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Social Ties at the Neighborhood level: Two decades
of GSS evidence

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Avery M. Guest
University of Washington

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SOCIAL TIES AT THE NEIGHBORHOOD LEVEL:
TWO DECADES OF GSS EVIDENCE

Avery M. Guest
Susan K. Wierzbicki
Department of Sociology
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98115

Email: peto@u.washington.edu

ABSTRACT

Using the General Social Survey, this paper analyzes trends in socializing with neighbors and friends outside the neighborhood during the 1974-96 period. Consistent with arguments about a declining attachment to neighborhood, a linear trend toward decreased intra-neighborhood and increased extra-neighborhood socializing is evident. In addition, the temporal data suggest that individuals are increasingly specializing in either neighborhood or extra-neighborhood social ties. However, the evidence about declining attachment is qualified. The trend toward decreased neighborhood socializing is small. In addition, inconsistent with some claims about the contemporary neighborhood, there is only mild evidence that socializing at the neighborhood level is increasingly selective of certain social groups.

One of the classical issues in the study of community social life is whether ties to locality are decreasing over time (Bender 1978; Gannon 1978; Stein 1960). Most frequently, social scientists have argued that the economic development of societies is associated with declining local social ties and increasing extra-local ties. As Hawley (1971: 210) notes, "...the tendency is for small territorial units to be absorbed and stripped of their functions by the larger universe of activity." A number of rationales may be provided to support this position, but the crucial argument seems to be that advances in transportation and communication reduce the friction of space and liberate individuals from the necessity of concentrating social relations in their home territories.

While a number of studies exist on this question, most have serious problems of validity. For instance, studies have compared social relations across time periods largely on the basis of recollections of (often older) community members, but have provided little actual comparable data (Lynd and Lynd 1929; Warner et al. 1963). In addition, since most temporal comparisons have been made for specific communities, it is unclear whether the communities represent the general universe.

This study focuses on social ties in U.S. neighborhoods over a 22 year period, using two questions from the General Social Survey (GSS), a representative sample of the U.S. adult population over 18 years old. Some fifteen of the (generally) annual surveys from 1974 to 1996 asked respondents to report on how frequently they "spend a social evening with someone who lives in your neighborhood?" This was followed by another question to determine how often they "spend a social evening with friends who live outside the neighborhood."

The data definitely have some limitations; in particular, the term "neighborhood" is not explicitly defined, although conceptions of it are usually limited to an area encompassing, at most, a few blocks around one's home (Guest and Lee 1984). In addition, neighboring is defined explicitly in terms of socializing, although it is frequently studied in its multiple dimensions, such as simply chatting, exchanging favors, and knowing information about each other (Campbell and Lee 1990a; Wellman and Wortley 1990). Nevertheless, the GSS data provide a rare opportunity to investigate general patterns for

the United States over two decades, and an opportunity to chart for a number of years the temporal sequence of change.

Drawing from what we perceive as the "decline of community" literature, we investigate three major questions about temporal changes in social ties at the neighborhood level. First, we test the thesis that non-local (non-neighborhood) ties have grown relative to local ties. Second, we investigate whether social ties at the neighborhood level have increasingly become disassociated from other types of social ties. In short, whether neighboring has become a more specialized or segmented role in economically developed societies. Third, we test whether neighboring has become increasingly selective of certain sub-groups of individuals: namely, those who lack the opportunity or resources to concentrate their social ties at the non-local level.

PREVIOUS THEORY

As noted above, the conventional wisdom in sociology is that geographically localized communities were once relatively autonomous as social units, but this condition has gradually given way to more geographically dispersed patterns of social interaction. Consistent with this perspective, classical social theorists have frequently posited various forms of "gemeinschaft" in the past, in which communities had dense and highly interconnected social networks (Bender 1978). The most frequently espoused view is that these ties have gradually been replaced by gesellschaft social relations, in which community ties are weak in strength, limited in number, and based on rationalized ends-means relationships rather than sentiment.

In their formulation of fundamental ideas about urban neighborhoods in the 1920's, University of Chicago sociologists such as Robert Park viewed them as frequently having a gemeinschaft quality, especially those that had long histories and were residentially stable (Guest 1984). Parts of the city were viewed as little worlds, with relatively autonomous social and cultural patterns. Presumably, they attracted the interest and investment of almost all their residents, and, consequently, neighborhoods were centers for social life.

