

Class Project Final Notes and Preliminary Analysis

Included in the following are summary analyses and observations related to the main class themes and qualitative methods applied as part of the course project. Complete typed notes from the interviews are included as Appendix A.

Introduction

How does community form across previously constructed boundaries – physical and symbolic? As two civic leaders work to create a new North Central Special Business District, the streets within the neighborhood are reflective, anecdotally and statistically, of the opportunities and challenges facing urban areas on the cusp of rapid redevelopment across the United States.

Open observation and interviews were conducted by students in a graduate-course at Saint Louis University in Qualitative Research Methods, led by Professor Daniel Monti. The class designed a 22-question survey that was disseminated at a local National Night Out event where respondents indicated their willingness to be contacted to discuss pertinent topics further. Additionally, to maximize the representativeness of the sample (younger and older, male and female, African American and Caucasian, business owners and residents, homeowners and renters), additional outreach was conducted to increase the interviewee pool.

Two dominant themes were utilized as a framing for the project: “civic talk” and social capital. Hoekstra and Gerteis (2019) distinguish between how academics present diversity conceptually with how diversity and community belonging are realized “on the ground” and posit that there is a tension between idealized diversity and practiced ambivalence (p. 195). In lieu of overt racist language, “civic talk” is substituted by community gatekeepers and formal institutions such as neighborhood associations to maintain the status quo.

Lukasieicz et al. (2019) find from their analysis that structural barriers such as neighborhood characteristics and a lack of safety and resources limit the development of meaningful social capital in high-poverty neighborhoods rather than social interaction. Bonding, bridging and linking social capital are distinguished by bonding existing between individuals with the closest ties and who are alike, bridging bringing together people who are less similar and connected to resources, and linking which is focused less on strong individual connections and more on interaction with institutions and structures that may advance socioeconomic status (p 281 – 282).

Interview results

Three interviews were conducted in-person and by phone between October 31 and November 11, 2019. Interviewee #1 is an older African American woman, longtime resident, and homeowner in the neighborhood. Interviewee #2 is a middle-aged white male who owns a business in the neighborhood and recently purchased a home nearby where he lives with his wife (interviewee #3) and school-aged children. Notably, interviewee #2 spent significant time in the neighborhood growing up as his father owned and operated a printing business. Interviewee #3 is a middle-aged white woman who works and lives in the neighborhood with her husband (Interviewee #2 and school age children).

Interviewee #1 described significant formal and informal involvement in the community. Notably, from her perspective the neighborhood has not changed much over the 30 years she has lived there except that there used to be much more crime and disturbances and now more Caucasians are moving in. She is the secretary of her block unit and also worked in the neighborhood. People move to the neighborhood, she believes, because of its location and proximity to stores.

Interviewee #2 saw little change between 35 and 8 years ago but since has seen some marked improvement in the neighborhood despite constant crime which he gave three recent (previous two months) examples of including a home break-in, theft of \$35,000 worth of HVAC equipment, and a car break-in. As a business owner, he criticized the institutions that support the area just south and shut out his establishment from participating or being included. Individuals asking for money (panhandling) is viewed as a significant challenge in attracting non-residents to the area. Interviewee #2 addressed race directly and consistently throughout the interview including acknowledgement of his privilege and implicit biases. He also identified a separation between white newcomers and long-time black residents.

Interviewee #3 identified petty crime as an ongoing issue both from a business and residential perspective but compared the area favorably to where their family previously lived in Dutchtown for better overall conditions and less gang, drug, and prostitution activity. She has been significantly involved in schools and neighborhood associations previously but hasn't been able to make time yet since moving to the area. She expressed feeling burnout from previous efforts to get involved not resulting in meaningful change and improvements.

Results -- *It doesn't matter what happens, it matters what doesn't.*

Overall, the three interviewees highlighted blight and crime as significant persistent issues facing the neighborhood. Additionally, the accountability of a subset of the community, owners to other owners whether long-time or newer arrivals to the neighborhood, was much more apparent than more sweeping accountability between long-time residents and newcomers. Bonding social capital seemed to be the most present and white interviewees had a mix of direct and civic talk around diversity, segregation, and racism. Interviewee responses aligned with findings and criteria for neigh-

borhood belonging defined by Hoestra & Gerteis: 1) law abiding 2) contribute to neighborhood aesthetics 3) demonstrated commitment to shared values.

