The Humanistic Psychologist

Children's Lived Spaces in the Inner City: Historical and Political Aspects of the Psychology of Place

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Children's lives are tied to particular places, which are the stage where the psychological drama of the human community is played out. This biographical research study investigates and documents the experiences of children's lived spaces in Pittsburgh's Hill District. The Hill District is a traditionally immigrant and African American neighborhood, which has suffered through segregation, the turmoil of urban renewal, race riots, gang warfare, and drug-related crime. When we look at the history of a particular place, we often forget that its children are raised and participate in the same historical stream. What was childhood like for the children who grew up in The Hill over the past century?

Adapting the ethnographic method of narrative mapping (Lutz, Behnken, & Zinnecker, 1997), 12 African American adults (24 to 84 years old), who spent their childhoods in the Hill District, were interviewed and asked about their childhood roaming spaces. The story about lived space that emerged through the choral voices of the participants is of childhood places marked by political and cultural changes. Each generation of 10-year-olds (1930's to 2000) lived in the same geographical area, but experienced and lived their neighborhood places in dramatically different ways.

SITUATING THE QUESTION

The psychology of place has a venerable history within the phenomenological tradition. Spatiality is one of the fundamental, *a priori* dimensions of human existence (Heidegger, 1962). Before we conceptualize space in terms of measur-

able extensiveness—as the mathematical sciences do—or even before we have a name for the crib in which we were placed as newborns, we are spatial beings and find ourselves in a particular world-region that influences our embodiment and social relationships (Bachelard, 1994; Simms, 2008). Much of our spatial experience is lived preconsciously as the latent foundation of bodily being (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), and it requires conscious effort to illuminate the entwining of spatial forms with the psychological and social aspects of human life. Lived space is a powerful constituent of our daily lives, but it goes by mostly unnoticed.

Influenced by Heidegger's (1971) notion of dwelling, and the phenomenological analyses of children's lived spaces in Langengveld (1960, 1968) and van Manen and Levering (1996), this project began as a phenomenological exploration of children's experiences of the places that they claim in their neighborhoods: their hide-outs, favorite play spaces, peer-hang-outs, and secret spaces in the natural and built environment. The phenomenological literature has explored the important moodedness of familiar and unfamiliar locations for children (Benswanger, 1979) and the kinds of childhood experiences that particular geographical or architectural features make possible or foreclose (Jacobs, 1993; Relph, 1976; Seamon, 1989). In a previous, informal, study I interviewed older adults who grew up in a working-class, white, ethnic neighborhood (South Side) that was marked by the closing of the steel-mills in the 1970's. The steel industry had been the life-blood of Pittsburgh's economy for almost a century, and its decline led to severe interruptions of the social and economic network of this working class community. However, social/political themes were not explicitly talked about in the descriptions of childhoods spent in the shadow and at the mercy of the steel industry, but appeared as the implicit background of a number of narratives: parents or neighbors maimed or killed in work related accidents, widowed mothers who worked in the mill while neighbors watched their children. The participants mostly reveled in the freedom of their childhoods and gave detailed descriptions of play-spaces and nostalgic reminiscences of their old neighborhood activities. I assumed that in any neighborhood I would find similar regions of childhood activity, and that I could look at the psychological structures of children's places without paying special attention to the social construction of these spaces. I approached The Hill community for this project because I was looking for a coherent, stable neighborhood that had the loyalty of a number of generations of inhabitants who played in the same places.

During the interviews with The Hill inhabitants, however, the tragic history of the Hill District became a major player in the constructions of their narratives. Even though the participants did talk about building play-forts in the woods or hiding in the tree in front of the rent-office, the overwhelming story they told about their particular neighborhood was of a childhood embedded in the political and cultural changes in African American culture in the 20th century. Segregation is not only the political separation of a group of people, but it is *localized* in a particu-

lar place. Street names are boundaries, which keep the inhabitants in the ghetto and demarcate this special, segregated place from all others. Although other immigrants to the industrial city also began their lives in The Hill District, they moved to other places in Pittsburgh as soon as they could afford it. Yet there was no other place for the African American families to move to. The boundary was not permeable for them.

It soon became clear that a phenomenological study of The Hill children's experience could not be conducted independent of the social and political history of segregation that shaped their neighborhood. Historical change became apparent in the children's changing use of particular places. This is beautifully illustrated, for example, in the use and significance of front porches (Mugerauer, 1993), which changed drastically over the 70 years that were covered by the participants' narratives. Initially front porches were cozy gathering places where neighbors listened to the *Inner Sanctum* radio show when the children, after playing outside, returned home as the streetlights came on. A quarter century later, porches had changed into deserted lookout pads before children ventured out into gang-infested territory. Understanding this change only made sense in the context of the history of the Hill District. In the following, I give a brief history of The Hill District, describe the qualitative research method I used, present the findings through the voices of the participants, and analyze and discuss the implications of what they say.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PITTSBURGH'S HILL DISTRICT

