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The University of Southern Mississippi

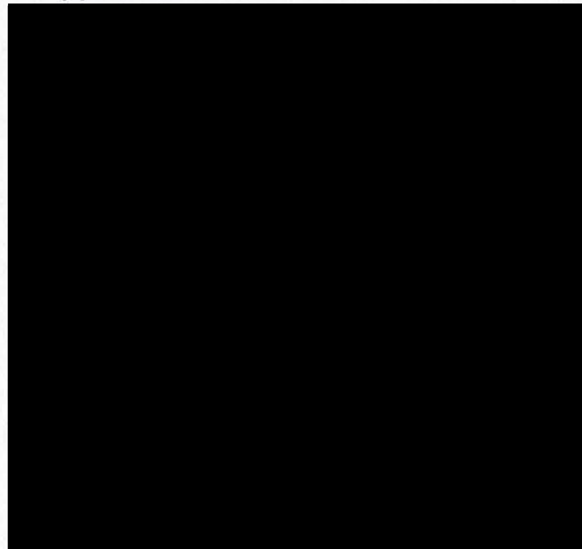
DISTANT NEIGHBORS: NEGOTIATING SPACE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN A SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY

by

Kelly Jo Davila

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts

Approved:



Dean of the Graduate School

May 2012

ABSTRACT

DISTANT NEIGHBORS: NEGOTIATING SPACE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN A SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY

by Kelly Jo Davila

May 2012

Through a case study in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, this research explores the need for cultural competence in urban economic development of neighborhoods. I place at the forefront the need for a collective community voice in the discussions and negotiations of future development, and argue that a lack of that voice has contributed to stunted economic growth.

In addition, through this case study I demonstrate that there may be systems in place intended to "solve" the problem of economic underdevelopment, but in reality only perpetuate the lack of economic growth. In this case, a reliance on the local bus system has made it more difficult for development to occur in the area where it is needed most.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For their support and feedback during this process, their contributions to the process of research, and for not evading the barrage of emails sent over the course of a year, the writer would like to thank Drs. Jeff Kaufmann, David Cochran, Bridget Hayden. Additionally, the network of support from students and professors in the departments of Anthropology and Sociology as well as Geography and Geology has made this goal infinitely more attainable. Among this group in particular, the following research could not have been accomplished without the time, patience, and quietly inconvenienced demeanor of Angela Smith.

Special thanks are extended to the residents of Palmer's Crossing for allowing me into their community, albeit hesitantly at first. Finally, to the city's mass transit division and Chris Carr of the GIS division, additional gratitude for quantitative and qualitative data and the speed with which all questions were answered and maps provided.

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CHAPTER ONE

ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE CITY

Entering the Community

There are only five miles separating my own neighborhood and "the field" where I conducted this research. Driving to that location means driving past some of the parts of the city of Hattiesburg, Mississippi that I find myself often – my favorite Thai restaurant, my mechanic, and my friend's homes. But once I pass those areas, there is a long stretch of highway which continues nearly unchanged until it dead-ends on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Long before that destination, there is a traffic light – the last one in Hattiesburg on Highway 49 headed south. Between the small stretch of what looks like an uninhabited part of town and the furthest places most people in the city usually find themselves is Palmer's Crossing. Its location far from the main commercial and residential areas of town is a product of the community's history as an autonomous place, as well as one of the many reasons its residents feel that they are relegated to the outside of its society.

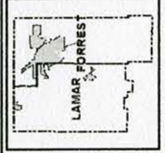
Driving into Palmer's Crossing emphasizes just how distinct it is from the rest of Hattiesburg (Figs. 1 and 2). My trips usually originated in a dense grid-laid neighborhood through a bustling college area and commercial corridor, eventually ejecting me out into the city's southeastern frontier. There, spaces are large and traffic is thin. Buildings are small. Many are boarded up. Compared to

Figure 1. Mississippi. Forrest and Lamar counties, in which the city is located, are highlighted.

the nonchalance my neighborhood children exhibit as cars speed down the street where they play, everyone is aware when an outsider arrives in Palmer's Crossing. Old Airport Road is a major artery directing traffic through the community, dotted with many of these boarded up buildings and permanently closed businesses. People on their front porches watch as cars pass, aware of which belong and which may have simply wandered into the area.

Resident's expressions are at first uninviting, which contrasts sharply with their dispositions once you actually sit down and talk to them. Overcoming the initial role as a stranger in the community is daunting. People in Palmer's

CITY OF HATTIESBURG



Map provided by the GIS Division of the HPFL Metropolitan Planning Organization Department of Federal & State Programs City of Hattiesburg, Mississippi

This map does not necessarily reflect the most current changes and was created for general planning purposes only.

Map Projection: NAD 1983 State Plane MS East
Map Production Date: 2/29/2012

Figure 2. City of Hattiesburg. The city limits are shown, including an orientation in both counties. "City Maps," Hattiesburg GIS, 2012. Copyright 2012. Adapted with permission from the author.

Crossing (Fig. 3) are acutely aware when you fear their reaction to a seemingly unannounced introduction.

Figure 3. Palmer's Crossing. The community is located in southeastern Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

I do not mean to imply that people in the neighborhood were inaccessible to me, or that the residents in any way misdirected or misinformed me. In fact, upon my first arrival, I was ushered to the nearest community leader who could give me a crash course in local history and answer my questions about life in the community. But I was never truly seen as an insider there. I came from the city – "in from town" – as people there like to say. When I told them I was a student at the university, their first thought was that I was there to ask about Palmer's Crossing's role in the Freedom Summer of 1964. Clearly there had been many academics who had come into and gone from the community, and they had their own social designation in the area. It seemed almost like they expected a type of academic tourist, more interested in the exceptional history of Palmer's Crossing than its current plight. I got the impression a number of times that I was, in the opinion of many people I spoke to, strange for an academic. Why was I not asking about the Civil Rights movement? What else would someone come to Palmer's Crossing to study? My introductions as a student of anthropology interested in the way people in the neighborhood felt about annexation was often met with surprised looks.

It felt as though I was being sorted through different roles as these conversations continued. At first I was an outsider, then a white girl from the city, then an academic, but different even for that group. For many, it seemed the est way to deal with my questions was to keep the conversation as far from personal information as possible.

This distance at which some residents kept me – the boundary they erected to better situate me in their perception of the more common outsider who has come into the community – was a difficult one to transcend, primarily because it was generally understood by both parties that I was there to study their "otherness." It was no coincidence that in order to explain this phenomenon to me, the residents made me feel like I was the "other." It wasn't until after the majority of my field work was completed that I realized how effective a technique this really was. "Anthropology is often about misunderstandings" (Herzfeld, 2001, p. 2). I certainly came in thinking there was a reducible homogeneity in the neighborhood, a misunderstanding brought on by my own misinterpretations of Mississippi in general. Similarly, the residents misunderstood my intentions for researching in their neighborhood. These mutual misunderstandings as well as my relegation as an outsider-academic (academic-outsider?) eventually bound the seemingly disparate aspects of my field work. It was through those misunderstandings that I learned how residents of Palmer's Crossing situate themselves both as a part of and distinct from the city itself – the outside.

Two Palmer's Crossings

Palmer's Crossing was annexed into Hattiesburg in 1991. A significant consequence of annexation is the perceived blurring of social boundaries between the two places. While the physical boundaries of Palmer's Crossing are officially recognized, residents' perceived social differences from Hattiesburg are not. The city has adopted much of Palmer's Crossing's history, yet the residents believe that that history, and their prior autonomy, creates a clear

distinction between their community and the city at large. This has resulted in two distinct ways people have come to describe the community.

The first – the one I'm most used to writing about – has to do with its physical, social, and historical elements. It is a predominantly low-income African-American, formerly rural farming community, near (and now part of) the post-bellum city of Hattiesburg, Mississippi. There was a prominent Freedom School located there during the Freedom Summer of 1964 – a fact which has become one of the most prevailing elements of the community's heritage. Like many other rural communities in the U.S. South, it has slowly become incorporated into the adjacent urban center.

Hattiesburg, like other urban areas in Mississippi, has an average per capita income for the region, approximately $27,000 per household; a relatively high population density of 861.5 persons per square mile; and a comparable amount of white and African-American residents – 53% and 42% of the total city population, respectively (US Census Bureau, 2012). Palmer's Crossing, however, is very different in composition. Census data obscures the true make up of the community by grouping it together with more affluent neighborhoods and part of the historic downtown district, so the demographic information I have of the community has been gathered through observation and discussion with residents. Income in Palmer's Crossing is very low, and according to residents, many of the people living there now are on some form of social aid or welfare. The population density is also quite low, which is seen immediately when driving through the community. Vast tracts of land are unoccupied, as are many homes

in the older subdivisions. Finally, the neighborhood is composed of almost entirely African-American residents.

As has been the case for many decades, most Palmer's Crossing residents find work in other parts of Hattiesburg. As a town that developed alongside Hattiesburg through much of its history, Palmer's Crossing has long been tied to Hattiesburg's larger economy. Many older residents remember working construction jobs in Hattiesburg during the 1950s and 60s, building new edifices as the city grew in size and population. Other residents are retired, work from home, or are unemployed.

By day, the population of the neighborhood floods out into the city to work, conduct daily business, or to socialize. This is aided by a local bus route which provides the community with access to downtown Hattiesburg and other parts of the city through route transfers. With the exception of churches and a rarely used community center, public space in the community usually takes the form of a front yard or a porch. A small convenience store offers seating and sometimes hot food, but I personally saw few people utilizing its space outside of employees and the occasional cigarette smoker just stopping in to buy a snack. Most residents spend their time away from the community or in their own homes. For those not from the community, there is a distinct impression that this is a very private place.

Although now a part of Hattiesburg, little development has occurred in Palmer's Crossing. Recent development there has usually been in the form of social service enterprises specializing in rural and low-income medical initiatives,

as well as new subdivisions provided to people from the Mississippi Gulf Coast displaced as a result of Hurricane Katrina. In addition to these places, the neighborhood has two convenience stores, several churches, a community center, and two schools (elementary and junior high). Recent infrastructural growth has catered to providing access to the aid-based services, but, ultimately, few roads connect Hattiesburg to Palmer's Crossing. This is the infrastructural Palmer's Crossing that I usually describe first as a means to set the stage for the other perspectives of the community.

Another Palmer's Crossing: the one some residents just call "Palmer's," is the perspective I was most interested in hearing about in my field research. It was the one referred to as "down here," in relation to Hattiesburg; "mostly the same as always" and, my favorite description: "just like Mississippi: the most lied about, talked about place in the world." I cannot describe that place using the prosaic, Faulknerian style many Mississippians imagine almost unconsciously when they think of the South. Frankly, that's not the way Palmer's residents tended to think of themselves. But I am also not keen to rely on the dialect of the people I spoke to in order describe the community in their words. Writing in their accented dialogue would only detract from the point they (and I) are trying to make. Instead, hope only to introduce Palmer's Crossing through impression imparted upon me, made tangible by its physical presence as a complex social landscape. It is a community relegated to the outside of Hattiesburg, where I was relegated to the outside by my standing as a resident of the city.

Integrating into the City

This sense of otherness, as I will present, is both formed and informed by Palmer's Crossing's inability to fully integrate into the city of which it is now a part. Following racial desegregation in the 1960s, Palmer's Crossing's major economic motivators began to move out of the community to exercise their new economic mobility to cater to both white and black residents in the city. Soon after, other affluent African-American families in the community moved out as well, leaving the remaining working-class or unemployed residents of then-rural Palmer's Crossing without a viable, self-sustaining economy. As a result, in 1991, Palmer's Crossing was annexed into Hattiesburg in an attempt to revitalize its services and to stimulate economic development between the city and the community.

One of the ways the city sought to integrate the community economically was through the establishment of the Palmer's Crossing bus route as a part of Hub City Transit's metro service line. However, while the implementation of the bus system certainly has its benefits for both the community and the city, it is actually only providing an expedient solution to the lack of a strong community economy in Palmer's Crossing. Because some residents in the neighborhood frequently use the bus route to access the businesses, services, and jobs they need in the rest of Hattiesburg, there is a subsequent decreased need for those enterprises to be located in Palmer's Crossing. This implies that Palmer's Crossing residents are increasingly reliant upon Hattiesburg (and especially the bus route) to address their economic and financial needs.

Meanwhile, the city has been less than proactive in its promise to upgrade existing services and develop new infrastructure in the community. Many older residences lack sufficient plumbing and roadways. Furthermore, the entire neighborhood sits in a flood plain. While this was once a benefit for farming and gardening in the area, it has now become a major source of property damage. In an already economically depressed area, these damages are felt profoundly. When the damages become too severe, many families simply board up their houses and move in with relatives in other cities or states. Therefore, the city's lack of initiative in providing service to residents of Palmer's Crossing – now tax-paying residents of Hattiesburg – has contributed to the slow decline of the neighborhood's population, although this decline had begun long before annexation occurred. Yet this population loss further threatens the potential for a strong economic foundation to be rebuilt in the community, while simultaneously increasing Palmer's Crossing's marginal position in the city.

