

Perspectives on Neighborhood and Community: A Review of the Literature

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This article provides a historical-theoretical review of perspectives on neighborhood and community as a social unit, an exploration of the neighborhood as a spatial unit and the problems of boundary construction, and a review of empirical findings on the different experiences of neighborhood by different populations in different contexts. Neighborhoods are recognizable and definable, and they provide at least potential units of identity and action. They are, however, open systems in which membership and commitment is partial and relative, and the delineation of neighborhood boundaries is a negotiated and imperfect process, often driven by political considerations.

A movement has been developing among funders and policy makers toward geographically targeted community-based or neighborhood-based interventions. Its rationale derives, in part, from the conviction that the interrelated needs and circumstances of individuals and families are grounded in a specific context of relationships, opportunities, and constraints, which, to a large degree, are spatially defined or delimited. Many of the interventions within this movement are concerned with issues of scope in linking programmatic efforts (“comprehensive” or “holistic” approaches), issues of citizenship and capacity building (including a concern with “empowerment” and “collaborative decision making”), and issues of social organization and the sustainabil-

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ity of efforts through attempts to rebuild the “fabric of community.” All of these issues rest on a premise that neighborhoods are central and viable units of analysis and action, that they can be defined and mobilized, and that they can act and be acted on.

This article provides a historical-theoretical review of perspectives on neighborhood and community. After briefly exploring some basic definitional difficulties, I examine the concept of neighborhood as a social unit, tracing a progression of thought from human ecology through the “decline-of-community” thesis and several responses to it. I also explore the neighborhood as a spatial unit, focusing in particular on problems of boundary definition. I review empirical findings on the different experiences of neighborhood by different populations in different contexts. Finally, I summarize the implications of these three perspectives on understanding neighborhood, including its component elements, scope, and uses.

Neighborhood and Community: Some Definitions

Although there is strong agreement among many that neighborhoods or communities are viable units of action, the operational definitions of these units vary greatly.¹ The two terms themselves are the cause of some confusion, and the distinction between them is often unclear.

On the one hand, “community” implies connection: some combination of shared beliefs, circumstances, priorities, relationships, or concerns. The networks of connection that bind individuals of a given group to one another as a community may or may not be rooted in place. Ethnic and religious communities are bound by culture and systems of belief; professional communities and other “communities of interest” are connected by common interests, circumstances, or priorities. In either case, the community defined may be more or less formalized through such local institutions as churches or social clubs or such member organizations as professional societies and associations.

Although local communities are place based, they are not seen as simply geographically bounded subdivisions of land. They are units in which some set of connections is concentrated, either social connections (as in kin, friend, and acquaintance networks), functional connections (as in the production, consumption, and transfer of goods and services), cultural connections (as in religion, tradition, or ethnic identity), or circumstantial connections (as in economic status or lifestyle). In both the local community and the community of interest, it is the existence of some form of communal connection among individuals—whether or not such connection is locality based—that provides for the possibility of group identity and collective action.

“Neighborhood,” on the other hand, is clearly a spatial construction denoting a geographical unit in which residents share proximity and

the circumstances that come with it. The neighborhood is a subunit of a larger area and is usually seen as primarily, if not exclusively, residential. Howard Hallman suggests a minimal definition: "A neighborhood is a limited territory within a larger urban area where people inhabit dwellings and interact socially."² Although this definition does not specify the nature or extent of social interaction, the notion of neighborhood is rarely free of the connotations of connection that inhere in the term community. Indeed, one classic definition of neighborhood provides a grab bag of possible elements that might distinguish individual neighborhoods in the broader metropolitan landscape—the same set of elements (social, functional, cultural, and circumstantial) suggested above as possible elements of connection in the local community. In this formulation, neighborhoods are described as "distinctive areas into which larger spatial units may be subdivided. . . . The distinctiveness of these areas stems from . . . geographical boundaries, ethnic or cultural characteristics of the inhabitants, psychological unity among people who feel that they belong together, or concentrated use of an area's facilities for shopping, leisure, and learning."³ In the urban context, in fact, the neighborhood is often considered the more primary unit of actual and potential solidarity and social cohesion.⁴ There is thus a conflation of community-like expectations for solidarity and connection within the geographical construction of neighborhood and a range of possible expectations, at varying levels of intensity, for the neighborhood and the local community as units of identity, use, and action.

These overlapping definitions have led, in some cases, to new and more clearly defined terms. Harvey Choldin, for example, suggests that the term "subcommunity" is preferable to either community or neighborhood, as it is "connotatively neutral," describing residential areas that are "completely dependent upon other parts of the community for subsistence" and are "less than communities because they do not have governments."⁵ Others have suggested that the conflation of neighborhood and community may go beyond a lack of definitional clarity to indicate a more fundamental confusion of principles. Network analysts, for example, have suggested that expectations for community-like solidarity in neighborhoods assume the "a priori organizing power of space" and may "give undue importance to spatial characteristics as causal variables."⁶

There is, however, power in the *idea* of the neighborhood, power that comes not from its precision as a sociological construction but from its nuanced complexity as a vernacular term. Neighborhood is known, if not understood, and in any given case, there is likely to be wide agreement on its existence, if not its parameters. Unfortunately, this generalized notion of neighborhood is not very useful in informing policy or planning for social change. Engaging neighbor-

hoods usefully as units of planning and action would benefit from a better understanding of their nature, dimensions, use, and value.

The Neighborhood as a Social Unit

There is an ongoing tension in the literature between notions of the existence and nature of community and connection at the local level and the pull away from such connection by the forces of modernization, urbanization, migration, communication, and technological advances.⁷ This tension, described by Barry Wellman as the “community question,” speaks to one of the core assumptions behind neighborhood-based programming: that neighborhoods are viable units of identity and action.⁸ There are several aspects of the community question that may help to develop an operational definition of neighborhood for the purposes of programmatic planning.

The Ecological Perspective: The “Natural Area,” or Urban Village

Before the middle of the nineteenth century, the city was seen as a commercial center of “individuals and institutions gathered together under conditions of relative abundance for the pursuit of commerce and civilization.”⁹ The notion of the American city as an aggregate of smaller social and functional units called neighborhoods was essentially nonexistent. By the end of the century, however, the city came to be seen as a differentiated, organic entity whose various parts—neighborhoods, zones, sectors—existed in interdependence and symbiosis.¹⁰

The city, in this ecological model, was seen as the product of natural processes of selection and competition. Competition between social groups for scarce resources, especially land, led to domination by the best-adapted groups, to increased division of labor, and to functional specialization by different sections of the city.¹¹ These processes drove the reconfiguration of the urban landscape and the shifting relationships of its many parts.

Several models were proposed to predict the form and outcome of urban growth on the various parts of the city. One such model described the growth of cities as following a pattern of “concentric zones” emanating from the center.¹² The “central business district,” dominated by office buildings, department stores, hotels, banks, theaters, and the like, is surrounded by a “zone in transition,” in which manufacturing and wholesale industries gradually invade the older residential areas. These residential sections, in turn, are transformed into centers of poverty or slums. Beyond this zone are three residential zones. The first is dominated by middle-income residences, primarily inhabited by industrial, working-class residents. The second contains higher-

income, primarily single-family residences. The third zone is composed of upper-income, suburban residences.

Another model presented the growth of cities as sectoral, following directional trends from the center (again, dominated by financial, retail, and administrative activity) outward along major lines of transportation and toward places with such geographical amenities as high ground, open space, and waterfront access.¹³ As in the concentric zone model, the principal direction of this growth is outward from the center, but here it is seen to produce a pattern of settlement in which the directional expansion and movement of banks, office buildings, and retail establishments draw with it the establishment of high-rent residential districts, thus forming concentrated sectors of affluence and activity radiating out from the center.

