the neighborhood – it could have been worse than that. They
could have came in there and just you know – rough it up. But for the most part, they
been respectful of it because they been eating out of it too. (laughter)…Yea- I went there
and had no collards I said, “man where is my” and they say “these over here they missing
too.” He just chopped off the whole thing. (chomp sound) (chomp sound) It just a big
empty space there. (laughter) Before it was bustling with collards. I could go there and
get me some collards. (laughter) …You know some people just don’t appreciate being a
good neighbor. That ain’t being a good neighbor. (laughter)

Soil quality improvements are a challenge for community gardens, as they are frequently
plagued by toxic conditions.

Steven: I would like to change … so uh but specifically uh it would be nice if it wasn’t
on top of that area where all those bricks up under there and that dirt, there’s probably got
lead in it cause a building was torn down and it would be nice if it wasn’t like that on that
but that’s why we got the raised situation to avoid that so but if I could change something
that would be the terrain you know.

Sade: It is, it’s a big issue now because one thing about the [Lincoln Heights] area it’s
known for lead. Lead, and so now days, a lot of people test their soil by getting a little
cup full of dirt or whatever and they ship it off to wherever it is, I don’t know. But we
never did it so far because we have a raised bed so we don’t have to go through that. But
I’m sure it’s tinted with lead because a big, it was a big church scare. Everything caught
on fire because the electricity hit it. And so it was an old, old church ‘cause Martin
Luther King came to that church back in the 60s. And I had thought that they’d leave it
there as a landmark cause it was a nice, big, huge, beautiful church. But it was too much
damage and not enough money to repair and so um, they end up tearing it down. But um,
I’m sure the soil, you know, we never had to worry about that because the raised bed. So,
these flowers will be ok because we’re not eating flowers. So we was, like I said, we
need some more raised beds, were trying to get some more raised beds. You know, it’s
cause they’re so many rocks um, you’d probably dig so far down because it’s rocks,
rocks, rocks, because of the old church at the center.

Similar circumstances facing community gardeners’ soil constraints are the limitations in
providing water. Many described what is articulated by these community gardeners:

Earline: We need water in the garden so once I get the coordinator I want him to work on
trying to work with whatever department he needs to work with to make sure water’s
there. We run ours hoes from the school now, and that’s a lot of work. …There’s a fire
hydrant right next to the garden but we don’t have the hose to use it for the garden. We
run in our own hose from the school, where there is a faucet on the side of the school but
that takes a lot of hose. So that’s one of the challenges we have is trying to do that. Uh,
we need uh, the soil, like I said. We need soil to, for the raised beds and don’t have the
funding to get it. And a couple of years ago we was able to get some what is it? – Mulch
to put around the plants. And last two years we haven’t been able to do that. Chips and stuff like that, which can be free but you gotta have somebody coordinate it.

Audrey: You know and have and be able to take our tools and be able to get to it to work it the way it should be. For instance like watering. You know that’s an issue. You know cuz like for the garden we use our water. I actually invested in getting hoses to extend out there. Matter of fact I probly bought one too many. You know to extend from our house over and water. … Mona: But before Mrs. T. had it was a hydrant put across the street because some kinda way it had been so many accidents there they closed that and shut it down but they replaced it you know and she had a hose line that she received from the fire department where she could bring it across and water it because one while that’s what she was doin. And then another while she had asked us a while years back.

Community gardeners struggle with financial support for a number of various primary requirements to have a productive garden, including ownership of the land they make use of.

These testimonials summarize this garden community theme:

Tina: Challenges is funding. That’s a big challenge. It is. Funding in order to sustain it. If the garden is to be sustained because most of the time if you get funding from a funder, you are not going to get the funding again next year. They are going to rotate it because you must remember a lot of organizations when they had the…What do you call it? Not the tsunami. Hurricane, well you had a lot of organizations shut down funding smaller even gardening programs. Red Cross all the other different places that may have different little funding strings for gardening and other activities, it dried up. So, a lot of the funding of places we were told there is no funding right now. The money is going to Hurricane Katrina, now it’s Haiti. So, you have to depend on one and another and so there’s really no big bucks, I mean this stuff costs. If we wanted to do another garden like what we did out here that’s quite a bit of money. So, we have to do fundraisers and everybody has to pay bills and whatever, so it’s rough, but we do it.