Expressing Otherness

I was lucky to meet enough residents of Palmer's Crossing who would tell me a little about themselves and their opinions of the effects of annexation. Many were vocal about their relationship with the city, while others were instead more concerned with the longevity of Palmer's Crossing as a specific social and geographical place within in Hattiesburg. Based on the meanings I was able to extrapolate from the myriad of perspectives I was shown in the field, I have broken this discussion into three major parts. In the first part, chapters three and four, I present the most widely-accepted perceptions of Palmer's Crossing

shared by its residents. This is an attempt to show not only the processes by which people have come to understand otherness, but also the ways in which they challenge each other. There is a theoretical trend in urban anthropology dealing with the dissolution of these "minority" social identities through the bolstering of the "dominant" social order, in this case, the dissolution of the community identity through integration into the larger city (cf. Low, 1996; Qvistrom, 2007). I found the less explicit divisions between urban/rural to parallel closely the boundaries – both geographical and ideological – between Hattiesburg and Palmer's Crossing, which help to create a sense of otherness.

In the second part, chapter five, I further examine the effect of those boundaries on the climate of economic development in Palmer's Crossing. The effect of desegregation in the middle of the 20th century in Palmer's Crossing is considered one of the major turning points in the community's autonomy. Although, ideally, desegregation ought to have helped Palmer's Crossing integrate into Hattiesburg through jobs and schools, such was not the case and the economic and social division between the two areas remains. The local bus route has become the manifestation of that integration and the social boundaries between Hattiesburg and Palmer's Crossing, and is also the place in which those divisions are alluded to, discussed, and mediated. Bus riders are keenly aware of the bus as a social arena, and use it also to confront the realization of political, economical, and social boundaries. Interestingly, the subsection of residents of the neighborhood who rely on the bus are not cast as others in the community – although bus riders in Hattiesburg are. Therefore, the bus offers a unique

perspective on social divisions between Palmer's Crossing and Hattiesburg without further imposing a division between Palmer's Crossing residents themselves.

In the third and final part, my conclusion, I suggest that the city and community choose to mediate their ideas of integration in highly complex ways. Often, there are more components to a single issue than can be handled at one time by either group. Therefore, the attempts at a solution to the problem of economic integration provide only expedient stop-gaps without addressing the root causes of chronic underemployment, a lack of community-based economic development, and reliance upon aid initiatives in Palmer's Crossing. While the city maintains efforts to bring economic growth to the city, residents of Palmer's Crossing must reconcile their perceived differences from the city in order to participate in the larger scheme of urban development.

In this sense, this thesis can contribute to the larger body of research within urban anthropology on the effects of economic integration, with particular emphasis on the role of public transportation on this integration. Through the public negotiations of the social boundaries between the two areas, as well as the private negotiations taking place on the local bus route, it is certain that individuals are aware of this larger (supralocal?) social phenomenon which maintains a group's "otherness" as an unintended consequence of development.

CHAPTER TWO

PROBLEMS OF THEORY AND METHOD

Cities

The city presents a number of considerations for the anthropologist that other research areas do not. Cities are often the homes of the researchers who study urban environments. For many whose studies take them into urban areas, cities become common place(s), and a standard by which intellectuals contrast other social environments. As well, cities are the products of historical change and transition. Especially prevalent in this conceptualization of the city is the idea that they represent modernity. This modernity is at odds with the perceived traditional or transitional enclaves of non-urban settlements outside the city.

As Anthony Leeds mentioned time and again, cities are not islands – they do not exist independently of one another. Each city is related directly or indirectly to others through common historical and economic processes. These common processes lead to some aspects and uniformity as well as key differences between locales. Thus, the recent emphasis on global cities is confusing. All cities, it would seem, are global – maybe not specifically in terms of transnational politics or post-capitalist economics, but every city has its ties to other cities, other countries, and the colloquial country. Thus it is important to cast an equally critical eye to not only mega-metropolises, such as New York and Chicago, but to smaller, more average cities which have their own formative processes and social divisions.

Cities are human inventions; every city shares at least a part of its history with the global society. And everybody who has ever lived in a city understands that feeling of being connected to everyone else while simultaneously living apart from everyone as well. The city is, in a sense, where one goes to be both together and alone (White, 2009, p. 13). Any urbanite knows this feeling, and it is that commonness of feeling which ethnographic fieldwork in the city aims to understand.

Methodologies

Field work and ethnography in cities is often done by leaving one place to study another. Sometimes we may have the luxury of staying "home" to do research. Regardless, a new sense of one's place in a larger urban environment is necessary for observing how other people view the place where they live. New sets of considerations are laid before us. Who in this city will we study? What relationship do they have with this place? How has life in the city impacted them? How do they navigate between the spaces and places of the city? How do they negotiate their sense of belonging – or not?

As anthropologists, we have at our disposal a variety of approaches to best address these issues while being sensitive to the nuances of human perceptions, but our understandings of the lived experience of other people will always be partial. We are at the mercy of our informants to allow us into their lives, but we are simultaneously tasked with drawing comparisons to other histories and imaginings of the past. From the variety of perspectives we seek, we find patterns, and from those patterns we find meanings. When we return to

confirm these meanings with our informants, we may find that those were not the meanings they themselves derived, and that we have misunderstood. Other times, we may end up demonstrating new perspectives to our informants by taking an outsider's eye to their common practices and extrapolating something they have overlooked. Most of the time, we fall somewhere between these areas.

For myself, the city in which I conducted research was my adopted home for two years between 2010 and 2012. While it was a place that seemed foreign to me upon my arrival, it gradually lost its most enigmatic characteristics over time. Yet the community in which I conducted my field research – vastly different from the "midtown" area I lived in near the university – retained those characteristics for me. In that way, recognizing the differences between the part of the city where I lived and the part where I worked seemed simple, at least superficially. I would caution others against that false certainty of a straightforward research area now; my work was anything but simple.

I have, as so many anthropologists before me, experienced the spectrum of certainty, doubt, and confusion while attempting to detangle the so-called webs of meaning in Palmer's Crossing. Often I have admitted defeat and abandoned hopes of understanding. Once I even blamed my lack of understanding on inter-observer error, as if that invalidated the things I saw and heard in the field. Eventually, I yielded to the realization that my observations were indeed meaningful to the people with whom I spoke and spent time with in ways that were different from the meanings those observations carried for me as an observer and researcher. Ultimately, I ended up with two stories: one from

the inside – the lived experience of my informants, and one from the outside – what that experience implied to me theoretically.

My approach is a qualitative one. And while I did not use a participant observation approach in the same way that other anthropologists do to write descriptions about cultures, I let ethnographic method inform the way my interactions with the community led to an impression of social common sense. To call the community in which I work its own distinct culture is to belittle their needs and desires to be a part of the larger urban sphere into which they have been annexed. To say I am describing their experiences is to take too distant an approach to the effective isolation they, in many cases, already feel. I rely heavily on the impressions of their sense of place to communicate the idea of Palmer's Crossing; a non-local's synopsis of local beliefs.

Validity

Impressions are not easy to situate in academia. The constraints of a discipline often guide how this very subjective type of data should be interpreted. For me, it is often difficult to distinguish between urban anthropology, urban sociology, and urban geography. While it is true that there is significant overlap and often interdisciplinary theories and methodologies at play between these three groups, I would distinguish them according to their primary foci: people, structure and order, and landscape; that is to say, the distinctions are elementary, but in order to interpret one focus, it is necessary to include (and often impossible to omit) the other two.

Each subdiscipline relies in some respect on a presumably “impartial” history, such as public records, to reinforce their claims. This also allows for some degree of verifiability of informants’ information (although a lack of verifiability doesn’t necessarily constitute falsifiability). Using public records to determine social phenomena is a common practice, especially in more structurally oriented or temporally comparative case studies (e.g. Rotenberg, 2001; Vaughan, et al., 2005), where an argument is made from the disjunct between perceived and quantitative differences. However, my discussion aims intentionally to be more impressionistic – to cater more explicitly to perceptions of residents. Statistically significant data is not the focus here, although quantitative interpretations of qualitative data are used briefly. Again, this stems from the need to interpret these phenomena through multiple lenses and from multiple perspectives to best address the problem at hand.

Urban Anthropology and “Classic” Ethnography

I am an anthropologist, though – not a sociologist or geographer. It should be noted at this point that the practice of anthropology in urban areas differs from that of small villages in its methodology as well as its conceptualization. While it is not uncommon for the anthropologist in the village to be almost overwhelmed with informant information through participant observation, the anthropologist in the city is often at challenged by the social mores, including the occasional unacceptability of simply approaching and engaging people in public areas (Gmelch and Gmelch, 2009, p. 297). This problem is obviously compounded when a research area lacks such a public space.

For the student, particularly undergraduates, a lack of access to urban anthropology monographs and articles in the classroom makes these problems of methodology difficult to overcome. When assigned only "classic" ethnography to read, such as Malinowski's work in the Trobriand Islands or Chagnon's study of the Yanomamö, field work in the city can become particularly disheartening if the student feels that he or she may not be doing "real" anthropology (Gmelch and Gmelch, 2009, p. 297). Although it was a skill I acquired later in my academic career, it was through urban anthropology I learned to better appreciate the ways in which anthropological themes are conceptualized and interpreted. I became acutely aware of what I was doing – how I performed my field work – while stumbling through the process. Those things I could not have learned through assigned reading.

It is important, then, to underscore the distinguishing factors between this classic ethnography and ethnography as it is performed in the city. While anthropology in smaller social spheres is often predicated upon participant observation – learning about cultural nuances while engaging in their performances – my field work relied more heavily on outside observation and especially formal introductions to the people whom my gate keepers saw as the most relevant to my studies. In this sense, as well, the information retrieved from these informants may be unnecessarily skewed towards that which I was perceived to want to hear versus what is the actual, observable reality. This is a problem that must be accounted for when writing about observations made in the field. However, this caveat could be further corrupted by overt dismissals that

ethnographic information may be situational or idealized. The task then becomes to precariously judge which realities constitute the most generally accepted truth (at whatever scale of analysis), to then apply interpretations accordingly.

While some have inferred that, given the above dilemma, urban anthropology is not so far removed from its classic anthropological roots (Sanjek, 1990), that urban anthropology is heading towards classic ethnographies of groups within cities rather than larger-scale analyses of urban conditions, I am inclined to agree with an alternative perspective that urban anthropology is continually reinterpreting conventional ethnographic theory (cf. Herzfeld, 2001, p. 134). Urban studies offer their greatest strengths in analyzing the ways in which urban societies consistently transform as a whole from the perspective of the individual (Hannerz, 1980, p. 240). Rather than give the sole power of that transformation to "global" or transnational structures and processes, many urban anthropologists track perspectives on the re-imaginings of space and culture from within the culture itself – through its people and their daily practices – rather than through bureaucracy. Ethnography in the city allows for continual reinterpretations of traditional anthropological theories, maintaining that no discussion of life in the city can be accomplished without reflecting conclusions inward, both towards the individual researcher as well as the discipline (both parties having traditionally been composed of urbanites themselves).

Cultural relativity notwithstanding, one of the primary motives for any sociocultural anthropological work has been the exploration of the elusive "common sense" of cultures (cf. Geertz, 1983, pp. 73-93; Herzfeld, 1987 and

2001, p. xiii) – those elements of cultural complexity which are present in some form throughout the entirety of human societies. Much of the ethnography I read throughout my undergraduate education – classic ethnography – had to do with what types of distinctions that common sense created for a social group. I found the most success, however, in understanding the common sense of my own city by wading through the roles of resident and outsider, positioning myself intentionally *inside* those social boundaries to understand the human actions which created them in the first place (Barth, 1969). But to do this, I feel I must first explore meaning and space to better situate people within these places and boundaries.

CHAPTER THREE

SPACE AND A SENSE OF PLACE IN THE CITY

Conceptualizing Space

Since I am dealing with social tensions related to human interaction with space and place, it seems logical to start with a discussion of these processes. The starting point of most writing on space and place has to do with a vague (in)ability to define either term. This stems from complex and fluctuating levels of importance in many scientific, historical, and philosophical fields – and for anthropologists, the relationship between space and place is related simultaneously to the social structures contained within as well as the boundary-producing capabilities of each.

Agnew (2011) provides a recent and comprehensive review of modern geographical theories on the nature of space, relating the common academic definitions of space and the concept of place to modernization in the realm of Western science. Specifically, he argues that the major disjunctions in the perception of space as a thing have been influenced by scientific and (Continental) philosophical trends from the Enlightenment onward. With each passing development, the utility of the concept of space has changed to fit its new demand or role in understanding the world around us, therefore making it difficult to define and conceptualize.