A third model of urban growth stresses the development of several hubs of commercial and administrative activities within the city.¹⁴ Again, the principal trajectories of growth follow major transportation arteries out of the central business district, but in this model, secondary centers of activity develop at strategic intersections, creating a "poly-nucleated city."¹⁵

Within these broad patterns of expansion and change, the organization and development of distinct subareas—neighborhoods—grew. Again, the process of neighborhood differentiation was seen as an organic one in which an efficient and evolving social organization, driven by natural processes of selection, competition, invasion, and succession, produced distinct residential subsystems. A system of "natural areas" was formed by physical forces of industrial development and land use as well as by the distinguishing forces of cultural attraction and identity and by the development and reproduction of locally based sentiments and symbols.¹⁶

A prototypical example of the urban neighborhood as a natural area is the ethnic enclave, formed by the clustering of immigrants into local communities around particular kinds of available work. Immigrant workers congregated within walking distance of the industry in which they tended to specialize and were further propelled to establish their neighborhoods as communities based on ethnic solidarity and identification through the "social imperatives of their cultural systems."¹⁷ Existing networks of early immigrants embraced new arrivals from home and offered a sense of identity, security, and belonging. The arrival of different ethnic groups and the development of coexisting sets of networks along these lines within the same geographic area often created some initial conflict until a new balance was worked out.¹⁸ The urban landscape that emerged from this growth was composed of sets of homogeneous neighborhoods within a heterogeneous field, a "mosaic of little social worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate," in Robert Ezra Park's famous phrase.¹⁹

The ethnic enclave as a natural formation—a transplant of the original close-knit village—is seen as the modern equivalent of the primordial “folk community,” in which relations among individuals were based on primary ties of kinship and friendship and were rooted in a common identity with local life. It was based on this view, and the belief in the viability of maintaining and promoting community within distinct, naturally formed neighborhoods, that the earliest neighborhood organization movements, such as the settlement houses, the community center movement, and the social unit experiments, began.²⁰

The Decline of Community

This notion of neighborhood as natural community formed the foundation for theories of its decline. The perception of the decline of community grew out of theories explaining the effect of broad societal changes. The principal argument centered around the effects of urbanization (accompanied by greater specialization and division of labor and the increased size, density, and heterogeneity of settlement) on social action and organization. One effect often cited was the weakening connections among individuals, at the local level and in general, as mobility and the concentration of heterogeneous populations in urban centers increased. Urbanization, in this view, has led to “the substitution of secondary for primary contacts, the weakening of bonds of kinship, and the declining social significance of the family, the disappearance of the neighborhood, and the undermining of the traditional basis of social solidarity.”²¹ Separation of the workplace from the residential neighborhood and technological advances, particularly in the fields of communication and transportation, were seen to have propelled such disconnection at the local level, as they “freed urbanites from traditional spatial constraints and expanded their range of social choices.”²²

Another argument for the decline of community is found in theories about the rise of an “underclass” in urban neighborhoods of high poverty.²³ In this thesis, the decline is due to neither the increased mobility of the inhabitants nor the increased heterogeneity but, in fact, to just the opposite. This group is often less mobile and more isolated than the rest of the urban population, and because pockets of concentrated poverty in the urban setting are disproportionately African American, they are by definition relatively homogeneous with regard to income and class. Unlike the solidarity that is often fostered among homogeneous populations who live together by choice, the homogeneity of poor minority populations forced to live together does not create solidarity and territorial identity.²⁴

Many forces have contributed to the concentration of poverty in contemporary urban centers. These include broad structural changes

in the economic base of cities (e.g., the transition from a manufacturing to a service economy, in which wages for low and unskilled workers dropped substantially), the immigration of large numbers of mostly unskilled African-American laborers from the South, and the eventual emigration of many middle-class black families from inner-city neighborhoods.²⁵ This emigration eliminated, according to some, access to middle-class “role models.”²⁶ It also led to an exodus of capital, making it “extremely difficult for most small, black-owned stores and shops that served ghetto residents to survive” and weakening what had been a generally strong neighborhood-based economy in which “black earnings [were] being expended primarily in black-owned establishments.”²⁷ In addition, the concentration of urban poverty among minority, and particularly black, Americans has been strongly influenced by the forces of racial segregation and policies that support it.²⁸ The impact of racism and the structural condition of racial segregation, particularly in large, ill-designed public-housing compounds, as well as the timing of the largest migration of blacks from the rural South to the urban North, have created very different circumstances for African Americans than for the primarily European and Asian immigrant groups who preceded them to these urban neighborhoods.²⁹

Others have argued against overdrawing the assumption of social disorganization in these neighborhoods. The poor in poor neighborhoods are often more active than the poor in other neighborhoods, and a “sense of community” was found to be a powerful predictor of political participation at the neighborhood level.³⁰ Further, blacks in poor neighborhoods develop informal neighboring relationships and local self-help networks that are both instrumental and affective, and they continue to use their neighborhoods for both instrumental and social purposes.³¹

There have been several responses to the decline-of-community argument. I will examine three: the “community of limited liability,” the model of community as a “social system,” and the “community without propinquity.” Each, in some way, acknowledges the connection among individuals and groups while simultaneously recognizing a shift in expectations of the role and functions of the local community. In some sense, each of these models suggests that the proponents of the decline-of-community thesis have been looking for community in the wrong place.

The Community of Limited Liability

The notion that the local community was vanishing was, in Gerald Suttles’s words, “wrong on two counts. First it assumed that there was some golden age during which the local community had achieved

almost total consensus on its membership and a personal identification on the part of its residents. Second, it assumed that the local community needed the allegiance or recognition of all or most of its members to continue as an influential social unit.”³²

Rather than considering the “natural area,” or “urban village,” as the primary unit in which local ties reside and on which community identity and action is based, proponents of the community of limited liability envision a different unit. The community of limited liability is a larger area, geographically defined but composed of several neighborhoods, and has an “official” identity—that is, it is recognized internally by residents and organizations and externally by municipal government and other extralocal institutions. Attachment to this unit is contingent, voluntary, and based on instrumental values tied to investment, function, and use as opposed to the affective ties and interpersonal neighbor relations that characterize the natural area, or urban village.³³ Further, individuals attach different degrees of importance and are differently engaged in their local community, and these relationships themselves may shift. “In a highly mobile society people may participate extensively in local institutions and develop community attachments yet be prepared to leave these communities if local conditions fail to satisfy their immediate needs or aspirations.”³⁴

The nature of residents’ membership in the community of limited liability is understood to be partial; this concept of community recognizes the multitude of associations and relationships, within and beyond the local community, that compose the social life of individuals. It does not, however, necessarily replace the natural area, or urban village, as *the* contemporary local community in the urban environment. They are different forms of organization and different fields of activity, and both may still be recognized by urban dwellers. The community of limited liability is more likely than the neighborhood to be defined in terms of the physical territory it encompasses than in terms of relationships with nearby people, but both may inspire a “sense of community.” This sense of community in the urban village is based on primarily informal interpersonal ties and in the community of limited liability, on instrumental values—“the protection of status or family needs.” The latter is thus more likely to act collectively to protect existing investments or advocate for change through formal channels.³⁵

Contrary to the assumptions of the decline-of-community thesis, in communities of limited liability, the extent to which residents identify an area as a neighborhood or community has either remained the same or increased over time.³⁶ This has been the case even where use of neighborhood services and facilities has declined.³⁷

Social Systems and Political Economies

Another model, related to the community of limited liability but retaining some elements of the urban village, posits the local community as a social system. Here, the local community is seen as a functional unit in which goods and services are provided and consumed, interpersonal relationships are created and maintained, participation in activities is shared, and the circumstances of local life are held in common.³⁸

Roland Warren defines five major functions of this local community: (1) "production-distribution-consumption" of religious, educational, and social goods and services as well as conventional commercial and economic activities; (2) socialization, especially through families and schools; (3) social control, both formally through such government agents as police and such other institutions as churches and schools and informally through family and friends; (4) social participation through such formal channels as voluntary organizations and informally through kin and friendship networks; and (5) mutual support, again through both formal institutions and informal networks. The local community is thus defined as "that combination of social units and systems" that provides "the organization of social activities to afford people daily local access to those broad areas of activity that are necessary in day-to-day living."³⁹

Similarly, John McKnight speaks of community in terms of functional associations: "the social place used by family, friends, neighbors, neighborhood associations, clubs, civic groups, local enterprises, churches, ethnic associations, temples, local unions, local government, and local media."⁴⁰ The local community in this social system model encompasses interpersonal networks, voluntary associations, formal organizations, commercial and economic activities, and involvement in institutions whose fields of activity extend beyond that of the neighborhood itself.

