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The Ties that Bind: The Role of Place in Racial Identity Formation, Social Cohesion, Accord, and Discord in Two Historic, Black Gentrifying Atlanta Neighborhoods

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THE TIES THAT BIND: THE ROLE OF PLACE IN RACIAL IDENTITY FORMATION,
SOCIAL COHESION, ACCORD, AND DISCORD IN TWO HISTORIC, BLACK
GENTRIFYING ATLANTA NEIGHBORHOODS

by

BARBARA HARRIS COMBS

Under the Direction of Charles Jaret

ABSTRACT

Recent research has uncovered a new phenomenon in some distressed areas, black gentrification. Black gentrification follows the same pattern as mainstream gentrification with one notable exception: In black gentrifying neighborhoods both the poor and working class residents who resided in the neighborhood prior to its “gentrification” and the new residents of greater economic means are black. An additional hallmark of black gentrification that distinguishes it from traditional gentrification is that black gentrifiers in black gentrifying neighborhoods often feel a responsibility or obligation to their lower income black neighbors. Prior to the economic downturn in the United States, some in-town Atlanta neighborhoods were undergoing black gentrification.

Amidst the current mortgage foreclosure epidemic facing the U.S., distressed urban areas like the ones under study, which began to gentrify in the last ten to twenty years, can easily fall prey to mortgage fraud and/or further decline. Sustained revitalization efforts require that the neighborhoods maintain a critical density level; therefore, neighborhoods cannot afford to lose more citizens. My dissertation focuses on two historic, black gentrifying in-town Atlanta neighborhoods: the Old Fourth Ward and the West End. The Old Fourth Ward is the location of the birth home of one of Atlanta's most celebrated sons, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The West End, once a center of black consciousness in the city, now boasts one of the highest mortgage fraud rates in the nation. Revitalization efforts in both communities are in jeopardy. This dissertation explores ways to strengthen social and economic cohesion in these gentrifying black communities. Specifically, I argue that attachment to the neighborhood space (something I term "place affinity") has the potential to obviate social tensions in gentrifying black communities and bind residents to each other and the social space they all occupy.

INDEX WORDS: Gentrification, Black gentrification, Place, Place affinity, Space, Attachment, Social cohesion, Gentrifying communities, Homeowners, Renters, Racial identity formation, Accord, Discord

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BARBARA HARRIS COMBS

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Georgia State University

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Barbara Harris Combs
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May 2010

DEDICATION

This dissertation is devoted to my family: my loving husband, Darrell; my children, Breann and Jason; and my mother, Ruby Mae. Darrell, if I had it to do all over again, I would choose you. Jason and Breann you are my joy and my inspiration. Mom, when my children are grown, I hope I can be the kind of mother to them that you have been to me, and I hope you are around to see it! Thank you each for all the sacrifices that you made so that I could live my dream. I cannot tell you how much your patience, love, and encouragement have meant. I could never have done this without you. I only hope that I can play some small role in helping each of you to fulfill your dreams. You deserve it.

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CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

Gentrifying black neighborhoods are at a precipitous point. The financial uncertainty of the past two years makes their position even more precarious. In order for such neighborhoods to survive, they must be dynamic organisms.¹ Neighborhood boundaries may expand or contract, but more often the growth of the neighborhood organism is social or economic rather than physical in nature. The attendant demographic changes in the neighborhood can bring tension, but the viability of a neighborhood requires that those who share its bounded geographical space find some common ground. For better or worse, all the inhabitants of gentrifying black neighborhoods are bound together. This work proposes to find ways to strengthen the ties that bind the residents, business owners, and stakeholders of black gentrifying neighborhoods together.

In the midst of sustained recession, black gentrifying neighborhoods are not the only areas facing potential economic decline. Almost all neighborhoods are at risk. Many trace the current U.S. economic crisis to the collapse of the housing market and prognosticate that sustained economic growth will only be possible through stabilization of that market (Sheldon, Bush, et al 2009). Like much of the nation, the metropolitan Atlanta housing market has experienced decline (Bennett 2008, 2009; Atlanta Home Sales Report 2008). According to the Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership (ANDP) website, metro Atlanta neighborhoods (including two that are the focus of this dissertation: the West End and Old Fourth Ward) have

¹ An organism is a growing, changing entity with individual properties, but it also takes on properties or characteristics of the whole. I argue that black, gentrifying neighborhoods need a similar adaptability if they are to prosper and grow.

“been devastated by the foreclosure crisis.” In fact, in 2007 Atlanta had the dubious distinction of being identified by the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Mortgage Fraud Division as one of the top ten cities in the nation for mortgage fraud (2007 Mortgage Fraud Report).

The American Housing Rescue and Foreclosure Prevention Act of 2008 has made funds available to aid communities harmed by the subprime mortgage crisis and related fallout. These funds can be used to purchase, refurbish, and market homes in areas hardest hit by the crisis. Homes in the Old Fourth Ward and the West End, many of which have been foreclosed or abandoned and might otherwise contribute to further blight in the neighborhood, could be purchased through this program.² In fact, Atlanta became the first city in the nation to receive these funds (Bennett 2009). Since that time, the city has received a lot of criticism regarding the slow pace of acquisitions and sales under the program. According to an *Atlanta Journal Constitution* article appearing January 25, 2010, “Federal officials say Atlanta is moving too slowly spending \$12.3 million it got last March to buy vacant homes in neighborhoods ravaged by foreclosures” (Stirgus 2010). Monies for the program are administered through a newly formed Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program called the Neighborhood Stabilization Program fund (NSP).

In the midst of widespread economic decline, the United States cannot afford to view any of its neighborhoods as throw away neighborhoods, but investing in the buildings and infrastructure of a community is meaningless if no such investment is made by the people of an area. To be certain, economic capital is needed to revitalize areas ravaged by mortgage fraud, foreclosure, and blight; however, monetary funds alone are insufficient to ensure that the

² A consortium led by the Atlanta University Development Corporation was among the first to receive federal funds under this program.

neighborhoods return to vibrancy. An infusion of monetary capital will be meaningless unless sufficient social capital already exists (or is cultivated) in the neighborhoods.

The housing crisis clearly demonstrates that the people in a neighborhood are inextricably bound together in a number of ways. When a real estate owned (REO) home is sold at a bargain basement price, the value of the homes around it may be adversely impacted as well.³ A homeowner seeking to refinance for a more favorable rate may find his or her appraisal does not support the deal. Conversely, in a gentrifying neighborhood, mortgage fraud may not be as readily identifiable because: i) the value of home is, in part, linked to what someone is willing to pay for it; and ii) in light of the large volume of homes being sold at extremely low prices, home sales at prices in excess of the current market rate may look like the market correcting itself, so they do not raise suspicion. Gentrifying neighborhoods are particularly vulnerable to decline and abuse as they are fertile ground for the best and worst of the human condition. As such, these neighborhoods are deserving of our attention.

Statement of the Problem

This dissertation is intended to enhance our sociological understanding of the changes black gentrifying neighborhoods are currently going through in order to propose and implement approaches to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the neighborhoods. The neighborhoods are being buffeted by a host of forces and processes—housing crisis, economic downturn, demographic changes, and identity challenges. The overarching goal of this dissertation is to determine the potential for place attachment to: i) obviate tensions in the two historic black neighborhoods under study; and ii) foster social cohesion such that the people who have the economic means to leave the neighborhood are less inclined to do so.

³ REO property is real estate in the possession of the bank or lender as a result of a foreclosure or some type of forfeiture.

Over the last twenty years, some inner city Atlanta neighborhoods have experienced a return of the black middle and upper-middle class (i.e., the gentry). The Old Fourth Ward (part of which is in the Martin Luther King Jr. Historic District) and West End (a neighborhood near the Atlanta University Center) are two such neighborhoods in transition.⁴ The broad label that many people apply to these changes is gentrification.

Other Atlanta neighborhoods have experienced gentrification (Martin 2007; Keating 2001), but the gentrifiers in those neighborhoods are typically white, while the old residents of less economic means are typically minority group members, usually African American.⁵ In some Atlanta neighborhoods, like the Old Fourth Ward and West End, both a large segment of the returning gentry and the old residents of the space are African American. When gentrification follows this pattern (i.e., both the majority of newcomers to the community and the old residents of the gentrifying community are black), Pattillo (2005:307) “hesitantly” labels this “black gentrification.”⁶

Until recently, few would argue that the Old Fourth Ward and West End were gentrifying.⁷ In some very substantial ways, the neighborhoods can still be classified as

⁴ The Atlanta University Center Consortium, Inc. is located in the West End Historic District. The Consortium’s stated purpose, as advanced on its website, is to “provide programs and services to member institutions, which have included Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College and Morehouse School of Medicine, Spelman College, and the Interdenominational Theological Center.

⁵ In a meeting of the American Sociological Association, Larry Keating presented “Resurgent Gentrification: Politics and Policy in Atlanta” where he contrasted past gentrification movements in the city of Atlanta (1965-1990) with gentrification efforts post that period. In his paper, Keating outlines six elements of “resurgent gentrification”. These elements are discussed later in this chapter.

⁶ The return of the black gentry is not posited as the literal return of the precise people who left the community. Rather, it is the return (in significant number) of black middle and upper middle class members to the inner-city neighborhoods they abandoned en mass post desegregation.

⁷ A March 11, 2006, New York Times article (See Dewan) noted that a significant number of whites are moving to the Old Fourth Ward. According to that article, based upon Census records the percentage black in the area declined from a little over 90% in 1990 to about 75% in 2000. This is due, in part, to the Old Fourth Ward’s proximity to Virginia Highlands, a popular in-town neighborhood with whites. Most of the white population of the Old Fourth Ward is concentrated in Tract 14, in the Northeastern portion of the neighborhood. The West End is also an in-town neighborhood with close proximity to downtown; however, it has not seen as large a change in its white population over the same period. It is, however, anticipated that 2010 Census records will indicate a significant rise in the area’s white population.

gentrifying. Old buildings are being torn down or rehabilitated. New buildings are going up, and the average educational attainment level, as well as the income of the residents, is on the rise. However, in one very substantial way, these neighborhoods do not fit the established model of gentrifying neighborhoods: over the past two years, housing prices in these in-town neighborhoods have been in flux and may have sharply declined. In spite of these changes, in one very cogent respect, things are staying the same in these two Atlanta neighborhoods: the racial/ethnic composition of the residents of these neighborhoods remains overwhelmingly African American.

The neighborhoods under study do not meet the strict definition of gentrifying widely held by many where at the end of the neighborhood renewal process the formerly impoverished area transforms to a wealthy area; however, the transformations underway in the neighborhoods are a type of gentrification. Lees (2000:397) observes that “gentrification is not the same everywhere.” In an extension of this idea, Van Criekingen and Decroly (2003) identify a typology of neighborhood renewal where gentrification is present but “delimited.”⁸

As further evidence that “black gentrification” is taking place in the neighborhoods, I contrast the gentrification taking place in the two Atlanta neighborhoods under study and juxtapose it against the findings of Larry Keating and the Gentrification Task Force Committee on Gentrification. Keating (2003) identifies six key elements of what he terms “resurgent

⁸ The typology they identify includes the following processes: incumbent upgrading, upgrading, marginal gentrification, and gentrification. By “delimited” the authors suggest that each process of neighborhood transformation which they identify as gentrification has limits beyond which it does not proceed (i.e., upgrading neighborhoods do not begin as incumbent upgrading or move to marginal gentrification). Each process marks gentrification. The Old Fourth Ward neighborhood most closely aligns with Van Criekingen and Decroly’s (2003) description of “marginal gentrification.” Marginal gentrification begins with an area that is decayed or impoverished. The neighborhood transforms through building improvements, increased social status, and the arrival of new residents. Marginal gentrification differs from traditional gentrification in its end result. In traditional gentrification, the end result is that the neighborhood transforms to a wealthy neighborhood. This result is not the case in marginal gentrification. The West End fits the typology Van Criekingen and Decroly (2003) term “incumbent upgrading.” In incumbent upgrading neighborhoods begin in decay or impoverishment and then the neighborhood transforms through building improvements; however, there is no increased social status, rise in residents, or metamorphosis to a wealthy neighborhood.

gentrification” taking place in Atlanta (See footnote 3 of Chapter 1). The first hallmark of resurgent gentrification is that it is more extensive than earlier gentrification efforts in that more dwelling units are involved. The second hallmark is that resurgent gentrification is not as dependent on “unique architectural quality;” instead, the housing is less distinctive and nature. The third hallmark of resurgent gentrification is that white purchasers are moving into non-white (usually black) neighborhoods. The fourth hallmark is that conflicts are generally intensified based on the addition of race and class antagonisms to the mix. The fifth hallmark is that public subsidies are often used to accomplish the neighborhood revitalization, and poorer households often get pushed from the community. The final impact is that population shifts change the racial composition of the electorate.

My findings show that resurgent gentrification is largely taking place in the black gentrifying neighborhoods under study with the following notable exceptions. While whites are moving into the communities, the racial composition in the communities remains largely unchanged as, in addition to the white, middle and upper class residents, black middle and upper class residents are moving in too. Additionally, as the neighborhoods were overwhelmingly black to begin with, the racial composition remains largely unchanged. As a result, the third aspect of Keating’s “resurgent gentrification” is not present here. The fourth element of Keating’s resurgent gentrification is not present either, at least not to the extent of for rendering race and class interactions as “volatile”. Instead, race and class dynamics in the neighborhoods under study are much less conflict-laden than previous literature reflects.

Black gentrifying spaces are sites of great accord and discord. Urban sociologists have focused on intra-racial conflict in black-gentrifying neighborhoods (Hyra 2006, 2008; Jackson 2001; Pattillo 2007; Pattillo McCoy 1999b; Moore 2005; Taylor 2002), but little attention has

been given to the potential for obviating that tension. Additionally, intra-racial bases of neighborhood accord are often explored, but there has been little discussion of neighborhood accord across racial, economic, and gender lines.

Recent research makes it clear that despite the undeniable influence of an enduring legacy of slavery and separatism instituted via Jim Crow laws and the like, African Americans have had and continue to have a profound influence on the development of African American neighborhoods (Pattillo-McCoy 1999a; Pattillo 2005; Lacy 2002, 2005, 2007; Haynes 2001; Hyra 2006; Adelman 2004). This research in no way suggests that discrimination has not played a role in present day housing patterns.⁹ However, it suggests that post-segregation, African Americans have played a key role in the development and maintenance of black communities.

Civil Rights legislation afforded African Americans new housing choices and made it possible for them to volitionally leave neighborhoods that did not meet their needs and seek out (or build) new communities of their choosing (Gregory 1998, Jargowsky 1996, Lacy 2004, Lamb 2005, Pattillo 2005, Wiese 2004). Many fled the urban inner city spaces of major cities for the suburbs (Weise 2004). However, it must be noted that while many African Americans left the inner city, many remained. A combination of factors-- rising gasoline prices and commute times, proximity to amenities, quality of life--have made the inner city appealing again to a number of people (not all of whom are African American), causing some inner-city neighborhoods to be on the verge of meaningful economic, racial, and cultural diversity. The

⁹ Lamb (2005) argues that since 1960, both presidential politics and judicial decisions have played a tremendous role in the development and maintenance of housing segregation patterns in the U.S. suburbs. In his book, Lamb contends that the federal government promoted the evolution of racially segregated housing through a variety of mechanisms, including the funneling of mortgage guarantee program funds to whites (and denial to non-whites of the same) and decisions about the location of highways and public housing units. Lamb (2005) extensively discusses the Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968) and federal efforts to curtail (and sometimes enhance) its scope. Although Lamb's (2005) primary focus is the suburbs, he establishes that government policies (both executive and judicial) have had a profound impact on U.S. housing segregation patterns generally.

diversity found in these neighborhoods is potentially explosive and could threaten the continued viability of the neighborhood space.

To many, Atlanta is and should always remain a black metropolis. In few places is this more evident than in Atlanta's black neighborhoods, many of which still wrestle with the ghosts of the City's segregated past (Massey and Denton 1994; Sjoquist 2000). Atlanta is "the black Mecca" (Hewitt 2004).¹⁰ The city is home to more black millionaires (per capita) than any other city in the U.S. and has more black-owned businesses than all but one other city in the United States (Wilson 2007). As the birthplace of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. and home of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Atlanta has a solid place in African American history—past and present. Atlanta also has a substantial black middle class, who reside in a variety of neighborhoods and neighborhood contexts across the metropolitan area (NeighborWorks 2005; Pattillo 2003). Middle class status afforded many blacks the opportunity to leave the urban, inner-city leaving it largely inhabited by blacks of lower socio-economic means (Wilson 1987, 1997). Today, many urban areas are populated by those of a variety of racial/ethnic backgrounds and various economic means. Despite the economic, racial, cultural, and religious diversity present in gentrifying urban areas, a certain level of social homogeneity exists in a black, gentrifying neighborhood; this accord has the potential to improve the quality of life for all the current residents of the community and enhance its sustainability.

A great deal of the existing body of literature on gentrification focuses on inter-racial conflict in gentrifying areas; however, racial homogeneity in a neighborhood context does not ensure social homogeneity (Hyra 2006). Even in the face of racial homogeneity (i.e., sameness),

¹⁰ This is a label that has been contested. For example, Jaret (1986/87:62) examines Census data from a number of Southern and non-Southern cities in order to test the "validity of the claim that Atlanta has become one of the best cities in America for blacks". Jaret (1986/87) finds that despite Atlanta's enduring reputation as a black Mecca, Atlanta does not have the best outcomes for blacks on important measures like black unemployment rates, percentages of black college graduates, and "inter-racial income equality." Despite these findings and others calling the propriety of the label into question, the view of Atlanta as the black Mecca is still widely held by many.

social accord may be threatened by economic disparity. However, neighborhood economic diversity, especially in black inner city areas with high levels of concentrated poverty, is seen to bring certain advantages (Wilson 1997, 1987). In *The Truly Disadvantaged*, Wilson (1987:56) states, “I believe the exodus of the middle- and working-class families from many ghetto neighborhoods removes an important ‘social buffer’ that could deflect the full impact of prolonged and increasing joblessness”.

Wilson (1987, 1997) argues that economic diversity is desirable; however, neighborhood diversity can also heighten the potential for neighborhood conflict. Diversity brings diverse ways of utilizing, understanding, and viewing the neighborhood space. For example, Sanchez-Jankowski (2008) outlines the processes by which poor Latino residents in New York and South Central Los Angeles work, in the midst of chaotic existences, to create social order by adopting one of two cultural values or orientations—“maximizing excitement” or “maximizing security.”¹¹ These two orientations are at odds with each other, and, as residents actively pursue the value orientation which they adopt, conflict ensues.

Strengthening economic and social cohesion among those who live, work, service, and utilize gentrifying black neighborhoods should be a priority, as it can foster a social stability in communities otherwise vulnerable to decline. As one respondent said, “There are no throw away communities,” especially not the historic, black gentrifying neighborhoods under study.

Purpose and Analytical Objectives of the Study

This dissertation is generously supported by a Doctoral Dissertation Research Grant (DDRG) from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In examining the changes engulfing black gentrification neighborhoods, my dissertation has several analytical objectives or

¹¹ Security maximizers try to protect and conserve their limited resources while those who “maximize excitement” recognize that the neighborhood environment places limitations on their ability to enjoy life, so, to the extent possible, they “maximize excitement” now.

tasks, including addressing several important goals and objectives of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). First, it examines whether place (more specifically attachment to place) can be an effective vehicle to strengthen economic and social cohesion in black gentrification neighborhoods so that the people and neighborhoods are better able to withstand economic downturns. Previous research on black gentrification focused on two northern cities (Chicago and Harlem) and was primarily done in the 1990s and early 2000s, which were times of relative economic prosperity. One manifestation of this prosperity was central-city renewal (Grogan and Proscio 2000; Moss 1997); however, the current economic condition makes this a distinctly different time. In the face of economic downturn, I seek to discover whether place attachment can compel those with the economic means to leave challenged neighborhoods to remain? Neighborhoods are strengthened when their residents feel a sense of attachment or affinity to them (Elder, King, and Conger 1996); therefore, it is critical to understand the bases of those feelings of place attachment.

Place attachment is not unusual, especially for people who live in or on the borders of areas of a city with historic landmarks, such as the Martin Luther King Jr. birth home or Atlanta University Center college campuses (Keith and Pile 1997). Studies also show that length of time in an area can foster place attachment (Elder, et al. 1996; Herting, et al. 1997). Involvement in local functions and the use of local services has also been found to increase attachment to place (Cuba and Hummon 1993). Each of these variables (and others) is analyzed to determine their potential for binding residents to the neighborhood and to each other.

A second objective of this dissertation is to explore ways for improving the physical conditions and quality of life in black gentrifying areas. Despite intra-racial conflicts present in black gentrifying areas, some argue black gentrification actually improves neighborhoods

(Pattillo 2007). In his study of the indigenous, poor residents of two black gentrifying neighborhoods in New York (Harlem and Clinton Hill in Brooklyn), Freeman (2006) suggests that the phenomenon of black gentrification leads to improved lives of poor residents and increased amenities for all. There is a scant, but emerging, body of existing research on the role of African Americans in shaping black communities (Pattillo 2005; Portney and Berry 1997, Prince 2002, Gregory 1998). Understanding this process can help us understand how to improve the physical conditions and quality of life in black gentrifying areas.

A third objective of this dissertation is to uncover sources of accord so that people in gentrifying neighborhoods can learn to work together to improve their neighborhood and minimize all forms of displacement and improve the quality of life for those who remain. Gentrification literature commonly studies discord and displacement in the gentrifying neighborhood (Chernoff 1980, Lees 2000, Lindstrom 2003, Martin 2007), but its flip side is seldom explored.

A fourth objective of this dissertation is to understand the impact of place on the formation of residents' sense of identity—both shared and individual. Gieryn (2000:481) notes, “[S]ociologists should perhaps add place to race, class, and gender, as a wellspring of identity drawn upon to decide just who we are in an always unsettled way.” For this reason, historic, black-gentrifying locations are compelling sites to study the potential for physical location (i.e., place) to impact how social identity (neighborhood, group, and individual level) develops, is evaluated, and understood amidst class and lifestyle fractures in the black community.

People vary on their attachments to the neighborhood space, but Orum and Chen (2003) suggest everyone develops attachments to the places they live. According to Flint et al (2000:3), “Place matters because it structures the way we behave.” Ponzetti (2003:1) says, “The meanings

particular places hold for those who inhabit these familiar spaces are important for understanding the choices and decisions people make during their lives.” If place plays a role in who we are and who we become, then a shared affection for the place in which the neighborhood is situated (i.e., place attachment) has the potential to foster social homogeneity (Cuba and Hummon 1993). The potential for various forms of attachment to improve the quality of life for old and new residents should be explored.

It is well documented that physical displacement often occurs in gentrifying neighborhoods (Lees 2000; Keating 2001; Martin 2007; Hyra 2006; Pattillo-McCoy 1999). The foreclosure crisis in the West End neighborhood under study was due to mortgage fraud and has resulted in some actual physical displacement (Department of Justice 2007). However, displacement is not just physical; it can be economic, political, and/or social (Martin 2007). By emphasizing means to improve social cohesion in gentrifying neighborhoods, which in turn will reduce social displacement, this dissertation is directly related to HUD’s strategic goal of keeping existing homeowners from losing their homes. A strengthened community could actively combat both physical and social displacement.

I also touch upon HUD’s strategic priority to increase homeownership, especially among minorities. Strong revitalizing communities open up homeownership to a broader base. When distressed neighborhoods (which are often in minority areas) are revitalized, people have an opportunity to purchase in established neighborhoods at prices below the market value. This opens up home buying opportunities to an economic class of people to which it might not otherwise be available. Because this study is being conducted during a time of economic downturn, housing prices are depressed, and the point of entry into the neighborhoods has been

lowered. This makes the communities viable for people who might not otherwise have been able to purchase in the areas.¹²

Finally, one of HUD's priorities is to improve our nation's communities by making them more livable and bring private capital, especially new businesses, to distressed communities. The priority of making communities more livable is addressed first. Economic factors are not the only thing that makes communities more livable. Social cohesion in a community makes our neighborhoods more livable. I explore the potential for place attachment to foster social cohesion and stabilize gentrifying communities. Residents who feel socially tied to each other may be more likely to take a proactive stance in addressing potential neighborhood ills like crime, poor services, and suspicious home sales that might later end up in mortgage fraud. Such behaviors on the part of neighborhood residents also make communities more livable.

This dissertation examines neighborhood residents' local shopping and attitudes toward the neighborhood. A better understanding of consumption patterns of the various groups in distressed areas will be of value to private investors considering opening businesses in these neighborhoods, which has the potential to improve the economic viability of troubled neighborhoods and make the communities more livable. Many private investors, including supermarkets and other services needed for vital communities will not invest in a community absent a sufficient economic base to support them. The black middle class provide that economic base in gentrifying communities. In order to better market to and service these areas, it is important for investors and service providers to understand any variations (based upon age, gender, marital status, etc.) in neighborhood attachment levels among this economic base.

¹² Of course, caution should be advised to buyers because in the event the housing market turns around, the tax value of the home is likely to rise. Homeowners who cannot afford a rise in taxes should not be advised to purchase, even if they are able to acquire homes at fixed mortgage rates.

Need for the Study

Amidst the foreclosure epidemic facing our country, distressed urban areas cannot afford to lose more homeowners. If revitalization efforts in gentrifying communities are not sustained, many homeowners and their neighborhoods are at risk. Sustained neighborhood revitalization is inextricably tied to the area's local economy. In the current mortgage foreclosure crisis, disadvantaged inner-city neighborhoods, many of which began to gentrify in the last 10 to 20 years, can easily fall prey to mortgage fraud and/or further decline.

A great deal of the existing literature on the neighborhood contexts in which African Americans reside focuses on the role of white racism in housing patterns and the inner city (Massey and Denton 1994; Wiese 2004; Hyra 2006). Recent attention has focused on black middle class neighborhoods (See Adelman 2004; Lacy 2007, 2002, 2005; Pattillo 2005; Pattillo 2003; Pattillo-McCoy 1999a, 1999b); however, in debating the path of black neighborhood development, little attention has been focused on "the role of African Americans in shaping black communities" (Hyra 2006:71). Most studies of black gentrifying neighborhoods have been concentrated in the North, but in many respects the historic South has a very different place dynamic. As one of the first, this study is significant and will go a long way toward testing the generalizability of previous black gentrification study results.

Sociologists have only recently begun to focus upon place, but other social science practitioners including social psychologists, geographers, and anthropologists have long concentrated upon it and all will be interested in these findings (Inwood 2009b; Greif 2009; Orum and Chen 2003; Creswell 2004, Elder, King and Conger 1996, Entrikin 1991). Recent research suggests that in addition to race, class, and gender, place is an important basis of identity construction among individuals (Orum and Chen 2003). A history of Jim Crow

segregation in Atlanta has a huge impact on how the city is laid out (Sjoquist 2000; Coleman 1991; Chafe et al. 2001). It also impacts the present day discussions like whether North Fulton County should secede from Fulton County. Merida and Fletcher (2007:49) note both a “class-and-color consciousness” present in the South” (2007:49).¹³ Further, the entrenched and enduring legacy of slavery on the South is indisputable; this legacy can still be seen in residential housing patterns (Massey and Denton 1994; Adelman 2004). This research extends the discussion of the role of place in housing preferences and the development of community.

The record shows that discord or conflict is present in black gentrifying areas (Hyra 2006). Economic strength allows the black gentry to differ from the black underclass with respect to consumption patterns. This creates a “dilemma of difference” that has the potential to fracture black solidarity. The economic power of the black middle class may be used to provide social and physical (in the form of boundaries like fences) distance from the black lower class.¹⁴ However, our current economic times reflect anything but economic prosperity. Flat economic growth could lessen the social distance among those of different classes residing in a neighborhood as people lack the means to maintain the markers of distinction, but class can be performed in other ways. This dissertation is significant because it pays attention to new ways of performing class.

In addition to class and race, this dissertation pays particular attention to the role of gender in neighborhood level interactions. It asks is place attachment different for or experienced differently by males and females in the neighborhoods? Safety, or at least the

¹³ The color consciousness to which the authors refer is not an awareness of black and white, although that exists; instead, it is an awareness of hues of black with a preference (or deference as the case may be) being afforded to blacks with lighter skin tones.

¹⁴ Pattillo (2007:312 n23) paraphrasing Lamont and Molnar outlines the distinction between “symbolic boundaries” and “social boundaries” and states, “the former are conceptual, affective, rhetorical, interpretive, discursive and the latter are inscribed into patterns of social (political, economic, and institutional) relations, often through processes of stratification and hierarchy. Symbolic boundaries can be used to produce social boundaries”.

perception of safety, is critical if gentrifying black neighborhoods are to remain viable. Areas which are perceived as unsafe may lose or fail to attract certain categories of residents. Cole and Omari's work on racial identity (2003) and Collins' work (2001) outline such a need for future research to examine the intersection of gender with class and race. This research is significant because it examines distinctions in how black gentrifying neighborhood spaces are perceived and utilized by men and women thereby extending the discussion in gentrification literature on the intersections of race, class, and gender.

As outlined above, my dissertation fills several gaps left by previous research. First, my research is concentrated in the South, specifically Atlanta, Georgia. The South has not been examined by previous Black gentrification researchers, and the results may help establish the generalizability of previous research. Second, unlike past research, this research is done during a time of economic downturn and is the first to examine the housing crisis' impact on Black gentrifying neighborhoods. Third, my study touches upon how people experience gentrification as a gendered phenomenon; therefore, it can contribute to a growing body of research in this area. Finally, my dissertation assesses whether the development and promotion of "place attachment" can foster social cohesion in gentrifying neighborhoods and help stabilize them.

Research Questions

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze how place matters in the formation of social identities in two black gentrifying areas of Atlanta-- the Old Fourth Ward and West End neighborhoods. Through an examination of historical data, extensive interviews, a survey instrument, and observation, I uncover what impact the meaning people assign to place has on the social dynamics of neighborhood level interaction as well as the role of place in

neighborhood identity formation, individual identity formation, and group cohesion. In order to arrive at these processes, I ask the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between place and race in black gentrification neighborhoods?
In other words, does sense of place in black gentrification neighborhoods differ for black residents and those who are not black?
2. What is the relationship between race and class in forming social identities in black gentrification neighborhoods?
3. What is the impact of gender on neighborhood level interactions?
4. How do social/psychological attitudes vary among neighborhood residents in black gentrification areas?
5. How do the social engagement levels of residents in black gentrification neighborhoods vary?
6. In times of economic downturn, what factors influence those with the economic means to leave (the gentry) black gentrification neighborhoods to decide to remain?

Hypotheses

My first three hypotheses are presented together because they are linked. First, I hypothesize that in gentrifying neighborhoods residents create narratives (based upon race, class, gender, culture, and/or history) that link them to neighborhood spaces and legitimate their claims to these local sites. Second, I hypothesize that these narratives change in times of economic uncertainty as residents attempt to divorce themselves from the neighborhood. For example, those gentry who postulate that their entry to the neighborhood was about racial uplift may change their narrative in order to distance themselves from that goal as their financial security (in the form of home value) becomes threatened. Third, despite these changing narratives, I

hypothesize that those with strong affective (i.e., cultural, historical, social, and/or psychological) ties to black gentrifying neighborhoods are more likely to remain there in times of economic downturn than are those who have only economic ties to the neighborhood.

Definitions

Some of the terms used throughout this research proposal need to be operationalized.

Those terms are outlined next.

There is little agreement as to the meaning of *gentrification* (Lees 2000; Lind and Hellstrom 2003; NeighborWorks 2005; Smith 1996; Smith 2006). Some definitions seem more benign than others. The more innocuous definitions of gentrification fail to acknowledge the negative implications of the phenomenon, namely displacement.¹⁵ A common definition is that gentrification is the process whereby inner-city decaying neighborhoods are transformed and occupied by middle to upper middle class individuals (Berry 1985; NeighborWorks 2005); however, Van Criekingen and Decroly's (2003) work call various aspects of this definition into doubt.¹⁶ I adopt the definition employed by Boyd (2005). Boyd (2005:266) defines gentrification as "the process through which 'poor and working-class neighborhoods in the inner city are refurbished via an influx of private capital and middle-class homebuyers and renters.'" Boyd's (2005) definition does not mention displacement. Displacement does not have to occur in gentrifying areas; however, researchers have begun to acknowledge that even when gentrification is accomplished without actual physical displacement of residents, other forms of

¹⁵ How gentrification is viewed may be a function of how it is defined, but it may be that how it is viewed also has a great deal to do with the particular standpoint (i.e., position) of the viewer. Boyd (2005) notes, the "interpretive framework" through which some blacks view gentrification allows them to dismiss some of the negative impacts of gentrification (like displacement) on the lower class. The black gentry Taylor (2002) interviews in Harlem acknowledge displacement as a deleterious outcome of gentrification but suggest some displacement is acceptable—as long as the right kinds of people (drug dealers and the homeless) are being displaced. Another researcher, Derek Hyra (2006), views gentrification and displacement as synonymous.

¹⁶ In Van Criekingen and Decroly's (2003) typology of neighborhood renewal gentrification takes various forms. In one form, "upgrading," no decay or impoverishment is evident in the gentrifying area. In the case of "marginal gentrification" and "incumbent upgrading," upper middle class residents need not be present.

displacement (like social and political) may still be present (Martin 2007; Chernoff 1980).¹⁷ The threat of displacement and mix of socio-economic statuses can breed conflict among those who dwell in the space. All these definitions of gentrification share in common the idea that the gentrified space is improved and then inhabited by previous outsiders to the community. Next, I outline how the various social classes will be operationalized.

In the larger society, class is often defined in simple economic terms by how much money one earns (Pattillo-McCoy 1999a); however, in African American society, class is more difficult to operationalize (Pattillo-McCoy 1999). To define *middle class*, I adopt a variation on Blau and Duncan's approach (1967), which considers income, education, and occupation in the assessment of class status. For purposes of this dissertation, class, specifically *middle class* is operationalized as *homeowners* whose family/household income equals or exceeds \$50,000 per year but is not more than \$99,999, who are college educated individuals and are either business owners or employed in white collar jobs.¹⁸

¹⁷ Displacement takes many forms. It may be actual physical displacement of old residents, social displacement, or political (Martin 2007). Physical displacement has received a lot of attention in the literature, but the other forms of displacement have not. Displacement is more than just physical eviction, although this is one form. A change in a way of life can also be viewed as displacement. This is a form of social displacement. Social displacement is not new. Glass (1964) alludes to it in her definition of gentrification in her seminal work on gentrification, *London: Aspects of Change*. While social displacement is not new, our understanding of it is evolving. Atkinson (2002) discusses a form of social displacement wherein old residents simply don't feel comfortable in the neighborhood anymore either because their friends and family have left the neighborhood or because the neighborhood amenities have changed so much that the old residents feel a type of social isolation from the new neighborhood. Political displacement is a relatively new concept in the literature. Leslie Martin (2007) examines four gentrifying Atlanta neighborhoods to determine whether "the loss of [long time residents'] political influence" in the community organizations that they helped create could be counted among the many known adverse implications of gentrification. Martin (2007) terms such a loss "political displacement". Long before Martin (2007), Chernoff (1980) identified and discussed the impact of social displacement on the then renovating Little Five Points commercial district in Atlanta.

¹⁸ While I believe class has more flux than this definition, the term must be operationalized. I insert homeownership into my definition of black gentry due to the tension revealed in the black gentrification literature between homeowners and renters. In so doing, I do not wish to downplay the importance of income to the classification of class. I select the above distinctions because homeownership, college education, and employment in a white collar vocation often lead to certain performative acts (like language, dress, and behavior), which have the potential to incite intra-racial class conflict.

Upper middle class status shall be operationalized as those having a family or household income of at least \$100,000 per year to \$199,999 per year.¹⁹

Upper class status shall be operationalized as those having a family or household income of \$200,000 per year or more.

Poor is difficult to operationalize herein; however, because the lowest income category on the interviewee questionnaire is \$34,999, it shall be operationalized as those with a total household income of \$34,999 or less.²⁰

Working Class is operationalized as those with a total household income of at least \$35,000 and not more than \$50,000 per year.

A *homeowner* is anyone with an actual legal interest (other than as a renter) in the real estate in question.

Gentry is operationalized as anyone qualifying as middle class or above.

Oldtimer is operationalized to include any residents of the study neighborhoods who have resided in the area (continuously) for a period of at least ten years. All other residents shall be classified as *newcomers*.

Stakeholders is defined as either real estate developers doing business in the study area and real estate agents selling property in the same; as well as those leaders and members of social, educational, religious, cultural, civic, and neighborhood associations in the study areas; and also governmental agencies or service providers in the study areas.

The term *neighborhood attachment* is somewhat self explanatory; however, for purposes of this dissertation I am following the conceptualization of Hunter (1975) and Greif (2009).

¹⁹ In the upper income thresholds (those equal to or in excess of \$100,000), I rely singularly on income as a marker for social class. This is because I deem that beyond a certain threshold marker, education and homeownership are not significant markers of class status in the African American community. Many African Americans view education as a means to obtain a good job. What is considered “a good job” is largely a matter of salary, which affords individuals the means to acquire things like a home.

²⁰ Admittedly, this is problematic as under this definition some college-educated teachers may qualify as poor.

Greif (2009) outlines two distinct but overlapping components of neighborhood attachment, which include behavioral and attitudinal elements. Behavioral attachment manifests itself in active social ties and involvement in the neighborhood. Behavioral attachment requires expression through informal “neighboring” activities and formal participation in local groups. This formal participation involves group resolution of problems (Woldoff 2002).

Greif’s (2009) second dimension of attachment, attitudinal attachment, involves both “evaluation and sentiment.” Evaluation and sentiment, the two elements of attitudinal attachment, tug and pull against each other. The evaluative element of attitudinal attachment assesses how the neighborhood meets the individual’s needs while the sentimental dimension connects with the area on a less rational manner. Sentiment addresses feelings of emotional connection to the area.

According to Albert Hunter’s 1975 article, “The Loss of Community: An Empirical Test through Replication,” neighborhood has the following distinct dimensions: a “cultural-symbolic” element, a spatial element, and an element of “patterned social interaction.” The cultural symbolic dimension of community contains as collective identity in people’s minds. The functional spatial dimension of community must meet at least one human sustenance need (like banking, shopping, personal care). The “patterned social interaction” dimension contains predictable and established roles and institutions. According to Hunter (1975) a connection or commitment to a local territorial community (i.e., neighborhood) springs from one of three aspects of community life (or a combination of them): ecological, social, or cultural/symbolic.

Combining Greif (2009) and Hunter’s (1975) ideas, I define neighborhood attachment as attachment or affinity to the neighborhood based on ecology (i.e., spatial aspects of community), social structural bases (i.e., social institutions, statuses, roles, interactions, etc.), or cultural-

symbolic bases (i.e., loyalty to the area, identification with it, appreciation for area's culture, traditions, or some other basis of affective attachment). Neighborhood attachment is a form of place attachment. In sum, it is the bonds that individuals form to a place.

Space and place are intertwined, yet distinct. For example, Tuan (1977:6) argues that “what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value.” Orum and Chen (2003:15) differentiate space and place as follows:

Place, we must emphasize is a notion different from that of space with which it is sometimes conflated. Space is a medium independent of our existence in which there exist objects (including other human beings), objects that behave according to the basic laws of nature. Place is a unique and special location in that space notable for the fact that the regular activities of human beings occur there. Moreover, because it is a site of such activities, and all which they entail, it may furnish the basis for our sense of identity, as human beings, as well as for our sense of connection to other human beings, in other words, our sense of community. Place, in other words, is that special site, or sites, in space where people live and work, and where, therefore, they are likely to form intimate and enduring connections.

According to Massey (1994:120) places are “networks of social relations,” and our very understanding of the world happens in places (Tuan 1977). Therefore, not only are the terms space and place related, they are intertwined. My definitions of place and space derive substantially from the definition set forth by Orum and Chen (2003). I conceive of space as a physical construct. Space has a locational component which includes buildings, streets, and natural landmarks, and may also include a spatial component or geographic/locational component. On the other hand, place as used herein is a social construct. Place includes the social, cultural, historic, religious, civic and other institutions or markers which delineate the area as common, marked, or contiguous. Certain places (for example business establishments or social service agencies) seem consistent with the neighborhood space while others might not. Place can be constructed or made through the act of place making (Martin 2003a; Creswell

2004). People form connections with place in one of the following four ways: i) sense of personal identity; ii) sense of community; iii) sense of a past or future; and/or a iv) sense of being at home (Orum and Chen 2003).

Like space and place, the terms *community* and *neighborhood* are often used synonymously; however, they are not always synonyms. Community is a much broader concept than neighborhood. According to Martin (2003b), the term “neighborhood” has both a spatial and social connotation with the label “community” often employed to describe the social aspect of the neighborhood. Although those who share a neighborhood space often share a common social, cultural, or economic orientation, neighborhood only has a geographically bounded (spatial) connotation. Community can be geographic in nature, but it may also be social or cultural in nature without the presence of express or expressed boundaries.

CHAPTER 2.

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON BLACK GENTRIFICATION

Over the last twenty years, a growing body of research on black gentrification has emerged (Pattillo 2007, 2005, 2003, Pattillo 1999b; Hyra 2006; Boyd 2005; Moore 2005; Prince 2002; Taylor 2002; Jackson 2001; Boyd 2000; Schaeffer and Smith 1986; Prince 2002). Boyd (2005:266) defines gentrification as “the process through which poor and working-class neighborhoods in the inner city are refurbished via an influx of private capital and middle-class homebuyers and renters.” Black gentrification follows the same pattern as mainstream gentrification with one notable exception: both the poor residents who resided in the community prior to its “gentrification” and the new residents of greater economic means are black (Pattillo 2005, 2007).²¹

A distinguishing feature of “black gentrification” is the deep sense of responsibility many black gentrifiers feel for the larger black community.²² Despite this deep sense of responsibility felt by some black gentrifiers, the literature points out a tension which often develops in black gentrifying spaces as residents, new and old, struggle to find a sense of identity and group cohesion amidst disparate representations of blackness.²³ In Moore’s (2005) examination of class and racial identity formation in a low income black gentrifying North Philadelphia neighborhood, she concludes that whilst living side by side the urban black poor, the returning black middle class often develop a “multi-class” identity which “embodies the unreconciled class tension between the middle and lower classes...[and] lead[s] to confusing and contradictory

²¹ The sources of private capital are consistent with mainstream gentrification.

²² This is often manifested in the black gentrification literature as “racial uplift” (See Hyra 2006; Boyd 2005).

²³ In the literature, a black identity is often a simple matter of race; however, sometimes there are disputes about “authentic” representations of blackness. An additional area for exploration in future research is the concept of “black consciousness” including an examination of what it is and whether it is possible for racial outsiders to manifest such an awareness.

behavior (447).” Studies in Harlem (Taylor 2002; Jackson 2001) and Chicago (Hyra 2006, 2008; Pattillo 2007, 2005; Boyd 2005, 2000) unearth a similar phenomenon. As a result, solidarity and conflict are ideas that recur throughout the black gentrification literature.

Previous research on black America has highlighted the urban poor, but recently, a small cadre of researchers has concentrated on the black middle class (Lacy 2004, 2007; Pattillo 2005, 2003). Consistent with this shift, many black gentrification studies describe the process from the perspective of the gentrifiers. There are a few notable exceptions to this practice (Maurrasse 2006; Freeman 2006). Freeman (2006) examines two gentrifying black neighborhoods in New York (Harlem and Clinton Hill) in order to understand the implications of gentrification on those blacks who remained in the neighborhood. Freeman (2007:7) states, “the most active and vocal residents are not necessarily representative of the entire neighborhood,” so he takes care to speak to a cross section of residents of the communities, especially the “indigenous” black population. As Freeman (2006) describes the process of gentrification in Harlem and Clinton Hill he highlights how gentrification disparately impacts the poor indigenous residents of the neighborhoods and the newcomers of greater economic means. According to Freeman (2006), these disparate impacts account for the disparate levels of activism and participation noted between groups.

Several studies point out how non-monolithic the black community is by highlighting the largely class based conflicts and clashes among black residents of the study neighborhoods. In a study of Chicago’s Douglas/Grand neighborhood, Michelle Boyd (2005:266) concludes that black gentrification can have a “disproportionate negative impact” on the lower income black residents of the community. All African Americans in the neighborhood do not share common concerns, and even when they do, they do not all share common beliefs as to how to accomplish

those goals. Boyd (2005) asserts that these distinctions often result in “disproportionate negative impacts” on the poor. However, according to Pattillo (2003:3) “lifestyle distinctions” exist between the returning black middle class and the black poor who remained in the neighborhood, but a common bond forged through common lived experiences as African Americans creates solidarity amidst this conflict. The people in black gentrifying spaces tend to distinguish the dynamics that occur in these neighborhoods from other gentrifying spaces. This may be because the black gentrifying spaces most often under study (Harlem and Chicago) are themselves significant to black history and culture, and therefore residents fight to protect and preserve not only the neighborhood space, but a distinct history, culture, and way of life.

This chapter examines the central themes present in the current black gentrification literature, including conflict, solidarity, racial uplift, and boundary work. Then, I move to a discussion of the role of place in black gentrification literature.

Central Themes and Ideas in Studies of Black Gentrification

The black gentrification literature contains multiple foci, but the most prevalent of these is the idea of conflict within African American communities.²⁴ Sometimes the conflict consists of black “old-timers” versus black “newcomers” embroiled over competing ideas about the identity of a community in transition. In other cases, it involves intra-racial class-based conflict or disputes over acceptable uses of community space. Thus, the age old notion of competing interests rooted in a hierarchical stratification system is present. Of course, the intra-racial dynamics of black gentrification are not limited just to conflict. Researchers have documented motives and actions infused with cooperation and solidarity among the varied residents of these neighborhoods.

²⁴ Because the literature on black gentrification is fairly new and closely connects with broader research literatures, I will also refer to research in the fields of gentrification/urban studies and racial/ethnic studies.

Another theme in the black gentrification literature is the role of sense of place and place identity. Where one lives or “hangs out” – the “kind” of place it is and its reputation – says something about a person, and in black gentrification neighborhoods this can be a supplemental or intersecting dimension to one’s racial identity. In my view, this issue has not been fully explored in the literature, and I hope to elaborate on it in this research.

In the remainder of this literature review, I discuss what other scholars have discovered about these principal themes – the intra-racial dynamics (comprised of both conflict and cooperation) of black gentrification and the way a sense of place affects residents and is both constructed and contested in these neighborhoods. I also indicate whether there are gaps in the literature, which points me in directions where my research can make a contribution.

Intra-racial Dynamics in Black Gentrification Neighborhoods

Conflict is a common theme in early gentrification literature (Smith 1986; Zukin 1987; Lind and Hellstrom 2003; Keating 2001). A great deal of the conflict outlined in the larger body of gentrification literature was framed as inter-racial in nature, so when researchers began to examine “black gentrification” as a phenomenon, some were surprised to find that tensions, disagreements, and conflict were still prominent themes.

Tensions, Disagreements, and Conflict.

Intra-racial conflict in the black community is not new (Frazier 1957; DuBois 1995[1899]; Drake and Cayton 1993 [1945]; Graham 1999). Black intra-racial conflict is as old as distinctions over “field” and “house” and light and dark; however, recent research on the experiences of black gentrifiers in the changing communities in which they reside have raised the profile of intra-racial divisions, especially class, status/lifestyle, and other conflicts in the black

community (Boyd 2000; Jackson 2001; Taylor 2002; Prince 2002; Pattillo 2003; Boyd 2005; Hyra 2006; Pattillo 2007).

Intra-racial conflict in the black community takes many forms (Hyra 2006). Most of the attention in the black gentrification literature focuses on intra-racial class conflict. In that context, Hyra (2006:72) defines intra-racial class conflict as those conflicts among blacks that arise “when competing factions, such as homeowners versus renters, debate the path of neighborhood development”. Neighborhood development is not the only source of contention among blacks in a vertically integrated neighborhood (i.e., a community with a wide income distribution among its residents spanning high to low).

Another recurring source of intra-racial conflict in black gentrification neighborhoods is disputes between “oldtimers” (i.e., those who resided in the community prior to its gentrification) and “newcomers” regarding what constitutes appropriate uses of space by residents, especially what they do or how they act in public. Newcomers to a neighborhood bring with them their own ideas about the acceptable use of public and private space (Jackson 2001; Pattillo 2007; Moore 2005; Taylor 2002; Hyra 2006). For example, Pattillo (2003) outlines how newcomers to a black gentrifying neighborhood in Chicago expressed disdain over the practice of fixing cars on the street—a custom that had gone on in the neighborhood (without objection) for some time before the arrival of the newcomers (Pattillo 2003).

The street is public space, so there is a communal aspect to its use. In such cases, it is, perhaps proper that what passes as acceptable use of public space be negotiated among members of a collectivity, but the acceptable use of private spaces is also contested in black gentrification literature (Pattillo 2007; Jackson 2001; Taylor 2002). Pattillo (2003) writes in “Negotiating Blackness, for Richer or for Poorer,” about Mrs. Howard, an affluent new black resident of

North Kenwood-Oakland, a black gentrifying area on the south side of Chicago, who expresses disapproval over her lower socio-economic class neighbors' use of private space, specifically their front porches (Pattillo 2003). Mrs. Howard states:

Then there's like this component on the block of the people who have like more than like two or three generations in the house, and are not keeping up their house. You know. 50 cars on the street; that kind of stuff, which I hate. Sitting on the porch all the time, staring at you from like the time you walk out of your door till you get to your car. I'm just like seeing them, and it's like, oh, yuck. So that's how my neighbors are. (Pattillo 2003:2).

Mrs. Howard's disdain of her neighbors' lifestyle is clear. She objects to the way they maintain their property, the number of cars they have, and even the fact that they sit on their front porches—a practice she finds personally objectionable.

A contention very similar to the debate between newcomers and oldtimers is found between renters and homeowners. Derek Hyra (2006) compares two well-known black gentrifying areas: Harlem, New York and Bronzeville, Chicago. In both locations, Hyra (2006) notes very overt antagonism by some black homeowners against black renters. Hyra (2006:80) reports the following comment made by a black homeowner at a community meeting to discuss a publicly subsidized housing project: "Damn it, I am tired of all these no rent and low rent people that y'all are bringing up here". The homeowner's venom is clear.

Mrs. Howard's comments and those of the resident quoted in Hyra's (2006) piece reveal ways that black gentrifiers talk about class without ever mentioning class. References to "renters" and "owners" or "long time" and "new" residents become substitute terms that avoid use of explicit class labels (lower class or upper class).

In another vivid example of lifestyle distinctions, Moore (2005) tells a story about a member of the black gentry (who was a newcomer to the neighborhood) who expresses disdain over the long established neighborhood practice of people (some of whom were homeless and

indigent) rummaging through neighborhood garbage cans. The stated reason for the newcomer's protestation of this practice was that she could be fined by the city for any garbage not picked up after the pilfering was done. However, prior to the "newcomer's" entry to the neighborhood, the garbage pilfering practice went on without complaint or fine. Complaints about this established pattern by a "newcomer" made the newcomer the subject of reproof at community meetings and in neighborhood conversation.

The ire expressed by the newcomers and oldtimers in the examples cited above each arise out of a class-based consciousness about what constitutes proper neighborhood conduct. The homeowner/renter and newcomer/old timer tension revealed in these quotes plays out in "the patterns of neighborhood life--the ways in which people... interconnect with one another, and defend (or offend) the places in which they live" (Logan and Molotch 1987:99).

As noted above, many of the dichotomies we use, like oldtimers and newcomers and owners and renters, are simply "ways to talk about class without talking about class" (Pattillo 2007:14). Consciously or unconsciously, the residents' words and deeds make distinctions among groups of people. The class-based consciousness the residents' sentiments evoke is a clear attempt at boundary work.²⁵ While these actions are not always overt, they are, nevertheless, present. Pattillo (2007:12) notes, "People do not wear their diplomas on their sleeves," instead they create lifestyles to reflect that social class. These class and lifestyle distinctions are lived out in society through things like consumptive patterns, hairstyles, and patterns of language/speech (Pattillo 2007). According to Moore (2005:438), "The consumption choices a person makes indicate his/her level of cultural knowledge as well as make an assertion about his/her class identity."

²⁵ According to Lacy (2004:n.3), boundary work is the process by which "social groups understand who they are only by drawing symbolic distinctions between themselves and out-groups." A discussion of boundary work in black gentrifying areas appears later in this chapter.

Solidarity and Cooperation in Black Gentrification Neighborhoods.

Race and class are important social identities in American society (Boyd 2005; Cole and Omari 2003; Gates 2004; Graham 1999; Gregory 1998). Since race and class are, in fact, conflated in our society, they become important as either intersecting or competing avenues of identity construction (Gregory 1999; Moore 2005; Collins 2001). Several black gentrification researchers are taking a closer look at the black middle-class and finding ambiguity and sensitivity in their situation rather than simplistically seeing them merely in conflict with their economically disadvantaged neighbors. In her most recent work, *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City*, Pattillo (2007) studies how the middle class residents of the black gentrifying area of North Kenwood-Oakland in Chicago broker the precarious position of belonging to two worlds—one white (accessible to the black middle class by virtue of their economic status and educational attainment level) and one black (accessible to them by virtue of race/ethnicity). Pattillo (2007:117) explains:

The black middleman occupies a classic liminal position. Much of life is lived *on the border* rather than fully in the worlds on either side: in the car between a predominately white workplace and a predominately black neighborhood, in a sentence that uses ‘ain’t’ but crisply pronounces all the ‘-ing’ endings, walking across the stage to receive a bachelor’s degree to give to mom, who dropped out of high school. Straddling these two worlds, black middlemen take up new positions within the black community and vis-à-vis the man.

Those in the middle form an identity that is both race and class based (Pattillo 2007; Lacy 2002). Pattillo (2007:304) argues that the “precariousness of the ‘middle’” adds a complexity to gentrification studies which merits more attention in the literature.²⁶

²⁶ Pattillo’s (2007) concept of “middleness” is akin to W. E. B. DuBois’ notion of double consciousness. This concept suggests that black identity is doubly constrained by internal and external forces (Lacy 2004). DuBois ([1903] 1961:7) observes that the position of blacks in the larger society compels the formation of a sort of “second sight” which compels African Americans to look at themselves “through the eyes of others.”

In black gentrification literature, the black middle-class has multiple interpretations (Taylor 2002; Pattillo 2003, 2007; Moore (2005), Taylor (2002), and Pattillo (2003; 2007), but all concur in the belief that some members of the black middle class are able to identify with the black poor, thereby straddling two worlds. Pattillo (2007) terms such blacks “middlemen”, but Moore (2005) calls those who express solidarity across class lines “multi-class” and juxtaposes “multi-class identity” against what she labels “middle-class minded”. Moore (2005:443) believes a multi-class black identity crosses class, in that “multi-class identity values the continuation of a connectedness to lower-income members of the black community”. The neighborhood development efforts in multi-class black neighborhoods affirm black identity and consciousness.

Some researchers (Moore 2005; Boyd 2005; Pattillo 2007) find the concept of “the middle” a useful category, but others do not. In *Harlemworld*, Jackson (2001) acknowledges that economic stratification exists among the black residents of his study area in Harlem, but he suggests that the stratification cannot be understood through the use of labels like “middle class,” “underclass,” and “lower class”. Jackson suggests that while African Americans recognize class and its markers, their understanding of class is much broader than the aforementioned labels suggest. Taylor (2002) reaches largely the same conclusion in her examination of Harlem.

In *Harlemworld*, John Jackson (2001) touts black gentrifying spaces, like Harlem, as places where multiple black identities can co-exist. Jackson (2001:176) writes.

The space of a gentrifying community reveals a collision of economics, politics, and culture that signals multiple meanings of the types of blackness available in Harlem.

These multiple identities to which Jackson (2001) refers can be put on or off at will. Moore (2005), Boyd (2005), and Pattillo (2007), on the other hand, suggest that the concept of

middleness is seminal to the black gentry's ability to access multiple meanings of and types of blackness. Where multiple meanings and identities are available, the possibility of borders (i.e., existence on the fringe) exists too. The doctrine of uplift seeks to elevate those on the fringe.

Racial Uplift.

The doctrine of racial uplift, which is one way of expressing a desire or need to cooperate across intra-racial class differences, has received much attention in recent writings about black gentrification (Boyd 2005; Hyra 2006; Gaines 1996; Taylor 2002, Jackson 2001). According to Boyd (2005), in its contemporary form, the notion of racial uplift focuses on the obligation of middle class black America to "use its resources to advance the material status and mental mindset of all African Americans" (274). Hyra's (2006:85) definition of "racial uplift" borrows directly from the earlier concept of "racial advancement," which Drake and Cayton (1993 [1945]: 716) described with these words:

When Negroes speak of advancing the race they may be referring to either of two things: (1) individual achievement which 'reflects credit on the race' or (2) organized activities which are consciously designed to raise the status of the group as a whole (716).

Racial uplift is touted as a good thing (Drake and Cayton 1993[1945]; Jackson 2001; Gaines 1996), but some question that view (See Boyd 2000; Boyd 2005; Taylor 2002).

The literature suggests that "racial uplift" is either a rationale for the black gentry's movement to black gentrifying spaces or a result of such movement. Boyd (2000), Moore (2005), Hyra (2006), and Taylor (2002) each provide support for the contention that some middle class African Americans who relocate to gentrifying areas do so to participate in a form of racial uplift. However, racial uplift in theory and racial uplift in practice may be very different things. The idea of racial uplift seems altruistic and even somewhat self sacrificing, yet Taylor (2002)

observes how the rhetoric of racial uplift often cited by returning blacks is sometimes inconsistent with their actions. These inconsistencies have not been fully explored.

While intra-racial conflict is present in gentrifying areas, race can also be the basis for the formation of class (Pattillo 2003; Moore 2005). There is no monolithic black experience; however, African Americans form a distinct community or class because they share a common history, which works to create the perception of a common experience. The limits of this perceived black solidarity are often tested. Pattillo (2007) acknowledges that boundaries exist in the black community, but these same boundaries “work from without to contain its members within a community of solidarity” (Pattillo 2007:20). This community of solidarity contains schisms and gradations (Prince 2002; Jackson 2001; Hyra 2006; Moore 2005; Boyd 2000; Boyd 2005; Lacy 2004; Lacy 2007), so the limits, or boundaries, of this “community of solidarity” need to be explored.

Boundary Work.

Boundaries and boundary work allow people to see themselves as apart from others (Lamont 2000; Lamont and Molnar 2002). The distinctions created in this process are often expressed and maintained through patterns of consumption (Lamont 2001). In a rote, perhaps even unconscious act, the people in a community make distinctions about the people they share space with in the community in an attempt to frame who is an insider and who is an outsider (Wilson and Taub 2006). In this manner, racial segregation can be maintained socially, even when residents live in close physical proximity to racial outsiders. The result is boundary making, also known as boundary work. Boundaries are lines of demarcation. Not only do they frame who or what is in, they also mark who or what is out. In a neighborhood context, this is demonstrated through interaction (or those with whom we fail or refuse to interact).

Lamont and Molnar (2002) draw a distinction between symbolic boundaries and social boundaries. Social boundaries are about structural roles that privilege some social actors above others while symbolic boundaries are constructed and used by individuals in order to draw distinctions between themselves and others. Thus, symbolic boundaries are used to categorize and fit people into groups, and social boundaries are used to maintain the division or separation of the groups which we symbolically create. Both notions of boundaries are present in the black gentrification literature.

African Americans occupy symbolic communities where accord is possible because the groups share a common enemy and common goal--to fight white racism (Delgado and Stefanic 2001). However, in black gentrifying areas, the black poor and black middle class share a spatial community as well. When blacks of differing economic means share actual physical space, it becomes possible to see distinctions in the way people live, interact, dress, speak, and maintain their property (Boyd 2000; Boyd 2005; Taylor 2002; Jackson 2000). Additionally, people creatively construct boundaries (physical and symbolic) to distinguish “people like us” from “people like them” in the neighborhood.

While the physical space between neighbors in gentrifying areas may be small, residents find ways to erect symbolic boundaries (Pattillo 2007). In Pattillo’s (2007) examination of the North Kenwood area of Chicago she uncovers that while this black gentrifying neighborhood is now filled with fences, there was an earlier time in this neighborhood when no fences existed. Instead, one neighbor’s yard extended into another’s in a seamless weave. Recalling that time, one interviewee says:

It was gorgeous. It didn’t have no fences at all. And green grass. You could just look down, sit at the end of the block and look all the way down. And you see nothing, just green grass on both sides. No fence. (Pattillo 2007:53)

Another resident of North Kenwood-Oakland area in Chicago recalls similarly:

You could just run from yard to yard. You basically had a football field here, because they had no fences. And I mean it was just amazing to me, you know (Pattillo 2007:53).

The erection of fences where once none existed works to create a not only a new aesthetic for the property, but a new identity for the neighborhood.

The erection of physical or symbolic boundaries, like fences, has the potential to create a form of symbolic power and to set up new social boundaries between neighbors (Lamont 2000). As a result of these new attitudes about place, the identity and actual physical appearance of gentrifying black neighborhoods is often altered. More attention needs to be focused on the rationales and modes of erection of social boundaries as well as the impact of such boundaries on neighborhood cohesion.

The literature reveals intra-racial conflict and the possibility of cooperation and solidarity is present in black gentrifying areas. These studies raise questions about the boundaries of racial group identity in a neighborhood context. The research reviewed here also: (a) calls into question the utility of ongoing debates about when, how, and if race trumps class; (b) highlights how intermingled the two categories—race and class—remain; and (c) shows a need for another foundation upon which to build black racial solidarity. I posit that a strong attachment to place has the potential to ameliorate intra-racial conflict in black gentrifying neighborhoods and to strengthen social cohesion.

The impact of factors like race and class on the social dynamics in black gentrifying areas is well documented in the literature; however, little is focused on other important identity

formation factors like place and gender on social processes in gentrifying black neighborhoods.²⁷

The following section addresses this issue.

Neighborhood/Place Identity in Black Gentrification Areas

As described above, areas undergoing black gentrification are compelling sites to study dynamics of black unity and solidarity, as well as conflicts and tensions in the black community (Boyd 2000). They are also good places to examine the bases of neighborhood and racial identity formation. Published research on black gentrification has made a good start in exploring this phenomenon, but many new questions and issues, specifically related to the importance of place in the formation of social identities, remain to be addressed.

Gentrifying neighborhoods are communities undergoing change (Atkinson 2002; Betancur 2002; Lees 2000). In the end, these areas emerge with a distinct neighborhood identity, which some may view as “improved” and others view as “sanitized.” In a changing community, competition may develop over which of several competing identities should be adopted and what that identity signifies for the area and the people who live in it or frequent it (Moore 2005; Hyra 2006; Boyd 2005). In black gentrifying areas, even when the black gentry and the oldtimers are in agreement about the desired identity of the neighborhood, tensions may emerge as to the “the appropriate mechanisms for change” (Taylor 2002:162).²⁸ Further, community development is also influenced by a complex web of local, national, and global factors (Hyra 2008). As the

²⁷ This research does little to advance the discussion with respect to gender; however, gender-related issues did come up in the interviews I conducted. Marsh et al.(2007), are correct in their assertion that the once widely held view of the black middle class being comprised of a family unit is passé. If they are correct in their assertion that the emerging black middle class is more likely to be single and living alone, then the impact of gender will become an increasingly important factor to study. Gender may play a role in the social dynamics of a neighborhood that has not been considered previously. Issues of safety and impression management must be considered when analyzing such interactions. The influence of gender on the decision to locate to a black gentrifying area, which is by definition is urban in its context, deserves further exploration. That will have to be left to another researcher.

²⁸ It must be noted that some of the “old residents” of black gentrifying areas may themselves qualify as black gentry.

physical and social landscape of a neighborhood change, such changes can influence the related issues of place, neighborhood, personal, racial, and group identity (Boyd 2000).

Omi and Winant (1986) argue that in the U.S. one's racial identity is the most significant dimension of self and social identities. In fact, the authors observe that racial identity in the U.S. is so significant that, "Without a racial identity, one is in danger of having no identity" (Omi and Winant 1986:62). In contrast, urban sociologists and geographers emphasize the role of place in self and social identities. In other words, they highlight how place plays a role in who we are and what we become (Creswell 2004; Gieryn 2000; Teedon 2001; Zaytoun 2006; Casey 1993). Orum and Chen's (2003) analysis of place recognizes the centrality of place to our social identities, describing places as "specific locations in space that provide an anchor and a meaning to who we are" (2003:1).

So strong is the bond between people and place that Orum and Chen (2003:12) assert, "All humans, regardless of where they may live and reside, experience a similar linkage between their own personal identity and the places they have lived". Other researchers agree that the human connection to place is so strong that in addition to variables like race, class, and gender, place should be considered among the factors most significant in the determination of human identity (Gieryn 2000; Keith and Pile 1997). Martin (2003a:730) expresses the connection between place and identity this way: "place provides an important mobilizing discourse and identity for collective action, one that can obviate diverse facets of social identity in order to define a neighborhood-based polity."

Hankins (2007) links the significance of place to gentrification. In "The Final Frontier: Charter Schools as New Community Institutions of Gentrification," Hankins (2007) highlights how through activism and the use of public funds, gentrifiers in the in-town Atlanta

neighborhood of Grant Park successfully created a community through their activities around the formation of a charter school. Hankins (2007) persuasively argues that today's gentrifiers seek a "place-based community that they are willing to produce and eager to consume" (126).²⁹

Lees (2000) contends that the role of place-identity has not been fully explored in the larger body of literature on gentrification. However, this connection is uncovered in the discourses of the black gentry in many of the studies on black gentrification (Boyd 2000; Boyd 2005; Taylor 2002; Jackson 2001). The rhetoric of many of the new residents of Harlem that Taylor (2002) interviews suggest Harlem is more than a place bounded by physical parameters; these residents see Harlem as a "symbol." It is this symbolic Harlem—an enduring reminder of black hope, pride, industry, and culture—to which many of the gentrifiers are drawn.³⁰

The "newcomers" to Harlem are black professionals with varied family and socio-economic statuses who have moved to predominately poor Harlem. Their middle class status affords them other options on places to live, but they choose Harlem. Among the many reasons for the return of the gentry to this historic area, one is quite prominent: the lure of Harlem as a place that has vivid historical, social, cultural, and economic symbolic meaning to African Americans (Taylor 2002). Other black gentrifying neighborhoods have formed in and around locales important to black history (Boyd 2000). In locales with rich racial histories, place is significant, but in addition to being a reference to a physical location, the meaning of place takes on social, psychological, cultural, and historic components (Gieryn 2000). In such instances, place becomes a commodity to be consumed (Newman 2002; Inwood 2009b; Hankins 2007). In

²⁹ The reference refers to gentrifiers in general, but I know of no reason to exclude black gentrifiers from this analysis.

³⁰ In the last twenty years, a growing body of gentrification literature has linked culture to the economics of urban renewal (Zukin 1987, Harvey 1997; and Hackworth and Rekers 2005). Newman (2002), Boyd (2000; 2005) and others examine the potential of commodifying culture through use of historic heritage tourism for revitalizing black gentrifying areas.

her discussion of Bronzeville in Chicago, Boyd (2000) similarly classifies the sale, purchase, demolition, and/or renovation of existing homes as an attempt to buy history and sell nostalgia.

Black gentrifiers to a community may be attempting to purchase more than just history. Moore (2005) suggests that the purchase of a home in a black gentrifying area is an overt attempt by the black gentry to participate in and be identified with a way of life. In some cases, the black gentry may be viewed as buying an authentic black identity (Boyd 2000). Boyd (2000:119) writes, “Residents are interpreted as returning, not just to the neighborhood, not just to the Bronzeville community, but also their essential racial being, to blackness.”

A commitment to black racial identity persists in America (Pattillo 2003; Lacy 2004, 2007). Hochschild and Weaver (2007) note that those who racially identify as black tend to possess an “emotional or affective attachment to the concept of being black and to other people who share the same label or self-definition” (655). This commitment to black identity may be a source of accord among those in black gentrifying areas, or at least among those who self identify as black.

This affective attachment to blackness is similar to the place-based attachment or affinity I assert can form the basis of interpersonal solidarity. Place attachment may have fewer fractures than attachment to blackness. As Moore (2005) suggests in her discussion of gentrifiers with a multi-class identity, for some gentrifiers, a common racial identity can become the tie that binds the black gentrifiers to the lower class residents of the community (Collins 2001; Gregory 1998). Although race may bond the black gentrifiers and the black lower class residents of black gentrifying areas together, the research cited above shows that conflicts and divisions often arise (Gregory 1998; Jackson 2001; Collins 2001; Hyra 2006). Pattillo (2007:5) expresses the conflict this way: “[it is] a unique tension between the class-based protection of economic and lifestyle

investments on the one hand and racially motivated concerns for equity and solidarity on the other hand”. In public and private places, the black middle class negotiate sameness and bridge the differences (class, gender, lifestyle, power, education, influence, ownership/renter status, oldtimer/newcomer, etc.) between themselves and the black lower class (Pattillo 2007; Lacy 2004; Lacy 2007).

Black Places, Black Spaces

The concept of “racialized space” combines racial identity and place identity, and black gentrifying neighborhoods are excellent examples of this in several respects. The neighborhood space is viewed by many outside the community as “a black area.” The delineation of the area as a black area is locational or spatial in perspective, so I refer such areas as black spaces. On the other hand, black places are embodiments which are social in creation. Black places may be bounded geographically, but their more salient characteristic is that they contain social, cultural, and historic institutions, buildings, and establishments which signal to outsiders that the area is a “black place.” This perception carries forward and extends to the people who occupy the space and ultimately the goods and services offered in the area. As areas transition, racial outsiders are viewed as interlopers, and the shops and stores in the area come to be viewed as serving an exclusive black clientele. In this manner, both the racial authenticity of the space and the people who live in it are preserved.

In gentrifying communities, a complex “web of social relations [forms] among neighborhood residents,” stakeholders, and consumers (Mesch and Schwirian 1996:467). That web has the potential to become even more complicated in neighborhoods undergoing gentrification where both the identity of the place and those who occupy it are in flux (Boyd 2000; Taylor 2002; Jackson). Boyd (2000:120) asserts this point most directly when she states,

“neighborhood residents in the process of reinventing their community cannot help but reinvent themselves”.

Many of the black gentrifiers who Taylor (2002) interviewed in Harlem face a barrage of questions and bafflement from family and friends about their choice to invest in a black neighborhood.³¹ After all, many of their friends and relatives worked hard to escape the very neighborhood context to which they are willingly returning. Having succeeded “against the odds,” the last thing many of them want is to again be associated with a lower class black identity. Although some returning black gentry cite economic reasons (like the availability of cheaper housing stock) and racial uplift as the reason for their return to Harlem or other gentrifying black communities, another prevailing explanation is the desire to escape white racism so prevalent in integrated spaces (Delgado and Stefanic 2001; Gates 1997). Taylor (2002:66) terms this burden the “psychological costs of integration.”

There are psychological implications of race and class on racial identity formation (Cole and Omari 2003). This psychological cost of living in integrated spaces may drive some middle class blacks to black gentrifying neighborhoods. One of Taylor’s (2002) interviewees vividly describes the freedom he feels, in the black spaces of Harlem, to just be himself without the burden of explaining or justifying his physical appearance and choice of hairstyle. Clutching his dreadlocks as he speaks, he says this of his move to Harlem:

I thought it would be best for my own psychological and mental makeup to live in an African American community where they don’t ask me those kinds of questions, where they don’t feel threatened (2002:70).

Taylor’s interviewee clearly feels a sense of comfort and security in the black spaces of Harlem.