The two primary contrasting perceptions of space can be summarized as follows: First, as an ontological thing in itself, space was established by Isaac Newton as a container of matter. This served to bridge the gap between

medieval interpretations of space as a non-entity and Enlightenment understandings of space as something that could itself be studied (Agnew, 2011, p. 320), thus advancing fields such as physics and astronomy by laying foundations for understanding space as existing independently from things contained within it.

Contrast that with the second conceptualization of space championed by philosopher Gottfried Liebniz, for whom space was relational and dependent on what was contained within it (Agnew, 2011, p. 320). In this sense, objects contained within a space directly reflect that space's (or place's) qualities and value. The objects contained within a space have phenomenologically important responses to the space itself, thus giving it meaning. These objects are what are studied to understand the fundamental attributes of the space. This Liebnizian perspective is perhaps the most widely utilized concept of space employed by those who study human-environment interactions and social organization.

Given these two perspectives, it becomes easier to understand Agnew's point that the ways in which academics perceive space is directly related to what they wish to observe about it. It is, in a way, a conceptual tool for research rather than just an arbitrary definition. Such a definition would clearly not be universal, making its normative or generalizing properties problematic at best.

The alternative to the ontology/phenomenology dichotomy is Blaut's (1961) insistence that these conceptual frameworks should instead be viewed as interdependent upon one another – that each is an incomplete picture of space and spatial relativity. The shortcomings of both perspectives are exacerbated

especially when human agents are introduced. Blaut's conception seems to be the common middle-ground argument between a seemingly persistent polarization between humanistic and positivist theories in academia. The discussion of this opposition is rarely left uncited in social sciences literature. In his 1887 article, "The Study of Geography," Franz Boas mentions this polarization as well: "One party claims that the ideal aim of the sciences ought to be the discovery of general laws; the other maintains that it is the investigation of the phenomena themselves" (Boas, 1887, p. 138). These phenomena include, among other things cited in his article, both natural history and the story of human culture as it relates to a specific place.

The contestations between ontology and phenomenology, and structure and order, have been points of departure for many authors attempting to organize differing perspectives on spatial processes. Some have argued that theorizing about the nature of space is essentially futile (for example, Saunders, 1981, p. 239) while others have made the deconstructionist approach to space and spatial processes the subject of several volumes (for example, Soja, 2000). Still others have remarked that the insistence upon the rigidity of such dichotomies is a product of the mutual shortcomings, particularly regarding the object of study, of humanism and scientism (Relph, 1981, p. 143).

Society is both a product and a producer of the physical and ideological manifestations of space and spatial processes (cf. Lefebvre, 1968). Humans and their social groups are subject to the same natural and ideational processes that change both observable and affective expressions of nature, identity, and the

physical limitations of the corporeal body. From this point, it seems that humanism and scientism are not, in fact, at odds with one another, but are simply describing two distinct spatial objects.

Producing Places

Cities are erected in specific ways to project identities as well as to provide the means for its residents to sustain themselves and interact with one another through their participation in various social roles (cf. Hannerz, 1980, pp. 101-103). These roles allow people to maintain different positions in the establishment of social identities and to negotiate contestations of the meaning of social space.

In Palmer's Crossing, perceptions of the value of space are related directly to the community's history and development as well as a change in the social climate of the South as a cultural region following the Civil Rights movement and desegregation. Since Hattiesburg was a city erected to partake in the expansion of the lumber industry through the implementation of railroad systems, the establishment of the social meaning of space in Hattiesburg as well as Palmer's Crossing has much to do with economic and industrial growth.

Merrifield (1993, pp. 521-523) distinguishes the ways in which people produce space (i.e. give space meaning) into two categories that are useful to determine the roles people play in embedding cultural value within it. The first, a representation of space, refers to the ways in which historical and economic processes change the physical look and feel of the cultural landscape. The second, representational space, relates to the ways in which people interact with their established representation of space, if and how they contest that

representation, and the effects of that representation on the lived experience of residents. Since human perception contributes to the formation or creation of space, particularly to the establishment of a place as a specific and bounded point in space, a shared ideal is required to create both a physical and ideological concept of what a place should be and what it should look like. In this way, the production of space is explicitly linked to the exercise of power, since those with the most political momentum are more likely prone to become the primary actors in the physical manufacture of space (cf. Duncan, 1993).

For Palmer's Crossing, the physical landscape has been a direct result of the community's relationship with Hattiesburg. Prior to its annexation in 1991, the town reserved some autonomy in matters of new infrastructural and industrial development, but it still relied heavily on the municipal services (sewage, water, and gas) provided by Hattiesburg. Because of the events surrounding desegregation, the community maintained a strong community identity centered on its own autonomy, but economic underdevelopment persisted throughout the decades after merchants and business owners moved out of Palmer's Crossing into the city. As a result, annexation occurred at a time when Palmer's Crossing had lost much of its authority on the (re)imagining of its own environment as a result of prolonged economic contraction.

The city of Hattiesburg, however, did not just take in Palmer's Crossing in out of good will. Political motivation for annexing the community came primarily from a demand for the location of a heavy industrial sector which bounds the neighborhood to the southern and eastern sides. Located there are lumber mills,

food-processing plants, and other industrial enterprises. Since Hattiesburg relied upon the use of these industries, the city chose to annex the Palmer's Crossing industrial area to gain direct access to those companies and their tax base. This area was annexed in the first of two waves; the industrial area was incorporated in 1991, and only after a lawsuit instigated by the Concerned Citizens of Palmer's Crossing – the neighborhood association group – was the residential area of Palmer's Crossing also annexed into the city later that same year.

Since then, the production of space in Palmer's Crossing has been largely governed by the city of Hattiesburg. Contestations of the value and meaning of the landscape have been issues for the neighborhood association as well as city planners. As with most politically-charged contestations, a compromise must be made, and while the city is indeed helping the neighborhood in some areas (i.e. bringing new development initiatives), it is not fulfilling its responsibility in others (i.e. providing comprehensive municipal and infrastructural services).

The tug-of-war between the city and the community embodies a power struggle that is more deeply embedded in modernist scientific and philosophical discussion than is immediately clear. As scientific progress wove into the fabric of cultural and social productions of space following the Enlightenment in the 18th century, philosophies of space (and the meanings people give to spaces), lost potency to the discussions of what space is and what it can become in economic and monetary terms (Foucault, 1980, p. 149). In Palmer's Crossing, their community was annexed for economic reasons: they had existing lumber and industrial plants which were frequently used by Hattiesburg businesses. Yet the

residents of Palmer's Crossing have received few benefits from the increased demand for their industrial sector.

Commodifying Space

Since the mid-1800s, capitalism has played an integral role in the modern conceptualization of space and place in America as evidenced by expansion from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific. This capitalist conception of space in our own country persists today, and is compounded by global and transnational development of economic superstructures that characterize the current worldwide marketplace. A post-modernist interpretation of traditional economic structures has provided a major theoretical foundation for conceptualizing space in this type of interconnected economic environment. In this sense, space is perceived simultaneously as the area in which people live and act, as well as the places wherein commodities are produced and consumed. These two phenomena often occur in the same points of space, especially in urban environments. However, while economic motivations are certainly a part of the ever-transforming concepts of space, it is not the sole motivator for those transformations.

For some, a Marxist approach was favored for much of the 1970s-1990s (cf. Harvey, 1991[1973]) as a way to integrate the social motivations of capitalist development into geographical and sociological analyses of space and place. However, this approach has often been dismissed as solely a product of Western scholarship, and has been accused of "[providing] a fictitious sense of place" (Johnston, 1991, p. 132) by one more vocal naysayer. While this critique is valid,

since Marxist approaches are often overly deterministic and lack a local (versus global) voice, the fact remains that political motivation in the development of spatial meaning is not only present, but ubiquitous – especially in Western societies where land is valued as a means by which one may make a living. To use a common buzzword in anthropological studies, the distinction between the geographical and anthropological interpretations of space in economic terms is the apparent lack of agency. Marxist geographical literature does not often suggest that humans the ability to behave either within or beyond common cultural parameters.

Affect

Because human behavior is often more difficult to extrapolate than the structural phenomena often surrounding economic development, affect – human emotions and their resulting behaviors – is approached less frequently in geographical literature on space and place. Here is where anthropology may contribute to the literature with individual histories and perspectives – as I plan to do in the following chapter. However, in both disciplines, often only a single case study is used to refer to more normative or theoretical shortcomings in the analysis of spatial transformations. Given constraints of both time and scope, I am not exempt from falling into this trap, unfortunately.

To return to the point, the focus on affect is lost because it requires a broad discussion of social change, ethnohistories, and several detailed accounts beginning with "I think," "I feel," and "I suspect" – terms not widely accepted in social science communities. When coupled with historical documents, censuses,

and surveys, a clearer image of the lives of people in the city emerges. Because affect is usually accompanied by the specific social and historical developments in an individual's or a group's past rather than detached structural or institutional series of events, it contributes subtle and complex perspectives of gradual social change. Nigel Thrift summarizes affect well, regarding it as the ubiquitous excess left over from what scholars typically choose to discuss, which constitutes "a different form of intelligence about the world" (2004, p. 60).

Through ethnography, this intelligence contributes the human element of the anthropology of cities. As such, affect can then be directly linked to a sense of place. This differs from a solely humanist perspective of space because the sense of place does not come from the way people relate their places physically, but rather it comes from the way people feel about their place in the world. It represents the anthropomorphic qualities people project onto places, and their relationships with space (Tuan, 1996, p. 446) as they situate themselves within, distinguish themselves from, and compromise identities between different places. Contrast this with the often deterministic (and, some would argue, nihilistic) early urban sociological literature on the impersonal connections people have with each other and their (built) environment (cf.: Duncan and Duncan, 1957; Durkheim, 1897; Wirth, 1938) and it becomes clear why anthropological theory continued to splinter away from sociological theory. An anthropological perspective furthered the understandings of how humans form a sense of place and also how cities constitute these senses and their contestations.

Since I approached my research believing that it is necessary to view space in terms of the anthropomorphic qualities people assign to it, I began my field work asking how residents of Palmer's Crossing identify what those qualities are, and how they project them onto their place. The best way to address this was through a series of ethnohistories; I wanted to know what Palmer's was like in the eyes of my informants. As was alluded to in the conversations I had with people, the community's political relationship with Hattiesburg and the larger structures of economies and cultural connections were active dialogues within which social ideologies are displayed, examined, debated, and ultimately transformed.

Of particular interest to me were the ways that different actors expressed their ideas of a sense of what Palmer's Crossing ought to be, and how those expressions were shared or at odds with one another. Both the city government and the neighborhood association contest one another at a very public level, but beneath that, I have found there are a number of other entities at play. Among those, racial tension, ideas of prestige, the effect of time on personal activities, and the prioritizing of the tasks of daily life have surfaced repeatedly in my conversation with the residents of Palmer's Crossing

The following chapter will address the broader background relating to the overall senses of place at odds with one another in the community, and how important a role economics plays in these contestations at a public level. At a more private level, I found that they are played out in their multitudes through the

community's transit route – that will be illuminated in chapter five. A discussion of these different arenas of negotiations will follow in the conclusion.

CHAPTER FOUR

"THE MOST LIED ABOUT, TALKED ABOUT PLACE IN THE WORLD"

Without the trappings of the Geertzian footnote – sweeping negative history under the rug to illuminate other cultural nuances – I want to highlight the boundaries erected by shared and individual pasts, spaces, perceptions, and myths. I have attempted here to detangle a cognitive landscape of borders forged by otherness through snapshots of differing perspectives of a single place.

Using several people as key representatives of differing senses of place in Palmer's Crossing, I will present three different but common perceptions of Palmer's Crossing: one, as a place that needs substantial assistance to spark development, usually taken from the perspective that rural people are unwilling to change without being forced to; two, as a place that has changed throughout its history and ultimately improved, but in ways that outsiders and those too young to remember what it was like before desegregation or even annexation are not immediately aware of (I hesitate here to use the cliché, but some people in the neighborhood are certainly of the opinion that the more things change, the more they stay the same); and lastly, the perception of Palmer's Crossing as an ongoing place of contestation – a place worth fighting for in a long struggle towards equality between classes and spaces.

Creating Space

In February of 2011, I sat down with a woman from an architectural development firm to discuss some new subdivisions being built in Palmer's Crossing. My interest came primarily from a growing awareness of urban

development in general and the ways the built environment may reflect social order. Choosing a research area in the city where I lived seemed to be the best way to conduct research while taking classes. It wasn't immediately apparent to me, however, that Palmer's Crossing differed vastly from the idea of Hattiesburg I had formed in the six months I had spent living in Mississippi.

