Perceptions and Borders of the Changing Neighborhood:
A Case Study in Philadelphia
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1

Introduction to Neighborhood Perceptions and Race

Neighborhood Theory and Research

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Chicago School of urban sociology formed the foundations of American sociology with the development of an ecological approach to the urban setting. Using the city of Chicago as its "natural laboratory," the founders of the Chicago School, who included Ernest Burgess and Robert Park, conceptualized the city as an ecosystem of communities in which social structures and the surrounding environment shaped human behavior. Studies on the relationship between spatial location and urban poverty declined during the post-World War II period and resurfaced in the 1960s and 1970s when problems associated with urban poverty, such as serious crime and inner-city joblessness, reached startling new levels with the drastic influx of migrants and immigrants to the city and the rapid growth of suburbs.

Extending upon ecological models, which explained the segregation of the city into neighborhoods as a product of competition for scarce resources and processes of invasion and succession, Gerald Suttles' 1968 study, *The Social Order of the Slum,* formed the basis for socio-cultural models for the city.[1] Socio-cultural models understood the community as normative social interactions and shared collective representations and sentiments. Suttles' study focused on a particular neighborhood in Chicago's West Side inhabited by four different ethnic groups. He demonstrated the significance of locality and culture in creating an "ordered segmentation" within a neighborhood by describing how different ethnic groups living in the same area experienced the neighborhood in separate ways. Suttles' findings showed that various collective

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[1] Park and Burgess, *The City*, 63-79.

cultures existed between different groups in the same space.[2] However, sociological studies on

neighborhood effects—studies focusing on the consequences of the neighborhood structure on

the well-being of its residents—have rarely considered this aspect of the neighborhood when

using it as a unit of analysis to study residential racial segregation.[3] Instead, neighborhood

effects studies have treated the neighborhood as an objective unit of analysis, in which

researchers measured neighborhood variables using boundaries established by the U.S. Census

and other institutional agencies (e.g. school districts). Nevertheless, as Suttles demonstrated, a

major component of the neighborhood is the collection of individuals who experience the

neighborhood in different ways.

Albert Hunter's 1974 book *Symbolic Communities* is a classic study that empirically

examines spatial areas of local communities and their symbolic meanings. Hunter, who studied

sociology at the Chicago School, synthesizes ecological and socio-cultural theories to define the

community.[4] While several definitions for *community* exist, nearly all of them are a mutation of

either ecological or socio-cultural theories or a combination of the two. Ecological models,

which refer to the spatial distribution of people and the functions of elements within the space,

face criticism for their focus on spatial characteristics and neglect of social, cultural,

psychological, and political influences on the pattern of the city. Socio-cultural models account

for influences in their explanations of the city. Hunter indicates that because spatial reference is

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[2] Suttles, *The Social Order of the Slum*, 5-10. 62.
[3] Sampson, "Assessing Neighborhood Effects," 445.
[4] I define the terms *neighborhood* and *community* identically. While Ernest Burgess defines *neighborhood* as a shared residential area and *community* as a social function, Hunter argues that because functions change in scale over time, *community* does not necessarily imply a function. Moreover, the structure of my study led subjects to refer to their neighborhood and community as identical units. Park, Burgess and McKenzie, *The City*, 104; Hunter, *Symbolic Communities,* 77.

an inherent component of social interaction, and consequently socio-cultural theories, the two models are inevitably related.[5]

Contemporary literature in the social sciences reveals a renewed interest in subjective neighborhood definitions with an emphasis on boundaries.[6] Robert J. Sampson et al review trends of studies in neighborhood effects in the last decade and suggest that subjective analysis is essential. Most research studies of neighborhoods rely on boundaries defined by the U.S. Census Bureau and other institutional districts; however, as Sampson et al note, these definitions are inaccurate for research and policy because they do not consider the dynamics of social interaction and the influence of other institutions, such as real estate practices. They suggest that researchers need to find new approaches for measuring and analyzing the neighborhood while considering social interactions and institutional processes. Among the various directions that the authors offer in the context of research in child and adolescent well-being, Sampson et al cite neighborhood boundaries and dynamics of change as important areas to consider for defining the neighborhood.[7] I focus on both aspects in my study.

Critics claim that defining the neighborhood using cognitive definitions has little consensus among residents and among outsiders. Moreover, they assert that using subjective definitions for the neighborhood cannot possibly survey enough residents to provide a full representation of conceptions. These assessments emphasize that each individual has his or her own perception of the neighborhood, and individual cognitions rarely establish a collective definition among residents of the area or with outsiders. Since studies cannot possibly sample

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[5] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 7.
[6] Lamont and Molner, "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences," 167-8.
[7] Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley, "Assessing Neighborhood Effects," 443-78.

every resident of the area, critics claim that studies using cognitive definitions yield biased results and only offer a small number of perceptions.[8]

Nevertheless, empirical evidence that demonstrates a lack of consensus is rare, and instead, it shows similarities with the particular factors residents use to define their neighborhood. Hunter defends the significance of neighborhood perceptions:

> "Residents' perceptions and definitions of their local area are not of course a 'holistic' way to define neighborhoods or community areas, but they are an independent reality that should not be ignored or discounted even if they fail to coincide with other methods…If [people] believe these communities exist, then they exist."[9]

Hunter argues for the importance of acknowledging the existence of symbolic communities. The different "realities" that people perceive are significant in understanding the neighborhood and, consequently, the role of neighborhood effects in residential racial segregation.

The Significance of Race

We can apply Suttles' findings on the importance of culture and ethnicity on the structure of the neighborhood to studies on the residential racial segregation of poor urban Blacks. While some conservative scholars argue that race is no longer a factor in explaining poverty, the literature demonstrating the significance of race in studying neighborhood effects is vast. In Douglas A. Massey and Nancy Denton's 1993 book *American Apartheid*, the authors argue that Black residential segregation is uniquely powerful.[10] Finding that the segregated pattern of the city is also man-made, not only "natural," Massey and Denton suggest that racial discrimination in various policies and practices, such as redlining and blockbusting, contributed to the

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[8] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities,* 69.
[9] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 70.
[10] Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid,* 88-96.

emergence of the urban underclass.[11] They compare data and conduct simulations to show that

segregation builds concentrated poverty into the residential structure of the Black community,

which in turn, leads to exacerbated negative effects for poor Blacks. Massey and Denton

demonstrated that residential racial segregation continues to be prevalent and that class

differences and residential preferences between Whites and Blacks simply cannot account for the

high levels of racial segregation that continue to exist.[12] Their findings illustrate the importance

of the neighborhood and the inherent element of race in studying concentrated poverty.

Showing the significance of both subjective neighborhood analysis and race, Albert

Hunter's 1974 study revealed the importance of race in neighborhood perceptions with empirical

evidence of diverging neighborhood definitions between races. He argued that because the local

community is not a formal organization, the name and boundaries that people use to identify

their neighborhood have implications for socio-cultural, psychological, and ecological

components of the neighborhood. Hunter claimed that names both distinguish the area and

indicate an identity. Boundaries heighten distinctions and create a cognitive framework that

directs one's behavior.[13] By analyzing both names and boundaries, Hunter showed that not all

residents view their communities in identical ways and that not all communities are identical

realities for their residents.[14] Hunter's results, which show perceptual divisions between

residents of different races occupying the same space, and the numerous findings that

demonstrate the significance of race suggest that researchers in the field need to reevaluate how

they approach the neighborhood unit to measure structural factors to explain the urban

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[11] Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*.
[12] Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 109.
[13] This concept comes from the Symbolic-Interactionist School of thought, which argues that people's behavior depends upon the symbolic meanings of objects in their environment, and these symbolic meanings derive from social interaction and interpretation.
[14] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 67-9, 95.

underclass. An approach that relies on subjective neighborhood perceptions can show that populations living in the same physical space that differ by race or socioeconomic status can live cognitively in very different neighborhoods.

Adapting Hunter's Approach

In order to help fill the methodological void suggested by Sampson et al in considering the dynamics of social interaction, my study adapts Albert Hunter's approach to conduct a case study on a gentrifying neighborhood in Philadelphia. Albert Hunter's 1974 study analyzed the impact of the increasing scale of the city on the city's ecological structure and on the sentiments and symbols that define the culture of local communities. In the 1920s and 1930s, Ernest Burgess explored the neighborhoods of Chicago and divided the city into 75 mutually exclusive local communities. Using these community definitions as a comparative sampling framework, Hunter interviewed 801 Chicago residents, approximately 10 from each of the 75 community areas in 1966 and 1967. He spent one week in each community interviewing residents, observing the area, and talking with various business owners and community leaders. The interviews were short, open-ended questionnaires that asked residents to name the area and its boundaries, to sketch a map of the neighborhood, and to discuss neighborhood characteristics, neighborhood change, and residents' community involvement and personal attachment to the neighborhood.

Hunter analyzed his data to measure the degree of persistence of cultural symbols that define the neighborhood and the correlations between various groups of people and how they perceived the neighborhood. Hunter found that a surprisingly significant number of respondents, across all races, gave names and boundaries identical to those given by Burgess over forty years

earlier. This persistence of neighborhood names and boundaries demonstrate the strength of shared local culture and its symbols, including symbols that demarcate neighborhood borders. Moreover, the results show that symbolic definitions are independent of social and ecological definitions.[15] Burgess referred to symbolic boundaries as "natural" and developed the concept of "natural areas," which are areas of population segregation that share common selective or cultural characteristics.[16] Hunter speculates that "natural" borders are the most convenient and unambiguous borders and serve as isolating barriers.[17]

Hunter also found differences between residents in various demographic groups and their ability to define their neighborhood. Subjects with longer periods of residency both in the neighborhood and in the city of Chicago, greater involvement in or awareness of community organizations, or higher frequency of crossing boundaries were more likely to know the name and all four boundaries of an area. In addition, residents living in areas with high occupational status or high economic status were likely to define their neighborhood clearly.[18] Residents living in neighborhoods with more families also demonstrated greater ability to define their neighborhood. White residents were also more likely to give clear definitions of their neighborhoods by identifying names and boundaries. According to Hunter, his findings demonstrate a correlation between social position and cognitive clarity.[19]

Group differences were also apparent in how residents defined the size of their neighborhoods. While Burgess defined the 75 community areas as similarly sized units, Hunter found variation in the way different demographic groups defined their neighborhood and its size.

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[15] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 81-93.
[16] Burgess, *The City*, 188. This concept of natural areas is controversial in sociological literature, and I discuss the concept and its applicability to my study in greater depth in Chapter 1.
[17] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities,* 25.
[18] Hunter measures occupational status by one's ability to be the head of the household. Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 104.
[19] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities,* 95-105.

Respondents from areas with low economic status or low family status were likely to define their

neighborhood as either very small or very large.[20] Residents with children described smaller

areas as their neighborhood, while subjects with longer lengths of residency depicted their

neighborhood as very large.[21] However, the findings that showed correlations between

neighborhood characteristics and the likelihood of residents to define their neighborhood did not

necessarily reflect a consensus. As Suttles' study demonstrated, different groups of people

experience the neighborhood in different ways.[22] Therefore, the residents that Hunter

interviewed from neighborhoods that he assigned with particular status characteristics may not

have perceived the characteristics that he used to define the neighborhood as part of the local

symbolic culture. Moreover, Hunter noted that his sample distribution was not necessarily

generalizable across the Chicago population due to the sample's overrepresentation of females,

managers and clerical workers, older residents, and residentially stable people. Nevertheless, his

sample corresponded closely to Census data with regard to race, and because of the

representativeness of his subject sample by race, his findings in racial differences warrant

particular attention.[23]

Hunter found that Blacks and Whites defined their neighborhoods as different *types* of

communities. While Blacks defined the local area as a spatially small section of blocks, Whites

depicted a larger community area with distinct geographic boundaries. Hunter speculated that

Blacks base their communities on personal knowledge and direct interaction, and therefore,

identifying oneself with a unique community with distinct boundaries is less important for

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[20] Hunter measures economic status of areas with median education level, median housing value, and percent employed by sector. Hunter measures family status of areas with percent of children under five, percent of people married, percent of employed females, and percent of single-family homes. Hunter, *Symbolic Communities,* 25-7.
[21] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 105-116.
[22] Suttles, *Social Order of the Slum*.
[23] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 199-202.

Blacks than for Whites. Hunter's findings showed that social forces influence cultural symbols and that cultural symbols influence groups in different ways. Hunter, in the tradition of the Chicago School, failed to develop a theory explaining the distinctiveness of race, nor did Hunter provide a thorough explanation for his findings; however, subsequent sociological literature demonstrates the power of residential racial segregation on the residents of a neighborhood and surrounding areas. While Hunter presented significant findings concerning perceptual differences between various groupings of residents, his book *Symbolic Communities* did very little to explain the causes for strikingly divergent geographic horizons.

Alex Kotlowitz explains narrow geographic horizons in his 1991 book *There Are No Children Here*, an ethnography of a Black family living in Chicago projects. Depicting the limited space to which residents in isolated neighborhoods traveled, he illustrates the narrow geographic horizons that poor Blacks experience due to residential racial segregation. He describes the awe the children in the family expressed when they traveled to downtown Chicago, an entirely different world for them that they had only experienced a handful of times despite its short distance from their home. Moreover, the curiosity conveyed by the children over whether or not a place exists where gangs are nonexistent demonstrates the remarkably closed perceived world in which the children live.[24] As Kotlowitz shows, segregated Black residents face high levels of isolation and alienation from the rest of the city, narrowing their perceptions of their own neighborhood.

The cognitive differences that Hunter found between racial groups and the similarities within racial groups have profound consequences for research on residential segregation and neighborhood effects. Such differences yearn for further explanation to understand how

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[24] Kotlowitz, *There Are No Children Here*, 19-32, 171-8.

different groups can share space. Because the detrimental effects of residential racial segregation grow from structural conditions, Hunter's findings are significant for policy recommendations. [25]

A Case Study of Gentrification in Philadelphia

My study focuses on a single neighborhood in Philadelphia undergoing neighborhood transition. Philadelphia, the fifth largest city in the United States, has long-established African-American and white-ethnic populations. Like most U.S. cities, Philadelphia has experienced several racial successions, providing a rich "laboratory" for urban studies. For my study, I chose a single neighborhood to conduct a close analysis of the dynamics of the neighborhood and to gain a more insightful understanding of the cultural symbols of the area. By concentrating on one area, I was able to delineate the complexities of the neighborhood and its residents to provide an extended explanation on the perceptual patterns among groups in the area. To compare cognitive differences and similarities among groups for my study, I selected a neighborhood that was undergoing gentrification during the time I conducted the study. Gentrification is the process of renovation and redevelopment in low-cost deteriorated neighborhoods, which results in an increase in property values and an influx of middle-class and affluent residents who displace the prior population.[26] During gentrification, groups in distinct social positions live side-by-side as the neighborhood gradually changes, setting the stage for a comparative study between groups of different social statuses. The heightened awareness of neighborhood definitions during neighborhood transition, which Hunter described in *Symbolic*

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[25] Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged.*
[26] Anderson, *Streetwise*, 26-7.

Communities, elicited the local cultural symbols for each group and highlighted the differences between the groups.[27]

The area of study is a neighborhood near the border between the traditional definitions of the Center City and South Philadelphia regions of the city.[28] The Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System (NIS) defines the area of study, marked by a thick outline on Figure 1.1, as Schuylkill-Southwest, which refers to the Schuylkill River Area and Southwest Center City.[29] The Temple University Social Science Data Library, the database source used to define the neighborhoods in NIS, explains the neighborhood areas listed in the database as "small spatially-coherent geographic [units] that [make] data collection, comparison and analysis statistically meaningful in the context of the entire city."[30] Because my study focuses on perceptions of neighborhood definitions and realizes that residents define the neighborhood differently due to different experiences, I interviewed subjects living in both the NIS-defined neighborhood and in its surrounding areas. By interviewing residents from both the NIS-defined area and areas adjacent to it, I was able to collect valuable data from residents living outside of the neighborhood, providing both insider and outsider perceptions of the neighborhood name and boundaries.

However, I only interviewed subjects in surrounding areas north and south, not east and west, of the neighborhood because my study focused on the particular border that separates the cosmopolitan Center City from the culturally rich South Philadelphia located south of Center City. Both regions carry strong cultural symbols, and like most cases of gentrification, the gentrification that is taking place here is an expansion of Center City. The development of a

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[27] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 86.
[28] *Philadelphia Neighborhood and Place Names.*
[29] *The Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.* The Philadelphia NIS is a cartographic database that combines U.S. Census Data and various other datasets to analyze neighborhoods and properties in Philadelphia.
[30] *Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.*

higher-status commercial area, known as Center City, is resulting in the appearance of new stores and construction extending concentrically from Center City and encroaching upon areas past South Street, the traditional border that separates Center City from South Philadelphia. Due to the gentrification that the area is undergoing, the borders are becoming ambiguous, heightening awareness of neighborhood definitions for both long-term and newer residents.[31]
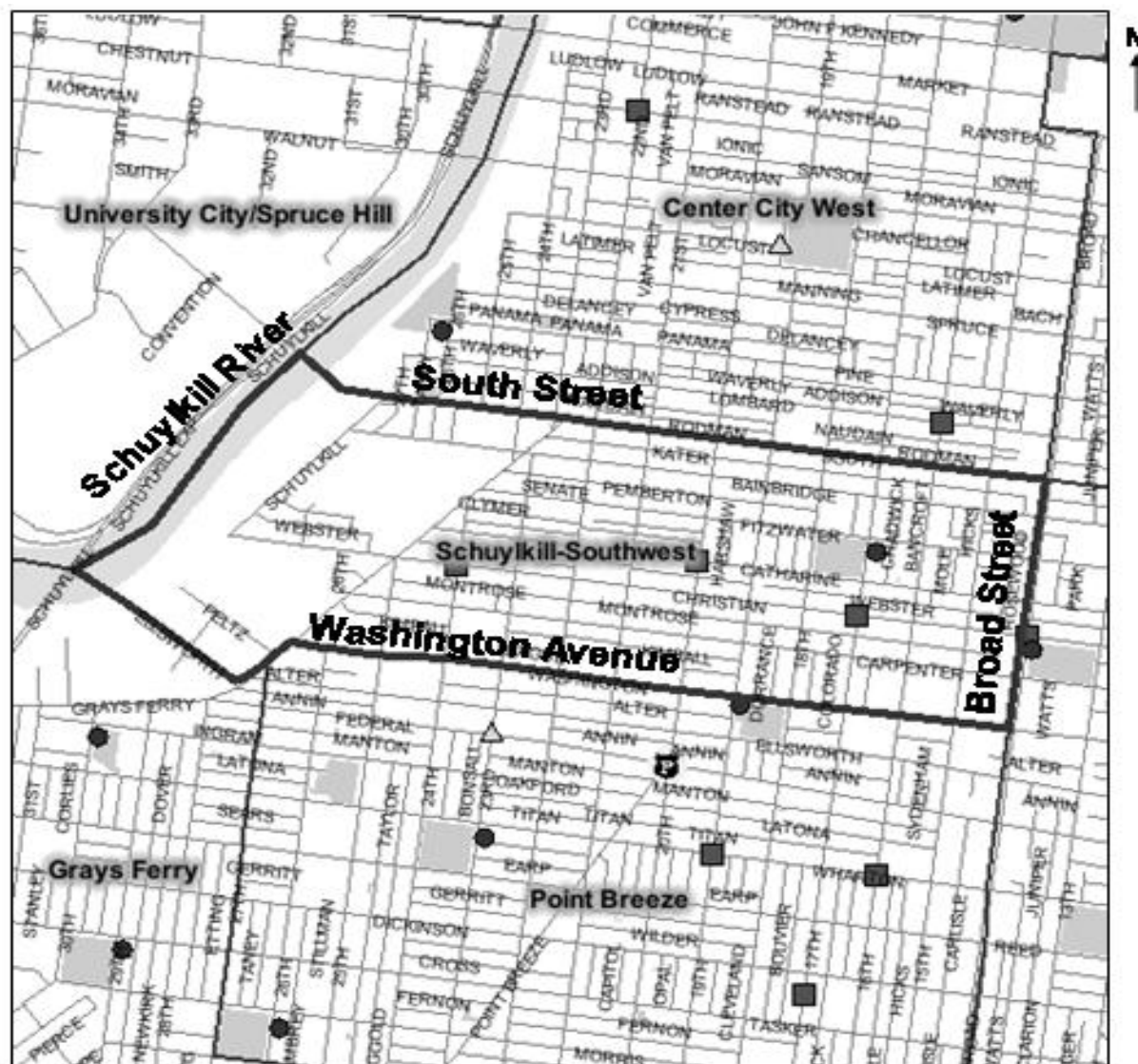

Figure 1.1. Map of area in study.
Source: Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.

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[31] *Philadelphia Neighborhoods and Place Names.*

Methodology

In order to measure and analyze the neighborhood definitions of the area, I adapted the approach Albert Hunter used in his study *Symbolic Communities*. In July and August of 2006, I collected data in this area of Philadelphia. I interviewed 67 residents, divided among each of the three areas—the specified area of the study and the areas north and south. I also spent a total of three weeks in each area, walking around the community, observing it, and talking with its residents. I spent most of my time in the areas on weekdays from morning to early evening, but I did not spend most nights in the area, nor did I conduct interviews at night. The area north of the neighborhood attracted residents from outside of the area in the evening and on the weekends with its bars, restaurants, and park. The area south of the neighborhood had a surge of shootings and homicides during the summer, sometimes in the early evening, and thus I felt unsafe in the area at night. The specific area under study did not appear to have many residents outside of their homes at night except for youths in random pockets of the neighborhood, so the evening was not a practical time to obtain subjects to conduct interviews or make many observations.

