

Phoenix Area Social Survey: Long Term Monitoring of Social Interaction and Environmental Change in Urban Neighborhoods

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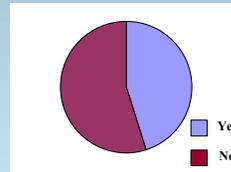
Abstract

Our main objective in the Phoenix Area Social Survey (PASS) is to examine the reciprocal relationships, or the interplay, between the social and natural environments in an urban ecosystem. In order to understand this complex process, social scientists affiliated with the Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) project propose to conduct a spatially-explicit, longitudinal social survey of residents in the Phoenix-Mesa MSA. The survey will measure the social ties of individuals to their communities, values and sentiments regarding communities, behaviors that affect the natural environment, and satisfaction with the quality of life in the area. The community that people experience most intimately is the neighborhood. Our central research questions ask how neighborhood social ties, values, and behaviors are connected with one another in ways that reflect willingness to act socially and politically with respect to the environment, and how changing environmental conditions, in turn, affect the quality of human life.

Research Questions

1. How do neighborhood characteristics, or the social, built, and natural environments in neighborhoods, affect *neighborhood attachment*?
2. How do neighborhood characteristics affect people's *priorities for achieving a sustainable urban environment and for mitigating environmental damage*?
3. How do neighborhood characteristics, neighborhood attachment, and environmental priorities affect people's community values and sentiments, especially their *sense of responsibility for the neighborhood* and their *sense of efficacy regarding social action*?
4. How does the neighborhood context and people's responsibility and efficacy affect their *stewardship of the natural environment*?
5. Do neighborhoods and environmental stewardship have discernible impacts over time on *changes in the natural environment* (such as vegetation, open land, environmental hazards, and the distribution and abundance of species)?
6. How do neighborhood characteristics, attachment, stewardship, and conditions in the natural environment affect people's satisfaction with the *quality of urban life*?
7. How are environmental conditions and quality of life related to each other and, over time, how do changes in these variables influence residential choices, neighborhood attachment, responsibility, efficacy, and stewardship?

"If residents were able to move out of greater Phoenix tomorrow, would they do it?" **



Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy

** To put this in a national-level context, the General Social Survey (GSS) asked a random sample of Americans "How close do you feel to your town or city?" 59% of respondents answered "very close" or "close" while 39% said "not very close" or "not close."

BUT experience in the metropolitan area is mediated by experience at the neighborhood level. Forces that attract or repel people to Phoenix are often neighborhood-specific.

Sampling Design

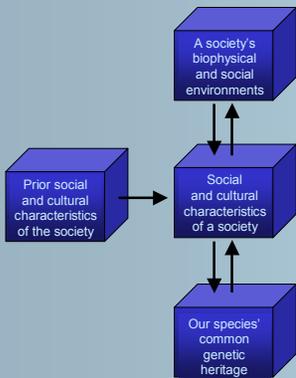
1. Coordinate PASS sample neighborhoods with the LTER 200-point survey. This will allow coordination of sociodemographic and ecological data for integrative research. By using the on-going work of other LTER projects, we will also be able to determine the proximity of these neighborhoods to large employers and environmental hazard sites.

CAP-LTER 200-Site Survey Points



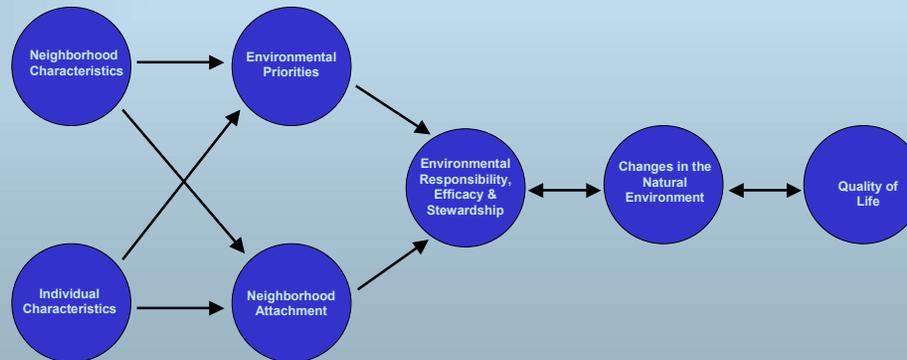
2. Classify residential points on three attributes: 1) *spatial location* (distance from urban core); 2) *age of housing stock*; and 3) *socioeconomic status*, measured as average value of homes. We will construct a matrix of these variables based on 3 cells for location classification, 3 cells for age classification, and 3 cells for socioeconomic status, yielding a 27-cell matrix. PASS sample neighborhoods will be selected from the populated cells of the matrix in a manner to be determined once the data are assembled.
3. Neighborhood is a social patch that is defined by characteristics that distinguish it from surrounding areas. For sampling purposes, we use both objective and subjective measures to define the physical boundaries of neighborhoods.
4. Once neighborhood boundaries are established for the sample sites, we will enumerate all the dwellings within the boundaries. A random sample of households within the neighborhood will be chosen for administration of the survey.

General Model of the Human-Environment Feedback Relationship



Source: Gerhard Lenski, Patrick Nolan, and Jean Lenski. 1997. *Human Societies* New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

Neighborhoods, People and the Environment: A Conceptual Model



Some Types of Valley Neighborhoods



Canal Park est. 1950s to 1960s



East Rio est. 1980s



Riverside est. 1900s to 1950s



Jen Tilly Terrace est. 1940s to present

2001 Research Plans

The pilot project will begin January 2001 and run through December.

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