



The Nature of Nature: Do perceptions of nature vary among neighborhoods in Baltimore? If so, how?

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Introduction

Urban residents' disconnect from nature is well documented, with Americans spending on average nearly 90% of their time indoors (Klepeis et al. 2001) and children spending less than 40 minutes a week outside compared to four hours just a generation ago (X).

The idea that nature is good for the physical and mental health of city residents dates back to at least Frederick Law Olmsted's original vision, and researchers have spent the last forty years quantifying these benefits. On the individual level, researchers have demonstrated nature's ability to replenish directed attention (Kaplan 1995) and reduce stress levels (Ulrich et al. 1991). At the neighborhood level, researchers have found correlations between increased tree canopy and reduced aggression (Kuo and Sullivan 2001) and improved health perceptions (Kardan et al 2015).

These studies have largely compared nature to not-nature in clear-cut cases (e.g. park vs city street), without tackling the thorny question of what does this beneficial nature look like? After all, given that perceptions of nature change over time, between individuals, and among cultures, why even try?

In 2003, researchers from the Baltimore Ecosystem Study surveyed city residents and found that perceived environmental quality had significant correlation with life satisfaction at both the individual and neighborhood scale, while objective measures of environmental quality did not (Vemuri et al 2009).

This project aims to document how residents of two working class neighborhoods in Baltimore, one predominantly white and the other black, perceive existing nature typologies. If urban ecology policymakers, researchers, and visionaries are to create nature to benefit people's mental and physical health, they need a better framework for understanding how perceptions of nature vary across individuals, community groups, and institutions.

As a linguistic note, the interviewees were asked where they enjoyed spending time *outdoors* instead of asking them what kinds of *nature* they would enjoy. The purpose of this research is not to unpack the complexities of the word nature, but rather to gain a better understanding of what types of outdoor spaces people enjoy, and how they determine when and where they are going to use those spaces.

To address this question, this research proposal asks the following questions of both residents and leaders of institutions creating nature in Baltimore.

- Where do people enjoy spending time outdoors? How do they choose these places? What activities do they like to do there?
- Where and how do people exercise?
- Where and how do people get away or de-stress?
- How do people perceive and use 8 different nature typologies present in their neighborhood? Are there differences across neighborhoods, race, gender, or age?

Paper Overview

The goal of this paper is to provide a framework to help people like myself understand how working class urban residents both perceive, navigate, and leave their urban space around them. The paper is broken into five variations on a theme of this, each section asking a new version of this question in a way that builds on the understanding from other sections. The paper does not yet seek to offer implications for decision making and policy, that will come later.

0: Findings

After showing 28 different people pictures of 8 types of landscapes, what did they say? Read this section to find out.

1: Choreography of Civil Ties

This chapter explores the relationship between boundaries and cues, while placing a higher emphasis on the role of people and their stories as cues than much of the incivilities literature. The chapter then explores the choreography of control between various actors as a dance of expanding and constricting boundaries. It asks: What are the cues? Who's in control? What does care imply?

2: Myth and Memory

The role of myth, memory, curiosity, and identity is important to understand as these factors shape how individuals create the narrative they use to navigate the boundaries and cues presented in front of them. These boundaries and cues don't exist in a vacuum of time or space, but rather as a relationship with the individual's prior experiences and sense of what they imagine to be their identity.

3: Overcoming Fear

Given the wealth of research on external incivilities as a driver of fear, this chapter explores how individuals perceive these fears, looking at the following questions:

- How do individuals conceptualize fear?
- Why do individuals elect to overcome their fears, and if they are motivated to overcome, how do they do so?

4: The Value of Away

It appears that what's needed are vectors of new experiences, whether that's pathways to bring people into the neighborhood or pathways for those in the neighborhood to get out. This section explores this notion by asking the following questions:

- What is the role that expectations play in driving enjoyment of an experience?
- Where do people want to get away?
- How do people get away for the first time? How do they discover a place that is unfamiliar and/or unknown?

5. Reflection: Unsolicited Advice for Future Hixon Fellows

Methodology

The primary datasets utilized in this paper come from 1) 28 semi-structured in-depth interviews with residents aged 18+ of the two neighborhoods, 2) interviews with 10 institutional leaders or groups, 3) 26 short interviews with residents of the two neighborhoods, and 4) participatory observations and field notes.

Site Selection

The goal in neighborhood selection was to find one predominantly white and one predominantly black working class neighborhood to compare differences in perceptions along racial lines. To do this, I identified neighborhoods in Baltimore that were within the middle 50% range for the following socioeconomic variables: median income (between \$35,000 and \$68,000), median age (between 32 and 42), and percent homeownership (between 32% and 64%). Within this subset, I identified Cherry Hill, which is over 95% Black and Morrell Park, which is over 70% White. These neighborhoods are both located in southwest Baltimore and are under the sphere of influence of the Middle Branch.

Both neighborhoods are isolated. Morrell Park is bounded by the I-95 overpass and Gwynns Falls creek to the east, a steep hill to the south, Patapsco Rd to the west, and industrial land to the north. A major CSX rail line bisects the neighborhood from north to south, and Washington Boulevard also bisects the neighborhood from east to west. Cherry Hill is bounded by the light rail tracks and the Harbor. It has a, well, hill that for a long time served as inspiration for the infamous up da hill and down da hill gangs.

Sampling Methodology

The goal of this study was not to attempt to represent the entire neighborhood's beliefs, but rather to identify key themes that drove individual's decision making processes as they thought about uses of space. Additionally, this study sought to understand the perceptions of residents of a neighborhood, not park users, who are well studied. To this end, I primarily used convenience sampling to identify residents of each neighborhood. Once an individual was interviewed, they would often suggest others to be interviewed – this de facto snowball sampling allowed me to speak with individuals who weren't comfortable on the streets and would have been missed through a strict convenience sample. Finally, I also asked key influencers within each community to identify and recruit residents to be interviewed. Each interviewee was paid \$30 for their time via gift card.

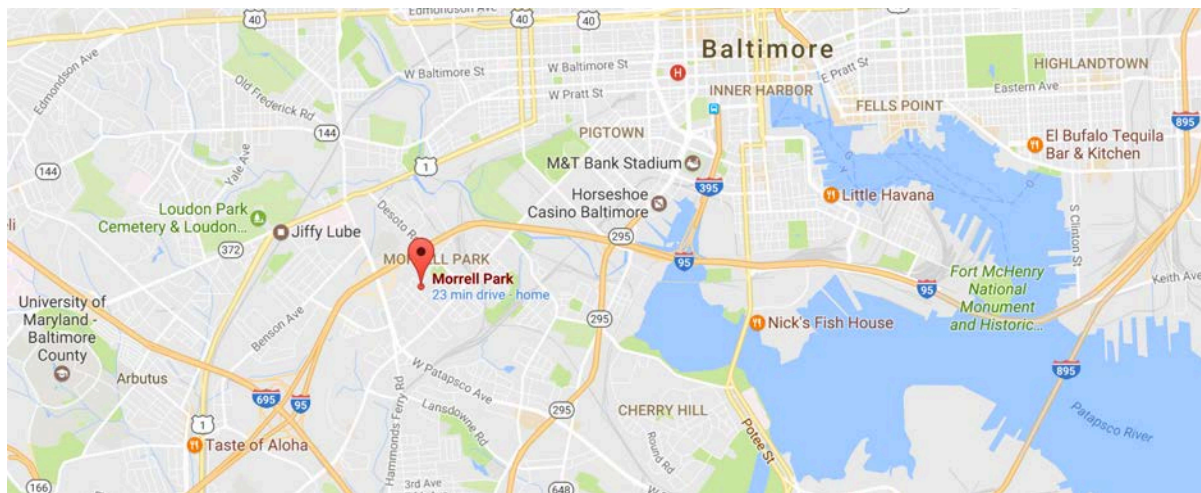
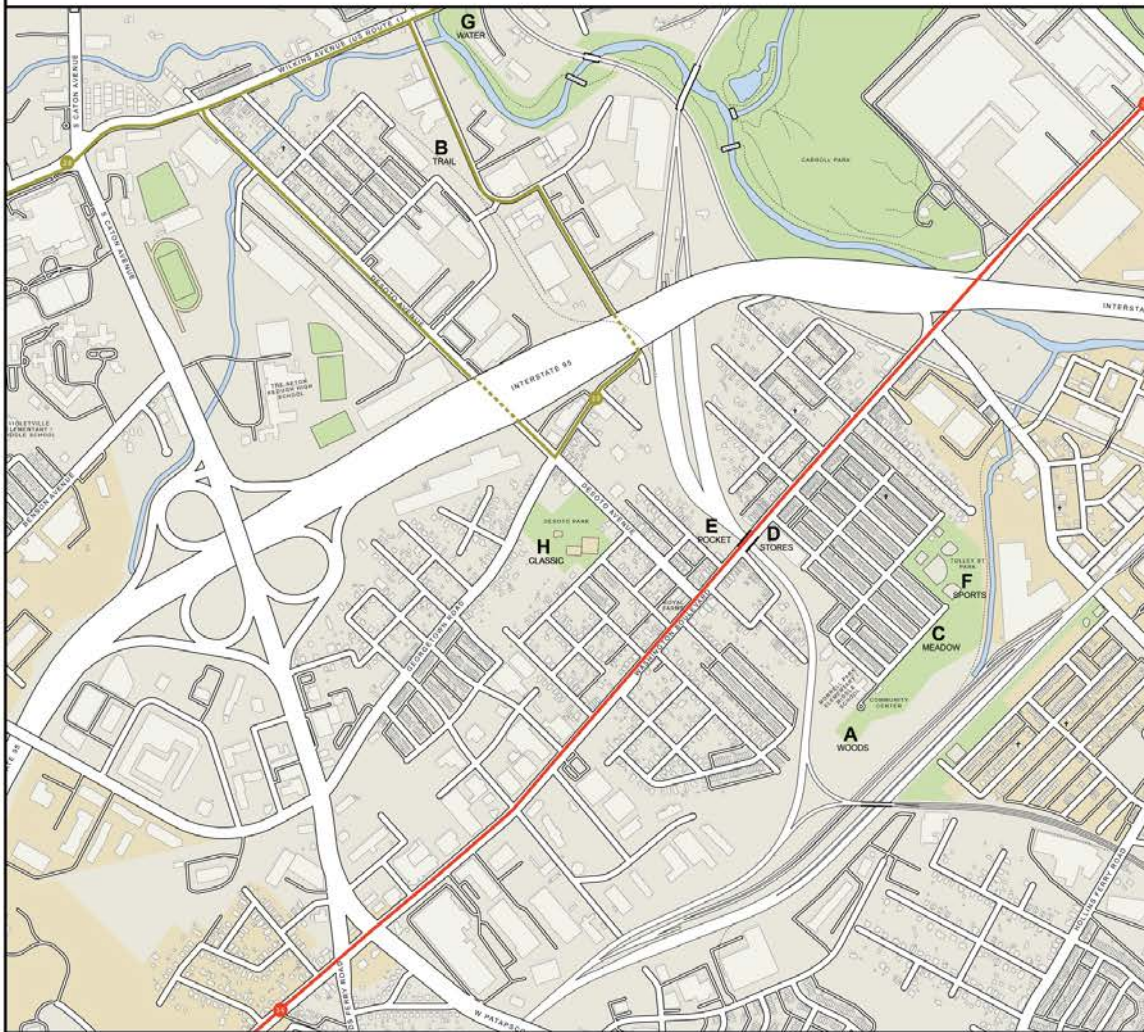
Interview structure

The resident interviews were semi-structured, and either held at the home of the resident or at a community building. Each interviewee was asked to tell the story of their experience in the neighborhood, with the questions laid out in the introduction layered in during the course of conversation. The interviews lasted from 20 minute to 150 minutes, with the average around 45 minutes.

Throughout this paper, all names have been changed.

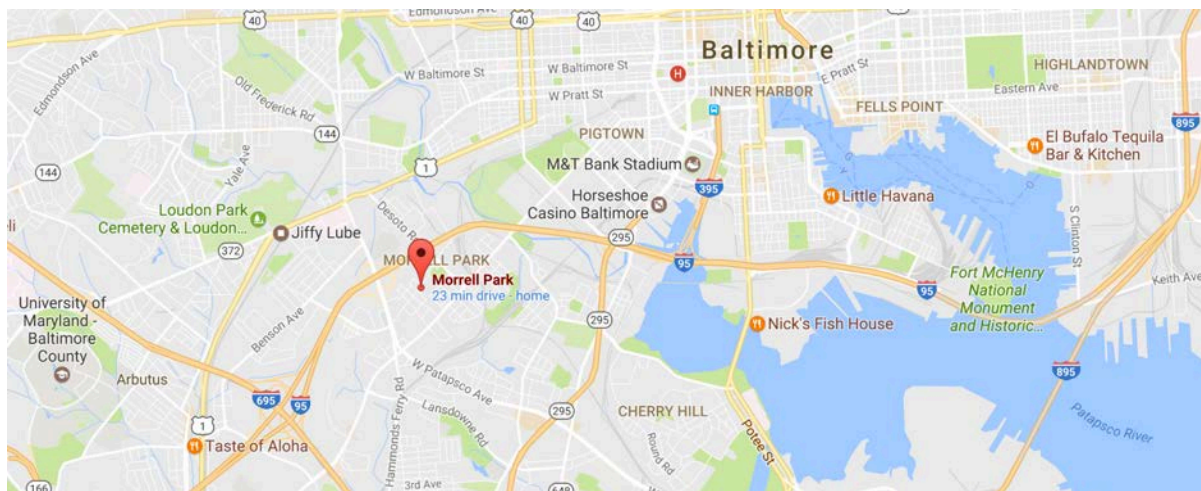
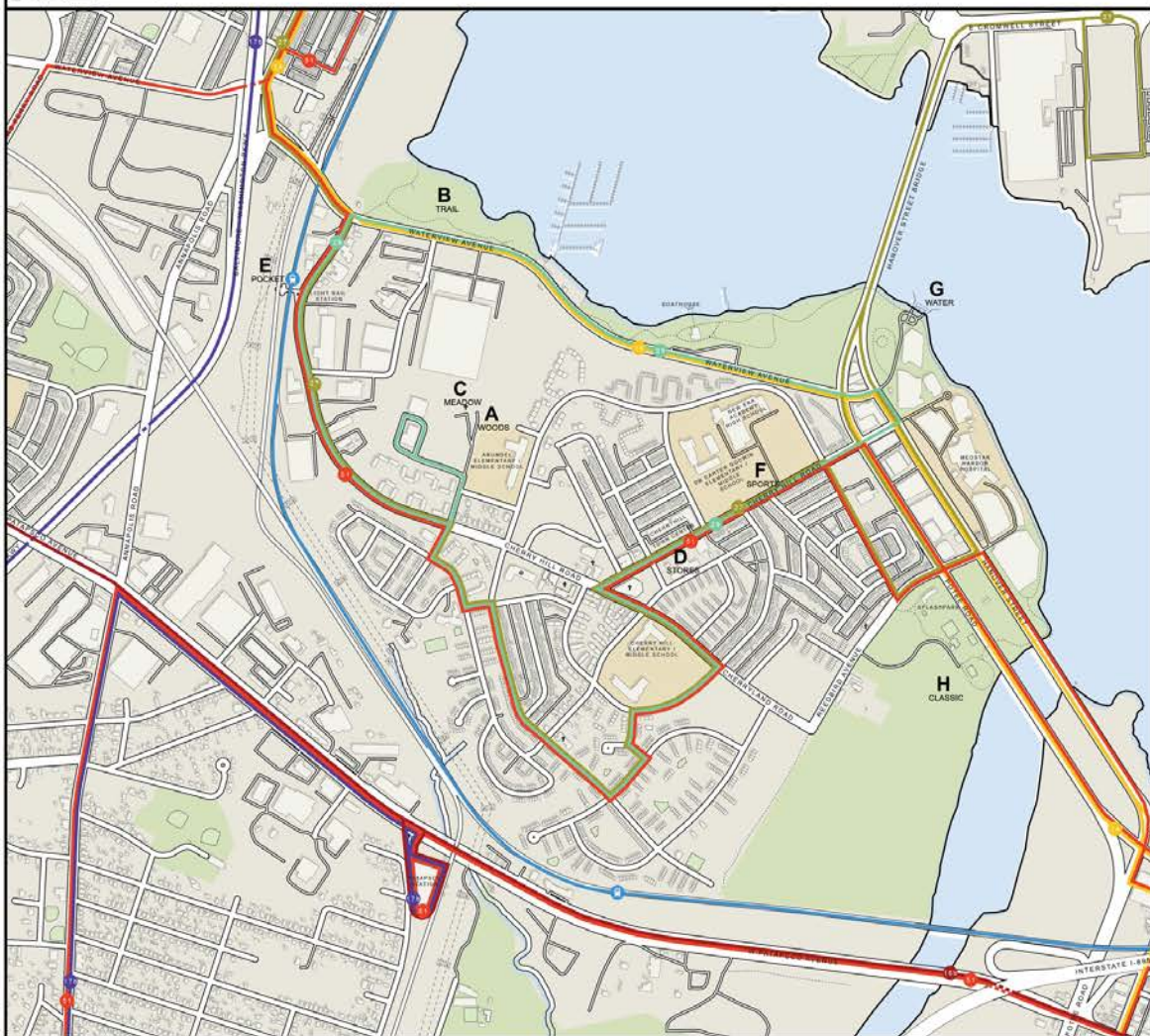
Map of Morrell Park

This is the map that interviewees were shown, without the letters that label each of the picture typologies. These letters are shown for your reference. They sync with the header of each typology in the Findings section. The colored lines represent bus and light rail.



Map of Cherry Hill

This is the map that interviewees were shown, without the letters that label each of the picture typologies. These letters are shown for your reference. They sync with the header of each typology in the Findings section. The colored lines represent bus and light rail.



"You want to give this place a resume, and you can't"

Section 0: Findings

Section 0: Findings

This section provides direct answers to the questions that were asked.

Where do people enjoy spending time outdoors? How do they choose these places? What activities do they like to do there?

In order for somebody to spend time in a place, that experience needs to meet two criteria: 1) have a purpose or destination and 2) fulfill an expectation of safety and comfort. Additionally, as a minimum threshold, they needed to have the personal resources and access to the space to get there.

While this may seem common sense, it's worth noting what the experience does not need to require – a beautiful aesthetic. The considerable literature and focus on identifying various landscape typologies that offer a more restorative experience would suggest otherwise. In the course of the interview, I would show the interviewee pictures of eight different landscape typologies. These pictures were taken of places within their neighborhood. Routinely, they would look at the image, offer one reaction (“oh, that’s nice”) and then realize where the picture was taken, and reassess their opinion of the image based on their understanding of the image’s context.

The aesthetic is not the driver of use. Sure, there are instances in which aesthetic is the driver, when somebody is looking for a gorgeous view or a meditative landscape. But that aesthetic does not exist independent of its context, and individual’s first assess the context before making a decision of use. This also can be seen in the most populated areas of either neighborhood – the commercial strips, which were universally decried as the ugliest image.

1. Spaces should provide a purpose or destination

“You want to give this place a resume, and you can’t” – Jo¹

Without an excuse to be somewhere, people are not going to go there. Three themes emerged as common excuses for people to be somewhere: 1) gain utility from the activity, 2) there was an activity to do, and 3) sought a sense of awe. For each of these activities, there is an expectation prior to engaging, and then the individual makes a decision on if that expectation is met. For example, if you go to the park to see friends, but nobody’s there, you may have a feeling of isolation that is unpleasant. But if you went with the intention of not seeing anybody, then this feeling of isolation would be welcomed.

¹ Jo lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-60, black, female (B11).

	Examples	Representative Quote
Gain utility	Catch fish for dinner Improve health through exercise	
Do an Activity	Crab as excuse to socialize Sit in car in parking lot with windows down, music on Walk at the mall with friends Camp by the water with your girlfriend, tent, hot dogs, hamburgers, and beer	
Sense of Awe	Practice mindfulness by the water because it's a view you can't get from your house	'I want to see something I ain't seen before'

For the example of sense of awe, Wallace² is in search of views he can't get from his house. He is an elderly veteran who walks with the help of a walker and the Veterans Administration Hospital taught him mindfulness to help him cope with his anxiety. To do this, he enjoys going to the Middle Branch Park, where he can sit on a bench with his fishing pole and look out at the water. When he looks, he sees water, trees, cranes, rickety bridges, buildings, and sometimes he will picture himself on a passing boat with the cool air blowing across his face surrounded by people laughing. This picture imagery, the technique of visualizing yourself elsewhere, allows him to blank out his problems and meditate, and he is able to fulfill this because these are views he can't see from his house.

2. Spaces should fulfill an expectation of safety and comfort
"They ugly. You won't see him there, you won't see me there" – Francis³

Before deciding if they have an excuse to go to a particular place, residents will first assess if this is a place they belong. To do this, they read the landscape, interpreting fellow people and physical objects as cues of belonging. Through this reading, they build a mental map of where they belong. As a core tenant, people want to spend time in places where there are people they want to be associated with, doing activities similar to the activities they will be doing. In the absence of people, individuals can rely on symbolic cues to understand what type of people use that landscape or if there are any inherent restrictions on their use of space, such as an allergy.