My purpose for speaking with the woman at the development firm was to get a sense of the responses to the new subdivisions that were to be built in Palmer's Crossing. I was under the impression that they were being built to house people who already lived in the community, though I knew they were proposed as part of an aid initiative for those affected by Hurricane Katrina.

It became immediately apparent that the firm had spent a great deal of time recently trying to pass the building permit through the city council. I was shown the community master plans, which laid out a single block of houses with a common area. Each four-bedroom, one-bathroom house was identical to the next (they were modular units, constructed elsewhere, then shipped to their locations), with single car driveways and small yards. The subdivision was designed for maximum occupancy in minimum space, with an allotted number of trees to be planted and light posts to be installed.

What wasn't immediately apparent was why the firm had pushed so hard to get the project to pass. The neighborhood association group, The Concerned Citizens of Palmer's Crossing, was divided on whether it wanted another such subdivision in their area, as many had been constructed there to house people affected by Hurricane Katrina. Some of the more vocal opponents stated that the

city needed to address the current infrastructural problems (pot holes, side walks, sewage pipes, etc.) before erecting new neighborhoods with efficient services. Proponents of the development welcomed the increase in population the new subdivisions would bring.

It appeared the woman was trying to sell me on the idea by explaining that the foundation was a subsidiary of the United Way and that Habitat for Humanity volunteers were ready to work on the buildings. The whole thing could be built in under a year – from land acquisition to the first residents moving in – but they were stalled by the neighborhood association who was trying adamantly to keep the development out of the community, mostly to make a point about infrastructural and municipal services that needed addressing in older parts of the community. The association had effectively established some obstacles the development firm had to overcome before they could secure the permit to build.

The first problem the developers faced was getting the landowners to sell. The woman I spoke to explained that many people from Palmer's Crossing own several acres of land as part of family inheritances. Many of those landowners default on their property tax, so selling would apparently be in their best interest. They had already found several adjacent plots of portions of family-owned land, and that the sale was being thwarted by the neighborhood association. She named one man explicitly, Frankie Benton, as the person who was responsible for that obstacle.

"How can they not see that this is better for them?" she asked me rhetorically. "The community needs new development." This was early in my research, and I was almost inclined to agree.

Our discussion pressed onward, and I asked her if she was from Mississippi. No, she responded. She was from Ohio. She didn't have the "old Southern pride" that "those people" had. Then she mentioned something that changed the way I began to look at the city and its neighborhoods: "They want all their houses to sit at the same height [as the new houses]."

I have come to realize that you can tell how old a house is in Hattiesburg and especially in Palmer's Crossing by how high off the ground it is. In a region prone to flooding, houses are often raised a few inches to a few feet off the ground in an effort to keep water from seeping through doors and windows. In Palmer's Crossing, many houses sit on the ground or just a few inches above – because of its municipal autonomy before it was annexed into Hattiesburg in the 1990s, they did not have many of the building code enforcements the city had. This was another problem the firm faced with the new subdivision; these new residences were to be placed 18 inches off the ground, meaning they would sit high above older residences in the community. In fact, some other similar subdivisions built in Palmer's Crossing as federal aid projects after Hurricane Katrina are located near existing neighborhoods, and they are clearly higher than nearby houses. The contrasts between the two phases of development are striking. Where one block contains new homes, sidewalks, streetlights, and

privacy fences, another has just a few houses, patched with two-by-fours, peeling paint, and boarded windows.

The final problem with getting the project green-lit was the assignment of its prospective residents. People living in Palmer's Crossing were not eligible to move into these new subdivisions; other people from the coast who lost their homes to the hurricane were assigned as the new tenants.

"They just can't see how we're trying to help them," she sighed. In my field notes, this quotation has question marks over "they" and "them." I'm not sure which party she meant to address, but I knew there was a much more deeply rooted contestation of what that space – vacant as it stood – meant to residents of Palmer's Crossing, developers, and the city than just the location of a new subdivision. While I didn't know what shape this would take as my research progressed, I never looked at Hattiesburg, or Palmer's Crossing, in the same way.

Engaging in the Community

Some five months later, the first day my research partner, Angela, and I spent in Palmer's Crossing during a field session in the summer of 2011 gave us what I would now describe as an improperly elevated hope that we could somehow edge our way into the community. We began at the Palmer's Crossing community center, where a summer camp program was being held for children in the neighborhood who were out of school for the season. There, they could be supervised during the day while their parents were at work, yet this was the last day this program was in session. We asked those volunteers who were not busy

attending to children what they knew about the neighborhood's history, but most said they could not be of any help – most were high school students – but they directed us to two people who would later become key informants over the first few weeks of our research: Ms. Hall, curator of the Palmer's Crossing Heritage Museum just across the street, and Mr. T. F Sullivan, whom we were told to find sitting under an oak tree near the only convenience store on Old Airport Road.

Mr. Sullivan was easy enough to find. As we approached him, he didn't look up from his newspaper, but after we spoke, we had his full attention – briefly. This being late June at the hottest part of the day in the Deep South, he said we should come back at an earlier time, and after the July Fourth holiday. We made that note, and then contacted Ms. Hall.

She returned our call quickly, and we set up a time to meet with her at the museum. Since she now lives and works in Meridian, Mississippi, an hour and a half away from Palmer's Crossing, she had to make a special trip down to Palmer's to unlock the doors for us. She didn't mind, she said, because she had some talking to do with members of the church next door. Ms. Hall, like many former residents of the neighborhood, maintains close ties to the community through church services and community outreach, although she does not live in Palmer's Crossing anymore. She moved to take a job in another city, but her volunteer work curating at the heritage museum keeps her at home in Palmer's.

The museum is a small, single room, cinder block building on Old Airport Road right before the train tracks. It sits across the street from the community center where a historical marker identifies Palmer's Crossing as the site of a

Freedom School during the Freedom Summer of 1964. During that summer, volunteers from around the country would come to teach at Freedom Schools, where programs were designed to educate and empower African-American residents of the South. These programs were intended to make the desegregation process more efficient by creating a sense of racial equality – socializing members of African-American communities to understand that they had the same rights and could have the same ambitions as their white counterparts. The Freedom School in Palmer's Crossing served much of the southeastern Mississippi area, and remains today an iconic historical symbol for Palmer's Crossing's autonomy and sense of service. Ms. Hall seemed to anticipate many questions about the Freedom Summer, and was unsure how to answer when we instead inquired about the neighborhood's economic past and the nature of its annexation into Hattiesburg.

Like many buildings in the neighborhood, the museum had no central air conditioning. The heat inside was nearly as bad as the July heat outside, and Ms. Hall handed us some old newspapers to fan ourselves while we were indoors. As my partner collected data about companies and people mentioned in the newspaper clippings and posters on the walls, I asked Ms. Hall what life was like in Palmer's when she lived there just a few years before.

"I'll tell you, I liked it better before they put that railroad right between my house and the road that leads to [the museum]. They make it so inconvenient to get around down here."

The stretch of railroad in question was built after the neighborhood was annexed as an extension for the old lumber routes that are used to connect the industrial areas in the southeastern corner of the neighborhood to Hattiesburg's train yards, where goods could then be shipped elsewhere on existing tracks. The building of that railroad essentially bisected the community. While one major road, Old Airport, remains which runs east-to-west through much of Palmer's Crossing, no new roads have been built since to connect the two places.

"It makes it harder, you know, for the folks that take the bus." By this, she meant that people often had to walk along or across the tracks to get to the bus stops in the southern portion of the neighborhood.

"Is that how most people get around here," I asked, "on the bus? Where does that route go?"

"Back into town, you know. Places where the people need to go."

I made a mental note to ride that bus route. Before I moved to Hattiesburg, I had looked into the bus route to see if it would be effective transportation since I did not have a car. Upon arriving, however, it became clear that here – a city with few sidewalks and road shoulders – a car is often needed to get to necessary locations. The bus routes did not service my neighborhood, and biking down the two-way streets did not appear to be the safest way to commute, so I ended up buying a car after six months. Thus, I found it surprising that Palmer's Crossing residents relied heavily on the route. It must have been more comprehensive than the other routes, I thought.

We thanked Ms. Hall for her time and got contact information for her son, who lives in Hattiesburg, for future reference, then cruised back down Old Airport Road toward the highway in hopes of catching Mr. Sullivan under the oak tree where we had seen him just a few days before. On that particular day we did not find him there. Out of viable leads for more information, we continued driving back "into town."

Things Looking Up

We found it difficult to speak to residents during the hot, rainy summers that are apparently common in southern Mississippi – and, driving by, we looked suspicious. Nonetheless, we did it every day. In Palmer's, driving by slowly means you're an outsider. Most people who go there have a destination in mind. Not many wander into the community, since it is cut off from much of the rest of the city due to the few roads linking the two places.

The residents of Palmer's Crossing spend much of their time outdoors – again, not many have air conditioning – and this summer, like every summer in southern Mississippi, was brutally hot and humid. As we cruised slowly by the neighborhood grocery across from the oak tree looking for Mr. Sullivan, all we saw were the closing doors to porches as their tenants went inside to ask who keeps driving by in that old BMW. Our attempts at a friendly wave were often met with confused faces, and we had learned to just laugh off our painful exclusion and persist.

It was late July, and our field summer was drawing to a close. Mr. Sullivan would be right there under that tree, he told us, glancing first over his glasses at

the two white girls taking notes, then back down to the Metro section of the Hattiesburg newspaper. The holiday came and went, and then it began to rain.

The problem with finding people in Palmer's Crossing is that they make it known when they want to be found. You won't find them in the rain, surely, and we didn't find Mr. Sullivan. We rode out to Old Airport Road, from Edward's Street to the railroad tracks by the Heritage Museum, every single day for 27 days. At first we drove slowly, as if he would appear simply because we were looking. Then later we sped up, because it had become any other daily task awaiting completion. Finally, on July 28th, 2011, we found Mr. Sullivan under the oak tree wondering if we girls had forgotten about an old man.

Mr. Sullivan is something of a historian. He reads the newspaper front to back and has an incredible memory with an almost encyclopedic knowledge of Palmer's Crossing and Hattiesburg. I have always envied people with that ability to recall the past; I myself have to write everything down in order to remember what was said or done. As he spoke about the ways the neighborhood has changed, I wrote feverishly to keep up and my partner recorded the conversation.

The 1950s and '60s were tough, he said, right up until "the law [Civil Rights Act of 1964] passed." Jobs were hard to come by. Some people were employed at the local lumber company (Mr. Sullivan worked there for a while), while others worked construction jobs in Hattiesburg or at Camp Shelby, a regional National Guard base. Some families tended small garden plots of six to twelve acres of land, but didn't sell their crops for profit. If a local family had a business, they usually could not or would not hire outside of their immediate kin

groups. According to Mr. Sullivan, most of the residents of Palmer's Crossing were on some sort of welfare at that time. Juxtaposing the roads and new buildings that Palmer's residents were constructing just a few miles away in Hattiesburg, Palmer's Crossing had a few dirt roads and shotgun houses, but everybody "had their own space."

In the middle of the 20th century, there were more places to go in Palmer's Crossing. The neighborhood was fairly self-sustaining, and although people were generally poor, they got what they needed by work or by favors, and most of what they needed could be found in their area (except, it seemed, jobs). On Old Airport Road there was a grocery store run by Old Man Hudson that would later turn into a successful regional chain called Hudson's Treasure Hunt which now specializes in overstock merchandise. Back then, though, they just sold food, including some that Mr. Hudson's brother grew in a nearby farm just outside of Palmer's Crossing on the other side of Highway 49 where many white-owned farms were located. Mr. Hudson worked with the community residents, allowing people to pay off tabs at the end of the month or whenever they got paid. His was the only white family in the neighborhood, and they too were poor until the company became successful enough to move out of Palmer's Crossing into the city. Many people I spoke with that summer talked about Mr. Hudson with great respect. Ms. Hall recalled, when Angela asked if he was *the* Hudson of Hudson's fame, that the neighborhood essentially "died with him."

Such was life in the middle of the 20th century in Palmer's Crossing. By the mid- to late-1960s, many of Palmer's Crossing's African-American residents

were finding it increasingly difficult to find work in the area. Several eventually moved to the Northeast or Midwest to try their hand in automotive and industrial fabrication. Those that stayed behind continued to wade between periods of employment and unemployment, looking for work when it was available and relying on each other when it wasn't.

Today, 20 years after annexation, circumstances are similar. Most people are on some form of federal aid. Work is still difficult to come by in the immediate area, but the bus route has helped improve that situation somewhat. People are still working in Hattiesburg and coming home to Palmer's Crossing at night, but "that's just the way things are around here," Mr. Sullivan told us.

"You know, it's changed, but not much. Things were different then, but they're better now. We still have problems, of course, but things are much better now," he assured us. "It may not seem like it to you, but things here have improved. I got hope for us yet."