The social system model also stresses the neighborhood's relationship to other units of interaction. The neighborhood or local community is located within a "system of systems"; it contains within it smaller systems not necessarily rationally related to one another and exists as part of larger systems, not in isolation.⁴¹ As in the community of limited liability, membership is seen as variously constructed and not exclusive of membership in other systems. Members of the community are connected to one another as individuals and through association with and membership in informal groups (family, peer groups, patrons, clients), formal groups, and institutions (school, work, religious congregations). These connections in turn link individuals to other and larger systems of activity and identification.

There are thus two levels of integration at work: internal or "horizontal" links among a community's social units and subsystems and

external or “vertical” links between these subsystems and systems outside the community.⁴² Rather than the “mosaic of little social worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate” that Park envisioned, the social system perspective sees an interconnected and expanding system of social worlds, linked and interpenetrating at numerous points through particular structures and nodes of activity.

The notion that such local units of action should be seen in the context of a political economy provides a backdrop for the community-as-social-system paradigm. Unlike the ecological notion that urban growth and neighborhood differentiation are products of “natural” processes—selection and competition, migratory patterns and market forces—the political economy paradigm sees such processes as mechanical and manipulable, “the result of investments in economic activities and housing, conditioned by government action.”⁴³

In this perspective, neighborhoods are seen as dynamic, and neighborhood change is subject to the broad external forces brought to bear by virtue of the neighborhoods’ “dual nature” as residential areas and units of development.⁴⁴ “Land-based elites” compete to develop the land and resources of given neighborhoods. These elites operate with the assistance of governmental authorities to promote growth at the expense of other localities. According to Harvey Molotch, this is a major force behind the “territorial bond among humans”; it is “socially organized and sustained, at least in part, by those who have a use for it. . . . The growth-machine coalition mobilizes what is there, legitimizes and sustains it, and channels it as a political force into particular kinds of policy decisions.”⁴⁵ In the context of political economy, therefore, community connection among individuals at the local level may exist in many ways and for many reasons but should be seen as subject to the influence of competing interests and external manipulation.

Network Analysis and the Community without Propinquity

Another response to the decline-of-community thesis arises from the examination of relationships among individuals without regard to group or spatial boundaries, or “network analyses.”⁴⁶ The community-without-propinquity argument “affirms the prevalence and importance of primary ties, but maintains that most ties are not now organized into densely knit, tightly bounded solidarities.”⁴⁷ In other words, rather than identifying the nature and extent of community geographically, this argument looks for community in the aggregation of networks of interpersonal relations. The model places the individual, rather than the place, at its center.

The findings of network analysis suggest that the structure of interpersonal networks in contemporary urban society is multiplex. “Ur-

banism,” says Claude Fischer, “does not seem to weaken community, but it does seem to help sustain a plurality of communities.”⁴⁸ As the decline-of-community thesis suggests, the proportion of people known by residents—the “density of acquaintanceship”—may be declining, and the number of intimate ties maintained may be relatively low.⁴⁹ However, neighbors continue to maintain numerous instrumental ties with one another, exchanging information, favors, and support as well as acting as “gatekeepers” to systems beyond the neighborhood.⁵⁰

Several variables will influence the scope and intensity of individuals’ local networks. Most important is residential stability, which influences the formation of locality-based friendships and participation in local activities, which in turn increases residential attachment and social cohesion.⁵¹ The degree of population diversity and the segregation of subsets of the population will also affect the density of acquaintance, decreasing residential attachment and social cohesion.⁵² However, the diversity that comes with concentration of heterogeneous populations in urban centers may foster sets of subcultures or subcommunities.⁵³ The degree to which such subcultures become spatially differentiated by choosing to congregate in neighborhood pockets may in turn increase the density of localized interpersonal networks and the degree of neighborhood attachment. Neighborhoods in which many individuals share a particular lifestyle, for example, or are engaged in particular kinds of local investment, such as home renovation, may foster such attachment, either informally or through formal local organization.⁵⁴

Thus, while some kinds of interpersonal ties extend beyond the neighborhood for most urban dwellers, other such ties continue to thrive at the neighborhood level. The neighborhood or local community may be a less central construct for the concentration of “intimate” ties or networks of “sociability,” but it continues to provide a forum for relationships through which information, aid, services, and connection to broader networks and systems are shared.⁵⁵

The Neighborhood as a Spatial Unit

Like the natural community and the community of limited liability, the social system and political economy perspectives imply the existence of boundaries that differentiate the neighborhood or local community, and the associations that define it, from its surroundings. Although network analysis does not take such boundaries as given (and individuals may not be likely to think of their kin, friend, and support networks in terms of neighborhood space), sets of interpersonal networks may still be looked at within the confines of a bounded unit such as a neighborhood. Some of these ties will be more important at the neighborhood level than others, but combined with the use of various formal and informal associations, facilities, services, and activities, the neigh-

borhood may still be defined spatially as a viable unit of reference and action.

The geographical boundaries of a set of associations, however, can be hard to fix; individuals may belong to various subsets of the associations and may live at various distances from the loci of associational activity. Similarly, the boundaries by which formal organizations define their fields of operation are unlikely to coincide perfectly. Although the greatest concentration of relationships and associations will presumably exist within the borders of the unit defined and is likely to "attenuate at its boundaries" without ending there, the act of drawing these boundaries is ongoing and happens at many different levels.⁵⁶

Mental Maps and Resident Definitions

One way in which neighborhood boundaries are drawn is by individuals as they conceptualize and negotiate their movement through and relationship with their surroundings. Every day, people observe and interpret their surroundings and construct mental maps that guide their relationship to space, their choices of movement, and their approaches to social interaction.⁵⁷

There are several influences at play in constructing these maps. Physical elements of the city are one: the constructed "paths" of movement (streets, bus routes, walkways), the division of the city into subareas defined by physical barriers or "edges" (walls, viaducts, rivers), and the existence of generally recognized landmarks.⁵⁸ Social and functional elements also play a role. These include the demographics of an area, the presence of major institutions, the perception of safety or danger, and the relative location and functional opportunities presented by different parts of the city.⁵⁹ All of these factors inform individuals' interpretation of space and the delineation of boundaries that order the physical world of the city and help guide their action within it.

The construction of such boundaries is based in part on the degree of emphasis an individual places on the defining characteristics of neighborhood. Four dimensions are particularly important: (1) the neighborhood primarily as a place or unit of space within which various activities occur; (2) the neighborhood as a set of social relationships; (3) the neighborhood as defined by its relationship with one or more institutions; and (4) the neighborhood as a "symbolic" unit with a name and recognized identity.⁶⁰

How an individual defines neighborhood in terms of these dimensions will to a large extent determine his or her view of the physical scope of the neighborhood. Thus, those who define the neighborhood in terms of social relationships are more likely to describe a smaller unit than those defining the neighborhood in terms of institutions. Although residents may stress one dimension over others, their per-

ception of neighborhood rarely focuses on only one. The dimensions of physical space and social interaction, in particular, are nearly always intertwined, and the use of the institutional definition among residents is not particularly prevalent.⁶¹

How residents define their neighborhood is, in part, a product of who they are—their “social and physical position within urban society.”⁶² This is true of the dimensions of the neighborhood they are likely to stress, their general perspective of the size and scope of their neighborhood, and the way they construct and interpret particular boundaries. It also extends to the construction of mental maps for the larger metropolitan area.