In the post-World War II period, however, sociologists frequently criticized such perspectives. The mass purchase of automobiles and the outward spread of the established city allegedly encouraged the demise of the traditional neighborhood as envisioned by Chicago sociologists. Some (Greer 1962) believed that localized communities now attracted limited interest and involvement from many residents. Those with ties were largely characterized by a rational investment in territory through the ownership of valuable homes or the rearing of children. Social ties were based more on a functional need to develop protective mechanisms for one's children and home rather than any particular inherent need to interact socially with others. Others (Gans 1962, 1967) portrayed life within parts of the metropolis as a reflection of the ethnic, familial, and social class characteristics of the residents, and argued that localized social ties were based on little inherent interest in territory around home. Thus, ethnic areas such as the West End of Boston had strong social ties, but these were a reflection of working class Italian American culture, rather than any general attachment to neighborhood areas.

Only a few have directly challenged such arguments. In one noteworthy exception, Hunter (1974) argues for the "persistence of sentiments in the mass society". He suggests that localized social ties in the metropolis may serve to counterbalance some of the disagreeable features of life in highly developed societies. For instance, Hunter argues that the local neighborhood may be considered a "defended refuge" by workers who seek relief from the competitive pressures of jobs. Co-residents of neighborhoods are generally not competitors in workplaces, and thus may be enjoyed as social friends without worrying about economic repercussions.

Wellman and Leighton (1979) have succinctly discussed some of these issues and have proposed three forms of community that may continue to exist in contemporary society: (a) the lost community in which individuals have few social ties at the local or extra-local level, (b) the liberated community in which individuals have primarily non-neighborhood social ties, and (c) the saved community in which individuals primarily relate to others in their immediate neighborhoods. While not taking a strong stand on the importance of each type of community, Wellman and Leighton seem to believe that the most likely form

of community is the "liberated" in which local social ties have declined while non-local ties persist or even increase.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

As suggested above, there is very little research that actually addresses the longitudinal nature of neighborhood social ties. Some (Fischer 1982) have tried to approximate such an analysis by comparing the strength of neighborhood friendship ties in relatively urban versus relatively rural communities, finding support for the conventional thesis that the more "advanced" areas have weaker ties than the more "traditional" rural areas. In another "approximate" test, Campbell (1990) analyzed neighbor social relations in a block in Bloomington (IN) in 1939, finding that many of the ties were quite weak and roughly comparable to those found in more contemporary urban areas. No direct longitudinal data were presented, however.

In one study that challenged the conventional wisdom, Hunter (1975) analyzed the prevalence in 1949 and 1974 of various forms of neighboring in a consciously biracial area near the University of Rochester. Most measures of social interaction showed little change, and there was no evidence of extensive declines in social ties.

Other researchers have studied changing social ties by focusing on neighborhood institutions. Lee et al. (1984) analyzed activity patterns of neighborhood community clubs in Seattle for 1929 and 1979. Among their findings, they reported that the number of community clubs had remained amazingly constant, and they seemed increasingly engaged in political activism. However, inconsistent with the above studies, they reported that the community clubs over the 50 years met less frequently and devoted themselves less to social activities such as dinners and dances.

A major concern about the Hunter and Lee et al. studies arises from the fact that they analyze only two specific time points. From the studies, one cannot determine what happened in the intervening years. While not likely, it is possible that communities with roughly the same social ties at two different time points actually experienced some variations during the intervening years.

There are also longitudinal studies of neighborhood life that may have some implications for understanding social ties, but do not actually focus on this issue. For instance, Guest et al. (1982) analyzed the use of community names in Seattle real estate ads from 1920 to 1978, finding a relatively constant proportion. They suggested that the importance of neighborhood communities had not changed in this time period, but, drawing also from the Lee et al. (1984) study of neighborhood organizations, the importance of neighborhood areas may have remained constant while their functions have changed from more purely social to political.

HYPOTHESES

Given the lack of definitive evidence on shifts in neighborhood social ties, we wish to maintain some sense of agnosticism about major trends. Yet, in the face of massive changes in transportation and communications technology in recent decades, localized interaction has shown quite possibly some longitudinal declines in importance. In turn, consistent with the community liberated perspective, it seems likely that non-local interaction may have evidenced some increase.