Audrey: I think the biggest challenge because I think that garden is in a spot that could be more inviting or uh other people because it’s like a focal point. I think in our grid um it’s to probably try to talk to the people and ask them how long are they planning on trynna hold on to this lot that its not really feasible for them financially because that was the question too and she mentioned about they were struggling trying to keep their property and they, their home property and then you know to have the taxes for that lot, you know so we gotta try to talk to them and see if they would be willing to turn it over, as a tax write off an then that gotta be one less worry for them, and we can move on to get the things we need done. …Mona: well a couple of our members that was in with her when we approached her about ownership of the lot for the community and so it was all of this “hehawin” goin on about it so that’s just what happens sometimes so.
Summary

The galvanizing effect of food on community gardeners’ social capital is most profound in this study. Gardeners’ health and safety are established around it, planting and eating locally grown crops. Their knowledge is impressed upon fellow gardeners and neighborhood populaces via food related education. Peoples’ economic lot in life is increased by the savings and sales related to crop produce made accessible in the community. At the core of challenges they face are people who can overcome through education that encourages efficiency, mitigates natures’ obstacles, and accessing resources to health and safety of the Lincoln Heights neighborhood.
CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION

The most significant findings from this research project related to community gardeners’ motivations, the social capital they exhibit, the implications beyond the community gardens, and the successes achieved in spite of the challenges confronted. Neither gardener, nor any community garden, is the sole generator of social capital. The majority of participants in this research carry with them a prior spiritual sensibility of faith, love, and hope or ‘rootedness’ (Fullilove, 2004) obtained from cultural and religious beliefs and historical social relationships through generational linkages. From this foundation, community gardeners build their social capital. Community gardeners’ gracious efforts succeeded in: motivating community change and strengthening social networks, evoking foresight to expand improvements beyond the community garden sites, and connecting social place-based knowledge to resourceful thriving (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2007) in a careworn low-income urban neighborhood.

Main Findings

Motivations. The success of the community gardeners in this study can be attributed to their motivations. Gardeners share a strong desire to create beautiful, peaceful, and healing environments in their neighborhood. They accomplish this by being informed about growing food in a socially enriching way. These community gardeners have been impressed upon by numerous unsightly vacant open spaces found throughout their neighborhood to reutilize them. They champion an effort to these landscapes by including plants that produce food for sharing with the broader neighborhood. Community gardeners find motivation in being more informed, taking on an active supportive role in their community, and creating outdoor social places with significant restorative qualities.
Building Social Capital. Community gardening generated social capital that follows a linear pattern from trust to sharing to collective efficacy. This was accomplished through the inclusion of community members at various points in the planning processes with frequent participation in activities. First, they learned to trust. Gardeners move from a state of belief in themselves to giving or sharing of themselves. This trajectory results in their imagining an improved land, labor, and lot in neighborhood livelihood. Gardeners’ bond relationships help to identify the need for bridge relationships as a means for achieving initial support, broadening necessary resources, and desire for accomplishing greater community impact. In this way, gardeners build social cohesion that fostered collective efficacy.

Expanding Improvement. In part because of the social capital developed through the community gardens, gardeners wanted to improve the community in other areas: providing safer streets, expanding educational opportunities, and increasing employment opportunities through green-industries. Social networks have been improved and continue to unite relationships that have been fractured due to fears for safety. Knowledge shared among gardeners leads to a desire for higher levels of structured education. As safety and knowledge are acquired, gardeners look towards economic stability and growth options in marketing their skillsets for leveraging community transformation.

Overcoming Challenges. The urban ills of the Lincoln Heights neighborhood (e.g.: infrastructural blight, social isolation, and economic disinvestment) are challenges gardeners face when trying to achieve their mission of community improvement (e.g.: economically, environmentally, and by eating healthy). The barriers they face include lack of material resources, social stability, and encounters with nature. Strengthening their bond and bridge relationships provide a solution to the problems they confront as they realize their garden
mission. Gardeners struggle to secure support from civic and private organizations to meet their material needs (e.g.: land, accessible water, quality soil, storage units, fences, and hoop-houses for year-round gardening). Building members’ proficiency in gardening activities through an increase in educational and outreach programs, gardeners can overcome areas where they have internal conflicts, low participation rates, poor work ethics, and lack of efficiency. In addition, gardeners are learning how to prevent or mediate natural conflicts of weather, animals, and insects.