Civic Talk

As described by Hoekstra and Gerteis, civic talk would allow established, long-time residents to be exclusionary while claiming commitments to and investment in diversity as a value of the neighborhood. Civic talk typically focuses on behaviors rather than demographic or categorical differences. Notably:

- the long-time resident interviewed did not offer any shrouded commentary that would suggest an interest in being exclusionary to neighborhood newcomers.
- newcomers were very put off by panhandling and crime, although it was not apparent whether or not the individuals they view as troublesome lived in the area or targeted it.
- African American male panhandlers were referred to as “petty criminals” by one interviewee, who self-corrected use of the phrases “ghetto” and “Maplehood” and criticized white people living outside the city for their civic talk calling minimum wage positions predominantly held by African Americans “summer jobs” and undeserving of livable wages.
- Interviewee #2 acknowledged his white privilege that allows him to be successful in his business where an African American male would face significant discrimination and bias. He also wonders on occasion whether black people in the community look at him and think he is just like the white people who live “out in the county” and will not live nor visit the area.
- Interviewee #3 stated “there are good people in this neighborhood, *but* they can’t afford to fix their house or tend to their yards.” She talked about the nicer area just to the south as having fewer low income “stragglers” and that people driving through will “literally turn around when they see the crumble” north of the Delmar Divide, an area where “there are plenty of *good* people living over there.” Additionally, she and fellow owners requested a property owner who rents to start requiring credit checks because they would just “rent to anybody.”

Hoekstra and Gerteis also identified themes of discomfort, the requisite intentionality that is required for diversity and inclusion to thrive. This discomfort was addressed directly by white interviewees #2 and #3 as both expressed a commitment and valuing of diversity that requires them to challenge their own implicit biases and engage in the community.

How residents and business owners interacted with the formal neighborhood association(s) also indicated some interesting overlaps and dissimilarities with what Hoekstra and Gerteis observed. Connected members indicated they went out of their way to meet everyone and develop community participation. One business owner, however, expressed dismay that while technically within what he understood to be the northern boundary of the Central West End Business Improvement District, he and neighboring establishments were refused access to and promotion by the group.

Bonding, Bridging, and Linking Capital

Bonding, bridging, and linking social capital were identified by Lukasiewicz et al. (2019) as the three categories of capital of which individuals need access in order to increase economic mobility or even just navigate the daily challenges of poverty. Bonding capital is available through strong ties with family and close friends and typically connects people with those in similar circumstances to themselves. Resource exchange could include material, emotional, and practical (childcare, house-sitting, job searching). Bridging capital is generated through connections between dissimilar individuals outside of one's immediate network of family and friends, sometimes through church or schools. Similar to bonding, can result in material and emotional supports. "Linking social capital is the extent to which individuals build relationships with institutions and individuals who have relative power over them" (Hawkins & Maurer, 2009), which suggests more material and less emotional supports. Linking capital in particular was described as critical for people not to climb out of poverty as much as to navigate daily struggles and hardships. Living in segregated neighborhoods with structural barriers diminishes potential for creating or using to their advantage forms of social capital.

- The long-time resident interviewee (Interviewee #1) expressed going out of her way to welcome newcomers and make sure they were encouraged to participate in meetings and other activities.
- Long-time residents more broadly, however, were described by a newer resident as being "stuck in their ways," "insular," and not really involved, doing the same things and going to the same 4-5 places.
- White newcomers and black long-time residents were described as "very separate" from each other and significant racial segregation persisting in the neighborhood despite the changing demographics.
- Interviewee #2 reported never receiving a job application from an African American. As Hoekstra and Gerteis acknowledge, intentionality is required for diversity to thrive in a community. The business owner did not mention any deliberate efforts or attempts on his part to generate applications from non-white individuals.

