Residents’ Perceptions of Neighborhood and the Implications for Community Change

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Overview

- Background
- Research Questions
- Data and Methods
- Findings
- Next Steps
Background

What is Making Connections?

• An initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation

• Goal – to “help improve outcomes for vulnerable children living in tough neighborhoods”

• Emphasis on strengthening communities
Making Connections Sites – in 10 Cities

- Denver, CO
- Des Moines, IA
- Hartford, CT
- Indianapolis, IN
- Louisville, KY
- Milwaukee, WI
- Oakland, CA
- Providence, RI
- San Antonio, TX
- Seattle, WA
Location of Making Connections -- Milwaukee Neighborhood within Milwaukee County, Wisconsin
Background

Selected Literature


Research Questions

• How do residents view their neighborhoods spatially and symbolically?

• How do the residents’ views compare with pre-defined boundaries?

• Can information about resident perceived neighborhoods prove useful in addressing neighborhood action or as a basis for work to strengthen neighborhood involvement and social networks?
Data and Methods

• Survey of residents in the Making Connections sites

• Residents Asked
  – To draw a map of their neighborhood
  – To provide the name of their neighborhood
  – To answer a variety of other questions

• Resident-drawn maps were digitized by NORC
Data and Methods

History

• Began with Denver
  – Grouped residents based on their “official” neighborhoods and conducted consensus calculations
  – Consensus found and method replicated for other sites

• “Denver Method” failed with every other site except Louisville

• Explored Other Methods
  – Nearest Neighbor Hierarchical Clustering
  – Consensus Based on the Neighborhood Names
  – Neighborhoods Based on Other’s Maps

• Complexity of the other methods led to questions about practical application, which led to our current method
Data and Methods

Step 1: Identify neighborhood names given by 10 or more respondents & overlay the resident drawn maps

Resident Drawn Maps for People Who Responded
“Cold Spring Park”, Milwaukee
Data and Methods

Step 2: Determine if there are consensus areas
Data and Methods

Step 3: Select those census blocks endorsed by 33% or more of the residents & compare to nearest neighbor hierarchical clustering results for commonalities

Cold Spring Park Endorsed Neighborhood Boundary
Data and Methods

Step 4: Repeat method for other neighborhoods named by 10 or more respondents
Data and Methods

Step 5: Analyze nearest neighbor hierarchical clustering results to see if additional endorsed neighborhoods can be included.

Endorsed Neighborhood Boundaries, Milwaukee

Cluster 5 was added during this step.
Findings: The Denver “Standard”

Denver is a unique situation -- Official names; Not a lot of overlap
Findings: Many Overlapping Names

Resident Endorsed Neighborhood Boundaries, Louisville

**Louisville** – Official and unofficial names; Lots of overlap

**Similar Cities:**
- **Seattle** – Official and unofficial names
- **Oakland** – Unofficial names
Findings: Many Overlapping Names

Resident Endorsed Neighborhood Boundaries, Seattle
Findings: Many Overlapping Names
Findings: Overlapping Name and Cluster Mix

Indianapolis –
Official and unofficial names; Clusters; More names than clusters; Overlapping areas

Similar Cities:
Milwaukee -- More unofficial names

Providence – More official names

Des Moines – No official names
Findings: Overlapping Name and Cluster Mix
Findings: Overlapping Name and Cluster Mix
Findings: Overlapping Name and Cluster Mix

Resident Endorsed Neighborhood Boundaries, Des Moines

Legend:
- Making Connections Site Boundary
- Cluster 1
- Cluster 10
- Capitol East
- Capitol Park
- Drake & Drake Park
- Eastside
- Fairground
- Logan
- Riverbend
Findings: Mostly Clusters

San Antonio – Mix of names and clusters; More clusters than names; Some overlap

Similar City: Hartford -- Official name in the mix
Findings: Mostly Clusters
Research Findings

• How do residents view their neighborhoods spatially and symbolically?
  – Vast differences across sites and to some extent within sites

• How do the residents’ views compare with pre-defined boundaries?
  – It depends on the site

• Can information about resident perceived neighborhoods prove useful in addressing neighborhood action or as a basis for work to strengthen neighborhood involvement and social networks?
  – Yes, within each site; but difficult across sites
Next Steps

Evaluate Our Methodology

• More Research
  – Reliability Measures between and within resident endorsed neighborhood boundaries
    Compare results from the survey

• From the Field
  – Experience from Local Learning Partners in each site
    Field results only from Milwaukee so far
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