**Contributions**

This study expands previous research on social capital and community gardening in several ways. First, it explores how community gardens contribute to social capital. Through the act of gardening together, individuals develop values, build cross-class cooperation, increase opportunities for face-to-face contact, and link generations together through common goals of community beautification and food production. Second, by focusing on African American community gardeners rather than a racially and ethnically mixed population, I was able to contribute to our understanding of the development of social capital by observing these empowered, African American community gardeners in a low-income neighborhood. In contrast to most of the previous work on community gardens, my findings about the development of social capital among low-income African American individuals is substantiated by primary data, whereas previous research has made claims without specific context to African American cultural associations or with only meager participant samples, which has made a poor foundation for building any future generalizations.

We now have a better idea of how the dynamics of community gardens effectively generate social capital. This qualitative study shows how local social support systems can meet
some basic needs of community gardeners, including essentials for the survival and thriving of a healthy community. I have identified distinct indicators that convey social capital for African Americans in low-income neighborhoods through community gardens beyond the anecdotal findings of previous studies; these include values, visual qualities and democratic esthetics, group efforts, social and cultural factors, social health, design elements, catalysts and saturation of social capital. I consider each of these briefly below.

Values. This study contributes to our understanding of the values developed by community gardening. Across class and cultural differences, community gardeners develop values of care, responsibility, and a sense of community. This achievement was challenged by the environmental constraints of abandoned housing, vacant lots, and the dangers of vice culture attendant too common to economically and socially vulnerable circumstances. Respectability, care, sense of community is burgeoning as dynamic community gardens remove barriers for the formation of bond and bridge relationships. Community gardens are places where age, resident tenure, leadership positions, and even one’s behavior, (e.g.: legal and illegal) are superseded to forge civility. Community gardeners’ interest to improve upon their standards of public health and ethics of social well-being in their neighborhood is galvanized by their personal investment.

Design Characteristics, Elements and a Democratic Esthetic. The community gardens included in this study have landscape characteristics and relationships that researchers have found to impact social capital such as: open areas, built structures, and visibility of a site. Open areas that may not have a building associated with it; where the landscape is a prominent feature alone is an example. Other landscape features are examples, like public to semi-public buildings and zones including churches and other faith-based institutions’ structures. Another example is visual access to outdoor spaces without or with minimal visual barriers with signs of
maintenance. All of these landscape features facilitate cognitive perception for identity based on character appeal and beauty, and/or spiritual harmony.

The community gardens included other landscape amenities that impact social capital. These amenities are central to community gardens’ relationship to social capital production and include: common public spaces with vegetation (Sullivan et. al., 2004; Kuo & Sullivan et. al., 1998; Kweon, et. al., 1998); small niches (Fullilove, 2000); recreation space (Reid, 2009); smaller blocks (Berke, 2007); schoolyards (Gomez & Muntaner, 2005); community centers (Dannenberg et. al., 2003); act as an outdoor learning environment (Farley et. al., 2004); and vacant lots and farmland (Zukin, 2010).

Another contribution to our understanding of social capital generated by community gardens in this particular environment is that of visual quality. Often, visual esthetics is associated with social stability. For these community gardeners, beauty does not depend on manicured maintenance levels that produce immaculate lawns and geometric forms of symmetry in hedges and shrubbery, but to vernacular, irregular, and mosaic patterned landscapes. A makeshift fence suggestive of a garden’s perimeter, an amoeba shaped compost pile, a motley collection of recycled containers used for holding tools, water, trash, or mulch are informally placed to function as gardeners choose. The practical character of non-professional abilities is suitable for the composition of successful common community gardens. Through the democratic process of developing community gardens, an informal form of expression is demonstrated. The beauty is found within the participants’ individual identities and is arranged into a landscape that expresses their sense of community.