The Hill District is an old immigrant neighborhood, situated on a series of hills flanked by steep bluffs falling down to the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers. It overlooks the downtown Pittsburgh business district and is the most direct link between Pittsburgh's major economic and cultural centers. During the large waves of immigration in the 19th and 20th centuries, The Hill, as it is called by its inhabitants, was the gateway to an American life for Polish, Irish, and Jewish immigrants, who used it as the starting place for their work and family lives and moved on from there to more affluent and less crowded neighborhoods in city and suburbs. During two great waves of migration (1910 to 1930 and 1940 to 1970), millions of black rural people left the South and settled in major cities in the Northeast and Midwest, Pittsburgh's Hill District among them. Although, early in the 20th century, 90% of African Americans were rural, one century later 90% are urban. Forced to settle in the dilapidated immigrant neighborhoods of the inner city, African American families, unlike other immigrants, could not "move up" and leave the neighborhood, because Jim Crow laws barred them from living in white neighborhoods. Segregation created "islands of black life"—black "archipelagoes" as Fullilove (2004, p. 27) calls it. The Hill, although inhabited by African American, Jewish, and Italian communities until the 1950's, became a black archipelago in Fullilove's sense.

Within the boundaries of the archipelago, there is a circumscribed freedom and sense of belonging, yet the place is not freely chosen but maintained by default. "The creation of the archipelago nation had two consequences for African-Americans. The first is that the ghettos became the center of black life; the second is that the walls of the ghetto, like other symbols of segregation, became objects of hatred. In this ambivalent love/hate relationship it was impossible to choose to dwell" (Fullilove, 2004, p.27).

The Hill did become a center for Black life: It had a functioning business infrastructure (grocery stores, barber shops, shoe stores, furniture stores, doctors, bars, etc.), and the black inhabitants rarely had to leave the neighborhood unless it was for work in the steel-mills along the Monongahela river or in domestic service in the white neighborhoods. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, an African American newspaper, had the widest circulation of any Black newspaper in the United States: It was distributed to readers as far away as the southern state of Alabama. Next to New York and Chicago, The Hill's Wylie Avenue was the center for Jazz, frequently visited by such jazz greats as Duke Ellington, Lena Horne, and Billy Eckstine; civic organizations flourished; children were cherished, educated, and supported by the community; and neighbors engaged in the daily "sidewalk-ballet" (Jacobs, 1993, p. 66) between home, shops, schools, work places, and the entertainment venues of bars, clubs, sandlot ball fields, and picnic places.

The walls of the ghetto, on the other hand, did become visible objects of hatred. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, in the wake of the urban renewal movement, the city of Pittsburgh bulldozed the lower part of the Hill District to make way for a large sports arena. It displaced thousands of people, crammed many of them into new public housing developments, and destroyed the cultural and economic center of The Hill. In 1968, during nation-wide riots following the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., almost all the remaining businesses in the Hill District were burned to the ground, and they have not been rebuilt in the past 35 years. Even now, there is no grocery store anywhere close to the Hill District, and the once flourishing corner of Center and Fitzpatrick Streets has been taken over by drug dealers. Poverty, crime, and drug abuse are the daily obstacles that destroy the public sidewalk ballet in the heart of the Hill District today.

NARRATIVE MAPPING: CONNECTING NARRATIVE TO LOCATION

Inspired by Lippitz' (1993, 2001) work on biographical experiences and the lived spaces of childhood, I designed a qualitative biographical research study which would connect biographical narrative with a particular childhood location. Adapting the method of narrative mapping, which was pioneered by Lutz, Behnken, and Zinnecker (1997) as a visual-ethnographic tool for the exploration

of children's lived spaces, my students and I interviewed 12 African American adults (24 to 84 years old) who spent their childhood in the Hill District. The procedure of narrative mapping consists of a combination of drawing and biographical interview. Adult participants were asked to represent, in drawing and narrative, their remembered "childhood roaming space" when they were around 10 years old. The participants drew a hand sketch of their neighborhood and told the interviewers about the places on their maps and what they remembered doing there. The interviewers asked initially only clarifying questions, but, as the interview progressed, inquired particularly into play places, paths taken by children, the way to school, the presence of adults and other children, communal activities, and finally the participants' sense of how the neighborhood had changed since their childhood.

Unlike other visual research which focuses on the mapping itself, in this study the sketches functioned as an anchor for an extended biographical narrative. Our participants initially resisted drawing details of their maps, but became engaged in the process of storytelling itself. The maps, however, were a constant reminder of the particular situatedness of lived experience, and localized the participants' memories in their childhood neighborhoods. Frequently the interviewers and the participants referred to the maps to either ask about particular activities or to point out where narrated incidents took place. Through the maps, the childhood neighborhoods became more tangible, and they functioned as a mnemonic device like the classical "memory theater" (Yates, 2002, p. 37): Recall seemed to be easier when memories were tied to particular locations, and imagining the locations and drawing them evoked chains of childhood memory and stimulated a fuller narrative. The drawings allowed the participants to "go there" more fully. This was particularly important because some were asked to remember events from more than half a century ago. The participants were also reassured that we were not interested in artistic quality of the drawings, but that they would help us imagine the neighborhood better. Once the interaction with the maps began, the participants seemed to enjoy talking about their childhood roaming places, and more and more stories appeared; the mood changed from worry about the drawing to the excited sense that there was more to be said about their childhood places. As a result, the extensive interview transcripts provide a rich document about changes in childhood over time in one particular neighborhood.