Figure 1.2 is a map of my own perception of the neighborhood and its surrounding areas. Although I observed the neighborhood as part of my research, I also served as an actor in the situation, possessing my own perception of the neighborhood. After finding deep complexities among the neighborhood dynamics, particularly in the rapidly changing neighborhood of study, I had difficulty naming the neighborhoods and differentiating them with distinct boundaries. However, I tried to group together areas with generally distinct characteristics, such as racial composition or building types (e.g. residential areas or commercial areas). Moreover, readers should be aware of my role as a young, Asian-American female walking throughout the neighborhoods alone. In the residential areas that were predominantly Black, my presence was

very noticeable, attracting attention from most residents as an obvious non-resident of the

neighborhood. Several male residents, especially in this area, had attempted to invite me on

dates, while other residents would shout racial slurs at me. In addition, I also symbolized the

gentrifying population in the neighborhood under examination. For example, an inebriated

Black woman with whom I had exchanged greetings shouted after me, "This is our

neighborhood!" Thus, my role as a participant in the neighborhood dynamics may have affected

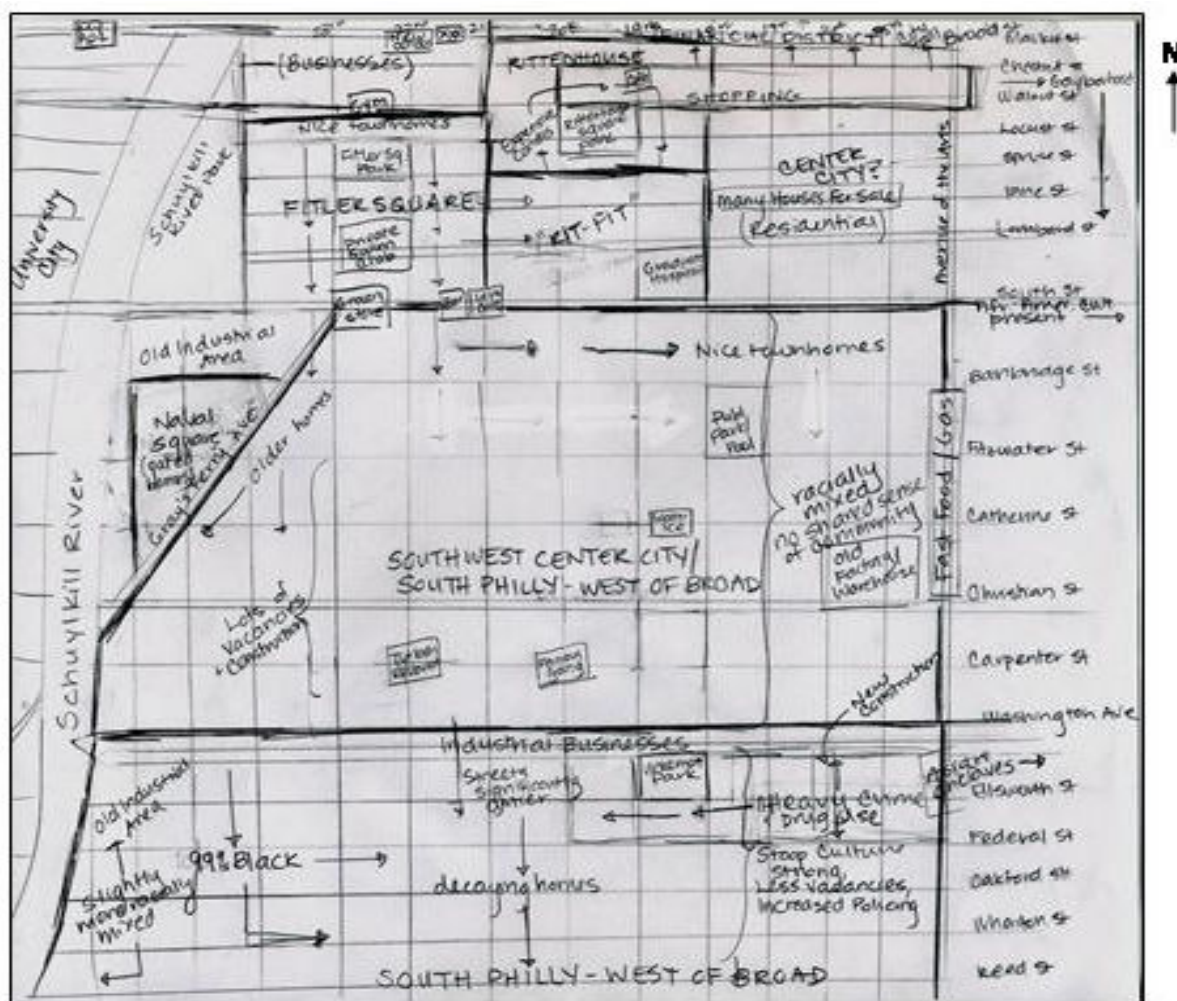which residents were willing to participate in my study.

Figure 1.2: My personal map of the area in study.

I gathered my subject sample by asking passersby or residents sitting on their stoops if they were "from the neighborhood" and if they would like to participate in a short interview. I also spent considerable time reviewing notes and analyzing my data at Le Petit Café, a one-year-old café located on South Street.[32] The owner of the café, who was also a resident of the neighborhood under examination, often discussed the project with me, and she would sometimes ask regular customers to participate in an interview for my study. I ensured that my subjects represented broad geographic coverage by tracking where the subjects resided, and I often targeted areas by only walking around specific blocks for periods until I obtained a sufficient number of interviews. I gathered a sample distribution of races that closely reflected U.S. Census data for the areas north and south of the neighborhood.[33] Because the gentrification that is taking place in the particular area of study has occurred in the last five years, the 2000 Census data does not accurately reflect the population by race. The 2000 Census Data indicates that the area under examination was 69.8% Black and 23.9% White. However, Residential Sales Data indicates that from 2000 to 2005, 2,412 properties were sold in the area, which only contains 5,224 total properties. Moreover, the median residential sales price increased from $65,000 to $220,000.[34] These figures indicate rapid gentrification and immense changes in the population demographics occurring over the last several years. My sample of subjects from the NIS-defined neighborhood consisted of 13 White residents (43.3%) and 17 Black residents (56.7%). Twelve surveys were invalid due to various reasons, and the remaining 35 subjects lived either north or

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[32] The names of people and relevant places have been changed to protect the confidentiality of the subjects.

[33] *Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.* The 2000 U.S. Census Data in this database indicates that the area north of the area under examination was 4.51% Black and 85.1% White; my subject sample of residents in this area consisted of 1 Black resident and 13 White residents. The area south of the neighborhood of study was 91.2% Black and 5.04% White; my subject sample of residents from this area consisted of 11 Black residents and 0 White residents.

[34] *Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.*

south of the defined area. I compensated subjects with a choice of $5 gift certificates to

Starbucks, Le Petit Café, or another local café La Colombe.

Heavily based on Albert Hunter's method, my interview instrument was a short open-

ended questionnaire that consisted of three parts. In the first part, residents filled out a sheet of

paper containing questions, which asked for background information about the resident and

asked the resident to provide the name of their neighborhood. The second part of the

questionnaire asked residents to draw a map of their neighborhood and the surrounding ones on a

blank sheet of paper. I also asked them to label each area, mark where their house is located, and

add any important features of the neighborhood. I gave subjects a sample map of a fake

neighborhood to provide residents with some direction for drawing their maps. I added the

sample map after the first few subjects exhibited hesitation and resistance with drawing a map,

and I changed the sample map after interviewing ten more subjects because the subjects were

tending to not include features of the neighborhood. Changing the sample maps may have

skewed the initial subjects' data. The third part of the interview consisted of a series of questions

asking about residents' sentiments of the area and surrounding ones and the local activity and

participation both within and outside of the area. For this section, I asked the subjects the

questions and took notes on their responses. Often times, subjects would continue to talk

extensively about their neighborhood and Philadelphia beyond the scope of the questions, and I

used these conversations as additional data for my study.

General Findings

The results of my study demonstrate significant differences among residents by race, and

these racial differences form the basis for many of my explanations. Whites have a more

idiosyncratic view of which boundaries are important. They tend to use such factors as established housing values and perceived safety levels to define their neighborhoods, and they often use conventional neighborhood sizes in their cognitive maps.[35] African-Americans use major streets or geophysical landmarks to define their neighborhoods, and they draw and label their neighborhoods either on a very large scale, as an entire region of Philadelphia, or on a very narrow scale, as a neighborhood block.

Of the 55 valid subjects interviewed, 96.4% of Blacks defined their neighborhood with major streets or geophysical landmarks, while only 25.0% of Whites cited expected borders to define the borders of their neighborhood.[36] Furthermore, 27.6% of Blacks drew their neighborhoods as large regions. Defining a neighborhood on a regional level, such as "South Philly," suggests that the subject does not differentiate between residents living in various sections of the region and focuses more on the geophysical nature of the neighborhood. An additional 58.6% of Blacks drew maps on a block level, depicting only a few blocks or less as their neighborhood, demonstrating narrow geographic horizons, while only 26.9% of Whites did so.

The following figures, Figures 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5 illustrate examples of fundamental differences in how residents perceive their neighborhood.[37] Throughout the paper, I will revisit some of these maps, along with several additional maps provided by subjects in the study, to explore possible explanations for these diverging perceptions. Figure 1.3a is a map of a 62-year-old retired Black man named Alan who has lived in the neighborhood of analysis for thirty

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[35] "Cognitive maps are convenient sets of shorthand symbols that we all subscribe to, recognize, and employ." In Downs and Stea, *Cognitive Maps and Spatial Behavior*, 9.

[36] I discarded 10 survey results due to various reasons, such as not being a resident of the area under examination.

[37] I did not collect the actual names of the subjects in the study to maintain anonymity. The names presented in this study are pseudonyms.

years.[38] On his map, Alan demarcated South Street as the northern boundary of South

Philadelphia, and he draws all of South Philadelphia as his neighborhood. Moreover, Alan calls

his neighborhood "South Philly." Such a neighborhood definition does not exclude anyone from

any areas in an obvious manner and indicates values in authenticity and tradition, despite the

gentrification the area is undergoing.

Figure 1.4a is the map of a 37-year-old Black female subject, Denise, who has lived in

the area just south of the area of study for her entire life. Denise was a nursing assistant at the

Graduate Hospital, and I had interviewed her on her way home from work. Like most subjects

who drew a single block as their neighborhood, she identifies her neighborhood as "South

Philly" but only draws one block, the 19th Street block between Titan and Manton Streets.

Because South Philadelphia is a large region of city, the inconsistency between the name of her

neighborhood and the map she drew for it demonstrates similar patterns of perceiving

neighborhoods between residents who demonstrated very large and extremely narrow geographic

horizons. Denise also discussed her neighborhood very negatively as she complained about

increasing violence and drug use in the neighborhood. Interestingly, she mentions Southwest

Philadelphia an as ideal area to live, although areas of Southwest Philadelphia had been

experiencing higher rates of murder during the summer than the South Philadelphia region.

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[38] All names of subjects in this paper are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the subjects.
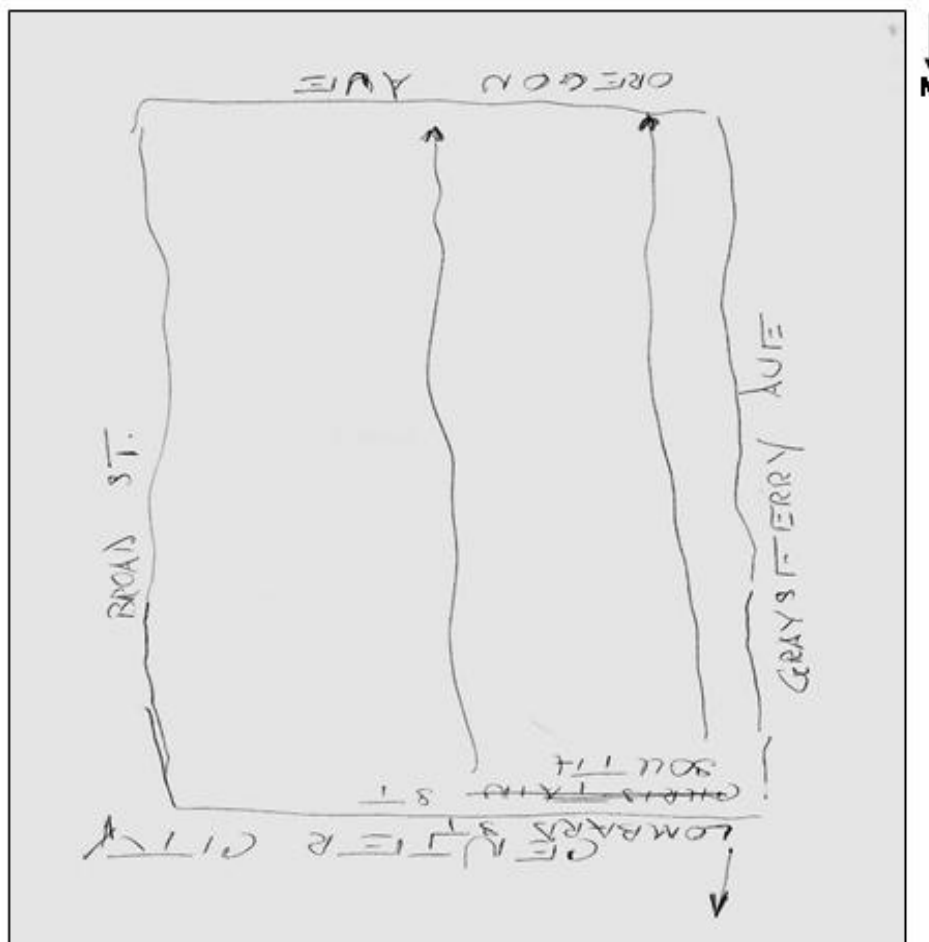
Figure 1.3a: Alan's map. (62-year-old retired Black Committeeman.)

Figure 1.3b. Translation of Alan's map onto standard map provided by *Philadelphia NIS*. The red dashed lines indicate the neighborhood the subject indicated in his map.
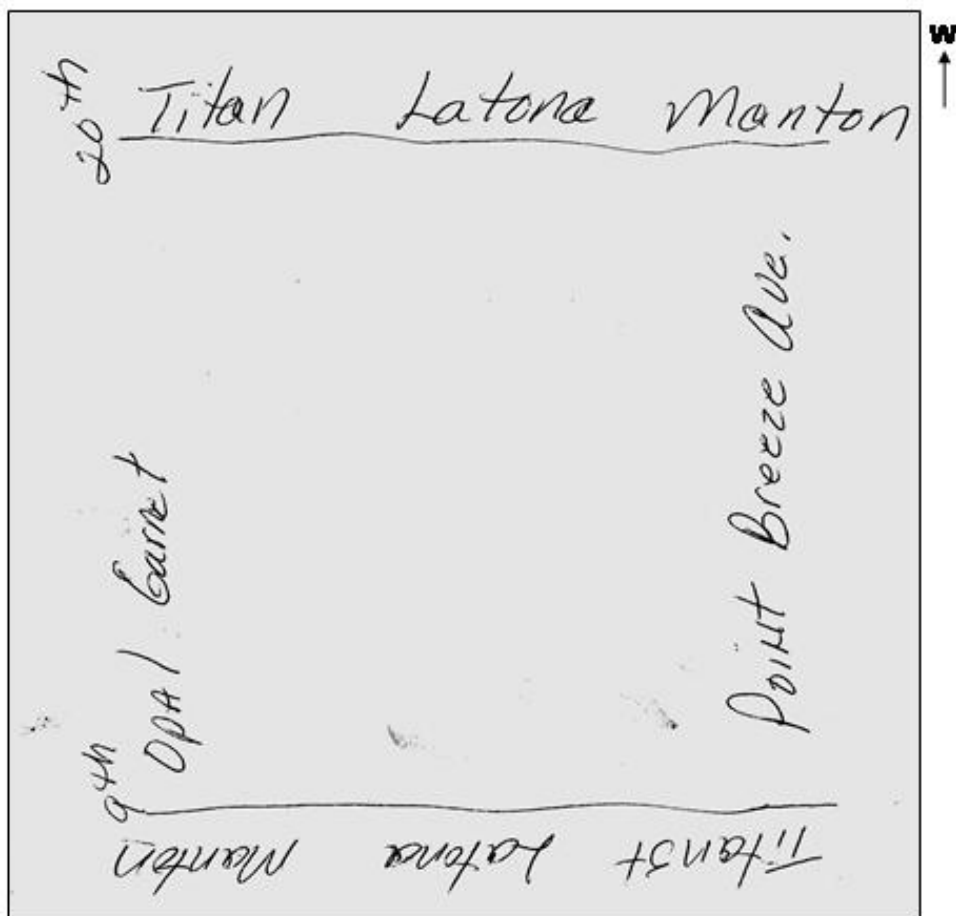
Figure 1.4a: Denise's Map. (37-year-old Black female.)

Figure 1.4b: Translation of Denise's map onto standard map provided by *Philadelphia NIS*. The red dashed lines indicate the neighborhood the subject indicated in her map.

In contrast to the large and narrow scopes of the neighborhood drawn by the majority of Black residents, Figure 1.5a illustrates the map of a 30-year-old White female, Melissa. Like most other White residents, she depicted a map of a size closely similar to the uniformly sized Chicago neighborhoods defined by Ernest Burgess, and she defined the borders of the neighborhood with minor streets. Melissa had lived in the neighborhood under analysis for 4.5 years and had just opened Le Petit Café in the past year. She identified her neighborhood as "Graduate Hospital Area" and defined the southern boundary of her neighborhood as Catherine Street, a minor one-way street just three blocks north of Washington Avenue. The Whites living north of South Street often chose natural borders to demarcate the southern border of their neighborhood or to indicate the northern border of South Philadelphia; however, the majority of White residents living between South Street and Washington Avenue did not use natural boundaries to define the southern border of their neighborhood that separated it from South Philadelphia. Melissa named wealth as the common factor she had with the people in her neighborhood, and she did not label any of the areas directly adjacent to the borders that she defines, demonstrating that she identifies the areas as outside of her community. Moreover, she did not include areas that she highlights as high-crime as part of her neighborhood, yet she is unable to label the high-crime areas with a name either, indicating that she is drawing a border simply to cognitively distance herself from the areas that she views negatively. The distinct differences in her map from the Black subjects' maps in Figures 1.3a and 1.4a illustrate the fundamental differences between races in how residents perceive their neighborhoods.
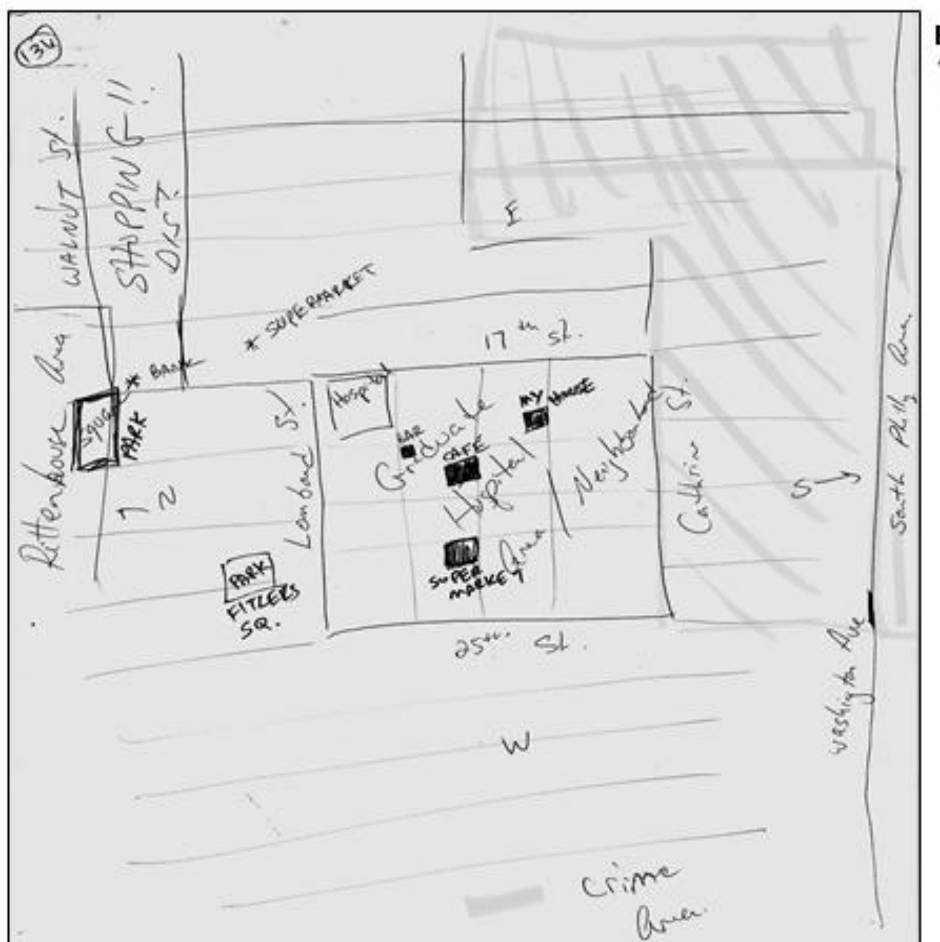
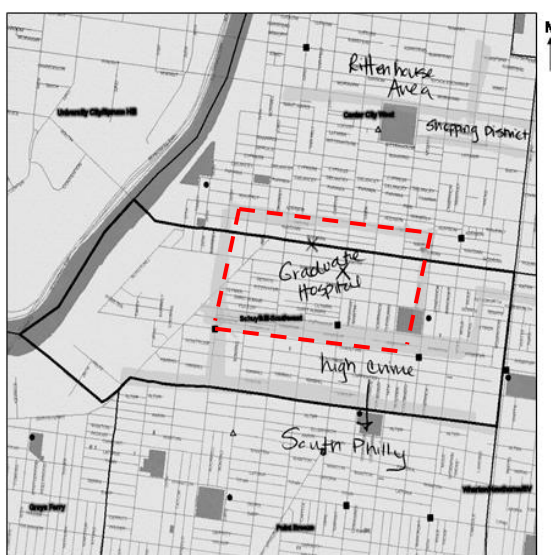**Figure 1.5a:** Melissa's Map. (30-year-old White female café-owner.)

Figure 1.5b. Translation of Melissa's map onto standard map provided by *Philadelphia NIS*. The red dashed lines indicate the neighborhood the subject indicated in her map.

The drastic differences between Blacks and Whites demonstrate the impact of residential racial segregation on how residents perceive their own neighborhoods and the surrounding areas. The findings suggest that Black residents may face greater effects from what Chicago School scholars called "natural" boundaries, which often coincide with political boundaries, and from residential segregation, even within areas that appear integrated. Moreover, cultural authenticity and self-identity play significant roles when residents are identifying themselves with a neighborhood and defining its borders. Zoning and other public policies, community associations, and real estate practices, are institutional factors that perpetuate differences among Blacks and Whites.