*Group Efforts and Social Health.* Compared to previous research, this study echoes many qualities of social capital linked to community gardens. Group activities engaging nature
improve social well-being (Abraham et al., 2010). Meetings and other cooperative work that was conducted in, and in relationship to, community gardens resulted in the formation of close social networks among gardeners (Armstrong, 2000). Spatially, the interaction is personal, as in face-to-face contact (Putnam, 2000) and time-wise, the frequency of interactions are near daily (Reid, 2009). Gardener dependence is a result of required constant close contact that develops in community gardens. Community gardens are places where different individuals are not placed in a hierarchy (Blundson & Davern, 2005; Chile & Simpson, 2004; Gomez & Muntaner, 2005). Community gardens are also places where a team effort is comprised of political agendas, role models, cultural continuity of commonality and socially conscious people (Goode, 2010; Blokland, 2008; Reitmanova & Gustafson, 2009; Zukin, 2010). Social support formed around the cultivation and consumption of food can bring together various class, age, sex, and health status populations (Armstrong, 2000; Mundel et al., 2010; Wills et al., 2010; and Wakefield et al., 2004).

In support of previous research, this study places community gardens as facilitators of walkable, mixed-use, neighborhoods where residents trust others and are involved socially (Leyden, 2003; and Day, 2006). Access to resources such as habitat and its revitalization are vital products of social capital (Fullilove, 2004); that is also true for community gardens. Resilience, a protective quality for buffering stress, is embedded in social capital practices and (Reid, 2009), is linked to community gardens. People with stronger levels of social support and more social ties have an increased level of social well-being.

**Social and Cultural Factors.** Identifying and understanding the socioeconomic background of a community can affect the ways community gardens build social capital, which Glover (2004) left unaddressed. Though Glover (2004) found that gated and locked fences
reduce social interaction, I found that security structures are necessary to limit criminal activity (e.g.: fly-dumping, vandalism, theft, and stashing of drugs and accompanying paraphernalia). This shows how it is important to consider neighborhood specific social and cultural concerns when developing a community garden.

Socioeconomic factors impact the development of social capital among community gardeners who are ethnic minorities (Sokolovosky, 2010) because of the economic conditions and social capital connections where there is a yearning to grow heritage foods in an affordable way (Reitmanova & Gustafson, 2009). Unlike previous research, this study confirms some of the culturally specific garden foods consumed by African Americans. Where Glover (2004, p. 155) noted that carrots were used to encourage African Americans to participate in community gardening, I found that greens (e.g.: collards, turnip, and mustard), okra, watermelon, and sweet potatoes were the culture specific crops of choice for African American community gardeners. These ingredients are identified as essential to ‘Soul food’ most commonly recognized with African American consumption. Identifying and understanding the ethno-racial food culture of a community can affect how social capital is built through a community garden setting.

Social Capital Catalysts. While Putnum (2000) contends that social capital declined during the past century due to individualism, fostered by technology and a lack of common national mission encouraged during times of war; I found the opposite among community gardeners in this study. These community gardeners are unified by immediate local factors such as economic hardships and violence, rather than national wars. I interpret this finding to be based on a few cultural factors that other researchers have found to be relevant to consider. Many low-income inner-city African American communities have not followed an individualism model. In fact, some have fostered social networks to combat the lack of individual and
communal financial wealth (Stack, 1974). Technology, such as texting or calling other gardeners on cell phones, acts as a tool of gathering gardeners on short notice to participate in activities that improve their social capital. Furthermore, Putnum’s ‘bowling alone’ theory of a decline in bowling leagues is reversed for community gardeners in this study. Interestingly, it was the most frequently mentioned group sport participated in away from their community gardens.

Generalizability

How applicable are these findings to other communities? Communities within similar contexts may very well follow patterns identified in this study. The intention of this research is not to be universally generalizable but to present empirical data that clarifies community garden processes’ impact on a specific community’s social capital development.

Interpretations of this research, suggested from community gardeners’ experiences, may not generalize to other neighborhoods or even to other gardens within the same neighborhoods. While participants in this study engaged a great deal in social capital generating activity, I am aware that other efforts to forge community gardens were not as successful. Observations of several sites listed as community gardens indicated from a few website lists, were no longer visibly in operation in Lincoln Heights. Although rarely occurring, there were some fractures and alliances of community gardeners’ social units after my data collection period that could provide additional findings regarding Hanifan’s and Bourdieu’s definitions and interpretations of social capital resulting in structuring of behavior patterns. Divisions of social units: friends, family, and congregation (Hanifan, 1916) and class fraction rooted in earliest childhood surfaced along generational and class lines (Bourdieu, 1984). Likewise, Lincoln Heights is susceptible to over involvement or network saturation causes an unmanageable social capital, resulting in diminishing returns (Gomez & Muntaner, 2005).
Even with these caveats, however, I believe that the majority of the findings presented here are applicable to other low-income African American neighborhoods both today and for some time in the future. Several of the ways in which these findings have impacts are discussed below.

