Our Place: Perceived Neighborhood Size and Names in Los Angeles

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ABSTRACT

Perceptions of urban neighborhood size and place names reflect residents' experience of place and may influence place-related choices and actions (e.g., mobility decisions, efforts to control noise, investments in social relationships) more than other neighborhood spatial definitions. We examine variations in these perceptions using survey data from Los Angeles and nationwide. Our results show that size perceptions vary little across regions of the U.S. However, individual and tract characteristics have a significant effect on residents' perceptions. Specifically, more socially marginalized respondents and those less geographically mobile view their neighborhoods as smaller. Residents of larger census tracts and those with higher vacancy rates see their neighborhoods as larger, while residents with higher percentages African American and poor view their neighborhoods as smaller. Consistent with previous studies, there is greater consensus on neighborhood names than perceived size in Los Angeles County. Our results confirm that no single definition can capture residents' own perceptions of "neighborhood" – since the perceptions of residents living in close proximity are themselves so variable.

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Introduction

Neighborhood characteristics have been associated with a wide range of individual behaviors and indicators of well-being, including child development, juvenile crime, health-related behavior, and health and nutritional status (Ainsworth, 2002; Browning et al., 2004; Caughy and O'Campo, 2006; Cubbin and Winkleby, 2005; Henderson et al., 2005; Kling et al., 2007; López Turley, 2003; Sampson et al., 2005; Xue et al., 2007). In this literature, "neighborhood" generally refers to the geographic area surrounding an individual's home (Pebley and Sastry, 2004). The most common definitions of neighborhood are based on census or other administrative geographies, traditional neighborhood boundaries, subjective knowledge of a city, or grouping of adjacent areas with similar characteristics (Sampson et al., 1999; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Weiss et al., 2007). This approach and recent, innovative strategies (e.g., Grannis, 1998, 2005; Sherman et al., 2005; Guo and Bhat, 2007) are generally chosen without reference to residents' reports about their neighborhoods.

We take a different tack by examining the perceptions of residents themselves about the size of their neighborhoods in samples from Los Angeles County and the nation. Although residents' reports should not be the sole, or even primary, criterion used to define neighborhood size in contextual analyses, they are nonetheless important: perceptions of size reflect residents' experience of their own neighborhoods and may influence place-related choices and actions (e.g., mobility decisions, efforts to control noise, investments in social relationships) more than other neighborhood spatial definitions. Thus, to understand urban neighborhoods and how individuals interact with them, we need a better understanding of residents' perceptions.

Residents' perceptions of neighborhood size are also important because of researchers' interest in measuring and understanding neighborhood social characteristics, and their effects on various individual and family outcomes. This focus has led many surveys to include questions about respondents' assessments of neighborhood attributes (e.g., safety, social interaction). As Lee and Campbell (1997) note, these questions generally do not define "neighborhood," but even if they do, respondents may ignore the stated definition in favor of their own. Thus, to interpret the results of these questions, it is important to understand residents'

perceptions of neighborhood dimensions and the extent to which nearby neighbors' perceptions agree. This is a task we undertake in this paper.

We also examine the names residents use to refer to neighborhoods. Neighborhood names may contain useful information about how residents define their own neighborhoods. Moreover, agreement among residents about the size and name of the area they live in suggests that neighborhoods are recognizable places both to insiders and outsiders (Lee and Campbell, 1997). Agreement on neighborhood names may also be an indicator of the degree of attachment residents feel toward the neighborhood (Taylor et al., 1984).

We address five questions related to residents' views of their neighborhoods. First, do urban residents nationwide share a common perception of neighborhood size or are there regional variations? For example, residents in large Eastern and Midwestern cities might view their neighborhoods as smaller than those in the West, because of their more high-rise physical environments. Second, how much consensus on neighborhood size is there *among residents living in close proximity* both nationwide and in a representative sample of neighborhoods in a major urban area like Los Angeles? Third, within local areas, do individual social, economic, and demographic characteristics affect residents' perceptions of neighborhood size? For example, do stay-at-home mothers and elderly residents have a different view of neighborhood size than employed residents who generally spend most of the day outside of their neighborhood? Fourth, how do physical, socioeconomic, and demographic characteristics of neighborhoods themselves – including population density, poverty, and residential turnover --affect residents' perceptions of size? Finally, how much consensus is there within neighborhoods on names used to designate the neighborhood and does the use of names vary by individual social characteristics?

Our results show that respondents both nationally and in Los Angeles County view their neighborhoods as relatively small in size and that there is little regional variation in this perception. However, levels of agreement on neighborhood size are very low for residents living in the same census tract. In Los Angeles County, individual and tract characteristics have a significant effect on how residents perceive the size of their neighborhood. Specifically, respondents with poorer education, those who are recent migrants and/or interviewed in Spanish, and those who have lived in their neighborhood for at least

five years view their neighborhoods as smaller than other respondents, although some of these effects diminish when tract-level fixed effects are included in the model. Tract size and vacancy rates are positively associated with neighborhood size whereas the proportions African American and poor are negative associated with perceived size. Consistent with previous studies, there is greater consensus on neighborhood names than perceived size in Los Angeles County. Again we found that more marginalized individuals were less likely to report a neighborhood name. Among those who do report a neighborhood name, however, Latinos are more likely to report the modal name.

In the following two sections, we describe previous research on neighborhood definition and on how residents perceived their own neighborhoods. Next, we outline the data and methods used in this paper. We then report on the results we found for each of the five questions outlined above. In the final section, we discuss the results.

What is a Neighborhood?

Early urban sociologists, notably Park (1915), saw neighborhoods as discrete entities in which much of urban social life took place.   Park described an urban neighborhood as "a locality with sentiments, traditions, and a history of its own" which "moves on with a certain momentum of its own, more or less independent of the larger circle of life and interests about it" (Park, 1915: 579-580).   Since the 1960s, however, urban ecologists have come to view neighborhoods as hierarchies of spaces integrated into a larger whole, with different functions and produced by different processes and actors (Gieryn, 2000; Guest et al., 1982). For example, Suttles (1972: 54-64) describes four levels of neighborhood boundaries representing different types of resident participation and different domains of life (e.g., neighbor interactions, schools, politics), and defined by different actors or circumstances (e.g., by residents, outside interests, or accidents of geography).

Other scholars argue for multiple neighborhood boundaries, on other grounds, i.e., that local attributes must necessarily be measured at different spatial scales (Galster, 2001; Caughy, et al., 2007). For example, Galster sees neighborhoods as "bundles of spatially based attributes" and argues that while structural characteristics may vary over the span of a few meters, air quality may be constant over large areas of a metropolitan area.

Guest and Lee (1984) distinguish two types of communities: "local areas" and "neighborhoods." Local areas are defined by the institutions located there, e.g., parks, major streets, schools and shopping centers. Institutions also "serve as unifying factors in the development of shared symbolic identities" within local areas (Guest and Lee, 1984:37). By contrast, neighborhoods lack this unifying focus and are defined by social or human interaction: which local residents you recognize, see on a regular basis and interactive with at least at a minimal level. Whereas local areas are typically larger than individual residential blocks, the spatial dimensions of a neighborhood are more ambiguous. They may include "immediately adjacent homes or be dispersed over a several-block area." (Guest and Lee, 1984). Guest and Lee (1984) and Lee and Campbell (1997) show that in cities as different as Seattle and Nashville, the majority of residents used "neighborhood" to mean a geographic area, but also said that the term had a social connotation of immediate neighbors, friendliness or a sense of community.