A number of more specific reasons may be suggested for these trends. Per capita car ownership has shown a steady growth in the second half of the 20th Century, facilitating ties over wide geographic areas. Developments in electronic communications such as the telephone and computers have opened up greatly the possibilities of indirect socializing. Non-home labor force participation among mature adults, especially women, has grown greatly, freeing individuals from a necessary dependence on the locality for their social ties. A general decline in fertility rates since the 1950's has decreased the number of children in families, thus possibly the relevance of "home territory" to social life.

An alternate view, consistent with the community lost perspective, is that the loss of localized social ties has not been matched by equivalent gains in extra-local ties. Increasingly, many households have multiple labor force participants, and there is little time for any kind of socializing. In addition, face-to-face interaction may be replaced to some degree by impersonal interaction through computers and telephone networks.

Another important issue is whether neighborhood social ties have become increasingly disassociated from other social ties. Our hypothesis, given the dramatic changes in the geographic possibilities of social interaction, is that neighboring has become a more voluntaristic activity, in which some particularly participate because of time availability to interact socially, the localized orientation of other members of the household such as non-adult children, and the limited availability of resources such as money and transportation that would facilitate social ties over wide geographic areas. In such a case, we would expect that the number of social ties at the neighborhood level would become decreasingly related to the amount of social ties at the non-neighborhood level. If this is true, it would be consistent with the well-known argument that individuals in contemporary society can be categorized on the basis of whether they are cosmopolitans (with non-local involvements) or locals (Guest and Oropesa 1986). This hypothesis is also consistent with the well known argument (Wirth 1938) that urbanization and societal development involves a specialization of roles so that some individuals concentrate on specific types of relationships while others chose different outlets for their social ties.

A third related issue is whether neighboring has become more concentrated among social groups in the population that have a functional dependence on the neighborhood. While a variety of groups might be studied, we will concentrate on four comparisons, by educational attainment, by chronological age, by the presence of children, and by work status or non-home employment. A variety of arguments can be suggested for why some groups, given increasing possibilities of physical liberation from locality, should be increasingly differentiated in regard to neighborhood social ties. The poorly educated may especially emphasize local social ties due to their relatively low incomes which permit limited personal choices, and their limited knowledge/inquisitiveness about the larger world. Relatively old people (seniors), in particular, may increasingly have social ties inside the neighborhood due to problems of physical mobility while young adults make use of improved transportation and communication for personal experimentation in the larger world, job changes, and travel. Those with children may increasingly orient themselves to the neighborhood because this is home space for family activities while the childless partake

of the social opportunities in the larger world. Those who are not employed outside the home may have limited alternate opportunities to those at the neighborhood level, especially as others enter the labor force and are able to find non-local social relationships.

While we espouse the view that neighboring may be increasingly selective of sub-groups, we also recognize that this might not be true under certain conditions. Overall, neighborhood and non-neighborhood ties may increasingly be disassociated, leading to more specialization in social ties, but this may have little differential impact on sub-groups in the population. Trends away from neighborhood attachment may characterize all segments of the population, and "neighboring" may increasingly be a voluntaristic activity which is influenced by such factors as personality and specific circumstance.

METHODS

The GSS is a highly respected survey of a representative sample of American adults over 18 years of age that has been conducted since 1972 by the National Opinion Research Center. One of the strengths of the GSS is the longitudinal nature of the questions so that social change may be studied. While the survey has generally been conducted on an annual basis, questions on socializing at the neighborhood and extra-neighborhood levels were asked in 15 surveys between 1974 and 1996, permitting an analysis of 22 years. In recent years, questions on socializing have also been asked for sub-samples of the larger annual sample.

The large number of annual observations allow researchers to determine not only the degree of change but the pattern of change. Does an activity such as socializing change by roughly the same amount over years or are there sharp alterations that may be related to specific social changes in the society?

The GSS has also asked about other forms of socializing beyond those that are analyzed in this paper, including separate questions on spending a social evening with relatives, parents, and a brother or sister. A question on socializing at a bar or tavern has also been asked frequently. We do not analyze those questions in this paper, partly because they are not central to our analysis and partly because the questions have not always been

asked in the same years as those we focus on. The GSS data show a small temporal decline in tendency to spend a social evening with parents and a brother or sister, but hardly any change in the tendency to spend an evening with relatives. The data also indicate a small decline in the probability of going to a bar or tavern.