African-American respondents in one study, for example, were more likely to stress the social dimension of neighborhood than whites (and therefore, presumably, to delimit a smaller area as their neighborhood). They were also less likely to draw on the other three dimensions. The same was true for older people, the unemployed, the unmarried, and long-term residents.⁶³ In contrast, those “types of residents we might anticipate to lead lives that extend beyond the neighborhood—young persons, whites, the well-educated and employed—define it in primarily territorial (and, secondarily, structural) ways.”⁶⁴ Similarly, another study showed that those most involved in neighborhood activities, such as socializing with neighbors and participating in club membership, are most likely to provide a social definition of neighborhood.⁶⁵

Regarding size, one study showed that residents of urban neighborhoods tend to define significantly smaller areas as their neighborhood than do suburban residents, although both groups gave equally detailed descriptions, “suggesting that as individuals they seemed to have equally clear images of their neighborhoods.”⁶⁶ Women, long-term residents, and residents with small children also tend to define a smaller neighborhood area.⁶⁷ Still others think not in terms of neighborhood at all, but tend to speak more generally of “where they live” as, for example, the “west side” or the “south side.”⁶⁸

The ways in which specific boundaries are drawn are also influenced by an individual’s place in and relationship to the larger community. Elijah Anderson, for example, describes the clarity with which a particular street is assigned the status of formal boundary between two neighborhoods. In this case, the street is a clear marker of separation between a neighborhood in transition—racially and economically mixed but becoming increasingly white and affluent—and a poor and primarily African-American neighborhood. The lines between these two neighborhoods are “defined and maintained in different ways by each community.”⁶⁹

The meaning and relevance of such socially constructed boundaries may be different for different individuals. One study demonstrated

how the difference between maps drawn by black youths in Boston relate to their different experience and connection with the larger community. For example, although the maps of two children defined a street separating their neighborhood from a primarily white housing project as a major boundary and included detail only from “their” side of the dividing line, the map of one black youth, who attended the Boston Latin School a few blocks away, incorporated with equal detail a larger portion of the area on the other side of the line.⁷⁰

Similarly, a study comparing the mental maps of residents of five neighborhoods in Los Angeles (each neighborhood differing along several demographic dimensions) revealed distinctive perceptions of the city as a whole among these groups. The most restricted representation of the city (providing detail for only those blocks immediately surrounding the respondents’ homes) was provided by residents of the primarily Spanish-speaking neighborhood of Boyle Heights. Maps drawn by the predominantly African-American sample from a neighborhood near Watts were also restricted. In contrast, primarily “non-ethnic” upper-class respondents provided much more detailed maps of the entire Los Angeles basin.⁷¹

Given that such mental maps are developed by individuals in response to various social and physical aspects of their environments and that their individual experiences in that environment will inform their perceptions, the degree of consensus that can be reached about any particular set of boundaries is questionable. Some degree of consensus is built through social interaction; thus, some informal boundaries (the border between a neighborhood in transition and a perceived high-crime area, the declared boundaries of a gang’s turf) may be acknowledged through informal sharing of information, perceptions, and observations or through active (sometimes violent) campaigns of boundary maintenance. At the same time, boundaries may be drawn by a number of corporate actors—real estate developers, service providers, city planning departments—that differentiate neighborhoods from one another in more formal ways.

Exogenous Influence and the Role of Organizations

In addition to the ongoing informal processes of mental mapping on the part of individual urban dwellers, several organized groups mark boundaries to differentiate parts of the city from the areas that surround it. These groups may be internal to the neighborhood, as in neighborhood-based or “grassroots” organizations that seek to define (or make clear what is understood as already defined) the boundaries of the neighborhood. The task of boundary definition helps to clarify their constituency and is seen as useful not only for gaining legitimacy within the neighborhood but also for connecting the organization to

broader resources in the city.⁷² In some cases, neighborhood organizations may push for redrawing boundaries to separate one neighborhood from another, for example, to focus resources on their particular area of concern. They may also mark boundaries with banners proclaiming the name and identifying the blocks included within their purview.⁷³

Groups drawing neighborhood boundaries may also be external, such as banks and real estate developers seeking to define new markets or governmental agencies and private service providers seeking to manage the distribution of goods and services to various parts of the city. In some cases, establishing local organizations as representatives of a given neighborhood may be fostered or stimulated by outside organizations (such as government and corporations) in need of information, support, or legitimacy.⁷⁴ Researchers also play a role by attempting to aggregate perceptions of individual residents and those of agency heads and leaders of community organizations into composite maps reflecting some collective understanding of neighborhood or community areas.

The specific boundaries defined by these various groups rarely agree precisely with one another and even more rarely agree completely with the perceptions of neighborhood residents. However, there still may be strong agreement between organizationally defined boundaries and resident perceptions of the central blocks within a given neighborhood, with consensus falling off at the outer edges.⁷⁵ There may also be reasonable agreement on the name of a neighborhood and the general area it comprises, although several names may be accepted for the same area or portions thereof. Such consensus is often related to clear variations in the physical environment (proximity to parks, the design of streets, the existence of landmarks) and to the income and status levels of the neighborhood.⁷⁶

Multiple Boundaries and Nesting Neighborhoods

Geographically, the units in which the circumstances and activities of daily life inhere can be “nested,” where each member of a community is simultaneously a member of others. Suttles describes one way of looking at such a hierarchical grouping by identifying four levels within a “pyramid of progressively more inclusive groupings.”⁷⁷ The first is the local network (or “face-block”), which is constructed individually and has no residential identification. It is composed of a loose network of face-to-face relationships ranging from simple recognition (from using the same facilities, traveling the same paths, and so forth) to various levels of acquaintance.

The second level is the “defended neighborhood” conceived of as a small subsection of the city (which might range in scope from a build-

ing in a housing project to several city blocks) that constitutes a “safe haven” for its members. The defended neighborhood possesses a “corporate identity” known to both its members and outsiders and, in some cases, may resemble an urban village.

The third level is the “community of limited liability” discussed above, which has an official identity and a set of officially recognized boundaries. These boundaries are often codified by city planning departments and may, like the defended neighborhood, have symbolic relevance but may or may not have any status as an administrative unit.⁷⁸

The fourth level is the “expanded community of limited liability.” These units are variously constructed and vaguely bounded subdivisions of a city, for example, the “east side.”⁷⁹ Terms for these large areas are little used by most residents; however, they are used in describing parts of a city with known subdistrict (or neighborhood or community area) names.⁸⁰

The boundaries of “nesting neighborhoods” (as units of identity and action) are not easily contained within one another; they overlap on many levels. Boundaries defining the various neighborhood constructions outlined above are further incorporated into and divided by geographically defined administrative units, political boundaries, and service catchment areas. These include school, park, and library districts; police precincts; community-development planning districts; electoral wards; catchment areas for social service providers, community development corporations, citizens’ district councils, and other local organizations; church parishes; and so on. For the most part, such constructions cross-cut or subsume rather than coincide with those units recognized by residents as neighborhoods. For certain programmatic ends, however, they do offer some advantages as units of action, such as the existence of clear administrative boundaries and the presence of some administrative mechanisms through which to manage development or provide services.

Experiencing Neighborhood: Relationship and Use

Neighborhood may be recognized, identified, and delineated differently by different individuals, and neighborhoods provide very different contexts for the individuals who reside there. The search for a universal definition of neighborhood may be, as Peter Rossi suggests, a kind of search for the Holy Grail.⁸¹ In addition to the tension between local cohesion and diffusion (the relative importance of individuals’ connections locally and beyond the local sphere in contemporary urban society—the tension between “horizontal” and “vertical” links, in Roland Warren’s terms), and the multiple ways in which boundaries may be defined, there is the issue of different experiences regarding neigh-

borhood activity and connection among different populations and contexts.⁸² In defining the boundaries and elements that compose the urban neighborhood, the questions necessarily arise: Neighborhood for whom? Neighborhood for what?

Interpersonal Networks and Neighboring Behavior

Just as how individuals perceive and construct the size and boundaries of their neighborhoods depends, in part, on their status in and relationship to the larger society, approaches to neighboring and local interpersonal networks differ for different populations in different contexts. Thus, an individual's neighbor networks and neighboring behavior may vary by gender, age, ethnicity, family circumstances, and socioeconomic status. Such networks are also affected by the neighborhood context in which they develop.