Grannis' (1998, 2005) conceptualization of "T-communities" can be seen as an extension of Suttles' block faces and Guest and Lee's neighborhoods based on social interaction. Grannis argues that social interaction among neighbors is obstructed by primary streets as much as by other physical obstacles (e.g., railway lines). In T-communities, "every household...is reachable from every other household only by using tertiary streets" (Grannis, 1998: 1533). Residents of T-communities, therefore, have the potential for street and sidewalk-level interactions with each other. Grannis' analysis shows that T-communities are more racially homogeneous than other types of communities in urban areas, suggesting that residents defend areas accessible to their own block face by tertiary streets more strongly.

Gieryn (2000) emphasizes that neighborhoods cannot be defined in exclusively spatial terms. Rather they are invested with meaning and values, have physicality in terms of structures and landscape, and are constructed on an ongoing basis by residents and non-residents. He also emphasizes the importance of neighborhood names, arguing that: "Without naming,.. identification, or representation by ordinary people, a place is not a place." Places such as neighborhoods are liable to change over time: "...the meaning or value of the sample place is labile – flexible in the hands of different people or cultures, malleable over time, and inevitably contested." (Gieryn, 2000: 465).

In summary, contemporary urban sociologists view neighborhoods as places with inherently flexible and generally ambiguous boundaries. Neighborhood definitions vary depending on context and on the observer. The delineation of neighborhoods is a consequence not only of geography but also of a continual social process through which residents, non-residents, and commercial and governmental interests define and redefine neighborhoods.

How Do Residents See Their Own Neighborhoods?

Only a handful of studies since the 1970s have examined residents' perceptions of their neighborhoods' size and names.[1] Reported average neighborhood size varies considerably among these studies, but is generally small. For example, Haney and Knowles (1978) report median sizes of 20, 48, and 155 acres (i.e., 0.03, 0.08, and 0.24 square miles) for inner city, outer city, and suburban Green Bay neighborhoods. In Cleveland, Coulton et al.'s (2001) respondents gave an average of 0.32 square miles. In Seattle, most residents said that their neighborhood had a radius of less than half a mile (i.e., < 0.79 square miles, assuming circular neighborhoods) (Guest and Lee, 1984). However, many reported an area of no more than one block in each direction. Nashvilleans reported an average area of 14.8 blocks (Lee and Campbell, 1997). Los Angeles respondents in the 1970s reported "residential areas" between 0.13 miles in radius (0.05 square miles) for the lower income black community of Watts to 2.07 miles (13 square miles) in upper income white community of Palos Verdes (Banerjee and Baer, 1984).

Most studies also report low levels of *agreement* among residents of small geographic areas on neighborhood size, but often higher levels on names. Haney and Knowles (1978), Coulton et al. (2001), and Lee and Campbell (1997) report relatively little agreement on neighborhood size or boundaries among neighborhood residents. In contrast, Lee and Campbell's (1997) results show that residents living side by side in Nashville often gave the same name for their neighborhood. Guest and Lee (1983) found significant consensus among residents on the name of their "part" of Seattle.[2] However, Haney and Knowles (1978) reported relatively low agreement on neighborhood names in Green Bay.

In these studies, both perceptions of size and the use of modal names varied by respondents' and local area characteristics. Perceived neighborhood size was larger for home owners, local association members, and individuals who defined their neighborhood based on a local institution (e.g., school, shopping

center, etc.). It was smaller for women, long-term residents, and those with young children (Guest and Lee, 1984; Lee and Campbell, 1997). Local association membership and duration of neighborhood residence increased the chances of reporting the modal name (Lee and Campbell, 1997). Perceived neighborhood size and consensus on names was associated with distance from the central business district, whether the neighborhood was urban, suburban, or rural, whether a place had a defined class or historic identity, and the number of shared social ties (Lee and Campbell, 1997, Guest et al., 1992, Haney and Knowles, 1978; Keller, 1968; Guest and Lee, 1984; Taylor et al., 1984). Agreement on neighborhood names was reported to be higher in neighborhoods with more white, home-owner, and higher-income residents (Lee and Campbell, 1997).

Our analysis is an advance over earlier studies for several reasons. First, previous studies are generally based on local (often convenience) samples, frequently in smaller or mid-sized cities. In this paper, we use data from a representative sample of neighborhoods and individuals in a major urban area from the 2000-2001 Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey (L.A.FANS-1) and from a nationally representative survey (the 1997 Panel Study of Income Dynamics Child Development Supplement), to make inferences about a larger urban area and to consider regional variations in the United States. Second, multilevel statistical models and large sample sizes allow us to distinguish between the effects of individual and neighborhood characteristics, unlike previous research, on perceived neighborhood size and names. Third, the analysis includes more extensive characteristics of both individuals and local areas which permit greater insight into residents' perceptions of neighborhood size and names.

Data

Our analysis is based primarily on data from the 2000-2001 Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey (L.A.FANS).[3] Los Angeles is the second largest Metropolitan Statistical Area (after the New York MSA) in the U.S. It includes 88 cities (including the City of Los Angeles), 81 school districts, and a large number of unincorporated areas. The physical structure of Los Angeles is the result of a social movement in the 19th and 20th centuries that viewed cities as hazardous and disease-ridden and suburbs as healthier and more desirable places (Fogelson, 1993). Commercial land developers took advantage of this sentiment by purchasing large tracts of farm and ranch land beginning in the 1860s, subdividing them into communities of

single-family tract housing, and advertising extensively in the East and Midwest about buying a piece of the "good" (i.e., suburban) life in sunny Los Angeles. Suburban, single family housing remains the predominant pattern, even in "inner city" areas.[4] Although land purchases began in the late 1800s, most areas have been developed since World War II (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2007). Given the recency of development, developers' role in assigning boundaries and names, and their suburban character, local areas in Los Angeles would appear to lack the historic identities and salience to residents of neighborhoods of older urban areas. But recent grass-roots political action to demarcate and rename local areas and establish neighborhood councils (Fellers, 2003; McGreevy, 2003; Gold, 2003) suggests that neighborhoods are important for many Angelenos. Indeed, in a survey in the 1970s, 60% of Los Angeles respondents said that it was very important for them to live in a place they considered a neighborhood (Banerjee and Baer, 1984).

L.A.FANS is based on a stratified probability sample of census tracts in Los Angeles County. Sixty-five tracts were sampled from three strata: very poor, poor, and non-poor, with an oversample in the first two strata. L.A.FANS interviewed 40 to 50 households per tract, with an oversample of households with children (<18 years old). For more information, see Sastry et al. (2006). Within each sampled household, one adult (age 18 or older) was selected at random from the list of all adult residents and interviewed in person, in either English or Spanish. Although other individuals, including children and their primary caregivers (PCGs), were sampled and interviewed, questions on neighborhood definition were asked only of the randomly selected adult (RSA) sample. Thus, there was one respondent per household. Note that in about one third of households, the RSAs and PCGs were the same person. In these cases, this person was the respondent for the neighborhood questions. All results in this paper are based on weighted data.

We compare neighborhood size results from L.A.FANS to nationally-representative data from the 1997 Panel Study of Income Dynamics Child Development Supplement (PSID-CDS).[5] PSID is a panel survey conducted since 1968 which includes a refresher sample added in 1997. The Child Development Supplement (PSID-CDS) is a survey of approximately 3165 children (0 to 12 years old) and their primary care givers (usually mothers) in 2394 families from the main PSID sample. PSID-CDS includes all families in the main PSID sample that had children less than 13 years of age living in the household and lived in the United States. PSID-CDS primary caregivers (PCGs) were asked a question on neighborhood size similar to

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the one in L.A.FANS. No information was collected on neighborhood names. PSID was initially a cluster sample, but due to residential moves, the average number of PCG respondents per census tract in the PSID-CDS analytic sample was 1.6.   We present measures of agreement on perceived neighborhood size for respondents living in tracts which include at least two PCG respondents (25% of tracts in the sample). However, because of the low density of respondents per tract in PSID-CDS, the neighborhood-level multivariate analysis is limited to data from L.A.FANS.

