# SOCIAL TIES, ENVIRONMENTAL PERCEPTION, AND LOCAL ATTACHMENT

**GUSTAVO S. MESCH** *is a lecturer of sociology at the University of Haifa, Israel. His research interest is in community organization and collective action, criminal victimization, and cybercommunities.*

**ORIT MANOR** *holds an M.A. in sociology and teaches survey methodology and sociology at the Open University in Tel Aviv.*

ABSTRACT: This article investigates the determinants of place attachment. The *community of limited liability* argues that local attachment is the result of local relationships neighbors develop through time. The *liberated community* argues that only a minority of individual social ties are local. Therefore, people will not experience attachment. The authors argue that local attachment might result from a positive perception of the neighborhood environment. Using a randomly selected sample from one large city in Israel, the differential contributions of these models to the understanding of local attachment are investigated. The results show that attachment to place is expressed by a majority of urban residents. The higher the number of close friends and neighbors that are known and live nearby, the higher the attachment to the neighborhood. Perceptions of the local environment have a direct and independent effect on neighborhood attachment. Implications for the understanding of place attachment are discussed.

**Place attachment is a positive emotional bond** that develops between individuals or groups and their environment (Altman & Low, 1992). It is a state of psychological well-being experienced as a result of the accessibility

AUTHORS' NOTE: *We appreciate the comments of Barry Wellman and Ilan Talmud on an early version of this manuscript. We would like to thank the undergraduate students of the research seminar in urban sociology for their technical help in gathering the data and their continuous support in this project. Direct all correspondence to Gustavo S. Mesch, Department of Sociology, University of Haifa, Haifa 31905, Israel; e-mail: gustavo@soc.haifa.ac.il.*

ENVIRONMENT AND BEHAVIOR, Vol. 30 No. 4, July 1998 504-519
© 1998 Sage Publications, Inc.





of place or a state of distress set up by the remoteness of place (Giuliani, 1991). Place attachment refers to the emotional linkage of an individual to a particular environment (Hunter, 1978). In that sense, the study of place attachment is the study of emotional investment in place (Hummon, 1992).

Place attachment is important because it generates identification with place and fosters social and political involvement in the preservation of the physical and social features that characterize a neighborhood. In fact, a number of studies have shown that the higher the neighborhood attachment the more likely are individuals to develop a set of norms and to exert effective formal and informal social control that reduce crime (Sampson & Groves, 1989) and to fend off attempts to change the social and physical nature of the area (Mesch, 1996).

Two theoretical perspectives are central to the study of community attachment. The *community of limited liability* emphasizes that residents' involvement in their local neighborhood is voluntary and limited by the degree to which it meets their needs. If needs are not met, the individual may choose to leave the neighborhood. The critical variables that explain the development of neighborhood attachment are the individual's economic and social investments in the place such as home ownership, length of residence, individual's stage in the life cycle, and locally based social relationships (Berry & Kasarda, 1977; Sampson, 1988).

The second perspective, the *liberated community* model, argues that social change in modern societies has increased the geographical mobility of individuals and has therefore "liberated" the community from the constraints of place (Wellman, 1988; Wellman & Leighton, 1979). According to this perspective, neighbors, friends, and kin living in the same neighborhood make up only a minority of the social ties that bind us to society. Although local social ties are the most frequent, they provide a small amount of social support (minor tasks) and significant relations are dispersed all over the city (Wellman, Carrington, & Hall, 1990). The expectations of this model are that most of the social relationships are nonlocal and that people have no attachments to place.

A feature common to both perspectives is that both attribute place attachment to a single variable: the extent to which individual's social relationships are local or nonlocal. In this article, we argue that attachment to place might also develop through direct experiences with the local environment. Individuals evaluate neighborhood characteristics according to subjective standards. They judge the advantages and disadvantages provided by the physical and social environment of the neighborhood and the degree to which these qualities fit their expectations and needs (St. John, 1987). When a positive evaluation is reached, a positive bond and sentiment such as attachment