Implications and Policy

There are implications of this research for particular environments as well as more broadly to other settings. Low-income African American neighborhoods in Chicago can benefit by utilizing community gardens as community builders, and by paying attention to the cultural factors that motivate participation and develop social capital. For individuals who argue that the benefits of community gardens are limited, the evidence present above demonstrates that, on the contrary, community gardens are a vehicle that they can lead to great community improvements.

Low-income neighborhoods, immigrant neighborhoods or neighborhoods including groups of marginalized people, should tailor the design of their community gardens to fit their needs. From growing more ethnic specific foods to accommodating persons with disabilities, spaces can be modified to accommodate and grow participation. Even individuals who are incarcerated can be empowered to rehabilitate their lives by gardening with others. Within spaces of confinement, communal gardens have to potential to lessen abounding racial barriers.

City planning and urban design can foster policies that promote community gardens communities that are under stress. Community programming should promote community garden activities: acquiring vacant land, providing educational opportunities on related topics, and job training for building skilled labor in green industries. These findings are strongly recommended for a variety of stakeholders to champion: designers, planners, city officials and agencies, and others (Hou, Johnson, Lawson, 2009, 191-195).
To what extent should cities invest in community gardens? An assessment of current tactics should be measured with the results from this research. Considering the need for community participation where ghettoization, gentrification, and other disturbances persist, social stability can be reinvigorated through funding community garden programs. Like community centers, educational institutions, and civic recreational opportunities, community gardens offer one clear choice that has proven effective.

For educators of landscape architects, my research informs agendas for research, teaching, and community engagement. There is more we need to know about the impacts of community gardens on community health, vitality, and self-sufficiency. Educators should be teaching future landscape architects about the value of community gardens for community building. Community gardens provided students, educators and practitioners with opportunities for an orientation to participatory design. This form of civic engagement champions instruction in comity among all of humanity. My research can be used to militate against the exclusion of underserved populations in landscape architecture processes that impact neighborhood resources.

Landscape architects’ relationships with African American communities can be improved through community gardens. Such relationships are fostered by the ability of community gardens to bridge greater understanding between the practical and professional methods of spatial ordering. Greater access, awareness, and presentation of formerly unacknowledged and seldom noted historical and cultural connections between African American life and landscape architecture can be made via community gardens. Building these relationships can diminish the abuse, exploitation, and vilification of our cultural environments and each other socially. Fully mobilized, successfully implemented community gardens present greater opportunities to strike vigorous blows on behalf of democracy in achieving vital needed open space infrastructure in an
urban neighborhood.

Experience and expertise in African American culture and history is needed among those who teach, research, and practice landscape architecture. My research informs this assessment. Like the inclusivity gained by community engagement with community gardens, conscious facilitators of learning that mirror the breadth of people that can benefit from landscape architecture, can also be improved by a diversity of leadership. Professional and academic diversity can enhance the educational experience of all students and communities that are engaged. Imagine being able to see yourself in American landscape history references that are not a dismissal, trivialization, or misreading of your culture? Until more critical, honest, and ingenious representations of Blacks’ relationship to the landscape are unavoidable in the discourse there is a great void in our vast cultural history and diverse society.

Future Research

Future research should replicate this study in other settings, utilize other methods, apply a different focus, and increase the sample size to further our understanding of social capital generated by community gardens. Not only can it yield specific findings but can draw us closer to finding commonalities across diverse uses of community gardens.

Replication of this research in other similar communities in the Midwest: Detroit, Michigan and St. Louis, Missouri, and places in other regions such as Atlanta, Georgia; Washington D.C.; New York City; Oakland and Compton, California can provide a greater likelihood for generalizability of the extent to which community gardens impact our understanding of community gardeners’ social capital generation. More attention should be given to longitudinal studies, those gathering community gardeners’ stories about the impact of their developed social capital. This type of information can be solicited through involved
participant observations, in-depth interviews, and participatory action research. Common unsightly vacant lots spur local residents to embrace participatory action to clean and beautify ugly and dirty settings; a frequent community development catalyst among African American community gardeners in low-income neighborhoods (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny, 2004, 400-402, 410). McIntrye (2000) was able to engage inner-city youth in a campaign to clean up the landscape through participatory action research. The negative psychological sense of community of that group of youth was transformed into a positive. Like this transformative participatory action research project, its replication within the context of a community garden (Zukin, 2010) could address lack of scholarship about teenagers’ social capital and community gardens.

