CONTAINMENT IN THE CITY: HIGHWAYS, BOUNDARIES, BODIES,

AND THE POLITICS OF URBAN SPACE

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CONTAINMENT IN THE CITY: HIGHWAYS, BOUNDARIES, BODIES

AND THE POLITICS OF URBAN SPACE

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ABSTRACT

The organization of urban space accommodating the rapid movement of the automobile facilitates a kind of forgetting, through the act of driving, and creates a sense of containment, through the built environment itself. If this is so, how does this occur? What is the relationship between movement, memory, and containment? How do these kinds of material conditions reflect and reproduce the spatial segregation of different bodies? What are the implications of such spaces on the body and society, the body politic? Using Kansas City as a case study, these questions will be addressed in this project.

In the spring of 2010, twenty-three interviews were conducted with urban planners, architects, developers, consultants, real estate agents, civic leaders, and community organizations, all of whom were asked to geographically define downtown and discuss urban redevelopment in Kansas City. Downtown was often defined by the highways that surround it, and streets, cars, parking, driving, and transit were unavoidable topics of discussion. What are the implications of the prevalence of highways in urban space for the body, movement, engagement, and society?

I propose that as active, human agents orient to material boundaries in urban space, such as drivers on a highway, a sense of containment and passivity, even fear, is produced as

boundaries are reproduced and reinforced. The rapid movement of bodies in cars on a highway produces detachment from urban space, and the people within that space. The highway as an object in urban space creates a boundary eliminating the possibility for social engagement, which creates a sense of containment, particularly in areas of the city divided by race. In public spaces downtown where diverse bodies do meet, bodily boundaries such as dress codes are implemented, also restricting social engagement. Whether through driving or dress codes, the individual is made to be aware of the body as an object in space, but it is when the body fades into the background that we are able to open up to and engage others.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences have examined a thesis titled "Containment in the City: Highways, Boundaries, Bodies, and the Politics of Urban Space," presented by Andrea Leigh Clark, candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, I frequently drove east on 39th Street, from Rainbow Boulevard to

Emanuel Cleaver Boulevard, on a five-mile stretch of asphalt passing through State Line Road,

Main Street, Troost Avenue, Bruce R. Watkins Drive, and Prospect Avenue. Most of the route

was familiar, having hung out, lived, worked, and gone to school in Midtown Kansas City over

the years. The farther east I drove the less familiar the surroundings became, but the street

names told the familiar story of vibrant urban life followed by flight and sprawl. As I gazed out

the window, these intersections, overlaid with memories of old black and white photographs of

bustling street corners, came to life in my imagination. Despite my limited lived experience on

the east side, I knew the old boarded up churches, shops, restaurants, and houses were not merely

abandoned buildings. They were haunted by the history of the city, a history that is no longer

directly accessible in the present. In the words of Michel de Certeau, "There is no place that is

not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can 'invoke' or not.

Haunted places are the only ones people can live in" (1984, 108).

De Certeau describes the sensation of haunting saying, "Objects…have hollow places in

which a past sleeps…what can be seen designates what is no longer there" (1984, 108). These

places, he continues, are "fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not

allowed to read" because "this is a sort of knowledge that remains silent" (de Certeau 1984, 108)

as it resides in the body through lived experience or spatial practice. The histories that haunted

the places I passed on my commute were only accessible to me through the documentation of the

lived experience of others in the past through written text and photography. The sense of

haunting would remain at the level of my individual consciousness, or embedded in the

unconscious, unless brought to social life through communication with others, but I was traveling alone with my thoughts in my car.

Each month as I drove this route, I unknowingly began forming the questions that evolved into this project. At first I contemplated the connection between the history of racial segregation, the blight of the east side, and new redevelopment in downtown Kansas City. Little did I know that the act of driving itself, which I had been engaged in all this time, would become the focal point of this project. The organization of urban space accommodating the rapid movement of the automobile facilitates a kind of forgetting, through the act of driving, and creates a sense of containment, through the built environment itself. If this is so, how does this occur? What is the relationship between movement, memory, and containment? How do these kinds of material conditions reflect and reproduce the spatial segregation of different bodies? What are the implications of such spaces on the body and society, the body politic?

Initially I planned to engage my questions through a photo essay, and although this project evolved into a written thesis, the visual aspect continued to be a source of inspiration and a tool for personal exploration and social dialogue. By photographing urban space, I was forced to get out of the car, walk, and talk to people curious as to what I was taking pictures of and why. Photography became a strategy for me to engage these spaces, and at times the people within these spaces, in order to create meaning in a new way. Mark Johnson, in his work on the body, aesthetics, and meaning, states, "art matters because it provides heightened, intensified, and highly integrated experiences of meaning, using all of our ordinary resources for meaning-making" (2007, xiii). In this sense, the photographs, some of which will be incorporated into this paper, do not merely capture static objects in space; they conjure a quality of experience created by habitual movement through urban space, specifically walking.

Kansas City Then and Now

To preface this paper, I would like to clarify where I mean when I refer to "Kansas City." The Kansas-Missouri state line divides the Kansas City metropolitan area, and both states have their own Kansas City, although they are quite different spaces and somewhat separated by a river. In this paper, I will specify if referring to the Kansas City metropolitan area, so it can be assumed that any reference to "Kansas City" is strictly Kansas City, Missouri. Although I grew up in the suburbs of the Kansas City metropolitan area, I spent a lot of time in the city. I learned its history and watched it physically change over the years, especially the last five, and it is this history and transformation that makes Kansas City a perfect case study for addressing questions of movement, memory, and containment within urban space.

Kansas City is "a region divided by history, politics, and sheer distance," (Johnson and Peirce 2003, 1) according to a four-part series published in the *Kansas City Star* in 2001 based on a report produced for the newspaper by Citistates Group, a network of journalists, thinkers, civic leaders, and activists "focused on building competitive, equitable and sustainable 21st century cities and metropolitan regions" (Citistates Group). In fact, Kansas City has a long history of division by distance, particularly through spatial segregation based on racialized boundaries. In the late 1800s, there were four enclaves in which African Americans tended to cluster, but the Vine Street Corridor, located from 12th Street to 25th Street, between Troost Avenue and Woodland Avenue, would become the heart of the black ghetto. Several factors contributed to the concentration of blacks in this enclave. When the housing boom of the 1880s collapsed, thousands of two-story homes stood vacant providing black Kansas Citians with housing in the Vine Street Corridor. Beautification projects of the 1890s began to reconfigure urban space and black residential patterns. Frank Walsh, a member of the Board of Public

Welfare, believed "if social ills had social cures…then both the ills and cures could be found in the uses of urban space" (Schirmer 2002, 24). Parks and boulevards were used to clear slums and create physical barriers to separate the elite from the troubles of urban blight. Many of the displaced blacks moved to the Vine Street Corridor east of Troost Avenue, which had established schools, businesses, churches, and a variety of social organizations.

In 1865, the Missouri constitution had abolished slavery and extended some civil rights to blacks, including the right for black children to be educated in public schools. Ten years later, black civil rights activists protested against the lack of schools and the poor quality of existing schools for black children. In response, the Missouri constitution was revised in 1875 "requiring that districts containing at least fifteen school-aged black children must provide separate schools for black pupils" (Schirmer 2002, 29). Still, in the late 1800s, the number of black schools could not keep up with the number of children, leaving some classrooms "with a pupil to teacher ratio of 65:1 in 1898" (Schirmer 2002, 32). As Jim Crow laws became more prominent in Kansas City in the early 1900s, a city ordinance was passed in 1915 stating that black schools could not be located within 2,400 feet of a white school, public or private (Schirmer 2002, 75). It was not until 1954 that Kansas City schools were desegregated, and in the 1950s the student population was fairly integrated. However, by the 1970s, due to white flight, the number of white students dramatically decreased leaving nearly all black schools in the city.

Historically, the Vine Street Corridor thrived as the center of black entertainment in Kansas City with the majority of saloons and cabarets located within its boundaries, fifty of which were located in the six blocks just north of 18th Street and Vine Street; few of these venues were located in the predominantly white communities located south of 39th Street. The red light district that had been confined to the Northeast had been raided, and the evicted prostitutes

moved south to Paseo Boulevard between 12th Street and 19th Street in the Vine Street Corridor. Although some whites went slumming in the area, "the white reformers partitioned their city by a 'moral geography' that declared vice to be unthinkable in their own territory but acceptable in districts where respectable whites seldom ventured" (Schirmer 2002, 126). Disapproving black community members seeking family friendly entertainment went downtown, however many of the entertainment venues downtown were segregated at that time, in addition to restaurants and department stores.

Beginning in the 1880s, a pattern of spatial distance emerged in Kansas City. As the black community grew and encroached on middle and upper class enclaves, whites moved farther south. In the early 1900s, J. C. Nichols built subdivisions in south Kansas City, referred to as the Country Club District. Homes in this district were sold with deed covenants that restricted black home ownership. Despite the Jim Crow laws of the early 1900s, spatial segregation in Kansas City was somewhat irregular and unpredictable until the 1910s. As the black population increased 72 percent between 1900 and 1920, available housing became harder to find, as real estate agents were reluctant to sell homes to blacks in predominately white neighborhoods (Schirmer 2002, 56). By the 1950s real estate agents "began advertising property 'east of Troost' and 'west of Troost' implicitly designating the race of those to whom property was available" (Gotham 2002, 103). Even in 1990, every neighborhood in which African Americans constituted more than 50 percent of the population was located east of Troost Avenue (Gotham 2002, 118).