develops toward the place of living (St. John, Austin, & Baba, 1986). The implication of our argument is that place attachment might be a result of a positive evaluation of locale. That is, those who express a high level of satisfaction with the physical and social attributes of the local environment also might tend to express a higher level of attachment, regardless of the extent of their involvement in locally based social relationships.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the contribution of these perspectives to the understanding of attachment to the local community. Two research questions guide this study. First, to what extent are people attached to place, and second, to what extent do local social ties and environmental perceptions affect place attachment.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The community of limited liability perspective holds that individuals' orientations and attachments to place are limited by the fact that transportation and communication in modern urban society have reduced the dependence of individuals on neighborhood ties to meet needs (Hunter, 1978). This limited, variable orientation to place is seen in a sense to be an exchange relationship. An individual's social and emotional investment in the neighborhood depends on the degree to which it provides commensurate rewards. When the local neighborhood fails to meet an individual's needs, the individual will withdraw, if not physically, then socially and emotionally (Hunter, 1978; Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974).

### ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INVESTMENTS AND ATTACHMENT

The community of limited liability perspective assumes that economic and social investment of residents in the neighborhood facilitate the development of locally based social relationships. Local social ties are instrumental in the development of emotional feelings toward place. Home ownership is an economic investment. For some individuals, a home is the only substantial asset that they are able to accumulate in their lives and having this material interest, they will be more socially involved and attached to the neighborhood. Home owners are more likely than renters to know and interact with their neighbors and to express higher levels of place attachment (Logan & Spitze, 1994).

Families with young children have strong interests in the neighborhood. Young children are limited in their early stages of socialization to the immediate geographical environment. They play and socialize with the neighbors and usually attend school in the neighborhood. At a very early age, neighbors join the family as important agents of socialization. This centrality of place in the socialization process increases the interest of families with young children in the community and nurtures local attachment.

Age is also related to neighborhood attachment. As individuals grow old, their geographical mobility decreases and they become more interested in the neighborhood (Schwirian & Schwirian, 1993).

Length of residence has been noted as central to neighborhood attachment. The development of sentiments toward place is a temporal process. The longer an individual lives in the neighborhood, the more likely is he or she to develop friendships and social relations that have been found to have a positive effect on attachment (Beggs, Hurlbert, & Haines, 1996; Sampson, 1988).



### LOCALLY BASED SOCIAL TIES AND PLACE ATTACHMENT

In the community of limited liability perspective, the social ties of individuals to neighbors, friends, and kin living in the neighborhood are critical to the understanding of place attachment. The development of sentiments toward place may be primarily associated with the meanings and experiences of place, which often involve relationships with other people. Places are the context in which interpersonal relationships occur, and people are attached to those social relationships (Altman & Low, 1992). Supporting this argument, a number of studies have shown that local social involvement, in particular with friends and kin, is the most consistent and significant source of attachment to place (Guest & Lee, 1983; St. John et al., 1986).

Scholars have recognized the centrality of local ties, but these have mostly been considered a single entity. There is sufficient research evidence today to conclude that neighborhood residents relate differently with others according to the type of relationship. Different relationships provide different types of support. Friends are more likely than kin and neighbors to provide emotional aid (such as advice about family problems), small services (such as lending and giving household items), and companionship (such as discussing ideas and doing things together) (Wellman & Worthley, 1990).

The local social ties of some individuals are composed of close family members. Although only a minority of neighborhood residents live close to their parents, the latter nevertheless provide significant social support. Out of all the ties, parents usually provide large services (such as regular help with housework) and financial aid (small and large loans and gifts) (Wellman & Worthley, 1990). Recently, interest has grown in the structure of family ties in the neighborhood (Logan & Spitze, 1994). Family is named more frequently than friends and neighbors as providing help with various

household tasks such as shopping, laundry, and baby-sitting. In addition, having family as neighbors is the most important predictor of social interaction in the neighborhood. In sum, the role of parents in local networks is critical. Although the majority of people do not have parents or adult children living in their neighborhood, a substantial share of all social interaction with nonhousehold members is with them. In addition, the best predictor of neighborhood social interaction (phoning, visiting, and helping with routine tasks) is the number of family neighbors (parents and children living in the neighborhood) (Logan & Spitze, 1994).