Analytic Strategy and Variables

We begin the analysis by comparing perceived neighborhood size for L.A.FANS and PSID-CDS respondents. To do so, we construct an L.A.FANS sample comparable to the PSID-CDS sample.   This L.A.FANS comparison sample includes only RSAs who were also primary care givers (PCGs) of sampled children age 12 or younger. Because RSAs are selected at random among all adults in the household in L.A.FANS, the L.A.FANS PCGs who were also selected as RSAs – and, thus, answered the neighborhood questions -- are a random sample of all PCGs in L.A.FANS. Furthermore, PCGs were selected in a comparable manner in both surveys, i.e., they were selected because they were the primary caregiver (generally the mother) of sampled children. Using the PSID-CDS and the comparable L.A.FANS samples, we examine measures of within-tract agreement on perceived size for Los Angeles County and the United States.

Next, we estimate the effects of the respondents' individual characteristics on their perception of neighborhood size. Residents' perceptions of neighborhood size may vary either because: (1) individual social, economic, and demographic characteristics affect residents' perceptions of neighborhood size or (2) the neighborhoods in which different socioeconomic groups live are themselves are quite different from each other. To determine whether individual characteristics systematically influence perceptions of neighborhood size, it is important to control for potential differences in neighborhood characteristics, since individual and neighborhood characteristics may be correlated. Therefore, we estimate two models. The first includes only individual characteristics and the second adds tract-level fixed effects. The model including tract-level fixed effects allow us to hold constant all differences between tracts while examining the effects of individual characteristics on perceptions of neighborhood size. Comparison between the two models with and without

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fixed effects indicates how much of the apparent individual differences in perception of neighborhood size can be accounted for by differences in neighborhood-level characteristics.

We then consider the effect of specific neighborhood-level characteristics on collective perceptions of neighborhood size. The dependent variable in this model is the neighborhood level fixed effect itself (i.e., the coefficient for each tract) from a model including individual characteristics and tract-level fixed effects. These tract fixed effects represent the collective perception of neighborhood size in each tract, net of variation among tracts in the social, economic, and demographic composition of the observers. Positive fixed effect values indicate larger perceived neighborhood size while negative values indicate smaller perceived size. We regress these fixed effects on several neighborhood characteristics hypothesized to affect perceived neighborhood size as described below.

In the final section of the analysis, we turn to local resident consensus on neighborhood names. First, we examine the relationship between individual characteristics and whether respondents said that the neighborhood had a name. Then, for those who gave a name for their neighborhood, we investigate the effects of individual characteristics on whether or not individuals gave the modal name given by others in their neighborhood. As in the case of neighborhood size, the use of neighborhood names may vary among individuals either because: (1) certain types of individuals are more likely to use a name or the most common name for their neighborhood and/or (2) neighborhoods themselves differ in important ways. Therefore, for each of these models examining the use of neighborhood names, we contrast the results from models without and with neighborhood level fixed effects. In this case, neighborhood fixed effects represent a local propensity to give the area a name and to give the area a particular name, respectively. For example, some well-established and clearly demarcated neighborhoods may be easily identified by all or most residents by a particular name. However, there may be little consensus on the names of other places (e.g., some newly developed or unincorporated areas of Los Angeles). Controlling for tract fixed effects allows us to hold constant these potential differences among neighborhoods while examining the role of individual characteristics.

Outcome Variables

The multivariate analysis uses two outcome variables: perceived neighborhood size and neighborhood names. In both surveys, each respondent was asked to describe their own neighborhood as: (1) the block or street he/she live on, (2) several blocks and streets in each direction, (3) the area within a 15-minute walk from his/her house, or (4) an area larger than a 15-minute walk from his/her house. In PSID, the second category was worded slightly differently as "this block or street and several blocks or streets in each direction." The response categories are clearly limited compared to respondent verbatim descriptions or drawings of neighborhood maps (see Coulton et al., 2001). They do not specify clear cut boundaries and may be interpreted differently by different respondents. On the other hand, the question is simple and quick for respondents to answer, and does not require map-related skills or spatial memory.

In L.A.FANS, respondents were also asked "Suppose you were talking to someone who lives here in the same city or town that you do and you were telling them where you live. What name would you use for this neighborhood?" Textual names were coded into categories, using several rules. First, when respondents gave names corresponding to different levels of geography for the same tract, we coded each unique name separately, but used our knowledge of local name usage to combine categories when appropriate. For example, if one neighbor says "Rancho Park," while another says "West Los Angeles," and a third says "Westside,"[6] we would code Rancho Park in one category and combine West Los Angeles and Westside in a second category – since the latter names are often used interchangeably, even though West Los Angeles technically refers to a smaller area. Second, when respondents identified their neighborhoods by the street they lived on we coded these responses in the "gave street name" category. Similarly for respondents who gave a nearby intersection as their neighborhood name, we coded these responses in a category labeled "gave cross-streets or intersection" Third, when a response was a name used for both streets and neighborhoods (e.g., Santa Monica), we did the following. If a street-related word was specifically mentioned (e.g., "boulevard"), we coded it as "street name." Otherwise, we used whether the street was located close to a respondent and our knowledge of local usage to determine whether the respondent was referring to a neighborhood or a street. In general, coding procedures were designed to produce a conservative result, i.e., to reflect less rather than more consensus within the tract. Finally, some respondents

gave only descriptions of their neighborhood (e.g., "the poor section" or "near the beach"). We coded these responses in a separate "area description" category.

We use two outcomes for neighborhood names. The first indicates whether or not the respondent gave a name to the neighborhood, rather than a description, street name, intersection. etc. Second, among those who gave a name for their neighborhood, we consider agreement with other census tract residents on the name. Neighborhood names are, by nature, not ordered and differ for each census tract. We follow previous research by using whether or not each resident gave the modal neighborhood name for the neighborhood given by tract residents. For example, if the most common response in a tract was "Rancho Park," our variable measures whether or not each sampled adult in that tract gave this response.

Individual and Neighborhood Characteristics

Previous research suggests that three groups of individual characteristics may affect residents' definition of their own neighborhood: (1) life cycle stage, (2) exposure to and participation in the neighborhood, and (3) socioeconomic status and cultural background. Life cycle stage may affect how individuals interact with their neighborhood. For example, to parents of young children, their neighborhood may be defined by where their children attend school and children's friends' residences, but young, single, working adults may see their neighborhood only as a place to sleep – i.e., a much smaller location. Residents who are involved in local activities, through groups, friends, or family may identify more closely with their own neighborhoods and see them as larger entities than others. Socioeconomic status may affect residents' dependence on neighbors and neighborhood businesses – for example, poor Angelenos who rely on walking or the bus system are likely to see their neighborhoods differently from car owners who have greater freedom of movement.[7] Ethnicity and immigrant status may also affect residents' perceptions of their own neighborhood because of discrimination or language barriers they experience in other neighborhoods.

The variables in each of these three categories which are included in the analysis are shown in Table 1. Life cycle characteristics include: age as a continuous variable and whether or not the respondent is over 55 years of age, marriage and cohabitation, the total number of children in the household,[8] and whether or not the respondent is working. Gender is also included because previous analyses found that women saw their neighborhoods as smaller than men. Neighborhood exposure and participation variables include the

length of residence in the neighborhood, whether the respondent has family or friends in the neighborhood, and participation in neighborhood meetings during the past 12 months.[9] Socioeconomic variables include ethnicity, educational attainment, whether the resident is a recent immigrant (i.e., entered the US since 1990), family income, and whether the interview was conducted in Spanish.