Today as the population of the Kansas City metropolitan area reaches nearly 2 million, "only one in four metropolitan residents lives in Kansas City," according to 2000 census data (Brookings Institution 2003, 4). About 58 percent of the residents in Kansas City were white,

while 31 percent were African American (Brookings Institution 2003, 17). As whites continue to leave the central city for the suburbs, specifically married, young professionals with and without children, the African American population remains concentrated in Kansas City. Although the dissimilarity index measuring segregation levels in Kansas City has decreased over the years, about 64 percent of blacks "would have to move to another neighborhood to achieve the same population distribution" (Brookings Institution 2003, 22) as whites. The poverty rate for whites in Kansas City was around 8 percent, but 25 percent of blacks were in poverty as "black household incomes in Kansas City are nearly 40 percent lower than those of whites" (Brookings Institution 2003, 58-60). To summarize, "metro Kansas City continues to grow in spatially divided ways, with wealth and opportunity accumulating in its many rings of suburbs while slow growth, minority residents, and lower-income households accumulate in the center" (Brookings Institution 2002, 35).

As "Kansas City has more freeway miles per capita than any other region in the nation," (Vey 2006, 8) commuting is a fact of life for many residents. Twenty-two percent of residents in the suburbs commuted to the central city for work, while only 12 percent of central city residents commuted to the suburbs; 38 percent of suburban residents commuted within the suburbs, and 25 percent of central city residents worked within the central city (Brookings Institution 2003, 51). Of these commuters, about 80 percent of them drove alone (Brookings Institution 2003, 53). While only 9 percent of white households lacked access to a vehicle, 22 percent of black households were without a vehicle (Brookings Institution 2003, 54). In addition to a lack of personal transportation, Kansas City was ranked "12th out of the country's 300-plus metropolitan areas based on black's physical isolation from area job opportunities" (Brookings Institution

2006, 6). This connection between driving and spatial segregation, and the social and political implications, will be explored in this project.

The Body in Social Space

"Places are doubly constructed" as they are physically built and "interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined" through social processes which are mediated by the built environment and the body itself (Gieryn 2000, 465). Because of this, the body, urban space, and everyday practice become fundamental to understanding how active agents make space meaningful in everyday life. There are several frameworks for understanding the concept of space, the relationship between space and the body, and the implications of certain kinds of space on the body and society. Marxist theorists, such as Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey, bring an understanding of the interconnected and interdependent relationship between self, nature, and society; as one is produced the others are produced simultaneously. In addition, the importance of historical material conditions, in which production occurs, are brought to the forefront. Phenomenologists on the other hand, as described by Benno Werlen, are primarily concerned with the meaning consciously produced by the agent within the act and the intersubjective, or social, nature of establishing shared meaning. Pragmatists, including George Herbert Mead, Mark Johnson, and Paul Connerton, focus on the role of the body and unconscious body memory differentiating themselves from the phenomenologists.

Each framework challenges the dominant, traditional objectivist stance, which is based on the premise that the mind and space exist apart from and outside of the body. Cartesian dualism, which elevates mind over body, reason over feeling, and thought over practice, allows for this disembodied view of meaning leading to several misconceptions, that the mind is free from the body and that meaning making does not involve feeling. Johnson argues, "meaning is

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not just a matter of concepts and propositions, but also reaches down into the images, sensorimotor schemas, feelings, qualities, and emotions that constitute our meaningful encounter with our world" (2007, xi). The mind and the body, according to Johnson, "are not two things, but rather aspects of one organic process, so that all our meaning, thought, and language emerge from the aesthetic dimensions of this embodied activity" (2007, 1). In response to the desire to free the mind from the body, he quite beautifully states, "it is our organic flesh and blood, our structural bones, the ancient rhythms of our internal organs, and the pulsing flow of our emotions that give us whatever meaning we can find and that shape our very thinking" (Johnson 2007, 3). In light of this, Johnson strives to form an embodied theory of meaning, which will be discussed in more detail later. For now I will begin by outlining the emergence of social space by exploring how different sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and geographers have used space as a construct.

In *The Production of Space* Henri Lefebvre begins by outlining a brief history of the concept of space, from a philosophical and mathematical to a social construct, demonstrating the need for a "science of space" (1991, 7). Although philosophy had distanced itself from metaphysics, space remained an absolute concept that subsumed the body and its senses. Even when used as a classificatory tool, the concept "belonged to the *a priori* realm of consciousness…hence transcendental" (Lefebvre 1991, 2). In mathematics, space was perceived as empty, infinite, or something of the mind, which only increased the divide between "mathematical spaces (i.e. from the mental capacities of the human species, from logic) to nature in the first place, to practice in the second, and thence to the theory of social life – which also presumably must unfold in space" (Lefebvre 1991, 3). More recently, epistemology and semiology have also made use of the concept of space. Within epistemology, although lacking a

clear definition, space continues to be a thing of the mind overriding the subject as a social agent, "hence the re-emergence of the abstract subject, the *cogito* of the philosophers" (Lefebvre 1991, 4). The semiological approach of reading space like a text, according to Lefebvre, "is to evade both history and practice" (Lefebvre 1991, 7). "Such a space," he says, "implies a process of signification" (Lefebvre 1991, 17). In an attempt to move beyond these notions of space, Lefebvre sought a theory of space that would incorporate the mental, the physical, and the social.

Lefebvre argues that "physical space has no 'reality' without the energy that is deployed within it," (Lefebvre 1991, 13) therefore space is produced through spatial practice and "embodies social relationships" (Lefebvre 1991, 27). He says that social space is not an object or a product, rather as "the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh action to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others" (Lefebvre 1991, 73). Because of this, our "interest must be expected to shift from *things in space* to the actual *production of space*" (Lefebvre 1991, 37). From this emerges what Lefebvre refers to as "a conceptual triad," (Lefebvre 1991, 33) dialectic in nature, including spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces. The first is the daily routine or performance that produces and reproduces social space, the second is the conceptualized codes that seek to order space, and the third is the symbolic meaning "linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art" (Lefebvre 1991, 33).

Lefebvre argues, "there is nothing, in history or in society, which does not have to be achieved and produced" including space. However, Marx narrowed production down to the concept of labor, and according to Lefebvre, "the more restricted the notion [of production] becomes the less it connotes creativity, inventiveness or imagination" (1991, 69). He argues that until "the body is envisioned as a practico-sensory totality," meaning a body with "spatial

qualities…and energetic properties," (Lefebvre 1991, 62) knowledge will not be de- or reconstructed.

Around the same time Lefebvre was writing *The Production of Space*, David Harvey was working on his book *Social Justice and the City*, in which he explored "questions that arose from projecting social and moral philosophical considerations into the traditional matrix of geographical inquiry" (2009, 9). Harvey argues that space is not merely a backdrop for social processes; rather space and social processes are in a dialectical relationship with one another, human practice being the link between the two. "The city as a built form" then is not merely "regarded as a set of objects arranged according to some pattern in space," (Harvey 2009, 303) leading to the concept of urbanism used by both Harvey and Lefebvre. Urbanism, as defined by Harvey, is "a set of social relationships which reflects the relationships established throughout society as a whole" (2009, 304).

Harvey also problematizes the false separation between object and subject, between spatial form and human action. Within Marxist theory, Harvey writes, "knowledge is seen as a part of human experience and as growing out of human practice," a perspective which restores the "relationship between subject and object" and confronts the dualistic assumptions of "traditional empiricism" (2009, 296-297). Focusing on human action, then, is a "shift away from philosophical idealism towards a materialist interpretation of ideas as they arise in particular historical contexts" (Harvey 2009, 13). In *Spaces of Hope*, Harvey discusses the importance of the human body in spatial practice. He argues that the human body is not "a passive product of external processes" rather it is "a relational 'thing' that is created, bounded, sustained, and ultimately dissolved in a spatiotemporal flux of multiple processes" (2000, 98-99). Therefore,

"different processes (physical and social) 'produce' (both materially and representationally) radically different kinds of bodies" (Harvey 2000, 99).

For both Harvey and Lefebvre, space produced within a capitalistic mode of production becomes abstracted, as production is "no longer one with the processes of reproduction which perpetuated social life" (Lefebvre 1991, 49). Lefebvre states that abstract space "has nothing of a 'subject' about it, yet it acts like a subject in that it transports and maintains specific social relations, dissolves others and stands opposed to yet others" (1991, 50). However, he continues, "the abstract 'one' of modern social space" hides "the real 'subject', namely state (political) power" (Lefebvre 1991, 51). Harvey elaborates on this idea when he says, "neither the activity of space creation nor the final product of created space appear to be within our individual or collective control but fashioned by forces alien to us" (2009, 310).