Regarding individual characteristics, the size, density, and nature of such networks depend in large part on the degree to which an individual is socially integrated into the larger society. Individuals most highly integrated (women, married people, people of middle age, people with higher incomes and education) tend to have larger neighbor networks; however, the relationships that characterize these links are generally not particularly intense or likely to involve frequent contact. They are also more casual. In contrast, those less integrated into the larger society (singles, children and the elderly, those with lower income and less education) are likely to have smaller, more intense, and more frequently engaged relationships in the neighborhood. They are more instrumental and substantive.⁸³ Race seems to play a role similar to socioeconomic status: African Americans tend to have neighbor networks that are both more "spatially proximate" and stronger in that they are more intimate, have endured longer, and are characterized by more frequent contact.⁸⁴ In addition to these variables, an individual's length of residence in a neighborhood increases both the size and intensity of neighbor relations.⁸⁵

Neighbor networks and behavior are also affected by contextual circumstances. Just as individuals' length of residence increases the number and intensity of their relationships with neighbors, residential stability of the neighborhood as a whole has a collective effect on the density of interpersonal networks and the extent of residents' social participation.⁸⁶ In addition, the built and social environment play a role. One study found that owners of single-family homes could call on a greater number of neighbors for assistance.⁸⁷ Another suggests that the density and heterogeneity of settlement in public housing provides "push and pull forces," either presenting greater opportunity and facilitating desire for localized interaction or propelling residents to form networks beyond the development.⁸⁸ A third study found that

the degree of perceived danger affects neighbor networks in particularly disadvantaged settings by promoting family coping strategies. These strategies seek to increase links outside the neighborhood or residence rather than to develop broad local networks.⁸⁹

Neighborhood Use and Neighborhood Participation

Just as neighbor networks and relationships are different for different people, the kinds of activities generally supported by different neighborhoods and the extent to which neighborhood services and facilities are used by residents differ among populations. Children, for example, and families with young children (particularly the primary caretakers within the family) are generally less mobile and more likely to concentrate activities within the local neighborhood.⁹⁰ The elderly may be equally constrained geographically but may be less likely to make use of neighborhood facilities and services because of more extreme limitations on physical mobility, fear of victimization, reliance on informal personal (especially family) networks, general diminution of social activity, or lack of available or desired services or facilities at the neighborhood level.⁹¹

The extent to which such differences apply across contexts and population groups defined in other ways is, however, not entirely clear. At the neighborhood level, for example, one study suggests that "only a particular combination of negative characteristics, such as geographic isolation, poverty, and social homogeneity, made for significant concentrated use of local areas."⁹² As noted previously, however, in particularly depleted areas (in this case a housing project), a resident may choose to cope by segregating himself or herself from the immediate neighborhood and nurturing links to opportunities outside the neighborhood.⁹³

In another example, a recent study of two Chicago neighborhoods shows neighborhood differences in the use of particular kinds of services. In one neighborhood, 75 percent of residents went to church and 81 percent did their banking in the neighborhood, while only 12 percent ate out locally compared with 48 percent, 39 percent, and 14 percent, respectively, in the other neighborhood.⁹⁴ These differences may speak to both income and homogeneity. The first neighborhood is almost entirely white, with a mean household income of about \$31,000; the second is ethnically mixed (with large African-American and Hispanic populations) with a mean household income of just under \$20,000.

At the individual level, another study suggests that higher-income residents, whites, long-term residents, and members of larger households tend to make greater use of neighborhood facilities.⁹⁵ The relationship to income here is likely to be an artifact of availability; more

affluent neighborhoods generally have available a greater range of facilities and services, and more affluent residents tend to be more aware of and have greater access to such facilities and services.

Residents' involvement in organizational activities may also differ by neighborhood context and individual characteristics. Neighborhoods that are well defined as units, more homogeneous, and of higher socioeconomic status seem to be more inclined to address neighborhood issues through organized means such as community clubs.⁹⁶ At the individual level, adults between the ages of 35 years and retirement are more likely to belong to neighborhood organizations and volunteer associations, as are more affluent residents, married couples, and families with children.⁹⁷

Thus, in addition to the variety of ways in which neighborhoods may be identified, recognized, and bounded, different neighborhoods (however defined) provide very different contexts for individuals. Individuals experience their neighborhoods based both on their position in the life course (by virtue of age, marital status, and family composition) and their position in the larger society (by virtue of income, education, employment, and ethnicity).

Conclusion

The preceding review highlights three essential dimensions of neighborhood—the social, the physical, and the experiential—and provides some clarity about the nature of neighborhoods and the elements of their definition. The particular findings that can be distilled concern four aspects of neighborhood: (1) the problems of neighborhood delineation; (2) the nature of neighborhoods as open systems; (3) the relationship between neighborhoods and interpersonal networks; and (4) the ways in which neighborhoods are experienced and used differently by different populations.

First, regarding the problems of neighborhood delineation, it is clear that despite the definitional difficulties involved, differentiated subareas of the city are recognized and recognizable. They have developed and been defined through historical processes and continue to be influenced by circumstance, individual behavior, and the activities of business, government, social service and development agencies, and other corporate actors. However, the delineation of boundaries is a negotiated process; it is a product of individual cognition, collective perceptions, and organized attempts to codify boundaries to serve political or instrumental aims. The attempt to define neighborhood boundaries for any given program or initiative is thus often a highly political process.

Second, neighborhoods are best seen as open systems, connected with and subject to the influence of other systems. Individuals are

members of several of these systems at once, and the perceived importance of each affiliation is likely to be situational and changing. Even limiting affiliation to geographically based collectivities, individuals may claim and value membership in more than one at a time. The local community may thus be seen as a set of (imperfectly) nested neighborhoods—a hierarchy of locality constructions—and individuals often recognize such localities by name and are comfortable with more than one name to describe local areas differently constructed.

Third, although relational networks (and particularly “intimate” ties) among individuals are often dispersed beyond the neighborhood, instrumental relationships among neighbors remain common, providing mechanisms through which information and support may be exchanged and links to systems beyond the neighborhood may be fostered. The recognition of a neighborhood identity and the presence of a sense of community seems to have clear value for supporting residents’ acknowledgment of collective circumstances and providing a basis and motivation for collective action. In addition, residential stability fosters the development of interpersonal networks among neighbors and, through them, neighborhood attachment and social participation.

Finally, neighborhoods are experienced and used differently by different populations. Regarding experience, those most integrated into the larger society (e.g., women, married people, people of middle age, people with higher incomes and education) tend to have larger, more dispersed, more casual neighbor networks; those less integrated into the larger society (e.g., singles, children and the elderly, those with lower income and less education) tend to have smaller, more intense, and more frequently engaged relationships in the neighborhood. Such organization may also differ across cultures, and the relationship may be curvilinear, with people living in particularly depleted neighborhoods again having fewer intense, frequently engaged relationships within the neighborhood. Regarding use, neighborhoods that are reasonably homogeneous, low-income, and have a fairly high percentage of young people may be the most likely areas for concentrated local use, if the necessary facilities, services, and institutions are available. Again, the relationship may be curvilinear, with populations at both the very high and the very low ends of the socioeconomic spectrum less likely to concentrate their activities within their neighborhoods.

Despite some increased clarity on the nature and dimensions of neighborhoods provided by this review, a central question remains for policy makers and practitioners concerned with using the neighborhood as an effective unit of organization and action. Given the broad range of possibilities for conceptualizing, defining, and acting in (and with) neighborhoods, how might one best define local areas as units of action for neighborhood-based programs and interventions?