Neighbors are another component of locally based social relationships. Studies conducted in different cities report that on average an individual knows about 14 neighbors well enough to say "hello" and talk and visits seven neighbors on a regular basis (Campbell & Lee, 1992). Neighbors' ties are not necessarily strong, but physical access makes it easier for people to deliver services even when their relationships are not firm. Neighbors exchange small services, such as baby-sitting and driving children to activities. Their continuous importance as a source of social support is related to their proximity, which leads to an increase in the frequency of contacts. Although they do not provide social support that cannot be provided by others, they are still the most frequent contact of the individual (Wellman, 1996).

The liberated community perspective conceptualizes community as a network of social support. According to this perspective, accessibility to transportation and other means of communication (such as phone) has liberated the community from place. Because space no longer constricts movement and communication, community without propinquity is possible. In modern and industrialized societies, individuals rely on a complex system of social ties composed of kin, friends, and neighbors. These social ties are important because they provide economic, social, and emotional support to the individual. However, only a minority of these ties are local. Few kin or friends live in the same neighborhood, but many live elsewhere in the metropolitan area. Moreover, most social ties in the neighborhood are weak, in that they are not intimate and provide little social support (Wellman, 1996; Wellman & Worthley, 1990). Regarding place attachment, the expectation of these models is that people are not attached to place.

### RESIDENTIAL SATISFACTION AND ATTACHMENT

If local ties are only a small part of the total social networks, and they are not strong enough to promote local attachment, then what affects place attachment of individuals? Individuals might be attached to neighborhoods



as long as they perceive them as good places to live. Note that attachment and satisfaction are different concepts. The first refers to sentiments that develop toward place, whereas the second refers to the evaluation of features of the physical and social environment. Guest and Lee (1983) observed that neighborhood satisfaction is based on the perception of place as a relatively nice place to live in terms of people, housing, and noise. On the other hand, attachment is based on a more affectual level of attraction to place or remorse to move out. It is possible to be satisfied with where one lives and to be not particularly attached to place. However, it appears that neighborhood satisfaction predisposes one to place attachment. Individuals with a positive evaluation of the neighborhood physical and social environment are more likely to develop a commitment to maintain future residence in the neighborhood and a positive affective bond to place that is reflected in higher levels of attachment (Feldman, 1990).

Studies have shown that there is an imperfect match between objective characteristics of neighborhoods and residents' perceptions of neighborhood quality of life. Individuals' evaluation is subjective because they belong to social groups that differ in their culture, experiences, and expectations. People judge objective characteristics according to what they perceive they deserve, expect, or may reasonably aspire to (St. John, 1987; St. John & Bates, 1990; St. John & Cosby, 1995). For example, the same built environment is evaluated differently according to race, age, and stage in the life cycle. Negative subjective perception of the environment is positively related to individuals' thoughts of moving out of the neighborhood and residential mobility behavior (Lee, Oropesa, & Kanan, 1994).

Many studies have examined the components of residential satisfaction. The conclusion that can be drawn from these studies is that residential satisfaction is a multidimensional concept. It includes a vast array of perceived quality attributes including physical, social, economic, political, and cultural characteristics. In this study, we have selected several that have been found in past studies to be related to attachment to place. Satisfaction with the types of people in the neighborhood (social environment) and with the conditions of the physical dimensions of the environment (noise levels and open space) were the specific attributes most strongly related to overall satisfaction with the local neighborhood (Fried, 1982; Herting & Guest, 1983). A positive perception of the open space, built environment, and people living in the neighborhood is a central component in the evaluation of the neighborhood and were found to be related to feelings of neighborhood attachment (St. John et al., 1986; Ward, La Gory, & Sherman, 1986).

## HYPOTHESES

The foregoing discussion implies that from each perspective a different set of expectations can be derived. The community of limited liability perspective expects the existence of local attachment. Community attachment is affected by the degree of economic and social investments in the neighborhood. Therefore, community attachment is likely to be positively affected by home ownership, length of residence, age, family status, the number of young children in the household, and the size of locally based social ties.

In addition, we posit that attachment to place is related to the subjective evaluation of the neighborhood as a good place to live. The higher people evaluate characteristics of the physical and social environment of the neighborhood, the higher the likelihood of attachment to place.