Things Need to Get Done

We were getting close to the end of the summer field session and running out of people to speak to in the community, so I pulled out the card Ms. Hall gave me with her son's contact information on it. She didn't give me his real name, but said he goes by Babiboi, and that he is a local musician. I dialed the number and awkwardly confirmed whether or not the person with whom I was speaking was indeed Babiboi. It was, but we could not chat for long. He had some errands to run that day, and said he may not be of the most help to us, anyway. "But I know a man – he can take care of y'all." He gave me the number for Frankie Benton.

At the time I remembered that I had heard that name before. The woman I spoke to at the architectural firm mentioned a man who was a major obstacle in green-lighting the development project. I think I even wrote the name in my notes originally as "F.D." as if that would mean something to me later. Oblivious, I called this Frankie Benton to ask for a short phone interview. No, he said. We should just come by the house that afternoon.

We arrived at his home just off James Street, in a part of Palmer's Crossing we frequented less often than the Old Airport strip. His home was large and quite nice – it stood in contrast to many other homes in the area we were used to seeing. However, the smell of runoff from an industrial wastewater lagoon lingered heavily in the humid, mid-summer air. The "Hattiesburg smell," as locals like to call it, emanates from this general area around James Street, where a number of food product factories are located. Wastewater lagoons contain the runoff from these factories, and on particularly humid days, the smell travels for miles. Mr. Benton's home and business are located less than two minute's drive from these plants.

After knocking, Mr. Benton – a very tall, older man – opened the door to let us in. A wonderful contrast to the terrible smell outside hit us immediately. Something good, fried, and Southern was cooking. He waved at a couch for us to sit and went to go check on the food on the stove. He returned quickly and insisted (for the first of many, many times) that we stay for dinner. We declined, feeling we had already interrupted his family's Friday afternoon. He sat in a leather recliner at one end of the living room and leaned back. Looking at the

photographs on the walls and tables in the room reminded me of being in the heritage museum. People and businesses that had long left the community were featured alongside photos of entire families from decades ago. He allowed us a moment to take in our environment before finally sizing us up.

"You're doing a project for school, are you?" he asked. I realized I hadn't quite explained to him what we wanted to discuss.

"Yeah," I replied. "Our Masters' theses."

"And you want to know about the Civil Rights movement?"

"No, actually we were hoping to talk to you about the annexation, maybe the neighborhood association..."

"This is the fightin'est place down here... Palmer's Crossing is just like Mississippi: the most lied about, talked about place in the world."

"How do you mean?"

"People ain't got no clue what they talk about when they talk. The mayor says one thing, he do another. The state representatives say one thing, they do another. The residents, they say one thing, and everybody doing something completely different. Nothing get done if you do it like that. That's why we got two associations in the neighborhood, see? Some people do both, that's why nothing get done. You need to get organized to get things done down here. Lord knows we got things need to get done down here." He looked at his hands and smiled to himself. "They say I'm a hell-raiser."

"Are you?"

He laughed, maybe at us and the way we stopped fidgeting and stopped writing when he went on his brief complaint.

While not a native of Palmer's Crossing, he did grow up in a rural part of Clark County, Mississippi, northeast of Hattiesburg, bordering the Alabama state line. In the 1950s, he came to Palmer's Crossing to work on the Camp Shelby construction project. He ended up meeting a woman there and moved down to marry her.

He has been a part of the Concerned Citizens of Palmer's Crossing for the past 25 years and has spearheaded a number of legal disputes, especially regarding annexation and infrastructure. As a contractor himself, he feels like the city should take more initiative to improve the existing amenities like pipes and roads that run throughout Palmer's Crossing.

The impression we had of him was that of a bureaucrat – he had a determined disposition and nuanced awareness of public policy – although he didn't hold an elected office. He is one of few people in Palmer's Crossing that the Hattiesburg city council, land developers, and government employees – including the mayor – know by name. He is a regular fixture at city council hearings as well as an oft-cited "voice of dissent" in the Hattiesburg American newspaper, known particularly for his bold, frank language. Hence the "hell-raiser" epithet, I presume.

Everything in Palmer's is a fight, he said, from the plumbing to the legislation. It all stems from a lack of representation. He likened Palmer's to the American colonies before the revolution for independence from England.

Palmer's Crossing residents pay Hattiesburg taxes, but do not receive the services the money is supposed to pay for, although the city is also receiving money from the federal government to build roads, lay pipes, and patch streets.

The legacy of the past and the pride with which residents express their autonomy persist as part of an idealized vernacular history. This creates a gravity which pulls some individuals into a position of advocacy for current residents and for a sense of place in the community. Mr. Benton is one such advocate for the community. While it isn't his birthplace, he calls Palmer's his home, and he feels it is his responsibility to make sure the people there have a voice loud enough to be heard by someone who will listen.

More importantly, he is a product of Palmer's Crossing. The community's history, its decline, and its current struggles are all components of his personality, and he channels those components in every city council meeting he attends. His description of Palmer's Crossing was one which resonated with me – one which I have taken as the title of this chapter. As he described it, Palmer's Crossing is the most lied about, talked about place in the world. What he means by this is not that the community is defamed or that it is somehow the subject of envy or contempt. Rather, he means that Palmer's Crossing is enigmatic. Many of the community's problems – particularly those which Mr. Benton has assigned himself to address – are not easily reducible to a simple solution. I will return to this point later, however, in my conclusion.

Senses of Place

The three perspectives presented here concern the neighborhood as a community in need of assistance, a community whose progress is subtle, and a community in need of an advocate. Clearly, there are overlaps between these perspectives. For instance, all three reflect an awareness of buildings and the built environment – housing, companies, and infrastructure. In this way, the built environment has in many ways defined its character.

However, these perspectives all diverge when they approach the community's relationship with Hattiesburg. The first implies that the city of Hattiesburg (or even state or federal agencies) carries the economic and infrastructural burden of Palmer's Crossing. The second suggests that it still is quite autonomous, but that it is historically linked to Hattiesburg by the pursuit of jobs and work. The last proposes that Hattiesburg has not fulfilled its end of the bargain of annexation, that Palmer's Crossing is being taken advantage of for its industrial resources.

Interestingly, each of the residents that we spoke to were quick to describe how Palmer's Crossing differs or is separate from Hattiesburg. This was typically explained as a stark difference in the community's socioeconomic position compared to the rest of the city. None made mention of any other part of Hattiesburg – whether a formerly autonomous place or not – that may have undergone similar processes leading to some sort of economic inequality, despite the fact there are several autonomous neighborhoods in the city other than Palmer's Crossing.

Although the city is composed of many annexed places, for Palmer's Crossing residents, the whole of Hattiesburg is grouped into one singular, oftentimes faceless entity. The sense of community in Palmer's Crossing has in some ways amplified since annexation, possibly in an attempt to cope with the incorporation into the city, and into the larger urban environment they had lived apart from for so long.

Because one of the outcomes of annexation was the establishment of a local bus route to bring residents into Hattiesburg, providing them access to the goods and services they need which are not present in the neighborhood itself, I believe the bus itself is the manifestation of that feeling of otherness felt in the community. Residents who use the bus (and many who do not) hold its service in high esteem as a valued and necessary addition to the community. However, they are bound to the ways in which the city needs to run the bus as a business, binding them to the hours in which the bus runs as well as the locations it serves. Thus, full "incorporation" is not achieved by the residents who rely on the transit system, and their social boundaries are enforced by the bus routes themselves.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRANSIT

Hub City Transit

The public transit system in Hattiesburg, Hub City Transit (Fig. 4) is run by the city whose job it is to match federal funds provided to maintain service by the Federal Transportation Administration. It has been in service since the middle of the 20th century, but the Palmer's route was only implemented after the neighborhood was annexed in 1991 (Larson, 2000). Since its inception there have been no changes made to the route (Larson, 2002). In 2009, a private assessment company was hired by the city to establish the efficiency of the route – primarily in terms of its monetary expenditures and the quality of the service provided to riders (City of Hattiesburg, 2009). One conclusion this report made was that the Palmer's Crossing route ought to be discontinued because of its relatively low ridership; more money is spent keeping this route in service than it actually brings in. Mayor Johnny Dupree, however, whose political platform stresses the importance of access and infrastructure, is heavily invested in the neighborhood's accessibility, and did not allow the assessor's recommendations to be fulfilled.

Without prior knowledge of the 2009 assessment of the transit system, Angela and I conducted a similar project in October of 2011 to see how people were using the Palmer's Crossing route. A few months before, in the summer of the same year, we spoke to a number of people in the neighborhood who all

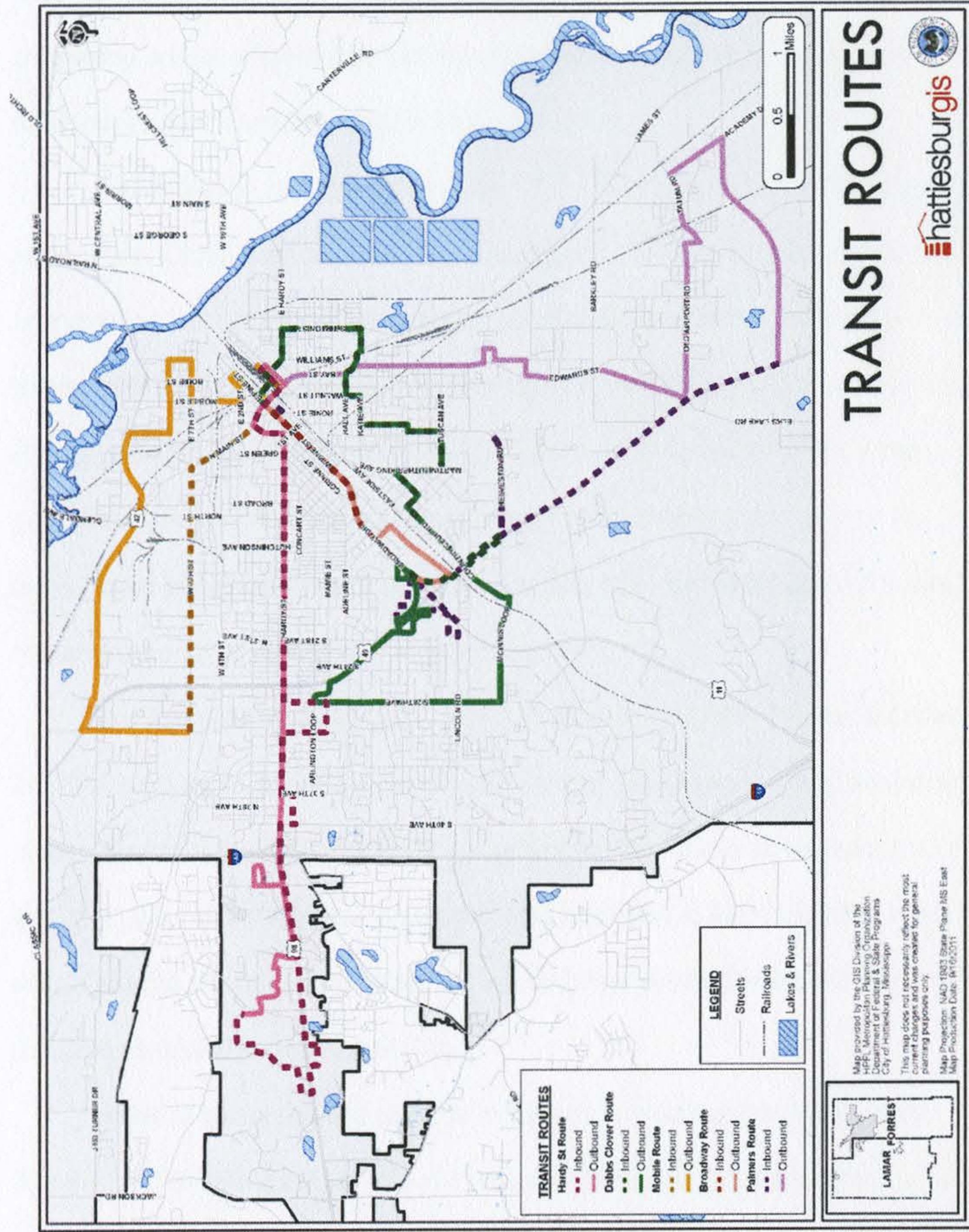


Figure 4. Transit Routes. Each color represents a single route. Dashed lines indicate inbound, solid lines indicate outbound. "City Maps," Hattiesburg GIS, 2012. Copyright 2011. Adapted with permission from the author.

alluded to the importance of the Palmer's Crossing bus route to help people overcome a lack of personal transportation as well as the need to access businesses and services outside of the community.

According to bus drivers and the city's Geographic Information Systems supervisor, Chris Carr, we were the only people to have considered from an anthropological rather than a business perspective how the route was impacting the lives of its riders. Although the number of people who use the bus route in Palmer's Crossing is not a statistically significant proportion of the local population, this type of transit-based research is an important means to understand how some residents are choosing to overcome a lack of personal transportation and strong community economy.