Black spaces offer some form of haven against the pressures found in integrated spaces (Lacy 2002). Critical Race Theory posits that the creation of safe counterspaces for minorities to

³¹ Middle class status affords the gentry choices in residential housing.

decompress from the pressures of white racism is necessary in order to prevent microaggressions from taking place (Delgado and Stefanic 2001; Gates 1997; Solorzano, et al. 2000).³² Similarly, Castells (1983) describes an earlier attempt by gay gentrifiers in San Francisco's Castro Street area to create safe spaces for themselves. Castells (1983) terms the early gentrification efforts by the San Francisco gay community as an attempt to claim "gay spaces." In addition, Castells (1983) argues that housing in gentrifying areas can be more than just an economic investment; it can be a "cultural investment."

Like the creation of the "gay spaces," black gentrification may be an attempt to produce and consume "black spaces." Lacy (2004) discusses the need for "black spaces" in her work. Lacy interviews suburban middle class blacks in two Washington D.C. communities. One neighborhood is majority black and the other is majority white. All of Lacy's (2004) subjects are black and work (and in some cases live and work) in white environments. Lacy (2004:910) maintains that racial identity is constructed and maintained "through interactions in ...black spaces." Drawing upon her interviews with black middle class parents in one white and two predominately black suburban counties near Washington D.C., Lacy contends that "black spaces" are important for socialization and formation of a black identity. She also finds that where a distinctive black spatial community does not exist (such as the majority white suburb under examination), black parents will often work to create an "imagined" or "interpretive" community in order to retain their connections to the black community and instill in their children a strong black racial identity.

Lacy's subjects were all middle class and possessed some economic means. Middle class status affords individuals a limited amount of choice as to their living context. Her interviewees

³² Microaggressions is a term Critical Race Theorists use to label the numerous small assaults and insults leveled at minorities, especially African Americans in the course of a day. According to Solórzano (2000), microaggressions occur in the form of "everyday racism," and it is subtle and incessant.

sought their specific living context for varying reasons. Some specifically sought to escape perceived white racism in majority suburbs. The hostility of white racism that black gentrifiers seek to escape by moving to a black community may be met by another form of hostility from their less affluent new neighbors, especially if the gentrifiers are perceived to “look down” on the older residents of the area (Pattillo 2003). This conflict is rendered more complicated when new physical and/or symbolic social boundaries are constructed in the neighborhood.

Conclusion

Race is a strong adhesive that binds many African Americans together, but that adhesive has voids. It is well settled that racial homogeneity in a neighborhood does not ensure social homogeneity. The same class conflicts which exist in traditional gentrifying communities exist in black gentrifying communities. This social discord has implications on interactions at all levels, but especially micro level interactions.

People in the neighborhood may vary on a host of other factors, but they all share the same neighborhood space. The significance of space and place has been underexplored in the literature on black gentrification. Amidst competing and compelling other bases of identity formation (like race, class, and gender) place can play an important role in identity formation, especially in black gentrifying communities.

CHAPTER 3.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To uncover and understand the social processes present in these changing neighborhoods, I employ an ethnographic case study approach to examine thoroughly and holistically two local communities in Atlanta undergoing black gentrification. My methodology is described in this chapter. I begin with a discussion of the methods employed to conduct this research, followed by a discussion of the study neighborhoods, some general information on interviewee demographics, and conclude with a discussion of how the data are analyzed and interpreted.

Methods

The case study methodology was developed by scholars in Europe, and later was often employed by researchers in the University of Chicago's Department of Sociology in the early part of the twentieth century (Hamel, Dufour, and Fortin 1993). When applied to urban neighborhoods, this approach seeks a complete understanding of a local area and its residents through in-depth analysis. Understanding of the processes involved occurs through "thick description" (Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg 1991). Thick description involves the observation (in a natural setting), recording, interpretation, and analysis of what is being studied (Yin 2003).

Using a case study approach, my dissertation involves an examination of two black gentrifying areas of Atlanta, Georgia. I conduct my research in the tradition of the Chicago School, which emphasizes the importance "investigating the empirical world through the use of humanistic and participatory methods" (Pattillo-McCoy 1999:219). Therefore, I employed multiple qualitative methods to gain an understanding of the people and the communities. In addition to participation and observation at various community events and attendance at

community meetings, I conducted extensive semi-structured, open-ended interviews with 56 residents, business owners, and stakeholders in the communities under study. Each interview lasted an average of 90 minutes. All interviews were conducted at a location of the interviewee's choosing. This choice of location was done purposely in order to ensure all interviewees' comfort and to shift some of the balance in the power dynamic back to the interviewee.³³ Additionally, Census data and review of historical documents were utilized. The historical data used included newspaper articles, minutes from various neighborhood association gatherings, and minutes from past NPU meetings. I collected Census data from the decades 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 in order to gain an understanding of historical changes in the community.

Working in the Chicago School tradition, I investigate “the empirical world through the use of humanistic and participatory methods” (Pattillo-McCoy 1999:219). Like any good research design, the methods I used here are an extension of my substantive questions and epistemological position. I chose an ethnographic case study approach because this approach strives to get a complete understanding of the unit of analysis under study through in-depth analysis. This approach relies heavily upon interviews, observations, and qualitative coding to gain an understanding of the processes under examination.

Field notes were taken and recorded in notebooks. Then the notes were transcribed into a Word document. Depending on the nature of the field visit, I would either record my notes contemporaneously or record notes from memory as soon after the visit as was feasible. Every attempt possible was made to immediately code my field notes to improve the validity of this time sensitive material. Coding is discussed later in this chapter. In this early phase, I used

³³ I am very comfortable with people of all walks of life, and I can usually develop an easy rapport with most people; however, I recognize that just introducing myself as a PhD candidate in Sociology at a large institution can cause some interviewees discomfort. Therefore, the choice of a comfortable interview site was important in order to put all participants at ease. Allowing interviewees the freedom to choose the interview location was important for another reason. Yin (2003:305) notes, “interview sites can yield important information about the way participants construct their individual and social identities.”

coding as a process to help me categorize what turned out to be a voluminous amount of qualitative data.³⁴ My early intent was to use NVivo 8 for this purpose. In the early stages, NVivo proved helpful at identifying the frequency and occurrence of certain topics; however, as the process unfolded, I found my hand methods (memoing, notetaking, and coding) to be more useful. For example, some phrases/terms like “Bedford Pines” were used by respondents in a variety of ways. Respondents used the name Bedford Pines in lieu of words they felt less comfortable saying. As a result, Bedford Pines could refer to concepts like race, class, gender, age, crime, and/or drugs. NVivo was insufficient in uncovering these nuances.

Interviews were audio recorded. The first interview was done using a transcription machine which contained a cassette tape recorder. The machine was bulky, awkward, and required the use of electricity. The interview flow was interrupted by this equipment (the interviewee and I were obsessed with whether the tape was recording, and the tape had to be changed and labeled several times during the course of the 2 1/2 hour interview). As a result, I purchased a digital recorder for use in my interviews. The digital recorder was small, sleek, and unobtrusive. Another added benefit of the digital recorder was that no tapes needed to be changed with it. Interviewees felt at ease with the equipment and soon forgot it was there. Another added benefit to use of the digital recorder was that it would hold up to 120 hours of interviews. I could download interviews to my computer, send them off for transcription and still have a safe and readily available back up should something happen. I also would listen to previously recorded interviews as I traveled to and from various locations. This re-sensitized me to issues raised by interviewees.

Fieldwork is a hallmark of ethnographic research. Fieldwork is necessary in order to help me gain a complete understanding of the social processes at work in the neighborhoods selected.

³⁴ My interviews yielded almost 2500 typed pages of transcripts and notes.

It allowed me to gain a sense of place and space both as the residents described it, and as I observed it. My interview observations were augmented with my observations from informal visits to the areas and attendance at meetings and events. The semi structured nature of my interviews allowed me to interject questions into the discussion as needed. According to Berg (2001), semi standardized interviews permit informal probes such as these.

One benefit of research in the ethnographic tradition is, “the investigator has the opportunity to compare what people say they do with what they actually do” (Wilson and Taub (2006:194-5). This research design will help me to develop new theories in order to answer the research questions I have posed. I utilize the supplemental interviews, field work, and historical research to confirm the validity of my conclusions about the processes under examination.

Before beginning my interviews, I spent 16 months visiting and interacting in the study neighborhoods³⁵. This preliminary fieldwork allowed me to gain an understanding of the sense of space and place both as the residents utilized it and as I observed it. It also enabled me to gain legitimacy as a researcher and a limited insider status. When I actually began my formal interviews over a year later, many people assumed that I lived in the neighborhoods. This was especially helpful as many residents expressed a general weariness or suspicion of researchers. Later, the in-depth interviews allowed me to add the residents’, business owners’, and stakeholders’ descriptions to my analysis.

While I did not live in either neighborhood, I spent hundreds of hours driving and walking through the neighborhoods, talking to people, attending community festivals, shopping, eating, and participating in various community meetings and other activities. I attended church events, and I drank lots of coffee! In each study neighborhood, a local coffeehouse became my

³⁵ The Old Fourth Ward is within walking distance of my university, and the West End is along my route from home to school. One neighborhood lies approximately 26 miles from my home while the other is 24 miles away.

home base of operation. Each coffeehouse became like a home office. I even conducted some interviews there. Mostly, they became locations where I could find out about community events, meet and talk to people informally, observe interactions, and use the facilities! Ironically, both coffeehouses changed ownership during the tenure of my research, but the same community feel prevailed.

Each coffeehouse was located at a well traveled cross-street in the communities. Therefore, I was able to meet and view people from a variety of age, socio-economic, and racial backgrounds. I approached many people at or around the coffeehouse to request an interview. At the conclusion of the interviews, I often asked for referrals to other people in the community with whom I should meet. Therefore, my sample of interviewees is a purposive snowball sample. I attempt to offset the failings of this survey method through triangulation.

Study Neighborhoods

The first study area consists of the Old Fourth Ward and Sweet Auburn neighborhoods (hereinafter referred to as “OFW”) located adjacent to downtown Atlanta, and the second study area is the West End (WE).³⁶ The West End is one of the neighborhoods surrounding the Atlanta University Center (“AUC”) on the Westside of Atlanta.³⁷ It is 12 minutes away from Hartsfield Jackson International Airport, five minutes from downtown, and three minutes from the Georgia Dome. Figure 1, Map of Study Neighborhoods, shows the areas under study.

³⁶ The NPU (or Neighborhood Planning Unit) system was initiated by Maynard Jackson, Atlanta’s first African American mayor, in order to grant neighborhoods participation in city government processes. Citizens of neighborhoods in the City of Atlanta have a rare opportunity to participate in the planning process for neighborhood development. According to the City of Atlanta’s website, the city “is divided into twenty-five Neighborhood Planning Units or NPUs, which are citizen advisory councils that make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on zoning, land use, and other planning issues. The NPU system was established in 1974 to provide an opportunity for citizens to participate actively in the Comprehensive Development Plan, now called the Atlanta Strategic Action Plan, which is the city's vision for the next five, ten, and fifteen years. It is also used as a way for citizens to receive information concerning all functions of city government. The system enables citizens to express ideas and comment on city plans and proposals while assisting the city in developing plans that best meet the needs of their communities.”

³⁷ The AUC houses several African American institutions including Spelman College, Morehouse College, Clark Atlanta University, and Interdenominational Theological Center.

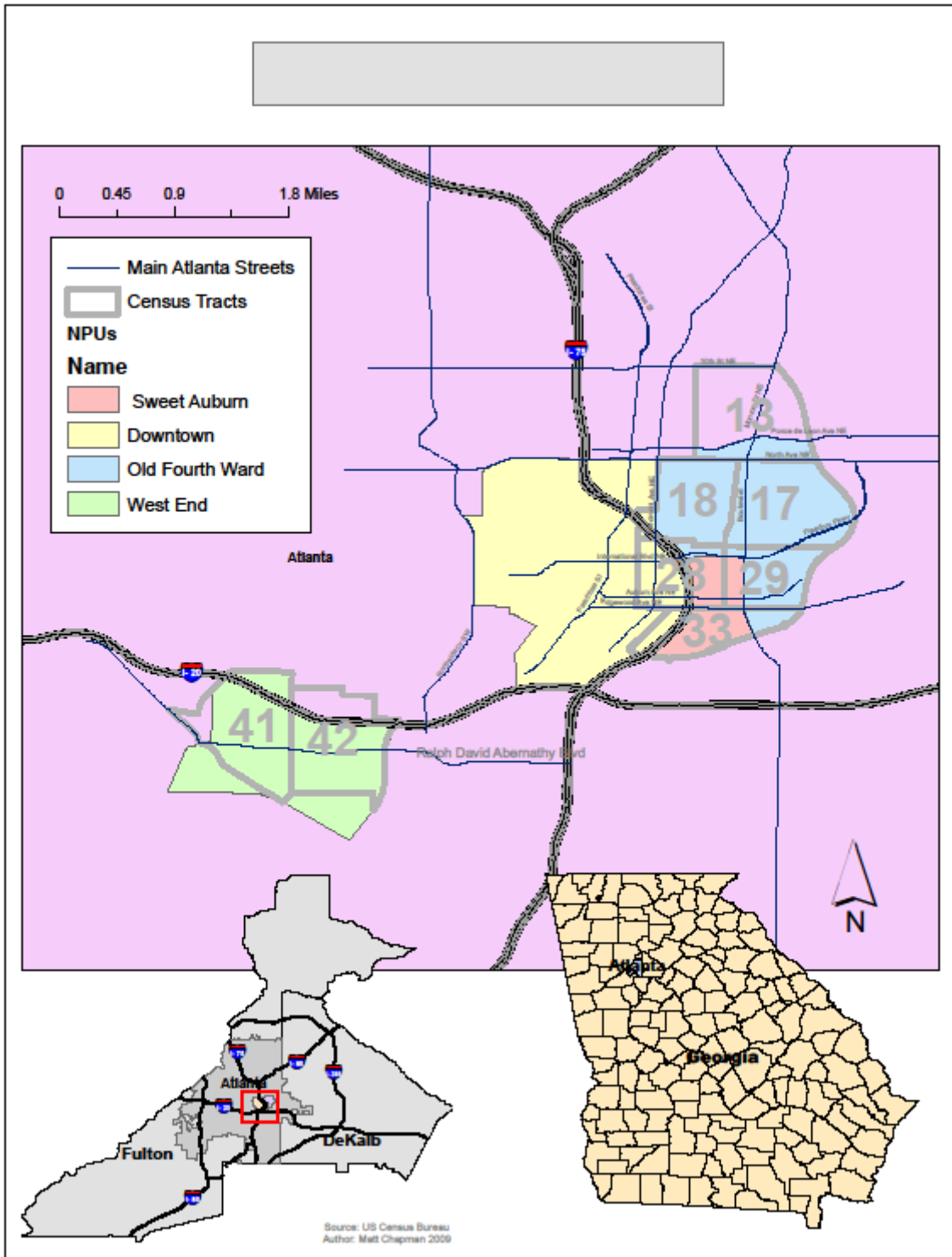


Figure 1. Map of Study Neighborhoods

The areas were selected for several reasons. Similarities exist between the neighborhoods. Both areas are experiencing black gentrification, albeit at different stages³⁸. Both areas are located in what was Atlanta's Empowerment Zone.³⁹ Each area has great historical significance in the black community. The childhood home of Martin Luther King Jr. is located in the OFW and the MLK Center for Nonviolent Social Change and the King National Park Service site sit adjacent to it in the Sweet Auburn District. The West End is home to the Hammond House Museum, Wren's Nest, and the Shrine of the Black Madonna Bookstore, which has over 10,000 book selections by mostly African American artists and is a favorite location of touring African American authors. The Black Holocaust Museum is also located there. Both neighborhoods are tourist destinations, and each has a number of prominent black churches.

In addition to a rich residential and cultural legacy, both neighborhoods have a significant economic legacy. The Old Fourth Ward's economic legacy is tied to an era when the area near its main street was known as Sweet Auburn (Inwood 2009b). "Sweet Auburn" was a term coined by John Wesley Dobbs, grandfather of Maynard Jackson and the "unofficial mayor" of Auburn Avenue (Pomerantz 1996). Dobbs called Auburn "sweet" because of the money that ran through the community. A 1959 *New York Times* article called Auburn Avenue "the richest Negro street in the world" (Dykeman and Stokely, August 9 1959, SM11).

Despite a period of extended economic decline, Auburn Avenue has a significant amount of cultural cachet among African Americans. Auburn Avenue is still home to numerous

³⁸ Gentrification in the Old Fourth Ward is in the late stage, while the AUC neighborhoods are in the very early stages of gentrification. In the wake of the precipitous economic decline in our country which has especially reverberated through the housing industry it is, however, difficult to refer to either area as traditionally "gentrifying."

³⁹ Under the 1993 Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities Act, the federal government was authorized to declare a number of economically depressed areas as "empowerment zones;" thereby qualifying these places for special tax incentives and other assistance from the federal government for the purpose of helping these areas achieve self sufficiency.

significant social, cultural, historic, and religious sites. The City of Atlanta's most recent redevelopment plans for the area (the Butler-Auburn Redevelopment Update) include rebranding the area as a "heritage tourism" cultural historical site dedicated to the achievements of African Americans (Inwood 2009a, 2009b). Racial heritage tourism involves a remembered past. According to Boyd (2000: 108), it involves a "conscious and deliberate reconstruction and representation of black history." Racial heritage tourism involves a "representation" of history. It does not purport to be the authoritative representation of history. The Old Fourth Ward's history predates the Sweet Auburn; however, this legacy is often ignored.

Despite anti-Catholic and anti-black sentiments, Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, an African American Catholic church community was founded in the area in 1912, and according to Roswell and Patterson (1989), other important African American churches date back even earlier (Big Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1865; Wheat Street Baptist Church, 1870; Ebenezer Baptist Church, 1886). Fire Station #6 dates to 1894. Other key early buildings in the community include Atlanta Life Insurance Company (1892), the Rucker Building (1904), and the Odd Fellows Building (1912).

The Old Fourth Ward moved from a white settlement space, to mixed, and then to a densely populated African American community. In a passage from Gary Pomerantz's (1997:123-124) book entitled *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: A Saga of Race and Family*, the author recounts how John Wesley Dobbs, the unofficial "mayor Auburn Avenue" and grandfather to Atlanta's first black mayor, Maynard Jackson, describes Auburn Avenue between the periods 1924-1938:

Dobbs believed there was magic in Auburn Avenue, especially in that two-block stretch between Piedmont Avenue and Butler Street (now Jesse Hill Street). When Blacks spoke of Auburn, that's what they meant: the churches, clubs, barbershops, shoeshines, small businesses, restaurants and banks between the

Rucker Building and the Yates and Milton Drugstore. Once it had been called Wheat Street, but in 1893 white residents successfully petitioned the city council to change it to Auburn Avenue, convinced it had a more stylish sound. By the 1930s some called Auburn the “Black Peachtree,” though, physically, that was a bit of a stretch since Peachtree wound north of the city and continued for many miles. In its entirety, Auburn Avenue ran little more than a mile and a half. Yet even as developer Heman Perry triggered a housing boom for blacks on the west side, Auburn remained the spiritual center of black Atlanta. The three legged stool of black finance: the Citizens Trust Bank (of which Dobbs was among the original directors), Mutual Federal Savings & Loan, and Alonzo Herndon’s Atlanta Life Insurance Company was located on Auburn. To walk the Avenue on any summer evening was to experience the vitality of black life in the city: the sounds of ragtime from the Top Hat, the smell of fried chicken from Ma Sutton’s and the constant hum of animated street chatter. It became the place for black dreamers. You knew you had arrived on the Avenue once you had your own pulpit or your own cornerstone.

The area has remained majority black; however, a loss of people brought a decline in economic strength. According to the City of Atlanta Planning Bureau, at the time the 1960 Census was taken the Old Fourth Ward had about 22,000 residents making it one of the densest residential neighborhoods in Atlanta. In the coming years, the area’s population dropped dramatically. Many say urban renewal and desegregation contributed to the neighborhood’s rapid decline.

Table 1 contains Census data on the Old Fourth Ward from 1970 to 2000. Despite a precipitous general decline in the population of the Old Fourth Ward from the period 1970 to 1980 (the population went from 23,194 residents in 1970 to 15,017 residents in 1980), its percentage of African Americans remained fairly constant. Per the 1970 Census, 78% of the Old Fourth Ward’s population was African American. According to 1980 and 1990 Census records, respectively 76% and 75% of the area’s population was African American. 2000 Census records indicate a decline in the African American population of the Old Fourth Ward. Those records indicate that as of 2000, 63% of the population of the Old Fourth Ward was African American.

Table 1. Old Fourth Ward Demographic Information 1970-2000

	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Change: 1990 - 2000
Total Population	23194	15017	14098	16719	19%
White	5124	3522	3282	5044	54%
Black	17999	11402	10521	10561	0%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	n/a	9	23	197	757%
Asian alone	n/a	21	49	178	263%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	n/a	8	16	11	-31%
Hispanic	n/a	44	207	454	119%
Male	10487	6975	6797	8355	23%
Female	12707	8042	7301	8364	15%
Under 5 Years	1755	792	815	926	14%
5-9 Years	1937	760	640	841	31%
10-14 Years	1810	649	583	697	20%
15-19 Years	2116	1002	656	812	24%
20-24 Years	2430	1772	1311	1813	38%
25-34 Years	2897	2933	3354	4155	24%
35-44 Years	2580	1443	2053	3039	48%
45-54 Years	2570	1408	1138	1690	49%
55-59 Years	1241	726	537	480	-11%
60-64 Years	1174	813	599	512	-15%
65-74 Years	1752	1658	1201	798	-34%
75 & Over	932	1061	1211	956	-21%
Median Household Income	\$5,103.00	\$5,975.50	\$11,941.17	\$25,661.50	115%
Less than \$30,000	3096	5493	4993	4715	-6%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	1100	1013	726	871	20%
\$40,000 to \$74,999	671	589	1066	1975	85%
\$75,000 to \$149,999	209	148	389	945	143%
\$150,000 or more	55	41	28	240	757%
Median Home Value	\$72,900.00	\$23,641.33	\$66,233.33	\$176,350.00	166%
BA Degree or Higher	621	1660	2204	3773	71%
% with BA or Higher	16%	54%	13%	20%	56%
Owner-Occupied Housing Units	1018	6307	1302	937	-28%
Total Housing Units	9056	30675	7282	9656	33%
% Owner Occupied	62%	21%	18%	10%	-46%

Source: Census Data

The Old Fourth Ward boasts ethnic diversity beyond mere black and white. From 1990 to 2000, the Old Fourth Ward saw a tremendous growth in its American Indian/Alaska Native population (from 23 in 1990 to 197 in 2000, an increase of 757%), Asian population (from 49 in 1990 to 178 in 2000, an increase of 263%), and its Hispanic/Latino population (from 207 in 1990 to 454 in 2000, an increase of 119%).

The decade from 1990 to 2000 marked other precipitous changes in the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood. Median home values rose by 166% (from \$66,233 in 1990 to \$176,350 in 2000), and the number of households with a median household income of \$150,000 or more increased by 757% (from 28 to 240). The number of school age children in the community rose again during that decade after a marked decline from 1980 to 1990 while the number of residents aged 55 and over declined. Other educational factors changed too. The percentage of residents with a BA degree or higher rose to 56% (from 2204 in 1990 to 3773 in 2000). In 1990, the percentage of residents with a BA degree or higher was only 20%. Finally, while the number of housing units in the neighborhood increased from 7282 in 1990 to 9656, the percentage of owner occupied homes fell during that same period to a record low 10% of all housing units.

This Census data paints the picture of a changing Old Fourth Ward community. While the percentage of the neighborhood which classifies itself as African American declined during the period 1990 to 2000, the ethnic diversity of the neighborhood does not belie the fact that the area is undergoing black gentrification.

The in-town Atlanta neighborhood known as the West End has a rich history (Crimmins 1982). The neighborhood “is connected directly and indirectly with leaders of varying local, state, regional, and national significance in the Civil War, politics, literature, architecture and the

Civil Rights Movement” (City of Atlanta). This in-town Atlanta neighborhood has been ravaged by mortgage fraud and decline.

Table 2 contains Census data on the West End neighborhood from 1970 to 2000. The white population of the West End declined precipitously from 1970 to 1980, and it has never rebounded. According to 1970 Census records, 44% of the area classified itself as white. By 1980, only 9% of the community (or 461 out of 5097 total residents) was white. The decline continued in 1990. 1990 Census records indicate that 3.4% of the West End (170 out of 4953) classified as white. Finally, 2000 Census records indicate that 2.1% of the West End’s population (104 out of 5058) was white. The African American population of the community has remained fairly consistent since the white flight of the 1970s.

Other racial shifts have been occurring in the West End too. The greatest population increase was observed in the Asian category. During the period from 1990 to 2000, the area’s Asian population increased by 2450% (from 2 to 51). At the same time, the Hispanic/Latino population of the community grew by 359% (from 17 to 78).

The Census records indicate that during the period from 1990 to 2000, the West End has seen a decline in its young residents (ages 14 and under) and its older residents (65 and older). While the area’s median household income has been on the rise since the 1980 Census, as of the 2000 Census, the median household income for the area is still a very modest at \$17,811. On the other hand, substantial increases were noted in the number of households in the area with median household incomes of \$40,000 or more. Eight percent of the residents had a BA or higher in 2000, and 20% of the homes were owner occupied units. Finally, according to 2000 Census information, median home values in the area rose by 30% (from \$59,450 in 1990 to \$77,500 in 2000).

Table 2. West End Demographic Information 1970-2000

	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Change: 1990 - 2000
Total Population	5624	5097	4953	5058	2%
White	2498	461	170	104	-39%
Black	2909	4611	4757	4800	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	36	5	5	9	80%
Asian alone		9	2	51	2450%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone		0	2	0	-100%
Hispanic		11	17	78	359%
Male	2469	2299	2165	2379	10%
Female	3155	2798	2788	2679	-4%
Under 5 Years	490	453	483	385	-20%
5-9 Years	577	394	440	401	-9%
10-14 Years	625	497	426	285	-33%
15-19 Years	518	530	363	391	8%
20-24 Years	398	526	375	449	20%
25-34 Years	587	933	834	753	-10%
35-44 Years	489	503	748	776	4%
45-54 Years	452	360	414	637	54%
55-59 Years	200	180	146	232	59%
60-64 Years	111	170	142	183	29%
65-74 Years	396	311	313	267	-15%
75 & Over	286	240	269	225	-16%
Median Household Income	\$3,894.08	\$6,848.00	\$14,321.50	\$17,811.00	24%
Less than \$30,000	746	1395	1571	1504	-4%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	18	100	139	117	-16%
\$40,000 to \$74,999	33	285	205	425	107%
\$75,000 to \$149,999	0	100	33	63	91%
\$150,000 or more	0	7	25	34	36%
Median Home Value	\$2,328.00	\$24,364.00	\$59,450.00	\$77,500.00	30%
BA Degree or Higher	92	399	456	390	-14%
% with BA or Higher	2%	8%	9%	8%	-16%
Owner-Occupied Housing Units	440	480	484	495	2%
Total Housing Units	1972	1902	2253	2439	8%
% Owner Occupied	22%	25%	21%	20%	-6%

West End Atlanta's first name was Whitehall (National Park Service 2009).⁴⁰ Formed around 1830, the community predates Terminus, the precursor to Atlanta.⁴¹ Due to the presence of a rail line, the West End "was important strategically to the defense of Atlanta in 1864 (City of Atlanta). In 1868, an early settler of the area, George Washington Adair, changed the community's name to West End.⁴² It is said that Adair named the area after London's West End theater district (National Park Service 2009). Though largely a working class community, a number of notable residents lived in the area, including former mayor and *Atlanta Constitution* owner and editor-in-chief, Evan Howell (City of Atlanta; National Park Service). Another one of the West End's most famous early residents is author Joel Chandler Harris, known for his series of books entitled *Uncle Remus Tales* (Cooper 1945).

Early residents of the area were white; however, at times, the black presence in the community was quite significant. In time, a burgeoning black middle class, many of which were affiliated with what is now the Atlanta University Center colleges, were attracted to the area northeast of the West End and settled there. The City of Atlanta's online resource indicates that in the 1870 Census, half of the population of the community was black. Not surprisingly, the black and white populations of the community remained segregated.

Annexed by Atlanta in 1894, the area began to grow in both population and economic prosperity (Cooper 1945, City of Atlanta). George W. Adair and other prominent whites, who had previously acquired large blocks of land in the area, promoted the area to middle and upper

⁴⁰ It took this name from the presence of a prominent tavern in the area owned by Charner Humphries which came to be used as a restaurant, tavern, post office, stagecoach stop, and community gathering place. Unlike the other buildings in the area, the tavern was painted white, so it came to be known as Whitehall.

⁴¹ Terminus was the early name for the territory later named Atlanta. The location's original name derives from its planned creation as a stop or terminus on the Western & Atlantic Railroad line.

⁴² During Reconstruction, federal troops were stationed at Fort McPherson. Because the West End was an unincorporated area, taverns soon began to locate all over the community and soldiers would come there to drink. Adair hoped to change the perception of the community by changing its name. The community sought incorporation around the same time.

middle class whites as a model southern suburb of Atlanta (Cooper 1945; Crimmins 1982). Streets in the West End were named after prominent Southerners, particularly Confederate generals to distinguish the area from the federal government's adjacent Ft. McPherson.⁴³ Their efforts were successful. A number of notable upper class whites moved to the area, and a white majority was reestablished in the area. Following the influx of people, especially people with means, national business chains like Firestone, Piggly Wiggly, and Sears located in the community (Crimmins 1981).

The West End's majority white racial composition remained unchanged for decades, but by the 1960's, African Americans once again began to move in to the West End. In 1961, under the direction of its then pastor and noted Civil Rights leader Ralph David Abernathy, West Hunter Street Baptist Church relocated to Gordon Street in the West End (Abernathy 1989).⁴⁴ Jesse Jackson spoke at the opening of the new church. West Hunter Street Baptist played a significant role in the community's transformation. Ralph David Abernathy served not only as pastor of West Hunter, but Abernathy also served as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and prior to his death, Abernathy was a friend and advisor to Martin Luther King Jr.

The 1973 completion of the West End Mall made the area an economic hub once again. The West End soon came to be associated with an awakening black consciousness. According to the City of Atlanta, "[b]y 1976, West End was eighty-six percent black." White flight turned the white in-town neighborhood into a black community, but desegregation brought the exodus of many of the middle and upper class blacks from the community. Even with the exodus of this

⁴³ Lee Street is named after Stephen Lee, leader of the United Confederate Veterans. Gordon Street is named after confederate General John B. Gordon of Georgia. Ashby is named after Brigadier General Turner Ashby. Lawton Street is named after General Alexander Lawton. Howell Place is named after Evan Howell.

⁴⁴ A large part of Gordon Street was later renamed Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard.

population, the area remained a predominately black community. In order to claim the community as a distinctive black space, several streets that once bore the names of Southern Civil War heroes and veterans were renamed after prominent black leaders. Ashby Street was renamed Joseph Lowery Boulevard, and in 1991, Gordon Street was renamed Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard. The latter happened in 1991. Now that I have established a picture of the neighborhoods under study, I move to a discussion of the interview sample and sample demographics of the group.

Interviewee Sample and Demographics

I interviewed residents, stakeholders, and business owners in the West End and Old Fourth Ward neighborhoods; a total of 30 individuals in the Old Fourth Ward community and 26 in the West End were interviewed.⁴⁵ All the names of people used in subsequent chapters are pseudonyms. This is done in order to preserve the anonymity of the people I interviewed; additionally, this protection helped respondents to feel freer to speak their minds. In the OFW, I met with 5 business owners (4 of whom were also residents) and 11 stakeholders (6 of who were also residents). Because of this overlap in statuses, the total number of Old Fourth Ward residents interviewed was 25. In the West End, I met with 5 business owners (4 of who were residents) and 4 stakeholders (3 of who were residents). Because of this overlap in statuses, the total number of West End residents interviewed was 24.

Table 3 displays demographic information on the respondents. Residents comprised the largest category of interviewees. Additionally, a majority of respondents were African American (84.6% of West End respondents and 83.3% of those in the Old Fourth Ward). In both

⁴⁵ It should be noted that one couple I interviewed in the Old Fourth Ward actually live outside its boundaries (in Cabbagetown). I met the husband in a popular Old Fourth Ward eatery. As we talked, I told him about my dissertation research and that I was interviewing residents, business owners, and stakeholders in the Old Fourth Ward. He indicated that he and his wife lived and operated home based businesses in the Old Fourth Ward. I set up an interview with them, and when I arrived I realized they lived just outside the neighborhood boundaries. This illustrates how fluid neighborhood boundaries actually are.

Table 3. Respondents' Demographic information by Status, Gender, Race, and Income

Status of Respondents	Old Fourth Ward	West End
Residents	25	24
Stakeholders	11	4
Business Owners	5	5
Gender Breakdown of Respondents	Old Fourth Ward	West End
Male	15	14
Female	15	12
Race Breakdown of Respondents	Old Fourth Ward	West End
African American	25	22
White	5	2
Asian	n/a	2
Income Breakdown of Respondents	Old Fourth Ward	West End
\$ 0 - \$34,999	30%	23%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	3%	23%
\$50,000 - \$69,999	10%	8%
\$70,000 - \$99,999	10%	23%
\$100,000 - \$199,999	20%	15%
\$200,000 and up	17%	4%
Refused	10%	4%
Educational Attainment Level of Respondents	Old Fourth Ward	West End
Less than High School	3	1
High School Graduate	2	4
Some College	6	4
College Graduate	7	10
Graduate Degree	12	7
Age of Respondents	Old Fourth Ward	West End
Age 35 years and under	2	7
Age 36 to 50	12	10
Age 51 to 65	12	7
Age 66 and up	4	1
Refused	n/a	1

neighborhoods, a majority of respondents were between the ages of 36 and 65 (80% of Old Fourth Ward respondents and 65.4% of West End respondents). A majority of respondents have a college degree or more. In the Old Fourth Ward, 63.3% of respondents report having a bachelor's degree or higher while in the West End 65.4% report having a bachelor's degree or higher. In the Old Fourth Ward, half of all respondents (15) are male while the other half of respondents (15) are female. Fifty four percent of West End respondents (14) are male, while 46% (12) are female. The income distribution levels of respondents were fairly split; however, the greatest majority of Old Fourth Ward residents interviewed came from the \$34,999 or less income category. Twenty three percent of West End respondents fell into each of the following categories: \$34,999 or less, \$50,000-\$69,999 and \$70,000 to \$99,999 categories.

One of the biggest challenges in conducting a rigorous qualitative study is creating a good interview protocol. I carefully constructed three separate sets of interview questions: one for residents (old and new), one for business owners, and one for various civic, social, political, economic, and religious stakeholders in the two neighborhoods. A core set of questions was the same in each interview protocol. I interviewed long time residents of the neighborhoods to provide an account of how these areas have changed, their feelings about that change, and their impressions of and interactions with new residents. New residents were probed about their reasons for moving to the neighborhood, perceptions of the area, and involvement in and with the community. I also interviewed key stakeholders in the gentrifying communities. Included among the group of stakeholders are community leaders, city officials, and developers, who were interviewed to determine their vision of the neighborhood and feelings about neighborhood change. Finally, real estate agents were interviewed to determine their impressions of whether the neighborhood character has changed, how, and why. Residents were queried to determine

their proffered reasons for returning to the neighborhood, vision for/of the neighborhood, attitudes about their neighbors, interaction with neighbors, level of participation in neighborhood groups, and use of neighborhood resources and vendors. Business owners constituted another important block of interviewees. I polled community business owners to determine their experience with neighborhood change and impressions about gentrification and what it has meant for their business.

Several strategies were used for identifying potential interviewees:

1. I asked my friends and acquaintances for referrals of people they knew in the neighborhoods under examination;
2. I searched newspapers and neighborhood association websites for the names of people who are officers of neighborhood associations;
3. I asked for referrals from the contacts I met;
4. I attended community meetings and events and asked the people I met if I could interview them;
5. I asked for referrals from the people I met at various community meetings and events;
6. I stopped people on the street;
7. I used archival material, including newspaper articles and public records, to identify key stakeholders and requested interviews from them; and
8. I looked at property for sale in the area and spoke with sales representatives about the evolving nature of the neighborhood and its residents.

The interview questions were tied closely to issues and themes outlined in my review of the black gentrification literature (Chapter 2). The questions were then revised based upon input

from my committee. I pre-tested the interview protocols with a sample of the target population. Additional revisions to the instrument were made as a result of this pretest. The most substantial of these revisions was to omit a question calling for interviewees to draw out a “mental map” of the neighborhood and highlight important social, cultural, historic, or personal locations within those boundaries. Although the mental maps provided valuable information about respondents’ perceptions of the community, things and people in it, and its boundaries, it was omitted because it produced great anxiety among respondents. Respondents were so focused on “getting it right” that their comfort level during the interviews was compromised.

The greatest potential obstacle I faced was lack of access to residents. I mitigated this lack of access problem by participating in a variety of community events, attending neighborhood planning unit meetings, and frequenting community hang outs in order to meet people for my snowball sample. I also joined several groups in the communities. Joining these groups allowed me to stay connected even when I could not attend functions. I soon began receiving e-mail notices about various happenings in the neighborhoods.

In addition to interviews, I utilized Census data for historical indicators of neighborhood change such as changes in the income, homeownership rates, average housing price, average rent, racial composition, and average educational attainment level of residents of the study area. My sample size is relatively small, and my sampling methodology (basically I use a snowball sampling methodology) has built in bias, so Census data was helpful in providing a more complete picture of the neighborhoods.

The use of multiple research methods provides triangulation (Inwood 2009a). Triangulation allows data to be corroborated through the use of multiple sources. Denzin and Lincoln (1998:4) observe that the use of multiple methods of data collection “adds rigor, depth,

and breadth to an investigation”. The ethnographic information collected through participant-observation allows me to log “the minutiae of every day interactions” (Pattillo-McCoy 1999:224). The minutiae tell the story of the dynamic social processes present in the transitioning neighborhoods under study.

Analysis/Interpretation of Data

I employed classic qualitative methods in my research in order to unearth relevant themes and concepts, including the coding/classification of data, memo writing, and analytic induction. As noted, after coding, I employed two additional steps in my interpretation of the data. None of the steps were distinct. At each stage, I found a constant interplay with the others. In this section I outline the three steps I utilized to interpret and analyze my findings.

Coding of the data into qualitative themes was the first step. Coding is a process used by numerous qualitative researchers (see Strauss and Corbin 1998; Maxwell 2005; Creswell 1998; and Miles and Huberman 1994). I used a method partially informed by Grounded Theory Methods (GTM) to code the data, but I did not strictly follow GTM. However, I did utilize coding as my first step toward analyzing the data. According to LaRossa (2005), in Grounded Theory “analysis begins with open coding” (840); in this process, the researcher examines the text to determine what concepts and variables are generated by it. Open coding is an analytical, dialectical process “through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (Strauss and Corbin 1998:101). In open coding, categories emerge naturally (i.e., from the data itself and not from any preconceived notions of the researcher).

Although I wanted the concepts to emerge naturally, I found that my literature review sensitized me to certain ideas I anticipate will emerge in the interviews. Many of the initial themes (like conflict) emerged from the literature, but I was not bothered by this. Miles and

Huberman (1994:56) note that “it is not the words themselves but their meanings that matter.” Meaning is key to interpretation. To get at the shared social meanings, I coded the text in a way that allowed me to discard material I deemed as irrelevant and focus on the data. Discarded information was not discarded forever. I used colored markers to initially code the interview transcripts and memos and field notes into broad themes like race, class, and gender, but then I used a secondary process to review and code the data.

My secondary coding involved recoding and organizing the data consistent with emerging explanations or theories. For example, during one interview a respondent “rolled” his eyes while saying the words “we all get along here” (see next paragraph), suggesting that words and facial expressions may tell different stories. Once I saw enough instances of this kind of inconsistency between words and actions (i.e., I reached what Strauss and Corbin (1998) call “saturation”), it became clear that some respondents worked hard to create narratives that underplayed conflict. This whole idea gave way to two larger themes: Optimized Conflict and Minimized Conflict. Maxwell (2005) describes this categorization process as “theoretical” while Strauss and Corbin (1998) label it “axial coding.”

At its heart, Strauss and Corbin (1998:3) define coding as “the analytical processes through which data are fractured, conceptualized, and integrated to form theory.” I coded words, phrases, and even actions in order to better understand the dynamics in the community. For example, during one interview a respondent rolled his eyes when the next door neighbor began to mow her lawn and even muttered (under his breath) “she’s been home all day and she does this now?” Yet, during the same interview the respondent claimed that everyone in the neighborhood got along great. Creswell (1998) notes it is important for the researcher to not have a literal focus but instead to interpret the data more broadly and develop links in the material to other

emerging codes in order to explain the researcher's conclusions. The second step, memo writing, was helpful in developing those links.

Memo writing is a process which allows the researcher to attempt to provide some structure to his or her overall analysis of the data (Maxwell 2005). I used memos to record my observations and to wrestle with the meaning of observations and data. During my interviews, I was careful to jot notes into a notebook. I told respondents that I was keeping notes about "good quotes" that I wanted to use and other information that they communicated to me as a backup in case something went wrong with the audio tape. The notes did serve that function, but they also allowed me to jot down my observations. These observations included notes on where the interview was located, things that were happening around us, and overlap with other interviews. I also used memos to help me connect categories together.

It took almost eight months to complete all my interviews. I would constantly replay interviews and take notes on them from a fresh perspective. Then, I would take the new notes and write memos detailing those observations. Often, the material I found compelling the second time around was different from those areas I was sensitive to the first time. Memo writing helped me to determine how and if the categories fit together.

My final stage was inductive analysis. In inductive reasoning, a researcher uses facts and observations in order to arrive at general conclusions. This process gives meaning to the observations. According to Maxwell (2005), the researcher must find a way to construct a narrative that brings the fragmented pieces of data back together again. This can be achieved by finding a common link or thread among the categories or themes.

My research questions were useful at this stage. In fact, throughout the process, I constantly replayed these questions in my mind. As presented in Chapter 1, my research

questions asked the following: (i) what is the relationship between place and race in black gentrifying neighborhoods? (ii) What is the relationship between race and class in forming social identities in these neighborhoods? (iii) What is the impact of gender on neighborhood level interactions? (iv) How do social/psychological attitudes regarding gentrifying neighborhoods vary among newcomers, old residents, stakeholders, and business owners etc.? (v) How do the social engagement levels of residents in these neighborhoods vary with affective attachment to place? and (vi) In times of economic downturn, what factors influence those with the economic means to leave black gentrifying neighborhoods to remain in them? I discovered a thread running through each question: In each case, respondents actively worked to create narratives to either tie themselves to the community and/or its people or distance themselves from it. In effect, I found that the ties that bind are social constructs only as strong as the collective agreement upon which they are built.

The remaining chapters of this dissertation are laid out as follows. Chapter 4, “Atlanta’s Old Fourth Ward Ain’t Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood,” gives the reader a feel for the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood, its people, its history, and explores the nature of interactions in the space. Chapter 5, “Creating Community,” does the same, except it examines the West End neighborhood. After establishing a sketch of the neighborhoods in chapters four and five, chapters six, seven, and eight examine the central questions in the dissertation. Chapter 6, “Attachment Matters: A Place, Space, and Race Based Analysis,” examines the role attachment plays in neighborhood satisfaction and discusses how attachment and satisfaction levels vary among different groups in the study neighborhoods. Chapter 7, “Should I Stay or Should I Go,” outlines the factors most commonly cited by respondents as detracting from the neighborhoods and their appeal, and Chapter 8, “When Things Fell Apart,” examines the impact of the mortgage

crisis on neighborhood attachment and social cohesion in the study areas. The final chapter, Chapter 9, reports my conclusions and outlines recommendations for improving economic and social cohesion in black, gentrifying neighborhoods.

CHAPTER 4.

ATLANTA’S OLD FOURTH WARD AIN’T MR. ROGERS’ NEIGHBORHOOD: THE GHOSTS OF ITS PAST, THE UNCERTAINTY OF ITS FUTURE

This chapter asks the question what kind of place is the Old Fourth Ward? The explanatory/analytical vehicles I use in order to answer that query are, in fact, a set of other questions. I focus on what are the neighborhood residents’: i) sense of “place identity” for the neighborhood; ii) sense of racial identity (for themselves, the neighborhood, and others); iii) attitudes about neighboring; and iv) attitudes and perceptions about race, class, and gender dynamics in the neighborhood. I utilize these questions as a way to understand changing neighborhood dynamics in this black gentrifying neighborhood. Cumulatively, these questions are used as a proxy for my underlying question: what kind of place is Atlanta’s Old Fourth Ward neighborhood?

While the Old Fourth Ward is largely a black community, people of a variety of racial and ethnic contexts live, work, play, and do business in the area.⁴⁶ Even amidst the multiethnic background of a place like the King Center, certain salient characteristics (notably race, class, gender, and age) get noticed by residents. Race, class, gender, and age as well as intersections of any two or more of these factors impact neighborhood level interactions and perceptions of the neighborhood space. However, in both my observations and conversations with people in the

⁴⁶ According to 2000 Census data, over 63% of the population of the Old Fourth Ward is African American; however, because the Census data used herein is broken down at the tract level and tract lines do not follow neighborhood lines, the actual percentage of the study neighborhood which is black is likely much higher. I surmise this because 5044 of the area’s total population of 16719 are white, and of those 2788 reside in Census Tract 13. Figure 1, Map of Study Neighborhoods, reveals that only a small portion of Tract 13 (which contains Virginia Highlands, an area popular with many white in town residents) is in the Old Fourth Ward. So over half (i.e., 55%) of the Old Fourth Ward’s white population resides in Tract 13, some of which is on the fringe of the neighborhood, and most of which is located outside the neighborhood’s borders.

neighborhood, I found that race is the variable people seem to focus on most often. While race is often the focus in people's comments, perceptions, and actions, the other variables—class, gender, and age—are peripheral, if unspoken, matters. Each of these variables is discussed in this chapter.

Race: Perceptions and Relations

W.E.B. DuBois said that the problem of the 20th century would be the problem of the color line. Since then, many prominent race scholars have posited that this unresolved issue remains the central question of the 21st century. In the historic Old Fourth Ward, the answer to the question 'does race matter?' is as varied as the people who inhabit the social space. Race is a central part of the neighborhood's past. In some redevelopment plans, such as those relying on vehicles like "racial heritage tourism" and nostalgia, race is inextricably tied to the area's future (Inwood 2009a, 2009b). The area struggles with the ghosts of its past and seems uncertain whether to leave the past in the past, relive it, or reframe it. The result is conflicting and sometimes contradicting stories of inter-racial and intra-racial accord and discord.

Elizabeth Battle, a community activist and long time resident of the area describes the neighborhood as multi-racial. Ms. Battle has lived in the Old Fourth Ward for almost 30 years. A middle class African American woman in her late forties, she has been active in the community since moving into the neighborhood. Her background is multicultural, and while she proudly embraces her African American heritage, she shares equal pride when discussing her mother's English ancestry.

According to Ms. Battle, it was the "beautiful, old housing stock" which drew her to the neighborhood. She would travel through the neighborhood on the bus, and she liked what she

saw. Today, Ms. Battle comments innocently on her former unawareness of the Old Fourth Ward and its legacy.

When I moved in Fourth Ward, I didn't realize that I was in the same area that Martin Luther King was... but, I knew there was something special. You could feel it in the air, even with all the chaos that was going on.

Elizabeth Battle knew that the neighborhood was a “black” area, but she did not realize it housed the birth home of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The chaos she describes refers to a lot of loud activity in the area. Some of it was drugs, but a lot of it was music, dancing, and wild parties that went on until all hours of the night. Ms. Battle says amidst all the chaos, she found a “sense of community.” Her love for the area caused her to study its history, and what she discovered surprised her.

...[O]urs is a multicultural community, okay? There had always been whites living with blacks below the street over here [pointing]. I mean the energy and synergy in the area, that's both black and white.

Denzel Martin, a local councilperson for the area, agrees. An Old Fourth Ward resident, Councilman Martin says that the community was historically diverse and discusses a time in the late 1800's to early 1900's when Jewish and African American residents resided in the neighborhood together. Both Councilman Martin and Ms. Battle believe that many are not aware of the Old Fourth Ward's multicultural roots.

If most of its residents do not know about the Old Fourth Ward's multicultural history, it is perhaps because the area is often described and marketed as a black community. Plans developed by Central Atlanta Progress to revitalize the area rely largely on black heritage tourism, which has successfully been used in some areas as a development tool (Newman 2002).⁴⁷ Some Atlanta city officials hope to capitalize on this burgeoning economic market.

⁴⁷ The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines cultural heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes historic,

Current redevelopment plans for the Old Fourth Ward emphasize the social, cultural, and historical significance of the area to black history (Inwood 2009a, 2009b). The plans highlight a time when the Old Fourth Ward, and particularly Auburn Avenue, was a vibrant economic, political, and social center for African Americans. According to Inwood (2009a), “For a portion of Auburn Avenue residents, business owners, and community activists, Auburn Avenue’s significance lies in the way it looks to the future not to the past.” Views of the neighborhood are contested, but previous successful black heritage tourism revitalization efforts by cities necessitate the promotion of a single narrative for and about the space (Boyd 2000). The narrative neither has to be shared, nor does it have to be true. However, the presence of multiple narratives produces conflicting and often competing views among the residents, stakeholders, and business owners in this black gentrifying urban space.

Community activist Elizabeth Battle and Councilman Martin are quick to describe the community as multicultural; however, many other residents claim the area as a distinctly black space. Whether discussing the glorious past of the community or its bright future, Melinda Galveston describes the Old Fourth Ward as “a prominent black community.” Kelly Walker, an executive officer with a major real estate developer that has a prominent project in the neighborhood, extols the area as a “place for black enterprise.” Additionally, some residents contend the area is a place for “black dreamers” and others the “black Mecca.”

Some of the people who view the Old Fourth Ward as a distinctly black space are its white residents. Daniel Tepee is a white man in his early fifties who has lived and worked in the Old Fourth Ward for over ten years. Mr. Tepee describes himself as “your basic Caucasian.” He describes the Old Fourth Ward as “a black community.” Most of his substantial holdings and

cultural and natural resources." (National Trust). Black heritage tourism focuses on cultural sites of interest to black history.

investments are in the Old Fourth Ward. His enterprises include owning real estate, developing property, and part owner of a coffeehouse. Naomi Goldman is a 35 year old white, Jewish woman who has resided in the Old Fourth Ward for almost three years. Naomi echoes Dan's sentiments and utilizes even stronger words to set forth her premise that the Old Fourth Ward is a black neighborhood.

In a larger context, I think I feel I'm intruding a little bit, which is fine with me because to me this is a historical neighborhood that I think should belong to African Americans. I don't think white people should take this over. So, I have no problem with it [feeling unwelcome], but I don't feel welcome sometimes.

Naomi Goldman believes that there are many indications that the community just serves African Americans. These indications include things like clothing, food, and hair care options available in the community. According to Ms. Goldman, these indicia mark the space as black territory.

Ms. Goldman's comments indicate that she views both people and places as potential threats to her acceptance in and of the community. There are number of places in the Old Fourth Ward community where Naomi Goldman feels welcome and not labeled. Daniel Tepee's coffeehouse is one of those places. However, there are a number of places where she feels like an outsider.⁴⁸ Ms. Naomi Goldman remarks on one such experience:

I used to volunteer at the Samaritan House...used to.⁴⁹ [I stopped because] I had a big fight with the chef. Was it the chef? Yeah, it was the chef. He was two hours late, and because he had to drive miles and miles and miles away and I was doing all his work...he only lasted there for a very short time. So, it wasn't just me. But there were other things that bothered me.... I think that's an example of not feeling welcome. I didn't feel welcome [there]...It's because of the color of my skin, yeah. Yeah. Like the chef...he's a different chef. He would be very pleasant to me, but friendly and joking with the female and male volunteers there who were African-Americans, but pretty much completely ignored me even when I tried to join in...I was the only white volunteer...I think they felt that they didn't

⁴⁸ Some of the labels include newcomer, white woman, outsider, interloper, and gentrifier.

⁴⁹ Samaritan House is located in the Old Fourth Ward. The organization helps homeless men and women to become self sufficient. One of its outreach programs is called Café 458. The Café is located in the Sweet Auburn area, and its motto is "where eating out can be your good deed for the day." Gourmet menu selections prepared by an "award winning chef" are offered at reasonable prices, and the proceeds benefit Samaritan House.

really want a white woman there...Yeah. I didn't go back. I really didn't, it made me very uncomfortable.

Naomi Goldman says she endured this treatment for almost two years. Then she decided to stop volunteering at the organization. Her perception is that she was treated differently because of her race. No one was overtly hurtful to her, but no one made her feel welcome in the organization either. Many other businesses in the community do not make her feel welcome, but none of her experiences have been as overt as the one at the Samaritan House.

Racial dynamics are complex. Ms. Goldman's perceptions about the community may not be without merit, but perception is a two way street. The problems Naomi Goldman details seem to begin with her negative encounter with the first chef. As a white, upper middle class woman, Ms. Goldman appears to have very fixed perceptions about time; while, in the African American community, time is often a more fluid concept. Her ire was raised because of the chef's extreme tardiness, and admittedly, she did not hide this. Race may have played a role in the social dynamics present at Samaritan House, but it is possible that the public argument Ms. Goldman had with the chef and his later dismissal played a role in how others interacted with her. Based upon our interview it appears that this possibility, however, does not occur to her. In her mind, race is the only possible dynamic which can account for her disparate treatment.

What follows is an examination of racial attitudes in the community from three distinct perspectives. I outline: i) intra-racial relations in the community; ii) inter-racial relations; and iii) attitudes about the rising presence of individuals of Hispanic or Latino descent.

Same Kind of Different as Me: Intra-Racial Relations in the Community

Race is a powerful adhesive; however, blackness does not bond all members of the black community together. This section outlines intra-racial relations in the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood.

Contested Memories—A Tale of Two Black Women.

Whiteness can brand one as an outsider in the Old Fourth Ward; however, being African American does not automatically grant one insider status. This section outlines the experiences of two black women—Viola Washington and Aisha Holder—both of whom are long term residents of the Old Fourth Ward. Viola Washington is an octogenarian who has lived in the Old Fourth Ward her entire life. She resided in the community during its heyday, which she considers to have been the 1940s and 1950s. Ms. Washington recalls the Old Fourth Ward that “used to” exist. The community that Washington recalls was “friendly, unified, and dedicated.” “Confident” is the other word that she often uses to describe the community. But that all changed, she says, with integration.

Prior to integration, Ms. Washington recalls black doctors and lawyers and all kinds of business people living and working in the community. During our interview, Washington pulls out an old telephone directory from the late 1940s, turns to Auburn Avenue and shows me the diversity of businesses that once lined the streets. She misses that. However, the diversity and number of businesses lining the street is not what she misses most. What Ms. Washington misses most is the feeling of community she says “used to” prevail.

Urban renewal and desegregation drove others from the neighborhood, but Ms. Washington remained. As she discusses those African Americans who fled the Old Fourth Ward and other inner city communities for the suburbs, some resentment can be noted in her tone.

You don't have that neighborly neighborhood [now]. There is no neighborhood. There is no friendliness. Everybody now is too damn selfish trying to get up the ladder, so there is really no friendliness. There is cordiality, but not friendliness. There is no community.... Neighbors used to be neighbors, and now they all aren't.... Way back then, everybody cared. When things got bad, this neighborhood went down, and it went down when integration came here because

all of us want to better ourselves, and we think bettering ourselves is moving into a big, big, big house into another neighborhood.

Ms. Washington identifies with the Old Fourth Ward of an earlier day as she believes it had a visibly tighter knit black community. In her comments, Ms. Washington levels resentment at black, middle class flight from the neighborhood; however, she does not address why the remaining residents fail to be friendly.

If the former Old Fourth Ward had problems and issues, Viola Washington does not recall any. According to Ms. Washington, a different sense of neighboring persisted then than the one which exists now. She even boldly asserts that the current issues in the mortgage industry could not have happened in the Old Fourth Ward she recalls:

But if something happened to somebody over there at the city center, say they have crisis or they had a debt, everybody knew. Everybody helped. We didn't have mortgage banks to do that. But if they had a crisis or an emergency or a need, the people over here knew. We knew everybody who lived in Fourth Ward.

Today, Ms. Washington knows very few of her neighbors by name and she has even less knowledge of their needs. She indicates several reasons for this: some of her attempts have been rebuffed, some of her neighbors seem to be working professionals and are "too busy," and some of the people are undesirables she does not care to know.

History surrounds Viola Washington, and it is this history which seems to hold her caught between a remembered past and an unsatisfying present. Her walls and bookcases are lined with pictures, awards, and other recognitions, most from a time past. Her reverence for the past and longing for the way things were seems tied to her feelings about being marginalized in a community where she has spent her entire life. Six years ago Ms. Washington moved from one location in the neighborhood to another six blocks away. Health and social reasons prompted the move, but her feelings of disconnect grew more pronounced after the move. Her move was a

type of displacement, but it is not one of the forms commonly contemplated by the gentrification literature. As discussed later in this chapter, Ms. Washington felt socially displaced by the arrival of poor Latinos on her block. Because of this, she decided to move. The home that she volitionally purchased is on the very edge of the neighborhood. She moved from the heart of the Martin Luther King Jr. Historic District to the fringe of the community. This completed her physical displacement.

Ms. Washington helped to create the former community she recalls. She feels on the fringe of the current one. Indicia of Ms. Washington's former stature in the neighborhood still exist. One of the most prominent of these is a building that bears her name, but she still feels that people, particularly newcomers, do not appreciate her former contributions. Ironically, outside the neighborhood she has the recognition she craves. On the city level, Ms. Washington heads a committee on seniors and at the national level she is recognized as a National Silver Haired Congressperson. It is only in her own neighborhood that she feels without honor.

It is true that in the wake of desegregation, many middle and upper middle class blacks did leave the community, but by the mid 1980s, a small cadre of upper middle class blacks returned to the declining community. Aisha Holder, a community activist, and her husband, Riley, an attorney, are one such couple. The Holders moved into their now 119 year old Victorian home over 24 years ago. The Holders, who classify as black gentry, did not purchase because of the Old Fourth Ward's glorious past or its then dubious present. Instead, they believed in what the neighborhood could be. In the course of their tenure in the community, some of the neighborhood's potential has been realized.

During the 1980s, Aisha Holder describes the area as “the wild, wild, West.” The Holders coined this phrase after one of their many visits to the community prior to their decision to purchase.⁵⁰

We would go in the morning to see what it was like because it was really like the wild, wild, west. Not so much drug dealing at that time, but a lot of prostitution, and there was a building, very unfortunately, that was right around the corner where transvestites... It's not the politically correct word to use nowadays... Transgender. Very bodacious transgender individuals would party in the street at two and three a.m. The first time it happened, I was like when I heard it – I thought it was a parade or something. It was this whole larger than life acting out thing.

Aisha Holder's comments illustrate how race, class, and sexuality impact perceptions and interactions in the neighborhood. The Holders were looking for a black neighborhood; however, as an upper class, college educated black woman, the “larger than life acting out” of the “very bodacious transgender individuals” seems to offend her middle class, black female sense of respectability. In this way, the potential black solidarity she seeks to build is challenged by her politics of respectability.⁵¹ Despite the “larger than life acting out” that they witnessed in the neighborhood, the Holders purchased their home. Aisha Holder says they saw the inherent potential of the neighborhood. The housing stock was old, but beautiful. It had character. The area was close to downtown, and the women in the neighborhood reminded them of their own grandmothers. All of the raw ingredients were there for a vibrant community. Mrs. Holder says:

And so we went the next day to look at the house and it was interesting...it [the house] was dilapidated...it was a Sunday....It was February of '84. But it was...people, with little old ladies were sitting on their porches. Their yards were swept. There were little flowers. I mean...so you've got the sense that these were people who cared about living there and there was something about it that I cannot tell you.

⁵⁰ Perhaps unknowingly the Holders' use of the phrase “wild, wild West” to describe their neighborhood echoes the same words used by noted geographer, Neil Smith, in a 1992 article entitled “New City, New Frontier: The Lower East Side as Wild, Wild West.”

⁵¹ The ideas raised by Mrs. Holder's comments play a large role in the shaping of individuals' attachment to the neighborhood, and they are discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters. However, this chapter is devoted to providing the reader with a sense of the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood.

Viola Washington was one of those “little old ladies” the Holders sensed “cared about” the neighborhood. To the Holders, the gentrifying community had a solid foundation, and they were willing to build upon it.

In-town communities have their social ills, but they also have their charm. Undaunted by the appearance of the community, Aisha and Riley Holder longed to escape what she terms the “sterility” of suburban Atlanta living. The Old Fourth Ward was anything but sterile then. At the time, there were no shining gems among the housing stock. The infrastructure was unimproved. Everything was rough around the edges and in need of repair. Even the police seemed to have forsaken the area, but underneath the surface the Holders believed the area and its people could shine. Almost five years of living in an Atlanta suburb had cured them of the belief that shiny new houses were better.

The Holders made a conscious, deliberate move to a black community to try to make a positive impact on that community. In many ways, the move was like coming home. Mrs. Holder calls herself as “an in-town girl.” She grew up in Brooklyn, New York. A few years of living in a new suburb outside of Atlanta, Georgia, gave her fresh appreciation for older communities, especially historic ones.

The Holders helped the area obtain its historic designation. Twenty-four years after their arrival in the community, you seldom hear people discuss the rise of the Old Fourth Ward without mention of the Holders’ names; however, Aisha Holder is careful to make it clear that a strong, vibrant community existed prior to their arrival.

From their first visit to the house that would become their home, the Holders suggest they could feel the “sense of community” in the air. The Holders were intoxicated by this sight; it was nostalgic. Nostalgia is compelling. Mrs. Holder says:

I mean so you got the sense that these were people who cared about living there, and there was just something about that ...I felt it, and it reminded me of the streets that I grew up on in New York, which is a different city, but it was different, but there was something there that made me feel like the streets I grew up on. And so we looked at the house and it needed a lot of work. So we agonized for awhile and then we started talking....with the little old ladies sitting on their porches. We got to know the women who would then be our neighbors.

Through contact, the old women in the community became surrogate family to Aisha and Riley.

Common ground can help span the divide of difference. Aside from age, the only readily perceptible difference between the Holders and the old women on their street was economic status, but even that did not feel like a chasm. Neither Holder nor her husband was so far removed from working class that they could not relate to these women. Holder says, "These old women could have been our grandparents." The reverence and respect the Holders demonstrated for both the neighborhood and its residents endeared the women towards them. Perhaps too, the old women looked upon the Holders as surrogate grandchildren.

Not everyone in the community was pleased with the upper class couple's decision to move into the Old Fourth Ward. Soon after they moved into the community, Riley Holder received a visit at his law office from several people in the community. The visitors were long term residents of the community of various ages; some were around the same age as the Holders. Riley did not know any of them. None of the visitors had come to his home to offer a welcome basket, casserole, or baked goods when he and his wife moved into the neighborhood. Riley Holder did not even know how this group knew where he worked, but he knew that they were neighborhood residents, and assuming they needed legal advice, he ushered them from the outer vestibule into his private office.

Once inside Riley's office, he realized this was not a friendly visit. These were community "gatekeepers" seeking to maintain the status quo. The group made this point plain:

they did not want any “gentrifiers” in the area. Although black, the gatekeepers perceived Riley and Aisha as outsiders. Without mincing words, the group told Riley Holder that he and his wife were exactly the kind of people they did not want to see move into their neighborhood. Riley Holder was equally candid in his reply. As Aisha retells the incident, her amusement is still obvious all these years later.

He told them, ‘we bought the house we’re here to stay.’ Then he went on to say, ‘I can assure you that...one of the reasons we bought in this neighborhood is because of the people who were there. So we have no desire to make them go away.’

The Holders feared that the lines of battle had been drawn.

Mrs. Holder calls this welcoming committee “the neighborhood gatekeepers.” Later, the Holders discovered that the gatekeepers were more interested in maintaining the current economic mix of the area than working to improve the neighborhood. Mrs. Holder comments:

[B]ut what was interesting is when we got involved and we started doing stuff and they weren’t doing anything! I’ll be honest. I mean, these are the folks who on behalf of the neighborhood are gatekeepers but don’t do anything to change it. And hadn’t. Their strategy was a defensive one.

The Holders may have looked like the gatekeepers in “racial” features, but the only color that mattered to the gatekeepers was green (as in money). The Holders’ economic means was a concern to the gatekeepers, all of whom were oldtimers of limited economic means. The gatekeepers who confronted Mr. Holder wanted to see both the racial and class dynamic of the neighborhood remain the same. The Holders grew attached to what the community could be, and the gatekeepers’ attachment was to maintaining the then current balance.⁵²

⁵² Ironically, as evidenced by Aisha Holders earlier comment about the “bodacious transgender people” in the community, Mrs. Holder wants to bridge the class gap but she has distinct ideas about what forms of dress, expressions of sexuality, and times and forms of assembly are acceptable and respectable. In this manner, she too acts as a gatekeeper.

Ironically, the Holders made conscious efforts not to flaunt their economic means in such a way as to offend their neighbors of more limited economic means. For example, for almost a decade they failed to make wanted improvements to the exterior of their home which would be inconsistent with the character of the neighborhood. When Aisha and Riley Holder purchased their Old Fourth Ward home, they painstakingly worked for five years to repair the interior of the home. After the interior repairs were done, they discussed working on the outside of the home, but they decided against it. The Holders did not want their neighbors to feel out of place or inferior. Seven years after the interior repairs were complete, they improved the outside of the home only after their preteen daughter made a comment that she was embarrassed to bring the friends that she made at her exclusive private school to her home because of the way the outside of the house looked.

At the same time the Holders found a “sense of community,” Viola Washington says a “spirit of community” began to wane. One view sees the glass as half empty. The other perceives the glass as half full. Both may be correct. One is simply more optimistic than the other. In the course of the last twenty five years, intra racial conflicts have not been eliminated; however, the recurrent battle cry was to fight against white racism leveled at African Americans and other minorities, which drew focus away from intra-racial class conflicts in the community.

Can't We all Just Get Along? Inter-Racial Relations

Steve Thomas and Melody Johnson share a small efficiency apartment owned by a group whose partial mission is to prevent the displacement of long time residents of the historic district. Both are African American. Steve is in his late fifties. Melody is in her early fifties. Melody Johnson grew up in the Old Fourth Ward. She returned to the community 15 years ago. Steve Thomas moved in with Melody about eight years ago; prior to that, he was homeless. They have

known each other for over twenty years. Steve Thomas' family grew up in Grady Homes. The couple has a keen knowledge of each other and the community in which they reside. Discussing what the community is and is not, Steve says, "it's not Mr. Rogers' neighborhood, but people can get along here if they know how to carry themselves."

According to Steve Thomas, the community is "transitioning from one thing to another."

He says:

It's still in transition. I won't say it's a bad situation, but when you put people together that have different cultures, different languages there could be miscommunication, misunderstanding between the people, so that type of thing. But I think in a matter of time, everybody gels together to one degree or another. Just right now, it's just too up in the air to see what's going on.

The transition includes some changes that the couple is comfortable with, as well as some changes that they find distasteful. The positive things include improvements to the neighborhood's infrastructure, development, and an increased police presence in some sections of the neighborhood. Mr. Thomas attributes some of the changes to an increase in the Old Fourth Ward's white population and to stricter policies on panhandling imposed through the office of Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin. These changes include a greater police presence in the community, cleaner streets, and a roundup of homeless individuals.

Like Steve Thomas, Melinda Galveston, a professional black woman in her late forties, partially attributes changes to white people returning to the neighborhood.

Yes. We need more people. We need a larger population. We need to continue the diversity of the population. I really don't mean to be prejudiced at all, but it is a proven trend that the more white people, the more police protection, the more revitalization happens at a quicker pace. We have successfully begun that trend to attract whites because with white comes higher income regardless of race. It brings more stability.

Unlike Steve Thomas, Melinda Galveston is a member of the black gentry and active in the community. This upper class woman is a lawyer by trade, and she knows how to get things

done, yet she still firmly believes that the city only became more responsive to the cries of the citizens of Fourth Ward after an increase in the white population of the neighborhood.

The diversity that is present in the community is not just from residents, but the business owners in the community. Elizabeth Battle believes that strife sometimes occurs because the business owners “come in to this community with preconceived notions about black people.” Not only are the business owners in the Old Fourth Ward no longer predominantly black, many of the services that they provide are geared to a wider community. This diversity is not lost on resident Steve Thomas.

Like I was saying, you had the white flight and then you have the white in-flight that was here. I guess in order for the community as a whole to accommodate these types of people, you have different types of let’s say this, social things.

Because of “social changes,” in the composition of the neighborhood and its store owners, Steve Thomas no longer feels welcome in all of the stores in the community. He says some store owners look at lower class residents with “suspicion.” Melody echoes this sentiment. It is not the Old Fourth Ward community that she recalls.

Melody Johnson is reticent to interact with any of the residents of the Old Fourth Ward – black, white, rich, poor, or otherwise. Instead, Melody chooses to keep her distance. There was a time (in her youth and early adulthood) when she attended neighborhood block parties and other events, but now she dislikes the crowds. Crowds bring uncertainty and the potential for a neighborhood party to escalate into something else. Race is not the issue; the inherent potential for “something to pop off” at any time discourages Ms. Johnson from interacting with people in the neighborhood.⁵³

⁵³ By “pop off,” Ms. Thomas outlines what she describes as a propensity for some people in the neighborhood to become offended or irritated over “slight” matters and begin arguing or start some type of physical altercation.

Not everyone in the community is dubious about forming relationships across the race, class, and/or gender divide. Tony Simpson, a black, male, upper-class resident of the Old Fourth Ward has lived in the neighborhood for over 14 years. Tony recognizes the complexity of what he describes as the “urban fabric;” however, in Tony Simpson’s urban fabric, social bonds cross racial lines.

I have what I call my solid old school neighbors, but then there are others like the male across the street. White, gay male in his forties. Best neighbor you could ever have, been the best neighbor you could ever ask for. He’s been there since I moved in. We shared tools . His junk became my good stuff, and my junk became his good stuff and that kind of thing. Now our neighbors range gay, straight, black, white. Uh we even have a few Latinos.

Mr. Simpson is president of his neighborhood association. It is clear he has the ability to coalesce with various groups of people.

Some intra racial bonds exist out of necessity or at least due to recognition of co-dependence. The current economic downturn is causing people to bond that previously did not communicate. Councilman Martin says, “I hate to say this, but it’s great that we have an economic downturn because it’s forcing people to get back to basic principles of you know, sharing and working with one another...we’re looking out for each other in ways we didn’t have to before”. In the past, people bore their economic troubles privately, and they did not talk about issues like unemployment and difficulty making the mortgage payment publicly. According to Councilman Martin, people have begun to publicly dialogue about what was formerly considered private issues.

Impressions of the community and those in it are subject to change, especially when circumstances change. Naomi Goldman (the white, Jewish woman in her thirties mentioned earlier) does not perceive the community to be friendly to racial outsiders. When Naomi moved into her condominium on the edge of the Old Fourth Ward, the racial composition of her

building was 95% white, so her condominium complex was viewed as a white facility. The racial composition of the building is beginning to change. What has not changed is the level of inter-racial communication. In Ms. Goldman's opinion, the newer black residents of the building interact with each other, but they do not often interact with the established white residents.

Naomi explains this phenomenon by saying African Americans are "kind of looking for places to belong." When asked to compare her Jewish heritage, she suggests Jews are looking for places or communities to which to belong, but without a feeling of being tied to each other. African Americans are tied together, in Ms. Goldman's opinion.

Longevity may have changed Naomi Goldman's perceptions of her African American neighbors. First impressions are lasting, but they can be overcome. Naomi recently became engaged and plans to move into her new husband's home, which is twenty minutes north of the city. She will sell her Old Fourth Ward condominium at a considerable loss, but believes it is worth it to be rid of the place.

Race relations are a complex series of actions and reactions. Resident and business owner Daniel Tepee is neither black nor an old timer in the community, but as he reflects back on his 11 years as a resident of the Old Fourth Ward he believes the community's perception of him has improved. In the beginning, long term residents displayed a natural skepticism of him. According to Daniel Tepee, "this [skepticism] wasn't so much because I was white." Instead, he believes there is a natural skepticism when outsiders come into any community.

