

University of Nevada, Reno

**Mapping the Experience of Home:
Using Geospatial Perception Mapping to Understand Neighborhood Sense of Place
in the Wells Avenue Neighborhood Conservation District, Reno, Nevada**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science in Geography

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August 2015



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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Entitled

**Mapping The Experience Of Home:
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be accepted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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Abstract

Home...that space so personal, so distinct, so intrinsic to the human/place relationship that “lies right at the heart of human geography” (Cresswell, 2004, p. 93). Studying the connection people feel toward certain places through concepts of emotion, experience, and attachment to meaning stems outward from the phenomenological and humanist branches of geography (Holt-Jensen, 2009). With every person’s version of home a space unto itself, is it possible for a place so intimate to be studied and defined? My answer is *yes*. This phenomenological case study investigates the perceptions and emotions of a newly designated conservation neighborhood, the second of its kind in Reno, Nevada. In an area usually looked at as a site for economic development and perhaps initiatives in historic preservation, there is little research undertaken through a cultural geographic lens aiming to understand how different communities in the area view their own home ground in transition and the implications of place creation. This project navigates the allegory of home through the voices and drawn maps of the Wells Avenue Neighborhood Conservation District (WANCD) and is approached through the impressions and attitudes of community groups, merchants, and a patchwork of residents diverse in both their backgrounds and their stories about the place they live. Through the construction of sense of place inside and around the WANCD and with the usage of Geographic Information Systems as a tool for qualitative data collection and communication, this study investigates how personal experiences and perceptions, community connections and common goals, and specifically-identified areas of personal

meaning play into the way in which these different stakeholders experience, participate in, and envision their neighborhood.

Acknowledgements

There are many people I would like to thank for helping me make it through this long road they call graduate school, starting with my committee members.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank my advisor Dr. Paul F. Starrs for the many hours of listening to my crazy ideas and bouncing back new ones, for the only person in my life I have ever met who can so rapidly recall esoteric details about *almost anything anyone could ever talk about*, and for providing me guidance and feedback in figuring out this entire process in a way that allowed me to truly learn how to navigate such an intense task. I will honestly never forget you Paul. To Dr. Victoria Randlett, I am so grateful to have met such an inspirational geographer and person, who blends together extreme intellect and a love and passion for teaching and connecting to her students. To Dr. Diane Barone I am grateful to have met someone who has achieved so much and yet is so humble, constantly supporting her students with real positive push forward. And to Mella Rothwell-Harmon, MS, who is one of the most incredible researchers I have met and who I hope continues her career in historical fiction crime novel writing, thank you for being part of this process.

I would also like to thank my mother, brother, father, step-mother, and friends for countless hours of support in the forms of book money, beer money, and listening to me incessantly talk about how I'd never make it through grad school, providing me with a constant "You got this!" at the end of most conversations.

And finally, thank you to all of the participants, organizations, and those who helped me create this project in all its parts.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The shade from the trees planted 45 years ago. A name printed on wood next to the year 1911 found in the attic. The little red cross at the street corner surrounded by plastic flowers and candles. The fireplace made with river stones from the park 100 years ago. A house's inner walls lined with pictures of the stories lived there. A small café. A playground. A place where chickens used to roam. A tattered warehouse with graffiti covering its prestigious past. Replaced glass from the bullet hole. Peeling paint never to be painted over. The old pet store. The new Quinceañera dress shop. The old V & T Railroad once the backbone of transport for the Comstock Lode now commemorated in three square feet of ties on a hidden downtown stretch of grass. The smell of Salvadoran pupusas. The smell of roses. The known names of people who slept in the same room 80 years ago. A long porch. A secret bootleg-era liquor hideaway. A beloved bookstore. A forgotten quarry. And all the stories embedded in years of changing walls and streets and footsteps.

What does home feel like, look like, smell like, and in whose mind? This study proposes to explore the senses of home, creating a story atlas of sorts from myriad storytellers in the space. These are the *stories* of home, and they show how people and places co-create.

Studying the connections felt toward certain places through emotion, experience, and attachment to meaning stems from the phenomenological and humanist branches of geography, associated with such geographers as Vidal de la Blanche, Robert David Sack, Yi-Fu Tuan, David Ley, and Anne Buttner (Holt-Jensen, 2009; Kitchin & Tate, 2000). Within this frame of thought, particular attention to *ideas of place* can be investigated to understand why and how

people experience *sense of place* (Cresswell, 2004). Timothy Cresswell relates the particular importance of studying sense of place in geographical research, writing:

By looking at research on the creation of place in a mobile world, places of memory and places to live, it becomes clear that place itself has a unique and pervasive power. There is no doubt that these acts of place-creation are political and contested, and researching this 'politics of place' is an important strand of geographical enquiry. (Cresswell, 2004, pp. 90-91)

Geography seeks in part to understand places embedded with the conceptions and imaginings of a world interpreted through the experiencer (Cresswell, 2004). Peter Davidson investigates a fascination with these concepts in his directionally-oriented work *The Idea of North* (2005). As he weaves the reader through the stories of a variety of end-of-the-rainbow (or in this case North Pole) scenarios, we are emotionally and conceptually spatially situated through an Emily Dickenson poem, a Michelangelo sculpture, a rendition of ancient traveler axioms, and myths about the Northern Lights (Davidson, 2005). Amid a flood of ideas he asserts:

Everyone carries their own idea of north within them... (This) is not a book about northern places so much as about places that have been perceived to embody an idea or essence of north, or *northness*. It is only in part a sequence of northern topographies-tracings of an idea about place that is shifting and recessive. As you advance towards it, the true north recedes away northwards. (Davidson, 2005, p. 19)

Like Davidson's work, it is a *notion of place* that this project investigates, beginning with an assumption that ideas of place, and more specifically home, are in the eyes of the *homed* and can reveal themselves through experiences lived and stories told. This idea of stories *in* space (and *on* space) has had clout in the discipline and philosophy of geography since Erastosthenes, Chief Librarian at the Library of Alexandria (275-194 BC), uttered the word *geography* (Bonnett, 2008). As a figurehead in the discipline, Erastosthenes embodied the importance of the story (using the tales of sailors to understand the world) and the importance of cartographic representation (being credited as one of the first to create a world map) (Bonnett, 2008; Roller,

2010). This project investigates where these storied experiences become spatial, revealing emotions, values, perceptions, and actions vital to place creation.

In geographical research, maps have the ability to describe spaces: material and imagined; far-away or every day; and constantly told in terms of process and experience (Wood & Fels, 1992). Wood and Fels explain the differences between what they term as the “uses” and the “livings” of maps, of which they claim, “The maps we make in our minds embody experience exactly as paper maps do, accumulated as we have made our way through the world in the activity of the living” (1992, p. 14). This study explores these “livings” of space that Wood and Fels (1992) use to better understand the everyday experiences of place. As a student investigating cultural geography, I am interested in the lived ties that bind people to space. As Cresswell states, “Home” is “an elementary and ideal (for some) form of place” that “lies right at the heart of human geography” (2004, p. 93).

My purpose in this study is to explore how perceptions, emotions, values, and places of meaning connect people to a sense of place and how that plays out in the development of the place itself. In addition to engaging in academic discourse around the exploration of feelings on intimate spaces such as home, this study investigates insider perceptions about a transitioning neighborhood told, in part, through mapped experiences. This kind of phenomenological case study explores the general ways in which people and place co-construct identity and how that contributes to the association, creation, and envisioning of communities.

This project specifically gives a more in-depth look into the development of the newly-formed Wells Avenue Neighborhood Conservation District (WANCD) in Reno, Nevada investigating how transformations in place identity are perceived from an insider point-of-view. Through a methodology of sketch mapping and qualitative interviewing, maps are used to

navigate stories of personal and collective place-associated importance, focusing on the spaces where people and place merge and diverge inside the WANCD. In an area looked at as a place best relegated to economic development and piecemeal historic preservation, little is documented through a cultural geographic lens to understand how the different kinds of people in the area view their own home as it changes before their eyes. As concepts of place and the reasons behind involvement and change become more important in understanding a shifting cultural geography, this study attempts to place itself within a greater context of work understanding place identity, sense of place, and the formation of community change from the inside out.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The curious but wholly human territory where feeling, seeing, and the experience of place intertwine is what this work seeks to better understand. This literature review navigates elements of geographical study from writings of early humanists to modern-day alternative cartographers and constitutes four parts: phenomenological geography conjoined with ideas about sense of place and place attachment; power dynamics in representation specifically around storytelling and mapping; new cartographic thought and applications in combination with qualitative methods; and finally, a scrutiny of works that specifically incorporates digital mapping and neighborhood studies. With its promise to cover a gamut of earlier and still-evolving work, this review pulls from some foundational writings but also from the innovative in attempt to add to the ever-expanding world of geography that focuses on the interaction between people and place.

I. Phenomenological Geography, Sense of Place, and Place Attachment

The experience of place, told through stories, has crossed the spectrum of geography's long-standing tradition of attempting to find and communicate order and meaning of people and places (Bonnett, 2008). Early explorers told of their experiences abroad through traveler tales (Holt-Jensen, 2009). Marco Polo (1254–1322) related the world through the stories of his journeys to China, and Ibn Batuta (1304–1368) told of far-away lands spreading from Beijing to Africa (Holt-Jensen, 2009). Adding to the knowledge of our world through stories, maps have provided a visual element in understanding the spatiality of humans (Roller, 2010). From the 6th century, Hekataios of Miletos' *Circuit of the Earth* illustrated meridians through maps, and Anaximandros of Miletos portrayed an earth with a column-like shape (Roller, 2010). This

display of stories and maps has allowed for an understanding of where these two foundational components of the study of the earth intersect, providing modern-day geographers dynamic ways to explore the world using traditional tools as a rudder for navigation.

Perception, specifically, has played a role in human-habitat interaction. In the 1940s, John Kirtland Wright pioneered concepts of human perception linked to geographical understanding, writing about how the *feel of a place* was as important as its material composition (1947). Wright called to fellow geographers to embrace, rather than disregard, their perceptions of the world, allowing their own *siren call* of the imagination to lead them, and their *aesthetic subjectivity*, with creativity as its guide, to direct world discoveries (Wright, 1947). But with a shift toward empirical and positivist science during the mid-1900s, it wouldn't be until much later that contemporary geography would re-embrace Wright's early flirtation with human experience and perception as a valid source of scientific information (Holt-Jensen, 2009). Still, perception along with other human attributed factors, such as values and emotions, were relied on as instruments of evaluation in sense of place and place attachment studies (Tuan, 1974/1996; Low & Altman, 1992; Riley, 2002).

The History of Phenomenological Geography

The development of *humanistic* geography in the 1970s and '80s allowed for human perceptions and emotions to hold a valid space in academic dialogue (Holt-Jensen, 2009). This branch of the discipline evolved in direct response to the *new quantitative geography* which incorporated positivist modes of thinking through the empirical questioning and mathematical-based analysis that had become popular during the Cold War and space race (Gould, 1999; Holt-Jensen, 2009; Martin, 2005). Despite the success of positivist geography as a supposedly provable hypothesis-based science, human geographers soon began to question the credibility of a field incorporating

humans as a strictly scientific and countable element (Holt-Jensen, 2009). As Holt-Jensen has countered to this boiling down of certain human elements into hard scientific output, “Intentional expressions such as ‘to imagine something,’ ‘to believe something,’ ‘to love somebody’ cannot be translated into the *thing* language of the natural sciences” (2009, p. 131).

Humanistic geography incorporated concepts of humanism and phenomenology, the practice of relying on human experience as a way to gather data and to understand humans interacting with the world around them (Holt-Jensen, 2009). This renewed interest in human perceptions, emotions, and researcher subjectivity made its way into the works of benchmark geographers such as Anne Buttimer, Yi-Fu Tuan, Nicholas Entrikin, and John Pickles, who propelled further geographic inquiry into sense of place and the human experience as a valid source of interpretations about the world (Holt-Jensen, 2009). The intersection of phenomenology and geography, or more plainly put, the feelings and experiences one has in a specific place, led some geographers to a philosophical investigation of meaning in place (Basso, 1996; Casey, 1996).

What *is* Place?

As the philosopher-philologist Edward Casey writes, in exploring concepts of place, “perception” is key as the perceiver creates “an entire teeming place-world” (1996, p. 17, 19). Casey expounds, “more even than earthlings, we are placelings” (1996, p. 19). Place attachment scholars Low and Altman write, “Place, in our general lexicon refers to space that has been given meaning through personal, group, or cultural processes...(known in terms of) scale or size and scope, tangible versus symbolic, and known and experienced versus unknown or not experienced” (1992, p. 5).

The anthropologist Keith Basso's work also incorporates a philosophical search for place meaning beyond Western thought. In his investigation of Apache people's connections to landscape, Basso concludes that "*sense of place*" is experienced in both the "heart and mind" (Basso, 1996, p. 54). Basso scribes an elder's poetic expression of his homeland, inspiring the title of his 1996 work *Wisdom Sits in Places*:

Wisdom sits in places. It's like water that never dries up. You need to drink water to stay alive, don't you? Well you also need to drink from places. You must remember everything about them. You must learn their names. You must remember what happened at them long ago. You must think about it and keep on thinking about it. (A passage told by Apache elder Dudley Patterson, p. 70).

Sense of Place

Sense of place studies crucially bridged understandings of human-environment relationships, especially in the work of early phenomenologists (Low & Altman, 1992). Yi-Fu Tuan, credited as one of the "founders of humanistic geography," was a paramount explorer of phenomenology and existentialism in the landscape, delving into ideas of *sense* and *feeling* of place (Peet, 1998, p. 48; Tuan, 1974/1990, 1974/1996).

On the first page of his introduction to *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*, Tuan relates the fundamental importance of connecting an individual's intimate and extraneous relationships to places writing, "Perception, attitude, and value-prepare us, first of all, to understand ourselves. Without self-understanding we cannot hope for enduring solutions to environmental problems, which are fundamentally human problems" (1974/1990, p. 1). Tuan further links these intangibilities directly to landscapes in defining what he calls *topophilia*, bonding people to place through their own intimate spatially-connected experiences (1974/1990).

Tuan more deeply immerses himself into what he calls *spirit of place* where he claims that human-attributed meanings, such as collective and awe-inspiring *public symbols* and tender and personalized *fields of care*, are what comprise the character of place (Tuan, 1974/1996). He highlights that place attachment forms through routine interaction with space, awareness of personal place boundaries, and an understanding of the threats and support systems used in creating emotional bonds with different intersecting “worlds” (Tuan, 1974/1996, p. 453).

Tuan argues that place *detachment* surfaces when people disconnect with local spirits (specifically with the disappearance of religious and cultural celebrations and ritual), lack physical and emotional neighbor networks, and no longer take the time for slow and purposeful interaction with the materiality of place through walking and “loitering,” in part due to a world enhanced with the need for quick movement (1974/1996, p. 453). It is in the loitering and the attention given to the intimate experiences that Tuan believes that people create meaning in place writing, “The feel of the pavement, the smell of the evening air, and the color of autumn foliage become, through long acquaintance, extensions of ourselves-not just a stage but supporting actors in the human drama” (1974/1996, p. 452).

Others have explored sense of place through the cultural symbols created in connection with certain landscapes. Basso writes of the importance on the “ideas, beliefs, stories, songs,” or what he calls the “conceptual and expressive instruments of place” (1996, p. 54). His research with Apache people shows the importance of story in understanding the nuances of spaces, interweaving different contextual backgrounds to relate meaning and legitimacy told through myths, recent history, and personal accounts from locals (Basso, 1996).

Researching the way meaning stems from the particularities of place can help social scientists understand human identity and action, both at the individual and cultural levels (Basso,

1996; Kahn, 1996). Basso writes of the impact and utmost importance of place meaning and place-centered stories in identity creation and maintenance for the Apache people, who constantly tie current day situations to the voices of their ancestors retold in the same geographic space (1996). Miriam Kahn's two-year anthropological study with the Wamirans of Papua New Guinea suggests that mythology, history, and social practice are inseparable from the topography and climate of landscape (1997). She writes:

Places capture the complex emotional, behavioral, and moral relationships between people and their territory. They represent people, their actions, and their interactions and as such become malleable memorials for negotiating and renegotiating human relationships. Places and their stories also become metaphors that are heavily relied upon during social discourse about relationships. (Kahn, 1996, p.168)

Exploring meaning in place allows researchers to better understand people-place patterns, albeit, with caution toward generalizations. The caution is that places, along with history and time, are constantly constructed and reconstructed through processes that shift in meaning (Harvey, 1996). This study, in part, aims to investigate such ever-changing processes inside of place identity and creation.

Sense of Place and the *Placed Individual*

In addition to understanding the uniqueness of a specific place and the application of general qualities that can help researchers relate to other phenomena in similar areas, exploration of place meaning can allow for an understanding of the intimate nature of the *placed* individual (Casey, 1996). Casey writes:

Minimally places gather things in their midst — where “things” connote various animate and inanimate entities. Places also gather experiences and histories, even languages and thoughts. Think only of what it means to go back to a place you know, finding it full of memories and expectations, old things and new things, the

familiar and the strange, and much more besides... (this) power belongs to place itself, and it is a power of gathering. (1996, p. 24-25)

To comprehend place, understanding the instrument through which it is perceived and experienced — the human body — is essential (Casey, 1996; Foucault, 1980). This idea that places and individuals are intrinsically connected (and thus, reveal intricacies of each other), relates to what Casey calls “a phenomenological *topoanalysis*” where “lived bodies belong to places and help to constitute them” and “places belong to lived bodies and depend on them” (1996, p. 24-25).

Kahn (1996), Casey (1996), and Basso (1996) all probe into human interactions with place, seeking how identities are created and altered in both the person and the landscape. Kahn pulls from her own experience of her presence forever affecting the place she studied in Papua New Guinea writing, “A meaningful landscape resulted where my actions had taken place and my memory lingered. I had become Wamirian by literally becoming part of Wamra” (1996, p.188). Casey sums this up this complex idea of constant interrelation of people and places writing, “Despite the inherent wildness of all places (including urban places), there are no first-order places, no First Places that altogether withstand cultural pervasion and specification” (1996, p.35). Basso echoes this idea of the necessity of co-construction of place and people identity, summarizing, “Sense of place is a universal experiential genre, and therefore, as more and more works gets done, it may be found to exhibit transcultural qualities...being from somewhere is always preferable to being from nowhere” (1996, p. 87).

Place Attachment

Place attachment studies allow phenomenologist scholars another avenue to investigate ways that people form bonds with place, often focusing on intimate spaces, such as homes or sacred

areas laced with personal experience (Low & Altman, 1992). Concepts around place attachment are further explored by geographers, anthropologists, architects, folklorists, marketers, psychologists, sociologists, environment behaviorists, and planners, to name a few, and in addition to academic research, can apply to environment design and practical problem solving (Low & Altman, 1992).

Diving deeper into what *bonding to place* encompasses, Low and Altman lay out three main foundational concepts often found in place attachment studies: 1. Place attachment is “interrelated and inseparable;” 2. Its origins are “varied and complex;” and 3. It “contributes to individual, group, and cultural self-definition and integrity” (1992, p. 4). More specifically they claim that “affect, emotions, and feeling are central to the concept” of place attachment (Low & Altman, 1992, p. 4). Pulling from renowned place-identity scholar, Harold Proshansky, Low and Altman add that “knowledge and beliefs, behaviors and actions in reference to a place” are at the core of place attachment studies (1992, p. 5).

In a further sifting of how people form attachments to places, Low and Altman (1992) provide four main themes: 1. The biological “fit” of the person/environment; 2. Environment interaction and dependence; 3. Psychological experience and meaning; and 4. Cultural understanding (p. 8). They explore these themes through five subthemes: 1. “*Attachments* (affect, cognitions, and practice); 2. Places that vary in *scale, specificity, and tangibility*; 3. Different *actors* (individuals, groups, and cultures); 4. Different *social relationships* (individuals, groups, cultures); and 5. *Temporal aspects* (linear, cyclical)” (Low & Altman, 1992, p. 8). These differing ways to investigate sense of place studies allow geographers many avenues to better understand how these identities are constructed and maintained.

Attachments (affect, cognitions, and practice)

Place attachment can be studied through the individual or the collective, shared meaning in common spaces of families or neighbors (Low & Altman, 1992), or the *ordinary* and the *extraordinary* (Riley, 1992). Riley (1992) echoes Tuan's (1974/1990) ideas of human-landscape emotional connections, specifically relating the juxtaposition of individual/collective place attachment in how most humans have a tendency to identify with certain place and develop personal feelings with the landscape. This aspect of sense of place studies seeks to better understand people-place character and identity by exploring how people feel attached to place and what they do on a normal day or celebrated occasion to continue that emotional connection intimately and collectively.

Places that vary in scale, specificity, and tangibility

Scaled spaces can also define bordered identities (Low & Altman, 1992). Riley views the ordinary landscape as a *cultural artifact* within itself, providing measurement of scaled human actions (1992, p. 14-16). Low and Altman (1992) agree that spatially-scaled experience provides common threads of understanding the processes of what is happening within a confined geographic location as well as a space-based object to be studied as holding identity within itself. Riley pulls from Stigloe's 1982 idea that *common* landscapes provide insight where human relationships cross and co-create writing, "An *ordinary* or *common* landscape can produce affective impact as an explicit focus for common feeling...the common landscape is a source of shared meaning and emotion, whether liked or disliked, whether tasteful or ugly, because it is shared experience" (Riley, 1992, p. 27). It is through these definitions of scaled areas that, in part, we can reference specific locales and the character they represent.

Different actors and social relationships (individuals, groups, cultures)

Connections to others in space allow a look into place creation. In addressing attachments, Low and Altman highlight how social bonds between people *in* a space might hold more importance than a bond *to* a place (1992). Riley echoes this idea, writing, “The attachment comes from people and experience, the landscape is the setting” (1992, p. 19).

Swedish sociologist Per Gustafson investigates ascribed meaning through psychological and sociological attributes of the people who are forming place attachments and the relationships they create (2001). He relates perceptual connections that people use to understand their surroundings directed through concepts of the *self*, (*life path*, emotions, activities, and identity) the *other*, (perceived differences), and the *environment* (natural or built, with unique characteristics, history politics, and location), often crossing between all three (Gustafson, 2001). Drawing on Breakwell’s themes of resident place attachment, Gustafson categorizes an understanding of meaning in place through the four concepts of “distinction,” “valuation,” “continuity,” and “change” (2001, p. 13, quoting from Breakwell, 1986). Riley also relates how personalities of people affect the kinds of places where they feel attached (1992). Exploring the ways in which people connect to their own inner values and perceptions, those of their neighbors, and those that they prescribe as traits of their environment, allow researchers deeper understanding in how and why co-creation of place and people identity happen.

Temporal aspects (linear, cyclical)

Concepts of time also relate place identity. Riley (1992) claims that a place’s age, attributed meaning, and any conceptualized sense of time are all-important actors in place attachment to the ordinary landscape. He focuses on the idea of *remembering* as critical in understanding the power of place asking, “Is memory transformed to but a memory, or is it the essential emotional relationship with the landscape?” (Riley, 1992, p. 20-21).

Riley (1992) specifically points to place attachments formed during childhood playing a major role in adult attachment to place. Marcus (1992) adds to this, claiming that places holding emotional ties from childhood form the start of place-based identity, creating psychological, cognitive, and emotional attachment patterns in adults. Marcus states that these early constructed sense of place identities play out in later years as people continue to seek those self-expressions of home (1992). This exploration of self-identity experienced through place can play significant roles in how children develop sense of self and how adults sub-consciously reenact these affective ties to spaces throughout their lives (Marcus, 1992).

