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Strategic Neighboring and "Beloved Community" Development in West Atlanta Neighborhoods

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STRATEGIC NEIGHBORING AND "BELOVED COMMUNITY" DEVELOPMENT

IN WEST ATLANTA NEIGHBORHOODS

by

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Under the Direction of Dr. Katherine B. Hankins and Dr. Kathryn Kozaitis

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the phenomenon of faith-motivated actors in blighted inner-city neighborhoods on the west side of Atlanta, Georgia. In merging community development literature with a framework of place, this research explores the role of faith in neighborhood transformation efforts. In particular, it examines the motivations and values of these actors that shape how they conceptualize their neighborhoods and in turn how these values are then inscribed into place. Fewer than 40 strategic neighbors are known to be active in Atlanta's west side; of these 32 participated in the research through in-depth interviews, surveys, diaries and other qualitative research methods. Through this extensive qualitative investigation, this thesis explores the middle-class identity struggles experienced by participants as they reconfigure the social and material spaces of their neighborhoods as they live out their faith.

INDEX WORDS: Christian community development, Place, Class, Neighborhoods, Identity

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INTRODUCTION

The End is my Beginning—T.S. Eliot[1]

At the beginning of this research process, I was not a strategic neighbor. Instead, through this process I became one. In this sense, the finish of this research is truly a start. I now begin as a sinner, a Christian, a social scientist, a white, twenty-four year old female, and as a neighbor seeking to live out the implications of my faith in the context of my neighborhood in the city of Atlanta, Georgia.

In 2008, inspired by my Christian faith to love God, love my neighbor, and confront the injustice and inequalities within the City of Atlanta I relocated to an under-resourced inner-city neighborhood in Atlanta[2]. It was not before long that I discovered I was one among many faith-motivated actors in my neighborhood. Through other faith-motivated neighbors, I discovered that this phenomenon is part of a much larger movement beyond my neighborhood and beyond Atlanta; it is a movement going on across the United States referred to as Christian community development (CCD). My personal experiences in my neighborhood then led me a year later to the Georgia State University Applied Anthropology program in an effort to utilize ethnographic methods to address the injustices and blight that I saw in my neighborhood. As I searched for the "perfect research study" on community development practices, my path serendipitously crossed with Dr. Katherine Hankins, an urban geography faculty member in the Department of Geosciences at Georgia State.

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[1] Eliot, T.S. 1944. *Four Quartets (East Coker)*

[2] I first became aware of these stark inequalities in 2006 while attending a church service at Trinity Anglican Mission in America church. In the sermon there was a reference to a 1 in 3 HIV positive rate in the west Atlanta neighborhood Vine City.

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I intended to ask about her research on Atlanta neighborhoods but forgot my questions when I realized she was studying "gentrification with justice" and CCD. I shared that it was "funny" that I was "doing" what she was researching and she asked me, "Are you a strategic neighbor?" a term she found in the process of her research. Awe-struck and confused by the familiar concept with an unfamiliar name, I replied "I guess I am." Unknowingly, this marked the beginning of a research study and team, in which I found myself as a research subject and a researcher.[3]

I accompanied Dr. Hankins and her research partner Dr. Walter to the Annual Conference of the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) held in Chicago October of 2010 to conduct research on urban ministries employing "gentrification with justice" strategies and on strategic neighbors. During this study, we conducted surveys and interviews with urban ministries and strategic neighbors across the United States. At the close of the on-line survey data collection, 70 strategic neighbors and representatives from 35 urban ministries had responded. In addition, I conducted multiple interviews with strategic neighbors, 32 of whom are located specifically within west Atlanta neighborhoods. As our study developed and through my conversations with Dr. Hankins, a new line of thought emerged on the role of faith in the urban process, as we had come to call it--one which this thesis aims to explore.

Although there are many aspects to examine in excavating the role of faith in the urban process, in this thesis I focus on class-identity struggles. More specifically, I examine the class-identity struggles of key faith-motivated actors (strategic neighbors), because they reveal the tensions of social inequalities present in contemporary urban life. I argue that community development, when examined through a place-based lens, reveals embedded social class-identity strug-

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[3] I began working with Dr. Hankins and Dr. Walter as a part of The Urban Spatial Justice Research team in July 2010.

gles and contours of faith that are presently sculpting the urban landscape and molding the dynamic twenty-first century city.

Chapter One surveys community development and the emergent sub field of faith-based community development (FBCD). This review draws attention to place and a current shift within community development literature towards an understanding of social capital that draws from Bourdieu (1986) rather than Putnam (2001). This leads into Chapter Two, which concurs that place is a critical framework in the exploration of community development and faith-based community development (FBCD). This chapter discusses the complexities of neighborhood and suggests that it is malleable and open for politics. In doing this, it develops a framework that inserts a "place ethic" into understandings of politics. Then, Chapter Three discusses the importance of the study and provides a detailed summary of triangulated qualitative methods employed in this research and my complex positionality as a practitioner of Christian community development and as a researcher.

Chapter Four begins the empirical section of this study. It discusses what it means to be a strategic neighbor in west Atlanta and reveals an embedded conflict between social class and faith. This conflict is referred to as class-identity struggle and is explored by the next three chapters. In order to examine these struggles and tensions, each chapter focuses on one of three key traits shared by strategic neighbors: (Chapter Five) Faith, (Chapter Six) Place, and (Chapter Seven) everyday life, which encompasses the daily-actions and practices of strategic neighbors. Then finally, Chapter Eight marks the conclusion and summarizes the class-identity struggle of strategic neighbors. It reveals how participants' identities are transformed and how these identities then create new trajectories and configurations of place.

1 LITERATURE REVIEW: EXAMINING "BELOVED COMMUNITY" DEVELOPMENT

"The public mood has detached…There are structural problems…As these problems have gone unaddressed, Americans have lost faith in the credibility of their political system. This loss of faith has contributed to a complex but dark national mood. The country is anxious, pessimistic, ashamed, helpless, and defensive"— April 26, 2011 David Brooks, New York Times[4]

"…the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the beloved community…This is the love that may well be the salvation of our civilization."—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, 1957[5]

Introduction (1.0)

Globalization and neoliberalism have been credited with marginalizing and disenfranchising local communities (Harvey 1996; Kemper and Adkins 2005; Massey; Creswell 2004; Bennett and Hyland 2005). Some suggest that the restructuring of the global political economy has caused "time-space compression" which has produced anxiety, disjunctures, and has "annihilated space" (Harvey 1996). For many, this new phenomenon has caused an onslaught of unintended consequences, rendering space irrelevant, inciting *placelessness* and ultimately perpetuating social inequalities (Harvey 1996; Harvey 2000; Massey 2005; Creswell 2004). However despite a current discourse, that globalization and neoliberalism are "inevitable," many actors continue to resist (Massey 2005).

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[4] Commenting on recent public opinion results from Pew Research Center, "Loss of faith in political system darkens national mood"
[5] *"The Role of the Church in Facing the Nation's Chief Moral Dilemma," 1957*

Current resistance efforts have sought place-based initiatives and local action in the form of community-based development (Hyland and Bennett 2005; Creswell 2004; Massey 2005). In this way, one could argue that efforts such as faith-based community development (FBCD) are a product of what scholars and theorists deem the "spatial turn" (Soja 2010; Massey 2005). This turn suggests that space plays a critical role in shaping social practices, beliefs, and values; and that space is engaged in molding both social theory and social justice in the twenty-first century (Massey, 2005; Soja, 2010). Through the spatial turn, scholars suggest "beliefs, values, internal thought-life, imaginaries, and ethics are what underpin and transform communities and places" (Gerhardt 2008: 912, 913, 926). In other words, these underpinnings are internalized and become identities which are then inscribed in place and are also shaped by place itself. In this way, the spatial turn reveals how critical space/place is for the twenty-first century (Creswell 2004; Massey 2005).

This perspective sheds light on the current struggles occurring for and within place and requires that we interrogate whom urban places and politics serve. In particular, it demands that we examine the growing (or, one might argue, renewed) interest in (place-based) community development within larger urban development efforts. Therefore, it is imperative for emerging fields like community development to draw from a critical engagement with space and place as community developers enact their vision of "social justice."

Community Development in the Twenty-First Century

Community development is a growing field that has attracted the attention of business developers, churches, politicians, neighborhood residents and activists, as well as social scientists and scholars. Within scholarship, social capital (Putnam 2000), a fundamental principle of

contemporary community development, has recently been drawn into question. According to Putnam, in *Bowling Alone* (2001), social capital refers to "ideas that resource skills, like knowledge, reciprocity, norms, values facilitate community members working together to make substantial improvement in the entire community's living conditions" (Putnam 2000, cited by Bennett and Hyland 2005:7). Furthermore, he suggests that the loss of civic engagement in U.S. cities and neighborhoods is due to lack of "social capital." Although scholars do find that the resources identified by Putnam's social capital are relevant and constitute community (Hyland and Bennett 2005), many argue that his ideas fail to explore the real value and meaning of social capital. Furthermore, scholars suggest it is unempirical, lacks rigor, and relies too heavily on midrange theory and experiences (Van Willigen 2005:27; Hyland and Bennett 2005; DeFillipis 2001). As such, scholars are now (re)turning to an understanding of social capital that draws from Bourdieu (1986).

As DeFillipis (2001) argues, Bourdieu's focus on relationships, values, beliefs, and social class offers a critical new lens for community development studies and practices. Contrary to Putnam, Bourdieu's social capital points to social structures, networks, and identities. More specifically, he explains that there is a relationship between macro social structures and micro networks, which ultimately create social class categories and social class identities (Bourdieu 1986). In this way, Bourdieu's social capital is not describing relationships and networks as resources, which they are, but an overarching social order and its social class categorizations.

Bourdieu (1986) identifies three distinct "fields" of capital with different relationships toward class: economic, cultural, and social capital. These "capitals" are then internalized and reproduced through class networks and relationships, through what Bourdieu calls "symbolic capital." These internalized capitals are then manifest in the form of "tastes" and "preferences"

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but also determine to whom one is (or is not) linked, which forges class-stratified networks. These identities are what is then acted out as "habitus" which then perpetuates and reproduces class categories (Bourdieu 2002).

For the purpose of this research, I focus only on social capital as it stands in contrast to Putnam's (2001) conceptualization, because Bourdieu's social capital emphasizes conflicts and the power function of these social class positions and the divisions they create across not only class, but race/ethnicity, gender, socio-economics, or etc. As such, he would not agree with Putnam that there is a "lack of social capital." Instead, Bourdieu suggests that it is impossible to be lacking social capital because we are entrenched in it. Hence, he would argue that social capital creates inequalities and disparities across class-lines by creating internalized class identities.

This insight then shifts studies of class away from examining one's relationship to production to "class identities." In this lens, class-identities are more than socioeconomic; they are "psychosocial," moral, and emotional experiences (Dowling 2009:1; Patico 2008; Hankins et al. 2010). For this reason, Bourdieu focuses on underpinning beliefs, values, and relationships which forge networks and social class categories and identities that perpetuate and reproduce class, unequal power relationships, and the overarching economic forces of capitalism.

Within community development studies, there are debates on the role of these social networks in constituting community. At the moment, scholars debate the importance of internal and/or external networks and how they operate in developing "strong" or "weak" ties (Granovetter 1973). Key concepts of community development focus on "community building" and "community strengthening." Community building is best understood as internal community relationships within development (Van Willigen 2005). Meanwhile community strengthening is best understood as lateral relationships bringing internal networks together with external networks

(Schensul 2005). The focus on lateral partnerships in community strengthening suggest that internal and external networks forge new networks and new possibilities which are pivotal to constituting communities (Hyland and Bennett 2005; Schensul 2005). But in the spirit of Bourdieu, it is not only these relationships and networks which constitute community, it is the underpinning beliefs, values, social class, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and place that comprise these networks in the first place (Bourdieu 1985; Gerhardt 2008; Dowling 2009; Hyland and Bennett 2005). These contours within internal/ external networks are worthy of exploration, because the underpinnings serve to constitute and shape communities and inform how actors engage in community development.

Faith-based community development

In the exploration of these underpinnings of community development, scholars have explored the sub-field of faith-based community-development (FBCD) (Kemper and Adkins 2005; Phillips 2010; Connolly and Brondo 2010; Kline 2010; Pentenko 2005; Kemper and Adkins 2006; Heffernan and Fogarty 2006; Hankins and Walter 2011; Occhinpinti 2005; Bornstein 2005; Occhinpinti, Adkins, Heffernan 2010). According to Heffernan and Fogarty (2010), 18% of U.S. Non-government agencies are faith-based with over 135,000,000 members, over 350,000 congregations, and a large and growing collective annual budget (Heffernan and Fogarty 2010:1). [6] Although not all of these groups are involved in FBCD, there is a growing trend to engage in community development work through formal religious congregations.

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[6] According to Heffernan and Fogarty (2010:1) in the year 2000, US FBOs had an annual budget totaling 80 billion dollars.

Since 2001, faith-based organizations (FBOs) have increasingly been given federal support and funding (Kemper and Adkins 2005; Kemper and Adkins 2006; Goode 2006).[7] In this lens, the growth, budget, and increasing social-service delivery capacity of FBOs make them a powerful entity in community development programs in the context of the neoliberal(izing) state (Heffernan and Fogarty 2010).

Scholars have examined this relationship between FBOs and the government inside the neoliberal state (Adkins, Occhinpinti, Heffernan 2010; Goode 2006; Occhinpinti 2005; Bornstein 2005). Generally, they examine the organizational structures and conclude that there are critical problems with neoliberalism as an ideological framework for caring for marginalized groups. In particular, they state that FBOs are insufficient and do not fill the gap of the receding state. While this is a key finding among researchers, these studies have yet to explore other important aspects of FBOs. More specifically, they leave unaddressed the ethical underpinning, such as faith, that is embedded in these processes and operationalized in community development.

There remains little attention to how the values and beliefs within faith groups shape and motivate their community development strategies and make FBCD unique. In addition, scholars have yet to examine how practitioners operationalize FBCD and what it means for these actors who negotiate market-forces and socio-political structures with their faith beliefs and values. Moreover, although these values and class identities are often invisible, they are, and have been, important dimensions of (faith-based or secular) community development. As a first step in ex-

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[7]An excerpt from Kemper and Adkins (2005), "Faith-based and other community organizations are indispensable in meeting the needs of poor Americans and distressed neighborhoods. . . . [By this Executive Order] there is established a White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives . . . that will have lead responsibility . . . to establish policies, priorities, and objectives for the Federal Government's comprehensive effort to enlist equip, empower, and expand the work of faith-based and other community organizations to the extent permitted by law (President George W. Bush, *Executive Order*, January 29, 2001).

ploring the underpinnings of FBCD, this research will now review the historical legacy of faith and development.

The History of Faith and Development (1.1)

In spite of the renewed interest in FBOs in the neoliberal(izing) state, FBOs have a long history in the United States. According to Kemper and Adkins (2005), faith-based groups have been involved in development and social justice since the nineteenth century social gospel movement. However, at that time these groups focused on "transforming and reforming people… instead of the structures that created and shaped poverty" (Kemper and Adkins 2005:78). This shifted during the 1960s social justice movements and turned toward faith-based community organizing. These movements draw from Saul Alinsky's (1949) *Reville for Radicals,* a manual that operationalized organizing methods to unite Protestants and Catholics to work together on urban issues and injustice in Chicago.

Faith-based organizing was instrumental in movements such as the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, the Watts urban riots (1967), Latin American liberation and reform, and multiple other protests (Kemper and Adkins 2005; Marsh 2005; Connolly and Brondo 2010). Although these movements had various ethical underpinnings, they were all deeply theological and faith oriented. In particular, the American Civil Rights movement was rooted in faith-oriented principles which merged faith and social justice together (Kemper and Adkins 2005; Marsh 2005) using theologies and philosophies, such as "incarnational faith," "Agape love," and the

"Beloved Community" (King 1998; King 1967; Marsh 2005; Inwood 2009). [8] According to

Phillips (2010:17) during the1960s and 1970s, there was also a critical theological shift around

the idea of "mission." As Phillips (2010: 17) suggests, "mission" changed meaning for many

people and institutions of faith and began to focus on "promot[ing] physical and cultural well-

being of people, especially the "community," by emphasizing the community and social nature

of faith. Furthermore, he suggests this social shift transitioned from "colonial theology" to libera-

tion theology and "incarnational faith" (Phillips 2010). In his view, colonial theology focuses on

the soul, devalues material betterment, relies on universal and/or abstract principles, supports

creation and hierarchy as a moral order, and emphasizes charity toward the poor. In contrast,

incarnational faith is defined by "daily lived experiences and social conditions of ordinary people

and communities as the context for living out one's faith" (Phillips 2010:17). Incarnational faith

focuses on the whole person and human experience as social, material, physical, and spiritual.

Informed by social science, rather than philosophy alone, it exchanges charity for justice and

"takes on" structural forces which require innovation, networks, and place-based focuses (Phil-

lips 2010:28).

Theologies of Development and Networks of Faith

Current faith-based development studies suggest that the Christian theological doctrine of

"incarnation" is deeply linked to development (Phillips 2010; Connolly and Brondo 2010). In a

study of faith-based community development on "El Paraja," a Christian community in Nicara-

gua, Phillips (2010) suggests that the theological doctrine of incarnation is what links "faith" to

development. In particular, he finds that incarnational faith fuses faith and action together and

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[8] For a definition of Agape Love, please see glossary in Appendix A.

makes the practice of religious faith and development synonymous. According to Phillips (Phillips 2010:18), in El Paraja, incarnational faith is oriented towards practical and daily living of faith-based values rather than faith-rituals:

> …faith is expressed in relations to others and concerns their community and world…[T]he community's sense of faith is so integrated into its development as a community that it is hard to separate one from the other" (Phillips 2010:27).

Based on these findings, he suggests incarnational faith is a certain kind of faith expression that ignites social action and community transformation in the form of development. Ultimately, this not only links "incarnational faith" to development but marks it a pivotal force.

Similarly, Connolly and Brondo (2010) suggest incarnational faith is critical to faith-based development models. However, they suggest that it is rooted in theology, specifically the "Christian doctrine that Jesus is truly God and truly human" (Connolly and Brondo 2010). They suggest this theological doctrine is traditionally linked to Anglican/Episcopal church denominations which (1) make the sacred and the secular inseparable, (2) are traditional in the Southeast, and (3) treat practices of faith (service, care and mission) as evangelism (or sharing one's religious beliefs and views). In fact, they suggest that incarnational theology and faith-based development are implemented through acts of evangelism (Connolly and Brondo 2010).

In their study of the "Mississippi Model," a FBCD model involving a Mississippi Episcopal church and a Panamanian village, they found incarnational theology was the "clear" link between "provision of social, medical and economic support services and evangelism" (Connolly and Brondo 2010:42). Incarnational theology shifts the goal of Christian evangelism and the "mission" away from conversion and towards "forming relationships and spiritual community as a primary theme" (Connolly and Brondo 2010:42). In this sense, the core of incarnational theol-

ogy includes faith-based development efforts, as they call it "doing" Christianity, which primarily involves "community" and "relationship building" (Connolly and Brondo 2010:46). Ultimately, the transition to incarnational theology shifts faith-motivated actors' mission and overall goals towards community, partnership, cultural exchange, sustainability, local empowerment, and determination to build capacity within communities served (Connolly and Brondo 2010:46).

Incarnational faith and theology is also an intriguing underpinning of FBCD, particularly because FBCD is operationalized through the creation of networks and through building relationships across lines of class, gender, race/ethnicity, economics, etc. According to Kline (2010:140), these networks and relationships are one of the biggest assets that FBOs offer to communities. In his research, he focuses on the social networks and partnerships between an FBO, the Light of Central Florida (LCF) and the Apopka, an under-resourced and marginalized farming population in Southwest Florida. He finds that LCF has the ability to help the marginalized farm-workers because of its "power of networks" (Kline 2010:134-5). In other words, the organization is networked through faith, which includes an array of individuals, churches, and FBOs. Then through these networks of faith, they are able to link the Apopka to medical doctors and skilled healthcare practitioners to whom farm-workers previously did not have access (Kline 2010).[9]

Christian Community Development Association

FBOs continue to grow and become increasingly involved in FBCD. A key component of faith-based community development is the work that is emerging explicitly from Christians. Christian community development efforts are increasingly represented by the Christian Commu-

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[9] But, despite the success of this partnership, he suggests FBOs do not have the ability or resources to maintain long-term solutions and macro-structural changes (Kline 2010).

nity Development Association (CCDA). The CCDA was established in 1989 and is not a single FBO, but an association of 3,000 individual members, 500 interdenominational churches and FBOs in over 200 cities and forty states (CCDA 04/24/2011).

The CCDA philosophy of development first emerged as the "3Rs:" relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution (Perkins 1995). This philosophy serves to integrate faith and development as one pursuit. These tenants, which he articulated in *With Justice for All* (1982), were first developed by Dr. John Perkins after his theology shifted from dispensational to incarnational (Marsh 2005). On the front book flap, Perkins describes each tenant:

(1) Relocation: To be an effective community developer demands relocating to the community in need. We must live among those we are serving. We must become one of them. Their needs must become our needs.

(2) Reconciliation: …We cannot achieve Christ's mission working alone; we must work as a body with each person exercising his or her spiritual gifts as a part of the whole. To do this the work of reconciliation, then, we must begin by being a reconciled fellowship (speaking directly about segregation and racism in the church).

(3) Redistribution: The earth does not belong to us, but to God. We are only its stewards. God provided the earth for all mankind. Economic injustice, then, is simply depriving people of free access to God's creation. Justice is achieved by working with God to share His resources with the disenfranchised of the earth (Perkins 1982).

In particular, he developed these tenants of CCD as a way to meet "three universal felt needs:" "the need to belong, the need to be significant and important, and the need for a reasonable

amount of security" (Perkins 1995:20-21). According to Perkins, (1995:21) "The gospel rightly understood is [sic] holistic" and, similarly, Christian community development (CCD) embodies evangelism, social action, economic development, and justice.

A key tenant to Perkins and the CCDA strategy for CCD is relocation. In *Restoring At-Risk Communities* Perkins (1995:21-22), explains that this tenant is theologically based in the fact that "Jesus relocated. He became one of us. He didn't commute back and forth to heaven…the most effective [practitioners]…will live among the poor…have a personal stake in the development of their neighborhoods;" and later he adds that relocation of faith-motivated actors to under-resourced neighbors offer solutions unlike "programs" which he argues are "poor substitute(s) for what neighbors can do best" (pg. 86).

Perkins then breaks down the "first R" relocation into three sub-categories: Remainers, Relocators, and Returners. These three sub-categories describe the different decisions made by individuals who are participating in CCD: (1) "Relocators" are individuals, usually middle to upper middle class (gentry), who are not from an under resourced neighborhood but move-in as an act of faith; (2) "Returners" are individuals who are native to an under-resourced neighborhood, left to seek a better life, and have now returned to live out their faith in their indigenous neighborhood; (3) "Remainers" are those who did not leave their neighborhoods, have endured the problems, and have chose to stay and be a part of CCD (Perkins 1995). These persons then "live out their faith" in an under-resourced neighborhood in a socially just way, and then implement additional components of reconciliation and redistribution (Perkins 1995; Lupton 1997; Barber 2009). This process serves as an intentional spiritual and physical revitalization plan to create what some Christian community developers call "Shalom" or "Beloved Community."

Shalom and Beloved Community

According to Nicholas Wolterstoff (1983:69-72) in *Until Justice and Peace Embrace,* Shalom is not the absence of conflict but "the presence of right and harmonious relationships imbued with delight and flourishing before the Lord." Additionally, Gornik (2002) adds Shalom is not only what he calls all "faith-shaped urban activity" it is the "reconceptualiz[ation] of the political and social order of the city; it reverses the everyday and localized effects of a global market economy and a history of discrimination and exclusion…a radical alternative for the city" (Gornik 2002:98-99). However, historian and theologian Charles Marsh (2005) suggests that still a greater movement encompasses Shalom and goes beyond "strategic neighboring," FBCD, and CCDA.

According to Marsh, these efforts are deeply connected with Dr. Martin Luther King's concept of the "Beloved Community" (Marsh 2005). He suggests that the idea of Beloved Community is the tangible synthesis of the presence of the church and social justice movements (including the movement embodied by strategic neighbors, CCDA, and FCBD) (Marsh 2005:207). For King, Beloved Community was a social, theological and geographical method to bring about justice and enact social change. More specifically, it operationalizes this change by cultivating human agency, encouraging individuals and groups to stand up and oppose an unjust system of oppressors and oppression, loving oppressors through divine Agape love, and converting one's enemy to a collaborator to build the Beloved Community (King 1967; Inwood 2009). Moreover, in King's own words it was the purpose and "end" of the entire Civil Rights movements: "…reconciliation…redemption…the creation of the Beloved Community" (King [1954]1998; Marsh 2005; Inwood 2009:488).

What is a strategic neighbor?

Within the CCDA, the "3Rs" philosophy is a specific set of actors called "strategic neighbors," i.e. Relocators, a term coined by Robert Lupton, a founding member and long-time practitioner of Christian community development (see Lupton 1997). According to Lupton (2005: 172-173) "strategic neighbors" are "the best thing we can offer an urban neighborhood." He argues that strategic neighbors are different than "urban workers" and volunteers who enter into the neighborhood to "help" and drive back home after their shift (Lupton 2005:172). In particular, he describes them as

> …people who have a deep commitment to loving God and loving their neighbor…they are the frontline troops who go into neighborhoods where good neighbors are in short supply. They buy houses, join neighborhood associations, help organize crime watches, build relationships with neighbor kids, offer support to single moms, take seniors to the grocery store. In short, they are the embodiment of good news…essential to the return of wholeness to an urban community…[they are] committed neighbors who will make the neighborhood their own (Lupton 1997:173).