Neighborhood characteristics, shown in Table 2, come from the 2000 U.S. Census and include tract area and population density to represent urbanicity and type of settlement, percent of dwellings vacant, and an index of residential stability. Tract area averages 17.5 km^2 or (6.8 miles^2). On average, population density is 5,850 residents per square kilometer. Approximately 23% of the population is below the poverty line and 5% of dwellings are vacant. Ten percent of the population in these tracts is African American.[10] Our residential stability index was constructed using factor analysis and includes the percents of: dwellings in multiple-unit structures, owner-occupied households, non-family households, and households that did not move between 1995 and 2000. We posit that less densely populated tracts and those with higher vacancy rates are likely to seem larger to their residents because relatively few people are in close proximity. Conversely, residential stability may lead residents to perceive their neighborhoods as smaller in size. Los Angeles County is divided into eight service planning areas (SPAs) which are essentially geographic regions of the county. We include which SPA each tract is in to capture regional differences in physical structures, road networks, and local culture.

Multivariate Modeling Issues

In our multivariate analysis of L.A.FANS data, we treat perceived neighborhood size as an ordered variable since the responses are qualitative but increase in size. We estimate an ordered logistic regression model. This model is a generalization of the standard two-outcome logistic regression model to multiple outcomes and is fit to the cumulative probabilities of the outcome variable. In particular, the model compares the first outcome to the next three outcomes combined and, at the same time, compares the first and second outcomes combined to the next two outcomes combined and so on. The estimated parameters include the covariate effects and three cutpoints that together define the four outcome categories. The constant is absorbed into the cutpoints and is not estimated separately. The ordered logistic regression model is also known as the proportional odds model (McCullagh, 1980). Covariate effects reflect the odds of

reporting the neighborhood as the "block or street," compared to being in the group that combines all remaining outcome categories, relative to the omitted reference category of the covariate; for continuous variables the coefficients are interpreted as the effect on the odds of a one-unit increase in the variable. The proportional odds assumption means that this covariate effect is the same for the odds of being in the first two categories combined compared to the next two categories combined (and so on). Less formally, the exponentiated covariates represent the likelihood of reporting a larger neighborhood size.

A major goal of the multivariate analysis is to investigate the role of individual attributes on perceived neighborhood size, which requires comparisons among respondents living in close proximity (in the same tract) with each other. Conceptually this is important, because it eliminates the possibility that different neighborhood size perceptions simply reflect actual differences in neighborhoods (e.g., density, road network, topography, etc.). Therefore, our models include both individual effects and a dummy variable, or fixed effect, for each tract in the sample. The fixed effect absorbs all factors that are common to respondents in the same tract—essentially, the characteristics of the tract itself—and focuses the analysis on systematic intra-tract differences in neighborhood definitions based on residents' individual characteristics. However, we also examine whether tract characteristics generate systematic differences in perceived neighborhood size among tracts. We do so by extracting the tract fixed effects estimates (i.e., the coefficients on the dummy variables for each tract) from the models and regress them on tract-level characteristics in a separate linear regression model.

L.A.FANS oversamples adults living in households with children and in poor and very poor neighborhoods. We account for this design feature through the use of sample weights. All the results we present are weighted and all statistical tests are based on robust standard error estimates that account for clustering of observations in census tracts.

Results

Perceived Neighborhood Size

The first question is whether urban residents in the United States share a common idea of neighborhood size and whether there are important regional variations. We compare distributions of perceived neighborhood size for L.A.FANS and PSID-CDS in Figure 1. For L.A.FANS, the figure shows

results separately for the entire adult sample and for the PSID-comparable sample. The PSID results are shown for the total (metropolitan and non-metropolitan) sample, for the metro only sample, and separately for metro areas in the west, northeast, midwest, and south regions.[11]

Figure 1 shows that the distribution of responses differs between the PSID and L.A.FANS data sets. To examine these differences, we pooled the data for the two surveys and estimated four logit models – one for each category of the neighborhood size variable.. For each model, the dependent variable was whether the respondent gave the particular category (e.g., the block or street he/she lives on) in question versus giving one of the other response categories. The independent variable is the survey sample (i.e., either L.A.FANS or PSID). The results showed that L.A.FANS respondents were significantly more likely to give the first and third responses than the PSID sample and significantly less likely to give the second response.[12] There was no significant difference in the frequency of the fourth response in the two samples.

This difference persists even between the PSID metro West sample and the L.A.FANS comparable sample. We suspect that the reason is the difference in wording of the second category. Specifically, the PSID wording explicitly includes both the block or street the respondent lives on and several blocks or streets in each direction, whereas the L.A.FANS wording only implies it.[13] Variation between the two surveys in question wording may also have contributed.[14] For example, L.A.FANS respondents in the PSID-comparable sample are also more likely to give the third response (an area within a 15-minute walk) compared with all PSID respondents and PSID respondents in western metro areas, despite the identical wording in the response category. Despite these differences, the majority of residents in both surveys say that their neighborhood is in one of the smallest two categories, i.e., an area within several blocks or streets of their home. These two categories were given by 60-62% of L.A.FANS respondents and between 66-75% of PSID respondents.

The results for PSID and for the PSID-comparable L.A.FANS sample are limited to primary caregivers (usually mothers) of children age 12 and younger. Thus, these samples are predominantly reproductive aged women with younger children. However, the differences between the L.A.FANS PSID-comparable sample and the L.A.FANS total sample (representative of all adults in Los Angeles County) are

small, suggesting that the limitation of PSID results to mothers of younger children did not greatly affect perceptions of neighborhood size for regions outside Los Angeles.

There is some regional variation in perceived neighborhood size among PSID respondents, but it is not large. A χ^2 test for perceived neighborhood size by region was not statistically significant at the 0.15 level. In an ordered logit models including regional dummies, only the contrast between the West and South regions was statistically significant with Western residents reporting the smallest neighborhood sizes and those in the South the largest.

To summarize, most adults in the PSID metropolitan and L.A.FANS samples agree that their neighborhoods are relatively small: either the block they live on or within several blocks or streets in each direction. Regional variation is modest, with the only significant difference between the West and South.

Agreement on Neighborhood Size Among Neighbors

Our second goal is to determine whether residents living in close proximity agree on the size of their neighborhood. Because there is no single consensus measure of agreement in the statistical literature, we present two common measures in Table 3. The kappa statistic measures inter-rater agreement and has a range of <0 to 1 (Landis and Koch, 1977) with higher values representing greater levels of inter-rater agreement. The kappa values shown in Table 1 range between 0 and 0.2 which Landis and Koch (1977: 165) interpret as "slight" agreement. The second index is the intraclass correlation (ICC) which measures the homogeneity within groups relative to the total variation . The ICCs come from ordered logit models without covariates using STATA's gllamm procedure to account for data clustering in tracts. The ICC coefficients are also quite small, although all are statistically significantly different from zero. The ICCs suggest a slightly higher level of agreement on neighborhood size among L.A.FANS respondents than PSID respondents, but this result may be affected by the substantially smaller sample size per tract in PSID. We also calculated kappas and ICCs by region for the PSID metropolitan area sample (not shown) and the results were very similar to the PSID sample as a whole. Consistent with most previous studies, these results suggest that in both Los Angeles and nationwide there is relatively little agreement among residents of the same census tract about neighborhood size.

Individual Characteristics and Perceived Neighborhood Size

Our third goal is to examine whether individual characteristics – specifically, life cycle stage, exposure to and involvement in the neighborhood, and socioeconomic status and cultural background -- affect perceptions of neighborhood size. These variables are described above and their distributions are shown in Table 1. We estimated models with and without tract-level fixed effects. A likelihood ratio χ^2 test with 64 d.f. of 95.62 was statistically significant at p<.0064 indicating that the model with fixed effects fit the data significantly better. However, the coefficients on individual variables in the two models were of the same size and significance. (In Table 4, we present the results of ordered logit models, which include tract-level fixed effects.