Although my sample does not include a significant representation of poor Whites or of wealthy African-Americans, the subjects from the neighborhood undergoing gentrification were living in similar surroundings. Despite the same environment, the subjects perceived different "realities," and the dissimilarities were more striking by race than any other measured factor.[39] The neighborhood my study analyzes seems integrated when examining the 2000 U.S. Census figures for populations by race; however, in the pattern that gentrification tends to follow, Whites are moving into this once predominantly African-American neighborhood and gradually displacing poor Black residents.[40] Although newer White residents and poor Black subjects occupy the same space, the differences between races in how residents define their neighborhood indicate "segregated realities"—perceived physical or abstract borders. Massey and Denton demonstrated the destructive effects of residential segregation on the Black community using the objectively defined neighborhood unit as a measure, but a full understanding of segregation that considers perceptual differences is necessary to comprehend the effects of residential

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[39] These measured factors include gender, age, education level, occupation, length of residency, location of interview, and location of residency.
[40] *Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.*

segregation.[41] While segregation is less apparent in a seemingly integrated neighborhood, it is

significant for understanding and explaining the persisting existence of the urban underclass.

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[41] Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*.

2

Defining the Neighborhood

Residents' perceptions of their neighborhood names and boundaries both distinguish an area and indicate an identity for themselves, and thus, the perceived neighborhoods indicate the situation in which residents live. While Whites had idiosyncratic views of which borders are important, Blacks tended to pick major streets or geophysical landmarks as boundaries to define their neighborhood. Moreover, Whites tended to define their neighborhood similarly sized to the uniformly sized neighborhood areas defined by Burgess and his students, i.e. roughly in the range of 20 to 250 square blocks.[42] Figure 2.1 presents summary findings from the study by race. There are drastic differences between Black and White residents in using expected borders, a model that I will develop in this chapter. Moreover, Black and White respondents diverged in geographic horizons and the use of defining one's neighborhood by a central location. Consistent with Hunter, my results show that Black residents viewed their neighborhood as either very small, as a block, or very large, as a region. Sharp dissimilarities indicate that members of different races perceive their neighborhoods in different ways. This chapter will discuss the racial differences among residents' neighborhood perceptions.

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[42] Burgess and Park, *The City*; Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 107-8. While 20 to 250 square blocks seems like a large range, contradicting the notion of uniform neighborhoods, Hunter characterized this range as "intermediate sized neighborhoods." Moreover, the areas Burgess defined are based on the idea of "uniform functionally-integrated communities," which is similar to the definition given by the Philadelphia NIS for its neighborhoods.

	Blacks	Whites
	n = 29	n = 26
Area of Residence		
Living north of the neighborhood	3.4%	50.0%
Living within the neighborhood	58.6%	50.0%
Associate with neighborhood north[1]	23.5%	30.8%
Associate with northern edge of neighborhood[2]	0.0%	7.7%
Associate with neighborhood	0.0%	61.5%
Associate with neighborhood south	76.5%	0.0%
Living south of the neighborhood	37.9%	0.0%
Length of Residency		
<10 years	24.1%	61.5%
>10 years	75.9%	38.5%
Use of Expected Borders[3]		
Yes	96.4%	25.0%
No	3.6%	75.0%
Geographic Horizons		
Narrow (<15 area blocks)	58.6%	26.9%
Intermediate (15-250 area blocks)	13.8%	73.1%
Large (>250 area blocks)	27.6%	0.0%
Name by Central Location		
Yes	3.4%	61.5%
No	96.6%	38.5%

Figure 2.1: Summary data from study by race.

[1] "Associate with neighborhood north," "Associate with neighborhood itself," and "Associate with neighborhood south" indicates where residents living in the area of study associated themselves with. Residents either identified themselves with the area north of the study, which was predominantly White and higher-income, with the area itself as its own entity, or with the area south of the study, which was predominantly Black and lower-income, respectively.

[2] Some residents identified the northern edge of the area under examination as their neighborhood. The "expected" northern border served as a central location for these residents.

[3] Three residents drew their neighborhood as a block and did not specify their neighborhood borders during the interview. I did not consider these residents in these statistics.

A Model for Defining the Neighborhood

Many scholars have created models to explain the structure of the city and the creation of boundaries. Because the city consists of several smaller segments that serve as functional parts of the urban landscape, the way people divide the city is important to understand the role of the neighborhood. Ernest Burgess and Robert E. Park developed the original model for the human ecological approach in their 1925 book *The City*. This model developed the concept of "natural"

areas as areas of population segregation that share common selective or cultural characteristics. Each of the areas has its own history as a community, name, community interests, and businesses and organizations oriented to the local community. Land values, streets, rivers, railroad properties, streetcar lines, and other distinctive marks or barriers serve as the dividing lines between the "natural" areas within the city.[43]

In the sociological field, the ecological models face criticism for their focus on spatial characteristics and neglect of the influence of social, cultural, psychological or political factors in shaping the pattern of the city. To account for criticisms of ecological models, scholars have developed various models that explain residential segregation while considering these additional factors. Socio-cultural models explain the neighborhood patterning of the city by similarities among other factors, such as economic status, family status, or ethnicity. Behavioral approaches focus on the demand side of the housing market and people's preferences to live with people with similar status or ethnicity.[44] However, Massey and Denton's *American Apartheid* argue that discriminatory policies and real estates practices are the cause of the segregated pattern of the city.[45] Nevertheless, because spatial reference is inherent to social interactions and politics, natural area models are often similar to other models and only differ by the factors used to determine the neighborhood borders.[46]

Integrating various models, I develop expected neighborhood definitions for the neighborhood under analysis in my study to form a basis of comparison for the neighborhood definitions given by the subject sample. The expected borders of the area of my study vary

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[43] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities,* 25; Park and Burgess, *The City*, 188.

[44] Van Kempen, "Ethnic Segregation in Cities," 1638-9.

[45] Redlining is the practice of denying or increasing the cost of services to residents in ethnically or racially mixed areas under maps created by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, thus institutionalizing a systematic practice of racial discrimination in housing. Racial steering is the real estate practice of guiding prospective real estate clients to neighborhoods with the same social and economic, especially race, background as the homebuyer. Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 51-2, 99-100.

[46] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 7.

depending on what residents use as references to define their neighborhood; however, using the theoretical models that explain housing patterns, only certain boundaries align with the theoretical models. Figure 2.2 illustrates the possible "natural" borders of the area and distinctive landmarks from an ecological perspective. Schuylkill River is a major geophysical landmark with a major highway running alongside it, and it traditionally divides the West Philadelphia region from the rest of the city. Market Street and Broad Street are high-traffic streets that intersect at the City Hall, and major subway lines run along them. South Street is a famous area for commercial business and nightlife on the east side of Broad Street and was once a thriving entertainment center for the Black community in the area contained in the neighborhood.[47] Moreover, South Street is historically the northern boundary of the South Philadelphia region.[48] Washington Avenue, Gray's Ferry Avenue, and Point Breeze Avenue all serve as major streets. Rittenhouse Square Park and Fitler Square Park are significant landmarks that nearby residents often referred to in their maps, and the Graduate Hospital is an important building in the landscape. Hunter also considers streets within one block of a park or vacant land, railroad or subway line, expressway, city limits, or rivers as possible "natural" borders. He argues that streets may have been the most convenient form of articulation for major geophysical landmarks, and therefore, I consider streets near major landmarks or "natural landforms" as expected borders as well in my study.[49] Because the Schuylkill River curves and intersects every east-west street at various places, I also considered streets within one block of the river relative to the location of the interview or the subject's residence as an expected border as well.

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[47] Gelman, Bill, *South Philly Review*.
[48] *Philadelphia Neighborhoods and Place Names*.
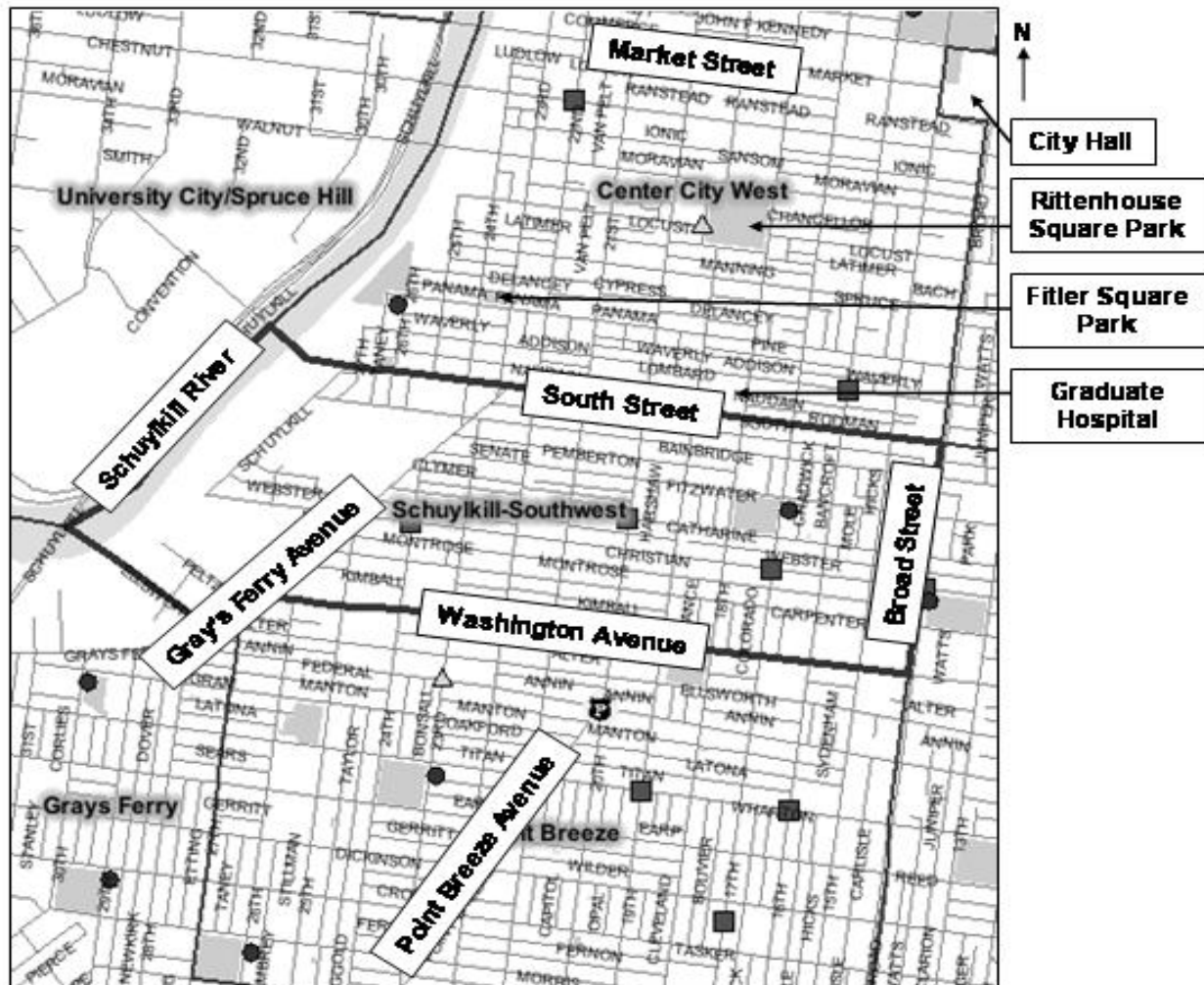[49] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities,* 82.

Figure 2.2. Map of expected borders and distinctive landmarks from an ecological approach.
Source: Adapted from the *Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.*

While Figure 2.2 indicates major distinctive barriers and landmarks, Burgess and Park

also argue that land values are important indicators for natural areas. Because newly constructed

or rehabilitated houses run throughout this gentrifying area and are interspersed with several old

homes or vacant properties, the present land value would not be an accurate indicator of expected

borders as the area is rapidly changing. However, I still look at the land values of the area in the

past because, as Hunter argues, the symbolic definitions often persist and can retard the

ecological and social forces of change.[50] Figure 2.3 and 2.4 illustrate the land values for the area

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[50] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities,* 93.

from 2000 by monthly rent and the value of owner-occupied homes, respectively. We can see

that the land values coincide with the model of expected neighborhood areas. Note that high

median housing values exist in several blocks directly south of South Street; however, the

housing values are sporadic and differ from block to block. Therefore, no strong distinctive

border exists that explains naming minor streets as neighborhood boundaries. Moreover,

residents did not exhibit a consistent pattern in naming minor streets as neighborhood borders.

In addition, because the land value is changing so rapidly in the area, a nonpersistent land value

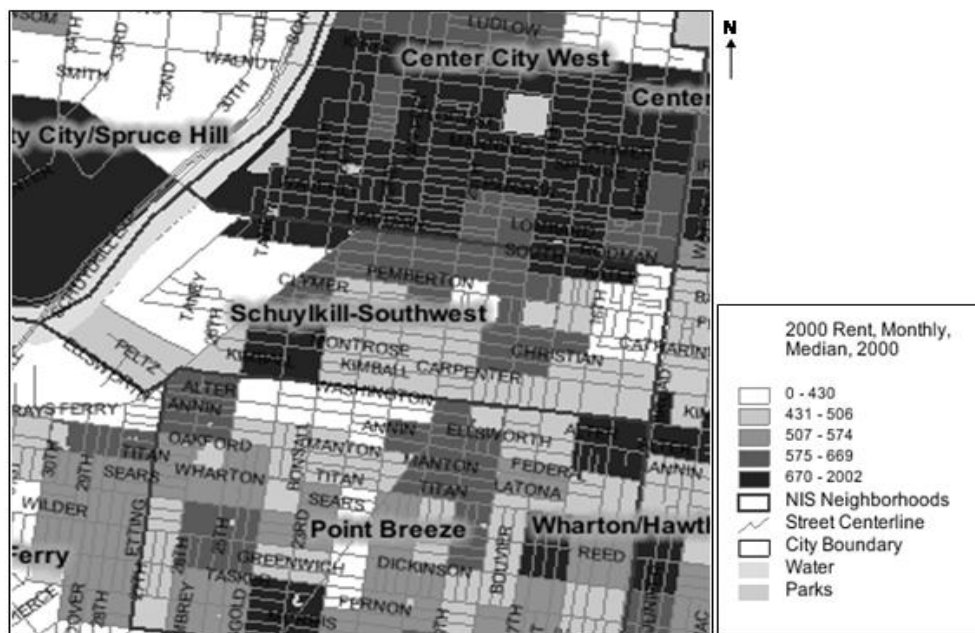border is unlikely to be a symbolic definition for the local community.

Figure 2.3: Monthly Rent, Median, 2000 by Census Blockgroups.
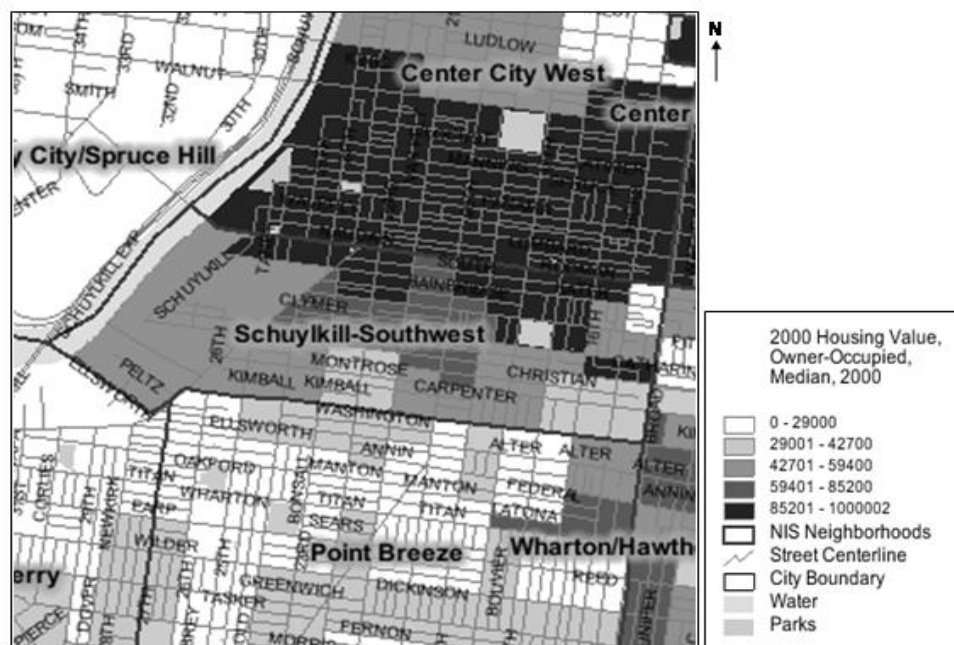Source: Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.

Figure 2.4: Housing Value, Owner-Occupied, Median, 2000 by Census Blockgroups.
Source: Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System

In addition to land values and major barriers or landmarks, socio-cultural models

emphasize the importance of economic status, family status, and ethnicity in residential racial

segregation. Using adaptations of the variables Albert Hunter selects for measuring economic

status, family status, and ethnicity in his study of Chicago, I analyze a selection of U.S. Census

Data variables to find any additional expected borders that may exist in the neighborhood. I

measure economic status with data maps of highest level of education, median household

income, and percent with income below 100% poverty level. I use maps of percent of children

below eighteen years of age to measure family status, and I analyze ethnicity with maps of

percent of population African-American.[51] Figures 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, and 2.9 are maps that

measure each variable, respectively, from 2000 U.S. Census Data. From these maps, I find

similar patterns with the housing value maps (Figures 2.3 and 2.4) that demonstrate that socio-

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[51] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 25-7.

cultural factors coincide with the "natural" borders labeled in Figure 2.2. Although there are differences on a block-by-block basis, from the maps, the patterns of differences do not form distinctive borders along the minor streets in the area that explain residents' choices to draw minor streets as borders. Moreover, the area has been undergoing rapid change during the last several years, and thus, this data from 2000 is likely to be inaccurate. Furthermore, borders that are not persistent over an extended length of time are unlikely to be strong enough symbols that define a community.
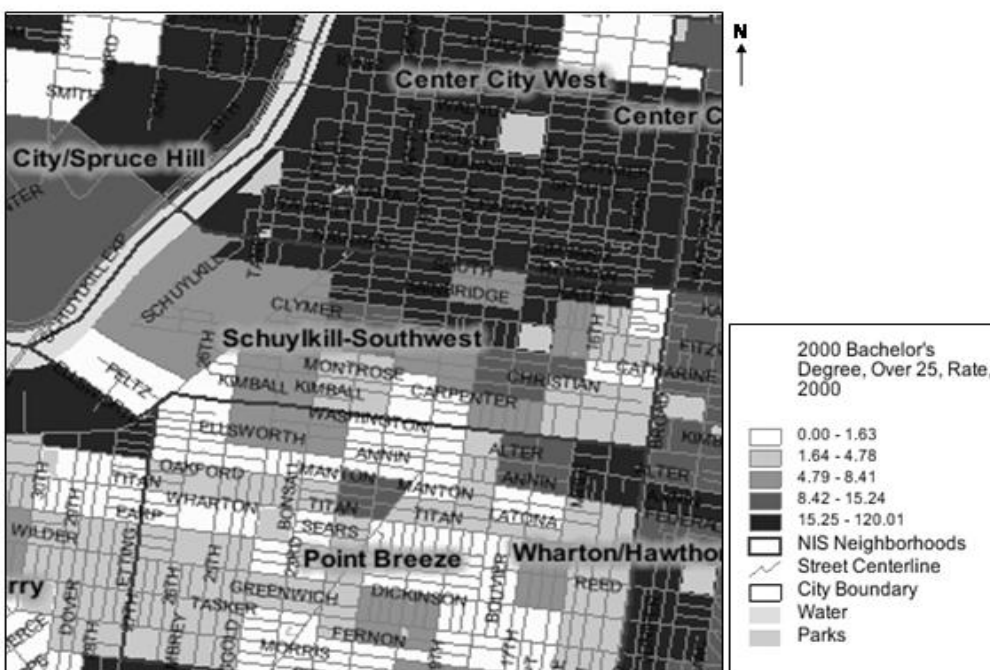

Figure 2.5: Percent of population over 25 years of age, whose highest level of education is a Bachelor's Degree in 2000 by Census Blockgroups.[1]
Source: Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.