I have a great deal of respect for the people who've been here their whole lives.
And for me, I feel like I've been accepted here. I think that's a privilege you earn.

On reflection, he says there are some things he would do differently. Mr. Tepee was a very vocal new resident. He came to be more accepted when he decided to keep his mouth "shut" for a time and try to understand some things.

I'm not perfect. I've made some mistakes for sure. But I do try to treat the history of this community respectfully. I've tried to do what I think the community wants to see done with the things that I've done.

Eleven years later, Mr. Tepee feels like he is “in the community, but not of it, and certainly not above it.”

In my observations of Mr. Tepee in various contexts, he seemed to fit in well in the community; however, often at public meetings he would sit on the outskirts of the room and seldom spoke unless invited into the discussion. Numerous people of various races (and what I perceived to be various economic backgrounds) would always approach him, and he always seemed pleased to greet them, though reticent to make the first move. Even in the coffeehouse which he co-owns and frequents, Mr. Tepee would seldom speak unless spoken to first. This seems to be in direct contradiction with the early posture he adopted in the neighborhood of always voicing his opinion. As a racial outsider, Mr. Tepee used to jump into neighborhood issues and affairs. Now, he waits to be invited in. It appears that he is intentionally silent or peripheral in some settings as a strategy for blending in or being accepted.

Over time, Mr. Tepee has achieved a level of acceptance in the neighborhood, but just as the neighborhood has started to grow comfortable with a visible and vocal white presence, emotions ranging from disdain to curiosity are expressed about the growing Latino population in the area.

The Rising Latino Presence in the Community: The Mexicans Are Here

Neighborhood diversity is broader than just black and white. This is not lost on current Old Fourth Ward residents, business owners, and stakeholders. Many of the interviewees point to a rise in the area's Latino population. Oftentimes those of Latino descent are viewed by

interviewees as a homogeneous population. This comes through in the speech that people use, often referring to everyone in the neighborhood of Latino descent as “the Mexicans.”

Steve Thomas does day labor work with a company in the Old Fourth Ward. On his job, he works with a large group of Hispanic people, and as an African American man, Mr. Thomas feels like a stranger in a strange land. He says:

To a large degree, they stay to themselves. Because we haven't gotten to the point yet where there is a common denominator for everybody. We've got people of different cultures. I work with people that are Hispanic, and they tend to stick with what they're familiar with. I mean it's understandable.... On the job when I'm working, you see these 10 Hispanic people and I'm the only [black] person there, and they get to talking. That excludes me.

Mr. Thomas' comments suggest he feels like a racial outsider, and it is not a feeling he relishes.

His job as a day laborer is in the Old Fourth Ward, but he indicates that he often feels a world apart there.

I won't say it's a bad situation, but when you put people together that have different cultures, different languages there could be miscommunication, misunderstanding between the people, so that type of thing. But I think in a matter of time, everybody gets together to one degree or another. Just right now, it's just too up in the air to see what's going on.

Difficult economic times may accelerate the potential for miscommunications and misunderstandings across the racial divide. Currently, there is a scarcity of jobs in the community. Racial resentment runs high when competition over scarce jobs is a factor.

Kevin Washington is a homeless, black man who resides in and around the Old Fourth Ward. Born in 1957, he is in his fifties. Mr. Washington is hopeful that new jobs will come to the community. It is easier for him to find work now than it was five years ago, but most of the work that he gets is piecemeal. He used to detail cars, and he has done some restaurant work, but he says he does have the ability to do “book work.” In Mr. Washington's opinion, “the Mexicans are taking over.”

Kevin Washington's resentment of "the Mexicans" is threefold: i) he sees a lot more Mexicans than he used to in what he perceives as "his community;" ii) he often competes with them for jobs; and iii) Latino business owners will not hire him.

I think they stick together you know and getting all these businesses around. Yeah, I see more and more of them. I've tried to get hired by them, but no, no, no, they already got somebody they know of.

While Kevin Washington sees the Latino presence in the community as elevated, others view it as on the decline.

In recent years, Atlanta Housing Authority has made a concerted effort to tear down Atlanta's housing projects. Regarding the planned raising of several housing projects in Atlanta, Georgia State University sociologist Deirdre Oakley says, "Very much intertwined in all of this is the issue of race [as] the people being affected are almost all poor African-Americans" (Brown 2009). However, other racial/ethnic groups are represented as well. Several of the housing projects demolished or scheduled for demolition are located in the Old Fourth Ward. One apartment building, the Overlook, served an extensive Latino population. According to Father Bob, pastor of Ascension Church, there was a greater Latino presence in the Old Fourth Ward prior to this change.⁵⁴ A few years ago, housing was more affordable. Councilman Martin echoes this sentiment. Mr. Martin noted a rise in the Hispanic population in the community, until the closing of the Overlook Apartments.

If "the Mexicans" all lived in Overlook Apartments, Viola Washington believes they all moved there from her former street in the Old Fourth Ward. Several years ago, many of the houses around Viola Washington's home began to go it into decay. Several of those declining

⁵⁴ This church has been called the oldest black, Catholic church in Atlanta. It was founded in 1912 as an African-American, catholic community. Currently, the church is about 60% African-American and about 40% white. There are a few other ethnicities sprinkled in, but those are the two most significant. The majority of its parishioners live outside the community. Father Bob estimates that only about 5% of the church membership lives in the Old Fourth Ward.

homes were already vacant and inhabited by vagrants. People told Viola Washington that she should move. The vacancy rates were not Washington's only incentive to move. The high steps in the home were "unbearable." The older Washington became, the more difficult it got to mount both the steps to the home and inside the home. She desperately needed a place that was level. The only thing that tied her to the home was the relationships that she formed with people in the community. Located on Lampkin Street, right off of Highland Avenue, just one block east of Randolph, Washington "used to know all the people" on those streets and adjacent streets as far as John Wesley Dobbs.

Ms. Washington remained on the street until everyone she knew moved. When the long term residents moved, Ms. Washington says "the Mexicans moved in," and, she no longer felt tied to the community. Ms. Washington did not view "the Mexicans" as people who were looking to form a community: "There was no people left on that street except people you call transient."

Despite the fact that the Latino population is also a minority group, many in the community view those of Latino and Hispanic descent as outsiders in the community. This was not Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream, but a lot has changed since King played on the streets of Auburn Avenue and with whites at the basketball courts at Our Lady of Lourde's Church. Change is one thing the Old Fourth Ward community knows a lot about.

Class

During the years that Atlanta was a racially segregated city, the Old Fourth Ward was a vertically integrated neighborhood. Because of segregation, low income, middle income, and even a few affluent blacks were forced to live together in an economically diverse neighborhood because they were not welcome anywhere else. Today, as the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood

wrestles with the challenge of finding a way for all social classes to coexist, it struggles with the ghost of its past. Some people seek to recreate what is remembered as a harmonious past, but times have changed. In the last two decades, the middle and upper middle class have returned to the Old Fourth Ward. The poor and working class never left. As a result, some distrust, resentment, and caution exists on the part of the returning gentry and those who remained.

Economic Class: At the Poles (Polar Opposites) and In Between

Class matters loom under the surface of any discussion of neighborhood level interactions in the Old Fourth Ward. For example, many of the interviewees expressed an appreciation for the advantages of urban living and a tolerance of the disadvantages. The disadvantages most commonly outlined—drugs and drug dealers, homeless and panhandlers, home and car break ins, inferior schools and substandard infrastructure—are strongly correlated with socio-economic factors. Class is the unspoken differentiator. It is present in seemingly innocuous comments like Elizabeth Battle’s statement, “we’re in it, but not of it, and not above it.” Elizabeth Battle is a middle class African American woman. Her comments elucidate an acknowledgement that she resides in the inner city of a major metropolitan city. They also evidence an awareness of her “middleness” in the class hierarchy.

Melinda Galveston, the upper class black woman introduced earlier, is single, in her early forties and owns a home in the community which, prior to the economic decline, was valued far in excess of one million dollars. Like one of the neighborhood’s poor residents, Steve Thomas, Ms. Galveston knows that the Old Fourth Ward “ain’t Mr. Rogers’ neighborhood.” Ms. Galveston comments: “I live in the city. I don’t live in the suburbs... You know what I’m saying? This is what a city, urban neighborhood is.” Ms. Galveston describes herself as “one of those new people coming in to strengthen the neighborhood.” Ms. Galveston says she is

“serious” about her commitment to the neighborhood, and she is willing to work to achieve the kind of community she desires. In her opinion, old residents do not have the “know how” or “desire” to get things done. According to several poor residents of the Old Fourth Ward, it is capital they lack, not know how.

Capital is not a problem for Melinda Galveston. An eight year resident of the neighborhood, she has since brought her mother, brother, and father to live in the neighborhood. In addition to that principal residence, Galveston owns rental property in the community and plans to acquire more. Melinda Galveston firmly believes that her mere presence in the community makes a positive difference. She tolerates the activity of her poorer neighbors and believes that her presence will somehow elevate their condition; however, she does not perceive any benefits that her poorer neighbors bring to her only benefits she brings to them.

Over the last few years, Kevin Washington (not related to Viola Washington) has watched the growth of the neighborhood. Kevin Washington is one of the Old Fourth Ward’s lower socioeconomic residents. For the last five years, he has made his home in and around the area. The King legacy means something to Mr. Washington, but he says he came to and remains in the area simply because “I didn’t have any other place to go, and I was jobless, so I was in shelters, from one shelter to another.” When Mr. Washington is not able to get into a shelter, he sleeps under bridges and in cardboard boxes, and it’s a shower here or there.

Despite his depressed economic condition, Kevin Washington is proud to see upwardly mobile blacks in the Old Fourth Ward; he describes them as, “movin’ on up like George and Wheezy.” Kevin Washington is not movin’ on up, but he hopes to one day. Washington has what he describes as, “a little itty bitty, part time job cleaning yards and stuff.” The job allows him to pay \$9.00 a night to stay in a shelter run by the Atlanta Recovery Center on Trinity Street,

in the neighboring downtown area. When Mr. Washington is unable to get work to pay the \$9.00 a night, he's on the streets in the Old Fourth Ward.

Mr. Washington is optimistic about his future and the future of the neighborhood. For one thing, the growth of the Old Fourth Ward makes it a lot easier for him to find work than it was five years ago. There is an increased police presence in the neighborhood too. It makes Mr. Washington feel good to see people who look like him prospering. Still, most of Mr. Washington's optimism rests on the sheer audacity of hope. Kevin Washington is a survivor. He says he and other homeless people made it in the past, and they will continue to make it.

While on the one hand Kevin Washington self identifies as homeless, he draws a distinction between himself and other homeless residents of the community. Mr. Washington says:

Well, I slept out with the homeless, and I was homeless along with them, Slept up under bridges and slept in cardboard boxes. And you know shower here, eating there, and we made it, and we still making it.

Mr. Washington believes he has more motivation than many of the homeless he formerly slept alongside. He describes his typical day as one in which he gets up early in the morning. His first task is to look for food somewhere, and then he goes about looking for some work to do.

I just strikes up and get to walking from place to place. This is every day. I'm not the type to just lay under the bridge and lay down.

While Mr. Washington is grateful to God for what he describes as his "little health and strength," he expresses resentment for some of the upper class residents of the community.

The higher uppers, the people that got the money is going on about they business and looking down on the little guys such as me, and I don't think they [big wheels] have no time for the little wheel, big wheels, big wheels. The rich getting richer and the poor get poorer.

Kevin Washington blames whites for what he considers to be the declining socio-economic condition of lower class residents of the Old Fourth Ward. When asked, he says:

Well, yes I see a lot of whites too, especially in the downtown area and stuff like that now because actually mostly Perry Homes had like black folks in it, and they tearing down buildings and stuff and putting up condos and this that and the other. I see a lot of that. That's happening a lot today. [It bothers me] in a way it does because, you know a lot of black folk, black people like myself don't have that high income, that kind of money to stop these things, and uh to see them tearing down little buildings and stuff that we was staying in...and building lofts, and this that and the other for the big timers with the money? Yeah. That kind of hurts.

Mr. Washington is proud of those African Americans who are able to purchase properties in the community and dreams of the time when he too can afford to "move on up," but he feels doubly marked because he is a poor, black, man. His frustration is apparent in this next comment:

Well I'll go back to what I was saying about the challenges of the low income. The places they were staying and stuff is getting torn down. They putting lofts [up], and they making it big for the big people; the folks that got the money. Low income blacks just don't have it [money]. So, I just don't agree with it, but it's nothing that can be done because it's happening, happening and you can see it every day.

As a recently homeless man, Mr. Washington remembers being on the street. It is unclear whether his constant third person references to the recently displaced, poor African Americans who formerly resided in public housing is because he is trying to distance himself from this population or because as a current resident of \$9 a day transient house, he does not even consider himself low income.

Not a Handout, Just a Hand.

The vast majority of the upper class respondents I spoke with said they would not like to see the working and lower class residents of the community displaced, but many also said they did not want to see social services in the community increased. In fact, the overwhelming majority of middle and upper class respondents would like to see social services (or at least the

visibility of these services in the area) decreased. These ironies are sometimes subtle and nuanced and at other times blatant.

During one interview, business owner Daniel Tepee indicated that he finds inherent value “in the dishwasher being able to live in the same community” where he or she works, but later in the same interview, Mr. Tepee lamented the number of church feeding programs and heavy social service presence in the community. The indigent tend to follow social services, and several respondents believe that there are already enough indigent in their community.

Like Melinda Galveston, many middle and upper class newcomers believe that what is good for them is good for the whole community, but neighborhood residents have not benefitted uniformly from neighborhood improvements. At a recent public meeting about the future and vision of the Old Fourth Ward, the discussion centered on ideas like sustainability, green spaces, and LEED certifications. Supportive housing was also discussed⁵⁵. Many recent, middle and upper class residents of the neighborhood weighed in on the topic.⁵⁶ Very few people talked about protecting the rights of poor residents to remain in the community. Aisha Holder, community activist and long-time advocate for the poor and working class in the neighborhood remained silent until asked to comment. Mrs. Holder firmly believes that as neighborhoods revitalize, “the hardworking, but low income residents who are there have every right to remain and benefit from the improvement of the neighborhood.” Mrs. Holder said:

I put it all on the table. The issue, which was we appreciate you taking part in this effort to plan for our community and our neighborhood, and it’s wonderful. These ideas are great. It must be green and sustainable. We wanna have affordable housing... No. We’re going beyond that. You don’t get to do anything that dislodges that decent, productive, mostly low income folks who lived here when you didn’t even know this was the Old Fourth Ward.

⁵⁵ According to the Center for Supportive Housing, supportive housing is a “cost-effective combination of affordable housing with services that helps people live more stable, productive lives.”

⁵⁶ Community meetings are disproportionately attended by those of higher economic means.

For a moment after, the room fell silent. It did not occur to most of those in attendance that their plans for green space and affordable housing would leave anyone out in the cold. The semantics of the term “affordable housing” seemed to imply to most of those in attendance that such housing is affordable to all. Mrs. Holder assured attendees it was not.

The term “affordable housing” sounds not only innocuous, it sounds inclusive. To others, the term “affordable housing” is just an exercise in semantics. Like Kevin Washington earlier, Old Fourth Ward resident Steve Thomas has been homeless before. Mr. Thomas believes that low income residents are often excluded from urban renewal plans:

If they're going to take that step in revitalization, they should surely consider the lower class and lower economic, these people, because what they're doing, they're doing things like 'affordable houses' and stuff that really aren't affordable. Yeah, it's like a euphemism for the word. You know you have a high degree of homeless people here that are being displaced but not replaced and that's causing a lot of problems. They wonder why you have crime when you know you have to do what you have to do when you're in that type of situation. Now, that is not good. It's just a product of one thing--people being left out in this transition turn.

Despite his own precarious economic position (he and his girlfriend live in a one room efficiency apartment which they can barely afford), when discussing the “lower class” Mr. Thomas refers to the group as “these people” effectively distancing himself from membership in the group. Steve Thomas' girlfriend, Melody Johnson, shares his belief that there will be no room for poor people in the new Old Fourth Ward. Ms. Johnson goes so far as to say that any discussion of providing affordable housing is only lip service. From her vantage point, Ms. Johnson says, “Well, they're getting the poor people out of the city, looks like to me.”

In a neighborhood context, seemingly private decisions can impact the larger community. Tony Simpson is a black man of economic means (an upper class member of the black gentry) who serves as a dean at a college. Ironically, it is those means which make him feel marked:

It's a very interesting thing. I think as you continue to gentrify, I was viewed and probably still am viewed as one of those new people as the gentrification part of the problem. So it's interesting from a race stand point, you know here you are a brother coming in taking a house that has been jacked up. You renovate it. All that kind of stuff... nobody wants it but now I am viewed as a problem because now you're raising property values.

Tony would like to be viewed as a brother; however, he sometimes finds people will thrust the label "gentrifier" on him instead.

Tony Simpson and his wife live in a sprawling home in the Old Fourth Ward. The home has gone through many conversions. Discussing this, Mr. Simpson says, "I bought it as a piece of crap... It was half burned out. It was a crack house." He purchased the home with the intention of living in one unit and renting out the others. He turned it into a quadruplex, and for a time, became a self described "slumlord." After a number years of running what basically amounted to a rooming house, Tony decided to convert the home to a single family unit, and he and his wife have resided there ever since. His time as a landlord gave him an appreciation for all of the people in the Old Fourth Ward community, regardless of socioeconomic status. He says he benefitted from them, and now he gives back. Mr. Simpson indicates that he learned this model of "giving back" from his parents' example.

Mr. Simpson serves as president of one of the local neighborhood associations. In that position, he advocates for the rights of all residents of the neighborhood; however, Mr. Simpson firmly believes the neighborhood would benefit if the residual effects of certain segments of the population were eradicated. Tony Simpson says:

And it's not so much Section 8 housing, but it's all the ills that come with it. And I honestly believe that it's the 80-20 rule. I believe that 80% of the people who live in Section 8 along Boulevard are hard working Americans trying to do the right thing. I believe 20% of them mess it up for everybody else.

The housing community along Boulevard to which Tony refers is called Bedford Pines, a privately owned and operated Section 8 facility. Because the facility is privately owned, Atlanta Housing Authority's decision to tear down the city's public housing complexes did not affect Bedford Pines. The complex extends out instead of up, spanning several city blocks. Bedford Pines has over 700 units and no on-site laundry facilities. It will run out of tax credits by 2015, but for now, it is still standing. The topic of Bedford Pines recurs in my interviews more than any other. Like so many other respondents, Tony Simpson's comments on the Section 8 housing community evidence that he is wrestling to classify the lower income residents of the community into groups: deserving and undeserving poor.

At the Intersection of Race, Class, Gender, and Age.

Variables like race, class, sexuality, and gender not only influence the formation of individuals' social identities, but, according to Patricia Hill Collins (2000), these variables form "interlocking systems of oppression." According to Collins (1993:26), race, class, and gender are "distinctive yet interlocking structures of oppression." Additionally, Collins argues that "everyone has a race/gender/class specific identity," and everyone is simultaneously "being oppressed and oppressor" (Collins, 1993: 28).

The Old Fourth Ward residents I interviewed hold a number of identities. Some social identities are discussed in polite public discourse; others are not. A thirteen year resident of the Old Fourth Ward, Ms. Hope is proud of the fact that many outwardly open lesbian and gay couples reside in the neighborhood, yet there has not been a big blow up in the neighborhood about it as she has seen this happen in other in town Atlanta neighborhoods. A lesbian herself, Ms. Hope (a black woman in her fifties), and her partner, a white woman, live together in the community. They have not had any incidents based upon their sexual orientation, but because of

her upper class standing, inter-racial relationship, and sexual orientation, Johnetta Hope recognizes that there is “always” the potential for conflict.

In her comments, Ms. Hope reveals she feels oppressed on many sides, but she does not dwell on it. She believes people use other words to mask what they really mean. The seemingly incidental things that people choose to fight about become a proxy for the larger issues which are either socially impolite or politically incorrect to discuss in public. Ms. Hope says:

[Even] in the lesbian/gay community it is a microcosm of larger society, so we still have issues around race. You still have issues around gender, and you still have issues around class.

No place is that clearer than the case of Bedford Pines.

The interlocking issues of race, class, and gender make it difficult to posit a viable solution for the Bedford Pines, despite the desire of many to do so. Melinda Galveston’s comments echo this frustration:

[T]his particular housing community, Bedford- Pines, has to take whoever qualifies... We’re getting the lowest of lowest...But if you think about a drug dealer mentality; he’s going to come, and he is going to prey on those people, and that is what’s happening.... Now you think about a drug dealer and you think about a woman in that environment and in that condition. She sees no way out, but a better way of life by allowing a drug dealer to use her place. A support system for that negative thing, right? I mean you understand what happens, and this is what’s happening. You talk about building community? You have destroyed one. We have not been successful in working around that, but do you think we don’t care about the folks in Bedford-Pines?

Over and over again, respondents expressed a desire to deal with the problem of Bedford Pines, but uncertainty as to how to proceed. Pat and Dennis West are upper class, and they have lived in the Old Fourth Ward for eight years. They are a professional, white couple in their fifties with no children. The West’s moved to the Old Fourth Ward from neighboring Virginia Highlands. Patricia West lists all the successful people who have come out of public housing including

Truett Cathy (founder of Chik-fil-A restaurants) and Elvis Presley, and she struggles to understand why Bedford Pines' residents all seem doomed.

In Dennis and Patricia West's utilization of the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood space, there are some areas they avoid. Bedford Pines is one of them. Some of their "knowledge" about which areas are unsafe for them occurred experientially. Some of it is perceived. Their ideas about safety have as much to do with class, as they do race and gender. Although the condominium complex in which they reside is full of people from a variety of countries, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, in many ways, the residents—white and non-white alike—of their condo are just like them—upper class, working professionals. This irony is not lost on the Wests who both recognize that within a one block radius of their building you can find people in abject poverty and dire need. Patricia observes:

We are quite aware that numerically we have more income, more education, and more resources than many other people in the neighborhood. That's a fact, and so if you're looking at a broad stretch of housing where folks are just getting by, we are different than those people. Socio-economically, no doubt about it, but we feel comfortable [here].

Perhaps the greatest evidence of their level of comfort in the neighborhood lies in their automobile. About the same time that they moved to the community eight years ago, the Wests purchased a new auto. Eight years later, the vehicle only has 32,000 miles on it.

The West's say they believe in using the resources of the neighborhood where they live.

Although they do some of their shopping online, they do a great deal of eating and socializing right in the Old Fourth Ward.

Neither Dennis nor Patricia West expresses great fear when walking through the neighborhood; however, both of them do use precautions. Over time, Patricia West has developed what she calls "theories" in order to help her decide how to act, interact, and react

when she is on the street. These “theories” are really guidelines for engagement on the street. The rules she has developed are about safety, but they are also about interaction. Patricia and Dennis West desire to interact with their neighbors, all of them. However, they want to do so safely. The theories tell her what to do in certain encounters on the street: cross the street, remain, make eye contact, or speak. These theories are shaped and molded by a delicate combination of formal education on urban issues and experience. Experientially, Patricia West learned that “some comments don’t warrant a response.” At other times, a careful response can diffuse what might be a bad situation. Part of Patricia’s decision about what to do is predicated on the other individual’s manner of dress:

I mean there are poor people who are walking the streets of Ireland who are disenfranchised and upset; they look like everybody else, but they are in a different class. So where I’m going with this is that we encounter young people in this neighborhood who are horribly disenfranchised. I mean no one cares about them. They are angry, young black men in baggy pants and surly attitudes and foul language, who walk the streets of this neighborhood as they do every poor neighborhood in America, and they make me, no I think they make everyone uncomfortable. They make us uncomfortable, and they make educated upper middle class uncomfortable or middle class white people uncomfortable. So I will not go into Burger King on North Avenue because I don’t feel comfortable [there].

Dennis West expresses his feelings a little more benignly: “I feel like, not unsafe, it’s more uncomfortable, unwelcoming, obviously different.” The words Dennis and Patricia West use are different, but the sentiment is still the same: there are places in the Old Fourth Ward where they will not go. As upper middle class white residents, they simply feel that there are places they do not belong. Although the West’s are careful not to venture into social spaces where they perceive themselves as unwelcome, they are active members of the NPU and neighborhood association. Through membership in these groups they hear about the plight of their low income neighbors and want to help, albeit from a safe distance.

The residents of Bedford Pines are viewed by the Wests, Tony Simpson, and Melinda Galveston not only as in need of protection, but worthy of protection. Bedford Pines houses very young (most are under 21), black women. Most have little education and an average of about two children. Ms. Galveston has no children herself, but she believes the children and mothers in Bedford Pines both need and deserve societal protection.

Street People.

Across the socioeconomic spectrum, residents and business owners in the Old Fourth Ward view “street people” as an unavoidable annoyance. Even some of those who have been on the streets themselves express frustration with the practice of begging. Sterling Woods (discussed in more detail later in this chapter) is one such Old Fourth Ward resident. While Mr. Woods indicates he can empathize with the plight of many homeless residents of the neighborhood, he expresses disdain for those who beg for money.

Yeah, you got homeless people. They have the tendency to come and ask things of you that you may not feel that you’re just not out to do today. Everybody can survive, like I say, everybody. If you can go be a beggar, you [can] go to work...[I]t’s a job itself. Begging is a job. That [people begging] can like put a dampener on your day. Like you going on here and a guy 15 or 20 years younger than you, whatever, or either he’s a person that you know, able-bodied, sound mind, and they’re asking you for your money? I don’t think you’re going to feel too bad about that, and when you tell them no, and then they’ll say, ‘Huh? Don’t you have any change?’ ‘No, No mean no, okay?’

Ruby Everson believes the homeless have taken over Auburn Avenue, and she is none too happy about it.

Ms. Everson is an octogenarian, and she resided in the Old Fourth Ward for most of her life. She’s a longtime member of Wheat Street Baptist Church, which is located on Auburn Avenue. Ms. Everson was forced to move out of the community when the church made plans to refurbish the housing complex where she lived. As she surveys Auburn Avenue now, she says

most of the people on it look like vagrants, which was not the case in the Auburn Avenue she recalls.

Not everyone is bothered by street people in the community. Tiffany Hayes is a realtor, who works in a high rise condominium building overlooking Auburn Avenue. Ms. Hayes believes the street people give Auburn Avenue “flavor.” To Ms. Hayes, flavor is a form of authenticity. She says every urban space needs flavor. In the course of the last ten years, Ms. Hayes has lived or sold property in nearly half a dozen in-town Atlanta neighborhoods. A self described “change lady,” Ms. Hayes frequently gives money to street people; however, she has one rule. She refuses to open her purse to search for money; however, she will give it if asked.

I think it’s the southerner in me. I always say good morning, good afternoon. I just think that you should acknowledge people... I feel like people don’t acknowledge any one anymore, especially people who were on the street for whatever reason that is. Maybe they feel annoyed because they feel they’re going to ask them for something or whatever, but at least acknowledge that they’re human, and say no and pass by them.

Ms. Hayes’ refusal to go in her purse to search for money is a safety issue. She recognizes that some people may be looking to steal from her and that some who did not originally approach her with the intent of stealing may be moved to do so out of sheer opportunity.

Joshua Graham pastors a prominent black church in the Old Fourth Ward. Pastor Graham knows many of the street people by name. They call to him as he walks through the community. Pastor Graham also knows their stories. Some of the tales are more sympathetic than others, but Graham believes all the street people are “God’s children.” Pastor Graham wants to minimize displacement in the neighborhood; he views this as a social justice issue. Pastor Graham recognizes that many of the Old Fourth Ward’s residents and business owners would like to rid the area of the street people, so he utilizes the church to speak to the needs of

the disadvantaged population. Some of the most disadvantaged residents of the Old Fourth Ward are readily identifiable through means like dress.

Dress: The Commodification of Class (or Presentation of Self in Everyday Life).

Class standing is communicated in a number of ways, so dress is often used as a proxy to determine class standing. Despite spending a lot of time on the street, Kevin Washington takes care to make sure he dresses well. In doing this, he is deliberately attempting to avoid marking himself as overtly homeless. In spite of his efforts to present himself in a way that does not identify his homeless status, Washington has been stopped by the police from time to time. Oftentimes they pat him down to see if he has drugs. It bothers him when they stop him, but he does not believe there is anything he can do about it. Washington says the community in general is not very welcoming to people like him. Often, when he enters local business establishments looking for work, people “act like they are scared” of him. Here, Washington draws a distinction. He says that the black owned businesses do not tend to treat him that way. In fact, some of the local black restaurants even allow him to work in their kitchens from time to time. Conversely, he has been kicked out of several businesses that are not owned by blacks.

While Kevin Washington dresses up to garner respect in the community, Councilman Martin has learned that dressing down can have the same impact. He says:

There are a lot of parts in various cities that have been lost in the glamour, the shimmer, the shine, and for various other ethnic groups or demographic groups here you may have that. But the core and the base [here] is really real. It’s really real. Although I wear suits every day, [on] any given day at any given time you might see me dressed down, and I still deliver the service that I’m supposed to deliver, [the same] that I would deliver out in a suit, and the same is true for everyone else here. And sometimes if you’re not without the suit, you don’t garner the same level of respect and trust.

His comments suggest that one's appearance can be used to place others at ease or induce discomfort. Councilman Martin's comments also suggest that dressing down can help upper class African Americans to posit an authentic black racial identity in the neighborhood.

Dress can prove a very uncertain proxy for social class. Consider Melinda Galveston's comments:

I'd consider it [Old Fourth Ward] as one of the best neighborhoods, but you know what, public opinion will probably call things because of what they think they see on Boulevard. Plus, not to be racist, but the youth culture with the baggy pants and the cap and all of that, everybody wears that. If you're dark skinned and you have that on ... people make a lot of assumptions about you...People make a lot of assumptions...People make a whole lot of assumptions, and some of what they see is not drug dealers, but they look the same. They just see the kids that don't have anywhere else to be but outside on the streets because of the hood.

These days, a lot of college students can be found on Auburn Avenue as well. This is due, in part, to the expansion of Georgia State University. Georgia State, termed by one respondent as "the university that ate Atlanta," is a downtown, urban university. The university built a new dormitory in the nearby Old Fourth Ward community, and they have acquired additional property in the neighborhood. As Melinda notes, many of the young college students dress in a manner which residents previously associated with the drug dealers in the area.

Class not only matters in the Old Fourth Ward, it gets expressed in a number of spoken and unspoken ways. Individuals seem to feel the need to mark themselves as a part of a distinct group or to distinguish themselves from less desirable group affiliations. In so doing they claim membership and allegiance not only to the various social groups or classes they might occupy, but they also legitimate their claims to the neighborhood itself.

Gender

Overt gender discussions are most noticeable by their absence in the neighborhood. In my discussions with residents, business owners, stakeholders in the area, respondents were more

apt to bring up issues of race and class than gender. In analyzing this absence, I conclude that inside the “matrix of domination” which Collins (2000) discusses, gender is perceived by the residents of this black gentrifying neighborhood as a lesser axis of discrimination than either race or class.⁵⁷ This belief is typified in the following examples from my interviews. As discussed, Bedford Pines is a housing project populated by young (most are under 21), black mothers. In discussions about Bedford Pines, there is a recognition among respondents that multiple forces or sources of oppression work together to disadvantage the residents of that housing project; however, only race, class, and age, not gender, are commonly mentioned by respondents as sources of oppression.⁵⁸ Similarly, discussions about sexuality, an issue directly related to gender, are often secondary to discussions about class and often race. Tony Miller is an upper class African American resident of the Old Fourth Ward. Earlier, Mr. Miller commented about the range of racial, ethnic, and sexual orientations represented among his neighbors. In the same discourse he goes on to discuss the only group he would like to be rid of. He says:

There are obvious drug deals and dealers in the neighborhood. I used to tease people and say they were running a horizontal corporation. You can go out there [and see]. They have shift changes. They have uniforms. They have regimen. Me and my neighbors talk about it all the time. You know who the drug dealers are. You watch them do their business. And that’s one thing that frustrates us is that if we know all of this, then why can’t the police stop it?

Tony Miller is less bothered by the sexual orientation of his neighbors than he is by their means of employment. Old Fourth Ward resident Johnetta Hope believes that she can be open with those in the community about her sexual orientation. She says:

I don’t have to hide it [that I am a lesbian]. I am very open about that. There are a number of couples in the neighborhood. I know that there are people that feel that gays and lesbians are a problem, especially when gay men gay white men

⁵⁷ Collins describes how inside the matrix, inequality functions on three different: personal/individual, group, institutional/societal.

⁵⁸ Bedford Pines is a privately owned housing project which does not run out of housing credits until 2015, so despite the Atlanta Housing Authority’s decision to raise all the public housing projects in Atlanta, it still stands.

come into a neighborhood and change things. And that's an issue, well for some that's an issue.

Ms. Hope's comments hint at a gender issue; however, her comments primarily illustrate that while sexual orientation is a problem for some in the neighborhood, this issue is aggravated when the individuals involved are white. As a result of these findings, the discussion of gender contained in this section is largely extrapolated from the two areas where respondents more directly touch upon gender related issues.

In black gentrifying neighborhoods like the Old Fourth Ward, discussions of gendered experiences and gendered space seem inextricably tied to issues of safety and perceptions of crime. The discussion, however, is more complex than just an analysis of male and female perspectives. Issues of age, upbringing, race, and even class further complicate the analysis. Survival requires what Elijah Anderson terms a "code of the streets."

The Rules of Engagement

Men and women utilize largely the same rules of engagement for navigating the neighborhood space. Most of the people I interviewed had "Rules of Engagement" about interacting in the neighborhood. Joshua Hill is a relative newcomer to the Old Fourth Ward. A three year resident of the area, he views the area as synonymous with progress and opportunity, which is precisely why Mr. Hill located there. Despite negative experiences, this 46 year old low income black man views both his future and the future of the neighborhood with extreme optimism. He resides in a low income building on Edgewood Avenue and runs a push cart business from which he sells snacks, candy, soda, and water to local residents. Mr. Hill calls his business a marketing venture. He carries flyers of local stores and events with him as he traverses the neighborhood and passes them out to people. The flyers litter his cart. Most of Mr. Hill's customers are homeless; however, he feels tied to all the residents of the area – rich, poor,

and those in the middle. He anticipates that one day most of his income will come from his marketing enterprises and not the sale of candies and the like.

Business is not always good. Sometimes Joshua Hill stops at the local soup lines for help himself. Sometimes he works in the lines. Mr. Hill has been robbed once, and the experience taught him a few things. First, Mr. Hill learned to avoid the section of the Old Fourth Ward where he was robbed. The section sits in a part of town that houses a local homeless shelter. Joshua Hill perceives this area as dangerous. Second, Mr. Hill learned to always carry something on his cart to give away. He even made a sign: "Free water if you have a cup." Mr. Hill purchases dollar trays of cookies from the store and refills a gallon jug with tap water to carry with them throughout the neighborhood. He sets forth his logic.

So a lot of times if a person see you giving something-- someone is givin' something. You gotta be an evil person to harm or take something away from somebody that's already givin' you something... So people are responding because they appreciate it.

There are a lot of evil people out there, but Hill believes these precautions ameliorate his chances of becoming a victim again.

There is one other precaution Hill takes in the neighborhood. This weapon he wields is perhaps the most disarming of all. It is a smile. According to Hill, you should always smile and never frown. "A frown," he says, "tells people you think you are better than they are, and that can get you hurt."

Tiffany Hayes also finds merit in eye contact. Ms. Hayes says, "I try to at least have eye contact with people;" beyond eye contact, Hayes takes her cues from the other person: If they nod, I nod. If they say 'hello,' I say 'hello.' One of the main reasons Hayes feels comfortable in the Old Fourth Ward is she does not take chances. She parks in areas that are well lit and where other people are parking. She does not go down dark streets. Additionally, from her time

waiting tables, she's learned to constantly scan her environment and know what is going on all around her.

Movement is an important tool, a defensive weapon of sorts. Many respondents discussed the wealth of information which is communicated through a person's stride. More than gender or even race, stride often marks an individual as an outsider in the community, and outsiders are marked as easy targets. Outsiders are often hit up for change or victimized in other ways. A quick and purposeful stride shows you know where you are going and you belong. Moving targets are more difficult to catch. Kevin Washington keeps on the move all the time. That way, he says, "I don't get mixed up with all that trouble." Years on the street taught him to see trouble when it's coming. When trouble comes, Washington goes the other way. Some of his other rules for living on the street include of the following:

Like, well, I know if I'm down this block, and I see a bunch of crowds shucking and jivin' and lookin' like they up to no good, I just go the other way. .. Back in the day I used to be involved in stuff. I know what the deal is when I see someone run across the street and run up to someone. I know what they doin'. Dealin' and doin' drugs and that different type stuff, and I've been that route. That's how I know. So I can spot it a mile away. So keep yourself straight. Go the other way.

Only those who know the neighborhood have the option to "go the other way." By changing course, those who are unfamiliar with the area could possibly be placing themselves in more danger. This theme is echoed by others.

Daniel Tepee, a white resident of the area, agrees. As Mr. Tepee walks through the community, he always speaks to people. Part of this is simply his nature, part of it is amusement. Even after a decade in the community, Daniel Tepee believes it still surprises some people that a white man walking through the community makes eye contact and speaks to people. He likes to

walk early in the day and often encounters mothers walking their children to school. Things change at night.

I mean like I said, I know a lot of people here, but if it's in this community you know after dark you think more about distance and space. I think more about it if someone passes me and they turn around. I think there are things you can do to increase your probability of a safe experience. And I kind of practice those things no matter where I go.

Dan, Patricia, and Dennis are all white residents of the community; however, their concern about darkness and night is shared by many. The rules of engagement change at night.

In the Still of the Night.

Men and women share very similar views of the neighborhood space, especially at night. Among interviewees, neither group views the neighborhood space as inherently dangerous. Instead, danger is contextual in nature. More often than not, women are careful to explain their lack of fear in the community by framing it in terms of their personal histories, which often provide a rationale for their lack of fear.

There is inherent potential for danger in dark spaces. Such spaces provide cover, isolation, and limited vision. The potential for danger is often proffered by men and women as a reason to avoid certain areas of the community. Tiffany Hayes does not live in the area, but she spends a great deal of time frequenting various restaurants, bars, and clubs in the community. She also works in the area. Since moving to Atlanta some eight years ago, Hayes has lived in a number of areas from the upscale neighboring Virginia Highlands to “East Atlanta before it was East Atlanta.” Hayes employs the same precautions and rules when she is walking through the streets of the Old Fourth Ward as she does in the upscale Virginia Highlands neighborhood: she avoids smaller, dark streets saying, “darker streets are potentially unsafe.” Many Old Fourth

Ward residents' concerns about dark spaces extend beyond concern for themselves to concerns for their families, especially young children and female family members.

Family Matters.

Elizabeth Battle's bungalow style single family home sits on a quiet street in the Old Fourth Ward; however, just up the street and around the corner is one of the busiest and most crime ridden areas in the community. According to this resident, the area has been a hotbed for crime during the almost thirty years of Elizabeth Battle's tenure in the community. A neighboring street provides a gateway to anywhere in the greater Atlanta metropolitan area, so it is heavily traveled. The street also houses a local hospital and the Bedford Pines housing project. Despite the fact that she lives in close proximity to what many would consider a dangerous area, Elizabeth Battle says she has never been afraid. This is where she lives. Ms. Battle says, you cannot be afraid if you've made a conscious and deliberate decision to live in the inner city.

Residents often express concern for the safety of their children, especially young children, irrespective of their gender. Elizabeth falls into this category. Although Elizabeth did not fear for her own safety, her daughter was another matter. Elizabeth's daughter was a pretty girl. When she became a teenager, Elizabeth had many concerns for her daughter, but she stresses that these are "not fears." Knowledge of the community and its residents were Elizabeth's armor. Not only does Elizabeth Battle make it a point to know the people in her community, but her remarks indicate she makes a concerted effort to be known as well. When Ms Battle's daughter was growing up, Elizabeth Battle walked around the community and showed a picture of her daughter to the local drug dealers. Elizabeth told them this was her child and not to bother her. A tacit respect developed between the drug dealers and this "crazy woman" who had the audacity to approach them.

Perspective influences respondents' perceptions of the neighborhood. Aisha Holder seldom speaks about being afraid while in the Old Fourth Ward. She says this is because she "grew up in New York City." From Mrs. Holder's early teens, there was no place in the city that she and a group of her girl friends would not go. She never felt uncomfortable any place in New York City, and she does not feel uncomfortable any place in the Old Fourth Ward. According to Mrs. Holder, "home should be a place where people feel comfortable." Heather Henry agrees. Her uncle introduced her to the community (he was a builder), and he taught her to never be afraid when in the neighborhood. Ms. Henry resides in a live/work space on Edgewood Avenue. In the neighborhood, she is affectionately known by some of the street people as "the crazy lady." Her bold, confrontational approach earned her this label. Ms. Henry became a homeowner just two years ago, but she has lived and sold real estate in the area for almost fifteen years. According to Ms. Henry, she lived and worked in the area at a time when you "had to ride around with a gun in your car." Nothing about the Old Fourth Ward community that exists today frightens her.

Heather Henry runs a real estate business from her home. She is also a flight attendant. A single, black woman in her late thirties, Ms. Henry is attractive and physically fit. She is known as the crazy lady because she has been known to sanction people for behaviors she considers inappropriate. Heather Henry has been known to yell "be quiet" or "move it along, don't you know people live here?" from her balcony. On one occasion, she even donned a robe and walked to a nearby pub to tell them to shut things down when the music persisted after hours. Ms. Henry also walks from the local train station in the wee hours of the morning trailing her carry-on bag if she has a late flight. As a single woman living alone with no children, her concerns are only for her own safety and not that of others, so she is willing to take more risks.

Perception Matters.

Like Heather Henry, Rochelle Ferrer is a single, attractive black woman who walks without fear in the community. Despite Rochelle's level of comfort in the community, many of her friends and family were concerned when she decided to move to this inner city community. Rochelle recalls her mother saying "you stay in the ghetto." Ironically, Rochelle recalls spending many of her summers in the Cabrini Green housing project in Chicago. Rochelle's mother sent Rochelle there to spend the summer with her maternal cousins. Upon reflection, Rochelle now realizes that her Chicago relatives lived in what came to be one of the worst and most notorious public housing projects in the nation. Rochelle's mother had no fear for sending her to spend the summer in Chicago, and yet her mother's perception of the Old Fourth Ward was that it was a dangerous place.

When Rochelle Ferrer first moved into the neighborhood, it was her mother who expressed great fear for her. Her mother expressly referred to Ms. Ferrer's Old Fourth Ward neighborhood as "the ghetto." Friends were no better. Ms. Ferrer laughingly recounts the early days. Oftentimes, when friends would come by to pick her up, they would lock their doors when they got into her neighborhood. According to Ms. Ferrer, the irony is that this act alone put them at more risk than just driving through the neighborhood. When riding through the neighborhood, she says, "People lock their windows and doors and don't nobody really want you."⁵⁹

Some of the cousins Ms. Ferrer lived with during her summers in Chicago were involved in gang related activities, but in the Chicago neighborhood that she visited, Rochelle was always treated with respect. Respect is what Rochelle Ferrer always gives when she's walking through

⁵⁹I observed this in my field visits. Often, visitors to the neighborhood will instinctively clutch a purse tighter when approaching a group or individual they perceive as dangerous. This act often incites group members. On one occasion an irritated individual yelled, "What? You think somebody want you? Ain't nobody thinking 'bout you."

the Old Fourth Ward. Simple things can show respect. Ms. Ferrer never crosses the street when she sees a group of “guys,” she simply says “excuse me” and walks through them. Ms. Ferrer believes that the act of walking through and not around the group of men signals that she views them as gentlemen and not animals. In her experience, when black men feel treated this way (as animals), they may often act with bravado or some other sort of ignorance in order to combat the affront. Another one of her rules is to avoid dark places. This avoidance refers more to exterior lighting than it does time of day.

Like many of the other respondents, Sterling Woods says he does not have fear in the neighborhood; but his words suggest the contrary. Mr. Woods says:

It's no good to live somewhere and be afraid. I'm not afraid living here because I understand what I face, what I have to face every morning. I get up, I know not to walk out the door, just... Well I know to walk out the door with prayer and caution.

According to Mr. Woods, a lot of crime victims attract danger and harm to themselves through their body language. There are only a few areas in the Old Fourth Ward where Mr. Woods does not feel safe. In fact, he will go almost anywhere in the community; however at certain times there are areas he says you just stay away from. These are areas at night where young men congregate. When asked why, Mr. Woods replied:

Because you got a lot of youngsters. Got a lot. Also a lot of people that just don't care for themselves and nobody else. You got a great deal of people they really get living on the street. Okay, so they don't have nothing to lose.

He terms his behavior “cautious,” but his actions do sound a little like fear. Sterling Woods feels he has a future worth protecting. Although he only has a 10th grade education, he's optimistic about the future. He says alcohol and cigarettes robbed him of his health, but expresses pride at the fact that he has a son who graduated from Emory University and is now attending medical school in Augusta, Georgia. Woods paints houses for a living. He is a 25 year resident of the

Old Fourth Ward. He has been in business for a number of years, but prior to 2006 he experienced a hand to mouth existence. Now, he does not worry about where his next job will come. The current financial condition has caused people to decide to clean up their houses and between redevelopment efforts in the community, people moving into the community, and people fixing up their property, he has not had to worry about steady work.

Randall Evans lives in Section 8 housing in the Old Fourth Ward. Mr. Evans has resided there for almost three years. He hopes to leave as soon as he is successful in obtaining disability benefits. Randall Evans expresses “no fear” when walking through the neighborhood. He says, “I was a marine. I can go anywhere.” Mr. Evans seems to believe his own words. He echoes these words with strong conviction. If his comments are true, they are perhaps, unwise. Mr. Evans seems oblivious to the fact that he is in his late fifties and on disability. While Mr. Evans says he believes that he can go anywhere in the Old Fourth Ward, his activities indicate otherwise.

Mr. Evans exercises many precautions. He knows the areas that are prone to drugs, and he stays away from those. He tries to avoid going out late at night. Mr. Evans attends church in the Old Fourth Ward, and he sings in the choir. Sometimes church activities keep him out at night. On such occasions, he tries to get a ride as often as possible. The last place he wants to be is alone, at night, walking the streets of the Old Fourth Ward. Mr. Evans says he believes “God will protect” him, but he uses caution anyway. He calls it “wisdom.” The Bible advises that wisdom is the principle thing. Its readers are advised to “get wisdom and with all thy getting get understanding.” Other respondents, including Rochelle and Melinda discuss the protection of God being upon them as they interact in the neighborhood.

Neither men nor women in the community express stated fear of the area; however, their comments evidence the employment of a complex set of rules and behaviors each uses to safely navigate the neighborhood space. Sometimes, respondents' claims of having no fear are called into question by their practices or even outright contradicted by other statements. Ironically, women, especially those who spent their formative years in large metropolitan cities, express fewer concerns about navigating the neighborhood safely.

Elizabeth Battle, a local neighborhood activist discussed earlier, says now the concern in the community is not white racism. Instead, "we have to worry about [people] being racist and disrespectful to your own race." In this respect, as she sees it, the biggest offenders in the community are the criminals, especially the drug dealers, many of whom are young African American men.

Petty crimes abound in the neighborhood. Perceptions of safety and likelihood of victimization seem to be influenced more by race than gender. Rochelle Ferrer is an attractive, middle class black woman in her early forties. She has resided in the Old Fourth Ward for about five years. Ms. Ferrer considers the neighborhood safe, but she suggests some of the new people moving in might not, especially those who are unfamiliar with the area.

Familiarity can breed a sort of comfort. Rochelle Ferrer enjoys walking in the neighborhood. She seldom feels uncomfortable or out of place; however she does express concern in going into dark places. When she first moved to the community she felt comfortable enough to go out at night and walk alone under a bridge. Ms. Ferrer does not do that anymore. She says she is not afraid, but the unpleasant sights and smells of what she encountered cured her of her late night walking penchant:

One time I did go down the steps under the bridge going to Cabbagetown going toward Inman Park, and I saw a man, and he was peeing, and it was smelling bad, but he said, in his crazy way, 'hello.'

His "crazy way," involved tipping his penis in a wave like motion. Even in the mist of this incident, Ms. Ferrer indicates no fear. Because Rochelle Ferrer grew up with "four brothers...and a lot of uncles," she indicates the sight of a penis did not put her on edge. She says, "I really didn't have that fear that a prissy girl would." This is the only indication she gives of what constitutes a "prissy girl."

Ms. Ferrer's concerns were ameliorated because the man was like her. He was "like family." Her comments indicate that upbringing has a lot to do with her level of comfort with all elements in the community. Her paternal uncles used to drink; they would drink outside and work on cars, and their hands would be dirty after a hard day's work. The urinating man did not frighten her because "there were people like this in our family." Rochelle says, "I'm not scared of them. I know them. They're like family to me." Even so, after that incident, she discontinued walking alone late at night.

Age Matters: Old Women and Young Women Alike

The Old Fourth Ward is rich in social, historical, and cultural resources, but one of its greatest strengths has to be its people. An interesting gender legacy of the area revealed in my interviews is that respondents' tales of the neighborhood's past were filled with numerous references to specific men (like Daddy King, Martin Luther King Jr., Alonzo Herndon, John Wesley Dobbs, and Maynard Jackson) and countless stories of the sacrifices and efforts of scores of nameless women. A belief widely held by interview participants is that it is the women of the Old Fourth Ward community who have sustained the area. This legacy is not lost or forgotten. Strong, black women resided in the community both during and since the time of King. Today,

the future of the Old Fourth Ward is still in the hands of the community's women—young and old—many of whom are raising children and grandchildren who will be the area's next generation.

Daniel Tepee reveres both the Old Fourth Ward community and the old, black women who remained there during its most tumultuous period. A number of years ago, Mr. Tepee served as interim Executive Director of a major neighborhood development association in the community. During that time, he learned more about the history of the community. He says that prior to the neighborhood having a reliable police force, the old women of the neighborhood policed the area. Mr. Tepee believes the women of the community saved the Old Fourth Ward:

But then when you go back up and you know what you had here was not really right. It was an African American neighborhood, so when drugs and things got bad it was basically economic flight. Anybody that had the financial means to leave the community left. And what happened was the people who didn't have the resources to move just simply didn't. And they started digging in their heels and started changing things, and all um a lot of those folks were women. Old, mean black women.

As Mr. Tepee retells this story, a sparkle is noted in his eye. It is clear that there is no malice in his words. Daniel Tepee, a middle class, white, male, business owner, and Old Fourth Ward resident has nothing but respect for these “old, mean black women” he describes. These are the same old women that Percy and Aisha Holder fell in love with when they toured the neighborhood in search of a home. As a white man, Daniel Tepee calls the women “old, mean black women” however, the Holders, an African American couple, view them as grandmotherly.

Daniel Tepee's belief (that black women, specifically “mean, old black women” saved the Old Fourth Ward) is mentioned in only a handful of other interviews; however, although Daniel Tepee's belief is not widely articulated in the community, it may, nevertheless, be widely held. In “Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousnesses: The Context of Black Feminist

Ideology,” King (1988:54) argues that black women have played a central role in the maintenance of black existence:

Black women often held central and powerful leadership roles within the black community and within its liberation politics. We founded schools, operated social welfare services, sustained churches, organized collective work groups and unions, and even established banks and commercial enterprises. That is, we were the backbone of racial uplift, and we also played critical roles in the struggle for racial justice. Harriet Tubman led slaves to freedom on the Underground Railroad; Ida B. Wells Barnett led the crusade against lynching; Fannie Lou Hamer and Ella Baker were guiding political spirits of the southern black efforts that gave birth to SNCC and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party; [and] the “simple” act of Rosa Parks catapulted Martin Luther King to national prominence.

King’s comments suggest that black women have been saving communities like the Old Fourth Ward throughout their existence in America. This belief in the ability of black women to stoically and consistently bear the burdens of the black nation, nurture and protect the young, and preserve and maintain something for the future is at the core of black, female identity. As a racial outsider, Mr. Tepee may be misreading the strength and resolve of these old, black women as meanness.

Elizabeth Battle has the same resolve now that she possessed almost thirty years ago when she moved into the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood. Then, she was a young mother; now she is a grandmother. In her youth, Elizabeth Battle was a feisty member of the community. So too were Viola Washington and Ruby Everson. The passage of time has done nothing to change this. Almost thirty years later, Elizabeth Battle is still as bold as ever. The drug dealers are still on the same corner around the block from her home. These are not the same drug dealers Elizabeth warned to stay away from her daughter. The new crop of drug dealers is different, yet Elizabeth approaches them with her same signature audacity. In one conversation, she said, “I’m cuckoo?...You the one poisoning your own folks.” Not many people in the community, male or female, have the gall to approach the drug dealers. Obviously, Elizabeth Battle sees a

commonality between the drug pushers and some of the people to which they sell. Battle appeals to them by saying, “you...poisoning your own folks.” It is her belief that that racial connection should mean something to the dealers. While the dealers do not stop selling, it is, perhaps, because of Battle’s age and the fact that she is a woman that she is able to dialogue with them in this way. It is unlikely that they would permit such public rebuke from a racial outsider, a young racial insider, or a man.

Many older, long term residents of the neighborhood, such as Viola Washington, lament what they perceive as an increasing lack of respect for the community’s legacy and their contributions. Some of the people in the community have not changed, but times have definitely changed. Oldtimers like Ms. Washington recall the vibrant, vertically integrated neighborhood that “used to” exist. Some only have memories of the decaying neighborhood that remained after many of its middle class residents left in the wake of desegregation and various urban renewal projects. These fears are hard to combat, even in the midst of obvious revitalization. Sometimes Viola Washington doesn’t feel respected in the community. She is old now. An octogenarian and a grey haired senator (an honorary title given to a select few, this group recognized in Washington, D.C. and called upon to contribute/advise on legislation impacting seniors); however, in our own neighborhood that she labored hard for, she often feels without honor. Viola Washington says:

The new people in the community, black and white, they have more education.
They think they’re the only ones who know how to transact and get things done,
but I know. I know.

Despite a record of being a very accomplished community activist, Ms. Washington feels that she receives no esteem or respect from upper class members of the neighborhood--both black

and white. Ironically, Washington says, “[the drug dealers] they speak to me quicker than the upper class.” In so doing, they show her an esteem that the educated populous does not.

In the black community, the instilling of values was, historically, a community affair. Neighbors were permitted to sanction and sometimes even punish children who misbehaved. Some of the residents still try to instill these values. One day Rochelle Ferrer and her twenty something daughter were waiting at the MARTA station to catch a train. When the doors opened, a young black man pushed past them to get on the train first. Ms. Ferrer politely confronted the young man and told him that he should wait and let older people walk on the train before getting on himself. The young man balked at her comment, but his companion, also young and black, said, “You gotta be respectful; she respect you; you respect her.” Rochelle echoes this attitude. Her belief is that most people in the community, regardless of their socioeconomic status or color, will show respect to you if you respect them, but what constitutes respect may vary by factors like race, gender, socio economic status, and even age.

Conclusion

What kind of place is Atlanta’s Old Fourth Ward neighborhood? To quote one respondent, “It ain’t Mr. Rogers’ neighborhood.” In the last 30 years, the once densely populated in-town Atlanta neighborhood has undergone a number of demographic shifts including the exodus of the black middle class, disinvestment and economic peril, the return of the black middle class, and the rising presence of racial outsiders in the community. However, these changes have not tainted the area’s public perception as a black community. Both the identity of the neighborhood and its residents seems inextricably tied to the public perception that the area is a black community.

Although the neighborhood is thought of as a black space, there is a discernable white and Latino presence in the area. In fact, I found more racial/ethnic diversity in this black gentrifying neighborhood than has been highlighted in previous black gentrification literature. As noted earlier, the black experience in America is not a monolithic one; therefore, a great deal of the literature concentrates on intra-racial experiences in black gentrifying neighborhoods (Hyra 2008, 2006; Boyd 2005, 2000). When inter-racial diversity is noted in the previous research, it often focuses on the black/ white dichotomy (Taylor 2002, Jackson 2002). This researcher finds more diversity present in the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood than previous literature suggests. This is notable because, despite this diversity and a significant presence by “racial others,” residents still hold staunchly to the view that the neighborhood is a “black area.” This evidences that the racial identity and even authenticity of the community as “black” does not come from numbers alone. Instead, residents look to the area’s history, businesses (current and past), and social institution’s as significant markers of its identity.

The Old Fourth Ward is a neighborhood in transition. The community is in the midst of redevelopment discussions about its future, yet many of those plans looks to its past (Inwood 2009a, 2009b). The area has a glorious history which should be celebrated, but in light of social, cultural, economic, and historic changes in society, it cannot be recreated. Still, a long standing tradition of neighboring is present in the area, but attitudes about neighboring seem to be shifting. Oldtimers recall “rent parties,” borrowed cups of sugar, and looking out for each other’s children. New forms of neighboring such as neighborhood clean ups, block parties, and neighborhood organization membership--are often less involved and resented by some oldtimers in the neighborhood. Still, I find that neighboring activities, especially informal neighboring

activities which do not require formal group membership, have great potential to obviate conflict in gentrifying black neighborhoods.

The Old Fourth Ward neighborhood is home to many people; some are newcomers to the area, and others are oldtimers. The residents, stakeholders, and business owners interviewed often craft narratives and interpret their own personal histories in a light that uniquely ties them to the community. Most respondents do not suggest that their belonging to the area means that others do not; rather, they suggest that there should be room for more at the table. In Langston Hughes' classic poem "I too," the writer simply wants a place at the table. Hughes writes: "Tomorrow I'll be at the table when company comes." For now, the various racial and ethnic groups, classes, and genders who call the Old Fourth Ward home seem content with a place at the table, but soon that debate may shift to a discussion of who sits at the head of the table. After all, it is a place fit for a King.

CHAPTER 5

CREATING COMMUNITY: FOR THE GOOD OF THE WEST END

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to give the reader an overview of what kind of place the West End is. The issue of housing vacancies and mortgage fraud is much more prevalent in this neighborhood than in the Old Fourth Ward (2007 Mortgage Fraud Report, Bennett 2008, 2009). In recent years, the West End neighborhood has seen a resurgence of sorts; however, in order to understand this revival, it is important to recount the area's recent past.

Like a number of U.S. neighborhoods, the West End has been plagued by mortgage fraud, foreclosure, and abandonment.⁶⁰ Fannie Mae, the largest mortgage investor in the United States, publishes several mortgage fraud updates each year. A summary of Fannie Mae's findings from loan reviews completed through January 2009 notes that among 2007-2008 loan originations, the 303 zip code prefix (in which the West End is located) ranked second in the nation for loan misrepresentations involving the omission of key facts about the property or misrepresentation of comparables.⁶¹ Because fraudulent mortgages often end up in foreclosure, mortgage fraud has the potential to adversely impact neighborhood property values for a number of years to come.

⁶⁰ Mortgage fraud is broadly defined to include any of a number of misrepresentations including misrepresentations regarding i) credit or credit history; ii) Social Security Number; iii) liabilities; iv) assets; v) income; vi) occupancy; or vi) appraisal.

⁶¹ According to Saxon (2009), from 2001 to 2005, the state of "Georgia ranked #1 in mortgage fraud, both prime and subprime" four years out of five. In 2006 and 2007, Georgia's national ranking in mortgage fraud improved to fourth and sixth, respectively (Saxon 2009, slide 13). However, in spite of recent improvements in Georgia's national position with respect to mortgage fraud, the West End remains in a precarious position.

It is agreed that mortgage fraud has the potential to decimate neighborhoods like the West End. In 2004, Chris Swecker, former FBI Assistant Director, Criminal Investigative Division, made these remarks to Congress:

The potential impact of mortgage fraud on financial institutions and the stock market is clear. If fraudulent practices become systemic within the mortgage industry and mortgage fraud is allowed to become unrestrained, it will ultimately place financial institutions at risk and have adverse effects on the stock market.

In retrospect, Swecker's words seem prophetic. A High Cost Loan Map (2008) created by the City of Atlanta in order to identify neighborhoods which might benefit from funds provided through the federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) shows that over 61% of all loans in the West End are financed by subprime lenders. The large percentage of subprime loans in the area is disturbing in light of Saxon's (2009, slide 19) assertions that "one thing the areas considered to have high occurrences of mortgage fraud have in common with each other is the amount of loans financed by subprime lenders...[another is] these areas are where the highest rates of foreclosures and fraud are recorded."

Home values and home starts in metropolitan Atlanta were on a steady increase from 2001 to 2005; however, in 2006, they began to decline (Saxon 2009). A May 12, 2008, *Atlanta Journal Constitution* article describes a "boggling" city-wide drop in housing values, and it reports "the problems are pronounced in areas like West End, Lakewood, and Vine City" (Bennett 2008). In fact, from 2007 to 2008, the West End neighborhood saw a precipitous decline in median home prices (Atlanta Home Sales Report 2008). Combined new sales and existing home sales for the 30310 zip code area where the West End is located dropped from a

median price of \$86,000 in 2007 to \$36,000 in 2008 (Atlanta Home Sales Report 2008). This drop in median home price for the area represents a decline of 58.89%.⁶²

The decline in home values in the metropolitan Atlanta area is complex; however, there is general agreement that a widespread mortgage fraud scheme involving a number of homes in the West End contributed to decline in the West End neighborhood (Swartz 2008; Department of Justice 2007, 2008). Court records indicate that from 2001 through 2002, a Georgia man named Kevin Wiggins and several other co-defendants (including an appraiser) conspired to purchase distressed properties in the West End, misrepresented the nature and extent of upgrades to the properties, sold the properties at inflated cost to unqualified straw purchasers, and walked away with the proceeds leaving the loans unpaid and the properties unimproved and unoccupied.⁶³ Wiggins' scheme affected as many as 80 properties in Atlanta's West End, and it is estimated that as much as 20% of the property in the West End lays vacant because of this scheme. The area has been so ravaged by mortgage fraud that it arguably has no place to go but up.

In the aftermath of mortgage fraud issues and the recent recession, the West End is seeking to rebuild itself. Rebirth is not new to the West End or its residents. The neighborhood survived Reconstruction. It survived white flight. It survived as one major retailer after another exited the West End Mall, and it survived bifurcation resulting from the placement of Interstate 20 through the neighborhood. Today, new residents are moving into the area, and old residents

⁶² According to the Atlanta Home Sales Report, only zip code 30353 posted a larger decline. Also located in Fulton County, zip code 30353 posted a 60.43% decline in the median home price of new and existing homes (from \$133,925 to \$53,000) during the same period. Adair Park, Adams Park, and Adamsville are included in this zip code.

⁶³ According to a Department of Justice Release dated July 29, 2008, "Wiggins was sentenced to 8 years, 4 months in federal prison."

are becoming more vigilant about their neighboring; this is due, in part, to the Wiggins case.⁶⁴ In light of this revival, some residents actually describe the West End as a phoenix rising.⁶⁵ The mythical phoenix is vigilant and hopeful, and it reflects a symbol long associated with Atlanta. Keenly aware of her surroundings, the phoenix can see into the distance. The bird is a symbol of hope and rebirth. Like the phoenix, the West End seeks to rise from the ashes. One resident believes resurgence is a certainty. He says:

It's weird. Mortgage fraud came in...it made all the bad properties easier to acquire. So it had its cleansing effect, you know? Here in the West End things will start over again...[in the past] there was... the white flight [and] things, so we started over in the community.

Over and over again, the area has been forced to recreate and reposition itself for the good of the community, and a number of the people I interviewed believe it will do so again.

Still, the West End is a fragile community, and this fragility creates interdependence among those who live and work there. This interdependence crosses demographic lines. Many interviewees describe a sense of interconnectedness among the people in the neighborhood evolving from a perception that they are in a boat together, and they either all sink or sail. Today, the neighborhood is overwhelmingly African American, but diversity does exist in the community in several forms: age diversity, limited racial diversity, and diversity among educational attainment levels. Economic diversity exists too, and there is also diversity with regard to forms of religious expression and diet.⁶⁶ Moreover, the West End is a popular area for bi- or multi-racial couples and families to live. Despite this diversity, in my interviews, West

⁶⁴ The Wiggins case was exposed through the efforts of West End residents. In a Department of Justice Press Release dated July 29, 2008, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Georgia David Nahmias said, "This case started with concerns from neighborhood activists, which led to a diligent FBI investigation that revealed a scheme using phony rehabs and straw borrowers to steal millions of dollars from mortgage lenders."

⁶⁵ Amina Charles, president of the neighborhood association, outlines the mission of her organization in such terms: "[our mission] is to make the West End the destination for Atlanta; to make it a Phoenix rising of sorts."

⁶⁶ The West End has a significant Muslim population and a large Christian population. The Shrine of the Black Madonna Church is located here as is a large Catholic Church. A Hebrew Israelite presence can also be found. In terms of diet, there are a number of vegetarians and vegans in the West End, too.

End respondents often emphasize the common bonds which exist among them and minimize diversity or conflict in what appears to be an attempt to maintain an already delicate balance. To be certain, these connections or bonds are present, and they are stressed and even stretched by respondents who share a belief that what is good for the community is personally good for them.

In this next section, I examine the multiple bases for and challenges to the formation of a spirit of community in the West End neighborhood; these include the residents' confrontations with and responses to crime, the role of front porches and home ownership, the impact of the mortgage crisis, efforts at neighborhood assistance, and quests to generate a shared vision of the community.

The Varied Bases of Community

An Urban Neighborhood Faces Challenges

Language can be used to construct meanings and identities of places (Tuan 1991). Page (2005:30) points out the communal nature of locations and notes that language can be used to both "construct" and "destroy" places. Therefore, the words that people use to describe an area are a form of place making. Sometimes, in the course of my interviews, people used terms to describe the area which seemed to be contradictory. The use of contradictory terms by respondents to describe their neighborhood may be a matter of disparately situated individuals perceiving the area differently. However, sometimes the terms seem to be an overt attempt by respondents to create a community of their choosing.

Like many urban spaces, the West End is riddled with inconsistencies. Some of those inconsistencies are revealed in the words and phrases that people use to describe it. One respondent calls the West End "a beautiful eyesore." Another labels it "peaceful and dangerous." A resident/business owner calls the community "drug infested and beautiful." Still

another resident/business owner describes the community at as full of “crack houses and beautiful houses.” For this reason, The West End is a community some residents label as “misunderstood” and full of “contradictions,” and “inconsistencies.”

Not everyone has an appreciation for living amidst dichotomy noted in the previous paragraph. Many newcomers to the West End are attracted by the benefits of in town living, but not all of them are adequately prepared for the down side of urban living. Realtor Faith Howard makes a conscious effort to inform her potential buyers of both sides of urban living. Mrs. Howard recognizes the contradictions this area holds; she views and presents the West End as peaceful and dangerous, beautiful and an eyesore, drug infested and beautiful, and full of crack houses and beautiful houses. In her time as a realtor, Mrs. Howard has discovered that some people can deal with this kind of breadth; some cannot, so Howard makes certain to communicate all the realities of living in the West End to her potential buyers. Some would call this practice counterproductive for someone who sells homes, but Mrs. Howard does not.

In Mrs. Howard’s experience, new residents who are not adequately informed about the community tend to become dissatisfied at the first sign of trouble, and they quickly move out of the neighborhood. Mrs. Howard is interested in building a base of residents who will remain in the West End for years to come. Those who can deal with this breadth of experiences are more likely to form bonds with the people in the community with whom they share social space.

Criminal activity is often associated with urban spaces, and perceptions about crime keep many people from locating to the neighborhood. Crime also drives some residents away. Six year resident Chris Ford comments on this response, saying:

I don’t think people are prepared for the expectations of urban living. And I think they just get, you know, frustrated and have different feelings about it. And they just weren’t prepared for it, so if it doesn’t meet their expectations, they, you know, they leave.

Mr. Ford's observation is based on the fact that crime has been a problem in the West End for a number of decades. In the early 1970s, the people of the West End community began to talk about the need for more police protection. Today, Mr. Ford and other residents and business owners voluntarily contribute funds to pay for private security patrol in the neighborhood. The private security detail patrols the whole neighborhood, not just the businesses and homes of those who participate. No resident or business owner is compelled to participate. According to Chris Ford, those who resent either the need for private security or the decision by the majority to those participating (paying for the service) to have security patrol the entire neighborhood (as opposed to only patrolling the homes of paying participants) do not tend to last long in the neighborhood. Mr. Ford and others who contribute to the policing effort view it as a community wide effort.

Yusef Moore has longevity in the community. His interracial family moved into the West End in the early sixties when he was just a boy. This qualifies him as an oldtimer. He recalls a transition of the community, which he says happened in the early eighties. Yusef Moore states:

In the eighties...A lot of people saw potential in renting. A lot of people started renting their property out, but they learned soon their renting causes problems because people didn't appreciate the home like the owners did, not the original owners.... A lot of these houses have apartments on the side that they're renting out, you know. But after people started buying these houses and renting these homes out; that's when the neighborhood really changed. That's when we started seeing more crime.

His comments attribute a rise in crime in the community to the increase in renters, which he indicates occurred during the same period in the early eighties. This account suggests that large scale crime did not exist in the community prior to the early eighties, a fact which other long term residents' accounts call into question. Yusef Moore's urban landscape has changed several

times during the course of his tenure in the community; however, he seems stuck recalling a community which the facts do not wholly support. For example, during the period he recalls, his own father was violently murdered around the corner from his home, and the street on which his family resides experienced a number of violent attacks on elderly women.

Front Porches and Front Porch People

The design of a neighborhood space can promote or discourage connections in the community. This is evidenced in the architecture of the neighborhood. Houses were built differently in the past. Many old Southern homes have generous front porches with ample space for people to sit and rock or linger. In a time before air conditioning, cable TV, and video games, people spent much more time together on spacious front porches catching the breeze and catching up on neighborhood gossip. The neighborhood's design promotes this form of encounter. The neighborhood design is not intentional as much as it is historic in nature. West End is a historic district. It received this designation in 1971 (National Register). The historic designation acts to protect and preserve some of the character of the community, including front porches. As a result, front porches abound in the community.

Some residents of the West End call it a front porch community. Chris Ford is one of those residents. According to Mr. Ford, suburbanites build back porches and erect fences so they do not have to interact with their neighbors. Front porch people invite interaction among their neighbors. Mr. Ford says:

This is an older community. So it's the front porch mentality. Before AC, everybody was on the front porch... So a lot of people who are only here a couple of years, they're back porch people, so they build privacy fences. And they come in and out through the back porch and never really say hello... It's out of character, just architecturally, it's out of character... The suburbs are back porch mentality; it's a matter of adjustment... Yeah. I mean it's, you know, you have your own little domain and, you know, you're not expected necessarily to interact

with a lot of people, but essentially it's [the West End community] set up to interact.

These interactions occur on the street, front porches, in parks, business establishments, and at the MARTA station. According to Mr. Ford, interaction fosters a sense of community.

Seven year resident Nigel Walters says the way the neighborhood is laid out gives him an appreciation for how things used to be.

I look at the West End basically as a window to history, so to speak. You know, just by looking at the architecture in this neighborhood, you kind of get a feeling for what it was back in earlier times, you know. At the same time, it's nice to see, I personally feel it's nice to see that there are some black people that are living in nice homes, in a quiet environment, that's just minutes away from the hustle and bustle and chaos, that's just, you know, a few blocks over, so to speak, and into the downtown area, you know.

Based upon the layout of the houses, Mr. Walters imagines how neighbors engaged with each other. He says some of those interactions persist today.