In *Society, Action, and Space*, Benno Werlen argues that although human geographers have perceived space as an object, it "does not exist as an object or a causal force" (1993, viii). Werlen begins by offering a definition of space in which "space is neither an object nor an *a priori*, but a frame of reference…for the *material* aspects of social actions" (1993, 3). Space is then a classificatory concept because it has no empirical reality outside of action; it has no meaning in itself. It is social action that produces the social world, and it is "an action-oriented *social* geography" (Werlen 1993, 7) he seeks to establish. Werlen states that his assumptions about space conflict with those of Lefebvre. Lefebvre, according to Werlen, is guilty of reifying space when he says, "the 'social' only exists when it becomes spatial" (1993, 4). Marxists who give space causal power, along with geo-determinists, fall "into the related trap of dismissing subjective agency" (Werlen 1993, 6). Werlen argues that although space constrains action, it does cause or determine it.

While Lefebvre and Harvey were further developing Marxist theory and human geography, Pierre Bourdieu was working out his concept of habitus in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Bourdieu argued that the perception of the anthropologist as an outside observer led to the reduction of practice to a message to be decoded through hermeneutics. He says that the anthropologist as observer comes to rely on a "*repertoire of rules*" to make up for a "lack of practical mastery" (Bourdieu 2008, 2). According to Bourdieu, there must be a break from "objectivist abstraction" to include "inquiry into the conditions of possibility, and thereby, into the limits of the objective and the objectifying standpoint which grasps practices from outside…instead of constructing their generative principle" (2008, 3). He defines his fundamental concept, habitus, as "systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*" that "reproduce the objective structures of which they are a product" (Bourdieu 2008, 72). While these structures govern practice, they do not determine it. Habitus is embodied through practical mastery, and it is the "dialectical relationship between the body and a space…which leads to the em-bodying of the structures of the world" (Bourdieu 2008, 89). Everyday practice becomes of interest because through it habitus is embodied. Thus, the body can be perceived as a form of memory. However, "the principles em-bodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness" (Bourdieu 2008, 94) requiring the anthropologist to render the structures explicit.

Werlen is also critical of Bourdieu and his inability to locate the human body within his concept of social space, and Werlen states that habitus is "part of the mental world and should therefore not be localized in…social space" (1993, 155). If actions consist of a social, subjective, and physical aspect, "spatial categories can only grasp" the physical aspect (Werlen 1993, 5). Action, rather than space or the human subject, becomes the focus of analysis when "society is understood as the totality of actions" (Werlen 1993, 19). Werlen concludes that

"primacy has to be given to subjective agency in social geography" as well as the "physical-material conditions surrounding human action" (1993, 201).

De Certeau, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, explores the "ways in which users – commonly assumed to be passive and guided by established rules – operate" (1988, xi). For de Certeau, as well as Bourdieu, everyday practice is not taken for granted, perceived "as merely the obscure background of social activity" (de Certeau 1988, xi). Everyday practices, he says, "are tactical in character" (de Certeau, xix) meaning that they do not follow a proper or strategic trajectory based on rationality. De Certeau then differentiates between place and space; place is defined by "the law of the 'proper' rules," while space is produced through practice "by the actions of historic *subjects*" (1988, 117-118). In order to "disentangle himself from the murky intertwining daily behaviors and make himself alien to them," the voyeur, a detached observer, must create distance from everyday practice to maintain a view from above, looking down on "the ordinary practitioners of the city," however, "these practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen [from above]" (de Certeau 1988, 93). It is not geometric space or proper rules being utilized in everyday practice, rather "a style of tactile apprehension and kinesthetic appropriation" (de Certeau 1988, 97).

Phenomenologists, according to Werlen, are concerned with meaning-adequacy as reality is whatever is meaningful to the agent in the context of the act; if something in the act is relevant to the agent, it is real to the agent. Space, which is meaningless, becomes meaningful to agents through action; as memories are associated with space, it is transformed into place, creating a sense of continuity and stability. The place of the act and the material objects that surround an agent do influence or constrain action, but they do not cause or determine the act itself. Agency is located exclusively within the social agent as the body mediates between the subjective and

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the material. Because of this, analysis should begin with the "consciousness of the agent" (Werlen 1993, 53). According to phenomenologists, although there is no universal reality, objective meaning is constituted through "interacting subjects" or a "communal and associative relationship" (Werlen 1993, 58). They also argue that "pure sense data…only become meaningful through the intentional act of consciousness," (Werlen 1993, 60-61) therefore, as agents intersubjectively constitute reality, the social is formed. From this it can be argued that "the direct face-to-face situation" (Werlen 1993, 77) in which agents communicate is a fundamental aspect of the social.

Pragmatists such as George Herbert Mead and Mark Johnson focus on the role of the body in meaning making. Mead's theory of the physical thing is helpful to further explore the process by which agents make objects meaningful. By coming into contact with objects and experiencing resistance, we become aware of our self and the object simultaneously, and "this experience of effort is not an experience of something passive or inactive; it is an experience of an act, a process, which requires time and space" (Miller 1973, 111). As a subject gains the ability to anticipate the resistance of an object, the subject is able to objectify the self. "This is a social act" because "by taking on the attitude of an other, one places himself *outside* himself, at a distance from himself, *inside* the other" (Miller 1973, 114). Similarly to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Mead believed "that a person can experience his own body only in relation to others bodies" (Miller 1973, 104). Merleau-Ponty adds that bodily space becomes "the background against which the object as the goal of our action may stand out," and it is "in action the spatiality of our body is brought into being" (1962, 117). Johnson also describes this when he says, "all our acts of perception are directed *to* or *at* what is experienced and *away from* the body doing the perceiving" (2007, 4), a process he refers to as "background disappearance" (2007, 5).

In Johnson's embodied theory of meaning, he highlights the unconscious, passive aspect of human meaning making without dismissing the conscious, conceptual aspect. Percepts, or bodily sensations, and concepts, "forms by which we organize our experience," (Johnson 2007, 87) are not distinct processes. "These processes," he states, "are neither entirely passive nor entirely active; rather, they are a blending of passivity and activity in an organism-environment transaction" (Johnson 2007, 90). The process by which meaning is made is not strictly conscious or unconscious, active or passive, abstract or practical; it is both, but it begins with the body.

If urban space reflects social relations, if social structures are embodied through everyday practice, and if meaning is made by agents encountering resistance through action, then everyday movement of the body within urban space should be the starting point for projects concerned with meaning making in the city. This paper will then focus on the act of driving on urban highways and the implications of such meaning making on the individual body and social relations.

Method

In the spring of 2010, I conducted twenty-three interviews with individuals involved with urban development in Kansas City. I contacted forty-four urban planners, architects, developers, consultants, real estate agents, civic leaders, and community organizations that have played an active role in development projects or initiatives in Kansas City. The concept of the urban growth machine, coined by John Logan and Harvey Molotch in the 1980s, influenced my decision to interview individuals with a vested interest in urban development and power to influence or shape development in Kansas City. The business community including the self-employed, local retailers, and corporations, as well as the media and elected officials, all considered to be part of the urban growth machine, are primarily concerned with the exchange-

value of commodified space as their interests lie in profit and growth. The urban growth machine also depends on the services of place-professionals, and it is these "design-experts [who] mediate the relationship between political, economic, or mobilized powers and the built-places that they desire" (Gieryn 2000, 470). At times, the efforts of the urban growth machine may clash with residents and community groups who are "concerned about the use-value of place" produced in everyday practice (Gieryn 2000, 470). With this concept in mind, I became interested in how those who physically produce the built environment perceived the space they were designing and developing, and how those perceptions of space might differ from those with a vested interest in use-value rather than exchange-value. In addition to the interviews with individuals representing the interests of the urban growth machine and segments of the community, newspaper articles, independent reports, and notes from public forums were incredibly helpful as well.

The interviews were mostly conducted at the participant's place of employment, most of which lasted about an hour. Some interviews, at the request of the participants, will remain anonymous due to the nature of the their employment. Initially I was interested in the location of recent redevelopment projects downtown, the use of public financing, and public access. Because of this, many of the interviews discussed those topics; however, each participant was asked to define downtown Kansas City and the urban core. Both terms are constantly thrown around in public discourse and advertising, such as real estate brochures, but they are rarely defined when used. As I transcribed the interviews and read the transcripts, I began to notice several themes. First, there was a discrepancy between official definitions of downtown offered by the city and community development corporations and definitions based on personal experience. Second, transportation was a major concern voiced by nearly all participants. Third,

the issue of race was raised by numerous participants in regards to urban redevelopment and transportation, or the lack thereof. Some participants spoke of the importance of New Urbanism trends in urban planning, stressing the need for creative design that fosters a sense of community by facilitating walkability and sustainability. Others were concerned with increasing the population within the city, attracting new businesses, and increasing tourism. Either way, streets, cars, parking, driving, and transit were unavoidable topics of discussion in almost every interview.

If urban space, the agent, and action are fundamental to understanding how meaning is made, what are the implications of the prevalence of boundaries, such as highways, in urban space in Kansas City for the body, movement, engagement, and society? I propose that as agents orient to material boundary conditions in urban space, such as drivers on a highway, a sense of containment and passivity, even fear, is produced as boundaries are reproduced and reinforced. I believe that the data collected in the interviews, in addition to information gathered from a variety of articles, reveal some of the explicit and implicit implications that this kind of urban space has for the body and society.