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[1] Rate = (percent of population with characteristic) / (percent of population without characteristic)
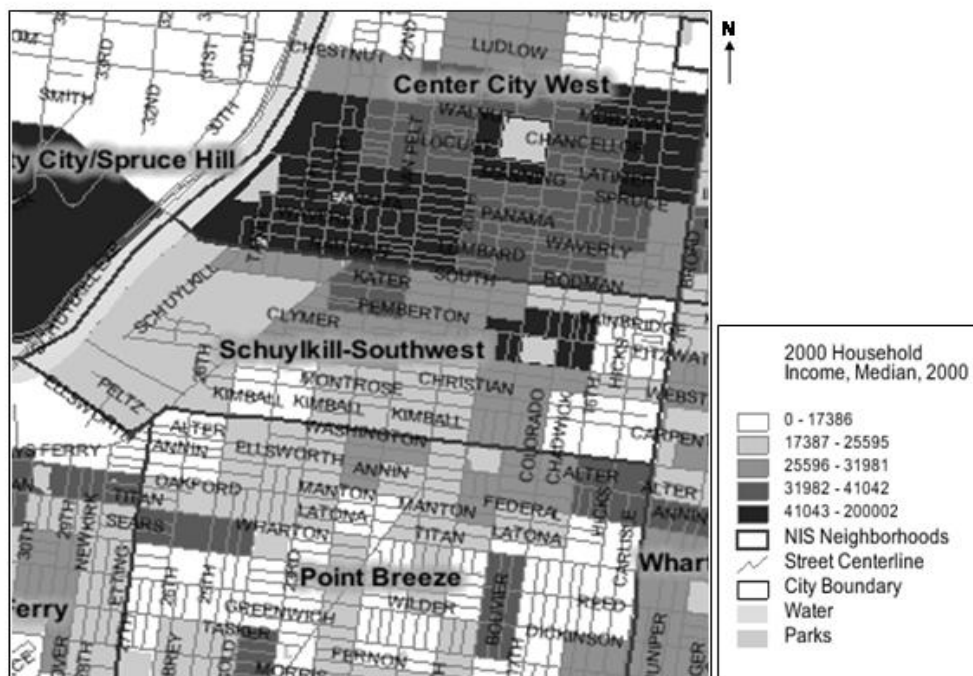
Figure 2.6: Median Household Income in 2000 by Census Blockgroups.
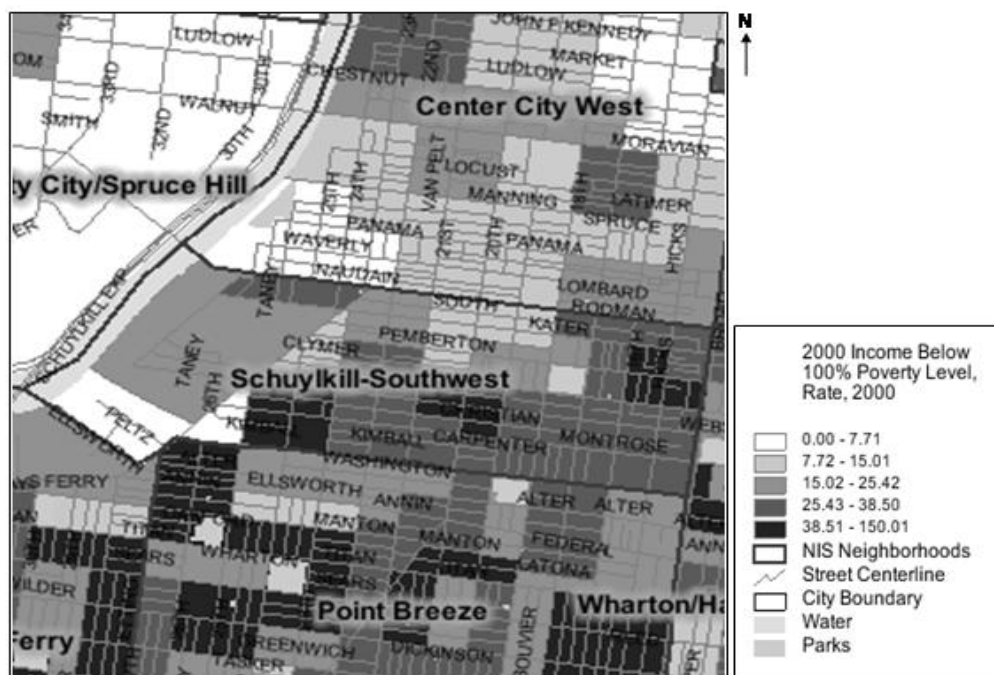Source: Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.

Figure 2.7: Rate of residents with income below 100% poverty level in 2000 by Census Blockgroups.
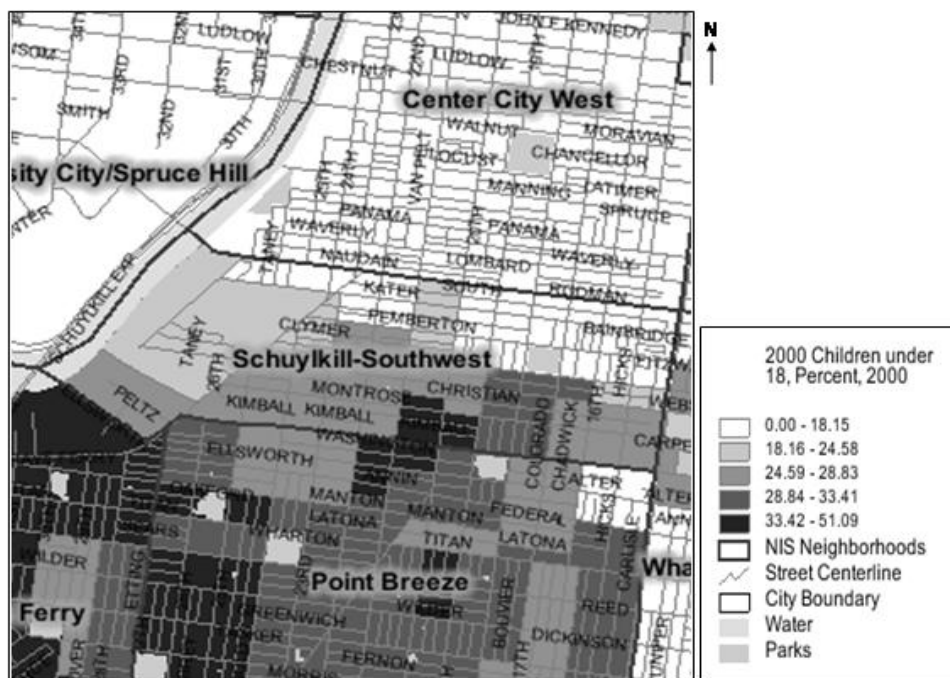Source: Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.

Figure 2.8: Percent of population that are children under 18 in 2000 by Census Blockgroups. Source: Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.
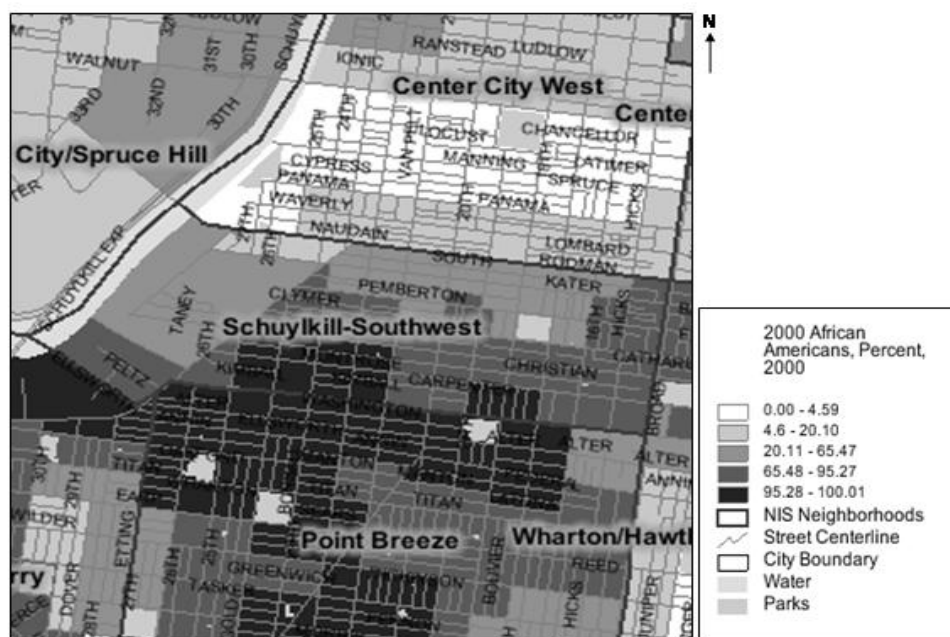

Figure 2.9: Percent of population that are African-Americans in 2000 by Census Blockgroups. Source: Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.

In addition to socio-cultural models, behavioral models focus on housing demand and

personal preferences to live with people of similar socio-economic status in areas to explain

residential segregation. Figures 2.10 and 2.11 illustrate the present housing demand in the area. Like the other maps shown above, each block group differs from others and does not form a consistent border along any minor streets. Moreover, the rapid change the area is undergoing does not result in any persisting borders. Massey and Denton discard the explanation for people's preference to live with others of similar socio-economic status by demonstrating that Whites are willing to live with a lower percentage of Blacks than the percentage of Whites with which Blacks are willing to live. Thus, Blacks are more willing to live in a racially mixed neighborhood with more Whites. They cite additional studies that demonstrate the strong persistence of negative Black stereotypes among Whites, including poor upkeep of homes and proneness to violence. Massey and Denton argue that these negative views perpetuate the fear that Black neighbors lower property values and increase crimes rates. Thus, Whites perceive Blacks moving into a neighborhood as a threat to their social status, consequently promoting Whites to avoid neighborhoods containing a significant percentage of Blacks.[52]
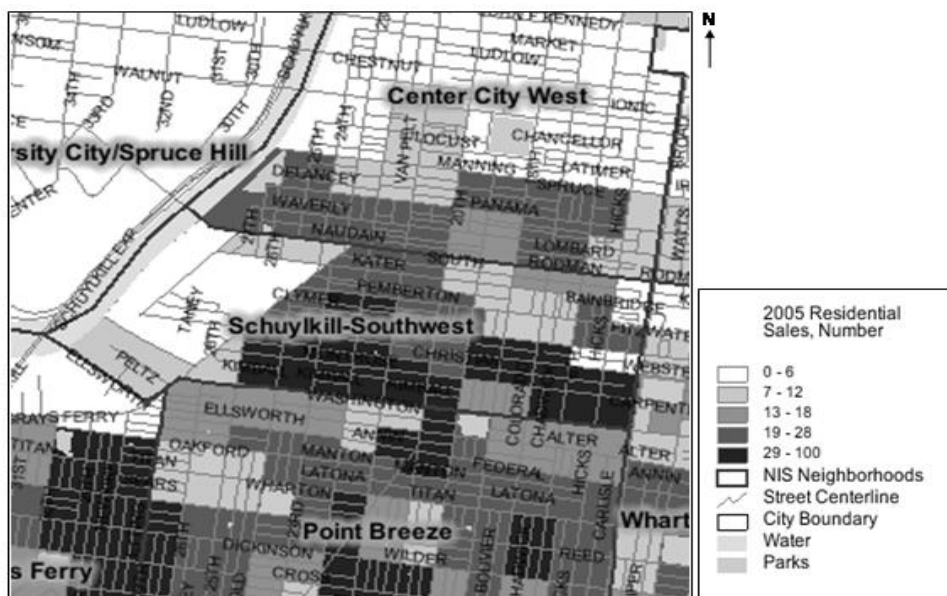

Figure 2.10. Number of Residential Sales in 2005 by Census Blockgroups.
Source: Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.

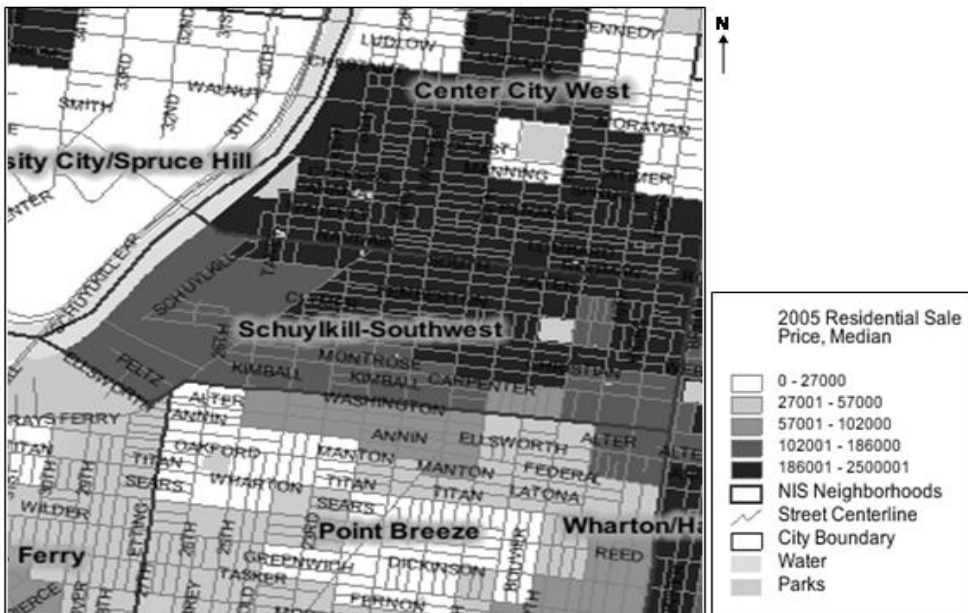[52] Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 88-96.

Figure 2.11. Median residential sale price in 2005 by Census Blockgroups.
Source: Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System.

Moreover, political boundaries may also influence how residents define their

neighborhood because a larger majority of poor and working-class African-American subjects

may face greater consequences from these boundaries. Massey and Denton extensively discuss

how policy and housing practices have greater effects upon concentrations of poor Blacks. They

perform a simulation to demonstrate that a negative change in the neighborhood environment is

much more dramatic for segregated Blacks than for Whites.[53] Although the area is not as

concentrated as in the past, the greater significance of the consequences of policies on African-

Americans, such as property tax changes and zoning ordinances, may explain why Black

residents use the boundaries that coincide with political boundaries. Figure 2.12 shows the

official Neighborhood Planning Analyses Sections for the area of study. These boundaries

coincide with the expected boundaries discussed above and labeled in Figure 2.2.

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[53] Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid,* 118-25.
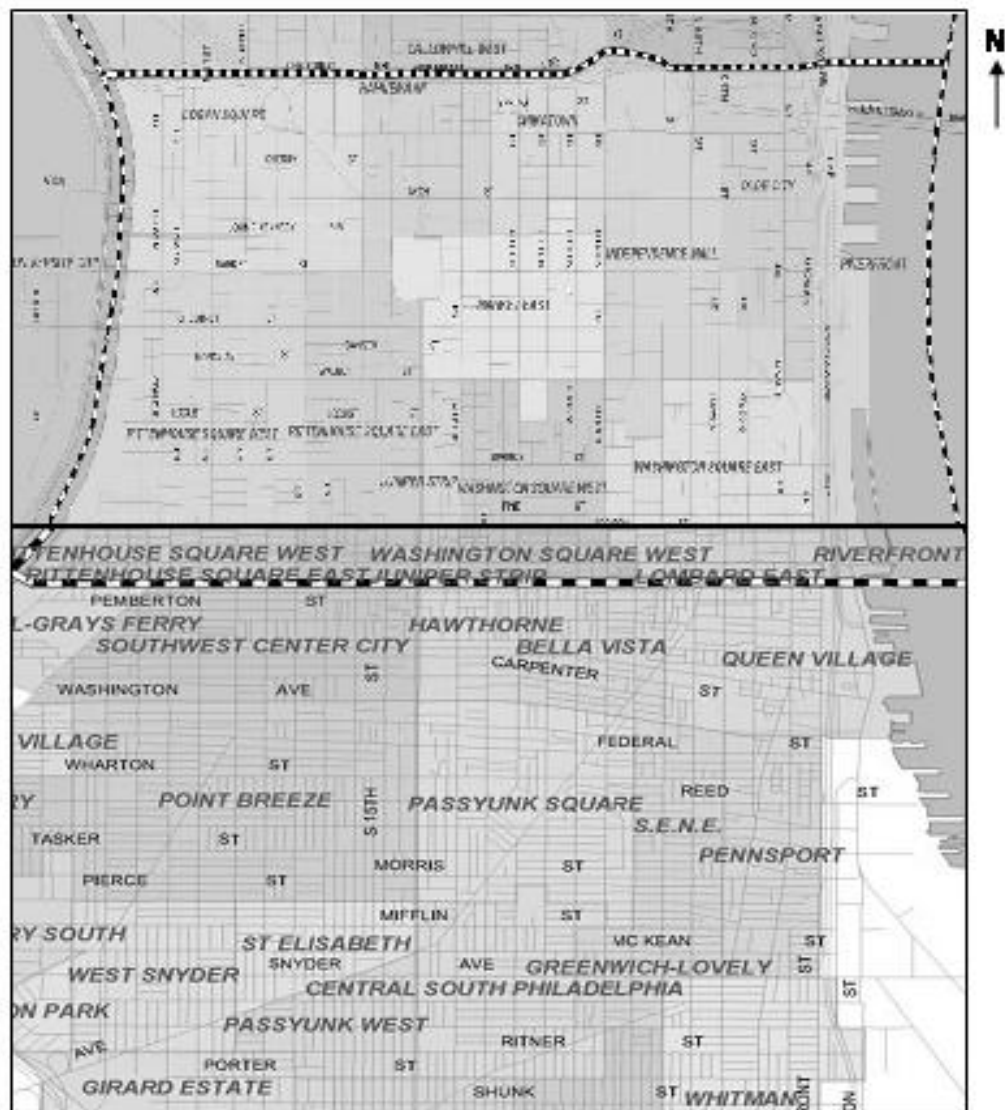
Figure 2.12. Philadelphia Planning Analysis Sections A and B – Neighborhoods, 2004.
Source: Philadelphia City Planning Commission's *Political and Community Service Boundaries of Philadelphia Guide*.

Furthermore, using Hunter's argument about the persistence of symbolic definitions, I examined historical records of Philadelphia neighborhoods to see if other expected neighborhood areas existed that may persist. The expected borders labeled in Figure 2.2 are all of the major borders used in previous neighborhood definitions. In addition, some sources cited the street located one block north of South Street, named Lombard Street, as a neighborhood border on the eastern side of Broad Street, but in the 1970s, the border changed to South Street due to

redevelopment. While Lombard Street may have only served as a border on the east side of

Broad Street, the past significance of the street may still be a symbolic definition to some of the

residents, and so, I considered Lombard Street as an expected border when residents named the

street to define their own neighborhood.[54]

Diverging Neighborhood Perceptions

While Figure 2.2 shows the expected borders for residents to use when defining their

neighborhood borders according to the models discussed above, respondents showed striking

differences by race. Residents diverged in using the expected boundaries to define their

neighborhoods. Of the fifty-seven subjects interviewed, 96.4% of Blacks defined their

neighborhood with major streets or geophysical landmarks, while only 25.0% of Whites cited the

expected borders to define the borders of their neighborhood.[55] Furthermore, although Burgess's

model of Chicago's community areas and the Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System

define neighborhoods with similarly sized spatial areas, many residents differed in the size of

their defined neighborhoods.[56] Like Hunter's findings, residents tended to view their

neighborhoods on three levels: regional, community, and block. Moreover, the level that

residents viewed their neighborhoods tended to be consistent among races but quite different

between races. 27.6% and 58.6% of Blacks drew their neighborhoods as large regions or as a

block, respectively, whereas 73.1% of Whites drew their neighborhoods as sizes similar to the

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[54] Philadelphia Neighborhoods and Place Names. This index comes from multiple sources, including the Philadelphia City Archives, historical research and the *Philadelphia Almanac and Citizens' Manual*, edited by Kenneth Finkel in 1995.

[55] The subject sample contained two Native-Americans, a mixed African-American/Native-American, an immigrant from Israel, and an immigrant from Turkey. I categorized the Native-Americans and the mixed African-American/Native-American under the Black category; I categorized the two immigrants under the White category. I made these categorizations because some of these subjects noted that society tends to label these races in this way. This labeling affects how people perceive the world in which they live and define their situation, and therefore, these categorizations are appropriate for this comparison on race.

[56] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 73; *Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System*.

uniformly sized Chicago neighborhoods defined by Ernest Burgess. The remaining White

subjects drew their neighborhoods on a block level, and no Whites depicted their neighborhood

as a large region. Hunter had similar findings in his study, and he suggests that lower class

individuals may have narrow orientations surrounding the home, which produces narrow

cognitive definitions of the neighborhood or a very large and vague notion of the community.[57]

The lack of consensus in the definition of the neighborhood and its sharp split among Whites and

Blacks exhibits an ambiguity that allows residents to redefine perceived boundaries to suit their

own psychological and social needs.[58] The following maps drawn by subjects in the study, along

with subjects' responses in the interviews, illustrate diverging perceptions and offer incite into

explaining differences among residents' perceptions.

Melissa

Melissa is the owner of Le Petit Café located at the intersection of 21st Street & South

Street. I regularly went to the café to write and analyze field notes throughout the summer.

Replacing a dive bar, the café had just opened less than a year ago, and the owner often helped

me by asking regular customers to participate in my study. In turn, I used gift certificates from

her café as compensation for subjects. Melissa already had a vague idea about the study when I

interviewed her. She is Israeli but has lived in the U.S. for several years, and she has lived in the

neighborhood for 4.5 years.[59] As the owner of the local café, a product of the gentrification of

the area, she is very involved in the community. However, patrons of her café are predominantly

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[57] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities,* 115.
[58] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 86.
[59] When analyzing the data by race, I categorized Melissa as White because she appeared Caucasian and expressed similar perceptions and concerns to most White residents interviewed in the study. She is part of the gentrifying population that has recently moved into the neighborhood. Her responses are representative of White residents living in the neighborhood in the study.

younger, middle-class Whites. While the area surrounding the café has a significant Black

population, I rarely saw Black customers during the times that I spent at the café. Moreover,

most Black residents to whom I compensated with gift certificates to the café were unaware of its

existence. Thus, although Melissa owns a business that is part of the community, her business is

only symbolic for a specific subpopulation of the local community.

Melissa calls her neighborhood "Graduate Hospital Area," but according to the

Philadelphia Neighborhoods and Place Names database, this neighborhood name was still non-

existent in 1995.[60] From her map, Figure 2.13, she defines the boundaries of her neighborhood

from 17th Street to 24th Street, and from Lombard Street to Catherine Street, which is three

blocks north of Washington Avenue. Neither 17th Street nor Catherine Street coincides with the

expected borders of the neighborhood. Moreover, she is unable to name the areas surrounding

the area that she depicts as her neighborhood. Choosing minor streets as borders, along with her

inability to name the areas directly around her neighborhood, indicates that the borders she chose

are idiosyncratic. Moreover, the size of the neighborhood that she depicts is 28 blocks, which,

like 73.1% of Whites, is similar to the uniform sized neighborhoods defined by Ernest Burgess in

his study of Chicago neighborhoods.