The liberated community perspective, which conceptualizes community as social support, implies that locally based social relationships, although they exist, are a minority of the individual's total ties. They are unimportant in that they only provide help with minor services. Regarding community attachment, because social relationships are dispersed all over the city, people are not attached to place. In the following analysis, these hypotheses are tested.

## DATA AND METHOD

Data for this study were collected in a telephone survey of residents of the Haifa metropolitan area. Haifa is the third largest city in Israel with a population of 250,000. The Haifa metropolitan area was chosen because its sociodemographic composition resembles that of the country as a whole.

A random systematic sample of phone numbers was selected from the pages of the Haifa phone directory. Of the 600 phone numbers originally sampled, 35 were commercial establishments and 40 had been disconnected. Of the 525 households contacted, 29 refused to participate in the study, making a response rate of 95 percent.

University students conducted interviews by phone. They had received extensive training in administering the instrument and were monitored daily by the project staff. The full questionnaire contained 67 questions and took an average of 35 minutes to complete.

The survey included questions on respondents' sociodemographic characteristics such as age, education, marital status, and number of young children living in the household. Questions on neighborhood satisfaction and neighborhood attachment were also included. In addition, residents were asked about fear of crime, victimization, and crime level.



The main dependent variable of this study is neighborhood attachment. Following the conceptualization of Giuliani (1991), which described place attachment as a state of psychological well-being associated with the presence of place or a state of distress set up by the absence of place, three survey items were used to tap the concept of neighborhood attachment. First, urban residents were asked to what extent they were proud of living in their neighborhoods. Second, respondents were asked if they would be sorry to move out of their neighborhood. Finally, respondents were asked if they had plans to move out of the neighborhood in the next year. A "yes" answer was coded 1 and a "no" answer was coded 0. Because all the dependent variables in this study were measured as dichotomous, a logistic regression was used in the multivariate analysis.

Economic and social investments in locale were measured using a number of variables. The home ownership measure asked the respondent if he or she owned the apartment. Individuals were asked how many years they had resided in the neighborhood so as to measure length of residence. Stage in the life cycle was measured using three variables: respondent's age, family status, and number of young children that currently reside with the respondent. Previous studies have shown that a number of variables have an effect on local ties and neighborhood attachment. To evaluate the net effect of the contextual and social ties variables on local attachment, we controlled for education and gender.

Following previous research, three concepts were used to measure the degree of satisfaction with the neighborhood. The first refers to the quality of neighborhood environment and is a combined measure of the responses to two items: satisfaction with noise level and air pollution level in the neighborhood. The internal reliability of the scale was Cronbach's alpha .57. The second measure referred to satisfaction with the open space that the neighborhood provides. The concept is a combined measure of the responses to three items: satisfaction with parks, playgrounds, and parking space. The degree of internal reliability was Cronbach's alpha .69. The third measure was a single item that measures the degree of satisfaction with the social environment of the neighborhood. Residents were asked if they felt that too many delinquents lived in the neighborhood. This item was measured as dichotomous: yes coded 1 and no coded 0.

Several variables were used to measure the different types of close local social ties. Respondents were asked how many neighbors (who were not close

friends or parents) they could say they knew by their first name. In addition, respondents were asked how many neighbors they invited to family events. Friendship ties were measured by a survey item asking the respondent to say how many close friends lived in the neighborhood. Kin ties were measured by an item that asked the respondent if his or her parents lived in the same neighborhood.

## FINDINGS

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the sample. In terms of sociodemographic composition, average age of the sample respondents was 43 years and 60% were females. Average education was almost 13 years, 67% were married, and 50% had young children at home. Regarding measures of investment in locale, on average, respondents had resided almost 15 years in their current neighborhood and 80% were homeowners.

Next, we explored the extent to which residents expressed feelings of attachment toward the neighborhood through the distribution of the responses to three items. As shown in Table 2, a large percentage of the respondents (almost 81.4%) indicated that they were proud to live in their current neighborhood. Only 23% indicated that they planned to move out and find an apartment in another neighborhood during the next year. As to their feelings about moving, 67.7% indicated that they would feel sorry if they had to move out. The results clearly represent support for the community of limited liability argument that neighborhood sentiments persist in mass society (Hunter, 1978).