Strategic neighbors are key actors in FBCD and specifically Lupton's concept of "gentrification with justice" (see Hankins and Walter 2011). [10] In particular, this concept places the faith-based social justice components of the CCDAs "3Rs" alongside market forces. In other words, Lupton suggests that it is both possible and critical to integrate social justice and faith with market forces and urban processes of gentrification. In fact, he embraces market-forces, explaining "There is nothing [as] life-giving or self-sustaining as sanctified self-interest" (Lupton

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[10] For definition of Gentrification with justice, see glossary Appendix A

2005:173). He argues that while there is a risk with the gentry returning to these neighborhoods, but also there is a definite need and problem if they never do (Lupton 1997).

Lupton and his ministry FCS Urban Ministry Collective have operationalized the concept of "gentrification with justice," by recruiting and utilizing strategic neighbors in five Atlanta neighborhoods.[11] As of 2011, FCS is currently focusing on South Atlanta, a disinvested neighborhood and has recruited numerous strategic neighbors to implement its FBCD strategy.[12] However, our broader research study has revealed that strategic neighboring and FBCD are not only happening across the United States, but also among individuals unconnected to Lupton, FCS, or even CCDA (see Hankins et al. 2010).

Marsh (2005) argues that through Beloved Community and incarnational theology draws a link between CCDA's model of community transformation and the grass roots faith-based activism of the Civil Rights movement. His claims are supported by Leroy Barber in *New Neighbor: Invitation to the Beloved Community* (2009). Barber explicitly asserts that "strategic neighbors" or what he terms "new neighbors" are living out the Beloved Community philosophy (Barber 2009) through CCD. Leroy Barber is not only a strategic neighbor, but President of *Mission Year* and a co-collaborator alongside Lupton's FCS Urban Ministries Collective, both of which are Atlanta-based Christian FBOs that recruit and utilize strategic neighbors in FBCD efforts (Barber 2009). [13]

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[11] South Atlanta,East Lake, Ormewood Park, Summerhill, and Grant Park (Lupton 1973; Lupton 1982; Lupton 1997; Lupton 2000; Lupton 2009; Lupton 2010)

[12] It was suggested during participant interviews, from August 2010-January 2011, that there were over 30-34 strategic neighbors in South Atlanta.

[13] For a definition of Mission Year, see glossary Appendix A.

[17] Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. moved his family to Vine City in 1967 [other sources claim 1965] and his widow Coretta Scott King maintained their residence in the neighborhood until her death in 2006. Martin Luther King III continues to maintain the Vine City residence today (http://www.vinecity.net/home/Web%20Pages/AboutVineCity.aspx accessed April 24th, 2010).

As this research study will explore, strategic neighboring is occurring in west Atlanta, an important hub of the "The Beloved Community" and the Civil Rights movement. Throughout west Atlanta are the homes of former Civil Rights leaders, historical buildings, and sites of important meetings and protests. In particular, the originator of "Beloved Community" himself, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, lived in Vine City (one of the studied neighborhoods) from 1965 until his death in 1968.

In close, current research has yet to make the connection or truly explore the underpinnings of faith-motivated actors and how they operationalize and experience FBCD. Although studies have addressed several critical areas of analysis, they primarily focus on the structural components of FBOs, while leaving out the individual actors who enact FBCD. It is my contention that research should explore FBCD in such a way to illuminate the underpinnings and networks of individuals and actors who are enacting FBCD in their daily lives and pursuing Beloved Community. And, importantly, it is critical to interrogate the meanings, experiences, and practices of place that shape and are shaped by faith-based community development.

2 A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE PLACE ETHIC

"Perhaps the extraordinary thing is actually the ordinary…and ordinary things are more valuable than the extraordinary things; nay they are more extraordinary"—G.K. Chesterton[14]

"Politics is when you look out your window"—Adrienne Crawford, quoting Shane Claiborne[15]

Introduction (2.0)

Space

As mentioned in the previous chapter, social justice and social theory within community development have taken a "spatial turn." This turn can be traced to the work of Henri Lefebvre (1991), who conceptualized space in *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre 1991). In his work, he created a framework that explained space was not a "receptacle," but an active agent shaping social action (Lefebvre 1991). Adding to Lefebvre's work, Edward Soja (1980) suggests that space is not only a causal agent but that social actions and space simultaneously shape each other in a "socio-spatial dialectic" (Soja 1980). The formation of the socio-spatial dialectic is critical to understanding the interconnected relationship between space and social practices, is in particular, how social life ranging from macro social structures to everyday, mundane actions shape and are shaped by space.

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[14] Chesterton, G.K. 1995 [1908]. *Orthodoxy.* Ignatius Press: San Francisco, pg. 96
[15] While at CCDA Chicago 2010, Adrienne identified as a strategic neighbor and participated in a focus group as part of the Urban Spatial Justice research study with Dr. Hankins and Dr. Walter.

According to Soja (2010), the socio-spatial dialectic reveals that humans are inherently spatial, temporal, and social and live in the socio-spatial dialectic (Soja 2010). Moreover, in describing the dialectic, Soja suggests there is a "porous" relationship of various external and internal structures and movements within spatial and social practices (Soja 2010:18). Furthermore, as this dialectic engages with the socio-spatial dimension it not only reveals that humanity and space-time are interconnected, but that social inequalities and disparities "disconnect" or disrupt the spatial, temporal, and social interconnectedness of humanity (Foucault 1967).

According to Harvey, space and time are socially constructed, and they are shaped by class and therefore, capitalist relations (Harvey 1996). In fact, this is why he argues that place is problematic. Harvey (1996) explains that because place is a product of capitalism it is intrinsically reactionary and exclusionary. Therefore, he suggests that place reveals the class struggle is inscribed on space and that any effort to resist which does not address "property" and "capital" is a diversion (Harvey 1973; Harvey 1996; Harvey 2006). Although Harvey agrees that globalization and neoliberalism have opened up progressive and universal politics, both addresses neither capitalism, nor its inevitable production of social inequality (Harvey 1996; Harvey 2000; Harvey 2006). In short, for him the only hope for "social justice in the city" is spatial politics that tackle capitalism and underlying class struggles (Harvey 1973; Harvey 1996; Harvey 2000).

However, in contrast Creswell (2004) argues that place is not a diversion but a necessary part of the human experience. He suggests that place is the way humans know and experience the world and that the fixity of place both serves to reveal social inequalities and get at "the center of humanity" (Creswell 2004). Creswell explains that place is made up of location, locale, and the sense of place (Agnew 1987) and also attaches meaning, creates ideas, notions, understandings,

and feelings (Creswell 2004). In this lens, place is not a diversion but is essential to being human and for exploring and understanding the class struggle of capitalism.

Place

In *Global Sense of Place* (1991) and *For Space* (2005), Massey suggests that place is not necessarily a hegemonic product of capitalism or just a way to make social inequalities visible. Although she does not refute these claims, she argues place is created by multiple forces, such as, race, gender, ethnicity, and interconnected relationships which are open for politics (Massey 1991; Massey 2005). Massey understands place as a "bundle," full of varying flows, fluxes, and flexes in space. These various flows and fluxes are numerous interrelationships, which operate at varying strengths and speeds and engender place with multiplicity and contemporanity.

Based on this understanding of space, Massey (2005) suggests that globalization is not causing anxiety and placelessness nor is it "annihilating space" for those attached to place and made vulnerable (as described in Chapter One) (Massey 2005). Instead, she argues that the idea that globalization (global capitalism) and the neoliberal imaginary of globalization are inevitable is false (Massey 2005). Moreover, she suggests that place is open to "multiplicity" and diverse social relationships, which therefore opens place up for "cross-cutting politics," with macro and micro social and political implications (Massey 2005). In this way, place and politics thereby link, through the socio-spatial dimension, the change materiality and social relations of place which require politics, i.e. schools, parks, churches, etc (Hankins et al. 2010).

Operationalizing Place (2.1)

In an effort to operationalize Massey-like place-politics, Susan Fainstein's *The Just City*
(2010) focuses on urban planning policies. Like Massey (2005), she suggests that space and ci-
ties can be gradually reconfigured and reimagined through place-politics (Fainstein 2010). Al-
though other theorists like Harvey and Soja (2010) dismiss Fainstein's contribution because of
her deviation from revolution to reform, she argues that it is also imperative to work to develop
capabilities within the capitalist city (Fainstein 2010). However, Fainstein only operationalizes
Massey-like place politics to form policy recommendations for politicians, urban planners, and
city developers. She does not explore the potential for extroverted place politics for individuals,
activists, citizens, and places like neighborhoods.

Neighborhoods: Place and Space

In order to explore place-politics for the twenty-first century, the potential for neighbor-
hood place-politics must too be explored (Martin, 2002, 2003). In *Enacting Neighborhood*
(2002), Deborah Martin explains that the "spatial identity" of neighborhoods is unclear and sug-
gests that it is both a space and a place (Martin 2002). This, she argues, is because neighbor-
hoods are "enacted by social and political actions," but they are also "a product of larger spatial
organizations" (Martin 2002). To further understand this hybridity of neighborhoods, Martin
draws on Massey-like place-politics as "places of bundled spatiality" (Martin 2002). Expressed
another way, neighborhoods are complex places, constructed by both everyday routines and daily
politics and macro structural forces, i.e. individuals, neighborhood associations/community
groups, the state, etc.

Place Frames to Relational-Place Making

Martin (2003) develops "place-frames" as a framework through which to understand the role of place in contentious politics. These frames highlight the role of external forces, as they influence and shape everyday politics of neighborhoods. In particular, these place-frames examine collective action through moments of conflict and negotiations (Martin 2003). These moments, she suggests, are the only way through which everyday politics of neighborhood become visible to those outside the neighborhood (Martin 2003).

More recently in Pierce et al. (2011) *Relational place-making: The Networked Politics of Place,* Martin's place-frames and efforts to operationalize neighborhood place-politics are brought together. The goal of this work is to connect activism and place, and "draw attention to people and events within the place." They seek to bring to light both the internal daily politics of neighborhood together with external politics and networks (Pierce et al 2011:3). To do so, they utilize place-frames to analyze and dissect the "bundles of spatiality" which constitute neighborhood. Through this lens, they suggest these bundles are made up of place, politics, and networks and fold together multiple scales of place, i.e. individual, local, community, state, etc. (Pierce et al. 2011).

Within network politics, they argue that place-identity remains essential and complex in shaping networks of place and politics (Pierce et al. 2011:5). Therefore, to explore neighborhood networks and politics, they consciously focus on networks instead of "powerful forces" of structural urban capital to pinpoint connections that create place-identity. These imaginaries of place-identity are about two main ideas: (1) the "combination of people and institutions that agree upon and recognize themselves as a part of a shared community," and (2) the "bridging and interlocking shared understanding" in which place and networks are co-constituted (Pierce et al. 2011:5).

In other words, (and reiterating Hyland and Bennett 2005; Schensul 2005) internal and external networks are both instrumental in shaping and forming each other. Therefore, in their view, the bundling of place-making "reconceptualiz[es] place as both simultaneously experienced and participated in" (Pierce et al. 2011:5) by a range of scaled, interlocking networks.

This concept of relational place-making is a process, one which utilizes both internal and external networks, and is effective on multiple scales (individual, community, and urban place) (Pierce et al. 2011:7). Within relational place-making it becomes possible for "the dynamic and radical complexity of place-politics" to cultivate "politics of neighborhood" and achieve greater spatial justice (Pierce et al. 2011).

Spatial Justice and the Potential of Place-Politics (2.2)

Neighborhood-based place-politics are multifaceted because of their ability to cut across gender, class, race, ethnicity, and other issues of identity politics (Martin 2002; Pierce et al. 2011; Massey 2005; Massey 1994; Massey 200; Soja 2010). Neighborhood by nature lends itself to place-politics because it "has the ability to mobilize identity for collective action and neighborhood with the potential to enact place, but is also grounded" (Martin 2003). In this way, neighborhood place-politics can be open and situated without being bound and exclusionary. Therefore, neighborhood place-based politics demystify beliefs that globalization, urbanization of injustice, and neoliberalism are inevitable (Massey 2005; Pierce et al. 2011). Hence, the neighborhood, as a bundle of trajectories, I suggest, has the ability to move towards new spatial configurations, such as Lefebvre's right to the city (1991), Soja's spatial justice and new regio-

nalism (2010), King's (1957) Beloved Community, Gornik's (2002) Shalom, and Fainstein's just city (2010). Moreover, these radical place-based ideals forge "place-politics" and echo what Massey (2005) suggests: that space is open and full of political potential to liberate individuals, organizations, and institutions to create place, which is full of multiplicity.

The problem of place-frames

What remains unknown about the potential for neighborhood place-politics is how they are actually constituted and operationalized. Although relational place-making connects the agency of individual subjects to the daily politics that forge place-politics (Pierce et al. 2011), it only reveals in part how place-politics are constructed and operationalized in neighborhoods. In this lens, it appears place frames may be unnecessarily limiting the further exploration of neighborhood place-politics.

Place-frames potentially become problematic for three key reasons. First, place-frames focus on conflict and moments of negotiation. According to Hyland and Bennett (2005), conflict and negotiation frames reinforce negative images of neighborhoods and perpetuate a problem and deficiency focus that often frames neighborhood as a project and an object of charity (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993, Hyland and Bennett 2005). This in turn fosters a hegemonic, exclusionary, and reactionary treatment of neighborhood as place. Ultimately, this could lead to privileging the role of the external forces over the daily politics of agentic actors, who do not and/or are unable to utilize traditional conflict management and negotiation spaces.

Second, place frames ignore subject positions and the identities of actors. In particular, they make class identities and tropes of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality and how they are experienced invisible. Therefore, this lens does not capture the daily actions of groups that are

devalued by the larger social categories nor does it capture politics but rather only "consensus" (Ranciere 2001). Third and finally, place frames are momentary and too temporal to understand the connection between activism and place and the place-politics of neighborhoods. By looking at small moments of conflict, it becomes impossible to view the multiplicity within everyday life. This makes it also impossible to view the multiplicity within the socio-spatial dialectic and how within the dialectic agentic actors enact place-politics and operationalize place (Massey 2005). Therefore, place-frames never truly reveal the daily politics and relational place-making that occur nor the class constructions that are internalized within the construct of neighborhood. Moving away from place frames could both further open up the potential for relational place-making, as well as cultivate a better understanding of how agentic subjects and place-politics are operationalized inside of neighborhoods. To engage and examine neighborhood place-politics in a way that illuminates these underpinnings it may prove insightful to turn to a new framework.

The "place-ethic" (Hankins et al. 2010) enables a fuller view of daily politics and overcomes this gap. This framework weaves together a synthesis of the socio-spatial dialectic (Harvey 1996; 2006; Soja 2010), place-politics (Massey 1991; 1996; 2005), and relational place-making (Pierce et al. 2011). [16] In particular, it incorporates Ranciere's (2001) "proper politics" and situates itself in the context of daily politics of community development (van Willigen 2005; Schensul 2005). Unlike place-frames, the lens of a place-ethic does not focus on momentary conflicts as sites of relational place-making. Instead, the focus is on how individual actors make place through their notion of how things 'ought' to be and the socio-spatial consequences of their daily lives.

This lens makes the identities, social class, and subject positions of agentic subjects visible by exploring how they operationalize, reimagine, and relationally "make neighborhood,"

through their interactions, internal relationships, and networks. Moreover, this makes agentic subjects in silenced places/spaces and "proper politics" visible (Ranciere 2001). These silenced places/spaces include individuals, communities, and groups marginalized by larger socio-political structures. In particular, this place-ethic draws attention to them as they act to strengthen current capabilities to reimagine and reconfigure space and to cultivate "socially just" places. This is relevant to a theoretical framework of place for the twenty-first century, because it reveals how individuals are harnessing place to resist or engage socio-political structures. Although the place-ethic is not intended to dispel the other frameworks surveyed, it does suggest that to examine actors and agents within urban politics the study of everyday life as politics is necessary.

Interestingly, this echoes yet again the "spatial turn." Within this "spatial turn," geographers and social theorists continue to peel back the layers of politics, revealing internalized values and beliefs which are active forces in shaping political culture and actions. For this reason, the theoretical development of "relational-place making" and the "place-ethic" serves to put agentic subjects and the daily actions of individuals "back on the map."

As described in Chapter One, values, beliefs, and relationships are lived and underpin community development, specifically FBCD. In this lens, the following chapters will draw upon an empirical research study on faith-motivated neighbors who seek to enact FBCD. Since place as a framework provides a lens to both explore faith-motivated actors (strategic neighbors) and how they operationalize neighborhood, it also reveals embedded class identities, through faith values and daily actions which express FBCD. Ultimately, this not only opens up silent spaces and politics, but draws attention to the (potentially) profound place-politics of ordinariness.

3   METHODOLOGY: PRAXIS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Introduction (3.0)

Since 2001's Faith Based Initiative Executive Order, there has been increasing attention to faith-based efforts, specifically in the field of community development (Kemper and Adkins 2005). [17] According to Kemper and Adkins (2005), faith-based community development (FBCD) is distinct from other forms of traditional social capital and assets-based community development (Kemper and Adkins 2005).

> [Faith-based development] does not mean having more, but fundamentally being
> more in terms of quality relationships of life that emerge from a community's
> own cultural traditions…the creation of new cultural, political and economic pat-
> terns and conditions that enhance dignity, critical consciousness, and interperson-
> al communication and cooperating based on the principles of participation and
> community self-determination (Kemper and Adkins 2005:98).

Within scholarship, social scientists have been exploring community development as both a study and a practice. In an effort to "put people first," many have utilized applied and participa-tory, action methods (Cernea 1985; Hyland and Bennett 2005; Schensul 2005; Van Willigen 2005; Lambert-Pennington 2010; Hale 2007; Kline 2010). My research is informed by such ap-proaches and utilizes participatory methods and praxis principles to examine FBCD in inner city Atlanta.

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[17] George W. Bush 2001 Executive Order see page 9.

As I pointed out in Chapter two, most research on FBCD has primarily focused on the understanding the role and organizational structure of FBOs (Kemper and Adkins 2005; Kemper and Adkins 2006; Goode 2006; Adkins, Occhinpinti, Heffernan 2010). However, researchers are now beginning to explore the theological and faith-motivation underpinnings of FBOs and FBCD (Heffernan and Fogarty 2010; Brondo and Connolly 2010; Phillips 2010; Lambert-Pennington 2010). To expand this line of inquiry, my research looks at the role of individuals and how they enact faith-based community development. My research question asks, How do strategic neighbors seek to transform neighborhoods through their faith-based community development practices? In particular, it examines how faith-motivated actors conceptualize and enact place politics through their vision for holistic community transformation, which, I suggest in my empirical chapters, reveals underpinning social-class struggles.

Praxis Principles

In this research I utilize various praxis strategies and principles from Kozaitis (2000), Hale (2007), Van Willigen (2005), and Schensul (2005). Anthropological praxis is defined by Kozaitis (2000) in *The Rise of Anthropological Praxis* as the merger of anthropological methods and practice that are informed under both grand and mid-range social theory (Kozaitis 2000). My praxis principles are compassion, advocacy, and participation. The planning stages of my research design featured Kozaitis's compassion-centered and participatory approach, which ultimately seeks to use anthropological theory and methods to yield positive social change and reform (Kozaitis 2000). These took shape as "praxis strategies" that took into account "activist anthropology." In particular, activist anthropology removes objective distances by "align[ing] oneself with an organized group in a struggle for rights, redress and empowerment and a com-

mitment to produce knowledge in collaboration and dialogue with the members of that group" (Hale 2007:104). This approach directly applied to my position in the research, as both a researcher and a research participant.

Additionally, I was also informed by Van Willigen (2005) and Schensul (2005) in my methods to utilize principles of social knowledge (Van Willigen 2005) and "bonding and bridging" (Schensul 2005). Together these principles focus on cultivating local knowledge that will identify community needs and build community (Van Willigen 2005), as well as utilize community strengthening principles which make research and knowledge accessible to participants (Schensul 2002:191; cited by Lambert Pennington 2010:144).

In reference to the role of faith in shaping the city, social life, and motivating social action, this study research design intentionally evoked nuances of praxis and participatory research in three key ways: (1) to further "democratize knowledge" gained through research by informing practitioners and organizations engaged in FBCD, (2) to serve the three main stakeholders: faith-motivated actors, local neighborhoods, and participants being researched, and (3) to further the role of anthropologists and social scientists in faith-related research. Moreover, these key praxis principles steered my research design toward participatory action research (PAR) methodologies.

Data Sources and Techniques (3.1)

Data Sources

This research brings a traditional research design together with these praxis principles. These principles were implemented throughout the process of gathering, analyzing and reporting data. I gathered data by engaging in four methods of qualitative research: active-participant observation, detailed ethnographic field notes, participant diaries and semi-structured interviews with strategic neighbors.

My data sources included seven west Atlanta neighborhoods, including West End, Westview, Booker T. Washington Community, Washington Park, Vine City, English Avenue, and Grove Park. Although these neighborhoods are all poor neighborhoods, predominately African American, and on the west side of Atlanta, they do have differences. Some have experienced more or less (dis)investment, displacement of indigenous neighbors, drug and prostitution, religious and ethnic diversity, and they have experienced individually nuanced histories. But, despite these differences, one key element they all have in common is the presence of faith-motivated "strategic neighbors."

Strategic neighbors are located in other neighborhoods throughout Atlanta; however these particular places and participants were chosen based on rapport and networks. My focus on west Atlanta neighborhoods evolved as I utilized my own networks in addition to the "snowball method" to recruit participants (Bernard 1997). Many of these networks and relationships were built because I live in the Booker T. Washington Community.

Since 2008, I have been active as a strategic neighbor within west Atlanta. During this time, I have developed a broad network of strategic neighbor throughout my neighborhood, in

Atlanta, and throughout the United States. For this research, I specifically chose west Atlanta neighborhoods because of what appeared to be growing numbers of faith-motivated actors; in addition, I find it compelling to explore FBCD in the historic hub of Atlanta's Civil Rights movement, as west Atlanta was home to some of the movement's leaders. In fact, I was able to interview and identify the first known strategic neighbor and Civil Rights activist in Vine City: Hector Black.[18] More general, this study also provides insight into claims that CCD is historically linked to American faith-based social justice movements (Marsh, 2005).

The Participants

Thirty-two strategic neighbors were interviewed from the seven west Atlanta neighborhoods (see Appendix B, Table 3.0 for full list of participants). Twelve one-on-one and six group semi-structured interviews were conducted. All participants interviewed self-identified as Christians, 31 of 32 said they regularly attend church, and all are motivated by their Christian faith. As a group, research participants represented five denominations: "Presbyterian Church of America," "Presbyterian USA," "Anglican Mission in America," "Evangelical-Non-Denominational," and "Evangelical Covenant."

As a collective, this sample represents individuals from the age of 19-70 years of age and an average age of 31 years old. Of the 32 participants, they self-identified as such: 28 identified themselves as white, 3 identified as mixed race (African American-White, Black-Hispanic-White, and Lebanese-French), and 1 identified as ethnically Chilean. On average, they have lived in their respective neighborhoods for 2.5 years, the greatest length of time being 10 years,

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[18] He lived as a "strategic neighbor" in Vine City from 1965-1967. His interview is not used in the final data set, but his activism in the neighborhood and Civil Rights links FBCD to historical social justice movements.

and the least being 3-4 months. Of this sample, 20 females and 12 males were interviewed, including 17 who were married, 11 of whom had children (only 3 participants had children that were of school age), as well as 15 who were single, without children, and/or not married. Additionally, all but three participants had gone to college, 25 participants had a Bachelor's degree, and 15 had received a Master's Degrees or higher.

At the beginning of the study, 20 participants were homeowners and 12 participants were renters. However, at the close of the study one of the homeowners moved out, as well as three of the five Mission Year team members, who were renters. [19] [20] Additionally, 7 participants said they "had been a strategic neighbor before" at a previous location and were now "trying" again.

The Neighborhoods

Three out of the six neighborhoods studied were targeted in 2008 Weed and Seed anti-poverty initiatives. [21] Additionally, all the neighborhoods resided in zip codes 30318, 30314, and 30310 and were described by participants as "the inner-city" (see appendix B, Figure 3.1 for a full map of west Atlanta neighborhood boundaries and the location of participants). These area codes are 95% African American and have been home to countless poverty and revitalization

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[19] Sally Jeffrey moved out of Vine City at the beginning of 2011; she was interviewed as a strategic neighbor during the research period of 2010.

[20] Colyn Burbank, Joshua Brown-Culp, and Jannelle Fenton moved out at the end of March 2011 when they felt that Mission Year was "too structured" and they wanted to focus on being neighbors in their hometown communities.

[21] Weed and Seed, a community-based strategy sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), is an innovative, comprehensive multiagency approach to law enforcement, crime prevention, and community revitalization. CCDO oversees the Weed and Seed initiative. In particular, Atlanta Weed and Seed coordinates federal, state, municipal and community resources to co-design neighborhood action plans that reduce crime, monitor juveniles, keep students in school, revitalize neighborhoods and build community capacity. This data was collected from a Weed and Seed Evaluation presented by Dr. Michael J. Rich from Emory University, to the U.S. Department of Justice Community Capacity Development Office National Conference Tampa, FL July 13-16, 2009 (http://www.atlantaga.gov/mayor/weed_seed.aspx).

plans. According to 2009 Census data, the poverty levels of the studied neighborhoods are suggested to be over 30%.[22] In fact, in 30314 which include Vine City, BTWC, and parts of English Avenue, more than half of those living in poverty (16.4% of the 30%) are 50% below the national poverty line.[23] [24]

In contrast, within these neighborhoods there are also several historical sites related to the 1960s faith-motivated Civil Rights movement, such as the homes of key leaders, offices, churches, and universities which were deeply involved in the movement. In particular, this area includes the last residence of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Vine City, who, according to one participant, was a former strategic neighbor.[25] The significance of focusing on these particular disinvested neighborhoods is related to claims that strategic neighboring and contemporary CCD is connected to these early faith-based social justice movements (Marsh 2005; Barber 2009).