Overall, life cycle variables have little effect on perceived neighborhood size, but neighborhood exposure and participation, and socioeconomic status have substantial effects. The only statistically significant life cycle characteristic is whether the respondent is 55 years or older. Older residents see their neighborhood as smaller compared to other residents, reflecting perhaps, more settled or limited daily routines and neighborhood interactions. Unlike previous studies (e.g., Guest and Lee, 1984; Lee and Campbell, 1997), the coefficient for gender was not statistically significant. We examined several other specifications of both the age and number of children in the household variables as well as interactions between respondent's gender, working, children in the household, and gender (not shown), but none were statistically significant.

Among the neighborhood exposure and participation variables, length of residence, having friends (but not family) in the neighborhood and participation in a neighborhood meeting were statistically significantly related to perceived neighborhood size. Long term residents (>5 years) view their neighborhoods as significantly smaller than shorter term residents. On the other hand, friends in the neighborhood and participation in a neighborhood meeting increase the perceived size of respondents' neighborhood.

For socioeconomic and cultural characteristics, ethnicity, educational attainment, immigration status, and the language of interview are all related to perceived neighborhood size. Although none of the coefficients on the ethnic categories in Table 4 are significant, the ethnic dummy variables are jointly

significant at the p<.05 level. A test of the African American and "other" coefficients shows that African Americans are significantly more likely to report that their neighborhood is large than respondents in the "other" group (who are predominantly Asian and Native American). Perceived neighborhood size also varies with educational attainment: reported neighborhood size generally increases with educational attainment, although only the coefficient on having less than a high school diploma is significant. It is also significantly smaller for respondents who report immigrating recently to the U.S. (<5 years prior to interview) and for those interviewed in Spanish. Note that the latter two variables are interrelated, but not as closely as might be expected: the correlation between language of interview and recent immigrant status is only 0.36. Logged family income is not significantly associated with neighborhood size perceptions.

Taken as a whole, these results suggest important variations in perceived neighborhood size. More marginalized individuals in Los Angeles – those with less education, recent immigrants, and Spanish speakers – see neighborhoods as smaller entities than others do. The reasons may include greater dependence on local services among these groups both because of reliance on the bus system for transport and because of language or social class barriers they encounter when outside their neighborhood. It is also possible that educated residents use a different "neighborhood" paradigm – e.g. defining neighborhoods based on local institutions or as well-known "parts" of the city rather than one's own residential block (Guest and Lee, 1984).

We might expect that longer duration of residence would increase residents' familiarity with the area and people who live in it, thus, increasing perceived neighborhood size. To the contrary, our results show that residence for more than five years is associated with smaller not larger perceived size. The reason may be that longer term residents are selected for characteristics associated with smaller perceived size, such as lower social mobility, more insularity, or having a social life completely outside of their residential neighborhood. On the other hand, longer residence may also allow respondents to get to know their particular block and their neighbors well and may lead them to differentiation between residents of their block who are well-known and are therefore "neighbors" and other who live in adjacent areas who are not "neighbors." Two other neighborhood participation variables, having friends in the neighborhood and participating in a neighborhood meeting, are both significantly associated with larger perceived

neighborhood size – perhaps because both characteristics are likely to acquaint residents with other parts of their local area which they themselves do not observe on a daily basis.

Local Characteristics and Perceived Neighborhood Size

Perceptions of neighborhood size may be influenced not only by the characteristics of the individual observer but also by the attributes of the locale being observed. Our fourth goal is, therefore, to examine the effects of census tract characteristics on the perceived neighborhood size of each tract. To do so, we extract the neighborhood fixed effects estimates from the second model in Table 4 and regress them on tract-level characteristics in a linear regression model.

The results are presented in Table 5. Neither the size of the census tract, population density, nor residential stability is associated with perceived neighborhood size. However, residents in tracts with a higher percent in poverty and a higher percent of African American residents were significantly more likely to report smaller neighborhood size responses, whereas those in neighborhoods with a higher percent of vacant households gave significantly larger neighborhood sizes. Residents of the South SPA (the omitted category) view their neighborhood as larger than residents of all other SPAs, although the differences were statistically significant only for Antelope, San Gabriel, West, and East SPAs. The South SPA encompasses traditional African American neighborhoods – which have become predominantly Latino – just south of Downtown (Los Angeles (the Metro SPA). We also estimated models which included the percentage of residents in other ethnic groups and the percentage of immigrants, recent immigrants, and Spanish and non-English speakers, but none of the coefficients were statistically significant.

Residents in poor tracts may report smaller neighborhood sizes for reasons discussed above, including greater reliance on local stores and neighbors because of poor transportation and concerns about discrimination in other neighborhoods. Residents in tracts with a higher percent African American are also significantly more likely to perceive their neighborhood as smaller. Los Angeles County has few majority African American tracts (roughly 5% of census tracts in 2000) and they are becoming scarcer over time because of the influx of Latino immigrants. Residents of tracts with a larger proportion of African American population may define their neighborhoods as smaller because they are more likely to be ethnically heterogeneous than other neighborhoods.

Tracts with a higher proportion of vacancies are perceived as significantly larger than other tracts. Tract-level vacancy rates were relatively low (<15%) in 2000. Residents in high vacancy tracts perceived their neighborhoods to be larger, ceteris paribus, probably because they had fewer nearby neighbors.

Neighborhood Names

Finally, we examine the names respondents use for their neighborhoods, the level of agreement within tracts on neighborhood names, and covariates of neighborhood name agreement. Table 6 shows the types of names that residents use for their neighborhoods. More than three-quarters gave a specific neighborhood name as all or part of their answer. The first row in Table 6 refers to whether a respondent gave any specific name to their neighborhood. About 11% gave only a street name or cross-streets (the names of two intersecting streets), with a street name being more common. Just under 7% referred to their neighborhood only by a landmark (e.g., the golf course, a shopping mall) or by an area description (e.g., "quiet part of town," "slum neighborhood"). Only three percent of the sample said that they didn't know the neighborhood name or that it did not have a name and another one percent did not give an answer.

Among those reporting a specific neighborhood name, we determined the most common (modal) name given by respondents in each tract and then calculated the proportion of respondents in the tract who gave that specific name. Most tract residents (72%) gave the most common name. For comparison, we also determined the most common name used by respondents in each sampled census block, a much smaller unit of geography embedded within each tract, and then calculated the number of block residents who gave that name. Although the proportion giving the most common name at the block level was higher (80%) than at the tract level, the difference was not as large as might have been expected.

The number of names respondents in a given census tract reported for their neighborhood ranged from one to 11, with a mean of almost four names. As an additional measure of consensus on neighborhood names among residents living in the same census tract, we calculated a kappa statistic, the same measure of inter-rater agreement described above for neighborhood size responses. In the case of neighborhood names, the kappa statistic is substantially larger than for neighborhood size – implying a much higher level of agreement on neighborhood names. A kappa of 0.56 implies a "moderate" level of inter-rater agreement (Landis and Koch, 1977).

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Table 7 presents the results of a conditional logit model in which the first equation examines whether or not the respondent gave a neighborhood name (vs. an area description, street name, no name, etc.) and the second examines whether or not the respondent gave the modal name reported by residents of the tract he/she lives in.. The models shown include only individual level characteristics. We also estimated models including tract-level fixed effects (not shown). Models incorporating tract fixed effects could not be estimated in a few tracts, because there was no tract-level variability in the dependent variable: in one tract, all respondents reported a name for the neighborhood and in six tracts all respondents who gave a name reported the same name. We discuss the results of these models in the text.

The results for model 1 in Table 7 show that life cycle characteristics are not related to whether the respondent reported a neighborhood name. Among the neighborhood exposure and participation variables, only length of residence is significantly associated with use of a neighborhood name. Specifically, respondents who had lived in their neighborhood for less than three years were significantly less likely to report a name for the neighborhood compared with residents who lived there five or more years. We speculate that longer term neighborhood residents have had many more opportunities to describe where they live to others and to be exposed to names that others use for their neighborhood.