In addition to lived concepts of time, Riley (1992) adds in the idea of temporally experienced *fantasy* where he says that the imagination of the perceiver in the place interacts strongly with the power of attachment. Riley writes, “When we ask what patterns of trees, meadow, mountain, and water make a Western national forest overlook popular, we might also ask how many visiting males are fantasizing themselves as John Wayne or Gary Cooper” (1992, p. 22). This idea of the imagination of the perceiver creating specific place attachments harkens back to Wright’s concepts that states of mind and moods are important factors in landscape interpretation and experience (1947).

Symbols and Stories in Place Attachment

Symbolism in the landscape can become a major actor in connecting the materiality of place to place attachment (Low, 1992). Low states that place attachment itself is a symbolic act of people attributing shared meaning to a particular place, where the place itself then becomes a symbol (Low, 1992). These places may be created through already understood values (social, political, historical, cultural, etc.) or can create a shared cultural experience (Low, 1992). Low states that these cultural attachments are often formed through genealogy, land or community loss,

ownership and economic politics, *cosmology*, religion, spirituality, myth, pilgrimage, celebrations, and narrative (1992, p.166). She claims that these factors continually create place attachment in a fluid way, acknowledging they are all ever-changing processes themselves (Low, 1992).

For the purpose of this project, the aspects of *cosmology* and *narrative* are important processes in investigating attachment to place. *Cosmology*, as Low defines it in modern terms, can be broken down into people's "correspondence between their myths and symbols, their social organization, and the architectonic order" (1992, p. 171). She refers to Basso's 1996 work with the Apaches in claiming that *narrative* holds a role of telling stories or giving names to a place where "the linguistic act of narrating is the process by which attachment occurs" including historical, political, or personal accounts (1992, p. 167). Low says researchers must approach understanding landscape attachment from the standpoint of *time* and the *internal narrative* where the place itself is created and maintained through people's stories about it (1992).

With an understanding of sense of place and place attachment, geographers can explore the concept of *place* at the local, universal, individual, and cultural levels. The importance of such studies has heavily influenced human and humanistic geography since the 1970s, as social scientists sought to understand underlying meaning not provided by positivist reasoning of the world. Phenomenological frames are especially useful for this kind of investigation in geography as well as other social sciences where the study of human-environmental interaction has provided a gateway to understandings the nuances of what it is to *be human in place*. The next section will further explore how phenomenological and other qualitative methods can reach into these deeper areas of understanding these human-world relationships.

II. The Power of Representation: The Story and the Map

In the world of human geography, the idea that multiple perspectives can constitute a whole view reveal that the “multiplicities” are themselves “worlds concerned with doings, makings, happenings, and feelings” (DeLyser, Herbert, Aitken, Crang, & McDowell, 2010, p. 13). The ideas that human geographers should *honor* this array of local knowledge and differing perspectives aids creativity in the research process (de Mello, 2007, p. 215).

Geographers are in a unique position to “know worlds” without driving a hard line between the tangible and intangible (DeLyser et al., 2010, p. 13-14). DeLyser et al. suggest this as a “sense of becoming” viewed as the “material practice of translation not only between conceptual worlds, but as a practical, embodied, interactive, co-constitutive process” (2010, pp. 13-14). As human geography reflects and questions the processes creating *place*, a simultaneous questioning of the processes that create the *(re)presentations* of these places play just as important a role (DeLyser et al., 2010). As this project weaves through sense of place and place attachment understood through the telling of stories, values, experiences, and perceptions in interviews and maps, it is important to investigate the underlying powers and processes in the representations themselves.

Power, Process, and Their Theories

The ideas of process, power, and knowledge constantly intertwine in space (Foucault, 1980; Harvey, 1996). Foucault (1980) deconstructs the power structures embedded and embodied in communal spaces seen in the *Panoptican* layouts of schools, hospitals, prisons, industry, and the *body of the city*. Harvey (1996) focuses on the intermingling of social process and the discourse/production of power in space. DeLyser et al. echo these intersections of power in place, writing:

Places...are constituted by processes that transect multiple scales and are constituted out of the spatial and temporal relations between differently scaled and embedded processes...where one might find one culture occupying one bounded place (which) comes under pressure as material, political, social, economic, and cultural relations are stretched through space and time to work interactively. (2010, p. 10)

If these suggested powers encompass the processes geographers seek to understand, we must investigate where they are and how they are transferred from the makers of knowledge to the consumers of knowledge and back again.

Representation embodies the idea that humans constantly reconstruct their world (Dewsbury, 2000). Defined by the *Dictionary of Human Geography*, representation is “a set of practices by which meanings are constituted and communicated ... (they) not only reflect reality, but they help to constitute reality” (Dewsbury, 2000, p. 704). In a caution toward distinguishing representation from reality, especially in relationship to people and cultures different from ourselves, Dewsbury (2000) draws from Barnett’s 1997 work in claiming that representations have often been told through a masculinized and ethnocentric Western voice. He warns that these representations often actively work to *marginalize*, *exoticize*, and *silence* cultural difference (Dewsbury, 2000, p. 704). Dewsbury suggests that due to ever-present power relations inside the act of representation that the intentions in the production of knowledge should always be questioned (Dewsbury, 2000). As this project explores different forms of representations, both told from the multiple points of view of the participants and the investigator herself, it is important to shed light on the underlying power dynamics present. This is specifically investigated through two of this project’s (and geography’s) most fundamental aspects: the story and the map.

The Power of Story

The power of story reflects how humans process their inner and outer worlds, stemming from ancient times where narrative was a major vehicle for understanding human experience (Campbell & Moyers, 1988; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2006). In *The Power of Myth*, renowned journalist Bill Moyers asks the famous mythology scholar Joseph Campbell about why humans seek story:

Moyers: You changed the definition of myth from the *search* for meaning to the *experience* of meaning.

Campbell: *Experience of life*. The mind has to do with meaning...

Moyers: How do you get that experience?

Campbell: Read myths. They teach you that you can turn inward, and you begin to get the message of the symbols... Myth helps you to put your mind in touch with this experience of being alive. It tells you what the experience is. (1988, p 6-7)

In an effort to understand the power of story's ability to portray human experiences, the use of narrative allows a glimpse into the structures of power and process, as Clandinin and Rosiek (2006) relate:

Narrative inquires us to explore the stories people live and tell. These stories are the result of a confluence of social influences on a person's inner life, social influences on their environment, and their unique personal history. These stories are often treated as the epiphenomenal to social inquiry-reflections of important social realities but not the realities themselves. (p 41)

DeLyser et al. (2010) explore what stories have the potential to express, following upon Odin's 1997 work on *narrative trajectories* wherein constantly "shifting storylines" relate the ever-changing dynamics of human relationships and culture (p. 15, quoting Odin, 1997, p. 602).

In this sense, story provides a way to reveal the ever-changing processes of our world and our experiences.

Revisiting Dewsbury's (2000) idea of representation, we know that concepts feed products and products feed concepts. The field of geography has an especially influential stance as it *literally* represents the world around us. The idea of a process always being *in process* leads to the understanding of *where* dynamics of power exist in geographic representation (Harvey, 1996). A question then arises as to how geographers best reflect these ever-evolving processes while producing tangible results from their research (MacKian, 2010).

In an exploration of the myriad ways that information can be represented, MacKian (2010) explores unique ways that geographers not only conduct their research but also present it through non-traditional formats, specifically that of written, visual, and performative storytelling. Specifically drawing on the esoteric yet intriguing investigations of Wylie's 2006 work on Smoothlands, where research is predominantly told through the stories of images, MacKian writes:

I have no idea what the central message of the paper is, if there is one at all, but I am left with a sense of awe, a feeling of having been there, on the edge of the world, buffeted by wind and waves, and mesmerized by the rhythms of the all-surrounding sea. (2010, p. 365)

This is not to say researchers should create end products that leave audiences without concrete take-aways, but it does create a space to conceptualize the importance of the senses and their impact on emotions as valid forms of representation. This, in turn, allows researchers a chance to revisit authoritative academic claims of how the world *has been* interpreted and how the world *can be* interpreted (MacKian, 2010).

Stories are one way for us to walk this line between representation and reality while simultaneously playing with our own *places* of experience (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2006). As American writer Tom Spanbauer eloquently sums up, “The only thing that keeps us from floating off with the wind is our stories. They give us a name and put us in place, allowing us to keep on touching” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2006, p. 35, quoting Spanbauer, 1992, p. 190).

The Power of the Map

Maps add an additional layer to understanding qualitative aspects of personal experiences and stories of lived place (Wood & Fels, 1992). Like stories, maps harness power through representation (Cope, 2010; Harley, 1989; Monmonier, 1996; Wood, 2010; Wood & Fels, 1992). Maps represent this power through described cultural perspectives (Harley, 1989), through places and people, illuminated or silenced (Harley, 1989), through the interests they represent (Wood & Fels, 1992), through the counter-mapping of the oppressed and the general public (Wood, 2010), through the imagined and enforced identity of nation and state (Anderson, 2006), and through the imagined and encompassed identity of the self (Harmon, 2003).

Process again becomes an important point to consider, starting at the production of the map itself, wherein both the map-makers and the audience must be contextualized (Harley, 1989). Harley points to the buried powers around ethnicity, politics, religion, and class that lie within the process of map-making, stating:

In the map itself, social structures are often disguised beneath an abstract, instrumental space, or incarcerated in the coordinates of computer mapping...Deconstruction urges us to read between the lines of the map...and through its tropes to discover the silences and contradictions that challenge the apparent honesty of the image. We begin to learn that cartographic facts are only facts within a specific cultural perspective. (1989, p. 3)

The power of mapping shows through its history (Anderson, 2006; Wood, 2010). Wood (2010) suggests that maps were not part of the everyday (or even royal) language before 1500, used sparingly to show property domain and only gaining popularity as concepts of nationhood needed a way to literally mark territory. Anderson (2006) explores this idea of the map employed as a sort of invisible shield, fencing in (or out) the desired people and places of nation-building states. He relates how a combination of a “systematic quantification” of peoples through census data, designated preservation of specific heritages through museums, and the printable map changed the abilities of authoritarian entities (Anderson, 2006, p. 168).

Cope (2010) investigates the power dynamics of map-making sketched into the landscape via tracings on paper. She illustrates Roman maps vis-à-vis territorial domination, questioning not simply the authority of the mapmaker, but the process of mapping while simultaneously carving the map into the earth, writing:

[This] raises the question of the social production of knowledge, especially as it is intertwined with the social construction of places, and on this count, geography has a long (and thoroughly oppressive) history...the production of knowledge involves diverse material, social, and textual resources brought together in a specific context, by specifically located actors, and for various spoken and unspoken purposes. Contemporary qualitative research in geography has been strengthened by such understandings. (Cope, 2010, p. 33)

The Researcher’s Critical Response

If we know that the representations presented in stories and maps are inherently laced with power, then how can geographers circumvent these gatekeepers to get at what is *real* in the world? Aitken and Kwan warn that “as researchers, we use powerful technologies and representational tools to delve, to understand, to explain, and to sway. These actions are not devoid of emotion or artifact” (2010, p. 287). Feminist, non-representational, and geographies of

difference and resistance theories have challenged geography to bring these otherwise hidden agents of power into a clearer view for critique (Dewsbury, 2000). Although the opinions inside of these theories in geography are immense, some geographers continuously push the researcher to critically illuminate these productions of power in his or her own work (Rose, 1997). Feminist geographer Gillian Rose implores geographers to look not just at traditional, colonial, and masculine ways of knowledge production, but at the *situatedness* of the researcher in relationship to her project and participants (1997, p. 311).

Applying geographic theories allow for a more in-depth understanding of beneath-the-surface processes of representation. *Non-representational theory*, coined by Nigel Thrift in 1996, questions static representations and instead emphasizes movement, fluidity, and the *newness* of the everyday interpreted through temporal and spatial shifts in relationships, both human and non-human in nature (Thrift, 2008). Thrift summarizes this as “the geography of what happens” (2008, p. 2).

Feminist geographies and geographies of difference also address the shifting dialogue of power, knowledge, and representation (hooks, 1999; Rose, 1997). Feminist and Geographies of Difference scholar bell hooks, one of the first black woman geographers to gain national merit, adds a unique perspective as an insider and academic into such fringe geographies. In her work *Homeplace*, hooks illustrates home as “a site of resistance and liberation,” juxtaposing objectification and individuality, hardship and dignity, and defeat and empowerment for African-Americans, specifically women (1999, pp. 42-43).

Theories such as *non-representational theory* have been criticized for lacking the ability to produce tangible results to academic research (Cadman, 2009). But these theories do provide

lenses that allow researchers ways to look for alternative explanations of space. In addition, they allow audiences a different perspective on realities that may silently exist around them.

The Audience's Critical Response

Audience critique holds import in the dialogue around the power of representation (Dewsbury, 2010). “*How* something is re-presented is just as important as *what*...the audience can be used far more effectively, productively, and explicitly to help us script the meaning and findings of research” (Dewsbury, 2010, p. 330).

Eickstein (2011) critically investigates audience involvement in understanding literary realism in *Coming through Slaughter* by Michael Ondaatje written in 1976 representing famous jazz musician Buddy Bolden who died in an insane asylum. Eckstein argues for a “critical, post-empirical, post-colonial” reading of “his (Bolden’s) geography,” citing that the reader’s *perception* of the story is just as critical as the writer’s intent (2011, p. 98). Eckstein argues that through the embodiment of characters and their struggles, readers decipher characteristics of place (2011). Eckstein compares this written form of storytelling to that of *map-storying*, asking viewers to look outside of traditional concepts of *how* they know places, writing:

As creative cartographer Denis Wood has been telling us for over a decade, these alternative spatial conceptions that exist outside the expected geopolitical categories teach us that conventional spatial arrangements (e.g. city limits, territory defined by zoning ordinances, interstate highways systems, national borders) have themselves been conceived by particular individuals for particular reasons... both realist narrative and realist mapping narrowly reproduce a place as a static object of empirical observation, framed by conventionally-often hegemonically-defined expectations. That said, alternative scaling and mapping is necessary but not sufficient to meet our collective trial by space. We must return to the role of the reader. (Eckstein, 2011, p. 102)

Eckstein implores both reader and story/map-maker to critically think about how geographic meaning is produced (2011). Referring to what post-colonial scholar Qudri Ismail

called *narratological reading*, Eckstein stresses that the readers of stories and maps play just as active a knowledge-creation role as the writers and cartographers writing, “Histories, like maps, are made not found” (2011, p. 102).

In a reversal of Eckstein’s “histories like maps,” *maps like histories* need critical consumption (Eckstein, 2011, p. 102; Monmonier, 1996; Wood, 2010). Monmonier warns viewers of the “seducing” qualities of maps, specifically of Geographic Information Systems, wherein data is often interpreted as factual and showing the whole story (1996, p. 174). Monmonier focuses on the necessity of audience critique toward the visual power of maps, specifically *graphic narratives* and *multimedia atlases* about which he writes:

Graphic narratives carry the yin-yang of insight and deception a step further by providing a focused sequence of maps, texts, graphs, diagrams, and other images addressing a specific communication goal... Because maps can be strongly persuasive, the graphic narrative is a potent rhetoric weapon... users must be wary that maps, however realistic, are merely representations, vulnerable to bias in both what they show and what they ignore... the conscientiously curious viewer needs to stop, think, back up, and probe the data interactively. (Monmonier, 1996, p. 180)

Understanding power dynamics of the creators and consumers of knowledge are important as researchers wade through the process of academic investigation. In understanding how and where these dynamics are placed, researchers can better address them in their own work, especially as technology allows for more and more forms of easily accessible representations in data collection and production techniques. Critical theoretical lenses allow researchers and audiences to explore the process of power and knowledge co-production. This understanding provides an important backbone to the exploratory nature of this project, attempting to bridge multiple realities and a holistic picture through stories and the maps. The

next section deepens a look into these representations using new technologies to map qualitative methodologies, sense of place, and place attachment.

III. Qualitative GIS

Maps lie at an interesting intersection of art and science. GIS supports both intuitive perception and deductive analysis...looking at each layer individually or in various combinations, they (GIS users) are changing their viewpoints, experimenting with different emphases and pursuing a holistic perspective. They are working to escape the ingrained assumptions of their individual experiences and the blinders of society's assumptions, challenging the information that is displayed and questioning the omissions. (Sinton & Lund, 2007, p. 14)

Geospatial storytelling, the *narrative atlas*, and the *storymap* diverge from traditional mapping (Caquard, 2013). Maps laced with narratives can plot human experience and perceptions across the vernacular landscape, and the cartography of home can be visualized through a multitude of daily-living lenses: post-911 fears of Muslim women living in Columbus, Ohio (Kwan, 2008); the dream-scape of ancestral sacred spaces combined with government-appointed lands of the Mapuche people in Chile (Hirt, 2012); and the strolling/consumer patterns of shoppers in Manchester, UK (Warnaby, 2012). These mappable everyday experiences allow for an investigation into the geography of perception, emotion, and activity.

The “Qualitative” in Geography

Qualitative methodologies in the social sciences often focus on the question *how* in an attempt to understand how processes happen and meaning is ascribed (DeLyser et al., 2010; Lichtman, 2013). Contemporary geography allows for a convergence of both quantitative and qualitative methods, allowing for “different ontological and epistemological approaches to knowledge and data” (DeLyser et al., 2010, p. 6). Reduced, it becomes a question of what you are asking and how you are asking it.

In her short piece condensing geographic qualitative history, Cope writes that “qualitative research cannot be separated from the history of geography at any point: as long as there have been attempts to ‘write the world’ (*geo-graphy*), there have been qualitative methods of observation, synthesis, analysis, and representation” (2010, p. 25). Cope further relates the *two sides of science* highlighted in an English translation of Heinrich Kiepert’s 1881 *A Manual of Ancient Geography* which Cope transposes onto quantitative mapping technologies and qualitative inquiry methods seen in the works of such early benchmark geographers as Strabo, Ptolemy, Eratosthenes, and Pliny (2010, p. 32).

It is through these methodologies that Cope claims researchers choose what to study and how to study it where the “process of research serves to (re)construct the Other vis-à-vis the Self” (2010, p. 31). Aitken and Kwan echo this idea that modern qualitative methodologies are best done “using ourselves as a research tool and understanding our position as ‘subjects in spaces of betweenness’” (2010, p. 289).

Hybrid Geographies and GIS

Contemporary geography as a field is complicated to summarize, as geographers span the spectrum of the quantitative and the qualitative, sometimes falling somewhere in-between. Ideas of *hybrid geographies* (Sui & DeLyser, 2012) and *multiple realities* (Yin, 2014) in data collection help to provide an additional check of accuracy to qualitatively designed studies, offering a sense of validity to the work, while allowing researchers to mix and match techniques to unveil innovative solutions from new perspectives. These new in-between methods allow for new visions, synthesis, and conceptualizations of the spaces of everyday living to be better understood by geographers and non-geographers alike (Sui & DeLyser, 2012).

Human and physical geographers embrace spatial tools, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), to digitize and analyze giant amounts of metadata funneled into visualized spatial patterns (Longley, Goodchild, Maguire, & Rhind, 2011). GIS has often played a traditional role in the field of geography as a tool for quantitative data mapping applied to areas such as city planning, crisis problem solving, crime prevention, and geologic surveying, with its earliest publically-known uses in the 1960s involving Canadian land usages and resource identification and the 1970 U.S. Bureau of the Census Population (Longley et al., 2011). More recently, GIS has been investigated for its potential as a tool researching different concepts of place, creating new methods that embrace both quantitative and qualitative worlds of knowledge (Sinton & Lund, 2007).

As critical geographers began their dissection of the positivist aspect of GIS, starting in the 1990s with the landmark book *Ground Truth* by John Pickles, GIS was questioned for its simultaneous power in knowledge production while having a limited ability for representation (Aitken & Kwan, 2010). This limited representation included the omission of *other* voices that in part came from the lack of these voices in official records, an often-used source of data for GIS researchers (Aitken & Kwan, 2010). It has only been a more recent debate as to how GIS can be used directly as a qualitative methodology instead of a tag-along to other methods or in comparison to other qualitative computer software (Aitken & Kwan, 2010).

Whilst quantitative methods often focus on things that can be measured, qualitative methods elaborate more on ephemeral, perhaps deeper and more personal meanings. Whilst the former focus on generalizing across a statistical norm, the latter are predisposed to individual perspectives, unique contexts, and specific renderings. Whilst the former are concerned with mathematical and logical connections, and hypothetic-deductive reasoning, the latter sit in a well of senses, speculations and interpretation. Whilst the (former seek to smooth out and normalize, the latter embrace difference and contradictions. (Aitken & Kwan, 2010, p. 290)

What is Qualitative GIS

Qualitative GIS straddles what many geographers consider a line drawn in the methodological sand. It provides a unique forum of layered information where users can interactively interpret and reinterpret data (Aitken & Kwan, 2010). MacKian (2010) addresses issues of the *qualitative component* inside qualitative GIS research writing, “Rather than stripping the data of its essential messiness, the aim is to capture this messiness in all its glory and say something about it” which “is not something confined to the space and time sandwiched neatly between ‘field’ and ‘output’”(p. 361). Clandinin and Rosiek (2006) stake claims for a similar ideology in the use of narrative methods, allowing for a *navigation* of data rather than reductive presentation:

An honest empirical method will present inquiry as a series of choices, inspired by purposes that are shaped by past experience, undertaken through time, and will trace the consequences of these choices in the whole of an individual or community’s lived experience. In our view, narratives are the form of representation that describes human experience as it unfolds through time. (p. 40)

To preserve the “messiness” of qualitative data inside of a quantitatively-designed computer program, Qualitative GIS methods bridge traditional forms of qualitative methodologies, including ethnographies, participatory action, interviewing, etc., by adding spatial understanding (Cope & Elwood, 2009). Cope and Elwood reason this new combination of methodologies forms “the core commitment of Qualitative GIS” where “integrating multiple forms of knowledge and the findings from various techniques is at the heart of mixed-method research” (2009, p. 4). More recently, qualitative forms of GIS analysis have used *Grounded Visualization* combining the traditional qualitative *Grounded Theory* with the geographic approach of *Geovisualization* to better understand communities, such as with Knigge and Cope’s (2006) foundational work investigating community garden spaces. Others have used *multiple-methodology* approaches, plotting narrative data with point-placement data such as Watt’s work

investigating patterns of ethnic neighborhood involvement in property destruction in the 1992 Los Angeles race riots (2010).

Qualitative GIS allows for more in-depth *geovisualization*, with its abilities to layer meaning-making data such as research artifacts and multimedia like audio, video, photography, and hand-drawn maps and sketches, allowing for diverse possibilities of representations (Aitken & Kwan, 2010). Aitken and Kwan point to Matthews et. al 2005 ethnographic study on low-income families where field notes were hyperlinked into a GIS platform for a more in-depth contextualization of complex problems and coping strategies (2010).

Aitken and Kwan focus on the possibility to connect the “emotive non –representational power of images” to space through Qualitative GIS (2010, p. 296). They highlight researchers who have altered more common GIS practices, such as Andrea Nightingale’s 2003 work comparing Nepalese community data (oral histories and local knowledge) with government sensing data, Paul Robbins’ 2001/2006 study investigating modern forest land discrepancies in India plotting colonial accounts of the area, and Hong Jiang’s 2003 piece looking at Chinese pastoral areas investigating perceptions of pastoralists comparing interviews and remote sensing data (Aitken & Kwan, 2010, pp. 297-298).