Sometimes Active Participant Observation

This research was conducted as I lived in the intersection of three neighborhoods of Booker T. Washington Community (BTWC), Vine City, and Washington Park. While living in this area, I have actively participated and observed various formal and informal gatherings; including neighborhood activities, meetings, and protests, as well as specific strategic neighbor

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[22] Source City of Atlanta Census data 2009, http://www.city-data.com/zips/30314 [30318] [30310].html
[23] Source City of Atlanta Census data 2009, http://www.city-data.com/zips/30314 [30318] [30310].html
[24] The United States' National Health and Human Services (HHS) official 2011 poverty threshold is $10,890 for a single individual and $22,350 for a family of four. *Federal Register*.Last updated January 20, 2011, 76(13): 3637-3638.
[25] King moved to 234 Sunset Avenue, Vine City 1965 against the advisement of other contemporary leaders. However, he moved to the blighted neighborhood as part of living out his ethics/faith and fighting for civil rights and the poor people's campaign.

activities and meetings. I have also extensively read literature by CCDA practitioners, particular-

ly Robert Lupton.[26] More specifically, I conducted interviews with strategic neighbors at local

coffee shops, local restaurants, their offices, but mostly within their homes. Additionally, I have

also driven and/or walked throughout participants' neighborhoods and attended several of their

churches. In this sense, when I was not in my neighborhood I was not an "active-participant" but

continued to make key observations.

Part of my sometimes active-participant observation also took place in conjunction with a

larger research study. Along with Dr. Katherine Hankins and Dr. Andy Walter, I participated in

the "Urban Spatial Justice: Faith in the Neighborhood Research Study." This study surveyed ur-

ban ministries and strategic neighbors from across the United States, and specifically targeted

neighborhoods in Atlanta.[27] Due to my participation in this research, I have interacted with vari-

ous other strategic neighbors and forged new networks within and outside both my neighborhood

and Atlanta.

Ethnographic Field Notes

Over the course of my time on the west side of Atlanta I have kept detailed ethnographic

field notes of day-to-day life. I pre-coded these field notes regarding my positionality into three

subfields: strategic neighbor, researcher and participatory-researcher. Specifically, I started a

blog in 2008 for the Vine City neighborhood. This blog now includes active participation from

strategic neighbors within the BTWCA and Vine City. I also utilized online ethnographic me-

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[26] Lupton is an author, strategic neighbor, co-founder of CCDA, and president of FCS Urban
Ministry Collective in Atlanta, faith-based community developer
[27] For an 18 month period, in addition to other methods, The Urban Spatial Justice project in-
cluded interviews with strategic neighbors and representatives of urban ministries in multiple
neighborhoods in Atlanta, Georgia.

thods by pulling from strategic neighbors' blog posts, emails and other electronic correspondence and articles (Bird and Barber 2007:139-147). Additionally, I have been informed by the findings from the larger research study with Drs. Hankins and Walter and our collaborative research process. My participation in this research shaped my role as both a researcher and participant and heavily contributed to my ethnographic field notes and overall research methods.

Participant Interviews

For my study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 32 strategic neighbors. These interviews ranged from 60 minutes to 120 minutes in duration. The participant interview questions were made in a collaborative effort with 9 other strategic neighbors (see Appendix C).

Research participants were recruited based on established networks developed by living in the BTWCA neighborhood. Initially, I interviewed participants that I knew and then utilized the snowball method, a technique in which existing research participants identify additional people to be included in the study (Bernard 1998). Additionally, through Dr. Hankins and Dr. Walter's research study, I created a research website, a facebook page, passed out business cards with research information, attended two relevant conferences, and connected with participants through blogs and emails from both urban ministries and strategic neighbors. [28] Ultimately, through this process I have come in contact with a broader network of strategic neighbors. This network has also contributed to my methods for contacting and recruiting participants.

The term "strategic neighbor" was used to recruit and interview participants because it is a key term linked to Atlanta-based FBCD organization FCS Urban Ministry Collective. For this reason, along with Drs. Hankins and Walter, I utilized media which asked: "Are you a strategic

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[28] The Urban Spatial Justice Website URL: http://geospatial.gsu.edu/urbanspatialjustice/

neighbor?" This proved to be helpful in identifying and recruiting participants, specifically be-

cause some participants were previously unfamiliar with the term strategic neighbor. I found this

to be relevant to my praxis principles because the recruitment of participants became participato-

ry. In particular, the use of this term in my research process has contributed to making faith-

motivated actors more conscious of their decision to move to under-resourced neighborhoods

and to think critically about their actions in which they seek to work towards community trans-

formation (Hankins et al 2010).

Participant Diaries

At the end of my interviewing process I asked participants if they would be willing to

continue thinking about their daily activities and role in the neighborhood. Then I gave each par-

ticipant an online activity log to document and track their activities in the neighborhood on a dai-

ly basis for four weeks (see Figure 3.2)

Date	Time	Where?	Who?	What did you do? Please explain the activity.	How did this activi-ty/interaction come about? Was it planned, informal, formal, planned, spontane-ous, etc.?Please explain.	How did it lead to community transformation, in your view?

Figure 3.2 Participant Diaries

I chose to use an internet-based log because over the course of the research, participants

tended to respond more consistently by email. I chose to use this log to better understand the

daily activities of strategic neighbors in their neighborhoods and to engage participants to think

critically about their role in the community development process and neighborhood transforma-

tion. In particular, this was relevant to my praxis principles, as it raised the consciousness of par-

ticipants and enabled me to further understand their networks and daily practices. I triangulated

the logs, interviews, observations and field notes and use coding, concept diagrams, and respon-

dent validation to analyze this data. Also, I was able to compare these logs to the semi-structured interviews and sometimes active participant observations. Additionally, because these day-to-day actions which participants link to neighborhood transformation are critical to my research, the logs also provided additional information and enhanced the overall findings and their reliability.

Coding

In order to analyze and later triangulate my data, I used various coding methods. At the onset of the research process, I first pre-coded by ethnographic field notes into three separate diaries. I create diaries in which I reflected my experiences as a (1) resident-researcher, (2) participant, and (3) active-participant researcher. This is relevant because as I reflect and take my notes I am actively thinking through my positionality in these roles. In this order, (1) I understand my role as resident-researcher to pertain to my daily practices as a neighbor and researcher in the BTWC and Vine City neighborhoods, (2) I understand my role as participant, as a faith-motivated strategic neighbor in the BTWCA and Vine City neighborhoods, and as a part of a church and larger network of Christian believers, and finally (3) I understand my role as an anthropologist and a research assistant/collaborator on a broader project—which shapes my positionality vis-à-vis the research study.

Then to analyze my interviews, due to the length of my semi-structured questionnaire, I coded my interviews by using six key questions: (1) How do strategic neighbors understand/conceptualize their neighborhood? (2) How do they understand themselves and their role in this neighborhood? (3) What are their daily practices in their neighborhood? (4) What is their goal in neighboring? (5) How does neighboring lead to neighborhood transformation? and (6)

How do they experience neighboring in terms of burn out, success, failure, etc.? Afterward I post-coded my data based on four key themes: place, faith, politics and community.

Conceptual Diagrams

To further explore and understand these four themes, I created conceptual diagrams to visualize my data. These diagrams were made based on triangulated data collected through the previously stated methods. Through this process, in conjunction with my coding, I created four diagrams. These diagrams show how strategic neighbors conceptualize and enact their vision of development. In particular, these diagrams are based on the interview questions about "spiritual, physical, and social" aspects of their neighborhoods and how they do (or not) go about meeting those needs. Through this criterion participants' responses were placed into four diagrams: (1) needs (marked in red), (2) visions (marked in blue), (3) needs and visions (red and blue), and (4) actions (marked in green) (see Appendix D).

I used these diagrams to then make inferences and examine how strategic neighbors conceptualize and how their everyday life actions and routines are enact their social/spiritual/physical vision of neighborhood transformation in their neighborhoods to reveal both their underpinning faith values and, as my analysis revealed, class identities. More specifically, I used these diagrams to explore and cultivate an understanding of how they conceptualize their neighborhoods, how they understand themselves, and how they work towards neighborhood transformation.

Respondent Validation

Respondent validation was ongoing throughout the entire research process. After I triangulated my data, extracted key themes, and gathered a general understanding of strategic neighbors, I then contacted my participants to share my findings. In particular, beginning with the nine participants who helped construct the interview questions and key contacts who confirmed key themes, findings were brought to participants to confirm and/or refute.

Over a 60-day period I contacted and shared my findings with all but three participants. I used email, one-on-one meetings, and phone calls to follow-up with participants, which gave more depth to my initial findings. Based on their feedback and suggestions, I re-examined the data collected and my analysis. This process with participants was then repeated to ensure they were rightly represented and felt comfortable with how I shared their sentiments, direct quotes, and personal stories. I chose to discuss my findings with participants because after my research, it is likely they will read my final report. This was a critical aspect of the research and supported my overarching praxis principles, to "democratize knowledge" by sharing the knowledge from the research study with participants. As well as, the intention to make recommendations to practitioners, the key stakeholders, and further develop best-practices to yield positive reform and change (Greenwood and Levin 2005).

During this process multiple participants shared how influential, critical, and informative the research findings were to their daily politics and practices of being a strategic neighbor. Some explained that it helped them come to terms with areas of struggle, weakness, and strengths of their activism. Additionally, by way of participants these findings have also been made accessible to key actors, including non-participant strategic neighbors and members of FBOs who seek to achieve FBCD best practices. Although this was a critical piece of the re-

search, it was highly time-consuming and one of the most challenging aspects of the study. Nevertheless, sharing the research findings with participants has served to be one of the study's most important outcomes (See Appendix E for recommendations for strategic neighbors).

Positionality (3.2)

In this research I am positioned as a Christian, white, female, researcher and as previously stated, a strategic neighbor in west Atlanta, Georgia. My position as a strategic neighbor is perhaps the most polarizing with many strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths

According to Kline (2010), anthropologists serve as a potential powerful mediator between faith-based organizations and communities. As I investigate strategic neighboring within my own network and neighborhoods, I perceive that there are many positives. First of all, I find that many strategic neighbors and faith-based organizations are skeptical of academic inquiry, specifically based on the historic hostility from anthropologists and social scientists (Heffernan and Fogarty 2010). In this way, my position as a strategic neighbor has granted me greater access to strategic neighbors. These networks enabled me to gain trust, ask key questions, and attend impromptu and informal meetings / gatherings, whereas another researcher may have been unable.

After building rapport for nearly three years, I have also cultivated relationships throughout west Atlanta that enable me to "speak the same language," and communicate about life, poli-

tics, race and faith with other strategic neighbors. On one hand, my role as resident-researcher, living as a strategic neighbor and also working as a researcher, enabled me to link my neighborhood and key actors to the university and made it possible to network with other strategic neighbors. On the other hand, my role as an academic and anthropologist is also a positive, because it gives me credibility, and it has grounded me in theory, which I believe has allowed me to understand the complexities of strategic neighbors.

My work with Dr. Hankins and Dr. Walter serves as a key example of how researching with these nested identities of strategic neighbor, community resident, and researcher can be used for greater benefits for more participants and for researchers. In addition, this research, and studies like it, open up opportunities to forge new relationships between anthropologists and faith-based organizations and to enhance further their relationship (Heffernan and Fogarty 2010; Lambert-Pennington 2010; Huff 2010; Kemper and Adkins 2005).

Weaknesses

There are also potential obstacles and weaknesses in studying oneself. Because of these nested identities, my ability to be reflective and hold a critical lens towards myself, my neighborhoods, and strategic neighbors is not impartial and therefore it is constrained in certain capacities. Because this is a weakness, working alongside of other academics and teams, like Dr. Hankins and Dr. Walter is vital. I have found this partnership to be critical to my research process and creating reliability in my findings. Through this partnership I have been exposed to different perspectives, and questions that require me to continually examine myself, strategic neighbors, and FBCD. In order to overcome this weakness I consciously utilized a strong theoretical framework to guide my inquiry and engaged with literature that countered the perspectives of

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FBCD practitioners. In particular, my participation in a broader study with Dr. Hankins and Dr. Walter was a key way in which my positionality was negotiated and balanced.

The potential weaknesses of my positionality in this research are twofold. First, despite the achievement of applied and participatory research, some still find academia to be skeptical and resistant (Kozaitis 2000; Lambert-Pennington 2010; Schensul 2005). More specifically, scholars may disagree with how I elected to share my findings with participants and include respondent validation in my research design. Then secondly, although academe is making strides in bridging relationships within the realm of faith (Fogarty and Heffernan 2010; Kemper and Adkins 2005; Kemper and Adkins 2006), many scholars and practitioners remain skeptical. Therefore, because of both my focus on faith and my positionality as a faith-motivated subject, this research may be disregarded.

In short, although these are potential weaknesses, they also have the potential to build needed bridges between faithful actors from multiple scales and anthropologists. Putting anthropology at the service of faith-based and -motivated actors can strengthen both research and FBCD practices and strategies. As an anthropologist and strategic neighbor, this is the kind of research I would like to see and be a part of in academe and in my neighborhood. As a strategic neighbor this is also a chance to improve practices that utilize the positioning of the university to work towards community and neighborhood transformation efforts. Moreover, this connects FBCD to anthropological research and forges a partnership. At the heart of this research partnership is the heart of King's social and faith-based philosophy of Beloved Community; to bring collaborative partnerships that will yield social transformation at the most macro and micro levels (King 1967; King 1998; Marsh 2005; Inwood 2009). In this view, this newly forged partnership works towards research as it ought to be and Beloved Community as it could be.

"[There are] two parts to [strategic neighbor]...From what I am doing is strategically living in this area, I don't have to live here and it is a choice for me. That's one strategic, that I am choosing to live here…and the other part is…not being in the suburbs and choosing to get to know my neighbors…not just catching up, but knowing…Its easy for me to not ever see them. I have to make the decision, we have to plan, it is not like it is just going to happen, I have to make steps to make it happen. And it would be very easy for me to not see them."—Research participant, Brittany Harris in the BTWC [when defining strategic neighbor]

Introduction (4.0)

When asking directions to the home of two strategic neighbors, the research participant who referred me to the couple explained: "It's the nicest house on the street, you can't miss it."As I pulled my car up to the only two-story home with a waist-level, shiny black fence on the street, I found myself in agreement with her. I too thought, it was unusually "nice," as she had put it. Thought it resembled the surrounding architectural style and would have been modest to nice in an average Atlanta neighborhood, here in an inner city neighborhood of project-like apartment homes, burnt-out houses, overgrown yards, and vacant lots, it stood out, even in the absence of working street lights.

The reason I was stopping for directions in the first place, was to conduct an interview with a family of strategic neighbors, who had been "living out their faith" by relocating to the inner-city 3 ½ years ago. I wanted to get a sense of what it meant to be a strategic neighbor, and

they invited me to their home for a family-style dinner, to share their personal experiences. We had a modest and delicious meal, but the trappings did not come from the local Family Dollar, the only grocery store for miles. Instead, they came from Trader Joe's, a high-end specialty grocery store across town.

After dinner, the interview began, and in the midst of dynamic stories and experiences of living in the neighborhood, they seemed to define the essence of strategic neighboring as "the decision to stay." In particular, they explained that although they knew other neighbors who were both faith-motivated and committed to neighborhood transformation, their capability to move out, made things "different." It appeared this particular experience was wrought with tension, and that the "opportunity to get out" but "the decision to stay" was a key experience critical to constructing what is and what is not a "strategic neighbor." As Allison Winters* put it:[29]

> It's different [than neighbors who can't move]…I think that there is just not that much choice. I don't think they stay because they want to be a part of this, but they stay because they have to. They are then a part of it, because…they are stuck here and might as well do something good here… [But] they can't go anywhere else.

Ultimately, "the decision to stay" reveals unequal power relationships and that strategic neighboring is not only about faith harnessing market forces, but it is also entrenched in social class. In this chapter, I will first review how the class-identity struggle emerged and became visible through the research process itself. Then following this chapter the class-identity struggle outlined here will be explored along the lines of faith (Chapter Five), place (Chapter Six), and everyday life actions (Chapter Seven).

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[29] The *Asterisk marks that the participants name has been changed.

Who are Strategic Neighbors? (4.1)

A Formal Definition

In the interviews, each participant during interviews, was asked to define the term "strategic neighbor." Participants' collective responses formed an image of a "typical" strategic neighbor. Although there was a variety of individual nuances, participants generally agreed on the following traits defined a "strategic neighbor," which are summarized in Table 4.0. The three most common traits that participants agreed on were: (1) Motivated by Christian faith, (2) Intentional actions and time in the neighborhood, and (3) specifically focusing on being in a neighborhood and/or place.

Table 4.0: Common traits identified by participants when defining strategic neighboring

Order	Trait	Frequency	Percentage
1	Motivated by Christian faith, religion, and theology	17	53%
2	Intentional actions and time in the neighborhood	17	53%
3	Specifically focusing on being in a neighborhood and/or place	17	53%
4	Strategically building relationships and loving people in their neighborhood	16	50%
5	Targets poor/marginalized people groups and/or areas, includes poverty alleviation efforts	13	41%
6	Has a vision for the neighborhood	12	38%
7	To "Just be a neighbor," live authentically, coming alongside neighbors instead of "fixing"	12	38%
8	Being Other-Centered	11	34%
9	The Act of moving-in strategically	11	34%
10	Commitment to staying in the neighborhood and/or relationships	5	16%
11	Pursues racial reconciliation and diversity	5	16%
12	It takes a group of people, church, community	4	13%
13	Anti-Consumption , Materialism, and Minimalist Values,	4	13%.

(Data collected from a total of 32 participants)

Based on the various interview responses, the following broad definition was formed (see Appendices: C for full list of tables, and D for codes and conceptual diagrams).

Strategic Neighbor: An individual who is generally motivated by his or her Christian faith, who willfully decides to focus his or her time and energies on the people living within a specific, under-resourced, geographic area, with the interrelated goals of living like Christ, building relationships with the residents of that area, and seeking community transformation.

This definition illustrates the key qualities that characterize strategic neighbors, yet in the process of defining "strategic neighbor" participants revealed still deeper complexities. In the interviewing process itself, a key polarization emerged as participants grappled with this title and what it meant, for them and their neighbors, for them to "be a strategic neighbor."

For participants being identified as a strategic neighbor was not necessarily positive or negative. This was revealed as more than half of the participants accepted the name "strategic neighbor," citing that they liked the "accountability," the "plan" and/or "vision" which it implied, and asked "What are we doing to be more strategic?" However, participants were (at least somewhat) uncomfortable and torn about the term "strategic." If they were a "strategic neighbor," than what did that make their other neighbors?

According to Joannah Cook, being a "neighbor" and building relationships is far more important than being "strategic." But, she said it is a "good term to throw around" and talk about. For Joannah, and the majority of participants, the accountability referred to elements from both their faith-values and middle class identities. On one hand, "accountability" was about remembering the Christian faith-principles and social justice components that first motivated actors to

relocate. Then on the other, "accountability" also had to do with insuring that they were max-imizing their resources, as middle class persons, for the betterment of the community.

> …it challenges your motivation. There is accountability in that term [strategic neighbor]. Accountability, that if you are calling yourself that: What are you doing to strategize a better neighborhood?

However, Joannah also shared that she knew people who did not like and/or use the word because "they did not want to be seen as anything other than their neighbors," even though "they were."

Compellingly, a third of participants seemed to grapple with the term "strategic neighbor" including two participants who completely rejected the name along these lines. In particular, these participants proposed alternative terms, i.e. "intentional" or "compassionate" and felt that the term "strategic" conflicted with their faith-values which inspired them to be in the neighborhood and build relationships in the first place. However, most participants through the research process accepted the term, regardless of initial resistance or tension with "strategic." For some, they liked how it challenged them to "not shoot from the hip" (interview with Doug Whitmire*). But despite their acceptance or rejection of the term, what remained constant was the fact that none of the participants felt comfortable using the term openly; especially not with their neighbors.

This was the most common tension they felt with the title "strategic neighbor" and they were most concerned about how "using a term like that" would, (1) create a barrier to building relationships with neighbors and (2) separate them as middle class individuals and not real neighbors. Participants especially felt using a term like "strategic neighbor" evoked power and traditional social class categories related to the disinvestment of their inner-city neighborhoods.

In particular, they did not want to appear middle class to their working class neighbors, specifically because it often created barriers to relationships. Moreover, this was because these social class categories, power, and elitism were what they were trying to transcend by relocating:

> We don't [use the term strategic neighbor], but the concept we really like…the intentionality of the description, that there is a difference with an investor or that this is just a fun place to live… [and] a strategy and a plan for why we are here. But at the same time we would never use the term in our neighborhood (Interview with Drew Henley, 2010).

Both Drew and his wife Diane were familiar with the term and did not desire to use the label "strategic neighbor" around their neighbors. Interestingly, this was a key finding that all participants, that those previously familiar with the term, as well as those who explained they never heard it, did not desire to not use the label around non-strategic neighbors. However, participants gravitated toward the other half of the term: "neighbor." Participants felt comfortable using neighbor because it evoked their Christian faith values and belief to "love thy neighbor as yourself," as Diane Henley, a strategic neighbor in Vine City neighborhood put it: "…we are just people that [sic] value being a neighbor." Most participants shared that they "would never use" the term strategic neighbor, because they did not want to be perceived as wanting to "come and fix people," because they were "white and middle class" (Interviews with John and Lauren Farnum, Doug Whitmire*, Jane Gilbert, Paula Willis, 2010; 2011).

Doug Whitmire* shared that he initially did not like the term because he was already experiencing a tension along these lines. Doug shared that his neighbors across the street ask them for money and the 11 year old calls him "Mr. Polo" as he gets into his car to go to work. For him, this was related to what he felt was the "biggest need" and "problem" in the neighborhood.

Doug explained that his new middle class and more affluent neighbors were warm and welcoming. But his working class and poor neighbors, whom he was trying to "strategically" build relationships, were not. Unlike his affluent neighbors, his poor neighbors did not attend the neighborhood association meetings and were not active in reporting crime. Additionally, his middle class and working class neighbors did not socialize or invite each other to neighborhood social gatherings. However, this was true, with the exception of Doug and his wife. Motivated by their Christian faith values, they socialized and invited both their rich and poor neighbors over.[30]

Participants openly acknowledged that they felt there were tensions and inequalities in their neighborhoods along the lines of class and race. In fact, these tensions were what first motivated them to relocate to "restore" their neighborhood. Jack Fisher* felt these class and racial tensions were embedded into the neighborhood. In particular, he has tried to explain to his skeptical neighbors why his wife and he moved into the neighborhood almost four years ago:

> It is tough to explain that I am not out here to fix them, and that is not what I am
>
> trying to do. I have had to stop myself a couple times because I sound elitist…like
>
> everything I don't want to be.

Jack* explained these class tensions as specifically racialized, commenting that as a white male, he often felt people thought he was going to move out, rent his home, or that he was there for more suspicious reasons related to drugs and prostitution. He recalled one time while coming home on the train, a homeless man asked if he would buy him some food when he got off. Jack agreed, and when the train stopped and they exited together, the homeless man did not understand why he lived "there" and started to interrogate him on why he lived in "this neighborhood." Jack explained how the man asked him, "Your wife is black? No…well then you must be

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[30] However, since their house was recently robbed, they are currently hesitant and unsure how to reengage relationships with some of their low-income neighbors.

gay?" He was amused by this, but explained those were just the typical perceptions of being a white middle class male in a predominately African American and notoriously blighted inner-city neighborhood.

This was a common experience among participants. Many shared that they thought their neighbors believe they are either in the neighborhood to "make money" or to receive credit for a community service/social programs project. In particular, they felt their neighbors "expected them" to move out, rent their homes, and/or gentrify the neighborhood because they were "white and middle class." Additionally, participants shared how their neighbors were "surprised" when they stayed, got involved, and simply wanted to participate in neighborhood activities without "gentrifying." For participants, "not gentrifying" meant "coming alongside" instead of starting something new in an effort to strengthen current organizations and efforts to improve the neighborhood; but it also meant being conscious to not engage in activities that may potentially displace poor and vulnerable neighbors (Interviews with Lydia* and Jack Fisher*, Drew and Diane Henley, Esther Lee*, Jane Gilbert, Chuck and JoElyn Johnston, 2010 and 2011). Participants explained that although they knew they were planning on staying and did not want have plans to "gentrify" the neighborhood in this way; they did realize that there is a deeper stratification they are seeking to challenge.

The stratifications along the lines of class and race are why participants identified with the term "strategic neighbor" and why they do not use it openly. In this sense, their complex positionality and identity is clearly revealed. On one hand, their faith-motivated relocation to the inner-city is connected to their faith beliefs and faith values and desire for social justice. But on the other, they are faced with the reality that they are middle class persons in a very real social hierarchy. In this lens, participants are conflicted. More specifically, within this conflicted identi-

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ty, they consciously grappled with how one could enact justice and holistic neighborhood transformation, and yet they feel entrenched by a market-value structure, which they are trying to challenge with their faith value system. At the same time, this structure is also their instrument for justice. In particular, it enables them to utilize/leverage their privilege(s), i.e. middle class networks, education, and resources.

In short, their identity as "strategic neighbors" emerged as both a key obstacle and tension for participants. Inspired by their Christian faith values, they desire to have "authentic" peer-to-peer relationships and become true "neighbors." But this remained a challenge, as they still remained middle class people in the eyes of their neighbors, with their access to resources, their ability to drive across town to Trader Joe's, and their ability to make "the decision to stay" or the decision to leave. Ultimately, this reveals an underpinning class-identity struggle within strategic neighbors and the way they choose to live their lives in inner-city neighborhoods. The following chapters will examine the three most common traits used by strategic neighbors to define their work: faith, place, and daily actions (see table 4.0). In this examination, I offer a particular focus on the class identity of strategic neighbors and what their embodied tension reveals about larger social structures and ultimately how they reconfigure these structures by consciously enacting their place ethic in their neighborhood.