Probably the most striking result in this model is the fact that those in more marginalized groups – i.e., those with the poorest education, recent immigrants, and those interviewed in Spanish – are least likely to report a neighborhood name. Recent immigrants, particularly those who were interviewed in Spanish, may not be as familiar with local place names as other residents of Los Angeles because of linguistic and social isolation from other residents. Furthermore, neighborhood names were more likely to be reported by those who completed college and those with higher family incomes. The coefficient for respondents who had been to graduate school is positive as well, but not statistically significant. It is, however, significantly different from the coefficient for less than high school graduation, further reinforcing the result that more educated respondents are more likely to report a neighborhood name.

Marginal respondents (those with lower incomes and educational attainment and those who are recent immigrants and were interviewed in Spanish) may report a neighborhood name less often because they are less likely to live in settled neighborhoods with well-established names. The model including tract-level

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fixed effects suggests that this is true, at least in part. Once tract fixed effects are introduced, the coefficients on family income were no longer significant and those for educational attainment were smaller and less likely to be significant. However, the coefficients for the educational dummies remained jointly significant at the p<.10 level. Coefficients for recent immigrants and those interviewed in Spanish also remain statistically significant. One other change in the model including fixed effects is that the coefficients for duration of neighborhood residence lose significance.

Model 2 includes only respondents who report a specific neighborhood name and examines the likelihood that the respondent reports the modal name given by other tract residents. For life cycle characteristics, only age is marginally significant, with older respondents being more likely to report the modal name. Among the neighborhood exposure and participation variables, only the coefficient for having friends in the neighborhood is significant. Friends in the neighborhood significantly increase respondents' likelihood of reporting the modal name instead of another neighborhood name. It seems plausible that respondents with neighborhood friends are more likely to interact with others in the neighborhood and are thus, more likely to be aware of the modal name.

Ethnicity is significantly associated with reporting the modal name. Specifically, Latinos are significantly *more* likely to report the modal neighborhood name than other ethnic groups. None of the socioeconomic status variables are significantly associated with reporting the modal neighborhood name. When neighborhood fixed effects are introduced into the model, Latinos remain significantly more likely to report the modal neighborhood name compared with whites and the other ethnicity groups, but not African Americans.

Discussion

The goal of this study has been to examine the perceptions of urban residents about their neighborhoods. Unlike earlier studies based on local (often convenience) samples, in smaller or mid-sized cities, we use data from a representative sample of neighborhoods and individuals in Los Angeles (L.A.FANS), the second largest metropolitan statistical area in the United States and compare them with results from a nationally representative survey (PSID-CDS). On the whole, the majority of adults in L.A.FANS and in PSID-CDS view their neighborhoods as relatively small geographic areas. Despite

differences in response patterns between the two surveys, two-thirds of PSID-CDS respondents and almost two-thirds of L.A.FANS respondents said that their neighborhood was either the block or street they live on or an area within several blocks or streets in each direction. Regional variations are modest, with the largest neighborhoods in the West and the smallest neighborhoods in the South.

When we compare the perceptions of respondents living *within* the same census tracts, however, there is relatively little agreement on neighborhood size.   The lack of consensus on perceptions of neighborhood size is consistent with previous research and appears to be robust to widely varying questions about neighborhood size asked in several studies, including LAFANS and PSID-CDS. There is considerably more agreement within census tracts on neighborhood names, a result that is also consistent with earlier research.

Perceptions of neighborhood size are strongly influenced by individual characteristics, even when neighborhood characteristics are held constant. However, individual characteristics have less effect on the reporting of neighborhood names. An important finding of this study is that more marginalized groups in Los Angeles – those with poorer education, recent immigrants, and Spanish speakers – see neighborhoods as smaller areas than others do. Less-educated respondents, those interviewed in Spanish, and recent immigrants are also less likely to report a name for their neighborhood – although these findings are attenuated when tract-level fixed effects are introduced.   We speculate that reporting of smaller neighborhood size and no neighborhood name is due to greater social isolation for these groups because of language and social class barriers.   This result has at least two potentially important implications. The first is that differences in perceived neighborhood size may reflect differences in the spatial area within which individuals interact. In other words, more marginalized groups such as recent immigrants and the less educated may interact with and be affected by the social and physical conditions in a smaller geographical area surrounding their home than, say, native born individuals who have more education. Thus, neighborhood-level social programs involving these groups may need to be targeted to smaller areas. Second, marginalized social groups may have in mind a different size area when responding to survey questions on neighborhood characteristics than other groups.

In contrast, neighborhood size perceptions and name use are not strongly associated with life cycle factors like age, daily activities like employment, and having children as we had expected. Perceived neighborhood size is affected by exposure to and participation in neighborhood activities. Residents who had lived for more than five years in the neighborhood perceived it to be smaller than shorter term residents. Having friends in the neighborhood and participation in neighborhood organizations significantly increased neighborhood size. Longer duration of residence in the neighborhood is also associated with an increased likelihood of reporting a neighborhood name, but this effect is no longer significant once tract-level fixed effects are included. Neither life cycle factors, length of residence, nor participation in neighborhood activities affected the chances that an individual reported the modal neighborhood name.

Finally, we hypothesized that perceived neighborhood size would be affected, not only by individual characteristics, but also by the physical and social characteristics of the tract in which respondents lived. Our results showed that the percent in poverty and the percent of residents who were African American significantly and negatively associated with perceived neighborhood size, while the vacancy rate was significantly and positively associated with perceived size. The first two results are consistent with the individual level findings that individuals in more marginalized groups may view their neighborhoods as smaller than others. The strong association between higher vacancy rates and larger perceived neighborhood sizes may result from sparser population density or it may be a function of which specific areas of the county which have higher vacancy rates.

These results also have implications for the literature on the effects of neighborhood social context. Our results and those of previous studies indicate that no single definition can capture residents' own perceptions of "neighborhood" – since residents' perceptions of neighborhood size (and the specific boundaries they draw, as other studies have shown) are themselves so variable. Rather from residents' perspective their neighborhood "is probably best described as an area relatively close to their home with fuzzy boundaries that may expand or shrink depending on context and personal experience" (Pebley and Sastry, 2004: 125). When analysts are forced to choose a single definition, our results suggest that census tracts and blocks are probably as close as any definition to the neighborhood sizes that residents report nationwide and in Los Angeles – either the street or block they live on or that street or block plus several

streets and blocks in each direction.   However, analysts would be well advised to test the robustness of their results to different neighborhood definitions, when possible, and to take into account the possibility that individual and neighborhood-level characteristics themselves affect the size of place that influences and can be influenced by individual and collective behavior.

A better approach to the study of the effects of place is not to rely on a single definition of neighborhood, but rather to incorporate the ambiguity of neighborhood boundaries as part of the analysis. Examples include models with spatial lags or decay functions and models which incorporate approaches from fuzzy set theory (see Pebley and Sastry, 2004). Kusenbach (2008) proposes a related approach originally suggested by Hunter (1974) in which neighborhoods or communities are defined as hierarchies of space. These are more complex and data intensive approaches, but brings us closer to the reality of people's lives.