CHAPTER 2

SPACE AND MOVEMENT

In *How Societies Remember*, Paul Connerton argues that memory is not merely "an

individual faculty" (2007, 1). Social memory, or collective memory, he says, is "sustained by

(more or less ritual) performances" (Connerton 2007, 4) in which memory is embodied by the

agent through habituated movement. Similarly, Richard Sennett states that the embodied

knowledge of the agent is not an "individual state of mind; it has a sharp social edge" (2008, 44).

Habit-memory, as Connerton calls it, is interesting in the sense that "we frequently do not recall

how or when or where we have acquired the knowledge in question; often is it only by the fact of

the performance that we are able to recognize [sic] and demonstrate to others that we do in fact

remember" (2007, 22-23). The unconscious nature of habit-memory challenges the

phenomenological assumption that meaning is consciously constituted between agents. The

acquisition of habit-memory is similar to embedding, a concept used by Sennett to describe "the

conversion of information and practices into tacit knowledge" (2008, 50). In *The Craftsman*,

Sennett uses the craftsman in the workshop as a means to explore the process of embodied

knowledge. In Sennett's model, as we encounter and engage bodily limits, a material world

responsive to bodily limits is produced; however, if we encounter bodily limits we cannot

engage, retreatism and passivity are produced.

In "A Space for Place in Sociology" Gieryn states that engagement, as well as

estrangement, "can be built-in" urban space (2000, 477). The layout of buildings, houses, and

sidewalks, and the presence of "corner stores, churches, and clubs" as well as "parks,

plazas…squares, libraries" (Gieryn 2000, 477) can facilitate engagement between people.

However, Gieryn adds that sprawling suburban development, high-speed travel in an automobile,

and the "conversion of once public places into private or semi-public ones" (2000, 477) facilitates estrangement between people.

When the habitual movement of the agent occurs in the form of driving, what kind of embodied meaning and engagement are produced? Connerton says that drivers experience "panoramic perception," a "new relationship between the perceiver and the object-world" where the driver, for instance, does not belong "to the same space as the perceived objects" (2010, 109). Urban space is then "read through the car" by the driver as opposed to physical interaction or engagement with the space, and for the driver "everyday knowledge of our life-spaces is learned through a windshield" (Connerton 2010, 112). In order for people to actively create meaning in urban space, habituated movement requiring "privileged points in space and time" (Connerton 2010, 120) is necessary. The highway, however, makes this an impossible task as the moving body is freed from place. The highway serves as a single function space providing uncluttered movement for the car eliminating the possibility for human interaction that is not mediated through the car.

De Cearteau poetically described a traveler on a train, and portions of his rich description, I believe, can be translated to the driver. The "grid of the railway car," or the patterns of streets and highways, "is a perfect actualization of the rational utopia," he says, making the traveler mobile and "independent of local roots" (de Certeau 1988, 111). "The windowpane," or the windshield, "is what allows us to *see*" creating "the spectator's distance," while "the rail," or the highway, is "what allows us to *move through*" or "to pass on" (de Certeau 1988, 112). As a driver, you are "outside of these things that stay there, detached and absolute" (de Certeau 1988, 111). While the train is "the solitary god from which all the action proceeds," (de Certeau 1988, 113) drivers, compared to passengers, are in control of their vehicle. For driving bodies, material

objects become obstacles to be avoided. Defensive driving is then a protective behavior in which the driver is aware of the body in a way that disallows engagement.

Connerton, in *How Modernity Forgets*, argues that certain kinds of urban space, such as the modern street system, are not conducive for the creation of habit-memory. He makes a distinction between the concepts of memorial and locus. Memorials, such as monuments, are often constructed out of fear of forgetting, but constructing a memorial begets forgetting as it "discards the obligation to remember" (2010, 29). He adds, "memorials conceal the past as much as they cause us to remember it" (Connerton 2010, 29). A monument is constructed in a way to create a sense of awe that discourages engagement with the object. In comparison, locus, such as a city street, is a non-propositional space. Locus is a " far more inexplicit reference to memory," and we experience it in a different way, "*inattentively*, in a state of distraction" (Connerton 2010, 30, 34) or habitual everyday practice. Connerton observes that in everyday life material conditions are often taken for granted and accepted "as a fact of life, a regular aspect of how things are" (2010, 34). Because of the "power of the locus," (2010, 34) Connerton argues that it should be the focus of analysis.

The street or highway, as a taken for granted locus experienced in daily life through driving, will be the focus of this chapter. Kansas City is an urban space dissected by highways and boulevards facilitating quick movement of goods and bodies through the city. The detachment created while driving through urban space, and the sense of containment produced by the highway as an object in urban space, shape how the city is defined or made meaningful by active agents.

Defining Downtown

The interviews conducted for this project were inspired by a report written and published by *Ingram's*, a local business magazine, in December 2004. The month prior, *Ingram's* had hosted a gathering of about 30 prominent city leaders at the headquarters of the Crossroads Arts District in Kansas City to discuss economic development, and the first task was to define downtown. The Economic Development Report generated by *Ingram's* out of the event stated that "the question of definition is more than an academic exercise" (Cashill 2004, 2) as the answer would determine the allocation of resources. Former Mayor Kay Barnes pushed for a definition of downtown that she referred to as River-Crown-Plaza because it included the River Market, Crown Center, and the Country Club Plaza, all of which are sites of consumerism (see fig. 1-3). (Brommelsiek, Clark, and Jackson 2010).

Figure 1. River Market located north of the loop in downtown Kansas City.

Figure 2. Crown Center located south of the loop in downtown Kansas City.

Figure 3. Country Club Plaza located at 47th Street in Midtown Kansas City.

One participant in the *Ingram's* event suggested that "if you think of greater downtown as a shopping center, we have two anchors: the Plaza and Downtown/River market. We just have to fill it in" (Cashill 2004, 2). Several individuals offered an alternative definition of downtown, which limited the southern boundary to 31st Street, as opposed to the Country Club Plaza, which is located at 47th Street. These individuals also made it a point to designate Prospect as the eastern boundary to ensure that the historic 18th and Vine Jazz District would be included. However, the group was urged to agree on one definition of downtown in order to "reinforce that consensus through repetition" (Cashill 2004, 2). In the end, the former mayor's definition was adopted as she insisted that "we need to be expansive in who we are and what we can become" (Cashill 2004, 2) as a city. Because River-Crown-Plaza is a wordy name for a district, *Ingram's* began calling it "The Corridor" (Cashill 2004, 3). Although the Corridor may seem to be the more expansive definition because it stretches farther south, the primary focus is on one street, Main Street. (Brommelsiek, Clark, and Jackson 2010).

Although the former mayor defined downtown as the Corridor, the Downtown Council, a nonprofit membership organization representing downtown businesses, property owners, and organizations, defines downtown from the Missouri River to 31st Street and from State Line Road to Paseo Boulevard, which they also refer to as greater downtown. Both of these definitions were given during interviews as some referenced River-Crown-Plaza/The Corridor or the Downtown Council's definition of greater downtown. In an interview a development consultant said that the Downtown Council has "tried to really instill upon people that that's the definition of downtown. You know it's argued widely" (Potter 2010). However, a real estate agent believed that downtown has been "pretty well defined for quite some time" (Boveri 2010).

The Downtown Council acknowledged competing definitions of downtown when a representative stated, "A lot of people think it is the loop, the Central Business District" (Hurd 2010) but went on to reiterate that they actually define downtown differently. In addition to the Downtown Council, there are several other private nonprofit organizations that have a stake in urban development, such as MainCor and the Jazz District Redevelopment Corporation. Although these organizations focus on different areas of Kansas City or aspects of urban development, there is some overlap. For example, MainCor is a Community Development Corporation that focuses on development along Main Street, specifically through partnering with the city to enforce overlay zoning and conduct plan reviews in addition to streetscaping (see fig. 4). Main Street begins at 1st Street and continues through Midtown until the Country Club Plaza, approximately 47th Street, where the street name changes to Brookside Boulevard, therefore it cuts through the defined boundaries of both the Downtown Council and MainCor. During an interview, the director of MainCor discussed how her desire to expand the organization's coverage area is seen as a "territorial takeover" (Burnette 2010) by others, whether or not those are her intentions. Another example of this overlap is the more recent involvement of the Downtown Council in the historic 18th and Vine Jazz District, which is overseen by the Jazz District Redevelopment Corporation. The 18th and Vine Jazz District is located just to the east of Paseo Boulevard, which is the eastern boundary of downtown according to the Downtown Council. Although the jazz district is not technically located within the Downtown Council's definition, their representative stated, "we do include 18th and Vine in our view of downtown" (Hurd 2010).

Figure 4. Facing north on Main Street at Westport Road in Midtown Kansas City.

For some planners interviewed, the act of locating downtown is believed to be just a conceptual tool to assist in the planning process. "To me it's just a geographic representation. To me it means nothing. It's just a level of thinking," stated one urban planner, who continued by saying, "Who cares. The city is like a living organism, it's organic. It just does its own thing" (Interview with an urban planner, May 4, 2010). However, the organizations previously discussed are vying for influence as they lobby the city for funding and tax breaks for projects that will benefit their members, therefore the definition of downtown that is accepted and agreed upon matters to them and their members. Although these abstract boundaries might be just a tool for some, these organizations put them into practice as their defined boundaries become sites of competition. (Brommelsiek, Clark, and Jackson 2010).