In addition to studies that especially center on all of the correlates of social capital and community gardens, studies that focus specifically on collective efficacy can be conducted. Unlike this study, which includes a variety of community gardens, researchers should give considerable attention to faith-based community gardens. These types of community gardens, included in this study, were more successful in building social capital. As a case study, my research relied on insight from a small number of gardeners from all but one community garden. Future studies should include larger samples from multiple sites to further approach generalizability. An examination of community gardeners’ social capital generation in cross-sectional studies would also help foresee processes that are unique and more universal to different types of community gardens.

Conclusion

This research is contributes to our understanding of the extent to which community gardens generate social capital within inner-city African American neighborhoods. Studies of gardeners’ community building social interactions have documented some general indicators of
social capital among non-African American populations (Armstrong, 2000; Glover, 2003; Milligan et al., 2004; Wakefield et al., 2007; and Sokolovosky, 2010). Researchers have acknowledged anecdotally that community gardens have the lowest cost (Voicu & Beven, 2008, p. 243) and highest beneficial impact for “meeting the needs” of urban dwelling low-income African Americans (Armstrong, 2000, p. 324). Yet, none appear to have qualitatively investigated the critical role that urban community gardens play in the social well-being of low-income African American gardeners at the neighborhood level (Glover, 2004; Glover, 2005; Mundel et al. 2010; and Wills et al., 2010). I used qualitative interviews that specifically focused on the community building social capital interactions of low-income African American community gardeners living in an inner-city Chicago neighborhood. The findings presented here, which are based on extensive interviews, site visits and photo documentation, enhance our understanding of community gardeners’ development of social capital.

The community gardeners I observed and interviewed were motivated to transform their environment through social engagement, to produce cost efficient and healthy fruits and vegetables, and to clean and beautify unsightly vacant spaces in their neighborhood. Community gardeners’ social capital is generated from the trust of their core relationships fostered in planning processes. Frequent planned activities in establishing community gardens gives rise to sharing experiences among participants. Collective efficacy results from the achievements made in gardening collectively, which spawns their hopes of taking on other shared issues that they can address together. Gardeners succeed when they use social networks to activate larger social engagement through local social networks for the appropriation of vacant open spaces for esthetic, economic, and educational betterment of a neighborhood. While gardeners face challenges in realizing their mission to improve the health and safety of their community, they
utilize their collective social networks to be knowledgeable about open space land use, more
informed about managing natural environmental barriers, and galvanize strong bonds and bridge
relationships to access critical resources to overcome these challenges.

Nearly every major city in America today has vacant lots within salvageable neighborhoods. The residents’ will to be employed in the transformation of their own communities often goes untapped or is ill-supported. Using practical agrarian knowledge and resources can again make streets, residential developments, and cities mirror the nature revered names they are often identified as (i.e.: parkway, vista, and garden). I foresee community gardens as not only a response to the decay in these neighborhoods but as a vital and sustainable urban infrastructure. Community gardens produce investment in neighborhoods; grow individual values and social responsibility, strengthen ties among neighbors, and help urban citizens thrive. We should grow more of them.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARIES AND PHOTOS OF THE COMMUNITY GARDENS