Figure 1. Perceived Neighborhood Size, L.A.FANS and PSID
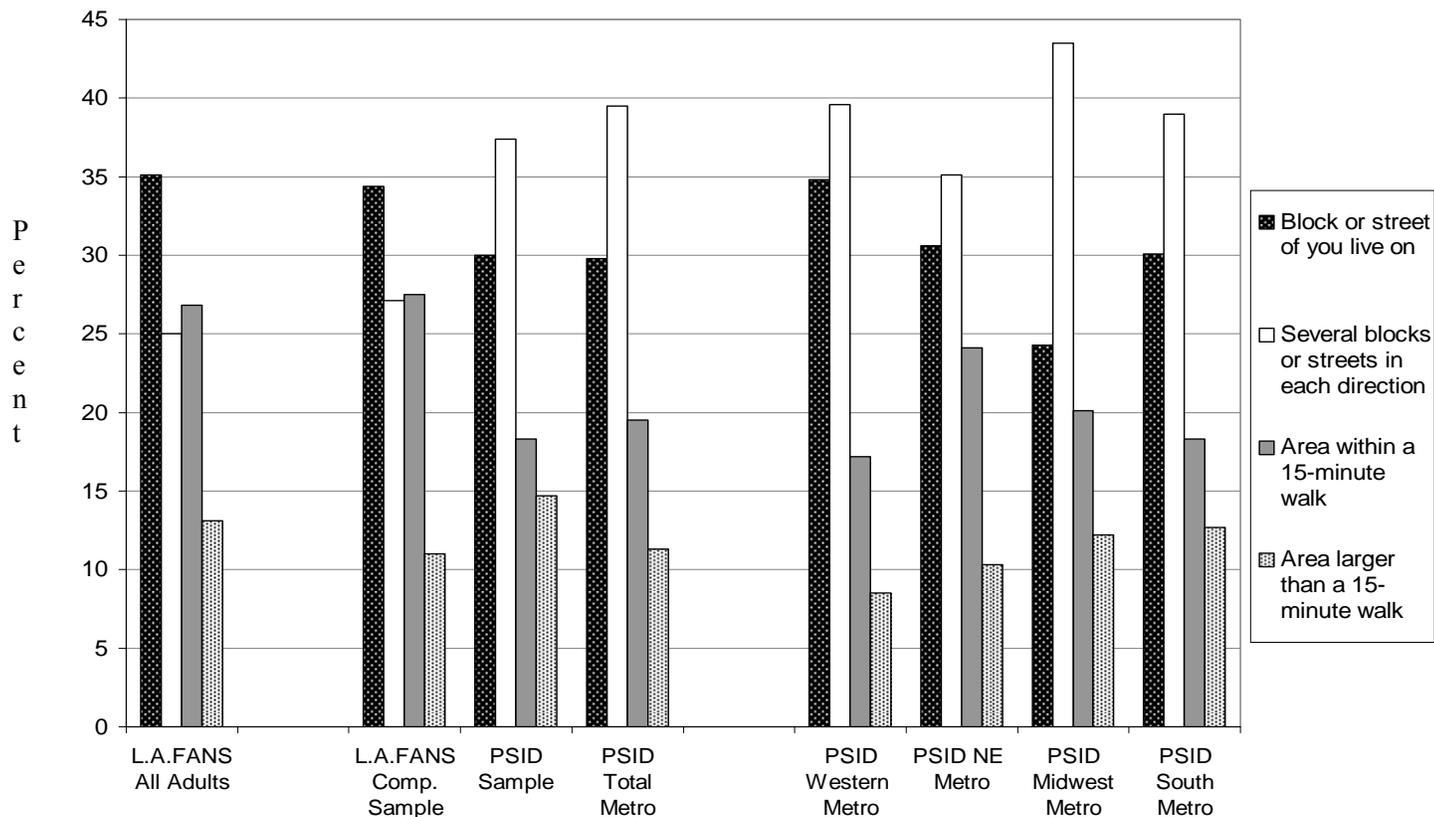
Notes: Weighted data from L.A FANS-1 and PSID-CDS 1997 data. See Appendix Table 1 for exact percentages and sample sizes. L.A.FANS Comparable Sample includes only primary caregivers (PCGs) with children under age 12 as described in the text. PSID metropolitan area samples include residents of counties in Census Bureau-defined "metropolitan areas."

Table 1. Distributions of Individual Characteristics L.A.FANS Adult Sample, Weighted Data

Characteristic	Mean or Percent
Age (years)	43.1 years
Age 55 or older	
Yes	24.6%
No	75.4%
Married or Cohabiting	
Yes	60.0%
No	40.0%
Total number of children in HH	1.06 children
Currently working	
Yes	67.5%
No	32.5%
Male Respondent	48.7%
Duration of residence in neighborhood	
< 1 year	16.0%
1 to 3 years	23.3%
3 to 5 years	13.4%
5 or more years	47.3%
Any Friends in Neighborhood	
Yes	69.9%
No	30.1%
Any relatives in neighborhood	
Yes	29.2%
No	70.8%
Participated in neighborhood meeting	
Yes	12.0%
No	88.0%
Ethnicity	
Black	10.0%
Latino	36.8%
White	38.1%
Other	15.1%
Education	
< HS grad	23.2%
HS grad or some college	53.5%
College grad	10.7%
Grad School	12.6%
Recent Immigrant (since 1990)	
Yes	12.5%
No	87.5%
Family Income	$55,077
Whether interviewed in Spanish	
Yes	22.6%
No	77.4%
Unweighted Number of Cases	2439

Table 2. Distributions of Tract Characteristics L.A.FANS Tracts Sample

Characteristic	Percent or Mean (S.D.)
Tract area (km^2)	17.5 (88.2)
Density (persons/ km^2)	5850.8 (4159.0)
Percent in Poverty	23 %
Percent Vacant Households	5%
Percent African American	10%
Residential Stability Index	0.0 (1.0)
Regions of County (SPAs)	
Antelope	4%
San Fernando	12%
San Gabriel	15%
Metro	14%
West	6%
South	19%
East	14%
South Bay	17%
Number of Cases	65

Table 3. Within Neighborhood Agreement On Perceived Neighborhood Size

	Overall Kappa	Intracluster Correlation (s.d.)	Median number (range) of Observations per Tract
L.A.FANS All Adults	0.0364	0.0368 (0.0013)	39 (27 - 57)
L.A.FANS PSID-Comparison Sample*	0.0474	0.0342 (0.0021)	13 (4 – 25)
PSID Sample*	0.0422	0.0220 (0.0020)	1(1 – 12)

* Primary caregivers (PCGs) in households with children age 12 and younger.

Table 4. Ordered Logit Coefficients on Neighborhood Size, With Tract Level Fixed Effects

	Coefficient	(S.E.)	
Age (years)	0.007	(0.005)	
Age 55 or older			
Yes	-0.405	(0.182)	*
No‡	.		
Married or Cohabiting			
Yes	0.070	(0.091)	
No‡			
Total number of children in HH	-0.023	(0.034)	
Currently working			
Yes	-0.002	(0.088)	
No‡			
Male Respondent	-0.050	(0.083)	
Length of residence in neighborhood			
< 1 year	0.322	(0.119)	**
1 to 3 years	0.310	(0.112)	**
3 to 5 years	0.308	(0.112)	**
5 or more years‡			
Any Friends in Neighborhood			
Yes	0.269	(0.078)	***
No‡			
Any relatives in neighborhood			
Yes	0.118	(0.095)	
No‡			
Participated in neighborhood meeting			
Yes	0.242	(0.121)	*
No‡			
Ethnicity			
Latino‡			
Black	0.276	(0.169)	
White	0.146	(0.135)	
Other	-0.283	(0.199)	
Education			
< HS grad	-0.373	(0.088)	***
HS grad or some college‡			
College grad	0.013	(0.132)	
Grad School	0.131	(0.177)	
Recent Immigrant (since 1990)			
Yes	-0.260	(0.110)	*
No‡			
Log of Family Income			
Below mean	-0.046	(0.070)	
Above mean	0.086	(0.090)	
Whether interviewed in Spanish			
Yes	-0.304	(0.131)	*
No‡			
Category Cutpoints			
Cut 1	0.274	(0.775)	
Cut 2	1.349	(0.782)	
Cut 3	2.949	(0.810)	
Pseudo-R^2	0.040		
Likelihood ratio test (vs. null model)	256.552 (with 86 d.f.)		***
Number of Cases	2439		