Clearly, there is no universal way of delineating the neighborhood as a unit. Rather, neighborhoods must be identified and defined heuristically, guided by specific programmatic aims, informed by a theoretical understanding of neighborhood and a recognition of its complications on the ground, and based on a particular understanding of the meaning and use of neighborhood (as defined by residents, local organizations, government officials, and actors in the private sector) in the particular context in which a program or intervention is to be based. Such an approach would balance considerations of scale and intended impact with the identification of those elements most critical for supporting a particular change strategy and a knowledge of the social, political, and economic dynamics that provide the context of local life. By providing a synthesis of the literature and distilling its implications for understanding the neighborhood as a social, spatial, and experiential unit, this article attempts to provide the foundation for developing a heuristic framework for considering neighborhoods that might be applied in specific programmatic circumstances.⁹⁸

Notes

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1. There are several perspectives on the possibilities for and essential elements of promoting collective action at the local level. John Davis suggests that local communities may act "on the basis of interests and solidarities that are endemic to the locality itself," such as to improve services or protect property values. John E. Davis, *Contested Ground: Collective Action and the Urban Neighborhood* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 5. David Chavis and Abraham Wandersman suggest that the existence of a "sense of community" can be a catalyst and can be both cause and effect of local action. David M. Chavis and Abraham Wandersman, "Sense of Community in the Urban Environment: A Catalyst for Participation and Community Development," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 18, no. 1 (1990): 55–81. Charles Tilly stresses that criteria governing other forms of collective action apply to communities as well and that such criteria are more likely to apply in homogeneous communities where conditions favor circumscribed communication and where "control over land . . . is valuable but unstable." Charles Tilly, "Do Communities Act?" in *The Community: Approaches and Applications*, ed. M. P. Effrat (New York: Free Press, 1974), pp. 209–40, quote on p. 213.

2. Howard W. Hallman, *Neighborhoods: Their Place in Urban Life* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1984), p. 13.

3. S. Keller, *The Urban Neighborhood: A Sociological Perspective* (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 87.

4. One exception identifies immigrant communities as embedded within neighborhoods that house several different immigrant groups. Although each community shares a common locality, they form separate units, each defined through networks of affiliation by common heritage, religion, and language. C. Golab, "The Geography of Neighborhood," in *Neighborhoods in Urban America*, ed. R. Bayor (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat, 1982), pp. 70–85. Here, it is affective attributes of community, rather than organizational ones, that drive the distinction.

5. H. M. Choldin, *Sociological Human Ecology: Contemporary Issues and Applications* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1984), p. 243.

6. B. Wellman and B. Lighton, "Networks, Neighborhoods, and Communities: Approaches to the Study of the Community Question," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (1979): 363–90, quote on 366.

7. See, e.g., L. Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," *American Journal of Sociology* 44 (July 1938): 3–24; G. D. Suttles, *The Social Order of the Slum: Ethnicity and Territory in the Inner City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); W. R. Freudenberg, "The Density of Acquaintanceship: An Overlooked Variable in Community Research?" *American Journal of Sociology* 92, no. 1 (1986): 27–63; C. S. Fischer, "Toward a Subcultural Theory of Urbanism," *American Journal of Sociology* 80, no. 6 (1975): 1319–41; C. S. Fischer, *To Dwell among Friends: Personal Networks in Town and City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); W. J. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); R. J. Sampson, "Local Friendship Ties and Community Attachment in Mass Society: A Multilevel Systemic Model," *American Sociological Review* 53 (October 1988): 766–79; and E. Anderson, *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

8. B. Wellman, "The Community Question: The Intimate Networks of East Yonkers," *American Journal of Sociology* 84, no. 5 (1979): 1201–31.

9. Z. L. Miller, "The Role and Concept of Neighborhood in American Cities," in *Community Organization for Urban Social Change: A Historical Perspective*, ed. R. Fisher and P. Romanofsky (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1981), pp. 3–32, quote on p. 5.

10. That the city came to be understood through an organic analogy is consistent with the dominant sociological paradigm of the day, perhaps best exemplified by the works of Herbert Spencer and the translation of Darwinian theories of competition and selection to the dynamics of human society. This worldview reflected the social, political, and economic circumstances present in the decades surrounding the turn of the century, "where the dynamics of privatism and laissez-faire enterprise prevailed." W. P. Frisbie and J. D. Kasarda, "Spatial Processes," in *Handbook of Sociology*, ed. Neil J. Smelser (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1988), pp. 629–66, quote on p. 632. It was within this epistemological framework that the study of urban ecology developed.

11. R. McKenzie, "The Scope of Human Ecology" (1926), and R. E. Park, "Human Ecology" (1936), both in *Urban Patterns: Studies in Human Ecology*, ed. G. A. Theodorson (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1982), pp. 28–34, 20–27.

12. E. W. Burgess, "The Growth of the City" (1925), in Theodorson, ed. (n. 11 above), pp. 35–41.

13. H. Hoyt, "The Pattern of Movement of Residential Rental Neighborhoods" (1939), in Theodorson, ed. (n. 11 above), pp. 42–49.

14. A. H. Hawley, "Human Ecology, Space, Time, and Urbanization" (1971), in Theodorson, ed. (n. 11 above), pp. 111–14; M. J. White, *American Neighborhoods and Residential Differentiation* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1987).

15. These three models share some central characteristics and are not entirely incompatible. In his study of American neighborhoods, which is based on census data from 1980, Michael White suggests an integrated model, acknowledging that patterns of urban residential change may differ depending on the issue in question (White [n. 14 above]). Residential distribution by socioeconomic status, e.g., tends to adhere to the sectoral pattern, while distribution by race and ethnicity is clustered.

16. Park, "Human Ecology" (n. 11 above); H. Zorborough, "The Natural Areas of the City" (1926), and W. Firey, "Sentiment and Symbolism as Ecological Variables" (1945), both in Theodorson, ed. (n. 11 above), pp. 50–54, 129–36.

17. Golab (n. 4 above), p. 77; see also D. S. Massey, "Ethnic Residential Segregation: A Theoretical Synthesis and Empirical Review," *Sociology and Social Research* 69, no. 3 (1985): 315–50; and A. Portes and R. D. Manning, "The Immigrant Enclave: Theory and Empirical Examples," in *Competitive Ethnic Relations*, ed. S. Olzak and J. Nagel (New York: Academic Press, 1986), pp. 47–68.

18. Golab (n. 4 above), p. 80.

19. R. E. Park, *Human Communities: The City and Human Ecology* (New York: Free Press, 1952).

20. Miller (n. 9 above); R. Fisher, "From Grass-Roots Organizing to Community Service: Community Organization Practice in the Community Center Movement, 1907–1930," and P. M. Melvin, "'A Cluster of Interlacing Communities': The Cincinnati Social Unit Plan and Neighborhood Organization, 1900–1920," both in Fisher and Romanofsky, eds. (n. 9 above), pp. 33–58, 59–87; and P. M. Melvin, *The Organic City: Urban Definition and Community Organization, 1880–1920* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987).