In the following sections, we first analyze overall trends in socializing at the neighborhood and non-neighborhood level. We then determine whether these ties have become increasingly separated from each other, or segmented. Finally, we analyze whether trends in neighborhood social ties are similar or dissimilar for major subgroups in the population.

OVERALL TRENDS IN SOCIAL TIES

Table 1 shows the crosstabulation from the GSS over the 1974-96 time period between neighborhood and non-neighborhood social ties. The table distinguishes between socializing with "friends" and a "neighbor", where friends actually refers to individuals who do not live in the neighborhood, although neighbors may also be friends. The table uses the exact response categories that are found in the GSS. Individuals who failed to provide one of these responses are eliminated from the table.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Note that some relationship exists between the two variables, with individuals who socialize in one sphere having a tendency to socialize in the other. This is consistent with what Campbell and Lee (1990b) call the "social integration" perspective, namely that both types of ties are related to general integration into the society, such as through high social status. However, while positive, the relationship is not especially high ($\text{Gamma} = .179$), indicating a wide variety of responses. Some individuals have high social activity inside and outside the neighborhood, others specialize in one or the other, and still others are involved little in either type of activity.

The table also shows that the two variables have somewhat different overall distributions. Neighboring is more widely distributed, as indicated by the larger number of individuals who pick the most extreme categories of high and low social interaction. Individuals tend to cluster more in the mid-range categories of socializing with friends

outside the neighborhood. Neighboring is thus a more discretionary activity than non-neighborhood socializing, while non-neighborhood ties may be considered more universal (although not necessarily high) in their prevalence.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Table 2 indicates summary levels and distributions of socializing for the two variables in the 15 surveys where both questions were asked. To make the data directly comparable, we have restricted analysis to individuals who gave a codeable response for each question. The variable SOCOMM refers to neighborhood socializing, while SOCFREN refers to non-neighborhood ties. For each variable, means and standard deviations were calculated by assigning scores to each category (6=high, 0=low). Because the overall means have little intuitive interpretation, we have also calculated the proportions of responding individuals (PSOCOMM and PSOCFREN) who reported socializing at least once a month, which would seem to be a reasonable (albeit debatable) estimate of those who engage in serious socializing. These proportions are shown graphically in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Differences over the years tend to be small, especially when adjacent years are compared. Nevertheless, social ties with neighbors decline over time, and an even weaker counter-trend toward increasing social ties with individuals outside the neighborhood is evident. Note that the average score for socializing with neighbors is higher than the score with non-neighbors for each year until 1989. In the last six surveys, the average score with non-neighborhood friends is higher three times. The same general patterns occur when one analyzes the annual percentage that scores high in socializing. Again, the trend is clearer for neighborhood than non-neighborhood social ties.

One should not assume that the means for each year are necessarily representative of the total U.S. adult population, for each survey is a sample, and there is almost certainly some error in predicting the population value. Yet, if trends are evident, they should appear in the general patterns.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

One evident pattern in the data is the strong linearity of the trend. In other words, there do not appear to be dramatic "jumps" or "declines" in the values, suggesting that these types of socializing are primarily responding to long-term secular trends, rather than specific historical events. The Pearsonian correlations between each of the four aggregated measures of socializing and year of observations are quite high, with values being $-.854$ for SOCOMM, $-.818$ for PSOCOMM, $.731$ for SOCFREN, and $.744$ for PSOCFREN. We should note, nevertheless, that the largest annual decline in neighborhood socializing occurred between 1974 and 1975, a period when a severe gas shortage was easing in the United States.

A useful interpretative piece of information in Table 3 is the unstandardized regression coefficients of year when it is used to predict the aggregated values of the four dependent variables over the time series. The unstandardized coefficient indicates the predicted change in the mean with each additional year of observation. The coefficients for the proportions have a practical interpretation. The value of $-.0044$ for PSOCOMM indicates that the proportion of "high" neighboring persons decline by that number each year or by $.044$ in 10 years ($10 \times .0044$). Assuming a continuation of current trends, it would take many decades for neighboring to disappear as an important activity among the American population.

A noteworthy pattern is the greater speed of decline in socializing with neighbors than the increase in socializing with friends outside the neighborhood. While extrapolation from these data is tenuous, they are consistent with the idea that overall socializing with all friends may be declining slightly in the U.S. population.

These results thus provide some modest evidence for the community liberated thesis, but some support for both the "saved" and "lost" perspectives is evident. In support of the saved view, we find that neighborhood and non-neighborhood ties remain very similar. In support of the "lost" thesis, we find that total social ties may be undergoing a very slight decline.