Because the route (Fig. 5) was intended to integrate Palmer's Crossing into Hattiesburg to spark economic growth and development, and because of its clear impact on the neighborhood according to the residents we spoke to that summer, the transit project I designed was intended to illuminate the ways in which people used the bus to determine whether or not the expected economic integration was actually happening.

A list of questions we used to initiate conversation can be found in Appendix C of this volume. We did not use the list as a survey, and in many cases, we were able to only hit on two or three specific inquiries. Most of the time, after only one or two questions, bus patrons continued to talk to us about their perceptions of the efficiency of the route as well as the impact the route had on their lives.

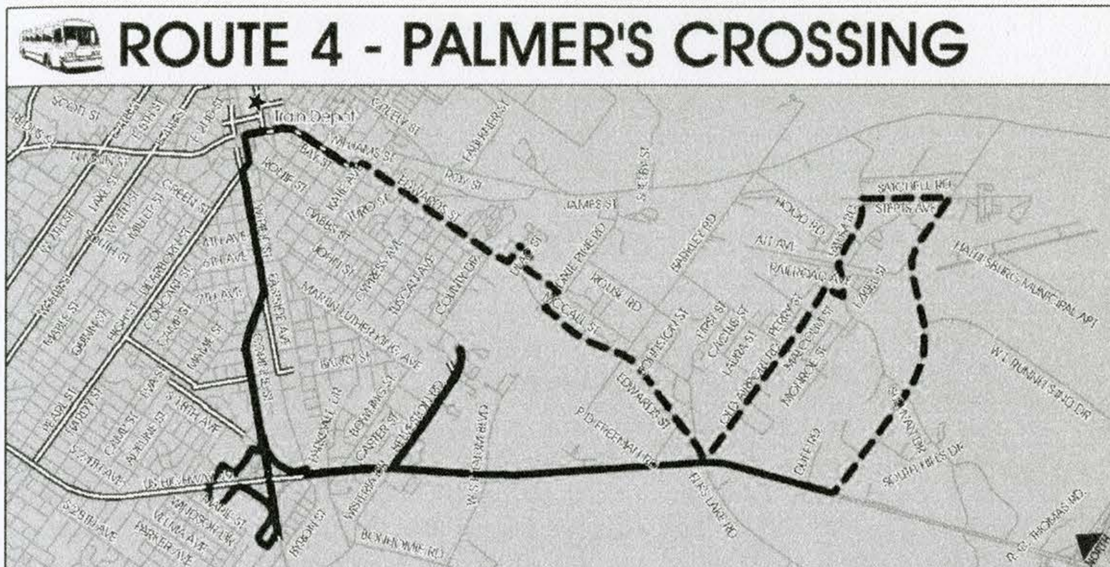


Figure 5. Palmer's Crossing Route. In contrast to full circuit map, dashed line indicates outbound, solid line indicates inbound. As well, note that north is not vertically oriented here. These inconsistencies are the original author's and are for the purposes of image size and shape. "City Maps," Hattiesburg GIS, 2012. Copyright 2012. Adapted with permission from the author.

Over one month, my research partner and I took alternating shifts, scheduling our presence on the bus to cover the entire daily circuit (7 AM to 12 noon and 2 PM to 5 PM) at least three days per week for every week of the month. Together, we spent nearly 90 hours on the bus and observed approximately 91 distinct riders. Of these, we spoke to 38 individuals – besides the bus drivers and transit system employees. Data collected included notes from our informal interviews, locations at which people got on or off the bus, and if they required transfers to get to where they were going. As not all riders (particularly non-regular riders) were comfortable speaking to us, and given the allotted time and the nature of the route as minimally used compared to others in the transit system, we feel this represents a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the Palmer's Crossing route on its riders.

Patrons of the Palmer's Crossing Bus Route

Patrons of the transit system are residents of Hattiesburg with limited to no access to personal transportation. On the Palmer's Crossing route, the riders are predominantly African-American, both employed and unemployed individuals. Many people use this route, although not all of them are from Palmer's Crossing. Compared to the other routes provided by Hub City Transit, the Palmer's Crossing route is the least frequented route. For this reason, the line runs shorter hours than other routes, and takes an extended service break in the middle of the day. The other three bus routes run from either 6 AM to 6 PM or 6:30 AM to 6:30 PM with no breaks in service.

During our one-month bus research, we concluded that most of the riders were recipients of federal and/or state social services. However, I did establish a difference in the types of businesses and services residents of Palmer's Crossing used compared to riders who were from other parts of the town. Palmer's residents most often accessed retail businesses, grocery stores, pharmacies, municipal services, banks, and the transit station for transfers to other routes. In contrast, those who were not residents of Palmer's Crossing used the public transportation system to gain access to specific social service facilities located along the route, including low-income medical care, a Salvation Army, and a local food pantry. While one explanation for this observation could be that Palmer's residents could simply walk to these nearby social service initiatives, this was neither confirmed nor denied by observation or conversation with bus riders.

Overall, the bus route is adept at providing access or transfers to all riders, regardless of where they are trying to go along the route.

A thorough and compassionate system of radio communication between drivers of each route ensured that no rider was left at a location where he or she could not be picked up, provided it is at least close to an established bus route. In the same vein, bus drivers do not enforce bus stops. If a rider must get off somewhere, he need only mention to the driver where he is going and the driver will ensure that he gets off as close as possible to his stop, regardless of the presence of a city-sanctioned bus stop at that place. In fact, I was later told that many “official” bus stops (which are marked in a layer of the transit map on ArcMap) are unmarked with signage on city streets.

When we asked what could be adjusted to improve the transit route in Palmer’s Crossing, the riders who answered almost unanimously agreed that weekend service would be nice, but not completely necessary. A few expressed a desire for the route to run later in the day and without a break in service. While the route takes holidays and scheduled maintenance days, it consistently runs on time, even in severe weather. In southern Mississippi, where heavy rainfall is a frequent problem, this detail makes this route incredibly beneficial to public transit users, although dealing with the weather then becomes another issue to riders must overcome.

There were several distinct groups of riders on the Palmer’s route, each with their own reasons for using the transit service. These reasons are, in order of frequency, (1) a lack of personal transportation or legal means to drive a

personal vehicle; (2) dependence on the bus to find jobs or go to work; (3) transfer to the Palmer's Crossing bus access very specific locations along the route, such as low-income medical clinics, the Salvation Army, and a local food pantry; and (4) support of the route. Groups 1 and 2 are commonly referred to as the "regulars" – people who use the route at all times of the week, month, or year. The distinction between these two groups is blurry, and Group 2 may actually only be a subset of Group 1. Groups 3 and 4 are more irregular, and tend to use the route only during specific times, usually on a biweekly or once-a-month cycle. Below is a more detailed breakdown of each group's specific use-patterns.

Riders who Lack Access to, or Adequate Coverage for, a Personal Vehicle

For the majority of riders, the route served simply as a ride to places they needed to go to conduct daily business – grocery stores, shopping malls, banks, doctor's offices, and billing offices for city services. Many riders did have a friend or family member who could help bridge the gap when they needed transportation while the bus was not running (on a weeknight, weekend, holiday, or scheduled maintenance day). A few riders even had their own personal vehicles, but rode the bus because they could not afford gas or auto insurance – reserving their cars for emergencies only. In many cases, people would simply plan their errands, appointments, and leisure trips around the transit's hours of operation. Many people who rode the bus commented that they had to frame their personal schedules largely around the times and places that the bus operates. Several people are left having to walk across highways or back into

town when the route completes its daily circuit if they are not done with their affairs.

Riders who Use Transit for Employment Purposes

Other riders stated that they used the bus to look for work, and one woman in particular said she wished the transit system extended further out into the more affluent neighborhood of Oak Grove where she may be able to find a better job than the ones available on the current transit system. Because of the time it takes to transfer from one route to another, she said she had an easier time making it to work when she sticks to just one route (in her case, the Palmer's Crossing route), although the right amount of money could tempt her to spend more time in transit. Everyone who used the bus for work (with the exception of two temporary workers from the coast who held jobs that fit snugly into bus hours) mentioned that it was particularly difficult to frame their work schedule around the bus schedule – in addition to framing the bus around their personal schedules. Additionally, many riders who were employed still relied on some form of federal aid to make ends meet.

Riders who Access Specific Locations along the Palmer's Crossing Route

A relatively small group of people used the Palmer's Crossing route specifically because of the location it serviced, versus other routes. The local Pearl River Community College was among the most frequented of these stops and residents and non-residents of Palmer's Crossing alike used that particular location. Also frequented along the route was the Rural Health Initiative Clinic, which is located on Old Airport Road, just west of Edward's Street. Lesser used

services include the Edward's Street Fellowship Center and food pantry, which is not located in Palmer's Crossing, but in the adjacent community of Irene Chapel; the Hattiesburg Clinic located on the Highway 49 commercial corridor; and the Salvation Army shelter just north of Palmer's Crossing on Highway 49.

Riders who Use the Route Simply to Support it

This was a small group of individuals who paid the 50 cents to get on the bus, ride for one full circuit and chat, then get off where they got on. These people were interested in supporting the route because they saw its presence as necessary and vital to the neighborhood rather than riding it to get to a certain location. One of these individuals mentioned that he also liked to take the time on the route just to talk to people, implying that the neighborhood itself did not have its own public social space. Another made it a point to ride weekly, if not just to give his 50 cents and let the bus go on without him.

Drivers' Thoughts

The bus driver for the Palmer's Crossing route, Glen, was also incredibly helpful in illuminating some of the nuances of the riders. He knew most of them (and us) by name, and maintained good relationships with many people after seeing them daily. Glen gave me the first breakdown of the rider categories mentioned above when I began to ride the bus in early October (in his words, there were "regulars, and non-regulars; people who need it and people who don't; people who come from somewhere else, and people who just get around like we would in a car"). He has been driving the route for about three years now,

and his estimate is that the route averages from 40-50 riders per day, of which around half are "regulars". My observations reflect similar numbers.

After he overheard my conversations with riders, Glen opened up to me more about his experience driving that route.

"It's about time they had someone start asking people what they think around here," he said. I am not sure he was aware of the assessment done in 2009 (at the time I was not), but the purpose of that evaluation was to analyze efficiency from a business perspective. Glen is well aware that although the Palmer's Crossing route is the least profitable in the transit system, it was among the most important because it provided legitimate assistance to those who absolutely relied upon it. He and the other drivers tried to cater to these riders as much as possible, passing along information about job openings or apartments for rent, and offering advice when asked. And while the bus is rarely late, sometimes people are. Glen had a knack for making up for lost time and getting people to where they needed to be, occasionally pushing the rackety old bus to maximum speeds to get a rider to work or school on time.

For a short time in the middle of our research month, Glen was out on a fishing trip and another bus driver filled in for him. Gary, usually the driver of the Hardy Street route, the most frequently used and profitable route in the transit system, was able to talk to my research partner about what he saw in the Palmer's route that he did not see elsewhere. He reiterated the social nature of the bus, stating that it was its own community. The riders and drivers feel a social obligation to help one another. For the drivers, that means not adhering

strictly to the bus stops and in some cases the bus route path in order to get people where they need to go.

The riders represent an underprivileged population and the bus system should, in his eyes, exist to serve them as much as possible. Because the routes predominantly follow commercial streets and occasionally meander into residential areas (Palmer's Crossing is one such of these areas), the drivers often get to see both the private and public sides of the riders –where they live, work, and conduct their business. There is little secrecy between the riders and the bus drivers, and as a result, they learn quickly to trust one another. This is one way the transit system effectively assists the bus riders who must learn to rely on public transportation to address their own needs.

Although the bus route is effective, there is a more complex issue which is building beneath a rather simple expedient solution. The businesses and services that the bus riders rely upon are oftentimes not found in their own community. These include everyday places, such as grocery stores, which riders must use the bus to access if they do not have private transportation. This creates a demand for the bus service and the bus is designed to address these demands. In so doing, the transit system itself is increasingly reliant upon a portion of the population with minimal income to sustain it. Simultaneously, the riders who are putting money into the transit system are not investing in their community economy because their accessibility is often relegated to locations outside of their neighborhood. It may seem counterintuitive to those who have not been regular bus riders themselves, but it is easier and often more

convenient to take a bus elsewhere to conduct business since it reduces walking time and provides additional space to carry things (consider this scenario with groceries), and is a more social mode of transport. Thus, the bus is simultaneously addressing the problem of a lack of local economic development by providing access to specific businesses and services that riders need as well as stifling any potential economic development in their community, essentially by being effective at providing access.