"…Jesus was the first strategic neighbor."— Research participant, *Diane Henley*

"The rich think they know it all, but the poor can see right through them."–*Proverbs 28:11*[31]

Introduction (5.0)

Faith was one of the three most common themes in defining strategic neighboring. All participants were personally motivated by their Christian faith. Over half, 17 out of 32, said faith is a necessity for one to be a strategic neighbor, because faith alone made "real reconciliation" across race and class possible. Although several participants felt that one could be a strategic neighbor without faith, they felt it would be difficult and that certain aspects would be very different. For example, Jane Gilbert reflected on the role of faith:

> At the end of the day there is an impasse because of racial and cultural divides
>
> that… Maybe not so much for younger neighbors in the same socio-economic
>
> place, but for [poor neighbors], even more so for our elderly neighbors [who grew
>
> up in an openly segregated society]…We can be warm together but to really expe-
>
> rience more together, only Jesus can do that. I think that good intentions can take
>
> us a good distance but it is not enough. If you are a strategic neighbor, and not a
>
> believer, I think you would need more measurable results… I think it requires
>
> faith to really break through that.

[31] The Message, Biblical translation by Eugene Peterson

What Jane describes as "believer" and Christian faith refers specifically to the beliefs of strategic neighbors. For Jane and other participants, their "faith" enabled them to stay in their neighborhoods when it did not make logical sense, to engage in activities that they could not quantify or measure, and motivated them to not only seek their own self-interest but the interest of the neighborhood. In this way, Jane explains that without a sense of there being a greater purpose or meaning for her life and her efforts, she does not think that others will find this "rational' or effective."

Other participants also noted that not all faiths or even all Christians, including those involved in urban ministry and neighborhood transformation efforts, shared beliefs and values similar to strategic neighbors. In fact, in my ethnographic field notes a man who works for Christian urban ministry in a west Atlanta neighborhood and who is working towards his PhD in theology at the Interdenominational Theological Seminary (ITC) called out to me from his car, "What are you doing here, you're white?" In our conversation, he then explained that reconciliation across lines of race and class was impossible until "Jesus comes back:"

> As a black man (he explained he was not African American but of African and
>
> Caribbean descent) [racial reconciliation] is impossible because African Ameri-
>
> cans and Whites have never been reconciled; nothing will ever bridge this gap
>
> (Ethnographic field diary, 11/09/2009).[32]

In other words, inside of the Christian faith, outside of strategic neighbors, there are those who believe the divisions and stratifications of race and class are insurmountable. Therefore, they believe that racial reconciliation would not be possible until the afterlife/end of the world. This fol-

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[32] This was recorded in personal ethnographic diaries, but also shared in the blog URL: www.vinecity.blogspot.com

lows traditional Christian eschatology.[33] Moreover, as previous scholars have explained, not all faiths and faith-motivated people are engaged in FBCD or in their communities, vis-a-vis strategic neighbors (Kemper and Adkins 2005; Heffernan and Fogarty 2010).

Participants did not only struggle with racial tensions, but also socio-economic tensions. According to participants, the most common influential Biblical verses for them include "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven…Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" [Matthew 5:3, 5].[34] Others invoked describe "God's heart for the poor" and for "justice," which "motivated them" to be strategic neighbors (Interviews with Richard Humphrey*, Emily Green Hayden, Beverly Easterling, Drew Henley, Laura Pritchard, Esther Lee*, Jane Gilbert, Chuck and JoElyn Johnston, 2010; 2011). In particular, the concepts outlined in these Biblical passages resonated with participants and motivated them to enter relationships with the poor and enact social justice. However, these faith values are in conflict with market values, ingrained into strategic neighbors to do "what is practical" and "what works" (Interview Ted Winters* 2011), by the overarching market forces, political systems, and social norms in the U.S. which are how the city is forged, operated, and constructed . On one hand, their faith motivates them to use their social class positioning to enact "justice" and "love the poor." However, on the other, their Christian beliefs pinpoint the entire power structures of class as "unjust" (Interviews with Ted* and Allison Winters*, Colyn Burbank**, Tyler Baldridge, Richard Humphrey*, Laura Pritchard***, 2010 and 2011).

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[33] Traditional Christian eschatology suggests that at the end of the world there God's creation will finally become perfect. Participants explained this as God's final and full redemption of what was made broken by evil.

[34] These verses were the most commonly referenced as influences for participants to begin strategic neighboring.

Although the participants' value system and the values system of the macro class structure appear to have similar goals, in some capacities, they are in an ongoing conflict. In this way, strategic neighbors have complex social class positioning and identity, because simultaneously their internal faith values conflict with the larger external social structure but conflict also with their own internalized values of their middle class social positioning. According to participants, they constantly negotiate this tension. Allison Winters* explained that she feels this tension not only in terms of macro-economic systems, but also within Christian community development (CCD) itself. In particular, she did not align herself with Bob Lupton's model of "gentrification of justice:"

> [Lupton] is too capitalistic… It is not that I think capitalism is bad; there are just things about it…that contribute to income inequalities that we have in our country…I struggle with…our capitalist system and…what he says…causes me to think…He seems very interested in pleasing the business community, and connecting with [the business community's] self interest… [But] I don't want to have to play on [the business community's] terms. I'd rather see some things about the business community change.

She added

> …I mean, [our neighbor] works…really hard… and can hardly make it…and we allow it. [I]f we had an economic system that treated people with respect, a lot of things would be different in this neighborhood.

In contrast, during the same interview, her husband Ted Winters* explained that Lupton's strategy is not "overtly capitalistic," but is what he calls "practical" and "what works:"

I can see what Bob Lupton is saying: we aren't going to become a socialist coun-

try. So we have to work with…whatever big company…and make the best of the

funding that they will give us, and then leverage it for our neighborhood.

Nevertheless, despite the practicality of Lupton's "gentrification of justice" which appealed to

Ted, internally because of his faith values he still struggles with the implications of the strategy

of harnessing market forces:

I struggle when we go to Bible studies that are in houses that are, like, ten million

dollars. We are sitting there and can't think about Bible study because we are

thinking about the cost of the bricks; [and] these are our good friends, good

people, and they are, like, committed to justice. But if they [only] knew that

someone was working for their company that couldn't make ends meet.

Ted's* comments reflect a tension embodied by strategic neighbors. On one hand, their faith

values propel them to radically challenge social stratifications. On the other hand, they are en-

trenched in a much larger system that they believe perpetuates social inequality. The following

section explores participants' faith values, which challenge social class categories and the social

inequalities they create.

Incarnation (5.1)

Participants felt their faith enabled them to negotiate their conflicting values and identity.

When strategic neighbors described their faith here were four key words and theological themes

that emerged "incarnation," "place," "community," and "loving their neighbor." The most popu-

lar theme they used to describe their personal faith and beliefs was incarnation. In fact, when discussing their faith-motivation, the 32 interview participants referred to "incarnation" 311 times, "place" 203 times, "love" 161, "community" 122 times, and "loving your neighbor" 110 times.

Incarnation is a theological concept, which has been linked to other faith-based development efforts and social activism (Marsh 2005; Kline 2010; Phillips 2010; Connolly and Brondo 2010). According to historian and theologian Charles Marsh (2005), incarnation means to live as the metaphorical "hands and feet" of Jesus and accepting the call to live one's faith through social action. In particular, he suggests incarnational theology is linked to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s concept of "Beloved Community." and plays a "role of spiritual nourishment in the work of mercy and justice" (Marsh 2005:206). Although there are more commentaries by scholars and theologians on what the incarnation is, it is best understood through two key points: (1) "the incarnation" is first the embodiment of God in human form as Jesus Christ and then (2) "incarnational theology" is the doctrine that Jesus lives through Christians, enabling them to live their daily lives as Jesus would.

Incarnation is not only a key theme, but it is the centerpiece of the theology and faith-motivation, which propels strategic neighbors to relocate. According to Diane Henley, a strategic neighbor in Vine City the "incarnation," the Biblical narrative of the life of Jesus, is the only reason why she is a strategic neighbor. For participants, moving in and staying in their neighborhoods is incarnating Jesus, because He tangibly challenged traditional social class categories and norms. Emily Green Hayden, a strategic neighbor in English Avenue, explains that her motivation to relocate and live out her faith (and be a strategic neighbor) comes from "the incarnation" and describes what it means and its implications:

Jesus is really forgoing privilege and saying 'I am not going to use all of the power and the privilege of Heaven to avoid pain and suffering. Instead I am willfully entering into it and want to work to redeem it.' That's the sort of path I want to follow. I am educated, I am middle class, I could avoid this, but I have to exercise my will. I have to choose to be present here, choose to see, choose to let it affect me, choose risk over comfort. It reminds me of…Jesus emptying himself of privilege and assuming the posture of a servant. I think this is what discipleship is all about. There is a lot of nuance and a lot of individuality to what being a disciple means, but there is an overall direction, and I think that direction is towards chaos, frustration, and suffering. And if you are walking in the other direction, I don't know how you can say you are following Christ.

The Incarnation, which all participants had as a common motive, goes beyond the belief of "living like Jesus" and/or "having Christ live through "him/her" (Interviews with Emily Green Hayden, Lydia Fisher, Jane Gilbert, Esther Lee, Doug Whitmire, Paula Willis 2010; 2011) by pointing out three ways in which it challenges social class hierarchies and traditional modes of community development: (1) Forgoing privilege and the middle class ability to "avoid" pain and suffering; (2) Moving towards suffering, and (3) Pursuing the neighborhood's redemption through "Beloved Community" holistic (spiritual, physical, and social) development.

(1) Forgoing privilege

Strategic neighbors specifically moved to the inner city to forgo their middle class privilege and to "live where Jesus would live" (Interview with Lydia Fisher 2011). In fact, a fifth of participants when defining strategic neighboring and their faith-motivated selves, said it was *de-*

fined by living among the poor. Through the lens of incarnation, all participants suggested that their act of relocating and living in an under-resourced neighborhood is related to the Biblical salvation story of redemption. Although there were nuances expressed by different participants, strategic neighbors generally believe that God came to earth as a man, Jesus Christ, to restore relationships with humankind.[35] Participants referred to the Bible, which documents that Jesus gave up privilege by leaving Heaven, coming to Earth and living among the poor, in order to connect people back to God.[36] Doug Whitmire* connects this to strategic neighboring:

> [Strategic neighboring] is [about God's] compassion and empathy. Jesus was the epitome of empathy and he had the full compassion of God…He didn't like to see people in pain….I don't see this is as a ministry, but a type of life…To be less comfortable [and] more comforting, to my neighbors, [because we follow Christ].

According to Doug*, as well as to other participants, this was why they believe God has a "heart for justice" and a "heart for the poor" (Interviews with Drew and Diane Henley, Jane Gilbert, Janelle Fenton**, Beverly Easterling, Lydia Fisher, Colyn Burbank**, Tyler Baldridge, Joshua Brown-Culp**, Katherine Langley 2010, 2011). This motivated them (at least initially) to "live where God would live" (Lydia Fisher*), "give up their privilege" (Emily Green Hayden), focus on "dysfunctional relationships" (Richard Humphrey*), and relocate to "broken places" (Colyn Burbank**) / "the margins" (Joshua Brown-Culp**) of society, which for them meant the inner-city.

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[35] This Biblical verse John 1:4 was used by participant Jonathan Malmin to explain this theological underpinning and how his faith motivated him to not only relocate but participate in community development.

[36] These Biblical verses were used by participants to explain their faith and motivation to be strategic neighbor; but also were used to describe their faith values and beliefs: John 1, Matthew 5, Isaiah 61, Luke 14, Matthew 6, Thessalonians 4:10

Lydia Fisher[*] explained that moving into the neighborhood was entirely about the incarnation and its implications on how they live their lives.

> I believe [moving to the inner city] is what God wants us to do. I think about the people…Jesus spent time with while He was here: [the poor]. [They were] the people he would want to be seen with, spend time with…He looks out for [people's] needs and poverty, those underserved…Jesus highlights that in [his teachings in the Bible]…I think without a shadow of a doubt that is how [God] wants us to live our day to day…[Jesus] was always bridging gaps and bringing people together [through] redemption, reconciliation…Those are all things that He did, that I want to do…That is enough for me.

In short, Lydia* described how she is motivated by Jesus' life to embrace the poor, bring people together, and pursue reconciliation in her day-to-day life. Similar to the other participants, this places her in tension with her middle class social positioning. More specifically, this places her in tension because her faith values which require her to give up comforts of a typical American, middle-class lifestyle.

The fact that strategic neighbors are middle class and chose to build relationships with the poor and relocate to a poor neighborhood has a complex social meaning. In this way, strategic neighbors' faith does not truly motivate them to give up privilege, but to use their privilege and take risks even when they are often uncomfortable. Therefore, their social class identity enables them to confront social norms, confront social inequalities, and transform society by reconfiguring the social relationships and networks of their neighborhoods.

(2)Moving towards suffering

When discussing community development participants avoided business terminology and did not talk about capital, revitalization, or gentrification in a positive light. This stands in contrast to what one would expect of a typical middle class stakeholder in material/physical development. Instead, since they understood development as incarnation, they spoke primarily about building relationships within their disinvested neighborhood. As Brittany Harris put it

> I don't want [my neighborhood] to turn into Grant Park [a gentrified neighborhood on the east side of the city]. [People move to] Grant Park [for reasons like]…"I really like that house," "I like the location," I am going to choose to move there because "it is a good buy and it's trendy"…Here it is not [like that] because it's [for the people].

In this sense, participants did not want their neighborhoods to develop purely materially/physically into middle class neighborhoods. Instead, they wanted both the physical landscape and the social landscape of their neighborhoods to change. They pursued these changes by building relationships with their marginalized and vulnerable neighbors. As Joshua Brown-Culp** explains in his definition of strategic neighboring:

> [P]ursu[ing] people, find[ing] out who they are…build[ing] relationships with people even if it is not benefiting [me], not because it is easy [and] …seek[ing] out the downcast and the outcast. Like if there is a scary guy [in the] neighborhood that nobody wants to go near, go[ing to] talk to [him]. [He] need[s] a neighbor just as much as anybody else…seek[ing] people out even when it is not easy, especially when it is not easy.

This stands in contrast to community development as a narrative of economic progress and prosperity; participants understood it through the salvation story of their faith (see Chapter One and above pages 60-64). In this way, it was about the internal "transformation" for themselves and their neighbors within these territorial boundaries. Although they hope to see physical changes, what they really want is more metaphysical: "restored relationships," "racial reconciliation," "neighborhood identity," and a "community within the neighborhood" (see Appendix D, Table D.2.0).

> If, in five years the neighborhood doesn't look drastically better than it does now,
> I will be disappointed. But, at the same time if…there is a community, and there
> is a change, where people feel like living in Grove Park *means* something, [then I
> will be pleased]….I would really love [for the neighborhood] to have a sense of
> pride… not even pride, but a sense of identity…Like, there to be like a "Oh, you
> live in Grove Park. I have heard that there is a really neat community there (Inter-
> view with Esther Lee*, 2011).

In this view, relationships with the marginalized and those suffering in their neighborhood, from both a spiritual and social/political perspective, were strategic neighbors' focus in their community development efforts. Their desire to build relationships specifically with the poor originates within their incarnational faith and as they seek to live like Jesus. Through these relationships they believe, over time, God will "holistically restore" the neighborhoods and the lives of their neighbors in a spiritual, physical, and relational sense. [37]

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[37] Holistic Restoration was discussed by many participants. They referred to this as the development and restoration of all things, spiritual, social, and physical. This was a key way in which they understood development as a whole.

(3) Redemption through development

Their vision for community development reflects the great salvation story. In this story, Jesus will return to Earth, causing there to be "no more suffering" (Interview with Laura Pritchard, 2010). [38] Some participants called this vision "Shalom" (Interview with Ted Winters, 2011) when explaining their goals for neighborhood restoration. More specifically, "Shalom" refers to the radical social reconfiguration of the city described by Wolferstoff and Gornik in Chapter One. In this way, participants' larger theological underpinnings reveal that for strategic neighbors, incarnation *is* development.

Through the research process there is evidence that these incarnational efforts have led to tangible material/physical development in the neighborhoods. For example, Jack* and Lydia Fisher* feel that the restoration of their home mirrored the restoration that "God was doing" [in their personal life and their neighborhood].[39] For the Fishers*, the act of renovating their home was simultaneously "development" and "incarnation." In particular, they felt they were "being the hands and feet of Jesus," "making their faith tangible," and being a part of "bringing God's Kingdom." Although outsiders may see the work on their home as simply material/physical development, for strategic neighbors, it was also spiritual and underpinned by incarnational faith, as expressed by Lydia*:

> We liked the idea of doing to a house what the Lord was doing in us, [restoration],
>
> like we wanted a place that wasn't perfect but that needed care and needed to be
>
> revived in a sense. That was a reminder of [the restoration] we wanted God to do

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[38] The beliefs of strategic neighbors and their "salvation story" refers to the "coming of Christ" and the "Returning of Christ" can be found in The Bible; particularly, in "the gospels"—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.

[39] The Fishers theologically explained that since God chose to restore humanity by entering into its brokenness rather than destroying it, they saw a special value in restoring their home rather than tearing it down (though it made logical/economic sense to do so) to build a new one.

in us, and in our hearts, what we wanted Him to do to an entire area, and in our world.

In this way, strategic neighbors' pursuit of development is distinct from other faith-based and non-faith-based community development models. Their pursuit is distinct because of how it challenges and negotiates social class categories. Generally, their pursuit is distinct because in their development efforts they pursue gives preference to the poor and vulnerable. Their efforts to "holistically develop" their neighborhoods differs from other models which give preference to elites and the middle class, and often end in the displacement of the poor. Their model of development was not primarily about attracting investment and business but about reconfiguring social class norms and racial/economic stratifications. This became evident when strategic neighbors discussed their inner-city neighborhood associations.

The Neighborhood Association (5.2)

Surprisingly, more than half of strategic neighbors do not attend their neighborhood associations either regularly or at all. This was a compelling finding among participants. In fact, further inquiry revealed that many participants attended their local neighborhood-based group during the first six months after moving in, but then over time, they stopped attending regularly or even at all. According to participants, there were two key reasons behind their drop in attendance: (1) "Stress and inefficiency" of the meetings (Interview with Emily Green Hayden and Libby Warfield, 2011) which took away from "relationship building" (Interviews with Drew and Diane Henley, Beverly Easterling, Lauren and John Farnum, 2010; 2011) time and (2) the "con-

flict of interest," they felt their neighborhood associations were trying to "kick out" the youth and poor from the neighborhood to attract economic development (Interview with Richard Humphrey*, 2010).

Stress and Inefficiency

One participant, who actively writes letters to government officials and calls and reports crime in English Avenue neighborhood, does not attend her neighborhood meetings. Instead, she communicates by sending letters to the association through her pastor. For her, the meetings were "too stressful" and inefficient. As a group, participants shared this feeling and felt that participating in the organization challenged and/or took away from time to build relationships with vulnerable residents of the neighborhood who did not attend. Among other reasons, several participants explained that these meetings were ineffective, because they only sought to address physical needs and never got to the underlying social dynamics.

During an interview with two female roommates in English Avenue, one participant asked, "What am I going to do to change this [referring to the stress and inefficiency]?" To which the other pointed out,

> ... I see the importance of the neighborhood associations…The problem, however
> is, that very few residents go. There's quite a bit of political or civic apathy here.
> Perhaps that comes from years and years of being disenfranchised—I don't know.
> I also think there's a lot of distrust of authority figures--the police, in particular.
> Like if I had been assaulted by the police, or discriminated against by them, why
> would I go to a public safety meeting to talk to cops?

Most participants voiced similar struggles with their neighborhood associations. In my own ethnographic diaries from 2009-2010, I attended public meetings in West End, Westview, Vine City, and the Booker T Washington Community. I documented extensively the volatile neighborhood meetings of the Booker T. Washington Community Association, Neighborhood Planning Units (NPU) –T and -L, and the Vine City Civic Association, and many other public meetings for west side neighborhoods.

Some of these accounts included long yelling matches between neighbors, politicians crowding meeting times with rallying votes and support, disagreements and factions, which broke up neighborhood civic leagues into various different groups. In this effect, there was low attendance, lack of neighborhood representation or communication to non-homeowners and low-income neighbors about meetings, burnout of active members, and occurrences of mortgage fraud and foreclosures that forced committee chairs and active members out of their homes and out of their respective associations (ethnographic field notes and interviews with Lauren and John Farnum, Lydia* and Jack Fisher*, Joannah Cook 2010 and 2011). In this light, participants described their neighborhood associations as often stressful and draining.

In fact, the meetings were so stressful that one participant, Stephen Causby, moved out of his neighborhood. Stephen, who now works for the Atlanta Regional Commission, completed his Master's degree in Urban Planning at Georgia Tech. For his thesis project, he helped create plans designed by the neighborhood association and conducted a parcel count. But by the end of this process, he explained he needed to "detox" and spent 15 months living in what he felt was a more "stable" neighborhood in Atlanta, one where he did not have to "be a neighbor."[40]

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[40] Causby does not currently attend his neighborhood association meetings. However, he and another strategic neighbor from English Avenue have started their own neighborhood group, including more vulnerable/marginalized residents, as of May 2011.

Conflict of Interest

Over half of participants said that although they initially went to their neighborhood association meetings, over time they felt there was a "conflict of interest." Richard Humphrey[*] explained his conflict with attendance

> We went for awhile…But, [our neighborhood] is socioeconomically diverse, and
>
> most of our relationships [and] people we got close to were renters… [W]hen you
>
> go to the neighborhood association it is mostly home owners…and it is was just
>
> really negative towards youth and renters. [A]lot of times it just felt like an assault
>
> on the poor, and after awhile I was like I don't know if I want to be a part of this
>
> group. So I don't know if it was wrong or right for us to stop going. We
>
> have…some relationships with people…there, but we are kind of like advocates
>
> for kids and the poor in a gentrifying neighborhood…A lot of people in our
>
> neighborhood view teenagers as a threat…and the poor…to development…I don't
>
> agree with that...The negative talk about the homeless, and anyone who isn't a
>
> middle class home owner [bothers me a lot].

According to Richard*, the struggle between middle-class identities and faith values directly conflict within the neighborhood association. While various participants also expressed this tension and concern, as they tried to serve their neighborhood, others felt attending the meetings did not address their main interest to build relationships, regardless of social class. As Lauren Farnum explained

> We got involved in [the neighborhood association] to make relationships…I defi-
>
> nitely thought: "I want to band together with people from the neighborhood to

change things." But ultimately, I just wanted to build relationships, meet and get

to know people… [But] now I am trying to organize a neighborhood watch and

stuff, and…action in the neighborhood. I know that also builds relationships, but

it is secondary, and gets pushed to the side…Like you can't be busy making

neighbors, because you are busy making the neighborhood association exist.

Lauren's involvement makes her a minority among participants, but her sentiments represent the

attitudes expressed by strategic neighbors. In fact, Lauren is reluctantly now the president of her

neighborhood association, only taking the position to keep the organization from dissolving.

The lack of participation among strategic neighbors did not mean they did not desire

physical improvements in the neighborhood. In fact, strategic neighbors did feel there was a need

for this kind of material/physical development, citing needs like housing, green spaces, derelic-

tion clean-up, more retail establishments, and other amenities. However, their lack of participa-

tion relates to the tensions and internal struggle they had with the negative side effects of this

kind of development. As Drew Henley pointed out

There are some nasty parts [of the neighborhood]. There are lots that are gross,

overgrown, boarded up homes that look disgusting, people squatting in them, and

a house over there (points down the street) caught on fire when someone was just

squatting in it to keep warm…Nobody was hurt…There are definitely eyesores in

the community, but they don't really bother me that much. There is part of me

that struggles. Because there is part of me that knows the prettier the community

is the more the investors are going to want to move in, think it is turned around,

and people will buy up homes and push people out. So it doesn't really bother me

that there are houses boarded up. But maybe it should, because it bothers indigen-

ous neighbors in the community.

The "eyesores" within the community and the struggle discussed by Drew reveal an internal so-

cial class struggle. On one hand, he is middle class, and he recognizes eyesores that, if cleaned

up, could attract investment to the neighborhood. On the other hand, his faith-values cause him

to have concerns about cleaning up the neighborhood because it attracts development. In particu-

lar, he is concerned with how material/physical development will increase the price of rents and

"push" vulnerable residents out. However, these values create compassion for the "indigenous

neighbors" who desire to have a safe and clean neighborhood. Thus, he remains conflicted on

whether or not to clean up the neighborhood.

In summary, through the neighborhood associations, conflicts between middle class-

values and faith-values emerge. Participants appeared concerned with the physical needs and in-

frastructure of the neighborhood, but in a way, that places them in opposition with other actors in

their neighborhood (i.e. neighborhood associations). In particular, a tension emerges because

their incarnational faith values shift their focus to the needs of those unrepresented by the neigh-

borhood association. In this way, the strategic neighbors' faith values clash with the efforts of

many community groups who seek to increase property values, increase economic development,

and attract more middle class/affluent homeowners. This struggle with their social class identi-

ties did not occur only with middle class homeowners within neighborhood associations, as a

public/secular problem: it also occurs within the church.

Faith in the Neighborhood (5.3)

According to participants, neighborhoods and the Church are disconnected. They described current neighborhood churches as "commuter churches," which primarily attract African Americans from outside the neighborhood, who do not care for, or engage with neighborhood residents. Richard Humphrey[*], who has been a strategic neighbor for over seven years, was surprised to find that the first church he and his wife attended was "a disengaged commuter church in the heart of their inner-city neighborhood:"

> This church was all on obedience and holiness and so little grace. [The pastor] rarely said the word love and he rarely taught on the topic of God's love at this church, and that clashed with our core values. Surely, not an emphasis on justice for the poor, we never talked about that stuff…They just weren't even involved in the neighborhood. Most of the members came from the outside [the neighborhood and] were scared of it. Saying "be careful when you go home"…I was expecting a neighborhood church, where some of the members lived there, and at least some wanted to be involved, [but they didn't].So, I was discouraged.

Paula Willis explained, during an interview at her home, that despite the numerous churches around her street, none of her neighbors actually attends any of them. Instead, she noted that the people who attend are former residents, who have moved "up and out:"

> This is weird, because there are 11 churches in 2 blocks. I [thought] that [all the neighbors] go, but the people from the neighborhood, [don't go]. It's [the people] from back then [who used to live here, but have since moved out].