21. Wirth (n. 7 above), pp. 20–21.
22. B. A. Lee, R. S. Oropesa, B. J. Metch, and A. M. Guest, "Testing the Decline-of-Community Thesis: Neighborhood Organizations in Seattle, 1929 and 1979," *American Journal of Sociology* 89, no. 5 (1984): 1161–88, quote on 1163.
23. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (n. 7 above); D. S. Massey, "American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass," *American Journal of Sociology* 96, no. 2 (1990): 329–57; and P. A. Jargowsky and M. J. Bane, "Ghetto Poverty in the United States, 1970–1980," in *The Urban Underclass*, ed. C. Jencks and P. E. Peterson (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1991), pp. 235–73.
24. R. P. Taub, D. G. Taylor, and J. D. Dunham, *Safe and Secure Neighborhoods: Territoriality, Solidarity and the Reduction of Crime* (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 1982).
25. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (n. 7 above); J. D. Kasarda, "Urban Change and Minority Opportunities," in *The New Urban Reality*, ed. P. E. Peterson (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1985), pp. 33–68; and S. Lieberman, *A Piece of the Pie: Blacks and White Immigrants since 1880* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).
26. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (n. 7 above).
27. J. D. Kasarda, "City Jobs and Residents on a Collision Course: The Urban Underclass Dilemma," *Economic Development Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (1990): 313–19, quote on 315.
28. Massey, "American Apartheid" (n. 23 above); and D. S. Massey and M. L. Eggars, "The Ecology of Inequality: Minorities and the Concentration of Poverty, 1970–1980," *American Journal of Sociology* 95, no. 5 (1990): 1153–88.
29. Lieberman (n. 25 above).
30. J. M. Berry, K. E. Portney, and K. Thomson, "The Political Behavior of Poor People," in Jencks and Peterson, ed. (n. 23 above), pp. 357–72.
31. C. B. Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); B. A. Lee, K. E. Campbell, and O. Miller, "Racial Differences in Urban Neighboring," *Sociological Forum* 6, no. 3 (1991): 525–50; B. A. Lee and K. E. Campbell, "Neighbor Networks of Blacks and Whites" (1993, mimeographed); N. M. Bradburn, S. Sudman, and G. L. Gockel, *Racial Integration in American Neighborhoods* (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 1970); and A. Lyons, *Tenants in Community: Relationships between People Living in Subsidized Housing and Their Surrounding Communities* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University, Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, 1990).
32. G. D. Suttles, *The Social Construction of Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 8–9.
33. *Ibid.*; Miller (n. 9 above); and A. M. Guest and B. A. Lee, "The Social Organization of Local Areas," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (December 1983): 217–40.
34. J. D. Kasarda and M. Janowitz, "Community Attachment in Mass Society," *American Sociological Review* 39 (1974): 328–39, quote on 329.
35. Guest and Lee, "The Social Organization of Local Areas" (n. 33 above), quote on p. 23.
36. A. M. Guest, B. A. Lee, and L. Staeheli, "Changing Locality Identification in the Metropolis: Seattle, 1920–1978," *American Sociological Review* 47 (1982): 543–49; A. Hunter, "The Loss of Community: An Empirical Test through Replication," *American Sociological Review* 40 (1975): 537–52; and A. Hunter, *Symbolic Communities: The Persistence and Changes of Chicago's Local Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).
37. Hunter, *Symbolic Communities* (n. 36 above).
38. C. P. Loomis, *Social Systems* (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1960); R. J. Warren, *The Community in America* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1978); and A. D. Edwards and D. G. Jones, *Community and Community Development* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976).
39. Warren (n. 38 above), p. 9.
40. J. L. McKnight, "Regenerating Community," *Social Policy* (Winter 1987): 54–58, quote on 56.
41. E. O. Moe, "Consulting with a Community System: A Case Study," *Journal of Social Issues* 15, no. 2 (1959): 28–35.
42. Warren (n. 38 above), pp. 163–64.
43. D. Bartelt, D. Elesh, I. Goldstein, G. Leon, and W. Yancey, "Islands in the Stream: Neighborhoods and the Political Economy of the City," in *Neighborhood and Community*

Environments, ed. I. Altman and A. Wandersman, *Human Behavior and Environment: Advances in Theory and Research*, vol. 9 (New York: Plenum, 1987), pp. 163–89, quote on p. 165.

44. A. Downs, *Neighborhood and Urban Development* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1981).

45. H. Molotch, "The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place," *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 2 (1976): 309–32.

46. Network analysis provides methods by which the form, nature, intensity, and extent of relationships among individuals and institutions can be formally modeled and quantified. The social network approach focuses on the types of links that define social actors' relationships to one another rather than on the individual attributes of these actors (as does survey research) or on presumably bounded groups (as does institutional analysis). The network approach thus "allows us to dispense with the *assumption* of institutional integration" (J. C. Mitchell, "The Concept and Use of Social Networks," in *Social Networks in Urban Situations*, ed. J. Clyde Mitchell [Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1969], pp. 1–50, quote on p. 47). This, in Wellman's terms, enables us "to study both ties that do not form discrete groups and networks that are, in fact, sufficiently bounded and densely knit to be termed 'groups'" (B. Wellman, "Structural Analysis: From Metaphor to Theory and Substance," in *Social Structures: A Network Approach*, ed. B. Wellman and S. D. Berkowitz [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], pp. 19–61, quote on p. 37).

47. Wellman, "The Community Question" (n. 8 above), p. 1206.

48. Fischer, *To Dwell among Friends* (n. 7 above), p. 264.

49. Freudenburg (n. 7 above); and Wellman, "The Community Question" (n. 8 above).

50. R. S. Ahlbrandt, *Neighborhoods, People and Community* (New York: Plenum, 1984); Lee and Campbell, "Neighbor Networks" (n. 31 above); Stack (n. 31 above); D. I. Warren, "The Helping Roles of Neighbors: Some Empirical Patterns," in *Urban Neighborhoods: Research and Policy*, ed. R. Taylor (New York: Praeger, 1986), pp. 310–30; Wellman, "The Community Question" (n. 8 above); and B. Wellman and S. Wortley, "Different Strokes from Different Folks: Community Ties and Social Support," *American Journal of Sociology* 96, no. 3 (1990): 558–88.

51. R. J. Sampson, "Linking the Micro- and Macrolevel Dimensions of Community Social Organization," *Social Forces* 70 (1991): 43–64; Sampson, "Local Friendship Ties" (n. 7 above); and Kasarda and Janowitz (n. 34 above).

52. Freudenburg (n. 7 above); and Fischer, *To Dwell among Friends* (n. 7 above).

53. Fischer, *To Dwell among Friends* (n. 7 above).

54. E. Crenshaw and C. St. John, "The Organizationally Dependent Community: A Comparative Study of Neighborhood Attachment," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (1989): 412–33.

55. Indeed, Fischer argues that several factors have contributed to a net increase in Americans' commitments to their localities, despite the likely diminution of social ties—although here he includes not just urban dwellers but suburbanites as well. (C. S. Fischer, "Ambivalent Communities: How Americans Understand Their Localities," in *America at Century's End*, ed. A. Wolfe [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991], pp. 79–90). In fact, the dispersal of the urban population into low-density suburbs with local governments is one major factor he cites as contributing to the overall increase in commitment. Others include the historical trend toward greater residential stability, the rise of "class-homogeneous neighborhoods," and increasing rates of home ownership.

56. R. P. Taub, *Nuance and Meaning in Community Development: Finding Community and Development* (New York: New School for Social Research, Community Development Research Center, 1990).

57. R. M. Downs and D. Stea, "Cognitive Maps and Spatial Behavior: Process and Products," in *Image and Environment*, ed. R. M. Downs and D. Stea (Chicago: Aldine, 1973), pp. 8–26; and P. Gould and R. White, *Mental Maps* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1974).

58. K. Lynch, *Image of the City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Technology Press, 1960).

59. Gould and White (n. 57 above); and Suttles, *The Social Construction of Communities* (n. 32 above).

60. A. M. Guest and B. A. Lee, "How Urbanites Define Their Neighborhoods," *Population and Environment* 7, no. 1 (1984): 32–56; S. H. Haeblerle, "People or Place: Variations in Community Leaders' Subjective Definitions of Neighborhood," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1988): 616–34; B. A. Lee and K. E. Campbell, "Common Ground? Urban Neighborhoods as Survey Respondents See Them" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Washington, D.C., August 1990); and Hunter, *Symbolic Communities* (n. 36 above).

61. T. Lee, "Urban Neighbourhood as a Socio-Spatial Schema," *Human Relations* 21 (1968): 241–67; Guest and Lee, "How Urbanites Define Their Neighborhoods" (n. 60 above); and Lee and Campbell, "Common Ground?" (n. 60 above).

62. Guest and Lee, "How Urbanites Define Their Neighborhoods" (n. 60 above).

63. The respondents in this study were residents of neighborhoods in Nashville, Tennessee. However, a study of "community leaders," in this case presidents of neighborhood associations in Birmingham, Alabama, presents somewhat different results. Here, black association presidents were more likely to use physical descriptors than were whites. Gender was an even greater predictor. Women were more likely than men to use "human interactive characteristics" as opposed to physical descriptors (Haeblerle [n. 60 above]).