It is important to note, especially in regards to the disconnect between conceptual and practical definitions of downtown, that the mindset of today's developers and planners is shaped through their own embodied experience of urban space. They encounter the same boundaries as everyone else within urban space, and as Johnson says, meaning "comes from the nature of our bodies and the patterns of interaction we have with our environment, and it is therefore shaped by our values, interests, and purposes as active agents" (2007, 103). The abstract, conceptual definitions of space produced are in part a product of vested interest and embodied experience of the built environment that produces a sense of containment.

These privileged definitions of greater downtown offered by the former mayor and the Downtown Council differ from the personal experiences of downtown described in interviews. The official definitions, which are conceptual and abstract, are imposed on urban space; however, everyday practice reveals an alternative way of defining space, or making space meaningful. In interviews, some acknowledged the Downtown Council's definition but added that they personally considered downtown to be limited to the loop, an area of the city just south of the River Market surrounded by a loop created by the intersections of four highways: I-70 to the north, 71 Highway to the east, I-670 to the south, and I-35 to the west (see fig. 5-6). An urban planner said that although she lived within the Downtown Council's defined downtown, she did not personally consider it to be downtown; for her downtown was limited to the loop.

Figure 5. The southwest corner of the loop in downtown Kansas City.

Figure 6. The loop on the north side of downtown Kansas City.

When downtown is referred to as the loop, respondents added observations that downtown is just buildings, that no one lives there; downtown is strictly a place of business. One of these individuals even stated that "growing up downtown almost didn't exist" (Webster 2010) due to the lack of housing, amenities, and people. An urban planner who has office space within the loop also commented on the appearance of a lack of people downtown by stating, "There's probably 50,000 people within a 10-block radius of us right now…Some of them are held up in offices…most of them don't use public transit, and most of them to leave their buildings…walk through an internal elevator core down into the basements of their buildings and then drive out" (Serda 2010). In addition, two respondents described the loop as an island, as if it were disconnected from the rest of Kansas City. (Brommelsiek, Clark, and Jackson 2010). The fact that personal definitions of downtown reference the loop suggests that downtown is made meaningful in everyday practice by driving on one of the four surrounding highways. Sennett, using nineteenth century London as an example, describes how the highway came to serve as a "means to escape the urban center, rather than dwell in it" (1994, 332). Although the center of the city remained economically active, it was "losing its meaning" as London became a "string of connected residential villages" (Sennett 1992, 136). The same loss of meaning can be seen in downtown Kansas City; although it continues to serve as the CBD, it is defined or made meaningful by the movement of drivers on the highways that surround it, connecting different regions of the metropolitan area to one another and the city.

CHAPTER 3

SPACE AND BOUNDARIES

Different kinds of urban space allow for different kinds of embodiment, engagement, and connection between people, and Sennett makes moral judgments about material boundaries in urban space based on the implications for social and political life. In *The Craftsman*, Sennett describes the difference between ecological boundaries and borders. According to Sennett, boundaries are exclusionary, such as the edge of a territory, and limit movement beyond themselves while borders are porous or fluid and enable interaction through some kind of exchange, "an active edge" (2008, 227). Regarding boundaries in the urban environment, Sennett states that the "most pervasive in the modern city is the inert boundary established by highway traffic, cutting off parts of the city from each other…the boundary fending off human interaction" (2008, 228). (Brommelsiek, Clark, and Jackson 2010). The highway boundary can be observed in Kansas City, both downtown and in the urban core. Although some have noticed the need for connectivity in the city, a majority of the plans implemented focus on north-south connections, rather than east-west connections.

The term connectivity can refer to a physical connection, such as a border facilitating exchange, but it can also serve as a metaphor for thought processes. Johnson discusses "*thought flows*" or the "*transitional flow of thought*" (2007, 95) in the production of ideas. Just as there are physical boundaries that do not facilitate engagement, there are also mental boundaries that hinder the flow of thought. Johnson describes this by saying, "we feel the halt to our thinking, we feel the tension as we entertain possible ways to *go on* thinking" (2007, 97). Maybe, then, material conditions that disallow engagement are embodied by agents through habitual movement fostering disengagement, passivity, retreatism, or a sense of containment at the level

of the body. This sense of containment felt at the level of the body in daily practice informs "higher" levels of thinking, such as conceptual definitions of space used to make decisions regarding urban development. This chapter will discuss connectivity in the city, as well as definitions of the urban core and existing highway boundaries on the east side of Kansas City. It will also explore how some groups have attempted to turn urban boundaries into borders while challenging this sense of containment.

Connectivity

Many developers and planners interviewed pointed out the need for linkage or connectivity between the three nodes along the Corridor, River-Crown-Plaza, and although several streets were mentioned as being capable of this task, Main Street was most often the only street discussed as it is was described in interviews as Kansas City's "main street." Whether through buses, streetcars, light rail, or a combination of all three, most participants stressed the importance of improving transportation including walkability by designing bike/ped friendly streetscaping.

In an attempt to do so, the MAX, the first Bus Rapid Transit line in Kansas City, was completed in the summer of 2005 and runs north and south along Main Street from the River Market to 75th Street. A second line, the Troost MAX, which mainly runs north and south along Troost Avenue from downtown to 95th Street, is scheduled to begin running in the fall of 2010. Although the MAX lines will decrease travel time for some riders, many interviewed believed that more should be done in terms of transportation, such as creating a light rail system. In 2006, voters finally passed a light rail initiative, after voting down seven prior proposals, only to find it overturned by the City Council due to issues with cost and feasibility. Two years later voters rejected a sales tax increase to fund a light rail line, and it was believed that "a lack of specifics

in the route, along with the economy, doomed the plan" (Cooper and Smith 2008). The route of a starter-line has continued to be at the center of debate among planners and city leaders, and some concerns regarding the "lack of service to the inner city" (Cooper and Smith 2008) on the east side played a factor in the 2008 vote. It was reported that Mayor Mark Funkhouser responded by stating, "it was now time to devote his attention to a regional network" and that "as far as he was concerned, the starter-line plan was dead," however he reiterated that a regional plan "would have to include a downtown spine" (Cooper and Smith 2008) indicating continued support of the Corridor. As stated above, the north-south connection takes precedence over the east-west connection.

Defining Urban Core

The east-west connection was problematic in the light rail initiatives due to a perceived lack of service to the east side. In interviews as well, participants were indecisive regarding the eastern boundary of the urban core as they were unsure of how much of the east side should be included. Although downtown was included within their definitions of the urban core, downtown was equated with office buildings while housing was associated with the urban core. For most participants, the urban core was characterized by the neighborhoods that are in closest proximity to downtown. Some perceived the term urban core to have a negative connotation, indicating urban areas that were poverty-stricken or blighted. A policy researcher said, "when people hear 'urban' you know it's a code word for minority" (Interview with a policy researcher, April 8, 2010). A woman who works on the east side stated that the "urban core consists primarily of African Americans" (Webster 2010). A social worker defined the urban core by the people who live "in the city, and for this city for the most part, it's the poor" (Kizzee 2010). When a local businessman involved in development was asked to define the urban core, his

immediate response was, "Urban core don't mean black if that's what you're saying" (Interview with a local businessman, June 3, 2010) indicating frustration that the urban core is often associated with African Americans. However, some enthusiastically used the term urban core to describe a diverse community. Similarly, a councilwoman felt that the urban core sometimes "has a negative connotation" but believes it has "evolved over time" (Marcason 2010) to mean something more positive like the center of economic and residential life. Although she believed her district to be in the urban core, she stated that her constituents in mostly white, middle to upper class neighborhoods south of the Country Club Plaza might be surprised by her statement indicating that they might perceive the urban core to be someplace else, someplace other than where they live.

Whether defining downtown or the urban core, the Missouri River to the north and the state line to the west, a boundary running through the center of the Kansas City metropolitan area dividing Kansas and Missouri, are assumed and were not contested in interviews. It is the eastern boundary that is most controversial; no one seemed to be sure how much of the east side, an area with the highest concentration of African Americans, to include. Although the former mayor's definition of downtown, the Corridor, did not include an eastern boundary, other definitions of downtown and the urban core included major boulevards and highways as eastern boundaries, 71 Highway being one of them.

Dividing Line

The extension of 71 Highway was completed in 2001 after 50 years of planning, construction, and lawsuits. The 10-mile freeway was to connect south Kansas City and downtown and to assist in alleviating traffic congestion caused from drivers commuting between downtown and the suburbs (see fig. 7). Approximately 10,000 residents, mainly African

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Americans, would be dislocated from the extention. In addition to losing their homes, people feared the freeway would disrupt community life (see fig. 8). Stoplights and sidewalks were added to the plans at specific intersections after complaints from neighborhood leaders, and the end result was "a hybrid of a freeway and a parkway that would be compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods" (Campbell 2001).

Figure 7. Heading north on 71 Highway to downtown Kansas City.

In the end Emanuel Cleaver, who served as a councilman and mayor during construction of the freeway, said the freeway held "the promise of reconnecting a sprawling divided city" (Campbell 2001). Cleaver urged the City Council to name the freeway Bruce R. Watkins Drive after a political leader in the black community and former city councilman who had been opposed to the freeway, and they did so with permission from his family as he had died before the freeway was completed. However Watkins had previously stated, "Is that freeway going to

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become Kansas City's own Berlin Wall, and are they going to try to keep the Negroes east of it?" (Campbell 2001).