I observed the interactions Mr. Walters spoke of on numerous occasions. After one interview concluded, an interviewee walked me to my car. We talked while standing on the sidewalk. Another neighbor was on his porch, and the two began to converse. After exchanging pleasantries, the conversation quickly turned to a car on blocks in the street. The car had been there for weeks, and the two discussed what they or its owner should do about it. During another interview, parking was discussed. The interviewee told me about a parking area accessible to residents in the alley behind their home. When I asked to see the area, we went outside and encountered several neighbors. On a third such occasion, a neighbor saw an interviewee and me talking. She crossed the street to talk to us and began describing a "crazy white man around the corner who [was] at it again." After a short recounting of the "crazy white man's" most recent escapades (brandishing a gun to threaten a black man going through his garbage), they each decided the man was going to kill someone (or be killed) if his actions persisted. On the

occasion of each of these impromptu encounters, the individuals lingered beyond the time necessary for polite conversation and exchanged meaningful information about the community.

The infrastructure of the community forces many interactions, but recently, residents have begun to seek out increased contact with their neighbors. In addition to the architectural structure of the community, the subprime mortgage crisis and escalated instances of mortgage fraud have heightened levels of neighborhood interaction. Unfortunately, the financial crisis has also heightened a divide which has existed in the community for some time – the distinction between owners and renters.

Home Ownership

Potential tensions abound in gentrifying neighborhoods. Numerous gentrifying areas report racial conflicts among residents (Zukin 1987; Hyra 2006, 2008; Boyd 2008, 2005, 2000; Pattillo 2007, 1999). Gays and lesbians moving to gentrifying areas have also met resistance in some communities (Castells 1983).⁶⁷ However, in the West End, the great divide is not along racial or sexual lines. Instead, it is a largely class based struggle pitting homeowners against renters. The owners are the West End's most vocal and cohesive group. The local neighborhood association is comprised almost exclusively of home owners⁶⁸. The result is a more cohesive, readily identifiable class of owners and a fragmented class of renters.

It has been said that the West End must also find a way to embrace its short term residents. A negative perception of renters pervades. One resident's comments convey this.

Renters here in this area, it's like a temporary thing for them. [They] can be here one day, and somewhere else the next day. So [they] don't have to clean the yard. [Their attitude is] this ain't ours. We don't own it, so we don't have to take care

⁶⁷ Several in town Atlanta neighborhoods including Kirkwood, East Atlanta, and East Lake have experienced overt clashes between the mostly black residents of the community who resided there prior to gentrification and the new residents of the community. In the late 1990's, matters reached a boiling point in Kirkwood. A local pastor circulated a letter about what he termed "a white... homosexual and lesbian take-over" in the community.

⁶⁸ At one time in the organization's history, renters were excluded.

of it... Some, I don't wanna say all, they've gotten into this mentality that, okay we can do whatever we want and then we'll move. Tear the place up. It ain't mine....So that's the mentality of some renters in the area, and I say in the area, because it's not the case with people who rent houses in other areas.

This resident's comments illustrate her belief that West End renters have a different level of attachment to their homes than renters in other areas.

Ironically, a great deal of the housing stock in the West End is not owner occupied. According to the 2000 Census, there were 2439 total housing units in the West End, and only 495 of them (i.e., 20%) were owner occupied. This places owner occupied homes in a distinct minority in the community. Many people express frustration over this ratio. These frustrations generally take one of two forms. The first form is where homeowners equate the prevalence of social ills in the community with the presence of so many renters, and so they express disdain not for renters generally, but for the ratio. The second form is where residents express a belief that owners are more desirable than renters because their large financial investment makes them more likely (than renters) to work actively to turn the community around.

The survival of the community is largely dependent upon reducing its vacancy rate; therefore, residents have come to realize that occupied homes are a desirable goal, even if those homes are occupied by renters. In the wake of this realization, the language that people use to describe both investors and renters has begun to change. It contains distinctions. Investors and renters are not bad per se; instead, "responsible investors" and "responsible renters" are much more desirable than empty homes while "absentee landlords" are frowned upon.

At the same time, ill will still exists toward both investors (i.e., absentee landlords) and renters. In relatively equal proportion, respondents' level resentment at renters who fail to treat the rental property with respect and absentee landlords who fail to properly screen their tenants. Residents recognize that the number of owner occupied homes in the area is approximately 20%

of the total. There is also a general awareness of high vacancy rates in the neighborhood. However, despite these realities, residents want investors to be more selective in their rental decisions. This comment illustrates some residents' belief that investors owe a duty to the neighborhood to place "responsible" residents in their properties:

Look. This is a neighborhood. This is where people live. It is where we want family. So why not? If you're going to buy the house, why not put families in it who are responsible, who also like the neighborhood? ...Use Section 8 dollars for what it's supposed to be: to help families get on their feet.

This comment was expressed by long term West End resident, Samantha Turner. Ms. Turner is a homeowner. She is not opposed to renters; however, she expresses a distinct preference to have owner occupiers purchase the available housing stock in the West End. In her opinion, owner occupiers express a higher level of attachment to the neighborhood. This attachment can cause investors to make decisions (both about improving the property and which persons they rent the property to) other than from a pure economic base.

America has pushed homeownership. Many of those in the community who espouse disdain for renters grew up in homes and not rental properties. Homeownership was a source of pride and a desired goal in their families, and they believe others should view it the same. Although some in the community blame the deteriorating housing stock on renters, Samantha does not. Instead, Samantha places the blame on unprincipled investors or landlords who only care about one thing – rental income. Samantha firmly believes investors have an obligation to the community. She also believes that responsible renters exist. Although Samantha is black gentry now, her beginnings were not. She does not hide the fact that her belief in responsible renters comes from her own personal history.

Ownership does not mean people treat property with respect; being a renter does not mean that people will not treat property with respect. Current West End resident Samantha

Turner knows this first hand. In her youth, Ms. Turner and her family rented the same duplex for over fifteen years. They could not afford to purchase a home of their own, but they treated the rental property as if they were its owners.

I mean it was our home. The neighbors next door on each side of us owned their homes. Well, we treated it like you would think we did.... If we had a leaky faucet, we would fix it. The landlord? We didn't bother them for anything, even painting. We would even paint the place, so..when I wanted to invest in real estate why it was more for people like us, like my family was. People who couldn't afford their own house, but who wanted a nice place to live. You know. And want to be part of a community.

She recently purchased the burned out home next to hers. She plans to renovate the property and then rent it out to a family just like her own.

A distinct hierarchy exists in the West End with owners on top and renters on the bottom, but the delineations do not end there. Opinions about renters run strong in the area, especially low income Section 8 renters. A number of rental properties in the neighborhood are Section 8 housing. Despite strong feelings about Section 8 renters, not all residents believe the group is bad. Most express sentiments similar to this:

I don't mind responsible owners getting responsible Section 8 people, but it's really bad because a lot of absentee landowners say 'I gotta get this place rented,' and they'll rent to anyone.

If renters are on the bottom of the hierarchy, Section 8 renters are at the very bottom of the bottom.

Disdain for renters is so persistent, it causes renters to be viewed as a distinct class distinguishable from the class of owners in the community. What often goes unvoiced in this dialogue is that the economic means among both renters and owners spans high to low.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ From an examination of Census data, I conclude that economic diversity exists among many of the West End's residents, owners and renters alike. Out of 2439 total households in the West End, 439 (18%) are owner occupied (Census 2000). The 2000 Census data also shows that most West End residents have earned income of less than \$30,000 per year; only 639 (26.2%) earn in excess of \$30,000, and of that group only 63 households (9.9%) reported

Ownership is seen as a badge of honor while renters, even those with the economic means to be owners, are looked down upon. Almost two decades ago, long term West End resident Cheryl Simpson invited a friend who had just moved into the area to a neighborhood association meeting. The middle aged newcomer was dressed professionally and spoke professionally; however, when it was discovered that she did not own the house in which she resided but rather rented, Mrs. Simpson says a certain tension could be felt in the room. Cheryl Simpson broke this awkward silence by extolling her friend's virtues, including a graduate degree in law. Then chatter began again. The friend did not attend another meeting. It is difficult to tell why many residents look down on renters, but this incident illustrates that it has existed for some time.

The Mortgage Crisis

Some view the recent economic downturn is a source of community cohesion. The mortgage crisis has been an equal opportunity offender, impacting West End residents of all socio economic classes, races, and ethnicities. As a result, some of the divisions discussed above are collapsing. This crisis has created a sense of solidarity among the residents of the West End.

After several people were indicted on "an elaborate mortgage fraud scheme in the West End," people began to question how it could have happened (Swartz 2008). Many long term West End residents consider the community one of Atlanta's last undiscovered jewels in in-town living. When prices in other in-town Atlanta neighborhoods like the Old Fourth Ward, Grant Park, and East Atlanta began to rise, West End residents reasoned that their community would soon follow. As a result, when the community first received reports of "home sales" in the \$300,000's and \$400,000s, some residents swelled with pride. Richard Newcomb explains:

earned income between \$75,000 and \$149,999. Another 34 households (5.3%) reported earned income of \$150,000 or more. Therefore, at 439, the total number of owner occupied households is some 200 less than all the households earning between \$30,000 to in excess of \$150,000. As a result, economic diversity must exist among renters and is likely to exist among owners.

So it's good that we build ourselves up and have our pride... [But] we can be deceived in our own minds because I think that's how mortgage fraud occurred, and we were easily taken advantage of... Because we were deceived in our own minds, thinking our houses are worth \$400,000... But meanwhile, if we were realistic, we would've known. 'Wait a minute here! That house should not be selling for \$400,000 when it's been vacant and all the blocks are blighted.'... So I think the more level-headed we are, the better we are at protecting ourselves from predators.

Residents touted their community as the next Grant Park or the next East Atlanta, but as reports of an organized fraud scheme came to light, all residents of the neighborhood are left to deal with its implications.

Falling values are one result of the crisis. Homes in the West End are a good value now. Some have sold for as little as \$10,000. Realtor Faith Howard says even at that price, some people expect a polished, suburban like community. She believes this view is problematic.

We need people who are coming in clearheaded, knowing where they're coming in, and ready to stay for the long run and work for the long run. We need workers. We don't need people who just think it's 'Oh, it's all beautiful,' and then as soon as something happens to them they're like, 'I'm moving back to Stockbridge.'

Mrs. Howard wants to attract new residents (owners and renters alike) who fit in with the integrity of the community. Her fear is that the current low price will lure people to the neighborhood who do not readily fit in with the community they find. People who are looking for or expecting a polished suburban-like community do not assimilate well. According to Mrs. Howard, they have two choices: "get in where you fit in" or create the community you desire. The former is a matter of retreat, the latter retrenching. Amidst the current economic crisis, residents like Mrs. Howard feel a need to retrench because many are upside down on their mortgages which creates a sense of being tied to the neighborhood because they lack the economic means to leave it. These residents face a choice: either they can accept the community

that exists, or they can work to create a new one. Ideally, the new community is an improved community,

Creating community requires work. It is also, by definition, a communal act.

Community cannot be created in isolation or alone. Instead, it requires consideration of self and others. The creation of community need not be a selfless action. Consideration for others may be born out of a realization that it is in your own best interests to look out for the needs of others.

The mortgage crisis illustrates how this kind of interdependence works. Faith Howard says:

The thing that we've been already implementing is the community coming together and leveling with each other. There are no facades. We're not putting on anything. I have a number of people coming to me, saying Faith I may be having a problem with my mortgage. Can you talk to my mortgage company and try to work this out? ... No longer is it that people are just staying in the house being quiet and the next thing you know the house is being foreclosed and nobody knew. Now people are coming together saying, 'Hey, I need help. My husband has been out of work for six months.' And then we're utilizing our network of resources within the community to help each other out. To help people save their homes.

Helping people save their homes helps the neighborhood in which everyone resides, and because of this, realtor Faith Howard has noticed an open dialogue among neighbors about their financial condition. This type of vulnerability about what are typically private economic matters breeds familiarity and creates a sense of community. While self interested, this community is deliberate (i.e., an intentional community) and utilitarian. The result is a rational form of neighboring.

I Got Your Back: Neighborhood Assistance

Residents in the West End watch out for each other. This tradition is not new, and it takes passive and active forms. There is a general recognition among the neighbors in the community that if one person's house gets broken into today, someone else could be the target tomorrow. It is not uncommon for a criminal to be chased away by the vigilance of a neighbor.

In some cases, the neighbors do not even know each other by name. West End resident Lauren Murphy illustrates this point as she recalls when her car was almost stolen:

I didn't know anyone wanted the car, so I didn't have an alarm on it... Neighbors thought someone was coming to visit, but then they realized that... [someone] was actually trying to steal [it] ... They had gotten the car open and was actually trying to steal it, and they [neighbors] came over and rescued me. I mean, they knocked on the door. I didn't know who it was, but the car would have been stolen, but thanks to the guy across the street. I don't think we ever talked. Sometimes, you just never know who is noticing you or look at who is watching.

Koriandra Barnett tells a similar story. When her West End home was broken into, a neighbor that Ms. Barnett did not even know by name grabbed a shotgun from his home and chased the perpetrators down the street. Ms. Barnett indicates her only interaction with the neighbor who came to her aid was a perfunctory wave every morning. Ironically, Ms. Barnett indicates that she “only waved to [him] out of Southern hospitality.”

The tradition of neighborhood assistance has deep roots in the West End. Ruth Marshall and her family were the first African American family to purchase a home on one of the signature West End streets. A then single mother of two teen age boys and a girl, Ms. Marshall was concerned when older white women in the neighborhood began to be terrorized by young black men visiting the neighborhood to do harm. That was almost forty years ago, but Ms. Marshall recounts it like it was yesterday. Four elderly white women residing in a rooming house down the street from Ms. Ruth were almost captive in their home. They were afraid to come outside, especially at the first of the month when their support checks came in the mail. One day, Ms. Marshall and her boys saw one of the women being robbed. The perpetrators were young black men. None of them lived in the neighborhood. Despite the possible danger to them, Ms. Marshall and her sons intervened. Even in this moment of panic, Ms. Marshall was cognizant of the fact that she was the mother of two young black men. Ruth Marshall cautioned

her sons to call the police and go summon a neighbor, a white man, who was helping to revitalize the neighborhood. Because the perpetrators were black men, she did not want her sons to get mistakenly identified as the malfeasants. When Ms. Marshall and her family moved in, none of the white neighbors had been particularly welcoming. Still, Ruth Marshall felt an obligation to the community – even a community to which they felt on the fringe.

This incident, over thirty years ago, was a turning point for Ms. Marshall, the neighbor she asked her sons to summon, and the West End community as well. The neighbor, Nate McCullough, was moved to act. Soon after this incident, Mr. McCullough purchased most of the properties on the street, and he began to renovate them.⁷⁰ McCullough purchased the homes from the older white residents, and he sold them to blacks moving into the area. According to Ms. Ruth, “the older white people they were glad to get out of the neighborhood, so they sold their houses for a little next to nothing.” According to Ms. Marshall, a tacit agreement formed between the new residents of the community and the whites who remained. The groups peacefully coexisted, and when it was in the best interest of the community, they looked out for each other.

Shared Vision

Commonality of vision is also a source of unity in the West End community. It takes a certain amount of vision to see the beauty in the West End. As stated earlier, this may be because the neighborhood is riddled with inconsistencies. Over and over again, respondents told a story of being able to see beyond what is immediately visible with the naked eye to the beauty underneath.

⁷⁰ Some who retell the story of the neighborhood see Mr. McCullough’s actions as self interested. Ms. Marshall has known him for almost 40 years. For some of that time, he was the next door neighbor. Until recently, he lived in the West End for that entire time. Some say Mr. McCullough came in and raided the homes of their valuable fixtures and then simply made cosmetic changes and sold homes in a profit. To others, like Ms. Marshall, Nate McCullough saved the West End community that came to be her home.

An Asian business owner and West End resident who is heavily invested in the area describes the West End community as “a pearl buried under trash.” People have to be willing to endure the stench of the trash in order to find the buried treasures underneath. Samantha Turner now owns two homes and a carriage house in the West End, but when a realtor friend brought her to the area almost ten years ago, Samantha was not even in the market for a home. The house she toured, and eventually bought, did not show well. When she first saw it in around 1999 it had not been lived in for over three years and the walls of the home were covered with moss. A police escort was necessary just to enter the home, yet Samantha saw beyond that. According to Samantha, others “didn’t see the potential.” The house had character. It also had a carriage house out back (vagrants had been living in it, which is part of the reason for the police escort), a significant amount of land, a working fireplace, and original details. She anxiously bid on the home. Today, Samantha Turner’s home stands as one of the jewels of the neighborhood.

Samantha Turner and the Asian business owner/resident noted above share a common vision. Each of them was able to see beauty in a community surrounded by ugliness. Then, that vision moved each of them to invest in the neighborhood. The beauty of segments of the neighborhood is readily recognizable to outsiders. Peeples Street and Oglethorpe contain many magnificent restored homes. Peeples Street is still lined with red bricks, and a signature wrought iron gate lines the street, and other notable structures like Hammond House and the Willie Watkins Funeral Home also stand; however, outside of those locales, it takes a certain vision to see the beauty of the area.

The bases of community—urban living, front porches, home ownership, the mortgage crisis, neighborhood assistance, and shared vision-have been outlined. They are the ties that bind

residents of the community to the community and ultimately to each other. Some bonds are more attenuated than others, but the bonds do exist, and they form the bases of community.

Next, we move to a discussion of fractures in those bases of community. As stated earlier, class, race, and gender are potential sources of solidarity among those who belong to the respective classes; however, they can also potentially fracture a sense of community. Class consciousness, gender based consciousness, and race consciousness pervades the West End community. In next section of this chapter, I examine each of these in more detail.

Class Consciousness

The West End is a good economic value. Value makes the community attractive to a wide array of people of varied economic means including the working class, middle class, investor class, and first time buyers. According to Chris Ford, “Well, in the West End, they always say, you get maybe twice as much house for the money.” His spouse, Zaniah Ford, agrees. She says:

I met this young white couple that just bought a house in our neighborhood for \$75,000. It’s not that I was opposed to the place, you know. And I mean it makes total sense, but it’s such a different psychology than the notion that you’re supposed to be incredibly in debt for your life.... It’s better to have a house you can pay off in your lifetime as opposed to perpetual debt. But so many people think that perpetual debt is the way we’re supposed to achieve something. I think that’s what precipitated these mortgages that were unsustainable anyway. Nobody ever intended to sustain it.

According to Zaniah Ford, a lot of the newcomers in the community may not be rich, but they have the economic means to not only purchase a modest home in the community, but to improve it as well. The ability to improve one’s property is a definite class marker, differentiating the newcomers in the community from many oldtimers and other newcomers with more restricted economic means.

Poor and disenfranchised groups also call the community home. Low owner occupancy rates in the West End have contributed to the presence of a higher volume of the real estate in the community being used for halfway houses and other social services purposes than exist in many other in-town communities. A high volume of available housing stock drives purchase and rental prices down, which has made the area attractive to social service providers with limited means. The West End is also proximate to downtown, has easy highway access, and a prominent MARTA station in the middle of the community. All of these things make it attractive to low income residents, those in the community without a permanent home, and the social services agencies that serve them.

A distinct class of homeless and mentally ill individuals can be found throughout the West End. Some people resent the presence of the homeless in the West End community. Others express a “there but for the grace of God go I” perspective. Chika Moon is an Asian business owner and West End resident. Mrs. Moon works very hard at her many enterprises in order to maintain her six figure income. Mrs. Moon is upper middle class, yet she has a heart for those who have less economic means than she.

Not all of Mrs. Moon’s experiences with lower income and homeless residents of the community have been favorable, but she is still inclined to help. Chika Moon is more likely to lend a hand than to give a handout. Mrs. Moon says, “Sometimes I give them a job and find out they are homeless because they don’t want to work.” While this realization is mind boggling to Mrs. Moon, she understands that some homeless people do want to work so she continues to offer jobs to them in hopes of helping them get off the street.

Mentally unbalanced and drug addicted homeless individuals present a unique challenge in the neighborhood because they are unpredictable. Many middle and upper middle class

residents of the area have limited experience dealing with this population. Logically, upper class residents may realize that their lower socio economic class neighbors are not all dangerous, but because some are, it may be easier for residents to treat the entire class of people as social pariahs. Such sweeping generalizations can prevent dangerous errors in judgments such as opening your bag to give money to a drug addict who ends up robbing you.

It is difficult to live in a community and be afraid of those who share social space with you, so many residents develop coping mechanisms and a certain amount of street smarts to help them negotiate interactions in the economically diverse community. Zaniah and Chris Ford (black gentry) have working class roots. A foot in both worlds gives them some perspective. Zaniah is both pragmatic and compassionate in her dealings with street people.

I figure if somebody is asking for change on this corner today, they'll be there tomorrow and the next day too. And if you treat them badly, they will remember that. That's just not a good thing.... As it is, I have a lot of compassion for the level of need that some people have. I just think like, "How did you get like that?"

On at least one occasion, the compassion Zaniah felt for some of the less fortunate members of the community manifested itself in a dangerous practice. She recounts this incident below.

[T]he hustle guys who want to cut the grass all the time, you know? I was handling that for a while and then a hustle guy who had some problems did drugs in the bathroom... I thought he wanted to use the bathroom. Apparently he needed it for other purposes.

Her comment illustrates a certain level of trust or perhaps naiveté about person. After this incident, Chris took over the role of determining what community people the family would help and those that they would not.

Faith Howard (a real estate agent) came to the West End because she "wanted to work within a community that was pretty much a blank canvass," but Mrs. Howard quickly learned the community had a rich history that deserved to be protected, preserved, and remembered. As a

marginal member of the black gentry, she brought with her ideas about how to accomplish things.

Many of the middle and upper middle class residents of the community have ideas about how to get things done in the West End. Practicing their own brand of racial uplift, many newcomers, especially college educated ones, evidence a strong desire to help the community through whatever means they deem appropriate. Gaines (1996) defines “racial uplift” as attempts by black elite (some more “accommodationist” in tenor and others more “egalitarian”) to create a positive ideology of uplift and black identity. In either case, the hallmark is that the black elite express a belief that they know what is in the best interests of uplifting the entire race as well as the means to accomplish this goal. Many new residents express such ideas. Mrs. Howard used to be one of them until she began to talk to oldtimers in the neighborhood.

There has been so many, so much ground work already laid here. To continue to start anew is reinventing the wheel, and it’s silly, and then you lose a lot of the good heritage that is already here. A lot of good ideas. A lot of good ground work [has been laid]that just needs now someone who is not so tired and worn by the fight to pick up and to begin again. It’s like grace. You know. Now you need to maybe put on and begin again.

Mrs. Howard is black, college-educated and middle class. In her observations, many of the older, long term residents of the community have made substantial contributions to the neighborhood; however, they do not receive much respect from the newcomers. Mrs. Howard believes she is an anomaly.

Faith Howard’s later comments illustrate an overt intention to perform a brand of racial uplift. A native of New York, Mrs. Howard moved to Atlanta less than a decade ago. Reflecting on the transformation of her Brooklyn neighborhood she says:

I missed the boat in Brooklyn. I was never able to afford a brownstone there. I would never have been able to help some of those seniors maintain and keep their brownstones with them after the taxes [went up]. Do you know what they’re

selling for now? Half a million dollars and some for a million dollars! You know, in Park Slope. When that happened, I thought, ‘Wow, I missed the boat. God if I ever have an opportunity,’ and here I feel that God showed me an opportunity, and it was up to me to seize it and to see it and not to be afraid of what I saw because with the opportunity came with so much risk for my family. [You know] going into a broke-down neighborhood. I [thought, do I] just need to leave it alone? But then I thought neighborhoods and people are only as broken as you allow them to be. You can restore a neighborhood. You can restore the people in it. And it was like God said to me, ‘Well how much work you want to do?’ And I was like, ‘Okay, I’ll do the work.’

Not everyone in the community has appreciation for the new people or the old ways which Mrs. Howard’s comments illustrate; however, underlying her comments is a sort of superiority which can best be understood through an examination of the intersections of race, class, and gender.

As a black woman, the majority of the people in the neighborhood look like Mrs. Howard. Clearly, she feels a level of kinship with the blacks in the neighborhood, but on some level she sees herself and her family as different from the community. This is evidenced in comments “broke down neighborhood” and “risk for my family.” Her college educated status and class standing seem to separate her from many residents of the West End. Although her earlier comments illustrate a respect for the efforts of the oldtimers, there is an inherent assumption in her comments that her ways and efforts are both needed to make the neighborhood better and superior to any efforts that the oldtimers might craft. Finally, Faith Howard’s comments illustrate ageism in comments that suggests both the seniors in Brooklyn and the West End need saving. Oldtimers feel there is very little appreciation or knowledge of how things were done in the past. Class tensions are accentuated in this struggle as a distinct percentage of oldtimers lack a college education and are lower in social class while many of the newcomers are middle class and college educated. Yet, underlying all of this seems to be a sincere desire help the black community to which she feels inextricably tied. It is a form of racial uplift often

discussed in the black gentrification literature. All of these tensions are present in Faith Howard's comments.

The somewhat negative perceptions of a number of middle to upper class respondents their neighbors of lower socio-economic means have been outlined, but upper class standing does not make one immune to negative perceptions by others in the neighborhood. Nigel Walters describes his perception of a congregation of black men and women attending a newly formed church meeting in the neighborhood. Mr. Walters says:

I've never went [there]. Like I said, I just noticed that when it started at first, when it opened, it seemed like it was more of an invitation [to] people that were trying to become more financially equipped, so to speak. So it seemed like those semi boogey blacks were attending the church.⁷¹

Mr. Walters' comment illustrate his belief that the congregants' black authenticity is somewhat compromised by their middle class status. Even though church members went door to door in inviting neighborhood residents to the service, Mr. Walters felt the "invitation" was not open to him or people like him (in terms of their economic means). Additionally, when the church began holding services at the local middle school, it made an already constrained parking situation even worse as "everybody" in the church seemed to drive a car and park it on Mr. Walters' street. Neighborhood people could walk to the church, but none seemed to attend.

Gender-Based Consciousness

Part of Faith Howard's desire to save the neighborhood is squarely about racial uplift; however, race is only one part of her identity. Ironically, while gender is arguably as readily identifiable as race, in the largely racially homogeneous black gentrifying West End neighborhood gender consciousness is less pronounced than race consciousness. Despite this distinction, gender based attitudes (predicated on a gender consciousness) do prevail in the West

⁷¹ "Boogey" is a reference to upper middle class blacks (the black elite) described in E. Franklin Frazier's book, *Black Bourgeoisie*,

End. Some of those attitudes seem benign in nature and some not, but in subtle and unsubtle ways, gender based attitudes exist in the community.

West End residents Zaniah and Chris Ford purchased a former rental property abutting a group home. The couple began cleaning the property soon after moving into the home. As new parents, they dreamed of letting their toddler roam free in the yard. Unfortunately, the yard was full of dangerous materials: shards of glass, discarded things, nails and the like. The property was partially fenced, but barbed wire remained on the top of the fence. The barbed wire was unsightly and dangerous. One day, Zaniah Ford began to remove the barbed wire from the fence. As Mrs. Ford worked, one of the residents of the group home voiced his concern. Mrs. Ford states:

The man right across from us, it's like an adult assisted living, there's a man there... Tells me whatever he's thinking, and he suggested I leave the barb wire on. I don't know! But if it made him more comfortable to have the barb wire... I left some of it because he was concerned about my security. I thought that was nice of him.

Zaniah Ford believes that the man was not concerned about his safety, but her own. His comments suggest he viewed the barbed wire fence spanning only one side of the yard as a form of protection. His concern seemed to be focused singularly on Mrs. Ford and not the dangers the fence might pose to her young child. While Mrs. Ford chuckles at the thought that leaving the barb wire up could offer her any sense of protection, she does acknowledge that dangers exist in the community.

Dangerous streets are dangerous for all; however, respondents express more concern for the safety of women traveling in the neighborhood than any other group. The West End is touted as a walkable community; however, at certain times and in certain places, there is not a lot of foot traffic. Some respondents voice a belief that women should stay out of certain areas in the

community, or, at a minimum, avoid certain areas at certain times. Darkness gets equated with danger. Respondents do not suggest that women should not travel the streets of the West End; however, certain wisdom is advised. Some streets have higher occupancy rates than others. These streets tend to have better lights and be more traveled. If women go out at night, they are encouraged to stay in these “safe” places. I seldom walked in the community at night, but I would drive around the area. I noted both men and women could be seen out at night. More people, male and female, could be observed near lighted public spaces, especially near the MARTA station. One park abutting Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard would have a few people in it, but the West End Park was almost always deserted (at least visibly deserted to a driver by) at night. At night, the West End Park is perceived as “dangerous” by many in the community.

Not all West End residents adhere to fixed ideas about where women belong and when. Ruth Marshall recalls a time when old women were marked as prey in the neighborhood; however, she refuses to live her life with fear. Ms. Ruth works daily in her garden, and she walks the community. On one level, Ms. Ruth knows that she should be afraid. She has a delicate frame, and she is almost 80 years old, but she says, “I don’t really get scared because there’s always somebody around, and people are very nice about watching for the older people and to protect them.”

Gender based attitudes in the West End are not just related to issues of safety and criminal victimization. Male sexual prowess and female sexual prowess (even the potential thereof) are treated quite differently by many West End neighborhood residents. This contention is, perhaps, not surprising in light of King’s (1988:55) assertion that: “a point of concern and contention within the black community [is] how sexual inequalities might best be addressed, *not*

whether they existed [emphasis added].” Some such attitudes are evidenced in respondents’ comments.

Bobby and Kristina Anderson have resided in the community about a year. The couple are black gentrifiers and became active in the West End since moving in the neighborhood. They live on a less traveled street in the neighborhood, and they have gotten to know all their neighbors. Oftentimes, Bobby Anderson will do things for people in the community, including cutting their grass. Kristina Anderson is also active in the community, and she is proud of Bobby’s “Southern hospitality” and willingness to help out his neighbors. Kristina Anderson has one hard and fast rule for her husband: Bobby is not permitted to go to the home of any single, female neighbor without her. Kristina says she trusts Bobby, but she is a little concerned about how her single, female neighbors may perceive Bobby’s acts of kindness. Kristina also has concerns about what neighbors may think who might see her husband coming in and out of the houses of single, female neighbors. This consciousness of marital status is rooted in issues of gender and has the potential to stifle associations in the community.

Comments by other respondents support Kristina Anderson’s assessment that people are aware of the movements of others in the neighborhood, especially as it relates to the sexual exploits of female residents. For example, Cecilia Waters is a single, black female resident of the West End community. Ms. Waters is described as very vocal about her opinions, and many people in the community refer to her as “Crazy Cecelia.” A resident for almost six years, some of her neighbors can chronicle the number of boyfriends Cecilia has had since moving to the community, including the regularity and times of their comings and goings. A few other respondents made similar references (although not all about Crazy Cecelia) about women in the community. Despite the fact that there are single men in the community too, none of the

residents' revealed stories of their escapades. When respondents mention the details of Crazy Cecilia's comings and goings, they tend to infer that such information is relevant to matters of neighborhood safety and security. From this, I conclude that different standards of acceptable sexuality exists for men than do for women in the West End neighborhood.

Gender based attitudes about sexual preference vary in the community, but most respondents were careful not to voice open disdain regarding the sexual orientation of others; however, this disdain gets communicated in other ways. On one occasion, I was interviewing a couple in their home. When I got to the questions about interactions with others in the community, the couple rattled off several neighbors with whom they regularly interacted. I inquired about the neighbors' right next door, and they said "no, we don't interact with them." They went on to describe a past altercation having to do with property boundary lines, but at the end of the interview the wife pulled me aside and while pointing next door whispered, "You know they're lesbians." The discussion about property boundary lines may have only been subterfuge for their real reasons for not interacting.

The topic of sexual orientation did not come up enough in the course of my interviews to lead me to conclude that this attitude towards lesbians was pervasive; however, at least one other interviewee (a newcomer) revealed that she was bisexual and that it made some people in the community very nervous. That interviewee believes that part of the reason she gets this response (nervousness or tension) is because she lives in a "Southern city" with strong religious roots. Based on the foregoing, I conclude that while West End citizens may not express open disdain for some citizens based on matters like their dating patterns and sexuality choices; nevertheless, it gets felt.

Race Consciousness

Despite a deliberate attempt to build a broad community and a sense of solidarity, West End residents are not colorblind. Race still matters. Race is seen, felt, and communicated in a myriad of ways. Thirty-seven years ago when Ruth Marshall and her family (African American) moved to one of the community's premiere streets, there was no welcoming committee. Her white neighbors did notice her, but they did not stop to talk to her. Ruth Marshall recalls approaching her neighbors and her initial conversation:

When I moved in I introduced myself to them and if they didn't say anything I would let it go... If they listened, I let them know... We wasn't going to bother them, and I said we're not going to come in and hurt you. We're not going to steal from you because that's what they think, and I said my kids are not going to bother you.

Not all of the white neighbors were unwelcoming; but it was tense enough that Ms. Ruth still recalls that when the second black family moved into the neighborhood, she shouted and told all her friends, "I've got black neighbors!"

"Black" takes a number of forms in the West End, but one of its most conspicuous forms is black youth. Young people are everywhere in the West End, and young black men seem more visible than any other group. They are hanging out in and around stores, they are waiting at bus stops, they are walking to school, and they are watching. You find them on the basketball courts. You find them at the library. You find them in the many parks in the West End, and you find them in the schools. The heightened visibility of the young black men in the community may be because many of today's young, black men have a distinctive look. While not all urban youth fit this scenario, baggy clothing and sagging pants can often be found among the youth in the West End. This look has become synonymous with African Americans. It is also a look which generates fear among some segments of the community, especially whites. Many residents of

the West End, black and white alike, express disdain for the image that this manner of dress conveys.⁷² Zaniah Ford explains:

You have to be sort of selective about the things that we identify as black. The different parts of our culture that we valorize and parts that we have to say are things that were inflicted upon us and not necessarily things that we mean. Like, I yell at the kids on the street when I can see their underpants. I know I'm not that old, but I'm just like, 'No. I don't want to see that. Sweetie can I talk to you?' ... You should embrace your culture and own it, but does all that mean that I wanna see your underwear? I don't want to! I think maybe we embrace certain things about what we think is urban, being coterminous with black when it's not necessarily correct, see?

Zaniah Ford perceives that these young black men do not know their heritage. She expresses frustration with the men themselves and with a society that she believes has failed to teach these young black men their worth. As a result, she suggests that these young men walk around wearing the accoutrements of entrapment all the while believing they are free. Their manner of dress earns respect from many other young, black men in the community, but it draws reproach from some members of the community.⁷³ Some in the neighborhood are quick to speak to youthful offenders, and others are quick to avoid the young people.

Although Raymond Flowers is relatively young, many of the sights in the West End are offensive to him, including young men with their pants hanging down. Mr. Flowers is a 32 year old black, West End business owner and home owner who says, "The whole way of thinking in

⁷² The City of Atlanta is majority African American, and as in the nation, many of its youth have been influenced by hip hop culture. One visible influence of this culture is the practice of wearing pants such that they sag (also known as saggin') and expose the underwear of the wearer. Both the City of Atlanta and Atlanta Public Schools have wrestled with the issue of regulating this manner of dress, which some see as a free speech issue. One Atlanta City Councilman, C.T. Martin, went so far as to try to criminalize "saggin'" by proposing an amendment to the City's indecency laws to ban the practice. The proposed amendment did not succeed. Atlanta Public School's current student dress code policy states, "Students are expected to dress in a manner that is consistent with the basic educational mission of the Atlanta Public Schools (APS) and to avoid disruption of the instructional process, violation of health and safety standards, and offence of common standards of decency." While the APS policy does not expressly prohibit the wearing of "saggin'" pants, it does say "appropriate undergarments must be worn at all times and must not be visible."

⁷³ This form of dress (large, baggy clothing and/or sagging pants) could be perceived as resistance to the dominant culture, and, therefore, a counter culture movement; however, many who study culture argue that while rap music and culture (including dress) began as a counter culture movement, it is not any longer.

this neighborhood needs to change.” Over the course of the last 8 years, Mr. Flowers has been involved in the West End and maintained several business enterprises in the community; however, he only became a resident two years ago. Some of the young men in the neighborhood hang around outside of the building where Raymond Flowers’ office is located. Some of them venture in the building to escape the cold or heat, as the case may be. Mr. Flowers is disturbed that school age children hang out in the neighborhood at all hours, including school hours. Despite this frustration, he still befriends some of the young black men in the area.

Raymond Flowers describes the current “community mentality” in the West End as “ghetto.” Mr. Flowers says ghetto describes a “low living” and “low thinking” existence. Unsupervised children are one indication Flowers uses of a “ghetto mentality.” Despite a belief in the pervasiveness of a ghetto community mentality, Mr. Flowers has faith in the ability of young people in the West End to change themselves, if not their community. Raymond Flowers expresses far less faith in the parents of the neighborhood’s young people.

You make an impact on people when they’re young. That’s why the young cats that come around. It’s a bunch to young cats that are like 12 to 15. They always come in the office and they hang out, but if you look at these kids when they’re on the street, you’d be like ‘Wow, I’m not gonna walk on that side of the street.’ But you, when you meet them you’re like they alright kids. You can talk to them. They have sense. They are not bad kids. Their situation is just not so conducive to them being successful. Sometimes their parents is not there. Like one of my young boys, his dad is in prison. His mom works all the time. That’s the story with a lot of them.

Mr. Flowers engages in a more limited form of racial uplift. He volunteers as a mentor with the neighborhood high school, and he informally mentors some of the young men who “hang out” in front of his business. Age is a silent marker for Raymond Flowers. The young kids in the neighborhood, those under 15, are salvageable, but Raymond Flowers does not hold out much hope for those 16 and over. According to Mr. Flowers, it is “too late” for them.

The racial mix in the West End is changing, but most residents still view the West End as a black community.⁷⁴ Samantha is a fourteen year resident of the West End; her partner, Lauren Murphy has resided in the community for 2 ½ years. In her short tenure in the community, Ms. Murphy has already noticed an increase in the white population in the community.

I don't know if they're moving here from other cities. I see more Caucasians, most likely maybe yuppies, younger generation. People who ride bikes to work. I won't say I've seen them actually going to work. They may have a backpack, people exercising, maybe a mother with a child with a certain type of stroller, jogging, walking dogs, jogging with dogs.

Lauren Murphy's comment illustrate that she perceives the Caucasians moving into the neighborhood as distinct from the current population on a number of levels. Besides the obvious racial distinctions, Lauren notes that the newer white residents' consumption pattern vary from the African American residents she knows. Ms. Murphy perceives differences in the way the population dresses and its interests.

Six year resident Zaniah Ford has observed changing demographics in the community too, but she still views the West End as a black neighborhood. She explains:

[the community] Seems pretty black to me, and I was interested in the range of cultural expressions going on. The religious communities... I thought the Hebrews, the Israelites were kind of fascinating as were the sort of Sunni Muslim community in this place, and it's just kind of... Seems kind of in some ways like my neighborhood in Brooklyn, except the West Indians here live in Stone Mountain.

For Zaniah Ford, the range of black cultural and religious expressions present in the West End gives the community a sort of racial authenticity. Mrs. Ford deliberately sought this kind of authenticity in a community. After receiving an Ivy League education, Zaniah Ford worked in

⁷⁴ According to the 2000 Census, African Americans comprised almost 95% of the West End's total population. In the period from 1990 to 2000, the black population of the West End stayed constant while the number of white residents dropped from 170 to 104. The Asian population rose from 2 to 51 (an increase of 2450%), and the Hispanic population increased from 17 to 78 (i.e., by 359%). The community had a total population of 5058.

New York City prior to settling in Atlanta to teach at a prestigious historically black women's college. These experiences taught her that how a community is perceived is not exclusively a matter of ethnic ratios.

I hope it shouldn't matter who moves in, but still, whether or not the racial composition stays the same, one thing is it will still be predominantly black. Whether the racial composition stays the same or not, it's still going to be viewed as a historic black community because we will protect things, the cultural, social, and valuable things here; that is my hope. I could be wrong, but I hope.

Zaniah Ford believes the black heritage present in the community should be protected; however, she does not believe a monolithic black community exists. Instead, she seeks a place where there is a diversity of black identities and experiences. For her, the West End is such a community. Although Mrs. Ford views the community as a black community and hopes it will remain such, she has a surprising appreciation for the recent influx of white residents. She explains this by saying, "I think the more diversity you have in a black neighborhood, the better."

Some diversity has always existed. For example, whites have always been in the West End (Crimmins 1982). The community started as a white community, and even as the black population grew, some whites remained. Many white newcomers to the West End occupy the dwellings they own. This is one reason many people respect the burgeoning white community in the West End. One black oldtimer says:

It's like you didn't realize, all of a sudden why white people aren't getting off the train where they're supposed to. But I think this has been a stop and start kind of thing. And because the transition of the housing market occurred when it did, people now have so many more options. You have to really have a really good reason to want to buy in this neighborhood, and I think there are some really good reasons.

Even those who want the community to remain "black" recognize a need to occupy and stabilize the housing force so that the community survives. The act of whites buying and occupying the homes engenders a certain amount of respect from some in the community.

Whites can be accepted into the community. Matt Jacobs is a Caucasian business owner and West End resident. Prior to living in the West End, Mr. Jacobs, a single white man in his thirties, invested in the community by purchasing a home. Since moving to the community almost six years ago, he has become very active in the neighborhood association, NPU, and several community coalitions, including an effort to save the local firehouse from closure. Mr. Jacobs feels accepted in the community now, but he remembers the racial conflicts he faced in the community.

When Matt Jacobs first moved into the West End and started attending neighborhood meetings, he was viewed suspiciously. He was white, vocal, and a newcomer. At the time, any one of those was enough to raise an eyebrow. Together, they raised ire. Even acts as seemingly innocent as a walking his dog down the street drew comments like “what are you doing here?” and “That looks like a police dog, and you look like a police man.” Mr. Jacobs even recalls being called “honky.” Today, he and his dog are known throughout the community. Despite his acceptance, Matt Jacobs says he is still cognizant that the community is viewed as a black neighborhood, and he is not.

Moreover, Mr. Jacobs believes potential racial conflicts are on the horizon. His concern is born partly out of experience. Mr. Jacobs has lived in other in-town Atlanta communities where racial tensions mounted. He is concerned that when the West End begins to turn around, African Americans will say the neighborhood was stolen from them. If that happens, as a white man, he will be a likely target for displaced racial aggression. In his own words :

To me, I want good people living around here. I don't care...what color. What aggravates me is now it seems like a lot more younger whites are moving in. Where are the younger black professionals? Where are they? I don't know why that is. Right now, there is affordable housing here, but in five years you are going to start hearing all this crap about where is the affordable housing for us?

The balance and acceptance which exists in the West End does not mean that race is not seen or felt. Racial classifications are a large part of the way people talk about and refer to each other. There is a consciousness of race and a need to fit people into fixed racial classifications. Nancy Guttman and her husband have lived in the community for just over a year. Nancy Guttman is Caucasian and her husband, Tam, is Asian. When Ms. Guttman and her husband first moved to the West End, they braced themselves for racial insults or at least rebuffs in the community. With a few minor exceptions, none were forthcoming.

While few overt comments were made, the couple did not go unnoticed. Tam walks to the train station almost daily. His hair is long and dark. He often wears it pulled back in a ponytail. People seldom make reference to his ethnicity, but when they do, they often mistake him for Native American. A Native American persona gives Tam a certain racial authenticity in the community as many African Americans view the plight of Native Americans as similar to their own. Nancy Guttman's features mark her as distinctively Caucasian. Mrs. Guttman has a small frame, pale face, and white hair. She too walks in the community. After about ten months of living in the neighborhood, Mrs. Guttman heard the first racial comment directed explicitly at her. While walking home from the MARTA station, she heard someone shout, "Hey. Hey you. Hey. Snow White." Nancy Guttman chuckled at the reference, but she did not reply. At first she was uncertain who the man was shouting to, but the Snow White comment made it abundantly clear.

Racial awareness does not necessarily lead to racial intolerance. Soon after purchasing the building she now occupies, Chika Moon, an Asian business owner, was constantly harassed by a homeless man outside her building. The homeless man recognized her Asian ancestry and called her "Chinese lady." Mrs. Moon is Korean American. After several highly inflammatory

encounters, Mrs. Moon called the man over to talk to him. Choosing her words carefully, Mrs. Moon explained her heritage to the man. Now, a year later the homeless man calls her “sister.” The label “sister” appears to be the homeless man’s way of accepting Chika Moon, a racial outsider, into the black community. This is consistent with the notion of boundary work, which argues that the people in a community make distinctions about the people they share space with in an attempt to frame who is an insider and who is an outsider (Lamont and Molnar 2002; Wilson and Taub 2006). A similar acceptance of a racial other into the black community can be found in Cheryl Simpson’s comments:

I have one friend; he has rented at least three or four places here...been here at least twenty years. He’s a brother from New York, he’s a white gentleman, but he’s into black power movement. He has moved probably on every other street in this neighborhood.

Despite his exterior, the gentleman’s belief in black power is enough for Cheryl Simpson to bestow the label “brother” on a Caucasian man. For Mrs. Simpson race is a mentality.

Various community members’ ideas about race are somewhat fluid, but in the coming years, green may be the only color which matters in the West End. At least that is what Amina Charles, president of the local neighborhood association, thinks. Ms. Charles views “green” as a proxy for other things. According to Amina Charles, the demographics that matter in the West End are not black and white; instead they are “education and income,” proxies for social class.

One of my neighbors said, ‘The Caucasians are coming in and now they’re [the Caucasians] saying ‘We’re here. We’re here!’ And I said to them, yeah they say they are here, but they’re also here doing stuff. They started the patrol...As long as they’re doing stuff... I don’t care if you’re black, blue, green, or yellow, as long as you are helping to elevate West End, I don’t give a damn what you are.

Ms. Charles has resided in the West End for 10 years. As she reflects back on her 10 year history with the community, she observes that early on the community seemed kind of stuck in a

“black vs. white mentality.” Now, Ms. Charles believes there is a strong willingness to bridge ties across racial and economic divides in an attempt to do what is good for the West End.

Conclusion: Common Ground --We're in this together

Racial and class tensions are revealed in respondents comments about the neighborhood and interactions within it. However, the deleterious impacts of mortgage fraud and a global financial crisis seem to have inspired many citizens to cooperate across racial and economic lines. Whatever their class, race, and gender, the residents of the West End share one thing in common: a desire to see the community not only survive, but thrive. Commonality allows people to underplay the differences that exist between them and highlight the common bonds. This story of a friendship that develops between two West End women illustrates that common bonds forge strong ties.

Ruth Marshall was the first black woman to purchase a home on her block (back in the 1970s). Soon after, another family, the Moore's, moved across the street -- the husband (a black man), his wife (a white woman), and their children all settled into the home. Ruth Marshall's children became friends with the Moore children, but Ms. Ruth and the woman did not become friends. They spoke. They were cordial. They were polite. But they were not friends. One day, that all changed.

The pain of loneliness knows no color. One day tragedy struck Ruth Marshall and her family. Ms. Marshall's daughter, then in her late twenties, died. The Moore family sprang into action. The husband, Willie Moore, gave Ms. Ruth food and a significant amount of money to help with expenses. A few years later, Mr. Moore was killed in a violent neighborhood incident having something to do with numbers gambling. Ms. Ruth knew Mrs. Moore's pain. Ms. Ruth was certain that her neighbor's untimely loss of a husband was every bit as painful as her own

untimely loss of a child. Their common bond caused these two women, who had done little more than wave at each other across the street for over a decade, to become the best of friends. Prior to this, all the women could see were their differences—one black, the other white; one Muslim, the other Christian; one married, the other a single mother. In the wake of tragedy, the differences seemed insignificant. Mrs. Moore and Ms. Marshall are now tied together. Neighboring forged a bond that time has not broken.

The financial crisis has tied residents of the West End together too. For better or worse, members of the neighborhood know that their individual fates and the fate of the community are linked. This realization encourages residents who formerly just lived in a community to begin to act like a community. One day in the uncertain future, the financial crisis will stabilize. What remains to be seen is whether the bonds forged in a time of economic crisis and upheaval will be strong enough to withstand economic resurgence.

CHAPTER 6.

ATTACHMENT MATTERS: A PLACE, SPACE, AND RACE- BASED ANALYSIS

While individuals' attachment to people and places is complex, it is seldom disputed. This chapter asks the question what factors heighten residents' attachment to the black, gentrifying neighborhoods under study? To answer this, I examine the influence of place on neighborhood attachment, neighborhood satisfaction, civic action (including neighboring), and racial identity formation.

Place attachment is the practical and affective ties which bond people to places (Greif 2009; Tuan 1977; Ponzetti 2003), and amidst a changing urban landscape, gaining an understanding of the factors that influence attachment in black gentrifying neighborhoods can aid in building stronger communities that both preserve African American heritage and are respecting of diversity.

The narratives most often disclosed by respondents about what brings and binds people to their neighborhoods are based on place, space, race, or some combination of those factors. Space is a physical construct. It embodies a locational/spatial component and includes things like buildings, streets, and natural structures as well as aspects of physical proximity or location in relation to other fixed, bounded geographical areas or things. On the other hand, place is a social construct. Places are sites of social interaction (Massey 1994), and they are contained in spaces (Orum and Chen 2003). Essentially, places are comprised of the social, historical, cultural, educational, economic, business, religious, and other institutions in the area. As such, places can be imagined, created, or reproduced. Residents evidence attitudinal and behavioral

aspects of neighborhood attachment consistent with Grief's (2009) description of place attachment.⁷⁵

The chapter begins with a discussion of sociological understandings of neighborhood attachment and then proceeds to an examination of attachment levels in the neighborhoods under study. Next, I emphasize the concepts of place, space, and race and illustrate their influence on the process of neighborhood attachment as well as how they impact the ways residents experience neighborhood attachment or fail to do so. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of symbolic neighborhood attachment.⁷⁶

Urban Neighborhoods as Communities

The term community means different things to different people. Some may view community as a purely spatial construct while others perceive it as a function of some type of cultural, social, or racial/ethnic kinship bonds. Hunter (1975) uses the term community to describe what we essentially have come to outline as a neighborhood.⁷⁷ In his study, Hunter finds that despite statistically significant declines in the “functional use” of neighborhood facilities like grocery stores, churches, movie theaters, doctors, and small purchases, and a statistically significant increase in the use of local banking services, there was no decline in community because during the same period the other two dimensions of community (see footnote 77) increased. Residents’ “informal neighboring” and cultural/symbolic “identification with the neighborhood” rose.

⁷⁵ Attitudinal attachment involves evaluation and sentiment. Evaluation addresses whether or not the neighborhood meets individuals’ sustenance needs while sentiment is a feeling of emotional connection to the area. Behavioral attachment includes involvement in neighboring and formal social or civic activities in the neighborhood.

⁷⁶ Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983:60) define “symbolic attachment” as a “sense of rootedness or centeredness.” As such, it is a feeling of belonging.

⁷⁷ Hunter (1975) outlines three “dimensions of community,” namely, neighborhoods as (a) spatial areas of functional use, (b) locales with cultural symbolic meaning, and (c) places of extensive social interaction. According to Hunter, causally linked declines in these “dimensions of community” would signal a “loss of community.”

It has been suggested that high poverty, black inner city neighborhoods suffer from a lack of social capital (Wilson 1996).⁷⁸ While the black gentrifying spaces under study are located in the inner city, they contain the critical mass of middle to upper middle class residents that Wilson argues provide stability and traditional values to the neighborhood through their mere presence in the community; however, economic stability and the presence of role models alone does not build a community. The maintenance of community is an active process, which requires a great deal of social capital. In the racially diverse study area of Rochester's 19th Ward, Hunter (1975) finds that residents actively work to create and maintain a "sense of community," even in the midst of racial diversity.⁷⁹ Social capital is a marker of social cohesion because it is indicative of the degree to which people can work together to get things done for their mutual benefit. Social capital includes individuals' networks, but it also includes a feeling of obligation that people have to one another (Coleman 1990). Several researchers have identified that black gentrification differs from mainstream gentrification in that unlike mainstream gentrifiers, the black gentry often feel a sense of obligation to their lower class neighbors (Boyd 2005; Moore 2005; Hyra 2006).

Putnam (1995, 1993) maintains that social capital is high in areas where engagement levels foster trust among residents. Collective efficacy, a feeling of trust between members of a community and willingness to intervene on behalf of those members, is related to the concept of social capital. According to Morenoff, Sampson, and Raudenbush (2001:3):

⁷⁸ Wilson's premise suggests that direct interaction across classes is not necessary to change the social outcomes of those members of the community who may be lower on the socio-economic scale. In recent years, researchers have challenged the portion of Wilson's premise that suggests when the black middle class left the inner city, they left the remaining citizenry without solid values. However, despite the challenge to a portion of Wilson's argument, few challenge the premise that relationships have an impact on individuals' social outcomes.

⁷⁹ According to the group's website, even today the established mission of the Rochester's 19th Ward Community Association is "to create a conscious multi-racial community where individual and cultural differences are celebrated and where people share a sense of community."

Just as self efficacy is situated rather than global (one has self-efficacy relative to a particular task), a neighborhood's efficacy exists relative to specific tasks such as maintaining public order. Viewed through this theoretical lens, collective efficacy is a task-specific construct that highlights shared expectations and mutual engagement by residents in local social control.

However, in his discussion of social networks in poor neighborhoods, Sanchez-Jankowski (2009:43) argues that individuals form associations out of need, not trust:

Thus individuals attempt to nurture personal relationships that they believe will secure the goods and services they might need in the future. Since most poor people think it is "who you know" that determines how well you will fare in life, relationships with individuals who will do one a favor at strategic times are seen as essential.

Thus even in cases where residents do not intuitively trust and feel responsible for each other, a sense of community may nevertheless emerge in cases where the personal incentives to create or develop community are great. In consideration of the arguments advanced by Putnam (1995, 1993), Coleman (1990), Hunter (1975), Greif (2009), and Sanchez-Jankowski (2009), I argue that neighborhood bonds and interaction levels (i.e., social capital) may be higher in gentrifying black neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Attachment and Satisfaction

Attachment has various forms and levels of intensity (Tuan 1977). Neighborhood attachment is a form of place attachment, and it takes many forms. Attachment to the neighborhood can manifest itself in ties to the ecology, institutions and establishments, people, culture, or traditions of an area. Symbolic meanings and place attachment tend to be higher in historic areas than other locales (Gieryn 2000). My interviews provide strong evidence of high levels of place attachment among most residents of the two historic black gentrifying Atlanta neighborhoods studied here. The data also suggest that residents' feelings of attachment to their

neighborhood are stronger or higher than their feelings of satisfaction with it. This section of the chapter provides supporting evidence for these conclusions.

I asked resident respondents in each study neighborhood to rate their level of attachment to the historic, black gentrifying neighborhoods in which they reside using a scale ranging from 1 (not very attached at all) to 10 (very attached; I never want to leave). These questions were asked well into the interview session and immediately after respondents were asked to reflect on the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements like “This neighborhood really feels like home to me;” “I think most of my neighbors in _____ like having me here;” “I frequently don’t feel respected or welcome here in _____;” “There is a lot of bickering and conflict among the people in this area;” and “_____ really means a lot to me, and I’d be sorry if I were to move away.” I did not want “knee jerk” sentimental responses to the questions about on neighborhood attachment and satisfaction. This placement of the questions allowed respondents the benefit of meaningful and systematic reflection on neighborhood dynamics and processes prior to answering.

Table 4, Resident Respondents’ Attachment Levels and Satisfaction Levels with Their Neighborhoods, reports mean satisfaction and attachment scores for various categories of respondents. The sample sizes are too small to run meaningful statistical tests, so I set forth the mean attachment levels for different groups of residents as a way to understand how attachment levels vary from group to group.

In both the Old Fourth Ward and the West End, respondents report higher mean attachment levels than levels of satisfaction. The mean attachment level in the Old Four Ward is 7.69 while the mean satisfaction level among the same and respondents is 7.00. In the West End, the mean attachment level is 7.38, and the mean satisfaction level reported among respondents is

Table 4. Resident Respondents' Attachment Levels and Satisfaction Levels with Their Neighborhoods

	Attachment		Satisfaction	
	OFW	WE	OFW	WE
Mean for all Respondents	7.69 ¹	7.38	7.00	6.69
	(25)	(24)	(25)	(24)
Old Timers (10 + yr residents)	8.12	9.29	5.81	7.50
	(13)	(7)	(13)	(7)
Newcomers (Less Than 10 years)	7.25	6.59	6.71	6.35
	(12)	(17)	(12)	(17)
Gentry	7.75	7.57	6.32	6.64
	(14)	(14)	(14)	(14)
Non-Gentry	7.64	7.10	6.95	6.75
	(11)	(10)	(11)	(10)
Blacks	8.13	7.50	7.15	6.78
	(20)	(20)	(20)	(20)
Non-Blacks	6.00	6.75	6.40	6.25
	(5)	(4)	(5)	(4)
Females	7.85	8.25	7.08	7.29
	(13)	(12)	(13)	(12)
Males	7.54	6.50	6.92	6.08
	(12)	(12)	(12)	(12)
Highly Satisfied (above mean)	8.44	8.31	-	-
	(8)	(13)	-	-
Not Satisfied (5 or less on satisfaction)	7.60	4.00	-	-
	(5)	(3)	-	-
Highly Attached (above mean)	-	-	6.9	7.5
	-	-	(15)	(13)
Not Attached (5 or less on attachment)	-	-	7.0	5.4
	-	-	(4)	(7)
High Income (\$200,000/yr or above)	8.20	8.00	7.90	7.00
	(5)	(1)	(5)	(1)
Low Income (\$34,999/yr or less)	7.60	7.80	6.70	7.10
	(9)	(5)	(9)	(5)

¹ number of cases

6.69. These scores suggest that respondents in the Old Fourth Ward are both more attached to and more satisfied with their neighborhood than West End respondents. I explain this as follows. Attachment is largely a function of identification. Despite the fact that the Old Fourth Ward is a broader geographic area than the West End, it seems to have a much stronger sense of neighborhood identity than does the West End. In part, geography may be responsible for the differentiation I noted. Various sections of the Old Fourth Ward appear to have a cohesive identity, but no singular identity appears to persist. For example, townhomes are prevalent in one area while tree lined streets with single family dwellings are found in another, and another area may contain a large number of public housing units. Even amidst the efforts by some to create a clear vision for the Old Fourth Ward's future separate and apart from its past, there is still a recognition and appreciation of that past (Inwood 2009). Therefore, a large part of sense of identity comes largely of its past while the West End is struggling to create a brand or identity for today. These results are consistent with Gieryn's (2000) findings that attachment is higher in historic areas.

Satisfaction is an element of attachment (Hunter 1975; Greif 2009); however, it is quite possible to be highly attached to an area with which one is not satisfied. These results are born out of my findings, which show that attachment levels in each neighborhood often run higher than satisfaction levels with the same neighborhoods. In each area, oldtimers express considerably higher levels of neighborhood attachment than neighborhood satisfaction levels. Specifically, Old Fourth Ward oldtimers express mean attachment levels of 8.12, but their level of satisfaction with the neighborhood is only 5.81. Similarly, in the West End, oldtimers express attachment levels of 9.29, but the mean satisfaction level with the neighborhood is only 7.50. Generally, oldtimers express higher levels of attachment and satisfaction than newcomers, but

this is not the case across all groups. Old Fourth Ward newcomers' attachment level is 7.25 (as compared with 8.12 for oldtimers), and their satisfaction and level with the community is 6.71 (as compared with 5.81 for oldtimers). In this case, Old Fourth Ward newcomers are more satisfied with the area than are Old Fourth Ward oldtimers. Several researchers suggest that length of time in the community increases attachment to the area (Elder, et al. 1996; Herting, et al. 1997). There is no research suggesting length of time in an area increases satisfaction with the area. The differences noted in oldtimers' attachment and satisfaction levels with their neighborhood can best be explained by these findings.

Sometimes respondents are both very satisfied with the neighborhood and very attached to it.⁸⁰ Other times, they are not. Interestingly, Old Fourth Ward residents who are highly satisfied with the neighborhood express a mean attachment level of 8.44, but those with satisfaction levels of five or less express a mean attachment level of 7.60. As the mean attachment level for all Old Fourth Ward respondents is 7.69, this demonstrates that it is possible to have lower levels of satisfaction but relatively high levels of attachment to the neighborhood.

In the West End, we find that those who are highly satisfied with the neighborhood express an attachment level of 8.31, but those who are not satisfied with the area express an attachment level of only 4.00. Raymond Flowers (4 on attachment, 2 on satisfaction) is one such resident. Mr. Flowers appreciates that the neighborhood is conveniently located (this makes it easy for his clients across the city to find him), but his concerns about "the populous" cause the area to lose some value to him:

The people here define the community... We as black people are quick to pass fault. It is called an 'n' mentality or attitude... I have nothing against the populous; however, the people... this whole group of people have one way of thinking—ghetto.... A ghetto attitude is somebody who is loud and very

⁸⁰ On a ten point scale, I deem scores above the mean as very satisfied.

belligerent. It is a mentality...the majority of the people here are really good people. That 1% can ruin it for everyone.

Raymond Flowers' tenuous attachment to the community is directly tied to a "ghetto mentality" which he admittedly states is only prevalent among 1% of the area's population. Mr. Flowers owns a condominium in the West End, but he is prepared to leave the area in the next year or two. Amidst the mentality he describes as "ghetto," Mr. Flowers comments that it is hard for "young people to escape the matrix." Ironically, both Raymond Flowers and his brother did just that. His attachment to the area is based largely on price and convenience. In this current economy, both of those are things he can get from a number of other in-town locations.

Old Fourth Ward residents who are highly attached (those reporting an attachment level in excess of the mean attachment level of 7.69, effectively eight or above) report a mean satisfaction score of only 6.90. But, in the West End, those individuals who are highly attached (again, those reporting a mean attachment score in excess of the mean of 7.38) report satisfaction levels of 7.50, which is comparable to the mean attachment level for West End respondents (7.38) and considerably in excess of the mean satisfaction score reported for all West End respondents (6.69). In this case, attachment shapes satisfaction.

Attachment is about social, cultural, and/or historical type bonds. Satisfaction, on the other hand, is more a function up of a neighborhood's geographical location and/or the existence and proximity of important services (like public transportation, amenities, and vital social services). Old Fourth Ward residents who are not attached to the area (those with attachment levels of five or less) have distinctively higher levels of satisfaction (7.00). Steve Thomas is a 7 on his level of satisfaction with the Old Fourth Ward, but his self reported attachment level to the area is only a five (5). Mr. Thomas states:

Economically, it's feasible living at this particular place. Like I said it's convenient. If you all have transportation, then you can afford to live anywhere you want to. [Here] the transportation is good as far as getting to different places, back and forth to a job, that type of thing. You have all your health facilities here that you can afford if you're on a fixed income or Medicaid, VA, that type of thing. So it's a more accessible thing that you have to do at a reasonable price I guess is the way to say it.

His comments evidence that his satisfaction is tied to the services the area provides and not to the area itself. Because the Old Fourth Ward provides a number of social services and accessible public transportation, Mr. Thomas is far more satisfied with the area than he is attached to it.

Sterling Woods is very attached to the Old Fourth Ward community (a 10 on a scale of 1 to 10), but his satisfaction level is only a 4 out of 10. Mr. Woods is a poor, black, Old Fourth Ward newcomer. His low level of satisfaction can be traced to places in the community where he feels unwelcome. He explains:

You can tell when somebody [is] judging you, trying to find [out your] past... They look at you trying to figure you out. If you want to figure me out, first, ask me. If you want to know me, ask me because what it looks like is not always what it appears to be.

Mr. Woods says he has "been high" and he has "been low," but he never judged others around him. He says alcohol claimed his past. According to him, the rash judgments of others threaten to claim his future. Mr. Woods indicates that when he enters stores in the Old Fourth Ward, he often feels marked as undesirable. Mr. Woods' economic constraints limit his transportation options and compel him to shop in the neighborhood, but he is unhappy with the way he is treated by area businesses. This feeling impacts his satisfaction with the neighborhood.

In contrast, a few Old Fourth Ward residents express high levels of attachment and satisfaction. Ruby Everson's self reported attachment score is a 10 out of 10 on attachment and a 9 on satisfaction. Ms. Everson is black, poor, over 80, and she has lived in the Old Fourth Ward most of her life. In explaining her 9 rating on satisfaction, Ms. Everson says:

Yes, we used to have supermarkets that we don't have any more on Edgewood Avenue. We had the A&P, and they don't even have A&P grocery stores no more, but that was the change to like Kroger's, and probably, I would like an A&P...[and] Well, they have deleted the transportation in the Old Fourth Ward, the [number]100 buses. They changed the numbers on one of them and they deleted one.

Ms. Everson's satisfaction needs are very basic: food and transportation. There are new supermarkets in the Old Fourth Ward, but they are located on the edges of the neighborhood.

Ms. Everson recalls when supermarkets were located on Edgewood Avenue, and she misses those days. As income levels in the area have risen, the area's population has gone down. With this, there has been a contraction in bus services. Ms. Everson laments this loss, but overall, she is still highly satisfied with the area.

West End oldtimer Ruth Marshall is in many ways a West End parallel to Ruby Everson. Ruth Marshall gives herself a 10 on attachment and 9 on satisfaction. Explaining her rating of 9 on satisfaction, Ms. Marshall says:

There is some things I'm not satisfied with but I'm going to say nine. We need to just kind of clean it [the neighborhood] up. Just got to clean up the streets and we can keep the streets and yards and things like we used to.

Her attention to the physical appearance of the neighborhood is largely tied to her personal story. Ms. Marshall is elderly and poor, but she keeps an immaculate yard. On the West End Tour of Homes, she never lets people come in to her home, but she often allows them to tour her gardens. When I gave her the \$25 interview honorarium, she said, "Oh now I can buy some more flowers." She seems to long for a time when people were more interested in maintaining their yards. According to Ms. Marshall, it is the only thing that dampens her satisfaction with the neighborhood.

In each neighborhood, old timers report higher levels of attachment and satisfaction than most or all other groups. Naomi Goldman is a white, single, upper class resident of the Old

Fourth Ward. Ms. Goldman describes her attachment level to the Old Fourth Ward as only a 1 or 2 on a scale of 10. Her satisfaction level is over two times as high – a 5 on a scale of 10. Ms. Goldman is a short term resident; she has lived in the Old Fourth Ward for two years. Ms. Goldman's comments illustrate her belief that time matters. Ms. Goldman indicates that if she were to spend more time in the community she would become more attached. Studies support the notion that attachment grows with time (Elder, et al. 1996; Herting, et al. 1997); however, her impending wedding means that she will be leaving the Old Fourth Ward. Despite her low level of attachment to the community, Naomi believes that her time in the neighborhood has been beneficial. She says:

I think I've changed... I think I have. I think I've seen that I really didn't have much cultural appreciation [for the community]. Even though I've grown up everywhere I don't really have much connection to this culture, and coming here I've started to appreciate it. I think I've changed, I think I've become more open now. Prejudice comes from not understanding, and I think that I understand a lot more, and I think that the more I get like that, the more I'm accepted here.

Ms. Goldman's comment suggests that her level of neighborhood attachment and satisfaction are both tied to her perceived acceptance in the community.

Places may be of great importance to people in the community, but sometimes attachment to cultural and social elements of the neighborhood is not enough to keep people in the community. Nigel Walters has lived in the West End for almost seven years. He has some college education, but did not complete all his degree requirements. Walters is an industrious man of modest means (he is working class) who takes great pride in his African and West Indian heritage.⁸¹ Mr. Walters values the West End community, but he says he would have no problem walking away from it. If he were to leave, Mr. Walters indicates he would miss some people,

⁸¹ During the course of our almost three hour interview, he revealed a number of business ventures that he has been or is currently involved in including photography, community organizing, and construction work. When I mentioned a service that my husband and I needed to have done, he gave me a card for that.

places, and things in the West End; however, he does not see himself as tied to the community.

He says:

You have to have a feeling of permanence to feel that way [attached], and with so much stuff going on right now in the neighborhood and the surrounding areas with this recession that we're in ... sometimes you can project like years ahead where you're going to be, and with the way things are going now... I got many compatriots that basically they're saying look if work opens up in the Caribbean or the Virgin Islands they are going. And I'm like, 'Yes I would too.' You know?

Mr. Walters works in the construction industry, and his comments suggest that he and his friends in the industry are resigned to the necessity of being somewhat nomadic in order to earn a living.

In the seven years Nigel Walters has been in the community, he has made ties, but none so lasting as to keep him here if more promising opportunities open up some place else. Mr.

Walters says:

I wouldn't be sorry to move away because I don't have, you would have to have some really deep roots to feel that way. And I haven't been here long enough to really develop those roots, and you know I've got some associations with decent people here, but a lot of people that I know in this neighborhood they are also like recent, you know?

According to Mr. Walters, time is necessary for lasting attachments to the community.

When circumstances change, people have to be willing to change with them. In the earlier paragraph, we discussed, Nigel, a working class African American man willing to leave his West End community in pursuit of better opportunities. Some middle and upper class residents share a similar willingness to leave. Melinda Galveston is an upper class, single, black, female resident of the Old Fourth Ward. Ms. Galveston describes herself as "very attached" to the Old Fourth Ward community. In addition to the Old Fourth Ward home that she shares with her mother, Ms. Galveston owns other properties in the community and moved both her father and her brother in to properties she owns in the community. Despite this high level of

attachment and an expressed desire to “remain in the community until death,” Ms. Galveston makes one thing clear: she looks upon her purchase as an investment. She says:

It’s like anything investing...you’re investing in the community to get returns, anything I invest in I’m looking for [a] return. I might love it too, but I’m looking for return. But the thing about it is people wait until something is pristine, then they want to invest, and then you can’t afford it.

Ms. Galveston goes on to say she would leave the city for the right opportunity — personal or professional — but she would keep her properties in the Old Fourth Ward.

Over and over again, residents describe social as well as economic bases of their attachment. Daniel Tepee is the white coffee shop owner, landlord and a builder, and he describes his enterprises in the Old Fourth Ward community as an investment. He invests in the community because he “sees value in the community.” He explains:

When I say value, for me that’s not simply economic. It’s also things I’m interested in. Because I have an investment, I have to do things.

Faith Howard also looks at her West End home purchase as an investment. Mrs. Howard considers the West End to be one of the best areas in Atlanta; however, she cautions “it’s not immediately the best because you will have to sit on your property for a minute before you do see that gain.” Mrs. Howard intends to remain in the West End. Her long term commitment stems from her belief that the West End is both a good place to live and a good investment.

These comments suggest residents view the places that they live as social and economic spheres. Each element—the social and economic—is important, but attachment may wane if residents perceive that the potential in either sphere is severely diminished. This is consistent with Logan

and Molotch's (1987) findings that the urban landscape has both an "exchange value" and a "use value" for parties.⁸²

Exchange value is obtained through enterprises (such as renting property) which allow individuals to make money from the land. Use value, on the other hand, comes from the enjoyment of the land through its utilization. Logan and Molotch (1987) describe a tension which often results from these two competing interests. The tension between the exchange value sought by land owners and use value sought by renters is often aggravated by the interests of a third group, the "business elites," who guide the growth and transformation of the city. Often times, the "growth" (i.e., development) the power elites champion (under the auspices that growth is good for all) improves the exchange value for a few while lowering the use value for the many. In my interviews it is clear that homeowners in both the Old Fourth Ward and the West End are concerned about both the exchange and use value of their property. Part of some homeowners' attachment to the areas is based upon perceived high values in one or both spheres. Next, I further discuss how place, space, and race influence attachment.

Place

Urban neighborhoods are not isolated islands; they are situated in a place. Place impacts neighborhood attachment levels. Agnew (1987) outlines three distinct elements of place: location, locale, and a "sense of place." Location refers to a place's role in the "global milieu." A place's locale is its institutional, social, and geographic context, and its "sense of place" is its self-identity.⁸³ Certain places are more conducive to certain things, including social

⁸² Logan and Molotch assert that traditional (human ecological models) fail to consider the special use values various groups derive from the place. Landowners, renters, and business owners all receive distinct benefits from the place they are located.

⁸³ Many definitions of place merge or include aspects of what I term as space—a physical construct including a locational/geographic component.

activities, business opportunities, and transportation opportunities. Additionally, according to Flint et al. (2000: 3), “place matters because it structures the way we behave.”