- Interviewee #3 believes that the problems facing the neighborhood are bigger than what any one small group could do, however, a small group can work to raise support and awareness. These activities could generate meaningful bridging and linking social capital opportunities for members of the community.
- Interviewee #1 identified significant bonding capital within her formal affiliations where the block unit of which she is secretary is led by a close friend and his wife is also on the executive committee. In talking about activities in the neighborhood, she reported that “we’ve all gone to have lunch” at a new restaurant, referring to her immediate social circle.

Three Questions

Three guiding questions used throughout the class to create a shared lens from which to examine a wide array of transdisciplinary research questions posed regarding diverse communities included: 1) who can be a member of the community? 2) how closely do residents expect others to play by their rules? 3) how accountable are people expected to be to each other?

In summary, the three interviews conducted suggest that:

- membership in the community is available to individuals who share values in making the neighborhood a safe, desirable place to live.
- There did not seem to be sweeping generalizations that renters were more or less desirable, however behaviors of some renters were cause for concern with long-time residents and newer arrivals alike.
- Rule following is expected with some acknowledgement that some neighborhood blight and disrepair is due to economic conditions and household finances rather than a lack of caring. The conversations presented a general acceptance of behaviors for residents as long as these did not generate safety concerns (loud music and informal gatherings not an issue until fights break out and the police come).
- A business perspective on rule following had less tolerance for behaviors that might be seen by potential visitors to the area (customers) as off putting or undesirable.
- Accountability is seen through participation in formal institutions such neighborhood associations and to neighbors within an immediate proximity (on the same block). Opportunities for more relationship building and social capital generation across newcomers and long-time residents would help to build trust and ties that will be critical when issues and challenges demand community participation and input which may not always be in sync.

Limitations

Participant bias and specifically acquiescence bias was minimized by the use of open-ended questions during interviews. Social desirability bias from respondents may have affected responses as interviewee formal and informal community roles may have driven framing and what was or was not shared. Nonresponse bias is also one consideration when interpreting and extrapolating from interview results as there could be characteristics and attitudes of individuals choosing to voluntary participate in the study from those who refused or were not reached through recruitment efforts driven by survey distribution at a community event and through a local civic leader.

Conclusion

The responses from the three interviewees suggest that there is moderate civic talk occurring by newcomers, whereas the longtime resident did not offer shrouded nor direct criticisms of newcomers or undesirable behaviors. The social capital in the neighborhood relies significantly upon bonding capital. Persistent segregation and divide within community members will significantly limit opportunities for bridging capital if not mitigated.

Lukasiewicz et al.(2019) recommended that future research around social capital be more defined on the borders and boundaries of the neighborhood of interest, which this project clearly embraced. Boundaries and borders came up frequently in two interviews as the area is split between two wards and Aldermen and encompasses the notorious Delmar Divide. As one interviewee described, it feels like living on an “island at a crossroads of all these burdens, actual and imagined.”

At its core, this project uses a Grounded Theory or Analytic Inductive approach and layers on concepts fundamental to interpretive case method. The focus on roles of the individual study participants in the broader community provided the foundation for the project, while looking at themes present at the current moment within an on-the-cusp of rapid redevelopment neighborhood (e.g. race and neighborhood segregation, community development, gentrification, civic talk, and social capital) leans more into the realm of interpretive case method.

While the project has embraced a critical eye with some of the theories and frameworks for which its investigating within this community, the purpose of the work was not to identify a relevant extreme example to debunk existing theory. Rather, how does this relatively small area and community fit into how we understand the formation of community in urban areas? Similarly, an ethno-methodological approach to the project would have featured a much more micro focus and challenged the very structures and assumptions that the class and researchers relied upon to explore the concepts of civic talk and social capital.

There are hints of both purposes for which these interviews were conducted could be applied: improved social philosophy and lesser so the development of philosophy of the social. The key questions around accountability and the setting and following of norms lend themselves to informing how community relations and dynamics can be improved while not going so far as that

making the world a better place is an overt objective of the project. Similarly, critical insights were gleaned from a more micro focus on the interviewees behaviors and attitudes although the project did not take an intentional ethnomethodological approach of deconstructing the systems and structures in which interviewees exist.

References

Hawkins, R. L., & Maurer, K. (2009). Bonding, bridging and linking: how social capital operated in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. *British Journal of Social Work*, 40(6), 1777-1793.