Figure 8. Looking east over 71 Highway in Kansas City.

ZIP code 64130, which is predominantly located east of 71 Highway, was the focus of a 3-part series in the *Kansas City Star* by Tony Rizzo called "Murder Factory" due to the high number of Missouri prisoners, specifically those found guilty of murder, that come from this area. The author observes, "Every day, thousands of suburban outsiders cut through 64130 on their way to downtown or the County Club Plaza. They see only the attractively engineered and landscaped arteries named for Bruce R. Watkins and Emanuel Cleaver that intersect on the ZIP code's western edge" (Rizzo 2009). From this we can see that driving creates detachment from urban space, and the people within it, and that highway boundaries create a sense of containment for those living in disconnected communities.

Borders or Boundaries

Some organizations have seen the need for uniting the city, and the Kansas City Area Development Council (KCADC), a private non-profit organization focusing on economic development, is one of them. They have sought to connect the Kansas City metropolitan area through a campaign launched in 2004 called ThinkOneKC. The purpose of the campaign was to unite both sides of the state line to brand and promote Kansas City as a whole region. The KCADC website makes statements such as "KC has given us a unified sense of place" and "50-plus communities, 18 counties, two states – OneKC." Commenting on this regional campaign, a respondent argued, "You ought to be talking about…one Kansas City, Missouri, which is not one…pretty soon you're going to have some walls like they've got for down in Mexico, put up a big wall between the haves and the have-nots or the blacks and the whites" (Interview with a local businessman, June 3, 2010). Although the ThinkOneKC campaign seeks to unite all regions of the metropolitan area the focus is on the state line rather than other more divisive boundaries such as Bruce R. Watkins Drive or Troost Avenue.

There other organizations, however, that do take on these racialized boundaries. In 1987, Reconciliation Ministries began offering emergency assistance, case management, and counseling to the community near 31st and Troost (see fig. 9-10). Holy Family Catholic Worker House, providing meals, clothing, and shelter, and Operation Breakthrough, offering educational, health, and social services, are also located within one block of 31st and Troost. Eventually, Saint Mary of Egypt Orthodox Church was created out of Reconciliation Ministries, and most recently, a grassroots organization called Troost Folks.

Figure 9. The corner of 31st and Troost Avenue in Kansas City.

Figure 10. Troost Avenue near 31st Street in Kansas City.

In response to discussions specifically about Troost Avenue as a racial dividing line, a group of individuals decided to throw a block party on Troost Avenue in 2006 with the theme "Neighbors Celebrating Neighbors" to draw people from both the east and west of the avenue. The lead organizer, Father Paisius "David" Altschul, who has researched Troost Avenue for 25 years, said, "the history of segregation is very slow to die. The reality of stigma on Troost is very much apart of it, and basically that's why we're writing a new story" (2010). The annual Troost Festival has become one method of promoting, or rewriting, Troost Avenue as a gathering place, or border, rather than a dividing line, or boundary. In addition to the festival, the group facilitates weekly meetings at 31st Street and Troost Avenue that are open to the public. "Sometimes it's a dreaming session. Sometimes it's hearing people, those concerns that are most important to them. It's definitely an opportunity for dialogue and addressing issues that normally are talked about rarely in open forums" (Altschul 2010). To address some of these issues, the group has also started working on community projects such as opening a non-profit restaurant and a neighborhood food co-op.

While the city and developers have been concerned with establishing a strong connection between downtown and the Country Club Plaza along the Main Street Corridor, whether through infill development or public transportation, less attention and effort has been put into connecting the east and west side of the urban core. As redevelopment projects in the loop have been completed, some have argued that the city needs to turn its attention to neighborhoods in the urban core, specifically on the east side, an area that has suffered from decades of neglect, but not everyone agrees. A real estate agent commented on this issue stating that the city needs to finish what it started downtown before moving on to neighborhoods in the urban core. "Whether it's east of Troost, you name it, we need a lot of help in other neighborhoods," but she argued

that downtown growth should continue because of the tax revenue that could be generated

downtown (Boveri 2010). A representative of the Downtown Council agreed saying, "a lot of

people, smart, well intentioned people, kind of think…we've fixed downtown, and it's time to

move on to other things…There's still work to be done" (Hurd 2010). Others believe that the

city should expand their reach into these neighborhoods. Despite MainCor's focus on the Main

Street Corridor, the executive director stated, "If we could embrace Troost and embrace

Broadway and be more of a Midtown I think we'd be better, but that's a very large battle"

(Burnette 2010). It appears that the battle to include the east side in these efforts might reveal

the sense of containment underlying our experience of urban space.

CHAPTER 4

SPACE AND BODIES

Sennett states that drivers "gradually became detached from the space in which they moved, and from the people the space contained" (1996, 322). He argues that "as space became devalued through motion, individuals gradually lost a sense of sharing a fate with others," therefore, "a kind of civic solitude" (1996, 323) is fostered. In comparison to single function spaces, "open-minded" (Connerton 2010, 113) spaces like plazas or squares provide a place for individuals to engage with one another. Connerton emphasizes the importance of street intersections as "open-minded" spaces, which would also be an example of Sennett's concept of border, as they allow for the creation of a "web of public trust" (Connerton 2010, 25) through regular, face-to-face interaction between individuals. Those who live the city, who embody urban space, build up sensory memories creating place. Sennett argues in *Flesh and Stone* that there is a moral value of urban space "in which people come alive" (1996, 354) as opposed to space that provides an escape from urban life. By coming into contact with difference, whether in the built environment or other human bodies, we come up against the limitations of our lived experience and are required to actively engage, reorient, negotiate, or improvise. Unlike "meaningless movement epitomized…by the automobile" which causes the body to become passive and indifferent, displacement, Sennett believes, "ought to jolt people into caring about one another, and where they are" (1996, 353).

Public spaces provide open areas, which are not mediated by the automobile, and should facilitate engagement and this moral jolting Sennett describes. However, if a city is defined by the act of driving and highway boundaries create a sense of containment, are there social and

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political implications? I believe that the controversy over a dress code in the newly developed

Power & Light District will offer some insight into this question.

Power & Light District

In late 2007 the first of many restaurants, retail shops, and bars opened in the Power &

Light District, an entertainment district located downtown within the loop, which was built by

the Cordish Company with public subsidies and development incentives as part of a downtown

revitalization initiative. In addition to private businesses, an "open-air live music venue,

surrounded by restaurants and nightlife establishments" called KC Live! is located within the

Power & Light District (Kansas City Power & Light District). KC Live! appears to be an open

public space resembling a plaza or a courtyard and covers the area of one square block.

(Brommelsiek, Clark, and Jackson 2010). There is a stage at the south end for live music, and

there is a variety of seating available, such as patio chairs and benches, arranged around a small

fountain. Around the perimeter is a two story strip of restaurants and bars, all of which have

semi-enclosed patios that face inward towards the courtyard (see fig. 11-12). In a newspaper

article the District was described as "a fine example of effective urban design…and an excellent

example of pedestrian-friendly architecture," however the author also noted, "In the Power &

Light District, you're not really occupying public space. You're occupying the space of the

developer, the Cordish Co." due to an aesthetic of "commercial homogenization" (McCalahan

2009). One reason the author gives for this is the fact that tenants in the District, most of which

are national chain restaurants, are "tightly controlled" (McCalahan 2009) meaning that the space

is not developed organically, rather it is contrived (see fig. 13-14). (Brommelsiek, Clark, and

Jackson 2010).

Figure 11. Pizza Bar patio in the KC Live! area of the Power & Light District in downtown Kansas City.

Figure 12. Public seating area at KC Live! in the Power & Light District in downtown Kansas City.

Figure 13. The Power & Light District in downtown Kansas City.

Figure 14. The Sprint Arena across from the Power & Light District in downtown Kansas City.

The public entrances to the KC Live! are blocked off at night to allow for a 21 and over age restriction. In addition a controversial dress code has been in place since the opening of the District, which limits the accessibility of this seemingly public space to certain kinds of bodies. At night in order to enter KC Live! individuals of age must dress in accordance to a specific dress code, however bars and restaurants throughout the District are allowed to enforce their own dress codes. This has caused confusion and frustration as individuals who may have dined at a restaurant in the District were later turned away from entering KC Live! because of differing standards of dress. The KC Live! dress code was also believed to be discriminatory towards African American males and other ethnic groups due to standards restricting the type of jewelry, length of shirts and shorts, and style of hair or headdress worn by patrons. (Brommelsiek, Clark, and Jackson 2010). Even those opposed to the dress code acknowledged the validity of the "District's desire to prevent the area from being overrun by the loiterers…and…the gangsta, parking-lot-pimping crowd" (Whitlock 2009). The underlying assumption behind the dress code is that behavior can be predicted based on clothing, which serves as a symbol or representation of the individual. (Brommelsiek, Clark, and Jackson 2010). This assumption was addressed at a forum on dress codes and civil rights called "Is It Your Clothes or Your Color?" hosted by the Kansas City Human Rights Council in April 27, 2010 at the Bruce R. Watkins Center in Kansas City. The question of dress as a predictor of behavior was discussed, and a local professor sitting on the panel noted that research has failed to show dress as an accurate predictor of behavior due to variation and inconsistent correlations between dress and behavior. However, Connerton comments on the use of clothing by a society to shape or constrain behavior when he says, "the apparel worn by Victorian women not only conveyed decodable messages; it also helped to *mould* female behavior" (2007, 33). Although clothing might not be of use in predicting

behavior, it is still believed that certain types of clothing permit or restrict certain kinds of behavior. Dress codes, then, are a form of containment that directly affects the human body.