ASSOCIATION OF TIES

A second hypothesis, consistent with the decline of community thesis, is that the number of social ties with neighbors is becoming decreasingly related to the number of social ties with friends outside the neighborhood. In other words, neighborhood ties are becoming more specialized. As shown in Table 1, there is a wide range in individual propensity during the 1974-96 period to emphasize neighborhood versus extra-neighborhood social ties. To directly test the hypothesis, nevertheless, we need to compare the relationship between local and extra-local ties for each annual survey. Then, we need to determine whether the overall positive relationship between the two types of ties is decreasing.

For each of the 15 annual surveys in the 1974-1996 period, we crosstabulated the seven categories for each variable against each other. We then calculated gamma for each table, and report the summary value for each year in Table 2. Gamma is a very useful measure for longitudinal comparisons because it is a symmetric measure of association (varying from +1.00 to -1.00) for ordinal data, and is not strongly influenced by marginal distributions. Note that all the values of Gamma in Table 3 are positive, suggesting a universal tendency (albeit often slight) for individuals to emphasize one type of tie if they emphasize the other, consistent with the "social integration" perspective (Campbell and Lee 1990b).

To test the hypothesis about the longitudinal specialization of ties, we have calculated the Pearsonian correlation between the year of observation and the aggregate Gamma value, finding a value of $-.737$. This indicates a strong tendency for the relationship between local and extra local ties to become decreasingly strong as year increases, suggesting some disassociation between the two types of socializing. While Gamma did not decline in a monotonically linear fashion, it is noteworthy that the highest gamma value of $.228$ was found in the first year of the series (1974) and the lowest value of $.100$ was obtained in the last year (1996). All the values of Gamma above $.200$ occurred in the seven earliest surveys before 1986.

SUBGROUP SPECIALIZATION

The data tend to support the "liberated" perspective in the first two hypotheses, but we still need to determine whether neighborhood ties are declining universally or selectively across social groups in the population. A variety of research (Campbell 1990, Campbell and Lee 1990a, Guest and Oropesa 1986) suggests that localized ties are selective of certain demographic and social groups, and it seems likely that the GSS data will show the same pattern. The more basic question is whether the selectivity is increasing over time, so that local ties may be viewed as mainly restricted to those with few other opportunities or choices.

As suggested above, we will consider four characteristics in the analysis: education, chronological age, number of children, and work status. These four characteristics are diverse enough to suggest some of the subgroup trends that may be emerging in the U.S. population, although other characteristics might be considered.

Two dependent variables will be considered in the analysis: (1) a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent engages in social activities with neighbors at least once a month (similar to PSOCOMM), and (2) the difference (LOCAL) between the local and non-local socializing scores on the seven point scales for SOCOMM and SOCFREN. Thus, a person who scores in the highest category of neighboring (6) and the lowest category of non-neighborhood socializing (0) would have a score of +6 (6-0). The two dependent variables will capture different aspects of socializing. The first indicates the absolute level of neighboring, while the second measures the relative level. Thus, we would expect relatively young adults to engage disproportionately in all types of social activity (including with neighbors), but it seems unlikely that neighboring would be an unusually high proportion of all activity.

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

In Table 4, we have presented means on the dependent variables for the various subgroups. The data are broken down further by decade to determine whether trends are evident. Note that the data for the number of children refer to those currently living; thus, some may be adult children who do not live at home. Unfortunately, we are limited to this variable

in the GSS, although it could be claimed that even those with adult children may have developed enduring social ties with others during the years of child rearing.

Interestingly, the patterns evident for absolute neighborhood ties are not necessarily similar to those for relative share of neighborhood ties. This occurs, because (consistent with our above analysis of Gamma) some types of individuals have high absolute scores on both socializing with neighbors and with non-neighbors.

In terms of absolute ties, we find that the youngest and those without children have high absolute neighborhood activity patterns. While this might seem counter-intuitive, these types of individuals also have unusually high levels of non-neighborhood ties. The young and those without children generally have low ties to established family units, and thus have the time and energy to socialize outside the immediate home. There is little variation in social activities with neighbors by work status and education.

The patterns for relative ties more closely fit the expectation that neighboring is selective of subgroups. Relative to non-local ties, the greatest local ties are found among the oldest, those with a large number of children, those who stay at home (rather than work or attend school), and the least well educated.