Participants explained that they desired an engaged "neighborhood church," as a source of support for themselves and their neighborhood. Furthermore, they also desired this church to embrace "incarnational theology" and "grace" which differed from many of the local churches they observed. As Eric Johnson explained

> There is one church I drive past in the neighborhood that says, "Right thinking leads to right doing"…which isn't true. From my perspective [this] is not the message of the Gospel. In my perspective, when people get more into right thinking they think more about themselves…But, I feel like to have a more spiritually healthy relationship with God there should be a greater sense of humility, brokenness and not looking at one's actions as "a good Christian" and doing it "this way."

However, they also struggled with churches outside of their neighborhoods. In particular, Paula wishes that her own church were more involved in her neighborhood. She and her husband travel between 5-15 miles to get to church, which they say "isn't far" but wish their church and church members supported them and their neighborhood more.

Most participants expressed bad experiences and tensions with both "mega-churches" and suburban churches. According to Sally Jeffrey* **, when she and her husband decided to move into the inner city, they received the most negative feedback from their suburban church—so much so that they ended up leaving the church:

> The response we got about us moving into [the neighborhood] from [our church was negative]…They were like, "They are just going to do drugs you aren't going to make a difference, you are better off going overseas." We lost all of our support. They were like, "[Those people] are a waste of your time." I was shocked

that was the response we got. Our families [and close friends] were supportive,

but the whole 'you are wasting their time,' that just shocked me.

Many others received similar feedback from other middle-class Christians. In fact, Lydia Fisher*

explained her Christian African-American friends, who attended nearby Spelman, Clark Univer-

sity, and Morehouse colleges, also had critical remarks. In fact, one friend suggested to her that if

she moved back to the neighborhood, she would be an embarrassment to her family, as Lydia's*

friend stated, "I can't go back, because we worked so hard to get out."

Even when participants did not receive negative reactions, they also were uncomfortable

with how others within their church responded to their strategic neighboring. These participants

discussed how other middle class peers often felt "judged" or acted "amazed" when they discov-

ered that they lived in a poor neighborhood (Interviews with Lauren and John Farnum, Drew and

Diane Henley, Lydia* and Jack Fisher* 2010, 2011). These responses mostly made participants

feel uncomfortable, and they wished they knew a better way to communicate to their neighbors

and to their other middle class friends, family, and churches what they were doing. In short, the

way participants discussed middle class and affluent suburban churches, became another key

sign of class tensions.

Participants did not openly express frustration with suburban churches, but there was an

obvious tension. In particular, they distanced themselves from judgment and explained that it

was "typical" for strategic neighbors to "say something bad" about elite and middle class

churches. Mostly they avoided being negative but verbalized that they were halfhearted and con-

flicted about their involvement. As Lydia* and Jack Fisher* illustrate

Our church has a huge heart for Atlanta, but it is Buckhead…We have struggled

with should we stay there? We…feel like God wants us to stay. [They do] all

types of incredible stuff, but not any social justice stuff.

Although most participants attended church in their neighborhood or within 1-5 miles, they still

felt a division between their middle class church community and their poor inner-city neighbor-

hood.

Some participants resolved to attend a neighborhood church or envisioned starting a

neighborhood church to challenge these class-divisions. According to six participants, their vi-

sion for the neighborhood included a neighborhood-centered church. In fact, this is an idea has

been described by Bob Lupton in an article where he refers to "Gentry Churches" (Lupton 2010).

[41] In total, six participants attend these parish-like churches, which focus on a neighborhood and

draws congregants from within those boundaries. However, Beverly Easterling attends one of

these territorially-focused churches but still envisions going to a church with a "neighborhood"

focus: "I get excited about having a local church, like closer and into the neighborhood…like 10

years down the road…I see that and [en]vision that for the neighborhood." Moreover, a key rea-

son why participants wanted to focus on "neighborhood" was class divisions within the Church.

According to Drew Henley,

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[41] Chuck Johnston, a participant in the research study sent me an email with an article written by Robert Lupton on "Gentry Churches." In the document he highlighted how he and his church envisioned strategic neighboring and Christian community development through a parish-church model: "…a community-centric vision, on the other hand, considers the needs of all residents in the entire neighborhood – especially the vulnerable. Real estate knowledge, business acumen, legal expertise, architectural design, finance capabilities, political connections, community organizing– these are a few of the talents that under the lordship of Christ become the spiritual gifts needed to do justice in a gentrifying environment."

Our Church has been great…but it [is] probably never going to look like the demograph-
ics of folks and people [who are] older in the community… [Most of our neighbors] are
probably never going to come there."

Although this church is only five miles away, besides access issues like transportation, what truly
makes the church inaccessible is its middle class "demographics," which in terms of race and
class contrast those of this inner-city neighborhood. No matter how diverse participants' current
churches are, in order to "look like the neighborhood," it would have to be 95% or more African
American, include a significant portion of middle class as well as the working poor, with about a
third of its congregants living below the poverty line.[42] In this lens, the issue of "demographics"
reveals an embedded tension between middle class and working class, even within churches and
incarnational faith values. When interviewing the English Avenue Mission Year Team, partici-
pants discussed their neighborhood church's often "tense" relationship with an affluent church
partner:

Tyler Baldridge: "[With] those churches…there is some tension there. I feel like the ten-
sion is wealth, poverty, [and] a class thing. I am not basing this tension off of just wealth,
but a bad experience I had…while teaching/ sharing at a Sunday school.
Katherine Langley: This guy said, [after]…we raised 12,000 dollars, "That's pocket
change, try raising 40,000 dollars." They are people [sigh], they [do] have a great heart
for the neighborhood, but it's messy.
Tyler Baldridge: …It's just the contrast, of power, more so than money.
Joshua Brown Culp**: I think for a lot of people it is hard to not want to be safe and
comfortable…It is much easier to give a check than to give your heart. I see a lot of my-
self when I see [affluent and middle class churches]…I don't know their hearts, maybe

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[42] City of Atlanta, 2009 Census Data

they want to do those things but they don't know how. I think that is where most of

America is, not wanting to sacrifice.

In short, although the team members identify this tension as socio-economic, as Tyler explains, what truly separates their neighborhood church and its suburban church partner is power. Furthermore, Joshua explains that he not only sees his own internalized tension with his middle class-ness in suburban churches, he also sees this tension in most of America. In this way, the unequal power relationship between the rich and the poor extends beyond neighborhood associations and churches to the nation state.

According to Joshua, this ends in a discomfort where individuals are unsure how to confront these inequalities along class lines and respond by avoiding confrontation and merely sending a check. He suggests that to truly confront these inequalities there will have to be sacrifices and individuals will have to challenge their internalized class identities to change these dynamics. In this way, participating in a neighborhood church did not resolve the dilemma and social inequalities along class lines.

Moreover, a neighborhood church was not a goal for all participants. In particular, two participants within west side neighborhoods explained that they need "space" outside of their neighborhoods. Both these participants expressed that they had difficulty fully connecting with a neighborhood church. While Laura Pritchard in the BTWC neighborhood explained that she "had a restless spirit," planned to move overseas at some point, and did not like being in a "Christian bubble," the other participant had more conflicted reasons. This participant described that that although her husband was a pastor of a neighborhood church, she did not feel like she could "fully connect" with the church. In fact, she explained that she mostly attends other more affluent and middle class churches on Sunday mornings and for Bible Studies:"[B]eing at this

church, even when we weren't [living] in the neighborhood was a big adjustment." According to this participant, her faith values also conflicted with the middle class values of the affluent churches she chose to attend. In fact, she did not feel like her middle-class identity and faith values fit in with either her neighborhood church or with a suburban church. On one hand, she felt like she was not a "good strategic neighbor" because she did not "fully connect." But on the other, her sociological and theological perspectives on social justice did not connect with the middle class churches where she felt more "comfortable" or able to "connect."

This chapter has explored the class-identity struggles of strategic neighbors that is created is specifically created by their often conflicted with their middle class values, their inner city neighborhoods' values, and their faith values. One key belief that prompted these tensions is their incarnational faith which motivates them to forgo their privilege as middle class persons, move towards suffering of the marginalized by relocating to under-resourced neighborhoods, and pursue holistic (spiritual, physical, and social) Beloved Community development. This belief shifted their development efforts, without excluding material/physical development, toward social/spiritual neighborhood development. Their incarnational faith then placed them in tension with social class categories or social institutions in particular with neighborhood associations, with the Church, and with themselves. In this analysis of faith and social class, place has also emerged as a key theme. Therefore, to fully explore the class identity struggles of strategic neighbors, the next chapter will focus on place.

6   PLACE AND CLASS

*"The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood."-John 1:14 [*The Message translation*]*

"Christians are often the worst neighbors…When I was a kid I remember when we talked about…"Love your Neighbor,"…they were so quick to remind me that people in Africa and Asia were my neighbors, that it almost made me overlook the fact that the people next door to me were my neighbors."— Research participant, Chuck Johnston

Introduction (6.0)

In addition to faith, an intentional focus on place was one of the three most common traits among strategic neighbors in west Atlanta neighborhoods. As depicted in the last chapter, participants' incarnational faith motivated them to relocate and directly linked their faith and actions specifically to their neighborhood. In this lens, participants were not only engaging in incarnational theology related to FBCD, they were also engaging in a "place-based theology" (Hankins et al. 2010).[43] This place-based theology brings participants' efforts to incarnate Christ and live out their faith specifically into the context of their territorially-based neighborhood.

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[43] Hankins, Walter, Case 2010

Placing Theology

Participants explained that "the neighborhood" is where strategic neighboring begins. In particular, strategic neighboring started when they initially "felt called to relocate" to a specific neighborhood and then chose to relocate there. Although participants may still engage in "incarnating" Christ outside of the neighborhood, they have positioned their identity largely within a bounded location. The focus on place and neighborhood is a way for participants to live out their faith and, as I suggest, it reflects a challenge to their middle class identity. There are three primary reasons why strategic neighbors felt motivated by their faith to focus on a particular place: (1) to cut across traditional socio-cultural barriers, (2) to make faith "tangible," and (3) to challenge social norms to enable solidarity.

According to Beverly Easterling, a strategic neighbor in the BTWC, engaging in a particular place enables one to cross traditional socio-cultural barriers and to remove the discrimination and favoritism embedded in all social relationships. In particular, Beverly feels that focusing on the neighborhood makes it possible to build relationships with people outside of her tax bracket. When defining strategic neighboring, she explained:

Purposely choosing to love the people around you, and not going outside of that.

And I mean, going outside of that when you need to but saying that my purpose

and my zone is concentrated here and this is what I am called to.

Additionally, engaging deeply in a territorially-specific place also brings strategic neighbors in close contact with tangible needs that they would otherwise ignore. As Esther Lee* explains,

Thinking about the zip code and how it relates to my faith…makes it a lot more

tangible and more than just I am going to pray for the children in Darfur or hope

that there is peace in the Middle East. To live in Buckhead or Midtown and say I

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am going to pray for the homeless in the city, [that] is a totally different expe-

rience than having them squatting in abandoned houses next to me; [like my

neighbor's niece who] is squatting in a house down the street…there is something

different about really focusing on what is immediately around you.

In this way, participants feel that they could never gain full solidarity with their neighbors, across

lines of race and class, without moving into these neighborhoods. As Emily Green Hayden, resi-

dent of English Avenue reflects

Some of my mentors at the Open Door Community taught me that what you see

when you wake up in the morning really defines your sense of reality. Like if you

live in a gated community in Buckhead, and the first thing you see in the morning

is SUVs and manicured lawns, what is going to compel you to look at the stark

realities of what is going on in these neighborhoods? You have to put your body

here…You don't have that sense of solidarity unless you are actually living here

and this is where your mail comes. [44]

In short, participants understood their role as neighbor as directly tied to place. This was espe-

cially made visible through their decision to stay.

Choosing to Stay (6.1)

The long-term commitment to their neighbors and neighborhoods distinguished strategic

neighbors from a FBO or other social services organizations. Most viewed "staying" as a per-

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[44] A Christian Community in downtown Atlanta, other Mission Year members and Strategic
neighbors knew of it and or had spent time there. Hayden and her husband lived there for a year.

sonal goal (Interview with Richard Humphrey, 2010), stating that they desired "long term rela-tionships" (In total, during interviews 16 participants defined strategic neighboring this way, see Appendix C) and "continuity" (Interview with Eric Johnson , 2010) with their neighbors. In par-ticular, they felt the decision to stay and not "flip" their home consciously challenged the stereo-types and perceptions of their neighbors (Interviews with Jack and Lydia Fisher*, Jane Gilbert, Chuck and JoElyn Johnston, and Esther Lee* 2010; 2011). As Jack Fisher* reflects

It took about 6 months [of living in the neighborhood]… [Then our neighbors] realized that [we] are nice people, [that we] are going to stay… [and] aren't [drug] dealers, or anything like that.

Most participants, specifically homeowners, shared this sentiment. Both homeowners and renters discussed their "decision to stay" in terms of "maintaining long-term relationships," "building trust of other neighbors" and "enduring hardship" in the neighborhood. Lydia Fisher* comments

We have been broken into three times and each time we are asked "Are you going to go? Are you leaving?" and we are like, No.

Although not all participants handled break-ins so smoothly, most had experienced a rob-bery and/or a burglary. Based on participant observation and through interviews, participants ex-pressed sometimes it was petty theft, i.e. rose bushes stolen out of the ground , a hair straightener stolen after hosting other neighbors for breakfast, or laptops and cameras swiped by teenagers, etc. Other times, it was more severe, such as a car stolen, being robbed at gunpoint, being physi-cally assaulted and/or mugged.[45] Participants largely felt that experiencing the problems and con-flicts further connected them to their neighbors and created solidarity with their neighbors. In

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[45] Shortly after an interview with Brittany Harris 2010, her home was broken into and she was robbed of her laptop and camera. Additionally, Chuck Johnston emailed me the day after our in-terview, 2011 sharing that there was an assault and robbery across the street from Esther Lee* (a strategic neighbor and participant in Grove Park).

particular, they felt afterwards their neighbors took them more "seriously" and treated them more as a "real neighbor." In fact, participants who experienced break-ins also appeared to have a deeper bond and attachment to the social and physical aspects of the neighborhood. In this way, their goal, to gain solidarity by making the problems of their neighbors their problems, was achieved.

For some, solidarity could only be achieved by staying in the neighborhood for a long-term commitment. This is a subjective time-frame, meaning for some participants 1 year, 5 years, 10 years, or forever. However, on average participants had been strategic neighbors (living in an under-resourced neighborhood) for 2.5 years. In this way, their notion of a "long-term commitment" is linked to achieving solidarity and building trust unlike other social service providers, ministries, volunteers, and NGOs, who may eventually leave. This perception created a class-identity struggle, specifically since participants felt that their decision to stay made them more like their neighbors—immobile.

The guilt of staying

Despite their ideals and "long-term" commitment to "stay," most participants shared that they had thoughts about moving out or leaving, specifically when things "got hard" and they felt overwhelmed with the high degree of need within the neighborhood. Participants largely voiced feelings of guilt when they even thought about leaving or moving out, or if they were not around in their neighborhood or with neighbors enough. Additionally, another source of guilt came from their middle-class social positioning, which in their view enabled them to leave.

Lauren Farnum expressed feelings of some guilt and that she could do a "better job" of being in her neighborhood more. In particular, she explained that it was hard to "stay" in the neighborhood because her (middle class) life-style involved constantly driving, going out, and

meeting up with friends and family outside her neighborhood. Guilt tended to emerge for partici-

pants because they felt very mobile and that their marginalized neighbors were mostly immobile.

Often this made them feel guilty, because they felt they were benefiting from inequality.

Rethinking Mobilities

However, this view appeared to be based on a false assumption of the immobility of indi-

genous neighbors. According to participants, although they were staying in their neighborhoods

to achieve solidarity with their poor neighbors and to challenge middle-class mobilities, their

neighbors actually moved fairly-often.[46] More specifically, their neighbors mostly rented and

frequently moved to other houses and apartments both in and outside the neighborhood. In fact,

participants commented that there were fewer people than there used to be in the west Atlanta

neighborhoods. According to Sally Jeffery* ** all of the people who lived on her street when she

first moved in had since moved out. She explained that the streets used to have lots of foot traffic

and kids but now these once full houses sit vacant.

The chronic mobility within the neighborhood was also confirmed by Beverly Easterling,

who has been a strategic neighbor for nearly three years and teaches at the local middle school.

According to Beverly, when she first started teaching most of her students were from the neigh-

borhood. However, now the school has experienced a declining population and now pulls its stu-

dents from other neighborhoods and a nearby homeless shelter. She identified several issues that

resulted in these changes, such as the 2007 demolition of public housing, mortgage fraud, and the

growing percentage of vacant houses.

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[46] This fact holds with the exception to neighbors who live in Habitat Homes. They are largely
immobile.

Although these may sound like symptoms of gentrification, there were significant signs of *disinvestment*, which imposes mobility onto vulnerable neighbors. This finding challenges many of the fundamental claims within CCD, which encourages committing to a neighborhood under the auspices that the underprivileged cannot move (Lupton 1973; Lupton 1997; Claiborne 2005; Perkins 1995). Ultimately, it is not the decision to stay that makes strategic neighbors similar to others in their marginalized neighborhood. Instead, it is their ability to decide in the first place which reveals how different they really are from many of their neighbors. Participants in their initial state are mobile, just as their neighbors are. However, strategic neighbors have control over their mobility, while their neighbors generally do not. In this way, the power over mobility held by the middle class undercuts their ability to achieve solidarity, i.e. "build relation-ships," enact CCD, and "holistically restore" their neighborhoods. Finally, the reality of these mobilities suggests that the discrepancies within social class inequalities are not about who is mobile or immobile, but who has the power to choose.

Challenging Class through Place (6.2)

According to Gunnar Martin, a strategic neighbor in Vine City, there is a need for middle class and elite Americans to think about what it means to be one of the richest people groups in the world. For him, the act of relocating to the neighborhood embodies his personal ethic and place-based theology, but also reveals class divisions within the urban landscape of Atlanta:

As one of the top 10% richest people in the world, [the question is]: What are you doing with that? I don't want to have the typical American life… I could be living

in Buckhead... [But] I don't want to be like everybody else…in our socioeconom-

ic bracket. In our bracket that when we were born we knew were going to go to

college, it was a set up.

Likewise for other strategic neighbors, it is an act of faith to confront aspects of their own middle

class identity, which they feel are "unjust" and connected to the poverty within their neighbor-

hoods. They related two key aspects to perpetuating these inequalities: (1) racial and economic

reconciliation and (2) materialism/anti-consumption.

Racial and Economic Reconciliation

As I suggested in Chapter Five, racial and economic stratifications are key arenas that

strategic neighbors seek to challenge by relocating to poor neighborhoods of color. All but four

participants self-identified themselves as White; three identified themselves as "mixed race" and

one as Chilean. In total, all 32 are middle class persons choosing to live out their faith in, poor

inner-city neighborhoods, among predominantly African American communities. Participants

feel there is racial/economic segregation in Atlanta and generally identify that there are "unspo-

ken" boundaries that divide different parts of the city. More specifically, they identified north

Atlanta as suburban, affluent, and white and west and south Atlanta as "inner-city," poor, and

black. Moreover, they also understood these boundaries to be related to historical segregation

and racism.

They identified these boundaries as west of Northside Drive and down "Bankhead" (now

Donald Lee Hollowell) as an unspoken color-line and class-line. However, participants felt that

these boundaries, although they made sense from their more middle-class perspectives, were in

tension with their faith values and beliefs. In response, participants consciously relocated to dis-

invested neighborhoods to challenge these traditional boundaries of race and class. In particular, when speaking about themselves or other strategic neighbors, they talked about "reconciliation" (one of the CCDA "3Rs," see Chapter One) and how in order to live out their faith, it was important to challenge such divisions. Jane Gilbert, a resident of Grove Park, stated that strategic neighboring specifically challenges "dividing lines" across race and class. By drawing on faith, Jane, and other participants, felt their Christian faith and 'place-based theology' called them to cross these socio-cultural and socio-geopolitical boundaries:

> I feel like the Kingdom [of God] doesn't look like the way we tend to segregate
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> ourselves, and not just racially. [People] are just drawn to sameness. I know that I
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> am very much drawn to sameness. I am incredibly drawn to people that [sic] do
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> what I do and like what I like. I kind of don't want to be drawn to that.

Over time participants became more comfortable crossing these "unspoken lines." When discussing Bankhead Highway (now Donald Lee Hollowell) and crossing to the "other side" of Northside Drive, participants recounted how there was a stark contrast between the Atlanta they knew as middle-class individuals, and the Atlanta they *now* know, as strategic neighbors. This feeling of crossing over an invisible social norm of race and class was expressed by Lydia Fisher[*], a white strategic neighbor who described the first time she drove into the neighborhood:

> [My husband and I] had lived in Atlanta for three years and…never crossed
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> "Northside" so to speak. So I was amazed, I thought I knew Atlanta and what the
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> city was like, and had no clue that there was that kind of poverty and obvious suf-
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> fering. I mean, you saw people high and drunk, and it was the middle of the day
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> and it was just so obvious….homes were clearly burned out, squatted in, and van-

dalized...The minute we crossed Northside, we went silent…it was like there was

a *line*. It was sad.

This was "sad" for participants because their personal ethic and faith values suggested these

boundaries should not exist. However, as Lydia* continued, she also recognized the complex

class divisions embedded into her neighborhood through her interactions with several of her

middle class Christian African American friends and colleagues:

Something that was discouraging to me…. [was when some of my] black

friends…[who] went to Clark and Spelman…[and] were in the sororities that par-

tied in Washington Park, and when I was like, "I am the second house on the

left," they were like "We partied in your front lawn!…We totally know where you

live!"… [But] when they came over they were like, "We can't believe you live

here!?...We don't even want to live here…If I even returned to that neighborhood

I would be an embarrassment to my family… I can't move back in… [My family]

worked so hard to get out… I don't want my kids to grow up there… [Although]

we are looking at the same neighborhood, to them it is just a bad, bad, place…. I

remember that being really discouraging…because I wanted it to be a multi-

cultural, multi-ethnic area…with different backgrounds, [with a community] that

wants… [to] love their neighbors.

What Lydia describes here, is a racialized class identity struggle within the African American

community in regards to her inner city neighborhood. This tension specifically exists between

those who are educated and have the ability to leave the neighborhood and those who are poor

and marginalized and do not have the same mobility.

There appears to be a different social meaning for middle class African Americans to re-locate to the inner-city than for those who are middle class but not African American.

This difference is supported furthermore by the explanation of one participant who shared that Mission Year, a key organization that recruits and teaches the philosophy of strategic neighboring, does not actively recruit minorities or from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). One strategic neighbor familiar with the organization recounts its recent struggles:

> Mission Year does not actively recruit minorities [or from] the African American community…because… [Mission Year team members from] Spelman [have really] struggled with [living in the neighborhood]. The [girls that] came [struggled because]…they were in [poor] black neighborhoods and seeing [that] with someone of your own color…like [Middle-class African Americans,] like my best guy friends, they don't understand why I live here and what I am doing. One [friend who is a middle class African American guy] was like… "You are living here again!? You need to get out of here!"

Similar to the tension described by Lydia*, perhaps this speaks to the historic legacy of racism and segregation which had produced social inequalities and stigma in regards of the inner-city urban America. In conjunction with race, participants also felt that economic, diversity would make their neighborhood healthier. Another key goal underpinning strategic neighboring was a transition from "charity" to "justice." In this sense, strategic neighbors relocated to build rela-tionships, which they felt would break-down the inequalities of between the superior rich and the inferior poor. In particular, they sought to create interdependent relationships to pursue equality across race and class. As John Farnum explains

[The neighborhood] would be a lot healthier if it were more racially [and] eco-

nomically mixed…not just black and white…We have gotten a couple comments,

like when I am on the MARTA going to work. Like, "You're not supposed to be

here, you are supposed to be up in Buckhead or something." It's a comment, like I

didn't belong here, because I looked like I was "too white and rich"…I feel like

the standard thing, when a kid or someone sees me doing any kind of work, is

like: "I will do that for you for five dollars." I am like, "I don't want that to be

your view," to do menial work for me… I would rather have a diverse group,

where you can do more than that. At least, more than because he [looks like he] is

white and/or rich and stuff.

Many participants feel that this current system described by John is geared toward "chari-

ty" in contrast to "justice." More specifically, they are frustrated when they see the Church

and/or people giving "hand outs" of money, clothing, etc. Participants feel these hand outs "hurt"

the neighborhood and instead of helping, as they create dependency and avoid larger justice is-

sues about why resources are distributed unequally. For the participants, these handouts often

hurt poor neighborhood residents more than help because they never address systemic problems

that keep them in poverty and living hand to mouth. Strategic neighbors feel that to truly address

these inequalities individuals and institutions have to have a "stake" (Interview with Beverly

Easterling, 2010) in the neighborhood's success and failure, and their neighbors' problems have

to become their problems (Interview Brittany Harris, 2010). To many, this is a mindset that they

are trying to reconfigure. As John expresses

"There are churches around here…we see groups of people that are giving out

clothes or help at the [neighborhood] Family Dollar, and many times I have

wanted to talk to them. [L]ike, "I appreciate your generosity but you are kind of

perpetuating and carrying on a system." Like, "Do you want to move here?" [If

so, than] great, we have open arms.

The system they feel that was being perpetuated is one of economic injustice. Although they

challenge this by relocating to build relationships with the poor, after moving they continued to

challenge this system by altering their consumption habits.