For examples of cues, see the section below detailing responses for each of the 8 typologies, as well as Section X on cues.

3. As a minimum threshold, people need to have the personal resources, health, time, and money to access the space, including parking.

² Wallace lives in Baltimore, but comes to Middle Branch to find peace. He is aged 50+, black, male (S2)

³ Francis lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 40-60, black, female (B14)

How do people perceive and use specific neighborhood sites representative of 8 different landscape typologies?

As a general rule, while the first half of the in-depth interviews was relatively open-ended, the second half consisted of them responding to a series of 8 pictures of different landscape typologies. Each of these images was taken of a place within or immediately adjacent to their neighborhood. It was interesting to experience people react to the images, in many cases they would respond first to the image as an aesthetic, and then as they looked closer, they realized they knew exactly where it was. This spatial placement of the image would often override their initial aesthetic impression, particularly with the picture of the woods. They were able to add in the context they knew of the place through their experiences and stories, which often contradicted the simple aesthetic.

Over the course of the next set of pages, each image pair is presented with responses from interviewees. The map on the next page places each of these images in context. In the tables of cues, blue indicates a female, black indicates male.

A. Woods



Morrell Park (Woods behind school)



Cherry Hill (Woods behind school)

Context

In both Cherry Hill and Morrell Park, the location of these woods are associated with drug users or the homeless. In Cherry Hill, these woods serve as the boundary between 164 (an elementary and middle school) and the top of the hill formerly known as Clay Mountain. The top of this hill used to house the multipurpose center, which as described later is the site of many of the older generation of interviewee's fondest memories. Today, the top of the hill is home to a Jehovah's Witness and a MedMark treatment center (methadone clinic). The patients at the methadone clinic have created a path for themselves through these woods as a shortcut to the light rail station which they use to get to their homes. Many of the patients come from outside of Cherry Hill to this clinic. This pattern of use has effectively rendered these woods, the light rail station, and the path between them as 'unusable' places by many of the Cherry Hill residents.

In Morrell Park, the woods are located at the edge of the neighborhood and ballfields, on the top of a steep hill and adjacent to the railroad tracks. The woods are also used as a shortcut, but between two subsections of the neighborhood that are divided by the railroad tracks. People also know the woods as where homeless live. Students at the school twenty yards from these woods have recess in a fenced off blacktop and are not allowed into these woods.

Perceptions from interviewees

Of the 17 people interviewed in Cherry Hill, 12 of them enjoyed the aesthetic of the image, however of these 12, half specifically said they wouldn't spend time in the woods because they knew it as a place near the methadone clinic. Only two specifically said they would use it, because it looked like a good camping spot, although neither of these two placed the woods as being next to the methadone clinic. 5 said they wouldn't go in the woods – two because woods are for animals not people, and three because they don't consider themselves woods people.

In Morrell Park, 2 of the 11 interviewed had spent time in these woods, with 5 of the 11 saying they would go into the woods.

List of cues

Implicit Cue Explicit Cue	Social Physical	Social Social	Physical Physical	Physical Social
Morrell Park	Reminder of Gwynns Falls Pic looks nicer than he thought it would Beautiful – looks familiar Remind her of Redwoods she read about in school Doesn't like all that 'stuff' – deer opossums, woods for animals, not her	Once went in woods with friends, but that's it Nice/clean – found out about homeless there	Don't like woods because bugs Worry about snakes, but would check out	Hasn't been into woods since 14-15, only to edge. Grandson goes now Been long time since she went in woods like that, projected fears onto it
Cherry Hill	Reminds of camping by uncles (+) Isolation, enclosure (-) Could camp here Woods for deer, not us Memory of multipurpose, cleaner than expected Despite knowing not good bc drug, reminds of aunt and crayfish by her aunts house	Spent hours in woods as kid, now knows homeless there Tranquility, peace, unfettered, no people, calm Peaceful, serene, she wouldn't go Associates with drug users, so don't go (but reminds of aunt which is positive)	Not jungle bc don't have to slash through Young trees = gaps, so not scared Scared of animals Too much dirt, not enough grass Not a woods person now but was as a kid Shade Beautiful Scared at night, but pic during day is beautiful. Would walk herself, but not with kids	

B. Urban trail



Morrell Park (Abandoned CSX tracks)



Cherry Hill (Gwynns Falls Trail)

Context

This Morrell Park ‘trail’ is an abandoned rail line, so most interviewees had not heard of it nor enjoyed the image. When asked if they would use it if cleaned up, most only offered that they would use it if it helped them get somewhere.

In Cherry Hill, this boardwalk is located along the Middle Branch trail, connecting the boathouse to the lightrail station. However, this section of the trail is far less used than the portion along the water, with many interviewed not even knowing this portion existed. The vegetation surrounding the trail is overgrown and blocks the view of the water. The boardwalk spills out onto the street by a marina, with one person remarking that they thought the trail ended there, viewing the marina as a barrier. While people do view the trail as used for walking, one of the most likely to walk, A2, doesn’t walk there because the surface isn’t good enough for him.

Usage

In Morrell Park, nobody interviewed had been on the trail, with 4 offering that they would use it as a shortcut. In Cherry Hill, 6 had walked on this trail. Of those who hadn’t been on the trail, 4 didn’t use it for a specific reason – calluses on feet, felt unsafe, and didn’t see themselves as a walker.

Cues

Implicit Explicit	Social Physical	Social Social	Physical Physical	Physical Social
Morrell Park	<p>Reminder of where used to work, BWI trails</p> <p>Scary at night, if needed shortcut, maybe</p> <p>Doesn't like, nothing to do – want benches, park, picnic, chairs</p> <p>Where she lived when homeless</p> <p>Too many bums, dumping, drugs, needles, sleep</p> <p>Grass too high</p>		<p>Would use if convenient</p> <p>Probably walk through</p>	<p>CSX wouldn't want used as trail, people would associate it with prostitutes (looks like a run-down place)</p> <p>Only if it went somewhere (doesn't go anywhere)</p>
Cherry Hill	<p>What's it supposed to be? A bike trail?</p> <p>What's on other side of woods, a jail?</p> <p>Walks on trails</p> <p>Not a walker like that, like sitting by hospital</p> <p>Doesn't feel safe – who's in the woods</p> <p>Associates with gwynns falls, hasn't walked trail</p> <p>Reminds her of Gwynns Oak trail</p>	Never been	<p>Unstable, bad for calluses on feet</p> <p>Greenery is wonderful, grass is wonderful</p> <p>Saw lynx, red fox (+)</p>	<p>Likes trail, can go places</p> <p>Walked to observation decks</p> <p>Walks here to gas station</p> <p>Isolation</p>

C. Meadow



Morrell Park (Unnamed field)



Cherry Hill (Unnamed field)

Context

In Morrell Park, this area is associated with the neighborhood it currently occupies, which is widely considered to be the source of many of the drug problems entering the neighborhood. While in Cherry Hill, many still associate this field with the neighborhood that was – the Clay Mountain and the Multipurpose Center. In Morrell Park, it is in a more visible location, while in Cherry Hill, it is hidden on back hill behind the Jehovah's witnesses, however, in Cherry Hill, this has one of the nicest views in Baltimore.

Usage

In Morrell Park, nobody interviewed enjoyed walking along this meadow, not because of the aesthetic of the meadow (which most found to look nice), but because of the neighborhood it finds itself situated. One person thought it looked clean enough to take her dog to poop there. In Cherry Hill, nobody had been there recently, with one person remembering playing there as a kid. The interviewees split into groups, with some indifferent or confused about what was supposed to be there, others not liking the tall grass, and others still able to imagine a use for the area – 'if only it had' a bench, spot for a picnic, place to take a girlfriend or kids, bbq, chairs, blanket, dog playground.

Cues

Implicit Explicit	Social Physical	Social Social	Physical Physical	Physical Social
Morrell Park	Looks clean – will take dog to poop there Trash is there, son nearly broke ankle there	Went by here for 4 th of July even though neighborhood is real dangerous Haven't seen white people go into rec center	Nice/clean, would walk here (just moved) Wants to go in woods in background (used to be homeless)	Doesn't know it. Not woods Unfamiliar, field with a lot of trees
Cherry Hill	If added benches, bbq, chairs, good place to picnic Inviting, put blanket down, sit and watch everything, let dog run around, kid run around. Trees have no rhyme or reason Grass needs to be cut – bugs, tall grass	Place to take girlfriend or kids Camp, picnic Would put playground there	Indifferent, open Not weeds, but still too tall for her – bugs, ticks, snakes, would be fine next to it	Nothing there – only trees and grass Clay mountain, woods by school she was told not to go into Doesn't know what to do in space – is tall grass weed or not?

D. Commercial Center



Morrell Park (Washington Boulevard)



Cherry Hill (Town Center or Shopping Center)

Context

In both neighborhoods, these commercial strips serve as the only source of commercial activity in the neighborhood, and offer a limited selection of shops. In Cherry Hill, the center has a Family Dollar, sub shop, barber, two fried food options, a library, and a liquor store. In Morrell Park, Washington Boulevard has a Chinese food spot, several bars, a hair cutter, a pizza spot, and a subway. For both images, respondents remarked that the image looked better than what they know it as, perhaps because there are no people in them. During the weekdays I spent in each neighborhood, these two areas were easily the most widely used spaces, and these uses were the source of much consternation and debate among those interviewed. On a given day, the Cherry Hill town center would have 20-30 people hanging out and socializing, often broken into small groups located in the shaded areas throughout the plaza. There was a group of regulars who would park their cars under the tree on the left of the image and play music and hold court while seated under the shade. In Morrell Park, the boulevard would have maybe 10-20 folks as well on a given weekday, but more dispersed along the strip and in smaller groups.

Usage

In Morrell Park, two females won't walk on Washington Boulevard at all, while a third male will only visit if necessary, such as waiting for the bus. The rest walk with their eyes wide open. In Cherry Hill, only two don't go at all, while 10 'hold their noses' and go despite the discomfort because of the stores there, while 5 enjoyed going and socializing with the people there. One gentleman in Cherry Hill asked me for a copy of this picture so he could put it on his wall, because he thought it looked so nice and reminded him of one of his favorite spots.

Cues

Implicit Explicit	Social Physical	Social Social	Physical Physical	Physical Social
Morrell Park	<p>Snips/clips, drugs, bad bars, shootings, but the picture actually looks nice</p> <p>Looks way nicer than he knows it as, where are all the druggies/trash? Doesn't feel safe at night, only on boulevard when catches bus</p> <p>Picture looks nicer than she knows it as, she's worked in many of the shops</p> <p>Doesn't like aesthetic but will still go to shops (Chinese, nails, hair, daughter's friends house)</p>	<p>Doesn't walk here anymore, will drive to royal farms, won't go out at night</p> <p>Terrified, only time she stops is at red light. Gun shootings, cops, selling stuff, prostitutes, been going on for 8 years.</p>	<p>Looks pretty nice (she just moved here)</p>	<p>Not bothered by anybody but doesn't walk here unless going to deli or royal farms</p> <p>Will walk to royal farms</p>
Cherry Hill	<p>Shops, gathering spot where people get nosy, in your business. Not what he does</p> <p>Picture is beautiful – this is where he hangs out</p> <p>Trees are for veterans</p>	<p>Doesn't go – drugs</p> <p>Nice place to shoot breeze, needs more stores</p> <p>Pinochle at library</p> <p>Chaos/confusion but still goes</p> <p>Perceives a bunch of do-nothings</p> <p>Knuckleheads selling druges</p>	<p>In and out, unbothered</p>	<p>Family dollar, hair place, sub shop.</p> <p>Looks undesirable, breeding ground.</p> <p>People don't go</p> <p>Lotto – doesn't mingle</p> <p>Goes but doesn't like it</p> <p>Need more stores</p> <p>Get stuff for mom at stores</p>

E. Pocket Park



Morrell Park (Memorial Park)



Cherry Hill (Light Rail Station)

Context

It's perhaps peculiar that the pocket park chosen for Cherry Hill is the light rail station. One of my first rapid interviews was with a woman who was sitting at the station, and unlike everybody else, stayed seated as trains came and went. She explained that she like coming to the station for its quiet. This is interesting because just about everybody else interviewed refused to come to the station unless it was a last resort, because the station is effectively 'controlled' by those that go to and from the methadone clinic. However, she was sitting on the side of the tracks opposite from the street, and once on the tracks, there is a sense of insulation from the people selling drugs on the street by the station entrance. The other common reference to this light rail station was that people considered it to be next to the jungle and filled with wildlife – it's on the edge of the neighborhood with overgrown grass and woods adjacent. People reported seeing black rat snakes, rabbits, and deer while waiting for the train.

In Morrell Park, this is pocket park in its classic definition, and is located on the main commercial strip, Washington Boulevard. It is further explored in a later section.

Usage

In Cherry Hill, none of the in-depth interviewees reported choosing to use the light rail, most when they saw a picture of the station immediately laughed. It was funny to them that after seeing so many pictures of 'natural' landscapes that I would include a picture of a place that to them is so clearly off-limits. Many reported going out of their way to take an alternative to the station. Over the course of the summer, the most police I ever saw at the station was to ticket people who failed to pay their fares, with minimal attention paid to those out front causing 'disorder.'

Cues

Implicit Explicit	Social Physical	Social Social	Physical Physical	Physical Social
Morrell Park	Thought was graveyard til aunt told him otherwise Wants to pull weeds Sitting on bench under shade sounds good Exclusive because only ppl who can afford 65/rock are listed, so not everybody in MP who died is there and people from outside MP can be there	Built by people in the neighborhood, then outsiders put treatment program across street Thought privately owned Doesn't like people on corners nearby Son used to work at neighboring fire station Used to cut grass there, drink coffee, play games. 2 homeless guys moved in, the woman who started it moved out Was daughters favorite place, now overrun by homeless		
Cherry Hill		Crackheads selling pills, needs security Don't feel safe - will drive instead of come here Seen people stabbed, robbed, doesn't carry cash bc worried about getting robbed Catch bus before taking light rail Unproductive mess	Saw black rat snake Wildlife/jungle	Gets you places

F. Sports Field



Morrell Park (Tolley Street)



Cherry Hill (Football Field by 180)

Context

When presented with a picture of Tolley Street Field in Morrell Park, respondents largely centered around the cues of the playground, with only the males likely to remember memories of playing little league. Little league was not a big enough driver to overcome the cues from the teens leaving their trash and drugs and burned symbols.

In Cherry Hill, this area didn't have a playground for teenagers to mark their territory. There were bleachers for them to use, but they didn't seem to be burned or littered with needles. While I didn't pursue this in great detail, there are a couple differences in neighborhood context. In Cherry Hill, there are many playgrounds scattered throughout the neighborhood and areas for teens to hide and find their own area. Morrell Park only has two playgrounds in the entire neighborhood, at each of the two parks. The only 'hidden' areas in Morrell Park are the woods, whereas Cherry Hill has a far greater diversity in housing stock to create areas of hiding.

Usage

In Morrell Park, nearly everybody did not spend time at Tolley Street today, although nearly everybody had been there and enjoyed time there at some point earlier in their life. The universal reason for not going there was that it was littered with needles and burned out slides. The only exception to this was when people go to Tolley Street for the Fourth of July fireworks.

In Cherry Hill, the opposite was the case. Just about everybody reported that they go here on Saturday mornings to watch the kids play football, even if they no longer had any kids playing. There were two exceptions to this – one father said he didn't like this field because he didn't want his son's Lebrons getting dog poop on them, and a woman who didn't like that the only activity this field was used for was football.

Cues

Implicit Explicit	Social Physical	Social Social	Physical Physical	Physical Social
Morrell Park	Needles left behind by heroin users Has swings, unlike Desoto Slide was burned Slide is not as good as the one at Desoto Teens writing on stuff, gum, piss, trash	Little league used to clean up the park Memory of playing baseball Goes for cookouts with grandkids on 4 th of July Teens smoking dope Memory of swing, scooter, playing baseball	I don't go there at night	Grandmother has to take grandson there because it's far Because of how trashed it is, she won't let her kids touch anything if they go
Cherry Hill	It was great when they added benches for people to sit on Doesn't want the dog poop to get on his son's Lebrons Haphazard tree planting Sons don't like getting dirty No scoreboard, lines, or anything else besides football	Watch football on Saturdays Memories of playing football on Saturdays Reminder of how he played football elsewhere, but still watches there on Saturdays Prefers Druid Hill because doesn't have any kids playing there anymore Meets her sister there, who lives nearby A place where kids mingle and meet	It's a hill she has to walk up The picture is beautiful, she doesn't normally see Cherry Hill in such a light	Memories of going to school at 180 Memories of going to school at 180 There's no parking, it's a waste of space and only good for dogs and football

G. Water



Morrell Park (Gwynns Falls)



Cherry Hill (Boat Launch at Middle Branch)

Context

The picture of Gwynns Falls is just outside of Morrell park, about a 10 minute walk but, importantly, on the other side of the I-95 overpass. So while nearly everybody found the picture aesthetically beautiful, many had never been there. In Cherry Hill, most viewed this place as a place to crab or fish – which is exactly what most people do there. Only a couple of people referenced finding peace or quiet at this boat launch. Most people did remark that they liked water, although one woman was afraid of drowning because she can't swim. Another woman would visit the Vietnam Memorial, about 50 yards up the way from the Boat Launch, but had never been to the dock and never plans on it.

Usage

In Morrell Park, only 2 of the 11 had ever been there. However, almost all found it aesthetically pleasing. This disconnect was because they viewed it as being located in a bad neighborhood, didn't know about it, or weren't bored enough to go. In Cherry Hill, only two people explicitly mentioned an emotional fulfillment of peace and quiet, while a third referenced how much she liked looking at the skyline. The rest of the responses were for its utilitarian value (crab/fish) or social value (people to talk with, take kids there, father's day). People didn't go because they were scared of the water, didn't have time, or thought it smelled bad.

Cues

Implicit Explicit	Social Physical	Social Social	Physical Physical	Physical Social
Morrell Park	Looks nice, reminds him of his brother in law's house (+) It's gorgeous – he's never had a reason to go here (-) Reminds her of creek where she caught minnows (+) Looks nice, would be good for a romantic moment with her husband, but has never heard of it (+) It looks calm, she would let her daughter play in the stream (+)	He grew up swimming in this creek and has had two friends drown here but still returns (+) She 'knows' it's in a bad neighborhood with needles and homeless (-)	He'd rather sit in the AC than get hot (-) He wouldn't walk here at night (-) It's water, a lake, she'd go here (+) Kid thought it looked really nice, because he didn't know his mother's social context	Never been bored enough to check it out
Cherry Hill	She likes to sit at the beaches by the grills (+) The water is dirty but they are cleaning it up (+) She could take her kids here to sit (+)	There are lots of different people there Likes to hear the stories from the fishermen	Goes crabbing, watched them rebuild the boathouse Doesn't go because she can't swim Goes to crab Doesn't go because scared of water It smells bad Goes to crab and fish	He's never been b/c no time for it Goes to walk by himself and think about peace, water, calm Went for father's day picnic Won't 'walk' the trail Would like to sit on a bench and look at skyline (+)

H. Classic Urban Park



Morrell Park (DeSoto Park)



Cherry Hill (Reedbird Park)

Context

DeSoto Park in Morrell Park used to be the site of active softball leagues and American Legion meetings next door. Today, it's largely devoid of users. I never saw more than 1 or 2 people at the park at a time, though the people I did see were often interesting – a woman picking pine needles for presumably some home use, a man playing his guitar while he sat in his car, and a woman having a hard conversation over the phone while seated in the shade. Reedbird Park in Cherry Hill was the site of a former high rise apartment complex and a city dump. Today, the city is using it to reach its tree canopy goals, so the only people that use it are those walking their dogs or playing basketball. It's located adjacent to the outdoor pool, which is heavily used by all in the neighborhood, but even though people can see Reedbird Park from the pool, they are not inclined to spend any time there.

Usage

In Morrell Park, most of the interviewees had been to DeSoto Park, but few enjoyed going there. In Cherry Hill, it was mostly males who visited the park – to either walk or play basketball. Many of the females remarked at how little there is to do.

Cues

Implicit Explicit	Social Physical	Social Social	Physical Physical	Physical Social
Morrell Park	<p>Treeline looks like carroll park, neat Kids burned up new playground, they planted new trees, no basketball nets anymore Beautiful in snow, doesn't like condoms Grass is brown and missing Looks like Carroll park Big swing is better than toley, messed up with writing</p>	<p>People wash cars here Used to coach softball, but now is bad place with shootings Nothing to do, nobody to look at, wants bench. Ballpark/American legion - no atmosphere Open, never see anybody, only came bc of American legion Once did egg hunt here</p>		
Cherry Hill	<p>Needs benches Granddaughter wants to go but won't take her bc of needles and ticks Nowhere to sit, looks closed Orchard- planted</p>	<p>Missing space Hasn't been to pool, not hot enough yet. Used to play basketball there. Could be a football field Grandson plays basketball there Basketball Empty - is it a jail? Basketball courts, picnics Fathers day cookouts Let the kids plant the trees</p>	<p>Going to become woods in like 20 years Creating a woods</p>	<p>Place to walk and get thoughts together Had picnic, went fishing</p>



"They ugly. You won't see him there, you won't see me there"

Section 1: The Choreography of Civil Ties

Section 1: The Choreography of Civil Ties

Introduction

Recent urban park discourse has centered around two principles: 1) order and 2) access. While urban design and policy has focused on using physical cues to establish order in a landscape, it can ignore the role of people as both a cue and an actor in the interpretation of these cues. 'Cues to care' was developed to transform messy ecological landscapes into the order of the urban fabric, while broken windows theory argues for cleaning up trash and well, broken windows, to establish a sense of order in the policing realm.

