Neighborhood Field Study

Purpose

The two primary purposes of this project are (1) to give students experience with hands-on field work, exploring Portland-area neighborhoods to learn about their history; social, economic, and demographic makeup; sense of community; and cultural "personality"; and (2) to expose students to a variety of place-based community settings and experiences with which they may have had little familiarity prior to taking this class.

A secondary purpose of this exercise is for students to learn, practice, and demonstrate presentation skills, using one or more of a variety of procedures (oral presentation, website, poster, etc.).

Finally, students may choose to work on this project in teams, which provides the opportunity to learn, refine, and practice teamwork skills.

Background

Unlike many cities, Portland has an Office of Neighborhood Involvement at http://www.portlandonline.com/index.cfm?c=25967, which is actually part of our city government, constituting one of the city bureaus and overseen by a city commissioner.

Portland is divided into **seven Neighborhood Coalitions** (go to http://www.marthabianco.com/Courses/neighborhood_coalitions.pdffor a printable color map), which make up the "top level" of our neighborhood system. You can obtain contact information about the coalitions, including web addresses, at http://www.portlandonline.com/oni/index.cfm?c=28390.

The seven coalitions are (if you live within Portland, try to find the coalition that includes your neighborhood):

1. Central Northeast Neighbors (CNN)
2. Neighbors West/Northwest (W/NW)
3. East Portland Neighborhood Office (EPNO)
4. North Portland Neighborhood Services (NPNS)
5. Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Program (SEUL)
6. Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. (SWNI)
7. Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods (NECN)

At the level below the coalitions are the **individual neighborhood associations** themselves. There are **90-95 associations** (depending on whether you include five that are "recognized" but not affiliated with any Coalition). You can look at the large map of street and neighborhood detail at http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=60599 to see exactly what your neighborhood association is. If you live outside of Portland proper, you will not be part of a Portland neighborhood association. If you visit this map, please note that it takes a long time to load and will probably appear unreadably small on your screen. You will need to use the **zoom-in tool**, located on the toolbar in Adobe, to click on the general area where you live. Keep clicking until you see your street and neighborhood clearly.

Is Portland Diverse?

"Diversity" means variation, difference, heterogeneity. There are many variables that social scientists examine when studying diversity. These include race, ethnicity, gender, religion, education, income, sexual orientation, occupation, marital status and number of children, type of housing, main method of transportation – to name just a few.

The primary method the government uses to find out about the characteristics of the U.S. population is the Census, but the Census does not retrieve a very wide range of information. For example, it does not ask about religious affiliation or practices.

Many people – whether college students or not – have very little idea of the "world around them" – even within their own city. Although Portland is not a very diverse city in terms of many sociodemographic factors, such as race and ethnicity, there are neighborhoods in Portland that are above the national average in certain categories.

For example, according to the 2000 Census, 13 percent of Portlanders were born outside of the U.S., compared with the national average of 11 percent. And although people identifying themselves as black or African-American constitute 12 percent of the national population and only 7 percent in Portland, there are neighborhoods in Portland **where up to 50 percent of the population is of African descent**. Similarly, although Hispanics and Latinos constitute 13 percent of the national population, there are neighborhoods in Portland **where up to 30 percent of the population reports being of Latino or Hispanic descent**.

Neighborhood-level data are not available on the subject of same-sex households, but 2000 Census data reveals that approximately 6 percent of all American households consist of same-sex unmarried couples. In Portland, this number is approximately 3.5 percent. Although that is below the national average, it is possible that there are specific neighborhoods in which the percentage of same-sex unmarried couples exceeds the national average.

Diversity is all around us; we simply have to look – with an open mind and informed perspective.

The Neighborhood Clusters We Will Study

I have selected clusters of neighborhoods that are distinguishable in one way or another. For example, the Northwest and Pearl Districts have much higher than average ratios of men to women; higher than average incomes; and small households, with one or zero children. Academic literature and popular resources suggest that both neighborhoods are friendly to "DINKs" – **D**ual **I**ncome **N**o **K**ids – and that a larger than average percentage of these households consist of same-sex male couples.

Or, as another example, the Lents and Powellhurst-Gilbert neighborhoods have a much larger than average percentage of families who speak a language other than English at home.