Although Qualitative GIS often more critically investigates ideas of representation more thoroughly than quantitative uses, Aitken and Kwan (2010) warn of challenges still faced, mainly in its scientific appearances:

Despite GIS’s capabilities in handling and analyzing qualitative data, how to represent human knowledge, meanings and emotions in a GIS still remain a major challenge for qualitative researchers who want to avoid the seduction and artifice of the ‘wow’ factor. Another problem arises largely from the vagueness, imprecision, and nuances in people’s representations and expressions, which are

used by research participants to convey their experiences, ideas and feelings during their interaction with the qualitative researcher. (p. 295)

Combining GIS and qualitative research methodologies allows for new ways to investigate geographic questions. “The question of what is representable (numeric, visuals, texts) and what is not representable (meanings, feelings) bears heavily on a discussion of how GIS and qualitative methods collide” (Aitken & Kwan, 2010, p. 300). Qualitative GIS can lend itself as an interactive storage unit, wherein users can sort through stories, perceptions, emotions, experiences, and values in a multitude of ways.

Mental Mapping and GIS

Mental mapping and GIS are specifically useful for locating and representing issues of perceived spatial differences (Ben-Ze'ev, 2012; Harris & Weiner, 2002; Hirt, 2012). In Harris and Weiner's (2002) study of community mental maps used to locate areas of difference in South Africa, they found that issues around forced citizen removals, understanding *expert* knowledge, ideas of appropriate forms of land use, access to resources, and community ideas around specification of land reform areas varied quite significantly between white and black South Africans. They also noted the differences in stories around specific historical issues, such as apartheid-era forced removals which were often averted, denied, or told in significantly smaller scales between white and black South Africans (Harris & Weiner, 2002). Harris and Weiner (2002) state that such mental maps provide extremely important data that may otherwise not be documented but should be approached with care.

Ben-Ze'ev (2012) used mental mapping to visually illuminate Israeli university student perceptions of the Gaza Strip, specifically investigating geographic knowledge of the area before and after the creation of the nation-state in 1967. He also used interviews to examine why people did not know more about their surroundings, learning that student perceptions were often based

on their particular constructs of life, personal experiences, and perceived fear of areas, illustrating the roles of perceptions, struggles, and actions bound in politicized space and seen through the sketching of mental maps (Ben-Ze'ev, 2012).

Digital mapping can layer understandings of the perceptions, emotions, values, and experiences embedded in the minds of people in one place. Qualitative geography allows for methods that show how and why people connect to specific senses of place. Mapping programs, including GIS, walk the line of representation, between throwing light on human/environment interaction and creating an *expert* stronghold on knowledge production. Together, these investigative tools allow for new ways to understand geographic spaces. The next section illustrates these kinds of studies specifically targeting neighborhood and community sense of place and action through digital mapping techniques.

IV. Neighborhood Sense of Place Studies and Mapping

Combining mapping and qualitative research has allowed for deeper exploration of human/place interaction (Cope & Elwood, 2009). In an investigation of community perceptions of a transitioning neighborhood, Cope and Elwood relate the importance of incorporating computer-based maps to better understand participant experience “because each narrative likely communicates rich descriptive detail about these shifting social and material processes” helping us “to understand situated and negotiated knowledge” (2009, p. 3). These new ways to investigate stories, map experiences, and communicate digital data allow for new conceptualizations as geography expands its understanding of *what* it is to exist as humans inside of *where* humans exist.

The mapping of cities allows for an intimate and complex understanding of what comprises urban character. Famously, in 1909, Daniel Brunham and Edward Bennett published

their *Plan of Chicago*, a conglomerate of maps, images, illustrations, diagrams, paintings, drawings, and sketches from staff intended to be exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago which later travelled to Europe portraying the leading edge of American city design (Danzer, 1998). Through its division and portrayal of urbanity into public/private spaces, the *Plan of Chicago* demonstrated what a city and its communities looked like “in Chicago terminology” (Danzer, 1998, p. 147). The purpose to amalgamate the plan into “the same vision in many formats would make it more familiar, more natural, more acceptable, and therefore more possible” (Danzer, 1998, p. 148). From this, these planners portrayed and envisioned the *common denominators* within Chicago and other American and European cities (Danzer, 1998).

Understanding Neighborhood Place Attachment and Interactions

Neighborhoods, specifically, have been studied to better understand where place attachment and place creation intersect (Knigge & Cope, 2006). Knigge and Cope (2006) investigated residential organizational group use of community garden space to better understand community identity and public participation. In their hallmark study linking Grounded Theory to *Geovisualization*, in what they coined *Grounded Visualization*, Knigge and Cope revealed that these research designs contextually strengthened each other by relating “exploration, iterative, and recursive ways of knowing, particular instances and general patterns, and multiple views” (2006, p. 2022). By layering plotted cartographic points with multi-media and field notes, the researchers looked into new ways of investigating social and spatial processes combining GIS-based production of knowledge with ethnographic studies (Knigge & Cope, 2006).

In their study on resident and tourist place attachment in a residential Australian natural park, Brown and Raymond (2007) discovered that although outward indicators such as aesthetics and recreation were highly valued, people needed to have a deeper connection to a place for it to

hold meaning and value, gained through intellectual, emotional, and activity-based interactions. In using digital mapping as a forum for communicating aspects of stakeholder-defined sense of place in ecologic preservation and policy making, they related that “the mapping of landscape values and special places can provide an operational bridge between place attachment and applied land use planning that seeks to minimize potential land use conflict (G. Brown & Raymond, 2007, p. 107).

Manzo and Perkins (2006) argued for the integration of studying individual and collective attachments, emotions, and meaning within social and economic community contexts for city planning. They claimed that “intra-psychic phenomena,” including beliefs, emotions, and cognitions around local places affect behaviors, engagement, and participation in planning and place-making activities at the local stakeholder level (Manzo & Perkins, 2006, p. 336). In addition to investigating the importance of emotional and experience-based place attachment at the individual level, Manzo and Perkins found that senses of *bondedness* and *rootedness* were important in understanding place-attachment at the community level, wherein communities with high social bonds showed more social connections, higher social control, less fear of crime, and more revitalization in the physical landscape (2006, p. 338). In studying stakeholder participation during a neighborhood revitalization effort, they found that as community history, culture, and places of import were acknowledged in the planning process, different community members became more involved in the revitalization efforts themselves while simultaneously building new senses of community across a shared landscape (Manzo & Perkins, 2006).

Manzo and Perkins (2006) called for a holistic viewing of the nature of place attachment through appreciation of the diverse perspectives that connect and divide across common geographic places with a focus put on the social capital found in stakeholder participation and

accompanying senses of insider empowerment. By incorporating these stakeholder-identified meanings around place attachment, they argued that planners and community developers can understand what motivates people to become involved at the planning, participation, and stewardship levels within neighborhood revitalization efforts (Manzo & Perkins, 2006).

TABLE 3. An Ecological Framework for Community Planning and Development: Exploring Multiple Environmental Domains and Levels of Analysis

	Environmental Domains (or Forms of Capital)			
	Physical	Social	Political	Economic
Individual	Place attachment/ identity Incumbent upgrading Residential pride and satisfaction	Sense of community Community attachment and identity Neighboring behavior	Citizen participation Empowerment	Personal investments Real estate decisions Monetary contributions
Social group/ organization	Shared place meaning Participatory planning and design Design Resident associations	Mutual assistance Networking Social cohesion	Empowered organization Level of participation	Fundraising Resource sharing Business associations
Neighborhood	Community physical conditions Upgrading, gentrifica- tion, or deterioration Abandonment Zoning	Informal social networks	Extent and power of community organiza- tion in neighborhood Organization in neighborhood External connections Representation	Private investment/ disinvestment Public investment (for example, community development block grants)
City/region/ society	Urban growth/sprawl Transportation systems	Social services (health, education, safety) Demographic diversity	Local, state, federal agencies Political institutions (lobbies, coalitions)	Regional/global economy Local/state/federal/ housing and eco- nomic development policies

Table from Manzo and Perkins, 2006, p. 345.

Coulton, Chan, and Mikelbank (2011) called for “authentic resident engagement” through “awareness, interaction, or contact with a place” shown through mental maps of resident perceptions providing insider viewpoints to better understand neighborhood scale and individual and collective identity (pp. 22-24). Through a layering of mental maps showing resident perceptions of ten U.S. cities using GIS, they found that identities of neighborhoods emerged at

both the individual and collective levels where perceptions played a crucial role for social networking and the ability for the community to collectively mobilize around development initiatives (Coulton et al., 2011). By obtaining insider stakeholder perceptions of boundaries and neighborhood names for the purpose of recognizing place identities, the researchers found common spaces and differing senses of neighborhood scale that they applied to better understand authentic resident engagement, spaces of connection, and an awareness or lack thereof by residents of existing social networks in their community (Coulton et al., 2011).

Brown, Perkins, and Brown (2003) also related a high level of residential place attachment and emotional bonds to the vernacular landscape greatly impacting residential commitment to revitalization efforts. In their study observing physical signs of decay along with resident interviews based on perceptions of social and physical neighborhood aspects, B. Brown et al. found that residents' attachments to their neighborhood block and surrounding areas were directly related to issues of home ownership, perceived/observed deteriorating public and private property conditions, perceived fear and experience of crime, and "collective efficacy" (assumed neighborhood control and social interactions leading to a strong sense of community) (2003, p. 261). Their results showed that home owners, long-term residents, and those who felt a high level of collective efficacy had a stronger sense of place attachment, resulting in a lower fear of crime and an overall lower perception of *incivilities* at the personal and property levels (B. Brown et al., 2003).

From their findings, they stated that "all residents have the neighborhood turf in common" and emphasized cultivation of neighborhood pride in public places as well as at the individual home level by focusing on rallying around common neighborhood causes and the

preservation of individual and collective cultures sharing the same geographic space (B. Brown et al., 2003, p. 269). In a call to community development programs, they suggest:

Place attachments may also provide the focal point of programs designed to cultivate social relationships protective of common places in the neighborhood as well. Programs could bring highly attached long-term residents together with new residents in ways that socialize newcomers to the strengths and history of the neighborhood. In the present neighborhood an oral history project led to a publication designed to showcase the rich history and vitality of the neighborhood. If such efforts could be integrated into the schools or other places with many newcomers, then place attachments may be more quickly cultivated and more visible in the area. (Coulton et al., 2011, p. 269)

In addition to understanding the role that meaning plays in place attachment, mapping these important places can affect at both the local and national level, and in the case of the Conservation International Suriname Project, was used to facilitate government/citizen dialogue (Ramirez-Gomez & Martínez, 2013). This organization digitally layered hundreds of sketch maps of indigenous spaces of meaning to use in talks with the Suriname national government concerning indigenous rights and conservation planning (Ramirez-Gomez, Brown, & Fat, 2013). The researchers argued that by incorporating stakeholder places of meaning and localized, indigenous knowledge, bureaucracy in conservation planning could be minimized while ecological stewardship could be cultivated by the very people who had lived in these areas who had strong stakes in its preservation for future generations (Ramirez-Gomez et al., 2013). In addition, by applying participatory community mapping of such grand scale, a condensed understanding of local knowledge, behaviors, participation, and beliefs were spatialized in an attempt to create a strong and sustainable infrastructure working across cultural and political divides to ensure common goals (Ramirez-Gomez et al., 2013).

Elwood (2009b) investigated the social and political implications of the usage of GIS for community planning, problem solving, and services available in a community-improvement non-

profit coalition of a northwest Chicago neighborhood. Elwood (2009b) investigated how this mapped information was used to push specific agendas and how neighborhood social networks used these maps. She writes:

[These technologies] bind neighborhood identities to these spaces through quantitative and qualitative approaches, and engage GIS as both representative and constitutive of community knowledge and identities. In doing so, they blur boundaries between methods, representational practices, and epistemologies that have typically been understood as separate, producing GIS as far more flexible and open than has often been recognized. (Elwood, 2009b, p. 64)

Storytelling Home Spatially

In addition to applications used for community planning and policy, creative cartography can layer intimate stories experienced uniquely and collectively in place. London peaks through anecdotes accompanied by black and white photographs of a decaying back alley stairwell, a sunbeam-lit silhouetted ballerina, and an elderly woman surrounded only by autumn leaves (Pritchett & Hofer, 1990). San Francisco reads like a novel, mixing history and the contemporary, boundary divides and boundary crossings, amidst stories of poetic connection, native myths, and personal encounters of the San Franciscan kind (Solnit, 2010). A single neighborhood of Boylan Heights illustrates itself through the cartographically-plotted visuals of jack-o-lanterns, dog barks, sidewalk graffiti, and radio waves (Wood, 2013). Ancient and modern myth, stories, and art flow through the auto-ethnographical deep-map of an hydrological aboriginal landscape of Australia (Somerville, 2013).

Through this mixing of unique mapping perspectives, visions, feelings, and connections, the intimacies of place can be experientially mapped (Wood, 2013). As Dennis Wood discovered in his compiled story atlas about his neighborhood Boylan Heights, everything indeed sings into

what he calls the “poetics of cartography” wherein he creates “a map attentive to the experience of place” (2013, p. 19).

The idea is this: the neighborhood is a process, a process-place or a process-thing, that transforms anywhere into *here*, and here into everywhere, the city into the space of our lives, the citizen into the individual and *vice versa*... The maps and text are at once very personal and yet essentially abstract. While the atlas is very much about Boylan Heights, it’s also about any neighborhood anywhere. They are maps with all of the science and technology that this implies, yet they have fingerprints all over them. I don’t know where it comes from, but they have heart. But then neighborhoods have heart, and it’s that heart that the maps in sequence sing about. (Wood, 2013, p. 22)

This project navigates these *fingerprints* of experience in the stories and maps of people in place to better understand where and how people have both seen and made the intricacies of place identity. The method used for this study incorporates concepts from prior research to explore overall perceptions, mappable experiences, and specific places of attachment in an attempt to understand resident places of meaning in a neighborhood.

Chapter 3

Method

Research question as the basis for data collection: *How do people experience, participate in, and envision the WANCD?*

My case study investigates the Wells Avenue Neighborhood Conservation District (WANCD) and the area surrounding it in Reno, NV using a multiple-methods design (Watts, 2010) that includes *phenomenology* (understanding “lived experiences”) (Lichtman, 2013, p. 87) and *geovisualization* (using visual methodologies to portray spatial data) (Elwood, 2009a). The WANCD was chosen as a case study because delineated conservation districts are a new and somewhat rare phenomenon in Reno. The WANCD is the second of its kind in Reno, officially designated, in part, for its unique cultural and historic characteristics (Skorupa, Mar 1, 2013). This area provides a glimpse into the lives of people currently undergoing change in a neighborhood designated for its cultural identity, while the site provides different perspectives on the place itself. The implementation of phenomenological methodology allows for inquiry into perceived and experienced surroundings while geovisualization technologies uses mapped data to investigate the *placing* of those perceptions and stories to best address the research question.

Researcher Background

The stories of people and phenomena fascinate me. My former experiences as a journalist and a community and international education programmer have provided me with a deeper look into how perceptions vary based on international, community, and individual levels. I am especially interested in better-understanding the activities and patterns of people by looking at their lived and imagined experiences. As an enthusiastic traveler to different parts of the world, experiencing places through physical, cultural, and personal interactions has guided (and still

does guide) my world view, shifting my own perceptions, values, and emotions. I am interested in investigations concerning community place attachment, action, and vision from different stakeholders to better understand individual and group desires that create a place.

The Wells Avenue area is intriguing for its variety of businesses, festivals, languages, history, and community organizations, making it unique in Reno. It is heavily influenced by two citizen stakeholder community organizations (West of Wells Neighborhood Group and the Wells Avenue Merchants and Property Owner's Association). This place is a personal one for me, too, as it is my home.

Studying Conservation Districts and Sense of Place

Studies have investigated conservation districts through expert and stakeholder preservation efforts (Wells, 2010). A conservation district can be widely defined, differing depending on the place and the reasons for its creation (Wells, 2010). A study of six conservation districts across six different states identified a few reasons for their creation including a desire to prevent new buildings and parking structure, attempts to reduce the effects of perceived property mismanagement from absentee landlords, or to limit short term renters (McClurg, 2011). In addition, communities hoped to maintain a thriving ecosystem of small, locally-owned businesses on a main street and to explore new ways of urban structural protection (McClurg, 2011).

Other studies delve deeper into how meaningful places are created and maintained by preservationists, government officials, and other stakeholders, including residents (Wells, 2010). Wells (2010) argues for *conservation performance indicators* to be assessed through stakeholder associated values and meanings instead of solely using the more traditional approach focusing on professional preservationists, who he claims, often focus on importance

“contained *within the heritage object* instead of *within the meanings* that people ascribe to the object” (Wells, 2010, p. 4).

In a qualitative/quantitative study of meaning in a conservation district in South Carolina, Wells (2010) investigates stakeholder/participant photographs and their associated meanings. His study reveals that the visual decay of older buildings elicited an emotional response connecting to a perceived history of the area (mostly imagined by the participants) that he dubbed *spontaneous fantasy* (which Wells likens to “vicarious experience” coined by Robert Riley (1992) (Wells, 2010, p. 9). *Spontaneous fantasy* “catalyzes an impromptu vision of the past in the mind’s eye that is neither premeditated nor based in historical fact. Accompanying this experience is a series of strong feelings that help to attach residents to their neighborhood” (Wells, 2010, p. 9). Place attachment themes of “general attachment, place identity, place dependence, and rootedness” were specifically tied to active stakeholder participation in the maintenance and sustainability efforts of the area (Wells, 2010, p. 8). Wells writes:

Unlike natural resource conservation measures, the explicit beneficiary of heritage conservation measures should be the stakeholders who ultimately reap the benefits of an historic environment that retains its authenticity. The values of most stakeholders, therefore, should be considered in the process which defines and implements performance measures and this process can be greatly informed through the use of social science research methodologies that can integrate both traditional expert/objective values along with these subjective values. (2009, p. 9)

Rationale for Study

Preliminary research and observations of the area were conducted prior to the start of this project to assess feasibility and rationale, including a pilot study of the WANCD. This initial study revealed a link between stakeholder community action with a focus on *ground-up* approach to creating the district itself. The ways that sense of place, values, actions, and symbolic

associations affected the creation of the area struck me on how those meanings, emotions, and perceptions manifested within the landscape. The WANCD seemed to hold characteristics of being an officially created and recognized district while also maintaining a seemingly strong and cohesive community spirit that I wanted to further investigate. In addition, as the surrounding areas in Reno have been rapidly changing both economically and culturally, I found it intriguing to delve into how place identity character develops and shifts over time, affecting both outsiders and insiders.

Setting: Wells Avenue Neighborhood Conservation District

Demographics have changed in the Wells Avenue Neighborhood area since it was subdivided into the Wells Addition in the late 1800s (Schuster, 2010). Sheep rancher Sheldon O. Wells originally owned the property until it was subdivided by Samuel Wheeler, his son-in-law, creating the addition ranging from current day Holcomb St. to Wells Ave. and Ryland St. to Cheney St. in the 1890s (Skorupa, July 7, 2013, p. 9A). The current-day area now holds some of the oldest known homes in Reno south of the local Truckee River, and many houses date between the early 1900s and 1940s when the neighborhood largely housed working class residents with a high proportion of Italian-American families (Schuster, 2010; Skorupa, July 7, 2013, Mar 1, 2013). According to local historian Barrie Schuster, early residents were musicians, stone-masons, teachers, and other blue-collar laborers who worked on their own homes and took pride in their neighborhood (2010). Home designs range from Queen Anne-style cottages, bungalows, and arts and crafts style buildings (Skorupa, July 7, 2013). In 1908, Charles Burke extended the electric trolley line to ride through Moran St. up to Wells Ave., ending at Cheney St. and next to the Virginia & Truckee Railroad that ran along Holcomb St. until 1950 (Skorupa, Mar 1, 2013).

In the 1960s and '70s, a number of residents left the Wells Avenue area to move to the suburbs, leaving houses in the neighborhood abandoned or converted to rentals and allowing for a rezoning for “high density infill development,” including the growth of apartment buildings (Schuster, 2010, par. 3). The 1990s and early 2000s saw a growth in Hispanic residents and businesses along the Wells Avenue area (Berry, 2004). According to the University of Nevada, Reno Small Business Development Center, there was a rise of 168 percent in Hispanic surnames for petitioned business licenses along the South Wells Avenue Corridor from 1998-2000 (Berry, 2004, p. 232). In the early 2000s, an influx of new renters and homeowners came to the neighborhood who, Schuster says, began “rebuilding the neighborhood both physically and by re-establishing the community” (2010, par. 5).

The West of Wells Neighborhood Group (WOW) and Wells Avenue Merchants and Property Owner’s Association (WAMPA) are two community organizations that have been involved in redevelopment of the area and played major roles in obtaining the conservation district boundaries officially recognized by the City of Reno (Skorupa, July 7, 2013, Mar 1, 2013). WOW has organized various local activities, including neighborhood cleanups, a 150-tree-planting campaign, and resident-backed city sidewalk/gutter restoration (Schuster, 2010). In addition to independent residents, developers such as HabeRae Investment Partners and Marmot Properties have bought and renovated multiple properties in the area, attracted to the neighborhood in part, because of the “charm” of the older homes and “have worked to restore that *feel* in the ones they renovate” (Skorupa, July 7, 2013, p. 9A).

According to an article in the *Reno Gazette Journal*, new residents seek an “urban lifestyle” close to a renewal of business districts in the downtown and Midtown areas, local parks, and the University of Nevada, Reno and are attracted to an area that is walkable/bike able

(Skorupa, July 7, 2013, p. 9A). According to walkscore.com, the WANCD is considered a “Walker’s Paradise” with a walkability scale of 91, a bike-ability scale of 75, and a close-to-transit score of 65 (all on a scale of 1-100) (WalkScore, 2014). Many residents know the histories of their houses, obtain grants for historical upkeep, and tend to “know” many of their neighbors (Skorupa, July 7, 2013, p. 9A). Crime and graffiti are still a constant in the area, but interviewed residents tend to believe the area is generally safe (Skorupa, July 7, 2013, p. 9A). In an article in *Reno Gazette-Journal*, one neighbor explained, “Edgy is very popular now. There’s a lot of neighborhood pride” (Skorupa, July 7, 2013, p. 9A).