Long term Old Fourth Ward resident Johnetta Hope’s comments illustrate the importance of a sense of place or self identity. Ms. Hope rates herself as a 10 on attachment to the Old Fourth Ward, but a 7 in terms of satisfaction with the neighborhood. Her words reveal that her sense of place and community is strongly rooted in an ability (or lack thereof) to utilize the neighborhood for important daily social and economic needs (i.e., what Hunter [1975] called the functional use dimension of local community):

We have been able to accomplish [a lot] in redeveloping the residential area but because I also live here... I am now looking for some vibrancy and aliveness in places to attend and be a part of on Sweet Auburn. I want to be able to have dinner there. I want to be able to go to the theatre there. I want to be able to listen to music. I want to be able to bank there. I want to be able to do business on Auburn Avenue. And as a resident, having been here for 13 years I still have to drive outside of my community to do my grocery shopping, my banking. Uhm, we now have restaurants in the community which is really great. We have small businesses in the community. But there isn’t that sense of place and oneness.

The sense of “oneness” that Johnetta Franklin describes hearkens back to a time when the Old Fourth Ward’s “sense of place” came largely from its identity as a segregated black community. Although then and now, no monolithic black experience existed, the somewhat meteoric post-desegregation rise of the black middle class (Pattillo 1999a, 2005; Lacy 2004, 2007; Jaret 1986/1987; and Adelman 2004) has increased the diversity and range of social and cultural experiences black residents seek. Today, a number of businesses do line Auburn Avenue.⁸⁴ In fact, almost all the services she outlines as desirable and fostering a “sense of place and oneness”

⁸⁴ For example, an October 8, 2008, census of the businesses located on one block of Auburn Avenue (between Piedmont and Jesse Hill Jr. Street) identified the following enterprises: Renaissance Walk (a condominium community), Negril Caribbean Cuisine restaurant, the Peacock (a former night club; now closed but under new ownership), Safeco Insurance Company, Sweet Auburn Grocery, Silver Moon Barbershop (said to be the oldest black shop in Atlanta), Big Bethel AME Church Federal Credit Union, Big Bethel Church Youth Recreation Center, Sweet Auburn Bistro (a new restaurant set to open later that month; it did not open until almost six months later in April 2009), and Auburn Dental Care.

already exists in the community. What is apparent is that the banking, music, dinner, and theatre options which this member of the black gentry seeks are not present. Because of their absence, Ms. Hope believes the community lacks a sense of oneness. In the midst of great economic diversity present in the area, it is unfair to assess the presence or absence of a sense of community, place, and/or oneness, on the presence or absence of services only accessible to an elite few of economic means.

Much like a song or a work of art, neighborhoods as places can transport individuals to another point in time and even inspire people to strive to be better. In this research I have observed that people take two approaches in understanding and relating to these two neighborhoods. One is highly reverential to the real or imagined history of the place; the other looks more to the place's future. Both approaches – a reverence for history and a hopefulness about the future – are revealed in respondents' stories that depict two forms of "place making" and place attachment. One form occurs mainly via learning about and identifying with social, cultural, economic, or historic institutions in the community. The other is a more agentic and efficient form of place making and occurs as residents consciously and unconsciously work to create bonds with each other that cross social/cultural, racial/ethnic, and gender boundaries in order to reach common goals (e.g., to achieve neighborhood stability).⁸⁵ In the next two sections I describe each of these approaches in greater detail.

⁸⁵ This second approach is reminiscent of the "community of limited liability" concept (Hunter and Suttles 1972). It presents a rational view of why neighbors bond or feel attached. In this community, high levels of interaction help to produce neighborhood stability. It is a kind of middle ground of attachment where people will invest themselves and their money, but only to a point. That is why it is a rational view of attachment. This should be contrasted with attachment predicated upon emotions. In the community of limited liability, residents like the community, and they are willing to invest in it; however, in the event residents feel that their investment or safety is jeopardized, many are willing to pull out (See Janowitz 1952; Greer 1962, 1972; Kasarda and Janowitz 1974).

Place Attachment

History is everywhere in the Old Fourth Ward. The neighborhood's historic significance is found in century old homes, street names, and institutions. Some of the Old Fourth Ward's richest cultural treasures include the Martin Luther King Jr. Birth Home, National Center for Nonviolent Social Change, and National Park Site. Reverence for these community places extends across racial and economic divides; however, the Old Fourth Ward was not always a desirable residential area. Councilman Martin recalls what it was like when he moved into the community:

Some folks didn't quite understand why I would buy in this neighborhood, and where it was. They'll go like oh, 'what is that?' You know. It's not like where is that, you know? I didn't have a name for the community. Back then Old Fourth Ward definitely wasn't cool. Little Vietnam, it used to be called. So it wasn't like "in," but it was a house. I mean in a key historic district. It was cool.

Although Councilman Martin (10 on attachment, 8 on satisfaction) grew up in a middle class home in Southwest Atlanta, he fondly recalls spending a good amount of his childhood visiting friends and places in the Old Fourth Ward. His next comment makes clear how strongly his sense of place attachment to the OFW is based on fond memories of people living there and earlier experiences (some from the days of the civil rights movement) in this neighborhood:

Just a few blocks from where he [a family friend] lived, there was a place called Freedom House where Civil Rights workers lived, and they would go to Mississippi and various places organizing their campaigns....But the real thing is--I mean on top of that we used to always come to Auburn Avenue to SCLC, to the King Center, to all these little old greasy spoon restaurants and talk to people---Mr. Shepherd's restaurant. And we'd [Martin and his siblings] be in the back rooms of these places playing on the typewriters or mimeograph machines and stuff. They didn't have computers and stuff. But one of the places we used to go was Wheat Street Gardens and that was—a guy named Big Rupert Atkinson was my father's---one of my father's--- what I think was one of the best friends. And he lived in the housing projects, so we would go over there on a regular basis and see him on the weekends, and just spend time over there with him. So I learned about friendship, I learned a lot of stuff and we would go and help families.

Reverence for these community areas in the Old Fourth Ward also extends globally. Other important places in the Old Fourth Ward that were mentioned in interviews include institutions important to African Americans like WERD radio station (the first African American radio station in the nation), Atlanta Daily World (first daily black newspaper), Atlanta Life Insurance Company, Butler Street YMCA, the Peacock Club, the SCLC headquarters; and historic black churches like Ebenezer Baptist, Wheat Street, and Big Bethel. When streets are mentioned, the name Auburn Avenue always comes up. Many respondents reveal strong feelings for these places and often suggest that living in the area uplifts and empowers them to overcome obstacles.

Randall Evans (5 on attachment, 10 on satisfaction) moved into the Old Fourth Ward area about three years ago. At the time, Mr. Evans was “on the verge of being homeless.” Although Mr. Evans was new to the area, he knew about the Old Fourth Ward.

This is historic... really...I can walk to the King Center. I could go to a whole lot of places that I used to look at ... just be able to look at it on TV. I went to the King Center, signed my name in the book. I tell my son about that...I says yeah, when you come down you go to the King Center. You just see your father’s name in the book.

Although Mr. Evans has no pride in his current living situation (he is poor, and he describes himself as still being on the verge of homelessness), he takes extreme pride in being able to reach out and touch “his” history. The neighborhood’s history fills Mr. Evans with hope for his future. Although he does not relish his son seeing his current living conditions, he expresses a strong desire for his son to see his “father’s name in the book.”

Like the Old Fourth Ward, there are social, historical, and cultural places in the West End which are significant to its residents, business owners, and stakeholders. These places include religious institutions like West Hunter Street Baptist and the Shrine of the Black Madonna; cultural attractions like the West End Performing Arts Center, Hammond’s House, and Wren’s

Nest; and socially and historically important black educational institutions in an abutting neighborhood.⁸⁶ Although none of the West End's institutions can vie with the Martin Luther King Historic District in terms of attendance or awareness from those outside the community, the institutions are venerable establishments to the people of the West End.

Yusef Allen (8 on attachment, 7 on satisfaction) is a West End old timer who is facing economic hardship. A few years ago, he used to command an upper middle class salary. Now, he classifies as poor. When he lost his home, Mr. Allen moved in with his sister in Westview, on the edge of the West End. I met Mr. Allen in a popular West End coffee shop. He calls the shop "his office." Mr. Allen likes the coffee shop because he says it is one of the only places in the neighborhood where you can buy a \$1.50 cup of coffee and stay all day without anyone bothering you. Mr. Allen likes that. It reminds him of the West End community he knew in 1976, when he first moved to Atlanta. In recalling "the way it used to be," Mr. Allen says:

It was...there were a lot of black conscious people, who were getting into or who were vegetarian. This was the cultural center of the community. You had a lot of activity going on from the Black Panthers.... There were a number of bookstores up and down the areas...what else...the black theatre groups started around that time too and the People's Survival Theatre, and then of course the arts and the...what was it back then...it wasn't called ...oh of course, the Arts Center, but Walter Dallas was running the theatre group that was there at the time. And so you had a number of things happening, and everything seemed to be around here in the West End area. The Here and Now restaurant, the Beautiful Restaurant was here...[There was] a cultural diversity, a cultural awareness; that higher consciousness; spiritual growth, was underscored. That's not here yet, but places like this [the coffee shop we were sitting in] and a couple other places, can kind of regenerate that, you know?

Mr. Allen is hopeful that the same kind of community which once existed can be recreated. His comments illustrate his belief that "places" can generate a sense of community. In fact, the

⁸⁶ Some of the most venerable social institutions in the West End are actually outside its "official" borders. People are very fluid about boundary lines in this community. The AUC center campuses (Morris Brown, Spelman, Morehouse, and Clark Atlanta) are considered by many respondents to be in the West End, and borders for the neighboring communities of Beecher, Donnelly, and Westview are vague or non-existent to many.

presence of a few “places” that regenerate the community spirit he nostalgically recalls fill him with that hope.

This form of place attachment is held by others in the community. Dennis Newcomb pastors a church in the West End. When the church Pastor Newcomb’s leads moved to the West End, Mr. Newcomb was given a broad education on the area. He says, “I have heard from others who receive me that the West End once in many ways was a driving economic, industrial part of the city.” Repetition of stories about the area’s glorious past have the potential to change residents’, stakeholders’, and business owners’ current perceptions of the area.

Length of time in a neighborhood has the potential to bond residents to the area, but for some, their attachment to the gentrifying communities under study began long before becoming residents. Johnetta Hope, discussed earlier, is the President of a community development corporation located in the Old Fourth Ward and a neighborhood resident. Ms Hope is a community old timer now, but the neighborhood meant something to her before she became a homeowner. She says:

One of the most important things that I value about this community is the beloved community and vision of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The fact that he was born in this community, grew up in this community, and still has a presence in this community through historical institutions is of paramount importance to me. I am a child of the fifties and sixties, and my first entrée into social justice in the Civil Rights Movement was when Martin Luther King Jr. came to Washington with the Poor People’s Campaign. I was 13 years old, and we were told not to go down to that March, and my cousin and I, who were very forward thinking, went.

Ms. Hope and others are inspired by the thought of moving into the same community where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spent his formative years. Subtle references to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. abound in the Old Fourth Ward. An advertisement for a newly constructed condominium building on Auburn Avenue bears this tag line: “At last: A dream home in the neighborhood where a dream was born.”

Memory and Nostalgia.

Memory and nostalgia are powerful and compelling tools in the place making tool kit. Some of the memories revealed by old timers in the two communities are contested. One old timer recalls a West End devoid of crime where people slept with unlocked doors, while another neighbor on the same street describing the same period recalls a community so laden with crime that little old ladies were too afraid to go outside to cash their Social Security checks and another neighbor was violently murdered in a numbers related incident.

Similar distortions are present in the stories of the Old Fourth Ward. One neighbor recalls a tree lined street with raked lawns and little old ladies sitting on porch stoops full of flowers while another recalls traveling through the community with a gun because of the constant threat of danger. To each, the community they recall is real and true. These contested memories highlight the subjective nature of perception. In each case, respondents are attracted to or repelled by the community they perceive. Often times, the community they are drawn to is the one they remember. Sometimes it is an imagined community, but sometimes, respondents reflect a deep attachment to the community that exists right now, with all its flaws.

In each community some respondents expressly communicate intent to create the “beloved community” Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. addressed. The late Coretta Scott King, (King 2005) wife of the slain civil rights leader, described the “beloved community” thusly:

[In the] beloved community, the values of caring and compassion will drive policy toward the world-wide elimination of poverty and hunger, racism and all forms of bigotry and violence. The beloved community is not a place, but a state of heart and mind, a spirit of hope and goodwill that transcends all boundaries and barriers and embraces all creation.

While the “beloved community” is not a place, its manifestation occurs in a place. I contend that efforts to create the “beloved community” are in fact attempts at place-making.⁸⁷ Here, residents seek (or espouse the intent) to build a “community” where human potential can be realized and dignity and respect for all prevails.

Active Place-Making: Socially Constructing the Local Community

As social beings, people are constantly changing, and attendant to these changes, their attachment levels to various places are also likely to change as needs, interests, age, and circumstances shift. Attachment is the very foundation of place making.⁸⁸ Place making connects us to places through our memories, but it also is a process that allows us to create or recreate places of our choosing. When the community people seek does not exist, people are faced with a number of choices. Some leave the community in search of the desired one. Some may endeavor to create the community they desire (Hankins 2007).

Sometimes neighborhood boundary lines are so fluid that even the residents of the neighborhoods do not know where they end and begin. When I began my interviews, I included a question that asked interviewees to take a piece of paper and sketch out their mental maps of the study neighborhood. Most interviewees were very uncomfortable with this request, and I eventually omitted it from the interview process. If residents inside the study neighborhoods struggle with knowing the boundaries of the areas, it is no wonder that outside residents do as well. Both neighborhoods undertook a project to place street topper signs throughout the neighborhoods. Old Fourth Ward resident Tony Miller says such efforts give the area a distinct sense of identity. In addition to street sign toppers, there is a new fence identifying a point of

⁸⁷ See also Inwood (2009c), “Searching for the Promised Land: Examining Dr. King’s Concept of the Beloved Community.”

⁸⁸ See the Project for Public Spaces website (http://www.pps.org/info/bulletin/what_is_placemaking) for “a place-centered approach to helping citizens improve public spaces and make great communities” Its supporters seek to create public “places of the soul, that uplift and help us connect with each other.”

entry into the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood. The street sign toppers and fence are not the only efforts by Old Fourth Ward residents to create a community. Stakeholder and resident Johnetta Hope describes her individual efforts to build a sense of community in the area as well as the efforts of her organization:

Yes there is a sense of neighborhood and community [here]. In fact, my neighbors have a set of keys to my house, and I have keys to their house. That's just how it is. We built that. Now taking off my hat as President of my organization and my NPU hat, my goal is to bring [us] together as a holistic community. Not just your separate pieces of it... [W]e pull people out of their houses and that we have activities where people can come and meet each other and get that sense of neighborhood.

Hope's words make it clear that the sense of community (she terms it "neighborhood") that exists is something the residents of the Old Fourth Ward built. It did not naturally exist; however, it can be cultivated through efforts like the ones she cites.

Cheryl Simpson (9 on attachment, 7 on satisfaction) believes the West End is on the verge of a turnaround. Mrs. Simpson and her husband moved to the West End over three decades ago. They indicate they believe in the neighborhood because they know "its working class roots." Mrs. Simpson describes the community as "scattered and tattered," yet full of potential. The potential of the community came from its people. The Simpsons surmise that the working class people of the West End will be willing to "work" to create a better neighborhood.

These acts of civic participation are viewed by some residents as attempts to create a better neighborhood, but they can also be seen as place-making (Martin 2003a). In recent years, a small cadre of oldtimers, and a larger group of newcomers, business owners, and stakeholders in the West End have endeavored to frame the community in a transformative light. The groups'

efforts include a growing urban gardening movement, the formation of a private security patrol to police the area, and the renaissance of the West End Tour of Homes.⁸⁹

Urban Gardening.

The urban gardening initiatives in the West End derive directly from the neighborhood's assets – many vacant lots (due to the housing crisis and the West End's severe mortgage fraud problem) and untapped human potential. Some respondents call urban farming a signature of the West End community. Currently, there are seven urban gardens in the West End. One sits just outside of the boundaries of the community in Westview, but is still perceived by many to be located in the West End. Another garden is located at Brown Middle School and students at the school have the opportunity to participate. A few community gardens already existed in the community, but as the number of vacant properties began to soar, people (outside and inside the neighborhood) began to treat those vacant lots as dumping grounds. An organization called Creating Vibrant Communities (CVC), a 501(c)(3) agency located in West End, Atlanta, set about to address the problem.⁹⁰

Several of the board members of CVC are West End newcomers. They come from a variety of races, ethnicities, income, and educational levels, but each shares a concern for improving the lives (physical, mental, social, and psychological) of West End residents as well as their enjoyment of the public space. Many of them are active in the local neighborhood planning unit, NPU-T. The urban garden movement is one means through which to achieve that goal.⁹¹ CVC's Urban Agriculture Program, was started in response to requests from NPU-T's Community Food Project. The Community Food Project's goals (to reclaim spaces in the

⁸⁹ The use of the term group is not meant to suggest that one formal association or uniform body is responsible for all the initiatives in the area.

⁹⁰ CVC is dedicated to building sustainable urban communities by helping the communities to discover their assets.

⁹¹ The Our West End Newsletter (OWEN) is another initiative of this group.

neighborhood and to provide safe, affordable fresh produce) coincide with those of CVC. The group secured a grant and several donations (including donations of land behind Brown Middle School), and they reclaimed some of the abandoned and vacant lots; however, individuals have to pay in order to take vegetables from the CVC Urban Farm. Those who work (laying beds, weeding, watering, etc.) the gardens pay less, but (presumably) everyone pays.

The sight of things growing on the property is a visible reminder to everyone that this property is cared for, and it was not to be dumped upon. According to Fraser (2000), urban gardens serve more than just a practical function. Urban gardens have symbolic meaning.

Fraser says:

Think for a minute about the symbolic meaning behind urban gardens that are housed in once vacant lots. The people who build these spaces not only change the physical environment but infuse the space with symbolic meaning, perhaps a message that people still live in the area and possess hope.

Describing the urban farming movement which took place in New York City, Kurtz and Smith (2003:193) state:

New York City residents began building community gardens in the early 1970s as a means of creating small patches of green amid the crumbling walls that characterized the urban blight that afflicted the city at the time. In community gardens, neighbors shared common green spaces where they could grow food to supplement their grocery budgets and plant flowers and trees to beautify their respective locales.

Like the blooms in the garden, the West End neighborhood stands poised to rise. Dumping still occurs, but the neighborhood development association's Beautification Committee arranges regular clean-ups of the area. Additionally, the local City Council representative for the West End resides in the neighborhood, and her office arranges for community service workers to clean up the area as well. Because the property is privately owned, the city has no obligation to keep or maintain the gardens; however, some urban gardens have been located on sites that were

previously abandoned by owners. In the event such lots become unsightly or unkept, the city has an obligation to find and cite the owners.

Although the CVC hopes to pursue other projects, the urban gardens are still closely aligned with their objectives. Many urban neighborhoods complain that low quality fruits and vegetables are available in the neighborhood stores. Instead of just talking about living a healthier lifestyle; the gardens empower the neighborhood to live a better, healthier lifestyle.

Urban gardens have physical and psychological benefits; however, at least one long time resident of the West End sees them as a source of discord. Despite her intense love of gardening, Ruth Marshall does not participate in the CVC's urban farming initiatives. She recalls the West End's early efforts at community gardens, and the issues they raised. Ms. Marshall says:

Well, a lot of the older people wanted something to do and then some of the young people enjoyed you know, wanting to have a community garden and we started the youth community garden over on, oh God I can't even remember the street, but anyway we had a lot of success and even the city gave us seeds and everything... I just didn't participate in the gardens or anything anymore...It was a lot of conflicts in the gardens and peoples was giving their children and neighbors and all of that stuff. First I was concerned. I didn't care who took the food [if they needed it] ...but some people would not take just what they need; they're going to take a lot more, it got like that.

Ms. Marshall is aware of the CVC's current efforts at urban farming; however, she prefers to tend to her own garden. Ms. Marshall has lived with economic constraints her whole life, and she believes that anyone in a community should be able to take what they need from the community garden. In her garden she always grows more than she needs, and she shares what she grows with her neighbors. She also does not mind if someone in need takes something from her garden.

Chris Ford (8 on attachment, 7 on satisfaction) is a member of CVC and a six year resident of the West End. He is also member of the black gentry. As such, he lacks both the

long term resident perspective which Ruth Marshall possesses and the severe economic constraints she has by virtue of being poor. When commenting on the gardens, Mr. Ford says:

We have at least four urban gardens here...yeah, in the neighborhood, it's kind of...it's good because, you know, we have some vacant lots and some people are using them for...to produce things... The vacant lots before they get turned into a garden they were just kind of like illegal dumping grounds and whatnot. And, you know, some people had spent a lot of time, you know, cleaning up the area and if you put a garden on it...

In Chris Ford's estimation, the urban gardens solve a lot of the neighborhood's problems. CVC is a 501(c)(3) corporation funded by several grants. It has limited resources, and so it requires residents to pay as much as \$210 a season to receive the proceeds of the garden.⁹² This amount may seem modest to Chris Ford, a member of the black gentry, but Ruth Marshall does not view it as such. Some crime in the area is a result of need, putting a garden in a vacant lot may clean up the area, but it does not do anything to reduce need in the area. Ms. Marshall would give the vegetables to anyone in the area in need.

The Private Security Patrol.

Right around the same time that the West End community decided to reclaim its vacant lots, a group of people (mostly young, white, college educated newcomers to the community) decided to create a private security patrol. The West End Neighborhood Development association organized the private security patrol in response to an increase in break ins (both home and car) in the neighborhood.⁹³ Residents, mainly newcomers, believed that something needed to be done to combat the rash of crimes. According to my interviews, many of the long term residents accept crime as a part of the urban landscape in the West End; by contrast, several

⁹² That cost can be reduced by as much as \$50 if members work in the garden.

⁹³ The West End Neighborhood Development Association manages the initiative. The group is careful to hire off duty officers who actually police the West End beat. These officers already have a level of familiarity with the community. All participants in the patrol have the officer's phone number, and the officer is encouraged to stop at the houses of participants for an initial introduction.

newcomers are seeking to create a safer community through efforts like the Security Patrol. Such efforts are a form of place making. Like the urban farming initiatives, the Security Patrol is a visible reminder that people care about the neighborhood and their neighbors, and that there is dissatisfaction with the level of City services.

Participation in the private security patrol is voluntary. Participants are expensed quarterly. The cost is about \$70.00 per quarter for private residents and about \$130 per quarter for business owners. Some West End residents can afford this cost; others cannot, but all benefit from the service. Newcomer Chris Ford (a member of the black gentry) explains:

I mean the community has...I guess I had some issues with the closing of the fire station, but I mean everybody has rallied around just the property taxes being too high...Yeah and it's a very common concern that crosses all kinds of lines. Yeah, across the board right now that's a concern. ..Public safety [is a concern]...we also have a private patrol. So public safety and that's organizing to get the private security patrol has been a big issue. Yeah. Basically there's no...it's not mandatory...it's volunteer, but even with it being volunteer I mean it started off with 75 people....I think some have dropped off and some have gone. So it's probably still around 75. Okay, yeah, as new people come in, they usually sign up.

According to Chris Ford, newcomers are more likely to financially contribute to the security patrol than old timers. Participants seem pleased with the security patrol.

In addition to a private security patrol, neighbors have become more vigilant about spotting and reporting all types of crime in their neighborhood from dumping to begging at entrances and exit ramps to the highway. However, in my interviews I found that poor residents of the study neighborhoods are much more likely to express a belief that you should mind your own business. Some of these comments illustrate this feeling. Melody Johnson says “You stay to yourself. It’s a smart way to be.” Her companion, Steve Thomas echoes this belief saying, “It’s called survival”. In their estimation, people who pretend not to see criminal or suspicious activity going down, survive, but those who “stick their noses in other folks business” do not.

By contrast, one poor, black West End resident always makes certain that he keenly observant of what is going on around his West End apartment. He is so vigilant that residents playfully call him “the lookout man.” Describing his watchful eye, he says quite simply, “A bullet don't know nobody, so once they're going to be shooting you can be in the wrong place at the wrong time.” By being ever mindful of his surroundings, he hopes to avoid being the victim of a bullet meant for someone else.

The Neighborhood Tour of Homes.

According to one West End resident, the West End’s greatest resource is its people. Like its residents, the West End’s housing stock also brings great value to the community. After a three year hiatus, the neighborhood association successfully revived the neighborhood’s Tour of Homes. In discussions and meetings about the Tour, people were very forthright about their desire to lure people into the community and showcase the best housing stock the West End has to offer. In fact, one aim of the Tour is for potential residents and investors to view the area and its people in a more positive light.

People see what the available housing stock looks like now (largely in disrepair), but few have the vision to see what it can be. Chris Ford explains:

Well, I mean, you know, I've done inventory of it and the past three years, actually we've gotten like 70 sales. And of those, I mean, some of them are investments, I mean, you're getting at least 30 people to move in, which is surprising. I mean, before like maybe 1999, you would only have less than half of that.

The Tour of Homes allows the community to showcase “the possibilities.” There is also a growing recognition among many neighborhood advocates that the Tour of Homes should celebrate the neighborhood’s past as well as its future. Highlighting the past of the area is an overt attempt to invoke what Orum and Chen (2003) term a “sense of placeness.”

The “sense of placeness” which Orum and Chen (2003) outline involves connections to places. These connections (the feeling of being at home, a sense of community, a sense of identity, and a distinct sense of past or future) imbue places with meaning. In the case of the West End Tour of Homes, Tour organizers made a conscious decision to lure people with former ties to the community to the Tour by highlighting buildings (including Brown Middle School, the Wren’s Nest, and West Hunter Street Baptist Church) of historic, social, cultural, or personal importance to people.

The Old Fourth Ward has a distinct “sense of placeness” too. All of the elements of a “sense of placeness” (the feeling of being at home, a sense of community, a sense of identity, and a distinct sense of past or future) can be found in the area, but the most prominent one is the last—a distinct sense of past or future. Every single respondent I interviewed in the Old Fourth Ward made mention of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his legacy. Additionally, respondents called the area “Striver’s Row” for blacks, a “Mecca for black capitalism in the South,” a “community,” a “black area,” and “home.”

Place appears to be an important factor in the formation of several identities, including a collective neighborhood identity. Like race, class, and gender, place is a significant factor in identity formation (Gieryn 2000; Keith and Pile 1997). Of course, places can evoke negative sentiments too. Respondents in both communities evidence a strong place-based attachments and repulsions. Place has its appeal, but space may also prove a significant basis of community formation.

Space

Space is different than place. When I use the term space, I conceive of it both as a function of physical distance and social distance. In the context of physical distance, space is

most often relevant to respondents in terms of proximity/access to other areas of the city. As it relates to social distance, space is viewed in multiple contexts including potential for conflicts or interaction in the public space and the appropriate uses and utilization of the public space. Space is a factor in attachment; however, in my interviews it came through more tenuously than race or place based attachment. In its most concrete forms, the significance of space is noted in discussions about: i) the benefits of living in a convenient location; and ii) what kind of “places” people would like to experience or create in the “public spaces” of the neighborhoods.

Location Matters: Physical/Geographical Constructs of Space

Some residents are attracted to the conveniences of in-town living. Physical proximity to downtown and other areas of the city cannot be undervalued, especially in a metropolitan area like Atlanta which boasts the second longest average commute time in the nation.⁹⁴

Additionally, residents still recall gas prices in excess of \$4.00 per gallon, and some are fearful that high gas prices will return. Therefore, the convenient physical location of the Old Fourth Ward and the West End (close to downtown and near public transportation) is highly valued.

Claude King and his wife, members of the black gentry, are also new residents of the Old Fourth Ward. Two years ago, they purchased a condominium in renovated factory space. Mr. King explains why:

Because I do work from home, I have the luxury of being in the building with several other home-based business owners, and it’s a centralized location. I’m close to the airport and things like that. So that’s very important. It’s closer to my wife’s job. I think that was the key thing. That was the key thing, so it cut down on her commute every day.

The virtues of in-town living most often extolled in my interviews include proximity to downtown, centrality of access to other places in the Atlanta metro area, savings on gasoline,

⁹⁴This information is taken from a report by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), a private firm out of Texas. The firm studied congestion growth from 1994 through 2000.

amenities of the building or neighborhood amenities, and a landscape that is not “cookie-cutter,” as many perceive the suburbs to be.

The Old Fourth Ward and West End neighborhoods have significant appeal to many residents because they each offer a convenient location. Elizabeth Battle is an Old Fourth Ward old timer. According to Ms. Battle, her neighborhood’s strategic location makes it one of the “best neighborhoods in Atlanta.” Tony Simpson agrees. According to Mr. Simpson, his strategic Old Fourth Ward location affords him the luxury of fulfilling all his needs within a 2 ½ mile radius of his home. Mr. Simpson and his wife are each able to go to work, their child’s school, attend church, and eat out within their community. By contrast, Mr. Simpson indicates that he has friends who miss the important activities in their children’s lives because they are “stuck” in Atlanta traffic, so he encourages all his friends to look at in-town living. Melinda Galveston agrees. Ms. Galveston can walk to work (just two miles away), but she often drives because of other obligations outside the city. Proudly, Ms. Galveston claims, “You can get anywhere in the city from Boulevard.”

Space has both spatial and social elements; the former is more concrete while the latter is abstract. Above, I examined respondents’ points of view about space from the perspective of location. Next, I discuss how the arrival of new groups of residents and redevelopment plans for the areas have impacted and changed the uses of the public space.

Public Places, Public Spaces

This section examines the ways public space influences social identities in the neighborhoods. Space is a source of accord in the communities, but it can also breed discord. Space as location is always viewed by respondents as a positive feature of the neighborhood, but not all aspects of space are viewed so favorably. Space-related matters, like the appropriate

utilization of public areas and how much social distance should exist between people in the neighborhoods, are potential sources of unity and conflict. New uses of the public space are underway in the Old Fourth Ward and the West End. The dynamics of each of these matters—appropriate use of public space, social distance issues and new uses of public space—are discussed next.

Appropriate Use of Public Space.

Earlier studies of black gentrifying neighborhoods reveal that the way space is conceived and utilized has the power to transform the way people live, work, play, and interact in the environment (Jackson 2001, Taylor 2002). It can even change the physical landscape of the community. Tony Miller, introduced earlier, heads one of several neighborhood associations in the Old Fourth Ward. A long time resident of the community and former member of the zoning board, Mr. Miller is familiar with the architectural guidelines for the neighborhood. Tony describes the Old Fourth Ward as a “front porch community.” Garages on the front of the home are architecturally and socially out of character with the neighborhood. According to Mr. Miller, front porches are consistent with the vibe and tenor of the neighborhood space.

West End resident Chris Ford expresses a similar sentiment in what he describes as “front porch” and “back porch mentalities:

So a lot of people who are only here a couple of years, they're back porch people so they'll build privacy fences. And they come in and out through the back porch and never really say "hello"...it's out of character just architecturally, it's out of character. And as such, it...they don't really seem to fit. If you're back porch, you're not really going to fit. People who aren't very neighborly, they don't fit...and so I mean the back porch people...they're living in a front porch community.

Chris Ford's comments indicate that the failure to be “neighborly” is viewed by some West End residents as a breach of neighborhood etiquette.

Ironically, as respondents discuss a boundless community where social interaction is encouraged, some also discuss the merits of bounding spaces in the neighborhood. Mr. Simpson says:

We've actually done street sign toppers that we've done to give community an identity. So fences that give identity but don't close off things, and for security around play grounds and things like that. As far as people fencing in their properties [I like it] if it makes sense. I want to put a 4 ft gate in front of my property because people let their dogs use the bathroom on my yard, and I hate that, and I have a young child. .. And if I'm going to let her run free while I sit on the porch and sip a coke, I need a fence.

Mr. Simpson's comment infers that fences offer multiple benefits. Fences can provide a sense of identity and/or continuity. Fences keep things and people in, but they also keep other things and people out. Gates and fences also mark a level of social distance that should be maintained.

You Make Me Want Your Stuff.

Public space is perceived as being fully and freely accessible to everyone. Some spaces in the community are not freely accessible to everyone, yet a lack of borders or boundaries to the area seems to invite the public inside the area. Such spaces have a "quasi-public" aspect.

Different views exist in the neighborhoods about what residents can and should do to keep from being a victim of crime. Based on my interviews, some people maintain social distance from their neighbors so that the neighbors do not know what they have. Social distance is maintained in other ways too, and class is often tangled in the mix. Several residents in both communities keep their blinds drawn at all times. This seems to be an attempt to keep their lives, possessions, and comings and goings hidden from the prying eyes of neighbors, passers-by, and would be criminals.

Some residents consciously leave their curtains open. Open curtains may be a symbolic representation of openness. William H. Whyte calls the street the "river of life in the city, the

place where people come together.” Neighbors who keep their blinds and curtains open extend the public space of the street right into their homes. Such neighbors may be viewed as more approachable than those whose homes appear closed off. Open curtains shorten the social distance between neighbors and have the effect of inviting others into the world of the resident.

West End resident Faith Howard and her family are members of the black gentry. The middle class couple prefers to leave their curtains open. Certainly others can see in, but this is not the reason they do so. Mrs. Howard says:

My shades are always open. You can see right in my house in the kitchen and everything. Because I don't have stuff, I don't have flat screen TVs and things like that. We have laptops that we put up and down and I have an upstairs in my bungalow, I have an upstairs, Master's room is upstairs so when we do leave the house, then one of the precautionary things we do, we have laptops in the house, we take all the laptops and we take them upstairs. So somebody on my front door, alarm already went off you don't have time to go running with it or nothing and when you come in you see there's nothing here. You see there's nothing here, so that's the only precautionary measure, we put all the laptops upstairs.

Mrs. Howard does not believe that most people use the public streets to look for opportunities to rob others, so she does not try to conceal the inside of her home from the view of those on the outside of her home. She also knows most of her neighbors. She has been to their homes, and they are welcome in her home.

New Uses of Public Space.

The mortgage crisis and mortgage fraud in the West End has brought many changes, including an influx of young, middle class white residents. West End old timer Yusef Allen recalls his thoughts when he saw the recent influx of white professionals in the area. He says:

And for the first time, when over there at the West End station, I saw white people on the bus. It tripped me out, and not only that, they tripped me out and I said why are they riding through here? Then I thought they're not riding through, they're buying a house!

Like Yusef Allen, many others express amusement at the sight of whites in the community.

Some African American residents are amused by the different ways that whites use public space.

Quoted in part in Chapter 5, Lauren Murphy says:

I won't say I've seen them actually going to work, but it looks like they're going to work. They may have a backpack, people exercising, maybe a mother with a child with a certain type of stroller, jogging, walking dogs, jogging with dogs, and I'm used to that from the Inman Park area.

Ms. Murphy's comments illustrate her belief that the white residents of the area have different accoutrements than African Americans. In fact, a yoga class currently being offered on select Saturday mornings in the West End Park is led by and is the brain child of a white West End newcomer. A variety of citizens participate, but no one conceived of it prior to the arrival of a new group of white residents. Prior to the arrival of this new crop of white newcomers, black West End residents may have participated in yoga classes, but this did not occur in open public spaces. The West End Park and other prominent parks in the area were sites where basketball and other activities perceived as "black" occurred. The presence of white newcomers has brought new ways of doing things. It has also expanded the West End residents' definition of what it means to "act black" such that alongside basketball, yoga, in the public park, is now acceptable.

Redevelopment efforts are currently taking place in both the Old Fourth Ward and the West End, and some new uses of public space are contemplated with those plans. A distinct element of the redevelopment plan for the Old Fourth Ward includes increasing the amount of park space. Efforts to begin Historic Old Fourth Ward Park, the first new park in the area in a number of years, are already under construction. In the West End, a new nature trail is

underway. Both the nature trail and the Historic Old Fourth Ward Park are part of the proposed Atlanta Beltline project.⁹⁵

The Beltline includes the addition of significant park spaces and offers connectivity through bike and jogging trails. Green space in each neighborhood has been allocated as part of a proposed Belt Line Project set to increase connectivity around the city.⁹⁶

The Beltline project proposes the addition of several new parks to the city's landscape, but Historic Old Fourth Ward Park is the first under way. The Trust for Public Land purchased property in the Old Fourth Ward for the creation of the Historic Old Fourth Ward Park (HO4WP). The five acre facility is expected to solve the area's water needs as well as provide much needed green space. Many of the amenities offered at HO4WP are available in nearby Freedom Park; nevertheless, the addition of this green space offers a significant change to the urban landscape of this community and provides a significant addition to the list of amenities offered by the Historic Old Fourth Ward community.

The West End community has the distinction of including the first mile of an arboretum known as the West End Trail, marking the first official mile of the Beltline project; the Trail is a public space that has the potential to attract different types of people to the community. In "Large Redevelopment Initiatives, Housing Values and Gentrification: The Case of the Atlanta Beltline," Immergluck (2009) describes how speculation about the Beltline increased home prices in a number of Atlanta neighborhoods. In my own research, I observed that a number of"

⁹⁵ This new park in the Old Fourth Ward is located near City Hall East, which is on the periphery of the Old Fourth Ward— far from Auburn Ave and closer to some whiter residential areas.

⁹⁶ According to the Beltline website (www.beltline.org), the Beltline is: "One of the most comprehensive economic development efforts ever undertaken in the City of Atlanta and the largest, most wide-ranging urban redevelopment currently underway in the U.S., the Beltline will combine greenspace, trails, transit, and new development along 22 miles of historic rail segments that encircle the urban core." As such, the Beltline has the power to transform the urban core because new uses of public space bring with them the potential for new and different types of interaction among those who utilize the space.

newcomer” white residents were attracted to the area because of the potential of the Beltline.⁹⁷ Their presence in the neighborhood marks a transition in the way space is utilized. In the past, public spaces in the West End have been commonly used for basketball, picnics, drug and other illicit activity, and gathering spots for the homeless, derelict, and/or idle.

Like sidewalks and front porches, the green space is an area where neighbors can potentially encounter each other. Green spaces are also locations where the diversity of the neighborhood is on display; however, a picture of the people actually using the greenspace may not be an accurate reflection of the composition of the neighborhood. This is because cultural, racial/ethnic, and gender based distinctions likely exist among groups as to their utilization of such public spaces as parks. A group of young white newcomers has already made a visible impact on the West End community.⁹⁸ They can be seen jogging and walking their dogs through the community. Old timers in the community may have little use for bike and jogging trails or skate parks while newcomers to the community, especially young white residents, may be attracted to these amenities. Proposed new uses of public green spaces have the potential to draw some to the community and repel others. Critical Race Theory notes that minorities often seek ethnically distinct communities because they perceive these as “safe spaces.” To some, the changing uses of the neighborhood places and spaces may threaten the perception of the neighborhoods as “authentic” black communities.

⁹⁷ During the 2008 West End Tour of Homes, I met a young white couple whose home was a stop on the Tour. In conversation, the couple revealed that they purchased a home in West End specifically because of the Beltline. The home was not on the Tour in 2009, and I have been unable to ascertain if the couple still resides in the area.

⁹⁸ White presence has made far less of a visible impact on the Old Fourth Ward community. Because the Old Fourth Ward community is proximate to Virginia Highlands, a community populated by a large number of upper class whites. The Old Fourth Ward also has several hospitals in it, popular eating places, and the MLK Historic District, all of which draw a large number of white visitors each day. Conversely, a number of West End respondents still express dismay at the sight of whites getting off the MARTA train at the West End station.

Race

Issues of place, space, and race often overlap, but even when this happens, race often comes through most poignantly in respondents' reflections about what binds them to the study neighborhoods. Several African American respondents expressed that their blackness is a strong or significant part of their identity. Consider the following examples. Old Fourth Ward oldtimer Elizabeth Battle says, "I am black...I have to live in a black neighborhood... I love this community. I love it even with the drugs and stuff.... I love it. I mean love." For Ms. Battle, her black identity and consciousness seem, at least in part, tied to place (i.e., living in a black neighborhood). As stated earlier, Elizabeth Battle is multi-racial; but even for those, like West End oldtimer Cheryl Simpson, who self identify as a single racial classification, multiple identities are possible. This notion is similar to Kesha Moore's (2005) discussion of multi-class identity or Pattillo's (2007) discussion of "the middleman." Discussing her multiple identities, West End resident Cheryl Simpson asserts, "but I am always black first." Such a self identification impacts attachment to the area. In both the Old Fourth Ward and the West End, blacks express higher levels of attachment to the neighborhood than do non-blacks (see Table 4, earlier in this chapter). In the Old Fourth Ward, blacks expressed an attachment level of 8.13 while non-blacks' attachment level was only 6.00. The difference between black and non-black attachment levels is less pronounced in the West End (7.50 and 6.75, respectively); however, it is still pronounced enough to suggest that race, specifically being black, has an impact on residents' attachment to the neighborhood.

Councilman Martin believes the Old Fourth Ward leaves an indelible mark on anyone who experiences the space:

The [area has] changed in several ways. I mean for one, you've seen the new gentry move in. You've seen seniors pass on. You've seen people move out who

couldn't for various reasons, some perhaps just life reasons, didn't have the staying power or had to move on, and they were just a part of this progress. But I'll tell you, anyone who touched this place loved it. No matter where they went. It leaves a special, you know, impression on your heart.

Councilman Martin calls the displacement which many researchers suggest is a hallmark of gentrification, especially early waves of gentrification, “progress,” and he suggests that positive feelings for and about the Old Fourth Ward community persists, even among this disadvantaged population. Joseph Harris, introduced in Chapter 4, grew up in the Old Fourth Ward, and he attended college in Atlanta where he was active in the Civil Rights Movement. Mr. Harris says, “I have an affinity for the neighborhood.” The affinity Mr. Harris describes formed over time, and it is tangled up with the spaces, places, history, and people in the community.

Reflecting on his time in the community, Mr. Harris reminisces on the important black “firsts” that occurred in the community. During the course of my interview, he lists several important “firsts,” including the first black CPA and the first black radio station in the country—both located on Auburn Avenue. Harris describes Auburn Avenue as “Striver’s Row for black people” and “a Mecca for black capitalism in the South”. According to Mr. Harris, because of desegregation “that cohesiveness we once had has somewhat dissipated.” Although “somewhat dissipated,” Mr. Harris still conceives of the neighborhood as a black area, and he hopes it remains such. The presence of other races in the community does little to dispel most respondents’ notion of the locations as “black places.” An assertion of the neighborhood as a “black place” persists even though racial others are present in the neighborhood.

Place and race overlap in the study neighborhoods to create distinct social zones which are often exclusively occupied along racial lines. These spaces include some stores, parks, events, and public streets. For example, many homeless people, most of whom are black, congregate outside a local discount store in the West End. Few community outsiders enter the

area. Even fewer still are non-black. A small grocery store in the neighborhood is patronized almost exclusively by people of color.

In addition to stores, several community events appear to be very racialized places. The West End hosts several community festivals including the Willie Watkins festival hosted in Hugh Howell Park and the Malcolm X Festival hosted in West End Park. Both events are almost exclusively attended by African Americans. Similarly, the Old Fourth Ward hosts Sweet Auburn Springfest each year, which is attended by over 10,000 people. It features food, fun, and entertainment. Hundreds of vendors are present. On any given evening walking the crowded streets of the Springfest event, you are likely to see more white vendors than white patrons.

It is difficult to tell whether non-black community members perceive certain spaces in the community as unwelcoming (to them) or if some spaces actually are unwelcoming to racial outsiders. On several occasions I heard white residents of the communities express the belief that many of the area businesses were set up to serve an exclusively African American clientele. When making this argument, respondents generally pointed to the variety of hair and barber shops, fried food places, and clothing specialty shops in the neighborhoods, many of which seem to have limited appeal to those outside the African American community. Old Fourth Ward resident Naomi Goldman is an upper class, white, newcomer. When asked about her neighborhood shopping habits, Ms. Goldman had this to say about where she gets her hair done and why:

Not here, not in this area. I go to Roswell. Before that, I was in Midtown. I wouldn't get a cut around here because I'll be honest, it seems like most businesses are African-American and that's the kind of hair they deal with. And I'll be honest... Because it's the racial divide. I mean, it is an African-American neighborhood.

This perceived unwelcomeness some white residents feel in certain parts of the West End and Old Fourth Ward may indeed be rooted in reality. Through his examination of urban poor neighborhoods in New York and Los Angeles, Sanchez-Jankowski (2008:11) concludes that small grocery stores, including mom and pop establishments provide important “institutional character and functions in the social life of poor neighborhoods”. While poverty exists in the Old Fourth Ward and West End neighborhoods, the neighborhoods can be distinguished from the high poverty, high crime neighborhoods under study in Sanchez-Jankowski’s work; however, Sanchez-Jankowski’s ideas (specifically that some neighborhood grocery stores can act as important social institutions in the community), which I will discuss next, also seem applicable in the case of the mixed income, gentrifying neighborhoods under study.

The mom and pop grocery store is a hallmark in poor, urban neighborhoods. It can also be found in many gentrifying black neighborhoods. According to Sanchez-Jankowski (2008:113), ‘the mom-and-pop store is not only an economic establishment but an important arena for social relations,’ especially if the store is what the author terms “indigenous”.⁹⁹ Sanchez-Jankowski (2008) details how the neighborhood situs occupied by the local grocery or mom and pop store is utilized by various ages, genders, and ethnicities disparately in terms of time, conversation, nature and extent of interactions occurring there.

The Old Fourth Ward has a number of important social institutions which, like the neighborhood store Sanchez-Jankowski describes, meet the socialization needs of a diverse group of residents. The area possesses prominent senior facilities like the Helene Mills Senior

⁹⁹ Sanchez-Jankowski (2008:113-120) identifies four different types of neighborhood stores prevalent in the urban, poor communities he studied in New York and Los Angeles: “imperialist”(these stores are most often owned by those who have no ties to the community in which the store is located and purchase for purely economic reasons), “holdout” (these are stores which exist prior to demographic changes in the neighborhood but remain thereafter for a myriad of reasons), “trailblazer”(those stores that see and seize a “an emerging business opportunity” in the changing dynamics of the neighborhood population), and “indigenous” (in the case of these stores, the owner is usually a member of the “dominant’ racial/ethnic group and a long time resident of the neighborhood).

Center and it has welcoming spaces for youth like the Martin Luther King Jr. Natatorium. In addition, services provided by the Butler Street YMCA are available to a wide array of people of various economic means. Pastor Joshua Graham believes “this area will come back”. A number of respondents share this view, and many posit that places in the community such as those identified and others are key to the area’s recovery. According to Elizabeth Battle, “there is something magical about the [Old Fourth Ward] area,” and the “magic” she describes is not as visible as it is felt in certain community places.

As in the Old Fourth Ward, places in the West End fill some respondents with hope for the future. West End oldtimer Yusef Allen explains his current optimism that the West End neighborhood he recalls may return:

I remember when it was the ‘West End,’ and so now, it’s a little bit of a disappointment to me now. However, recently, places like this [the coffeehouse where we were sitting] fill me with hope. So there’s promise; I guess there’s promise again with the West End.

As Mr. Allen identifies, there are community gathering places in the West End just as there are in the Fourth Ward; however, in the West End, community gathering places for youth (those 18 and younger) are virtually non-existent. Three community friendly places come to mind: the Shrine of the Black Madonna, the Wren’s Nest, and the Grounds Coffeehouse.¹⁰⁰ In light of the dearth of community meeting places available in the West End, these business establishments of the indigenous kind, such as those identified by Sanchez-Jankowski, assume a vital role in the neighborhood and fill this void.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) posits that African Americans seek safe counter spaces in which to congregate to debrief from the microaggressions suffered in everyday life (Delgado and

¹⁰⁰ Establishments in this tradition exist in the Old Fourth Ward too, including Ebenezer Baptist Church, the Historic District Development Corporation, Frutta Latta, and Danneman’s Coffeehouse; however, the need for such places is less pronounced.

Stefanic 2001). According to Lynn and Parker (2006:260), “everyday racism, in the form of microaggressions, is incessant and cumulative as practiced in everyday actions by individuals, groups, and institutional policy rules and administrative procedures.” Hair salons, barbershops, and restaurants specializing in ethnic cuisine may offer those safe counter spaces. In this view, the safety and sanctity of the areas are jeopardized by racial outsiders.

Not all spaces in the communities are unwelcoming to non-black residents. In each community, one local space that seems to be welcoming of everybody is a coffee shop. The offerings at each coffee shop have cross appeal, featuring vegan baked goods, cookies, sweet potato pies, red velvet cake, bean pies.¹⁰¹ In each place, residents from all walks of life, all racial and ethnic groups, and all class backgrounds congregate, thus it is considered a safe place. Ironically, each coffee shop has changed hands in the last two years. In both cases the coffee shop was purchased by a resident for residents who did not want to see it go. Each coffeehouse is more than just a coffee shop; it serves a function of a neighborhood community center.¹⁰² Meetings, gatherings, fundraisers, and “open mic” nights are held at them. The coffee shop owners, two black and two white, each seem interested in creating viable community places as opposed to viable black places.

Race is a very fluid construct for some respondents in both communities. While this section is about the place attachment of the various racial groups, some interesting material was revealed about some respondents’ own individual racial identities. In the course of interviews, at least four respondents revealed that they were of mixed race. Two of those respondents had one black parent and one white parent. A third respondent had one black parent and one Latino parent, and the fourth respondent revealed mixed white, black, and Indian ancestry. Despite

¹⁰¹ Only the coffee shop in the West End offers bean pies.

¹⁰² The Old Fourth Ward has several community meeting spaces and recreational options for all ages; however, the West End lacks even one such facility.

these revelations, at the end of the interview when I asked demographic questions, each respondent identify their racial or ethnic classification as black. Not one of them hesitated or stumbled when asked this question. Each evidences a commitment to black racial identity (Hochschild and Weaver 2007; Pattillo 2003; Lacy 2004; Lacy 2007).

According to Hochschild and Weaver (2007) individuals who racially identify as black express an attachment to other people to share the same label. When one respondent was asked why she calls herself African-American, she said: “I use African American because that’s what you know most of the people identify me as when they see me.”

Despite changing demographics, many outsiders still see both neighborhoods as black spaces. Rochelle Ferrer, a black, working class Old Fourth Ward resident, is very distressed by this attitude. Ms. Ferrer is active in the NPU and serves as President of a local neighborhood association. For some time, she has noticed that her neighborhood was becoming attractive to people of all races who have some economic means. According to Ms. Ferrer, you can see this in the neighborhood cleanups that occur twice each year when “everybody comes out for it – white, black, young, the old.” A few months ago she received a call from a friend who excitedly exclaimed, “I came through your neighborhood and I saw a white man walking his dog through your neighborhood at night!” The friend was shocked and amazed at such a sight. While Ms. Ferrer says that such a sight would have been uncommon when she first moved in, it is not now.

While the institutions of higher learning surrounding the West End are largely historically black colleges and universities, this is not the case in the Old Fourth Ward. Residents perceive that one local university has been responsible for bringing more ethnic/racial diversity to the Old Fourth Ward. Henry Rice says, “Georgia State has brought a great deal of the continent right

here to the Fourth Ward.”¹⁰³ Young college students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds walk to and from their dorm which is located in the Old Fourth Ward.

Much as race can be a solidifying factor, it can also be a source of frustration. Race enters into a number of discussions in the neighborhoods. In discussing politics, one long-term, black Old Fourth Ward resident expresses the frustrations felt by African Americans in both neighborhoods. She notes, “With five black mayors in thirty years, we should have seen more progress.” Her comments illustrate a belief that black elected officials owe something to the larger black community. Discussions of crime often lead to a discussion of “black on black crime.” Yusef Allen notes, “We used to have to watch out for the white man; now we [blacks] have to watch out for each other.” In both communities respondents’ display strong attachments to the areas based upon factors like place, space, and race. Their comments illustrate that attachment matters; however, sometimes attachment is little more than a symbolic gesture which fails to manifest itself into action. Instead, it is just a feeling of belonging (Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff 1983). The next section examines symbolic attachment.

Symbolic Neighborhood Attachment

Attachment can be a symbolic (e.g., sentimental) thing which does not manifest itself in any behaviors we would consider consistent with high levels of attachment. Some symbolic attachments were communicated in interviews. What I term symbolic attachment is akin to Gans’ (1979) notion of “symbolic ethnicity.” According to Gans, third and fourth generation European immigrants, many of whom fail to speak the native language and no longer live in the ethnic enclave communities their ancestors inhabited, commonly fail to exhibit the overt markers

¹⁰³ This comment is a reference to the downtown university’s expansion into the neighboring Old Fourth Ward. When the university built a new freshman dorm in the Old Fourth Ward, it increased the frequency and diversity of foot traffic in the neighborhood. It used to be that those walking in that area of town at night were viewed suspiciously. Individuals were presumed to be up to no good. That is not the automatic presumption any longer.

of ethnicity common among their precursors. For this group, ethnicity is something that is expressed largely through symbols which individuals can put on and take off at will. According to Gans (1979), symbolic ethnicity is what remains after substantive cultural ties dissipate. Similarly, symbolic attachment is a portable form of attachment which is neither intrinsic nor essential to the holder's identity. Symbolic attachment is attachment you can pick up or put down at will. This form of attachment can be expressed, if one chooses. The most common manifestations of symbolic attachment expressed by respondents were those to structures and places in the neighborhoods, but other forms of symbolic attachment were expressed as well.

As the Old Fourth Ward struggled with the closure of another school, memories were stirred about an earlier school closing in the community. In 2001, the Archdiocese closed the only Catholic school in the Old Fourth Ward community. The closure happened almost ten years ago, yet many people in the community still talk about it as if it happened very recently. Father Bob, priest of the local parish, is aware of this "attachment" to the school and chuckles when he hears people speak so nostalgically about the school. Father Bob believes attachment to the school is a "symbolic thing" which never manifested itself in actual support. Historical records reveal that fewer than 5% of the children who attended the local Catholic school lived in the community.

The symbolic attachment expressed to the school is similar to the symbolic acceptance expressed in both communities for the poor. Both neighborhoods outwardly enunciate a desire to be an inclusive community, open to all economic classes. Councilman Martin is an elected city official who lives and attends church in the Old Fourth Ward community. Councilman Martin has a positive impression of the area churches, many of which service the indigent. He says:

Historically, churches have been places where people can congregate, where people can come together to not only worship but also to [help]...it's kind of in a

place where all the community benefits are distributed.... The churches held people together.

Today, some resentment is expressed by respondents in each community over the type and frequency of assistance the local churches give. A long time Old Fourth Ward resident expresses these sentiments:

A lot of people at the churches don't live in the community, and don't understand the impact...[they] mean well, [but]they don't understand the impact that they leave those of us who live here with. Like I said...[There is a] convergence of new faces in our community as a result of you offering food and clothing every day. The question is, if you lived in this community, how would you feel? Most of us just take that approach. Remember, you all go home to your nice houses in the suburbs and pull into your driveway, and that's that. You leave us with the transitional person who managed to make it here. You leave that on my doorstep. That doesn't look good for me if I decide to sell, but when you sell you are fine. It's like dumping your trash on your neighbor's door.

This comment sums up the opinions of many in both neighborhoods. Residents' expressed attachment to the ideals of being an "inclusive, affordable community" extends only to a certain point. Openness and affordability are ideas that are symbolically valued, but are seldom put into practice. Neither community is opposed to helping people in need, but the needs of others are often secondary to residents' individual needs.

The debate over how to help those in need while preserving the value of the community is currently being played out in both communities as residents discuss a supportive housing ordinance proposed by the city of Atlanta. In an attempt to lure more visitors, conventions, and businesses, the city of Atlanta is working to improve its public image. Efforts are being made to remove the homeless from the city. As public crackdowns on the homeless in the city become more evident, there is a spillover effect on both of the neighborhoods in this study. The proposed ordinance would require greater distance between shelters, which could have the effect of pushing shelters into communities near and around downtown.

In public meetings, people often lament the perceived impact the ordinance will have on their neighborhoods, but others speak in support of finding a place inside the community for everyone. At one public meeting, a black middle aged woman encouraged those in attendance to have compassion for the homeless. This woman, a newcomer to the area, had never been homeless herself but said, “What about those of us who are just a paycheck away from being homeless? 55,000 Americans lost their job today.” Her comment illustrates a realization that many working Americans are only one pay check away from economic peril. As a result, the homeless that the ordinance could potentially legislate out of the neighborhood are current homeowners and renters. A similar debate occurred at a community meeting across town in the West End.

Stabilizing the communities may mean ensuring that everyone has a place at the table; however, neither side has enough knowledge of “the other” to believe that the other will do what is best for all. Patricia West believes greater connection is the key to this issue.

I think neighborhood associations, civic associations, where you know the elderly of the neighborhood see a condo or apartment building coming in and they fear that these people are going to be different from me. They are going to look down on me. They’re going to think I am a poor person and vice versa, [but] if they could communicate, if they could have a block party. Have a yard sale, an event that would help.

As a white, upper class resident of the Old Fourth Ward, West believes that most of the suspicion about her centers on her social class standing, and not her race. Patricia West also believes that she and the lower class residents with whom she shares social space can bridge the divide between them with a little bit of effort.

Future plans for the Old Fourth Ward rely on the area achieving and maintaining a critical density level of people. It is uncertain what balance between poor and people of means is

necessary to effect the desired stabilization of the neighborhood, but it is certain that both groups are necessary if the area is to thrive.

Conclusion

This chapter examined some of the factors attracting and attaching people to the communities. Specifically it examines race, space, and place based attachment. African American racial identification is still an enduring source of neighborhood attachment in the communities under study as black respondents express higher levels of attachment to and satisfaction with the neighborhood than no-black respondents.

While race matters in terms of respondents' level of attachment to the neighborhood, other factors such as space and place influence attachment as well. For some, their attachment to the area is based upon social, cultural, or historic lines while others express a form of attachment which is more utilitarian in nature. In the latter case, attachment to the area is heightened if the perceived "use value" is high.¹⁰⁴ The desirability of a home has long been associated with its location; therefore, exchange value is a function of both place and space. The locational aspect is a function of space (i.e., it has a geographic or spatial component); however, the actual structure or dwelling constitutes a place. The presence of certain places (e.g., establishments) in the community has value. Such places have the potential to attract (or detract) other places from locating in the area.

In space and places in the neighborhoods, what Logan and Molotch (1987:99) term, the "patterns of neighborhood life" are changing. These patterns include the ways people in the neighborhood connect and "interconnect" with one another as well as the ways they utilize the

¹⁰⁴ The notion of exchange value most commonly used refers to land owners and or business elites' ability to exchange the property for a suitable monetary value. Use value typically refers to home owners, but use value can also be realized by renters who desire a property in a certain location because the location affords them certain benefits.

neighborhood space (Logan and Molotch 1987). According to Greer (1962, 1972), communities are best understood by viewing the mix of people contained therein. A complex web of people live, work, and do business in both the Old Fourth Ward and the West End. The neighborhood space is the singular item which ties each of them together. That singular connection to a neighborhood space should not be undervalued, for it has the power to exponentially heighten attachment, especially when there are multiple bases for it.¹⁰⁵

Neighborhood patterns (including neighboring) are changing, and, in part, the economic times seem to be responsible for changing the ways that people in the neighborhoods interact. There is both a growing recognition that it is in everyone's best interest for homeowners to remain in their homes and a shift in neighborhood attitudes toward renters. The latter is especially the case in West End, Atlanta, where the mortgage fraud crisis has escalated the number of blighted and abandoned homes in the area, and people are coming to the consciousness that some neighbors—even renters—are preferable to no neighbors.

Places are significant to people; therefore, place attachment provides a potential source of accord for neighborhood residents. In my interviews with respondents from various economic, racial/ethnic, gender, and cultural backgrounds, respondents unveil how solidarity is negotiated amidst difference. These findings suggest that while race, class, ethnicity, and gender are established bases of community formation, a sense of community can be cultivated among groups. According to Relph (1976: 141), "places...are the significant centers of our immediate sense of the world." Relph (1997, 1976) notes, place matters, especially if one feels a sense of what he terms "existential insideness," which is a sense or feeling of being at home in a place.

¹⁰⁵ The Bible says, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12, New International Version). Similarly, I argue that multiple ties to neighborhood places and space forge an attachment that is not easily broken.

Previous research on black gentrification was done at a time of relative economic strength. Although the research highlights class-based conflicts present in black gentrifying neighborhoods (discord), great accord among black newcomers and oldtimers was also present. Often, race was the source of this accord. The current economic conditions are rife for the formation of a similar accord to be achieved across racial/ethnic lines, especially with racial outsiders who embrace the community identity (as a black neighborhood) instead of seeking to change it. In fact, my research finds that a great deal of accord, respect, and affinity exists in the neighborhoods than earlier studies indicate. The changing economic times may be responsible for some of this perceived accord as respondents' narratives indicate more willingness to work cooperatively, even across lines such as race, class, and gender, which were formerly great divides.

CHAPTER 7

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?: THE INFLUENCE OF CRIME AND THE QUALITY OF SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES

This chapter examines what factors influence people's decision to remain in or leave gentrifying black communities. Neighborhood context influences individuals socially, physically, and psychologically (Atkinson 2002; Sanchez-Jankowski 2008; Morenoff, Sampson, and Raudenbush 2001), so the choice of a place to live is a significant one. Whether a person is an owner or a renter, there are ripple implications associated with the choice of a place to live. The West End and the Old Fourth Ward are two distinct neighborhoods, but while each has a distinctive flavor and appeal, my discussions of the social ills in the areas might as well have occurred in the same neighborhood.¹⁰⁶ The observations which people made were quite similar. I pay particular attention to the narratives of those with the economic means to leave gentrifying black neighborhoods and the reasons they proffer for why they remain in such communities, even in the midst of economic downturn.

Various factors push people out of the study neighborhoods and pull them to it. In my discussions with respondents about these push and pull factors, three variables came up over and over again. The variables cited most often by respondents included crime, education, and availability/quality of service issues. Because I only talked to residents, business owners, and

¹⁰⁶ Distinctions exist between the study neighborhoods. The Old Fourth Ward is a more established community; this is evidenced in the number of redevelopment plans created for the area. On the other hand, there is little talk of "redeveloping" the West End as many people agree that it has never been developed in the first instance. Conversely, the Old Fourth Ward is much larger in terms of its total area, and it boasts several different neighborhood associations while the West End has only one. The size and age of OFW allow for a variety of living arrangements including industrial lofts, shotgun homes, large Victorians, condominiums, apartments, and tree lined cul de sacs. The West End lacks this wide spectrum of living arrangements and it has far fewer upscale restaurants and shops. Despite these differences, on the matter of social ills in the community, residents of each neighborhood identified the same factors.

stakeholders in the community, I can only surmise that these same factors that often push people out of the neighborhood are also instrumental in keeping others from viewing the areas as viable living options. Each topic is examined in detail in this chapter.

Crime

The crime issue is multi-faceted. Crime exists in the Old Fourth Ward and the West End, but crime is not exclusive to the black gentrifying neighborhoods under study. Table 5 is entitled 2009 Crime Statistics for Atlanta Neighborhoods. It lists the top ten top in-town Atlanta neighborhoods (in terms of the greatest number of incidents reported to Atlanta Police Department). Data for three neighborhoods outside of the top ten (Grant Park, Virginia Highlands, and East Atlanta, ranking 13th, 15th, and 17th, respectively) is also included for comparison purposes. The comparison neighborhoods are often mentioned by respondents in both the West End and Old Fourth Ward. In each case, the five most frequently reported crime types for each neighborhood are listed.

As Table 5 (2009 Crime Statistics by Atlanta Neighborhoods) indicates, the offenses most common in both the West End and the Old Fourth Ward are non-violent property offenses such as shoplifting, burglary (residence), motor vehicle theft (both auto and truck), and larceny (theft of items from an auto or a building). Most of the other in-town Atlanta neighborhoods cited have a similar list of crimes; however, public perception is that the West End and Old Fourth Ward are plagued by violent crimes. The Atlanta Journal Constitution lists the top ten neighborhoods in Atlanta in each of the following crime categories: aggravated assault; homicide; rape; robbery; burglary; larceny; and motor vehicle theft (Koerner and Dempsey 2009a). The Old Fourth Ward is on each list. The West End does not make the list of the top ten

Table 5. 2009 Crime Statistics for Atlanta Neighborhoods

1. Downtown – 1,398 total incidents	6. Kirkwood – 364 total incidents	13. Grant Park – 302 incidents
Larceny: Theft from vehicle – 461 incidents	Larceny: Theft from vehicle – 148 incidents	Larceny: Theft from vehicle – 87 incidents
Larceny: Theft, buildings – 168 incidents	Burglary: Forcible, residence – 58 incidents	Burglary: Forcible, residence – 50 incidents
Larceny: Theft, shoplifting – 162 incidents	Larceny: Theft, other – 23 incidents	Motor vehicle theft: truck/bus – 32 incidents
Larceny: Theft, other – 100 incidents	Larceny: Theft, vehicle parts – 22 incidents	Motor vehicle theft: auto – 23 incidents
Motor vehicle theft: auto – 86 incidents	Motor vehicle theft: auto – 14 incidents	Burglary: Forcible, no residence – 19 incidents
2. Midtown – 969 total incidents	7. Pittsburgh – 348 total incidents	15. Virginia Highland – 267 total incidents
Larceny: Theft from vehicle – 424 incidents	Burglary: Forcible, residence – 123 incidents	Larceny: Theft from vehicle – 112 incidents
Larceny: Theft, vehicle parts – 69 incidents	Motor vehicle theft: auto – 31 incidents	Burglary: Forcible, residence – 22 incidents
Motor vehicle theft: auto – 68 incidents	Motor vehicle theft: truck/bus – 27 incidents	Larceny: Theft, other – 19 incidents
Larceny: Theft, other – 61 incidents	Larceny: Theft, vehicle parts – 21 incidents	Motor vehicle theft: truck/bus – 17 incidents
Larceny: Theft, buildings – 59 incidents	Larceny: Theft, other – 20 incidents	Burglary: Forcible, non-residence – 15 incidents
3. Old Fourth Ward – 623 total incidents	8. English Avenue – 337 total incidents	17. East Atlanta – 260 total incidents
Larceny: Theft from vehicle – 127 incidents	Burglary: Forcible, residence – 61 incidents	Larceny: Theft from vehicle – 73 incidents
Larceny: Theft, shoplifting – 124 incidents	Larceny: Theft from vehicle – 42 incidents	Burglary: Forcible, residence – 65 incidents
Burglary: Forcible, residence – 75 incidents	Motor vehicle theft: auto – 37 incidents	Motor vehicle theft: auto – 21 incidents
Motor vehicle theft: auto – 41 incidents	Larceny: Theft, vehicle parts – 25 incidents	Larceny: Theft, other – 15 incidents
Larceny: Theft, buildings – 28 incidents	Larceny: Theft, other – 25 incidents	Larceny: Theft, vehicle parts – 12 incidents
4. West End – 410 total incidents	9. Greenbriar – 330 total incidents	
Larceny: Theft, shoplifting – 80 incidents	Larceny: Theft, shoplifting – 96 incidents	
Burglary: Forcible, residence – 57 incidents	Larceny: Theft from vehicle – 43 incidents	
Motor vehicle theft: auto – 47 incidents	Burglary: Forcible, residence – 40 incidents	
Larceny: Theft from vehicle – 38 incidents	Motor vehicle theft: auto – 34 incidents	
Motor vehicle theft: truck/bus – 32 incidents	Larceny: Theft, vehicle parts – 23 incidents	
5. Lenox – 403 total incidents	10. North Buckhead – 329 total incidents	
Larceny: Theft, shoplifting – 261 incidents	Larceny: Theft from vehicle – 132 incidents	
Larceny: Theft from vehicle – 47 incidents	Larceny: Theft, shoplifting – 65 incidents	
Larceny: Theft, buildings – 24 incidents	Larceny: Theft, buildings – 26 incidents	
Larceny: Theft, other – 20 incidents	Larceny: Theft, vehicle parts – 23 incidents	
Burglary: Forcible, no residence – 10 incidents	Larceny: Theft, other – 16 incidents	

neighborhoods in Atlanta for aggravated assault or rape, and it ranks 10th in terms of larcenies; however, it is on the list in every other crime category listed. Downtown tops five out of the seven lists (aggravated assault, rape, robbery, larceny, and motor vehicle theft), and the highly sought after Midtown area reported more homicides (3) than the Old Fourth Ward and West End, each of which had one.¹⁰⁷

The residents of the West End and Old Fourth Ward I interviewed display awareness that the neighborhoods can be dangerous places; however, they assert that they do not have to be. Respondents caution that a great number of the offenses in their areas are crimes of opportunity, which is why each neighborhood makes a concerted effort to educate its citizenry about how to stay safe in the neighborhood. Discourses in the neighborhoods about the influence of crime take many forms including discussions about public perception of the neighborhood, the influence of illegal drugs, homelessness and poverty, and the viability of self help as a protection against crime.

Public Perceptions of Crime within and Outside These Neighborhoods

There is a growing recognition that in the coming years, it will be important to convince people outside the study neighborhoods that each area is worthy of investment. As a result, a great deal of the potential of each neighborhood to revive or stabilize itself depends on the perception of those outside the area. People who live in the study neighborhoods tend to know their respective neighborhood's strengths and weaknesses, but as seen in Chapter 5, the language employed by respondents to describe the areas often has contradictions and inconsistencies.

¹⁰⁷ It should be noted that there have been several highly publicized shooting incidents (one involving the fatal shooting of Spelman student, Jasmine Lynn) in and around the Atlanta University Center (AUC) campuses. While the AUC is not in the West End, neighborhood boundaries in the area are very fluid and many people do not perceive a distinction.

Some describe their area as a relatively safe place while others describe the same area as “full of crime.” Melody Johnson, a lower income resident of the Old Fourth Ward who has lived in and around the neighborhood for most of her life, believes that there is “not a lot of crime” in the Old Fourth Ward. Fellow old timer Johnetta Hope, president of a neighborhood development corporation in the Old Fourth Ward, says “there is a lot of crime in the area;” however, Ms. Hope describes her own personal neighborhood experiences with crime as “just petty stuff” committed by “people [who are] desperate or stupid.” Seven-year West End resident Nigel Walters says “we have some crime,” but Raymond Flowers describes the West End as “ghetto” and “full of crime.” Finally, West End business owner and resident Chika Moon says “there is” crime in her area, but adds, “I don’t know if there is any more [here] than other places.”

Sometimes current perceptions of the neighborhood are rooted in the past. Viola Washington is over eighty years old, and she has lived in the Old Fourth Ward all of her life. During her tenure, Mrs. Washington has watched others move out, but she has remained. Often friends, relatives, acquaintances, many of which were former Old Fourth Ward residents themselves, tear down the community. According to Ms. Washington, many former residents refer to the area as a “slum.”

[They ask] ‘Are you still over there in that slum? Why haven’t you moved? ‘I said, “Well it was just home when we were children and we didn’t know any better.” We didn’t have all the convenience that the people have here, but we were unified and we had the care. We had the love. We had the confidence, and slum it is not. So what I’m going to do? I was here when we grew up, and they said we were poor. I grew up during the Depression, but I didn’t know I was poor. Now these people know it.

Viola Washington does not perceive of her neighborhood as a slum. She never did, but she cannot stop what others think or say. Because outsiders perceive the community as a crime infested slum, many potential investors and residents fail to even consider the area.

The alleged mismatch between “perception” and “reality” is not just touted by residents. Police representatives attend neighborhood meetings in both areas and assure residents of the Old Fourth Ward and the West End that the amount and severity of crime in their areas is less than that found in more prestigious areas of town like Buckhead, Midtown, and Virginia Highlands. Residents have adopted modifications of this now familiar mantra. For example, Steve Thomas, a resident of the Old Fourth Ward, suggests that while there is crime in his neighborhood, there is crime in the suburbs too:

[There are] people arguing and squabbling. It seems like if we look at TV, you got a lot of crime in the city, but it seems crime is going back out to the suburbs. It does. I mean, it does...[people here] might cuss each other and pop each other on the side of the head....We do have our share [but] the most thing I see here is robbery, burglary, that type of thing.