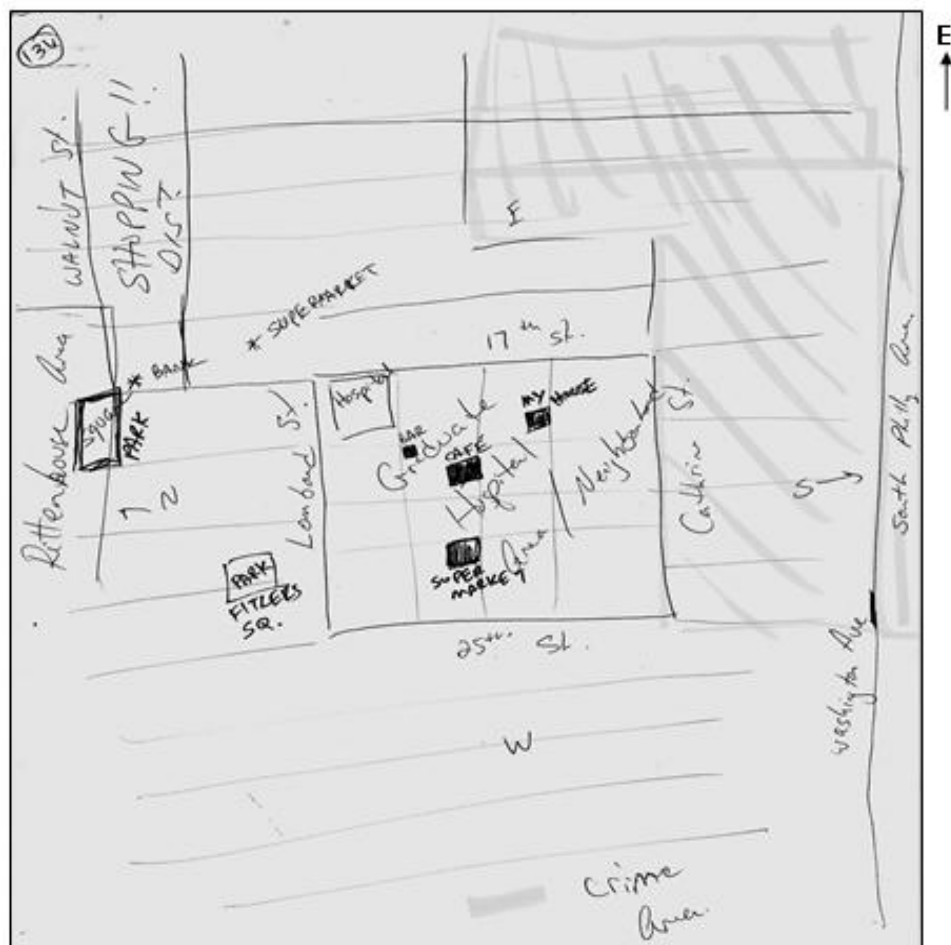[60] *Philadelphia Neighborhoods and Place Names.*

Figure 2.13: Melissa's map. (30-year-old White female café-owner). (Same as Figure 1.5).
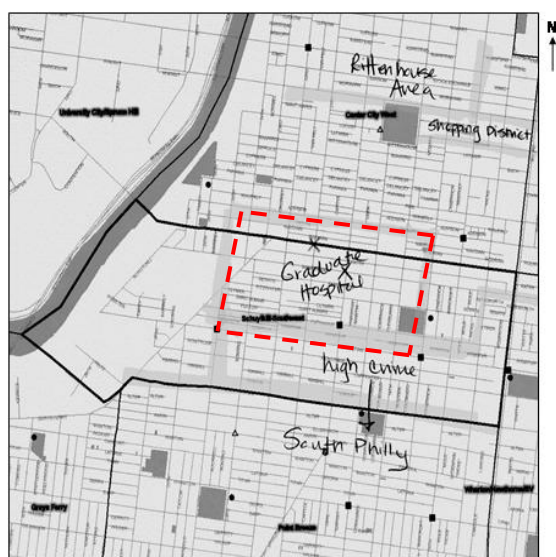

Figure 2.14: Translation of Melissa's map onto a standard map provided by *Philadelphia NIS*. The red dashed lines indicate the neighborhood the subject indicated in her map. (Same as Figure 1.5b).

Melissa also illustrates her perceptions of the other areas that she labels. By drawing undefined spatial areas between her own neighborhood and the adjacent areas, she demonstrates a feeling of distance or isolation from these other neighborhoods. Melissa may feel such isolation due to normative judgments that she holds about these areas. In the interview, she expressed her desire to live in the "Rittenhouse Area" for its higher status, and thus, she has a lofty vision of that neighborhood. Moreover, she discussed how she did not advertise her café in the Rittenhouse newsletter because she did not think people from the "Rittenhouse Area" would actually go to her café due to its location in an area of lower social status. By not advertising in the higher status area, Melissa shows feelings of class distinction from the area. She categorizes the residents of these surrounding areas as distinct social groups from her own by citing wealth as the common factor she shares with people in her own neighborhood.

While she typifies the area north of her neighborhood as wealthier than her own, the subject considers areas south of her neighborhood as less wealthy. She expresses discomfort with the area south of her neighborhood. She characterizes specific areas with high crime and judges the quality of the people in these areas by saying, "In the neighborhoods that aren't so good, the people aren't so great." To distance herself from perceived danger and to convince herself that she lives in a safe neighborhood, she excludes the areas that she views negatively from what she would consider her own neighborhood. Because she does not label the adjacent areas but labels South Philadelphia as below Washington Avenue, she is drawing an idiosyncratic border simply to separate herself from the areas that she identifies with crime. By excluding areas that she considers unsafe, she is cognitively distancing herself from negative elements.

Elijah Anderson observed similar behavior in his 1996 ethnographic study *Streetwise*. In his study, he elaborated on the role of race in neighborhood interactions by illustrating how race functions in social exchanges within shared spaces and in creating borders. He showed that perceived borders influence how people use and view various shared spaces during neighborhood transition. In his study, Anderson depicted two adjacent neighborhoods in Philadelphia; one neighborhood was impoverished and predominantly Black, while the other was undergoing gentrification. He described one street as a physical boundary that members of both communities maintained in different ways. Anderson cited examples of street corner groups of Black youths or White fraternity boys from the local university name-calling or giving hostile looks or gestures to passersby of different races from their own. This antagonistic treatment led residents to maintain these borders by choosing to use or avoid certain streets or areas, and thereby using these boundaries to determine which people to trust.[61]

Melissa exemplifies how residents choose areas or streets to avoid, thereby maintaining these borders and preserving mistrust of the residents on the opposite side of the border. The high number of White residents who chose minor streets as borders and discussed crime and safety seem to carry similar judgments to Melissa of the areas they exclude from their neighborhood in their maps. Although the areas south of the minor street borders that many residents delineated are experiencing a high rate of gentrification as well, avoiding areas residents consider unsafe causes residents living north of area to preserve negative assessments of these "unsafe" areas. Moreover, the further south residents in this area live, the further south is the minor street they choose as the border, and these residents all desire to associate themselves with the area north. Nevertheless, none of the Black residents living in the area chose a minor street as a border, demonstrating a one-sided force preserving the border.

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[61] Anderson, *Streetwise,* 46-8, 179-85.

Along with idiosyncratic borders for defining her neighborhood, Melissa uses a rather idiosyncratic name to define the area. She calls her neighborhood "Graduate Hospital Area," implying a "focal point community," a term used by Albert Hunter to define an area that tends to have indistinct or varying borders around a functional central building or space. Hunter argues that the strength of local points for local identification decreases with distance.[62] However, Melissa depicts her neighborhood as an area in which the hospital is included in the neighborhood but is located at the border of her neighborhood. Many White subjects did this on their maps. The pattern of placing the hospital at the edge of the neighborhood demonstrates that because there are no central locations in the area undergoing gentrification, residents are identifying themselves with the hospital, despite their distance from the node, in order to associate themselves with the fully gentrified area closer to the hospital.

From surveys of long-term residents, earlier uses of the name "Graduate Hospital Area" refer to an area that includes the hospital as a central location. If this is the case, then residents who name their neighborhood after Graduate Hospital with the hospital not centrally located are blurring neighborhood boundaries by trying to adopt the name of a higher-status area and apply it to themselves rather than associating themselves with South Philadelphia and the connotation the region carries. Moreover, newer residents may not realize that other residents refer to the area directly around the hospital as "Graduate Hospital Area" instead of the gentrifying area, and so, these residents may have learned the name from real estate marketing strategies or social networks. From postings in various real estate offices, realtors refer to the area as far south as Washington Avenue as the "Graduate Hospital Area."

Moreover, the name seems to carry symbolic meaning only for White residents. While 50.0% of White residents referred to the "Graduate Hospital Area," only one Black subject did

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[62] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 86-91.

so. However, this subject was a real estate developer and, thus, had a business interest in marketing the area as "Graduate Hospital Area." White residents, most of whom were middle-class, tended to identify themselves with this name and often did not refer to an area in which the hospital was geographically the central location. Residents' tendency to name their area as "Graduate Hospital Area" and not view the hospital as a central location reflects a desire to associate themselves with a name that carries meaning particular to a socioeconomic status. Therefore, the desire by White residents to associate themselves with an area with this name demonstrates racial differences in the symbolic communities in which the residents live.

Joan

While Melissa named her neighborhood after a focal point but did not indicate the focal point as a central location, another subject, Joan, did view her neighborhood around a central point. She defined the "Graduate Hospital Area" completely different from Melissa. Joan is a 45-year-old White female who has lived in the neighborhood for 11 years. She has a doctoral degree and is a Psychologist. I interviewed her on 19th & Lombard Streets, one block north of South Street, and she lived at 20th & Lombard Streets. She was sitting with her friend on her friend's door stoop waiting for a babysitter to arrive. Although the friend listened to her responses during the survey and sometimes disagreed with her, Joan maintained her individual answers throughout the interview.
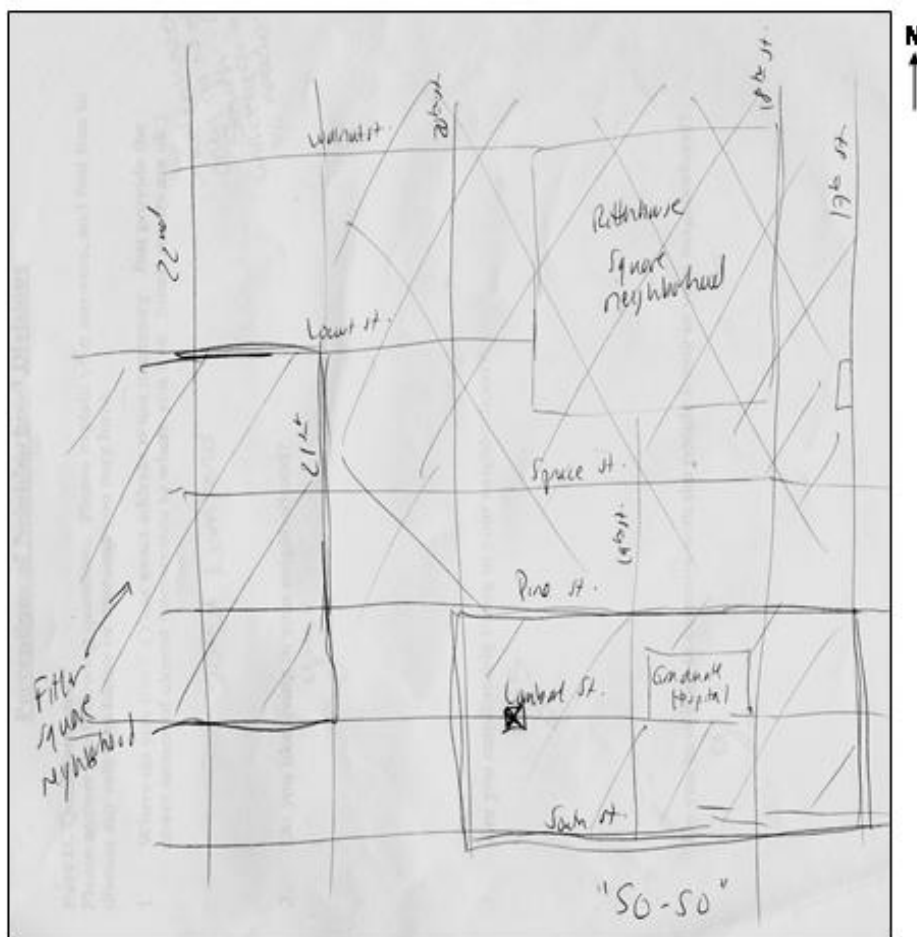
Figure 2.15: Joan's map. (45-year-old White female).

Figure 2.16: Translation of Joan's map onto standard map provided by *Philadelphia NIS*. The red dashed lines indicate the neighborhood the subject indicated in her map.

In Joan's map, she hesitatingly named her neighborhood "Graduate Hospital" and drew its borders from 17th Street to 20th Street and from South Street to Pine Street, which is two blocks north of South Street. Except for South Street, the rest of the streets that she indicates as borders of her neighborhood are minor streets. While I have argued that residents may choose idiosyncratic borders to exclude areas with which they do not want to be associated, residents may also identify their neighborhood with such borders because they base their neighborhood on a functional building or space. Nevertheless, although residents sometimes used central locations to name their own neighborhoods, often the borders the subjects drew did not indicate a focus on the central location and pointed to patterns of exclusion to explain their choice in borders. Melissa's map demonstrated such behavior, but Joan, on the other hand, seemed to rely heavily on central locations. Her map indicates small neighborhoods, each around the hospital and two parks, and she uses the names of these locations to name the neighborhoods. Hunter explains this neighborhood identification as different from the typical "area communities"—a two-dimensional bounded space.[63]

While "area communities" are the type of community that most residents tended to use, Hunter claims that though many residents indicate that a central location exists in their community, people only use "focal point communities" to define their neighborhood when there are no competing identities with "area communities."[64] Because Joan lives very close to the hospital, the building serves as a focal point for her; however, the other residents that name their neighborhoods after the hospital are actually identifying themselves with the "Graduate Hospital Area" as an "area community," often to disassociate themselves with the connotations that areas in the south carry. Moreover, Joan discusses her hesitation in naming her neighborhood as an

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[63] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 89.
[64] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 89-91.

indication of the low strength of her community. Thus, she relies on a focal point to define her

neighborhood also because the area lacks any community identification, supporting Hunter's

argument.

I should also note that only three subjects that called their neighborhood "Graduate

Hospital Area" indicated the hospital as a central location, and each of these residents had lived

in the area for more than ten years. However, the other two residents who viewed their

neighborhood as localized around the hospital indicated that the community was quite strong.

Joan comments that she does not have a sense of a local community because she lives on a main

street as opposed to a smaller street. The other residents lived on smaller streets, which may

explain why they may have felt a stronger sense of community. In the 1961 book *The Death and

Life of Great American Cities*, author Jane Jacobs, advocating dense mixed-use neighborhoods to

facilitate healthy communities, discusses the importance of sidewalk life. She describes the

value of enclosed streets with houses that face each other for assimilating children into regular

daily life, which is an essential element of a strong neighborhood, according to Jacobs.[65]

Although Joan identifies herself with a particular neighborhood, she does not feel

integrated into the community due to the design of her neighborhood; however, her identification

with this area demonstrates that the focal point still holds symbolic meaning for the local

neighborhood. Thus, although this area contains functional elements, it lacks sidewalks in

certain areas that integrate the community. Jacobs' analysis of urban planning demonstrates why

such neighborhoods may lack identity and a community consensus. While I cannot draw any

conclusions about the relationship between using "focal point communities" and the strength of

the community with so few subjects who defined their neighborhoods with central locations,

length of residency seems to be an important factor in determining how residents use the hospital

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[65] Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 77-84.

to define their neighborhood. Of all the residents that named their neighborhood in reference to the hospital, these three subjects were the only long-term residents.

Because the area is near the edge of the traditional South Philadelphia border and close to one of the wealthiest areas in the city, some residents chose not to identify themselves with either of these areas. Many newer residents living between South Street and Washington Avenue often defined their neighborhood as an area between the wealthy area and South Philadelphia; however, residents who have lived in the area longer considered this "in between" area as a smaller space, which centered on the hospital and lacked an "area community" identification. Long-term residents do not sense the expansion of the gentrification because they had moved into the area when the gentrification processes were just beginning. As the gentrification continued to spread further south, White residents moving into the area under examination began to identify themselves with the area, and no longer with the focal point.

By identifying her neighborhood by a central location, she ends up drawing her neighborhood as only six area blocks. While drawing a small neighborhood seems to indicate a narrow geographic horizon, demonstrated by 58.6% of Black respondents, she includes two other neighborhoods in her map and ends up drawing a total of 36 area blocks on her map. Moreover, she defines each of these neighborhoods with a central location. Her map shows high degrees of differentiation throughout the entire area, rather than just the nearby blocks, because she draws the borders of each of the neighborhoods with minor streets and leaves the remaining space on the map unlabelled. By differentiating the entire area, Joan does not actually express a narrow geographic horizon, and identifying her neighborhood as six blocks is a result of her outlook on communities as products of focal points. While Melissa leaves areas unlabelled to cognitively distance herself from crime or extreme wealth, Joan does not label some areas because she uses

focal points to define neighborhoods. She does not identify a focal point for these remaining

areas and therefore cannot label the areas. However, during the interview, she notes that some

people call the entire area on her map "Rit-Fit," named after the local town watch group,

demonstrating the influence of institutional forces on local identities. Joan uses this area-focused

neighborhood name to identify the unlabelled areas, but "focal point communities" have a

stronger symbolic meaning for her.

Focal points seemed to have a greater symbolic significance than spatial area for

residents living close to Rittenhouse Square Park and Fitler Square Park. All except one of the

residents living within one block of Fitler Square Park named their neighborhood after the park.

The park did not serve as a central location for residents living any further from the park. While

residents living in the area within in one block of the Rittenhouse Square Park named their

neighborhood after the park, 57.9% of residents who named their neighborhood after the park

were at least three blocks away from the park. Although nearby residents regarded the park as a

central location for high-end shopping, expensive restaurants, classy bars, and tourism, the park

served as a part of their daily lives.

Residents further away from the park actually identified their neighborhood by the spatial

area, rather than the central function of the park. Because Rittenhouse Square Park is the center

of an area characterized by wealth, many residents find it desirable to include themselves in the

area. The name itself has symbolic significance for these residents and led them to indicate an

association with wealth and high socioeconomic status. Some of these residents called the area

somewhat distant from the park, "South Rittenhouse" or "South Square," indicating that the

neighborhood identity was a stronger factor than the function of the park. Moreover, the

remaining other residents who were further from the park and identified their neighborhood with

the park also gave alternative names for the neighborhood. For example, one subject wrote,

"Rittenhouse Square-Center City," when asked in what neighborhood he lived in the first section

of the survey.

Interestingly, while 61.5% of White respondents named their neighborhood by a

significant building or space, no Blacks did so. Due to the composition of the neighborhoods,

only one subject living near the Rittenhouse Square Park or Fitler Square Park was Black. This

subject was the only resident that lived within one block of Fitler Square Park who did not name

his neighborhood after the central location and named his neighborhood "Center City."

Moreover, no Blacks living near the hospital named their neighborhood after the hospital, while

several White respondents did. Although many Black subjects mentioned churches, schools, and

playgrounds as important parts of the community, none of them named their neighborhoods after

these spaces nor drew maps centered on these locations. Instead, these residents often defined

their neighborhoods based on primary contacts and cultural identity, which I discuss later in this

chapter. The finding that Blacks tended to use direct contact and culture as bases for their

neighborhoods indicates that Blacks use different criteria to characterize their neighborhoods and

situate themselves in the world in which they live. By viewing one's neighborhood foundations

as primary contacts and cultural identity, residents indicate stronger "area community"

identification, especially since consensus among neighborhood definitions was more prevalent

among Blacks than among White residents. Furthermore, these results also demonstrate the lack

of primary functional buildings or spaces provided to areas with concentrated Blacks and the

lack of Blacks' connections to the public institutions near them.

Paul

I interviewed Paul at the intersection of 18th & Pine Streets, which is north of the area under study, but the subject lived at approximately 23rd & Fitzwater Streets, located within the area of the study. Paul was walking through the area, and he agreed to do the study when I approached him. I interviewed him while sitting on a nearby stoop. The area in which we were sitting had higher land values and was predominantly White. He never gave the actual intersection of his residence during the interview, but I approximated his address from where he marked his home on the map in Figure 2.17. My estimation of his home's location may not be entirely accurate because he draws his home near a park and school, and the park and school are at the intersection of 18th & Fitzwater Streets. We will focus on the fact that he resides on Fitzwater Street and ignore the ambiguity of the intersecting numbered street since the study focuses on borders dividing north from south.

Residents living in areas adjacent to higher-status areas may choose to redefine the borders between themselves and higher-status areas or rename the area in order to include themselves within the higher-status area and borrow its prestige.[66] Paul associates himself with the higher socioeconomic status of Center City. By identifying the neighborhood in which he lives as Center City and describing the area south of Center City as "sketchy," he provides evidence for his desire to associate himself with the higher socioeconomic status area of Center City. At the same time, like Melissa, he still perceptually distances himself from unsafe areas. When asked if any of the surrounding neighborhoods were changing, he indicates that North and West Philadelphia are getting much worse but does not mention areas around him. The discrepancy in the location of his home on the map, demarcated with an X in Figure 2.17, and the name he gives to his neighborhood reflects his preference to identify with a higher-status

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[66] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 181.

neighborhood. With some long-term poor Black residents living near his home, Paul's

placement of his home in South Philadelphia on his map may be an indication that he does not

consider residents living near him to be part of Center City, distinguishing himself from his

neighbors. Paul is disassociating himself from South Philadelphia as part of his neighborhood

identity and including himself in a more economically prestigious neighborhood.

Interestingly, Hunter found that residents tended to place themselves near the edge of a

neighborhood only when clear and distinct borders existed.[67] While South Street seems to be a

clear and distinct border and Paul does place himself at the edge of the neighborhood, he still

names Bainbridge Street as the distinguishing border. One explanation is that Paul followed

both patterns that Hunter had found—placing himself at the edge because clear borders exist and

redefining borders to borrow the prestige of a higher-status area. The combination of both

behaviors occurred in several instances throughout the study, and Hunter failed to account for the

possibility of both patterns occurring, consequently undermining his ability to explain his

findings.