Source: L.A.FANS tabulations. ‡ Omitted category. ****p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001; †p< .10

Table 5. Linear regression model of tract-level fixed effects for L.A.FANS Adult Sample

Variable	Coefficient	(S.E.)	
Tract area (km^2)	0.001	(0.000)	*
Density (persons/ km^2)	0.000	(0.000)	
Percent in Poverty	-1.479	(0.582)	*
Percent Vacant Households	5.573	(2.410)	*
Percent African American	-2.153	(0.533)	***
Residential Stability Index	-0.066	(0.077)	
Regions of County (SPAs)			
Antelope	-0.781	(0.236)	**
San Fernando	-0.406	(0.256)	
San Gabriel	-0.408	(0.222)	†
Metro	-0.158	(0.194)	
West	-0.388	(0.205)	†
South ‡	.		
East	-0.466	(0.220)	*
South Bay	-0.249	(0.196)	
Constant	0.731	(0.278)	*
Model F-statistic (df1, df2)	4.44(13,51)		***
Adjusted R^2	0.407		
Number of observations	65		

Note: †p< .10; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001. S.E. calculated using Huber-White sandwich correction. ‡ Omitted category
Source: Authors' calculations

Table 6. Neighborhood Names in L.A.FANS Adult Sample

Variable	
Type of Name Given (%)	
Gave a specific name	77.8%
Area description	3.2%
Near a landmark	3.5%
Street name	7.7%
Cross-streets	3.4%
Don't know or "no name"	3.2%
Other responses	1.2%
Total	100.0%
Number of cases	2,599
Percent giving most common name*	
In tract	71.6%
In block	79.5%
Number of cases	1,926
Number of specific names per tract*	
Mean	3.98
Range	1 to 11
Inter-rater agreement (kappa)*	0.56
Number of tracts	65

* Excludes responses which are not neighborhood names (e.g., area description, near a landmark, etc.)

Table7. Binomial Logit Coefficients for Individual Characteristics on Whether or Not the Respondent Reported a Neighborhood Name and on Agreement with Most Common Name

	(1) Whether Respondent Reports *Any* Neighborhood Name		(2) Whether Respondent Reports *Most Common Name*	
	Coefficient	(S.E.)	Coefficient	(S.E.)
Age	0.000	(0.007)	0.010	(0.006) †
Age 55 or older	-0.033	(0.220)	-0.310	(0.232)
Married or Cohabiting				
Yes	-0.008	(0.114)	0.121	(0.137)
No‡				
Total number of children in HH	-0.019	(0.038)	-0.004	(0.050)
Currently working				
Yes	0.153	(0.109)	0.211	(0.150)
No‡				
Male Respondent	0.158	(0.110)	-0.146	(0.104)
Length of residence in neighborhood				
< 1 year	-0.316	(0.152) *	0.067	(0.186)
1 to 3 years	-0.299	(0.135) *	0.239	(0.157)
3 to 5 years	-0.126	(0.153)	0.231	(0.198)
5 or more years‡				
Any Friends in Neighborhood				
Yes	0.064	(0.105)	-0.248	(0.118) *
No‡				
Any relatives in neighborhood				
Yes	0.053	(0.104)	-0.111	(0.134)
No‡				
Participated in neighborhood meeting				
Yes	0.120	(0.190)	-0.312	(0.206)
No‡				
Ethnicity				
Black	-0.061	(0.208)	-0.496	(0.289) †
Latino‡				
White	-0.020	(0.232)	-0.691	(0.239) **
Other	-0.060	(0.229)	-0.677	(0.233) **
Education				
< HS grad	-0.218	(0.131) †	-0.113	(0.142)
HS grad or some college ‡				
College grad	0.527	(0.235) *	0.168	(0.260)
Grad School	0.195	(0.244)	0.166	(0.256)
Recent Immigrant (since 1990)				
Yes	-0.370	(0.134) **	-0.067	(0.189)
No‡				
Log of Family Income				
Below mean	0.004	(0.079)	-0.078	(0.093)
Above mean	0.344	(0.118) **	0.016	(0.129)
Whether interviewed in Spanish				
Yes	-0.411	(0.163) *	-0.220	(0.197)
No‡				
Constant	1.165	(0.843)	1.744	(0.907) †
Pseudo R^2	0.06		0.02	
Likelihood ratio test (vs. null model)	156.323 (with 22d.f.)	***	42.410 (with 22 d.f.)	**
Number of Cases	2439		1820	

Source: L.A.FANS tabulations. ‡ Omitted category. *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001; †p< .10

Appendix Table 1. Perceived Neighborhood Size Distribution in Los Angeles and Nationwide

	Block or street of you live on	Several blocks or streets in each direction	Area within a 15-minute walk	Area larger than a 15-minute walk	Total	Unweighted Number of Cases
L.A.FANS All Adults	35.1	25.0	26.8	13.1	100.0	2,593
L.A.FANS PSID-Comparison Sample*	34.4	27.1	27.5	11.0	100.0	898
PSID Sample*	30.0	37.4	18.3	14.7	100.0	1502
PSID Total Metro Sample	29.7	39.5	19.5	11.3	100.0	1124
PSID Western Region Metropolitan Sample*	34.8	39.6	17.2	8.5	100.0	224
PSID Northeastern Region Metropolitan Sample*	30.6	35.1	24.1	10.3	100.0	192
PSID Midwest Region Metropolitan Sample*	24.3	43.5	20.1	12.2	100.0	256
PSID South Region Metropolitan Sample*	30.1	39.0	18.3	12.7	100.0	452

Percentages in table are weighted.
* Primary caregivers (PCGs) in households with children age 12 and younger

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Footnotes

[1] These studies include: Banerjee and Baer (1984), Coulton et al. (2001); Guest and Lee (1983, 1984), Guest et al. (1982), Guest, Lee, and Staeheli (1982), Haeberle (1988), Haney and Knowles (1978), Hunter (1974), Keller (1968), Lee and Campbell (1997), Taylor et al. (1984), and Kusenbach (2008).

[2] In a study of real estate ads in Seattle, Guest et al., (1982) also show that the use of specific names for geographic areas changed little between 1920 and 1978.

[3] For additional information see www.lasurvey.rand.org.

[4] The 2000 U.S. Census shows that 61% of all housing units in Los Angeles County were single-detached dwellings (U.S. Census, 2007, Table QT-H10).

[5] See www.isr.umich.edu/src/child-development/home.html for further information.

[6] These local names used in this paper may or may not be locations included in L.A.FANS. In order to protect the confidentiality of respondents, specific local neighborhood names cannot be disclosed. See www.lasurvey.rand.org for more information.

[7] Among working adults in L.A.FANS, 24% of those with only elementary school education use public transit, bike, or walk to work compared with less than 4% for those with more than a high school education.

[8] We looked at children of each age group separately (not shown) but found that the total number of children provided a better fit for the data.

[9] After asking about perceived neighborhood size and name, L.A.FANS respondents were told "Now I have some questions about your neighborhood. For these questions, "neighborhood" includes both the block or street you live on and several blocks or streets in each direction. Please keep this in mind when answering these questions."

[10] We also examine the contribution of the percentage population in other ethnic groups (e.g., Latino) but found no significant effects.

[11] We include counties which are part of metropolitan areas as determined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). See: http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/Rurality/RuralUrbCon/ .

[12] We also estimated an ordered logit with perceived neighborhood size as the outcome and survey sample as the predictor variable. In this case, the survey sample had no statistically significant effect on the outcome variable.

[13] "Several blocks or streets in each direction" in L.A.FANS vs. "This block or street and several blocks or streets in each direction" in PSID

[14] "When you are talking to someone about your neighborhood, what do you mean? Is it..." in L.A.FANS vs. "What do you consider to be your neighborhood?" in PSID.