Hoekstra, E., & Gerteis, J. (2019). The Civic Side of Diversity: Ambivalence and Belonging at the Neighborhood Level. *City & Community*, 18(1), 195-212.

Lukasiewicz, K., Bahar, O. S., Ali, S., Gopalan, P., Parker, G., Hawkins, R., ... & Walker, R. (2019). Getting by in New York City: Bonding, Bridging and Linking Capital in Poverty- Impacted Neighborhoods. *City & Community*, 18(1), 280-301.

Appendix A – Interview Notes

Interview with Survey Respondent #34

Dan Ferris – November 11, 2019

10:30 AM (20 minutes)

Interviewee: Female, 60+. African American, owns home.

How long in Neighborhood: 28-30 years, same home.

Neighborhood Changes

Not a lot of changes over the years – we have a block unit meeting that we go to every first Tuesday and a national night out with the police, the mayor, and the police chief. Rummage sales on Saturdays. There used to be more crime and disturbances but now hardly any.

We have more Caucasians moving in now and everything is ok. We have a good time in our neighborhood.

Participate in Community

I'm the Secretary of the Block Unit, Kenneth Calvert is the president and his wife is the treasurer. I'm glad because I wave at a man who hasn't come to any meetings so the President reached out and invited him to come. The block group has been meeting for a long time.

I worked in the neighborhood at a few places as a cook. First a restaurant, then Doorways which is a place for people who have AIDS, I cooked for them for quite a while, and I was offered a job to cook at one of the schools. I won three awards for my work in the community.

Why do people move to the neighborhood? Move away?

Don't know why people move here but we are really trying hard to make them feel at home. There is great access to all go to Schnucks, Aldi on Enright on King's highway. Family Dollar on MLK. On Boyle there is a show going on we've "all" gone to have lunch. We've been to a Chinese place on Euclid and Washington. We used to go to Lou Ellen's but they closed.

People might have moved away because we used to have to call the citizen line and police a lot for people getting drunk and shooting off firecrackers. One family in particular

kept to themselves mostly. They caused quite a bit of disturbance on the block and would always be outside drinking. Fights would break out and the police would have to come. They finally moved away not too long ago.

Community Connectedness

People get along just fine. We (the block unit) are always handing out fliers and getting to know people. I think it's one of the reasons why people stay here.

A few newer folks, the young ones, have started coming to our meetings. We post and send out fliers, so people know about them.

Miscellaneous:

Long-time residents work harder to keep the neighborhood looking good and do a better job watching what goes on in the neighborhood.

I worked two jobs for ten years to get the house paid for and I love it. I want to take care of my house and make sure it looks good. Sadly, someone stole the guttering from around the house when we were out of town. I put up a fence because the houses on both sides, the east and the west, were torn down. They're going to put up new houses there soon, so I really want my house to look good!

Interview with Survey Respondent #35

Dan Ferris – October 31, 2019

9:00 AM (1 hour), in-person

Interviewee: 40-something, white male, business owner/resident, school-aged children

How long in Neighborhood: 8-9 years business owner, 3 months resident

Neighborhood Changes

Huge changes. 'Grew up' spending lots of time in the neighborhood as father owned a small printing business in the area. Hookers and drugs everywhere, lawless 35 years ago. 8 years ago, still lawless. Empty church and buildings. Now, while crime still bad, conditions and property values have improved.

Civic Talk

White people from outside the neighborhood talk about a lot of the hourly jobs that people who might live in this neighborhood rely on as “summer jobs” to excuse not paying livable wages.

“Maplehood” – I guess I really shouldn’t say that, or ghetto. Those words are hurtful and used to overgeneralize and mischaracterize people and entire neighborhoods. Though Maplewood was really run down just ten years ago.

‘Petty criminals’ to refer to panhandlers and homeless individuals asking strangers for money in the neighborhood.

Crime and Safety

When you’ve been mugged seven times in your life, each by a group of African American teenagers, the trauma and natural instinct for self-preservation creates some implicit bias. Have to actively work when encountering groups of young men of color on the street to not be afraid or think of them any differently. It sets up an expectation bias that’s really difficult for people to overcome.