To what extent did kin and friendship relations still persist in the neighborhood? To answer this question, we show the average number of neighbors known by first name who were not friends, the number of close friends living in the neighborhood, and the proportion of residents whose parents lived in the neighborhood.

A vast majority of the sample knew their neighbors. As shown in Table 2, 57% knew from one to eight neighbors and 29% knew more than eight neighbors by their first name. A small minority of the respondents, 14%, reported that they did not know any of their neighbors by their first names.

Concerning social involvement with their neighbors, 20% of the respondents reported that they went out with them. About 50% reported that their relationship with their neighbors was close enough to invite them to family events such as weddings and bar mitzvahs. Only 19% of our respondents lived in the same neighborhood as their parents.



**TABLE 1**
**Descriptive Statistics of the Sample**

| | M | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 43.13 | 16.91 |
| Education | 12.85 | 4.33 |
| Gender (female) | 60.0 | |
| Married | 67.0 | |
| Length of residence | 14.85 | 13.75 |
| Satisfaction with | | |
| Environment | 4.20 | 1.52 |
| Open space | 3.90 | 1.75 |
| Number of friends living in the neighborhood | 2.94 | 2.97 |
| Number of neighbors invited to family events | 1.77 | 2.49 |
| Number of neighbors known by first names | 7.82 | 9.84 |

**TABLE 2**
**Sample Distribution of Local Attachment and Local Social Ties**

| | |
|---|---|
| Local attachment: | |
| Proud to live in the neighborhood | 81.4% |
| Sorry to move out | 67.7% |
| Have plans to move out during the next year | 23.0% |
| Locally based social ties: | |
| Number of neighbors known | |
| None | 14.0% |
| 1-8 | 57.0% |
| More than 8 neighbors known | 29.0% |
| Percentage that invite neighbors to family events | 50.0% |
| Parents live in the neighborhood | 19.0% |
| Close friends that live in the neighborhood | |
| None | 31.0% |
| 1-3 | 35.4% |
| 4 or more | 34.6% |

As to close friends, almost 31% of the respondents replied that they had none living in the neighborhood. Almost 35% reported having one to three close friends living nearby, and a third of the respondents reported that more than four close friends lived in the neighborhood.

To understand the variables related to community attachment, a multivariate analysis was conducted. In each model, variables measuring economic and social investment in the neighborhood were first introduced. Second,

variables measuring locally based social relationships were introduced, and third, variables measuring subjective evaluation of the neighborhood.

An important dimension of attachment is sentiments toward the neighborhood. In an urban society, individuals develop a cognitive map of desirable and undesirable places. Taking pride in the neighborhood contributes to its image and the degree of involvement of individuals.

Table 3 presents the results for the degree of pride that respondents took in living in their current neighborhood. Economic investments seem to have been instrumental in the development of pride. Home owners and the more educated took more pride in the neighborhood. Neighborhoods are homogeneous areas, and more educated people tended to live in high socioeconomic areas that enjoy high prestige and low environmental problems. Locally based social relations and neighborhood environment affected taking a pride in the neighborhood. The larger the number of friends living in the neighborhoods and the closer the relationship with neighbors, the greater the pride residents took in their neighborhood. The more satisfied individuals were with the neighborhood physical and social characteristics, the more likely was attachment to place.

Finally, we looked at the extent of feeling sorry to move out of the neighborhood. As shown in Table 4, the results are similar. The highly educated and females were likely to feel sorry to move out. In addition, the greater the number of friendships and close neighboring ties and the greater the satisfaction with the physical and social environment, the more likely the resident was to feel sorry about moving away. We also investigated the factors related to thoughts of moving out of the neighborhood in the next year (analysis not shown). The results are almost identical to the former models.

## DISCUSSION

The study of local attachment has become a central topic of interest in the social sciences. The cognitive and emotional links that individuals have for their residential environment has been shown to affect the extent of involvement in keeping up the neighborhood, individuals' willingness to organize in collective action, and the exercise of social control to decrease signs of disorder and incivilities perceived as indicators of crime.