Our major concern is whether neighborhood ties are becoming relatively more selective of certain types of individuals. Note, in general, that means on both dependent variables are decreasing for most subgroups, consistent with the community liberated thesis. However, two subgroups do not seem to follow this pattern. The absolute levels of neighboring show hardly any change over the decades for the elderly (those over 65) and for those who largely stay home (have little non-home workforce participation). In addition, these two groups are becoming increasingly differentiated from the other age and work status groups in terms of relative social ties. Note that the relative tendency of the aged to be localized has become increasingly evident over the three decades. Furthermore, those "at home" are becoming increasingly differentiated from the other groups in their tendency to emphasize neighbor ties. Both of these groups, of course, have time on their hands to be neighbors, and they may also lack the resources (at least physical in the case of the aged) to "get out" of the neighborhood.

These trends are much more difficult to verify on a statistical basis. The theory at hand suggests the presence of a statistical interaction between subgroup characteristic and year (or "time"), so that simple additive models with year and dummy variables for subgroup would be a less satisfactory statistical fit than those that also included an interaction term between year and the subgroup characteristics. Such an analysis was conducted for both dependent variables, using the standard F-test for the difference between two multiple regression equations where one includes a more inclusive set of the other. For age and work status, the interaction model, including both interaction and additive terms, was a slightly better fit for both dependent variables, although the gain in explanation was quite small in absolute terms. Thus, an additive model of explaining LOCAL, using dummy variables for the four work statuses and a linear term for year, explained 3.2 percent of the variance. When the dummy variables were included in interaction form with year (plus the additive terms), they explained 3.3 percent of the variance.

With such a huge sample (over 20,000 individuals), it is easy to find that this difference is statistically significant; however, it could be argued that its substantive significance is much less evident.

There is little evidence of temporally different trends for both education and the number of children. The two R-squared values were virtually identical (the additive versus the interaction model). In addition, inspection of the mean values in Table 4 shows little differential trend. We also tested for differential trends among a number of other social characteristics, but found very few that matched the patterns by age and workforce status.

Overall, then, the data provide some evidence that neighboring is an increasingly specialized activity in terms of population subgroups, but the trends are not major or dramatic. Mostly, relatively universal trends across subgroups are occurring.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Evidence for the continuing role of localized neighborhood ties in social relationships can be assessed to some degree using the 22 years of data from the GSS. This is perhaps the best data available to test some important hypotheses, although we are

clearly limited in terms of the number of variables and the length of time. It is possible that results would differ for longer time periods or for data sets with more variables, but this is a moot question at this time since we lack the necessary data for nationally representative U.S. samples. In addition, we would emphasize that the results in this paper only have implications for social ties. As we have noted (Lee et al. 1984), political activity with the neighborhood as a focus may actually be increasing over time.

The data show a relatively continuous, albeit slow, decline in the importance of social ties on the basis of neighborhood, and, in turn, an even smaller upward growth in the importance of non-neighborhood social ties. The linearity of these trends suggest that long-term secular processes may exist which extend beyond the time band of this study. Thus, the data provide some evidence for the community liberated perspective on social ties in contemporary American society.

At the same time, it is clearly necessary to qualify this conclusion. Even though there has been a decline in neighboring, the overall levels of neighborhood social ties in comparison to non-neighborhood ties were quite strong in 1996. Indeed, neighboring is a more variable activity than socializing with other friends, and thus it continues to be an important activity for a sizable segment of the population.

Elsewhere (Guest 1985), the senior author has argued that another alternative to the perspectives of community "liberated", "lost", and "saved" is the community "mediate", in which individuals maintain ties to both neighborhood and extra-neighborhood levels. While the U.S. population may be moving in the direction of the "community liberated", it seems fair to say that the "community mediate" may also be a fairly realistic way of describing the contemporary situation.

A clear finding of this analysis is that neighborhood and non-neighborhood ties are becoming disassociated over time, so that individuals are becoming specialists in localized versus nonlocalized social interaction. Thus, the U.S. population can more clearly be distinguished as locals versus cosmopolitans than in the past. Still, in the face of a declining relationship, the two activities are still positively related, indicating that a sharp dichotomy can not currently be drawn.