Consumption in Place

Living in an under-resourced neighborhood, for strategic neighbors, also relates to free-

ing themselves from the middle class pressure of "keeping up with the Joneses." Participants ex-

pressed that different values such as "minimalism," "anti-consumption," and "giving up com-

fort" are a part of achieving reconciliation across class lines. Many participants chose to live

simply and chose alternative consumption practices, such as "sharing resources with neighbors"

(Interview with Libby Warfield, 2011). In this way, participants discussed redistribution (one of

the CCDA "3Rs") through relationships, using words and phrases such as "sharing." These acts

of generosity were related to their faith-values, as well as not wanting to be "materialistic." As

Laura Pritchard***, a strategic neighbor in the BTWC expressed it: [47]

I just don't want to get sucked into the culture… [I am not talking about] the

"hood" or poverty…but American culture. I just don't like having so much stuff. I

just think it should be simpler.

In some ways, strategic neighbors feel that American materialism is contributing to the

blight of the neighborhood. For four participants, "anti- consumption" was a key motivator in

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[47] ***Asterisks means that the participant has relocated to another inner city neighborhood in
Atlanta.

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choosing to relocate to a disinvested neighborhood and was a way they consciously avoided materialism. As Esther Lee* explained

> I intentionally don't want to be caught up in conspicuous consumption…As long as I live in Grove Park, I am not going to live in a huge house…I am not going to own a very expensive car…It would be impractical…and [in]appropriate for the neighborhood. I have a perfectly nice house and I haven't exactly taken a vow of poverty…but [similarly, I am] saying I want something alternative.

Esther* did not only list Biblical passages and Christian leaders as influences in becoming a strategic neighbor, but also counter-cultural movements and anti-consumption and minimalist thinkers. Authors, such as Canadian social activist and writer, Douglas Copeland, of whom she is a "huge fan," have also encouraged her to "not get caught up with "stuff" and "material culture" that cause people to only desire having more.

Strategic neighbors believed "materialism" is often the larger socio-structural problem both within the neighborhood and outside the neighborhood (Interview with Doug Whitmire*, 2010). Participants have relationships with neighbors with various economic situations—who are middle class or poor. Although there were families with material needs, participants commented that both those with and without these needs had things, such as the latest video games, new cell phones, and big screen plasma TVs. However, at the same time several of these same families often sold their food stamps to pay rent, did not have food, had their utilities turned off, and experienced chronic evictions (Participant observations 2009, 2010; Interview Beverly Easterling, 2010). They identified this as a problem with "materialism" which participants explained as something that challenged their initial understanding of "needs" in their neighborhoods (Inter-

view Doug Whitmire*).[48] For example, John Farnum did not really believe there was a need for "heart change" until after he moved into the neighborhood. In this same way, participants seemed to describe that before relocating they understood the needs of inner-city poverty and poor neighborhoods as material/physical. But now, it appears they understand the needs as diverse, and more social and spiritual.

In close, this chapter has surveyed place as a key component of strategic neighboring, exposing the underlying and overarching class struggles among participants. Now, finally, the theme of daily actions will be explored as it, too, reveals the tensions of class in strategic neighboring.

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[48] In an interview with Paula Willis, 2010 she explained how drastically different it was to live among the U.S. inner-city poor in comparison to growing up in Chile and living among the poor in Campesinos (shantytowns). She explained that relationships between the rich and poor are very different and that in Chile she felt that though there were large disparities and poverty the tension she felt along the lines of race and class was reflective of poor social policy and inadequate and ineffective government programs.

"If someone claims to have faith but has no deeds, can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?... The body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."—James 2:14-25

Introduction (7.0)

This exploration has peeled back the layers of values and beliefs underpinning strategic neighbors, in which a social class identity struggle has emerged. Now to complete this exploration, this chapter turns to the third most common trait participants used to define strategic neighbor: their daily actions in their neighborhoods.

According to participants, the daily actions that were the most imperative for enacting neighborhood transformation were small intentional actions. Twenty out of 32 participants described these "small" and "ordinary" daily actions primarily in the terms of "building relationships" with their neighbors. Most suggested that although this seems mundane and simple, it is the most powerful way to transform neighborhoods. Paula Willis described her daily actions of "neighboring" in these terms:

…Spending time with neighbors, inviting people over, listening, asking questions, not just handing money out, but getting to know our rich and poor neighbors.[49]

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[49] She shared a powerful story about when she got upset when a neighbor kept coming over to ask for money. She finally told the woman, "Why do you think I have [money]? And that if I

As a group, participants frequently engaged in these small acts of kindness in order to get to know neighbors. In particular, making cookies to share with neighbors came up repeatedly as a way to do something small in order to build a relationship with a neighbor. Participants felt this small act of getting to know their neighbors was actually tied to their overall neighborhood transformation efforts. According to Lydia Fisher* making cookies was what she did to get to know a "hard to meet" neighbor. In fact, she expressed how at first she was nervous and intimidated and did not know how to initiate a relationship or even introduce herself. However, then another strategic neighbor gave her the steps of using cookies to get know her neighbors:

> She … was like, "Just go over there with cookies and stuff."And I was like "Whoa, Whoa, Whoa…I need the play by play. What do you mean just go over and make cookies and stuff!?" She was like, "Here is your plate, you go over, knock on the door, say "Hello, my name is Lydia, I just made you cookies, and I wanted to say Hi…Have a nice day." Give them the plate and turn around and walk away. If they want to talk, stay and talk and if not just go home." So I did that [, and it worked] …So now every major holiday I will make her [as well as other neighbors] something. I know she appreciates it…she returns the gesture [and makes me cookies too].

Making cookies was a common and routine practice among strategic neighbors. At least weekly participants were using cookies or other small foods and items to "share" with their

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have [money] that I should give it to you?!" Afterwards Paula felt bad and sorry for her words and went down the street to apologize to her neighbor and that if she really needed money to eat or something she would give it to her. When Paula got to the house, the woman's adult daughter was at the door and asked her "Did my mother ask you for money? Because if she did it is for cigarettes and we are trying to help her quit and won't give her money for that." Paula commented that she saw the women in the background signaling to her to say nothing, she did not say anything to the woman's daughter, but was glad she did not give the woman money.

neighbors, such as pancakes, sandwiches, cakes, hot dogs, pizza, etc. The key point of these rou-

tine practices of sharing is to initiate conversations with neighbors, break down class and racial

divides, and build relationships that, in their "long-term view," would lead to community restora-

tion. In this light, it is interesting to see how making cookies reveals an internal class-identity

struggle. Most studies have documented that middle class persons do not actively get to know

their neighbors (Dowling 2009). As exemplified by Lydia*, for strategic neighbors stepping out-

side of their classed-comfort zone is often hard and takes effort. In this sense, through this "small

act" of social justice, participants were also challenging their middle class identities, but also si-

multaneously enacting their inherently classed faith-vision of community as it 'ought' to be.

Small but Strategic (7.1)

Being present

During the interviews, participants' focus on relationships was ever-present. Multiple

times their phones would ring and, if it was a neighbor, the interview would stop. Participants

would text message, stop and chat, and even pause the interview to let their neighbor know they

would "call them right back." According to 12 of the 32 participants this was what they called

"being present" and was their main action in their neighborhood. In particular "being present"

referred to carving out time to just "be available" in their neighborhood without plans or an

agenda, in order to have time with neighbors. As Libby Warfield puts it

I think that allowing myself to be interrupted by things, to enjoy being a part of

things…Growing up, we weren't really connected with people…So I try…to be a

part of… gathering and interact daily.

As Libby described it, choosing to be present countered their middle-class social norms and up-

bringing. But participants explained they knew that if they did not intentionally take time to be at

their house, walk the streets, and just "be" in their neighborhood, that they would "miss out" on a

lot of relational time and important happenings in the community. In particular, they felt if they

were not "present" they would remain unaware of their neighbors' needs and larger issues of in-

justice. Although more than a third of participants felt "being present" was a key action, which

defined strategic neighbors, they also felt it was hard to explain to others as a real action. As

Drew Henley, a neighbor in Vine City, expressed

When people think about justice oriented mission, they think about the homeless

community and soup kitchens, and clothes drives and food banks…Those places

are great, and they serve a huge need, but they have a tendency to set up an "us"

and "them" mentality. [Being present and neighboring] it is difficult to quantify

because [people] want…some quantifiable result…But from this long term vision

of strategic neighboring…[it is] longer term change…[and it's about]…sharing

life together and developing real trust.

For eight participants, "being present" was not just about "small intentional acts" but a planned

spatial strategy to restore the neighborhood. Stephen Causby, who has been a strategic neighbor

in his neighborhood for 10 years, actively worked with his church to develop a "spatial strategy"

to "reneighbor" and enact CCD. He explained that after renting in the neighborhood for years,

when he bought his house he strategically looked for houses with this spatial strategy in mind. In

particular, he looked exclusively on a certain street block which was close to his church and the neighborhood garden (which he helped organize), and one that was "more stable" with inhabited homes and fewer vacancies than on other streets. According to Stephen, the strategy has been relatively successful. He noted that more strategic neighbors have moved in recently and the block where he lives has become so much safer.

In contrast, some participants talked about "being present" in the roughest parts of the neighborhood in order to "make them safer." For Colyn Burbank** and two members from his English Avenue Mission Year team, "being present" was not only about being available, but *where* you are present. Colyn** expressed that he and three of his roommates felt their presence walking down streets helped deter or break up criminal activities, simply by waving hello, and stopping to talk when they saw someone on their front porch:

> Like Tyler, Josh and I intentionally walk through the neighborhood every week
> together, down Joseph P. Brawley, a notorious drug street, to make our presence
> known. We walk down there every week, we walk down the scary streets to make
> them more approachable and safe, and meet the people on those streets.

All three shared a story about when they were walking down this "rough street." They came across a woman who was terrified of the neighborhood and was so afraid she did not let her son outside. They invited her to a community barbeque they were hosting and since then she has become active in the community. In fact Tyler, one of Colyn's** roommates, shared that the same woman recently got a playground donated to the neighborhood. Ultimately, this was a very tangible act, one which Colyn** and his roommates felt would never have happened if they were not simply "being present" in their neighborhood.

Social Events and Relationships

Although being present was a key action for strategic neighbors, when they were actually present, they focus on "building relationships." For some, these relationships were about being able to use social networks as a resource and creating community interdependence. But for others, these relationships are about knowingness, familiarity, being comfortable going over to talk on someone's front porch on a whim. Five out of sixteen participants said hosting and participating in social events was a mundane, yet critical action, which led to neighborhood transformation.

In conversations with Drew Henley, the Vine City Coordinator at Trinity Anglican Mission in America Church, he purposely did not want to host activities for neighbors at his church five miles away. Instead, he focused on hosting events at his home in the neighborhood and going to neighborhood places. In this way, strategic neighbors felt they were challenging the negative connotations of the inner-city. Participants identified challenging these norms, as well as doing "positive things" (Interview with Richard Humphrey*, 2010) in the neighborhood, to be an action. More specifically, it was an action in which they "affirmed" and "gave dignity" (Interview with Drew Henley, 2010) to the community.

The most formal relationship building acts participants discussed were mentoring and tutoring school-age kids in the neighborhood. Seven participants discussed how mentoring/tutoring a neighborhood girl and/or boy is a critical action, which they feel, contributes to neighborhood transformation. Mentoring became a big focus for some participants. Some strategic neighbors are motivated to "challenge the stereotypes…that inner city kids can't learn" (Interview with Brittany Harris, 2010). But others took on roles as volunteer tutors, coaches, and role-models be-

cause they felt the inner-city schools and home environments did not lend themselves to meeting the learning needs of children in the neighborhood.

Participants discussed two mentoring programs. One is an after-school program organized by a neighborhood church which tutors 12-15 kids. The other is a formal partnership through a church which pairs kids with mentors from their church. Participants shared that through mentoring and tutoring and by teaching life-skills along with academic-skills they contributed to community transformation by "raising up leaders" (Interview Diane Henley, 2010) within the neighborhood. Developing leaders entails helping neighborhood families enroll their children in extra-curricular activities, telling them about learning experiences, trips, athletics, educational support, and scholarship opportunities at their respective schools. For example, several strategic neighbors connected kids and their families to the new KIPP charter High School, Outward Bound club, scholarship programs, summer camps, soccer, basketball, etc. In these examples, participants feel these one-one-relationships with youth are critical to changing the future power relationships of the neighborhood. In this way, they are reconfiguring and re-making place. As strategic neighbors see it, these mentoring actions are a key component of their neighborhood transformation efforts.

Strategic neighbors relationally remake place by "reweaving the social fabric" of their neighborhood. "Reweaving," according to Chuck and JoElyn Johnston, means linking their middle class and predominately White church with their inner-city predominately African American neighbors: "We want to be over here, not to change anything--not to help--but to be a part of [the neighborhood and community] and [just] reweave the fabric a little bit, to make it stronger."

Although it echoes the new 'social mix' idea—which Hope VI (demolition of public housing) and other programs seek to achieve, for participants, the idea of bringing middle class

persons to the inner-city is a new strategy to address inner city poverty (Hankins and Walter 2011). For strategic neighbors the relocation of middle class residents to poor areas contrasts with a more traditional model of "up and out" which seeks to enable inner-city persons (especially kids) to leave the inner-city to relocate to middle class neighborhoods. The problem with this strategy is that it leaves the injustices in the inner-city unaddressed and ongoing. In this lens, strategic neighbors feel that inviting their middle class friends from church and from north Atlanta to neighborhood social events also contributes to their transformation goals. As Lydia Fisher* suggests

> The more we invite our friends the more they come, the more they come the less afraid they are, the less afraid they are the more we share, and the more they become aware of what we are doing…[this includes] people I didn't even know or would not have visited five years ago.

Lydia's comments echo part of Eric Johnson's vision. Eric Johnson, a strategic neighbor in Vine City who works at the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB) hopes to connect not only his family and friends to the neighborhood but also his co-workers. However, he like other participants wrestles with questions about how to communicate strategic neighboring to their middle class peers:

> When I was in a conversation Friday, this is something I really struggle with, one of my coworkers asked where I was living and I said, "Oh, downtown kind of on the west side"… [Although] I want to be very honest [about] what I am doing and why I am doing it…I [also] don't want to come off as idealistic and naïve…or, a crazy religious zealot.

Communicating their decision to relocate to an under-resourced neighborhood is a key issue among participants. In conjunction with their faith values, they do not want to attract attention or become self-righteous, which, many have suggested, pushes them to be honest about who they are and what they are doing. But, often they fear the responses of their peers and neighbors to their personal ethics, faith-motivation, and the poor neighborhood in which they lived.

In short, participants focus on "being present" and "building relationships" appears to operationalize Massey-like place-politics (2005) and used Bourdieu-like "social capital" (1985) by using relationships to network place. This was made evident when participants, who were connected to external middle class networks and institutions, were able to link, network, and provide access to things their neighbors did not otherwise have access to.

For example, they shared their resources with their neighbors who needed assistance with legal knowledge, reading bill statements, accessing NGOs for financial support, seeking job opportunities, transportation, résumé building, tutoring, mentoring, and various other forms of resources. Over the course of this research study, I was even personally contacted by individuals from well-known organizations who were seeking to make donations, through these actors, to these neighborhoods. These emails entailed wanting to know the tangible needs of the neighborhood and how they could best assist. It is likely that these contributions would not have been made possible without the strategic neighbors' presence and relational investment in the neighborhood.

Why don't they use a physical/material approach to community development? (7.2)

Although participants were engaged in material/physical community development, for the most part, they did not primarily pursue economic development, financial investment, or other actions geared toward restoring the built environment of their neighborhoods. Interestingly, participants explained that while they did care about their neighborhood's infrastructure and built-environment, they avoided such approaches, largely because of their concern for the poor. A closer analysis of participants' key visions and current neighborhood transformation efforts reveals major themes that explain why they did not primarily focus on the built-environment.

During the interview process participants identified that there are not only needs but assets in their neighborhood. In particular, four participants described this strategy as "Assets-Based Community Development (ABCD)."[50] Five out of 16 participants see neighborhood charter schools and after-school programs as an asset; seven participants see their proximity to their church and being downtown as an asset; but mostly when talking about assets, they speak about the front porches.

The strategic neighbors interviewed in this study love front porches, which they described as the number one asset in their neighborhoods. According to participants, their neighbors were regularly outside on their porches. They like how this structural component of the neighborhood opened up community-building activities and enables them to get to know their neighbors. This is a real plus for Jack Fisher[*]; he loves coming home and seeing neighbors on their porches:

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[50] This is a fundamental community development strategy which focuses on building up on existing strengths and local residents (McKnight and Kreztmann 1993).

> The houses are so close together so that if you are out front, or when you come
> home from work, everyone is right there and they see you, you say, "Hi." Any
> time [I] see them on their porch, I…cross the street and talk…until I met everyone
> on our third of the street… I met a lot of the kids that way and families.

However, although all participants identified assets in their neighborhoods, they still acknowledged that there were significant disparities within their neighborhood, such as underperforming schools, issues of poor health, a lack of access to social services, and a shortage of safe and adequate/affordable housing.

Overwhelmingly, almost three-fourths, 23 out of 32, of participants said that inadequate housing, lack of affordable housing, vacancies, unkempt properties, and the urban dereliction associated with unattended homes are their neighborhoods' greatest physical need. On average, participants estimated there are upwards of 50-71% vacant homes in their neighborhoods. Richard Humphrey[*] mentioned that mortgage fraud has affected roughly 250 homes in his neighborhood. According to participants, it is the single key physical issue of present day west Atlanta and potentially a causal root for the growing marginalization within their neighborhoods. Beverly Easterling reflects

> I think that the vacancies of the homes have impacted the culture and the climate
> of the neighborhood. [As a teacher,] how do you motivate a child to say the world
> is yours, when they don't feel like it is?

In this way, most participants see the housing problem throughout the west side as connected to poor housing conditions, and inadequate social policies and social services. In particular, one participant who used to work for Habitat for Humanity explained it as a historical problem within the City of Atlanta:

Housing has been a really interesting thing here compared… with the public housing being shut down over at Herndon Homes, Techwood Homes, there are still [some] low income homes and apartments in the community. But as more investors come in and as people move in, it is slowly pushing people out. So it is long term, you see…that there is no long term plan for the people that are here to be here for another 20-30 years….I don't have any real solutions. I remember working at Habitat for Humanity and we would raise a ton of money to build 50 homes a year, which is not to down play the impact they are having, but it is no small chunk of change to make a dent in the problem of affordable housing.

As Drew explains, the problem of housing in west Atlanta neighborhoods is overarching, deeply problematic, and complex. For this reason, most participants are overwhelmed by the breadth of the issues and therefore do not invest time and effort into pursuing more large scale solutions; for example, advocating for affordable housing, partnering with landlords, or connecting with nonprofits to access affordable mortgages. In addition to the previous reasons, participants articulated that "building relationships" across lines of race and class was the lynchpin to sustainable and successful neighborhood/community development, where, as I suggested in Chapter Five, development means incarnation and spiritual, physical, and social restoration. That is, all participants feel that changing physical structures is a long term process and a product of relationship building. For those reasons, participants tended to distance themselves from efforts that focused on investment in the physical space of the neighborhood.

Additionally, many strategic neighbors seemed to feel that their middle class and faith-based attitudes about what a neighborhood 'ought' to be physically is also in need of change. In contrast to traditional neighborhood revitalization efforts, the community transformation these

actors envisioned not purely physical transformations but the transformation of social class hierarchies. In fact, Jane Gilbert explained that while she desired physical transformation in her neighborhood, she felt her "white middle class" perspectives on what needed changing, also needed transformation:

> When I first came to the neighborhood I just though "Oh goodness, it doesn't look like what I am used to;" but the more I am here, the more I realize how lovely it is. It was even small things, like realizing, what is a real "tear down." Like it might be very well built structurally...But...I was so quick to say "tear down;" which is probably such a white thing, like let's scrap it and do our own thing.

While she still suggests adequate housing, a grocery store, and other amenities be built in her neighborhood, Gilbert explains, now she is not so concerned with the physical changes:

> I mean just some physical restoration, but to me already the relationships that I have built [are] enough, and that is why I want to be here. So I mean if our yard never gets more than the 6 plants, that [my] dad was so nice to plant back in September, and stays kind of muddy, than that is okay.

Moreover, participants feel that it is important not to take a singular approach to restoring their neighborhoods, which they see as reasons why past neighborhood revitalization efforts have failed. As Daniel Wells puts it

> …I think that this is why programs fail…we try to find the one magic bullet… [and wrongly think] that if we just throw enough money in that situation, poverty can be solved.

In this lens, participants challenged dominate ideas about "broken window theories" (Wilson and Kelling 1982) of how dilapidated environments attract violence, crime, and negative elements

(Goode 2006). In contrast to the theory, these actors are afraid of the neighborhood becoming "too pretty" due to their fears of gentrification and displacing the poor. For this reason, they do not seem to mind poor physical conditions. Ultimately, I suggest that because of their middle-class identity struggle, participants do not seek and/or participate in infrastructural approaches to community development. On one hand, participants see the overarching socio-political structures as the forces which create physical needs. In this light, as middle class persons, if they "clean up" the neighborhood, they would ultimately attract investors gentrify and further marginalize poor and vulnerable inhabitants. This creates a tension because they do not want to engage fully in the process of "pushing the poor out" of the neighborhood, but want to see positive changes in the neighborhood. Moreover, they continually lived in this tension, trying to conceptually figure out how to both simultaneously curb and harness gentrifying forces.

Successes and Failures

This chapter has discussed the daily actions which participants have engaged in to pursue community transformation. Contrary to traditional community economic development, strategic neighbors opt for a focus on relationship-building and "being present" in their neighborhoods. When asked about their greatest successes in the neighborhood, participants shared stories about the personal relationships they have developed and moments in which they crossed social and class barriers.

Likewise, they also discussed frequent failures in terms of these relationships and neighbors whom they did not do a "good job" of getting to know. John Farnum went as far as to say, regarding his efforts to build relationships as a strategic neighbor, that there have probably "more failures, than successes." Moreover, within the scope of the failures, participants shared the ways

in which underpinning social class struggle emerges in what they term the "burnout phenome-

non."

8 THE CONLUSION

"I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope..."—T.S. Eliot[51]

"This ain't no hood, 'cause there ain't no hood in my heart."—Miss Reese [long-term west Atlanta resident, responding to individuals who said he BTWC neighborhood was "ghetto and a "hood."]

Introduction (8.0)

"With all the abandoned houses, I guess this has become a simple place to dump a body." This is what Vine City resident Johnny Searcy was reported as having said in a March 23rd, 2010 *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* article, when describing a troubling murder in his neighborhood. A day earlier, a dismembered Lynda Myrick, 44, was found wrapped "in a comforter amid a thicket of weeds and discarded soda bottles in a vacant lot" just on the line between Vine City and English Avenue (two of the seven studied neighborhoods). The article reported

> …Crime has always been a fact of life along that section… [This] gruesome discovery was not unprecedented."We've had these kind[s] of murders over here before,"…He recalled the discovery of a body years earlier on this same corner…"I was working on a demolition crew [,] found this woman cut up in a freezer." [A] longtime resident…said "Go down to James P. Brawley…. Every other weekend

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[51] Eliot, T.S. 1944. *Four Quartets (East Coker)*

you'll see a new teddy bear on the corner." The bears are left behind by relatives

and friends mourning the loss of a loved one.[52]

This story is troubling and reveals the disturbing reality discussed at the beginning of this research. Many neighborhoods in the last fifty years have been rendered dumping grounds, like these, by a movement towards a neoliberal and globalized society. This trend has created placelessness, devaluation, disinvestment, and ultimately further marginalization of poor neighborhoods (Harvey 1996; Massey 2005; Soja 2010; Hyland and Bennett 2005). In response to this placelessness, scholars have found that individuals are using place specifically to resist these macro forces through community-based development, as explained in Chapter 2.

As discussed earlier, the vision strategic neighbors have for community development is often called "Shalom" and/or "The Beloved Community" (see Chapter One). In this vision, participants seek to replace, social class divisions and placelessness, rampant in the twenty-first city, with social integration and renewed place-identity (see Chapters Five, Six, and Seven). In a similar sense, this story touches on several issues that strategic neighbors are attempting to address. In fact, "James P. Brawley," a street referred to in this article, is the same "rough" street Colyn Burbank** said he regularly walked down with his roommates in an effort to make it "safer."

The Burnout (8.1)

Several months after the interviews, Colyn** and one of the other strategic neighbors who mentioned walking down James P. Brawley in an effort to enact Beloved Community

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[52] Boone, C. and Garner, MK. 2010. Police identify dismembered body found in vacant lot Monday, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, March 23rd, 2010.

moved out of their neighborhood. They abruptly left and broke their contract with Mission Year. The exact reason behind why these participants and one of their other teammates chose to move out is unknown. However, it is consistent with a theme among the larger sample of strategic neighbors. In fact, since embarking on this research study, four participants, as well as multiple other strategic neighbors, have moved out of their inner-city west Atlanta neighborhoods.

The situation and pattern of burnout

Overall participants seemed committed to their neighborhoods for the "long-term." According to participants, there are many pros to strategic neighboring but there are also a lot of cons and "discouraging things." In particular, each participant was asked about burnout, crisis of faith, marital and family struggles, and broken relationships. Over half of participants commented that at one time or another, they had "burned out," and admitted that they had thoughts about moving out. For some this ended with them leaving their neighborhood, disengaging from the community, and no longer being strategic neighbors.

Among strategic neighbors, burnout was the greatest "discouraging thing." Drew Henley described that although he is currently a strategic neighbor in Vine City; three years ago he and his wife were strategic neighbors in Peoplestown, another distressed neighborhood in Atlanta. They moved out due to burnout-related factors, as Drew explained they "felt lonely," did not have church support, nor did they have a network of other strategic neighbors. Drew felt that without these supports, he could sense his "heart getting hardened" to the blight and distress of the neighborhood. Diane Henley explained that burnout is "very easy" and can happen if her focus shifts away from her faith and marriage:

It is very easy to become consumed by needs and stresses of neighbors to the

point of forgetting to focus on my relationship with Christ and my husband, which

are both necessary to avoid burnout.

In this sense, it seems there is an association between burnout and support, and more specifically faith-related relationships.