Crime here is terrible. Last week a person high on PCP kicked in my back door on a Friday night. My son had to hide in the bathroom with my wife who grabbed a knife, mace, and called 9-1-1. The week before that, someone climbed onto the roof in the middle of the night and stole \$35,000 worth of HVAC equipment. Last month, we had a staff meeting in our conference room and when we came out each of our cars parked on the street had been broken into with thousands of dollars of damage and property stolen.

Police are stretched too thin. They spend all their time responding to domestic disputes so can’t focus on other issues. Every time something bad happens the officer will offer some useful advice that would have been great to know beforehand. “Don’t let that person on your premises – he’s unstable and trouble” which would have been great to know and available information if there were police patrolling the area and communicating with residents and business owners. They just don’t have time. With the limited resources they have, police are able to give retroactive “great support in hindsight.”

People don’t go past Left Bank Books or Washington. That’s where most people are getting harassed and asked for money. I don’t mind people asking for help, I’ve founded a non-profit and worked with a housing and homelessness organization for years. But this individual asking is really hurting businesses in the area.

Race

Bootstrap theory is garbage. I grew up poor and was able to pull myself up not just with hard work but because I'm white. If I were a black man with an afro the affluent white people who invite me into their homes to perform my job might not have hired me. None of these people would consider themselves racist.

Racism is much worse than classism. Race is something you cannot change and as a white person no matter what my circumstance is I'll never know what that is like. Sure, black people in this community may look at me and think I'm just like the white people who live out in the county and won't live or go out in this area.

Structural and Systemic Issues

One obstacle is that the big multinational companies (McDonalds) need a group of dead-beats and an underclass to advance their business model and profits.

We have "squishy" Mayors. First, Squishy Slay, and now Squishy Lyda. They don't stand for anything. Some people like to call St. Louis a blue spot in a red sea. It's more like a pink spot in a red sea.

As a business owner for 22 years, has never received a job application from a black candidate.

Delmar divide. School equity is nonexistent. A 1/10 of 1 cent tax on the county that went to city schools could change the direction of the city. But they're too busy passing sun-down laws and patrolling to keep outsiders out. People walk around the county being afraid of going to the city and a "batman scene" where both parents are killed in front of their child in a botched robbery.

Participate in Community

Fixing the community's problems has to start with education and jobs. Personally, and through my business I support nonprofits and help entities that help get people on their feet. I'm really bothered by the people who approach people at Evangeline's or other businesses and confront them for money. Those interactions are keeping people and their dollars out of the area and hurting the city.

Why do people move to the neighborhood? Move away?

Affordability. Bought both business property and home through foreclosure auctions. A guy without means can come here. And the art although that's starting to wane. There's no support locally or in the city & county more broadly for music and musicians. Art is embedded into other cities like New Orleans or Nashville. People move away because of the crime. And when it comes to education, everyone moves out. The \$15,000 - \$20,000 a year in private school tuition instead goes to mortgages and down payments on houses out in the suburbs where the schools are excellent.

Newcomers/Long Time Residents

Most of the newcomers to the neighborhood are white. Long time residents don't really get involved. They are stuck in their ways, doing the same things, going to the same 4-5 places. White newcomers and black long-time residents are very separate from each other, there is significant racial segregation within the neighborhood which is one of the most overall segregated cities in the country.

Community Connectedness

People here are insular and don't go outside what's comfortable. The community and St. Louis more broadly is terrible at welcoming transplants.

You would definitely want to talk to Heather Navarro and Don. Heather is the alderwoman for Ward 18. Don owns Evangeline's and knows all about how the lower part of the Central West End – the "movers and shakers" treat businesses on the upper part like ours.

Kind of difficult as the business and home just a few blocks away are in different wards and while technically in the Central West End the CWE Neighborhood Association won't list their business. Kind of feels like no man's land but there is more foot traffic than where the shop was previously located (Cherokee Street).

Miscellaneous:

I don't own a glamorous shop. Sure, we serve a more well-off group, but we don't have or need a glamorous look. I don't have the money to spend \$40k on a new façade and don't have the walk-by/walk-in traffic to justify a more attractive aesthetic.