On the access front, an influential group, the Trust for Public Land, has developed a ParkScore which provides a measure of the amount of green space within walking distance of a city's residents⁴. As Trust for Public Land and others know, it's one thing to provide access, but another for residents to actually use the parks. Based on physical boundaries and the social cues in the landscape, urban residents, particularly those in isolated neighborhoods like Morrell Park or Cherry Hill, have a sophisticated mental map of where they belong and don't belong – they know who is in control of each section of their neighborhood. Over the course of my conversations, these mind maps emerged as the strongest predictor of if somebody will elect to spend time in a place. Even when an interviewee acknowledged the beauty of a landscape or that a shopping center was closer, if they felt they didn't belong in that space, they would not go there.

This chapter explores the relationship between boundaries and cues, while placing a higher level of emphasis on the role of people and their stories as cues than much of the incivilities literature. The chapter then explores the choreography of control between various actors as a dance of expanding and constricting boundaries. It asks: What are the cues? Who's in control? What does care imply?

Theoretical Framework

What are the cues in the landscape?

The contradiction of fear is that the fears of most individuals are not a result of direct victimization but rather derived from story or visual cue (DuBow et al. 1979). The term 'incivilities' was proposed in 1978 by Hunter to define these visual cues that communicate 'an image of disorder and specifically the loss of civil society (Hunter 1978).' The key to Hunter's observation was his qualification that these cues substitute for a lack of personal encounters, in that the cues are largely meant to represent the people who created them. Skogan (1992) differentiates incivilities into social and physical disorder. Social disorder is episodic, and something that one either sees happen, personally experiences, or notices direct evidence of it. Physical disorder refers to the chronic visual signs of negligence and decay. There's another layer to this distinction that is unaddressed in his book, the role of story as a cue, this is explored in the section on myth and memory.

The choreography of care

⁴ See <http://parkscore.tpl.org/>

“The tacit police-citizen alliance in the project is reinforced by the police view that the cops and the gangs are the two rival sources of power in the area, and that the gangs are not going to win.” – George Wilson and James Wilson, Broken Windows, 1982

The cues of disorder described by Skogan are not created by neutral actors, but rather by actors with a vested interest in asserting their control or influence over the landscape. Hunter (1985) provides a framework of social control to help think about this dance across three scales, the personal, parochial, and civil.

Personal ties are relationships negotiated among participants who personally know one another (e.g. friends). Spatially, these relationships are not necessarily constrained physically because these are links among friends who may be located throughout the city. Since Hunter first posited this framework in 1985, the role of the internet surely has reshaped the spatial relationships of these personal ties.

Parochial ties are relationships negotiated among neighbors, and as such, these relationships are constrained geographically by the neighborhood boundary. Examples of these ties include local stores, schools, churches, and voluntary associations of various kinds. The purpose of these ties is for groups to support one another, with voluntary labor as the key commodity driving ‘local community status, reputation, and power (Barber 1961).’

Civil ties are, Hunter argues, neutral relationships of citizens and the state. These relationships are negotiated at the spatial intersections of private and parochial order, such as the streets and sidewalks. These ties are predicated in the state’s claim to be the only ‘legitimate monopoly of coercion, force, and violence (Weber 1978).’ Because of this claim, the state cannot allow for the legitimate use of violence non-state relationships, such as the parochial and personal ties.

In their landmark *Broken Windows* paper, Kelling and Wilson argue for leveraging civil ties to establish social order, in the spirit of the state-based approach articulated by Shils (1957) and Geertz (1963). In their view, police have historically served a role as maintainers of order, and in fact, it was only in the mid 20th century that they began to primarily serve as agents of crime enforcement. In an interesting twist on the role of the cue, they argued evidence from the *Newark Foot Patrol Experiment* suggested that a police officer’s uniform gave that individual a sense of responsibility to do something when encountering an incivility.

The alternative, articulating social order through parochial ties, is largely left unexplored in their paper.

How do individuals navigate these cues to create their mental maps?

“To survive the neighborhoods and shield my body, I learned another language consisting of a basic complement of head nods and handshakes. I memorized a list of prohibited blocks. I learned the smell and feel of fighting weather... I recall learning these laws clearer than I recall learning my colors and shapes, because these laws were essential to the security of my body.”

- Ta-Nehisi Coates, on growing up in West Baltimore as described in *Between the World and Me*

Implicit in the theory of broken windows and cues to care is the sense of environmental determinism, that these cues largely determine one's perception of that environment, as opposed to that individual's own understandings. Frustrated by repeated attempts from policy makers to define 'rural,' Halfacree (1993) proposed social representation theory, which offered an alternative to attempts to define rural with socio-economic variables or a physical location. Social representation theory suggests that space has no value without spatial properties, that space is only as valuable as it can be used. Thinking about this in the context of urban planners, an aesthetic value of nature is only useful in valuing the space if the use of the space is the aesthetic itself.

When showing Dutch and Dutch immigrants pictures of the same working landscapes, researchers found that the immigrants had a lower preference for the native Dutch landscape than the Dutch themselves (Buijs et al. 2009). While both groups had similar preferences for 'managed landscapes,' which included objects such as tractors, the Dutch rated the 'natural' landscapes higher than the first generation immigrants. In hindsight, this could be obvious. Of course the Dutch have a higher preference for pictures of natural Dutch landscapes. But there is discussion in the literature today of the idea of an intrinsic ideal of nature. It's clear from this study that cultural factors have a significant role in understanding and appreciation of the aesthetics of a particular place.

Nassauer et al (2007) try to make sense of the role of aesthetics with perception of landscape. Their argument effectively is that aesthetics is ethics, or in their words, "landscapes that are perceived as aesthetically pleasing are more likely to be appreciated and protected than are landscapes perceived as undistinguished or ugly, regardless of their less directly perceivable ecological importance." The landscape aesthetic provides the critical link between ecological processes and humans, and that our aesthetic experience can be a powerful driver of landscape change. The authors feel their primary challenge is defining what they mean by aesthetic – is it simply the scenic-aesthetic, or could it encompass 'knowing' ecological functions or other societal and ethical values? Regardless of what's considered in the role of aesthetic, the paper's weakness is in its minimal attention paid to the role of context. They do acknowledge the importance of context, but only in the sense of how context alters what aesthetic one will find appealing, not whether or not aesthetic is the most important driver in determining the use of space. It's worth recognizing that each of these researchers are asking different questions. Kelling and Wilson are asking what is the role of disorder in how somebody perceives their surroundings. Nassauer's Cues to Care is an answer to the question of how one makes a messy ecological landscape 'acceptable' in an urban setting (Nassauer 1995). The Dutch researchers are trying to identify the cultural role in the aesthetic beauty inherent within an image. The question being asked is critical to the proposed solution. If the goal of an ecological landscape is to get people to use that landscape, then cues to care don't necessarily solve that problem. However, if the goal is to make people not care about the ecological landscape, then it does solve that problem, because it seeks to enable the ecological landscape to fit in within its surroundings.

Given that, this paper is asking a different question than the papers discussed above. It asks what would make somebody want to use a space for their enjoyment?

Results

Differentiating between cues and boundaries

Boundaries are inherently physical in nature, existing at the change in physical landscape. This can be at the transition between field and woods, in the streets that divide blocks, or as socially demarcated through the construction of a fence. When confronted with these boundaries, individuals must make a decision of whether or not to 1) enter, 2) walk alongside but not cross, or 3) go away from it (Fig. 1). To make this decision, they rely on social cues that answer the question of if they belong on the other side of the boundary. It then follows that, in order for a cue to matter, that it must be known at the boundary – whether explicitly on the boundary’s edge, or exert enough of a magnetic pull to draw somebody across the edge. The scales of intervention in the form of cues must match the scale of the boundary. If, as seen in Morrell Park, the cue is made on a plot of land that is neither at the boundary’s edge nor does it exert enough of a magnetic pull to draw somebody in, then it will not affect an individual’s decision to not enter that boundary (Fig. 2).

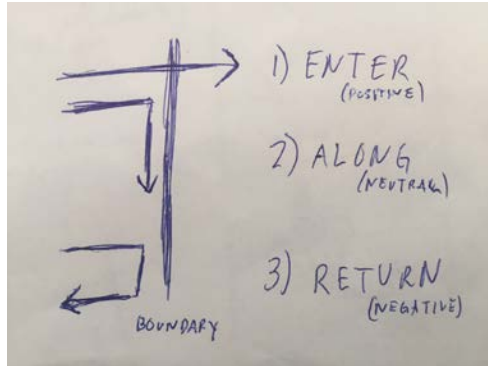


Fig 1. When confronted with a boundary, individuals use social cues to determine if they should enter, walk along, or return to where they came from. These decisions correlate with the desirability of the cue – if it’s something that individually wants to be associated with or not.

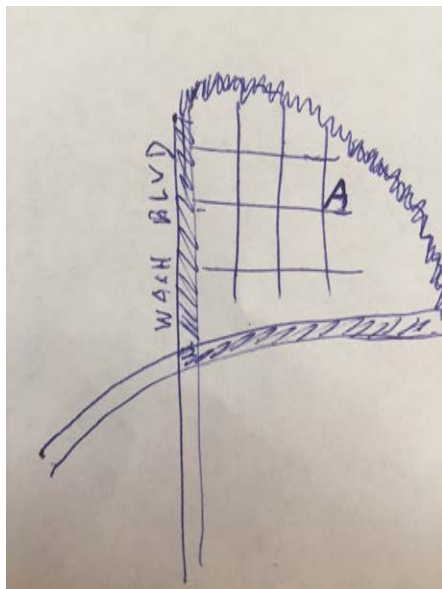


Fig 2. “A” represents an effort to keep a meadow along the side of the road well maintained, in the spirit of minimizing disorder. However, it is not located at the edge of the boundary nor does it exert a large enough influence to pull people across the boundary. Given this, residents still view the entire portion of Morrell Park outlined in this figure as off-limits due to their perception of it as a bad neighborhood, demarcated by stories of its drug problems. This spot is the same meadow that was shown to interviewees as one of the 8 typologies presented in the Findings section.

Boundaries – How do people create mental maps of where they do and don’t belong?

Over the course of interviews, the following types of boundaries emerged: spatial (tracks, hills, water, roads), temporal (time of day and season), and auditory (the distance your mother's voice travelled). It could be worthwhile to think about resources/access/threshold as boundaries (or as ways to overcome boundaries)

"Usually it's when you go past that bridge, down farther, that's where all the stuff is going on. It's been pretty quiet up here. I feel like I'm in a different neighborhood, so different down here than when you go just a couple blocks. It's crazy, that's where all your activity is, the drugs, already have a couple shootings down there."

It's less than a five minute walk for Karen⁵, who lives in on Deering Avenue in Morrell Park, to reach 'where all the stuff is going on,' and yet she feels as if it's a world away. This line is not invisible – not only is it implicitly created by a hill, but it is very literally demarcated by train tracks and Route One (fig x). These physical boundaries split Morrell Park into 3, maybe 4 sub-neighborhoods. The northeast side of the tracks, on the side of the hill sloping down into the city, is referred to as 'the city,' while the the southwest side of the tracks, which levels into the County, is referred to as 'the county.' Baltimore residents have a particularly strong affection for distinguishing between the City and the County, with most residents explaining that living in the County is more desirable because it has lower taxes and does a better job of maintaining its roads - and in the spirit of cues, it is very easy to see and experience the improved pavement when you drive across the city/county line.

"I don't go up the hill"

Waiting at a bus stop in Cherry Hill, I asked John⁶ why he was taking the bus to the shopping center farther away instead of the one a two minute walk up the hill from where we were talking. He had grown up in Cherry Hill, when it became infamous for its 'up da hill' and 'down the hill' gangs. The hill as boundary was the dominate driver of space during those years, and was immortalized in youtube videos⁷, countless candlelit vigils for people who died too young, 20+ young men now locked up in prisons from a recent drug crackdown⁸, and the minds of anybody who lived in the neighborhood during this time. John had only recently moved back to Cherry Hill, but he still would not walk the three minutes up the hill to the only shopping center in the neighborhood. He still viewed the town center as having '*too much drama and killings.*' To him, the question of where he likes to spend time outside was confusing, because he doesn't associate the outdoors with leisure or enjoyment, but rather with gang lines.

Memories such as John's are persistent far longer than the physical condition would suggest. As an outsider walking this hill in Chery Hill, I would have had no idea it carried such deep implication if it weren't for talking with so many people who were sure to tell me. The persistence of these memories are a major hurdle for residents of Cherry Hill to overcome. In conversations with leaders of local community groups, they made a point to

⁵ Karen: Her family has lived in Morrell Park for four generations, aged 30-60, white, female.

⁶ John lives in Cherry Hill, aged 30-60, black, male (S7)

⁷ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZfBBAZX7cc>, "Cherry Hill and Down Ya Block"

⁸ See <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/crime/bs-md-ci-cherry-hill-20160909-story.html>

dismiss this distinction as silly and from the old days.

'No matter what part of the community you was in, when your mother hit that door and hollered, when they said your name, don't care what part of Cherry Hill you in, you heard it.'

When Wanda⁹ was growing up, her boundary was defined by how far she could go while still hearing her mother's voice when it was time to come home, although implied in her statement is that this might be a rather large area. This range of voice may play a part in why so many people reference growing up in Baltimore with an 8 block radius as their boundary. For David¹⁰, being bounded by this 8 block boundary meant that growing up, you see only *'liquor stores, drug dealers, and worse. The default behavior surrounding you is alcoholics.'* The contradiction inherent in this boundary is that why would you want to stay within these 8 blocks given the conditions described by David. Ta-Nehisi Coates, in his book, *Between the World and Me*, explained that growing up, his parents just didn't trust what's outside their area, because they didn't know it. It was better for his parents to whip him than the police.

'It's beautiful when it was snowing. When we had the big snow, it was all white, couldn't see nothing.'

When shown a picture of Desoto picture in Morrell Park, most residents dismissed it out of hand, as a place that used to be filled with daughters playing softball but had since been ruined by teenagers who burned holes in the playground. Adam¹¹, quoted above, hates finding condoms on the ground there. But as he describes, the winter offers a clean slate for the park. Covering everything in innocent white, the snow resets the existing boundaries with its fresh powder. When it snows, Katie¹² will call somebody, and *'walk the Middle Branch in the snow, that is gorgeous.'*

'It be so pitch black out there at night, the only light you see is daggone stars and moon, and the headlights on your car. It gets dark out there, you can barely see your hand in front of your face. I don't like that.'

For Cathy¹³, spending time in the country is fine until it gets dark. She is a self-described homebody, and doesn't like the sense of isolation she has when she can't see anybody or anything around her. For others, like Veronica¹⁴, the time of day acts as a boundary because the sun is too hot. *'I prefer walking outside, if the weather would let me, because you know sometimes it's so hot you can't do that... I would have to be out there real early in the morning, before the heat hit, because I have asthma... I would be invited to a lot of cookouts and stuff at Carroll Park, but I have to wait until the sun goes down, before I can even go.'*

Cues of Control – What are the common cues people use to understand space?

⁹ Wanda lives in Cherry Hill, aged 50+, black, female (B9)

¹⁰ David lives in Catonsville, but fishes at Middle Branch in Cherry Hill. He is aged 30-60, black, male. (S13)

¹¹ Adam lives in Morrell Park, is 18-25, white, male. (A4).

¹² Katie lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-60, black, female (B17).

¹³ Cathy lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-60, black, female (B8).

¹⁴ Veronica lives in Morrell Park, is 30-60, black, female (A3).

When faced with these boundaries, individuals rely on a set of cues to determine their response. People want to spend time in places where there are people they want to be associated with, and doing activities that they would be doing. To determine this, they rely on cues, with the most direct cue seeing people utilize that space. In the absence of people, an individual can rely on cues that signal the type of people that utilize that space. But it doesn't have to be a visual cue, in many cases, people rely on the story of the place from somebody they trust, this manifests itself in the classic, *'oh you don't want to go there, it's dangerous.'*

These cues are not static. Actors are constantly manipulating these cues to determine control of the space. As one actor expands their boundary, it tends to restrict the boundary of somebody else. This choreography of control is danced both horizontally within members of the neighborhood, but also vertically across the levels of social control – the personal, parochial, and civil. This next portion offers illustrative examples of how various actors intervene in a landscape and utilize social cues to expand or constrict the boundaries of control.

The privatization of community space

Memorial Park is a pocket park on the main commercial drag in Morrell Park. Approximately 10 years ago when it was a vacant lot and dumping ground, a local group offered to take it over. They raised money by offering memorial stones to anybody who was willing to donate \$65. Today, the park (Fig. 3) would satisfy nearly anybody's checklist of what makes a pocket park work – shade, benches, something to do (grill), accessible, well-maintained. And yet, over the course of 70+ visits during the day this summer, I saw only 12 people use it, and it was all at once. Why is this so?



Fig. 3 – Memorial Park has shade trees, benches, grills, memorial stones in the pathway, and gardens.

After asking the 11 Morrell Park residents this question, two themes emerged. At a basic level, most residents do not feel safe walking along Washington Boulevard, and so have zero interest in spending more time than they need on the Boulevard by sitting down in this park. In the words of Sarah¹⁵, *'it's just bad vibes, it feels like a cemetery.'* The second reason is more nuanced. The decision to allow anybody to pay for a memorial stone caused two issues: 1) people outside of the neighborhood could be memorialized, and 2) well-known people from within the neighborhood who did not pay for the stone, or did not have somebody pay for them, were not memorialized. Sarah continues, *'it's only good for the families that put stuff there, not for like strangers, cuz you can see there's plenty of people that died that's not on there.'* Because the park is not 'owned' by the public, it exists among parochial relationships, but the mechanism in which money was raised for the stones degraded the value of these relationships, leaving the park without a neighborhood to offer its volunteer hours to maintain it.

At the neighborhood level, this park does exist at a boundary, Washington Boulevard. Its social cues described above are only known to those who live in the neighborhood, which reinforce the existing boundary, as opposed to offering a welcoming space, or a neutral ground for people from all parts of the neighborhood to come together. It also lacks enough pull to overcome the weight of the existing boundaries, which are so entrenched and deeply felt. When it was first established, it had momentum, but the person who helped create it has had his own struggles that keep him away from the neighborhood.

¹⁵ Sarah lives in Morrell Park, is aged 20-40, white, female (A7)

He used to mow, but had his equipment stolen twice, and so it has been harder to keep it maintained. Over the years, as the momentum has faded, the homeless, who normally live under the bridge, have come into Memorial Park. Recently, two folks had been living there, furthering its identity as a place outside of most residents' boundaries.

Nostalgic Dissonance – Conversion of the beloved to the unloved

'That used to be a beautiful place, don't know what they did up there. They should go back up there and put a skating rink back up there, roller skating. The library was up there for one, and then they had a daycare center up there. Just the beauty of it, you could go walk up there, go over the hill, look down on the gas station and all that stuff.' Many of the older generation in Cherry Hill, like Tiffany¹⁶, had fond memories of the Multipurpose Center, located on top of what they remembered as 'Clay Mountain.' Not only did Tiffany spend time at the Multipurpose Center, she ran through the woods of Clay Mountain, *'as kids, come on, we were going to run through the woods anyways, see what we could find. Let's go get some acorns, some cherries, something.'*

Today, this multipurpose center has been converted to a methadone clinic, which draws people from all over southwest Baltimore who take the light rail and then walk through unmarked trails in the woods to the clinic. The conversion of one of the most favorite places in the community to a place where largely outsiders come in and leave needles behind has completely flipped the boundary of this area. This isn't a small cue adjustment at the margins, but a fundamental shift in the pull of the given neighborhood. While it is unclear from the interviews how long this conversion took place, the woods that so many enjoyed as children are firmly in the off limits category because they don't want to associate with the methadone clinic's population of people who tend to use the woods for their own purposes. The methadone's sphere of influence extends beyond its immediate surroundings to include both the light rail station as well as the path between the two destinations.

For most interviewed, such as Katie¹⁷, the light rail station is *'an unproductive mess.'* The light rail is such an uncomfortable place, that many like Jo¹⁸ are willing to go out of their way to find an alternative method of transportation. *'I stand and wait an hour for that bus before I get on the light rail. I know the light rail will get me there quicker, but I will get on the 51 [bus] to Patapsco [light rail station] before I go to the Cherry Hill [light rail station].'* The civic decision to place the methadone clinic at the site of a formerly beloved place effectively transferred 'use' of that area to a different set of actors than Cherry Hill residents, the methadone clinic users. The influence of the center itself is so large, and the discomfort of the methadone clinic users to the Cherry Hill residents so great, that there are very few social cues that would enable somebody from Cherry Hill to choose to spend time in those woods or use the light rail.