64. Lee and Campbell, "Common Ground?" (n. 60 above), p. 8.

65. Guest and Lee, "How Urbanites Define Their Neighborhoods" (n. 60 above).

66. W. G. Haney and E. C. Knowles, "Perception of Neighborhoods by City and Suburban Residents," *Human Ecology* 6, no. 2 (1978): 201–14, quote on 207–8. It should be noted that most of the studies examining issues of neighborhood definition and resident mapping focus on a neighborhood or set of neighborhoods in one particular city and therefore call into question our ability to generalize beyond the specific context of each study to urban neighborhoods. Indeed, another study in a different city found that residents of central neighborhoods were more likely to describe larger areas than were those in peripheral neighborhoods. The difference in the history and physical layout of the cities may provide one explanation for this discrepancy in findings. In addition, resident definitions of neighborhood are highly dependent on methodological issues, such as how the question is asked. Responses concerning the areal size of one's "neighborhood," e.g., had no relation to responses concerning the areal size of the "part" of the incorporated community" in which a respondent lived (Guest and Lee, "How Urbanites Define Their Neighborhoods" [n. 60 above]). This distinction was not examined in the Haney and Knowles study.

67. Guest and Lee, "How Urbanites Define Their Neighborhoods" (n. 60 above).

68. Identification by neighborhood or community area and consensus on neighborhood names seem tied to class. Highly educated, higher-income people are much more likely to refer to and agree on community areas and neighborhoods by name than are lower-income people (A. M. Guest and B. A. Lee, "Consensus on Locality Names within the Metropolis," *Sociology and Social Research* 67, no. 4 (1983): 375–91; and R. P. Taub, conversation with author, University of Chicago, 1993).

69. Anderson (n. 7 above).

70. F. Ladd, "A Note on 'the World Across the Street,'" *Harvard Graduate School of Education Bulletin* 12 (1967): 47–48, cited in Gould and White (n. 57 above), pp. 31–34.

71. P. Orleans, "Differential Cognition of Urban Residents: Effects of Social Scale on Mapping," in Downs and Stea, eds. (n. 57 above), pp. 115–30.

72. R. P. Taub, G. P. Surgeon, S. Lindholm, P. B. Otti, and A. Bridges, "Urban Voluntary Associations, Locality Based and Externally Induced," *American Journal of Sociology* 83, no. 2 (1977): 425–42; P. Florin and J. Walker, eds., *Nurturing the Grass Roots: Neighborhood Volunteer Organizations and America's Cities* (New York: Citizens Committee for New York City, 1989); and S. M. Combs, *From the Neighborhoods: A Sourcebook on Information and Skills Needed by Community Organizations in Chicago* (Chicago: Chicago Catholic Charities, 1984).

73. G. D. Suttles, *The Man-Made City: The Land-Use Confidence Game in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); and Hunter, *Symbolic Communities* (n. 36 above).

74. Taub et al. (n. 72 above).

75. Taub, Taylor, and Dunham (n. 24 above).

76. Guest and Lee, "Consensus on Locality Names" (n. 68 above).

77. Suttles, *The Social Construction of Communities* (n. 32 above), p. 45.

78. One example of the community of limited liability is the "community area" defined in Chicago (and analogous constructions in some other American cities), which was delineated in order to "define a set of subareas of the city each of which could be regarded as having a history of its own as a community, a name, an awareness on the part of its inhabitants of common interests, and a set of local businesses and organizations oriented to the local community." Chicago Fact Book Consortium, *Local Community Fact Book, Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1990* (Chicago: Chicago Fact Book Consortium, 1995), p. xvii.

79. Suttles, *The Social Construction of Communities* (n. 32 above).

80. Hunter, *Symbolic Communities* (n. 36 above); and Guest and Lee, "Consensus on Locality Names" (n. 68 above).

81. P. H. Rossi, "Community Social Indicators," in *The Human Meaning of Social Change*, ed. A. Campbell and P. E. Converse (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1972).

82. Warren, R. J. (n. 38 above).

83. K. E. Campbell and B. A. Lee, "Sources of Personal Neighbor Networks: Social Integration, Need or Time?" *Social Forces* 70, no. 4 (1992): 1077–1100; Lee, Campbell, and Miller (n. 31 above); and Lee and Campbell, "Neighbor Networks" (n. 31 above).

84. Lee and Campbell, "Neighbor Networks" (n. 31 above).

85. Campbell and Lee (n. 83 above); and Sampson, "Linking the Micro- and Macrolevel Dimensions" (n. 51 above).

86. Sampson, "Local Friendship Ties" (n. 7 above), and "Linking the Micro- and Macrolevel Dimensions" (n. 51 above).

87. C. J. Silverman, "Neighboring and Urbanism: Commonality versus Friendship," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (1987): 312–28.

88. C. Keane, "Socioenvironmental Determinants of Community Formation," *Environment and Behavior* 23, no. 1 (1991): 27–46.

89. F. Furstenberg, "How Families Manage Risk and Opportunity in Dangerous Neighborhoods," in *Sociology and the Public Agenda*, ed. W. J. Wilson (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1993), pp. 231–58.

90. Ahlbrandt (n. 50 above); and Suttles, *The Social Construction of Communities* (n. 32 above).

91. M. F. Lowenthal and B. Robinson, "Social Networks and Isolation," I. Rosow, "Status and Role Change through the Life Span," and F. M. Carp, "Housing and Living Environments of Older People," all in *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences*, ed. R. H. Binstock and E. Shanas (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1976), pp. 432–56, 457–82, 244–73, respectively.

92. Keller (n. 3 above), p. 106.

93. Furstenberg (n. 89 above).

94. N. H. Nie, *Community Studies of the Neighborhoods of Hegewisch and South Deering* (Chicago: SPSS, 1991).

95. Ahlbrandt (n. 50 above).

96. A. M. Guest and R. S. Oropesa, "Problem-Solving Strategies of Local Areas in the Metropolis," *American Sociological Review* 49 (1984): 828–40.

97. Ahlbrandt (n. 50 above). Again, although the studies provide guidance as to how neighborhoods are defined, viewed, and used by residents and corporate actors, some caution must be raised with regard to the generalizability of their findings. In addition to the fact that the studies are bound to context, i.e., particular neighborhoods in particular cities, the unit taken as the "neighborhood" in each case varies. In some cases, neighborhood is defined by the respondent, and likely to be affected by the manner in which the question is asked. In others, the neighborhood is defined by the analyst, using various criteria. Examples of neighborhood definition for analytic purposes include the "statistical neighborhood" or census tract (White [14 above]; and C. J. Coulton and S. Pandey, "Geographic Concentration of Poverty and Risk to Children in Urban Neighborhoods," *American Behavioral Scientist* 35, no. 3 [1992]: 238–57); the block (R. B. Taylor, S. D. Gottfredson, and S. Brower, "Block Crime and Fear: Defensible Space, Local Social Ties, and Territorial Functioning," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 21, no. 4 [1984]: 303–31); the area within a 15-minute walk from a respondent's home (Sampson, "Local Friendship Ties" [n. 7 above]); school catchment areas and zip code areas (C. Jencks and S. Mayer, "The Social Consequences of Growing Up in a Poor Neighborhood," in *Inner City Poverty in the United States*, ed. L. Lynn and

M. McGeary [Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1990], pp. 111–86); codified composites of resident definitions (R. S. Ahlbrandt, Jr., M. K. Charney, and J. V. Cunningham, “Citizen Perceptions of Their Neighborhoods,” *Journal of Housing* 34, no. 7 [1977]: 338–41; and Ahlbrandt [n. 50 above]); and community areas (R. P. Taub, D. G. Taylor, and J. D. Dunham, *Paths of Neighborhood Change: Race and Crime in Urban America* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984]).

98. For a more detailed exploration of a heuristic approach to defining neighborhood, see Robert J. Chaskin, “Neighborhood as a Unit of Planning and Action: A Heuristic Approach” (University of Chicago, Chapin Hall Center for Children, Chicago, 1997), which builds on the current review and on the experience of a set of 25 neighborhood-based initiatives funded by private foundations.