Name: Magnolia Street Community Garden
Established: Circa 1980, more communal around 2000
Involvement: Leadership of a senior woman, and assistance of her son and older woman friend, block club, and community youth program. (3) interviewed
Location: Residential neighborhood, next door to home of the leader on a vacant city lot
Type: Mostly vegetable with some ornamental plantings, shrubs and perennials
Establishing Resources: City allows use and private organizational supports with participant investment
Name: Hawthorn Road Community Garden
Established: Idea explored in 2009, Informed of available land and support options in 2010, started cleaning the site in April 2011, began growing crops by June 2011
Involvement: Leadership of a faithful woman, and leading laborer of a fellow in a shared faith, others of faith community, on the block and in the neighborhood, (20) interviewed
Location: Residential neighborhood, a few blocks of the leader, on a few vacant city lots
Type: Mostly vegetable with some flowering annual plantings
Establishing Resources: Private owners allow use, organizational supports with participant investment
Name: Alpine Parkway Community Garden
Established: 2010
Involvement: Leadership of a disability retired woman with assistance of adult children, (1) interviewed
Location: Residential neighborhood, next door to home of the leader on a vacant city lot
Type: Mostly vegetable with some ornamental plantings, shrubs and perennials
Establishing Resources: Private owner allows use, organizational supports with participant investment
Name: Maple Avenue Community Garden
Established: 2009
Involvement: Leadership of a woman designated by her faith leadership, occasional neighbors and others in the faith, some youth, (1) interviewed
Location: On vacant lot near the place of worship
Type: Mostly vegetable with some flowers
Establishing Resources: Faith organization property, organizational supports with participant investment
Name: Rhus Lane Community Garden
Established: 1983 through 1989
Involvement: Leadership of a man, youth on the block and in organizations in local schools (1) interviewed
Location: On vacant lots near the leaders residence
Type: Mostly vegetable with some flowers
Establishing Resources: Local organizational supports with participant investment
Name: Cedar Boulevard Community Garden
Established: 2003
Involvement: Leadership of a woman, local organizations and community school youth (1) interviewed
Location: On vacant lots near local school and residence
Type: Mostly flowers with some vegetables
Establishing Resources: Local organizational supports
Name: Linden Place Community Garden
Established: 1996
Involvement: Leadership of a woman, local organizations and community youth (1) interviewed
Location: On vacant lots near place of worship and residence
Type: Mostly flowers perennials, shrubs, turf, and some trees
Establishing Resources: Local organizational supports
Name: Juniper Way Community Garden
Established: Circe 1985
Involvement: Leadership of a woman, with a friends assistance man who is new to the community, local organizations and community youth, (2) interviewed
Location: On vacant lots near residences
Type: Mostly flowers perennials, shrubs, turf, vines, some trees and some vegetables
Establishing Resources: Purchased lot by the leadership for $300.00, with civic leadership
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pine Drive Community Garden</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Established</td>
<td>1987</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>Leadership of a woman, neighborhoods man local organizations and community youth (4) interviewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>On vacant lots near residences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>All flowers perennials, shrubs, turf, and some trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>City and local government, local organizational supports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Name: Gingko Trail Community Garden
Established: Circe 1975
Involvement: Leadership of a family, the women, block club
(3) interviewed
Location: On vacant lots near place of residence
Type: Mostly flowers perennials, shrubs, and some turf
Establishing
Resources: Participant investment and local organizational supports
APPENDIX B

COMMUNITY GARDEN SOCIAL CAPITAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. First, let me ask you, what is this neighborhood called?

2. What do you think are the boundaries of this neighborhood? Please draw a map of the neighborhood.

Community Tenure
1. How long have you lived in this neighborhood?

2. What was it like for you when you first moved here?

   PROBE Change/continuity in resident makeup (poor or immigrant families)
   Change/continuity in economic conditions
   Change/continuity in social relations
   Change/continuity in local services

Institutional Resources
1. Take a minute to think about all the services and resources that this neighborhood has to offer families who live here. Let’s list them. Okay, let’s go over the list and tell me a little bit about each one.

2. Tell me about some of the resources or activities that this neighborhood has for the children who live here.

   PROBE Schools
          Parks
          Playgrounds
          Libraries
          Head Start, etc…
          Garden(s)

Physical Dangers
1. More and more people are expressing concerns with how safe they feel in their neighborhoods. Yet people have different views about safety and danger. Tell me about how safe you feel in your neighborhood.

2. People may like to spend time in safe places and avoid dangerous places in the neighborhood.
   a. Where are some of the places in the neighborhood that you think are dangerous?
      What goes on in these areas?
   b. Where are some of the places in the neighborhood that you feel safe?

Neighborhood Ratings

1. How would you rate this neighborhood as a place to live? What makes you think that?
2. How would you rate this neighborhood as a place to raise children? Tell me a little more about that.