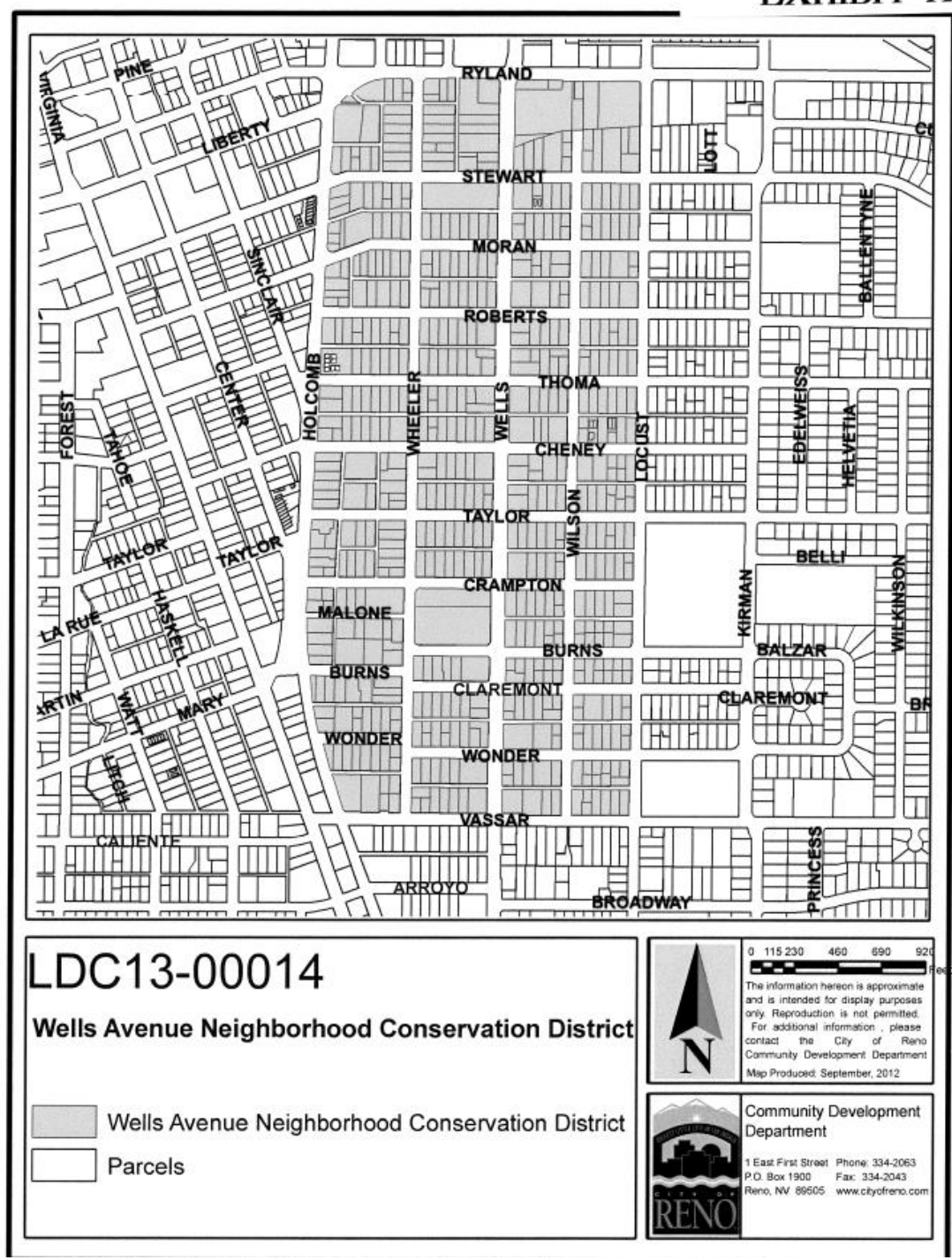
The conservation district was formed in a collaborative effort between local neighborhood groups including WOW, the Historic Reno Preservation Society, the City of Reno, and professors and students at the University of Nevada, Reno (Skorupa, July 7, 2013). The WANCD’s official borders extend from Holcomb St. to Locust St. and Ryland St. to Vassar St. (City of Reno, 2008). In 2001, planning began for street improvements in the South Wells Avenue Corridor, and in 2008, the City of Reno developed a neighborhood plan for the area drawing on reported issues identified by “residents and stakeholders in the planning process” (City of Reno, 2008, p. 1). Prior to boundary implementation, residents and University of Nevada, Reno students and professors listed every parcel and structure within the area, documenting and photographing them for official designation purposes from 2008-2010 (Reno, 2012; Skorupa, Mar 1, 2013). The plan integrated a number of recommendations including standards for residential design, historic preservation, mixed-use development, storefront improvement, and pedestrian usage within the WANDC, Wells Corridor, and Vassar Street District (City of Reno, 2008).

A conservation district has fewer restrictions than a historic district, but “promotes and reinforces the activities of neighborhood improvement groups within the scope of the area’s history” (Skorupa, July 7, 2013, p. 9A). Schuster claims the district is more an “acknowledgement of the historic value of the neighborhood” and “imposes no new regulations on property owners” although “the purpose will be to encourage awareness and preservation of the historic homes” (Skorupa, July 7, 2013 p. 9A; Mar 1, 2013).

The conservation district was officially dedicated on March 1, 2013 as the second of its kind in Reno, the first being the Powning District dedicated earlier the same year (Clifton, 2013; Skorupa, Mar 1, 2013) According to a report by the Reno Planning Commission, “Historic districts require acceptance by property owners and are regulatory, whereas conservation districts are non-regulatory and are designated through the establishment of precise boundaries” but the district will “recognize the architectural and cultural past of the Wells Avenue area” and “should provide educational opportunities to property owners and residents” (Reno, 2012, pp. 1-2).


According to the city plan, the area’s eligibility as a conservation district was due, in part, to its “unique character” and “historic cultural significance” (Reno, 2012, p. 2). The district cannot change local density regulations although does have a goal of maintaining new development in accordance with “the historic character of the area” (Reno, 2012, p. 2). The Conservation District is part of a larger Wells Avenue Neighborhood Plan, designated by the city’s Master Plan, with policy recommendations to include historic registry for cultural and economic purposes (Reno, 2012, p. 2).


EXHIBIT A



LDC13-00014

Wells Avenue Neighborhood Conservation District

-  Wells Avenue Neighborhood Conservation District
-  Parcels


0 115 230 460 690 920 Feet
The information hereon is approximate and is intended for display purposes only. Reproduction is not permitted. For additional information, please contact the City of Reno Community Development Department. Map Produced: September, 2012.


Community Development Department
1 East First Street Phone: 334-2063
P.O. Box 1900 Fax: 334-2043
Reno, NV 86605 www.cityofreno.com

(City of Reno, 2008, Wells Avenue Neighborhood Conservation District, Exhibit A, p. 6)

Participants

Twenty-three men and women identified as stakeholders within the WANCD and over the age of 18 participated in this study. Participants were recruited based on known varying affiliation with the WANCD (residents, business owners, organizational, or government affiliates) as well as diversity of demographics (age, income-level, education-level, race or ethnic background, gender, marital and family status, if they were renters or owners (for residents), /and number of years and number of ways affiliated with the WANCD). This selective data collection method was expected to allow “a wide range of variation in the responses through the strategic consideration of variables or factors expected to produce variation in the phenomenon being studied” (Gustafson, 2001, p. 8). A group with ranging demographics is likely to provide differing perceptions and have differing levels of activity as stakeholders in the WANCD, adding up to a better-rounded study (Gustafson, 2001).

Thesis Participants

	Pseudonym	Affiliations	Renter/Owner	Years Affiliated	Gender	Education	Race/Ethnicity	Marital	Household status	Income	Age
1	Helen	R, LBP, GA, COA	O	15/ 11 O	F	Masters	White	Single	Live alone	70,000-89,999	38
2	Tony	BO/E, COA,	Previous R	R11/BO31	M	HS/GED	White	DP	Live w partner	70,000-89,999	56
3	Bob	R, COA	O	6 mo/2weeks	M	BA/BS	White	Married	Live w partner/children	50,000-69,999	Missing
4	Susan	R, COA	O	6 mo/2weeks	F	BA/BS	White	Married	Live w partner/children	50,000-69,999	Missing
5	Sally	R, COA, RUA	O	13	F	Masters	White	Married	Live w partner	50,000-69,999	Missing
6	Linda	R, LBP, BO/E	O	20	F	2 yr Ass	White/ Native American	Married	Live w partner	50,000-69,999	Missing
7	Jacob	R, LBP, BO/E	O	20	M	Some college	White	Married	Live w partner	50,000-69,999	Missing
8	Sandy	BO/E, COA, RUA,	N/A	10.5	F	Some college	White	Single	Live Alone	10,000-29,999	Missing
9	Amil	LBP, BO/E, COA, RUA	N/A	26	M	2 yr Ass	Asia/Sub-Continent	Married	Live w partner/children	70,000-89,999	56
10	Patty	R, BO/I(P), COA	O	45	F	Some college	White	Married	Live w partner	70,000-89,999	71
11	Jim	R, BO/I(P), COA, LBP	O	45	M	Masters	White	Married	Live w partner	70,000-89,999	72
12	Oscar	R, E, RUA, COA	R	5	M	2 yr Ass	White	Single	Live w roommates	10,000-29,999	43
13	Maria	R, BO, RUA	R	12	F	Some college	Hispanic or Latino	Single	Live alone	Missing	57
14	Jake	BO/I	N/A	5	M	Masters	White	Married	Live w children	over 150,000	44
15	Danielle	R, LBP, BO/E/I	O	11	F	Missing	White	Single	Lives alone	Missing	Missing
16	Julio	BO/E	N/A	21	M	High School	Hispanic or Latino	Married	Live w children	30,000-49,999	44
17	Margot	GA	N/A	11	F	Missing	White	Single	N/A	Missing	Missing
18	Julia	LBP, COA, RUA	N/A	14	F	BA/BS	White/Hispanic or Latino	Separated	Live alone	10,000-29,999	57
19	Manuela	R, LBP, BO/E, COA	N/A	23	F	BA/BS	Hispanic or Latino	Widowed	Lives alone	Missing	80
20	Jonathan	R, LBP, RUA	O	64	M	2 yr Ass	White	Divorced	Lives w children	50,000-69,999	64
21	Lupita	R, LBP, E, COA, RUA	O	7	F	BA/BS	Hispanic or Latino	Married	Lives w partner	70,000-89,999	64
22	Duncan	R, LBP, E, COA, RUA	O	7	F	BA/BS	Hispanic or Latino	Married	Lives w partner	70,000-89,999	56
23	Andy	R, RUA	R	3	M	2 yr Ass	White	Single	Lives alone	30,000-49,999	26
<i>Affiliation Abbreviations:</i>			R=Resident; LBP=Local Business Patron; BO=Business Owner; E=Employed in Area; GA=Government Affiliate;								
			COA=Community Organization Affiliate; RUA=Recreational Use of Area; I=Investor								

Research Design

This project incorporated ideas from phenomenology to develop a better understanding of individual *lived* experiences inside a scaled neighborhood (Lichtman, 2013). Instead of providing broad explanations, the goal is to “provide research accounts for individuals in a specific setting” where “the meanings each individual attached to their interactions and the classifications they employed to make sense of their working lives within this context... would be analyzed inductively, focusing on allowing meanings to emerge from the interviews” (Reeves, Albert, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008, pp. 631-632). Qualitative methodologies have specific characteristics that allow for data gathering around themes of *meaning* with their insistence on incorporating context, a reduction in assumptions about reality, and a focus on process over cause and effect (Guba, 1994).

Data Collection

Data was collected through a multiple-methods approach to *place* interview information (Lichtman, 2013; Watts, 2010). Semi-structured interviews (Lichtman, 2013) were combined with sketch mapping (a form of mental mapping where participants draw their cognitive understanding of their surroundings on an already established map) (Boschmann & Cubbon, 2013). In total, 23 participants took part in 19 interviews, as there were four cases where two participants were interviewed simultaneously. Data collection for this project was done in the following steps:

- 1. Mapping activity.** Participants were asked to complete a guided mapping activity, where they were asked short questions concerning perceptions, involvement, and envisioned change in their neighborhood and were prompted to draw these places on a provided map of the area. Questions were asked about everyday routes, places they liked or were important to them

and why, places they had been involved in changing, places in their neighborhood they wanted to see change, and their perceived boundary of their neighborhood. In some cases, the mapping activity was presented fully at the beginning of the interview and more in-depth questions were asked afterward. As the sequence of interviews continued, I concluded that incorporating the drawing activity throughout the course of the long interview would allow participants to be more present and provide richer observations and descriptions around the mapping questions, and I followed that course in subsequent interviews.

2. In-depth semi-structured interviews. After, and in some cases during, the initial mapping activity, a more in-depth, semi-structured recorded interview took place, with the entire activity/interview process lasting between 45 minutes to 2 hours. Questions focused on participant perceptions, values, and experiences in the neighborhood around likes, dislikes, changes, involvement, knowledge of the area, and community and individual identity. Participants were also asked to go into more detail about answers from the mapping portion of the interview.

Limitations

Geographical dispersion was one of the biggest challenges to the study, as participants were recruited through initial organizational or point person contacts and their networks as well as “snowballing” recruitment through participants. This resulted in participants coming from similar areas as they tended to know neighbors close to them geographically or from similar organizations which also tended to relate participants with similar points of view due to their similar interests in the area. Due to this way of gaining participants for the study, an additional limitation came from participants coming from only half of the full conservation district (Wells Avenue and the neighborhood to the west of the street).

Analysis

1. Sketch maps. In total, 19 map artifacts were created with the input of 23 participants. From this, five specifics were asked to be drawn on the map: 1. A tracing of normal routines in the area; 2. Important places in the area that participants were then asked to mark in order of top three or four; 3. Places that participants felt they had been involved in the area (this was a very open-ended question as to what involvement meant); 4. Places that participants wanted to see change; 5. Participants' perceived boundary of their neighborhood.

Sketch maps were georeferenced into the ESRI ArcMap10.2.2 mapping program to provide actual plotted data of all local area streets and coordinates. The hand drawn portions were then digitized into shapefiles using various Draw and Editor tools. These shapefiles were then layered based on the above questions 2-5 for more in-depth ability to see where participant perceptions were similar or different. As some participants did not answer all questions, a total of 73 layers were created and placed into four separate maps holding all shapefile data associated with those specific questions. These maps were used to add additional geographic visual information provided from the in-depth interviews, *placing* participant experiences, including perceptions, emotions, and values.

2. Interviews. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed and then coded for initial themes amongst all participants, specifically viewed through the lens of Constructionist Theory/sense of place focus of study. Specific themes that emerged were then grouped into more cohesive themes which were then merged into a few main concepts (Lichtman, 2013). A total of 23 interviews were conducted, eight of which were held with two participants at the same time, and in total created 209 pages of transcribed interview data.

Research Lens

Contextualizing the data-gathering process based on a phenomenological design and Constructivist Theory (Social Constructionist Theory) was designated as a suitable lens to further investigate sense of place/place attachment themes in the data. Applying this theoretical lens was in an effort to understand how the participants constructed their sense of place through their own experiences, values, and associations revealed in their interviews. This theory also allows for researchers to focus on the connection between how people construct their sense of place and how this sense of place adds to the overall identity of the place itself (Massey, 1991).

Constructivist Theory surfaced with sociology and post-modernism about thirty years ago, asserting that individuals and/or social groups create their worlds through subjective experiences expressed through everyday interactions, language, and social practices that contribute to process and meaning-making (Andrews, 2012). Kincheloe (2005) breaks down foundations for Critical Constructivism, claiming that reality is constructed by a specific “knower” situated in a specific “social, cultural, and historical” “somewhere” which in turn “constructs the known” (pp. 2-3). Knowledge-making as a *process* is emphasized over knowledge *outcomes*, examining determined “worth” of particular realities (namely those of “privilege” over the “marginalize(d)”) by society and researchers/teachers and the ways in which that knowledge becomes produced and reinstated (society to human mind to teacher to student and recycled) (Kincheloe, 2005, pp. 3-4). Critical Constructivism steers away from reductionism and instead toward multiple realities, intertwining personal experience and perspectives within academia and theory (Kincheloe, 2005, pp. 2-4).

Massey (1991) relates this lens in terms of the construction of place, arguing that human activity plays a large role in the constant shifting expression of place identity. She focuses on

the complexities that make-up individual identities which transfer to place-making identities, inherently encompassing internal conflict of what she calls the “the juxtaposition” of “copresence” seen in the “conflict between interests and views of what the area is and what it ought to *become*” (Massey, 1991, p. 276).

Localities are *constructions* out of the intersections and interactions of concrete social relations and social processes in a situation of copresence...Crucially, too, they are about *interaction*. Such interaction, moreover, is likely to include conflict...Moreover, if as I have argued there are indeed multiple meanings of places, held by different social groups ·for instance, then the question of which identity is dominant will be the result of social negotiation and conflict... *It is people, not places in themselves, which are reactionary or progressive.* (Massey, 1991, p. 278)

Echoed in the works of DeLyser et al. (2010), Harvey (1996), and Foucault (1980), concepts of identity interwoven into the construction of space reflect the social powers, processes, and interactions of those who are present in creating it. This idea that we construct our everyday worlds from our experiences and viewpoints can be used as a lens to interpret the actions of participants in this study and how they choose to interact with the neighborhood. In addition to individual realities constructed at the personal, social, and materialized levels, this *copresence* can further be investigated to examine where tensions and collaborations construct the identity of the WANCD.

Critics of Constructivist Theory dissect the interplay between realism and relativism in social science research, arguing that by witnessing data through the spectacles of subjectivity disallows for any concrete (and hence legitimate) additions to scientific discovery (Andrews, 2012). To refute this claim, Andrews draws on the work of Hammerly’s 1992 work using Constructivism to seek out the *in-between* parts of phenomena, focusing on “representation not reproduction” (Andrews, 2012, p. 42). This study aims to investigate this *in-betweenness* of the

WANCD, to better discern the particularities of this specific locale's identity while also adding to a continuing discourse on the interaction between people and place.

The next section illustrates themes that resulted from the study. The selected parts of participant interviews demonstrate individual and collective patterns of similarities and differences in how they experience their neighborhood space in process. The application of the Social Constructivist theme focuses the results on *how* each person views their space in a larger context of being part of creating that space through their own perceptions, values, and experiences.

Chapter 4

Results

What makes a neighborhood come together to embrace change and create a conservation district? In no small measure, it is a community uniting, in a “bottom-up” sense. This study was set up to investigate shifting social and material processes understood through the personal experiences and meanings found in the landscape experienced by a multitude of stakeholders in the WANCD. In understanding what makes place, investigating the material characteristics as well as investigating social processes can reveal parts of a place’s identity (DeLyser et al., 2010). All data collection was the result of one research question: **How do people experience, participate in, and envision the WANCD?** A theoretical lens of Constructionism was applied to specifically understand how people constructed and created sense of place in the WANCD viewed through their personal and collective experiences. Using the methods of geovisualization (through sketch mapping) and phenomenological qualitative analysis (through open-ended, guided interviews), the transcribed interviews were then reviewed for overlapping themes, which were then sorted down into fewer themes and finally a few key concepts.

This project took on a data-driven look at the “unique” and “historical character” of the WANCD (City of Reno, 2012, p. 2), while also delving deeper into sense of place concepts through experiences, values, and personal connections and meaning stakeholder participants expressed through sketch mapping and interviews. All data was looked at through the lens of understanding how these participants constructed their own sense of place/place attachment ascertained from how they related their personal experiences and attachments, how they participated in place-creation activities, and how they envisioned the area. By connecting these values and attitudes to the physical landscape through mapping and interviews, these participants

expressed what and where this character and history of the WANCD existed, told through the experiences of the people who lived and worked there.

Maps of Meaning

In total, 19 maps were collected from the 23 participants, georeferenced, and then the sketch maps were traced to digitize the data gathered from participants. From this collection of data, 73 individual layered shapefiles were created and pertinent information was added into attribute tables to label aspects of the sketch maps. The maps themselves reference 1. Important places (19 shapefile layers); 2. Perceived neighborhood boundaries (19 shapefile layers); 3. Places of perceived resident involvement (17 shapefile layers); 4. Places of desired change (1 shapefile layers). The four maps below are digitized versions of these perceptions and experiences in the space of the WANCD.

Map 1: Participant Places of Importance in the WANCD

This map is a collection of all participant expressions of their top three to four most important places in the WANCD. The map shows where specific places are important to multiple people, such as Stewart Park, Wells Avenue, the library, Marketon, and Café Deluxe.

Map 2: Participant Perceptions of Boundaries in the WANCD

This map contains an amalgamation of all perceived boundary lines expressed by participants, revealing quite differing perspectives on the bounded identity of the WANCD.

Map 3: Participant Perceived Involvement in the WANCD

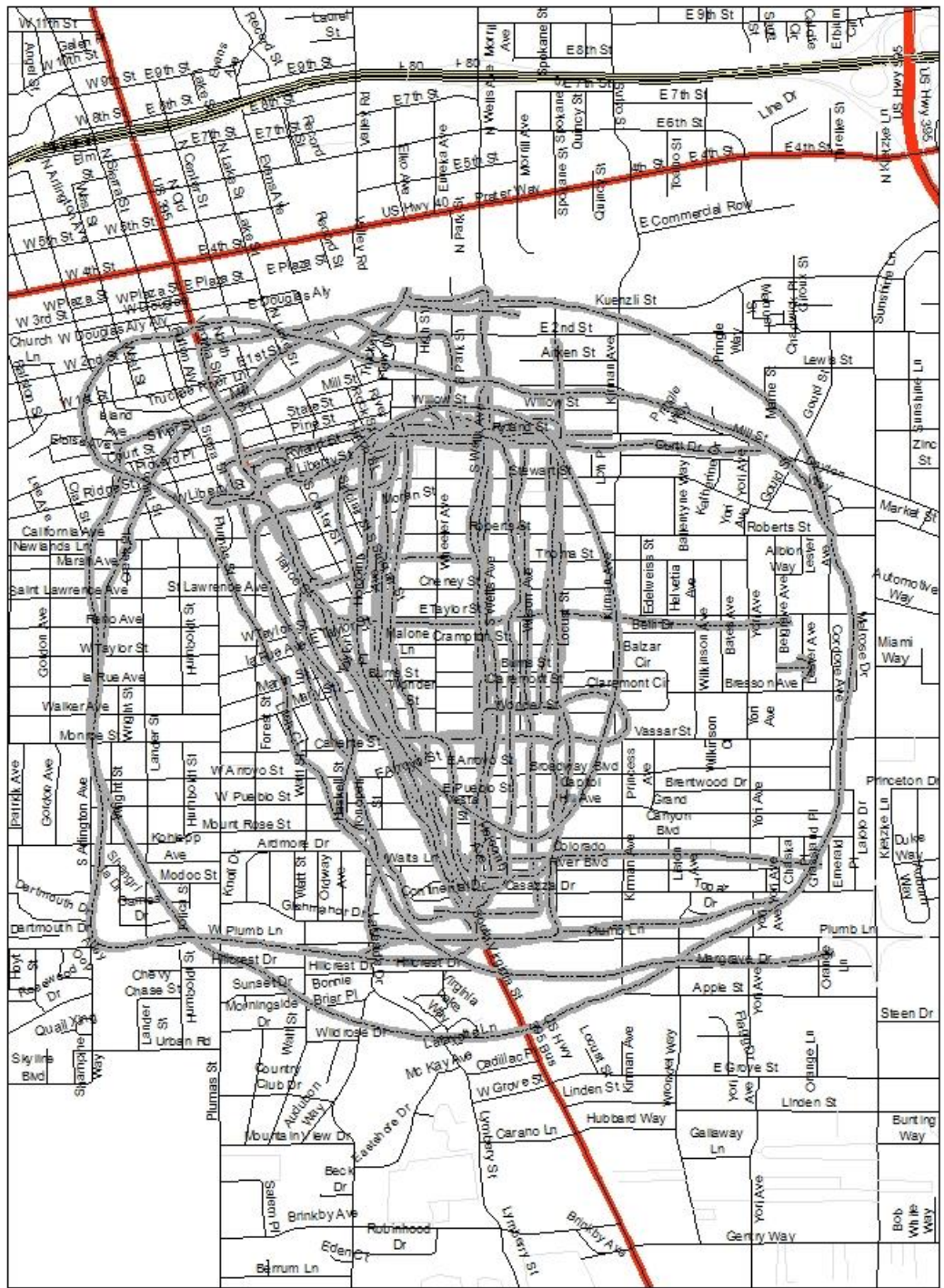
This map shows where participants felt they had involved themselves in some way in the area. Some participants selected pinpointed areas while others drew around much larger areas, such as the boundaries of the WANCD itself or a specific street.

Map 4: Participant Desired Change in the WANCD

This maps shows where people desired change, ranging from entire streetscapes to placing a streetlight in a specific area. Often participants would circle around areas they thought had many run-down apartment buildings, abandoned buildings, or liquor stores.