Steve Thomas’ comments also imply that crimes like robbery and burglary and occasional arguments in the neighborhood are but slight annoyances to be tolerated “in the city.” His comments on the city are contrasted with his ideas about “the suburbs.”

The topic of “the suburbs” recurs in a number of my discussions. Several times in the course of my interviews residents mentioned recent drug busts and other crimes in outlying suburban areas. These references usually took one of two forms: 1) overt attempts to paint the gentrifying black neighborhoods under study as no worse than the suburbs; 2) veiled assertions by residents that their neighborhoods were actually better than the suburbs. Additionally, because, despite crime, the suburbs have a less tarnished public perception than the neighborhoods under study, some respondents express views of the suburbs as centers of “hypocrisy.” Most often, respondents across racial, economic, and gender lines express overt attachment to city dwelling. For example, African American West End resident Faith Howard says, “I come from the city all my life...The suburbs ain’t for me. [I don’t want to be] out there in the boondocks.” Old Fourth Ward resident Aisha Holder shares a similar sentiment. She

says, “I bought my first house in the suburbs and I hated it. I’m from New York.” Like Faith Howard, Aisha Holder is African American and from New York City. Their comments suggest that something about growing up in the city draws them to the inner city neighborhoods they inhabit, but white Old Fourth Ward residents Dennis and Patricia West are both from rural backgrounds and express a similar attachment to the neighborhood. Pat West comments:

For me, uh for both of us, we grew up in a small town. When I went off to college, I lived in a huge city, and I loved it. I never want to go back to a small town... I’m a city person. We both like the excitement of the city, the grittiness of the city. We expect it is going to be difficult, but I like challenges in life. I don’t want to live in a little perfect clean suburb where everything is easy, and I never have to take on any challenges or face any difficult decisions. So being here is an ethic for us.

The West’s are an upper class white couple, but as Patricia West describes the ethic referenced in her comment above, it is a commitment to improve the black, urban neighborhood where they live. In this manner, Patricia and Dennis West’s undertaking appears very similar to the notion of “racial uplift” often practiced by blacks in black gentrifying areas and discussed prominently in the black gentrification literature (Hyra 2008, 2006; Boyd 2005; Moore 2005). The Wests indicate they do not want to change or “white wash” the area, but they are committed to participating in the community.

The Face of the Neighborhoods.

In both the Old Fourth Ward and the West End, vagrants and other indigent people are quite visible. This visibility is a very present reminder that there are people in need in the areas. In fact, this need is visible from the moment one enters the neighborhoods. There are several gateway entrances to each neighborhood. In the West End many outsiders travel into the community via an exit off of Interstate 20.

During the course of my field work, almost every time I left I-20 to take the West End exit I was confronted at the off ramp by someone begging for money. On most occasions, what

appeared to be pre-teen boys flanked the exit with football helmets in hand and a sheet of paper indicating that they were raising funds on behalf of their athletic team. The young men were seldom rude, but always very aggressive about approaching cars. If the light at the end of the exit ramp held for some time, people felt trapped.¹⁰⁸ Out of football season, the sports team they were collecting on behalf of changed, but the solicitation of money remained the same. On one occasion, I was traveling with a West End resident who grew very angry at the sight of the young men. She whipped out her cell phone and called the police saying, “They’re out here again!”

In the Old Fourth Ward, many vagrants saunter the streets in the Historic District. Some of the vagrants approach people in the neighborhood (including tourists) for money. Many do not; however, even when vagrants do not “bother anyone” by requesting money their mere presence can still be perceived as a bother. On one occasion, I was at a coffee shop in the Old Fourth Ward. On the street outside the shop, two homeless men were pretending to fight. The two put on quite a show. Each of their moves seemed carefully orchestrated. Some patrons were amused by the display. The owner of the shop was not. She went outside and asked the gentleman to take their chicanery away from her store.

Presenting a positive image has become a priority in both neighborhoods. For example, when the West End Tour of Homes was discussed at neighborhood association meetings, one of the stated objectives of the Tour was to improve outsiders’ impression of the community.¹⁰⁹ On the first morning of the West End Tour of Homes, one resident planted flowers along the exit ramp (the same one commonly flanked by young people soliciting money).¹¹⁰ The resident was

¹⁰⁸ Cars off the eastbound exit can only travel in one direction at the end of the exit ramp. The street is one way, so a right turn is not permitted and it dead ends straight ahead. Cars are only permitted to turn left. As a result, persons caught by the light are not able to escape the petitions of these young men,

¹⁰⁹ Last year, the Tour of Homes featured atypical homes. Lavish gardens, elevators, huge Palladian windows, immaculately decorated homes were included. The following year, a range of homes including more modest ones were included, as were buildings like Brown Middle School and the Willie Watkins Funeral Home.

¹¹⁰ The Tour of Homes is held the first weekend in May. This formerly annual tradition was reinstated in 2008.

not asked to do the planting, and he incurred the expenses out of pocket, but his efforts were heralded at the neighborhood association meeting following the Tour. Those in attendance seemed pleased at his efforts to improve the visual look of the area.

Perception is also an issue in the Old Fourth Ward. Coffee shop owner Daniel Tepee says his shop has “the cheapest good coffee in town.” Unfortunately, Mr. Tepee believes that some people in and outside the neighborhood avoid his shop because of all the homeless and vagrants in the area. According to Mr. Tepee:

A lot of people have a perception of that [homelessness] and they think why would they stop here when they could go a little further and not have to deal with that...Umm this is going to sound really harsh but one of the biggest offenders to this challenge are the churches in the community... they have a sandwich program that they have been doing for years and years...[A] lot of those folks they've been giving sandwiches to a long, long time will read the writing on the wall...Clearly that effort is not moving those folks forward and in addition to that it's keeping other people from not conducting business in this community...My thing is the church needs to be a conduit of resources both economic and labor...They don't have to do something themselves. I could go down the list here of a number of organizations that could use volunteer help or financial resources. This isn't a complaint. I just think there are some better solutions to umm getting everybody what they want.

The Old Fourth Ward contains a number of churches with strong social service traditions.

Additionally, the neighborhood contains many social service agencies. The feeding programs and their schedules are known, and the poor and homeless congregate in the area before and after feedings. Mr. Tepee resents the high visibility of the programs because he believes that this visible face of need keeps patrons from his shops and businesses from settling in the area.

The name Old Fourth Ward has some cache with a small segment of the public; however, to other people, the name can be a liability. Patricia West and her husband moved from Virginia Highlands to the Old Fourth Ward about eight years ago. The upper class white couple decided to settle in a reviving section of the Old Fourth Ward; however, at the time, they used other

labels to identify their new neighborhood. According to Patricia West, this pattern continues today. Mrs. West says:

When we first moved here, no one had ever heard of the Old Fourth Ward unless they happen to be in the Old Fourth Ward. And when we first moved here I admit we probably said we lived in Midtown. We would vaguely, somebody would say [they] live in Alpharetta, and we would say oh we live in Midtown. It was pointless to say Old Fourth Ward. So I would find other ways to answer the question where do you live...

Today, Mrs. West says the reputation of the Old Fourth Ward has improved:

I would say the identity of the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood its identity has gone up in recent years. Another thing that was happening is that developers and real estate agents did not want to refer to the Old Fourth Ward. They thought it was perceived as a blighted area. Oh a poor neighborhood, who would want to buy a property there? So you would see a real estate ad listing a property and it would say South Midtown... Or it would say, this is the one we dislike, SONO south of North Avenue.... Real estate developers made up an acronym, SONO, south of North Avenue, to avoid using the phrase Old Fourth Ward.

The ire that Patricia and Dennis express at those who refer to the Old Fourth Ward by other labels is directed outward at realtors and developers.

Residents in the communities feel they battle against two realities--the perceived reality communicated by the media and non-resident public and the "actual" reality they experience in their day-to-day lives. Residents, business owners, and stakeholders express frustration at what they perceive is unfair treatment in the media, which translates to a negative perception of the area among the general public.

Illegal Drugs.

Outsiders and insiders associate both neighborhoods with illegal drugs. In some ways, the communities' drug problems are related to the perception issue. For a long time, drug users and sellers have had an obvious presence in both communities. As one Old Fourth Ward business owner put it, "the Js [junkies] were here before the recession." It is his firm belief that

junkies will always be a constant in the community. Outsiders driving through the community may see young men in baggy clothing hanging out on street corners and view them with some suspicion. Those inside the community share a similar perception. Many assume they are selling drugs. In some cases, they may be right. Drugs are viewed as one of the factors contributing to the decay of some urban communities. Long-term Old Fourth Ward resident Ruby Everson ties what she terms the “weakening of the community” to the influx of drugs. Everson felt a loss of community spirit right around the time that drugs became prominent in the community. She says:

Well, people started doing so many things they just didn’t want nobody to know they were doing it. Guess they started keeping to themselves. This drugs stuff took over.

Everson believes that shame over drug use compelled neighbors to turn inward instead of to the community for help.

Like Everson, Joseph Harris is a longtime resident of the Old Fourth Ward. He too is frustrated by the abundance of drugs in the community. According to Mr. Harris, drugs surround the Old Fourth Ward home that he and his wife have occupied off and on for about 30 years. When Mr. Harris left Atlanta, he held on to the property because he thought it would appreciate in value. The community he returned to several years later was not the one he left. A few years ago, Mr. Harris discovered that the person renting the property next door to him was dealing drugs out of the rented home, so he confronted the man. Later, Mr. Harris erected an electronic fence around his property as a safety measure. After numerous calls to the police, the neighbor was ultimately arrested, but drugs remain a pervasive problem in the community. As evidence of this, Mr. Harris indicates he can look out his window to a nearby park or street corner and see drug activity.

Some blame the appeal of drugs in the community on frustration over lack of resources and limited opportunities, but Joseph Harris is not persuaded by this. According to Mr. Harris, many people in the former Old Fourth Ward community were poor, “but they were rich in character.” Joseph Harris describes the former community as Striver’s Row. Now, Mr. Harris says, “young strivers were replaced with people on drugs and with their pants hanging down.” Mr. Harris’ displeasure and frustration with this change are evident. In his youth, Mr. Harris was an active member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, so he knows the positive force that young people can affect in society. The young people in the community that he sees seem to stand for nothing. Comparing the Old Fourth Ward of yesterday with the one that exists today, Mr. Harris says:

It was a place where young African American boys like myself could come in there and learn how to play games and how to be a gentleman and how to be in the sports. The African American young boys who went on to do a lot of things in this country, a legend when you look at who came through down there... Yes, but the poor persons, those persons, many of them were poor, no question about that. My mother was one of them, but they were rich in character. They were people who believed in God, believed in the Bible, loved to read the Bible and also believed in the Golden Rule. We now have people that never seen the Bible, that avoid the Golden Rule, often times we never even seen Daddy in this world and whose Momma who brought them into this world often times is missing because Grandmother is trying to raise them. So it's a terrible, terrible scene. It's not only relating to black people.

What he sees in the area (or actually the absence of the values Mr. Harris says used to be in the area) sometimes makes him doubt the prudence of his investment.

Few residents deny that concentrated drug activity exists in the Old Fourth Ward. Fourteen year resident Tony Miller does not recall a time in his tenure in the community when that was not the case. Like Joseph Harris, Tony Miller does not have to go far to see drug activity underway or the deleterious outcomes of this activity – like drug paraphernalia and drug addicts. Drug activity is one of the reasons Tony Miller jokingly calls the Old Fourth Ward “the

hood.” According to Mr. Miller, the disparaging reference is only “half” a joke. When Miller moved to the Old Fourth Ward in 1995, he carried a gun to protect both himself and his property.

He does not carry a gun now, but he still calls it “the hood”. Mr. Miller says:

I jokingly say [its] the’ hood. Because that is half joke half reality. It is the ‘hood,’ by any colloquial definition of the word it is the ‘hood.

The drug presence in the community is the main reason he calls his neighborhood “the hood.”

While drugs are present throughout the Old Fourth Ward community, residents most often express aggravation at drug activity concentrated along a section of Boulevard that is populated by a large Section 8 housing community, Bedford Pines. This area is located near a prominent thoroughfare, and it provides easy access to major highways. Because of its location, it is a highly conspicuous area. Bedford Pines is a place where realtor/resident Heather Henry says “you can get any scene at any time.” Yet, admittedly blocks away from Bedford Pines near her live/work space close to the intersections of Boulevard and Edgewood, Heather Henry often finds evidence of drug activity too. Ms. Henry says:

I have been here overnight when they have had whatever activities was going on. I’d like to say drug activities. When all the drugs and the alcohol is gone and then they get to acting a fool because it has all run out and nobody has money to get any more. I get that any moment on a Thursday, Friday, Saturday night. I can sit out here and get comic relief. Ok? And I have literally sat out here with some friends in the parking lot just to watch some of my folks walk up and down the street talking to themselves, dancing, but it’s still, it’s a part of the community.

Like Mr. Harris and Tony Miller, Ms. Henry is a member of the black gentry. As a young single, black woman, Heather Henry is amused by the drug activity in the community.

Residents with young children seldom share this amusement, nor do they accept that drug activity should be a foregone conclusion in their neighborhood. As a result, families with young children often feel pushed out of the neighborhood by these factors. As president of her condominium association, Ms. Henry says she has seen this over and over again. According to

Ms. Henry, the people most likely to move out of the community (or at least her building) are those with young children.

For almost two years, West End residents Lauren Smith and Samantha Jones have had to deal with the deleterious neighborhood effects of drug activity up close and personal. The two women share a home with Lauren's teenage son. They were convinced that drugs were being dealt out of the home next door. They repeatedly called the landlord, but nothing changed. Over a year ago, someone threw a Molotov cocktail through the window of the neighbor's home. The burned out home has remained vacant ever since. Ms. Smith "hates what happened" but says it has been more peaceful since the incident. Samantha Jones agrees, but she is bothered by the eyesore that remains. The burnt out property impacts the couple's full economic, social, and psychological enjoyment of their property. According to Ms. Jones, drugs take a toll too:

I think that, I think the main thing that's holding this community back is the crime and drugs and the fact that it's so visible, whereas they may not see it because in Gwinnett, they had one of the major drug busts, and it did not look like a house where that would have been going on. Remember that?

Samantha's comments indicate that outsiders are more likely to perceive the West End as drug infested than other communities. This negative perception impacts the overall value of her home.

Consistent with Ms. Henry's comments about the Old Fourth Ward, West End residents and stakeholders express concern that families may be deterred from the neighborhood because of visible drug activity. One local investor seeking to rent a house he owned to a family took matters into his own hands.

The owner of that house's name is Han Lo. He's one of the gentlemen who helped catch one of our...helped shut down the drug house in the community. And I mean so it's like we're connecting. We're not just living like islands. We know that we need each other in order to make sure they stop.

Realtor Faith Howard describes this real estate investor as “a responsible investor.” The investor recognized that no families with children were likely to purchase with all the drug activity across the street, so he set out to rid the area of the drug house. He set up surveillance equipment on one of his properties across the street from the drug house and surreptitiously filmed the activities there. Once the owner/investor got enough evidence, he took his video to the police, and they closed down the house. Both the investor/owner and realtor want to create a “womb to tomb” West End community where people young, old, and everyone in between can feel comfortable and receive all the vital services they need. The ancillary activities associated with drug activity prevent that kind of comfort.

The Homeless, the Helpless, and Crime

Respondents’ reactions to homelessness vary. Some view it as a social issue, some a crime, and others an inevitable part of city living. Realtor Tiffany Hayes considers homelessness, street hustlers, and panhandling part of the “flavor” and “character” of living in the city. Ms. Hayes’ comments suggest that the homeless element gives the community authenticity. As such, they are value added. Ms. Hayes recognizes that there is crime in the Old Fourth Ward, but downplays it in saying “there’s more street hustling going on in these areas than breaking into buildings.” West End resident Victoria Randall agrees that homelessness seems to be part of the urban fabric of her community, but she is not as enamored as Ms. Hayes with either the homeless people themselves or the effects of it. Ms. Randall says:

You know they [the City of Atlanta] said that they're going to try to get them [the homeless] off the streets. I don't think that's going to ever happen. Because they continue to be on the street. If you're coming here, you'll come to see a homeless person up there on the corner begging or they can beg at like an environment like a store. They can hang out, and they hang out in front of the stores like up there at Family Dollar, they hang out up there.

Ms. Randall resents the spillover effects of homelessness. These spillover effects include increased crime, aggravation, and unsafe (or at least uncomfortable) spaces. Finally, West End resident Nigel Walters' view of the homeless and crime stands in stark contrast to each of the views expressed above. Mr. Walters says:

We have some crime, and we have people, like I said, living in a state of basically economic distress, but one of the things that people fail to do sometimes is to look at the cause and outlying reasons for that social disarray.

According to Walters, the sheer number of homeless, drug addicts, and individuals with diminished mental capacities found in the community is because of social conditions beyond the control of the individual parties themselves. These comments illustrate the breadth of residents' views on homelessness and crime. This range of perspectives can also be heard in public debates about this vulnerable population.

Homelessness and deprivation have been fixed aspects of each community for much of their respective existences. The homeless commit petty crimes in the neighborhood-- like loitering and begging, but they are a major annoyance for some. The homeless presence in the community is often tolerated by old residents more than it is despised. Long term West End resident Yusef Allen says:

You got the homeless people that you see them around in the highways, begging and stuff like that. A lot of times, they walk into a person's business. I mean the business owners don't want these people to scare away the customers so in that case, I wouldn't say everybody is welcome....When you think about it, a guy comes in your establishment, haven't bathed, you know, beard to the ground, clothes just dirty, I mean you're going to be a little uncomfortable about that as well because you don't want them to scare away your business...There's nothing really you can do with it because here's the thing: we understand our experience here in America hasn't been the greatest experience. That being said, we can't stay there....You've got to pull yourself up by your boot straps, by your own [bootstraps].

Mr. Allen does not mind the homeless' presence; however, as a former business owner, he understands the perspective of those who take a contrary view, especially business owners and homeowners.

Some people make distinctions among the homeless population. Old Fourth Ward resident Heather Henry believes the "new homeless" in the community bring the area down; however, like fellow Old Fourth Ward realtor, Tiffany Hayes, she believes the "old homeless" bring something to the community. The "new homeless" do not know the rules of interaction in the neighborhood. In stark contrast, Ms. Henry says the "old homeless" do:

I think it is kind of they become a neighborhood fixture. You are not harming them. You are not trying to push them out. Occasionally when they pass through they have gotten an opportunity to ask you for something. You may give it to them or you tell them to go on about their business, but even still... it's not a confrontation. It's not a threat. They don't pose a threat. Well the new ones come and like I said in any place. They try you. They just want to see what they can get...I've got a couple of them who call me Crazy Lady because like I said some nights when they come out and they done had their binge and it's early in the morning they're acting a fool, and I will open up my window and say, 'Keep it moving. People live and sleep around here. Y'all was fine earlier. Get fine somewhere else. Keep it moving.'

Heather Henry describes a community where certain kinds of homeless add value to the neighborhood, but others detract from it. She also outlines the delicate balance which exists between the homeless in the Old Fourth Ward and the residents and business owners.

Yusef Moore and his family have been in the West End community since 1962. According to him, the most notable increase in crime was in the eighties. He ties the advent of crime in the area to the increase of those in the community with limited economic means.

That's when we started seeing more crime. I say that's how the drugs got into the neighborhood, not just passing people but people in the neighborhood who's just maintaining. Drugs is what did it. Blacks just happened to be on the drugs.

Unlike long term resident Yusef Allen, Yusef Moore's comments suggest little overlap between race and class based issues. Yusef Moore's comments suggest that renters of low socio-economic means brought drugs to the neighborhood, and that race had no proximate bearing on the matter.

Over and over again in the West End and Old Fourth Ward some residents and business owners articulate a value that some homeless and semi homeless bring to the community. Leonard Curley owns a hair salon on Edgewood Avenue in the Old Fourth Ward. His customer base is drawn from all over the city. His base clientele come from a variety of contexts: students from the local colleges, travelers to the nearby King Center, local celebrities, and doctors from the nearby hospitals. Often times, Mr. Curley is open in the evening. A local social service agency sits across the street from his shop. Mr. Curley says it is important that his clients feel comfortable walking from their cars to the shops and that they be able to do so unharrassed by the homeless in the community.

Leonard Curley has been able to achieve a largely hassle free experience for his customers by spending time in front of his shop greeting people and tidying the exterior. Often, a local homeless person will ask if he or she can carry out the trash for a dollar or two. Mr. Curley usually complies. One homeless person carried out his trash so often that when Leonard Curley saw the woman on the streets in the neighborhood she introduced him to her friends as "my boss."

When these "regular" homeless see patrons coming to and from Mr. Curley's shop, they do not bother them. Mr. Curley is grateful for this. He says:

If you're here to get your hair done, and you see a man following you to your car begging you for money, you are going to be nervous. It's women. If it was a barber shop, I would be fine.

Some of the people in Mr. Curley's hair salon are as colorful as the "street people," so Mr. Curley has developed an appreciation for the homeless as part of the fabric of the community.

I do celebrities and stuff as well. So a lot of them I go to them wherever they need me or wherever they book me; I go there. Johnny on the spot. Like I have tried to work in high end salons and it just wasn't me. I like to be comfortable and I like the stylists to be comfortable and express their artistic vision as much as they want. I got a girl with purple hair. Got a dude with a Mohawk. He has so much personality. I would never alter anybody. I have been in the hair business for 18 years, over 18 years, and I have worked in the top salon in DC, the best salon in NY. I've done all that, and it was fine. It was great. I did it. I got from it what I needed.

Although Mr. Curley "would never alter anybody" and he even knows a few of the homeless by name, he notes that "The blight, the begging, the homeless is the worst thing about doing business here [in the Old Fourth Ward]". The blight, the begging, and the homeless are the items most visible to outsiders.

So what is the benefit residents communicate? The established homeless population in each area knows who belongs in the community, and they have a proximate idea of where people belong. Mr. Curley says:

The community lets people know. [We let] each other know what's happening. Like if there is a car break in or something. It's like your neighbor.

The community to which Mr. Curley refers includes everyone, the homeless too. Homeless residents who are fixtures in the area are viewed by some residents as providing a direct benefit to the community—added security. That is why Mr. Curley says he "don't mind the homeless."

Mr. Curley continues:

As long as they work. Don't just come up and approach. And it's the same one's that be out here, and they have game. Like at night time they come up and they'll tell people they have to pay \$5 to park and they're the tenant. It's the games that people play, and if you tell them no, then they'll go "F you then nigga."

Mr. Curley knows that in the Old Fourth Ward community he loves so dearly, there is always the possibility that something is going to “pop off.”¹¹¹ In no way does this make him want to leave the neighborhood, but he knows that others do not feel this way.

There is a motor shop next door to Old Fourth Ward resident Heather Henry’s building. After hours, Ms. Henry often sees homeless people dive into the dumpster at the shop. Once, Ms. Henry asked the owner of the shop what was in the dumpster and why he did not padlock it. The owner replied that it was just scraps and copper wiring. The dumpster divers take the scraps to the recycling center for money. The owner intentionally leaves the scraps there. According to Ms. Henry, the shop owner’s act of kindness does not go unreciprocated. She says:

He gets left alone. I think he doesn’t worry about anything because he looks out for them and they in turn look out for him. I promise you if someone were [to break in] we would know who. You know, we would know. They [the homeless] would tell you who did what. You know that it’s not someone who has been around here for a long time...The neighborhood is going to know that that’s the person and you won’t be able to be around here and be in peace.

Heather Henry’s comments suggest that the homeless community in the area has a code of ethics and a social network whereby those who violate the code can be identified and punished. She is confident that those who do trash or break into this metal shop are not long-term residents but transient homeless because everyone “in the community” respects and leaves this businessman alone. According to Ms. Henry, it does not matter that the businessman is white and many of the homeless are black. Ms. Henry’s comments suggest that this white business man is clearly viewed as an insider. However, not all homeless share the code of ethics outlined above. According to Ms Henry, such a mentality is more likely to be exhibited among those who have been in the community for some time.

¹¹¹ “Pop off” is a colloquialism meaning something can happen very quickly.

A similar view is expressed by long term West End resident, Ruth Marshall. According to Ms. Marshall, the “corner guys,” mostly homeless drunkards, can be relied on to look out for members of the community. Ms. Ruth says:

I always felt, always felt, even back then I felt safe. Right there on that road those guys sit there and they would be drinking and my daughter said they always, she said, ‘I don't even look at them’ and I said, ‘No. Don't be like that.’ I said, ‘If you need help, those are the guys that's going to help you,’ and one day she had a flat tire not too far from there, and they fixed her tire. I said, ‘You don't have to sit and eat with them, but don't be nasty to them.’ ...I said, ‘By the grace of God it's not you there on alcohol, it's not you there homeless.’ I said, ‘Don't ever look down on a person unless when you look down you pick them up.’ ...And if you can't pick them up, don't look down on them because you don't know where you will be tomorrow.

For Ruth Marshall, the homeless look out for those in the community and should be looked out for by those in the community. Ms. Marshall owns her own home, but she has struggled for most of her life. When her electric bill spikes due to weather changes or rate hikes, from time to time she still has trouble paying her bill. Like the homeless men and women she encounters in the neighborhood, it is easy for her to see herself in need of a hand.

The Challenge of an All Inclusive Form of Economic Diversity.

Economic diversity is valued by many people, but based upon my interviews and observations, when residents think of creating an economically diverse neighborhood few of them include the homeless and poor. Yet the homeless and poor are an ever present in both the West End and the Old Fourth Ward. Residents who accept the range of economic diversity in the community may be less likely to leave. The Simpsons describe this “acceptance level” as a level of comfort.

We have a cross section of friends and acquaintances, you know, like I said the [semi-homeless] guy who takes out the garbage. But he also can tell us everything that's going on. He watches our house while we're gone...but you have to have that comfort level. I'm not saying everybody has it.

Cheryl and Brian Simpson see this homeless man as value added to the neighborhood, but for others, he may detract from the community. The Simpsons also see it as their responsibility to take care of those in the community who may have needs. The homeless are welcome to ask for things from their garden or request a plate. In part, they believe it is their responsibility. In part, their longevity in the community affords them a perspective which others lack. Discussing the semi-homeless neighborhood resident again, Cheryl Simpson says:

He said to us, “Some of these people act like I will hurt them. I was here before they got here.” It’s true. His sister and her husband bought property on Eggleston probably 40 years ago. They were here when I got here. His sister was one of my baby sitters, she didn’t...her husband’s a well off electrician/carpenter. She was at home because she didn’t have to work. She kept my kids as a favor to me. She let me know ... I don’t have to work....So that’s what I was saying, working class neighborhood, lots of trades. I mean you can go all the way back to the 1890 census and you see lots of black people here, people don’t even know that. Blacks didn’t just come to West End in 70’s. Now having said all of that, this sister brought her brother from the country to have more exposure. Unfortunately she died and he fell back on hard times, but he knows he can come to us...

This comment illustrates that the Simpsons view home ownership is like a social contract where all the members of the community owe an obligation to each other. Many others view home ownership as an investment, not a social contract. Even among those potential community residents who desire to affect social change, many prefer to do so from a distance, not in their own backyards.

Self Help in Avoiding Crime

In many areas, crime is a matter left for the police to handle, but my interviews reveal that the West End has an established tradition of self help. Residents sometimes take policing the community into their own hands. This tradition goes back several decades. Yusef Moore and his family have resided in the West End for over 30 years. Recalling an incident many years ago, Yusef Moore recounts:

There is a gym which they turned into a homeless shelter over there [pointing to the street behind his street], so that brought forth crime up and down these streets. So my sister and I used to get out there at night and stop the crime. This is my home. I'm not going to let somebody come in and destroy it.

There is a fence separating the street Yusef Moore and his family live on and the streets that contains the homeless shelter. Yusef and his sister would bang pots and yell for the people to be quiet. As a child, Yusef Moore and his young sister were willing to fight to maintain a certain level of decorum in their community.

West End respondents relayed numerous stories of taking matters into their own hands. Such stories were told in the Old Fourth Ward too, but not with nearly as much frequency. The self help strategies uncovered include things like the use of firearms to deter criminals, additional security measures, open confrontations, Southern sensibilities, and education. Each of these self help strategies is outlined in the paragraphs which follow.

Richard Snow is on the maintenance staff for a low income building on the edge of the West End. He has lived in the building for less than two years. Many of the people in the building call him "the lookout" because when Mr. Snow is not working, he is often perched on the second floor landing of his building watching. As part of his duties as maintenance person, Mr. Snow has to unlock the door to a meeting room in a nearby building. Several area groups meet there to discuss matters like crime, safety, and drugs. Mr. Snow unlocks the door, and he even stays to lock up, but he does not participate. When asked about the existence of a neighborhood watch program, Mr. Snow says:

They got that too. There's one of the groups here in the area; they get out and walk through the neighborhood letting people know that they're trying to take the neighborhood back over and stuff like that.

Mr. Snow believes his vigilance serves the same purpose, even without participating in an organized activity.

Residents in both neighborhoods often detail carrying a gun or even chasing an alleged perpetrator through the neighborhood with a gun, but seldom does anyone reveal discharging a weapon. Raymond Flowers is one of the few exceptions. Mr. Flowers and his brother moved to Atlanta from one of the roughest sections of Brooklyn, NY, to attend school at one of the Atlanta University Center campuses. Mr. Flowers has lived in the West End for two years, but he and his family have operated a business in the community for over seven years. In those seven years, he can recall several break-ins, and in each case, the police arrived too late to do anything. Those experiences have taught Mr. Flowers to look out for himself and to be ever vigilant.

Raymond Flowers operates a successful graphic design business in the West End located in the same building where he owns a condominium. His brother owns a clothing apparel store in the community. The clothing apparel shop is visible from his condominium. One day, Raymond Flowers heard a loud crashing noise and looked out of his window to find someone driving his car through the front of his brother's clothing apparel store. Raymond Flowers called the police, and in an effort to scare the perpetrators away, he discharged his firearm from the balcony of his condominium. When the police arrived, the perpetrators were gone (along with some of his brother's merchandise), and Mr. Flowers was promptly ticketed for discharging a firearm in a public place. The officer said he "had to give him the ticket because his boss told him to." Raymond Flowers would make the same choice again if he felt it was necessary in order to protect his life, home, or property

Self help may seem like vigilantism to some. To others it is vigilance. The lines between the two sometimes become so blurred, that it's really a matter of semantics. Residents who are repelled by vigilantism may applaud vigilance. Realtor Faith Howard is proud of what she terms her West End neighbors' efforts to become "self empowered." Some of their efforts toward

empowerment include minor things like recording license plate numbers of those who dump items illegally, calling the police on beggars harassing car drivers at exit ramps, and placing security surveillance cameras around homes and property.

People whose sensibilities are offended by acts of self help like discharging a firearm may find other self help efforts more palatable. Self help does not always mean that residents take the law into their own hands; very often residents help the police to help the neighborhood.

Mrs. Howard says:

We're becoming self empowered, which ultimately enables the police to do as much as they can do. Right now we don't have what we should have, and it's not to fault anyone or to say the city is not doing what they should be doing. You know, I understand we're in a deficit in the city. However, other communities do have certain resources.... We're helping ourselves police wise... So that we can better service I guess our police officers, so that they can help us.

This model is evidenced in the actions of the West End real estate developer mentioned earlier in the chapter. After the investor videotaped activity at a suspected drug house across from his own property and submitted it to the police, the police shut the drug house down.

Self help is not the only remedy employed in the neighborhoods, but for many, it is the first course of action. Old Fourth Ward resident Heather Henry was introduced earlier. Ms. Henry lives alone. She is a young, attractive black woman who has lived and worked in the community for over ten years. Ms. Henry's live/work space is situated in a section of the community which sees constant traffic and activity both day and night. Her building is in walking distance from Grady Hospital, local eateries, and clubs. When Ms. Henry's peace is disturbed, she never calls the police. Instead, she handles the matter herself. Ms. Henry recalls one such incident when she confronted the owner of a new establishment in the area:

[A] young man who opened On the Edge. I'd come back from a trip. It was late night. I was tired. I had some of his patrons...right in front of this building standing outside smoking weed, got the car doors open, and the music up, and I

was like ‘Can I ask you guys to take that elsewhere? People live here. ... They [the businesses’ patrons] come to the city to party, and then they go home. So I went down just to ask him [the owner] what kind of element I need to expect from him and his patrons... I sure did -- house shoes, head rag, sweats and all. Went right down there in the midst of the party, asked for him immediately and I let him know. ... It had to be like 2 o’clock in the morning. I let him know I could appreciate anyone who’s trying to start their business and what have you, but I really would like to know what I need to expect. ...Just let me know what I need to expect, and I am going to let you know what you can expect from me.

Ms. Henry is not opposed to using the police, City Council, neighborhood association, NPU, or other means to handle problems in the neighborhood, but her first recourse is self help.

Policing the neighborhood is viewed as a corporate responsibility, and it is often shared by those in the neighborhood. Policing the community takes many forms. For example, the West End recently started its own private security patrol financed by members of the community. Not all the neighbors are financially able to participate. Not all neighbors—whether financially able or not—want to participate; however, all neighbors benefit from the patrol.

Mighty Neighborly of You.

Most of the offenses in the neighborhood are crimes against property. Often, residents leap to protect property, even when people are not in danger. When a crime does occur against an occupied dwelling, neighbors tend to react, whether or not they know each other’s name.

Koriandra Barnett, a two year West End resident, recently experienced a break-in at her home.

She retold the story at a homeowner’s association meeting.

A week ago today, my neighbor who I’ve never met before, but we’re Southerners so I wave, he waves...He saw them [the perpetrators], and he chased them down the street with a shotgun...He didn’t catch them, but he gave chase.

The neighbor risked his own safety to protect the goods of a neighbor he had never even met.

Over and over again respondents indicated a willingness to risk potential harm to self in order to protect the property of people that they may not like or even know by name.

One rationale expressed by respondents for the penchant present in the community to look out for your neighbors is that this value is a traditional characteristic of the region. According to several respondents, looking out for your neighbors is “a Southern thing.” Southern virtues like waving to people you do not know, greeting everyone you meet on the street, and sitting out on front porches may fill people in the neighborhood with a sense of connectedness. This connectedness works to foster a sense of obligation to each other.

These Southern sensibilities identified by respondents are important because they fill neighborhood residents with a keen sense of awareness as to who belongs in the social space, where they belong, and to whom in the community they are tied. Knowledge of these factors can put residents into a hyper-sensitive mode when people who do not seem to belong enter the neighborhood. Hypersensitivity can breed a certain amount of vigilance manifesting itself in self help. Additionally, the Southern practice of speaking to people on the street is used as form of self help, but it is also a norm which some members of the community esteem. Long term Old Fourth Ward resident Heather Henry believes the practice of greeting your neighbors is sincere. Ms. Henry fears that the pervasiveness of “Southern sensibilities” which she says “used to be present” in her neighborhood is waning.

I am afraid that Atlanta is going to lose the charm that brought so many people here as a result of all its growth. That Southern hospitality. That special sense of beauty that she has. Even then, back in 1991 ... you still had people who, we spoke in the morning. Although you knew he was a crack head at 7 or 8 o'clock at night, he [the crack head] still had sense enough to get up the next morning and say, 'Good morning.'

From Heather Henry's comments, it is apparent that she views the morning greeting exchanged between neighbors in her community as more than a perfunctory act. Instead, it is the way civilized Southerners across racial/ethnic and socioeconomic divides behave.

The final form of self help identified by respondents involves educating each other and increasing each other's awareness about local crime. Many crimes of opportunity abound in the two neighborhoods. Neighborhood residents are encouraged to take extra precautions to ensure that their properties are not stolen. These precautions are communicated through leaflets distributed by local city council members and the police. They are discussed in meetings, and neighbors talk about them on the street. Cars should never be left unlocked. Items should never be in plain view (this includes things in the house, inside a car, and outside). Outside apparatus (like condensing units, hoses, and water spouts) should be locked up or caged. In addition, residents are told that beyond mere courtesy, making eye contact and speaking to people on the street has an additional benefit. This practice could disarm would-be offenders. Eye contact signals to the perpetrator: (1) I see you; (2) I can identify you; and (3) I am not afraid of you. A streetwise potential perpetrator will read these signals and look for easier prey.

Social ties are important, but the granting of assistance by one neighbor to another seems to be as much about what actions are tolerated in the social space as it is about the specific ties that might exist among neighbors. A strong sense of community pervades both neighborhoods, but in many ways the community is one of necessity.

Education

The decision to stay in a neighborhood or leave it is complicated. There are a number of push and pull factors. However, education, especially elementary and secondary schools, is almost always viewed in the Old Fourth Ward and West End as a push factor. After a brief discussion on Atlanta Public Schools (APS), I will discuss the influence of education on the decision to remain in, leave, or move into the neighborhoods.

A former APS School Board Member and Old Fourth Ward resident says, “every child deserves a great neighborhood school.” Few in either community would disagree with that. The disagreement comes as people banter about who is to blame for the failing Atlanta Public School system. Councilman Martin puts it this way: “great schools make great neighborhoods.”

Many of the people in the gentrifying black neighborhoods under study have neither the time nor the inclination to invest in the public school system. It is not that the whole community is unconcerned. People express concerns at community meetings, but few come out to address the issue directly. For example, one Education Committee meeting I attended which featured an announced presentation by Atlanta Public Schools was only attended by two residents of the community. In various conversations with the chair of that committee, I discovered that this was not unusual.

A planned tour of the middle school and elementary schools in the West End brought only three attendees.¹¹² The explanation most often given for this is that at various stages of their lives, people have different priorities. Several different groups of people are present in each community. Some are young singles living alone. Some are singles that reside with others. There are older people--both single and married-- many of whom have no children, and there are young couples. Young couples generally fall into one of two categories: those with children and those without. Of all these groups, only those who have young children or plan to shortly tend to actively participate in efforts to build better schools in the community. Old Fourth Ward resident Tony Miller, a member of the returning black gentry, believes parents make the difference in the quality of education that a child receives.

¹¹² I was one of the three. The other two attendees were both young, white married newcomers to the neighborhood. One had resided in the area for two years and the other for one year. Both of the women had young children. Only one of the children attended the local public school. The other children were not school age.

No, I tell people all the time because I'm in education, if you do not get involved in your child's education they will be a C student, because that is the average and what they teach towards. If you want your child to have an exceptional education, you have to get involved. Well, I'm an educator, my mother is an educator, my aunts are educators...My background is education, so I don't believe in letting schools dictate my child, so yeah I could put my child in Atlanta Public School and she will do quite fine, but she will do better in a better school. That's all there is to it when there are more opportunities and all that.

Tony Miller and his wife have the economic means to send their toddler to any school they choose. They choose to live in the Old Fourth Ward, but because of their economic means, that decision does not threaten to compromise their daughter's future. Those with less economic means are often faced with a seemingly untenable decision. Residents can place their children in an inadequate public school, send them to private school, home school, or move away.

Improving the schools is an option, but that takes time. It also takes effort. In these neighborhoods, many residents, especially young newcomers, are already active in the community. Their community efforts are varied, vast, and time consuming. Private school costs time (in terms of transportation and investing the schools) and money, so many people choose to move away. Heather Henry says the search for better schools is the number one reason families move out of the condominium complex where she lives.

Times Change, People Change

Ruby Everson raised her children in the Old Fourth Ward and sent them all to Atlanta public schools. That was several decades ago, but Everson says the difference between then and now is the parents.

No. The public education is good. If the parent and the child take an interest in it... I went to PTA meetings with my children.

Ruby Everson was a single, working mother of five, and she was involved. Ms. Everson even served as president of the PTA. She encourages parents to attend meetings at the school. This is

what she believes will make a difference, but Ms. Everson's comments fail to acknowledge that different times call for different measures. To her, schools do not fail. Parents and children fail schools. It is not a matter of resources; it is a matter of resolve.

Parental involvement is one way to create better schools, but when parents do get involved, they often feel like their wishes are ignored by APS. A recent school restructuring in the Old Fourth Ward illustrates this dynamic. Atlanta's public housing authority recently demolished several of its public housing projects, including some in the Old Fourth Ward. When the projects closed, the children and families moved away, thus driving enrollment down in some OFW schools. Economic constraints compelled Atlanta public schools to do some restructuring, specifically, closing C.W. Hill Elementary School in the Old Fourth Ward.

The plan to close CW Hill Elementary School was a matter of public knowledge, and several meetings were held about it, yet many in the Old Fourth Ward community seemed caught off guard by the school's closing. At public meetings regarding the closing, residents made comments like "John Hope and CW Hill are too important to this Sweet Auburn District to let anything pass us by," "All of our planning for a better neighborhood goes to pot if we don't have schools," and "The quality of the neighborhood is impacted by the quality of the school." Their appeals to leave the schools open were denied. Two elementary schools, CW Hill and John Hope Elementary, combined in August 2009. John Hope Elementary, abutting the MLK Natatorium and Historic Site survived; CW Hill was closed.

Melinda Galveston is single, black, and upper class. Ms. Galveston acknowledges the need for a better public school system, but she does not feel compelled to work for one.

The city schools are good [but].... We need [a] better school system. I don't have any kids, so I tend to stay out of those conversations... I don't have any kids, don't really want any. It's just not my lifestyle.

Melinda Galveston is actively involved in the community, but she does not participate in discussions about the school system because she does not have children. Those people with children in the community are often absent from the debate as well.

The quality of APS schools is not the only factor parents must consider. Travel to and from school can also influence parents' perception of the potential suitability of the neighborhood to the needs of their family. Walking in the community can be unsafe or unsuitable for sheltered young sensibilities. Raymond Flowers has no children, but this young, single, black man says he would not send his kids to school in West End because "I don't want them to be around a whole lot of nonsense." In some cases, the nonsense occurs on the way to school and on the way home from it. Other West End residents express frustration over kids being approached and offered drugs as they travel to and from the MARTA train station on their way to or from school.

In each community, some children have to wade through drug paraphernalia, drug dealers, and drug users just to go to school. Drugs can also be found on many street corners in the neighborhoods, streets, and some parks, all in plain sight of children as young as elementary school age. In the Old Fourth Ward one location notorious for drug activity is a gas station close to an elementary school. Elementary school children walk by the gas station on their way to and from school, and drug activity goes on all around them. One resident says, "oddly enough, there is a code of ethics even on the street. Yeah. The heavy drug activity occurred after school hours and across the street on the side." This code of ethics offers little in the way of comfort or protection.

There are alternatives to the public schools. West End resident Faith Howard chooses to home school her children. This decision is personal and has multiple layers. Mrs. Howard and

her husband are both products of a very good northern public school system. When they moved to Atlanta, they were concerned about the shortcomings of the local public school, but the most compelling reason for their decision to home school was their religious values. The Howards neither expect nor believe that the public school system can adequately instill their religious values in their children. Old Fourth Ward resident Tony Simpson holds out hope for the future of public education in his community. For now, Tony Simpson and his wife are committed to sending their daughter to private school, but the Simpsons and some parents are working to start a top quality charter school in the area.

If we are going to have a sustainable community we got to have it [the proposed new charter school]. If we are going to have a womb to tomb community we got to have it. A kid can be born here, go to school here, from pre-k, from mother's womb to get a graduate degree [here].

Tony Simpson is hopeful that their efforts will be successful. His daughter is now two, so he has a few years before she is school age. In the event the neighborhood charter school is not up and running, he is prepared to send his daughter to the best school he can. Those who do not have that choice are often compelled to leave the neighborhood.

The education factor outlined above potentially influences those with children to leave the neighborhood; however, the quality of local businesses affects almost everyone. Consistent with Hunter's (1975) findings, many residents shop outside the neighborhood for their vital sustenance needs; however, while some of this is by choice, many others feel compelled to shop elsewhere.

Local Businesses: Service Matters

In many ways, the service issues most commonly identified are also issues of perception. According to some respondents, a lack of trust causes residents and business owners to view each other with suspicion. This lack of trust permeates through neighborhood level interactions.

Nigel Walters believes that a history of abuse makes it particularly difficult for African Americans to trust business owners, even African American business owners. He explains:

Well, trust is one of the things that breaks down the cohesion. See what I'm saying? See, cohesion depends on trust, reliability, communication, you see what I'm saying? And those are many elements that right now black people don't have where business is concerned. You know, so because of that, we're suffering right now. There's no doubt.

According to Mr. Walters, residents do not trust the quality of goods provided by neighborhood stores, the service in the community, or the prices of the goods. Additionally, consumption patterns are themselves complicated and highly personal.

Even those who are dedicated to the community often shop for vital goods and services outside the community or on its periphery. Shopping decisions may be made on a purely economic basis, but more ephemeral matters can also come into play. The two reasons most commonly expressed for the practice of shopping outside the community were necessity and quality. The necessity argument proffers that vital services cannot be found in the community; therefore, it is necessary to shop outside for them. The quality issue is more nuanced, but it generally takes one of two forms. Rationales commonly expressed by respondents for their decision to shop outside the neighborhood include: (1) the presence of poor quality goods in the community; and (2) poor quality of customer service.

Quality of Goods

One of the cultural treasures located in the Old Fourth Ward community is the Sweet Auburn Curb Market. A market at this site on Edgewood Avenue was opened in 1918, and it has a rich and extensive history in the community.¹¹³ The Curb Market takes its name from a period

¹¹³ The history of the Sweet Auburn Curb Market is recorded on its website (<http://www.sweetauburncurbmarket.com/ourmarket.htm>). According to the website, "In 1918, Atlanta established

in history when African-American patrons were not permitted to go inside the market. Instead, African American shoppers were forced to view and make their purchases from the very edge of the market, its curb. Hence the name, Sweet Auburn Curb Market.

Rochelle Ferrer is an Old Fourth Ward resident who lives a healthy lifestyle, enjoys walking in the community, and is active in several community organizations; however, Ms. Ferrer will not shop at the Sweet Auburn Curb Market. Ms. Ferrer says, “These days money is too hard to come by to spend it at places that offer second rate goods and services.” Instead, she tends to shop at Whole Foods on Ponce De Leon or other places where she can get organic foods and healthy items at a good price.

Sometimes I will do the Market, but not a whole lot. I ... was sick and on medications for a while, and when I'd go to the meat market I would tell people there are so many chemicals in the foods and smells in the air ... You'll get it on this end or that end. You are going to pay because you wanna eat healthy and clean. It makes your mind clear. I don't know... but I will support them [the Market] now and then and support the Mom and Pop shops that they have at the Market because I think it's a good thing. If I thought it was really fresh and organic and stuff, I would do it [more]. Greens and stuff like that I will go and do it, but I don't cook greens that often, but I should. So I don't go down there that often.

According to Ms. Ferrer, neither the quality of the foods nor the prices at the market is good.

Rochelle Ferrer also believes that the quality of service at the curb market is bad, but she is more generous than some.

a 'curb market' on land cleared by a massive fire that had swept through Atlanta the year before. The market, set up in a huge tent, was an immediate success bringing urban consumers direct access to farmers and their products. Wishing to give the curb market a more permanent home, the Women's Club of Atlanta raised money for a fireproof brick and concrete building which opened on May 1st, 1924, and was called the Municipal Market of Atlanta. At the time, it was located in the exact geographic center of Atlanta and quickly became 'the place to shop' for every Atlantan. Back then, Atlanta was still a segregated city, and whites shopped inside the Market while blacks were only permitted to shop from stalls lining the curb. The market's current name reflects that era.”

Daniel Tepee is a middle-aged white man, and a long-term resident of the Old Fourth Ward. He classifies himself as “middle class.” Mr. Tepee has worked to build several enterprises in the Old Fourth Ward, but for as long as he can recall he has left the community for most of his basic shopping needs. He explains his reasons:

One of the things that is really missing is a grocery store. The Auburn Curb Market is an icon. I thought it was headed in the right direction, and they just can't. I really think that the Curb Market should be one of the top markets in Atlanta.

Many respondents say they believe that icons like the Sweet Auburn Curb Market should be preserved, but absent strong financial support from the community they often cannot survive. The reason Daniel does not shop there is because the quality of the produce and meats is very low. Instead of shopping for meats, vegetables, and produce in the community, he feels compelled to meet this basic need outside the Old Fourth Ward.

As a dedicated community activist, Aisha Holder tries to support her community any way she can; however, Mrs. Holder sometimes finds that her Old Fourth Ward community does not serve all her consumer needs. A resident for over twenty five years, Mrs. Holder used to frequent the Curb Market, but she ended that practice a number of years ago. A vegetarian, the entire presentation of the items for sale disturbed her, especially after she saw an open air display of a pickled pig's head on a stick. Her clothing needs are also satisfied outside the neighborhood. Mrs. Holder prefers discount clothing, and only a few high end boutiques line the streets of the Old Fourth Ward. As a result, Mrs. Holder does most of her grocery and clothing shopping in other parts of Atlanta. For a time, she even got her dreads done outside the community until she successfully persuaded her stylist to move to the Old Fourth Ward. Aisha Holder has worked for decades to ensure that residents see and realize the value of the neighborhood, including attracting new businesses to the area.

The absence of certain businesses and services can impact how residents feel about the community, but the presence and mix of types of businesses already present in the neighborhood has an impact too. An Old Fourth Ward business owner suggests that new businesses to the area have been a catalyst in that change.

The community has really changed ...At one point it wasn't nothing but barber shops, salons, restaurants-- barbecue joints. It was strictly urban, but now it's growing... We have a vegan restaurant here!

Later in the interview, the respondent makes this connection even more explicitly. While discussing recent changes made to his storefront—he removed the bars, opened up the front, and put an awning on—he admits his efforts were spurred, in part by new, upscale restaurants which have moved to the area. It is this business owner's hope that those restaurants' customers will become his clients too. He says,

It [the bars] made it look like the hood... Yes. This is the Fourth Ward and it's known for being in the 'hood, but we ain't gotta look like it. That's just me. I felt like we were locked in. Like we were caged in. Then it was like, it makes clients feel 'Whew we got bars up. What's wrong with this neighborhood?' They would ride by and they could see the sign, but then they'd see bars and it would mess things up. It was kind of a deterrent.

Old Fourth Ward business owner Leonard Curly believes other legitimate business owners in the area appreciate it when a business improves its aesthetic appeal.

I am sure other businesses in the area appreciate it too. The guys from Café Circa. They ain't never come over here. The day I did it [removed the bars] they came over and said 'oh it looks 110% better.' They looked around, and they said, 'it really looks good. Man I like what you are doing.'

Leonard Curley made very little changes to the interior of his shop (a hair salon). The bank of windows lined with pillows and cushions in rich colors (gold, burgundy, orange, brown, and teal) and luxurious fabrics, the exposed brick walls, high ceilings, wood beams, and rich mahogany floors were all there prior to his exterior improvements. Improving the exterior made the inside

visible to those on the outside looking inside. People made assumptions about the quality of his goods and services based on their perception of the exterior of the shop.

Quality businesses are a priority in the West End too. Amina Charles is very interested in attracting new businesses to the West End. There are several reasons for this. One, she does not believe the current businesses offer all the options she is looking for in the community.

Secondly, she is concerned about the quality of the products and services at many of the existing businesses in the neighborhood.

I don't mind shopping in the neighborhood, but I don't think we have good eateries.... I do shop at Kroger is, but I think it stinks.... I like atmosphere, but I don't get it at Big Bear.

Another resident outlines the same dilemma:

So if you compare the price of the produce at Big Bear and compare it to Kroger, you'll find it's better quality sometimes at Big Bear, but the price is also cheaper at Big Bear. Whereas, your meats you probably want to go to Kroger [but] sometimes Kroger's meats is questionable too because little do people know sometime if the meat is going off slightly, some stores will likely wash some of that meat in stuff that neutralizes smell, like bleach and other things. As far as ground beef is concerned, you know, they have a tendency to put a little bit of extra red coloring into the beef and so forth, so that it is like prime meat. As far as the fish is concerned, most fish you get like fresh fish is frozen, so certain things you want to be aware of where you're buying. Sometimes, I will leave the neighborhood to go to the bigger food markets where I can get fresh fish. It's kind of like it's a breakup. You have to really be the type of shopper that basically picks and chooses where you're getting your goods from.

Despite these concerns, Ms. Charles is hopeful about the prospect of improving some of the local businesses.

Start a relationship with the owners. They will listen. But the only thing is it can't be like you better you better.

According to Ms. Charles, threats are of little effect. Ms. Charles is a very direct person, but she has discovered that with local business, a soft approach works best. In her experience, creativity also works, but the bottom line works best. For example, Kroger shopping baskets taken by

customers are often left on neighborhood streets, so whenever Ms. Charles visits the store, she returns whatever baskets she finds. The manager is grateful for this and responsive to any concerns Ms. Charles brings to him – even when those concerns are about the quality of goods or inferior customer service.

Low Quality Customer Service

Many residents of the neighborhoods have a choice about where they can shop. They have their own transportation and some economic means, both of which afford them the opportunity to shop at places of their choosing. Poor quality goods and services drive some to satisfy their shopping needs away from the neighborhood, but customer service is also a factor in the equation. According to Rochelle Ferrer, several places in the Old Fourth Ward maintain excellent customer service; she returns to those establishments over and over again. However, several places in the Old Fourth Ward have awful customer service. These establishments do not get a second chance to impress her: “If I’m gonna spend my money out, I’m big on customer service,” she says. This sentiment is expressed repeatedly by respondents.

Sterling Woods is among those who calls the Auburn Curb Market a “second rate place.”

Mr. Woods makes other observations about the Market:

No foreigners in the Curb Market shopping but selling. You don’t see no white people in the market shopping but looking. ...the only people you see in the Curb Market is black people. There’s a thing that I’m going to say, the poor get poorer and the rich get richer. That’s what the Curb Market is about ...they don’t keep upgrade meat, they don’t have upgrade vegetables... they do like it appear to be, but it’s not [upgraded]. Like I said, I’ve been six years on the street and I know.

Mr. Woods’ contempt for the Market combines his current feelings with the history of the Market, of which he seems poignantly aware. Mr. Woods shares his belief that blacks still receive inferior service and goods at the Curb Market. For this reason, he tries not to shop in the Market. Unfortunately, his limited economic means sometimes make that impractical.

Sentiments about neighborhood stores and facilities run very strong in the West End too. Raymond Flowers is a member of the black gentry and a business owner. This young, black entrepreneur feels no obligation to shop in the local stores. This attitude is born from experience. His customer service experiences in the community have been mixed, and Mr. Flowers is particular about the kind of service he expects and accepts. Some of his experiences are good. For example, there is a national chain eatery on the first floor of the condominium complex where he lives and works. Raymond Flowers says, "I know the people. They are good people, and they have good food. The people who own the franchise run it. They have good customer service." In contrast, he says that another national eatery, a fried chicken vendor, located around the corner from this condominium complex, has very poor quality customer service. On two separate occasions he went to purchase chicken and he was told they were "out of chicken." Mr. Flowers muses, "how can a chicken place be out of chicken in the middle of the day?" No apologies or courtesies were extended to him for his inconvenience. He no longer goes to that eatery.

All in all, Raymond Flowers chooses to shop for vital goods and services outside of the West End. The people make the difference for him. According to Mr. Flowers, the people in some business establishments do not care about the patrons. His experiences at the local drugstore and grocery store just minutes from his home have also been negative. Regarding the drugstore he says, "I've never seen a place where you could stand in line and the more people that are working there the slower it gets." I patronized the drug store Mr. Flowers references on at least eight occasions during the course of my interviews.¹¹⁴ Mr. Flowers believes the

¹¹⁴ Three of those visits were attempts to get one of the managers of the store to allow me to interview him. Despite promises to the contrary, the interview never materialized. Customer service is very slow, and the people who work at the store are not overly friendly; however, the employees' roles seem to be somewhat bifurcated. While I was in the store, the young female clerk behind the counter was chastised by her boss for allowing a known thief to enter

employees are just there for a pay check. At least that is how it feels to him. My observations in the same store indicate that employees' desire to protect their jobs requires a certain distancing from patrons as employees are sometimes encouraged to view patrons with suspicion.

Businesses can be welcoming places or uninviting environments. Old Fourth Ward resident Sterling Woods knows that well. Regarding his shopping experiences in the neighborhood, Mr. Woods says:

Some of the merchants in the store they don't treat you with the credibility of being honest, of a good person, a person of integrity. You walk in the store, you can feel the [hostility], you can just feel it. I'm not looking for it and not thinking that anything is going to happen, they're going to look at you like, uh oh, better watch it. You know, you have that unsecure feeling of being in the store and you're thinking in the back of your mind, 'Why did I come in here?' Instead of thinking about what you just came in there for to do.

Mr. Woods is poor and black, but he believes everyone deserves a certain level of respect, and he says that businesses that don't treat their customers with respect "are worse than the drug dealers." According to Mr. Woods, the only difference between the drug dealers and discourteous business owners is that the latter pay taxes. Recalling another incident at a store in the Old Fourth Ward, Mr. Woods says:

I went in a store, [and] the lady throw me my money, [when] I pay for an item, she says, "Okay, here!" I said, "Don't hand me my money that way." And throw it again, but me being the guy that I am, I take my money and left and decide not to go back there anymore.

Mr. Woods feels the treatment he receives has little to do with his low income status because in some neighborhoods stores, he is treated with respect, even stores which cater to higher end clientele.

the store without calling a certain code. The manager pointed to the individual's picture on the front wall by her register. About eight other photos were posted. Upon inquiry, I discovered that a group of seemingly homeless individuals (mostly male) steal toiletry items from the store and then boldly sell them on the corner in front of the store.

Some businesses work to create a certain environment. Sometimes it is a matter of perception. Big Bear, the small grocery store located in the West End, is perceived by many residents as a racialized neighborhood space. A few African Americans work in the store, but the store is owned and largely operated by Asians. Its clientele is almost exclusively African-American. White patrons are seldom found in the store. Some respondents' comments infer that this has an impact on the quality of service at the establishment.

Matt Jacobs is a white West End resident who will not shop at Big Bear. Mr. Jacobs' stated reasons have nothing to do with race or quality of goods. Instead, his refusal to shop at this neighborhood store is a customer service issue. Several of Big Bear's patrons purchase scratch off lottery tickets and convenience food items. The debris lines the public street in front of the store. Mr. Jacobs asked the owners to put trash cans in their parking lot. They refused to do so, so he refuses to patronize them. Matt Jacobs believes neighbors, even corporate neighbors, have an obligation to behave responsibly in the community. The owners of Big Bear did not agree.

Until now, I have addressed customer service from the perspective of the customer, but one Old Fourth Ward business owner's comments show just how complicated the issue of customer service actually is. Leonard Curley owns and manages a hair salon. Some days are particularly busy, but Mr. Curley says patrons still expect nothing less than 100% from him.

I can give my clients everything that they expect, but also know that I am human. Don't come in at 5 in the evening after I have been here since 8 in the morning doing a head every 30 minutes. You don't know what my mood is. Just because I didn't go up to you and say, "Hey, how are you Barbara" and gave you a big humongous hug doesn't mean that I have an attitude. You know what I am saying? We get that a lot. People think that you are a robot and you are not human. You don't know what happened before you walked in to me. How hot I am because the air is not working, anything.

According to this business owner, customers sometimes expect more than mere mortals are able to give. Sometimes, patrons will take their business elsewhere because of matters like this. Mr. Curley believes these customers began with unreasonable expectations.

According to Nigel Walters, failure to shop at local business establishments harms more than just the local businesses; it harms the whole neighborhood:

You know, people don't realize that when you don't shop in your own neighborhood, if you go out to other neighborhoods, this reduces the amount of revenue that you have here to clean the streets and the sidewalks and so forth. So with an exodus of most of the people in the neighborhood spending outside, they were actually making it easier now for the people to come in.

Nigel Walters is working class, black, and a seven year member of the community. He also has a distinct perspective. Most respondents blame neighborhood decline on the ravages of mortgage fraud, but Nigel ties it to residents insufficiently shopping in neighborhood stores. Mr. Walters' belief that shopping in other city of Atlanta neighborhoods reduces tax revenue available to clean West End streets is incorrect (that is not how city sales tax money is parceled out)¹¹⁵, but his comment is interesting because it ignores the quality of service issue. Instead, Mr. Walters seems to believe that the residents of black gentrifying neighborhoods have an obligation to support the businesses in the community, no matter what. Based on my interviews, most other residents do not share that belief.

Conclusion

Certain kinds of people seem more likely to leave the neighborhoods. People who are single and living alone may also be inclined to leave the neighborhood in search of better opportunities. Old Fourth Ward resident Melinda Galveston (a member of the black gentry) puts it this way:

¹¹⁵ However, if West End residents go to shop in an area outside the city of Atlanta (e.g. suburban Fulton or DeKalb counties), then Mr. Walters' point is correct.

I would move out of the neighborhood. I probably would not get rid of my property, but that's more a byproduct of who I am. I would say this. It took me 13 years to come back to Atlanta, and I've lived in four cities. I'm just a mover.

Ms. Galveston has a practical type of neighborhood affinity much akin to the notion of the community of limited liability.¹¹⁶ She expresses strong social and cultural ties to the community, but makes it clear that she would leave for the right opportunity. Her decision to retain her property in the event of a move seems as much an economic decision as a social/psychological one. People who get involved in the neighborhood tend to be more satisfied and remain longer. This involvement can be organized involvement in community groups or as simple as continued engagement with people in the social space. For example, a stakeholder institution in the West End community publishes and delivers a local newsletter. The newsletter is no small feat: it has a circulation of almost 1,600. Despite this large circulation, the newsletter is delivered door to door by street captains in order to give them the opportunity to engage with their neighbors.

Faith Howard believes everyone longs for a place to belong, a place to fit in. The search for a neighborhood may be an extension of that search for identity and completeness, and identity changes during the life course. Pursuant to these changes, some people may feel pulled to the neighborhood while others feel pushed away from it. Mrs. Howard has lived in urban neighborhoods her entire life. Reflecting on the differences between her Brooklyn, New York, home and her West End home, Ms. Howard states:

[In New York] you're not looking for some sort of fulfillment within the community setting. You just live in your house. You're not looking for a community to fulfill anything. You're just trying to find affordable rents in New York. Where here we pick locations for some sort of additional fulfillment to our lifestyle... And so you start to look for a neighborhood that fits you and your personality a little bit more because of something missing.

¹¹⁶ In a community of limited liability, there are a multitude of relationships and associations and a sense of identity; however, attachment is contingent and voluntary. Residents may invest themselves (identity and resource wise) in an area, but they do it like a business and will only invest to a point. When investment is no longer prudent, they are willing to pull out (see Janowitz 1952; Suttles 1972; and Kasarda and Janowitz 1974).

If, as Ms. Howard's comments indicate, the neighborhood is an important source of identity, it stands to reason that as the neighborhood changes or as people change, their feeling of being tied to the community may change as well. People who have meaningful connections in the community seem to form heightened levels of attachment and ultimately affinity. Connections develop over time, so short term residents are less likely to be tied to the community. These results are also substantiated in my findings in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

I find that neighborhood dynamics are different in the two gentrifying black neighborhoods under study. The Old Fourth Ward has a variety of residential spaces including condominiums, town houses, apartments, row houses, Section 8 housing, and spacious single family residences. The West End boasts far fewer condominiums and a great number of residential spaces, many of which have been converted to multiple family occupancy or houses with apartments. It also has a number of Section 8 facilities. Both communities have a large number of social service agencies. Faith Howard knows her urban neighborhood is physically and socially different than a suburban subdivision, yet she believes that to thrive the residents in her neighborhood must look after each other just like she thinks suburban subdivision residents do. She says:

So we have different dynamics. Like we have our blocks with streets and neighborhoods, so we're not like a subdivision where you have a gate in the community and everything's the same....However, we have to protect ourselves as if we are a subdivision. We know everybody's house, how old is your son, what's he doing home at this time when you know he's supposed to be at school? You know to look out for each other.

For those who welcome this level of connection, the community is inviting. For those who resent it, it can be an intrusive place from which some flee.

Whether in times of economic strength or weakness, those with young children and those singles living alone appear most likely to move out of the Old Fourth Ward and West End. Those with young children often move in search of better school districts or larger living spaces at a lower cost. Safety is also an issue for families with young children. Urban pioneers and vanguards are often willing to take risks with their own safety, but seem less inclined to risk the safety of their children. Those who elect to raise children in the gentrifying neighborhoods are constantly reminded of safety issues. For example, the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood hosts an event each year called “Safe Night Out.” At this event, Old Fourth Ward parents and kids get together for a night of fun in the neighborhood. It is a big party with face painting and other events; however, just the name itself is a constant reminder that not every night out in the neighborhood is safe.

The title of this chapter is expressed as a conundrum, but it may actually be a foregone conclusion. As stated at the end of Chapter 6 (Attachment Matters), place, space, and race-based issues may attract many to the neighborhood, but in some cases, they act as a deterrent. Businesses, service agencies, and people move to neighborhoods that adequately provide for their needs, and they leave neighborhoods that do not. Perhaps, the central question is not “should the black gentry and others stay or leave neighborhoods undergoing black gentrification?” After all, some will leave the neighborhood, while others will stay. The more significant question becomes what can be done to strengthen the black gentrifying neighborhoods under study so that other people of economic means will replace those who leave? This issue is addressed in the final chapter of my dissertation. The next chapter outlines the roots and impacts of the current mortgage crisis on the neighborhoods.

CHAPTER 8.

WHEN THINGS FELL APART: THE IMPACT OF THE MORTGAGE CRISIS

This chapter addresses the question how has the financial crisis made questions of black gentrification in the neighborhoods more complex? The current economic crisis is widespread; however, it has been suggested that it was substantially fueled by a rise in residential foreclosure rates brought on by the failure of the subprime mortgage market (Sheldon et al 2009). At the end of December 2008, the Credit Suisse Group, a financial services company headquartered in Switzerland and publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange predicted that by 2012 an estimated 16% of all mortgages will have been in foreclosure.¹¹⁷ The rate of foreclosures is not expected to decrease any time soon (Levy 2009).

Until the end of 2006, Georgia's housing industry remained relatively robust (Dodson 2006). Like much of the nation, the state of Georgia has been crippled by a slowdown in housing starts and a severe decline in housing prices fueled by a market overwrought with foreclosures (Levy 2009; Sheldon et al. 2009). The current foreclosure problem is so severe because it has at least three distinct sources: foreclosures due to (a) predatory lending; (b) mortgage fraud; and (c) unemployment. As discussed in Chapter 5, throughout the last decade, Georgia has ranked at or near the top of states in the country adversely impacted by mortgage fraud. Additionally, Saxon (2009) notes that predatory subprime lending is common where there are high incidences of mortgage fraud. Rising unemployment dealt a fatal blow to the Atlanta housing market. At the end of December 2008, the Georgia unemployment rate rose from 4.5%

¹¹⁷ This information was disclosed in a Credit Suisse report dated December 4, 2008, entitled "Foreclosure Update: over 8 Million Foreclosures Expected."

in the last quarter of 2007 to 7.5% in November 2008 (Atlanta Business Chronicle 2008).¹¹⁸ For the tenth month straight, the state's unemployment exceeded the national unemployment rate. With all three components in place (predatory lending, mortgage fraud, and unemployment), several Atlanta neighborhoods observed large drops in median home prices.¹¹⁹

Table 6. Fulton Zip Codes with Largest Drop in Median Price 2007-2008, notes the zip codes in the Atlanta area with the largest drop in median home price.

ZIP code	County	2007 median price	2008 median price	Percent Change
<u>30354</u>	Fulton	\$133,925	\$53,000	-60.43%
<u>30310</u>	Fulton	\$90,000	\$37,000	-58.89%
<u>30314</u>	Fulton	\$74,000	\$31,900	-56.89%
<u>30315</u>	Fulton	\$120,000	\$52,000	-56.67%
<u>30311</u>	Fulton	\$118,950	\$52,250	-56.07%
<u>30344</u>	Fulton	\$127,000	\$62,000	-51.18%
<u>30318</u>	Fulton	\$215,250	\$128,000	-40.53%

The zip code that the West End is located in, 30310, had the second largest decline in the county. 30354 is the Hapeville area. 30314 is near Clark Atlanta University. 30315 is the Lakewood Heights area. 30311 is Cascade Heights and surrounding area. 30344 is East Point, Atlanta, and 30318 is Rockdale. The Old Fourth Ward's zip code does not make the list.

The housing industry is one of the United States' largest industries (Gottdiener and Hutchinson 2006). A vast number of individuals are employed in housing or housing related enterprises and numerous businesses supply the housing industry, so it is not surprising that the impact of the mortgage crisis has been pervasive affecting a lot of people across many

¹¹⁸ General Motors closed its assembly plant in Doraville (outside Atlanta) in 2008. This followed the 2006 closing by Ford Motor Company of its Atlanta Assembly plant. Additional large scale job losses occurred in the manufacturing and construction industries (Saxon 2009).

¹¹⁹ Not all areas in the Atlanta metropolitan area are experiencing decline; however, a number of Fulton County locations are. This is noteworthy in light of the ongoing debate about the secession of part or parts of North Fulton County from the remainder of the county. Table 7 contains a listing of the zip codes in Fulton County which experienced the largest drop in median home sale (new and resale) price from 2007 to 2008.

neighborhoods. Tangentially or directly, virtually every neighborhood in America has been affected by the economic downturn. The Old Fourth Ward and West End neighborhoods are no exception.

There is a clear belief evidenced in the comments of residents, business owners, and stakeholders that the heightened levels of mortgage fraud, vacancies, and foreclosures which the neighborhoods are facing have had distinct social, psychological, and economic influences on both the neighborhoods and their residents. My discussions and observations in the study neighborhoods unearth two recurring themes with respect to those influences: impacts and moods.¹²⁰ Each category (impacts and moods) contains many nuances and degrees. For example, the moods described run the gamut from optimism to anger while the impacts range from the actual to the anticipated. Next, I discuss the impacts and moods revealed by respondents.

Mood: What Color are You?

The moods in the neighborhoods run the spectrum of emotions. Some respondents' comments reflect a peaceful, calming optimism. Others cautiously await the future. Respondents in this group are optimistic; however, their optimism is tempered by a certain amount of pragmatism. Some respondents express anger. Often times their anger is not aimed at a particular person or group, but at the situation (for example, rising instances of mortgage fraud or decreased home values). In some cases, the anger is more akin to frustration. When respondents' responses reveal nostalgia for "the way things used to be," they often dismiss the negative aspects of the past and concentrate only on the good. In such cases, a purity and innocence (sometimes bordering on naiveté) is demonstrated in their responses. The final mood

¹²⁰ By moods I mean attitudes or dispositions.

is more thoughtful and reflective. This group's comments elucidate an attempt to wrestle with three important questions: how did we get here; how do we get out of here; and how do we make certain that we are never in this situation again? Often, reading the mood of respondents is like looking into a kaleidoscope; all the colors seem to blend and swirl together. In the remainder of this section I outline the moods revealed through respondents' comments and my observations in the study neighborhoods.

Optimism

An enduring legacy of overcoming is present in both study neighborhoods, each of which has survived economic flight, white flight, and racial segregation. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that even in the face of uncertainty many respondents have an unshakable optimism about the future. Old Fourth Ward oldtimer Tony Miller's comments reflect optimism in the face of wildly fluctuating home values. In describing the rampant fluctuations, Mr. Miller says:

Now people who owned a house when it was only worth \$100,000 (because they haven't kept it up or what not and all that kind of stuff), they're like well oh I'm gonna get paid, so now I'm gonna jack the price up to \$450,000, right? So what has happened in sort of a microcosm is the market readjusting itself, right? So hopefully what you really hope for is that as we come out of this is that those overpriced properties, prices will drop during the time that interest rates are low, and we will get some families in here and it will serve to solidify the neighborhood. We on our side of the parkway are much more residential, we are very residential, which is also sort of a nice niche that we have. We have houses, we have a neighborhood.