Finally, the evidence is somewhat ambiguous concerning whether neighboring is becoming a more differentiated activity among certain subgroups in the population. By inspecting means, we have found some support for the position that the elderly and those in work statuses that keep them in the home are becoming greater specialists in neighboring relative to other age and work status groups. However, trends were much less evident by education and the presence of children. Mostly, shifts in neighboring seem to occur similarly across demographic categories, or the changes are so gradual that the basic nature of differences is maintained over time. Again, this finding alerts us to the fact that neighborhoods continue to serve important functions for a variety of population groups, although there are clearly differences.

How can we reconcile the evidence that neighboring and extra-neighboring roles are becoming increasingly independent in the general population with the finding that the extent of specialization on a subgroup level is somewhat ambiguous? What seems possible is that neighboring is a more voluntaristic activity in which some individuals consciously chose it and others do not. The psychological and social motivations for these choices need to be more thoroughly investigated.

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TABLE 1
 CROSSTABULATION OF SPENDING EVENINGS
 WITH NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS, 1974-1996

SPEND EVENING WITH NEIGHBOR	SPEND EVENING WITH FRIENDS							Total
	ALMOST DAILY	SEV TIMES A WEEK	SEV TIMES A MNTH	ONCE A MNTH	SEV TIMES A YEAR	ONCE A YEAR	NEVER	
ALMOST DAILY	11.6%	30.2%	18.6%	18.0%	7.8%	5.1%	8.7%	100.0%
	(143)	(373)	(230)	(222)	(96)	(63)	(107)	1234
SEV TIMES A WEEK	3.0%	28.2%	21.4%	24.2%	10.7%	4.6%	7.9%	100.0%
	(126)	(1174)	(890)	(1009)	(446)	(191)	(329)	4165
SEV TIMES A MNTH	1.9%	14.6%	30.2%	25.5%	18.7%	4.9%	4.1%	100.0%
	(49)	(370)	(767)	(647)	(475)	(125)	(104)	2537
ONCE A MONTH	2.3%	16.4%	19.0%	28.6%	20.8%	7.5%	5.4%	100.0%
	(73)	(520)	(600)	(904)	(659)	(237)	(172)	3165
SEV TIMES A YEAR	1.3%	10.8%	18.8%	16.9%	36.3%	11.1%	4.9%	100.0%
	(36)	(287)	(501)	(450)	(970)	(295)	(130)	2669
ONCE A YEAR	2.1%	15.6%	16.7%	20.7%	24.9%	14.6%	5.4%	100.0%

	(40)	(297)	(317)	(394)	(473)	(277)	(102)	1900
NEVER	2.7%	19.7%	16.5%	18.4%	15.3%	6.4%	20.9%	100.0%
	(151)	(1095)	(917)	(1025)	(853)	(358)	(1163)	5562
Total	2.9%	19.4%	19.9%	21.9%	18.7%	7.3%	9.9%	100.0%
	618	4116	4222	4651	3972	1546	2107	21232

Note: Sample sizes are presented in parentheses. "Friends" refer to individuals who live outside the neighborhood.

TABLE 2

MEAN SOCIALIZING SCORES FOR NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS

GSS YEAR	SOCOMM	PSOCOMM	SOCFREN	PSOCFREN
74	Mean 2.93	.6058	2.97	.6235
	S.D. 2.02	.4888	1.64	.4847
	N=1474			
	Gamma=.228			
75	Mean 2.77	.5630	2.92	.6143
	S.D. 2.02	.4962	1.68	.4869
	N=1483			
	Gamma=.186			
77	Mean 2.71	.5510	3.02	.6364
	S.D. 2.01	.4976	1.61	.4812
	N=1521			
	Gamma=.211			
78	Mean 2.71	.5303	2.92	.5862
	S.D. 2.06	.4992	1.66	.4927
	N=1520			
	Gamma=.213			
82	Mean 2.71	.5444	3.04	.6337
	S.D. 1.97	.4982	1.61	.4819
	N=1848			
	Gamma=.216			
83	Mean 2.60	.5223	3.04	.6499
	S.D. 2.03	.4997	1.61	.4771
	N=1591			
	Gamma=.195			