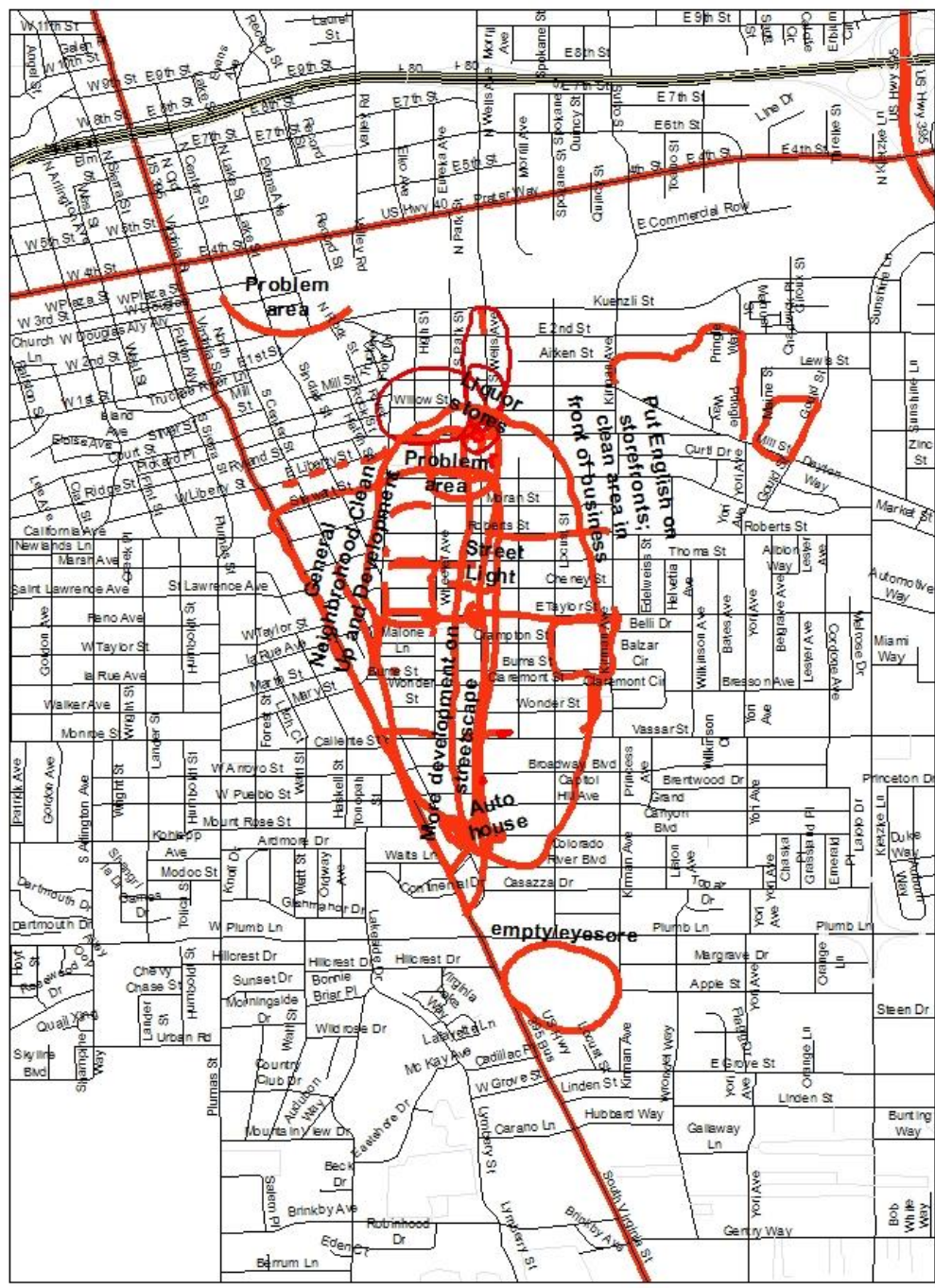
Participant Perceptions of Boundaries in the WANCD

Sketched lines of stakeholder neighborhood boundary perceptions



Participant Desired Change in the WANCD

— Sketched lines of stakeholder desired change



In-Depth Interview Themes

Each participant was part of an extended open-ended interview along with the mapping activity. Interviews ran anywhere from 45 minutes to over two hours, with most averaging a little over an hour. Over 200 pages of transcribed interviews from the 23 participants and 19 interviews were reviewed for overlapping themes, which were then sorted down into fewer themes and finally a few key concepts. Three major themes came through from in-depth analysis of the interviews provided by the participants, with sub-themes that explained more in detail the original three themes.

Theme 1. Character of area represented through perceived diversity and history.

Many respondents related a general “feeling” of the character of the neighborhood intertwined with an overall sense of diversity and historical materialism that was unique to the area in Reno. Participants expressed this through interacting with the diversity of their neighbors and nearby businesses, many in reference to the different ethnicities represented in such close proximity to one another. The general historical feel of the area came from the specifically dated architecture preserved in many of the houses as well as a few historical landmarks.

Theme 2. Character of the area perceived through connections.

This theme was explored in the many ways that participants related their feelings and experiences of connections in the area. This was probably the largest explored theme by participants, as many of them felt a sense of connection or spoke of feeling a lack thereof.

Theme 3. Character of the area perceived through desired

collective and personal action to improve area. Many participants spoke of creating the WANCD through participating in some way in their neighborhood, in the form of singular and collective actions. The following is a deeper exploration of how these themes and sub-themes

emerged through the analysis of the data using participant interview data to show how these themes wove through different participant interviews.

Theme 1: Character of area represented through perceived diversity and history

One of the themes that emerged from the participant interviews was an interest in the perception of diversity and history seen in the landscape of the area. Many participants gave specific interactions or general perceptions of how this added to their overall neighborhood experience as well as how they felt that it added to the overall identity of the neighborhood. Three subthemes that emerged from an analysis of the in-depth interviews were as follows: *1. Perceived diversity of residents and local businesses creating “diverse” neighborhood feel and a unique experience in Reno; 2. Discrimination of diversity adds to outsiders’ perception of the area; 3. Preservation of historical architecture adds to the perceived character of area.*

1. Perceived diversity of residents and local businesses creating “diverse” neighborhood feel and a unique experience in Reno. The idea of diversity was presented by many of the participants, reflected in the nearby businesses as well as through the perception of differing demographics of residents, mainly viewed through ethnicity and age. It is important to note that many of the participants commented on how the already existing diversity of the area was part of what created their sense of a diverse neighborhood, adding to their experience of the WANCD. Some commented on the variety of culture shown in the area during different parts of the year through holidays and festivities. Some spoke of the different restaurants and variety of culture reflected in the businesses, from that of Latino businesses to “Tattooville.” Although many people had different focuses, many of the participants spoke of the “diversity” in the area as part of what created the sense of place of the WANCD and can be seen through the following excerpts from participant interviews.

On speaking about the shifting demographics of residents in the area, one participant spoke of the importance of maintaining diversity in the area because it gave it a certain “feel.”

I think you want to make sure that you are not pushing people out of the neighborhood because you want diversity all around the city... That is part of the feel to begin with, right? *Margot*

Other participants spoke about the ethnic and cultural diversity they felt was represented in the area specifically by the different restaurants.

Everyone else comes here to eat so why go anywhere else? I would say this is the best neighborhood in the world for food. *Andy*

I can't believe all the restaurants we can walk to around here, and so we started counting. We got up to 43 restaurants. Not chain restaurants... a lot of different variety and restaurants like Midtown Eats, the owners live here in the neighborhood, to El Salvadorian restaurants. *Duncan*

Many participants expressed a view that the area was ethnically diverse, creating a diverse sense of feel to the area. One participant related how much the area reminded her of Mexico, where she grew up.

I go through the Latino homes especially around the holidays because they have the lights, the pretty lights. I don't know how to explain it. It's different. Barbecuing outside in the front yard and all that kind of thing... even if you need a Coyote you can find it. You can find anything on Wells Avenue. *Manuela*

Other participants spoke about the array of ethnic shops that lined the street.

The new merchants are coming in which are pretty much immigrants coming from all over. From Hindus to Filipinos, Mexican or El Salvadorian, a big mix of people on the street. It's not just one. You've got Chinese stores, Mexican stores, restaurants... (like) Rapsallion's, which is a fine restaurant on Wells Avenue. *Julio*

Culturally there's a lot more going on here, and I think that's very important. I also love the fact that you see a wider array of ethnicity in this part of town than you do out in the suburbs so you are exposed to a lot of different things. You know there's different foods, there's different music that you hear, and I personally just like a little more diversification. It's less boring. *Bob*

Other participants spoke of the Fiesta on Wells Avenue that showcased the different cultures represented in the area.

We started something back then that we called Fiesta Wells Avenue, and we were actually leaning towards having a multicultural event...the parade itself was unusual because cars would come up from Sacramento, the lowriders, and we had the Mexican horses and the vaqueros dance down the street...and City Council people and the Humane Society...this is a really interesting parade. I love it. *Julia*

This is an international fiesta on Wells Avenue...so I said no it's not going to be Latino. It's going to be international. And that's what I've tried to do is mix this all up. *Manuela*

There was a general idea that there was a range of age in the residents of the area, something that was unique to the makeup of the area.

I wouldn't want to live in a neighborhood where they're all a bunch of old farts like me. *Lee*

I would say the ages are probably like 20 or 35 and then I'd say it kinda jumps from 50 to like 70. It's people that have been here their whole lives or the people that have these new bitchin' condos with yellow paint. *Andy*

And the other thing that I really like too is there is a wide range of ages in the community. And it doesn't seem that the young people in this community are put off by older people as you see in the suburbs. A lot of the younger people that live here are working people or they are going to college...they're a little more involved in their communities. *Bob*

(Our renters' demographic) is really millennials, creative class, knowledge workers, 20 or 30 somethings. We don't have a lot of students, but we do have a lot of people that are just out of school. *Jake*

Another participant expressed the feeling of "creativity" from all of the tattoo shops in the area saying, "It is Tattooville too, like all the tattoo parlors. And I like that. I love the creativity." *Andy*

2. Discrimination of diversity adds to outsiders' perception of the area. Participants also expressed thoughts on outsiders having perceptions of discrimination, specifically in reference to the Latino residential population and businesses. Many participants expressed they felt that the area was viewed as a “ghetto” or other derogatory descriptions by outsiders, specifically in relationship to the ethnicities of people in the area or a sense that the area was itself rundown. Others related how many people thought the area was mainly Latino, although they did not believe that to be the case.

One participant related how he believed many people thought the area was mainly Hispanic, but that he did not perceive that as the case.

The most common complaint I hear is this is a Hispanic neighborhood. I keep telling them it is not. How many businesses on Wells Avenue are owned by Hispanics? Hardly any. There are maybe five or six. There are other businesses that are Caucasian or owned by some other people. I mean I am originally from India. I have been here for forever. There are a couple of liquor stores owned by people from my original country... There was a gas station owned by an Indian person but the general idea of people who don't know this neighborhood is that it's rented by Hispanics. *Amil*

Another participant related the eclectic mix of the area as opposed to being only culturally Latino.

Wells Avenue isn't just Hispanic. It is very eclectic. I mean it's got some very unusual business presence, but it's the place where everybody is accepted. It's not your standard. So it was kind of like the Burning Man of the minority community back in the day. *Julia*

Others related the outside perspectives of friends, government officials, or the general public that the area was not safe.

When we first bought our house a lot of people told us we were crazy. We bought in 2003 and it was, you know it still is, kind of a rundown neighborhood. But all of my friends were telling me we were literally nuts, and we were moving into the ghetto...and saying really kind of racist things about this neighborhood. Why they didn't want to live there. *Sally*

A lot of people were afraid to come to this area because it was mostly Hispanic, and they made it sound like it was a very low income which it was but it wasn't that bad. Then a lot of businesses started coming in, so it started to change a lot, and a lot of businesses have left. A lot of them have left, the Latino businesses. *Manuela*

I found this apartment and some people told me that it was the ghetto in the city. But since I came here I just love it. *Maria*

I've had a lot of friends come over and they always thought it was kind of ghetto but once they saw my house and my neighbors, they have a newfound respect for this area. They are not shying away and saying you are on Wells, you live in the ghetto. It's not the ghetto... It's been like "you can't walk down here at night," "You can't park your car here and go to an event. You don't leave your car here overnight" and stuff like that. I think that is a huge misconception. Then again sometimes it happens but I think that it's one of the safest areas I've ever had to walk around. I am proud of where I live. *Andy*

Some perceptions of the customer is that it's dangerous over there because of all of those Spanish signs. *Tony*

The city saw this neighborhood as a neighborhood in transition. In other words it was a place to dump people, rentals, low cost housing... they had nothing invested in the neighborhood, but this has changed. *Jim*

Everybody calls it the Mexican Street now or the hood or the dangerous street but this street is just like any other place. We got drugs, we've got family issues. *Julio*

3. Preservation of historical architecture adds to perceived character of area. Many participants spoke of the historical materiality as part of what created the character of the WANCD, specifically focusing on the architecture of homes as well as other buildings in the neighborhood.

One woman explained how she enjoyed walking the neighborhood and admiring the different kinds of historical architecture.

I just like walking around them (houses in the area), looking at the architecture. I am really interested in architecture. *Sally*

One man spoke about his own interest in historical architecture as an impetus for living in the area.

I have made a living as a constructionist, and one of our major specialties has been historical renovation...and I've always just like the older houses. And this house in particular I've always kind of admired just because I love the way it looks, the way it was laid out with the brick and all of that. *Jacob*

Another participant spoke to the historical architecture of the houses as being a major attracting factor for redevelopers.

What we did with the conservation district is really a tool for people who want to invest in the neighborhood because what we wanted to do was preserve the historical character of the neighborhood. There are some beautiful brick homes, beautiful older homes there so we really wanted to preserve that. And now you've got investors coming in and rehabilitating those historical homes. It is really cool to see. *Margot*

Another woman spoke of specific quirky and varied historical landmarks on Wells Avenue that added to the sense of place of the area.

When I talk about rundown places here I think about, like, the Wonder Bar. That's kind of a historical building with some of the most unique characters. You don't want that to go away so...when I talk about façade, you can't change the Wonder Bar. You just can't. You can't change the Irish bars, you just can't because that is who they are....Now we looked at it as a historical district, but we also looked at it as a very unique aspect of Reno because so many minority group from the Basques to the Italians, the ranchers, the farmers, had all been on Wells Avenue as kind of a startup business district until they moved on to bigger and better things. *Julia*

Another spoke about how a specific restaurant incorporated historical photos of the area to show the need for preservation of the historical character.

There's an important historical preservation there (at Café Deluxx) that I value...she's got historic Reno photos and things on the wall so she's created that connection to our history as well as sort of an education point around the history there as well as the neighborhood history. *Helen*

Another woman spoke of how the historical architecture drew her to the neighborhood.

Having grown up in Las Vegas, having no historical homes anywhere around, one of the things I really loved about Reno was an abundance of really cute, historic properties. Specifically the brick, bungalow styles here is what I fell in love with. *Danielle*

Perceptions of participants about the area showed specific aspects of diversity and history in the landscape that added to their sense of place in the area. This, in part, derived from the diversity seen through a wide variety of cultures, businesses, and the history seen through historical architecture. These topical aspects of sense of place explained and revealed aspects of WANCD character seen through external factors. A second theme that was spoken about widely in many different ways by different participants was the idea of connection and community, which will be explored in the next section.

Theme 2: Character of the area perceived through connections. Sense of community was another response by many of the participants as to part of what made up their experience in the area, although there were many different ideas of what that meant. A few of the sub-themes that emerged under this grouping of community and connections were as follows: *1. Connections experienced through general feelings of belonging; 2. Connections experienced through the physical landscape of walkability and few garages; 3. Connection into different micro-communities; 4. Experienced connection through a desire for change through action; 5. Connection to a personalized sense of history traced in the landscape; 6. Experienced connection or disconnection across community divides.* This section reveals many different aspects of the way community can be formed and people seek connection through their landscapes. The use of a Constructivist lens to reveal aspects of what makes a sense of place also reveals unique ties to the landscape of how people can form bonds to both others in their area as well as the area itself.

1. Connections experienced through general feelings of belonging. Some participants expressed a sentiment that part of their neighborhood experience revolved around people being friendly and knowing one another in the area. They expressed the general value of feeling connected and a sense of belonging as important to their community experience and what made their general sense of place in the WANCD. Often, participants revealed their own values of desiring connecting to their community and neighbors as an aspect of what they wanted from a place and in part what attracted them to the WANCD.

Two participants relate their values of connecting to their neighbors, something they experienced in the WANCD.

Community is where you have a group of people where whether their culture factors into it or not, they actually care about each other. They care about wanting to be part of the greater whole that has purpose to itself... We do try to get to know our neighbors when they move in and befriend them and be kind to them no matter who they are. ...It's if you are a good person or not. And we've done quite well. The people who live around us ...have good thoughts, and they care. *Jonathan*

My definition of community is connection, right, so all of those connections with the people on my block, are people I know and trust and have a shared history with. That's what makes up my community and all that is what makes me feel safe in my neighborhood. It's what makes me feel like it's my place because that's where my connections are... I mean we have these personal and emotional connections...they are sort of geographically oriented, and they are around that fact that we live in this shared geographical space that is a neighborhood. *Helen*

Other participants related the close connections they felt to people in their geographical neighborhood that gave them a sense of “love” and “belonging” for the area.

I love this neighborhood. I wouldn't trade it for anything...It is the closeness of people who live here. They know each other. You talk to them. You say hi...That's why...I see someone and I say, “Oh how is your business doing?” So it makes a big difference. You feel so good about each other. If you are in a big place, you don't know the people. You can be in business for years, and you never know who is doing the other business. But here you know each other. I can stand on the sidewalk and believe me, you can see

people honking at me. All day long...That is why I love this place. People know each other. *Amil*

“Love (begins to cry). The community is real special. The people around here are very special to me.” *Manuela*

(The neighborhood) offers me a sense of belonging. I feel like I belong to this tribe, and it’s kind of tribal as far as what it means to me...I protect a lot of it because I think of it as protecting my livelihood as well. You know when somebody’s doing something to damage the neighborhood and it starts running down, my livelihood is at stake too. But friendship, yeah friendship and sense of belonging... it’s my childhood neighborhood only here. *Tony*

2. Connections experienced through the physical landscape of walkability and few garages. Many participants related how the landscape itself facilitated more connections with neighbors, commenting on their perceptions that many people walked through the neighborhood and a lack of garages as reasons people felt they interacted more on a daily basis with their neighbors, adding to their sense of place.

Walkability in the landscape: Many participants specifically commented on the walkability of the neighborhood as a way to get to know the area and others in the area.

I definitely feel a sense of community on Wells Avenue because I walk around here all the time. I stick out, and I say hi to people, and they say hi back...I know all the people at 7-Eleven, I know all the people at Jimboys, I know all the people at the movie theater, and when I say, “Hey have a beautiful day,” people are like, “Wow. Thank you.”...I try to practice these principles in all my affairs. *Oscar*

Others related walking their dogs as ways they got to meet their neighbors.

So a lot of it is just the dog walks. Just walking through the neighborhood and talking to people and seeing people. *Sally*

Well the neighbors, they walk their dogs around here all the time. They know my name, and I know their name, and we share flowers with each other. Like they bring me plants...One lady decided to dig out all of her mother hens and bring them over here and said she wanted to trade them for some of the rocks in my parkway. So we did that. That

feels like an old-school neighborhood where I was born and raised everybody knew everybody and took care of everybody. *Linda*

When I came here at first I started to know the neighborhood by walking and walking. One day that way, one day the other way...And sometimes I walked down to the river and further...And you know when you are walking, many of the other people you see in the (WOW) meetings are in the street walking too, walking dogs or walking by themselves. Just to see the people it feels like a small town, a small area here. *Maria*

This is a very walkable neighborhood. Wells Avenue has a lot of people walking, a lot of older people walking, a lot of people walking from business-to-business because they are close together...the chamber really stepped in to advocate...for a walkable Main Street. *Julia*

It isn't just in this neighborhood, it's a transformation of people's desires about where they live and how they live and being able to walk and/or bicycle to restaurants or entertainment or employment. *Jim*

Well it's definitely becoming more community-oriented and people are coming from the neighborhood and a lot of people are riding their bikes or walking. *Tony*

So I think it is really going to help continue the momentum of the conservation district and make it that much more desirable for people to live there because they can walk or bike to all of these great restaurants and bars, the Discovery Museum if they have kids and now UNR, certain parts of UNR. I think that is super, super important. *Jake*

When we are walking we get to meet the neighbors and stop and talk...and so you kind of get to know who lives in your neighborhood, and you get to look at the different houses, architecture, and what they're doing in their yards. *Lupita*

I would say as far as the importance of our house in this neighborhood is our front porch because will sit out there on our front porch and people walk by we don't know...But they kind of look up and we say hi...and you get a conversation going so you meet all kinds of people in the neighborhood. *Duncan*

We wanted to start this energy of people being able to walk up and down the district...we really wanted to make it a pedestrian friendly environment. *Margot*

Few garages in the landscape: A few participants commented on the lack of garages in the area as a reason that they thought that they connected to their neighbors, mainly because

most houses had older, detached garages or none at all, forcing people to park on the street and hence interact with their neighbors.

We don't just drive our cars into our garages and disappear into the house. Most of us park in the street. I see my neighbors every morning and a different set every evening. As I'm leaving in the morning and coming home at night there is always somebody out to stop and talk to. You know you swap recipes or plants or whatever. So it's just kind of a real engaged social environment that I don't think you get in most places. I've never lived in a neighborhood that had this before. Except for maybe when I was a little kid. And played with the other little kids in the street. *Sally*

That is one of the things that comes along with the foot traffic. People aren't just getting in their cars and going somewhere. Because you see the neighbors and you kind of know who they are...there is a good sense of community. *Jacob*

3. Connection experienced through micro-communities. Although many of the participants related a general sense of friendliness and interacting with their neighbors as part of the place creation of their neighborhood, others focused on specific micro-communities in the area that they perceived as creating a major part of their daily interactions. These participants expressed more about the communities within their own world in the neighborhood that was very specific to a few places, unlike others who felt the community was a larger neighborhood status.

One participant focused on the recovery culture found in the area that he said was due to three major recovery houses being located along Wells Avenue within walking distance of his house. He expressed the major role that community played in his life and as a focal point of the area for him.

There is also an incredible recovery culture in Reno. And it's all based right around here... So that's the reason why I am proud of Wells Avenue, is that it is such an integral part of the recovery community in this town. And there are a lot of people that come from all over the world to come to do some of our conventions and stuff like that because the more hard-core it is, being a 24-hour town...you know if we can do it, anyone can do it. So that is the Triangle Club and the Dryers Club. *Oscar*

For business owners, many of them viewed their stores as micro-community spaces. One woman who owned a bar in the area spoke about how her bar had formed its own sense of community.

What do I love about my bar? That it feels good when you walk in...I'm a firm believer that when you come into a bar, you should be comfortable. And I'm real good about you know, "Ron this is Jeff this is JB"...it's just what I do. If they don't know each other I make sure that they meet each other. And the place is so small that we do what you do in a bar. We talk. And the first time they come in I'll introduce them around. And if they keep coming back they end up being comfortable. And I have people that I've seen the entire time that I have been in this bar. They keep coming back because even if I don't remember their name, I remember what they drink. I try to make it so that it is like that.
Sandy

A business owner of a local tattoo parlor expressed the micro-community he felt in his business that helped create the feel of the area.

The community comes to me...the stuff that I learned I know because people tell me. I've got a guy telling me how he lives in the neighborhood...A lot of them (my clients) live within this area...(they) tell me all the stories. *Julio*

Others spoke of how they felt their businesses added to creating a greater sense of community in the surrounding area. One participant viewed her participation to create change in the community in the form of her bookstore that she had for many years, saying:

Z Books improves the community...people said we were an icon, a Reno icon... I know people came from all over the community, Susanville, Truckee, Elko to come to my store...There were people from all over the world who said when they got off the plane they would come to my store and then go to their motel they were regular customers.
Linda

Another related things his business did for the community at large.

Yes I participate. I do a lot of things for the schools. I've done a lot of things with my kids because of my tattooing...Those are the things I do for my community. I give out gift certificates or stuff to all kinds of kids dying from cancer, and I do some events for breast cancer too. *Julio*

Another related how her store became a place people could come to look for different ways to connect into the community at large.