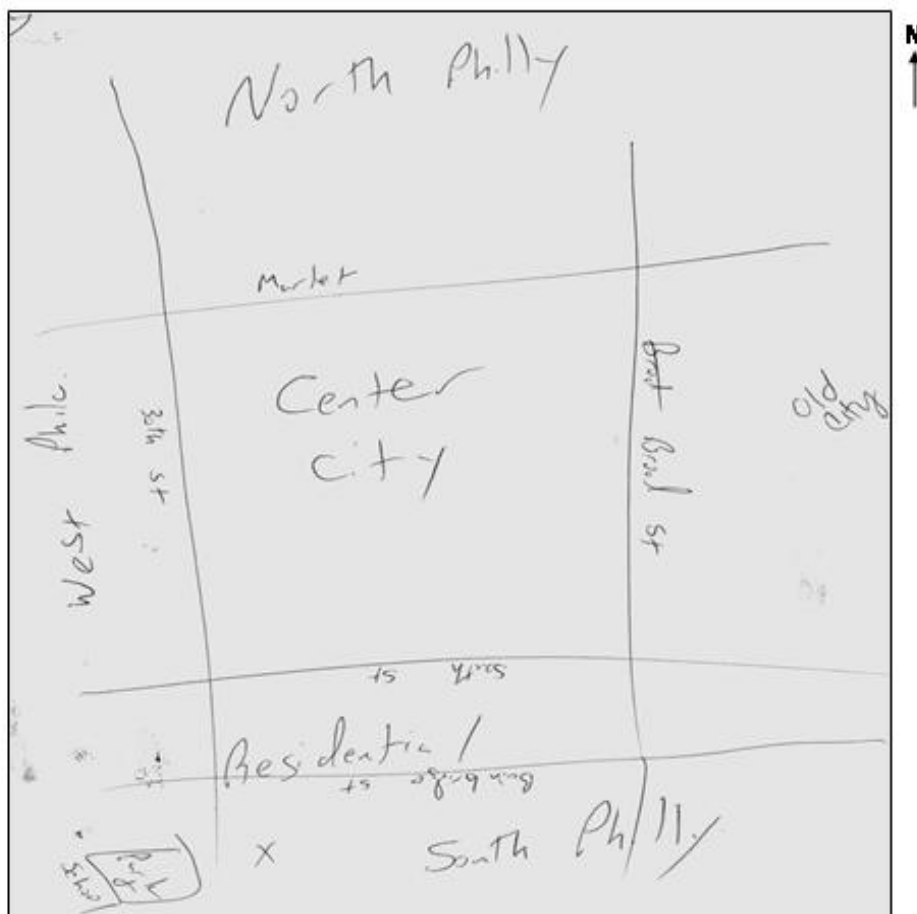[67] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 87.

Figure 2.17: Paul's map. (38-year-old working-class White male).

Figure 2.18: Translation of Paul's map onto a standard map provided by *Philadelphia NIS*. The red dashed lines indicate the neighborhood the subject indicated in his map.

I should also note that South Street, a one-way street, is relatively minor in terms of street traffic. However, as a major tourist attraction on the east side of Broad Street for its plethora of stores and restaurants and its past significance as a thriving entertainment center for African-Americans in the area of my study, South Street serves as a persisting symbol of the local community. Consequently, the street is an expected border in the neighborhood models discussed earlier. Nevertheless, the present state of South Street in the area of study as a low-traffic street, with the hospital and various businesses gradually popping up, indicates that South Street may not have symbolic significance for newer residents of the area. Moreover, the difference in the symbolic meaning of South Street may also run along racial lines. While race underlies the length of the residency in most cases due to the nature of gentrification, the past significance of South Street in the area examined as a Black entertainment district may imply that the area only has symbolic meaning for Blacks or those involved in the entertainment industry. Figure 2.19 presents summary findings from the study by length of residency. While the differences between lengths of residency are not as drastic as the divergences between Blacks and Whites illustrated in Figure 2.1, 73.3% of long-term residents living in the area examined associate themselves with the area south of the neighborhood. Furthermore, more long-term residents used expected borders to define their neighborhood.

Length of Residency	≤10 years n = 23	>10 years n = 32
Race		
Black	30.4%	68.8%
White	69.6%	31.3%
Area of Residence		
Living north of the neighborhood	26.1%	25.0%
Living within the neighborhood	65.2%	46.9%
Associate with neighborhood north[1]	33.3%	20.0%
Associate with northern edge of neighborhood[2]	0.0%	6.7%
Associate with neighborhood	53.3%	0.0%
Associate with neighborhood south	13.3%	73.3%
Living south of the neighborhood	8.7%	28.1%
Use of Expected Borders[3]		
Yes	45.5%	70.0%
No	54.5%	30.0%
Geographic Horizons		
Narrow (<15 area blocks)	52.2%	46.9%
Intermediate (15-250 area blocks)	47.8%	28.1%
Large (>250 area blocks)	0.0%	25.0%
Name by Central Location		
Yes	34.8%	28.1%
No	65.2%	71.9%

Figure 2.19: Summary data from study by length of residency.

[1] "Associate with neighborhood north," "Associate with neighborhood itself," and "Associate with neighborhood south" indicates where residents living in the area of study associated themselves with. Residents either identified themselves with the area north of the study, which was predominantly White and higher-income, with the area itself as its own entity, or with the area south of the study, which was predominantly Black and lower-income, respectively.

[2] Some residents identified the northern edge of the area under examination as their neighborhood. The "expected" northern border served as a central location for these residents.

[3] Three residents drew their neighborhood as a block and did not specify their neighborhood borders during the interview. I did not consider these residents in these statistics.

Paul also may have drawn Bainbridge Street as the only minor street and the border between Center City and South Philadelphia due to people's tendencies to carry egocentric perceptions of the worlds in which they live. People tend to have more detailed or differentiated cognitions of their neighborhood in relation to the distance from where they live. Saul Steinberg's famous 1976 *New Yorker* magazine cover, "View of the World from 9th Avenue" (Figure 2.20), demonstrates how people perceive areas closer to themselves with greater degrees of detail and differentiation. The figure humorously depicts an egocentric view of the world in which the bottom half depicts three city blocks in detail from the view of someone standing at

the very bottom of the illustration. Steinberg devotes the same amount of space to portray the rest of the world.

Paul's map parallels Steinberg's illustration with the differentiation he uses in the area near his home. He draws a park, a school, and Bainbridge Street near his home but does not indicate any other details on his map. He also labels the area near him as "residential." Moreover, while he is near the border of where he defines South Philadelphia, and arguably even located in South Philadelphia, he creates a strong cognitive division between himself and South Philadelphia by claiming that he does not even go into the area and does not leave Center City often. Also note that he labels the area east of Broad Street as Old City; however, Old City is a historical district and stretches from around Front Street through 5th Street. Broad Street is approximately one mile from Old City, further demonstrating the role of egocentrism in residents' perceptions.

Figure 2.20: Saul Steinberg's "View of the World from 9th Avenue."
Source: *The Saul Steinberg Foundation.*

Many residents used similar patterns in their maps, but residents differentiated areas in detail in different ways that correlated with race. Some residents, such as Paul, tried to show high levels of differentiation between particular areas when they were in an area that had many poor long-term Black residents mixed with members of the gentrifying population. All White residents who showed high levels of differentiation in their maps emphasized the significant changes in the area. Fifty percent of these residents mentioned crime or ethnic composition as part of the change, and 90.0% of them mentioned building and real estate value. These findings indicate that the borders of the area are less clear with the drastic changes in the neighborhood. Moreover, 75.0% of them used minor streets to define their neighborhoods, indicating that, although these residents were located in particular areas, they wanted to differentiate themselves from areas that one might consider unsafe, having a significantly different racial composition, or having different land values. Black residents only showed high levels of differentiation near their home when they drew their neighborhood on a block level or at a regional level. Defining one's neighborhood on a block or regional level corresponded with residents' narrow geographic horizons, which is due to the spatial isolation and alienation the urban underclass faces.[68] Because low-income Blacks experience spatial isolation and alienation, no processes of inclusion or exclusion seem to take place in Black residents' egocentric perception and, instead, portray a lack of knowledge of the areas outside of their home and neighbors.

In addition, unlike most White subjects, Paul perceives his neighborhood on a regional level, indicating that geographic horizons may relate to class or education levels more than race. However, although he draws his neighborhood to include a very large area, when asked if he would prefer to live in another neighborhood, he responds affirmatively but names a section *within* his defined neighborhood, "Rittenhouse Area." Residents' tendency to distinguish

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[68] Kotlowitz, *There Are No Children Here*.

"Rittenhouse Area" from surrounding areas indicates the understood borders of the well-known

neighborhood amongst the rest of its surrounding areas. As an area with a high socioeconomic

status, its distinct identity is a part of the symbolic culture. Paul does not distinguish the

"Rittenhouse Area" on his map, but he perceives differentiation among the large-scale

neighborhoods that he drew. While the subject may perceive differentiation within the

neighborhoods he drew, by drawing a large-scale neighborhood, he generalizes the area to

include himself in Center City as an entire entity and to disassociate himself with the

connotations of South Philadelphia. On the other hand, because he does not mention any other

smaller areas within Center City, such as Fitler Square, Paul may only be aware of the

"Rittenhouse Area" due to its symbolic significance as a wealthy area.

Sam

Although Paul blurred boundaries to associate himself with Center City, an area with

higher socioeconomic status than South Philadelphia, different subjects may find cultural status

more important. Some long-term Black residents that lived outside of the area they defined as

South Philadelphia would try to blur boundaries in order to include themselves with South

Philadelphia for the status that the area holds for its Black or ethnic cultural identity. Figure 2.21

is a map drawn by a subject named Sam who drew an indistinct boundary to identify his

neighborhood as South Philadelphia. Sam is a 49-year-old Black male who works for the School

District of Philadelphia. He works at the school on 17th & Christian Street, and he likely holds a

low-wage labor position at the school. He has a high-school education and has lived in his home

for twenty years, but he has lived in the South Philadelphia area his entire life. I interviewed him

one block south of Washington Avenue, but he resides one block north of Washington Avenue.

He was sitting on a bench outside of a corner store when I interviewed him. He says that he often hangs out on the block where I interviewed him because most of his friends lived there. He claims that the block, which he refers to as the "Ellsworth block," has a much stronger community than his own.

The subject initially names his neighborhood "South Philly," but when he draws the map, he labels the area "South Center City." Moreover, he labels the area south of Washington Ave. as "South South Philly." During the interview, he expresses a lot of pride in South Philadelphia, but when he thinks about the spatial organization of the area, the notion of South Philadelphia is vague to him due to the changes in the neighborhood and how the area "used to be called" South Philadelphia. By calling the area south of Washington Avenue "South South Philly," Sam is emphasizing that the area is the southern part of South Philadelphia, implying that South Center City is the northern part of South Philadelphia.

The sense of pride in South Philadelphia by Black residents was often evident in my subject sample. While none of the White residents I interviewed expressed the same feelings about South Philadelphia, the symbolic meaning of the term South Philadelphia for Black residents is undoubtedly significant. David Grazian's 2003 book *Blue Chicago* demonstrates the value of authenticity and tradition for a local culture. Grazian's ethnographic study examines how local communities attempt to preserve local customs and identities, while maintaining attachments to the local area. Through the Chicago Blues club scene, he explores the "search for authenticity" as a backlash to the increased commercialization and globalization of Chicago Blues.[69]
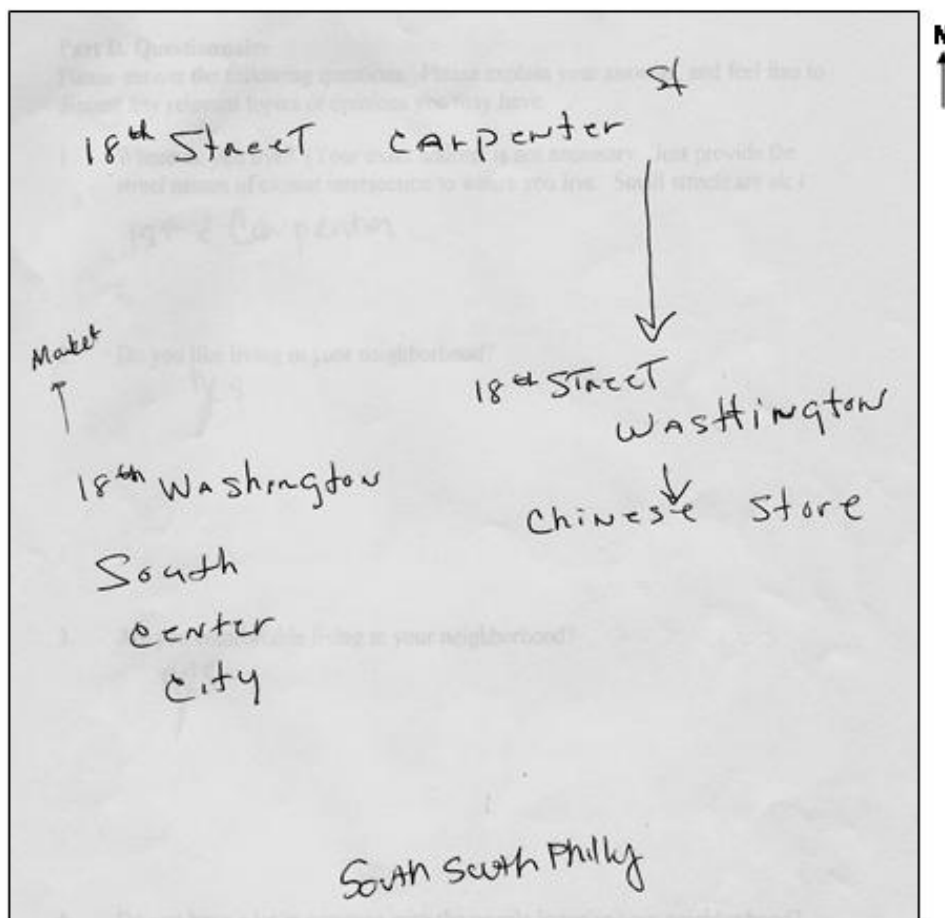
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[69] Grazian, *Blue Chicago.*

Figure 2.21: Sam's map. (49-year-old Black male).

Figure 2.22: Translation of Sam's map onto a standard map provided by the *Philadelphia NIS*. The red dashed lines indicate the neighborhood the subject indicated in his map.

The value of authenticity and tradition for African-Americans in the South Philadelphia area can help explain the persistence of, and possibly a revived emphasis on, the local symbols for Blacks in the South Philadelphia region. With the demise of South Street as the center of Black entertainment in the 1960s and the gentrification the area is presently undergoing, we can explain the tendency for Blacks to identify themselves with "South Philly" as an attempt to preserve the local culture and identity that was once attached to the area for Blacks. For residents living in the specified area of study, between South Street and Washington Avenue, 76.5% of Blacks identified themselves with South Philadelphia, while no Whites did. Moreover, Blacks demonstrated a higher rate of consensus for naming neighborhoods and identifying borders, indicating the strength of "area community" identity and its relation to symbolic local cultures.

Sentiments against the "invasion" of residents of higher socio-economic status may also contribute to the desire to preserve local culture and identity. Many subjects, both Black and White, discussed racial tensions in the area, and many Black subjects expressed a sense of victimization. However, Black residents offered vague explanations by often referring to some unspecified higher power as responsible for trying to impose changes in the neighborhood name and changing the housing market to remove Blacks from the neighborhood. White residents, on the other hand, were very enthusiastic about the changes taking place. While all long-term residents witnessed economic improvement in the area, only White long-term residents perceived economic changes as beneficial for themselves. Although Blacks identified the changes as positive for the neighborhood, most were not enthusiastic about them. The racial difference in attitudes expressed among long-term residents suggests that the gentrification process is racially biased. Gentrification ensures that Whites will be able to benefit from the rising real estate

values from past biased housing policies, which made home ownership easier for Whites.[70] In

addition, gentrification eliminates Black renters from the neighborhood, consequently causing

Black neighbors who value authenticity to move along with them.

One might argue that length of residency is more significant than race for explaining the

persistence of local symbols. The average length of residency for White subjects living in the

area was 5.9 years, which is very short in comparison to the average length of residency for

Black subjects—29.6 years. While there were only two White subjects who had lived in the area

for more than ten years, both did not associate themselves with South Philadelphia. One of these

residents, Gwen, a 62-year-old woman who has lived in the area for 23 years stated in the

interview, "Psychologically, I am in Center City. I'm not sure if this area is still called South

Philly, but I work in Center City and sent my kids to school in Center City." Although she

acknowledges that the area in which she lived was quite different from its state 23 years ago, the

symbolic meaning of South Philadelphia and the cultural significance does not exist in the

symbols of local identities for her. While length of residency relates to the influence earlier local

cultural symbols have on residents' responses, race is an integral factor for the relevance of local

symbols.

In addition, by indicating Washington Avenue as the border between "South Center City"

and "South South Philly," Sam denotes a clear separation from his own neighborhood and the

area south of Washington Avenue. While he still identifies his neighborhood as "South Philly,"

he indicates that he is part of "South Center City" and that this area is different from the area

south of Washington Avenue. Throughout the interview, the subject complains about the

prevalence of drug traffic in his neighborhood and indicates that drugs are the major factor that

distinguishes his neighborhood from the area south of Washington Avenue. Although his

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[70] Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid,* 88-96.

perception of the location of drug prevalence differs from my own and most other subjects interviewed, his perception of the location of high drug traffic coincides with his desire to associate himself with the area south of his own neighborhood. By calling his neighborhood "South Philly" yet recognizing the changing political boundaries, he is including himself with an area with which he would like to be associated—south of Washington Avenue.

We can attribute the strong association among Black residents with South Philadelphia to the area's symbolic definition. Albert Hunter finds that if the local culture of an area carries a distinctive natural boundary that residents shared widely, then residents were less likely to draw idiosyncratic borders. Although Hunter's study focuses on the movement of Blacks into predominantly White areas, he suggests that such movement across boundaries does not lead to cognitive redefinition but rather to a sense of invasion.[71] The local culture of South Philadelphia may only persist among Blacks because the area is historically predominantly Black, and from the sentiment expressed by many of the interviewees in the study, the long-term Black residents in the area perceive the movement of Whites into the area as an invasion.

Despite the subject's broad definition for naming his neighborhood, Sam drew his map on a block level. He only drew one block on his map although he refers to a massive area when naming his neighborhood. The discrepancy between the size of the area named and the size of the neighborhood he drew demonstrates that while he takes pride in his association with South Philadelphia, he actually only understands his community in a very small context. His geographic horizon, like the majority of Black subjects in my study, is actually very limited due to the spatial isolation produced by segregated poverty. His continual reference to the "Ellsworth neighborhood," which is a street, indicates that he defines his community based on primary contacts.

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[71] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 85-6.

Jeff

While Sam illustrated a similar pattern of narrow geographic horizons demonstrated by many Black residents, some White residents, such as Jeff, also drew small sized neighborhoods. However, this pattern among White residents tended to emerge from different perceptual behaviors. When White residents drew small or highly differentiated areas, they did not just simply draw a small number of blocks. Instead, these subjects, including Joan, drew similarly sized areas to Burgess's uniformly sized community areas, with distinct neighborhoods within the area. While Joan and Melissa lived in areas that they defined but did not label other areas, the subject Jeff lived in an area that he labeled as "undefined." This pattern provides interesting insight for understanding how residents deal with the ambiguity that occurs during gentrification.

Jeff is a 29-year-old White male graduate student at a university in Philadelphia. Jeff was a regular customer at Le Petit Café and was one of the subjects that Melissa, the owner of the café, helped obtain for my study. I interviewed Jeff at the café, from which he lived two blocks south. A native of San Diego, CA, he had lived in the area for fourteen months. In the first part of the survey, which asks for the name of his neighborhood, he simply identifies the nearest intersection to his residence, "21st/Fitzwater." On his map, Jeff draws definite borders of his neighborhood, yet labels it as an "Undefined Blue-Collar Neighborhood." This neighborhood consists of five to ten blocks, extends as far as two blocks south of South Street, and is bounded in the north by South Street. The neighborhood he draws extends from 20th Street to the Schuylkill River. He places his home along the southern border of the neighborhood he draws. Figure 2.23 presents the map Jeff drew during the interview, and Figure 2.24 illustrates the translation of his map onto a standard map of Philadelphia.

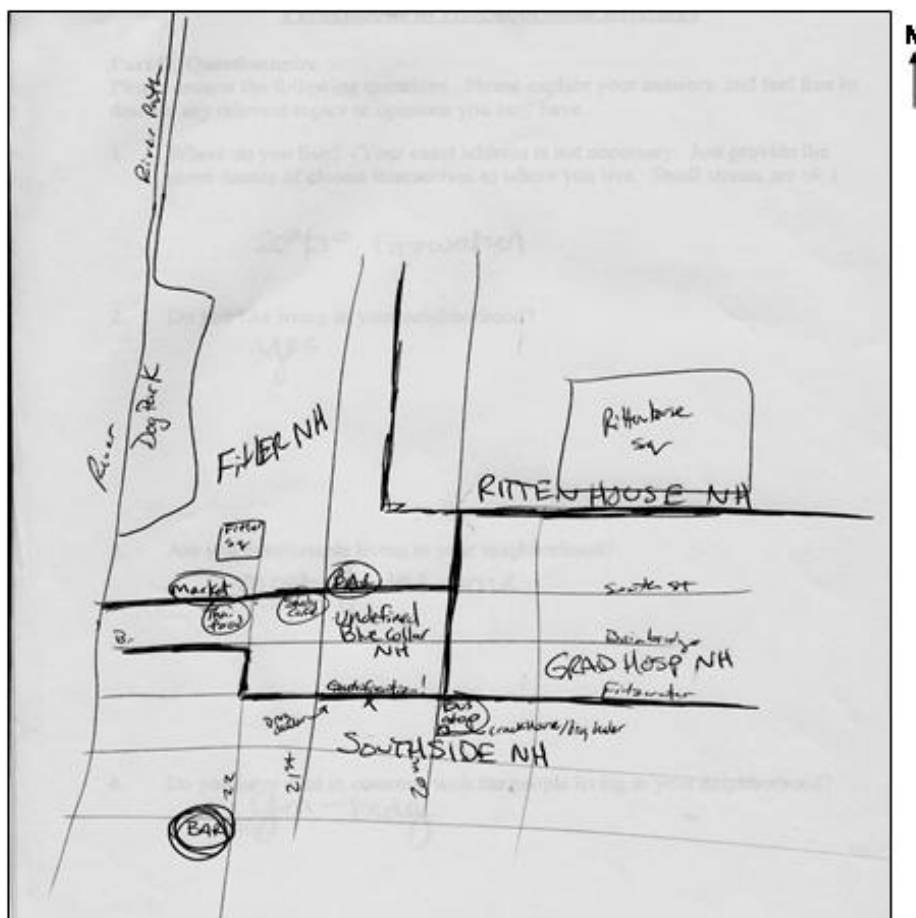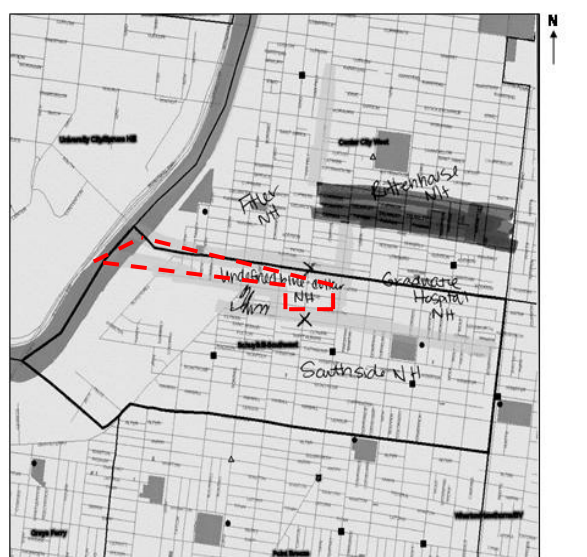**Figure 2.23:** Jeff's Map. (28-year-old White male graduate student).