Two central perspectives of local attachment have been presented in the literature. The community of limited liability expectation is that local attachments persist and they are the result of economic and social investments in locale. Socioeconomic status, as measured by education, has a positive effect



**TABLE 3**
**Logistic Regression Predicting Taking Pride in the Neighborhood**

| *Variable* | *1* | *2* | *3* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 0.0088 | 0.010 | 0.012 |
| | (1.005) | (1.005) | (0.999) |
| Education | 0.036* | 0.036* | 0.042* |
| | (1.070) | (1.067) | (1.099) |
| Children under 18 | 0.110 | 0.120 | 0.130 |
| | (0.944) | (0.936) | (0.917) |
| Length of residence | 0.100 | 0.011 | 0.013 |
| | (0.998) | (0.991) | (0.997) |
| Gender (1 = female) | 0.240 | 0.250 | 0.280 |
| | (1.201) | (1.243) | (1.432) |
| Married | 0.280 | 0.290 | 0.330 |
| | (1.08) | (1.083) | (0.959) |
| Owner of apartment | 0.290* | 0.300* | 0.360 |
| | (0.480) | (0.603) | (0.750) |
| Number of friends living in neighborhood | | 0.046 | 0.052* |
| | | (1.068) | (1.092) |
| Parents living in neighborhood | | 0.088 | 0.100 |
| | | (1.072) | (1.085) |
| Number of neighbors invited to family events | | 0.071** | 0.074** |
| | | (1.249) | (1.277) |
| Number of neighbors known by first name | | 0.014 | 0.018 |
| | | (1.003) | (1.016) |
| Satisfaction with environment | | | 0.087** |
| | | | (1.268) |
| Satisfaction with open space | | | 0.078* |
| | | | (1.221) |
| Criminal living in neighborhood | | | –0.34*** |
| | | | (0.307) |
| –2 log-likelihood | 443.451 | 424.141 | 345.458 |
| Chi-square | 15.106* | 27.804** | 57.474*** |

*$p < .1$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .0001$.

on local attachments. The effect of home ownership is indirect. Homeowners are likely to have more locally based relationships, and these increase their sentiments toward the community.

Social investments affect sentiments toward the neighborhood. Non-kin close social ties that are locally based have a positive effect on the pride one takes in the neighborhood and on the likelihood that one will feel sorry to move out. The higher the number of close friends living in the area and the higher the number of neighbors close enough to be invited to family events,

**TABLE 4**
**Logistic Regression Predicting**
**Feeling Sorry to Move Out of the Neighborhood**

| *Variable* | *1* | *2* | *3* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 0.007 | 0.0082* | 0.009 |
| | (1.011) | (1.015) | (1.014) |
| Education | 0.031** | 0.031* | 0.032* |
| | (1.087) | (1.080) | (1.059) |
| Children under 18 | 0.096 | 0.100 | 0.110 |
| | (1.051) | (1.006) | (0.991) |
| Length of residence | 0.0088* | 0.010 | 0.010 |
| | (1.017) | (1.007) | (0.999) |
| Gender (1 = female) | 0.200* | 0.210* | 0.230** |
| | (1.619) | (1.708) | (1.860) |
| Married | 0.240 | 0.250 | 0.270 |
| | (1.024) | (0.958) | (1.122) |
| Owner of apartment | 0.260* | 0.270 | 0.300 |
| | (0.611) | (0.697) | (0.668) |
| Number of friends living in neighborhood | | 0.038* | 0.041** |
| | | (1.099) | (1.122) |
| Parents living in neighborhood | | 0.072 | 0.078 |
| | | (0.984) | (1.00) |
| Number of neighbors invited to family events | | 0.05* | 0.052** |
| | | (1.124) | (1.160) |
| Number of neighbors known by first name | | 0.013 | 0.15 |
| | | (1.012) | (1.019) |
| Satisfaction with environment | | | 0.073** |
| | | | (1.251) |
| Satisfaction with open space | | | 0.64** |
| | | | (1.195) |
| Criminals living in neighborhood | | | −0.30* |
| | | | (0.494) |
| −2 log-likelihood | 581.308 | 561.581 | 490.325 |
| Chi-square | 30.911*** | 46.727*** | 72.358*** |

*$p < .1$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .0001$.

the more likely is the individual to feel attached to the community. Having parents living in the neighborhood does not affect local attachment. This seems to be at odds with past studies that have shown that of all the social ties, parents are likely to provide the highest level of help.