COMMUNITY GARDENING

1. Can you tell me about the history of this garden, how it came about?

2. What would you say is the mission of the garden?

3. How did you decide on this particular site for the garden?

4. What type of garden is this? How was the decision made to have this type of garden?

5a. How did you get involved in this community garden? (What would you say were the reasons that you became involved in this community garden?)

b. Besides this garden, what other gardening activities have you been involved in?

6. Who are the other people that are involved in the garden? Probe: Race, age, gender, relationships

7. Thinking about some of the other people here, why do you think they became involved in the garden?

8. How does your garden operate? You know, who takes responsibility for what? How did this come about?

9. What are the rules that you have for the garden? How did you develop these rules? What happens when people don’t follow the rules?

10. How do you pay for the garden?

11. What is the schedule of activities for the garden? (What goes into planning for the gardening season?)

12. What are some of the activities that members of the garden participate in away from the garden?

13. What would you say are some of the challenges in the garden?

14. In your opinion, how does the garden reflect the people who live in this community?

15. What do you think people get out of participating in this garden?
16a. How would you say the garden has impacted the community?

16b. How has the garden impacted the people who live in this community?
   Probe: Families
   Teens/children

17a. How do you encourage participation in the garden?

17b. What keeps people from participating in the garden?

18. What things do you like best about the garden?

19. What would you like to change about the garden?

20. Fantasize for a minute, where would you like to see this garden in five years
   What would you need to make this happen?

Closing/Thank You
**APPENDIX C**

**COMMUNITY GARDENERS’ ACTIVITIES CHART AND ANALYSIS**

- **Motivating:** Recognizing, Loving, Caring, Helping, Assisting, Admiring, Vesting, Hiring, Following

- **Planning:** Ordering, Designing, Delegating, Calling, Running, Taking Responsibility, Empowering, Supplementing, Going, Pushing, Opening, Seeing

- **Educating:** Speaking, Asking/Inquiring, Presentations, Paper work (Grant Writing), Signing, Sponsoring, Social justice, Meetings

- **Laboring:** Keeping, Cleaning, Refreshing, Using, Fixing, Tapping, Hammering, Finishing

- **Cultivating:** Tilling, Farming, Digging, Planting, Testing, Trying, Messing up, Replant, Growing, Watering, Weeding, Mowing, Raking, Pulling, Picking, Bagging, Gleaning, Gathering, Harvesting, Fertilizing, Composting

- **Swapping:** Switching, Taking, Having, Giving, Sharing, Acquiring, Selling, Buying, Receiving, Delivering

- **Preparing:** Peeling, Cooking, Canning, Potluck, Eating (Tasting), Cookouts, Picnics, Barbeques

- **Connecting:** Engaging, Welcoming, Spiritual meditation, Games (chess, checkers), Parties (w/block club), Sitting, Talking, Coming out (hanging)

- **Watching:** Protecting, Defending, Minimizing, Killing/Fighting (pest), Hurting, Theft
The terms for the gardening activity are derived directly from the gardeners’ responses to all questions in the protocol and their general responses provided beyond the questions posed. The Community Garden Social Capital Interview Protocol was designed to solicit gardeners’ social beliefs and behaviors. Throughout Chapters 4 – 7, gardening activities are addressed within a social capital context. Through the process of applying Grounded Theory to gardeners’ terms, I derived the categories (see Chapter 3: Research Design: subtitle, Data Collection and Analysis, subheading, Neighborhood observations and photos). The majority of the garden activity content was found in the questions that are addressed in Chapter 5: Evidence of Social Capital Development. The following is an analysis of the gardening activities from the entirety of the data collected.

Community gardens range of activities speaks to the high level of human involvement required for their existence. Although gardening activities have similarities, they can be generally divided into active and passive forms of engagement. Among the passive activities are: planning, motivating, educating, connecting, and watching. The more active behaviors are: cultivating, swapping, preparing, and laboring. The more active roles are most prevalent. While all gardening activities are social capital builders, gardeners’ responses suggest active roles may play a more significant part. During the growing season plant material demands daily care, unlike no other activity in the garden. The top three gardening activities: cultivating, planning, and swapping, we find that to a large degree the social character the most common behaviors exhibit social capital. A trajectory of a greater to the least amount of social exchange is shown. This analysis indicates that the more familiar the members of a social network some reduction in the degree to which social interaction engaged.