Figure 2.24: Translation of Jeff's map onto standard map provided by *Philadelphia NIS*. The red dashed lines indicate the neighborhood the subject indicated in his map.

Jeff's map exemplifies residents' use of minor and idiosyncratic borders to define neighborhoods. Moreover, he defined his neighborhood as a small spatial area. Using idiosyncratic borders, he labeled drug dealers just outside of his neighborhood to the south. Moreover, during the interview, he described the prostitutes in the alley behind his own house and crack houses opposite of the alley. He also mentioned that he heard gunshots a couple times each month behind his house. While he claims that he feels "fine" walking through these areas at night, he complains of the drug sales that frequently take place and the unfriendliness of the people in the area just south of his home in a neighborhood that he labeled as "Southside." No other subjects used this name, nor have I ever heard it in the context of Philadelphia. Nevertheless, this name is a common term used in other cities, and since he is not a native Philadelphian, he may have used this name in other cities in which he has lived.

Jeff's negative images of the area south of his house explain why he chose to draw his house along the neighborhood border. By placing his residence on the border, he indicates that negative elements are near his home but are not part of his neighborhood. Instead, he suggests that his block is gentrifying, and he labels an area of gentrification within the border of his neighborhood. He draws distinct borders to intentionally include and exclude particular elements of his neighborhood. Moreover, he excludes the 22nd Street block below Bainbridge Street, which is one block south of South Street. While nearly all residents drew four linear borders to define their neighborhood as four-sided, Jeff does not do so to define his own neighborhood. Interestingly, however, he labels his neighborhood as "undefined." Moreover, by identifying his neighborhood as "blue collar," he distinguishes his neighborhood along class lines. Therefore, although Jeff cannot provide a common name for his neighborhood, he finds that his neighborhood is quite distinct from the other nearby areas.

Unable to name his own neighborhood, Jeff demonstrates a sense of high differentiation to capture the character of his neighborhood. He labels various nearby amenities such as bars and restaurants and identifies nearby corners where drug dealers operate. Moreover, his exclusion of particular blocks from his neighborhood further suggests high differentiation in the area near his home. While Jeff strays from the typical pattern of drawing four boundary lines to define his own neighborhood, he follows the normal pattern for defining surrounding neighborhoods, suggesting less differentiation as the distance from his residence increases. His lack of differentiation for distant areas suggests an egocentric perception, explaining his use of idiosyncratic borders to delineate his neighborhood.

Moreover, Jeff may have used idiosyncratic borders due to the weak sense of community in the areas surrounding where he resides. Although Jeff claims he is a member of his own neighborhood community, he also suggests that there is not a sense of community between his own neighborhood and the other surrounding communities listed on his map. Thus, Jeff evaluates his position in the community based on primary contact with his neighbors. The many Black residents who drew their neighborhoods on a block level also relied on primary contacts with their neighbors to evaluate the strength of the community. However, these Black residents, such as Sam, demonstrated narrow geographic horizons by drawing a single block as their entire neighborhood. Jeff, on the other hand, includes several other neighborhoods on his map, most of which he defined. Jeff may not feel included in any of the established neighborhoods north or east of his own because his area is not as gentrified as the other neighborhoods. Class divisions may also play a role in this division, as white-collar young professionals characterize the gentrification, and Jeff labels his neighborhood as "blue-collar." Furthermore, he does not want

to include himself with the area just south of his neighborhood due to the negative elements that he perceives as prevalent in the area.

While I discussed how Jeff did not associate his neighborhood with the "Graduate Hospital Area" due to the transition his neighborhood is still undergoing, his map of "Graduate Hospital Area" further demonstrates the varying notions of the neighborhood among residents. Nearly all of the residents who mentioned the area had different definitions of the neighborhood. Jeff draws the neighborhood from presumably Broad Street to 20th Street and from a few blocks north of South Street to two blocks south of South Street. Melissa and Joan both define the neighborhood quite differently from Jeff. Moreover, Jeff does not draw the hospital in his map as a central location, yet he draws the centrally located parks in the Rittenhouse and Fitler neighborhoods. By not drawing the hospital as a central location but naming the area after the hospital, Jeff further illustrates that the area newer residents call the "Graduate Hospital Area" is not a "focal point community." Instead, the name of the neighborhood is symbolic of a gentrified area that is no longer associated with the symbols of "South Philly." While the hospital may have once served as the central location of the neighborhood, as shown by long-term White residents such as Joan, the expansion of the use of the neighborhood name during the rapid transition in the area has stripped away the symbolic function of the hospital attached to the neighborhood name. The name, instead, has become a symbol of gentrification. The rapidity of gentrification helps explain the numerous definitions given by residents for the same neighborhood name.

Steven

Like Melissa, the subject Steven also did not define the areas surrounding his own neighborhood. Steven was a 70-year-old Black male who was a real estate developer in the area, along with several additional occupations. He was well dressed and highly educated. I interviewed Steven on the door stoop of a property that he owned near the intersection of 19th & Christian Streets, four blocks south of South Street. He was willing to speak to me for an extended amount of time because he was trying to waste forty minutes before he had to meet with some perspective renters of his property. While I am unsure if he currently lived in the neighborhood or just owned properties there, he seemed to possess a thorough knowledge of the area and acted as if he had lived there. He rents out the property to other residents as two separate apartments. He also claimed to be a producer, developer, publisher, and promoter. As a real estate developer, the subject was aware of real estate issues in the area and had an understanding of the changing dynamics of the neighborhood. This perspective and position in the community separates him from the common layperson living in the area. His responses to questions on neighborhood change and community and the map that he draws are more complex than the responses and map of the common resident. Moreover, as an African-American who has been associated with this neighborhood for an extended period, seventeen years, the subject's responses and map are likely to be attentive to long-term Black residents since he has witnessed the neighborhood transition.

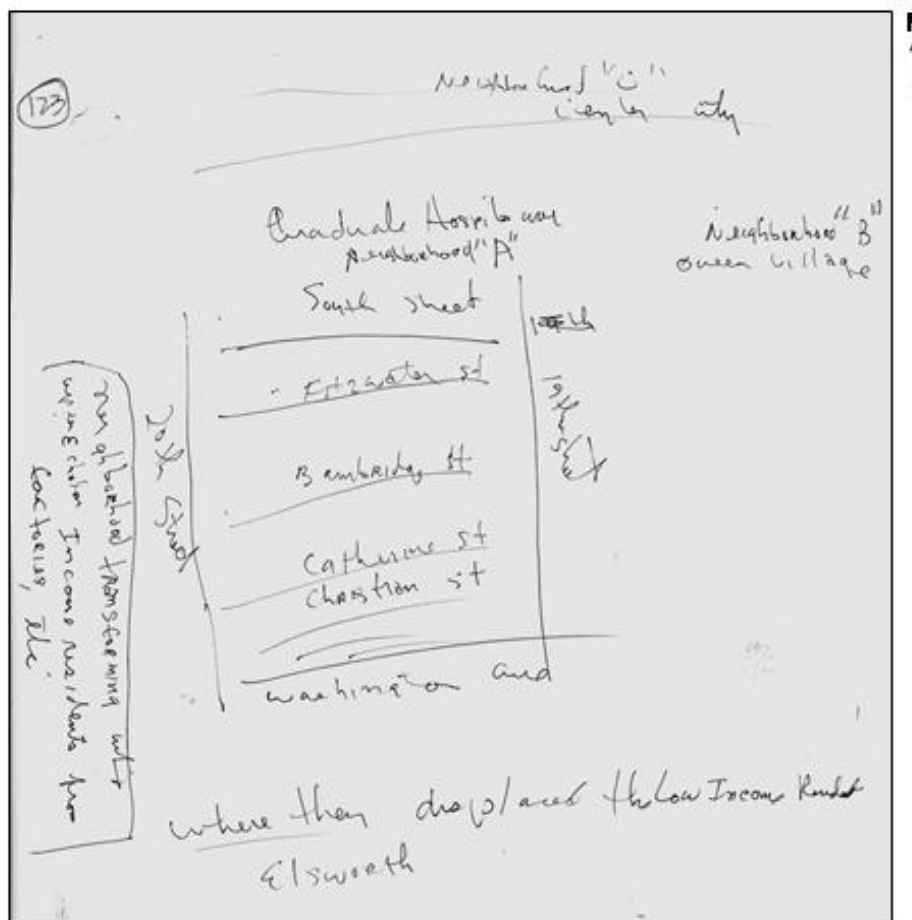**Figure 2.25:** Steven's map. (70-year-old Black male real estate developer).

Figure 2.26: Translation of Steven's map onto standard map provided by *Philadelphia NIS*. The red dashed lines indicate the neighborhood the subject indicated in his map.

Steven names his neighborhood, "Graduate Hospital Area," and he is the only Black

subject to use this name. While residents used the name to refer to the Graduate Hospital as a

central location or for identity purposes, Steven jokes about how "they" call it "Graduate

Hospital Area" and discusses how he uses that name when advertising his property on *Craig's*

List.[72] He also states that people used to refer to the area as "South Philly," but it no longer

possesses the character of South Philadelphia. He describes the past overwhelming prevalence

of drug dealers and issues by newer residents of eliminating low-income housing. He further

explains the new character of the area as a "cosmopolitan playground." He depicts the

neighborhood with a new racial composition, classy dogs, and ripe real estate. He states, "Now,

for young professionals and college students, it's the place to be—there's South Street, the

Avenue of the Arts, but no neighborhood." His statement demonstrates the ambiguity of

neighborhood definitions as the neighborhood fabric deteriorates amid such transition. While the

very idea of a neighborhood seems to be nonexistent, every resident drew a map and indicated

some sense of their neighborhood. However, the change created a breakdown in symbolic

meanings for local identity. The change has forced long-term residents to associate themselves

with another area while newer, politically more powerful residents, have created a new identity

for the immediate area.

In his map, Steven draws only the 19th Street block running from South Street to

Washington Avenue as his own neighborhood and labels the areas surrounding his neighborhood

with general descriptions. While this indicates a narrow geographic horizon, Steven, like Jeff,

differentiated between nearby areas to disassociate his neighborhood with the characteristics of

the surrounding areas. This pattern is another example of egocentric perceptions of the

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[72] *Craig's List* is a network of online urban communities that features free advertisements and forums for housing, jobs, personals, etc.

neighborhood, but unlike other Black residents, who simply had limited views of the city due to spatial isolation, Steven drew his neighborhood with such differentiation to associate and disassociate himself with particular characteristics, as many White residents tended to do. Moreover, the ambiguity of the sense of a neighborhood, as Steven noted in the above quote, helps explain why he differentiates the area by characteristics and why community identity does not have a symbolic meaning for him. Interestingly, many newer residents, who are predominantly White, did associate themselves with the community area; however, the Black residents sensed a community with either their primary contacts on their block or the Black cultural identity of South Philadelphia. No Blacks living in the area under examination actually identified themselves with the local "area community" between South Street and Washington Avenue, while 61.5% of White residents living in the area did so. This racial difference between sensing a neighborhood community within the area indicates that residents living in an "integrated" space experience the neighborhood differently depending upon their race or length of residency.

Steven seems only to consider the area directly east of his block as part of the "Graduate Hospital Area;" however, he is unable to provide names to the areas surrounding the other side of the block. Instead, Steven uses descriptions on his map. He labels the area below Washington Avenue as, "Where they displaced the Low Income Residents," and he labels the area west of his block with, "Neighborhood transforming with Upper Echelon Income residents from factories, etc.," indicating a transition from a factory area to a high-income residential area. He may consider this neighborhood transformation to be different from his own and the neighborhoods east because the area in which he lives is nearly all residential, while the areas west of his block had industrial elements before the transformation.

Steven also labels the area north of South Street as "Center City," suggesting a clear distinction from his own neighborhood and downtown. The rezoning policies created in the last few years, which consider the area between South Street and Washington Avenue as part of Center City, have created sharp differences between the population moving into the area and long-term Black residents, who tend to call the area "South Philly." Although Steven is the only Black resident to name the area "Graduate Hospital Area," he follows the majority of Black subjects, who consider the area as distinct from Center City. Lastly, he labels the area east of 19th Street as "Queen Village." While the borders of this neighborhood may be disputable, the "Queen Village" area is actually several blocks east, and there are additional distinctive neighborhoods in between. This inaccurate label poses questions of validity in his real estate knowledge of the area.

Most subjects did not consider the area to extend as far south as Washington Avenue; however, Steven has a personal interest as a real estate developer to consider the "Graduate Hospital Area" to extend past the location of his property. Using such a name to sell his property is more effective due to the relatively high price of the property and the intended market for wealthier tenants. Because the property is located in an area that is less gentrified than the areas directly north of it, residents are hesitant to move there, especially if one used names such as "South Philadelphia" or "Washington Avenue Area," which both carry less attractive connotations for the group of young professionals moving into the area.

Alan

While Steven drew his neighborhood as a differentiated block from nearby areas, 27.6% of Black subjects and no White subjects illustrated large regional areas as their neighborhoods.

My findings, similar to Albert Hunter's findings, show that most Blacks drew their neighborhoods as large regional areas or as small blocks, while most Whites drew intermediate sized neighborhoods.[73] These results suggest that a relationship exists between defining neighborhoods as large regional areas and small blocks. Alan is an example of a long-term Black male resident who drew his neighborhood as a large regional area. By analyzing my interview with him and the map he drew, we can compare Alan to Sam, who drew his neighborhood as a single block, to determine this relationship among neighborhood sizes chosen by Black respondents.

Alan is a 62-year-old retired Black male who has lived in the neighborhood for thirty years. I interviewed Alan on a summer afternoon along 23rd Street and four blocks south of South Street, and his house was within one block of the interview. He was the committeeman of the 30th ward and 17th police district of Philadelphia. Figure 2.27 illustrates these areas with the ward outlined in blue and the police district outlined in yellow.[74] Although he is very involved in the community and represents areas separated by political divisions, he still considers his neighborhood as a very large entity, calling it "South Philly." Nevertheless, when discussing the strength of community in the area, he says that the two blocks around him had a very strong sense of community, demonstrating that he relies on primary contacts to evaluate the community.

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[73] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 199-202.
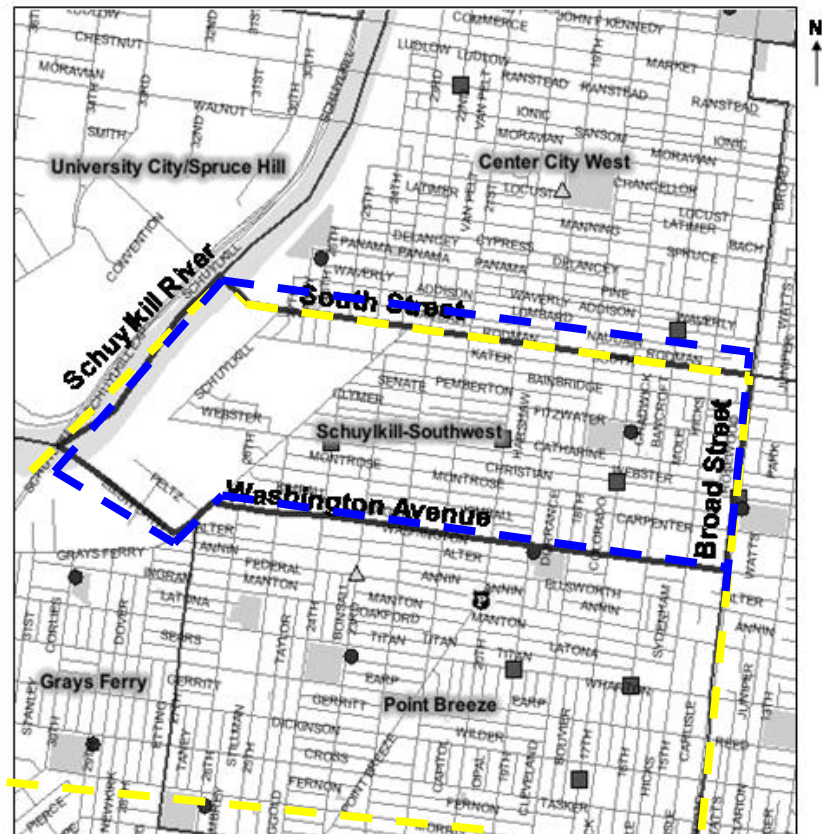[74] *Maps of Districts, Wards, and Neighborhoods.*

Figure 2.27. 30th Ward (blue dashed line) and 17th Police District (yellow dashed line) of Philadelphia marked onto map provided by *Philadelphia NIS*.
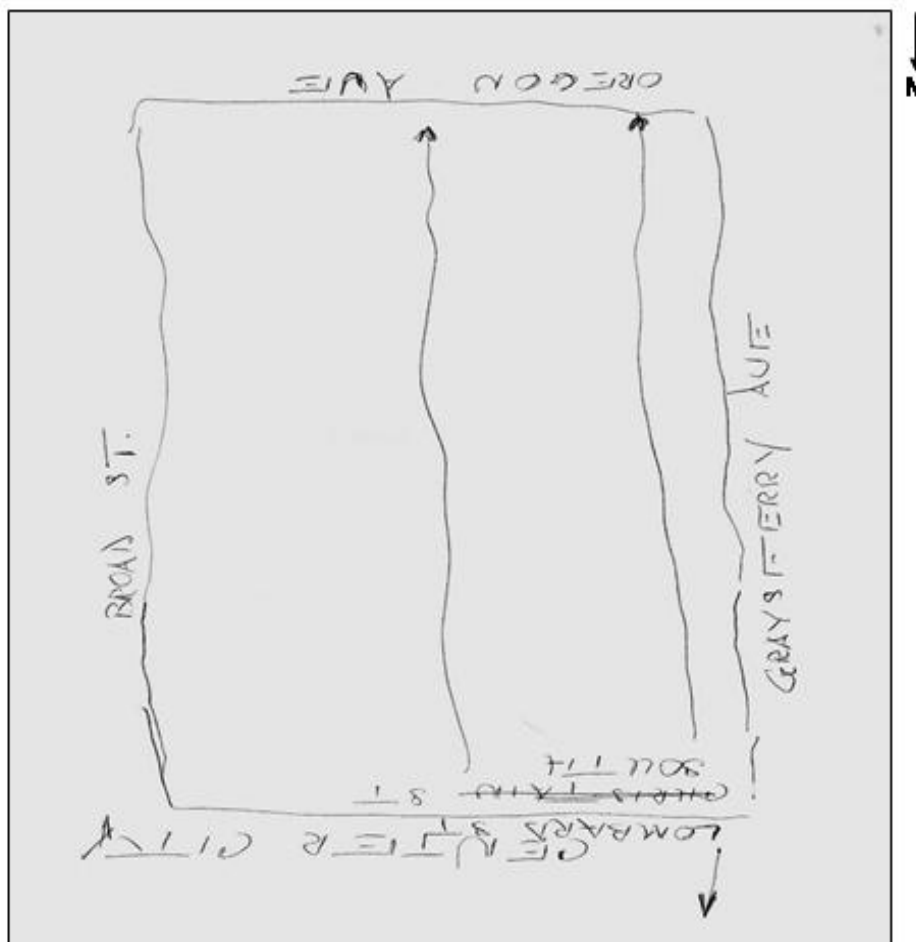
Figure 2.28: Alan's map. (Same as Figure 1.3). (62-year-old retired Black Committeeman).

Figure 2.29: Translation of Alan's map onto standard map provided by *Philadelphia NIS*. The red dashed lines indicate the neighborhood the subject indicated in his map. (Same as Figure 1.3b.).

In addition, Alan spent a significant amount of time during the interview discussing the changes the neighborhood has undergone. While he admits that Philadelphia is "all about [isolated neighborhoods]," he still defines his neighborhood as a broad regional area. Another long-term Black resident, Clyde, explains the reason for considering such isolated neighborhoods as one large regional area known as "South Philly":

> "We're going to keep it old school. We're not going to break it up into Graduate Square or anything and separate who's in the ghetto and who's not. There are 50 subtitles. South Philly is Queen Village, South Walk, Graduate/19th, Naval/Gray's Ferry—it's all a toss-up. You know, they changed the name of the Irish ghetto Devil's Pocket to Gray's Ferry. It's all to take the stigmas away. Philadelphia is an area of neighborhoods with ethnic enclaves. People buy into it, and it's comfortable because they're with each other, but really, there's no security. Everything is still there but dressed up."

This quote indicates that he is careful not to exclude anyone from any areas. Clyde emphasizes why breaking the city up into neighborhoods is unnecessary. While he is aware of the smaller neighborhoods, he discusses that these names are always changing and that naming neighborhoods is simply to separate people from stigmatized areas or to change stigmas.

At first glance, Alan's map demonstrates a very broad geographic horizon by drawing his neighborhood as one-fourth of the entire area of Philadelphia. He names his neighborhood "South Philly" and draws the neighborhood as everything south of "South/Lombard" and east of the Schuylkill River. Market Street is a major two-way street that intersects with the City Hall. He divides Philadelphia into four sections: Center City, North Philadelphia, South Philadelphia, and West Philadelphia. Most subjects that divided Philadelphia into large regional neighborhoods included Center City as an additional neighborhood in this way; however, some

residents, including Clyde and three additional Black subjects, all of whom had lived in the neighborhood for over thirty years, divided the city into three regions and included Center City as part of South Philadelphia. *Fodor's Travel Guides* describes the city's regions in this way. By excluding Center City, a symbol of shopping, nightlife, fine dining, and finance, from the city's regions, these residents depicted three major regions that each carries an authentic history and cultural connotation. Moreover, these three names do not imply any socioeconomic factors that distinguish one neighborhood from another.