This sense of boundary offers an explanation of why a third of those interviewed said they liked the aesthetic of the woods only to change their opinion once they realized where these woods were located.

¹⁶ Tiffany lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 20-50, black, and female (B15)

¹⁷ Katie lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-60, black, female (B17).

¹⁸ Jo lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-60, black female (B11).

Hookers and Uhaul

In Morrell Park, the woods and dead-end road next to the Uhaul offer a physical boundary, but when interviewees were deciding if they should spend time in that area, they aren't thinking of how nice the forest looks, but rather if they wanted to be associated with the 'hookers' that they knew offered their services in that space. In this case, Dawn¹⁹ is utilizing the people known to use the space as her cue to determine if it's a place she wants to spend her time. *'If you go down to Uhaul, you can see where the hookers, the streetwalkers walking, that's where they turn to pick them up, it's not safe. If you see guys turning down there to pick up a woman, you know it's not safe.'* In this context, the hookers and their men picking them up have signaled to the rest of the neighborhood that this is their space.

Dirt bikes and control of the street

Dirt bikers are one of the biggest problems faced by the City of Baltimore. They intentionally ride in the middle of the street, rev their engines, and do wheelies. This is largely a recreational activity, but it's also associated with drug trade and crime in the sense that dirt bikes symbolize control and are an object of desire – they allow you to demonstrate your control over the city. As Albert²⁰ observed, he watches teenagers come and try to hotwire pickup trucks so they can go steal dirt bikes elsewhere in the city. As an example of an anecdote he found funny, one recent attempt involved the teens hotwiring a new pickup only to realize everything's electronic nowadays, and so they had to scamper away.

The City has decided that one option for dealing with the 'terror' of dirt bikers is to build them a park so they can be contained in a separate part of the city, away from the rest of us. Van²¹ is skeptical this plan will work – *'They ain't going to use that park, you know what I mean? They're just going to keep riding the streets and terrorizing.'* To Van's perspective, these dirt bikers are not riding in the middle of the streets because they don't have an outlet, they are riding in the street because it's a way for them to exert control over other people's space. Without having talked or witnessed these dirt bikers personally, I don't have a perspective, but Van, the City, and the dirt bikers are engaged in a choreography of control over public space.

The absence of people + the role of neutral space

Wallace²² is a veteran who comes to the middle branch to practice the 'picture imagery' taught to him by the Veteran Affairs Hospital to help him with his health issues. He tends to sit on the bench by the water and fish. This is a relatively popular fishing spot, with anywhere from 3 to 15 people there on weekday mornings or evenings. Despite the popularity of the Middle Branch for fishing, it has huge fields of lush, manicured grass that were largely unused during the course of my summer observations. I asked Wallace about this, if he had ever seen anybody use these fields or if he had himself. His take was that *'people don't lounge on the grass because [he] thinks they think it's off limits. You don't ever see anybody on the grass except homeless people. Even when people barbeque down by the*

¹⁹ Dawn lives in Morrell Park, is aged 20-50, white, female. She has two kids under the age of 10.

²⁰ Albert lives in Morrell Park, is aged 50+, black, male.

²¹ Van lives in Morrell Park, is aged 30-60, white, male.

²² Wallace lives in Baltimore, but comes to Middle Branch to find peace. He is aged 50+, black, male (S2)

boathouse, they do so in the parking lot. This idea of a lack of people as a cue is offered by others when shown pictures of empty fields. For example, when shown a picture of a field in Cherry Hill, Tina²³ responded that *'there's nothing there, the only thing you see is trees and grass.'* Brittney²⁴ doesn't know what she would do there, or if *'the tall grass is weeds or not?'*

When well maintained, spaces like these serve as neutral spaces, in which people don't have any negative perceptions of the space, but just don't know how to use it. So they are fine walking along the space, but it's value to them is largely aesthetic, if anything at all.

Playground

Parents are unwilling to take kids to playground (Fig. 4) in Morrell Park because the teenagers have 'ruined' it. As Karen²⁵ describes, *'20-30 needles laying there, trash all over the place, [teens] tried to set the [sliding board] on fire.'* But this is really a manifestation of teenagers needing to exert control over a space because they don't have a space for themselves to occupy. Focusing on early childhood programming is not going to solve the problem, fixing the playground is not going to solve the problem. The problem is bored and unempowered teenagers. *'The majority of the problem is at night, teenagers do what they want to do, and mess things up for the little ones,'* Karen notes. The best early childhood improvement program, could actually be a skate park for teens, in order to take the teens away from the playground and give them their own space.

The other interesting aspect is the role of playgrounds for the parents – they create a boundary for kids to stay within, allowing parents to feel comfortable decompressing and not paying attention while kids play on the playground. This exacerbates the pain felt due to the boundary restriction imposed on them by the teenagers. Karen likes to take the kids to the playground by the BWI airport because *'they have an area for the kids where they can climb on, and a sliding board, but we go there for the planes. The planes are going in and out, they have little benches you can sit on, so we sit there while they're playing. It's nice.'*

Perhaps because these teenagers are associated with ruining the play area for her kids, Karen is also annoyed when teenagers walk the streets of the neighborhood, which is something she herself did as a teenager growing up in Morrell Park. *'As you grew up, us young girls, walk around neighborhood, like kids do now. Used to up to [Tangiers on Washington Boulevard] and get a big bag of fries for a quarter.'*

²³ Tina lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 30-60, black, female (B7)

²⁴ Brittney lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 50+, black, female (B16)

²⁵ Karen: Her family has lived in Morrell Park for four generations, aged 30-60, white, female (A9)



Fig 4. The playground

Activity as boundary remover

Charles²⁶ grew up in Cherry Hill during the 1990s, in the midst of the ‘up da hill’ and ‘down the hill’ divide. But he had fond memories of playing tag in the woods because it was something that all the kids in the neighborhood did together. The activity of tag, then, served as the social cue allowing people to extend their boundaries. *‘The whole Cherry Hill used to play tag, used to run around the whole neighborhood chasing each other, that’s the only good memory I have as a kid.’*

Football at the field below the Cherry Hill Town Center serves the same purpose as a cue to cross boundaries. The football field is the center of Saturday mornings, where many residents will, as Tiffany²⁷ describes, *‘just go down to the field and watch the kids play football, the Eagles. That’s pretty cool because you get to run into a lot of people you haven’t seen in awhile and you see people that come from other areas, and kids get to mingle and mix with them. So when they in school or whatever, you get to ‘You play for the football team, he was down there,’ that’s pretty cool, and the kids get to interact with all that’s going on out here, a little peace is better than nothing.’* The football field serves as a public space that facilitates two-way interactions between different types of people that wouldn’t have any reason to spend time with one another. The contrived excuse of football provides an excuse for somebody to be in an area that they otherwise wouldn’t belong.

Although watching kids play football was almost universally the fondest memory of

²⁶ Charles lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 20-40, black, male (B5)

²⁷ Tiffany lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 20-50, black, and female (B15)

everybody interviewed in Cherry Hill, for some, like Jo²⁸, it was a cue of exclusion. *'Ok, I understand it's fenced in for football game, that's all you got... It's not inviting for somebody to say ok, let's go over here and exercise, let's go here and do this. I mean the scenery isn't good, these houses over here don't look nice.'* For her, the football field isn't good for exercise.

Implications

Given this understanding of boundaries and cues, what are the implications for management of landscapes. This is explored through the two examples below. In addition to these two examples, one could think about how this applies to the Port Authority, which has money to implement dredging but lacks public support, or to those managing the Gwynns Falls trail – what if they paid actors to walk the trail?

Urban tree canopy goals

This is an issue of scale. The city-wide goals of tree canopy often conflict with a neighborhood's goals of economic development; this is particularly well demonstrated at Reedbird Park in Cherry Hill.

Cherry Hill has an abundance of green space in its neighborhood. A decade or two ago, the City tore down the Reedbird apartment complex, as part of their efforts to tear down the big public housing projects in Cherry Hill because the neighborhood had some of the highest concentrations of poverty in the nation. Following its destruction, left behind was a vast green field, along the waterfront. Residents, like Tina²⁹, see it as a wasteland. *"Ain't nothing exciting. They need to get rid of that. It just looks dead, everything's dead. Only thing you see is trees and grass. I want to see something there, anything, something besides these trees. Parking lot, anything.'* It's not that Tina doesn't like trees and grass, she grew up running through the woods along Clay Mountain. But she recognizes the real need of the community, stores and amenities. *'I wish some stores were there, that would be nice, like a mall, jobs, something.'* The City, meanwhile, has its urban tree canopy coverage goals, which are ambitious, and perhaps sees the lot as a great opportunity to reach their tree canopy coverage targets. They planted a field of trees several years back, but didn't necessarily engage the community.

In effect, this stretch of greenspace in Cherry Hill is a way for the city to hit its city-wide goals, while the local needs are left unfulfilled. The city maintains the field, it's well mowed, the trees are clearly cared for, but it's clearly not for the residents. And so very few people interviewed even acknowledged this stretch of park exists, it's as if it was blank space in their mental map.

How should the city manage the community space at the Cherry Hill Apartments?

The yards in the Cherry Hill projects represent the tragedy of the commons in reverse. Everybody has so little faith in their neighbors to respect their individual gardens or exterior improvements, that nobody does anything to indicate care. Tina says she really wishes she could have a little garden behind her apartment. She's walked by the Cherry Hill Urban Garden, but doesn't feel welcome – they don't ever reach out when she walks by, and

²⁸ Jo lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-60, black female (B11).

²⁹ Tina lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 30-60, black, female (B7)

she hasn't had time herself to ask. Not only does she not feel confident in her knowledge of how to garden, but she doesn't trust her neighbors to respect her garden space. *'The little kids around here might mess with it, urinate in it, and whatever. If I catch em, I have to beat them, and I don't want to have to go to jail or something. I was thinking about trying something, just to see if it sprouts up.'*

The space behind her apartment is mowed by the city. Tiny finds fault with the city's mowing pattern because it doesn't cut all the grass, leaving a strip of tall 'weeds.' She feels they don't mow because they are scared of running over trees, and aren't good enough to get closer. She wishes that there were flowers or something nicer that she controlled. In this case, the mowing of the grass signifies the lawn is controlled but by somebody else.

There's a difference when the default is a vacant lot, and interesting note when cues to care is effective – having the city signify it's in charge of a vacant lot that nobody was maintaining is different than the city signify it's in charge of the common grass space in the backyard of a resident who would like to use it in a different way.



"Baltimore looks like random wilderness everywhere"

Section 2: Myth and Memory

Section 2. Myth and memory, curiosity and identity

Introduction: What is the role of myth and memory in the determinants of the use of space?

Myth serves to help tell the story and explain identity even in face of apparent contradictions. When confronted with a boundary and social cues, residents would rely on myths and memories to determine if the social cues were something that they wanted to identify with. Did they view themselves as part of this neighborhood or space? This is exemplified in advice given to me from Tina³⁰ in Cherry Hill, “*Better not sleep on the porch but Cherry Hill is a good community.*” Her practical advice is I can’t sleep on my porch at night anymore because of safety concerns, but she still wanted to remind me that Cherry Hill, her community, is a good one.

Background

The picturesque

In the mid to late 1800s, Frederick Law Olmsted brought the ideals of nature into urban centers through parks (Cranz 1982: 29). Coining his aesthetic as the picturesque, he realized two things: 1) the pastoral landscape offered a middle ground between wilderness and the existing traditions of formal gardens and clipped lawns and 2) in an ironic twist, this pastoral landscape would need to be imitated by using forms suggested by nature, but that it would be impossible to utilize the existing materials that nature actually provides (Cranz 1982: 29). These gardens were the manifestation of a psychological shift in the intellectual world at the time concerning our relationship with nature. Alexander Von Humboldt’s travels enchanted leading thinkers of the day about the wonders of the natural world, while at the same time people were beginning the demographic transition to urban centers (Rich 2016). Cities were no longer simply a fortress to keep nature out, but were now being asked to invite nature into the city through Olmsted’s picturesque landscapes. Interestingly, this idea of inviting nature into the city coincides with efforts by the USDA and plant collectors to bring exotic plants from around the world to the U.S., as an object of desire. In quite the shift, today, our discourse is centered around protecting nature from humans, as seen through our biological preserves and focus on keeping plants in the places they are supposed to be.

The role of race and culture

At the same time Olmsted, Henry Thoreau, and John Muir are popularizing the notion of wilderness, non-whites are being deliberately excluded from the very wilderness that is becoming popularized through these parks. In 1862, in the midst of the Civil War, the Homestead Act was passed, creating conditions for the great European American land grab. In the early 1830s, shortly after William Patterson donated his first six acres of land to the City of Baltimore as one of the first, if not the first, public park in the U.S., American Indians were forcibly removed from their land and sent west in what became known as the Trail of Tears. In the late 1840s, treaties promising land to Hispanos formerly of Mexico and now of New Mexico were broken, with Hispanos left without. Many of the Chinese workers who built the transcontinental railroad were left stranded in the U.S. after their

³⁰ Tina lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 30-60, black, female (B7)

promised voyage home was not fulfilled. Although the Homestead Act initially offered land taken from the Confederates to the newly freed slaves, this was rescinded in 1866, with the land titles forced to transfer back to the former slave owners (Finney 2014).

Implications for this paper

These two quick summaries of parallel cultural trends are not meant to litigate the history, but rather set a foundation for a recurring theme throughout the rest of this paper – that despite a popular push to denote nature as an intrinsic aesthetic, it is a creation of each of our cultures, and how we use space largely lies in our sense of identity and belonging with other people using that space.

On a personal note, with this understanding, I shifted my questioning from that of ‘where do you find nature’ to ‘where do you enjoy spending time outdoors.’ The goal of this paper and this section is to understand what are the types of places different types of people enjoy spending time in, not to define the meaning of the word ‘nature.’

Myth shaped by memory – how you use space as a kid shapes how you use it today

Of the 28 people I conducted an in-depth interview with, nearly all had spent time in the woods as a kids, regardless of race or gender. And yet, many don’t spend time in the woods today. At first blush, this is counter to one of the dominant themes of outdoor advocacy today, that an appreciation for woods as a child is linked with an appreciation for the woods later in life. Many do, in fact, still appreciate find the woods beautiful, but for a variety of reasons explained in other chapters don’t feel comfortable going into the woods. Others are simply older in age and viewed the woods as an adventure fit for a child. The four stories below offer examples of people who enjoyed spending time in the woods as a kid, but don’t view it as something they’d do today as an adult.

Charles³¹ grew up as a black male in the heyday of Cherry Hill’s gang wars, but he had fond memories of playing tag in the woods because it was something that all the kids in the neighborhood did together. *‘The whole Cherry Hill used to play tag, used to run around the whole neighborhood chasing each other, that’s the only good memory I have as a kid.’* Today, only 10 or 15 of the kids he grew up are still around. The rest of them are *‘locked up or dead.’* Today, he doesn’t spend time in the woods. He associates the woods the having *‘all kinds of shit, snakes, deers, they got a lot of snakes and stuff down there.’* The animals make him uncomfortable, and *‘he wouldn’t walk through [the woods] by himself.’* Perhaps in the act of playing tag, he never spent time alone in the woods, so never developed that comfort level. Or perhaps he associates the woods with his friends that are no longer with him, although he did remark that playing tag is the only good memory he has from being a kid.

Tiffany³² grew up playing in the woods, even though they weren’t supposed to be in the woods. But as she describes, *‘as kids, come on, we were going to run through the woods anyways, see what we could find. Let’s go get some acorns, some cherries, something, we going to go anyway. Cuz we wasn’t supposed to go, guess they figure as long as it was daytime, we were cool.’* Despite this, today, she *‘don’t do the woods. Too scary.’* In particular, she wouldn’t walk through the woods with her kids. She thinks that the woods are more dangerous today than when she was younger, with *‘people living back there, people doing*

³¹ Charles lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 20-40, black, male (B5)

³² Tiffany lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 20-50, black, and female (B15)

drugs in the woods, all types of stuff. It isn't clear if the fears of the people in the woods today is because the actual threat has increased due to the presence of the methadone clinic, or if she was just unaware of the idea of other people in the woods as a kid. The other alternative is that because she knew she was never supposed to be in the woods as a kid, now that she's a parent, she could be channeling that idea and telling her kids they aren't supposed to be in the woods either.

Francis³³ remembers growing up as a kid and running around on Clay Mountain, now the site of the methadone clinic. There were no paths in these woods, it was open territory for her to run alone in the woods. But she was the oldest child growing up, meaning she *'had to take care of your brother and sister, because your mother had to work, so maybe I was running from them.'* They tore down these woods when she was 16 years old. But today, she won't go in the woods, not because she's scared of woods, but because she *'needs the path and needs the destination. I'm not going to just walk through the woods. To walk in the woods because it's woods, no.'* Although we didn't discuss this, perhaps she associates the woods as her escape from her brother and sister, not in a refuge sense, but associates it with what she was running away from.

Albert³⁴ thinks he's too old for the woods. *'Like I said, I'm 52. If I was younger, I would have been back there. When I was younger we were all over [the Gwynns Falls Trail], but we went from Edmonson Village where it go down under the bridge and walk from there and walk up Winston Hill. But that was when me and brothers were young adventurers, I'm say 14, 15 years old. We did stuff like that. No, hell no. I'm not going back there. I never done like that here.'* His 13 year old grandson will go into the woods with his little cousin, but he's never been past the edge of the parking lot next to the woods, he's just not that curious anymore.

Others, like Jo³⁵ and Sarah³⁶, never spent time in the woods as kids, and still don't to this day. Growing up, Jo *'just never played in the woods. [She stayed] straight on the walkway to the multipurpose building. That's all I did. I wasn't an adventurer, no woods.'* This disinterest in the woods hasn't changed since she was a child. While she will walk on the portion of the Middle Branch trail by the hospital, she *'wouldn't be walking in these woods, you don't know who's in the woods, somebody might grab you.'* For Sarah, she grew up with six sisters, *'so you know we ain't doing outdoor, or climbing, or rock climbing, ain't doing none of that.'* However, her husband really enjoys the outdoors and takes their 4 year old son on adventures in the woods all the time. In the course of showing a picture of the Gwynns Falls trail, while she first thought of the bad neighborhood it was in, her son instinctually said it looked really nice and asked if they could go canoeing there.

Only 3 or 4 of the 27 in-depth interviewed did not spend time in the woods as kids, which is rather remarkable considering that many of them would be classified as the 'inner-city poor.'

³³ Francis lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 40-60, black, female (B14)

³⁴ Albert lives in Morrell Park, is aged 50+, black, male (A2)

³⁵ Jo lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-60, black female (B11).

³⁶ Sarah lives in Morrell Park, is aged 20-40, white, female (A7)

Myth shaped by perception of nature

A recurring theme when discussing the picture of the woods was that woods are for animals, not humans. Francis³⁷ and Matthew³⁸ used this concept to justify why they no go fishing at the far pier at Middle Branch. Francis explained, *'Me and him don't go over there right now, there's nothing over there,'* with Matthew adding, *'there are deers over there. I don't want to be close to them.'* To Francis and Matthew, the deer signal that the space is no longer for them, and it's for animals. While perhaps this distinction restricts the amount of spaces they can enjoy, having such a clear boundary also reduces their uncertainty because they know that that area is not for them instead of having to judge each visit.

Woods also have structural qualities – they are large in scale (not simply a collection of trees) and create an enclosure to separate somebody from another environment. When describing the recently planted saplings at Reedbird Park, Rod³⁹ refused to call that woods because there was no enclosure. *'No woods there, no woods. You said woods didn't you? It's all open so you can see everything there.'*

Katie⁴⁰ admits that what she really likes is the aesthetic of wilderness, not the actual wilderness traits themselves. Her favorite park is Centennial Park, in Columbia Maryland, because it is *'more about being in nature, with wildlife and trees and the lake.'* Even though she feels like she's in wilderness, she knows that it was planned because there are nomenclature plaques next to many of the trees. And so she takes issue when trees in Baltimore are not planned, such as along the hill in Cherry Hill or at Reedbird Park. She doesn't think this issue is constrained to Cherry Hill, however. *'Have you noticed here in Baltimore, it looks like random wilderness everywhere. Nothing is landscaped nicely.'*

This understanding helps explain her thinking when she explained that the Middle Branch park is *'terrible, awful, absolutely hideous. We were going along because we were walkers and we would be batting off limbs. Nobody planned that garbage on the shoreline, it's awful.'* This statement was in direct contrast to her earlier statements that Middle Branch was gorgeous. The distinction lies in the value derived from the view, not the experience of walking along the trail. *'Along the shoreline, they have the rocks, it's beautiful, we never will see the skyline, the sunrise in the morning, absolutely gorgeous. Now the end by the boathouse, absolutely flawless. They have the benches graduated on the hill so you can see. The view is the beautiful part, you can see the water, you can see the shore.'* She's there for the view, and so things in her way such as overhanging branches or vegetation blocking the view are hideous. The irony of the situation, then, is that it's real wilderness that is blocking the aesthetic of wilderness she desires.