One way to address these more deeply embedded problems of economic underdevelopment in Palmer's Crossing as well as the financial strain the route puts on the transit system as a whole is to promote the bus as an alternative mode of transportation or extend its services to provide access to more people. Gary mused briefly about the possibility of extending the route east to the nearby city of Petal, north to the Hattiesburg-Laurel regional airport, or south to Camp Shelby, but conceded that while such changes could make the route more profitable, it would be at the expense and convenience of the current riders who rely on the bus to get to locations in a timely manner. Rather ominously, he concluded that the Hattiesburg government officials will "cave to public pressure" to either amend or maintain the routes in order to satisfy the electorate.

New Approaches

A couple of months after concluding research on the bus, I had coffee with Chris Carr, who works for the city as Hattiesburg's GIS supervisor. He had recently been tasked with riding each of the city's bus routes to assess their ridership and efficiency, confirmed for me that the patterns I was seeing were

really there. While he doesn't have a formal background in ethnographic methods, he was as aware as I was that the problems of accessibility and spatial inequality were a defining feature of the Palmer's Crossing route – and Palmer's Crossing's geographical location as well.

He told me about the transportation assessment made in 2009 which concluded that the transit system is losing money with the Palmer's Crossing route, suggesting that it ought to be cut to save the city money in the long term, but that the mayor would not allow that to happen. However, it was clear to Chris and myself that there are changes that could be enacted in terms of the route's geographical course that would benefit the transit system overall. For instance, by incorporating the nearby industrial complex on the service path, more riders may have access to different job options (and present employees may find an alternative mode of transportation in the bus). Another option is to eliminate some small areas along the bus route that are not used. Eliminating portions of routes is a last resort however, because once small parts are cut, larger parts may be cut as well. Chris' work will move closer to a more efficient geographical route for Palmer's Crossing and Hub City Transit in general, and his recognition of the complex social issues surrounding the transit system in Hattiesburg makes me hopeful that his proposals will be beneficial for the riders as well as the city.

Another large issue which may provide a potential solution to some of these problems that we both saw with the transit system is the lack of advertisement of its presence. While this is clearly not a problem for Palmer's Crossing, where many people are intimately familiar with the transit system, more

advertising among more populous parts of town could boost the ridership on other routes enough to float the relatively unprofitable Palmer's Crossing route. The city would indeed like to increase bus ridership, and is willing to provide access to more places, but it is limited by varying degrees of interconnectedness in terms of communication throughout the city. Mailed circulars are cost-prohibitive to produce and distribute, but not all residents of Hattiesburg have access to the internet or, as in the case of Palmer's Crossing, even television. A compromise may be to use a variety of advertising methods at the expense of a portion of federally provided funds, but this would then mean another service would suffer some type of loss. While increased ridership could be accomplished by providing transportation to city social functions, such as downtown arts and music festivals and athletic games at the University of Southern Mississippi, it would mean the city would have to spend more money on operation in terms of labor hours and vehicle maintenance, as well as increase its current, almost non-existent budget for public relations advertising.

Conclusion

In sum, the transit system is not utilized by a large portion of the population of Hattiesburg. Ironically, it relies on already poor people to support it financially. Rider demographics consist mainly of those on some form of public aid, who use federal services to pay for necessities such as food and medicine. Based on the major points of interest along the bus routes, the city is trying to provide people with low-cost access to some basic necessities. But in its attempt to keep the cost of riding the bus low (currently 50 cents per trip), the city is

actually paying far more per rider than is economically viable for the Palmer's Crossing route.

As a result, those who use the transit system to gain access to jobs and economic opportunity in Hattiesburg are often stifled by the course of the routes and the time it takes them to get from one point to another. While they often do have greater access to jobs than in their own neighborhoods, they are limited in their ability to find adequate employment in areas where economic growth has been either slow or nonexistent.

For the city, the best financial course of action would be to take into consideration the conclusion of the 2009 assessment report and cut the unprofitable Palmer's Crossing route out of service. Yet the mayor's dedication to the neighborhood rightly prohibits this from becoming another instance where the economically impoverished are denied the ability to connect their homes and the places where they conduct their business simply because they do not have access to personal transportation.

This problem is clearly more complex than it would appear. The city vis-à-vis the transit system is not intentionally stifling Palmer's Crossing's economic integration into Hattiesburg because they are providing the access the residents need to businesses and services. However, this is only an expedient solution to the larger issue of reliance upon aid programs as a result of chronic lack of economic stimulation. This lack of community economic stimulation is perpetuated by the effective addressing of the demands for access to economic enterprises outside of the community through the bus route. Thus, the problem

is cyclical and self-sustaining, making it incredibly difficult to solve. The problem transcends the bus route, however, yet the bus is an adequate manifestation of the medley of problems which feed into economic underdevelopment.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary

Deconstructing senses of place through community identity is central to understanding the ways in which the built environment transforms and is transformed by perceptions of space. Annexation – the incorporation of small communities into a larger urban center – modifies these perceptions over time, ultimately resulting in the mediation of local identities through the constraints of city planning and development

Since desegregation in the 1960s, the community of Palmer's Crossing has been slowly integrating into the larger urban center of Hattiesburg, of which it is now a part. While the neighborhood used to be its own autonomous municipality, it has historically been linked to Hattiesburg socially and economically. However, counter-intuitively, the community's economy has been slowly diminishing as integration into the city has increased. According to residents, Palmer's Crossing has largely been dependent on federal and state assistance. This has only exacerbated since desegregation, when many community-based businesses moved out of Palmer's Crossing to join the larger economy of Hattiesburg, where black and white merchants and shoppers could commingle. Five decades later, residents of Palmer's Crossing now have only a handful of local businesses available in their community. This has had a negative impact on the ability of many residents who lack personal transportation to shop or find work within the neighborhood.

Meanwhile, Palmer's Crossing remains relegated to the "outside" of the city – both geographically and socially. The community is the southernmost boundary of Hattiesburg, separated from the dense urban center to the north by large expanses of land formerly owned by families for farming and lumber harvesting. The presence of industrial zones further isolate the residential area of Palmer's Crossing by city zoning code mandates requiring these enterprises to have a large amount of space between them (Land Development Code Ord., Hattiesburg, MS, 64.04, 1989). These industrial zones are also responsible for a distinct unpleasant smell which has likely also stifled growth in the area which could serve to connect the city to the community.

Socially, Palmer's Crossing residents also create and maintain a boundary between themselves and residents of the city. Because of its historical autonomy, Palmer's Crossing residents maintain a distinct heritage and identity which they feel distinguishes them from residents of Hattiesburg. This does not imply that they feel isolated from the city at large, but instead they highly value their community's history separately from their relationship with(in) the city. Yet the relative geographical isolation from the city center has imposed a different mentality of "otherness." Residents maintain their social separation from the city while simultaneously engaging in the city's society and economy. This social separation is projected in a complex sense of place. Residents of Palmer's Crossing often oppose development in the area based on their ties to the neighborhood as a distinct place within Hattiesburg. Usually taking the form as another social service initiative proposing to build in the area – because land is

cheap and spaces are wide open – the residents, and particularly Frankie Benton, have chosen to play up socially sensitive subjects to help thwart these initiatives. Often, these take the form of opposition based on racial (Mees, 2006), or class-based (Larson, 2001) segregation, but tension seems more explicitly related to different values on senses of place than these specific social issues. However, they certainly play a role in the political discourse in the community.

Palmer's Crossing as a physical place carries meanings for its residents which do not always translate into the language of the city, which tends to perceive land in terms of its potential economic value rather than a socially constructed place. The city would like to see development take advantage of the community's natural resources, such as lumber, as well as their current infrastructural and zoning parameters – particularly by emphasizing industrial development. Residents, however, are more conservative in their initiatives. For them, the neighborhood as a built environment should reflect the social sense of place as well as address their economic needs. Ultimately, the problem of economic underdevelopment is further complicated by the negotiations between the city and the community regarding what type of development could and should happen there.

These divergences are mediated at a public level through the conflicting interests of the city council and the Concerned Citizens of Palmer's Crossing. In Palmer's Crossing, where development is a major issue (Maute, 2003; Smith, 2005), these contestations often result in further economic stifling. Take for instance the amount of opposition the woman at the development firm I spoke to

told me they had experienced, just in attempting to get the permit to begin the project. For this reason, compromises on development are often slow-moving. Sometimes, no compromise can be made, and a political decision outweighs a social negotiation in the interest of progress.

On a more private level, the problems which these negotiations aim to address are manifested through public transportation in the community. The bus route was established as a means to integrate the community and the city (Larson, 2002). A lack of community-based economic opportunities motivates residents to use the bus route to access economic enterprises in the city. For them, the bus is a means to overcome the limited economic opportunities in their own community. As a result, the bus route is an efficient way for riders to address their needs. However, in so doing, they (riders as well as the transit system) are detracting from economic growth within the community. While it may seem counter-intuitive that an effective transit system is perpetuating economic inequality between Palmer's Crossing and Hattiesburg, this is the reality which is occurring beneath the expedient solution the bus provides to residents. In light of the relatively low profitability of the Palmer's Crossing route, and a possible threat of its elimination, these deeper problems are beginning to surface. Efforts thus must be undertaken to address this larger issue of economic development at the community level in order to provide an adequate solution to the problem of dependence upon an unprofitable bus route vis-à-vis a lack of commercial growth in Palmer's Crossing. Considerations for addressing this issue are complex and beyond the scope of this paper, but some suggestions follow.

Underdevelopment

The transition between the community's economy in the 1950s and before, where commercial endeavors were largely a product of family-based specialty businesses that were run by kin groups to the post-1950s integration into the larger regional economy, is reminiscent of modernization processes. Herzfeld (2001) describes modernity in this sense as a "kind of identity," wherein "notions of privilege, wealth, and knowledge" are the means by which adaptive strategies incorporate prior techniques for sustaining social (including economic) identities, and how these identities change to address new demands (pp. 39-39). For Palmer's Crossing, integration into the larger urban area became necessary for the community to overcome its economic struggles. Yet this has not been an easy transition. Urbanites in Hattiesburg had long been accustomed to the dynamic economic development in the city, while the formerly-rural residents of Palmer's Crossing had previously maintained a specific set of skills (i.e. construction, lumber production, etc.) which tied them to the urban center. Thus, Palmer's Crossing residents maintained a different set of priorities regarding economic development. Throughout the decades, the enterprises in which Palmer's Crossing residents participated have been slowly diminishing as the economy of Hattiesburg moved away from lumber production toward an economy centered on health care, and higher education. This has precipitated in Palmer's Crossing residents looking for work in the city in other ways – usually through labor markets such as mechanics or retail.

Additionally, an obligation to the community's heritage has proven difficult to maintain in light of recent endeavors for economic development in the area. Many residents have moved away from the community, city, or state to pursue other economic endeavors. As the population in the neighborhood declined, so too did the catalyst for economic growth within the community.

Underdevelopment in the neighborhood is predicated upon the effects of desegregation – an effort which should have leveled the ability for African-American communities to prosper, but has in this case led Palmer's Crossing into economic decline. This decline is further compounded by the community's sense of pride, and their explicit demand to create new development in ways that promote and perpetuate the existing community identity. That identity stems from prior autonomy, yet that autonomy has been a major detriment to their prosperity. Thus, the singular "issue" of underdevelopment is actually a series of highly complex, systemic issues of development, further complicated by the additional pressure to abide by existing community beliefs and values (Fig.6).