Tony Miller views the mortgage crisis as a necessary market correction. Mr. Miller is confident about the future of his Old Fourth Ward neighborhood. He even plans to add a fence around his property at a substantial expense. Fences do not usually earn homeowners a dollar for dollar return in resale; however, Mr. Miller is not concerned about this. He has no plans to leave the neighborhood any time soon. In fact, he says he intends to be "buried in Grant."¹²¹

¹²¹ This is a reference to a cemetery in the neighborhood.

Old Fourth Ward old timer Joseph Harris shares Mr. Miller's optimism about the future. Joseph Harris indicates, "I moved in 1977 with high hopes and attitude...[I thought] it would take about 20 years" to turn the neighborhood around. That was 30 years ago. When I asked Mr. Harris if he had considered moving out of the neighborhood, he flatly said, "No." Since moving in, he has bought seven investment properties in the neighborhood. He is scouting his eighth purchase.

Both Mr. Harris and Mr. Miller are members of the black gentry, but optimism is not exclusively the penchant of the financially stable or oldtimers. Richard Snow and Victoria Randall are working class black residents of the West End. Both Mr. Snow and Ms. Randall believe that this is a "good time" to buy a house. Mr. Snow says, "I've been looking at houses." Mr. Snow's only requirement is that the house needs to be close to public transportation. Both of them are optimistic that they will be able to find a home to purchase that they both like and can afford. Sterling Woods, a poor, black resident of the Old Fourth Ward is also hopeful about his own personal future, and that of the people of Atlanta. Mr. Woods knows that foreclosures and bankruptcies are up, but he believes that opportunities are on the rise too. He says:

Well, [there are] quite a few vacancies now. With the economy the way it is, a lot of foreclosures going on. A lot of places have been delayed to be built just because of the money is not quite all there, but I would say there's as much money here in Fourth Ward, but people is not willing to let go of that. Now, everybody is depending on the economy to kind of see what the outcome is going to be. I think after the recession that's going on ... I believe that now we're going to bust wide open....I have been to quite a few different states and different places, but from my opinion, if you can't make it here, you can't make it nowhere.

Mr. Woods' optimism stems largely from his belief that Atlanta is a plentiful land of opportunity where anyone can make it. He continues:

So I've seen the change. I see the opportunity that if people come here for the right thing, they pull together as a community [it brings change]. I believe that

the people are coming together with concern about, totally, about what's happening around them.

As Mr. Woods describes the “change,” he makes it sound like a kind of spiritual awakening. He is hopeful that after the economic change, the desire to “pull together as a community” will remain.

Caution

Almost all respondents believe that economic recovery will happen, but no one is certain when it will happen. A prudent person exercises caution, especially in real estate dealings because they are, by nature, speculative propositions. Years of economic prosperity lulled many into a false sense of security and caused them to view real estate as a way to make a quick fortune. A number of television shows feature successful tales of people flipping a house and turning a huge profit with little more than sweat equity in the way of investment. However, the financial slowdown has caused people to view all of their financial dealings with more care. Some call it prudence or wisdom. When such ideas came up in my research, I termed them “yellow light” or caution statements. Cautionary measures were revealed in the statements of residents, businesses, and stakeholders, even area churches.

Joshua Graham is pastor of a prominent church in the Old Fourth Ward. The church has substantial financial holdings in the neighborhood, and it has a strong social services ministry and a commitment to urban communities dating back over 100 years. According to Pastor Graham, only a small fraction of his membership resides in the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood it serves. On reflection, Pastor Graham says, “[It’s] 10%; there’s no more than that, and I may be liberal even saying that.” The vast majority of his membership drives in from Southwest Atlanta or DeKalb County. They are largely a congregation of professional, black men and women of

some economic means. However, of late many of Pastor Graham's members have experienced downturns in their own economic situations.

At a time when the people in the area where the church is located have a greater level of economic need than ever, the church's membership has less means than ever with which to meet that need. Despite misfortunes, Pastor Graham is proud of the fact that the church has not had to reduce any of the services that it currently offers. He says:

So far we've been able to sustain all of our ministries at hand. We have not had to cut any vital outreach ministries. But I will say this. These are tough economic times, and we're having to look closer this year at ministries than we have in other years I have been here. Basically it is because of the economic downturn.

The current ministry offerings at Pastor Graham's church include several outreach projects aimed at helping the residents of the area in which the church is located. These include a feeding program, clothes ministry, residential drug rehabilitation and counseling services, and an HIV education program. The ability of the church to sustain a ministry of help depends upon the will of its members. Pastor Graham believes the majority of his membership supports the church's social justice agenda; however, their individual abilities to support that agenda have been curtailed. Pastor Graham says:

Listen we've had members who were professional people who lost jobs who still attend our church whose income was greater last year than it is this year. Yeah, so our capacity can help, but it depends upon our membership's capacity to support our church.

The capacity to which he refers is a large membership. The financial crisis has driven large numbers of people to the church, but Joshua Graham finds that a number of those people have needs and not means. As a result, the church is "cautious" in planning programs for next year.

The pastor of another area church with a similar deeply entrenched tradition of feeding the community (spiritually and physically) also notes “apprehension” among his membership, less than 5% of whom live in the Old Fourth Ward. Pastor Bob says:

Well, I can’t speak as much for the community as I can for my members, and that would be that people are more apprehensive, uncertain about the future, what’s going to happen to them, how will they be able to manage through these current challenges? So I see apprehension, less confidence.

Part of the reason that Pastor Bob’s congregants have more “apprehension” could be the fact that several times a week they come face to face with a manifestation of greater need. In the last two years, the lines at their feeding program have grown longer. That is not the only change noted either. The people in line are no longer just street people. Some of the people in line have homes and jobs, but they are not able to keep food on the table. I observed this myself. Most of those in the line look like “street people,” but others can be observed as well. Anyone who is hungry is welcome to get a meal. There is no requirement that recipients be homeless.

The feeding program at the church Pastor Bob leads is funded by a generous endowment. Despite market fluctuations, he believes that program is safe; however, he has heard “grumblings” of concern from some members who believe the church cannot continue to help everyone. Pastor Bob says:

Well, certainly the numbers have gone up for Our Savior’s Feast. I mean that certainly has increased. [There are grumblings] Not in a collective sense at this point. Well, I think individually some people are [grumbling]. Out of that fearfulness and lack of confidence [about the future], people withdraw.

The withdrawal that Pastor Bob describes is a helpful armor for those who seek to abandon the church’s principle of helping the poor. Many of the people that the church regularly feeds are homeless, but in the last year, that has begun to change. In times of universal hardship, it may be easier for people who have economic means to use their resources to help those in abject poverty

than to see their hard earned dollars go to feed someone they deem is being wasteful with their money or lazy. In the face of plummeting housing values, many parishioners are more concerned about helping themselves than they are about helping others.

Despite reduced home prices brought on by the financial crisis, potential residents are still cautious about investing in these two neighborhoods. Businesses are cautious about their dealings too. Kelly Walker is an executive with a nationally esteemed real estate development firm. Ms. Walker explains why huge values (in terms of home prices) found in the study neighborhoods do not necessarily translate into a huge volume of sales. According to Ms. Walker:

People will move into an area that is transitional when they are renting, but they want more stable areas where they can see more upsides to their investments when they buy.

Ms. Walker's insights help explain how people may view the study neighborhoods as potentially good values, and yet still remain in a cautious posture when it comes to investing in the areas.

Anger

Inequity raises Old Fourth Ward resident Tony Miller's ire. When he compares the amount he pays in real estate taxes to the level of services he receives, Mr. Miller becomes angry. He believes that city residents share a disproportionate burden of the obligation to fund the city, but they do not receive the funds they need to improve their neighborhoods. Mr. Miller says:

[S]chools are fundamental ... [W]ell you may say you know that is a bunch of humanistic bunk. Well let's look at it from the other side, from the financial side. The City of Atlanta is broke. The problem with the City of Atlanta is you have a population of half a million people inside the City that pay for everything, and you have five million people who use the City.

Mr. Miller is angry about shouldering the burden for vital city services without a larger portion of the benefit. His comments also illustrate a widely held belief that sustained neighborhood revitalization is not possible without an improved Atlanta Public School system (this relationship is explored in greater detail later in this chapter). Mr. Miller's comments also hint at an underlying frustration among residents in both neighborhoods. In response to the economic crisis, the city of Atlanta curtailed or cut several services. In the West End, Fire Station 7 was closed. The "temporary" closing of this and other fire stations in the city is known as a "brown out." Black outs refer a condition caused when fire equipment has to sit idle because the staff is not available to run the equipment. In practice, the two terms are used almost synonymously; however, reduced work weeks caused by furloughs are the most common reason given for black outs. Response times are expected to increase as a result of black outs and brown outs. In addition to fire services, budget cuts have also caused black outs and brown outs with respect to police and emergency services as well. The topic has been discussed at every neighborhood association and NPU meeting I attended. Everyone who has spoken up about the issue at public meetings which I attended is very angry, including the service providers.

There are other sources of anger too. While not everyone in the neighborhoods is delinquent on their mortgages, almost everyone I spoke to has felt some effects of the economic downturn. Zaniah and Chris Ford purchased in the West End about six years ago. The couple are members of the black gentry, and they have never missed a mortgage payment. Zaniah Ford loves the West End community, and she wants to see it prosper, but when she thinks about some of the programs available to help people who do not make their mortgage payments or are chronically late on them, she has a sense of ire. She says:

Yes. I kind of have mixed feelings about the fact that our house isn't worth what we paid for it. I think about holding on to the property versus letting it go, trying

to get another house at half the price, why can't you just do that? It's more the principle of the thing, and I literally mean principal on our house. To pull out of having to pay interest so much for something that you know, somebody who's just like a little more savvy on these things might not have to pay, and that's not cool to people....So I'm trying to understand like what are the options for people who can make the mortgage but would rather not?

Zaniah Ford is angry that amidst all of the economic stimulus and incentive options available to people, she feels there is no package for people like her. She believes that "people who pay their mortgages on time" despite trying economic conditions in their own lives get "the shaft" while those who do not meet their obligations end up getting rewarded with lower mortgage rates and reduced principal.

West End resident Amina Charles is angry too; however, her oldtimer status affords her a certain amount of perspective with which to temper her anger. During the course of our interview, her mood shifts several times. Sometimes, in the course of one statement she even moves back and forth from anger and frustration to a veiled optimism. That shift is evident in this comment:

Just like every place else, we're all looking for jobs. With the mortgage fraud we're having problems selling houses. Not selling houses, people want to buy houses but the appraisal, they wouldn't give us the right appraisals because they worry it's mortgage fraud and that's messing us up too, which is stupid you know? It makes things harder. And so you know it's just the same as any place else. It's just...we're struggling and that's it. The good thing about it is that we don't see like foreclosing houses and stuff like that because we've always had it. So we don't see the impact of it being so bad.

Even at the end of this discourse, her emotional transition appears incomplete. Her next comments illustrate a certain amount of reflection. Ms. Charles says:

Actually to be honest with you, most of the houses in West End have been sold. We ...we really don't have that much open to be sold. What we need now is to get the people...because there's always been people who held on to houses and haven't done anything [with them]. Now we have to make them uncomfortable holding on to those houses, so they can either sell it, fix it up, do something with it.

Many of the houses to which Ms. Charles refers are heir's property. In such cases, family members may hold on to the property for a number of reasons. Some may lack the financial means to make improvements necessary to render the property sellable. Some may be waiting for the right time to sell (such as an upswing in the market). Still others may hold on to the property out of some form of nostalgia.

Nostalgia

Nostalgia is a form of attachment which is difficult to quantify, and therefore it has tremendous potential to create neighborhood bonds. Symbolic attachment, modeled after Gans' notion of symbolic ethnicity, is discussed in Chapter 6 of this dissertation, but it bears mention again. According to Gans (1979:9), symbolic ethnicity "is characterized by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior." Subsequent researchers have refined Gans' ideas. Alba (1990) suggests individuals' ethnic identities get expressed through symbolic gestures like eating ethnic foods, using ethnic phrases, and participation in ethnic festivals and events. Mary Waters' (1990) interviews fourth generation white ethnics and concludes that while exercised in largely symbolic manners, the individual process of ethnic identity formation has important consequences for the individual and society. Both Waters (1990) and Alba (1990) make clear their belief that ethnic identification will persist. Beyond economic considerations, ethnic places and spaces are important locations for the development, expression, and maintenance of ethnic culture and psyche.

Ethnic identity, like any form of identity, is largely negotiated. Although it may be argued that what many third and fourth generation descendants of "immigrants" know about their heritage is a reproduced, invented, or bastardized version of authentic cultural traditions and

practices, these imitations are, nevertheless, important.¹²² Ethnic identity, like any form of identity, is largely constructed, negotiated, and maintained by individuals in opportune times and places such as those found in the ethnic community. As a result, even those who do not desire to live in the neighborhood may find value in sustaining the community, for to do so is effectively to sustain the larger culture of which one is a part.

Nostalgia, a kind of sentimental yearning to return to another time or place, is powerful and compelling (Boyd 2000). It is a longing for “the good old days” and “good old ways,” which, ironically while in the midst thereof, few people recognized as such. The lure of nostalgia is that the past it paints is posited as something that can be reproduced today. This is also, perhaps, its failing. Nostalgia fails to recognize that people are disparately situated, occupying vastly different social positions and conditions, yet it suggests that despite different social, political, and historical contexts, the past can and should be reproduced. The past becomes a panacea for the social ills of the present. Such memories can be intoxicating. Nostalgia calls some to action while others get lost in its wheels, perpetually moving, yet going nowhere. In the former form, nostalgia incites a movement to “regenerate” the perceived lost community. In its latter form, respondents remain “stuck” in a discourse that laments the “loss of community” never to be regained.

Loss of Community.

The loss of community argument (i.e., community life in the neighborhood was more vibrant or better in the “old days” than now and that communal solidarity used to be stronger than it is today) has been debated for some time, so it is not associated exclusively with the changing economic times. Councilman Martin is an upper class member of the black gentry.

¹²²The term “immigrants” is placed in quotation marks because I use it very liberally to include the descendants of former slaves.

While he did not grow up in the Old Fourth Ward community in which he now lives and serves, he spent a substantial amount of his youth visiting the area. Now Councilman Martin and his family have lived in the Old Fourth Ward for over ten years, which qualifies them as oldtimers. In a discourse bordering on a stream of consciousness, Martin unveils his feelings about the community that was and the community that now is. Recalling a conversation he had with a neighbor soon after moving in, he says:

One of my neighbors---I'm going to him because when I moved in and we worked for a year [on the house] and whatever. And he was like----and he used to sell drugs, I mean I'm being honest. You know, and he sold drugs in these different apartment complexes around here, and he used to deal----he was a really smart guy. I met him at a program in senior year in high school. He went to college. He ended up coming back; he didn't finish and got into selling drugs and stuff. Well we were talking with him about the old community, and he said, "Now, what community? We don't have community over here. When I grew up, we used to be able to go next door and get ----borrow sugar, borrow flour from each other, borrow an egg or something. Now, you wouldn't even know each other, you all wouldn't talk to each other, you all wouldn't share, you all don't have community over here." I said, "You're right about that."

Councilman Martin goes on to explain his accord. He says:

I agree because see, a lot of these folks who have moved in that are new, are isolated. They're in their silos, they're on the phones, cell phones, computers, don't go out next door or don't even know who lives there. They only become neighbors and friends when they get a break in or when their cars [are broken into] or when they lose something. Then you're like, okay I need to know who's around me. Because they're so caught up in living their lives, you know?

Councilman Martin's comments illustrate a conflict between the "old community mentality" of neighboring and the "new community mentality."

Viola Washington, first introduced in Chapter 4, ardently believes the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood she has resided in for her whole life (more than 80 years) has lost its sense of community. As stated earlier, Ms. Washington believes that the people who currently live in the Old Fourth Ward are "residents, not neighbors." She says:

Those were neighbors. These are residents. And that's what I tell them when I talk to them. They say we're your neighbor. I said, 'But we are not neighbors, we're residents on the same street.' But we were neighbors then, and if somebody needed somebody to care for their baby because they were going to the hospital I had to act that role. When my mother was still living and somebody needed somebody to care for their children because they were working and say I was working and my mother was not working, she would care for their children because I needed to go to work. We didn't even need as many jailhouses as of now because we just loved everybody.

Ms. Washington's memories of the past fail to acknowledge the intense racial discrimination and Jim Crow segregation which forced African Americans to reside in the then densely populated Old Fourth Ward neighborhood and to rely on each other in order to remain safe from the onslaughts of white racism. Additionally, Ms. Washington fails to address the limited economic and educational opportunities available to her mother which likely curtailed her ability to find gainful, long term employment thus making her available to watch the neighbor's children. Ms. Washington's comments make it sound as though she wants to recreate the community of past; however, it is doubtful that she really desires to recreate the social problems and conditions inherent in that era upon which the bonds she describes were predicated. Those who seek to regenerate community do not always look to restore the old community; sometimes they simply want to create a sustainable community today.

Regeneration of Community.

Despite Councilman Martin's nostalgia for the Old Fourth Ward community of the past, he is optimistic that that spirit of community can currently be regenerated. The economy is the surprising source of his optimism. Councilman Martin says:

Three, four, five years ago we were on an upswing in the economy, so people would spend their money travelling, doing their thing. It was a "me" and an individualistic community. I think it's unfortunate. I hate to say this, but it's great that we have an economic downturn because it's forcing people to get back to basic principles of you know, sharing and working with one another across

lines....You know you're looking out for each other, in ways that you never had to before. You know, so that's community, we're back to community.

The community to which Councilman Martin alludes to transcends racial/ethnic lines, and also crosses economic, social, cultural, and gender lines.

Six year West End resident Chris Ford believes he was fortunate to move into an area with an established community spirit. Ford reflects:

I just moved here and I thought I was lucky that I have such a community. I mean, now I'm more proactive in creating that community. So I mean...I'm invested mainly by my social capital as opposed to...I mean financially, you know the investment with the home, and I'm more invested with my social capital here as opposed to whatever the spot is. [Before] I was just only a home owner and only concerned with the home equity. You know. A place to live and the convenience.

Chris Ford believes a sense of community existed in the West End prior to the mortgage crisis. However, Mr. Ford believes the economic crisis has stoked the flames of community spirit already present in the neighborhood. He says that "the mortgage fraud had almost a cleansing effect on the West End." Reflecting on this, Mr. Ford describes how he and other West End homeowners conducted a private investigation of the housing sales in their neighborhood, which led to an investigation of the area by the Mortgage Fraud Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.¹²³

Reflection

Reflection is a common response shared by many residents, business owners, and stakeholders. In their reflections, respondents' most commonly assess the current situation and the options available to them. Should I stay or should I go? Should I make improvements to my home or business? Will those improvements pay off? Will the real estate market turn around?

¹²³ Initially, Mr. Ford and other residents were concerned about rising property taxes. Their investigation revealed that their property taxes rose due to home sales in the area. Unfortunately, the homes were neither occupied nor improved. The efforts of Mr. Ford and his neighbors led to the arrest of Kevin Wiggins and his co-defendants.

When will the market turn around? How did we get in this situation, and what can we do to turn things around? For businesses, the reflection process can be even more complex as the enterprise has to assess the situation from a corporate standpoint and not just an individual point of view.

Tiffany Hayes is a realtor selling exclusively in a new condominium complex in the Old Fourth Ward. During the pre-selling phase, the developer Ms. Hayes works for made the strategic decision to market the property as a “piece of black history.” Pre sales were almost exclusively to African Americans and usually to those seeking to use the property as a second home or future retirement property. When the market collapsed, many of those presales did not materialize. The developer then made the strategic decision to market the property to young people, many of whom were white.¹²⁴ They also played up the building’s proximity to several major hospitals and institutions of higher learning. Instead of describing the location as Sweet Auburn, as they formerly did, advertisements described the property location as “downtown.”

Ms. Hayes anticipates that some people have not been happy with the “shift” in marketing; however, with the building not even half full, she indicates that something had to be done. Reflecting on the anticipated complaints she says:

There is a lot of hypocrisy in the black community when it comes to things like that, you know? We don't want anyone else taking over our neighborhood, but we don't want to invest in our neighborhood, or we don't want to lead the way of investment in our neighborhood. And you can't tell me that we don't have enough or more people in this city that can create even a non-profit organization to save the [Old Fourth Ward] neighborhood.

Ms. Hayes’ time in the real estate industry has taught her that the residents of gentrifying spaces often allege that their neighborhood is being “taken over” by gentrifiers, most often white. She

¹²⁴ When the building was featured in the Home section of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* on August 31, 2008; the article featured a young white nursing student.

is certain that as the racial composition of the residents in the building shifts, that this criticism will be leveled. Her comments illustrate a kind of contemplative reflection.

Residents in the West End are also wrestling with recent racial shifts. The West End is still an overwhelmingly black neighborhood; however, several new owner occupants have been non-black. Old timer Cheryl Simpson has watched this shift, and she is somewhat conflicted by the change. Mrs. Simpson describes herself as “a hippie;” however, later in our conversation she notes “race is very real in this country...[so] I am always black first.” Reflecting on the different groups that have coexisted in the West End over the course of the last thirty years, she notes:

The early people have often been speculators. We need occupants, not speculators.. Gay couples have been helpful. Young white couples with kids come and go...[but] the only hope for black people is black people...Some people don't want a neighborhood; they want a house.

Mrs. Simpson firmly believes that young, white couples with kids are only interested in owning a house, not belonging to a neighborhood. Therefore, she believes that they cannot be relied upon to turn the neighborhood around. For that, Mrs. Simpson says, “black people” are the West End’s best hope. Yet ironically, she also believes “a lot of black people don’t want to be involved with poor black people.”

Some respondents’ reflections are more concerned with the sources and causes of the economic downturn than whom or what can bring them out of the crisis. Richard Newcomb heads an organization located in the West End dedicated to improving the quality of life for residents of the area. Mr. Newcomb has spent a lot of time reflecting on a number of the questions listed above. His reflections lead him to the conclusion that the problems we are now facing are the result of a system devoid of morals. According to Mr. Newcomb:

People keep on looking at economic solutions like changing laws...but it's not, fundamentally, the issue is not economic. The answer is not an economic issue; it's a moral issue. I mean capitalism without a moral base to it; we're looking at

the consequences, the consequences of an economic system with no moral values. So anything goes. Whatever I can do to make a buck. If I got to fudge this, ok. The whole system was in on it. I mean this level of over-leverage could not have taken place without the collusion of not just the mortgage brokers but appraisers and banks that didn't do due diligence. So the whole system, since the system is geared towards individual wealth, individual people, they didn't care, as long as they got money.

While Mr. Newcomb's reflections seem to indicate some pessimism, his sentiments also contain an element of pragmatism, and because of his belief that the resulting problems of a capitalistic economic system are system wide, Mr. Newcomb cautions that the solutions must be system wide as well.

Impacts

The long term effects of the economic downturn remain to be seen, but it has already had a number of immediate impacts on the neighborhoods. The following impacts are addressed in this section: investor responses, increased need, and flight.

Investor Responses

Home owners are not the only ones reacting to the economic downturn. Like homeowners, investors have an economic interest in the study areas. A number of building projects have been delayed, halted, or abandoned. Additionally, a number of projects are in various stages of distress, including some in or on the verge of foreclosure. The Old Fourth Ward has been more affected by this phenomenon than the West End. This is because there have been very few new starts in the West End for quite a number of years. The decisions investors make impact not only the neighborhood, but the economic viability of the company. Tony Miller understands that dilemma:

Well, there have been a couple of projects that developers have come to us [the Zoning Committee] on, and you can tell they've had to grind to a halt. So there have been a couple of projects just sitting there because they can't afford to do it. On the other hand, one thing that I have been really encouraged by is we have

three projects, four big huge projects approximately 400 units each. So we have 1600 units in our neighborhood that are being built right now And it's because developers had to do it because I mean they're not going to sit there and pay the debt service, and they already had the loans and the zoning, might as well build it because not everybody is broke, right?

Mr. Miller believes that investors respond logically.

Leonard Curley is a business owner in the Old Fourth Ward. His business enterprise sits on a prominent avenue in the neighborhood. Almost a year ago Mr. Curley discovered that a particular business was going to move into the store front next to his shop. In hopes of appealing to the clientele of that new shop, Mr. Curley set about improving his shop. Almost a year later, the business that was supposed to move in next door still has not opened. Mr. Curley blames the economic downturn on the slowdown of the number of new businesses in the area.

Some businesses perceive this as a good time to invest. In August of 2009, a national clothing retailer, Citi Trends, opened in a prominent location in the West End.¹²⁵ Although parking in the area is minimal, the shop is located a short distance from the West End MARTA station and several bus stops. According to its website, Citi Trends is a publicly traded company, and its theme is “trendy fashions at everyday low prices.” Since its opening, there has been a steady flow of customers in the shop. In addition to Citi Trends, a new restaurant, Space, opened in the West End around the same period.¹²⁶ Space offers a different ambiance than the other restaurants in the area, many of which feature fast food. Neighborhood residents see both additions as a positive sign that things are turning around in the West End. One West End resident says, “They have a full bar, nice ambience, and great food. I also bumped into a lot of people I know from the neighborhood, so this is as good as it gets.” Another resident, realtor Faith Howard, says:

¹²⁵ 906 Ralph David Abernathy Boulevard.

¹²⁶ Space is located at 1310 White Street.

Finally, West End Atlanta has a Restaurant for neighbors to frequent a few nights a week! SPACE ATL shows promise to be the next 'big thing' in the Historic West End, Westview communities since the Beltline trail. Good music, good food, good drinks, good service- the stage is set and the show has begun!

The turnaround (in terms of eating options and clothing shops) is just beginning in the West End, but residents are hopeful that their presence will attract other investors to the neighborhood.

Location is a great part of the appeal of both Space and Citi Trends, but at least one West End investor, Chika Moon, hopes to draw upon the area's history and culture in order to attract patrons.¹²⁷

This place [the West End] is very historical. We have the Wren's Nest and the Hammonds House. It's a great history. So, when I finish the hotel, I would like to make [a] brochure [for hotel guests]. I already talked to those people. I'm going to offer the brochure to hotel guests because actually it's just walking distance. I'm sure it's a lot more places that I do not know yet.

Although Ms. Moon is Asian, she has an appreciation for the history of the area. She also has an appreciation for the economic opportunity that the hotel would afford her. Ms. Moon hopes that parents of students at the nearby Atlanta University Center campuses, many of whom are black, will be attracted to the cultural heritage angle and stay at her hotel. The addition of restaurants like Space and shopping options are important precursors if her planned hotel is to be viable.

Increased Need

Increased need can be seen everywhere in the study neighborhoods, not just among the businesses. It is evident in the faces of the street people, long sandwich lines, the variety and number of people shopping at Goodwill or carefully calculating the cost of their groceries before placing them in the basket, and especially by the willingness of people to openly dialogue about their current economic situation. But while need is everywhere, the degree of need varies. Some

¹²⁷ Chika Moon is an Asian business owner and resident of the West End; she was introduced in Chapter 5. Ms. Moon own several real estate enterprises in the West End, and she has plans to build a "green" hotel in the West End.

have very pronounced personal needs while other needs are less personal and more community based in nature. In either case, the degree of each person's or neighborhood's need varies.

Degrees of Need.

It is often easier to talk in terms of community needs than individual needs. But even as people in the community talk about the rising rates of foreclosures and mortgage fraud, it is helpful to remember that each such occurrence potentially represents a person who has lost or is in danger of losing his or her home. However, the high presence of investors in the study neighborhoods sometimes makes it difficult to stay mindful of the human/individual factor.

Eight year Old Fourth Ward resident Melinda Galveston suggests need may be a staple of in-town living and not necessarily a sign of the times. She says:

You saw vacancies, you saw foreclosures, [and] you saw mortgage fraud. You saw all of that beforehand. I don't know whether that is a staple of in-town living, as much as it might be [here]. When your neighborhood is not homeowners as opposed to renters and that ...[brings] instability. So we will still see many more vacancies...[B]ut it's shifting... I think it's more of a problem of the shift to homeowners and less transient, less renting people. You also have to remember that the properties here were built between the 1920s and 1930s. If you didn't have the income to renovate the property over the years, if you bought here because you wanted to not live in this community but rather exploit the community... and just have low-income houses Then you probably lost money. I wasn't here for that, but I'm here for the end of that.

Melinda Galveston knows that some people who have invested in the Old Fourth Ward have lost money, but she has little in the way of sympathy for speculative investors. To Ms. Galveston, investors do not have need: they create need by supplying subpar housing.

Johnetta Hope is encouraged by the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, but she is concerned that because the Old Fourth Ward's stabilization needs are not as great as some other communities, that they will miss out on a valuable opportunity to stabilize their neighborhood.

Ms. Hope says:

Well, I could probably count the number on one hand the number of foreclosed properties that I see in this immediate community [the Martin Luther King Jr. Historic District]. There may be a few more in the broader Old Ward, but in this community I know of two. There may be one or two more. So fortunately at this point we have not seen major impact. Now that doesn't say that people are not experiencing major difficulty, and as you know, human nature will not let them come forth until they are backed against the wall. We have been able to intervene for one person who was about to lose their home, and we came in the nick of time, and we were able to help them renegotiate a loan, and there was another person that we couldn't, and that's really unfortunate. Um, the downside of that is as the Neighborhood Stabilization Plan goes into effect because we are not experiencing that [destabilization], we are not so much on the top priority list to experience some of that funding [but] we might be able to do that in a partnership with another group or something. Fortunately the neighborhood is looking pretty stable.

Ms. Hope's comments are particularly reflective of variations in the degrees of need which exist.

Some needs may go unmet simply because they are unspoken

Need does not just exist on an individual level. Each study neighborhood has collective needs too. The two needs most commonly elucidated are the need for jobs and the need for quality public education choices for all residents. Over and over again respondents evidence a firmly held belief that in-town neighborhoods will not survive without quality in-town schools. I say that this belief is widely held because respondents of all races, ages, income statuses, and family compositions express it.

Dennis and Patricia West are an upper class, childless white couple. Dennis and Patricia West are also very active in the Old Fourth Ward community. They have been residents in the area for about eight years. In addition to being active members of the NPU, Patricia West is president of their condominium association. Although some would say that couples like Dennis and Patricia West have a number of compelling reasons not to care about the public education system in the Old Fourth Ward. Patricia West comments:

So the challenge the Old Fourth Ward has is to provide all components of a living environment. You have a job, you have a residence, you have perhaps a church.

And you have schools, 'cause you still need schools even if you don't have children. Your neighbor may have children. You may have a friend who is a teacher. If she has to drive to get a good job, she's not really making this neighborhood her home because she's going outside the neighborhood to meet some of her needs. So, I would say better schools would be the challenge that we are facing, and if it's not addressed, it will be a crisis that will keep housing prices low.

Patricia West's comments illustrate that while deflated housing prices harm the entire neighborhood, home values in the neighborhood are also challenged by other factors, most notably poor performing schools and a lack of jobs in the area.

Again, Patricia West explains:

You can go out to Virginia Highlands and spend a huge amount on a house because you can afford it with the money you are not spending on private education. That is what we would want to see in this neighborhood. At present, the schools are poor in the neighborhood. The school district has paid little attention to the neighborhood. It has been a historically disenfranchised neighborhood. Uh. The Parent Teacher Associations are poor because the parents work two jobs. You know they don't have time to go to their children's soccer game or to attend classes and that kind of thing. So they can't put much into the school systems, and the, uh, the school system says fine we will send you the worst school teachers who won't do anything for you. So I believe the greatest challenge is in order to increase property value, pride of being here would be to increase the quality of the school district, so it becomes a destination for people who want a nice neighborhood.

Patricia and Dennis West are certain that good schools are the key to neighborhood stability.

Many of the people who are drawn to the Old Fourth Ward (and particularly the condominium complex where the West's reside) have similar background; however, circumstances change, and when they do, some find that the complex no longer meets their needs. Patricia West says:

What happens in this neighborhood is the condominium currently has a very disproportionately [large percentage of] childless couples and gay and lesbian couples. If you don't have children, you don't care about education [at least not] in the immediate sense. Well, you think I'm not going to have any children, so I don't care how the school systems are. But in fact, we do care because our property values are affected. What has absolutely happened in this neighborhood

is someone moves in, they get a boyfriend/girlfriend; they get together for a few years then they get married and have a baby. Six months to a year after having a baby, they leave.

Dennis West adds:

Or it's the architecture of the building. There are no older children living in this condo community. There may be one or two toddlers, but because of its open floor plan or something like that, families don't [live here]. But the larger issue is they know that the school districts are not going to meet their needs, or they are not sure there is going to be the socioeconomic compatibility of children for their kids to be involved with.

As their comments illustrate, Dennis and Patricia West perceive that education is an important issue with which the neighborhood has to wrestle. Winning the battle of providing a quality educational opportunity for all is necessary in order to win the war aimed at stabilizing the neighborhood. Factors like economic means and family composition vary the impact and need for good schools. For example, a few of the black gentry that I spoke with send their children to neighborhood public schools; however, in each case the children attend the school or schools with the best student outcomes in Atlanta.

Get Tough Attitude

There is a popular adage which says, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." The reference is not to getting going in a literal sense, but rather in a figurative sense. Even in tough times, tough people do not wait for someone else to save them. They set about to save themselves. A get tough attitude manifested itself in my interviews in the forms of attitudes of self help and those of neighboring/uplift.

Self Help.

Old Fourth Ward resident Sterling Woods believes tough times, such as these, call for tough people. He paints houses for a living; sometimes work is steady, but often he has to go out in search of his next opportunity. As a result, he hardens his skin (a protection against a rejection)

and knocks on doors in search of opportunities to improve his condition. He recounts one such fruitful expedition:

The doors are open. I mean ... it's all up to you. What you want to do? Like I'm saying since I'm working now, I can pursue my goal by going back to school at night. Work during the day, go to school at night...I'm going to go to United Way. They have a program, and it's right here; it's on Edgewood, and that's a good thing United Way offers. That's the only non profit organization that I know is offering to people but they are not broadcasting it; they're not advertising it, Okay? [I] just went in there. I just went in being nosy about what's going on in my community. I see there's some buildings in there, they've got all these, all the buildings behind it and I want to know what they're all here for. And that's getting involved. So once I got involved, I found out that I can get something from them that I really need.

Painting pays his bills now, but he is getting old, and he dreams of a better life. He believes the program at the United Way will help him to meet his goals. Mr. Woods extols others to look for similar opportunities because he believes that they are out there. What he found is that social service agencies are present in the community to help people like him, but that they seldom go out to find people like him. The other get tough posture commonly revealed is neighboring.

Neighboring as Uplift.

Five year Old Fourth Ward resident Rochelle Ferrer's comments illustrate how a "get tough" attitude manifests itself in a neighboring/racial uplift posture. Describing her decision to move into the Old Fourth Ward, Ms. Ferrer says:

At the time it was very convenient. I had gotten a job at the Capitol, so I was like I can't do this traffic thing, and I got a good deal 'cause at the time this area was so underdeveloped and it wasn't overpopulated and it wasn't like that. So I got a good deal. When I got here Grady Homes [a nearby large public housing project] was still up. All of these places had kind of dilapidated houses. Things that we tried to get torn down and bring something new. Then I started working on part of Sweet Auburn helping with the festival itself and bringing people worldwide and more international [artists] to our festival and trying to make it work... then I was thinking about it, um moving away. [I thought] you can't move away because I am the type of person that when you see things that need to be done, you do it.

Ms. Ferrer's belief that she could make a difference in and for her neighborhood caused her to toughen her posture and work harder. Today, she is president of one of the area's neighborhood associations and active in the NPU system.

Uplifting the neighborhood may benefit everyone in the community; however, it is often middle to upper middle class residents who are most vocal about lending their education and acumen to benefit the larger community. This mentality is evidenced in the comments of long time West End resident, Cheryl Simpson. After white flight in the sixties, Mrs. Simpson describes the West End:

In '72 the area was scattered and tattered. The only reason I moved over here in West End when I was a student in Spelman was because my uncle was in real estate and he had a friend who had just built a new two-storey building here. Otherwise, I would not have even thought of moving up here. I didn't even think about this neighborhood. But as I got more involved in political kinds of activity and hung out with a lot of people who talked about social action, like Jose Williams. You know, he preached, you know, self sufficiency. So we began to see the possibilities of West End... So you had a burgeoning and young black middle class with no money, but we had the connections and know how... [Y]ou had a core of college educated African-Americans, well travelled, well read, who understood how to go to Washington...

Cheryl Simpson's comments evidence somewhat of a savior complex. Although she is African American, like most of the residents of the neighborhood, Mrs. Simpson's comments illustrate a belief that her education and middle class status better position her to affect change for the good of the whole community.

Flight

Economic flight (disinvestment) is a pattern observed in each neighborhood in the past. Discussions of current flight from these neighborhoods take one of two forms – actual and anticipated flight. Each is discussed in this section.

Actual Flight.

Actual flight is less common than one might expect. This may be a function of the fact that a number of people are “upside down” on their mortgages, so they may not be in a position to leave the neighborhood, even for perceived better living conditions.¹²⁸ In the past (e.g., the years following desegregation when many middle class blacks left the Old Fourth Ward or the time of white flight when a substantial number of white residents left the West End), homeowners were in a position to pay off their homes before entering into debt elsewhere.

Falling home values makes it impractical that some will be able to pay off the value of their current home and move away without encumbered debt. Absent a short sale, many resident homeowners feel tied to the community. Discussions of actual flight are usually contained in respondents’ tales of the past. For example, Old Fourth Ward old timer Ruby Everson outlines two respective flights from the neighborhood. She says:

It's only been predominantly black the last 30 years. This was a Jewish neighborhood. Yes. That was another thing. The fact is that the economics of black folks have changed, okay? Most black folks left... there's not but a handful that were here and came back because this is where they were raised. Okay? Like Tyrone Jefferson and James Evers. He and his daughter have the same address in their birth certificate, and that is his grandmother’s parent's house, five generations in that one house. Okay?

The names that Ruby Everson recites are the exception. According to her, black middle class flight from the neighborhood was the rule. Ms. Everson’s comments challenge the view of the Old Fourth Ward as a long-standing historically black community and provide a competing narrative against the one most widely revealed in respondent interviews.

Daniel Tepee also discusses the impact of black middle class flight on the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood. He says:

¹²⁸ “Upside down” is a term used to refer to a situation when the homeowner has negative equity in the property (i.e., he or she owes more than the property is worth).

I think that it's quite fortunate. This community has a lot of good people in it dedicated to it.... When you go back umm you know what you had here was... an African American neighborhood, so when the drugs and things got bad it was basically economic flight. Anybody that had the financial means to leave the community did.

Mr. Tepee's comments echo a fear that the past will repeat itself, but his words also ring with a certain amount of optimism that good people (with or without economic means) will still remain in the neighborhood, even in the midst of flight and be called upon to rebuild.

Flight occurs from local businesses too. In tough economic times, neighborhood businesses cannot afford to lose their customer bases, yet that is happening. People may remain in the neighborhood, but no one can make them shop for their essential goods and services in the community. West End resident Lauren Murphy has only resided in the West End for about two years, and she has already eliminated a number of area businesses from the list of possible places she will shop. One of those businesses is a national automotive supplier shop. Ms. Murphy says:

I do a lot of online shopping. My concern is customer service.... At Carhop USA, I have observed people fixing their cars in the parking lot, and no one says you can't do that... Sometimes I feel like there are different rules here.

While Ms. Murphy does not intend to physically move from the neighborhood, neither does she intend to use neighborhood stores to meet her basic sustenance needs.

During the course of my research, I witnessed the struggles of several area businesses in each study neighborhood. Those struggles include closing, sale, moving, or delays in opening. The coffeehouse I frequented in the West End changed ownership three times. The second owners of the shop were concerned community residents who did not wish to see the shop, which has become a community gathering place, close. The current owner is not a resident; however, the community meeting space atmosphere persists. A similar situation happened with

the coffeehouse in the Old Fourth Ward. The current owner acquired the space when his tenant filed bankruptcy, and he did not want the neighborhood to lose the coffee shop.

On one occasion, I visited a hair salon and boutique on Auburn Avenue in the Old Fourth Ward and arranged an interview with the owner.¹²⁹ When I returned for our interview six weeks later (our first meeting was before Thanksgiving, and we arranged to get together after the New Year), the shop was gone. The shop owner next door told me he thought the salon moved to another location in the Old Fourth Ward, but he was not sure. I phoned the salon owner several times, but she never returned my calls. Signs line many storefronts in each study neighborhood. These signs promise that shops will be “opening soon.” After 18 months of study in the neighborhoods, many of these shops remain unopened.¹³⁰

Anticipated Flight.

Anticipated flight takes multiple forms. One of those forms is already communicated in Patricia West’s comments about the likelihood of those who have a baby to move out of the condominium complex and likely out of the community. It is also revealed in the discussions of speculative investors looking to profit from flipping houses in the neighborhoods. Richard Newcomb says:

So what we’re experiencing really was a large legal Ponzi scheme where the people left who had the mortgages at the end of the game got stuck, and the people who sold early on at the height of the boom, those houses were never worth that much. And so when they say today, they came out with figures, they’re saying that Americans lost \$1 trillion worth of wealth ... where’d it go? It just didn’t [disappear], Those properties were never worth that much.. It’s like a multi-leverage marketing scheme. You keep on selling it to each other and then you get just the last sucker at the end who buys it.

Often, by the time the malfeasance is discovered, all the bad actors have taken flight. According to Mr. Newcomb, only the “innocent” victims remain.

¹²⁹ The shop displayed handbags and jewelry (made by the owner) throughout.

¹³⁰ This is not always the case. Several new established have opened in the Old Fourth Ward and West End.

During the course of my field research, I was able to attend the West End Tour of Homes in 2008 and 2009. On my second Tour of Homes, three things made an impression on me: (1) the number of new residents, mostly white homeowners on the Tour, (2) a number of the homes listed on the Tour were active (for sale) real estate listings, and (3) an enthusiastic resident I met in the area the year before had moved out of the neighborhood. There are a number of possible explanations for the placement of a number of white homeowners on the Tour. All the white homeowners I met are college educated. Many of them are active in the neighborhood association, and they want to change the public image of the neighborhood. When Tour of Home attendees are greeted at the door by a white homeowner, it potentially changes the perception of the area as a “black neighborhood.”

Those who are attached to such a perception of the area as a black neighborhood may resent the presentation of white faces as representatives of the neighborhood; however, there are a number of residents in both neighborhoods who believe that addition of whites to the neighborhood improves the quality of services that residents receive from the City of Atlanta. African American respondents across the economic divide expressed such a belief. Upper class Old Fourth Ward resident Melinda Galveston expresses the sentiment thusly:

We need more people in the Old Fourth Ward. We need a larger population. We need to continue the diversity of the population. I really don't mean to be prejudiced at all, but it is a proven trend that the more white people, the more police protection, the more revitalization happens at a quicker pace. We have successfully begun that trend trying to attract white residents because with white comes higher income. Regardless of race, it [white] brings more stability.

Lower class Old Fourth Ward resident Sterling Woods says “thirty years ago this was a black place...Now, everybody wants the whites to come back.” Mr. Woods believes that more of a white presence in the neighborhood will help to stabilize things and encourage the police to continue their presence in the area.

Long term West End resident Yusef Allen has mixed feelings about the presence of whites in the neighborhood. Their presence compromises the landscape of the “black community” he recalls. On the other hand, he believes that increased white presence in the West End has contributed to a number of improvements in the area:

[W]ith white people, come the improvements in city services, you know? For years...from the time I got here, until...well, from the time my job took me overseas, we were constantly asking the City...you know, get rid of the potholes, improve the water pipes...could we have mail service you know before 4:00–5:00 p.m., and [could we have] sanitary service in the morning? Well now, those things have happened. Now, in the last two years the roadways up and down Cascade and the surrounding streets have been improved. I’ve been impressed. You know, sanitation does come in the morning, you know, mail comes before 5:00. Always after 2:00 p.m., but before 5. It’s progress.

Yusef Allen is somewhat begrudging of the fact that several battles he and other West End residents have waged for decades seem to have been addressed soon after the arrival of white middle to upper middle class residents. West End resident Chris Ford acknowledges that there has been an influx of whites in the past few years, but he says, “we’re very happy about people moving in because other than that it would just sit there vacant...We have 300 houses that need to be occupied.”

Chris Ford acknowledges that there is the potential for conflict among the “technology savvy...younger, predominantly white” new residents of the West End and the oldtimers.

I mean it’s just historically been a middle class neighborhood and predominantly African-American. So there was, you know, there's always been a lot of community activism. So if the new people were to come in and be as active as people who are already here, there might be some tension...it may not be over ideals...I think there is...there's a change in thinking maybe with their [newcomers'] racial demographic and there's more emphasis on email, chatting and websites as opposed to, you know, talking to people and, you know, on the street. I think it's minor but more, you know, blogs, more 'let's send a chain email about things' where it would be more about making a phone call or going to visit somebody.

As Mr. Ford anticipates any tensions that may emerge, it is more about ways of doing things than it is about what to do. In this manner, it emerges as a class based economic conflict. The effective use of new technology like blogs and e-mail requires competence (acquired through education and/or use) and, most importantly, equipment. Those with limited economic means may not be able to have a voice in “public” dialogues through such forums. Even in the face of certain black voices being silenced (because they cannot or are not invited to participate in many dialogues about the neighborhood), Mr. Ford firmly believes the area will remain “a black community.”

Conclusion

The current economic situation constrains many residents of the West End and Old Fourth Ward. Even long term residents, a number of which have taken out second mortgages on their homes, are often “upside down” on their mortgages. This places residents in a kind of economic servitude, and it ties them to the areas. Despite this condition, most respondents discuss their commitment to the areas in broader than economic terms. One West End resident that I met on the 2008 Tour of Homes expressed a very strong commitment to remain in the area for the course, so I was very surprised when, just one year later, I found that she had moved from the neighborhood.¹³¹ This experience taught me that despite people’s assertions to the contrary, some flight is probable.

¹³¹ I will call this resident Mary Ball. Mary Ball is a black, upper class woman. She and her then husband, a black man, moved to the West End. That was around 2005. Mary and her husband set about improving the property. Before the improvements were done, the couple divorced. Mary retained the house. Over a year later, she married a long time friend and colleague, a white man. The two resided in the home together and resumed making repairs on the home. Mary heard several comments from neighbors about her marriage, but a white family resided across the street and two other interracial couples on the same street. When I talked to her and her husband, they expressed great pride in the home and joy at living in the neighborhood. A year later, they were gone. Other residents would only say that they moved. I could not get clarity as to whether or not the couple was still together or not. Nor could I determine if they moved from the state of Georgia or if their move was volitional.

I find that the way residents and investors in the West End and Old Fourth Ward think about housing is changing. Decades of sustained economic growth made many homeowners think that home values could only go up. The current economic recession has reminded people that housing is a speculative market. If projections by Credit Suisse and others in the industry that by the end of 2012 almost 16% of the U.S. housing market will have been in foreclosure prove true, then the effects of the downturn will likely reverberate for some time. This is likely to change the way people view housing for some time.

To be certain, housing choices based on sound economic investment principles will persist, but it is not the only basis upon which homeowners, renters, and investors will make their decisions. Housing choices have become more complex, and resident, business owner, and stakeholder moods in the study neighborhoods are constantly changing. This is revealed in the narratives respondents weave about their attachments to the area, feelings of optimism and doom, and especially expressions of nostalgia.

America has survived economic crises before, and most everyone I interviewed is confident that we will survive this crisis as well. However, like the popular Yeats poem from which the title of this chapter is taken, when “things fall apart, the center cannot hold.”¹³² A center is needed, and so many residents, stakeholders, and business owners search for a new center. Formerly, people put their hopes in their houses and their jobs, but record job losses and declining home values have challenged the wisdom of such decisions. In the wake of this realization, some people have begun to search for and build a community in which to place their trust. The final chapter offers recommendations and conclusions on how historic, gentrifying black neighborhoods can build or strengthen their ties.

¹³² The poem is entitled “The Second Coming.” It was written in 1919, in the aftermath of World War I.

Part of this dissertation asks the question ‘in times of economic downturn, what will tie people to black gentrifying neighborhoods, especially those with the economic means to leave, such that they remain?’ In my research, I found that a number of factors drive people from the neighborhood. Crime, poor performing public schools, and then nature and quality of businesses in the area are the most cited factors influencing the decision to remain in or leave the neighborhoods. Additionally, many poor and lower income residents who seek to leave the area do not wish to do so for purposes of fleeing crime or in search of better schools; rather, they are looking for affordable places to buy or rent.

The American dream is still important to many people inside and outside the study neighborhoods. Homeownership is a big part of this dream. With all the talk of affordability of homes in the West End that and Old Fourth Ward, especially those in the West End, competition from investors with cash in hand (which precludes the need for mortgage and mortgage approval time) has made it difficult for many of these people to realize the American dream within their neighborhoods, so flight is probable for them.

I find that high levels of collective efficacy do exist among some individuals the study neighborhoods, but, where it is absent, collective efficacy (a feeling of trust between members of a community and willingness to intervene on behalf of those members) can also be cultivated. According to Page (2005:21), “by exploiting the social networks that develop in central places, people not only gain new opportunities, they gain a sense of interconnectedness that is vital to our well-being.” Strengthening social networks within the neighborhoods is key to fostering a spirit of community and interconnectedness. The more tenuous the connections are within the community, the less likely people are to consider or even be mindful of the interests of other groups in the neighborhood when making personal decisions. In the West End, and, to a more

limited extent in the Old Fourth Ward, residents seem willing to actively work to create the community they want. That willingness helps to forge the tie that binds.

CHAPTER 9.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This dissertation seeks to enhance the sociological understanding of the changes taking place in two black gentrifying Atlanta neighborhoods and to understand the potential for place attachment to foster social cohesion among the members of the neighborhood. The neighborhoods under examination are in-town, Atlanta neighborhoods experiencing black gentrification. While a growing body of research exists on black gentrification, none of the notable studies on the phenomenon explores black gentrification in the South. My research makes a number of significant contributions to this discourse.

Contributions to the Black Gentrification Discourse

The most prevalent theme revealed in the black gentrification literature developed over the last twenty years present is that of conflict (Taylor 2002; Jackson 2001; Hyra 2006, 2009; Boyd 2000; Pattillo 2003). Some of the works address (in whole or in part) the influence of intra-racial conflict, including class and lifestyle distinctions, on neighborhood dynamics (Prince 2002, 2004; Taylor 2002; Jackson 2001). Others focus on potential displacement (Boyd 2005), analysis of whether black gentrification is a production side (economic) or consumption side (social) process and its effects (Schaeffer and Smith 1986; Boyd 2008), and an understanding of the narratives of the residents of black gentrifying spaces (Freeman 2006; Taylor 2002). Much of the conflict examined is class-based tensions over the course of economic development for the area (Hyra 20006, 2009; Maurrasse 2006; Moore 2005; Pattillo 2007). Despite a focus in the existing literature on conflict, I find much more accord exists in the communities than has previously been outlined.

My research confirms that what Pattillo (2007:20) terms a “community of solidarity” exists among the black residents of the gentrifying spaces under study. To be certain, class and race based conflicts do exist in the neighborhoods; however, the schisms which were formerly emphasized in the neighborhoods (dichotomies like “renters” and “owners,” “blacks” and “whites,” and “newcomers” and “oldtimers”) are less highlighted in these neighborhoods than in previous literature. Pattillo (2007) outlines “three axes of status distinctions” which exist in the North Kenwood/Oakland community she studied. Those axes are: homeowner/renters, public housing residents/non-public housing resident, and oldtimers/newcomers. With the exception of the public housing resident /non-public housing resident distinction, each of these is present in my study neighborhoods, and each has been a source of conflict;¹³³ however, added to those distinctions are new ones: “good neighbors” versus “bad neighbors”; “responsible investors” versus “irresponsible investors;” “value added businesses” versus “valueless” enterprises. Amidst trying economic times, the latter distinctions are viewed as the ones that matter.

The communities under study are teetering on peril, and in the face of economic uncertainty, residents indicate more willingness to, at least provisionally, admit some racial outsiders into “community of solidarity” which Pattillo references. While some residents in the neighborhoods view Latinos with some suspicion, I noted a greater amount of tolerance for racial others than is expressed in previous black gentrification literature. Respondents openly express the view that white neighbors are preferable to abandoned and blighted homes with no neighbors in them. Future researchers should examine whether the “provisional solidarity” that is being

¹³³ The absence of the public housing resident/non-public housing resident conflict from my findings should not call into question the findings of any previous researchers on this point. Instead, the absence of this conflict is largely and directly attributable to the location of the study. Atlanta was the first major city in the nation to erect a public housing project, and it is the first to dismantle all of its large public housing projects. Therefore, the absence of public housing projects makes status distinctions like public housing resident/non-public housing resident unnecessary.

forged across racial/ethnic and class lines will persist beyond the immediate financial crisis of the times.

The role of place has been under-explored in the larger gentrification literature, and, therefore, by association in the black gentrification literature (Casey 1993). Instead, place has largely been the penchant of geographers and has been ignored by many sociologists (Gieryn 2000), but place plays a role in social identity formation and other social processes (Lee and Hummon 1993; Keith and Pile 1997; Malpas 1999). Because of this void, I utilize literature outside the field of sociology, generally, and gentrification, specifically, in order to advance my argument that strong, affective place attachment has the potential to obviate tensions in black, gentrifying neighborhoods.

When places bring groups of different people together, the potential exists for either social engagement or social estrangement (Sennett 1990). Based on my observations, I find that higher levels of social engagement (both formal and informal) are present in the neighborhoods under study than that identified in previous studies. I explain this as follows. Attachments—place, space, time, and race-based—are present in the neighborhoods, and strong attachments on any one of these bases promote interaction, including neighboring, across racial/ethnic, class, and gender lines. In fact, I find that a great deal more “neighboring” is taking place in the neighborhoods than previous black gentrification literature discusses. Some of this could be because of the economic times.

The very meaning people assign to a place impacts neighborhood level interaction within that place (Brown and Brown 2003; Gieryn 2000).¹³⁴ Place plays a role in individuals’ housing preferences and in who they are and who they become (Orum and Chen 2003), so place matters.

¹³⁴ Some examples of the meanings people assign to places include “home,” “investment property,” and “temporary dwelling.”

In fact, according to Martin (2003a:730), “place provides an important mobilizing discourse and identity for collective action; one that can obviate facets of social identity.” In the neighborhoods under examination, I find that: i) feelings of place attachment (or a lack thereof) impact residents’ views of both the neighborhood space and each other; and ii) residents are consumers in search of not just homes, but place and space constructs which satisfy their needs, and when the places people long for do not exist, they will work to create them or abandon them. This is consistent with the findings of previous researchers. In her examination of the Grant Park neighborhood in Atlanta, Hankins (2007) concludes some gentrifying spaces are “commodities” that some residents are ready to consume or even create. This is also consistent with Lacy’s (2004) findings. In her examination of black, suburban middle class communities outside Washington, D.C., Lacy (2004) concludes that where no black community exists, respondents will create an “imagined” one. While neither researcher examines black gentrifying neighborhoods, I find a similar phenomenon exists in the neighborhoods under study.

My research demonstrates that neighborhood amenities and services, especially schools play a key role in respondents’ decision to remain in the neighborhoods throughout the life course. This find adds a new dimension to our understanding of the narratives of those with the economic means to improve the neighborhood, the black gentry. To this discussion I add the finding that the often-referenced consumption versus production debate seems incomplete in assessing the likelihoods of people to remain in or leave the black gentrifying neighborhoods under study, especially the black gentry. Instead, respondents’ comments reveal that the choice to remain in or leave a particular neighborhood is both a matter of production (economic-based arguments and incentives) and consumption (social/cultural-based arguments and incentives) and further complicated by needs that change throughout the life course. I find that even those who

are attached to a neighborhood and satisfied with it personally are most likely to leave because of a change in life course, such as having a family.

Despite a substantial black presence, many black gentrifying neighborhoods face the constant threat of white encroachment (Taylor 2002, Jackson 2001, Pattillo 2007). Previous black gentrification literature has concentrated on the black communities in Harlem (Freeman 2006, Jackson 2001, Prince 2002, Taylor 2002, Schaeffer and Smith 1986) and Chicago (Pattillo 2007, 2003; Moore 2002; Boyd 2008, 2005, 2000); however, the American South has a much deeper and more entrenched legacy of racial segregation than many northern cities (Lamb 2005; Massey and Denton 1994; Sjoquist 2000; Hewitt 2004; Coleman 1991; Chafe et al. 2001; Adelman 2004; Jaret 1986/87; Pattillo 2005). In the Southern neighborhoods under study, I find that the racial identity of the neighborhoods as black is not threatened by the presence of racial outsiders. I explain this as follows. Merida and Fletcher (2007:49) note that a “color consciousness” still exists in the South. Because of this hyper-sensitive “color consciousness” present in the South, the identification of some Atlanta neighborhoods as “black” and “white,” respectively, is firmly established. Therefore, it stands to reason that even in the face of an ever growing diverse racial/ethnic group of residents, each neighborhood is perceived by those within its borders and outside it as a black community.

Returning black gentry and oldtimers alike reaffirm the centrality of race as an important social and personal identity in the neighborhoods. This is consistent with Omi and Winant’s (1986) finding that race is individuals’ most important social identity, but while race is an important social identity in the neighborhoods under study, it is not the only social identity available to respondents or discerned by others. Among others, class and gender are important social identities. Consistent with previous research, I find that both race and class are enduring

and important social identities present in the neighborhoods. However, unlike race and class, respondents do not overtly discuss a specific gender-based consciousness; however, while omitted from their speech, one can be found in respondents' actions.

Other researchers have identified a need to examine the intersections of gender with race and class (Cole and Omar 2003; Collins 2001). I find that despite views of the neighborhood space as being potentially dangerous, men and women in the neighborhoods possess perceptively no differences in their fears of and attitudes about the neighborhood space. In fact, as a gendered phenomenon, I observed very few areas where males and females in the neighborhood were treated disparately. These usually involved attitudes about sexuality and sexual relations. I was not able to discern whether or not respondents actually feel differently about the frequency and number of visitors entertained by male and female neighbors; however, respondents were more likely to reveal the exploits of single, female neighborhood residents than those of their male counterparts. The influence or role of gender on dynamics in black gentrifying neighborhoods is underexplored and merits further exploration, especially in light of research on lower rates of marriage among black women (Marsh et. al 2007).

Findings

This section sets forth my specific findings in this study with respect to the analytical questions posed and the hypotheses tested. After I set forth my findings with regard to the research questions, I discuss my findings with respect to the hypotheses.

Research Questions

My first research question asks what is the relationship between place and race in black gentrification neighborhoods? In other words, does sense of place in black gentrification neighborhoods differ for blacks and those who are not black? My research finds that a distinct

sense of place does exist in the study neighborhoods. Despite a contrary past and a changing demographic present, each neighborhood is very distinctly perceived as a black neighborhood. This perception significantly impacts various racial/ethnic groups' perceptions of particular places in the community along distinctly racial lines. According to King (1988:53), "race serves as a significant filter of what blacks perceive and how blacks are perceived" by others.

Part of the "sense of place" present in the black gentrifying neighborhoods under study is the perception of the areas as "black," and this perception is directly tied to key places in each community. In Chapter 4, several respondents discussed the Old Fourth Ward in these terms. For example, Melinda Galveston, a member of the black gentry, describes the Old Fourth Ward as "a prominent black community." A local, black real estate developer calls it "a place for black enterprise". Several black respondents simply referred to the area as "the black Mecca". This view is shared by non-black respondents as well. Daniel Tepee calls the area "a black community." Naomi Goldman, a 30-something, upper middle class, white woman draws the connection between place and perception most cogently when she says, "It's an African American neighborhood...I wouldn't get a [hair]cut around here because I'll be honest, it seems like most businesses are African-American..." Ms. Goldman's perception of the area as "black" is tied to places in the area and the "ethnic" services provided at those places. Naomi Goldman's perception of the community is influenced greatly by the places within it, many of which she deems as unwelcoming to racial outsiders. As a result, she perceives the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood where she lives as a place to lay her head, and most of her shopping, socializing, dining, and other functional needs are met outside the community. Black respondents were much more likely to view the area as more than a place to live and to meet more of their functional needs within the community.

In the Old Fourth Ward, all respondents were likely to make some reference to the area as a black community, but in the West End, oldtimers and African American respondents were much less likely to do so. This is not to say that race consciousness does not exist in the West End, because it does. However, in the wake of an economic crisis heightened by mortgage fraud issues in the neighborhood, with the limited exception of Hispanics, most black respondents seemed more to be more accepting of non-black residents. Consider Zaniah Ford's comments from Chapter 5:

I hope it shouldn't matter who moves in, but still, whether or not the racial composition stays the same, one thing is it will still be predominantly black. Whether the racial composition stays the same or not, it's still going to be viewed as a historic black community because we will protect things: the cultural, social, and valuable things here. That is my hope. I could be wrong, but I hope....I think the more diversity you have in a black neighborhood, the better.

Ms. Ford's tolerance of racial outsiders is somewhat self-interested. Although in previous comments she expresses a distinct preference for "black places" and spaces and a desire that the community retain its black status/identity, she is also cognizant of the need to have dwellings in the community occupied. The benefits of having those dwellings occupied (by anyone) far outweigh her preference for maintaining the space as an almost exclusively black community.

The connection to place based on race is more pronounced for black respondents in the Old Fourth Ward. This connection is revealed in respondents' attachment levels to the neighborhoods shown in Table 4, which is contained in Chapter 6 of this dissertation. Non-black respondents in the Old Fourth Ward were less likely to express strong place based attachments to the neighborhoods than their black counterparts. The mean black attachment level in the Old Fourth Ward was 8.13 while the non-black attachment level was only 6.00. At 6.00, non-black respondents' attachment level in the Old Fourth Ward fall well below the mean attachment level of 7.69. In the West End, the mean black attachment level was 7.50 while the mean non-black

attachment level was 6.75. While the attachment levels expressed by non-blacks (6.75) in the West End is below the mean attachment level (7.38) expressed by respondents in the area, this difference is not so significant as to conclusively infer meaningful distinctions. Taken, however, with the totality of the other evidence, I conclude that in the two historic, black-gentrifying neighborhoods under study, sense of place differs for black and non black members of the community.

My second research question asks what is the relationship between race and class in forming social identities in black gentrification neighborhoods? I find that race and class are both still important bases for the formation of social identities. In her study of a gentrifying a black neighborhood in Philadelphia, Moore (2002) determines that the positing of what she terms “multi class identity” positioned individuals to be effective (or at least heard) in community development efforts. As discussed earlier, even in integrated neighborhoods like those under study, respondents tend to view the neighborhood and/or places in them as distinct “black spaces.” Respondents’ comments also evidence an awareness of the racial/ethnic categories to which they and others around them belong as well as class distinctions among people.

Individual neighborhood residents each possess multiple identities, and while race and class are both significant identities, race still seems to be of paramount significance in the community. Consider West End resident Cheryl Simpson’s comments on this issue reproduced, in part, from Chapter 5:

[R]acism is still real. Now, we always talk about the intersection of race and class. The reality is you’re still black and you’re still white even if you’re on the same class line. And my daughter can speak about that more than I can because she has more white friends than I do, although I do have o
Mrs. Simpson is a community oldtimer. She is also a college educated member of the black gentry and a community activist. Despite this multiplicity of identities, she coherently and

unequivocally identifies that she is black first. Mrs. Simpson's comments indicate a realization consistent with that noted by King (1988:43): "[t]he dual and systematic discrimination of racism and sexism remain pervasive, and, for many, class inequality compounds those oppressions".

Because race and class are multiple and overlapping vectors of discrimination (King 1988; Collins 1990, 2000), I will analyze the dynamics of each in neighborhood level interactions separately first and then discuss how they work in concert. In both the West End and the Old Fourth Ward, individuals are identified, grouped, and delineated on the basis of race. Respondents refer to "the Chinese lady" on the corner, the "crazy white man," "Snow White" and other names. Sometimes, the names are meant to be derogatory, but more often than not, they are simple means of classifying individuals into readily identifiable groups. On occasion, respondents seem somewhat apologetic of their cognizance of their own racial status or that of other people. For example, in interviews or conversations, the names of other neighborhood residents often came up. In such cases, a description would usually follow. Even in very private conversations (for example in someone's home) respondents would often whisper their descriptions of the other person. When I asked for referrals to other residents, stakeholders, and business owners or when I placed a follow up call after an e-mail request for an interview, people would say things like "is it ok if I'm not black?" or "he's a gay white man, is that ok?" Clues about race and non-normative social statuses were not always whispered, but they were always given. Sometimes the clues came in direct statements like "she's an Asian business woman" or "you should talk to the white man around the corner." Without fail and without prompting, my requests for referrals always yielded these clues about racial and social status.

There appears to be a hypersensitive awareness of class, especially lower class, in the study neighborhoods. Old Fourth Ward resident Pat West says this in Chapter 4:

We are quite aware that numerically we have more income, more education, and more resources than many other people in the neighborhood. That's a fact, and so if you're looking at a broad stretch of housing where folks are just getting by, we are different than those people. Socio-economically, no doubt about it, but we feel comfortable [here].

Patricia and Dennis West's awareness of the class status of those around them is shared by many in both neighborhoods. Discussing a new, black church meeting in an area school, West End resident Nigel Walters says:

I've never went. Like I said, I just noticed that when it started at first, when it opened, it seemed like it was more of an invitation to people that were trying to become more financially equipped, so to speak. So it seemed like those semi-boogey blacks were attending the church...Not neighborhood people. That's it; none of the people that's going to that church looks like they're from the neighborhood, period. So, it's that thing where hey, they're coming in the neighborhood and they're taking over our neighborhood.

His comments illustrate that while race is important to neighborhood residents, the black experience is not monolithic; class impacts are noted and notable.

In the process of conducting my purposive snowball sample, many respondents gave me clues about the racial and economic statuses of those around them. Sometimes the overlapping vectors of oppression worked to elevate a person's status (for example: "he's a black man [and a] college dean and his wife is head of human resources," while at other times they work to lessen a person's status (for example: "she lives in Bedford Pines... "that's a Section 8 housing").

Chapter 7, *Should I Stay or Should I Go?*, is the chapter that most directly touches upon class and race issues. The chapter examines three factors most commonly referenced by respondents in their decisions about remaining in the neighborhood or leaving it. Those factors include the influence of crime, the quality of schools, and the quality of area businesses. In each case (crime, schools, and quality businesses) economic means affords respondents options which are not readily available to those and lower economic means. Additionally, cultural preferences, which are highly influenced by race and class, impact individuals' satisfaction with the quality

and variety of businesses in the neighborhood. One area of the future research should focus on variances in the attachment and satisfaction levels of poor and upper class residents in the community across factors like race.

My third research question asks what is the impact of gender on neighborhood level interactions? Surprisingly, my observations and interviews did not evidence any significant impacts of gender on neighborhood level interactions. Men and women in the study neighborhoods exercise certain precautions (rules of engagement) in their dealings with others in the neighborhood. Surprisingly, these cautions and precautions do not vary much by gender. Instead, the way people act and interact in the neighborhood space appears to be a direct reflection of individual's perceived status as an insider or outsider in the community. Male or female, someone who looks out of place in the neighborhood is likely to be marked and targeted by some elements in the neighborhood.

Males, even young males, in each area are perceived as potential threats, especially if they are black. There are three groups of potential threats: the homeless, those 18-40, and young black men. The homeless and derelicts in each area are largely male. Many of them are victims of what one West End oldtimer terms "President Reagan's assault on social services and closing of mental health facilities." While this group is largely anti-social and unlikely to approach individuals on the street, they are still feared and avoided by many in the neighborhoods. Homeless and mentally ill women are fewer in number, and they do not receive the same general avoidance in the community.

The rules of encounter are different when individuals, male or female, are approaching the proximity of a black man between the ages of 18-40. Respondents become extra vigilant, especially if it the encounter is with a group of black men. While many respondents suggest that

they will not avoid such a group, most have rules about the encounter. Pat and Dennis West cross the street to avoid the group, Tiffany Hayes “acknowledges” the group or individual, but she keeps moving. Similarly, West End residents Zaniah and Chris Ford indicate they always speak, but it is important to keep moving. Movement indicates purpose. It also demonstrates that the individual knows where he or she is going. Eye contact indicates a lack of fear. Respondents indicate that each of these is an important precaution against being targeted for victimization. Finally, teenage young men often cause more trepidation among respondents than all the others. Old Fourth Ward resident Kevin Washington explains that this group is unpredictable because “they got nothing to lose.”

As stated previously, minor gender based differences were observed in respondents’ attitudes about sexuality and sexual relations. Residents seem much more mindful of the statuses (single, married, divorced, lesbian) of women in the neighborhood than they are of men. This distinction was revealed in a few of the interviews, but it bears noting and might be an area for future research.

My fourth research question asks how do social/psychological attitudes vary among neighborhood residents in black gentrification areas? To answer this question I again look to respondents’ self reported responses on their attachment to and satisfaction with the neighborhood. The numbers tell a story of varying social/psychological attachments to the neighborhood space based on factors like longevity in the neighborhood, race, and gender.

In each study neighborhood, oldtimers express higher levels of attachment to the neighborhood than do newcomers; however, the story is more nuanced than that. In the Old Fourth Ward, the mean attachment level for oldtimers was 8.12 while the mean attachment level for newcomers was 7.25, but in the West End, the mean attachment level for oldtimers was 9.29

while the mean attachment level for newcomers was 6.59. While disparity in the attachment levels of oldtimers and newcomers does exist in both neighborhoods, it is much greater in the West End. Two things may be going on here. The first is imbedded in the comment of a West End oldtimer who says, “I moved into the community for an investment, but the longer I lived here, the more I liked it.”

Attachments take time to form. Because the West End is less developed than the Old Fourth Ward (in that the West End community possesses fewer improved dwelling structures and a smaller range of amenities), investment in the area may be viewed as a speculative venture by many newcomers. In the case of speculative ventures, it is not wise for resident “investors” to become too attached to the property or the community because to do so effectively elevates the use value of the property to such a point it could cloud the person’s ability to make rational decisions on the exchange value of the property. On the other hand, investment in the Old Fourth Ward is less risky in nature (albeit still a risk), so newcomers can afford to form early attachment bonds to the area. A second phenomenon may also help explain the heightened oldtimer attachment levels observed in the West End. According to (Greif 2009), attachment has two elements: behavioral and attitudinal. The attitudinal aspect of attachment includes an element of satisfaction with the community. West End oldtimers express higher levels of satisfaction with the neighborhood than do West End newcomers (7.50 and 6.35). Heightened levels of satisfaction among this population may be driving up attachment.

In the West End, the mean attachment level among females was 8.25 while the mean attachment level for males was 6.5. The mean female satisfaction level in the West End is 7.29 while the mean male satisfaction level in the West End is only 6.08, but in the Old Fourth Ward the mean female attachment level is 7.85 while the mean male attachment level is 7.54. Based

upon these findings, I conclude that in the West End, gender does matter for attachment and satisfaction, but in Old Fourth Ward it does not. A number of Old Fourth Ward female oldtimers expressed high attachment to the community of past, but lesser attachment to the present community. Additionally, the Old Fourth Ward is an area with a rich cultural and historic legacy, and the research suggests that attachment levels are higher in such areas (Gieryn 2000); therefore, it is not surprising that male and female attachment levels in the area would reveal less distinctions.

My fifth research question asks how do the social engagement levels of residents in black gentrification neighborhoods vary? Many residents of the study neighborhoods engage in what Hunter (1975) terms “informal neighboring;” however, active participation in civic organizations in the neighborhood seems to be the purview of an elite few. Class and homeownership in particular, afford people the opportunity to be socially engaged in the neighborhood, but they are not the only means of engagement. Residents, business owners, and stakeholders can all participate in neighboring activities. I define neighboring activities broadly to include formal activities like participation in civic organizations and less formal activities like interacting with neighborhoods (including visiting each others’ homes, conversations across fences and on streets, community events, and urban gardening); however, where more constrained definitions of neighboring are used researchers are likely to find that the social engagement levels of residents in gentrifying neighborhoods is higher for middle class and upper class citizens (Martin 2007; Moore 2005).