So people would come into the shop, and I have been in the system at one time, being out there a lot. I knew where I could send woman with no papers. I knew where I could send somebody to a doctor. I mean illegally. I was there... I had a garden out front and my garden consisted of all kinds of vegetables. And I had little baskets. And the ladies would come and pick tomatoes and vegetables that they needed for the day... I never turned anybody down. *Manuela*

Another spoke of her bar as a drop-off center for people in need.

I'm going to be a drop-off center so I can get (items) to the people who need it the most ... It's been a bar since, I've got it traced back late 50s early 60s and it's been a neighborhood corner bar forever. And I intend to keep it that way. *Sandy*

Some participants expressed that they felt a sense of micro-community with other people who had bought fixer-uppers in the area.

We didn't just get a house and a yard, we got this huge group of people that a lot of them started moving in about the time we did. And everybody was kind of doing the same thing. You know like everyone was buying these old junkie rentals, houses that had really just gone downhill. You know bringing them back to life, planting things, and getting to know each other, and being involved... we can all be friends and kind of have the shared vision and yet be very different people together. So I love the socialness, I love the camaraderie and just a sense of that we have a purpose and we are doing something that is kind of bigger than each individual house or each individual person... I think there is a huge camaraderie between all the fixer – uppers. We all have kind of the same kind of stories. *Sally*

The funny thing that I notice when we are at each other's homes is we are going in the basement and we are going to see this and that and we start talking about the historical aspects of our homes, which is really kind of fun. Especially when the people that are living there know so much about the history of their house. ...It's the best icebreaker ever. So many conversations come out of it. *Susan*

Well it's interesting when you have something that's kind of the common bond like these old houses. You want to take care of them and other people see it and there is an enthusiasm. So through the whole time we were working on this we had people just come and knock on the door and say, "Can I see what you're doing?" and we'd say, "Sure."

Then they would say, “Oh you have to come on over to my place and I’ll show you what I’ve done.” Then all of a sudden it becomes that you know your neighbors, and you see them every day and help if they need help doing something. *Bob*

I want people to come to the area and say, “This is great, all these great fixer-upper here. I’m going to buy one, and I’m going to create a neighborhood that I can live in.” And that’s what my goal is. Take this area, which like we said, we call the island, and make it into a place where people want to live, not just come because it’s cheap rent. *Duncan*

4. Experienced connection through a desire for change through action. Ideas of “cleaning up” the neighborhood varied as well. Multiple participants spoke of the neighborhood cleanups started by the local neighborhood group. Others related that they felt a sense of community by wanting to be part of organizations that aimed their goals at changing the community for what they believe to be the better. Others spoke of maintaining the upkeep of their homes as part of the cleanup and improvement of the area.

Well I mean we’ve cleaned up the neighborhood. We are fixing up our houses...we’ve gotten the historic designation. That is really important to me, living in a historic district. That is a really wonderful thing and that wouldn’t have happened if... a lot of us hadn’t gone out and worked on it. It doesn’t just happen by itself. Cleaning up the neighborhood and making a community doesn’t just happen. It is a lot of active participation and a lot of hours...that is something that makes the neighborhood a more inviting and beautiful place. *Sally*

Another participant spoke of the mindset of the people who helped create change in the area.

Progressive thinking... There is so much potential in this area with the historical character in particular and I think, (the residents) saw the potential, and it’s all a mindset. It’s all a mindset that people want to see. It truly is. I think this (city) plan will be recognized in the nation for what people can do when they come together...but I want to emphasize this. This wouldn’t have happened without the community... Without the Wells Avenue community this wouldn’t have happened. I mean I don’t care how good an elected official is for an area, without the support of the community, the people who live, work, and play there, you are not going to see something like this take shape. So really I give them all the credit for what they have done and what they have accomplished.

Margot

I participate. I like to participate. (When I moved here) it was nice, the neighborhood, at that time but it was dangerous. Now it is better. It is improving a lot...I have been part of that, so yes it is changing with new trees and new lights on the street. The police participate more. They are taking care of things too. It is very nice. And I like the people here. *Maria*

We started researching the community and found out about West of Wells, and we also found out about Midtown Merchants and that East of Wells has an association as well. So we kind of just started getting involved that way. *Bob*

About 1999, RTC and the city decided they were going to redesign the whole street...everything, sidewalks, street lights everything. That's when all the business owners got together, and that's when I started the Wells Avenue Merchant Association ... (a city planner) decided that we're going to do some pedestrian friendly redesign of the whole street, and so she started holding workshops over here at the Veterans school and all the business owners were showing up and all the neighbors were showing up and we were starting to form a neighborhood group. That's really when it all started because we all had a common cause. *Tony*

(WOW) had been a neighborhood watch years for before and it kind of went down, and then they decided they were coming back...so we went not knowing anybody really in the neighborhood...we decided we wanted to see what was going on and what can we do to make it a better neighborhood. *Lupita*

Safety was also an important experience of one participant who related how that had changed in the area since people began getting more involve with improving the area and how connecting to her neighbors was part of that.

Another way that you make the neighborhood safer is that you connect and get to know each other and look out for each other that people are accountable to each other. You know that when you see a crime or something happening you are not just an island. If you don't know what to do, you don't feel safe, you let your neighbor know. One of you call the police, and it's all those connections, that network that makes a neighborhood safe and also creates more accountability. Just a team to look out and raise your voice against things that you see that may be unsafe and technically illegal...we created the group to be both to improve the safety but the other part of that is improving the physical landscape so if there's a lot of blight that makes a neighborhood unsafe. Also it encourages more crime so we reduced blight in a number of ways by taking a lead on projects that are actually physical improvements to the neighborhood. *Helen*

Two participants spoke of problematic buildings close to their home and what one referred to as “inappropriate infill” (large, cinderblock apartment buildings that did not meet city zoning codes built close to their house). They specifically pointed to a run-down market taking part in perceived illegal actions and a perceived slum house which they referred to as ‘Psycho House’ full of “drugs, violence, guns, everything.” They said the house was specifically problematic because it was owned by a prominent political family in Reno.

Jim: Well yeah, there were lots of problems and this in one of the things that the neighborhood group organized around... It got so bad that a family got a restraining order (on his neighbor) to keep him away. They evicted him, and I was involved, and I had windows broken on my pickup truck and tires slashed, and we had some kind of a pellet gun... anyway there was retribution.

Patty: They (residents of Psycho House) would be out there and ‘F___ You’ on the porch and the guys with the Nazi uniforms.

Jim: Yeah one of the brothers sat out there with an SS uniform and a sub machine gun and they butchered dogs and hung belts over the front porch.

Patty: And see what we are going to tell you is you know the federal building... well it’s that family so it was very difficult for us to fight that.

5. Connection to a personalized sense of history traced in the landscape. Many participants related how their connection to the sense of history in the area was an important part of their day-to-day neighborhood experience and overall feel. Some spoke of the general history that they valued being preserved while others expressed their sense of place connection with specific people in the past who had lived in their homes. These connections were expressed by finding remnants of former house residents and by doing historical research to learn more about these individuals, creating personalized connections felt across temporal landscapes.

One of the reasons I was drawn to this neighborhood in the first place was the history of the homes. To me, history is important because it connects us to our past and that way we

can know where we came from and where we are going. That to me is a part of it. I feel like our history and having a sense of history and also a connection to it is part of what brings value to the neighborhood and to any neighborhood. My home is a historic home, and I love the elements of it. *Helen*

Well I think we have a lot of people in the neighborhood who are really interested in the history and so that is kind of another thing that brings us together and pulls us forward. It's another thing that makes us want this to be a great neighborhood because it does have such an amazing history. I still think someday in 50 years they'll be looking out at some of the developments on the edge of town that right now really don't seem to have a lot of history, they are just kind of raw houses on the landscape. But as time passes, and you start understanding what's there now and what was there, I think it's a way to bring people together and make people aware of the world around you. *Sally*

Others related to memories they had of how the neighborhood had been when they had first moved here.

The roundabout that used to be like a horse ranch, all that. So I used to be on Crampton and Wells. I was on Crampton and Wells across the street before the park went in. I was in the house now that is the insurance company, but when I was there, across the street was a skating rink...The fire department used to dump all their extra water there and during the winter would freeze so everybody used it as a skating rink. *Manuela*

Another participant related the history of the place he remembered from living in the area since 1950.

Yes there were a lot more trees. I don't know if you would call it a tributary, but there was a stream coming off of Virginia Lake. A few of them actually headed toward the river, and one of them came between these two properties. In an aerial view of the old one you can see the cottonwood trees that grew alongside it because they usually grow up next to the streams, and there was another part of it that was about two blocks to the west of us here and this one got closed off early...as a small child I would go collect crawdads in the creek. That was during the area when the V&T railroad was going through here...Well it was gone by the time I was probably three or four. My mother told me stories of pushing me down to the railroad tracks in a stroller and my sister who was two years older than me would walk alongside of her. I don't really have any memories of being there except for a couple places where they didn't take the railroad ties out. They would take the track off but the ties are still on the ground. *Jonathan*

One participant related her desire to have a different kind of history written about the area, specifically about the Latino culture.

Even though the stories haven't been written yet they will be written. And someday up on the walls we are going to see the pictures of the Latino businesses just the way that we see the Basque businesses and the Italian businesses that all came through Wells Avenue.
Julia

Part of the experience of the history of the place was expressed through the intimate stories from people of the past that current tenants had found or incorporated into their daily lives. This created a multi-layered temporal aspect to their experience, at times knowing parts of the personal life stories of these previous tenants in their homes and finding their remnants in the material landscape.

One woman, who was herself a historian, spoke of the personal histories of the house she had discovered through her own research. She even spoke of much of the back history of some of the people who had lived there, knowing their names and intimate pieces of their lives.

What I could tell you, we have done our house history....First of all I like knowing I live in a house that, I like knowing things about it. I'm interested in the traces that people leave behind of themselves...if you've ever been over to one of our parties, (my husband) takes people into the basement and shows the scraps of paper down there that someone burned. And it's still down there. Like they were burning evident from some insurance scam they were trying to run or something...So we like to say what you have there was a murder, or insurance stuff going on here. We like to exaggerate like a good ghost story. So I think it's fun to see the traces of things that people leave behind. And I say that someday I'm going to be the ghost in this house, and if anyone ever remodels my kitchen boy are they going to be sorry. *Sally*

She went on to explain a major reason for feeling so connected to the stories of the place of the neighborhood.

I think a lot of people in this neighborhood...They are just really interested in the neighborhood history. It just kind of a way of putting yourself in the bigger picture just kind of knowing that other people are going to come along after you. Just like we moved in here and made this our home someday someone else is going to. And they are going to

have their own stories and their own memories. And I like being part of that bigger chain—there's a lot more to come as well as knowing what was behind. *Sally*

Another two participants spoke about a lighting fixture her and her husband had made from a piece of wood they found in the attic with the name of the original owner from 1910 on it.

Susan: See that name? (She points to the light fixture above the table that reads L. H. Fox). My husband found that when he was in the attic replacing all the old knob and tubes...and (a local historian) had done some research on the house, and L. H. Fox was the second owner of this house, and he was the first secretary of the YMCA in Reno....

Bob: (Points to the light fixture) That was probably part of the shipment of lumber and Reno was so small then they didn't even have to put down the street address, they just put this is going to L. H. Fox in Reno and somebody probably just said L. H. Fox lives up on the hill...And so when I saw that, and (a local historian) told us what that was, and I found out it was actually from 1910, I thought well that's kind of slick. I mean that piece of wood is over 100 years old. So I just trimmed it down and made a little light fixture out of it so L. H. Fox would always have a place in the house.

One participant spoke of the pride he saw in the handiwork of the house in the way it was built.

The Truckee River didn't used to flow through downtown so a lot of low income housing was over here, and the houses were built by people with their hands. They didn't have some company come in and build most of the homes here... And I mean the craftsmanship on these wood paneling going around, you just never see that....Just simple things like that. The wood work on these frames... the fact that someone putting that much detail into one little piece instead of just slapping a wood frame around it. Those are all separate pieces, and they all fit in a certain way to match this...it gives you more of a sense of feeling that someone took pride in building this house. It wasn't just, "We are going to build this house to sell. We are going to build this house to live in so it stands for a long time and someone else could come in and appreciate it." *Andy*

Another spoke about knowing that the stones in her fireplace of her house from 1906 came from a local quarry, now the neighborhood park.

My fireplace was hand laid with stone from here, probably from down the street from Stewart Park which was originally a quarry and then was a dump and there's all these river stones that came right from the ground within probably blocks of here. (A local historian) knows who the mason was who likely did my fireplace. You'll see that throughout the neighborhood. A lot of homes have the chimneys and then the hearths on

the inside and outside that are made out of small river stone, and you can still see the fingerprints. *Helen*

She further related a story she had learned about a former resident who had planted rose bushes 50 years ago:

I met a guy who was friends with the son who lived here...he must have been friends with him in the 60s or 70s so that means that the original family must have been here for at least 50 years. He said that he was always having to go home to water his mom's roses and that's the story of my life because they are in much of the outside landscaping and there isn't any irrigation. There's so many rosebushes that I'm always watering in the summer. I'm sort of chained to my house in the summer because there's so much irrigation, and I just thought that it's such a funny story that he was always having to go home to water for his mom who would have been elderly, and that's what I do. I didn't know if some of the rose bushes were original, but I imagine now that they are from that story. *Helen*

Another participant spoke about the traces left in the house he and his son lived in representing five generations living in the house since his grandparents had built it in the 1920s with his great-grandparents.

I'm the 4th generation living in the family home...It gives me a lot of pride in them and a lot of respect for what they did and that they actually sawed the wood and built it themselves...It gives me a feeling that this needs to be protected and this needs to be taken care of...My great-grandparents told my grandparents when they were building it that they wanted this house to stay in the family...that hopefully it would bring about that meaning...that unity. *Jonathan*

He also spoke of connecting with flowers planted in his yard, the very same ones his grandmother had planted when it was her home.

We grow peonies in the backyard in this one area that were my grandmother's favorite. And so when they bloom, usually around Memorial Day, we will pick those and take them to the cemetery to place on her grave and on my grandfather's and my aunt's graves. And there's Tiger Lilies which were a favorite of my fathers. We harvest those which bloom at the same time and some heritage roses along the side of the house that were my mother's, the really old-fashioned ones that get really big and are really pungent. And we take this to the cemetery for her throughout the year and lilacs and it

goes on and on and on...plants that they liked when they lived here so they planted them, and we kept them and they're still growing right where they were from a long time ago.

Jonathan

Another woman spoke of the little historical research she had in accordance with physical attributes of her house possibly being a place to store bootleg liquor in the 1920s.

(Our house) was built by a guy by the name of Phil Curti. And the little bit of research that I have done, when the property was bought it was actually in the name of his wife Catherine Curti which is a bit unusual... You can speculate...he was a bootlegger. And then there are records to prove that...He ran nightclubs...during prohibition... There were rumors about a secret room in the basement. There is actually a room in the basement that is all partitioned off with masonry that may have had a concealed door into it or something. At one time there was a conveyor that ran down into the basement down the stairs...It might have been to take the booze in and out. That is all speculation, but it is a little unusual. *Linda*

One man who had done ample research on the previous tenants of his home, related specifically to the personality types that he thought had inhabited the home over 100 years, himself included.

When the Maccabees lived here and the Fonts lived here there were groups coming here to meet for different organizations and then parties announced on social pages...having a party for this group at (our home) on such and such a day. And so we continue the tradition...It's a party house, and it's a spot where you know the neighborhood says "Oh these guys are having a party"...so I'll sit here, and I will look at all the people gathered here laughing and joking, drinking my wine and my bourbon...and I sit back, and I think this is been going on here for nearly a century. *Duncan*

Another woman spoke of the importance of her connection to one of the previous owners of her home.

I am looking through these old pane glass windows...seeing the same things as all of the previous residents here have seen so naturally I was curious and I began doing a little research...And I found out that it was associated with a very prominent Reno musician and dance hall owner named Tony Pacitti... Everyone called him Uncle Tony. I've spoken to his niece on the phone. She was 73-years-old. She used to live in this house. And I've read pretty much every newspaper article that has ever been written about Tony...And he was just a really fun guy, Uncle Tony. He was such a positive, upbeat person it's almost like getting to know who he was has helped me navigate owning these properties and being a landlord and having a positive attitude...I am only the third owner

of this property...And so there is a lot that has been preserved here, stories that have been preserved. Through my research...getting to know who Tony was, it makes my experience here even better. *Danielle*

5. Experienced connection or disconnection across community divides. Another experience was that of outlying communities, wherein some participants felt that there was a cross connection and others felt that they were disconnected completely. One woman acknowledged cultural divides in the area but saw it as a place to bring these cultures together.

That mile and a half stretch of Wells Avenue at that time indicated to us...how accepting the general community was going to be with our efforts as the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Because our general community wasn't really with the program on what the Hispanic community was and what the transition from the Hispanic community meant to Reno and Sparks as a whole...it gave us all a tremendous opportunity to have public dialogue about the Hispanic mindset, Hispanic economics, Hispanic education, Hispanic work, and Hispanic work ethic. So it was a fabulous platform to be able to present a positive side of what the Hispanic community means to Reno, Nevada. *Julia*

This same participant related why the diversity in the area was important to the neighborhood experience but also the bigger experience of Reno as a whole in shifting demographics and relations to those changes. She related a story when a local politician asked her why she had put so much work into Wells Avenue.

And he's like, "What is it with you in this mile and a half of the street?" and I said, "Because of the history that I have had in trying to educate the community to diversify, that diversity isn't threatening. It isn't a bad thing...it is a symbiotic relationship. Just because somebody speaks Spanish doesn't mean that they are a criminal. It means they are a criminal because they are an idiot not because they are Hispanic. What about this guy over here who doesn't speak any Spanish..."and that mile and a half of the street represented to me personally, that are we going to get past this fear, this discomfort with the Hispanic community? Are we finally going to get to where we are an inclusive community, where Reno, Nevada can finally be inclusive? And that is what Wells Avenue means to me. *Julia*

Another participant related his experiences of how he felt about his role as part of a gentrification process.

You know I had issues in the back of my mind about gentrification and displacing people, but I don't think it's as big of an issue as I maybe would have thought it was. Because it is happening slowly, the change is happening slowly. I mean this house was abandoned for five years...If I had displaced a family, I would have felt bad...But this place was abandoned...Most of the people that we deal with in the community, like in the Latino community and the merchants...we have great relationships with them. I think they are happy to see us because we are in their place and buying their products, eating their food, bringing our friends there, creating more customers. I think they are happy that we are patronizing their place and enjoy their food and their products and their hospitality. They treat us well, and we treat them well, and I think that is a great relationship. *Bob*

Others expressed feeling as though they were not part of a community, and instead felt animosity with their neighbors.

No one really talks to anybody... But we don't really do anything as a community because we don't really have a movement or anything. As this area progresses, it's progressing because people are putting more money into it, but they are not necessarily putting more thought into it. *Andy*

A merchant expressed how he felt excluded because of the kind of business that he ran, a tattoo parlor.

I am excluded from the business part. They don't invite me and I don't care... Yeah we (tattoo artists) don't belong in the business world. We are less than other businesses. I am never considered a real business guy... I talked to other business people. The best answer that they give me at the end is damn I didn't know you knew so much. I didn't know you were even intelligent. I thought you are just a tattoo guy, crazy guy...I've been to meetings. I have been to business meetings and stuff like that where I am trying to associate with other businesses, and do the connections and let's get together and all that and I become the tattoo guy with joke questions...I become the butt joke of the place...a long time ago I stopped trying to associate. *Julio*

Another woman spoke of her animosity with some of the Latino businesses on the street.

They alienate what could be huge revenue for them. Why? I just don't understand it. On the street if you go into one of the shops, they are not welcoming...you see a lot of the Mexican storefronts, and they'll have the neon posterboard, and it will just be hand written and they don't even try to make it look nice. But it's all in Spanish... You are less likely to go in there if none of the signs are in English... a neon posterboard doesn't draw people to the street. Nobody drives down Wells Avenue and says, I'm going to park and

walk around and shop...Every time I go into Marketon I feel uncomfortable...it diverts a lot of business away from the street. *Sandy*

The ideas of connection in community and the landscape come through as major aspects of the participants overall feel of sense of place, experience, values, and perceptions of the area. The next section delves deeper into the ideas of how participants feel they have been part of enacting change in the area.

Theme 3. Participating in creating the WANCD through action and change.

Participants were specifically asked about their own involvement in the area as well as what they envisioned for the future or would like to see change. The following comments relate how people were personally involved in how they believed they were changing their neighborhood as well as some of the issues they spoke about wanting to see change. These were expressed in the following sub-themes: 1. *Individuals being involved in small changes*; 2. *Active participation in community organizations*; 3. *Desire for change seen in property cleanup, blight reduction, and change in upkeep of abandoned buildings and absentee landlords*; 4. *A general change in attitude*; 5. *A change in investment in the area*; 6. *A change in feelings of empowerment through action*; 7. *Reduction in perception of crime/ improved safety*.

1. Individuals being involved in small changes. Many of the participants expressed their own small contributions as part of their involvement in the area. One woman expressed how she quickly covered up graffiti on her business wall.

You know like the graffiti thing, I've got a five-gallon bucket of white paint. You hit my bar, I paint over it immediately. That is the key to stopping your place from getting tagged. Because if nobody sees their artwork, you become a waste of their spray paint. And I had my kids put the word out that this bar is off-limits. *Sandy*

Another participant talked about constantly picking up trash when he went for walks in the neighborhood.

When I would go for walks, I would always bring a garbage bag... you go for a walk you bring a garbage bag. You just pick up garbage along the way. That's just what you do, you pick up garbage along the way. *Oscar*

Another participant spoke of painting over a wall that had been graffitied with his own art.

I've got tagging on my back fence. Me and (my girlfriend) went out there and just put paint on our hands and covered it up. *Andy*

Another resident spoke of documenting the history of the area as part of her participation.

I would say of all the things (I have participated in) my work with Stewart Park... To just find the history and to do a little research and stuff. I think I was the first person to put everything together on Stewart Park, and now I am re-photographing it so that I am carrying that history into the future. *Sally*

Other spoke of community gatherings as their part of feeling being active in changing the area.

That is when I had my garden. I had a big backyard. We used to have parties back there... That was where our community was in the back because I had built a big wood awning with a big platform. *Manuela*

I love it, and I'm so happy to see it coming up and people being excited about it and people doing cleanups and planting trees and going to city council together. Most of all having our New Year's party, our progressive New Year's party, which is just the best. It's a symbol of where we've come, it really is. *Patty*

2. Active participation in community organizations. Other participants expressed being active in community organizations as the way they perceived themselves affecting change in the area. One participant talked about being part of the WAMPA.

I'm a member of the (Wells Avenue) Merchant and Property Owner's Association. Actually it's merchant and property owners' altogether. We have meeting once every three months and quite a few people show up... As an association is we have members who either own the businesses or run the businesses or who own the property. So we get together once in three months and discuss the needs of the businesses and the events, like St. Patrick's Day, we take the responsibility. The city doesn't do that. *Amil*

Another participant spoke specifically about working to obtain a community police officer in the area as part of a major change that the neighborhood group was working to secure.

Right now we are working on a little project to see if we can get a community policing project squared away again...at the last meeting we had talked about they had a great program where they had a couple of officers assigned to this neighborhood. *Jacob*

Many people spoke about being part of the WOW community group as the most impactful work they had done to participate in changing the area. Many participants focused on different outcomes of what that change transitioned into.