Although the stated purpose of the KC Live! dress code is to screen out potential troublemakers, at the dress code forum it was stated that several high profile Kansas City locals were turned away from KC Live! based on their dress, but once they were recognized they were allowed to enter. Some individuals who have been turned away have filed lawsuits against the Cordish Company for discrimination, although informal surveys have shown that while many individuals believe they have experienced discrimination at KC Live! very few actually report it, according to a panelist at the forum.

In response to these issues an organization called Power & Lights Out (PLO) was formed to educate young African Americans about dress codes, how they can be used to discriminate, and how to report incidents of discrimination. The founder of PLO explained, "It doesn't make sense to an area that's free to the public that you would have to have a dress code. To have a dress code in that courtyard is unfair. It's like saying I can't go to the park unless I'm dressed a certain way. It's free. During the day people can wear whatever they want" (Webster 2010). At the dress code forum, many of the panel speakers stated that private businesses have the right to establish a dress code as long as it is enforced equally. The main concern with the KC Live! dress code was that the space was built with public subsidies, it appears to be a public space, and the dress code was believed to intentionally exclude certain kinds of bodies.

The City Council agreed and passed an ordinance on April 2, 2009 stating that redevelopment projects receiving public subsidies, development incentives, or tax abatements cannot create "rules governing, prohibiting or limiting access to a place or business, or portion thereof, defined herein as a public accommodation" (City of Kansas City, Missouri) based on

jewelry, ethnic or religious garments or headdresses, the length of shirts or shorts, hairstyle, and footwear. After this ordinance passed, the KC Live! dress code was shortened to a few restrictions such as no clothing with profanity or no sweat suits. Despite these changes, discrimination is still an issue as a class action lawsuit was filed again the Cordish Company in July 2010.

Concern of exclusion is not limited to the dress code. Webster, the founder of PLO, commented that the Power & Light District was not catered "for people in the city, more so for people outside the city, really to get people to move back in" to the downtown area (May 12, 2010). Altschul, lead organizer of Troost Folks, agreed stating that the district was "pretty non-urban friendly" due to the cost of parking, expensive restaurants, and pricey entertainment that is seen as "an invitation simply for people that have above middle-class wealth" (2010). In regards to the restaurants and entertainment that is available, Webster pointed out that the dress code is not the only sign that African Americans are not welcome (see fig. 15). Even with the changes made to the dress code she explained, "all [they] play is country music. There's nothing that kind of caters to me down there" meaning that the music played in the bars and the food served in the restaurants did not necessarily cater to her demographic, young, African American professionals (Webster 2010). She continued by saying, "Not only do you tell me I can't be there" through the dress code, "you also tell me I don't have anything for you" (Webster 2010).

In other cities with a variety of entertainment spots this might not be an issue, but she added, "there's really no other places for us to go" (Webster 2010). This was not always the case. There were a variety of black nightclubs, many of them located east of Troost Avenue,

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Figure 15. Cowboy and cowgirls in The KC Live! area in the Power & Light District in downtown Kansas City.

but after an increase in violence, many of these clubs were closed in the early 1990s (Hayes and Rice 1994). Westport, a popular nightlife spot in Midtown located around 43rd Street a few blocks west of Main Street, had its own issues with racial discrimination during this time before the Power & Light district opened. However, after the District opened and began to draw patrons away from Westport, a few clubs in Westport have tried to compete by relaxing their own dress codes or playing more hip-hop music.

Despite some accommodations, there is still tension surrounding this issue. On Saturday evening, April 3, 2010, a group of 300 to 500 young people "caused fights and displayed gang signs" (Smith and Vendel 2010) at the Country Club Plaza. One teenager was arrested for carrying a gun. The following Saturday evening, April 10, 2010, it was reported that "as many as 900 juveniles swarmed the Plaza streets and sidewalks" (Smith and Vendel 2010). Apparently

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the youth, mainly African Americans between the ages of 11 and 17, had been using text messaging and social media sites to spread the word about the gatherings at the Plaza. Property damage, fights, and stampedes were reported, including a robbery and a beating. The police used pepper spray to disperse the crowds, and some businesses on the Plaza closed early. It was believed that the group came to the Plaza to cause problems, however later reports stated that most of the youth came to meet up with friends while only a few caused major problems. Although there were concerns that the youth would gather again the following weekend, there was no sign of "the groups of unruly youths" just "shoppers, strollers and dogs on leashes" in addition to "hordes of dressy prom-goers" (Kanagaugh, Rizzo, and Smith 2010).

In the weeks following the unruly gatherings, a summit and a brainstorming session were held to discuss the events and possible solutions. In attendance were city and leaders, youth organizations, and students. Council members, parents, and students shared the same complaint, one that has been heard over the years, that the city lacks affordable activities for young people, in addition to unemployment among youth and a lack of leadership. The 18th and Vine Jazz District used to be the hub of entertainment and community life for African Americans, so why do those who are at times excluded from the Power & Light District, Westport, and the Country Club Plaza no longer frequent this district?

<div style="text-align:center">

18th and Vine Jazz District

</div>

The 18th and Vine Jazz District has severely suffered from white and black flight as businesses have followed customers farther and farther south, and the population has significantly dropped. Despite this downturn, the Mutual Musicians Foundation and the Gem Theater, both built in the early 1900s, have been historically preserved (see fig. 16-17).

Figure 16. The Mutual Musicians Foundation in the 18th and Vine Jazz District in Kansas City.
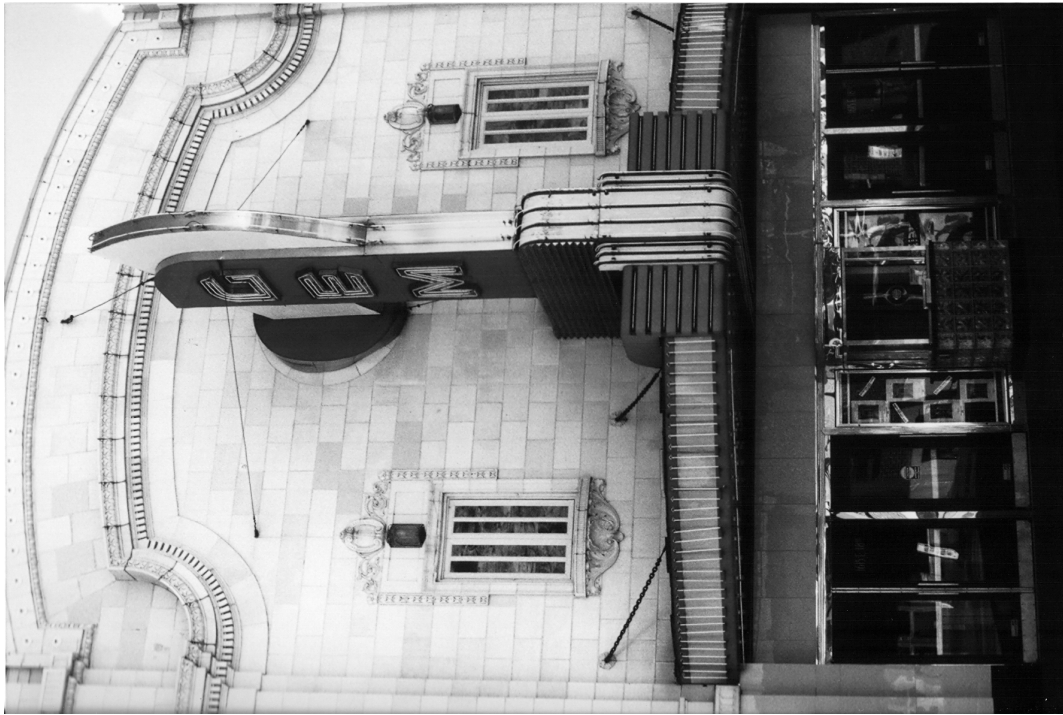

Figure 17. The Gem Theater in the 18th and Vine Jazz District in Kansas City.

The Jazz District is also home to the Negro Leagues Baseball museum and the Kansas City Jazz Museum. However, façades that were used as sets during the filming of a movie called *Kansas City* in the mid-1990s still remain on buildings in the Jazz District hiding the overgrown lots and crumbling structures behind them, which Ollie Gates, the president of a local bar-b-q chain and founder of the Twelfth Street Heritage Development Corporation, described as "bullshit" in an article published in the *Pitch* on June 19, 2008 (see fig. 18-19). Although the Jazz District is home to several museums and historic music venues, over the last two years two restaurants have closed and one relocated to the Power & Light District. A policy researcher said that one day after a meeting in the Jazz District he was thirsty, but "there was no place to even buy a coke. There was nothing open, no place to go…There was nothing to keep you down there" (Interview with a policy researcher, April 8, 2010).