The membership of at least one neighborhood association (located in the West End) is exclusively homeowners, and in associations in the Old Fourth Ward, the membership is overwhelmingly homeowners. Certainly, considerable neighboring exists among Old Fourth

Ward and West End; however, the ability to attend and participate in formal civic associations is largely reserved for non poor residents of the neighborhoods. However, by defining neighboring (our proxy for social engagement levels) very broadly, it is easy to see how it is not the purview of only a few in the community. More than any other activity, my research shows that neighboring and neighboring activities have the potential to obviate neighborhood tensions.

Traditions of self help have existed in the communities for some time, and the current economic conditions seem to have only heightened residents' willingness to look out for themselves and their neighbors. Residents employ self help to avoid crime. This can be demonstrated in the West End neighborhood's creation of the Security Patrol, each neighborhood's efforts to create crime watch, and attempts to secure Federal funds for the purpose of installing additional cameras in the community. Self help also manifests itself in cleanup efforts in each area and discussions about the formation of charter schools for each area. When a local West End fire station was threatened with closure, the neighborhood rallied. When schools in the Old Fourth Ward were slated for closure and merger, the community fought. In each of these cases, the community efforts crossed racial and ethnic lines. This evidences that while self help often manifests itself in a form of a racial uplift, it need not.

My sixth research question asks what factors influence the decisions that the gentry (i.e., those with the economic means to leave these neighborhoods) ultimately make about staying or leaving? I found that most of the gentry view home ownership as an investment. Certainly, many choose to invest in the historic, black-gentrifying neighborhoods under study because of their social, cultural, or psychological attachments to the area; however, their attachment levels are much like the community of limited liability. As supported by respondents' self reported attachment levels to the community, the gentry express higher levels of satisfaction and

attachment to the study neighborhoods than the non-gentry; however, they are only willing to invest to a point.

As discussed in Chapter 7 of this dissertation, the crime issue is multi-faceted and complex. This is because of the perception of crime is almost as important to respondents as the actual existence of crime in the neighborhoods. Many people maintain social ties within the neighborhood; however, they continue to maintain a number of important social relationships outside the area as well. When children are involved, this becomes even more complicated. This dilemma is evidenced by the Holders' story, retold in part from Chapter 4.

When the Holders were looking for a black community to invest in and be a part of, neither of them realized that they were expecting a baby. Mrs. Holder frankly notes that if they had been aware of this, they might not have made the move. When the child turned school age, they educated her outside of the Old Fourth Ward community in one of Atlanta's elite private schools. As their daughter grew older, they learned that she was embarrassed to bring her friends to the crime ridden, dilapidated area where they resided.

The Holders' economic means afforded them the opportunity to provide a quality education for their child; however, not everyone has the means to do this. West End resident Lauren Murphy moved from Virginia Highlands to the West End. Her only concern during the move was her teenage son. Some of her fears were alleviated when her son was admitted to Grady High School, one of the best in the Atlanta public school system, but she still worries about the crime he may encounter on his walk to the MARTA station.

Customer service and the quality of goods is the last factor impacting residents' decisions to stay or go. Once again, as found in the other two factors, those with limited economic means are disadvantaged in that respect. Those who do not like the quality of goods or the treatment

that they receive in neighborhood stores may purchase at other stores, but this requires both the time and the economic means to travel to another place to meet this basic need. Lower income respondents are less likely to have the benefit of either. Everyone wants the best for his or her children, and so the presence of young children complicates housing decisions. Even when strong neighborhood attachment persists, family attachments are likely to be stronger. As a result, I conclude that the factor most likely to influence those with the economic means to leave the community to do so is a lack of adequate educational opportunities for their children (if any).

Hypotheses

Next, I examine my findings with respect to the hypotheses presented. I hypothesized that in gentrifying neighborhoods residents create narratives (based upon race, class, gender, culture, and/or history) that link them to neighborhood spaces and legitimate their claims to these local sites. I accept this hypothesis. As was the case in Hunter's (1975) neighborhood study, respondents in the Old Fourth Ward and West End worked to create a sense of community by linking themselves to the neighborhoods. For example, one white West End newcomer explains her attachment to the community by saying that she "practically grew up in the area" because as a teenager, she used to hang out in the West End Mall in a store owned by her white girlfriend's father. Numerous respondents talked about how the area reminded them of where they grew up. Others recalled visiting family friends in the neighborhood or attending special events there. Some forms of attachment were more tenuous in nature, such as references to the area's proximity to downtown or presence of important social services in the area, but in each case, respondents crafted narratives to bind themselves to the area. In so doing, the respondents often linked themselves to each other. For this reason, I accept my first hypothesis which states that

respondents create narratives to link themselves to the neighborhood and legitimate their claims to the space.

My second hypothesis is that the narratives people create change in times of economic uncertainty as residents attempt to divorce themselves from the neighborhood. In my interviews, I asked respondents to come up with a list of terms describing the neighborhood when they first moved to the area and now. Even in the case of very short periods of residency (less than one year), some respondents used a different set of words to describe the neighborhood space. The most sweeping changes, however, were found among long term residents of the neighborhoods. For example, Old Fourth Ward oldtimer Joseph Harris describes the old community as “a middle class black enclave” and a “Mecca” for black enterprise, but the current community he describes as “sad” and “disappointing.”

West End oldtimer Cheryl Simpson’s memories are even more complicated. She describes the original community of which she became a part as “scattered and tattered”; however, through her own efforts and those of other middle class individuals, she describes the area as “strengthened.” A number of West End and Old Fourth Ward residents who express lower levels of attachment to the area use words like “transitional” and “temporary” to describe the areas. These word choices suggest a conscious attempt on the part of these respondents to divorce themselves from the community. Changing narratives were found in respondents’ comments; however, there is inconclusive support for the conclusion that economic uncertainty is the root cause; therefore, this hypothesis is rejected.

My final hypothesis is that those with strong affective (i.e., cultural, historical, social, and/or psychological) ties to black gentrifying neighborhoods are more likely to remain there in times of economic downturn than are those who have only economic ties to the neighborhood. I

accept this hypothesis. However, while those with strong affective neighborhood attachment levels are more likely to remain in the neighborhood in times of economic downturn, they will only do so to a point. I also found that severe economic downturn, such as the one we are currently facing, acts as a constraint on the ability of the gentry to move because to do so jeopardizes their financial investment in the neighborhood. Additionally, those with more limited economic means and long standing ties to the community tend to express high levels of attachment to the area and a commitment to remain, even when they express lower levels of satisfaction with the area.

As discussed, attachment involves elements of behavior and attitude (Grief 2009). Behavioral attachment is evidenced through activities like informal “neighboring” activities and formal participation in local groups. Attitudinal attachment is another important dimension of attachment, and it involves both “evaluation and sentiment.” One element, evaluation, assesses how the neighborhood meets the individual’s needs. The sentimental involves feelings of emotional connection to the area. Therefore, while I accept this hypothesis, it is with the realization that high levels of attachment need not always yield behavior consistent with the avowed level of attachment to the neighborhood. For example, Old Fourth Ward resident Melinda Galveston indicates that she is a 10 in terms of both her attachment to and satisfaction with the community; however, this single, upper class member of the black gentry also reports that either a better job opportunity or a serious love interest could lure her from the area.

Implications/Recommendations

This study seeks to understand how the residents, business owners, and stakeholders in gentrifying black neighborhoods feel about the neighborhood and the other people who occupy social space with them. The intent of the study is to gain information resulting in general policy

recommendations aimed at strengthening the sustainability of gentrifying black neighborhoods and the ties among those who live, work, and service such neighborhoods. Because of my conclusion that neighboring, in all its forms, has the potential to obviate tension in the neighborhoods, I next articulate various courses of action (i.e., recommendations) that the residents, business owners, and stakeholders of black gentrifying neighborhoods can take in order to facilitate neighboring.

A number of recommendations come out of my discussions and observations in the study neighborhoods. Many come directly from respondents' responses to the question "what can be done to strengthen social and economic bonds in the neighborhood?" Other recommendations are derived from my own insights. The recommendations can all be classified in this general category: "How to be a good neighbor." This seems simple; however, simple tasks are not always easy to perform. Further, in light of my finding that informal neighboring has the potential to lessen neighborhood tensions, it is important to equip citizens with the tools necessary to alleviate and avoid such tensions. The recommendations are organized as follows: recommendations regarding neighborhoods, residents, and neighborhood associations; businesses; youth services; schools; stakeholders; and the city. Improving economic and social cohesion in gentrifying black neighborhoods should be a goal for all. Each recommendation is sequentially numbered and a discussion of the rationales underlying the recommendations follows each.

Recommendations Regarding Neighborhoods, Residents, Neighborhood Associations

A number of my recommendations relate to ways to strengthen the neighborhood and improve social cohesion among the people in the neighborhood.

Recommendation One.

The neighborhoods need to promote the creation of safe spaces. As discussed throughout this dissertation, specifically in chapters 6 and 7, it is imperative that the neighborhoods be perceived as safe. The perception of safety can be promoted in a number of ways. Some of the discussions at neighborhood planning unit and other meetings I attended centered upon the pursuit of federal dollars to secure the cameras, lighting, and neighborhood ambassadors. These efforts are laudable, and they should be pursued; however, they are timely endeavors, and they are not guaranteed. Residents can promote the development of safe spaces in the community (by participating fully in the community development process at the neighborhood level and beyond) requiring that business establishments, especially new establishments who have to come before neighborhood associations and zoning boards in order to seek approval for certain things, use certain materials and maintain a certain level of lighting around their establishments. The residents' ability to "require" such actions is somewhat limited; however, if a strong sense of neighborhood identity is cultivated in the areas, businesses are more likely to voluntarily comply.

The social and spatial nature of an area can promote or discourage safety (Newman 1972). In *Defensible Space*, architect Oscar Newman (1972) discusses how sound planning and good physical design can promote safe spaces, especially in low income housing communities. Defensible spaces are areas where the physical configuration of the community is designed in such a way as to allow residents to control small areas around their homes. Personal identification of those spaces as being under the purview or control of individual residents encourages attitudes consistent home ownership with respect to the area. While some responsibility for promoting safe design can be assigned to governmental agencies like planning departments, the crux of Newman's ideas involve promoting the assignment of responsibility for

the neighborhood space to the neighborhood residents themselves. As such, it is a self help model.

Defensible spaces are creatable if the residents have: a feeling of ownership, surveillance is present, anonymity of design is absent, and the area is safe (Newman 1972). However, while there is limited support for the conclusion that public safety improvements can stimulate economic development (Fisher 1997), attracting quality businesses into the neighborhood can improve outside perceptions of the community, but new start-up businesses will fail if patrons are afraid to leave their cars and walk to the establishment. Therefore, it is imperative that neighborhoods be perceived as positive, safe spaces.

One specific recommendation for the improving the look and feel of the neighborhood is the installation of a surveillance lights and cameras. There are a lot of curves and desolate places in the neighborhoods. The installation of lights addresses multiple concerns from safety matters, to deterring dumping, to improving the aesthetic look and feel of the community.

In the study neighborhoods, many of the female and elderly residents of the areas have a sense of the safety and belonging, but new residents need to be attracted to the area too. Even among residents, some areas in the neighborhoods (like curves and desolate places) are perceived as unsafe, but even in such areas it is the limited vision, darkness, and isolation that marks the spaces as potentially dangerous. Because of the existence of such areas, residents learn discernment and a streetwise which cautions them to avoid dark, isolated areas. But, the general perception by outsiders is that both the West End and the Old Fourth Ward are crime ridden areas to be wholly avoided, especially at night. This perception must change in order for the communities to reach their full potential.

Recommendation Two.

Houses may fungible, but neighborhoods should not be; therefore, neighborhoods should actively work to brand themselves (i.e., create a distinct neighborhood identity). Branding serves two purposes: It generates more pride in the area, and it creates a distinct sense of identity which those inside (and outside) the areas can embrace. Moore (2005:440) says, that “a community’s identity is based on the characteristics that separate it from other neighborhoods”. Marketing executives know this and they appreciate the tremendous power of creating a brand and brand loyalty. If you hook a young person on a brand, when he or she is young and has limited income, he or she is more likely to stay with the brand as he or she ages and his or her income increases. The same can be said of neighborhoods.

It should be noted that neighborhood branding does have its disadvantages. A distinct neighborhood identity or brand can be rather limited in scope, especially when it comes to large geographic areas such as the Old Fourth Ward. Multiple neighborhood identities may be advisable in such areas; however, there should be an aspect of the neighborhood brand which unifies all the distinct parts (and people) of the community together.

Developing a positive brand for the neighborhoods has the potential to lure new residents to the areas. Each community sits in close proximity to institutions of higher learning. Several thousand students attend these colleges. Each year, students and parents travel through and to the communities. It is imperative that the surrounding community be viewed as safe in order for parents to feel comfortable sending their children to school in the area. Further, with the rising cost of on campus living, some parents may choose instead to purchase low cost housing for their child, but parents will only do so if the neighborhood is perceived as both safe and a good

investment. With an abundance of affordable housing and proximity to downtown, graduates of the institutions may consider purchasing in the neighborhoods.

When parents think about the neighborhoods surrounding their children's college, they need to view the area positively. A real estate agent in the Old Fourth Ward uses the proximity of a local college as a selling point in her condominium building. When potential buyers question her about crime statistics in the area she says, "You have 2000 students living in a dorm just one block north of us. If their parents feel safe with them living in the area you should be comfortable." However, recent crimes on and surrounding some in-town campuses have made parents feel less than secure.¹³⁵ Positive neighborhood identity is central to this change, so the neighborhoods need to brand themselves. Then neighborhood insiders and outsiders can begin to associate the areas with the positive brand instead of the negative ideas which currently pervade.

Recommendation Three.

Neighborhood associations should make a concerted effort to bring a diverse group of residents, business owners, and stakeholders into their organizations, especially renters. Historically, the membership of the area neighborhood organizations has been homeowners. Community development efforts have been overwhelmingly decided by the population of homeowners, but, in the West End less than 20% of the housing stock is owner occupied and only about 10% of the properties in the Old Fourth Ward are owner occupied. Despite this long standing fact, in each community, residents and community activists emphasize the desirability of attracting more homeowners, and they often speak disparagingly about renters and the investors who rent to them. Less emphasis should be placed on home ownership and more focus should be placed on neighborhood investment.

¹³⁵ Most of these incidents involved robbery or theft; however, on September 3, 2009, a Spelman College student was shot and killed while walking on the campus of nearby Clark Atlanta University.

While it may be desirable to attract more homeowners, it seems less than feasible to do so. In fact, even if more home owners do come to the neighborhood, the balance between homeowners and renters is likely to remain substantially unchanged for some time. As a result, strengthening the community will not come from the efforts of an elite few homeowners. Instead, it is far more likely to come from the concerted efforts of many forming a cross spectrum of community. Language pitting homeowners and renters against each other is self destructive and unproductive. As a result, neighborhood activists and community members should discourage its use.

In order to integrate everyone into the community, neighborhoods must reduce the conflict between homeowners and renters. The West End has a number of single family dwellings; however, in the last 40 years the largest percentage of owner occupied dwellings the community has had is 25%. The Old Fourth Ward has a greater variety and number of housing units, including a number of condominiums; however, since the 1970 Census, the percentage of owner occupied homes has been on a precipitous decline. According to the 2000 Census, only 10% of the homes in the Old Fourth Ward were owner occupied. Homeownership is still desirable for many residents; however, homeownership is not the answer for curing the communities' ills. Economic investment is great, but it is not the foundation of community, so it should not be treated as a prerequisite for community involvement.

There needs to be a change of focus away from homeownership. As developments seek to ensure an economically diverse community, part of the diversity that is needed in the community includes renters. Low owner occupancy rates are not the only problems plaguing the neighborhoods. Mortgage fraud haunts the neighborhoods and vacancies abound. Vacancies bring social problems with them. At its peak, vacancies in the West End accounted for 25% of

its available housing stock there. Several condominiums under construction in the Old Fourth have come to a halt while others are either in default or foreclosure. Other scheduled projects have been scrapped. The effect is a great deal of available housing stock. Decreasing vacancies must be a priority, even if it is through a population of renters.

Recommendation Four.

Through tools like Asset Based Community Development, residents need to actively work to create the community they want instead of waiting for government services and programs. Asset Based Community Development Theory (ABCD) is an approach to neighborhood development which emphasizes the formation of community based solutions to community problems. Asset Based Community Development is often contrasted with more traditional models of community development which focus on addressing the needs and problems in the community. Under this traditional model, once a community need is identified, outsiders are brought in to provide programs activities and services to lift up the community (Kretzmann and McKnight 1994).

Cunningham and Mathie (2002) outline the grounding principles of ABCD theory:

1. Change must begin with the community;
2. Meaningful changes should be built upon existing assets within the community – not those outside it;
3. Change is relationship driven/oriented; therefore, residents, business owners, associations, and institutions are encouraged to collaborate in order to produce solutions for all; and
4. Sustainable growth, not problem resolution, is the aim of the neighborhood of change.

The neighborhoods under study would benefit from an asset based community development approach as current government programs alone, such as the Neighborhood Stabilization

Program, cannot build the kind of self sufficiency, pride, and independence the neighborhoods need for sustained growth.

Community is not something that exists as much as it is built. In its absence, residents can create the community they desire, whatever that may be. Some simple things can help to build a sense of community. People who are friendlier seem to integrate into the neighborhoods better. Friendly does not mean that residents become the best of friends or even have dinner at each other's homes. This is a new era. People are busy, and their busy lifestyles create little room for meaningful new relationships; however, the simple act of sitting on one's porch and interacting with those around (by a simple nod or hello or some other activities which acknowledge that the social space is shared) go a long way toward creating community cohesiveness and stability.

Oftentimes respondents did not even know their neighbors names; however, that did not stop them from greeting each other and engaging in conversations as long as five minutes. In place of the first name, the salutation "neighbor" was often used. These simple exchanges allowed for the transfer of vital community information and helped minimize potential conflicts. West End resident Nigel Walters discusses the subtle ways to resolve neighborhood disputes through simple exchanges.

So it's like if I go outside and I stand on the sidewalk for 5 minutes, I mean whoever comes out it's like 'Hey Nigel! How's it going?'... They might say, 'come on let's talk awhile.' They'll point out like have you seen that tree, have you noticed how that tree is leaning, or ... can I get some flowers for my yard? Another person will say, "You know, I'm thinking about painting my fence." You know just generalized conversation. [Then] if they see a car sitting on the street they might say do you know how long it's been there? Or that car looks like it has a flat.

According to Mr. Walters, the aim of such conversations is to disseminate information as much as it is to get it. This kind of "chit-chat" among neighbors communicates several messages. It

may say, “You need to take care of that,” or “I like what you are doing,” or “I care about this neighborhood.” In any event, neighborhoods need to recognize that while outside forces certainly have an impact on the area, the neighborhoods themselves need to be proactive in creating the community they desire.

Housing developments like Bedford Pines breed social ills. Housing projects, per se, are not the problem. Bedford Pines housing community is problematic because the 700 plus unit facility houses young (most are under 21), female, black, single parent mothers without the provision of even things as basic as cable and laundry facilities. A community is often judged by its lowest element; therefore, neighborhoods cannot tolerate it when basic standards are not met. According to one resident, the resident population there it is “the lowest of the low.” These demographics make the residents of Bedford Pines rife for exploitation.

New urbanism is all about encouraging connections through design, and Aisha Holder thinks that it is the hope for gentrifying black neighborhoods like the Old Fourth Ward and West

End:

We call it new urbanism, but it was the [old] way... It was the logical mix of uses, mix of incomes... [new urbanism] it's a misnomer. It should be old urbanism... I'm delighted that the Obama Administration has a person in the Office of Urban Policy because cities are hearts of places, and if you let your heart die, it's just a matter of time before the body dies.

New urbanism provides a variety of housing options, walkable communities, and an emphasis on place by promoting the design of inclusive neighborhoods that meet a variety of individual needs.

Recommendations for the City

Hyra (2008) effectively argues that current neighborhood level urban renewal efforts are deeply entrenched in a web of local, national, and global factors and that city level politics influence processes of redevelopment in neighborhoods.

Recommendation Five.

Cities need to support areas they zone live/work/play areas. Support can come in a number of forms. Sufficient police should be available to walk through such communities and ensure that residents' peace is not disturbed. In this way, residents need not feel that they must resort to "self help in order to maintain decorum in the neighborhood (see Ms. Hinson's comments in Chapter 7). A related recommendation is that prior to approval of areas as live/work/play, there must be assurances that there is adequate parking for all uses at all times. This is related to "new urbanism" theory Mrs. Holder mentions which contends that by having people live close to their work and recreation, they will not need so many cars, hence fewer parking spaces are necessary. "New urbanist" designers like to plan on parking place sharing where residents and visitors use the empty parking spaces of businesses when they are closed at night. Theoretically, this makes sense, but at certain hours, overlapping uses mean that parking is not readily available. Ultimately, this has the potential to discourage much needed businesses from locating in the area and/or patrons from shopping there.

Recommendation Six.

Strengthen code enforcement, especially when it comes to historic guidelines, so that a strong sense of neighborhood identity and pride can be cultivated. In my interviews, observations in the neighborhoods, and attendance at various community meetings and number of residents complained about the speed (or lack thereof) with which the code enforcement

division of the City of Atlanta responded to complaints. At one public meeting, a code enforcement employee came to address the residents of the West End. The employee gave meeting attendees information about how to check on the statuses of their complaints; however, she warned that issues of failure to comply with historic guidelines and the like are handled by only one person. As a result, that person is over worked and likely to respond only after prohibited alterations to the historic structure had already been made. Failure to adhere with the historic guidelines threatens to compromise the character and integrity of the neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are old, historic areas, and they have appeal to many people because of that. If the areas become cookie cutter and historic elements are stripped from the homes, it threatens the economic viability of the communities, so code enforcement must be strengthened which will likely require the hiring of additional personnel.

Recommendation Seven.

The areas desperately need jobs, so the city should consider partnering with neighborhood organizations and area businesses located in those communities in an attempt to secure Community Block Development Grants for the specific, permitted purpose of economic development and job creation. Specifically, principal cities of Metropolitan Statistical Areas, like Atlanta, can request funds for the “provision of assistance to profit-motivated businesses to carry out economic development and job creation/retention activities”.

Recommendation Eight.

Businesses are a part of the neighborhoods they occupy and not merely just a business in the neighborhood; therefore, in the granting or renewing a business licenses to businesses, the city should consider the voices of the neighborhood and deny license to establishments the neighborhood deems “undesirable”. Under the Neighborhood Planning Unit system, business

owners have to get approval before being granted a license; however, there have been a couple of examples of the NPU denying such approval, but the business being granted it any way.

In one such example mentioned by respondents in the Old Fourth Ward, the neighborhood wanted a gas station in close proximity to an elementary school to be denied a liquor license. To make matters worse, the gas station was a known gathering spots for people selling and purchasing drugs. Despite the request of the community, the business was granted a license. There is precedent for the city denying businesses the opportunity to locate or relocate in the community based solely on community.¹³⁶

Recommendations Regarding Businesses

Business owners should act responsibly, like they are part of the community and not simply visitors there. This is type of business owner is akin to the “indigenous” owner Sanchez-Jankowski (2008) outlines and that I discuss in Chapter 7. While new businesses in the areas often have to appear before the local neighborhood association and/or NPU, few continue to attend meetings. Existing businesses need to be made aware of their impact and obligation to the community in which they are located. New businesses should be screened to determine whether or not they fit well in the community. Businesses that add to the community should be welcomed and those that take away from it should not be permitted. Specific recommendations for businesses follow.

Recommendation Nine.

An earlier recommendation (Recommendation 3) suggests that residents should work to bring everyone, including local business owners, into their organization, but this is not the sole responsibility of the residents—even resident business owners, so business owners must get

¹³⁶ See Abelmann and Lie (1995), which outlines what some describe as the “black- Korean conflict” in Los Angeles, California, after the 1992 riots.

involved in the community, which includes community organizations. The aim is to draw businesses in to the neighborhood, not just the neighborhood associations.

According to Sanchez-Jankowski (2008), businesses that get involved in the community fit better into the urban landscape and often do better economically. Businesses play a vital role in the sustenance of the gentrifying black neighborhoods. Aside from providing an important source of tax revenue for the city and jobs, they offer much needed goods and services.

Neighborhoods benefit from businesses, but the businesses benefit as well. In order to behave responsibly and responsively, business owners and operators need a “sense of community.”

Some residents suggested that the business owner should live in the community. However, while I find that business owners do not have to live in the community, but they do need respect for the area, the residents, and insights into how their business impacts the community. For decades, we have worked from a model that any business is good business. This is not true. Business owners need to be careful to take care of the property. For example, as described in Chapter 5, one West End business owner refuses to place garbage cans around his property. The predictable effect is that the ground it is littered with the items purchased from store. Businesses should ensure that their presence is value added to the community and not value taken away.

Recommendation Ten.

Appearance matters, so business owners should be encouraged to take care of property/business. If they take care of the business, the business will take care of them. Of course, it may be necessary to provide incentives for business owners to fix up their property, so this recommendation could well fit under recommendations for the city and/or recommendations for the residents. However, as it is still the responsibility of the business owner to make the changes and seek out the incentives, I believe it most appropriately fits here.

As seen throughout chapters 4-7, appearance matters. It matters to residents. It matters to visitors. It matters to potential investors, and it matters to those who might otherwise be inclined to dump materials in the vacant spaces of the community. The potential rewards of improving property are great. When owners do fix up their storefronts, people notice this. Positive effects follow too. Residents/visitors treat the area with more respect and other business owners are encouraged to take better care of their shops and the public spaces surrounding it. A great deal of the future success of the areas depends upon its perception to outsiders.

Current business owners are an untapped resource for attracting other viable businesses to the areas. The way to earn money in real estate is to buy low and sell high. This model was followed by all investors. Investors are always looking for the next big thing, but they seldom have the vision to see the potential of gentrifying neighborhoods. Current business owners are already tied to the community and have a vested interest in its success; therefore, they are an untapped resource for attracting private capital to distressed communities. When business owners fix up their property, people notice. Cooperation and the sharing of knowledge is needed among businesses. This is, of course, counterintuitive as businesses usually compete against each other; however, in this context, knowledge of the neighborhood, its people, processes, crime statistics, etc can be invaluable to the success of the business.

General Recommendations to All Residents and Business Owners

Recommendation Eleven.

Location matters, so know the area where you are planted. Currently, the greatest problem the West End faces is not drugs, crime, or poor performing schools. Instead, it is mortgage fraud. Mortgage fraud almost ravaged the West End community (Bennett 2008). Now the community seeks to rebuild. According to a recent report by a researcher out of the

University of Georgia, the process of rebuilding may be long and arduous (Carswell 2009). A heightened awareness, which comes from perspective, might have cued some into the mortgage crisis some time ago; however, much of the lending in the area was done outside of the area. Shared knowledge of a location affords perspective, so too does increased functional use of neighborhood services and facilities.

West End resident Richard Newcomb has this to say about the roots of the mortgage fraud crisis:

There is this classical line from a classic American movie, *The Godfather*. Al Pacino was talking to this guy and one of his partners in crime and they're talking about a murder. And he says, 'Well, I didn't ask who did it because I realized it wasn't personal. It was business.' So [there is] this philosophy that if it's a business, that anything goes.

It is much easier to take the attitude that it is just business when it involves a community of people that you do not know at all or only know on paper.

Recommendations Regarding Schools and Youth Services

As the Old Fourth Ward and West End look to the future, they must recognize that the future of each neighborhood is in the hands of its youth. In the wake of shrinking state and local budgets and mounting deficits, many youth programs and recreation facilities have been closed. This has driven many young people to the neighborhood's streets.

Recommendation Twelve.

Good schools attract and keep residents, so Atlanta Public Schools need to provide better quality K-12 educational options for residents. This point is so basic, that it needs little exposition. The importance of schools cannot be overstated. In both areas there is a great deal of talk about creating a "cradle to grave" community. Currently, many residents leave the community when they have children. The population density the areas need to be viable will

come from residents and renters, old and young alike, and of a variety of marital and family statuses. Good schools are needed if the areas are to appeal to all of these groups of current and potential residents.

Each community has made a recent (in the last two years) attempt to secure a charter school. In each case, the request was denied by the State. It is understandable that the state would not wish to approve a school which it does not believe is prepared to meet the basic needs of the populous, but years of poor performance on the part of the current public schools suggests they do not do so either. Atlanta Public Schools (APS) should work with the neighborhood residents and community activists seeking to secure approval for charter school in order to help place the communities in the best position to be successful on the next go around. While APS is not in any way involved in the approval or denial of such schools, it does have individuals with the expertise to place the schools in the best position of being approved.

Recommendation Thirteen.

Young people should be viewed as value added to a neighborhood, not value taken away, and the City and neighborhoods should work together to identify appropriate spaces and facilities to allocate for the use of the young. The sight of groups of young people congregating together on the streets or in the mall is disturbing and perhaps even frightening to some. We need to create viable youth programs to keep youth off the streets. As one respondent put it, “it’s hard for them [young people] to escape the matrix, so we need more programs for them.” That resident grew up in a single parent household with a strong Boys and Girls Club influence in his life. The newly elected mayor of Atlanta, Kasim Reed, has made opening the city’s beleaguered recreation facilities a top priority. Neighborhood officials must press the mayor to keep this promise.

Recommendations Regarding Stakeholders

Stakeholders include a variety of entities and groups as broad as federal, city, or state agencies and offices to real estate agents, developers, and neighborhood associations, all of which have an interest in the neighborhood.

Recommendation Fourteen.

FHA guidelines on loans are prohibitive (e.g., a refusal to lend to purchasers for condominium purchases unless the condominium complex is already 50% sold). Revisions may be necessary in order to meaningfully reduce vacancies, especially in large unit condominium complexes.

Recommendation Fifteen.

Churches and social service providers in the areas need to anticipate and understand how the way they provide services impacts others in the neighborhood and then work to minimize negative impacts.

Churches, universities, and service providers need to realize the impact that their actions have on the neighborhood, even when they are not directly located in the neighborhoods in question. Many students at Morehouse and Spelman go to distant counties (DeKalb, Gwinnett) to do community service, but there is need right where the schools are located. In the words of one respondent, colleges and universities are advised to “water where they are planted.”

Universities should not be like silos or isolated islands in the larger community in which they are situated; instead neighborhood partnerships should be explored. On a national level, institutions like Harvard, the University of Chicago, and Emory University lead the way in developing partnerships with those in the surrounding neighborhood. Universities can provide valuable incentives to their faculty, staff, and personnel who invest in local neighborhoods.

These acts also generate valuable good will between the groups. These partnerships should be sought out and cultivated. However, such partnerships will only work if once university personnel move into the areas; they become active participants in the neighborhoods. Old Fourth Ward resident and stakeholder Councilman Martin expresses this best:

I see a lot of these folks who have moved in that are new, and are isolated. They are in their silos. They are on their phones, cell phones, and computers. They don't go next door or don't even know who lives next door. They only become neighbors and friends when they get a break in or when their cars stolen or when they lose something. Then you're like, okay I need to know who's around me. Because they're so caught up in living their lives.

Aisha Holder advises that “neighborhoods and people are only as broken as we allow them to be.” We must not allow them to be broken, but it requires a concerted effort on the part of all.

Not all social service agency providers and church congregants or leaders live in the Old Fourth Ward or West End. This gives those stakeholders a narrower perspective of the community than that of its full-time residents. In Chapter 7, Ms. Hinson, a resident of the Old Fourth Ward, says it is improper for churches—many of which are populated by parishioners who live outside the community—to effectively “crap” on residents’ lawns (by attracting homeless, poor, and derelict individuals to the neighborhood space through the provision of feeding programs and other services) and then leave the literal and figurative mess for the residents to clean up.

Sometimes, tension exists in the communities between those who live there and those who provide social services in the community but do not live there. Many residents label churches as the most common offender. Churches need to consider the impact of their activities on “those who remain.” Many of the churches think that they’re providing a “hand up” while many of those in community say it’s just a “handout.” The difference is subtle but important.

The local churches are well meaning, but most of the parishioners of the major local churches do not reside in the community. As a result, they do not see the lasting impacts of their assistance.

In Chapter 4, Old Fourth Ward resident Daniel Tepee notes:

Clearly that [handout] effort is not moving those people forward and in addition to that not moving folks forward you know it's also keeping other people from not conducting business in this community. We need to help the community to raise the bar on you know filling up these vacant buildings with some other businesses. My thing is the church needs to be conduits over resources both economic and labor.... I think there are some better solutions to, um, getting everybody what they want.

Everyone needs a hand from time to time, and is important that one be extended; however, Mr. Tepee and other residents argue that constantly giving people handouts robs them of the ability and desire to improve their own situation. This economic tension could be obviated by recognition of the conflict it creates and frank discussions about what is best for all involved—residents, stakeholders, and service recipients.

Sometimes, the impact of the church on the neighborhood is quite benign; however, the impact is no less dramatic. West End resident Matt Jacobs says, “The churches have stifled the growth of this neighborhood. You can’t build a bar” certain places because of the proximity and prevalence of churches, so churches need to anticipate how their activities disrupt the neighborhood. For example, when a new church located temporarily in the West End, it made an already constrained parking situation even worse (See Chapter 5).

Recommendation Sixteen.

Connections matter, so promote policies to restore connectivity to neighborhoods and encourage stakeholder agencies, including the City of Atlanta employees, to have tangible linkages to the city. One way to do so is to require or encourage such employees to live in the City proper.

It is not surprising that the creation and maintenance of jobs needs to be a top priority in historic, gentrifying black neighborhoods like those under study; however, many of the jobs may come from surrounding areas and not the neighborhoods themselves. Both study neighborhoods still suffer from the effects of a lack of connectivity brought on by the location of interstate highways which, like railroad tracks, act as silent markers of neighborhood transition. Therefore, it is important to restore connectivity in the neighborhoods in order to get people to and from the jobs, wherever they may be.

The connectivity issue is more than just streets—it is people. The more tenuous the connections are within the community, the less likely people are to consider or even be mindful of the interests of other groups in the neighborhood when making personal decisions.

People connections should be encouraged. One Old Fourth Ward community stakeholder said that seventy percent of all city workers do not live in the city. Workers need more ties to the areas they serve. Police who don't live in the community have a kind of disconnect, and they may be less likely to do an effective job. This is certainly the premise upon which the West End Neighborhood Security Patrol, discussed in chapters 5 and 7, is built. While security patrol officers do not have to live in the West End, the neighborhood development organization hiring the officers makes a concerted effort to only hire those who regularly police the community. The rationale for this is that such officers are familiar with not only the topography of the community but the social processes in the area. This is great value in mediating, avoiding, and circumventing potential issues.

Cultivating Social Capital in the Communities

Relationships are the basis of social networks, and these social networks are an important form of social capital, for they are essential for getting things done in a neighborhood. Social

capital itself is an intangible concept said to include elements of social relationships such as the fostering of personal trust, participation in civic organizations, and norms of behavior (Coleman 1990). Teitz and Chapple (1997:51) offer a distilled explanation of this idea stating, “[social capital] is the social resources for getting things done...[it] may come in a variety of forms...but it always resides in relations, not in human individual or financial capital.”

The concept of social capital generated new attention after the release of Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. In his work, Putnam (2000) argues that Americans are less civically and socially engaged than ever, resulting in impoverished communities devoid of the benefits derived by meaningful human connections and civic participation. Putnam (2000, 1995, 1993) uses civic engagement (participation) and trust as proxies for social capital.

Social capital (i.e., “the social resources for getting things done”) can be a valuable transformative tool for gentrifying neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are already undergoing change. What has yet to be determined is whether that change will be positive or negative.¹³⁷ Tempkin and Roe (1996:61) suggest “building social capital in neighborhoods may [indeed] be an effective way to stem neighborhood decline.” Neighborhoods high in social capital are better positioned to effect positive change. Therefore, finding meaningful new ways to generate social capital can help individuals connect, potentially improving their own personal lives as well as the lives of those in their community.

A number of researchers argue that social capital is not possible unless the members the community/group feel bound to each other in a way common to the kind of ties often found

¹³⁷ Recent work by Boyd (2008) and Martin (2007) highlight the reality that changes which may be good for one or more segments of the community are not often equally advantageous for all other members of the community.

among racial or ethnic groups. Race and ethnicity are seen as important bases of group identity formation. According to Gieryn (2000), place can be as compelling a source of identity as race.

Historic neighborhoods are well suited to form and benefit from a somewhat unified vision of the neighborhood's past. Even if the members of the neighborhood agree upon nothing more than a desire to preserve history, this agreement is the fabric from which a cohesive tapestry can be woven. In her study of Bronzeville, a revitalizing black neighborhood in Chicago, Boyd (2002:108) argues that in racial heritage tourism "reconstructions of history and culture are just one form of invented tradition used to establish group cohesion and membership."¹³⁸ Building upon the ideas of Gieryn (2000) and Boyd (2002), I argue that if social capital involves elements of trust, civic engagement, and mutual aid/responsibility, it is as possible to exhibit these behaviors (in whole or in part) towards a place or space as it is to a race of people, and that such attachment to places, spaces, and/or race has the potential to bind residents to the community. High levels of neighborhood attachment can have a profound positive impact on the livability of the neighborhood as well as its stability and cohesion (Greif 2009; Brown et al 2003; Silver and Miller 2004). Connections are a form of social capital, and they are another tie that binds.

Asset Based Community Development

So much attention is paid to the weaknesses of a community that little attention gets focused on its strengths. According to the website for The Asset Based Community Development Institute (School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University), there is "a large and growing movement that considers local assets as the primary building blocks of sustainable community development." Asset Based Community Development Theory

¹³⁸Racial heritage tourism is an economic development vehicle successfully used in some areas like Beale Street in Memphis, Tennessee. It is a variation of cultural heritage tourism, which has a longer tradition, and focuses on sites of importance to racial/ethnic communities.

recognizes that just as every community has weaknesses, so too does every community have strengths and assets. Those strengths and assets can then be mobilized to strengthen the community and combat social ills.

The traditional model is responsive in nature in that it is commonly employed in response to an existing problem and then relies on the use of outside experts and professionals to determine the best course of action for the community. Under Asset Based Community Development Theory, the plan for the community is formulated by the citizens and stakeholders of the community with a direct eye to the community's needs, but more importantly, its resources. Asset Based Community Development theorists believe every community has a great deal of capacity to solve its own problems.

As a model, Asset Based Community Development has a great deal of potential to strengthen gentrifying communities. Gentrifying communities often have to deal with the negative perception of those on the outside of the community. As such, they would benefit both psychologically and marketing wise from an asset based approach to neighborhood development.

In "The Competitive Advantage of Inner Cities," Michael Porter (1995) outlines several advantages of inner cities including the areas' strategic location, connectivity, local market demand and human resources. In addition to the advantages of inner cities, Porter (1995) also mentions several disadvantages including employee skills, attitudes, security/crime issues, infrastructure problems, and heightened costs for things like buildings, land, and other variables. Many of these disadvantages were outlined in Chapter 7, Should I Stay or Should I go? In the chapter, three factors most commonly influenced the decision to leave the neighborhood. Those factors were crime, poor public educational system, and poor quality service/goods in neighborhood stores.

Porter (1995:14) argues that “social programs will continue to play a critical role in meeting human needs... [however,] they must support and not undermine – a coherent economic strategy”. In Porter’s estimation, it is the role of the private sector to cultivate and establish businesses in the inner city core. Additionally, there is room for community based organizations in Porter’s model. It becomes the responsibility of the community based organizations to “identify strengths and unique competitive advantages [to] participate in economic development” (Porter 1995:28). The collaborative effort that Porter outlines works well with an ABCD approach. The assets of gentrifying black neighborhoods are often a well kept secret. The mere act of discussing and uncovering the community’s assets can fill the community with pride and the resolve necessary to improve their condition.

Conclusion

Gentrifying neighborhoods are generally perceived as being rife with conflict; however, several researchers studying black gentrification have noted that in black gentrifying neighborhoods, racial homogeneity works to minimize some of the typical tensions and conflicts present in gentrifying spaces (Pattillo 2007; Taylor 2002; Jackson 2001; Prince 2004). While each of the works noted above reveals a certain accord among many black residents of black gentrifying areas, they also acknowledge “The fact of a racial homogeneity does not preclude the importance of difference, divisions, and distinctions” (Pattillo 2007:12) . Yet, in spite of these "differences, divisions, and distinctions,” a connection persists.

One black gentrifier Pattillo (2007:86) interviews outlines the basis of this contrariety:

Gladyse Taylor easily felt that she belonged when she bought her home in the Oakland in 1989. She was literally coming back, not to the block on which she grew up, but not too far from it... Bringing her talents and experiences back to the block felt right, and welcomed. [She said] ‘I’ve not had any problems with people in the community. Actually, I think for the most part, they were kind of

excited. Even though they realize[d] that the gentrification was taking place, they were happy and pleased that it was someone black.’

Gladys Taylor’s comments acknowledge an awareness of her Chicago neighborhood’s reticence to welcome gentrifiers into the community, but her comments also suggest an acceptance, which borders on delight, over the fact that she is black. Her comments suggest that potential class conflicts in the neighborhood may be obviated by her insider racial status.

Like race, other commonalities have the potential to obviate tensions in gentrifying black neighborhoods and foster a sense of accord among group members. No matter how tenuous, attachments to the neighborhoods do exist among residents, and these attachments bond respondents to the neighborhood and to each other. This attachment alone may not be sufficient to avoid neighborhood conflicts or to build a sustainable community; however, it does provide residents and stakeholders with the all important foundation upon which accord can be built. The presence of multiple ties (racial/ethnic, social, cultural, historical, etc.) only serves to strengthen the attachment cord. As noted in footnote 105, a threefold cord or bond is not easily broken.

Attachment is about more than just sentiment. Respondents in the two black gentrifying Atlanta neighborhoods I studied express a range of sentiments with regard to their bonds to the neighborhood. Some express attachments based solely upon convenience of location while others express deeply held sentiments for the area based on social, cultural, historical, or racial/ethnic lines. Sentiment alone is not enough to bind them to their neighbors or the neighborhoods. A sense of community is also necessary. Where a sense of community does not exist, one can be cultivated.

In his study of a gentrifying urban, middle class, racially mixed community in Rochester, New York, Hunter (1975) argues that the residents of the 19th Ward Community Association

consciously worked to create and maintain a “sense of community.” This “sense of community” manifested itself in neighboring practices and functional use (albeit not maximum use) of the neighborhood space. Hunter’s (1975) racially diverse, largely middle class subjects deliberately sought to live in Rochester’s 19th Ward, and then they deliberately set about to maintain the community which they created. Today, some 35 years late, the community remains a desirable neighborhood with a mix of racial, economic, and social backgrounds as well as an established tradition of neighboring.

The longevity and economic strength of the 19th Ward neighborhood Hunter studied has great potential to be replicated in the black, gentrifying neighborhoods under examination.¹³⁹ All the elements are present. The reasons individuals in Hunter’s study offered for moving into or remaining in the neighborhood included: i) good housing value; ii) a conscious “rejection of suburbia;” iii) an appreciation for the diversity of population in the community; iv) convenience of location; and v) “sentiment” (such as family ties). Each of these reasons is very similar to those communicated by respondents in my study neighborhoods. In fact, in many respects, the area is very similar to the black gentrifying neighborhoods under examination here. In his study, Hunter (1975:544) concludes that although residents’ use of neighborhood facilities like churches, movie theaters, doctors, and grocery stores declined, “the social and cultural symbolic sense of community” in the area under study increased.

Many black, gentrifying neighborhoods are situated in historic areas and/or cultural heritage tourism districts (Boyd 2000, Inwood 2009a, 2009b). Economic resurgence in the neighborhood is often driven by racial heritage tourism, which is dependent upon and “involves

¹³⁹ There are some notable exceptions. For example, this desirable Rochester neighborhood had little turnover, but these are different times now. While people form attachments to their homes and neighborhoods now, few of them intend to remain in the area forever. Despite these and other distinctions, Hunter (1975) evidences that neighboring can improve economic and social cohesion in neighborhoods.

the conscious and deliberate reconstruction and representation of black history” (Boyd 2000:108). In the face of encroachment by racial outsiders, racial heritage tourism efforts can help to solidify a black gentrifying area’s perception as a black space, thereby helping to preserve at least a small part of black history and black identity for the future.

Race, class, age, and gender distinctions still exist in the neighborhoods, but across racial, economic, and status lines, many neighbors in the West End and the Old Fourth Ward work to combat crime and save their neighborhoods from decline. Some do so because of their strong sense of attachment (social, cultural, historical, and/or personal) to the neighborhoods. Some do so in order to preserve or protect their economic investment in the area. For others, the neighborhoods have a high use value, so they work to protect them. Whatever the reasons, on perhaps this singular goal—save our neighborhoods— solidarity exists among residents, business owners, and stakeholders of the areas. This solidarity is fragile, but it is real, and it extends across races, sexes, classes, and ages. The economic crisis has forged a common bond tying the residents, stakeholders, and business owners in the neighborhoods together. What remains to be seen is whether the ties forged in crisis will persist after the crisis passes.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions for Business Owners

Read Informed Consent. If respondent consents to interview, proceed.

I would like to ask you some questions about the neighborhood your business is located in, your business, your customers, and you.

1. People have different names for this community. Please tell me: what do you call the area in which your business is located?

2. Describe the _____ [fill in blank with whatever name interviewee gives community]. What does it mean to you?

3. We all have, in varying degrees of clarity, a “picture in our minds” of _____ [fill in blank with name person gives to area]---places, roads, areas, buildings, and other things in the community that are significant to us. Your mental map of the area probably contains some elements or features that many others have in their minds, but it also has things that reflect your own unique perspectives, interests, and activities.

I am going to give you a piece of paper, and I wonder if you can sketch out your mental map. I want to know the borders of _____. Make your map as detailed as you can, putting in everything of importance or interest to you. Don't worry about what it looks like. Accuracy is not important either. I just want to get an idea of the places that are significant to you.

4. Please tell me about your business.

5. At any time since you have been in _____, have you had any difficulty with any of the following?
 - a. Securing a business loan?
 - b. Securing business insurance?
 - c. Securing support from private investors?
 - d. Securing grants?

Are any of these conditions different than when you first began your business? If so, when and why did they change?

6. How long have you been in business here in _____?

So would you consider yourself an _____ [Note: based on time frame they state, ask would you consider yourself a/n “oldtimer “? “newcomer”? “some other classification?” If so, ask what?]

If a newcomer, ask: So what do you think of the “oldtimers?”

If an oldtimer, ask: So what do you think of the “newcomers?”

- a. Has your business always been at this location?
 - i. If so, why did you pick this spot, and if not why did you move/change?
 - ii. Has the physical look of your property/ business changed at all over the years? *(Examples may include things like painting and/or upgrading interiors and exteriors. Try to also to get at things like security bars, fences, or boundaries and an explanation for why they exist, are maintained, or were torn down).*
 - iii.
7. What’s the best thing about doing business in _____?
 - a. Has that always been the case? If not, when did it change?
 - b. Why do you think things changed?
8. What’s your least favorite thing about doing business in _____?
 - a. Has that always been the case? If not, when did it change?
9. Have any of the products and services you offer at your business changed in the past ____ years? If so, what brought about these changes?
10. You indicated you have been doing business in this area for ____ years. I want to ask you a few questions about the area as well as your clientele, now, in the past, and some projections about the future.

Earlier, I asked whether the physical look of your property has changed. Now, I’d like to know if in the ____ years that you have been doing business in _____, has the area changed in the following respects?

- i. Are there any new kinds of people?
- ii. Any physical changes *(Examples: fences, changes in upkeep of homes, cleanliness of streets, new businesses)*
- iii. Any social changes *(Examples: more unity among neighbors, less unity, more block parties, fewer block parties, people speaking)*
- iv. Have the major problems/challenges changed?

11. Now I want to ask you some questions about your clientele.

- a. What kinds of people shop here or do business with you?
- b. Who was it ____ years ago? [*insert time frame based on years in business; if person has been in business a long time, take more than one step back and ask about five or ten year increments*]
- c. 5 or 10 years from now, who do you think your clientele will be?
- d. How do you see yourself as similar to the people who shop in your store? How are you different from them?

12. I want to probe a little more about your customers.

- a. Could you please describe your customer base for me?
- b. Why do you think they shop with you?
- c. What kinds of things don't you know about them?
 - i. Has that always been the case?
 - ii. If not, when and why did things change?
- d. What kinds of things do you know about your customers?
 - i. How did you come to know these things? [*prompt if necessary: by observation? Personal conversation in the store? Personal conversation outside the store? Another customer told you*].

13. What challenges do you face in running your business?

14. Now I want to ask you a few questions about any problems or conflicts you may have experienced or witnessed in the neighborhood.

- a. Have you had any competition, conflict, or problems with other businesses?
 - i. Can you please describe it?
 - ii. Has the matter been resolved, and if so, how?
- b. Any problems with city agencies (*ex. Licensing, fines, taxes, building codes/permits, etc.*).
 - i. If so, describe.

- c. Have you ever had any problems or conflicts with local residents here in _____, including conflicts with customers?
 - i. Please describe the nature of those conflicts.
- d. Have you noticed any conflicts or problems between different kinds of people in this area?
 - i. If so, could you please describe them?
- e. Based on your observations and experiences, would you say that people here in _____ get along pretty well or is there a lot of disagreement and/or hostility?
- f. Is there much renovation? Foreclosure? Vacancies? Price Fluctuations? Mortgage Fraud? If so, how do you feel about this?
- g. There is a lot of uncertainty in the current housing market. In your opinion, what impact, if any, will this uncertainty have on _____?
 - i. What impact will it have on your business?
 - ii. Do you anticipate any other impacts on **you** personally?

15. Now I want to learn a little bit more about the extent of your involvement in the _____.

Are you involved in local neighborhood planning (the NPU system), neighborhood associations, or community development corporations?

- a. If so, list which ones.
 - i. Do you think they are doing a good job?
- b. What was the extent of your involvement in these meetings?
- c. Have you ever attended NPU meetings for this neighborhood specifically on behalf of your business (i.e., to make a request or seek approval of something)?

[IF YES, what was your impression; IF NO, why not?]

16. Does your business contribute to or support the community in any way?

- a. Please describe how. *Prompt if necessary. {Examples might include the following: sponsor a sports team, partner in education, allow kids to sell girl scout cookies or have a car wash on your property, hire local people}.*

17. How would you say your current business is doing?

1. not as good as I expected
2. about what I expected
3. better than I expected

Ask: What do you attribute this to?

18. Based on your experience and knowing what you know now about _____, if you had a son or daughter who was starting a business, would you advise him/her to open a business here in _____ or in some other part of Atlanta?

a. If respondent chooses “some other part of Atlanta,” ask: Which other area would you suggest?

b. Why do you feel that way?

b. Have you considered moving your business out of _____?

i. Why or why not?

ii. How long do you intend to remain in _____?

iii. When you first moved in, how long did you intend to stay?

1. What changed and why?

Now I want to ask some questions to get a sense of your feelings about _____.

19. Can you give me four or five words or phrases that accurately describe _____ really well to you?

20. Does _____ hold any special significance – either historical or some personal importance for you? If yes, ask for comments.

21. If you could change just one or two things about _____, what would it be?

22. Where do you live? [*If respondent says any area outside study, preface next question with bolded language. If respondent does reside in the study neighborhood under discussion, omit bolded language from prompt*]. **Whether or not you live in _____**, I'd like to know how you feel about the following statements. These items should be used with the following choices:

- a. strongly agree
- b. agree
- c. neutral or no opinion
- d. disagree
- e. strongly disagree

This neighborhood really feels like home to me.

I think most people in _____ like having my business here.

I frequently don't feel respected or welcome here in _____.

There is a lot of bickering and conflict among the people in this area.

_____ really means a lot to me, and I'd be sorry if I had to move my business away from _____.

I would live in this neighborhood.

23. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, how attached are you to _____ [put name of neighborhood here].

24. Using the same scale as in the last question, with 10 being the highest level of satisfaction, how satisfied are you with the neighborhood?

25. Answer the following: As neighborhoods go, I consider _____ to be

- a. one of the worst areas in Atlanta.
- b. a below average area.
- c. an area that is pretty average.
- d. an above average area.
- e. one of the best areas in Atlanta

26. As far as I can tell, this neighborhood is

- 1. getting better or improving.
- 2. fairly stable or staying pretty much on the same level.
- 3. getting worse or declining.

27. Even if you think this community is very strong, what, if anything, can be done to strengthen _____?

I have a few personal questions.

28. What racial/ethnic classification(s) do you use to describe yourself?
29. What year were you born?
30. I am going to hand you a piece of paper. The paper contains various income categories. Please mark the appropriate category for your total household income. (Categories: \$0-\$34,999; \$35,000-\$49,999; \$50,000-69,999; \$70,000-99,999; \$100,000-199,999; and \$200,000 and up).
31. If you don't mind me asking, do you own or rent your home?
32. What is your marital status?
- Do you have school aged children?
If yes, where do/did they attend school?
 Why did you select that school for your children.
If no, ask if they have children, where they will attend school, and why.
33. Did you complete high school? If so, how much education do you do you have past high school?
34. Are you a member of any congregation? If so, where?
35. *[If respondent does not live in the neighborhood as expressed in question 22, move to question 38].* Because you indicated you live in _____, I have just a few more personal questions to ask you. Is that alright?
- i. Describe the kind of neighborhood you grew up in.
 - ii. Where did you reside before living here?
 - iii. What kind of neighborhood do you feel most comfortable in and why?
 - iv. Do you participate in any community groups or organizations? Which? Why?
 - v. Where do you do the various types of shopping (grocery, clothes, services) your family requires and why?
 - vi. What do you like about living in _____ and what do you dislike?
 - vii. Is there much crime in this neighborhood? So do you consider _____ to be a safe area?
36. Can you tell me the top 2 or three reasons you decided to live in _____?

- i. Was there anything else about this area or the things in it that attracted you to it?
- ii. How did your friends and family react to your decision? Why?
- iii. How do you see yourself as similar to the people in your area? How are you different?

37. Have you considered moving out of the neighborhood? Why or why not?

- a. How long do you intend to remain living in _____?
- b. Was that the case when you first moved here? If not, when and why did your plans change?

38. Do you have any final comments?

39. Is there anyone else I should be talking to? If so, who? Is it all right if I tell them you referred me? Do you know how I can get in touch with this person?

That concludes my interview. I want to thank you very much for your time.

Mental Map

Draw your map here. Please be sure to include any items, features, places, buildings, etc. that are meaningful or significant to you in the area provided. Accuracy is not important.

Reassure respondents that accuracy is not important. This is just to get a general understanding of the area they define as their neighborhood and its parameters.

After map is drawn, ask respondents to:

1. Put a triangle by any areas you consider unsafe and explain why.
2. Put a star by any areas you are fond of and explain why.
3. Put a square by any landmarks on your map.

Appendix B: Interview Questions for All Residents

Read Informed Consent. If respondent consents to interview, proceed.

I want to ask you some questions about the community you live in, your feelings about it, interactions in the neighborhood, as well as some personal questions about you. We'll begin with the community.

1. People have various names for this community. Please tell me: what do you call the area you do live in?

2. Give me 4 or 5 words that you think describe the _____ [fill in blank with whatever name interviewee gives community].

Explain what this area means to you.

3. We all have, in varying degrees of clarity, a “picture in our minds” of _____ [fill in blank with name person gives to area]---places, roads, areas, buildings, and other things in the community that are significant to us. Your mental map of the area probably contains some elements or features that many others have in their minds, but it also has things that reflect your own unique perspectives, interests, and activities.

I am going to give you a piece of paper, and I wonder if you can sketch out your mental map. I want to know the borders of _____. Make your map as detailed as you can, putting in everything of importance or interest to you. Don't worry about what it looks like. Accuracy is not important either. I just want to get an idea of the places that are significant to you

4. How long have you been a resident of _____. So would you consider yourself and “oldtimer?” “newcomer?” “some other classification?”
 - a. If a newcomer, ask: So what do you think of the “oldtimers”?
 - b. If oldtimer, ask: So what do you think of the “newcomers?”
 - c. How do you see yourself as similar to the people in your neighborhood? How are you different?

5. What are the main 2 or three reasons you decided to move here?
 - a. Was there anything else about this area or the things in it that attracted you to it?
 - b. Did your friends and family support your choice to move to _____?

6. Describe the _____. What does it mean to you?

7. Now I am going to ask you about changes (if any) you have observed in the neighborhood in the time you have been a resident.

- a. Are there any new kinds of people in the neighborhood you didn't see when you first moved here?
- b. What physical changes, if any, have you observed in the neighborhood? *(If they need prompting, mention fences, upkeep of homes, cleanliness of streets, new businesses).*
- c. What social changes, if any, have you observed in the neighborhood? *(If they need prompting mention more cohesion/unity, less cohesion/unity, conflict, crime, more block parties, different types of stores, interaction among neighbors)*
 - i. How well do you know the people on your block?
 - ii. Describe the kind and frequency of your interaction with those on your block.
 - iii. How many of the people on your block would you say you know very well?
- d. What are the major problems/challenges the neighborhood faces?
 - i. are these challenges different than those of ___years ago?
 - ii. what challenges do you think the neighborhood will face 10/20 years from now?

8. Now I want to ask you a few questions about any problems or conflicts you may have experienced or witnessed in the neighborhood.

- a. Have you had any competition, conflict, or problems with other neighbors?
 - i. Can you please describe it?
 - ii. Has the matter been resolved, and if so, how?
- b. Have you had any problems with city agencies *(ex. Licensing, fines, taxes, building codes/permits, etc.)*.
 - i. If so, describe.
- c. Have **you** ever had any problems or conflicts with local businesses or business owners here?
 - i. Please describe the nature of those conflicts.

- d. Have you observed any conflicts or problems between different kinds of people in this area?
 - i. If so, could you please describe them?
 - e. Do people here in _____ get along pretty well or is there a lot of disagreement or hostility?
9. These are uncertain economic times, and the housing market seems particularly unstable. I am going to name some housing conditions, please give me your thoughts on the extent to which these are occurring here.
- a. Vacancies?
 - b. Foreclosures?
 - c. Housing Price Fluctuations?
 - d. Mortgage fraud?
 - e. Renovating and fixing up their homes?
 - f. In your opinion, what impact, if any, will the economic uncertainty now present in the housing market have on this community?
 - i. What impact will it have on **you** personally?
10. I'd like to ask some questions about your shopping habits.
- i. Where do you shop for groceries? Ask "why"?
 - ii. Shop for clothes? Ask "why"?
 - iii. Get your hair cut or done at a local Barber/Beauty Shop? Ask "why"
 - iv. Go out to eat (quick bite)?
 - v. Go out to eat (nice sit down meal)?
11. How would you describe this area – can you give me four or five words or phrases that describe _____ really well?
12. Does _____ hold any special significance – either historical or some personal importance for you? If yes, ask for comments.
13. If you could change just one or two things about _____, what would it be?

14. Is there much crime in this neighborhood – do you consider _____ to be a safe area?

15. As neighborhoods go, I consider _____ to be

- a. one of the worst areas in Atlanta.
- b. a below average area.
- c. an area that is pretty average.
- d. an above average area.
- e. one of the best areas in Atlanta

16. As far as I can tell, this neighborhood is

- 1. getting better or improving.
- 2. fairly stable or staying pretty much on the same level.
- 3. getting worse or declining.

17. The following items should be used with the following choices:

- a. strongly agree
- b. agree
- c. neutral or no opinion
- d. disagree
- e. strongly disagree

This neighborhood really feels like home to me.

I think most of my neighbors in _____ like having me here.

I frequently don't feel respected or welcome here in _____.

There is a lot of bickering and conflict among the people in this area.

_____ really means a lot to me, and I'd be sorry if I were to move away.

18. Now I want to switch gears now from the neighborhood and ask some personal questions about you and your family.

- a. What do you do for a living?
- b. Would you consider that blue collar employment? White collar? Self employed?

19. If you don't mind me asking, do you own or rent your home?

20. Did you complete high school? If so, how much education do you have past high school?

21. Are you a member of any congregation? If so, where?
22. Just a few more personal questions.
- i. What is your marital status?
 - ii Do you have school aged children?
If yes, where do/did they attend school?
 Why did you select that school for your children?
If no, ask if they have children in the future, where they will attend school, and why.
 - iii. Describe the kind of neighborhood you grew up in.
 - iv. Where did you reside before living here?
 - v. What kind of neighborhood do you feel most comfortable in and why?
 - vi. Do you participate in any community groups or organizations? Which? Why?
23. What other clubs, political, civic, or fraternal organizations do you belong to?
24. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, how attached are you to _____ [put name of neighborhood here].
25. Using the same scale as in the last question, with 10 being the highest level of satisfaction, how satisfied are you with the neighborhood?
- a. Even those who are very satisfied with an area may see ways to improve it. What can be done to strengthen this community?
 - b. Compared to your expectations or thoughts about the community when you first moved in, how (if at all) have your ideas or attitudes towards _____ changed?
26. Have you considered moving out of the neighborhood? Why or why not?
- a. How long do you intend to remain living in _____ and why?
 - b. When you first moved in, how long did you intend to stay?
 - c. What changed and why?
27. What racial/ethnic classification(s) do you use to describe yourself?
28. What year were you born?

29. I am going to hand you a piece of paper. The paper contains various income categories. Please mark the appropriate category for your total household income. (Categories: \$0-\$34,999; \$35,000-\$49,999; \$50,000-69,999; \$70,000-99,999; \$100,000-199,999; and \$200,000 and up)

30. Even if you think this community is very strong, what, if anything, can be done to strengthen the community?

31. Who else should I be talking to?

32. Can you refer me to anyone? If so, who? Is it all right if I tell them you referred me? Do you know how I can get in touch with this person?

That concludes my interview. I want to thank you very much for your time.

Mental Map

Draw your map here. Please be sure to include any items, features, places, buildings, etc.

Reassure respondents that accuracy is not important. This is just to get a general understanding of the area they define as their neighborhood and its parameters.

After map is drawn, ask respondents to:

1. Put a triangle by any areas you consider unsafe and explain why.
2. Put a star by any areas you are fond of and explain why.
3. Put a square by any landmarks on your map.

**Appendix C: Interview Questions for
Community Stakeholders (Non-Business Owners)**

Read Informed Consent. If respondent consents to interview, proceed.

I want to ask you a few questions to get an idea about this area, your impressions about the area, your organization, issues facing the area, as well as the future of this community.

1. People have various names for this community. Please tell me: what do you call the area?
2. Define or describe _____ for me.
 - a. Can you give me 3 or 4 adjectives that adequately describe it to you?
3. We all have, in varying degrees of clarity, a “picture in our minds” of _____ [fill in blank with name person gives to area]---places, roads, areas, buildings, and other things in the community that are significant to us. Your mental map of the area probably contains some elements or features that many others have in their minds, but it also has things that reflect your own unique perspectives, interests, and activities.

I am going to give you a piece of paper, and I wonder if you can sketch out your mental map. I want to know what you consider to be the borders of _____. Make your map as detailed as you can, putting in everything of importance or interest to outsiders. Don’t worry about what it looks like. Accuracy is not important either. I just want to get an idea of the places that are significant to you

4. What do you value most about the? *(If a prompt is necessary, use the following: housing, commercial/retail, culture, people, services, etc.).*
5. How long has your organization been servicing this area?
 - a. What do you do at _____ [fill in blank with name of organization].
 - b. How long have you been in that function?
 - c. Do you have any previous experience with your organization?
 - i. If so, describe it and tell me how long you worked in that capacity.
6. In your opinion, has _____ changed over the course of your _____ years with (list agency)?
 - a. If so, how has the neighborhood changed?
 - b. Do you think the change you have identified is something that is recognized by those living outside _____?

- i. If it is not, can you venture a guess as to why not?
 - ii. In your opinion, how do you think outsiders (i.e., those who do not live, work, and/or do business in the area) view _____?
 - iii. How did outsiders view the community ___ years ago [place in context of how long the individual has been at the organization. If it has been a number of years, step back in stages].
 - iv. How do you think they will view the community ten years from now?
7. Is there a unified vision/neighborhood identity? If so, what is it?
8. Now I want to get an idea of the extent of your organization's presence in the community, but first, I would like to know your organization's mission. Can you share it with me?
9. Can you tell me a little bit about the kinds of things your organization does for or in the neighborhood.
10. Is there a certain subpopulation of the community that you work with more than others?
- a. Who is that?
 - b. Why?
 - c. Does your organization have any desire to expand that base?
 - i. If so, how and to whom?
11. Are there new groups of people in the neighborhood that you did not see before?
- a. If so, who?
 - b. How do you explain their presence?
 - c. Describe if you would, what impact, if any, has the presence of these newcomers had on social cohesion levels in the neighborhood?
 - d. In your opinion, does there seem to be more, less, or the same amount of conflict in the neighborhood since the arrival of these groups?
 - i. Describe the nature of those conflicts.
12. Who do you market this community to? How? Why? {If not a real estate agent ask, "In your opinion, who would this community appeal to?"}

13. In your opinion, what impact, if any, will the economic uncertainty now present in the housing market have on this community?
14. What can be done to strengthen this community?
15. Now I want to ask some questions to get a sense of your feelings [insert name by which person calls community] _____. Can you give me four or five words or phrases that accurately describe _____ really well to you?
16. Does _____ hold any special significance – either historical or some personal importance for you? If yes, ask for comments.
17. If you could change just one or two things about _____, what would it be?
18. Where do you live? [*If respondent says any area outside study, preface next question with bolded language. If respondent does reside in the study neighborhood under discussion, omit bolded language from prompt*]. **Whether or not you live in _____**, I'd like to know how you feel about the following statements. The following choices should be used with these items:
 - a. strongly agree
 - b. agree
 - c. neutral or no opinion
 - d. disagree
 - e. strongly disagree

I think most people in _____ like having my organization here.

I frequently don't feel respected or welcome here in _____.

There is a lot of bickering and conflict among the people in this area.

I would purchase a home in this neighborhood.

_____ really means a lot to me, and I'd be sorry if I my organization were to move away.

19. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, how attached are you to servicing _____ [put name of neighborhood here] and/or its residents?.

20. Using the same scale as in the last question, with 10 being the highest level of satisfaction, how satisfied are you with the neighborhood as a service base?

21. Using the following scale [read scale], I would like your honest opinion about _____ as a neighborhood. As neighborhoods go, I consider _____ to be

- a. one of the worst areas in Atlanta.
- b. a below average area.
- c. an area that is pretty average.
- d. an above average area.
- e. one of the best areas in Atlanta

22. How would you describe _____. As far as I can tell, this neighborhood is

- 1. getting better or improving.
- 2. fairly stable or staying pretty much on the same level.
- 3. getting worse or declining.

Now I have a few personal questions for you.

23. Did you complete high school? If so, how much education do you do you have past high school?

24. If you don't mind me asking, do you own or rent your home?

25. What is your marital status?

i. Do you have school aged children?

If yes, where do/did they attend school?

Why did you select that school for your children.

If no, ask if they have children, where they will attend school, and why.

26. What racial/ethnic classification(s) do you use to describe yourself?

27. What year were you born?

28. I am going to hand you a piece of paper. The paper contains various income categories.

Please mark the appropriate category for your total household income. (Categories: \$0-\$34,999; \$35,000-\$49,999; \$50,000-69,999; \$70,000-99,999; \$100,000-199,999; and \$200,000 and up).

29. Are you a member of any congregation? If so, where?

30. *[If respondent does not live in the neighborhood as expressed in question 18, move to question 34].* Because you indicated you live in _____, I have just a few more personal questions to ask you. Is that alright?

i. Describe the kind of neighborhood you grew up in.

ii. Where did you reside before living here?

- . How did your friends and family react to your decision? Why?
 - How long do you plan to remain living here?
 - Was that the case when you first moved here?
- iii. What kind of neighborhood do you feel most comfortable in and why?
- iv. Do you participate in any community groups or organizations? Which? Why?
- v. Where do you the various types of shopping (grocery, clothes, services) your family requires and why?
- vi. What do you like about living in _____ and what do you dislike?
- vii. Is there much crime in this neighborhood – do you consider _____ to be a safe area?
- x. Are there many vacancies? Foreclosures? Renovations? Mortgage Fraud? How do you feel about this?
31. What clubs, political, civic, or fraternal organizations do you belong to?
32. What are the main reasons you chose to live in _____?
33. Even those who are very satisfied with an area may see ways to improve it. From a resident's perspective, please tell me what can be done to strengthen this community?
34. "That's all the specific questions I have, is there anything you would like to add?"
35. Is there anyone else that you think I should interview? If so, who? Is it all right if I tell them you referred me? Do you know how I can get in touch with this person?

That concludes my interview. I want to thank you very much for your time.

Mental Map

Draw your map here. Please be sure to include any items, features, places, buildings, etc. that are meaningful or significant to you in the area provided. Accuracy is not important.

Reassure respondents that accuracy is not important. This is just to get a general understanding of the area they define as their neighborhood and its parameters.

After map is drawn, ask respondents to:

1. Put a triangle by any areas you consider unsafe and explain why.
2. Put a star by any areas you are fond of and explain why.
3. Put a square by any landmarks on your map.

Appendix D: Informed Consent Document

Georgia State University
Department of Sociology
Informed Consent

Title: The Ties That Bind: The Role of Place in Social Cohesion, Racial Identity Formation, Accord, and Discord in Two Historic, Black-Gentrifying Atlanta Neighborhoods

Principal Investigator: Dr. Charles Jaret

Student Investigator: Barbara Harris Combs

Sponsor: Department of Housing and Urban Development

I. Purpose:

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to understand how the residents, business owners, and stakeholders in gentrifying black neighborhoods feel about the neighborhood and those who occupy social space with them. You are invited to participate because you live, work, and/or do business in the study neighborhoods. A total of 50 participants will be recruited for this study. Participation will involve one personal interview taking one to two hours of your time.

II. Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed in person about your perceptions of the study neighborhood (past, present, and future), interactions and involvement in the community, and viability of the neighborhood. Some demographic information about you will also be collected. The preference is to interview you in your home, place of business, or work; however, you and the student investigator will agree upon the time and place of the interview. The interview will be audio recorded. Your participation should take between one and two hours of your time. You will be compensated \$25.00 for your participation.

III. Risks:

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life. You are free to pause or stop the interview at any time.

IV. Benefits:

Participation in this study may not benefit you personally. Overall, we hope to gain information which will ultimately result in policy recommendations about strengthening i) the sustainability of transitioning black neighborhoods; and ii) the ties among those who live, work, and service such neighborhoods.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data

collection is completed, your interview information, including the audio tape, will be destroyed.

VI. Confidentiality:

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. After the recordings are transcribed, the recordings will be erased, although written and electronic transcripts will be kept for up to ten years. We will use a pseudonym for all names during the study. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally. Data will be stored in a computer and the student investigator will use protected passwords to reach the data. Printed data, including mental maps of the study areas, will be stored in a cabinet or drawer that can only be opened with a key. Only Barbara Harris Combs will have direct access to the data. There will be occasions when Barbara Harris Combs and her advisor, Dr. Charles Jaret, will review the interview transcripts and mental maps together.

VII. Contact Persons:

If you have questions about the study, or believe you have suffered any injury, you may contact Dr. Charles Jaret at 404-413-6514 or Barbara Harris Combs at 770-942-0646. Your personal physician can make arrangements for appropriate management and treatment for any physical or psychological injury resulting from this study. Georgia State University, however, has not set aside funds to pay for this care if something should occur. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or svogtner1@gsu.edu.

VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Subject:

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be audio recorded, please sign below.

Participant

Date

Student Investigator

Date

Appendix E: Photos of Old Fourth Ward



Figure 2. Shotgun Row House in Martin Luther King Historic District of Old Fourth Ward



Figure 3. Row of Houses on Auburn Avenue



Start Tour
View from
301 Auburn Avenue

Figure 4. King Birth Home

Appendix F: Photos of West End



Figure 5. West End Home



Figure 6. Hammond's House Museum in West End



Figure 7. West End House located on Peeples Street