Several participants commented that they knew former strategic neighbors who suffered "crises of faith," burned out, and moved out. In particular, two participants expressed how it was painful having two of their close friends move out and stop being strategic neighbors. Their friends experienced chronic anxiety attacks, stopped returning phone calls, and slowly stopped attending neighborhood events. Ultimately, their friends put their house on the market and ended communication with their once-close friends.

But burnout was not the only factor which led strategic neighbors to leave their inner-city neighborhoods. For Sally Jeffery[*] **, who lived in the neighborhood for over five years, her family's decision to leave the neighborhood actually began when they wanted to relocate and be strategic neighbors in Baltimore, Maryland. However, they were unable to sell their home in their west Atlanta neighborhood. But after putting their house on the market in anticipation of their move to Baltimore, they began to withdraw from the neighborhood, especially after having kids. Although burnout was a factor, so were her family's' changing needs.

In examining burnout it appears that strategic neighbors are not only engaged in transforming their neighborhood, through their daily faith-inspired actions and everyday lives, but the neighborhood also transforms them(i.e. their theology and self-identity)—and not always positively. Richard Humphrey* expressed during an interview, that he was experiencing intense levels of burnout, difficulty with family relationships, safety issues, marital stress, worries about

gentrification, and stress from the challenge of raising a family in the inner city. At the moment, the most troubling aspect for Richard* is that the kids on his basketball team were not experiencing the "holistic change of the gospel:"

> [G]rowing up as a youth pastor…I saw over and over kids responding to the gospel, giving their lives to Christ...I saw so much change working in an upper middle class white youth group…but what you see [in this neighborhood] is so little change in people's lives. What dominates most of all is brokenness [,]… dysfunction [,and]… kid after kid drop out of high school…I have seen it with the kids on my basketball team…watching 7 out of 10 of them drop out of high school, [get] involved in some sort of crime, and then in and out of prison..It is just depressing…Back home, kids always finished high school, [and]…went off to college….[But] here, you see…[a] cycle of poverty and crime…Seeing that is really hard, and it [has] started to effect my faith. Like can this gospel thing work here?

For Richard* this is exceptionally hard because he feels "youth development" is his "number one priority about strategic neighboring," and his "life calling [purpose]." Moreover, the struggle of living in the neighborhood unearthed deep questions regarding his personal faith and his "calling" (self-identity). Although amidst these struggles, he deeply loves his neighborhood. He also acknowledged that other strategic neighbors experience these questions and burn out. In fact, he asserts, "everyone thinks about moving out at some point along the way."

Across all the interviews, participants discussed struggles and burnout as related to multiple factors. However, three key issues they all mentioned were the most prevalent: (1) "lack of spiritual discipline," (2) spousal relationships and having children, and (3) lack of social support. In fact, these key aspects of burnout also revealed the internal class-identity struggles of strategic

neighbors. The following sub-sections provide three vignettes of how strategic neighbors struggle with these key aspects of burnout. Then afterwards, I explain in greater detail the tensions of class they embody.

Lack of Spiritual Discipline

According to participants, the "lack of spiritual discipline" is related to burnout. Most commented that since moving to the neighborhood, they felt they read fewer faith related books/material, but also books in general, and felt "less spiritually disciplined." Instead, they spent almost all their free-time building and/or maintaining neighborhood relationships. Richard Humphrey[*] actually felt that sometimes building relationships with his neighbors often discouraged him from trying to "spiritually grow" the way he was accustomed to before he relocated:

From age 18-23 [spiritual discipline, involvement in Bible study, prayer, meditation, study, all those things] was one of the strongest aspects of my faith…

[But]…I have struggled so much that way since I have been [in the neighborhood]…I used to define [spiritual discipline] as growing in the knowledge of scripture and [time] with God…[But,] I haven't grown in that way… and it bothers me. I do feel like I have grown in relationships with people in the neighborhood, [and that I am] connected to God… [through those relationships]; that is something I have grown in [since] moving here. [B]ut I don't feel [like I have] a personal relationship with God [like I did before,] and I miss that. I can't imagine staying here much longer—almost 8 years, [if] that type of connection…isn't there."

For Richard*, spiritual discipline is consistently spending time reading the Bible, praying, and having alone time with God. Although he feels that building relationships is essential to his faith and a spiritual discipline in its own way, he ultimately values spending time alone, like he did before moving to West End, in a unique way. Richard* desires alone time because of his faith, while simultaneously because of this same faith he desires to sacrifice his free time to build relationships with his vulnerable neighbors. This reveals a key struggle between social class and faith values, because while he desires to grow spiritually, this same faith compels him to enter situations that he feels also hinder his spiritual growth.

However, although this tension reveals a layered social class identity struggle, I am compelled to add that there is more at play that a mere social class struggle. It would be inaccurate to dispel the importance of Richard* and other strategic neighbors' need for time to connect with their faith. Therefore, this struggle is wrought not only with social class tension but also with something on a spiritual level related to personal faith and beyond the scope of this research.

Family Relationships and Having Kids

Among many participants, a key issue related to burnout is family relationships, specifically decisions about raising children. More specifically, strategic neighbors are largely unsure about how to raise their children in their neighborhood. Ted* and Allison Winters* shared their complex concerns when discussing how their decision to be strategic neighbors may be affecting their kids. Both Ted* and Allison* feel having children who are school age is very challenging, since they now reluctantly send their kids to a nearby charter school. This is a comprise for the Winters, who expressed they did not like the charter school idea and ideally would send their

kids to the public school, but felt in a neighborhood that often did not have a safe or welcoming environment for children, this is their only choice.[53]

> Allison*: "I think that is the hardest thing [referring to the challenges of raising children as a strategic neighbor]. When we first moved here they were at a private school…we probably would have continued going there, but then a new charter school opened in West End [which is where the Winters* reluctantly send their kids now[54]]…it is different than what my childhood was like. [T]here aren't that many kids at church, and they aren't really friends with kids in the neighborhood. They [ask], "Why are [kids] still playing baseball in the middle of the street on a school night?" They know they aren't allowed to go out and play in the middle of the street. [T]he schools don't really have any sports, we don't have a park district, [so] we can't just sign them up for the little league team…

> Ted*: "When they were babies it was almost easier…We have a lot of discussions with them, because sometimes they don't like when the other kids come over and play with them in the yard. Because they don't play nicely…If I want to play with them alone I have to go somewhere else. If I do it here, I will have to say no to the whole neighbor-hood, and I can't do that.

> Allison*: There was one time, when we had [our son's] 5th or 6th birthday party. He wanted to have a baseball party out in the yard, so we invited some kids from school, and a couple kids from the neighborhood. But the neighborhood doesn't have a concept that you have to be invited to a birthday party…The kids from Buckhead Christian School*

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[53] Interestingly CCDA announced Education Reform to be the theme for its 2011 National Con-ference. Perhaps this suggests a larger theme and need across the nation in terms of the struggles and lives of strategic neighbors.

[54] The Winters* shared that they would ultimately prefer to send their kids to a neighborhood public school but did not feel like it was a real option and in the best interest for their children.

were like, "What is going on?!" And then we had a piñata in the back and these big kids

trampling little kids to get to it, and they were middle school kids, coming to a party, and

just inviting themselves and taking over. It was really awful and I felt bad for these sub-

urban mothers, and their kids; the party was just high-jacked by the neighborhood, and it

was really terrible. So we don't have outside parties anymore.

Allison* and Ted* deeply struggle with their decision to raise their children in English Avenue.

A key struggle between their faith values and their social class positioning emerges in their deci-

sions to raise their kids differently than their neighbors. For example, they did not send their kids

to the local neighborhood schools, they did not let their kids play in the street, they enforced cur-

few, and during their interview they specified that they had rules about when and how kids could

play with their children and at their house unlike many of their neighbors. However, they strug-

gled with these decisions. Both Ted* and Allison* shared they were not happy about sending

their sons to a nearby charter school, they had to leave the neighborhood to get one-on-one time

with their kids, and most importantly at times they felt they were putting their kids' safety in jeo-

pardy. Ultimately, their faith values, which led them to relocate to the inner city, deeply con-

flicted with their middle class parenting values on how to raise children.

   Lack of social support

   Participants feel having community, support networks, and relationships with other stra-

tegic neighbors are important factors to avoid burnout. For Richard Humphrey*, it was not only

his lack of spiritual discipline that was taking a toll on his personal life, but it was also feeling

like "just a couple in a neighborhood" with a lack of community. Richard* explained that during

the first five years, he and his wife lived in their neighborhood and they "had a lot of pride." In

their efforts to only "be about their neighborhood," they did not form relationships with other strategic neighbors and people more "like them," i.e. middle-class Christians.

Earlier he had felt it was just "a bunch of white people" and "middle class people," and if they were trying to help, they would "be about their neighborhood." But now almost eight years in, choosing to not build relationships with other strategic neighbors and other middle class peers seems to be a significant error. About three years ago, he started feeling "burnt out" and now desires "deep" community and wants to form relationships with others more like him. Although he and his wife do plan to stay in their neighborhood, they are currently "desperate for community with others from a similar background [middle class Christians and/or strategic neighbors]." Without community, they both agree, "Leaving is an option that is always on the table."

The Relationship between Class and Burnout

Although participants made connections about what could be causing their burnout, no one pointed directly to social class as a possible factor. However, in the same way that class struggles pervaded their attitudes about faith, place, and daily actions, class struggles were deeply apparent in their stated causes of burnout. First, their struggle with "spiritual discipline" exemplified the fact that as middle class persons they previously did not engage with getting to know their neighbors. The act of strategically building relationships with their neighbors, often came at the expense of time they traditionally had available to "spend with God" and "spiritually grow." In this way, because strategic neighbors were largely motivated by their faith because of a larger purpose, if they questioned the larger meaning and purpose of their work, their ability to remain in the neighborhood without quantifiable results, measures, and change seemed to become harder and more difficult for them Second, their struggle with raising their children in the

neighborhood reveals that while their faith motivated them to move into the inner-city, their middle-class attitudes about parenting (and schooling) conflicted with these environments. More specifically, they did not put their kids in underperforming schools; they did not let their kids play in the streets, and they enforced a curfew for them. Then lastly, their struggle with social support reveals the lynchpin of burnout—the need for middle-class networks. Participants felt they could not be sustainable if they did not have "others like them," i.e. middle class persons, people of faith, church support, and networks with strategic neighbors.

Interestingly, participants experienced a strange tension of needing, but also trying to escape their middle class roots. At large, participants shared that after they relocated to their neighborhood, initially they were "angry" with the "white middle class" and wanted to distance themselves from middle-class relationships that they viewed as implicated in the injustices perpetuated by social class, which as discussed above, often resulted in "burnout." The fact that participants could not escape their middle class networks and remained unable to become fully like their inner-city neighbors reinforces the problem that motivated them to relocate: harsh social stratifications and inequalities of race and class. In this way, the burnout phenomenon reveals how the internal class-identity struggle of strategic neighbors embodies a struggle within the macro socio-political system.

Hope and the Beloved Community (8.2)

As discussed throughout the previous chapters, class-identity struggles are ever-present in the lives of strategic neighbors and crescendo in the phenomenon of burnout. While all partici-

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pants experienced burnout, compellingly, not all (or even most), lost hope. Rather, many continued to work towards their faith-inspired vision of neighborhood restoration. Of the 28 participants who continue to work towards this vision, out of the original 32, seven had previously been strategic neighbors in other disinvested neighborhoods. After several had burnout-related experiences, those seven left their old neighborhoods and are now living as strategic neighbors in new neighborhoods.

The 28 remaining strategic neighbors were able to curb burnout by consciously reaching out to more middle class peers in order to build relationships and community. In addition, they also re-embraced more traditional middle class practices such as being more reclusive and consciously taking time to get out of the neighborhood. In fact, the longer participants remained in their neighborhoods, the more accepting they became of other middle class peers, from whom, early on, they distanced themselves. These participants seemed to also have worked through their previous judgmental feelings toward middle class Christians in "the suburbs" and "Buckhead." The ways in which participants reached out to their middle class peers included inviting them to activities in their neighborhood, making more time for family and friends, and networking with other strategic neighbors. Additionally, they spoke about being reclusive and having time to "practice spiritual disciplines," i.e. reading The Bible, prayer, going to church, etc., and some mentioned going to Christian counseling when they felt they were burning out.

Ultimately, to keep from burning out, their expectations changed—they did not see themselves as "restorers" enacting "Shalom" or even the Beloved Community, which first motivated them to relocate (Interview with Drew and Diane Henley, 2010). Instead, they found themselves just being "faithful," being "in need of forgiveness," and accepting they "may not ever see change," (Interviews with Drew and Diane Henley, Gunnar Martin, Lydia and Jack Fisher, 2010;

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2011) as some participants put it. This did not mean they disengaged from their neighborhoods, in fact they were engaged and through their daily actions, they continued to pursue neighborhood transformation (see Chapter Seven) and ultimately enacting their place ethic. However, in this process their rhetoric changed; their expectations and timelines shifted, as did their behavior. In this way, their identities are revealed to be "in process" and "under-construction."

Although identity is always under construction (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Laclau 1996), in the case of strategic neighbors, their identities cannot be expressed easily because they are consciously negotiating both middle and working social class identities (in addition to racialized identities). Through the class-identity struggle embedded into the lifestyles of strategic neighbors, who straddle these identities, there appears to be hope. This hope is that both these class identities can be negotiated and simultaneously expressed, at least in part.

This negotiation suggests that perhaps this is a new social class, or that potentially a new social class could emerge. For example, strategic neighbors in contrast to their middle class-ness adopt an affinity to be more social, building relationships with widows, the elderly, the poor, and youth in the neighborhood, stopping to deliver cookies, hanging out on their front porches, and visiting neighbors. However, they also maintain their middle class-ness, such as their power to choose their mobility and leave the neighborhood, their middle class social networks, their need (and ability to obtain) time alone and opportunities to practice spiritual discipline, the ways they raise their children, how they decorate their homes, where they grocery shop (Trader Joe's), what cars they own, and many others. Moreover, this hope is not distant but is a living reality in the lives of many strategic neighbors who are able to live in and challenge social class categories and tensions.

This thesis has explored faith, place, and daily actions of strategic neighbors. Within these frames, the class-identity struggles of participants emerged, along with a larger portrait of inequalities perpetuated by the macro social structure. In particular, these struggles also reveal how place is a key factor in constructing class-identities, and critical for exploring community development. More specifically, in regards to FBCD and CCD, practitioners are openly enacting a place-ethic to reconfigure the urban landscape.

What appears to be hopeful about these struggles and their place politics is that their re-configuration of place involves engaging both middle class and poor social classes and reconfiguring social class hierarchies. As reviewed in the chapters above, strategic neighbors consciously challenge middle class and working class social norms in order to embody both and to enact their place-ethic. In this lens, they are not only revealing class tensions but also the possibility for a new city and a new place-politics, through a new subjectivity and social class.

The creation of a new social class, which simultaneously engages middle class and working class identities, provides an answer to the question "Is strategic neighboring an effective way to transform/develop neighborhoods?" Although this is not the material/physical outcome which many anticipate, it is the outcome which strategic neighbors appear to be pursuing as they work toward the "Beloved Community." In this sense, their efforts within community development are not designed to end in a middle class neighborhood with a better infrastructure that would result in greater economic profit. Instead, strategic neighbors are building a community and a new social order, which is partly embodied in a new social class, where equal power relationships between the rich and the poor are being pursued as well as across historic segregation lines of race, between black and white.

Therefore, through negotiating their class identities and harnessing their production of space with faith, it appears that this is, in fact, enacting the vision they so idealistically work towards. This is because they are using a bounded place, a neighborhood, to reconfigure micro and macro social structures and norms through crossing race and economic lines. Furthermore, because they are challenging overarching social norms through place, they are also redefining development. In this way, development is no longer a discourse of capitalism and the narrative of economic prosperity/rags to riches, but for them it now means social justice. For strategic neighbors, development is about creating a new social order, specifically Beloved Community, and reconfiguring class and redefining class-identities. Ultimately, this reveals that Beloved Community is a type of development, one that makes development a discourse of race, class, social justice and one that tackles inequalities, unequal power relationships, and social barriers. In this sense, these actors do echo the call to Beloved Community: "…a boycott is not an end within itself; the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption, the end is the creation of the Beloved Community" (King [1954]1998; Marsh 2005; Inwood 2009:488).

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APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

Agape Love: As used by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Agape Love is seeking to create, restore, and preserve God's "Beloved community" heals the historic split between love and justice (*Ogoegbunem, NJ. 2009. "*The role of agape in the ethics of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the pursuit of justice." *Dissertation*, Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Theology, 307 pages.)

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD): McKnight and Kretzmann argue community development is too "problem and deficiency" focused, and should instead target the strengths and assets within the existing community. McKnight called this strategy "assets-based community development" (ABCD) because it utilized internal networks, relationships and places of the community (McKnight and Kretzmann 1993, cited by Bennett and Hyland 2005).

Beloved Community: The term originated with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He first used the term in a 1956 speech at the end of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in the onset of the Civil Rights movement. This change was tied to Christian theological doctrine of the "Kingdom of God coming to Earth." He argued that the purpose of the movement was not boycott but radical social change and a socially just society.

Christian community development (CCD): Specifically, Christian faith-motivated community development and working together to find ways to rebuild poor neighborhoods. Usually, it draws on some form of the CCDA "3Rs:" relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution (Perkins 1995: 21-22).

Christian Community Development Association (CCDA): Formally established in 1989, it is an organization of churches, institutions, faith-based organizations, strategic neighbors, faith-motivated leaders, and lay men and women who implement Christian community development (CCD), by expressing their faith in America's poor communities, at a grass-roots level.

Community Development: The effort to "revitalize" distressed communities, i.e. economic development. These initiatives usually include housing renovation, workforce development, and improvements in the delivery of social services. Traditionally comes from bottom-up and gras-

sroots initiatives that then empower communities by drawing the historically marginalized to the larger decision-making table and to take part in actively shaping and molding their communities.

Faith-Based Community Development (FBCD): Broadly**,** it may be defined as the involvement of faith-based organizations (FBOs) and institutions in efforts to revitalize under-resourced communities from a faith-based and –motivated perspective. Often this includes, establishing sustainable economic development initiatives, attract investments, build wealth, and encourage entrepreneurship. As well as, workforce development, job training, community outreach centers, health clinics, and various other social services to support communities.

Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs): An organization that holds religious or worship services, or is affiliated with a religious denomination or house of worship. This includes churches and other congregations or houses of worship; nonprofit organizations affiliated with churches, congregations or religions; and local nonprofit organizations affiliated with an umbrella or national faith-based network (Kramer et al. 2002, Faith-Based Organizations Providing Employment and Training Services: A Preliminary Exploration. *The Urban Institute*, Department of Labor: Washington, D.C, pg. 2.).

Gentrification with justice: A key concept originated by Christian community developer Robert Lupton, to place a Christian theology alongside of gentrification. It is both the concept and the practice of middle class individuals with compassionate faith, to relocate to a low-income neighborhood and use their professional skills sets, resources, and networks to ensure that their lower-income neighbors share a stake in their revitalizing neighborhood and are not displaced by gentrification.

Incarnation[al] (theology and/or faith): Rooted in "The Incarnation," a central Christian theology and religious belief, that God took on human form, as Jesus Christ; meaning that Christ was both fully God and fully man. In particular, this belief motivates persons to "be like Jesus," by loving the poor and pursuing what they deem "socially just." This doctrine is linked to faith-motivated social justice efforts, i.e. Liberation theology, Christian Community Development (CCD), etc.

Mission Year: A national 501c3 faith-based organization. It is a yearlong program where married and/or single Christian young-adults over the age of 18, volunteer to live in an under-resourced urban neighborhood. They volunteer for local churches, FBOs, NGOs, and spend time learning the principles of Christian community development and other faith-motivated social justice efforts.

Social Capital: the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. However, there are conflicting understandings within social-science, in particular between Bourdieu (1985) and Putnam (2001). (Please see Chapter One).

Social Justice: Theologically, the term and modern concept of "social justice" is linked to faith-motivated efforts for social services, i.e. living wage, human rights, desegregation, etc. and is linked to "Social Gospel" of the 19th century. From a socio-political perspective, it is connected to John Rawls *A Theory of Justice* (1972), referring to modern concepts of diversity, redistribution, and equality as human rights. In short, it is the just and/or fair distribution of resources, services, and benefits among all members of a society.

Strategic Neighbor: Faith-motivated middle class individuals who engage in faith-based community development by relocating to under-resourced neighborhoods. They seek to participate in neighborhood transformation efforts in an attempt to live out their faith (See Chapter Four).

The Civil Rights Movement: The movement in the United States beginning in the 1960s and led primarily by Blacks in an effort to establish the civil rights of individual Black citizens.

Table 3.0: Participant Strategic Neighbors in west Atlanta neighborhoods

Number	Name	Neighborhood	Zip Code
1	Alison Winters*	English Avenue	30318
2	Beverly Easterling	BTWC[55]	30314
3	Brittany Harris	BTWC	30314
4	Sally Jeffery* **	Vine City	30314
5	Chuck Johnston	Grove Park	30318
6	Colyn Burbank**	English Avenue	30318
7	Daniel Wells	Vine City	30314
8	Diane Henley	Vine City	30314
9	Drew Henley	Vine City	30314
10	Emily Green Hayden	English Avenue	30318
11	Eric Johnson	Vine City	30314
12	Esther Lee*	Grove Park	30318
13	Gunnar Martin	Vine City	30314
14	Jane Gilbert	Grove Park	30318
15	Janelle Fenton**	English Avenue	30318
16	Joannah Cook	BTWC	30314
17	Jack Fisher*	Washington Park	30314
18	JoElyn Johnston	Grove Park	30318
19	John Farnum	Washington Park	30314
20	Jonathan Malmin	Vine City	30314
21	Joshua Brown-Culp**	English Avenue	30318
22	Katherine Langley	English Avenue	30318
23	Laura Pritchard***	BTWC	30314
24	Lauren Farnum	Washington Park	30314
25	Libby Warfield	English Avenue	30318
26	Lydia Fisher*	Washington Park	30314
27	Paula Willis	Westview	30301
28	Richard Humphrey*	West End	30301
29	Stephen Causby	English Avenue	30318
30	Ted Winters*	English Avenue	30318
31	Tyler Baldridge	English Avenue	30318
32	Douglas Whitmire*	Westview	30301

[55] * Means participant name has been changed; ** Means that the participant has moved out of their neighborhood; and *** Means the participants has relocated to another inner city neighborhood.
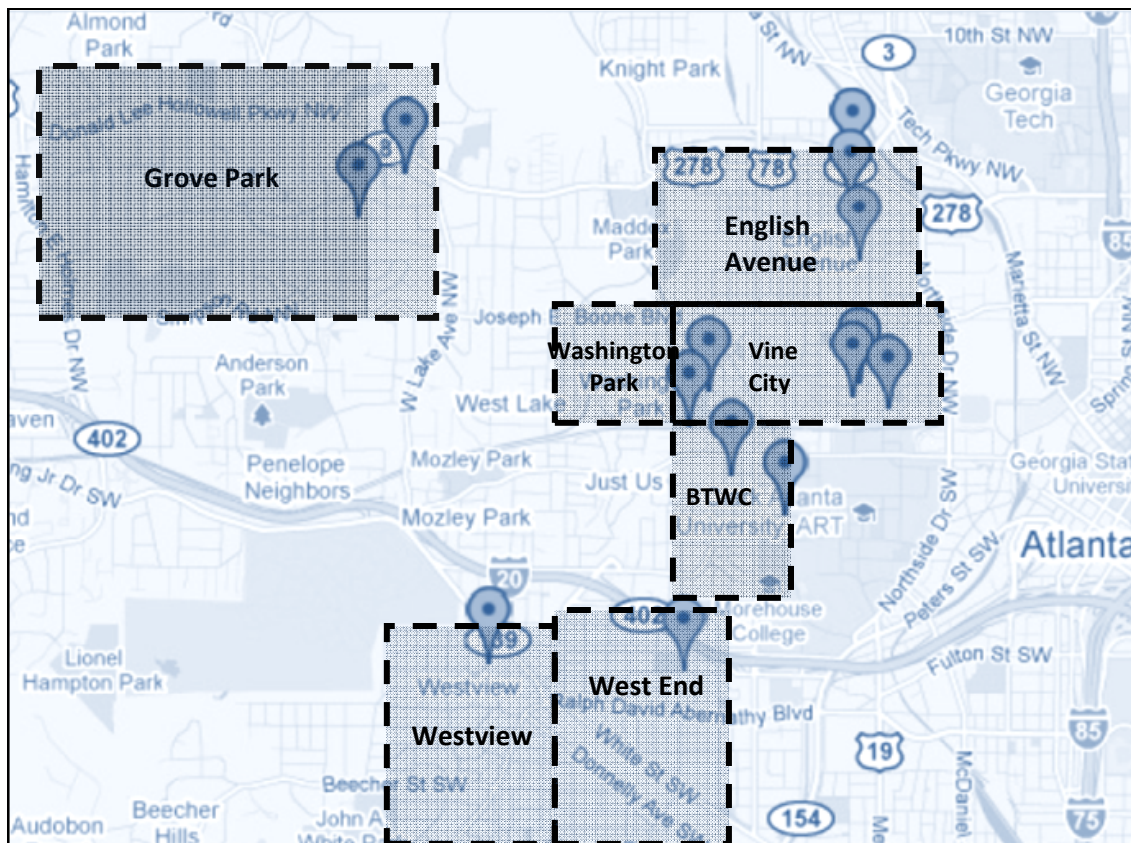
Figure 3.1: Map of Participant Strategic neighbors

*The Bubbles represent the location of participant strategic neighbors in the seven studied neighborhood highlighted in the map: Grove Park, Westview, Washington Park, West End, Booker T Washington Community (BTWC), Vine City, and English Avenue

Date	Time	Where?	Who?	What did you do? Please explain the activity.	How is this activity/interaction come about? Was it planned, informal, formal, planned, spontaneous, etc.? Please explain.	How did it lead to community transformation, in your view?