We interpret this finding as a result of the nature of kin and non-kin relationships in modern societies. Relationships with neighbors and friends are likely to be in jeopardy as a result of moving out. Distance increases the likelihood that friendship and neighbor relationships will be hard to maintain because they are based on propinquity and reciprocity. Kin relationships are likely to be less dependent on distance, so moving out does not imply that social support is likely to disappear. Support for this argument is provided by a recent longitudinal study of social ties that shows that immediate kin are significantly more likely than other ties (friends and neighbors) to remain stable through time (Wellman, Yuk-lin Wong, Tindall, & Nazer, 1997). Neighbors form only a small proportion of intimate ties, but relations with them tend to be friendly and nonintimate. For those who moved out of the neighborhood, most of their intimate neighbor ties disappeared (Wellman et al., 1997).



An interesting question is how having parents living in the neighborhood affects locally based relationships. In this study, we found that having parents in the neighborhood was not significantly related to any of the indicators of locally based social relationships. Thus, it appears that living with parents in the same neighborhood is not detrimental to the scope of social ties individuals maintain with neighbors and friends living nearby. However, our data did not allow us to explore the extent to which family living in the neighborhood affected the frequency and intensity of the relationship with friends and neighbors. These questions should be addressed in future studies.

The liberated community approach argues that the majority of the social ties of an individual are, in a modern industrialized society, no longer locally based. Therefore, people are not attached to place. In this study, we did not find support for this approach. The majority of our sample knew their neighbors by their first names, and half of the respondents were close enough to their neighbors to invite them to family events. Moreover, more than two thirds of the respondents indicated that they had close friends living in the immediate area. As to place attachment, our findings show that most of the residents were attached to place and that having locally based social ties, such as friends and neighbors close enough to be invited to family events, significantly affected place attachment.

Place attachment might develop through direct experiences with the neighborhood social and physical environment. Individuals evaluate the neighborhood characteristics, they judge the advantages and disadvantages of place, and a positive evaluation fosters positive emotional bonds such as place attachment. Satisfaction with the open space, the noise level, and people who live nearby is directly related to the likelihood of feeling proud of the neighborhood and feeling sorry to move out. The more place meets the expectations of the residents as a good and comfortable locale to live, the more positive sentiments toward place seem to develop.

An important finding of this study is that both locally based social relationships and satisfaction with the environment are related to the devel-

opment of place attachment. Future studies need to address the differential contribution of these two concepts. In other words, would individuals with and without social ties but equivalent satisfaction with the local area express the same degree of attachment? Or would people feel equally attached if they had equivalent social ties but expressed dissatisfaction with the neighborhood?

The positive effect of education on taking pride in the neighborhood and feeling sorry to move out indicates that socioeconomic differences probably exist in place attachment. Previous studies have shown socioeconomic differences in neighboring patterns. Higher-income individuals are likely to know more neighbors but to be in contact with few. Working-class individuals are likely to have intense relations but with few neighbors (Logan & Spitze, 1994). Higher-income individuals are likely to reside in neighborhoods that provide a better quality of the environment. We lack more refined indicators of socioeconomic status such as income and occupational prestige to further investigate the extent to which differences in social involvement and environmental quality affect attachment to place, and this relationship requires greater consideration in future research.

In sum, the results of this study expand previous work by showing that local attachments are still important and are not only the result of locally based social relationships. In particular, at a time of high geographical mobility, the subjective evaluation of the features of the physical and social environment, such as the presence of open space (parks and playgrounds), the lack of air pollution and noise, and the kind of people who reside in the immediate area, are characteristics that bind people to place.

## REFERENCES


Altman, I., & Low, S. (Eds.). (1992). *Place attachment*. New York: Plenum.