Myth shaped by societal decisions

In an uncomfortable way, societal decisions to allocate space to the homeless and drug users furthers our conception of woods as a place for animals, or really creatures that are not like us. From the City's perspective, they likely considered their placement of the Cherry Hill methadone clinic on the top of an isolated hill behind some woods as a thoughtful move. They kept it out of view from the neighborhood, so that the neighborhood

³⁷ Francis lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 40-60, black, female (B14)

³⁸ Matthew lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 20-30, black, male (B13)

³⁹ Rod lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 50+, black, male (B1)

⁴⁰ Katie lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-60, black, female (B17).

residents wouldn't be bothered by these so-called undesirables. In addition to the notion that the replacement of a favorite community gathering spot with a methadone clinic affects people deeply, the placement of the clinic in the woods reinforces the relationship between woods, animals, and drug users as separate from mainstream culture.

When interviewees would describe their discomfort or fear of seeing homeless in the woods, they would speak of the homeless as if they were a grizzly bear in the wilderness. Take this statement from Rod⁴¹, in which I've replaced the word homeless with bears: *"Matter of fact, in this area, especially across the bridge, there's a lot of bears in the woods, so don't think they would be safe in those woods, but if you go to Patapsco State Park, they won't live out there because they can't survive out there. So take the kids out there, to the one across the bridge."* Or this statement from Dawn⁴², *"They have the little woods back there, [my kids] go back there sometimes, but I haven't let them anymore, because of the bears. They go and sleep down there."*

In fact, the only person to express empathy for a homeless person in the urban woods was a formerly homeless person. When a place with homeless people potentially living there comes up in discussion, most people, like the two statements above, refer to the homeless as being dirty or something to fear. However, in talking with Scott⁴³ about Memorial Park, he remembered that somebody was living there: *'They had a guy sleeping back there. I don't know what ever happened to him.'* Only Scott viewed this person as a fellow human being worthy of his compassion as opposed to a foreigner to fear. He doesn't fear the woods because he's who everybody fears finding in the woods – he's been homeless, in jail, and addicted to drugs.

Myth shaped by cultural aspects

While I did not expressly ask people about how race factored into where they spent time, for some it is a clear undercurrent, although perhaps not the dominant decision making factor.

As a young kid, Albert⁴⁴ faced a drastic relocation of his life and surroundings. His mother shipped him and his brothers out of the Murphy Home projects to the mountains of New Mexico. In describing this transition, he, an urban African American, speaks not as an individual but rather as a group. *'At first you know you ain't like it. We was from the city, but then you adapt, man.'* Later as he describes how the New Mexico mountains differ from inner city Baltimore, he explicitly calls out race as he describes how going to the mountains is a white activity. *'When I was out in New Mexico, that's what the white boys did. On the weekend, grab some beers, go to the mountains, get in a truck and go ride to the mountain, shoot some deers, get some pigs, or whatever. That's what they do out there. Now in the city, it's different. On our weeks, people out there might say have a cookout, go get a pig, invite the whole town, have a drink, have a nice weekend. Here in the city, you say you're going to have a cookout, bunch of freeloaders come get drunk, spend your money, you clean up their shit, ain't no fun.'*

It's hard to assess how important race was in determining where he spent his time,

⁴¹ Rod lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 50+, black, male (B1)

⁴² Dawn lives in Morrell Park, is aged 20-50, white, female. She has two kids under the age of 10 (A5)

⁴³ Scott lives in Morrell Park, is aged 30-60, white, male (A8)

⁴⁴ Albert lives in Morrell Park, is aged 50+, black, male (A2)

but he did elect to return to New Mexico a second time to escape from being caught up with drugs in Baltimore. What's worth acknowledging is his acknowledgement of going to the mountains as a white activity – the relative influence that had on his desire or feeling of acceptance to go the mountains, is less clear.

Curiosity

One of the key fundamentals to understanding how people decide to try something new, is understanding their sense of curiosity. In many cases, the primary reason people hadn't been to a place within walking distance of them was because they just didn't know about it, or had never bothered to check it out. They were content to rely on stories from others to decide if that place was worth their time. Although this study didn't really dive into the question of curiosity, four narratives below offer a taste of where curiosity comes from.

Although Albert⁴⁵ would love to take his grandson to the circus, *'we can't afford tickets and buy food too, so we take him up to the park and let him do his own circus shit. That's what I say, let him be and do his own circus.'* Albert is also one to think a lot about being bored, as he explained he had never been to the Gwynns Falls trail because he *'just doesn't think we were bored enough to go back there. Always find something better to do. Drive past it every day, but you just don't go, you know what I'm saying?'*

Dawn's⁴⁶ 5 year old daughter likes the woods much more than her 8 year old son. For her daughter, she strongly prefers the woods to a playground. *'She'll stay content on the slide for a couple of minutes, but if we'll go into the woods, with different areas for her to go, it's imagination, so she can use her imagination, and go hey, and something, her and her imaginary friend make stuff up.'*

Jo⁴⁷ has travelled around the country, but her mother, *'not so much.'* She describes her sense of adventure as developing in response to her mother. *'My mother was one of those ones that always wanted you in the house, and I was like first chance I get I'm outta here. Whenever aunts and uncles would come and say we came to get the kids to take to the beach... we're like ya I'm coming.'*

Implications

The role of myth, memory, curiosity, and identity is important to understand as these factors shape how individuals create the narrative they use to navigate the boundaries and cues presented in front of them. These boundaries and cues don't exist in a vacuum of time or space, but rather as a relationship with the individual's prior experiences and sense of what they imagine to be their identity.

***Note on the section 2 header photo** - The irony is that the picture was taken at Ft. Armstead, which is outside of Baltimore, and so people actually don't mind walking through there, because they aren't worried about who's hiding back there. Same aesthetic, 180 degree different response than if it was in the city.

⁴⁵ Albert lives in Morrell Park, is aged 50+, black, male.

⁴⁶ Dawn lives in Morrell Park, is aged 20-50, white, female. She has two kids under the age of 10.

⁴⁷ Jo lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-60, black female (B11).



"I need the path and I need the destination, to walk in the woods because its woods, no"

Section 3: Overcoming Fear

Section 3: Overcoming Fear

Introduction

Given the wealth of research on external incivilities as a driver of fear, this chapter explores how individuals perceive these fears, looking at the following questions:

- How do individuals conceptualize fear?
- Why do individuals elect to overcome their fears, and if they are motivated to overcome, how do they do so?

Theoretical Framework of Fear

How do individuals conceptualize fear?

It's the inherent contradiction of urban spaces. While a feeling of safety is a 'prerequisite to the use of urban open spaces,' as Kaplan argues in *With People in Mind: Design and Management of Everyday Nature*, that feeling of safety is not necessarily correlated to actual victimization rates (Dubow et al 1979). For example, a national crime survey found that young males are most likely to be victimized while self-reporting the lowest level of fear, while elderly females are least likely to be victimized but reported the highest level of fear (Perkins and Taylor 2002). These trends held even after accounting for additional factors, like precautionary measures to reduce exposure to crime. Why is this so? What causes people to fear landscapes in a manner disproportionate to their actual risk?

Fear is an ambiguous word and concept. In this chapter, I will talk about two types of fears: 1) places that are uncomfortable but known in which individuals fear disorder, and 2) places that are unknown that invite individuals to project their deepest existential fears.

Fear type 1: Places that are uncomfortable but known in which individuals fear disorder

Researchers in the 1970s set out to answer this question, with Kelling and Wilson authoring their landmark article, *Broken Windows*, in *The Atlantic* in 1982. While much discussion in today's discourse centers around if broken windows theory reduces crime, Kelling and Wilson in their seminal paper argued that wasn't the point. The focus on reducing crime, they argued, ignores a second source of fear, 'the fear of being bothered by disorderly people.' The Police Foundation's *Newark Foot Patrol Experiment* (1981) found that increasing the foot patrol of police officers in neighborhoods did not lower crime, but did increase perceptions of safety. While on one hand this appears to suggest the experiment failed, Kelling and Wilson argue that the reduction in fear is a worthwhile goal in and of itself because of the high value that residents place on public order. The way to create public order, naturally, is to reduce disorder: "Social psychologists and police officers tend to agree that if a window in a building is broken and is left unrepaired, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken."

In response to a frustration over the ambiguous use of the term fear in the literature, Skogan (1993) articulated four different types of fears:

- *Concern* about crime within one's neighborhood.

- *Risk of victimization*, which is a measure of the perception that an individual feels they are likely to be victimized. As noted earlier, this does not correlate with actual victimization rates.
- *Threat of crime*, which is a measure of the potential crime an individual perceives threatens them. This differs from risk because risk accounts for behaviors taken by individuals to mitigate their exposure to the threat itself.
- Fear as *behavior* – Individuals tend to either avoid fear, with relocation the most extreme response, or mobilize a protection against that fear.

Given this understanding, designers and planners have spent the last several decades developing techniques and strategies to reduce disorder in the landscape through techniques such as incivilities, prospect/refuge, and entrapment/concealment.

Fear type 2: Places that are unknown that invite individuals to project their deepest existential fears.

When confronted with an unknown landscape, individuals can only rely on their memories and myths to imagine what could be there. In this situation, the unknown landscape, which is commonly the urban woods, is feared not because of a perceived disorder but simply because it is unknown and doesn't feel like a place one belongs. Individuals are likely assessing the risk of the unknown, and there is too much uncertainty involved. Additional literature review is needed here.

How are fears known?

Victimization is a rare event, so most people do not know fears through direct victimization. Within one's own neighborhood, they tend to rely on personal experiences and interpersonal communication to understand the threat to them, while for other neighborhoods they must rely on indirect sources of information (Dubow, Kaplan, and McCabe 1979). While it is common to think that this indirect information is driven by mass media, as of the early 1980s, there was no evidence of this (Tyler 1984). The tension arises when areas within one's neighborhood are unknown, in which an individual would expect to have personal experience or interpersonal communication to educate them, but that information is lacking.

One additional nuance to consider is the fear for the other, in which an individual is primarily motivated by a desire to reduce the risk to somebody else than they would do so for themselves (Dubow 1978). The common example of this is a parent taking care of their child.

Why do individuals elect to overcome their fears, and if they are motivated to overcome, how do they do so?

Why do individuals elect to overcome their fears?

Perception of fear is a relationship between the physical and social features within a given landscape and an individual's perception of that landscape. In response to fear, an individual's behavior largely falls into one of two strategies – avoid the fear or protect themselves from it (DuBow et al 1979). When confronted with a fear, how do individuals decide if they should avoid or protect? A look at tourism motivation theory offers a suggestion. Gnoth (1997) offers a theoretical framework that separates motivations to visit

a place into two categories – either an emotive internal driver (“push”) or a cognitive external driver (“pull”). If an individual is looking to fulfill a feeling (“push”), then the destination itself matters less than the feeling itself. For example, if somebody is looking for a thrill, they can accomplish this through watching a scary movie, going bungee jumping, or riding a mountain bike down a hill. There are multiple substitutes for the activity of fulfillment. However, if an individual is motivated by a pull driver, there is limited to no substitutability – their motivation is entirely driven by visiting that particular destination. For example, if an individual’s goal is to visit the Eiffel Tower, there really is only one Eiffel Tower.

This framework offers an explanation of why individuals elect to avoid or protect when faced with fear. If the individual is motivated by an internal emotive driver (“push”), then they have many methods of fulfillment, and so when confronted with fear, are better able to avoid the fear and elect a different pathway. However, if their motivation is driven by the destination itself, they have fewer alternatives, and so are more likely to engage in protective behaviors to minimize their exposure to the fear, but they will then confront this fear. In essence, if the reward is great enough, then they are more likely to take a risk and overcome their fear in order to achieve it.

How do individuals overcome their fears?

If an individual elects to overcome their fears, i.e. elect for a protective response instead of an avoidance response, then they protect themselves either through an individual response or utilize an environmental design. Individuals tend to utilize symbols of resistance (e.g. large dog or a sticker on home suggesting an alarm without any alarm there), home protection (e.g. alarms, door locks, leave lights on), or self-protective behavior (Dubow, McCabe, and Kaplan 1979). The types of self-protective behaviors people engage in are very diverse, with one survey of these behaviors finding that the only specific behavior done by more than 10-15% of the population was the act of going with a second person (Dubow, McCabe, and Kaplan 1979)..

Results

How do individuals conceptualize fear?

During the course of the interviews, two different types of fear emerged: 1) Uncomfortable, but known, and 2) Existential – both known and unknown

1) Uncomfortable, but known

These are largely considered in the incivilities body of work, with these types of fears discussed in the Choreography of Control chapter.

2) Existential, the power of the unknown

‘It isn’t safe to go there, because it’s an evil world out here’

When presented with a picture of the woods, two common fears were described. One group of respondents who found the aesthetic of the woods beautiful changed their tune once they mentally placed the woods in the context of their neighborhood. The negative context (e.g. homeless, drug dealers, methadone clinic) would supersede any previous discussion of aesthetic beauty. For another group of people, the image of the

woods triggered them in a way to describe all their deepest fears about life, in a way that suggested they were projecting these fears onto an unknown landscape.

For example, Tom⁴⁸ wasn't afraid of the woods per se, but was afraid of all the things she doesn't like in the world showing up in this unfamiliar place, the woods. *It's scary, you just don't know. It's a shame to say, but nowadays you just don't know who could be hiding in these trees, you just got to be careful today. When I grew up, we didn't have to be afraid to go here, these kids today have to keep their eyes open and watch their back. The way the world is today, maybe because you watch the news, but you do, you hear so much, I mean you hear about these car jackings, these people don't care, they don't care if your kid's in that car or not, if they want that car, they going to take it with the kid and all. I mean it's already happened.* Tom never was a big woods person, he didn't grow up spending time in the woods, they *'never went through little paths where there's a bunch of trees and grass.'* So the woods have always been unfamiliar to him.

When presented with a picture of the Gwynns Falls stream, Tina⁴⁹ responded with her fears of death by drowning, fears that are derived from stories she's heard, not experiences she's had. She doesn't know anybody who's personally drowned, but is aware that people can drown in lakes. When her nephew tells her about how he goes swimming in a lake, she doesn't take comfort. *'People can drown in lakes, they scared to get in the water now. Something about the current pulling people in, if you don't know how to swim, if you walk out there and try to help somebody, you might get pulled in. it's terrible, sharks and stuff. I like the lake though.'* There are no sharks in lakes, the picture of the Gwynns Falls creek is not a lake, and she still maintains that she likes the image of the lake.

This fear of the unknown is not limited to lakes and the woods. For Jo⁵⁰, she fears dogs, water, and heights. But she's *'never had a bad experience with dogs'* and is the *'same way with water, won't even go on a cruise.'*

For unfamiliar places, it's easy for people like Tina, Jo, and Tom to project their largest worries from the outside world onto it. In order to understand it, they need to make sense of something, and if they don't know it from tangible experience, then their brain fills the void, fueled by stories they've heard and seen. In essence, they are making the unknown 'known', even if what's known to them isn't known to somebody else.

Discrete experiences can trigger a switch of space from the known to the unknown, or vice versa. Laurie⁵¹ described a defining moment in which the woods by the Middle Branch trail become a source of unknown, switching from the familiar to the unfamiliar. She was walking with a girlfriend down the Middle Branch trail, which had tall weeds, 'taller than people' on each side of the trail. *'Three men came through and scared us to death. They didn't try to harm us or nothing, but the fact that they came through the tall weeds like that. [Irene] says this is so uncomfortable, and then we went further down and there was a homeless person with a hammock under the bridge, you know polite, but the situation we're living in today, and the least little thing frightens us.'* These weren't bad people that scared her, and she acknowledge that they posed no actual threat. But it's the idea of the unexpected that is terrifying, more so than any known discomfort. She feared the idea that

⁴⁸ Tom lives in Morrell Park, is aged 50+, white, male. (A11)

⁴⁹ Tina lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 30-60, black, female (B7)

⁵⁰ Jo lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-60, black, female (B11).

⁵¹ Laurie lives in Cherry Hill, is 50+, black, female (B4).

other unknown men could emerge from the tall grasses more than the three men that emerged that particular day. Her sense of control over that space was rattled, opening up those woods as a place of unknown other things to her. Her mind was triggered to think of all the worst case scenarios, as she references, *'the situation we're living in today...'*

Less discrete experiences, such as getting older, can also trigger a switch from the known to unknown. Tina⁵² grew up in the woods, but doesn't spend much time in the woods today, because they don't reflect the woods she knew as a child. *'I wouldn't go alone anyways; it isn't safe to go there because it's an evil world out here.'* She lives in a neighborhood that she does not feel comfortable walking in, and given how evil she views her neighborhood to be, has a hard time imagining that another place, the woods, could be anything but evil. She also is suggesting that her path to those woods is evil, that in order to get to those woods, she has to navigate her evil neighborhood first.

To protect herself, Tina has drawn a boundary around her home, and considers her home as her safe place, *'Not that I'm afraid of nothing, Im just more comfortable home.'* She is crafting a narrative for herself, acknowledging the known problems in her neighborhood as the evil world – it's not just her neighborhood, it's everything outside her control – while defining her house as a bubble within her neighborhood in which she feels safe. For her the woods she knew as a child are no longer familiar to her today and so she can make them familiar, or at least known, by projecting her known fears of the rest of the world onto the woods as well, a world that she is able to isolate herself from. For her, a known fear is better than an unknown.

2) Existential fears and the contradiction of the known

I don't intend to describe this fear of the unknown in a cavalier sense, as if there is nothing to be feared. Three people interviewed told me unprompted stories of people that they knew to have been killed in the woods or their neighborhood. I find it worth distinguishing between these known fears and unknown fears, because in each case, the person who knew somebody to have died was also not afraid to spend time in that particular place.

For Dennis⁵³, the granddaughter of his great uncle was killed walking through the woods back to her house on Mother's Day. She had gone to the store with a friend to buy a card for her mother. This obviously leaves a strong impression on Dennis:

Well you just never know who can be in the woods, you never know. My great uncle's granddaughter, lived down in Glen Burnie. She, just a little girl, and a friend took a trail, coming back home, and they went to the store to get Mother's Day cards. They took the trail coming back home and his granddaughter got killed. They got the guy. He raped her before he killed her. They caught the guy, killed the guy, shot. That's what I say. Some trails, see, it's always important to know your neighborhoods, what they're about, because if you don't, certain neighborhoods you going into, not saying you going to walk out. When you take trails, you have to know what you're doing, closed in, not out in the open, never know who's in the woods. Have to use a little common sense.

And yet, given this story, of all the interviewees, Dennis was one of those who spent

⁵² Tina lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 30-60, black, female (B7)

⁵³ Dennis lives in Morrell Park, is aged 30-60, white, male (A10)

the most time in the woods and outdoors. This is seemingly contradictory – most people refuse to go in the woods because they’ve heard similar stories, but don’t know anybody personally. Dennis knows a relative who was murdered in the woods, and this doesn’t keep him from walking through the woods. Why is that? The key piece in his narrative is he assigns blame to the neighborhood itself – this isn’t something site lines along the trail would fix. It’s a fundamental feature of the neighborhood. And in urban areas, this notion of neighborhood safety prevails among most important factors in deciding where to spend time. Others know death too well, including Dennis who *‘found a friend of mine not too long ago, right there at the Rainbow Bar there, in the back, with a needle in his stomach. Dead, was killed.’* These murders serve as cues of the neighborhood safety – *‘It’s really bad in Pigtown, drugs, come up on money from me, ask if I got a cigarette, killings, especially right around Washington Boulevard.’*

Others know of friends who have died doing outdoor activities. One of Scott’s⁵⁴ favorite spots is a swimming hole along the Gwynns Falls, where they *‘throw the line in, take a dip, whatever. I grew up there, had a best friend drown there, two of them matter of fact.’* This tremendous tragedy doesn’t keep him from continuing to visit this swimming hole, a place he knows well.

To know you must see, the implications of darkness

As people told stories of places they feared, the theme of visibility emerged. For some, like B15, they described this in the literal sense of darkness. The woods *‘look so beautiful, it’s day time. I would walk through here because I can see. But when evening comes, it gets dark, a whole other story.’* For others, like Laurie⁵⁵ above, the lack of visibility was in the context of tall grass blocking her view. Because they are each in an area that intrinsically don’t control, the woods, the loss of visibility eliminates their ability to see this unknown, preventing them from quickly processing the unknown and making it known and something you feel comfortable and part of their bounds of control.

The lack of sightlines or sunlight isn’t what makes the place feel unsafe, but rather, it’s what’s could be out of sight that stirs the imagination and causes the discomfort. For example, Sarah⁵⁶ won’t take her son to the Gwynns Falls trail, because she views it as a *‘bad area, it has needles. There will always be somebody there to dirty it up, people are so disrespectful, kids will always tear something brand new up.’* It’s not the park itself that poses the threat, but rather what surrounds the park and can come in through the park’s openings that worries her. This isn’t something that picking up trash or creating better sightlines will necessarily solve.