We started having the monthly meetings and talking about things and getting to know each other and starting to socialize together. Starting to do projects like "Hey let's go out and clean up all the trash. Hey let's go out and clean up all the graffiti." So I really think that kind of laid the groundwork...I think if you are attracted to this neighborhood you kind of have that vision...I think because we were all living here and we were trying to build this community, it was very successful. The word got out, and we got a lot press attention. (One person) got some national awards for neighborhood organizing and got the conservation district started. *Sally*

Well they came forward and we worked with (city) planning staff and so you have to notice the residents and you have to get a buy in by the majority of the residents and ultimately again it comes to the planning commission and then City Council for final approval. *Margot*

We have participated in many WOW events. We have hosted a Christmas party at our house a couple of times and the house has been on that HARPS tour. I still think it was because I play in a little quartet, and we played that day in that room. *Linda*

Having the meetings and parties and things. We've done a number of neighborhood cleanups where we've gotten grants to get dumpsters and things and all sort of work together and get trucks and people out walking and haul trash out of the allies and so big neighborhood wide cleanups and that creates an immediate neighborhood improvement. But also it's an opportunity for people to work side by side and build relationships with each other. We did a tree planting...where 150 street trees were planted throughout the neighborhood and that was another opportunity. We were all planting trees next to each other and then there's this physical improvement. *Helen*

3. Desire for change seen in property cleanup, blight reduction, and change in upkeep of abandoned buildings and absentee landlords. Many people said that they wanted to “reduce the blight” or to change the abandoned buildings, but when asked to draw it on a map, some people had very specific areas in mind while others focused on general areas. The following are comments on how people envisioned the area in what they wanted to see still change.

Like I said, the property owners could do some cleanup on their property and signage and lighting from the city of Reno, at least brighter lights...where the crosswalks are, we need brighter lights so people can see who is crossing. *Amil*

I would say the streetscape itself. I would like to see more roundabouts like I talked about. I think code issues, there are still some code issues with signage. There are still some blight issues that need to be addressed. *Margot*

I would say a lot of the junkie apartments...There is kind of that big, ugly apartment building...I think there are just kind of some areas where there are kind of trashy houses. *Sally*

Empty buildings, empty storefronts, and then the only other thing that I really have an issue with, I'm not really sure where he is, there is a guy over here who sells all the crack pipes...There is a little abandoned, they were probably storefronts at one time, right across street from the Deluxe Cafe, the little dilapidated ones. It would be nice to see somebody do something with that. I mean clearing up the blight would be nice. The other thing is if you can get rid of all the places, they've done a really good job of limiting the amount of liquor stores in the area so that kind of keeps some of the...but just get away from being hookah hash pipe central, crack pipe central, and let some other neighborhood lay claim to that. *Bob*

I would very much like to see the absentee landowners have to be responsible, whether it is graffiti removal whether it is weeding it, whether it is fencing and doing a better job with our laws on that kind of thing...One of the things that we talked about eons ago and they just don't think that the businesses and community were up to it, with granting monies for upgrading façades...Some of those business are kind of run down. If they weren't that rundown, they'd be more inviting. *Julia*

Put English on all the storefront so it would attract more business or more customers...and keep the area in front of your storefront clean. *Sandy*

Less liquor stores, cleaned up properties, less crime...I actually just heard that some of the properties there on High Street were being purchased, and I think some of the changes in our neighborhood and in Midtown are motivating more owner occupants to buy homes right in that residential area so I actually think its improving. More own occupants are buying homes and when that happens, there's more ownership and more people willing to engage with working with the police to reduce crime. I also think that city is also talking about city-wide restrictions on liquor stores so hopefully that will affect... also the city just passed an ordinance on tobacco paraphernalia which extends to drug paraphernalia which puts more limitations on that so I think that will help. *Helen*

Sure there are a lot of things that can be changed, but at this point we Mexicans need a lot of education as far as wall signs and stuff like that. You know that's getting much better. *Manuela*

I want a light, a streetlight. That is all I want changed. There's no light right here... Between there and there people pick up speed. *Julio*

The problems are the liquor stores. They are mainly on Virginia Street, but over in here there a couple... There are a lot of ramshackle apartment flats over there. Places that are just not well maintained or taken care of. *Jacob*

I'd like to see all the apartments that we have back to single-family dwellings...I really like the idea of single-family units because if they are not rented you have to own it so that you'll care for your property more which means there's a good chance you care about your children and your family more and get back to more of the good old-fashioned values of taking care of your family. *Jonathan*

There's still a lot of work to be done but just remodeling the streetscape with the traffic circles and the median and art, the public art, has really helped. Then another, along the same line is Center Street here, where they have done quite a bit of revitalization work...Again there is a lot of work to do with those areas even though they are not directly within the conservation district, per se, they are adjacent to it and continuous to it and are very, very important because it makes it that much easier for the revitalization in the conservation district...Even within the neighborhood that we've had a high impact on their still a gap tooth problem where there still a lot of absentee landlords still, there's a lot of shaggy apartments still so I would say this entire grade lot still needs to be improved. *Jake*

4. A general change in attitude. The idea of change seemed to play into concepts of physical change and overall social structural change. Although both of these often intertwined, such as a cleanup facilitating the community group to feel empowered to help change the community, there were often physical catalysts as symbols of a stronger current of social change.

A sense of pride in ownership. I like to see more owners occupy their homes. Less rentals. But you know there's always going to be rentals. I just like the idea of people living here who have a vested interest in the home they are occupying instead of that it's just income. *Susan*

It takes a certain type of person for the community to be like this. *Oscar*

I believe that we have a lot of unique aspects to this neighborhood that we are still trying to go in the direction that we were in five years ago when it was kind of ghetto and there was crime and there were businesses sprouting up and failing. Now I think we have a steady move forward where people are respecting the neighborhood more because a lot of people who live here are business owners... and they want to take care of the neighborhood so they bring in better people. I love it. *Andy*

That has turned around since the West of Wells started because they've gone after those property-owners, and they basically said we're not putting up with this anymore... if there's crime going on in your building, you should know it and you should figure out what to do about it to get rid of those people. *Tony*

I feel the improvement...it may have begun 10 years ago, but I think it's accelerating now I think there's a symbiotic relationship between our neighborhood, the West of Wells Neighborhood Group, and Midtown. *Jim*

I just like the signs on the post because they give us some stature. I mean the people are recognizing that this neighborhood has some beauty and some character and that really means a lot to me. *Patty*

In a lot of ways I like it since these three brothers have really refurbished a lot of the dead properties. It doesn't look like that anymore. It looks that there's a new fresh life of people who want to care to certain degrees. Maybe not as much as they did when I was a child. The home was everything. It was the center and you really took care of your garden and your inside but it seems to be getting a little bit more culturally and socially that direction which is nice. *Jonathan*

It's like a sense of place. The neighborhood is just one more nondescript block of nondescript rundown apartments. All of a sudden everything is spruced up and it's well lit and the sidewalks aren't broken anymore... I mean it is literally revitalizing little houses and bungalows and duplexes, and it kind of started out as a bunch of little houses at a time and then the whole block and it's kind of a couple blocks and now it's sort of the whole neighborhood... Murals on the garage doors, brightly painted houses, lighting, and fixed sidewalks and making all of these places pet friendly... We are just making it increasingly uncomfortable for the criminal element but increasingly comfortable for our target market... (My brother) and I have kids, and we say we want to improve the properties in the neighborhood to allow our daughters to live here. This place meets that criteria. *Jake*

5. A change in investment in the area. Many participants also related how they saw change being enacted as new investors came into the area. Some thought that the investors instigated the change while others believed they had come because of work the neighborhood group had done.

Well there is always conflict when there is change so it is just working through that, alleviating people's fears. There's always fear that comes along with change. Is this going to hurt my business? But I would say overall, if you talk to them, you know, they're happy. There is still a long way to go, but it is going to happen. Again, when we developed this plan, we were looking 20 years out into Reno's future... I mean the proof is all the investment that's going on there. Look at what Marmot Properties has done for example. Look at Midtown, which is the neighborhood district next-door. So there's your proof. *Margot*

The last 10 years there's been a great deal of shift. The 2008 debacle with the mortgages actually helped out the neighborhood because a group of three brothers started buying property up around here and they started refurbishing it and stripping the houses out for a real true remodel and turning them into rental units. That and the neighborhood watch program... Crime seems to be less, and with those three brothers, they've been doing a lot of murals on the fences and a lot of the properties to artistically upgrade the neighborhood.. *Jonathan*

I am talking about the property investors like Marmot Properties or Kelly Ray. In having the official Midtown Association and District and stuff, all that started happening because they saw an opportunity, an economic opportunity here, that if it wouldn't have been for our sort of groundwork... I think WOW kind of laid the groundwork to make it a

neighborhood that people would want to move into and then all the development of all of the restaurants and stuff came afterward...None of that was there until we made this neighborhood worth investing in. *Sally*

You know we one of the reasons why we chose the Wells Avenue Bungalow District before it was a conservation district because it was already some place, like (some) neighbors and the West of Wells group had already organized and were already working on getting the conservation district established. This was five years ago. What we felt was that organization where you had a group of residents banding together and doing things like cleaning up meetings in planting trees and helping to drive down the crime, keep crime that they, that from an investor perspective put a floor under our risk. *Jake*

6. A change in feelings of empowerment through action. Some participants expressed how their actions helped them feel more empowered as citizens and how their empowerment contributed to their actions in changing the area. This often created an overall sense of place of the area full of empowered citizens.

It has been a very wonderful and empowering experience. It shows you that if you really do that kind of ground-level work, I think anyone can, you know. I think change can happen on a small, local level. I'm all for bottom-up change, and I think that's what we've done here. Instead of like top-down, like a city planner says, "Oh we have this neighborhood and we are going to do this this and this." I don't think that would've ever worked out as a top-down thing because I think it was our enthusiasm and our love for the neighborhood that made it work. *Sally*

If the community hadn't stepped in and stepped up and had a voice. If the chamber hadn't been walking up and down with the city asking the business owners because we could speak Spanish...When it was time to choose anything, the community and the community being property owners, stakeholders, business owners, had input into what they wanted and when that happened people supported it. They were more supportive of it. I think they are pretty darn proud of Wells Avenue right now...it brought people together, and their voices were heard and were heard by the city and were heard by their elected officials and was heard all the way to Washington DC and Sen. Reid's office. That was a big deal. It was very empowering to people. *Julia*

(WOW) told us how to call the police and to not be afraid to call the police and say something is happening. To step forward. To not just close the windows and let things happen, no. So that is one way to be a participant...I changed because you know sometimes you just close your door and when somebody is fighting you don't want to get

involved in something. Now because they said if you see something, say it. Don't just be quiet because sometimes something worse can happen with a fight or something so that is why... because of the meetings...I learned to take the telephone and don't be afraid to report what I see...They show us how to recognize it's a drug problem or something else so that's why I am not afraid to report that because I said with drugs I don't play around...That is why things are improving. *Maria*

We've worked so well with city and the city has been so willing and done so much over the years...they really sort of empowered...I mean it was initially the city that empowered the people coming together and the change over the years the city has worked so well with us...that's empowering, that we can ask for resources and receive them, that we can reach out to the cops and they'll work with us. So that's empowering to know that you can affect change using the structures that are in place. *Helen*

We felt so helpless with that across the street for years, just helpless and we don't anymore. Now we know how to go to the city council, we know who to call...I mean our neighborhood group has done this, and we have some power and solidarity and a lot of fun. I mean there's nothing better than our New Year's party, nothing. *Patty*

When I saw the trees out front I decided that I wanted to do something about them because it was so sad...I called the city forester and told him my opinion...So pretty soon I see signs on all the trees on this block, they are going to take them out. I thought, hey I did something. *Linda*

I would get into the weeds and that's just the type of representative I was, like hey how can we make this happen. *Margot*

I still feel empowered to change and that's simply because we have so many dedicated people in this neighborhood that love the neighborhood. (Like one man), he knows about all the houses on the street, he knows the stories, he knows the history, he loves this neighborhood mostly because of the architecture. People who have been brought up in this neighborhood have a strong connection to it so it has a lot to do with the fact that there so many people who love the neighborhood and that makes me feel empowered to change. *Tony*

We write letters to City Council all the time...And we ambushed City Council one time, the entire West of Wells group. That was the graffiti thing. It wasn't even on the agenda and there were about 20 or 25 of us including the owners of...a couple other local business owners showed up and a lot of residents showed up, and we just said hey you've got to bring the anti-graffiti team back...I started an online petition...we had a Facebook

page. We had this big campaign going on. I got the petition and all the people who signed and stuff and the people that were formerly Reno residents that were signing so we were very active. *Duncan*

I feel, especially with the neighborhood watch, I feel like there's more of a unity in this area because we know more people. We're aware of what's going on. I think that if we see something strange or suspicious, it's like you can kind of do something... So I think for me those are the changes. Because when we first moved in we did not know anybody. *Lupita*

7. Reduction in perception of crime/ improved safety. Participants also expressed that they felt that the neighborhood in general had become safer with less overall crime happening.

There were certain things that made us feel comfortable moving in and that was a reduction in the crime rate, the stuff that they were doing having it declared a Conservation District that let you know that somebody gives a damn about the neighborhood and that the residents that live in the neighborhood care about it and want to improve it. *Susan*

As far as walking my dog around or parking my car at night and walking in the day, I feel very safe. *Sally*

Other participants related that although they thought that the area had been more run down a few years prior, they saw that had changed a lot.

It brings people that the neighborhood is maybe respectable isn't the right word but interesting now. We went to Deluxe several week ago and a number of her friends from a reading group... From the Mt. Rose highway area had come for lunch because they heard about it and that's just sort of symbolic of what's happening now. People who used to be afraid to come into this neighborhood are now attracted to it. *Jim*

I had lots of friends, especially woman from the museum, who would come to my house and they'd say, "Now is my car safe out there?" and "I have my purse with me because I didn't want to leave it in the car" and that has always made me kind of sad that they feel that way. But now I'm just so proud that people are understanding what this neighborhood is like. *Patty*

These results show a collection of experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and values presented by multiple stakeholders in the WANCD. They relate where many perceptions crossed

and differed and the multitude of stories that participants shared about their experiences. Combined with the maps, these results provide a comprehensive understanding behind what these participants relate as characteristics of the WANCD. The next section discusses aspects of these results.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The goal of this project is to explore how sense of place is understood through personal and communal experiences which create meaning and attachment to specific locales. In addition, the aim is to investigate the ways in which the character of the environment itself affects the people in it, constantly co-creating space through people-environment interactions. This study specifically explores how stakeholders experience, participate in, and envision the WANCD, how these interactions construct this place, and what is it about this place that affects these people to feel and behave in certain ways in its co-creation.

The mapping exercises and interviews reveal that the participants have similar and unique perceptions and experiences of the neighborhood, allowing for a look into the *multiple realities* experienced in the WANCD (de Mello, 2007; DeLyser et al., 2010; Elwood, 2009b; Massey, 1991; Yin, 2014). This allows for an insider view of *lived* spaces differing from officially defined borders as a city-recognized conservation district (Coulton et al., 2011; Tuan, 1974/1996) and provides a visual and contextual understanding of neighborhood-defined identity and specific places of meaning ascribed by these insider perspectives (G. Brown & Raymond, 2007; Coulton et al., 2011; Ramirez-Gomez et al., 2013). Through these converging and diverging landscapes, this project's results address the intimacies and complexities of home inside of place creation, returning to Cresswell's idea that home is "unique and pervasive...political and contested" and "an important strand of geographical enquiry" (2004, pp. 90-91).

Combining the research designs of phenomenology and geovisualization allows for a fluid exploration into place-making, sense of place, people-environment identity, and the

nuances of processes in place. Using the research design elements of phenomenology through in-depth interviews investigates concepts of meaning and ideas of values, emotions, perceptions, and experiences which are difficult to quantify (Guba, 1994; Lichtman, 2013). Situating the data with *geovisualization* applied through a digitization of sketch maps gives these contextualizing interviews a spatially-based point of view (Boschmann & Cubbon, 2013; Knigge & Cope, 2006). Additionally, the digital mapping creates cartographic artifacts, condensing and showing where different participant perceptions and identified places of meaning in the WANCD connect and intersect (Elwood, 2009a). Applying the research lens of Constructivism specifically focuses the interpretation of the data on social processes important in the construction of the WANCD itself, allowing even deeper understanding into people-place identity and co-creation between physical and cultural landscapes (Massey, 1991).

Although the results reveal specific themes present in WANCD identity, this style of research design grants discovery of *in-between* areas (Andrews, 2012) and *co-presence* (Massey, 1991) seen, in part, through a visualized spatial perspective of these processes at work (Knigge & Cope, 2006). Through this exploration around the creation of geographic identity in space, characteristics of home inside the WANCD reveal themselves as a “sense of becoming” through a multitude of ever-changing processes and experiences (DeLyser et al., 2010, pp. 13-14). The results of this study show how these material, social, and emotional landscapes constantly interact in place-making and relate an in-depth understanding of what, in part, gives the WANCD its unique character, adding to the ever-expanding work on sense of place studies in cultural and social geography.

Perceptions, Values, Emotions, and Experiences Revealed Across Landscape

Perceptions directly play into the *feel of place* (Casey, 1996; Tuan, 1974/1996; Wright, 1947). Meaning, attributed to spaces through experiences, values (both individual and collective), and emotions, helps determine what defines the character of a place, by whom, and how specific systems reveal these identities (Low & Altman, 2002). This project explores these elements of individual and collective place identity related to the WANCD through the experiences and desires of the study's participants, showing ways in which stakeholders bond to place through material and experiential-based connections (Knigge & Cope, 2006; Low & Altman, 1992; Tuan, 1974/1996). By looking into the meaning ascribed to these places by participants through individual and collective values, emotions, and perceptions, this discussion delves into a more intimate understanding of what is important to stakeholders in the WANCD and how those attributed significances moves them to act and create a sense of place in the personalized setting of home (B. Brown et al., 2003; G. Brown & Raymond, 2007; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Ramirez-Gomez & Martínez, 2013).

Mapping Exercises

As anticipated through the literature review, this study reveals the identity of the WANCD as an area of constantly intersecting and converging realities and experiences, affecting the different perspectives of those inside it (DeLyser et al., 2010; Knigge & Cope, 2006; Massey, 1991). This can clearly be seen on the sketch maps where participants identify places of meaning, places they associate with their own involvement in changing the area, places they would like to see change in the area, and their perceived boundaries of the area. These identified places of import create symbols of meaning in the landscape, and the unified understanding of these symbols, in turn, produces a shared space of meaning (Low, 1992; Riley, 1992). Through

this study, the WANCD becomes a symbol of these collective experiences, revealing its character in both the way it becomes a relic within itself while being a setting for the processes happening inside of it (DeLyser et al., 2010; Low, 1992; Massey, 1991).

In understanding that place identity is a complex phenomenon, with layers of experiences, cultures, and symbols that act in its creation (Casey, 1996; Cresswell, 2004), this project's exploratory nature reveals sense of place through the many processes at work without creating one fixed representation of what the place *is*. Instead, the fluidity of the WANCD's character becomes a comprehensive understanding of participant ascribed meanings and perceptions, creating its sense of place in ways that are difficult to summarize or quantify (Aitken & Kwan, 2010; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2006; Cope & Elwood, 2009; MacKian, 2010). Instead, the WANCD reads as a *story atlas* of landscape, and place identity is understood through unique concepts of *time* and the *internal narrative* told by the stories and experiences of those who have lived them (Caquard, 2013; Low, 1992).

The maps produced by the participants show the movement of how these insider stakeholders feel attached, where they feel most vested, and what they would like to see change in their neighborhood. This geovisualized representation of data showing the multitude of experiences and perceptions of people confined within a similar geographic space shows that individual perceptions can still take precedence over group perceptions and is part of a greater understanding of individual place attachment within a group context (B. Brown et al., 2003). This concept can be useful for organized groups (including city and neighborhood planners) to better understand multiple areas of perceived importance needed for community spatial decision making (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). This can affect the buy-in of community stakeholders in co-creating community designated spaces where *authentic* resident involvement or the promotion of

neighborhood pride is connected to place attachment and place stewardship (B. Brown et al., 2003; G. Brown & Raymond, 2007; Coulton et al., 2011).

Specifically, the differences in perceptions of bounded space can relate to ideas of scale, in the ways stakeholders perceive the borders of their neighborhood, and hence where they feel most bonded to the place itself (Coulton et al., 2011; Low, 1992). The data showing a difference between official and unofficial boundary lines was expected, based on the literature (Coulton et al., 2011), and these results show that perceived boundaries of neighborhood has less to do with collective identification of a designated neighborhood area (bonded by the lines of the conservation district) and more to do with individual routines through the space. Understanding these differing perceptions of scale in neighborhood identity shows how people sharing common landscape may distinctly view the space itself (B. Brown et al., 2003; Coulton et al., 2011).

The overlays of important places, places of perceived involvement, and places of desired change also demonstrate the common and diverging spaces amongst participants. By examining such spaces, planners, community groups, political groups, redevelopers, social scientists, and preservationists can best understand places of common ground as well as outliers (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). These understandings can allow interested and vested parties to convey what is important to people in place and how that importance plays out across material and social landscapes. In the WANCD, looking at specific areas for change can help community members better gauge what their perceptions across their community focus on and where their interests lie in connection to important areas, such as Stewart Park or Wells Avenue. Stewart Park as an example, reveals a multitude of participant attachment ranging from historical knowledge, recreational use, and memories of the place. By using stakeholder-identified places of importance, community improvement work can use authentic stakeholder buy-in in a bottom-up

approach to local change, while also creating awareness for stakeholders of what is happening in their neighborhood and how they can get involved (Coulton et al., 2011; Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Any of these different aspects of importance can be used as a means to participate in actively changing and maintaining spaces of import, even if different reasons are attached to the “why” of the change.

By mapping different meanings and interpretations of these shared terrains, these socially and emotionally-bounded systems can be viewed inside of community spaces (Ben-Ze'ev, 2012; Harris & Weiner, 2002), providing a deeper look into the nuances behind place-making as a materialized, perception-based, and value-based process (Knigge & Cope, 2006). Casey sums up this complex idea of constant interrelation of people and places writing, “Despite the inherent wildness of all places (including urban places), there are no first-order places, no First Places that altogether withstand cultural pervasion and specification” (1996, p. 35).

The results of this study allow for a deeper visualized investigation into cultural and social geography, where both blatant and hidden patterns reveal themselves as bearing on the character of place and the co-creations happening within it (Tuan, 1974/1996). This study offers a deeper look into where places of meaning intersect or stand alone, where stakeholders visualize their own desired change (whether based on documented or a *sensed* degradation of the area), and the ways in which identity can be uniquely and collectively spatially defined. Overall, this looks into geography’s ability to use technologies to investigate processes at work (Aitken & Kwan, 2010; Elwood, 2009a; Knigge & Cope, 2006) and see how sense of place can be best understood from the stakeholders’ revealed identities, with an understanding of qualitative factors that move people to actively participate in place-making (Basso, 1996; G. Brown & Raymond, 2007; Casey, 1996; Kahn, 1996; Massey, 1991).

A Discussion on Themes

Theme 1: Character of area represented through perceived diversity and history

Sub-themes: 1. Perceived diversity of residents and local businesses creating “diverse” neighborhood feel and a unique experience in Reno; 2. Discrimination of diversity adds to outsiders’ perception of the area; 3. Preservation of historical architecture adds to perceived character of area.

Gustafson (2001) looks at the ways we relate to our environment in a three-fold mix of *self, other, and environment* interactions, and Low and Altman (1992) look at the *person/environment fit* of people’s personal identities and value systems needing to be reflected in their environment as an aspect of place attachment. One salient theme from the study reflects participant experience with perceived diversity and history in the WANCD as a defining characteristic of the place itself expressed through an overall “diverse” feel of the area, a refuting of negative outsider perceptions of the area, and a connection to the historical materialism in the landscape. Participants comment on the diversity they feel is externally built into the environment and how the identified aspects of diverse ethnicities, ages, and histories add to the overall character of the WANCD as an interesting, fun, and unique place in Reno. Many participants express a belief that this diversity is a positive aspect of their experience of the WANCD and their neighborhood, hence identifying with their own values and reflections of self in landscape (Gustafson, 2001).