Seventy-nine percent of Black residents living south of South Street named their neighborhood "South Philadelphia" or "South Philly," referring to a large spatial area to describe their neighborhoods. Nevertheless, no white respondents living south of South Street named their neighborhood "South Philadelphia" or "South Philly," and only four White respondents named a remotely large area by calling their neighborhood "Center City." Nonetheless, the spatial area of Center City is several hundred area blocks less than the size residents often consider South Philadelphia. Thus, only Blacks defined their neighborhoods as large regional areas, and a large majority of Black respondents still perceived their neighborhood as large regional areas when they drew their neighborhoods as small blocks.

From Clyde's quote and my finding that only Blacks perceived their neighborhoods as large regions, Black residents seem to have fewer reasons to differentiate these large regions into smaller intermediate sized neighborhoods. These intermediate sized neighborhoods relate to using idiosyncratic streets as neighborhood borders. As I have already discussed, the importance of Black culture and authenticity serves as one reason that Black residents would generalize the spatial areas of their neighborhoods. Clyde refers to Black culture and authenticity by describing the use of large regional neighborhoods as "keeping it old school." Although Melissa, Paul, and

Jeff all show that perceptions of crime and safety are major factors that direct where residents

draw neighborhood borders, because most Blacks are long-term residents, the social ills that

plague these areas have long been part of the neighborhood and a part of poorer Black

communities. While all residents desire to rid the neighborhood of crime and drugs, long-term

Black residents that lived a few blocks away from crime did not draw idiosyncratic

neighborhood borders to eliminate such characteristics of crime from their perceived

neighborhood.

When discussing the strength of the community in the area nearby, Clyde explains that

the area lacks any sense of community because the people that are moving in do not want to be

involved. Moreover, the people who do care are leaving. He also blames the transience of the

residents in the area for why there is a lack of community commitment. He complains about the

trash on the streets, which other subjects have also mentioned as a visible example of a lacking

community effort. Furthermore, he expresses the need for block captains and complains about

the disappearance of community leadership. Nevertheless, many White respondents, who were

newer residents living in this area, claimed that they were involved in the community. The

diverging perceptions of community strength between races suggest that residents' idiosyncratic

exclusion of areas experiencing social ills guides where newer community members will extend

their community commitment.

However, Black respondents tended not to draw idiosyncratic borders to define their

neighborhoods, and instead, Black subjects relied on the traditional expected borders to define

their neighborhoods as large regional sections of the city. Thus, culture and authenticity for

Black residents has greater symbolic meaning than crime and safety. Moreover, historically, city

governments have not prioritized serving minority interests, and minority groups have often

struggled with gaining political influence representative of the groups' interests. Therefore,

Blacks may have a greater political advantage and more resources by forming a larger

neighborhood community to speak for their neighborhood interests. However, when residents

with more political power move into the area, the newer, more powerful residents propose

different neighborhood definitions, consequently forming organizations that only serve their own

interests and the interests of others moving into the area.

Christine

While Alan, along with several other Black residents, drew his neighborhood as a large

regional area of at least 250 blocks, Christine, a 27-year-old White female subject, depicted her

own neighborhood and surrounding neighborhoods as uniform, intermediate sized

neighborhoods, approximately 15 to 250 area blocks. These sizes are similar to the sizes

represented by Ernest Burgess and his researchers in their study of community areas in

Chicago.[75] Only 13.8% of Black respondents depicted their neighborhood in this way, while

73.1% of White respondents viewed their neighborhood as intermediate sized. This striking

divergence between Black and White respondents, which Albert Hunter also found in his study,

along with the differences discussed in boundary types and geographic horizon, suggests that

residents experience and use shared spaces differently.[76] By comparing Christine's map and

interview responses with residents who have demonstrated narrow or broad geographic horizons,

we can explain how and why residents of different races experience the gentrifying

neighborhood in different ways and explore the implications of this phenomenon.

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[75] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 107-8.
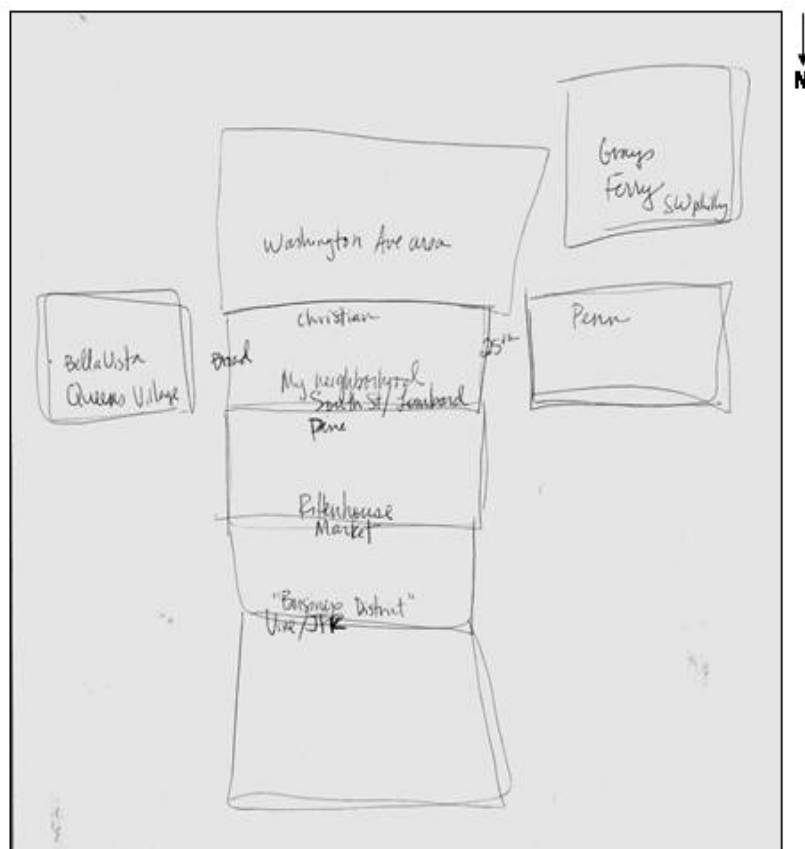[76] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities.*

Figure 2.30: Christine's map. (27-year-old White female.)

Figure 2.31: Translation of Christine's map onto standard map provided by *Philadelphia NIS*. The red dashed lines indicate the neighborhood the subject indicated in her map.

Christine has lived in the neighborhood for two years and is part of the new generation of young urban professionals that are rapidly moving into the neighborhood. As a native of another section of Philadelphia, Christine discusses how many of her lifetime friends have moved to the area, demonstrating the trend for people in a similar age group to Christine to move to the area. She also mentions the distinct characteristics, such as family structure, race, and socioeconomic status, between the new population moving into the area and the long-term residents. I interviewed Christine on her way home from work. She works as a "Grant and Education Coordinator" in the Center City area, and she resides three blocks south of South Street at 18th & Catherine Streets. We sat on a curb at the intersection of 19th & Lombard Streets, which is one block north of South Street, to conduct the interview. She lists her neighborhood as "Graduate Hospital Area" and draws seven other neighborhoods on her map, Figure 2.30. When she evaluates her own community and neighboring ones, she only refers to young urban professionals as members of the communities that she discusses. Her limited perception of neighborhood communities indicates that she experiences her community as a separate community from different groups of people living in the area, yet she generalizes her evaluation of the community to the entire area.

In her map, Christine draws her neighborhood, the "Graduate Hospital Area," between "South Street/Lombard" and Christian Street, which is four blocks south of South Street. Moreover, she depicts the neighborhood width as extending between Broad Street and 25th Street, which is essentially the Schuylkill River since residents sometimes use streets within one block of major geophysical landmarks as the most convenient form of articulation of a border.[77] Moreover, she does not perceive the Graduate Hospital as a central location of her neighborhood but refers to the building in the name of her neighborhood. She labels the area south of her

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[77] Hunter, *Symbolic Communities*, 82.

neighborhood as "Washington Ave. Area," but does not name any southern border for the area. Her inability to define this southern border is likely because she does not go south of Christian Street often. She also states that she would drive if she had to go south of Christian Street due to safety concerns.

Like Melissa, she draws an idiosyncratic border between what she considers a lower-status neighborhood and her own neighborhood along the border of comfort and safety that she perceives. By separating the area that she perceives as unsafe, Christine disassociates negative elements that jeopardize safety and comfort from the neighborhood area with which she associates herself. One should note that she previously lived on Christian Street in the eastern side of the city. Therefore, she may have chosen this street as the border of her neighborhood because the street holds symbolic meaning in her individual perception. Moreover, Christine names the neighborhood in the south after Washington Avenue, demonstrating her awareness of the significance of the major street. Although she perceives Washington Avenue as a major street, she views the street as a central location for the area south of Christian Street. Nevertheless, she does not perceive any of the additional seven neighborhoods in her map with a street as a central location. Such an inconsistency, along with her discussion of safety and similar patterns of exclusion among other residents in a similar demographic such as Melissa, suggests that she drew a distinct, idiosyncratic border to define her neighborhood in order to exclude a particular area.

At the same time, Christine blurs the borders between her neighborhood and "Rittenhouse," a higher-status neighborhood, by depicting the border between the two neighborhoods as "South Street/Lombard." By not naming a distinct border, she senses a continuity between her own neighborhood and the Rittenhouse neighborhood. Moreover, she

indicates that a sense of community exists between her neighborhood and the Rittenhouse neighborhood, and she discusses how she considers herself a part of Center City rather than South Philadelphia, even though she states that her neighborhood was technically part of South Philadelphia.

Christine's map also includes surrounding neighborhoods: "Bella Vista," "Queen Village," "Business District," "Penn," "Gray's Ferry," and "Southwest Philadelphia." By drawing so many neighborhoods, Christine demonstrates the general pattern among White residents to depict their neighborhoods as uniform intermediate sized neighborhoods. Moreover, several White respondents who drew their neighborhood at this intermediate level would draw surrounding neighborhoods, especially South Philadelphia on a regional level. Figure 2.32 is a map of a 46-year-old White female resident named Linda who lives in the area. She uses intermediate sized neighborhoods to define her own neighborhood and the surrounding neighborhoods north of her, but she names the area south of her neighborhood as "South Philadelphia," referring to a much larger spatial area than the other neighborhoods on her map. This discrepancy in perceived neighborhood sizes is due to a combination of egocentric perceptions and the reluctance to travel to areas south of her neighborhood. All of the residents who demonstrated this size discrepancy did not live in what they would consider South Philadelphia and generalized the entire area below a border as South Philadelphia. Moreover, all of these residents were White middle- and upper-class residents who rarely went south of their neighborhood. In addition to safety concerns, another reason for not venturing south is the area's lack of functional spaces, such as retail, parks, and amenities, compared to areas nearby in the north. Thus, these residents often experience the area in terms of where they go for daily activity combined with perceptions of safety and comfort. Therefore, these residents have egocentric

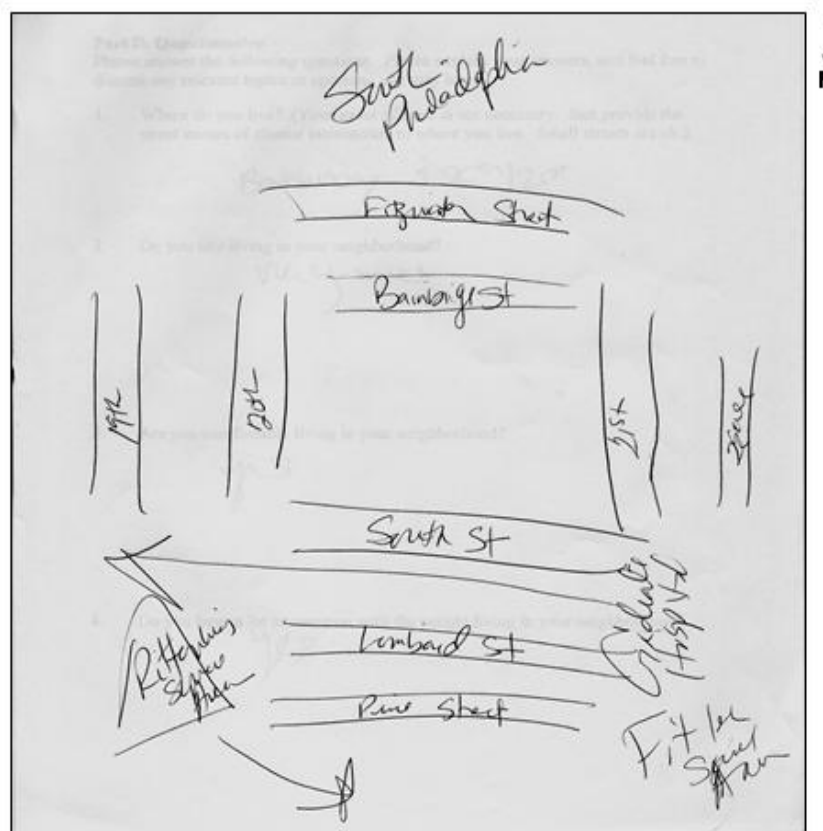perceptions of the area, consequently giving broad general definitions of the areas they rarely visit.

Figure 2.32. Linda's map. (46-year-old long-term White female resident).

I have discussed the block and regional level depictions that most Black respondents drew in their neighborhood maps and their relation to narrow geographic horizons. Blacks' narrow horizons relate to the significance of primary contacts, isolation and alienation due to poverty, exclusion processes, and focal point communities. Because Christine perceives her own neighborhood community as separate from other groups of people that live in the same space, her notion of the neighborhood relies less on primary contacts and more on contacts with people in groups of similar socioeconomic status. By relying on social networks beyond the neighborhood "stoop culture" that characterizes urban Black communities, residents create separate social

networks that work to defend community borders. Unlike Clyde's justification for defining his

neighborhood as a large region, Christine seems to be engaging in the exclusion processes

described by Clyde. The last explanation for residents' narrow perceptions, "focal point

communities," may relate to racial differences in the interests served by major neighborhood

institutions since only Whites used focal points to define their neighborhood.

Respondents further demonstrate the existence of distinct communities within the same

spaces by their differing perceptions between Blacks and Whites of the changing ethnic

composition of the area. Many young White urban professionals who perceive the neighborhood

similarly to Christine discuss the area's "diversity" positively and express disappointment at the

neighborhood's move toward homogeneity as more and more Whites move into the area.

Interestingly, long-term Black residents, such as Alan, perceive the neighborhood changes as

recent with Whites beginning to trickle into the neighborhood. While many Blacks living in this

neighborhood expressed positive comments on the decrease in crime and increase in safety as the

neighborhood ethnic composition has changed, some Blacks expressed anger and victimization

at the changing tax structure and increasingly unaffordable homes, in which they have lived for a

long time. Blacks may consider the influx of White residents to be recent and a newer

phenomenon because the changes have occurred so rapidly relative to the length of time most

Black residents have lived there. Just three years ago, the area was nearly 70% Black, so

although the area has experienced a rapid influx of White residents, the neighborhood is far from

homogeneous.[78] Such drastic overestimations of the number of people of each race living in the

area suggest that Blacks and Whites often live in separate social worlds during neighborhood

transition that rarely intersect in a positive way for neighborhood diversity.

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[78] Gelman, *The Place Where You Live*.

Thus, the explanations for why Blacks tend to perceive their neighborhoods on either very large or very small levels—significance of primary contacts, isolation and alienation due to poverty, exclusion processes, and focal point communities—also explain why Whites do not perceive their neighborhoods on large or small levels. The different situations in which Blacks and Whites live during neighborhood transition explain the perceptual differences that occur when neighborhood borders become ambiguous during neighborhood change.

3

Conclusion

The differences in neighborhood perceptions between Blacks and Whites in this gentrifying neighborhood were striking. While both Blacks and Whites lived together in this area, residents carried divergent notions of the space in which they lived and the community to which they belonged. By analyzing subjective viewpoints of neighborhood borders, one would expect to find differences between individuals. Interestingly, my findings showed that patterns emerged that fell strongly along racial divisions and, less pronounced, along differences in lengths of residency. I have explained these perceptual differences by making use of concepts such as exclusive and inclusive intentions, the value of authenticity, the varying persistence of different symbols, and the extent of isolation. In addition, neighborhood associations, real estate marketing, and political boundaries influence residents' perceptions depending on residents' interactions with these institutional forces. Although various factors determine how residents perceive neighborhood borders, the perceptual divergences between races have important implications for sociological studies on urban neighborhoods and urban policy.

The subjects in my sample illustrated essentially three different neighborhoods of varying sizes occupying the same space. Long-term Black residents tended to see their neighborhood as a regional area—"South Philly," and long-term White residents living near the hospital perceived their neighborhood as a small "focal point" community surrounding the Graduate Hospital. All other White residents identified their neighborhood as an intermediate sized neighborhood solely within the area of the study but with an ambiguous southern border. With residents living in virtually separate neighborhoods within the same space, an accurate analysis of neighborhood effects has yet to be completed. William Julius Wilson's influential book *The Truly*

Disadvantaged, published in 1987, changed the direction of urban studies by demonstrating the influence of structural features of the neighborhood on its residents. He showed that changes in the urban economy led to striking rates of Black joblessness, exacerbating problems in isolated poor Black neighborhoods. His study initiated a trend of studies focusing on the consequences of the neighborhood structure on the well-being of its residents.[79]

Nevertheless, modern urban studies literature fails to utilize a unit of analysis that can account for the subjective differences that consequently affect the well-being of their respective residents. Moreover, in gentrifying neighborhoods, different kinds of residents can have very different subjective perceptions of where the neighborhood borders are. Diverging perceptions among residents in the same space reveal the deeper complexities of neighborhood effects and, therefore, imply that we need to rethink our approach to neighborhood analysis in the social sciences. We cannot effectively evaluate neighborhood effects without a foundation for measuring the neighborhood unit. We must first understand and accept the notion of the multifaceted neighborhood before we can begin to comprehend the consequences of each facet's effect on its residents.

While the neighborhood effects literature contributes to explanations of the residential isolation of low-income Black residents, my study analyzed a seemingly integrated neighborhood and found similar cases of isolation. By recognizing the existence of residential racial segregation in neighborhoods undergoing change, we can take a new approach to gentrifying neighborhoods in future research. As commercial businesses that cater to the growing population emerge and developers continue to build new expensive homes, many long-term, low-income Black residents of the area experience the same isolation and alienation that

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[79] Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged.*

residents in concentrated poverty face. Thus, the gentrification process may create racially integrated spaces, but the effects of racial segregation remain.

These co-existing neighborhood communities between races and newer and older residents also compete with each other for the political representation of group interests, thus affecting land use decisions, tax structures, and neighborhood development. The isolation and alienation experienced by low-income Black residents invariably leaves low-income Blacks out of the political process. Moreover, the interests of the low-income Black population often differ from those of the middle- to upper-income young professionals moving into the area and long-term White residents who reap greater benefits from the gentrification process. The resulting formations of neighborhood coalitions that cater to the neighborhood perceptions of White residents exclude the group interests of low-income Black residents. At the same time, surrounding areas that White residents exclude from their perceived neighborhood do not gain the benefits received by included residents. The areas directly north of the area analyzed do not need the resources gained by the interests of newer residents because its residents have greater economic resources. On the other hand, the surrounding area to the south has a greater long-term, low-income Black population. Therefore, neighborhood interests of White residents exclude interests of Black residents living both within the neighborhood and near the neighborhood. This social and political isolation experienced by long-term Black residents perpetuates residential racial segregation and eventually leads to their residential displacement as gentrification continues.

Furthermore, while the perceived southern border of the neighborhood often varied among the newer residents of the area, their perceptions illustrated an emerging consensus of the neighborhood definition. As only newer residents associated themselves as residents of the area

examined in the study itself, a developing consensus for a neighborhood within the confines of

the area under examination in the study is evident. Because the gentrification process displaces

many long-term, low-income Black residents, newer residents and the businesses that open along

with gentrification are creating a new character for the area. Newer residents' perceptions paint

a picture of the neighborhood that is evolving, thus demonstrating that considering subjective

neighborhood definitions can help researchers identify and follow processes of cultural change.

By being able to analyze residents' subjective neighborhood perceptions, social science

researchers can gain a better understanding of gentrification and the complexity of its effects.

Although residential racial segregation in urban areas has declined in the last decade, we

must look at this phenomenon with reserve. Immigration of other minority groups has surged,

making urban spaces more diverse and changing the face of residential segregation with added

ethnic enclaves and businesses that cater to particular ethnic groups. Segregation has also spread

to the suburbs, creating areas outside of cities that face identical problems of concentrated urban

poverty. Lastly, as major cities compete for economic resources to survive and grow,

gentrification is growing throughout major cities. Cities need to be economically competitive in

order to survive and grow, and cities look to gentrification as one way of attracting a higher tax

base of residents. Nevertheless, gentrification can sacrifice the needs of low-income minorities.

The area just south of the neighborhood in this study is experiencing a drastic increase in crime

and drug traffic as gangs are pushed out of their old territory and unto the territory of opposing

gangs.

Nevertheless, while the index of dissimilarity—a standard measure of segregation that

evaluates the evenness of distribution between two groups across a geographic area—may be

lower due to gentrification, I have shown that micro level segregation still exists within Census

tracts that the U.S. Census Bureau would define as integrated.[80] The finding of persistent

neighborhood perceptual differences by race leads us to question the possibility of the existence

of the ideal of integrated communities.

By understanding the various neighborhood structures that exist within shared spaces,

urban policy-makers can establish a basis of understanding that will allow them to make

effective policy decisions that can satisfy the needs and desires of both older and newer residents

of such areas undergoing neighborhood transition. Policy makers can create innovative ways to

approach gentrification that would foster integrated spaces and open civic engagement rather

than segregated communities and racial tensions. Without promoting research and policy

recommendations that consider co-existing neighborhoods, we will continue to preserve

misunderstandings between racial groups and move farther away from achieving an integrated

society.

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[80] Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid,* 20.

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