Figure 3.2 Participant Diaries

Table 4.0: Common traits identified by participants when defining strategic neighboring

Order	Trait	Frequency	Percentage
1	Motivated by Christian faith, religion, and theology	17	53.1%
2	Intentional actions and time in the neighborhood	17	53.1%
3	Specifically focusing on being in a neighborhood and/or geographic space	17	53.1%
4	Strategically building relationships and loving people in their neighborhood	16	50%
5	Targets poor/marginalized people groups and/or areas, includes poverty alleviation efforts	13	40.6%
6	Has a vision for the neighborhood	12	37.5%
7	To "Just be a neighbor," live authentically, coming alongside neighbors instead of "fixing"	12	37.5%
8	Being Other-Centered	11	34.3%
9	The Act of moving-in strategically	11	34.3%
10	Commitment to staying in the neighborhood and/or relationships	5	15.6%
11	Pursues racial reconciliation and diversity	5	15.6%
12	It takes a group of people, church, community	4	12.5%
13	Anti-Consumption , Materialism, and Minimalist Values,	4	12.5%.

APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How long have you lived in this neighborhood?
2. Do you call yourself a strategic neighbor? If so, when did you first hear the term and start using it? If not, what do you call yourself?
3. What kind of strategic neighbor are you? (Remainer, Relocator, or Returner)Depending on the answer, researcher may ask questions 1b, 1c, and 1d:
3a. Remainer—How did you decide to stay in this neighborhood? Have you lived any other places?
3b.—Relocator--Where did you move from? Would you characterize where you moved from as suburban? Rural? Urban? Why did you choose to move to this neighborhood?
3c.—Returner—How old were you when you left the neighborhood the first time? Where did you first move to and why? What caused you to move back to this neighborhood? Before coming back, where did you from? Would you characterize where you moved from as suburban? Rural? Urban?
4. In what ways has the neighborhood changed over the past [xx] years?
5. Why do you think it's changed as it has? Has your strategic neighboring or the neighboring of others been a part of this change? In what ways?
6. In what ways has it improved?
7. What challenges still exist for the neighborhood?
8. How well do you know your neighbors? (very well, well, somewhat, not very well, not at all)
9. Are people who have moved in recently similar to you or different from you? Are they also strategic neighbors?[Please describe]
10. How well do you know other strategic neighboring your neighborhood, region, city, overall? How often do you get together with them? How active are your relationships with others?
11. Are you involved in a homeowners' association? If so, which one? In what ways are you involved?
12. In what ways are you involved in your neighborhood? Do you attend neighborhood organization meetings? If so, how often? Do you serve as an officer?
13. Are you involved in the Neighborhood Planning Unit for your neighborhood? If so, in what ways? Do you have contact with officials from the city of Atlanta regarding conditions in your neighborhood?
14. Do you attend a church in the neighborhood? Is this church active in your neighborhood? How so? Do other strategic neighbors go to your church? Do they live in your neighborhood? Do other residents of your neighborhood go there?
15. Have you heard of Robert Lupton? If so, in what ways?
16. Have you heard of "gentrification with justice," if so in what ways?
17. Have you heard of FCS Urban Ministries? If so, in what ways?
18. What is your ultimate vision of community, and if you use the word "shalom," that you are trying to create in this neighborhood through strategic neighboring?
19. What do you do, to bring this vision to life, and build this community?
20. How do you they develop and build relationships in the neighborhood with neighbors, organizations, other strategic neighbors, etc.? And how do these relationships build community and this vision in your neighborhood?
21. As a strategic neighbor, what do you want to change as in your neighborhood? Is this change primarily physical, spiritual, material, social, and/or environmental? Please describe.

22. How do you define spiritual needs? Are there spiritual needs in your neighborhood? What are they?
23. How do you define physical needs? Are there physical needs in your neighborhood? What are they?
24. How do you define material needs? Are there material needs in your neighborhood? What are they?
25. How do you define social needs? Are there social needs in your neighborhood? What are they?
26. How do you meet these needs as a strategic neighbor?
27. What successes have you had as a strategic neighbor?
28. How do you meet both the intersection of these physical and spiritual needs of your neighbors and neighborhood through the cultivating this vision?
29. Has strategic neighboring benefited your neighborhood? Has it harmed your neighborhood? Please describe in what ways.
30. Have the organizations that employ, endorse and/or support strategic neighboring have, if any, have been active in benefiting or harming your neighborhood? If so, in what ways?
31. How has strategic neighboring impacted your life? How has it benefited? How has it harmed? What have the greatest challenges been?
32. Do you believe you are acting in a political capacity? How does it, or does it not, embody racial politics, etc.?
33. Could you share with us the name of another person or persons in your neighborhood who might agree to be interviewed?

APPENDIX D: CODE BOOK AND CONCEPTUAL DIAGRAMS

Table D.1.0: Frequency of Neighborhood Needs with Participant Categorization

Code	Physical Need	Social Need	Spiritual Need	Total Frequency
relationships within community	0	28	20	48
Jobs	5	8	8	21
see people as god does, loving people, worth, value, dignity	0	0	20	20
Green Space	10	0	4	14
Education	0	13	0	13
Family	0	13	0	13
diversity: economic and racial	0	8	5	13
faith and action; engaged churches	0	0	13	13
positive attention to neighborhood assets	0	11	0	11
Empowerment	0	0	11	11
lack of access to services	4	6	0	10
Conversion, God's Kingdom Coming, Gospel message	0	0	10	10
Housing	10	0	0	10
violence, crime, prostitution	0	9	0	9
gathering places, diners, eateries, shops, etc.	3	4	0	7
positive neighborhood association	0	7	0	7
urban dereliction	2	0	4	6
youth opportunities/leadership/sports	0	6	0	6
Prayer	0	0	6	6
Hope	0	0	4	4
Materialism	0	0	2	2
Christian Morals and Values	0	0	1	1

Table D.2.0: Frequency of Visions with Participant Categorization

Code	Primary Category	Frequency
better access to social services/opportunities: jobs, public education, transit, affordable housing, etc.	Social Resources	17
strengthen social fabric , integration, community	Relational	15

leadership and child development of youth	Social	14
increase church and neighborhood relationship, church plant	Spiritual	13
better physical structures: sidewalks, roads, better land use	Physical	12
learning to be good neighbors	Relational	11
Change outside views	Social	11
be positive neighbors and be a part of the neighborhood	Relational	9
spiritual development of youth	Spiritual	9
safety, less crime, violence, safe streets, drugs, prostitution	Social	8
racial reconciliation, economic/racial diversity	Relational	6
preservation, no gentrification that pushes poor out, doesn't want to change the good things	Social	6
relationships with community groups, orgs, NPUs, city-wide, gov-agencies	Social	6
people would know Christ, conversion, discipleship, spiritual changes in neighborhood	Spiritual	6
neighborhood pride/identity and recognition	Spiritual	5
more inhabitants in housing, less vacancies, life in neighborhood	Social Resources	5
change inside views	Spiritual	4

Table D.3.0: Frequency of Participants' Actions

Code	Primary Category	Frequency
Building relationships, often through small intentional acts	Relational	20
Being available and present	Relational	12
Social events	Relational	9
Buying a home	Physical	8
Mentoring	Relational	7
Working in the community	Other	7
Spending time in a specific geographic area to "breathe life into it," sometimes buying a home to get rid of squatters	Physical	7
Pray	Spiritual	5
After-school / Tutoring program	Social	4
Activities with church	Spiritual	4
Neighborhood Meetings	Social	3

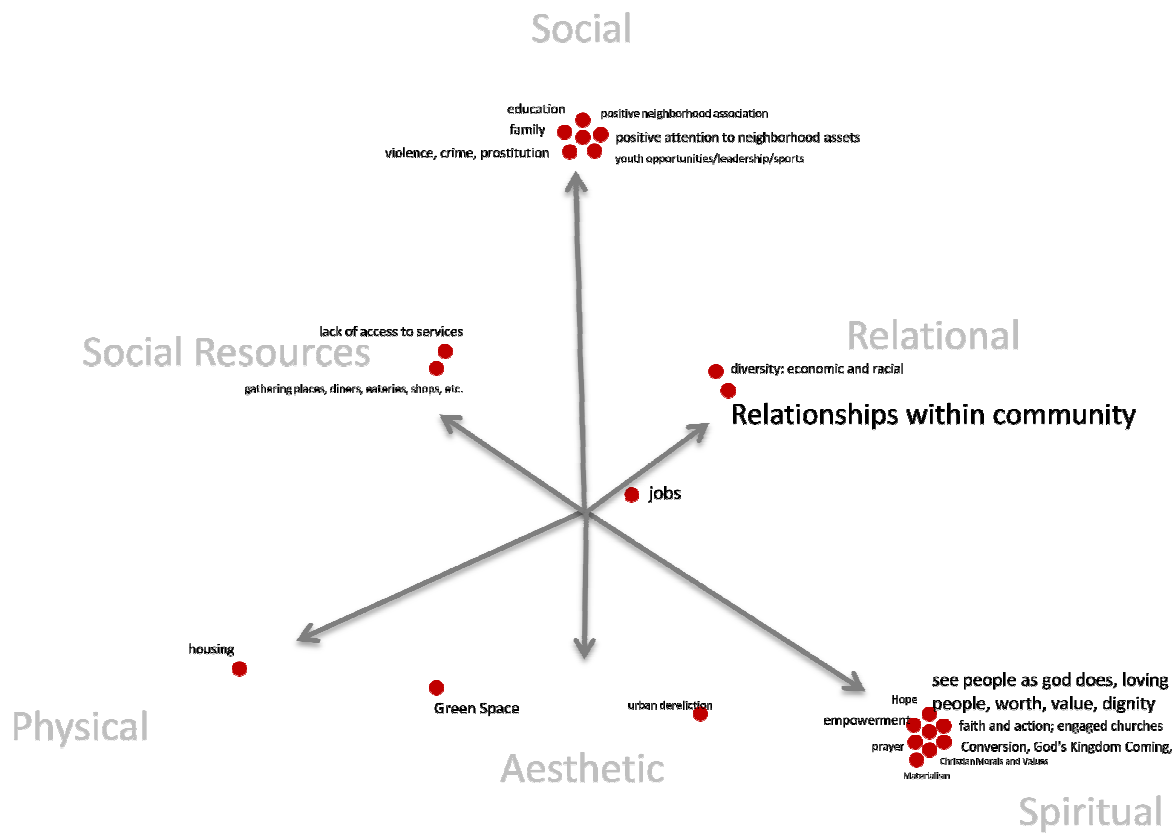| Providing Jobs, Starting Business	Other: Jobs	2
Reporting Crime or other issues to Gov	Social	2
Challenge perceptions of neighborhood	Spiritual	2
Bible Study	Spiritual	2
Financial aid to neighbors	Social Resources	1
Supporting each other with chores / exchanges	Relational	1
Community Garden	Physical	1
Civil disobedience, protests	Social	1

Figure D.1.1: (Diagram of Table 1.0.D) Visualization of Neighborhood Needs
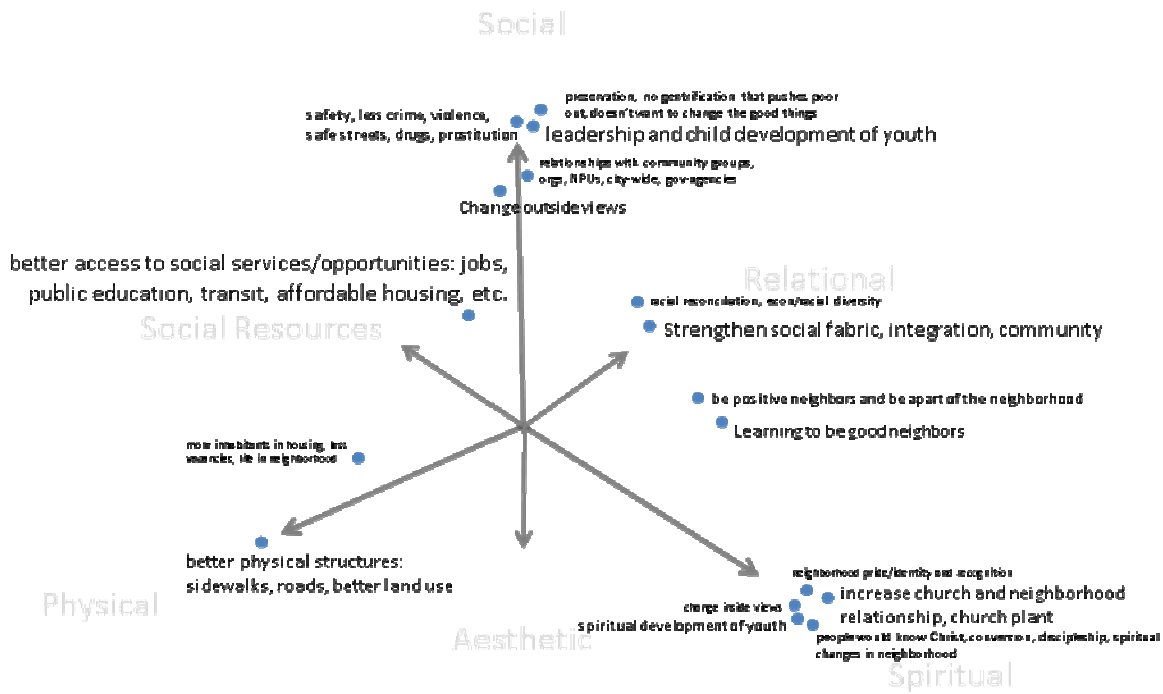
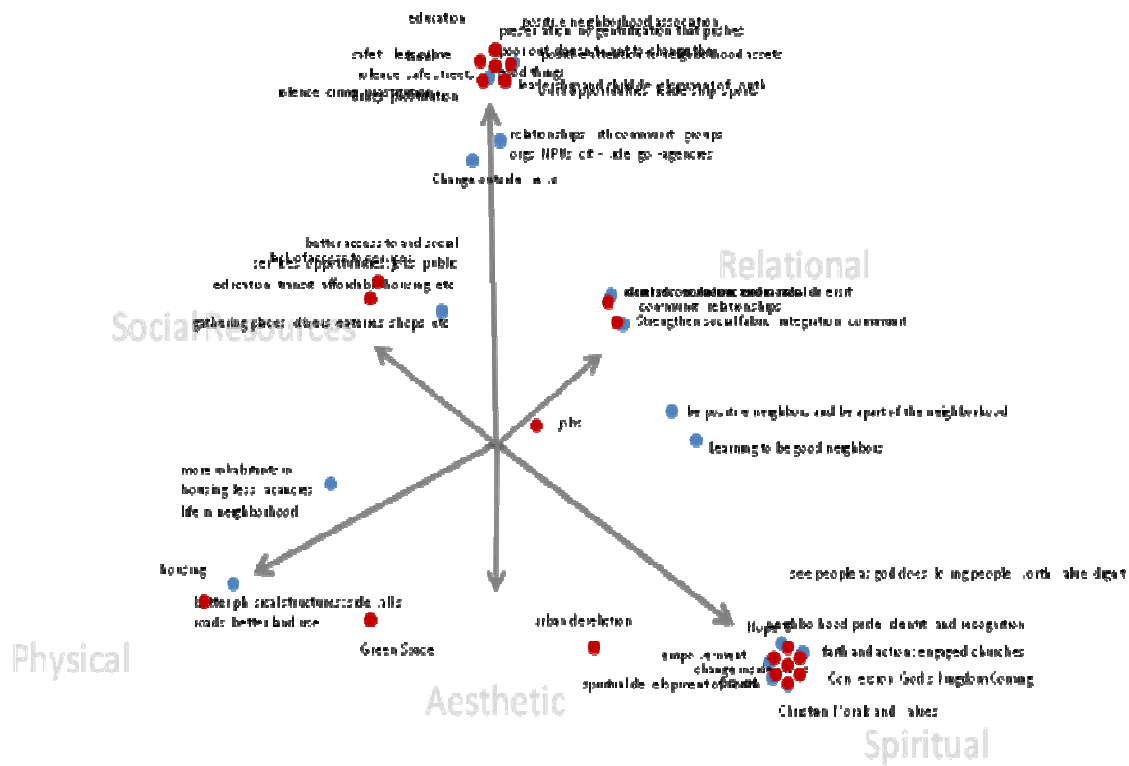Figure D.2.1: Figure: (Diagram of Table D.2.0) Visualization of Participants' Visions

Figure D.2.2: Figure: (Diagram of Tables D.1.0 and D. 2.0) Visualization of Needs and Visions
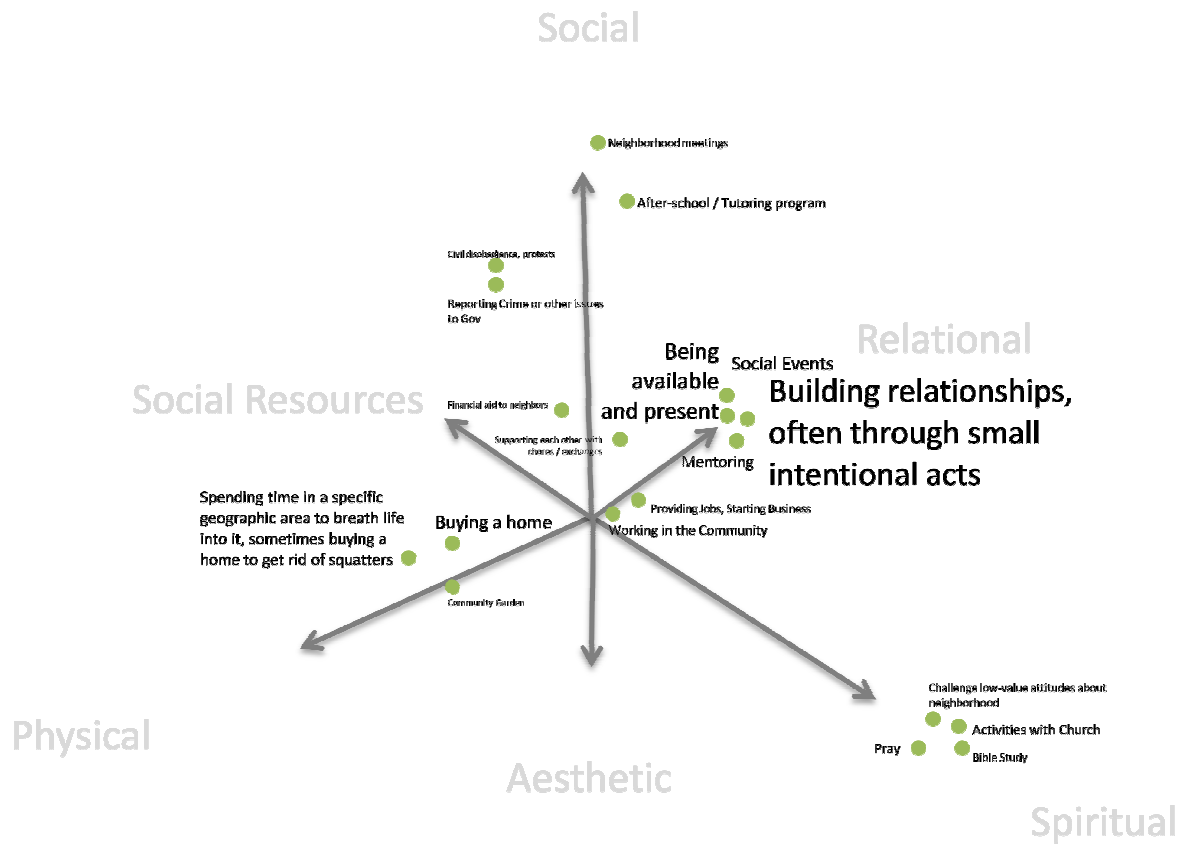
Figure D.3.1: (Diagram of Table D.3.0) Visualization of Participants' Actions

APPENDIX E: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRATEGIC NEIGHBORS

One of the greatest outcomes of the research was being able to come away with tangible recommendations and opportunities for participants and future strategic neighbors. As described in the Introduction and in Chapter Three, my role as a strategic neighbor has evolved through this research process. In particular, my journey to the research world began with the hopes to empower my neighborhood and use anthropology and social scientific inquiry to enact social change. In this senses, this research process has been an applied project in which recommendations for best practices can be gleaned.

Additionally, several participants voiced that they wanted to read my findings and asked for recommendations and insight about what other strategic neighbors were doing. Therefore, I here provide detailed recommendations to enhance best-practices of strategic neighboring and CCD.

(1) Strategic neighbors need a highly supportive network within the neighborhood to be both effective and sustainable. In particular, I would recommend counseling services for strategic neighbors, moving in as pairs or a group, and building relationships with their neighbors before moving in to ease their transition. Therefore, I suggest that current strategic neighbors seek ways to communicate what they are doing to their middle class peers and neighbors better. In particular, most participants expressed that they were unsure how to explain what they are doing. Since it was difficult to explain, this also made it difficult for them to build trust with other neighbors that make up their peer group. In this scope, perhaps better language and communication may cultivate greater support and understanding from middle class and faith-related networks. Furthermore, some participants suggested this may be a problem with the term "strategic" because it shifts the focus on

"effectiveness" instead of people. In this vein, I propose that better language is needed to further discuss being a strategic neighbor.

A practical application would be negotiating their roles and presence in their neighborhood associations and figuring out how to listen and learn from their middle class neighbors, as well as how to share their vision for neighborhood transformation. This will be difficult but if strategic neighbors can develop a good language for communicating their ideas within their associations it is foreseeable that there will be positive reverberations. Perhaps further investigation into the specific neighborhoods would provide more specific strategies to cultivate equal power relationships with the poor and vulnerable families, middle class, elites, politicians, and strategic neighbors.

(2) Strategic neighbors must make sure they do not over-idolize relocation and staying in their neighborhoods. During this research it appeared that for many strategic neighbors felt guilted and/or pressured to stay in their neighborhoods by the term "strategic neighbor." Several felt as if they were "bailing out" when their lives changed direction or of they felt it best for them to leave their neighborhood. This led to several participants reluctantly staying in their neighborhoods but no longer working towards the same purposes and goals to live out their faith, which caused other spiritual/emotional and financial difficulties. In this way, it appeared maintaining their external middle class networks also seemed to play other crucial roles. I suggest that keeping external networks and relationships will help new strategic neighbors keep perspective and maintain their initial purpose and goals.

(3) I suggest that there be more approachable literature available to strategic neighbors. Most participants shared that they did not read very much because they were busy building re-

lationships. But it was also mentioned that there was not a lot of literature written by women, and specifically women strategic neighbors. Therefore, I suggest it would be fitting for Christian community development literature to include more contributions from female practitioners and activists, as well as the stories and experiences of individuals who are participating in this movement, including those that have moved out, felt burned, and resist the term "strategic neighbor." I find their perspectives to be critical to fully understand the role of faith in the urban process, but also to serve practitioners in a concrete way that differs from the currently over-represented perspectives of charismatic male leaders within the movement.

(4) I recommend that strategic neighbors work with the city officials, address the reasons why they are not active in their neighborhood associations, and work on talking and listening to the middle class and elites and explore ways to work with these individuals and organizations, instead of holding them in contempt and viewing working with them as a "conflict of interest" Furthermore, this also will enable them to better support their neighborhoods and community transformation and make their practices as a neighbor far more sustainable; for instance, learning to utilize zoning laws and how to advocate for affordable housing and mortgages. I suggest actors explore their internal reservations about politics and their mistrust of social services and political system. I found this to be an interesting theme among west Atlanta strategic neighbors. Almost all did not view their neighboring as remotely political because many did not like and some even said they "hated politics." I suggest they engage in reconstructing or assessing their views of politics and explore ways to come alongside this system instead of ignoring it.

(5) I suggest strategic neighbors pursue building partnerships with churches throughout the city of Atlanta. In particular, it is critical for these actors to be in a neighborhood church in order to undertake the physical needs of their neighborhood, but it is also critical that they connect with resources and address the "commuter problem" of the local churches. I suggest that these individuals and pastors of inner-city churches begin to explore ways to educate current congregants with the doctrine of incarnational theology. In particular, encouraging congregants to "live out their faith" and support the neighborhoods by re-entry or simply supporting those that are relocating to better integrate into neighborhood life. This will not be an easy challenge, but will be pivotal for both strategic neighbors and long term faith-based restoration efforts in their neighborhoods.

(6) I suggest strategic neighbors also target jobs as a critical area of the vision and needs that the participants identified. I suggest they explore how to create and connect their neighbors with jobs more because as they identified it, employment is an area that deals with the whole person and is a critical piece to the holistic restoration of the neighborhood.

(7) Since all participants identified housing as a key issue in present day west Atlanta, I suggest taking a micro and macro approach to housing by tackling it on a social policy level. However, I suggest that they place extra effort on crafting ways to develop channels with authorities and city officials to inform social policy and address the housing needs and injustices within their neighborhoods. Perhaps this is a key way to build and utilize the middle class and elite networks in the policy arena.

(8) Finally, I suggest there is a need for more social scientific research of the role of faith-based individuals and organizations in the urban process to better employ, support, and utilize these actors and their passions for their neighborhoods. Over the course of my re-

search, I found that the strongholds of faith-motivated actors and strategic neighbors that have been rendered invisible by previous research and their contributions have been obscured by many academics across the United States. There appears to be much more to learn and explore, in understanding the role of faith in the city, how it is enacted, and better understand this key aspect of the urban landscape.

Two key areas for more research include: (1) the struggle to recruit and engage middle class African Americans in faith-motivated reneighboring efforts, i.e. to relocate to the inner city. This specifically may be a key area of research for organizations to understand the different and complex social meaning for middle class African Americans to relocate to inner city Atlanta (as opposed to Whites and non-African Americans). Then, (2) that strategic neighbors shift their understandings of a fixed and immobile inner-city life to one of rapid mobility and change. I suggest that social scientists, CCDA practitioners, thinkers, and authors explore how this may impact neighboring strategies, practices, and efforts to spatialize justice. In this lens, I suggest that social scientific research continue to peel back these layers and make key partnerships with faith-motivated individuals, organizations, and institutions.