85	Mean	2.54	.5059	3.01	.6271
	S.D.	2.01	.5001	1.63	.4837
	N=1526				
	Gamma=.216				
86	Mean	2.67	.5392	2.98	.6300
	S.D.	2.07	.4986	1.62	.4830
	N=1465				
	Gamma=.176				
88	Mean	2.54	.5163	3.03	.6494
	S.D.	2.03	.5000	1.59	.4774
	N=984				
	Gamma=.173				
89	Mean	2.34	.4665	3.00	.6316
	S.D.	2.02	.4991	1.67	.4826
	N=999				
	Gamma=.191				
90	Mean	2.45	.4951	3.01	.6450
	S.D.	2.05	.5002	1.58	.4788
	N=921				
	Gamma=.118				
91	Mean	2.46	.4951	3.09	.6680
	S.D.	2.06	.5002	1.66	.4712
	N=1018				
	Gamma=.140				
93	Mean	2.38	.4795	3.13	.6471
	S.D.	2.00	.4998	1.61	.4781
	N=1074				
	Gamma=.188				
94	Mean	2.35	.4699	3.08	.6575
	S.D.	2.02	.4992	1.58	.4747
	N=1962				
	Gamma=.161				
96	Mean	2.57	.5195	3.32	.7064
	S.D.	1.97	.4998	1.48	.4555
	N=1846				
	Gamma=.100				

Key: socomm=average score for socializing with neighbors; socfren=average score for socializing with friends outside the neighborhood; psoccomm=proportion high in socializing with neighbors; psocfren=proportion high in socializing with friends outside the neighborhood.

TABLE 3
REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS FOR PREDICTING SOCIALIZING
BY YEAR OF OBSERVATION

	SOCOMM	PSOCOMM	SOCFREN	PSOCFREN
Constant	43.278	9.153	-17.131	-4.946
B	-.021	-.0044	.010	.0028
s.e. of b	.003	.001	.003	.001
Beta	-.854	-.818	.731	.744

TABLE 4
 MEAN SCORES ON NEIGHBORHOOD AND LOCALIZED SOCIALIZING
 BY DECADE AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristic	SOCOMM			LOCAL		
	70s	80s	90s	70s	80s	90s
Education						
0-11 Years	2.69 (2086)	2.59 (2376)	2.49 (1276)	.19 (2080)	.05 (2372)	-.25 (1274)
12 Years	2.75 (2029)	2.55 (2777)	2.35 (2072)	-.38 (2028)	-.53 (2775)	-.76 (2068)
13-15 Years	2.94 (1019)	2.65 (1756)	2.47 (1752)	-.38 (1017)	-.69 (1755)	-.81 (1751)
16+ years	2.90 (854)	2.60 (1498)	2.49 (1717)	-.40 (854)	-.73 (1498)	-.87 (1716)
Age						
18-29	3.22 (1556)	3.04 (2058)	2.75 (1334)	-.47 (1554)	-.66 (2058)	-1.16 (1334)
30-44	2.67	2.50	2.40	-.38	-.69	-.86

	(1700)	(2586)	(2384)	(1697)	(2586)	(2382)
45-64	2.65	2.30	2.19	-.04	-.48	-.73
	(1386)	(1656)	(1539)	(1386)	(1654)	(1537)
65+	2.55	2.48	2.50	.29	.14	-.06
	(1342)	(2087)	(1558)	(1338)	(2082)	(1554)
Number of Children						
0	3.02	2.88	2.67	-.44	-.72	-1.03
	(1510)	(2296)	(1898)	(1509)	(2294)	(1897)
1-2	2.79	2.56	2.41	-.17	-.41	-.67
	(2323)	(3334)	(2874)	(2321)	(3332)	(2869)
3-4	2.65	2.45	2.26	-.08	.28	-.47
	(1466)	(1924)	(1570)	(1462)	(1924)	(1569)
5+	2.49	2.27	2.32	.12	-.08	-.39
Work Status						
Full time,	2.73	2.52	2.32	-.45	-.74	-1.00
School	(2903)	(4208)	(3797)	(2901)	(4208)	(3794)
Parttime job	2.78	2.74	2.51	-.35	-.54	-.82
	(496)	(881)	(771)	(496)	(881)	(770)
Not Now Working	3.32	2.66	2.63	-.03	-.67	-.83
	(341)	(482)	(315)	(340)	(482)	(2629)
Not in Labor	2.77	2.63	2.61	.17	.10	-.07
Force	(2184)	(2713)	(1833)	(2179)	(2706)	(1829)

Note: Sample sizes, used to estimate the means, are presented in parentheses.

FIG. 1 GSS TREND IN SOCIALIZING