Figure 18. Façade on Vine Street in the 18th and Vine Jazz District in Kansas City.

Figure 19. Façade on 18th Street in the 18th and Vine Jazz District in Kansas City.

While the Power & Light District was built relatively quickly with support from city

leaders, redevelopment projects in the Jazz District have not been fully completed and public

subsidies have not been successful at stimulating the local economy. Webster argued that the

city helped build the Power & Light District but left the Jazz District "almost blighted" (Webster

2010). She said that young people would like to have "comedy houses, bowling alleys, more

restaurants and lounges, maybe boutiques" in the Jazz District (Webster 2010). "Everything

that's going on in Power & Light," she said, "should be over here as well" (Webster 2010) in the

Jazz District. When asked why redevelopment projects seldom occur on the east side,

developers stated there was no market on the east side due to factors such as a lack of disposable

income. A development consultant said, "there's no market there for a Gap. There's no market

on the east side for a Target. I mean maybe there is, but if there is somebody would have built

one" (Potter April 2010). In addition to the economic challenges, several developers also highlighted how racial politics further complicate development on the east side.

Developers on both sides of Troost Avenue pointed out that traditional public subsidies, such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF), do not work in low-income areas. In 2008 Mayor Funkhouser hosted a New Tools symposium at the downtown library in Kansas City in hopes of generating new ideas to foster economic development on the east side. In an article titled "Barbecue baron Ollie Gates has a plan to save a slice of Kansas City" published in the *Pitch* on June 19, 2008, Gates describes a plan created by the Intra Urban Economic Council, of which he is a member, to "revitalize an area where other programs have failed." Their plan is to create a Black Heritage District in which state and local taxes would be eliminated in order to encourage economic development. The Black Heritage District, which includes the 18th and Vine Jazz District, would be located between Troost Avenue and Prospect Avenue from 9th Street to 29th Street. These "twenty blocks of black" were the center of black economic and social life in the Jim Crow era. In fact Vine Street only runs from 9th Street to 29th Street where its name changes to Wayne because whites living south of 29th Street did not want to be associated with the black community, according to the article (Martin 2008). Although the mayor has pledged support for this plan, it has yet to materialize beyond an idea.

There has also been an effort to connect recent development in the Power & Light District and the Crossroads Arts District, located just south of the loop, with the Jazz District. Chester Thompson, president of the Black Economic Union of Greater Kansas City, stated in a newspaper article that he "sees the Jazz District as an extension of the downtown and Crossroads districts" arguing "it's not that far away, and we have the same kind of entertainment and food"

(Smith 2010). However, little has been done to create a physical connection of any kind (see fig. 20).

Figure 20. A glimpse of downtown from the 18th and Vine Jazz District in Kansas City.

A mural commemorating local African American history was painted on the back of brick buildings in the Power & Light District. The buildings that display the mural featuring black baseball players and jazz musicians face towards parking lots off of Truman Road, which is a divided street allowing Highway 670 to pass through underneath. While drivers may not actually visit the Jazz District, they catch a glimpse of its history as they pass by downtown (see fig. 21-22). By memorializing black bodies, one can forget that the same district limits the access of certain kinds of bodies to public space based on dress.

Figure 21. The mural in the Power & Light District in downtown Kansas City.

Figure 22. The mural in the Power & Light District in downtown Kansas City.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Although the economic decline of the Jazz District and the urban core can be attributed to many factors, several participants stated that a lack of familiarity with the area perpetuates blight. A local businessman observed, "it takes a lot more support from the outside areas to help support" the east side, and because of that, "when people say they're apprehensive about coming to an area in their town, we've got problems" (Interview with local businessman, June 3, 2010). He went on to say, "It's going to take other folk to come and accept our area. Nobody accepts our area" (Interview with local businessman, June 3, 2010). He agreed that a tax-free district might attract businesses and customers that would not usually come to the area, and "then they'll find out when they get there…[it] is not so bad" (Interview with local businessman, June 3, 2010). An urban planner also suggested that people from the suburbs who are unfamiliar with the area might opt for spaces with which they are more familiar and comfortable. In response to his own question of why mothers from the suburbs do not bring their children to the museums in the Jazz District he said, "You drive under that bridge at 18th Street, [and it] looks like shit. If you don't know where you're going, you're like maybe we'll go to Union Station, I know where Union Station is, or maybe I'll go to the zoo because I know the zoo" (Interview with an urban planner, April 7, 2010).

People from the suburbs are not the only ones uncomfortable with unfamiliar urban space. A social worker on the east side, who helps the unemployed overcome barriers to employment such as transportation, observed, "There's this fear of places they've never been. It's just kind of amazing to me that everybody stays in their pocket. No one moves outside of their neighborhood…To me it all stems [from] the racial tension" (Kizzee 2010). He stated that

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"The problem is with the bus cuts they've had in transportation and the lack of transportation to the suburbs," which limits access not only to jobs but also to unfamiliar space and different bodies (Kizzee 2010). He also stressed the importance of an east-west connection by stating, "that's what keeps everyone segregated. If you have cars, you go back your little abode, you travel where you want and the places that seem comfortable to you, people of likeness to you…you can't look beyond certain streets or colors…if you're not every coming in contact with one another how are you going to know what you have in common and what you don't have in common?" (Kizzee 2010).

Without access to transportation, those living on the east side have a difficult time getting to areas outside their community. In addition, there is little in terms of housing, amenities, or entertainment to draw people from the suburbs to the east side, and many experience the space by driving through it on their daily commute. Where diverse bodies do meet, such as the Power & Light District, dress codes limit access to public space. Whether through increased public transportation or an elimination of the dress code, for those who work on the east side, it was more preferable to see economic development providing employment and entertainment within the east side rather than increasing mobility and accessibility outside of the east side. It appears that just as driving produces social detachment, the sense of containment created by spatial boundaries such as highways and boulevards, in addition to bodily boundaries like dress codes, are embodied by residents of the east side as well. Although spatial and bodily boundaries were acknowledged by participants during interviews, these boundaries were rarely actively engaged. This, in part, is due not only due to a lack of physical connection, but also an inability to conceptually engage these boundaries.

In Kansas City, as individual bodies encounter boundaries in daily practice while driving on one of the many highways or boulevards in the city, face-to-face social interaction and engagement of the built environment are restricted. When driving is the primary form of urban experience, urban space is engaged and made meaningful through the car, which fosters protectionism and passivity. In addition, individuals in neighborhoods east of Troost Avenue have been and continue to be spatially contained by the same highways and boulevards. These boundaries create a sense of containment, which is reproduced at the level of the body through dress codes in public spaces where diverse bodies do come in contact with one another. Whether through driving or dress codes, the individual is made to be aware of the body, but it is when the body fades into the background that we are able to open up to and engage others. Boundary conditions do not facilitate this kind of openness, and I believe the implications of this are evident in the responses and insights offered by respondents in this project.

This project is by no means conclusive, and further research should be conducted to elaborate on these findings. In this project, the agents of interest were individuals with a vested interest in urban space, which leaves out the perspective of the "ordinary person." The individuals who participated is also of concern as a majority of organizations and corporations located on the east side did not respond to participate in this study. Because of this, many of the economic or development perspectives came from individuals located within the loop and Midtown. As mentioned previously, my initial interest was more focused on the location of redevelopment projects in the city. Although some of the questions asked and discussed were incredibly useful, they were not specifically directed at topics such as driving. Interviews also tend to privilege thinking over doing, even if participants are asked to reflect on action, practice, or movement. In this project, I was initially interested in conceptual definitions of downtown,

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which is a more conscious process than the embodiment of meaning produced unconsciously through everyday practice. It is this embodied knowledge of urban space that informs privileged, conceptual definitions. Observation, in addition to interviews, would produce a richer understanding of how people actively make meaning in urban space. Future studies might explore how people who walk, bike, or skate make meaning in urban space differently than drivers. Also, because of my interest in the history of racial segregation in Kansas City, gender was not directly taken into consideration. It would be helpful to explore how gendered bodies experience movement in urban space, particularly through walking, as they face different risks. It would also be interesting to see how those who do not have access to a vehicle and rely on public transportation, which includes both walking and riding as a passenger, make meaning in urban space. Despite these shortcomings, I hope this project illuminates some of the issues surrounding movement in urban space and the implications for social engagement, particularly in Kansas City.

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VITA

On July 16, 1981, Andrea Leigh Clark was born in Kansas City, Missouri, and although she has lived most of her life in Lenexa, Kansas, a suburb in the metropolitan area, she calls Kansas City home. She received her A.A. in Liberal Arts from Mid-America Nazarene University in 2001 before living in Australia and Hawaii for a year. Coffee and photography are her fallback trades as she worked as a barista for many years and briefly attended Brooks Institute of Photography in California studying visual journalism. After settling back in Kansas City, she finished her undergraduate degree in Sociology at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 2008.

While working as a Graduate Teaching Assistant, she completed her M.A. in Sociology at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 2010. During this time she also co-wrote a journal article, which is currently seeking publication. In addition she is taking courses at the University of Kansas pursuing a Ph.D. in American Studies. Her academic interests are interdisciplinary but predominantly reside within urban anthropology. Down the road she hopes to continue to incorporate photography and film in her exploration of the city.