These are the neighborhood clusters we will study (note that the last cluster is actually not in Portland):

1. Lents / Powellhurst-Gilbert
2. Glenfair / Hazelwood
3. South Tabor / Foster-Powell / Creston-Kenilworth
4. Roseway / Cully
5. Eliot / Woodlawn / Vernon
6. Piedmont / Humboldt / Boise
7. Cathedral Park / Community Association of Portsmouth / Kenton / Arbor Lodge
8. Far Southwest / Crestwood /Ashcreek
9. Hosford Abernathy / Buckman
10. Sunnyside /Richmond
11. Northwest District /Pearl District
12. Bridlemile / Sylvan Highlands / Southwest Hills
13. Fairview Village (Gresham) / Orenco Station (Hillsboro)

Choosing Your Neighborhood Cluster

You should begin this project by finding out some very basic background information about some of the clusters above. Note that while most of the neighborhoods in a cluster are physically near to one another, they are not necessarily all part of the same Neighborhood Coalition. Also, the last two, while not Portland neighborhoods, might be interesting to study as examples of planned communities; they are, however, on opposite sides of the Portland Metropolitan area.

Suggestions for learning about the clusters:
1. **Obtain a "searchable address" for the neighborhood** by looking in the Neighborhood Directory, at http://www.portlandonline.com/oni/index.cfm?&a=65925. These begin on p. 11 of the directory. For each neighborhood, the Directory lists officers (e.g., chair, secretary, etc., and their contact info). Use the address for the chairperson. For example, for the Alameda Neighborhood Association, the chair's address is 2867 NE Hamblet St.

2. **Get preliminary data** from PortlandMaps, at http://www.portlandmaps.com/. To search for neighborhood Census data, you must enter an address, so enter in the address you obtained for the chair or other neighborhood officer. What will come up on the first screen will be some basic information about the property at that address. **Ignore that.** Instead, **click on the "Census" tab in the upper right**. This will reveal some preliminary Census information about the neighborhood, along with some graphs and maps. Keep in mind that these data are not very useful until you compare them with citywide or national data. Otherwise, they are just stand-alone numbers.

3. **Get 2000 Census data to learn even more** about the neighborhood by going directly to the U.S. Census, at http://factfinder.census.gov. Type **Portland** and choose **Oregon**; then click **GO**.

    ➢ Notice that in addition to whole numbers of people in certain categories, the Census provides percents and **also compares the percent in this city with the U.S. average**.

    ➢ Also, notice that for many variables, there are **maps**. For example, go down to Median age (years) and click on map (to the right). A map of Portland will come up. You can see areas color coded according to the median age. For example, you can see that there is a large dark-green area in the far northwest of Portland, which corresponds with the highest median age range.

    ➢ Play around with the tools at this site. With the tool in the upper right-hand corner, you can zoom down to 12 miles across, 4 miles across, etc. You'll be able to see actual street names. With the tool in the upper left, you'll be able to click on the *i* to get information about the specific are you're looking at. To do this,

        1. first click, the *i* and then
        2. to avoid pop-up problems, press your control key, and keeping it pressed,
        3. click on the neighborhood or area of interest (hold the control key down until all the information appears).

4. **Compare the Census data** from Step 3. You can look at maps of Portland to see how sociodemographic data are arrayed and, comparing the Census maps from Step 3 with the Portland neighborhood map at http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=60599, you can find information about the neighborhood you're looking at (e.g., median age in Alameda is 34).

5. **Look for patterns.** The neighborhood clusters are made up of neighborhoods that have some key sociodemographic or cultural features in common. You might notice, for instance, that the neighborhoods you're looking at in one of the clusters has a relatively high percentage of black or Hispanic residents.**Take notes that will help you choose a cluster**. Remember, one of the goals of this exercise is to learn about the variety of communities in the Portland area, so look for clusters that contain sociodemographic variables that are of interest to you.

6. **You can also get a street-level map** of each neighborhood at http://www.portlandonline.com/oni/index.cfm?c=35281.

What's Next?

You get to vote! Within the next week, please be on the lookout for a **Yahoo poll** asking you to vote for the Neighborhood Cluster you want to study. You may be teamed up with other students in the class and will have the opportunity to decide whether you want to conduct any aspect of your study together as a team or individually. Voting in this poll is required, but as a special incentive, everyone who votes by the deadline specified will receive 5 points extra credit!

Once neighborhood cluster assignments have been made, you will receive the next set of instructions to guide you in carrying out the actual field study and preparing your presentation.