Instead, she prefers to drive about 30 minutes away to Patapsco State Park. Although far bigger in scale, it’s similar in aesthetic to Gwynns Falls, with features such as walking trails, woods, streams, and open manicured grass. However, it also differs in its neighborhood context, and has controls on the openings into its bounds. *‘They have state troopers there, they maintain it, you have to pay to get in it. And you know people that don’t have [the ability to pay] aren’t going to go in there, they ain’t going to have the privilege of trashing it.’* The state troopers and pay station create a boundary around the park in which

⁵⁴ Scott lives in Morrell Park, is aged 30-60, white, male (A8)

⁵⁵ Laurie lives in Cherry Hill, is 50+, black, female (B4).

⁵⁶ Sarah lives in Morrell Park, is aged 20-40, white, female (A7)

she now has confidence in her knowledge that she knows what types of people she might see in the park, she doesn't have to worry about people jumping out from behind the woods, because even if she doesn't know them personally, she knows what type of person they might be, and it's a type of person that she wants to associate with.

In addition to concern over safety, Sarah's⁵⁷ point about needles and wanting to go to Patapsco State Park also reflects a class argument. There's something underlying her statements that she doesn't want to be associated with people who leave needles lying around. Her husband, walking in as we finished our interview, made this explicit, whispering to me – *'I never imagined I would live in a neighborhood like this. We're only here because her parents are not doing so well.'*

Similar to this, Georgia⁵⁸ is scared of the woods in the city but not the country. Within a week of moving to Morrell Park, she saw a young man walking naked on the street, watched somebody try to break into her neighbor's truck, and somebody else try to break into a different neighbor's RV. So she knows that there are people in her immediate surroundings that make her feel uncomfortable, and if she went into the local woods, they could also be there. If she *'can't see what it is, [she] feels unsafe.'* But in the country, her sister lives down a dirt road, a mile from the closest Wawa and two miles from Giant, with only twenty houses on the road. Walking through the woods at her sister's house, she is confident that there aren't people she doesn't want to see walking around, so she isn't scared of walking through the woods, and can enjoy *'a walk through the woods [where] the sun comes through the trees on the ground.'* It's not that you can't get the same aesthetic of the woods next to Morrell Park, but rather that the people and surrounding environment have changed. Improved sightlines through the woods aren't going to change this in Morrell Park, it's going to take changing the neighborhood itself. Georgia is scared of woods in the city but not in the country for this very reason. She knows that there are people she finds crazy in her neighborhood, but she hasn't seen animals in the country.

The contradiction of fear, the relationship between the familiar and the feared

During the course of the interviews, a relationship between the familiar and the feared and the implications of that on one's enjoyment of space emerged. In order to utilize a space, people need to feel a sense of control over that space.

Familiarity	Feared?	Enjoyment	Example
Unfamiliar	You fear it	Don't Enjoy	Project existential fears onto space [A11, B7, B11]
	You don't fear it	Don't Enjoy	Can't benefit because unknown
Familiar	You fear it	Don't Enjoy	Unable to mitigate risk below threshold
		Enjoy	Adrenaline or able to mitigate risk [S1ish, B13]
	You don't fear it	Don't Enjoy	The golden ticket
		Enjoy	e.g. don't like soccer

⁵⁷ Sarah lives in Morrell Park, is aged 20-40, white, female (A7)

⁵⁸ Georgia lives in Morrell Park, is aged 30-60, white, female (A6).

IIb) Why do individuals elect to overcome their fears, and if they are motivated to overcome, how do they do so?

Risk-reward framework

In listening to people describe reasons why they feared a place, it's easy to write off fear as an insurmountable barrier to the use of urban public spaces. But, during the course of the conversations, interviewees would often tell me the story of the time they spent in a place in a place they had previously told me they feared. These were moments in which they elected to overcome their fears. Sure enough, we can all think of times when we felt compelled to overcome a fear. The question then becomes, what does it take to overcome a fear?

Their stories of overcoming fears suggested a risk-reward framework, in which they were willing to overcome a fear if the reward was great enough, as seen in Fig 5. The far right side highlights that as things become more of necessity, the risk one is willing to take increases faster than it otherwise would. This aligns with the theoretical literature that suggests if somebody is driven by a pull motivation, they have limited ways to achieve their goal, meaning they would be willing to take on more risk to achieve that.



Fig. 5: As the reward increases, people are more willing to overcome their fear to do an activity.

Pulled to overcome, why do people overcome their fears?

1. To impress somebody

While walking on the Middle Branch trail, I spoke with a middle-aged black couple, who had just moved to Dundalk and travelled to the Middle Branch via light rail. His friend had first showed him this trail 2-3 years ago, and he was now taking his partner on a date for a walk along this path at sunset. They were dressed well, he wearing a top hat and red silk collared shirt, while she had put make-up on. In the course of the conversation, they were trying to figure out how to get back to the light rail. When I explained that the path back to the light rail went through the woods, she exclaimed '*oh no, I'm not doing that. I'm afraid of snakes.*' He assured her it would be fine, and she didn't want to retrace their steps, so was willing to give the walk through the woods a try to impress him on their date. Because the reward was great, she was motivated to learn more about the woods in order to mitigate her risk. She asked several questions of me to better understand how long the

path went through the woods, to help her better make the determination if the woods were worth it for the enjoyment of their date.

2. To survive the end of the world

When Roger⁵⁹, who had never been camping in the woods, was offered a chance to go with his friends, who had also never been camping, he decided against it because he just didn't think he would be comfortable with all the bugs, animals, and the general unknown. But in describing his thought process, he said the reason he would have gone was *'because if everything was going to shut down, it would be nice to know how to take care of yourself, but hopefully everything doesn't shut down.'* For him, it would take the ultimate scenario in risk, collapse of society, to make him face his fear of the (his ignorance of the) woods and the animals associated with it. Other than that, his fear of bugs and the unknown of the woods trumps any potential benefit, even though his friends arranged the trip and were equally as inexperienced. Perhaps if his friends had more experience, he would have felt more safe.

3. To see something she's never seen before

Jo⁶⁰ is well-travelled. She's been to most states in the United States, but had never travelled internationally. Her daughter told her she needs to get out of the US, which required flying, one of her deepest fears. If this was a flight to something she had seen before, she likely would not have elected to travel, blocked by her fear. Instead, the promise of visiting a place in the Dominican Republic, which turned out to be the first time she ever saw blue water, not the misty brown of the Inner Harbor, was enough of a reward to create an internal desire to overcome her fear of flying.

As Jo describes, *"My daughter was like mom, you need to travel outside of the United States, and I was like, I've got to get on a plane? This was during the time when planes were being crashed, and you're like no. And I said I'm going to do it, I'm going to go to [Punta Cana, Dominican Republic]. I'm in the air and I'm looking down, and the closer we got to Punta Cana, the more breathtaking it was. When we actually got there and touched down, I had to stand there. Because I've been to a lot of places in the United States, but when I seen that, I've never seen blue water before. I saw blue water for miles, it was the most beautifulest thing I ever seen."*

4. To attend a special event

Sarah⁶¹ and Karen⁶² can't stand going to the Tolley Street neighborhood or park, even though both grew up going there. Teenagers use the park today, marking it as theirs, by leaving trash, peeing on the playground equipment, burning holes in the slides. Others leave behind drug paraphernalia. This is a change that they first noticed 5-10 years ago and their negative perception of this neighborhood has persisted since then. As Sarah describes, *"I can't stand the place. I hate to touch anything there, gum everywhere, pretty sure people piss on the playground area, knowing kids play there, so unsanitary. Trash*

⁵⁹ Roger lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-50, black, male (B2)

⁶⁰ Jo lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-60, black female (B11).

⁶¹ Sarah lives in Morrell Park, is aged 20-40, white, female (A7)

⁶² Karen lives in Morrell Park, is aged 30-60, white, female (A9)

everywhere. *[The only time I take my son there is] for fireworks, that's it. I was like don't touch anything, get the hell over here."*

It's interesting to note that both Sarah and Karen went out of their way to tell me that this event did not change their perception of the park, but that they were willing to be in an uncomfortable space because of the importance of the 4th of July event. Karen describes, *"for the fourth of July, we went down there, of course we didn't go inside the park, we enjoyed that, we did that when we were kids... Matter of fact, I ran into an old friend of mine, talking about the neighborhood, growing up, how good it was. But to go inside the park and look around and see if it's cleaned up or anything, I haven't done that. We were sitting right down on the corner, sidewalk on the street, not exactly into the park, watching the fireworks."*

The reward of the fireworks and socializing with old friends offered the attraction of tradition and glamor, making it worth the cost of spending time there. Exposure through this event, however, was not enough to change their perception of the neighborhood.

5. To sneak out to get something you're not supposed to have

The last time Matthew⁶³ was in the woods was when he was in Job Corps, a youth job training program in which you live in a dorm-like setting while taking career training classes. The Baltimore Job Corps campus is located in the middle of the woods. He is scared of the woods, hoping that *"something won't come out. I seen foxes, deers, coons, they used to have that up there."* While cooped up in the dorms of Job Corps, he would occasionally want to go to the store, which required sneaking out and running through the woods to get to the store. *"I was scared for my life. Ran right through the woods."* He was scared of the woods, but was willing to overcome this fear in order to get something special at the store.

6. To save time

7. To enjoy the fear itself

In each of these instances, their experience did not necessarily change their perception of the threat of their fear, but the high reward offered them incentive to take on higher risk or to learn how to mitigate their risk from the underlying threat they felt.

Protection, not avoidance. How people learn to overcome their fears?

Interviewees offered three methods in which they overcame fear – through knowledge, going with a second person, and relying on external cues of familiarity.

Knowledge

When shown a picture of a nearby woods, interviewees would often exclaim that they don't go there, they're afraid of snakes. Like their fear of the homeless or other crimes, this isn't rooted in actual victimization or direct experiences, but is representative of their fear of the unknown.

As Tina⁶⁴ describes, this isn't insurmountable. She and her neighbors have been

⁶³ Matthew lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 20-30, black, male (B13)

⁶⁴ Tina lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 30-60, black, female (B7)

seeing snakes in the woods adjacent to their house. This is a new thing for them, they grew up in these woods as kids, played in them, and knew them well. They don't know snakes well, or at all, for that matter, other than that snakes are a danger. In response to this threat, they called the Health Department to take care of the snakes. When the Health Department arrived, not only did they implement measures to 'exterminate' the snakes from the area, but explained to her what types of snakes she was seeing and that they wouldn't harm her. This gave Tina at least some rules for protecting herself from the snakes, "*They won't mess with you, but if they brown or gold, then you run. That's good to know. Because I'm running anyways, even from a worm, I'm running. I ain't kidding. I'm running, running.*"

The knowledge adjusted her underlying perception of the threat from snakes. Although her plan is still to run, she knows she is running from an uncomfortable situation, rather than an unknown and existential threat to her existence. In effect, this knowledge has given her back control and use of the grass behind her house.

Alice⁶⁵ is a board member of the Cherry Hill Urban Garden only because the late president asked her to do so in her honor, not because she likes getting dirty or spending time in the garden. This distaste for the garden, she explains, is due to her fear of snakes. "*They said they have garden snakes, I think I would die if one had come in, so I'm not walking through the flowers.*" When pressed on where this fear arose, she replied she didn't know anybody who's been bitten by a snake, but her father always feared them. For her, it ultimately comes down to the '*fear that you just don't know if it's poisonous or what if you die.*' To Alice, snakes symbolize a literal existential fear, they could kill her. And this fear, this lack of knowledge of which snakes are poisonous or not, blocks her from enjoying time in the woods that she says look nice, but that '*she wouldn't go through.*'

Go with a second person

Katie⁶⁶ has the personality that her father describes as '*most people fly around the flame, you fly straight through.*' She has a naturally more risk tolerant personality, and is able to develop plans to mitigate any potential threats. '*I'm afraid of snakes, I'm conscious of that when I'm on the trail, get your heads out of the cloud for a minute. This is not Disneyland, everything is not controlled, we know that's not true... I have had snakes laying out in the middle of the trail, it's wild, and it's the same thing, you have to treat this like nature, you stomp a little bit, people who are not nature lovers are not going to do this anyway, I go with them and they'll do it, they'll trust me.*' Not everybody is comfortable with snakes, but by going with [Sheila], they trust her, and are willing to overcome their fear of snakes, because if they happen to see one, they trust her to protect them.

Cues of familiarity

A trail signals to an individual that somebody has been into the woods and returned, safely. For Gerald⁶⁷, the woods near his house growing up had a trail through them that people used to cut through to get to the shopping center. But importantly, the trail had two

⁶⁵ Alice lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 50+, black, female (B10)

⁶⁶ Katie lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-60, black, female (B17).

⁶⁷ Gerald lives in Chery Hill, is 50+, black, male (B6)

cues to signify that these woods are safe. There were often people on the trail, and from the woods, you could see houses in the neighborhood. Importantly to Gerald, for both the people and the houses, these were of people you knew well, *“I wasn’t scared, because we got houses around, I mean you got people that know everybody. Now, don’t walk through there in the dark unless you’re with somebody, but everybody knew everybody. Somebody came this way, somebody came the other way, everybody knew everybody. It wasn’t a problem.”* It’s the social cue of belonging that matters more than the sightline, here he is able to know who is within the boundary of unexpected visitors. Because they are all people he knows, then he has no reason to fear them.

Discussion

For further discussion, will investigate the sociolinguistic use of the word fear, and how designers can design for fear.

“My friend Jelani, who came up the same as me, once said the he used to think of traveling as a pointless luxury, like blowing the rent check on a pink suit. And I felt much the same, then. I was bemused at your mother’s dreams of Paris...But now your mother had gone and done it, and when she returned her eyes were dancing with all the possibilities out there, not just for her but for you and for me. It is quite ridiculous how the feeling spread... I wish, when I was back in that French class, that I had connected the conjugations, verbs, and gendered nouns to something grander...”

“The date of my departure, I sat in a restaurant with your mother, who’d shown me so much. I told her, ‘I’m afraid.’... She just listened and held my hand. And that night, I boarded a starship. The starship punched out into the dark, punched through the sky, punched out past west Baltimore, punched out past The Mecca, past New York, past any language and every spectrum known to me.”

- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*

Section 4: The Value of Away

Section 4: The Value of Away

In the words of David⁶⁸, without 'getting out', all one knows is '*liquor stores, drug dealers, and worse, default is alcoholics.*' The challenge with pocket parks and other small scale efforts are that they don't create opportunities to see something you haven't seen before, meet somebody you haven't met before, or feel something you haven't felt before. Not only that, but if the scale of these efforts is not large enough, then it will wind up reflecting the existing context of the neighborhood, without fundamentally changing the perceptions of any of that neighborhood's inhabitants. Instead, what's needed are vectors of new experiences, whether that's pathways to bring people into the neighborhood or pathways for those in the neighborhood to get out.

This section explores this notion by asking the following questions:

- What is the role that expectations play in driving enjoyment of an experience?
- Where do people want to get away?
- How do people get away for the first time? How do they discover a place that is unfamiliar and/or unknown?

What is the role that expectations play in driving enjoyment of an experience?

'It was just too isolated; you know what I mean? There's green grass and there's trees, but where you're out walking, you don't want to do isolation.'

When somebody does an activity, they have a set of expectations about their envisioned fulfillment from that activity. The gap between expectation and fulfillment drives enjoyment, this is regarded as the expectation-disconfirmation model in the field of consumer behavior (Oliver 1989). So when Laurie⁶⁹ goes for a walk along the Middle Branch trail, she is not looking to find isolation, instead she is looking for a comfortable walk. So when she finds isolation, this gap from expectations causes her discomfort and prevents her from enjoying the space. However, when asked for the moment in which she felt most isolated, she tells the story of her time on a cruise ship. '*I was looking through a porthole, there was nothing, it was isolated, peaceful, nothing came by but the birds. There's nothing more isolating than that I don't think.*'

Why is isolation in this context associated with peace and beauty, whereas isolation in the context of a waterfront trail by her house associated with fear and discomfort? She suggests that it lies in her sense of control over her situation. On the boat, '*the only place you can go is where it takes you, but when you in the park, you got choices, that's the difference.*' This appears contradictory – you would think additional individual control would give one a greater sense of security and comfort, and hence having no control over the boat would make one uncomfortable. But the key word in her story is the idea of choices – in the woods, she envisions having to make choices because of unforeseen situations arising. She doesn't actually know what to expect there because she doesn't have control over the boundaries of these woods. In her mind, anybody could come across her

⁶⁸ David lives in Catonsville, but fishes at Middle Branch in Cherry Hill. He is aged 30-60, black, male. (S13)

⁶⁹ Laurie lives in Cherry Hill, is 50+, black, female (B4).

path. Whereas on the boat, she is confident in the boundary of possible situations – there is nothing surrounding her, and she knows that no strangers will come across her path, because the boat has no other options.

This story is important to ground the desire to get away with a reminder that getting away is enjoyable in as much it's an expected result.

Where do people want to get away?

When people want to get away, they are looking for one of two things: 1) an escape to the safe or familiar or 2) exposure to the inspiring/unfamiliar.

1) Escape to the safe or familiar

These nostalgic/safe places are a refuge from the craziness of their day to day life. Below are examples of these places that arose during the interviews.

Local woods as refuge of healing

Jo⁷⁰ sees the trail through the woods along Middle Branch as her refuge. She discovered these woods by accident – she had gotten on the wrong bus, the 29, which just loops within Cherry Hill, and saw the trail along the water from her window. At the time, she was battling a cancerous tumor and had been given a companion dog from her son:

'At first, I couldn't even breathe, because the tumor was pushing on my lungs so I couldn't get air, so they had me on steroids and asthma pumps, but I learned to control it for me, not the way they wanted... [I would] spend every day at the park, sit by the water, let him run around, that's when [my dog, Prince] got to know what a fish was in the park. After that, I got better and better. [In 2011], they only gave me a year to live. It's 2016. I had to do it for me, it worked.

Today, she considers her home dangerous and uncomfortable. She doesn't feel comfortable leaving her home for fear of somebody breaking in, although she recently figured out a way to attach bars to her windows in a way that is less easy for people to break in. There's a bullet hole in her living room window. She constantly has to shoo people off her porch, whether they are dealing drugs or hiding from the police. This is in contrast to her refuge in the woods, in which she feels completely safe. If she *'could have a tent with running water and all my appliances and all that, I would live [in the woods] before she lives [where she does today]*.

For her and others, like Charlotte⁷¹, their access to their place of refuge is limited not by actual distance or bus lines, but by the neighborhood conditions that surround them. Jo doesn't feel safe leaving her home unattended because of a fear that others may break-in – she has watched this happen to her neighbors. For Charlotte, she won't leave her home in West Baltimore unless the bus is literally outside of her door, because she fears for her safety waiting too long outdoors at the bus stop. She is pregnant, and comes to Cherry Hill for her doctor visits, and finds Cherry Hill a respite from the violence prevalent in her West Baltimore neighborhood. Cherry Hill, as a quiet neighborhood and as the location of her

⁷⁰ Jo lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-60, black, female (B11).

⁷¹ Charlotte lives in West Baltimore but comes to Cherry Hill to visit the doctor. She's 20-30, black, female (S24)

doctor's office, is a place of literal healing and care for her, when she is able to leave her home and reach here.



Fig 6. Benches overlooking the Middle Branch in Cherry Hill. These are the benches where Jo would sit, let her dog run around, and heal.

The mall as place of refuge

Similar to Jo and Charlotte, Veronica⁷² is very uncomfortable in her Morrell Park neighborhood. Somebody's stolen her trash can, even though her gate is locked. She is no longer willing to walk outside of her house. *'If I don't like the feel of the atmosphere that I'm in, no, I'm not going to [walk] there. I'm going to get in my car and go where I want to go, I don't even [walk] to the deli anymore.'* To escape, she likes to go to the Glen Burnie (Fig. 7) or Security mall.

Either mall provides two things she lacks in her immediate surroundings – people she wants to be associated with and an environment in which she feels comfortable. And underlying both of those, it's physically and aesthetically different from her immediate surroundings. *'I love going to the mall, walking outside early in the morning before the sun hits. I was walking with two older ladies a couple weeks ago, and listened to a lot of conversations they had, I like to get knowledge. One of the ladies called me yesterday, and she said, 'oh Veronica, I just wanted to make sure you are ok.' And I enjoyed that.'*

Why does she have to drive 30 minutes away from her neighborhood to this mall? Jo is able to walk along the path less than a ten minute walk from her house, Veronica has the

⁷² Veronica lives in Morrell Park, is 30-60, black, female (A3).

Gwynns Falls trail less than a ten minute walk from her house. For one, she didn't know about the Gwynns Falls trail. *'You don't see a lot of people walking on it, you don't hear that this is the place to go, I'm hearing this from you now, but I've never been there, don't know what it's about.'* When showed a picture of it, she remarked it was 'really nice' and that she would *'want to sit for a minute, having the water there, and being comfortable, me and my husband, having a little romantic outing or something,'* The other aspect is simpler – it's hot during the day, and going to the mall allows her to benefit from air conditioning. However, she still occasionally elects to go to the mall over the Planet Fitness, which is closer, for the social benefits from her relocation.