Old money in St. Louis – the twenty-five people who have all the money joke openly about their role and place in the city. They also participate in the charity circuit and just reinvest each other's money in each other's causes like a charity circuit.

People look back with blinders on when they should be looking forward.

Trump election an opportunity for communities like this to look in the mirror and address the real issues, come together against fearmongering and find common ground.

Interview with Survey Respondent #36

Dan Ferris – October 31, 2019

10:15 AM (35 minutes), in-person

Interviewee: 40-something white female, works in neighborhood, school aged children

How long in Neighborhood: 8/9 years working, 3 months resident

Business and Resident Perspective

It feels the same living here as when we just worked here and owned the shop. It's definitely more convenient. There is a fair amount of petty crime which is a nuisance. But compared to previous neighborhood we lived there is no gang presence, far less drugs and prostitution. A very nice neighborhood abuts a very low-income neighborhood with us kind of in the middle. We're coming from Dutchtown that was also predominantly black but had the worst schools. I looked up the median income and it was only \$10,000 for a household!

Participate in Community – how people connect?

There are good people in this neighborhood, *but* they can't afford to fix their houses or tend to their yards. Dumping is a problem. There are better aesthetics than in previous neighborhood. Not sure how to get involved currently in the neighborhood. There used to be signs for community meetings but maybe that was done by the previous alderman?

It's interesting we were actually more motivated to be involved in our last neighborhood that was much more run down. We would organize trash pickups and neighborhood cleanups. I was the Parent Association President at my child's charter school. And I see how people who are involved just get fatigued. It's only five people who care and show up regularly and then all our efforts and energies are taken over by the angry person who

comes a single time to complain but doesn't have any real buy-in or commitment to making change.

Why Do People move here? Move away?

We moved from a tougher area though some people are coming here from nice suburbs of other cities because of the affordability. Though they can sometimes seem a little surprised at the condition of the neighborhood. The architecture is really striking so except for the rundown buildings and crime you would think this was a really nice area. Convenience checklist for moving is affordability, move-in ready, livable. Living in or near CWE is "desirable." People move away because of the Delmar divide. South of here, almost all nice and few low income "stragglers." North of here is much more mixed. People will literally turnaround when they see "the crumble" north of the Delmar divide.

Newcomers and Long-term residents

There is a woman on our block who has lived here for five years. She knows everyone! She's more upper income. Another newer resident helps organize a block party. "We might be gentrifying." It's the diversity and mix of people that we're aware of and attracted to. Though concerned that the very diversity that attracted them to the neighborhood might not be there in 5, 10 years.

Analogy of a dance company I was a founding member of. We worked so hard and so long, sometimes for no pay to get this thing going. Then some of the original founding members moved on and were replaced by new dancers who had no appreciation for the work that went into building the company from scratch. They can't help they don't know it and aren't as invested, though it's so hard that we went through so much and others just "waltz right in." People who "stuck it out" and have lived here for a long time must feel somewhat the same about us moving in.

Civic Talk

"North of here... there are plenty of good people living over there." We need "decent development" that's open to all.

Safety

Petty crime needs to be addressed but without sacrificing diversity and mixed income levels. It would be nice to live here and not worry about car break ins.

Boundaries, Efficacy, and Public Policy

It feels a bit like living on an “island at a crossroads of all these burdens, actual and imagined.”

No one contacts about CWE business stuff even though we’re technically in the CWE.

Inspection policy in the two wards is different! Learned after moving that the ward with their home is the only ward in the city that doesn’t require an inspection and occupancy certificate. When we went to the city office we were told an inspection certificate wasn’t needed for *“that ward.”* Maybe this was pushed for by long term residents who wanted to sell or couldn’t afford the inspection and certificate but instead of helping the neighborhood it’s really brought down the quality of the properties and who can move in. We had to ask a local property owner to start requiring credit checks because they would just rent to anybody.

I’m burned out from that form of community engagement (School PA, community meetings, etc). It felt like turning wheels and nothing getting done. No one has enough authority to do anything to create change. Not a good use of time so we find other ways to help and solve problems.

The problems neighborhood is facing are bigger than what one small group can do. However, the small group can raise support and awareness.