Beggs, J. J., Hurlbert, J. S., & Haines, V. A. (1996). Community attachment in a rural setting: A refinement and empirical test of the systemic model. *Rural Sociology, 61*, 407-426.

Berry, B., & Kasarda, J. (1977). *Contemporary urban ecology*. New York: Macmillan.

Campbell, K. E., & Lee, B. A. (1992). Sources of personal neighbor networks: Social integration, need, or time? *Social Forces, 70*, 1077-1100.

Feldman, R. (1990). Settlement-identity, psychological bonds with home places in a mobile society. *Environment and Behavior, 22*(2), 183-229.

Fried, M. (1982). Residential attachment: Sources of residential and community satisfaction. *Journal of Social Issues, 38*, 107-119.

Giuliani, M. V. (1991). Towards an analysis of mental representations of attachment to the home. *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research, 8*(2), 133-146.





Guest, A. M., & Lee, B. A. (1983). Sentiment and evaluation as ecological variables. *Sociological Perspectives, 26*, 159-184.

Herting, J. R., & Guest, A. M. (1983). Sentiment and evaluation as ecological variables. *Sociological Perspectives, 26*, 159-184.

Hummon, D. M. (1992). Community attachment: Local sentiment and the sense of place. In I. Altman & S. Low (Eds.), *Place attachment*. New York: Plenum.

Hunter, A. (1978). Persistence of local sentiments in mass society. In D. Street (Ed.), *Handbook of contemporary urban life* (pp. 133-162). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kasarda, J., & Janowitz, M. (1974). Community attachment in mass society. *American Sociological Review, 39*, 328-339.

Lee, B. A., Oropesa, R. S., & Kanan, J. W. (1994). Neighborhood context and residential mobility. *Demography, 1*, 249-269.

Logan, J. R., & Spitze, G. D. (1994). Family neighbors. *American Journal of Sociology, 100*, 453-476.

Mesch, G. S. (1996). The effect of environmental concerns and governmental incentives on organized action in local areas. *Urban Affairs Review, 1*, 346-366.

Sampson, R. J. (1988). Local friendship ties and community attachment in mass society: A multilevel systemic model. *American Sociological Review, 53*, 66-79.

Sampson, R. J., & Groves, B. W. (1989). Community structure and crime: Testing social disorganization theory. *American Journal of Sociology, 94*, 74-802.

Schwirian, K. P., & Schwirian, P. M. (1993). Neighboring, residential satisfaction, and psychological well-being in urban elders. *Journal of Community Psychology, 21*, 285-299.

St. John, C. (1987). Racial differences in neighborhood evaluation. *Urban Affairs Quarterly, 22*, 377-398.

St. John C., Austin, M. D., & Baba, Y. (1986). The question of community attachment revisited. *Sociological Spectrum, 6*, 411-431.

St. John, C., & Bates, N. A. (1990). Racial composition and neighborhood evaluation. *Social Science Research, 19*, 47-61.

St. John C., & Cosby, V. (1995). Life cycle differences in neighborhood satisfaction. *Sociological Spectrum, 15*, 147-160.

Ward, R. A., La Gory, M., & Sherman, S. (1986). Fear of crime among the elderly as person/environment interaction. *Sociological Quarterly, 27*, 327-241.

Wellman, B. (1988). The community question re-evaluated. In M. P. Smith (Ed.), *Power, community and the city* (pp. 81-107). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

Wellman, B. (1996). Are personal communities local? A dumptarian reconsideration. *Social Networks, 18*, 347-354.

Wellman, B., Carrington, P. J., & Hall, A. (1990). Networks as personal communities. In B. Wellman & B. Berkowitz (Eds.), *Social structures: A network approach* (pp. 130- 184). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Wellman, B., & Leighton, B. (1979). Networks, neighborhoods and communities. *Urban Affairs Quarterly, 14*, 363-390.

Wellman, B., & Worthley, S. (1990). Different strokes from different folks: Community ties and social support. *American Journal of Sociology, 96*, 558-588.

Wellman, B., Yuk-lin Wong, R., Tindall, D., & Nazer, N. (1997). A decade of network change: Turnover, persistence and stability in personal communities. *Social Networks, 19*, 27-50.