In addressing outsider perceptions of the WANCD, participants remark that a common idea exists identifying the area as more dangerous than the participants perceive it to be. In the interviews, participants comment on their dislike of outsider misconceptions about the area, including claims that the area is “dangerous” or a “ghetto.” In other instances, participants reveal

a sense of pride in the improving state of the area. In the case of the WANCD, insider perspectives paint a very unique understanding of place identity and can be used to illuminate bright spots or challenge generalized negative perceptions and blanket concepts of identity (Coulton et al., 2011).

In understanding sense of localized place, listening to insiders as a highly credible and important source of information, outsiders can re-situate views around their conceptions of place representation (Dewsbury, 2000) while challenging what goes into knowledge-production around place identity (Cope, 2010; Elwood, 2009b). From this, social scientists and city planners alike can become aware of power dynamics inside of representations of a place that might be deemed problematic and can acknowledge the importance of gaining insider perspective on community realities that might otherwise be dismissed through authoritative outsider perceptions (G. Brown & Raymond, 2007; Coulton et al., 2011; Ramirez-Gomez et al., 2013). Instead, differences in insider/outsider perspectives may relate an insider sense of pride that can be fostered for further community development, stakeholder engagement, and place stewardship (B. Brown et al., 2003; Coulton et al., 2011; Ramirez-Gomez et al., 2013).

The material aspects of the architectural and historical landscapes play significant roles in participant experiences of what creates the feel of the place. Although the WANCD's designation as a conservation district came about, in part, for its historical relevance and character in Reno, this study allows a deeper look into the importance of sense of place and meaning attached to history itself. As Wells (2010) points out, it is important to understand the meaning stakeholders ascribe to historical places rather than solely focusing on the objects that experts classify as important. Study participants ascribe their own values of historical materialism represented in their landscape as an important part of their experience and defining

topical characteristic to the WANCD, reiterating Gustafson's (2001) *self-environment* value systems. Some participants relate that the historical buildings and architecture present in much of the WANCD factored in to why they chose to move to the neighborhood in the first place.

In general, these somewhat topical aspects to the landscape create a sense of character expressed through participant observations and desired values around diversity, an understanding of general insider/outsider perceptions, and historical materialism. In understanding what creates sense of place from these points of view, these findings allow for an understanding of aspects in the landscape that help people bond to it and that helps create its overall identity.

Theme 2: Character of the area perceived through connections

Sub-themes: *1. Connections experienced through general feelings of belonging; 2. Connections experienced through the physical landscape of walkability and few garages; 3. Connection into different micro-communities; 4. Experienced connection through a desire for change through action. 5. Connection to a personalized sense of history traced in the landscape; 6. Experienced connection or disconnection across community divides*

Places capture the complex emotional, behavioral, and value-based relationships between people and their territory, representing interactions and staging human negotiations (Massey, 1991). Places and their stories become metaphors that are heavily relied upon during social discourse about relationships (Kahn, 1996). This navigation of different communities and networks is seen through what Low and Altman (1992) emphasize as the actors and social relationships that form a vital part of place attachment. As Basso (1996), Casey (1996), Kahn (1996), and Tuan (1974/1996) relate, it is the human interactions we experience *in* place that, in part, connect us *to* place. Sense of place studies allow for a deeper qualitative understanding of the underlying social

processes that connect people intimately to spaces, revealing the existence of collective social bonds (Low & Altman, 1992; Tuan, 1974/1996), co-presence (DeLyser et al., 2010; Massey, 1991), conflict (Coulton et al., 2011; Massey, 1991), and networks (Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Tuan, 1974/1996). This study reveals how these connections and social processes become a major factor for participants in creating place identity in the WANCD.

Participant experiences in the WANCD reveal an emphasis on social and community connections as a part of sense of place, seen through sense of belonging, a walkable landscape creating more neighbor interactions, micro-communities, communities formed as mobilizers for desired change, cross-temporal communities, and divided communities. An Manzo and Perkins explain:

Emotional connection is at the core of a sense of community. While this connection is focused on bonds among people, place attachment (as an emotional connection to place) can complement a sense of community, since both can motivate community members to participate in neighborhood improvement and planning efforts. In fact, sense of community has been linked to place attachment at both the individual and community scale. (2006, p. 339)

As seen throughout my literature review, attachment to community places can be understood through stakeholder community connections and sense of belonging (Manzo & Perkins, 2006), as collective values and feelings of community connectedness (Low & Altman, 1992), as *rootedness* and *bondedness* to local social networks (B. Brown et al., 2003), as an awareness of social support and threat systems (Tuan, 1974/1996), as social actors and systems (Low & Altman, 1992), and as a landscape of shared experience (Riley, 1992). The results from this study show that emotionally bonding to the community through social interactions and perceived connections was a major factor in participant ideas around experiencing sense of place

in the WANCD. Many participants relate these emotional connections in feeling part of the community as one of their most important neighborhood experiences in overall sense of place creation, expressing a sense of belonging in both the “heart and mind” (Basso, 1996, p. 54). On the importance of community in their neighborhood experience, a few participants write, “my definition of community is connection,” “love,” and “a sense of belonging,” again relating the value system seen between *self*, *other*, and *environment* as important aspects of place meaning creation (Gustafson, 2001) and what Low and Altman (1992) refer to as *person/environment fit*.

Community connection is revealed as an individually-held value for some participants, as the landscape itself provides an avenue for connection with neighbors thanks to the walkability of the area and the small number of garages, forcing many people to park on the street and interact with their neighbors or meet through neighborhood strolls and walking their dogs. In referring back to Low and Altman’s (1992) place attachment characteristic of *environment interaction and dependence*, the physical attributes of the WANCD facilitate a social experience important to the overall sense of place expressed by many participants. This allows for a fluid sense of connecting with neighbors and forming social networks important to overall participant experience and later playing a role in neighborhood group formations and senses of neighborhood safety in “looking out” for neighbors.

Connecting to other people and local organizations/micro-communities surfaces in participant interviews as an important part of sense of place and place attachment in the WANCD. Seen in the literature, having a general sense of local support networks (Tuan, 1974/1996), participating with social actors and networks (Low & Altman, 1992), connecting to others routinely across a common landscape (Riley, 1992), experiencing relationships between the self and the other (Gustafson, 2001), and the scales at which these connections are

experienced (Low & Altman, 1992) form place attachment. Participants in the study reveal an array of social communities in the WANCD, ranging from social businesses (such as bars and tattoo parlors), neighborhood-based organizations (such as the West of Wells Neighborhood Group and Wells Avenue Merchants and Property Owner's Association), neighborhood self-help organizations (such as the Triangle Club), and informal communities (such as conglomerated resident and business neighbors or home fixer-uppers). Interaction with these communities creates sense of place in the WANCD, where organizations forge social bonds and the ability to mobilize change. The existence of such micro-communities also illuminates potential areas of focus when desiring to incorporate an array of insider perspectives and opinions about place identity. These micro-communities themselves may be able to mobilize their own internal communities and can be looked at as a great source of diversity when listened to as distinctive insider voices. It is through the common landscape of shared space that they may find common grounds and community strength (Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Riley, 1992).

Participants reveal that a desire for change in the area surfaces as a kind of community inside the WANCD building social cohesion. Perceived places of degradation and danger become a uniting social space for neighborhood interactions around a common cause, often mobilized by starting or joining neighborhood community action groups. As Massey (1991) points out, it is in part the social activities in a space that create a constantly changing process of construction and identity. In the WANCD, the desires by multiple stakeholders to reduce neighborhood blight and improve safety become a shared goal that creates a community within itself (explained more in-depth in the next section).

An aspect of this study not found extensively in the literature review reveals a unique community traversing a temporal landscape, where participants express feeling intimately

connected to the history of the WANCD. The idea of *remembering* takes on a slightly new meaning as Riley asks, “Is memory transformed to but a memory, or is it the essential emotional relationship with the landscape?” (1992, p. 20-21). Some participants relate this connection to their own memories of personal experiences in the area while others express feeling a kinship of sorts with previous residents who had lived in their same homes.

The study reveals that this felt sense of connection to people who had previously inhabited the neighborhood becomes a defining characteristic of the spirit of the WANCD. Often, participants who express this unique sense of community had done research on their homes or had found historical artifacts in their basements and attics developing unique connections with different actors, social relations, and time (Low & Altman, 2002). This also touches upon Riley’s (1992) idea of temporally experienced *fantasy* where he says that the imagination of the perceiver in the place interacts strongly with the power of attachment. Wells (2010) slightly changes this concept into what he calls *spontaneous fantasy* where certain places can elicit emotional response and attachment through an imagined connection to history through physical aspects of the place itself. In the case of the WANCD, it is the remnants of past tenants and the follow-up research about who those people that creates connections and bonding across temporal divides.

Diving deeper into understanding what connection in place can mean, I refer back to Tuan’s (1974/1996) intimate connections in the landscape that help develop sense of place and Wells (2010) argument that these intimately felt emotional connections can move people to act as stewards of the place itself. In many cases, participants feel they need to maintain certain aspects of the landscape from previous tenants, whether that be the way a building is painted, spotlighting a relic from an old tenant, or the desire to preserve a 60-year-old rosebush. These

participants reveal a sense of *honoring* past people through knowing their stories, showing off material remnants of them still visible in the landscape, and relating personality characteristics between themselves. In these actions, the character of the WANCD reveals itself not only in the material but in the meaning ascribed to these historical aspects in landscape in what Wood refers to as the “fingerprints” of place (2013, p. 22). In the WANCD, the fingerprints of stone masons from 100 years prior are still visible in the landscape and known by current stakeholders. In understanding how connection can cross not only space but time and people can feel intimate connections with other imagined communities that no longer exist, geographers, planners, and preservationists might better understand otherwise overlooked details that drive people to create place meaning and act as stewards of spaces.

Finally, feelings of disconnect and dividedness are revealed in participant interviews as aspects of the WANCD’s character. As Tuan (1974/1996) relates, a sense of detachment surfaces when people disconnect from the spirits and social networks or no longer meander in local spaces. Low and Altman (1992) express place attachment happening in connection to different *actors* and *social relationships*, and Gustafson (2002) explains the importance of *self, other, and environment* interactions. Lacking these attributes might lead to a detachment from place. In many cases of participants expressing feelings of dividedness in the WANCD, they attribute their disconnectedness to a sense of being an *outsider* or excluded from local social networks. In some other cases, these divides in the social landscape are viewed positively, connecting culturally diverse communities. As seen in the literature review, a few participants relating the culturally diverse area of Stewart Park and Wells Avenue focus on the potential to create new shared landscapes of meaning (Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Riley, 1992). These potentially disenfranchised insiders might add valuable perspectives if given the proper voice and can be a source of new

and diverse ways of understanding how to involve as many stakeholders as possible in place identity creation and preservation (Manzo & Perkins, 2006).

Theme 3. Participating in creating the WANCD through action and change

Sub-themes 1. *Individuals being involved in small changes; 2. Active participation in community organizations; 3. Desire for change seen in property cleanup, blight reduction, and change in upkeep of abandoned buildings and absentee landlords; 4. A general change in attitude; 5. A change in investment in the area; 6. A change in feelings of empowerment through action; 7. Reduction in perception of crime/ improved safety.*

Participant interviews address ideas of personal involvement in the area and visions for the future of the WANCD. Revisiting how social processes construct sense of place (DeLyser et al., 2010; Massey, 1991), the results show how these interactions and desires create place character. Many participants explain their desire to maintain aspects of their community through both small hands-on activities and collective group actions where they feel they are affecting change. When asked about how people viewed themselves as being involved in their community, many describe participating in small changes, such as fixing up their homes to maintain historical aspects, picking up trash, helping local people in need, or being part of communities of change that collectively participate in community action initiatives.

Some participants relate community group accomplishments as a major part of their overall experience of the area, taking pride in seeing their collective actions physically manifest in the landscape and feeling empowered as community change-makers (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). These participants express feelings that they are socially in control of their environment, relating back to the “collective efficacy” factors in place attachment (B. Brown et al., 2003). They describe a general sense of safety and social control by watching out for neighbors, reporting

crimes to the police, and becoming involved with neighborhood city planning politics and projects. Participants claim their actions in the neighborhood directly relate to change in observable crime in the area and change in physical improvements. Some participants relate the official recognition of the area as a conservation district as direct observation of their involvement in the landscape, often giving them a sense of pride or deeper connection to the WANCD.

When asked how they envisioned the future of the area or where they would like to focus change efforts, participants reveal the desire to continue to clean up blight seen through graffiti, abandoned buildings, or lack of yard maintenance. Participants also report desires to hold absentee landlords more responsible for irresponsible tenants and the city responsible for enforcing codes at establishments deemed as somewhat dangerous or degraded, such as liquor stores that locals feel sell drug paraphernalia. Commitment to revitalization seems to be expressed at higher rates of participants actively involved in clean-ups, with a snowballing effect of sense of area pride (B. Brown et al., 2003). In addition, these places of desired change seem to correlate to places of meaning for participants, whether it be close to their actual homes and/or directly affecting their livelihood (Ramirez-Gomez et al., 2013).

Many tangible ideas around change given by the participants focus directly on feeling safe and affecting areas that are perceived to be degrading or conducting “unwanted” business (B. Brown et al., 2003). In relating to Gustafson’s concept of *self* and *self-environment* expression in place attachment (2001), these participants may individually decide to act in creating change that they feel contributes to their construct of the neighborhood they envision. Creating a better sense of personal or property safety is one identified reason these participants became involved in changing the area. Although the literature relates that people are often not

attached to places they perceive as generally unsafe (B. Brown et al., 2003), in the case of the WANCD, participants relate a desire to actively improve these areas.

Conclusion

Layers of place meaning and attachments in the WANCD reveal themselves as maps and stories motif their way across a landscape that is constantly *becoming* (DeLyser et al., 2010). Sense of place studies fall into a wider scope of work as geographers delve into these placed processes. From this kind of research, social scientists can better understand reasons people attach to place and what moves them to change and/or maintain it, individually or collectively. These social, physical, and emotional momentums that start around place attachment and experience can create connections and material manifestations across landscapes, defining the character of the place itself. Parts of this study explore how these processes co-create inside the WANCD.

Of the salient themes that arose from this study, the following surfaced as being especially considered factors in place identity inside the WANCD: 1. A sense of personalized and intimate history told through the stories that connect current and past people to the same place; 2. Places of importance show common grounds, unique aspects, and sense of accomplishments manifested in the landscape; 3. Community connections build place attachment/identity and looking to micro-communities and outliers allows for new possibilities in place co-creation; 4. Neighborhood involvement relates to sense of social bonding/control, commitment to the area, and place pride. These themes relate the importance of what can foster sense of place that might not be considered in initial place identity creation but can hold much clout in involving stakeholders for the purpose of creation and stewardship.

Concepts around place attachment can be further explored by many non-academics, including policy makers, urban redevelopers, city planners, and community organizers who ground this kind of work in environment design and practical problem solving (Low & Altman, 1992). This data allows for a better understanding of some of the motives behind why certain people mobilize to actively create change in a neighborhood and can provide useful for examining starting points of neighborhood community action. This can be of benefit in recruiting active insider participants as well as finding common ground to effectively mobilize bottom-up action (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Manzo and Perkins argue to bridge the disconnect often seen between sense of place studies and city planning, writing:

Psychologists who study place attachment do not usually discuss community development, nor do planners often incorporate environmental psychology concepts such as place attachment in their research and practice. Yet a combination of these perspectives can provide a richer understanding—not only of how planning impacts our experience of place, but also how community-focused emotions, cognitions, and behaviors can impact community planning and development. (2006, p. 336)

In cultural geography, investigating and exploring how place reveals itself allows geographers to understand the complexities of place. By looking to insiders for interpretations while still understanding that they each represent a different story, community creation takes on a more involved and authentic role, and place-making and stewardship can develop from inside of the place itself. Social researchers can take into consideration the importance of emotions, values, and perceptions as a valuable part of the meaning-making process around place. In understanding the character of the WANCD and sense of place in general, this study shows how many participant stories and perceptions constantly interact with multiple shifting processes to create identities. Knowing that these processes are always *in process* permits an awareness of the

multiple realities presenting place identity through co-presence, co-creation, and what connects us to a revealed sensibility of place.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Mapping information uniquely bridges scientific data and creative visualizations (Sinton & Lund, 2007). New ways of mapping, stemming from advances in cartographic technology and evolving perspectives on qualitative methodologies, allow for innovative data gathering, analysis, and representation (Sinton & Lund, 2007). Combining methodologies of digital mapping with qualitative research designs, researchers can shift paradigms of conceptualizing data, leading to new possibilities for interpretations, knowledge-production, and observing spatial patterns (Cope & Elwood, 2009). Through these qualitative investigations benefiting in being projected onto maps, geographers in particular can understand human processes at work in the landscape and present those interactions to the scientific community, policy makers, and the public at large, solidifying how people-place relationships can be better understood and spelled out (Caquard, 2013; Hirt, 2012; Kwan, 2008; Warnaby, 2012). When focusing specifically on digital mapping of perceptions, emotions, values, and experiences that add to place identity studies, geographers gain insight into how these hard-to-quantify processes write themselves on the landscape. With these technologies, landscapes are setting and artifact for understanding human processes in place (Casey, 1996; Kahn, 1996; Riley, 1992).

This project investigates sense of place, place attachment, and place identify studies inside the context of cultural geographies and dynamic cartographies. By exploring the differing cultural, social, and material geographies that constituted the WANCD, place identity is investigated through layers of realities and imaginings *on* and *in* a particular bounded landscape through the use of mapping and qualitative research design. Through investigation into the ways

to study place-bound material and social processes, this project aims to contribute to sense of place research in both academic and real-world application discussions.

The goal of the Literature Review in Chapter 2 is to gather research from sense of place/place attachment studies, story and mapping representation literature, new ways of combining GIS and qualitative research methods, and how these methods can be applied to sense of place studies at the neighborhood level. A comprehensive look is given to sense of place and place attachment studies through a myriad of geographers whose research traverses questions of human ascribed meaning and human attachment to place. It investigates how spaces themselves can become containers for these kinds of human-given meanings and attachments, creating senses of feelings and spirit that comprise place character. This chapter relates ways that storytelling and mapping create power and knowledge-production, specifically through emotional and identity landscapes that are hard to quantify. It addresses the processes at play within the production of representation and new ways of applying this knowing to GIS and qualitative research methods. Finally, this section reviews methods as applied to knowing insider perceptions around sense of place, specifically in ties to neighborhood identity. Qualitative GIS is an emerging field in geography, just now being combined with sense of place and emotional geography studies, so this literature review attempts to capture concepts across these different studies to find where lines can be connected for new research and applications of mapping shifting social, emotional, and physical processes across landscapes.

Chapter 3 focuses on the methodologies applied to this project, using a combination of phenomenological design with *geovisualization*, two techniques that combine to explore emotions, experiences, perceptions, and values of participants inside the WANCD. The research question of how people experience, participate in, and envision the WANCD I believe has been

best addressed by understanding the complexities of lived experiences of people related through in-depth interviews (Lichtman, 2013) and spatially visualizing these processes through the use of sketch mapping to “place” these experiences (Boschmann & Cubbon, 2013). An additional element layering these sketch maps into a GIS computer mapping program allows an overarching view showing where patterns converge and peculiarities stand out (Boschmann & Cubbon, 2013; Cope & Elwood, 2009; Knigge & Cope, 2006). Applying a Constructivist lens for data analysis focuses further on the ways that people construct their sense of place and the co-presence of the different realities revealing unique spatial identities (DeLyser et al., 2010; Massey, 1991). Using the WANCD as a case study allows for creation of a bounded geographical space where I could investigate and explore my ideas (Yin, 2014).

Chapter 4 relates the results from the collected data, in total spanning 23 participants from 19 interviews that lasted between 45 minutes to over two hours in length. The resulting data collection from these interviews is 19 sketch maps and 209 pages of transcriptions. From this, the 19 maps are georeferenced in ESRI ArcMap 2.2.10, and the sketch maps are traced into projected space with almost all maps comprising of 4 separate layers and 73 shapefiles (*some participants did not have a sketch map for each theme). These layers are then broken into the four thematic digitized maps shown in the results section that show participant views around places of importance, perceived neighborhood boundaries, places that they feel they have been involved, and places they want to see change. In addition, this section relates the major themes found from the transcribed interview data, which is looked at for emerging themes, conglomerated into fewer themes, and finally resulting in the three major following themes (with accompanying sub-themes described in detail in the *Results* section): ***Theme 1. Character of area represented through perceived diversity and history; Theme 2. Character of the area***

perceived through connections; Theme 3. Character of the area perceived through desired collective and personal action to improve area.

Chapter 5 is comprised of a discussion of the results, relating information from the literature section. This section addresses the context of sketch maps and Qualitative GIS mapping of participant perceptions, emotions, values, and experiences. It delves into aspects of the themes emerging from analysis of the results, specifically around the ways in which diversity and historic character, community connections, and desired change and participation form aspects of sense of place and the character of the WANCD. This section reveals connections between mapping this kind of qualitative information with in-depth contextualization provided by open-ended interviews to best understand unfolding processes occurring in the WANCD through stakeholder-place relationships.

Suggestions for Future Research

This project shows uses of incorporating new forms of combining methodologies in geographic inquiry and how to investigate and reveal difficult-to-define aspects of understanding human-environment interactions. Policy makers, city planners, and community organizations can incorporate such findings into their place-making and stewardship strategies. Such learning can be applied to community-gathered data, placing it before experts, officials, and community leaders showing how to create stronger bonds with insiders in community renovation projects.

Revealing aspects of emotional place-bonding, this project can also evolve into a unique platform for gathering sense-of-place community data in Reno, opening it up online for other members of the community to contribute their perceptions. It also can take the form of an interactive community storytelling and history collection project in documenting the WANCD's character to be viewed by both insiders and outsiders in the city of Reno. Although exploratory

in nature and linked to sense of place, such a study can become a targeted focus on themes that go deeper into stories of meaning or the social processes at work in constantly co-creating the WANCD.

Lessons Learned

Future research design can add more emphasis on the ways data is gathered, with more time spent identifying participants who can provide differing perspectives instead of using the snowball approach this study used which found respondents with fairly similar perspectives. Although I identified participants through a variety of organizations, due to time constraints on gathering data for the project, I worked with participants who were most forward in contacting me to participate in the study. As I went deeper into the research process and networked more in the neighborhood, I began to see the multitude of in-depth ways in which a neighborhood is constructed of many different realities. For future research, I would spend ample time identifying more diversity in potential participants before data collection began.

Concluding Thoughts

Throughout this process, I learned not only of the many ways in which perceptions can be drastically different, but also the ways in which my own *situatedness* affected the design I chose for the project. Being a somewhat new resident to the WANCD during the study period of 1½ years, I see now how a place is filled with so many different people and stories and that they all represent a minutia of what makes a place. I agree with geographers such as Basso (1996), Casey (1996), DeLyser et. al (2010), Massey (1991), and Tuan (1974/1990, 1974/1996) who argue that the feel and spirit of place is constantly in a state of becoming. This idea of the focus on process behind what creates our world has left me with an understanding that although they look solid, like molecules, spaces are always fluid. To best understand these intricate spaces, social

scientists must themselves enter this state of fluidity and reflexivity about what they are observing, the methods and technologies they apply, and their own subjectivities in relating what they specifically choose to focus on and how they represent their findings. I hope to take these learnings with me into future research on people-place identity.

Thank you

Chapter 7

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