For the past decade or so, development has usually come in the form of social service initiatives via federal and non-profit aid initiatives. While some scholars (Massey and Denton, 1993; Oakley and Logan, 2007) have studied the relationship between low-income areas and a high number of social services (i.e.: homeless shelters, food pantries, etc.), they have often found that there is no correlation between these phenomena. The argument rests primarily in the

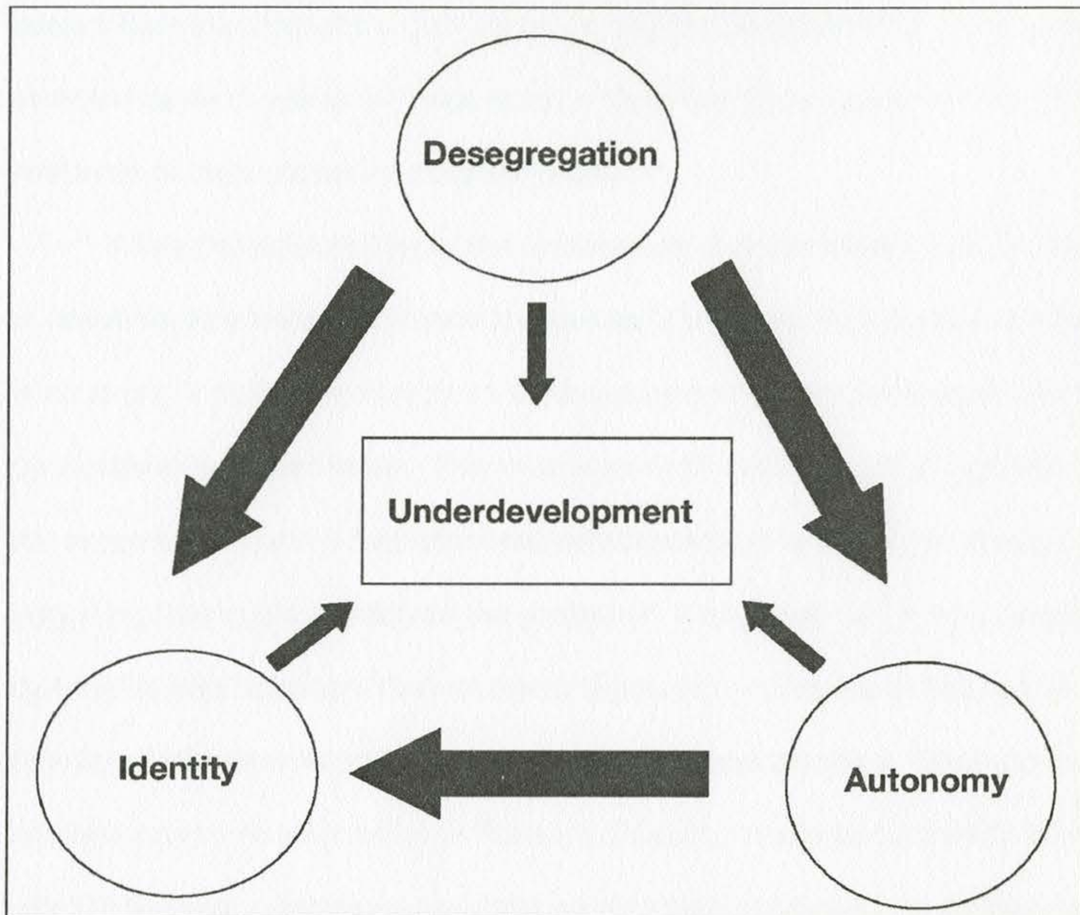


Figure 6. Flow chart detailing components of underdevelopment. The issue is inherently complex.

contention that wealthier residents in affluent neighborhoods have the power to halt the establishment of these services in their neighborhoods. Problematically, much of this data comes from census blocks and tracts, which may not correspond well with the communities in question, as is certainly the case in Palmer's Crossing. As well, many of these studies are undertaken in very large cities, such as Chicago or New York. This undermines the sense of community that is often amplified in smaller cities. In Palmer's Crossing, a low-income neighborhood, residents have proven that they can successfully halt these initiatives if they so choose. For them, development is allowed if it does not

detract from the neighborhood's sense of place or social identity. Thus, they exercise as much power in these political decisions as is expected from affluent residents of more exclusive neighborhoods.

While this does not imply that scholarship in larger cities on the placement of social service initiatives is incorrect per se, it suggests that community identity is as strong a political motivator as the supposed monetary persuasion exercised by wealthier neighborhoods. This is an important social aspect to highlight for the argument at hand – that economic development is stifled by integration (the very thing that ought to address the problem). It suggests that simply developing *more* is far less important than developing *properly* – properly in a sense that the development coincides with community identities and priorities. One way to address economic stimulation in Palmer's Crossing would be to identify the specific types of enterprises residents want in their community, in addition to those which they use in other parts of the city that could have correlates established in their own neighborhood.

Outspoken residents like Frankie Benton and members of the Concerned Citizens of Palmer's Crossing have been central to these negotiations between the city and the community. As a means to mediate the ideals upheld by the community in terms of the importance of their sense of place, these negotiations have proven invaluable to preserving the identity of the neighborhood – a central priority to community members. Residents of Palmer's Crossing do not fall neatly into the category of suburban black residents "without history" (McDonogh, 2006, p. 476). Quite the contrary; Palmer's Crossing's history has set it apart

from the city of Hattiesburg, and they exercise the right to maintain that history in these negotiations of space. Therefore, the relatively common (although extreme) belief that peri-urban "fringe" (Qvistrom, 2007, p. 269) areas are threatened by the dissolution of the independent identities as a result of urban encroachment (ibid.) simply does not fit with the case at hand. The community is largely threatened with a rapidly depleting population as a result of a lack of economic opportunity in the area since businesses in their own neighborhood are few and the Hattiesburg economy is saturated with college students (a source of cheap, part time labor) as well as professional-level occupations. Furthermore, the added stipulation for some residents to find sources of work which correspond to the times during which the local bus runs creates an additional challenge to overcome.

The added burdens of being poor in a poor neighborhood result in a "concentrated poverty" which Kneebone, et al (2011, p. 2) describe as an especially difficult situation where individuals are affected by their own poverty as well as the lack of access to specific resources and economic mobility as a result of living in an impoverished area. They argue that this phenomenon has become pervasive in suburban and peri-urban parts of the South and Midwestern United States – stating that Mississippi metropolitan areas are among the most affected (p. 19). Their comparative assessment has shown that living in concentrated poverty increases health and safety risks while decreasing financial security and economic mobility (p. 3).

Palmer's Crossing appears to fit this mold, as the effects of life in a low-income area are compounded by increasing reliance upon the economy of the city. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to address the potential effects of concentrated poverty on health and safety in this community, a clear correlation has been found linking this phenomenon to the inability of many residents to support themselves financially. In Palmer's Crossing, a lack of local (community-based) access to jobs and businesses has resulted in the dependence upon extra-local (city-based) services. While the residents have expressed their opinions about what type of development can and should occur in their community, it would seem that desirable development is stifled by its chronic status as a low-income neighborhood; the risk of investment may simply seem too great. Federal and state aid initiatives and low-income housing are comparatively lower-risk endeavors than commercial expansion, especially when the transit system can "address" these issues by moving residents out of the community to conduct their business.

Commuting

Through the transit system, the problems with economic development in the community become clearer. Many riders use the bus route daily to work and address their daily commercial needs. In so doing, they are pouring money into an economy that does not reciprocate by developing in their community. In reality, the accessibility that is offered to Palmer's Crossing via the local bus route perpetuates this lack of development by considering the problem "addressed." However, as the patrons of the bus system who rode just to

support it suspected, the lack of profitability of the Palmer's Crossing route means that this expedient solution may not be as sustainable as is necessary to continue "addressing" these problems.

In addition to these more structural economic problems, riders of the bus route also experience added burdens of lengthy commutes into and out of the city, thereby reducing the time they could be spending doing other activities. In a society where time is as precious a commodity as material objects, this further reduces the desirability of Palmer's Crossing bus route riders as potential employees because they must schedule their availability around transit hours. One woman on the bus made this point especially clear while trying to find work along the Palmer's Crossing bus route, "I try to say I can work from this time to this time, not on weekends, but I'll work every hour I can," and I get told, 'Yeah, like you get to make your own schedule.'"

While some riders do see their time in transit as a means to socialize, for the most part, there is only one person on the bus other than the driver. Each route takes one hour to complete a full circuit, and Palmer's Crossing is the half-way point on the route. While waiting to arrive at destinations uptown, the scenery can be boring – comprised of empty and industrial landscapes leading into commercial sprawl along a metropolitan highway corridor. After many trips, the familiarity with the route alone makes the trip seem longer. Many people use the time to rest or read; the driver even brings newspapers and magazines for the riders to peruse while they travel. I found myself often staring out the windows waiting, often for an hour or more, for someone else to get on the bus,

not only to collect data, but just to have someone to talk to. Yet even then, when another rider was picked up, I was often scrutinized. As the white girl with tattoos and piercings sitting in the back row taking notes and photographs out the window of the bus, I looked strange and out of place there. Eventually, riders yielded to my presence, and we were able to talk. I spent only a month riding this bus route, but for many of the people I spoke to, the boredom associated with waiting an hour or more to get to a destination was a regular part of their daily routine.

Additionally, I spent only parts of days on that bus route. I never became close enough to most residents to actively engage in their private lives – and they did not want me to. My position was clear: I could ask my questions, they would answer, we could have good conversations about anything we wanted, but at the end of the day, I had to leave. I had to go back to my part of the city and think of new things to talk about next time I came back "down" to Palmer's Crossing or back on the bus. I could always come back, but I had to come back with something. Otherwise, there was no point in my being there. Field work for me was a series of arrivals and departures, tasks and errands, trips and traveling – and while doing this research, especially on the bus, I had the audacity to become bored.

At first, I felt I was doing ethnography incorrectly. The scenes in ethnographic accounts that made the greatest impressions on me – Laura Bohannan drinking beer and discussing *Hamlet* with Tiv elders, Phillipe Bourgois sharing Colt-45s with heroin dealers in Harlem – seemed like such a far cry from

the type of “field work” I was doing, and not solely because I have never had a drink with my informants. It was not until much later, after I had begun a lengthy writing process, when I realized that I had come there to study how Palmer’s Crossing was different from the rest of Hattiesburg only to find out that my otherness to them was far more profound, and it was through my otherness they were able to express their own perceived differences from the city.

Conclusion

My time in this city has always felt temporary, and for all intents and purposes it is that, but for Palmer’s residents, their space demands permanence. It became apparent that we viewed the same place in different ways, not only economically or infrastructurally – as my thesis sought to prove – but fundamentally representative of different meanings. We, the residents and I, had erected a boundary between us. It was only through the otherness the residents imposed upon me that I could understand, and appreciate, those different meanings. In that sense, I have only now arrived in this place.

Much can be done to improve the community’s economic viability and in so doing, create a physical reality worthy of the sense of pride and heritage that comes with the place of Palmer’s Crossing, but clearly, there is an end to the amount of work I can do here. I am grateful other members of the community, both within Palmer’s Crossing and Hattiesburg, are engaging in similar research. To be sure, if anyone had an answer to the problem of inefficient economic development, they would suggest solutions. As it stands however, the depth and complexity of the issue makes unraveling its specific problematic elements

incredibly difficult. Since it is intrinsically related to the humanist perspective of place in Palmer's Crossing, an anthropological interpretation of the space is warranted. Yet such an offering has not appeared to simplify the issues at hand. It is important to remember, however, that counter-intuitive problems often do not have simple solutions. Cultural issues need not always abide by the confines of Occam's razor.

APPENDIX A

IRB PROTOCOL 12012605

THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.6820 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/irb

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
  Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **12012605**
PROJECT TITLE: **Assessing the Impact of Sociospatial Inequality in Palmer's Crossing, Mississippi: A Study in Peri-Urban Marginalization**
PROJECT TYPE: **Thesis**
RESEARCHER/S: **Kelly Davila**
COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Arts & Letters**
DEPARTMENT: **Anthropology and Sociology**
FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**
PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: **01/31/2012 to 01/30/2013**

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair

APPENDIX B

IRB PROTOCOL 11091904

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
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NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

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- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **11091904**
PROJECT TITLE: **Assessing the Impact of Spatial Organization on Social Inequality in a Rural Southern Mississippi Community**
PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation**
RESEARCHER/S: **Kelly Davila**
COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Arts & Letters**
DEPARTMENT: **Anthropology and Sociology**
FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**
PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: **09/26/2011 to 09/25/2012**

Lawrence A. Hosman — 9-28-2011

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D. — DATE
Institutional Review Board Chair

APPENDIX C

IRB PROTOCOL 11091904

Reference questions

List of possible questions to ask participants[1]

1. How often do you use the bus system in Hattiesburg?
    a. Do you mind riding the bus?
2. How often do you use this route?
3. Do you use other routes regularly?
4. How long would you say you spend on the bus on any given day/week?
5. What would make this bus route more effective for you?
6. If you could change one part of this (the Palmer's Crossing) route, what would it be?
7. Do you have an alternative form of transportation for when the bus is not running or to go to places where the bus does not go
8. What places do you need to visit regularly that can you not access by bus?
    a. How do you get there?
9. How much time do you spend getting to places on a bus?
    a. How much time would you think you'd spend getting there if you did not have to take the bus?

[1] These questions are the only ways in which researchers can solicit information from participants. However, any additional information given by participants will be used in ethnographic analysis of the data. Participants will be informed of this during the consent process.

APPENDIX D

IRB PROTOCOL 11060202 [2]

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NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **11060202**
PROJECT TITLE: **Piney Woods Ethnographic Fieldwork**
PROJECT TYPE: **New Project**
RESEARCHER/S: **Jeffrey Kaufmann, Ph.D.**
COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Arts & Letters**
DEPARTMENT: **Anthropology & Sociology**
FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**
PERIOD OF PROJECT APPROVAL: **08/30/2011 to 08/29/2012**

Lawrence A. Hosman
Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair

8-31-2011
Date

[2] IRB PROTOCOL 11060202 was issued to Jeffery C. Kaufmann (Professor, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Southern Mississippi) for an ethnographic methods course taught in the Summer of 2011. The author participated as a student and conducted fieldwork during that time under the purview of that protocol approval.

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