Given the downturn she perceives in Morrell Park, she misses *'being in a place where [she] can enjoy [herself] and feel safe. I feel safe in my home because not only do I have surveillance cameras and an alarm system, I have good neighbors, we look out for one another.'* Having a car allows her to escape to a place like the mall. She wouldn't otherwise feel safe waiting for a bus or walking to a local park. So in a sense the mall at Glen Burnie is more accessible for her than her neighborhood parks because she does not consider the local parks an option for use. Even if the parks themselves were clean, she wants to be in a place she feels safe, and a place with people who aren't like those who surround her – she wants to escape her surroundings, and no marginal improvement in the maintenance of Tolley St park would address these issues.



Fig. 7 The interior of the Glen Burnie mall. Veronica enjoys going to the mall because it offers her a different experience from the constant fear she is encompassed by within Morrell Park. She enjoys the women she meets there, and the air conditioning is very helpful in the hot Baltimore summer.

For each of these three women, they fear their immediate surroundings, and are in need of a place of refuge. For those who are comfortable where they are, regardless of any 'objective' standard, there is less of a need to get out or get away. Those who are used to the violence or drugs, or those who are part of it, don't feel the need to get away because they don't fear these surroundings, they see it as normal. As Jo⁷³ remarks, '*you can't be afraid of your environment because you're in it.*' If Jo considers her surroundings as her environment, if she sees herself as part of the neighborhood, then she has effectively agreed to be comfortable with the surroundings. On the other hand, if she works to not accept her surroundings as part of her environment, as she and these other two women have, then she has an outlet to leave the surrounding to a more comfortable place for herself.

Local woods as a respite from the day

Sitting on the edge of a former bridge support, with his feet dangling over the edge above the stream, Jason⁷⁴ was on his lunch break from work at the nearby scrap yard. Each day, it takes him seven minutes to retrieve lunch from his car and microwave it, leaving him 23 minutes to find peace of mind from the creek (Fig. 8). Lying next to him was a bottle of blue Gatorade, speakers playing music quietly, and a pack of cigarettes. The creek reminded him of the 'stanky river' near his childhood home on West Cold Spring Road where he caught crayfish with his friends. The stanky river was deeper than the foot-deep creek he was sitting at, but he had heard stories of people drowning there, so he never went swimming there.

He knew this spot well, he knew of a big beaver that occasionally came by, as well as the ducks that would fly through the woods. But he doesn't tell his coworkers about this spot, he does his own thing and doesn't care about them. They don't come here, nor does he see many people come back here. When he first saw me, he assumed I was the police. The 'trail' is an abandoned road, complete with fire hydrants and wired streetlights that have long since become overgrown.

For Jason, this offers a peace of mind from working at the scrap yard, and he clearly values his alone time. The woods he's in have no marked trail other than a herd trail created by him. It wasn't surprising to also learn he does like to fish, but on Saturday mornings at 5 or 6 am because that's when the fish are at their best.

⁷³ Jo lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-60, black, female (B11).

⁷⁴ Jason lives in East Baltimore but works in the scrapyard on the road between Cherry Hill and Morrell Park. He's 20-30, black, male (S25).



Fig. 8 The creek where Jason eats his lunch every day. This used to be a road – you can see the telephone lines along the road, and further down there still exists a fire hydrant. The creek was orange on this day for reasons neither Jason nor I knew. It was a color he had never seen before in the creek, and wanted to send a note to the local Fox News channel about it.

Just as sitting by the running water offered refuge to Jason, water also offers refuge to Dawn⁷⁵ and Scott⁷⁶. For Dawn, if she ‘*ever wants to clear [her] head, [she] goes somewhere where [she] knows the surrounding is a lot better, you know like a lot of nature. The water, it’s a calmer scenery.*’ Having been taken to these places of calm water by her daughter (see her story about youtube below), she is able to imagine herself at those places when she physically can’t make it. This familiarity is a key advantage of her experience of going away to something, she is able to mentally travel there again and again once she returns. ‘*At night, if I can’t sleep, I put on the sound of water, it soothes me. My daughter has an app on her phone, nature sounds.*’ For Scott, he views water as having a mind of its own, which he then can use to transport his own mind. ‘*I just can sit there, lay in it, for hours at a time, listen to it, ain’t got to see it. Feel it and listen to it. It’s got a mind of its own.*’

Space as nostalgic place

For others, like Charles⁷⁷, when he wants to get away, he prefers visiting a family

⁷⁵ Dawn lives in Morrell Park, is aged 20-50, white, female. She has two kids under the age of 10 (A5)
⁷⁶ Scott lives in Morrell Park, is aged 30-60, white, male (A8)
⁷⁷ Charles lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 20-40, black, male (B5)

farm in St. Marys, where he can spend time with his family and reminisce about the old days, *'just talking and reminiscing about old things, drink beers, eat plenty of food, meet some of my other family that I didn't meet.'* At the time of the interview, he hadn't been in about two months, which he considered to be a long time.

Charles grew up as a black male in the heyday of Cherry Hill's gang wars, and only 10 or 15 of the kids he grew up are still around. The rest of them are *'locked up or dead.'* He and his father were both laid off from the same job, a job his dad had held for 30 years, when ownership was passed on to the owner's son and he fired everybody. He only has an 11th grade education, and hasn't been able to complete the additional educational requirements. Charles lost his mother two years ago to a rare brain cancer, and since then he *'hasn't really been doing nothing. I've been getting over that little situation, kinda hard.'*

He now lives with his dad in a shared apartment, so having a distant place both physically, and a nostalgic place of memories of childhood, provides him an escape and refuge from his current struggles. While he finds peace walking along the water down the street from his house, it doesn't serve the same function as the family farm does in terms of providing an escape.

Virtual

For Alice⁷⁸, casinos serve as her entrainment outlet. She doesn't consider herself a garden person. She was asked to serve on the board of the Cherry Hill Urban Garden only because the leader passed, and was willing to help on one condition – *'I'm not digging up and getting dirty.'* She also doesn't consider herself a country person because she *'did not like long car rides. [They] had to stop the car and I had to get out and walk a bit. Never liked it.'* And yet, she takes the bus to the Delaware casino and has been on a plane to New Orleans and Las Vegas, despite her dislike for travel. Given this, she goes to the Horseshoe Casino in Baltimore, because she *'likes the noise and the lights and stuff. For me, it's a little entertainment.'* She goes with two friends once or twice a month. For Alice, casinos likely do provide a restorative environment more-so than any 'nature' setting because she just doesn't enjoy being outdoors.

Be away from electronics

For others, like Tiffany⁷⁹, they find that electronics get in the way of family time. She likes parks because they offer a respite from electronics, an electronics free zone one could say, where she can take her kids and have personal family time. Without electronics, the park becomes, *'a place to sit and be cool, the atmosphere where its nobody but me and the kids and we can get one on one time, as most of time, when you're in the house, you have people in and out, or they watching TV, or on their phones, so going out to park, no phones, no nothing. Leave all that in the house, just sit and talk.'*

Get away from bad influences

When Albert⁸⁰ was a kid, he and his family grew up by Murphy Homes, which by the

⁷⁸ Alice lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 50+, black, female (B10)

⁷⁹ Tiffany lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 20-50, black, and female (B15)

⁸⁰ Albert lives in Morrell Park, is aged 50+, black, male (A2)

1990s had become one of Baltimore's worst drug markets (Pelton and Oakes 1999). *"When [me and my brothers] started getting rough and bad, my mom put us on a bus and shipped us to New Mexico, with my brother. That was the country."* After leaving New Mexico, he served in the military, and returned to Baltimore where he found himself *'dabbing in drugs'* again. To escape the rampant drug environment he found himself re-immersed in, he ended up returning to New Mexico to live with his brother again. The only reason he returned to Baltimore was because he *'wrecked his car, and it wasn't no transportation, and you need a car to get to work, the nearest town was like 70 miles from where we lived. I mean my brother could take me around, but I was a grown man, so I need my own transportation, so I came back to Baltimore, got a job, and I been here ever since.'*

This response to the pervasive sense of fear he found himself surrounded by in Baltimore led him to undertake the ultimate in avoidance, he relocated across the country to an environment about as opposite as one could find from the projects in Baltimore.

Given the variety in places of refuge, the question then becomes is are we asking the right question when we ask if nature is better at restoration than other landscapes? Or should we be really trying to figure out what is restorative for each person, and tailor to that. Is nature inherently a better refuge than a video game?

2) Exposure to the inspiring and unfamiliar

The other value in getting away is to see something you haven't seen before, meet somebody you haven't met before, or feel something you haven't felt before. The stories below offer examples of each.

'I want to see something I ain't seen before.'

Charles⁸¹, who's background was described in the previous section, has experienced a lot in his life, but in a very specific place. As a kid, he would ride with his dad to paint sites, and enjoyed seeing different landscapes. Perhaps because of this, he is trying to get his CDL so he can drive as well as a truck driver, harkening back to his childhood days. But he can't – he can't get his driver's license until he pays child support, but he isn't able to get a job to afford the child support payments until he gets his driver's license.

It shouldn't be a surprise then that he wants to see something he's never seen before, he's ready for a change of scenery. What's interesting is what he says he most wants to do – swim with great white sharks. Now, this is a gentleman who is terrified of snakes, and doesn't feel comfortable in the woods because of all the animals present. He *'wants to go to wildness and see a, it's crazy, see a great white shark. I want to get in a cage and see it, you in their domain so they going to attack you and they mistake you for a seal or whatever cuz you have a certain look.'* He's seen sharks in the aquarium, that's not the same thing. And he's seen deer and opossums all the time. *'I want to see something I ain't seen before, blood in the water, that's interesting to me. I went to Kings Dominion and bungee jumped, crazy stuff like that.'*

How did he develop his interest in sharks? He watched Planet Earth. He also has a little shark book.

⁸¹ Charles lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 20-40, black, male (B5)

For others, they want to meet somebody they haven't met before.

Growing up, Tiffany's⁸² mother was largely a homebody. When she was ten or eleven, her grandmother came for a visit. *'She was like all you do is sit in the house all summer, you need to find something to do.'* So she took her down to the shores of Middle Branch, a ten-minute walk, and told her, *'ok now we going to get some rocks and toss rocks.'* After several visits, Tiffany told her grandmother she was tired of throwing rocks. Upon hearing this, her grandmother responded, *'ok well we can get on the 64 and ride that downtown.'* Tiffany didn't know what downtown was – her mother had only taken her shopping at a particular mall but never let them wander outside its boundaries. *'We went to Lexington market, and that was the best thing ever (Fig. 9). This is whole new different thing. My grandma was just well known everywhere, worked with welfare rights groups. People would walk up to her and hug her, and I was like I want that kind of love, I want my kids to feel that when I grow up.'* When Tiffany asked her grandmother how come everybody knew her, her grandmother responded, *'you can't just stay in one area, you go out to other areas and learn how other areas work and bring it back to your community and make your community better. By 12, I was catching the bus, going places myself.'*

For Tiffany, this opportunity to meet other people she hadn't met before proved to be a driving force for her life. It was kickstarted by her grandmother, who proved to her it was ok to leave the boundaries of what she considered home. By expanding her boundary, she could meet people who weren't like her, and bring new ideas back to her community. It gave her a purpose in life. And it's a purpose she has passed on to her son. Through a church group, her son went on college visits to Towson and Morgan State. *'When we was at Towson, they let the kids play basketball with them, and one of the coaches pulled me up and said wow this kid is pretty good, can I talk to him for a minute? He talked to him and he was like stay in school, get good grades, so you can get to college, and ever since then, he's been looking at different colleges.'*

⁸² Tiffany lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 20-50, black, and female (B15)



Fig. 9 Lexington Market. When Tiffany's grandmother took her here for the first time as a child, she declared it to be the 'best thing ever.'

Others want to feel something they haven't felt before

Adam⁸³ is a video gamer. He has a core group of friends, but outdoor activities are not necessarily their cup of tea. He doesn't associate with about 70% of the student body, is concerned by the amount of trash in his neighborhood, and is largely content playing video games with his video game nerd friends. Video games give him a sense of power and control that is unachievable for him in his day to day life. When he's stressed, he likes to turn to a video game that's easy to play, one that he 'doesn't get mad at that much, just makes me calm and relaxed, like minecraft sometimes, build whatever you want.' Video games give him *'the ability to control someone, who can do somethings that you as a human sometimes can't, and some games where you can fly around. I play Grand Theft Auto a lot, and break the law whenever you want, I would never do that in real life, get in trouble, but to just have the power, like just a small bit of power.'*

In his normal life, it doesn't sound as if he feels like he has a lot of control over it. Playing a video game gives him that control. And this type of achievement translates to real life. He said he could accomplish that feeling from video games when he completed a big project for his aunt. *'I helped my aunt on construction, stuff growing out back all over our shed, I had to cut it down, pull it out. It gave me the same feeling [as when playing a video game], had to work for what you wanted, and it was pretty hot that day.'*

⁸³ Adam lives in Morrell Park, is 18-25, white, male. (A4).

Driving her car out to State Line

Francis⁸⁴ 'go-to place' is the top of the Maryland line, where 'nothing is there.' To get away, she likes to drive the two or so hours to the top of the line, where she can '*exit to the right, and there's a little run down shack. I can park right there, and sit.*' While she won't get out of the car, she will roll down her windows. She drives far enough away so that she knows it's country, which is distinctly different from Baltimore City. '*First and foremost, the streets of Baltimore City are no good for your car. You can tell when you get to the country, that's enough right there. My car loves it, the tires like ohhhhh.*' There are plenty of places within Baltimore City with similar views or aesthetic, but none that she knows with confidence that she won't run into anybody she knows. '*I might see him, he might see me. We trying to get away.*' And even as she wants to get away, she doesn't want to leave her comfort zone too much – she won't exit her car. She is happy to just sit with the windows open and relax. From May to August, she'll make this trek about 10 times.

In a sense, the transportation to a different place is the trick Olmsted attempts to create for people in city parks with the pastoral landscapes. He recognizes the desire to get away and feel like you are in some place different. But if you are Francis and trying to not only get away aesthetically, but also to get to a place where you are sure you won't run into anybody you know, then physical distance to the place becomes important. For people who don't necessarily want to associate with people they live near, then this effect is magnified.

It's as if we were living in a very, very wealth comfortable neighborhood

Growing up in a family that travelled outside of Baltimore allowed Greg⁸⁵ to imagine that even though he lived in Cherry Hill, he could imagine that he was '*living at Oyster Harbor in New York or living at Annapolis because I wasn't in the dense part of Cherry Hill. You couldn't tell me I didn't live in a very, very wealthy comfortable neighborhood.*' Cherry Hill is not a very, very wealthy neighborhood by traditional economic metrics. But by having experiences of other neighborhoods similarly situated on the waterfront, with an abundance of amenities like a pool and sports fields, allowed Greg to imagine himself elsewhere instead of within the confines of his neighborhood. For school, he was also bussed across the City for additional exposure.

How do people get away for the first time? How do they discover a place that is unfamiliar and/or unknown?

Introduction

As I finished up my interview with Roger⁸⁶, his wife, Jennifer⁸⁷, returned home. After listening to our conversation, she added, '*You know when I walk, I usually like to walk on the water.*' Roger had previously explained to me that he and his wife liked to walk on the sidewalk, not next to the water, because he didn't like the terrain or elevation of the path along the water. His wife continued, '*I go down to the water to cleanse my mind. Very nice*

⁸⁴ Francis lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 40-60, black, female (B14)

⁸⁵ Greg lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 40-60, black, male (B12)

⁸⁶ Roger lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-50, black, male (B2)

⁸⁷ Jennifer is Roger's wife, is 30-50, black, female. I did not interview her beyond this conversation.

path, very nice long path through the whole park. I'll walk all the way to the gas station. Very nice. The whole thing is flat.' His wife's comment surprised him, causing him to remark, *'Oh it is?'* and they proceeded to engage in a conversation of discovery:

'The whole thing is flat?'

'Oh it is?'

'Ya'

'Huh'

'The whole thing is flat'

'I didn't know that'

'There ain't no hills'

'Maybe I should venture down there'

'Ya the whole thing is flat, it's real nice. It's right on the water, can't beat it, it clears your whole mind.'

'Oh...I didn't know that'

This is an obvious point, but in order to get away to a place, somebody must know it, it must be familiar. How particular places become familiar is not a logical pattern, instead it's often a series of coincidences. People project their ideas onto the unknown, creating barriers and excuses for them not to go. In this conversation, Roger and Jennifer often walk together throughout Cherry Hill, but they stay on the sidewalk. Jennifer will walk on her own by the path – she knows the path and views it as a place to get away and clear her mind. But despite their marriage and shared walks along a path less than 100 yards from the path along the water, he didn't know of this path.

If Roger isn't aware of this opportunity to get away and his spouse of several years is intimately aware of it and its benefits, then how is anybody else supposed to learn of places to get away? Over the course of additional interviews, the idea of vectors emerged, in that the precursor to being able to have a place to get away, is that you need to know about that place, and know what to do there.

Over the past couple decades, efforts have been made to increase park access to folks, this model perhaps best typified by the Trust for Public Land's park score. Recently, groups have begun to realize that it's not just about access, if you build it they will come, but that you need to teach people not only how to use these spaces, but that they exist at all.

It's helpful to think of this as providing vectors of opportunities. Examples of this include San Francisco's mobile trailhead and the Outdoor Education Network's youth leadership program. These vectors come in three forms, as laid out below: 1) those that both take you there and teach you, 2) those that only take you there, and 3) those that only teach you.

1) Take you there and teach you –

These are trips organized by community groups and others in which you go with somebody to somewhere new, and they also teach you how to spend time in the type of space. These vectors come in the form of community groups like Drum and Bugle Corps or camp, as well as friends and family.

Community groups like the Drum and Bugle Corps are excuses for kids to go to other parts of the city and participate in parades where they are center of attention. At the age of

two, Laurie's⁸⁸ grand baby *'walked the entire parade to downtown. Kurt Schmoke, [the mayor at the time], said I gotta shake your hand little one because she did a beautiful job, she marched from Cherry Hill to downtown.'* Laurie's other kids also partook in community activities, her daughter played the xylophone, and another kid was a cheerleader. These groups would take the kids out of town for meetings and practices, giving her kids an active life, doing what *'you can do within the realm of what you have.'*

Gerald's⁸⁹ friends taught him how to crab. *'The big boys, they taught me how to crab. They the ones that told me how to put the bait on the roof at night so it get funky.'* It's tricks like this that make doing an activity fun because it gives you the 'inside scoop.' When Gerald is on the dock crabbing, this tip will give him credibility among the other crabbers, he fits in. Before knowing these tips, he didn't know to notice this cue from the crabbers. As he read the cues to figure out if he should go crabbing or not, he didn't know to look for funky bait, perhaps he thought that the docks simply smelled bad because of the type of people that were there. Knowing that it's good for the chicken to smell a little funky completely changes his interpretation of an otherwise negative cue. Gerald also went to Camp Concern as a child, although his fondest memory of camp was of the drink machines, *'I had never seen a milk machine, chocolate milk machine, white milk machine, soda machine, juice machine, everything was a machine, except for food.'*

With Tiffany⁹⁰, having her grandmother show her that people outside of Cherry Hill had something to offer and could respect her in the way that respected her grandmother, opened her eyes to other parts of the city that she could go. As an adult, she tries to pass this on to the rest of the kids in the neighborhood through activities, such as taking them on bike rides. *'When I rode with the other kids, we went basically all the way downtown [on the Gwynns Falls trail]. Somebody told me it went a little further than that, but that's the farthest I wanted to go. Didn't want to take the kids too far out of zone, with other people's kids, you don't want to go too far because then they can't get back.'* With the path as an excuse to go on a bike ride, and a friendly neighbor willing to take them, these kids in Cherry Hill were able to utilize this space that they previously considered out of zone.

2) Take you there

These are activities you do in your life that expose you to new places, but don't necessarily teach you how to use these places in a new way. Examples of these include watching or playing sports, commuting to work, riding the bus – whether intentionally going somewhere new or not, going to school, doing something for a special holiday, and paths or trails.

The football or baseball field is a venue of interaction, and not just between the stripes. In Cherry Hill, the football field is the center of Saturday mornings, where many residents will *'just go down to the field and watch the kids play football, the eagles. That's pretty cool because you get to run into a lot of people you haven't seen in awhile and you see people that come from other areas, and kids get to mingle and mix with them. So when they in school or whatever, you get to 'You play for the football team, he was down there,' that's pretty cool, and the kids get to interact with all that's going on out here, a little peace is better*

⁸⁸ Laurie lives in Cherry Hill, is 50+, black, female (B4).

⁸⁹ Gerald lives in Chery Hill, is 50+, black, male (B6)

⁹⁰ Tiffany lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 20-50, black, and female (B15)

than nothing.' The football field serves as a public space that facilitates two-way interactions between different types of people that wouldn't have any reason to spend time with one another. The contrived excuse of football provides an excuse for somebody to be in an area that they otherwise wouldn't belong.

In Morrell Park, the baseball field serves as this purpose, but the Little League is not as strong as it used to be, part and parcel of why so many residents feel that the neighborhood is in decline. Current efforts to keep the neighborhood going are focusing on using Little League as a key vector in righting the ship, because of its outsize symbolic importance.

Commuting to work, or having a job that inherently involves travelling places exposes workers to new places that they may decide to return or spend time later. It's easy to ignore this 'accidental' exposure, but the act of having a job taking you to other places outside of your neighborhood is an important vector to seeing what else is possible. Roger's⁹¹ four-mile commute to his job at the United States Post Office takes him through what he considers a 'nicer neighborhood.' Because of this, he likes to play basketball at courts in this nicer neighborhood rather than the courts down the street from his house. *'It's a nicer neighborhood, it's shaded, even on hot days you can be a little cool, so I think that's why we like that one.'* Matthew⁹² attended a job training program, Job Corps, which located its dorms in the middle of woods outside of Baltimore, which was the first time he spent an extended period of time in the woods. Dawn's⁹³ mom delivered newspapers out by Camp Mead, and she would tag along as a kid, taking her out to different parts of the city. Charles⁹⁴ used to tag along when his dad would drive to his paint job sites all over the greater region. They would travel to *'different states, Virginia, and Bethesda, and all that, so I'm basically used to that. Going out and travelling, that's why I wanted a truck job.'* Van spent time in the military, which took him around the world, but largely caused him to meet people from all over the U.S. *'You deal with people all over the United States. You talk about different lifestyles, the way they was raised, grew up, things they did to get to the way they wanted to be. We all sit around, swapping, talk, man, if I was home, I do this that and whatever.'*

Wanda⁹⁵ fondly recalled the days of Super Sunday. It was an excuse to travel all over the city. *'We had the bus, the 28, Super Sunday, could ride anywhere, all day long. Gwynn Oaks Park, the carnival, every weekend we'd travel all around. Went to Dundalk, you'd learn your city on Super Sundays. Now you can really ride the bus all day long on the bus pass, so we try to teach the young people to take advantage of it.'* In an interesting irony, expanding the bus pass from Sunday to all days eliminated the special nature of Super Sunday, and with that went the excuse to do something different on Sunday because it was an opportunity to ride the bus for free that you didn't normally have. Coupled with a reduction in bus service on Sundays, using the bus as an excuse to go away is something you can no longer do in either a cultural or logistical sense.

⁹¹ Roger lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-50, black, male (B2)

⁹² Matthew lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 20-30, black, male (B13)

⁹³ Dawn lives in Morrell Park, is aged 20-50, white, female. She has two kids under the age of 10.

⁹⁴ Charles lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 20-40, black, male (B5)

⁹⁵ Wanda lives in Cherry Hill, aged 50+, black, female (B9)

When Greg⁹⁶ was in 4th grade in Cherry Hill, school was part time, with two sessions a day. His mother, a teacher, was having none of it, and wanted him to get a full day's worth of education, so she bussed him across town to another school that offered a single, full day of school. *'My family thought it was necessary for me to pay to get a full education, other people did not have the same options. I had to go all the way across town, it caused a different kind of growing up in Cherry Hill than other people.'*

Tina⁹⁷ did two things for the first time because of Mother's Day – a boat ride and went down to the Middle Branch Park with a friend. *'I never been on a boat before. I tripped out, it was funny. It was a Mother's Day present.'*

3) Teach you

In other situations, somebody tells you about an activity you should do somewhere, but isn't able to get you there. They serve as the inspiration or adviser, and it's up to you to make it happen.

'Nobody ever showed me how to fish, that's probably what's up, just not knowing how to do it. When I did it that one time, I just went with another dude my age and we didn't know anything, so I think I'll probably have to grab Mr. Al one day and have him throw a rod over the bridge.' Roger's⁹⁸ fishing equipment has sat in his basement collecting dust for years and he lives within walking distance from one of the most popular fishing spots in Baltimore. But he hasn't yet gone, because he doesn't really know how to fish. It's not even the fact that they don't catch any fish that's the likely problem – most people that fish and crab at the piers along Middle Branch don't catch anything. It's a social event, and Roger doesn't want to be seen as the guy who doesn't know what he's doing.

Veronica⁹⁹ likes to exercise at Planet Fitness, she is willing to pay the monthly membership fee and drive there instead of utilizing the community recreation center because she likes *'people [she] runs into, and [getting] knowledge on different little things that [she] didn't know about.'* For example, somebody at Planet Fitness told her about a park in Pennsylvania, Codorus State Park, that was an appealing place to visit for Veronica. She envisioned that it wasn't too far, about a 2-hour drive, and she could take the kids out there to grill and cook out. Once the person at Planet Fitness told her about the park, she then googled it, and saw it had nice beaches, and learn about how to reserve a spot prior to taking the family there. What's interesting is that Veronica also knows about a park closer to her with a beach and grills, Middle Branch Park. She knows people who go there and her cousins even post pictures of themselves having fun at Middle Branch on Facebook. But, Codorus State Park offers a different atmosphere, a chance to get away from her surroundings, and experience something new.

Charles¹⁰⁰ is scared of snakes and animals in the woods, yet after watching a few episodes of Shark Week developed a deep desire to swim with Great White Sharks. *'I want to get in a cage and see it, I'm fascinated about them sharks, I watch a lot of Shark Week. I turned on the TV and just seen it.'* He's been to the aquarium to see sharks there, and even

⁹⁶ Greg lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 40-60, black, male (B12)

⁹⁷ Tina lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 30-60, black, female (B7)

⁹⁸ Roger lives in Cherry Hill, is 30-50, black, male (B2)

⁹⁹ Veronica lives in Morrell Park, is 30-60, black, female (A3).

¹⁰⁰ Charles lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 20-40, black, male (B5)

has a 'little shark book.' But this isn't enough for him anymore, he's seen how aggressive they are in the water, and wants to see a 'real one.' Does shark week help or hurt his ability to enjoy being outdoors, if it sets the bar so high for spectacle?

When asked where he'd like to visit, Adam¹⁰¹ named a few of the interesting places he's seen while playing Grand Theft Auto: Los Angeles. He is a die-hard gamer, and doesn't tend to leave Morrell Park, so this video game is his only exposure to unfamiliar surroundings. *'In Grand Theft Auto, it's a remake of Los Angeles. I would love to see the Chinese Theatre, it looks temple-ish, I don't know if it's still down there, never been. I've only been here.'* But without a way to get to LA, creates a furthering of dissonance between what he wants and what he feels he is able to do.

'To be honest with you, my daughter youtubes them. Nature walks in Baltimore City.' Dawn's¹⁰² daughter finds fun attractions via youtube, and sees it as a game to find them, similar to the idea of geocaching or pokemon go. For example, she found a youtube video of a kid swinging on a tire swing in the Catonsville Tire Park, which is nestled within the larger Patapsco State Park. The video of the tire swing was enough of an excuse to get her mom to take her to the park, but once there, she started exploring to see what else she could find. *'She found the waterfall, it was a little man made waterfall or something, but the fact that she found that, it like astonished her, like oh my God I found something nobody else did.'* Given her explorer personality, she needs a way to find out about an attractant, and then is more than able to get there and she'll know what to do once she's there.

4) Bring there to you

The alternative to taking people away to places and people over there is bringing the 'there' to you. Efforts to bring resources in to neighborhoods was a response to complaints about lack of access to reach interesting places and people, and a desire to improve the neighborhood itself. When Cherry Hill was a city within a city, when many of the interviewees were growing up, they already had many of the amenities in their neighborhood, and so there were many social groups willing and able to take residents away to see other stuff. Today, given the lack of amenities in the neighborhoods, efforts have been made to bring in resources to the neighborhood.

Tina¹⁰³ describes this change, *'We used to go out, do a bus trip. Now they have a band come out and do live shows. We used to go with the church up here, meet up like 8:00 and didn't get back til 6. It was all day long. For parents that worked, that was like a babysitter, child had to be 12 and up. They don't do that no more, they just stopped. It was on the Army base, people of different groups and ages. Kept everybody doing something positive.'* Today, Operation Champ operates mobile clinics that bring Olympic and professional athletes into low-income neighborhoods, offering recreational opportunities for the kids.

The potential downfall here is that by bringing resources in to the neighborhood, you lose the benefits gained, as detailed above, from exposing residents to other neighborhoods and people. On a more practical level, these bus trips often served as a babysitter for the kids. Today, people like Tina suggest they don't have time to take vacations or visit new places because they are too busy babysitting.

¹⁰¹ Adam lives in Morrell Park, is 18-25, white, male. (A4).

¹⁰² Dawn lives in Morrell Park, is aged 20-50, white, female. She has two kids under the age of 10.

¹⁰³ Tina lives in Cherry Hill, is aged 30-60, black, female (B7)

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A Reflection: Unsolicited Advice for Future Hixon Fellows and My Future Self

A Reflection: Unsolicited Advice for Future Hixon Researchers and My Future Self

Research selection biases

During the interviews, it became clear that teenagers and kids play a major role in the perception of the neighborhood. But due to IRB restrictions, I could not speak with them. It is possible to get permission to conduct interviews with <18, but it is easier not to. In the context of the literature, it's worth thinking about how teenagers are likely understudied relative to their influence in urban neighborhoods, and that this may be due to additional IRB hoops one needs to jump through. Personally, when I was told that only interviewing 18+ was much easier for IRB approval, I immediately went with that for my sampling strategy, without really thinking if teenagers would be helpful in furthering my understanding of how people perceive spaces.

The other selection bias involves which neighborhoods are chosen for study. For visual preference literature in particular, the study subjects tend to be college students, and the experiment tends to have them walk through the arboretum vs some degraded street. The perceptions of these college students are then used to justify beliefs that nature is more restorative than not nature. It's easy to see why college students are so studied – it's their professors doing the studying. Additionally, in the park use literature, it's almost all entirely derived from people currently using the parks – it's the rare study that ventures out of a park's boundaries to ask what places people who don't use that park like to spend time in. These two factors played into my interest in interviewing non-park using residents, and that they should be relatively 'normal' for the given city, i.e. not the richest or most well-off, and not the poorest. I asked various folks working in Baltimore for neighborhood suggestions, but also ran a GIS analysis on standard census based metrics (worth remembering that the census doesn't count everybody, think about who would not want to be counted by the census), to identify a couple of neighborhoods to propose to people working in Baltimore and get their feedback.

When I showed them that they were Cherry Hill and Morrell Park, I was not immediately greeted with, 'oh, those would be great neighborhoods to work with' but rather a long pause. Cherry Hill was dangerous, Morrell Park – nobody had heard of it. At least 4 to 5 people who I respect a great deal gave me sobering advice about the challenges I would face. Had I considered my recruitment strategy? Did I have a uniform to wear to have credibility? Was I planning on hiring an intern to go with me so I wouldn't go alone? Had I talked to the police stations in each neighborhood to understand the safety dynamics? This advice proved quite beneficial, and made my project much better off in the long run. However, from a bigger picture, this advice also nearly proved insurmountable in the sense that it would have been much easier to choose 'easier' neighborhoods or an 'easier' project. In thinking back on these initial conversations, at times frustrating but in hindsight grateful, I also wonder how to make these barriers easier to overcome. There's perhaps a reason that these 'types' of neighborhoods become subjects of great anthropological research – they are so hard to prepare for, and have such a stigma about what working in those neighborhoods entails, that as a researcher you feel that you must tell their story because you have worked so hard to get it. And yet, in the common literature on perceptions of place, how 'normal' people view landscapes, these subjects are all college

students. Surely there is a middle ground in which we can work with residents of 'dangerous' neighborhoods for more straightforward research, where we simply want to understand how they perceive one aspect of their life instead of trying to unpack everything.

On a very practical note, the safety protections I took were sufficient for my purposes – I never felt unsafe during my summer. It is worth noting that several people I interviewed were sure to tell me that I was crazy for walking around alone in either Morrell Park or Cherry Hill. I don't say this to feel like I'm this brave person, but rather to try and tone down these black and white barriers we use to define safe and unsafe neighborhoods. Here were my safety protections:

- Only walked in the neighborhoods for interviews between the hours of 9am and 3pm, on a practical level the best response rates came during the lunch hour – 11-1.
- Carrying a clipboard with laminated maps and pictures was sufficient for a 'uniform' – I did not have a formal shirt or hat.
- I did not survey door to door – I only spoke with people who were already outside. If I did door-to-door canvassing, I would have wanted a second person with me.
- I paid folks \$30 but did this with a gift card, so I wasn't paying cash. AAA had a special deal at the start of the summer where they waived the fee for gift cards, so a \$30 gift card costs \$30. Typically, a \$30 gift card cost \$34 or \$35.
- I created a second phone line, using Line2 (an iphone app) that was \$9.99/month. This was very helpful when towards the end, word got out that I was paying people \$30 to talk, and got bombarded with 15 voicemails in less than an hour.
- I was respectful and looked people in their eyes as I walked through their neighborhood. I said hello, smiled, and asked them how they were doing.
- I did not end up interviewing two groups of people – one were the folks that hung out at the Cherry Hill Town Center with their chairs and music. I talked to one man on the periphery, the church's maintenance guy, about everybody and he assured me everybody was well-behaved. Everybody appeared well-behaved and in jovial spirits, but I felt uncomfortable interrupting them in a group setting without a second person with me. In Morrell Park, I attempted to talk to one or two of the young men who were walking along Washington Boulevard, but it was quickly apparent that they had no trust in me and were planning on making my life uncomfortable if I kept trying to talk to them. They did not trust that I was not a police informant.

How did I derive 'information' from the data? (i.e. coding)

I relied on more ethnographic/grounded theory techniques, in which I read through the transcripts and pulled out key quotes and ideas that were surprising, interesting, contradictory, etc. I transcribed the interviews in nVivo, which was very helpful to do that, but did not end up coding the responses. I found the process of coding to be too disjointed to really allow my brain to process what I was reading. A couple months later, I wish I had coded at the beginning, because it would be nice to do some analysis based on that – like who are the people that found the woods aesthetically pleasing but were scared to go in them because of who they might find. But I don't think I would change what I did given that

this is my first time processing this sort of data. If I did another study, and had more structured interview questions, and was more familiar with the range of responses I might expect, then coding would be much more helpful and less jarring to my processing time.

What technology did I use?

For audio recording, I used an iPhone app – Voice Record Pro. It was free or maybe 3 bucks, but worked well, was nice to not have to have a separate recorder. Has an easy sync to Box. I recommend 100% if you have no intention of using the recordings for anything but transcribing – it picked up the interview even if a soft spoken person was speaking on the other side of the porch from my phone with a fan going in the window.

I took field notes after each interview, or set of interviews, on my iPhone with its Notes app.

Maps and pictures were helpful as an excuse to talk – it made the explaining of why I wanted to interview them easier, I wasn't some stranger, but instead a grad student with some official documents doing some sort of survey – this fits in their image of somebody they might see at their front door. However, the maps were not helpful in the actual interview – they were too small for the older generation to read, and people don't know their landscape as a map. I laminated the maps and brought dry-erase markers, and was going to have them draw where they liked to spend time. And then I would take a picture of these maps. However, the challenge was that most did not exactly enjoy spending time in any parts of their neighborhood – they had to leave to get to those areas. I wasn't able to re-jigger my questions to use the map for them to draw boundaries, or paths they walked, or other interesting alternatives during the summer to adjust.

The pictures were worth 1000 questions, however. When the open back and forth conversation about their story started to dwindle, I could pull out the pictures, which triggered all sorts of interesting perspectives. I would love to explore the use of images of particular places more.

Interview Tips

Stefanie DeLuca, a Johns Hopkins researcher, was extremely helpful in providing advice on interviews. Read the methodology of her recent book for a great review of how to conduct socio-ethnographic interviews. The top tips are:

- Don't talk. i.e. don't get uncomfortable with silence and try to fill space. Don't interrupt them to offer your opinion or try to finish their sentence.
- Encourage them to keep talking with facial expressions, grunty-noises (mhmm, ohhh, that's interesting, tell me more), and can also repeat what they said.
- No yes/no or survey questions. This was my biggest downfall – in the search for something to talk about, I'd often do this:
 - Can you tell me about your favorite place?
 - I don't have one
 - Do you like to go walking?
 - No
 - Where was the last place you've been?

- Haven't really been anywhere. Been to that park there once.
- What time of day do you like to go there?
- Evening
- How many people do you tend to see there?
- A couple
- Do you have a favorite moment growing up?
- No cant remember that far
- Any places you like to go biking now?
- No, not anymore
- And so on
- This isn't a simple change in the question framing, but reflects a problem in the interview format. Instead:
- Ask them to tell you their story. I.e. Tell me the story of your time in Cherry Hill. Start from the beginning. (credit to Stefanie Deluca for this advice)
 - They often responded with "really, they whole thing?" To which I would say, yes, start from the beginning, with a big smile on my face.
 - And sure enough, they would tell me their story, and during this introductory conversation, I would be interested in their story and ask them to elaborate ("tell me more about that" "oh that's interesting, can you describe in a little more detail how you felt when your mother sent you to New Mexico")
 - This serves two roles – one, it puts them in the driver seat of the interview and makes it about their story, not my questions. Two, it provides an environment in which I can 'train' them, i.e. make them feel comfortable in giving specific details of particular moments – this is what is most illuminating.
 - During the course of their stories, I can then overlay the questions that I'm interested in. As they describe a moment of stress, ask them where they found refuge or relief.
 - There are real time constraints, however. I was targeting 45 – 60 min interviews, and 2-3 a day, so didn't have time to get to know their entire life story. So if they would go off on a tangent, I would make up a reference to something they said before even if there was no actual relationship – 'oh that's interesting, that reminds me of what you said before'
- When faced with contradictory information, such as when somebody described the Middle Branch as the most beautiful only to later call it ugly, ask them to teach you about those differences. "Earlier you mentioned it was ugly, can you teach me about the difference between when its ugly and when its beautiful?" Put them in the position of power regarding the knowledge, and you as their student.

Practical interview advice

- For me, as an introvert, I needed coffee each morning to overcome my reluctance to interrupt strangers to ask them to talk for an hour. Getting a coffee in the morning at the neighborhood shops also gave me a good opportunity to observe who the actors were.
- Eat at the neighborhood eateries

- Walk, don't drive. Although when you are short on time as the summer comes to an end, driving can help – in which I would drive until I saw somebody sitting on their porch, and creepily park down the street and walk back to them as if I had just stumbled across them.
- The gift card made a huge difference in their willingness to talk. Except for one subsection of Morrell Park, a typical day for me involved asking up to 5 folks for an interview, with 2 or 3 of them agreeing to do so. These were all people already sitting outside, and by themselves, so it was a captive audience. One subsection of Morrell Park, on the 'good' side of Washington Boulevard, I was 1 for 15 in getting people to talk to me. I have no idea what happened here – it didn't seem that word was out that people shouldn't talk to me, but perhaps it was.
- One practical note on the gift card, at least with AAA visa cards, sometimes they require a zipcode to use (think of gas stations that ask for billing zipcodes). By default, the zipcode is either the visa processing center zipcode, which was in South Dakota for me, or the billing zipcode of the person purchasing. Just ask for what the zipcode is so you can tell people what it is.

Short vs Long interviews

- My initial recruitment strategy was to do a lot of 'rapid' short interviews with people, and then if they were 'warm,' would ask them if they would be interested in doing a longer interview, but for \$30 this time. This did. Not. Work. Seems obvious in retrospect – its just weird to strike up a conversation with a stranger, and after 5 minutes if its going well to then say, oh this is going well, would you like to continue this conversation but now Ill pay you \$30 because you seem like an interesting person.
- So I pivoted, in which I set-up a system to recruit people to signup for hourlong interview slots. But each time I would ask somebody – 'hi im recruiting people for a research project. Would be \$30 for an hour, would you like to sign up' – they were just like, 'im free now, can we do it now' So that's what I ended up doing, just asking strangers if they were free now to talk, and of the porch-sitting crowd on weekday days, they sure were free to talk.
- The short rapid interviews were useful in as much as they allowed me to get feedback on the questions I was asking and get a feel for the range of responses before embarking on longer interviews. It allowed me to get up to speed on things I might here, so that I could know to probe deeper when somebody mentioned that in a long-form interview. Learning the lingo of the neighborhood.

Sampling Thoughts

- If I were to do this again, I would probably go for a sampling structure in which I randomly identified a certain set of addresses and then go door to door to those addresses until they agreed or didn't agree the longer interview.
 - This provides a more rigorous strategy that would better ensure a representative sample
 - My initial idea to get a representative sample was to sample until I hit 'quotas' of certain demographic splits based on census data. But I didn't have

time to really achieve this, and did not end up with a representative sample, namely only interviewed a few folks from the working population because of my decision to only interview 9-3 on weekdays.

- I didn't interview on weekends because I was in the mode of wanting time off, and it just seemed weird. Looking back, I would have spent most of my time trying to do on weekends because presumably working people are around. Though it just feels more intrusive, I'm not sure why.
- I used convenience sampling, but often what would happen is once I interviewed the first person for the day, they would go out of their way to recruit all of their friends so they could all get the \$30. This was helpful in that I got to speak with people who didn't normally sit on porches during the day, and unhelpful because it limited the social networks in which I was gaining insights from. I would typically use the excuse that I only had enough gift cards for 3 people in a day, to limit the number of people that they would recruit for me.
- I would also try harder to get people to meet me at one of the places in the neighborhood to talk through the landscape itself instead of via picture. Never could really figure out a good logistical means of doing this.