I analyzed the transcripts by marking particular localized activities (events on the block/street, the way to school, play places, roaming range) and compared them across the interviews. I was surprised to see how clearly the descriptions of neighborhood activities were divided by generational lines. In the following, I use a historical format first to present the voices of my participants by generational cohort and then to show and discuss the major themes from the interviews. Apart from organizing and condensing the materials, I have tried to preserve my participant's voices as they speak of changing childhoods in The Hill District.

THE VOICES OF THE PARTICIPANTS:
THREE GENERATIONS OF CHILDREN

The study's 12 participants grew up in The Hill during three distinct periods in its history. Faustine,[3] Dale, Willa, and Paulette were children during segregation, and experienced a well-functioning African American neighborhood (1930–1960). Lamar, Calder, Jacob, and Carmen experienced a neighborhood in transition (1960–1980): Urban planners had demolished the whole lower part of The Hill District, relocated and displaced 1,551 families and 413 businesses, and, by 1961, had destroyed the life blood of a poor but thriving community. The race riots and the destruction of much of the remaining infrastructure followed in 1968. Stan, Shanika, Darien, and Neoma were children growing up in a neighborhood marked by empty lots and storefronts and plagued by drugs and violence (1980–2004). In the following, we hear from these three generations of children.

1930–1960: "You Thought it was Just Your Little World."

For the first half of the 20th century, the street was the stage for public life in The Hill District, and adults and children were outside much of the time. They sat on stoops, played in the alleys, walked to see and be seen, and talked with neighbors and friends. The closeness of the houses created a strong sense of community and shared public life, and the inhabitants of a particular block knew each other well and watched out for each other's children.

Because of crowded living conditions, mothers sent their children outside, which in turn created a public life for the children and made them familiar with the terrain and the people of their quarter. The children had a strong sense of belonging to a particular block in their neighborhood, and rarely ventured far beyond its confines: "We played right in our little block, we didn't go much. We used to have street dances, right in this little section," Faustine said, pointing to a part of her map. "Our little block," "our little section," and "our neighborhood" was a frequently repeated theme: "We never went out of our area too much. You didn't realize other people existed. You thought it was just your little world."

Faustine appeared surprised when I asked her if she went anywhere by herself: She could not recall ever being alone as a child "By yourself? No. I don't know why. We just never did." It was taken for granted that you lived together with siblings and other children, and that you took care of each other. Taking care of younger siblings was not a chore or something to be paid for, but it was "what you did" (Faustine). Inhabiting a neighborhood was an intensely social affair for children. Play happened in streets and playgrounds among siblings and neighbor kids, the

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[3]All names of participants were changed to secure their anonymity.

walk to school was communal, the visit to the movies happened with a group of siblings, the circus was attended with neighbors and friends: "the same group every day 'cause we all lived in this court, and we all went as a group" (Willa). Their "little block" determined the circumference of their physical and social worlds and became the anchor for venturing into and understanding the larger world. "We knew each other, the neighbors knew us, they'd look out for us, it's much different than it is now…we weren't afraid of anything" (Willa).

The relationship between adults and children was clear: Adults cared for the young and had authority. When 19-year-old Dale and his young wife moved to The Hill in 1944, Mrs. Brown, his landlady, he said, "acted like a parent. In fact, she insisted and I still belong to Macedonian Baptist Church" (Dale is now in his 80s). The adults did not play with the children, but because life was so public, the children always had the feeling that some adult, family or neighbor, would watch then from the stoop or porch or through the open kitchen window. When adults were not working, they could be found on their front porches talking to each other across the narrow streets or listening to the radio together. The eyes of the neighborhood rested on its children; "everybody watched everybody," as Faustine said. For the children, this meant that they could not get away with anything: "A neighbor could tell you: 'Don't do something'. And you didn't do it because you'd get it from the neighbor and at home" (Faustine). Neighbors felt responsible for each other's children, and it was the duty of adults to correct all children. If you resisted a neighbor, you might be punished twice: by them and, later, at home when your parents found out about it. Proper public behavior was enforced by the community, and the effects of neighborhood discipline extended even to the criminal element in The Hill: "Even the drug addicts had respect for neighborhoods and children. So they did everything down the hill, which was Fulton and Wylie;" they did not come up the hill, not because they were not allowed, but "they just wouldn't do that" (Willa). (A friend told me that there is usually less drug activity around the barber shops in The Hill today because the men gathered there might know the drug dealers' "momma"). The adults instilled in the young a sense of community honor or probity (Illich, 1982), which demarcated the line that was not to be crossed. It was reinforced by the close relationship of the adults and the flow of communication between them: what we traditionally call "gossip." Dale sums it up beautifully: "It takes a whole community to raise a child. That's in essence how I was raised, and so when I moved to this neighborhood and Mrs. Brown says 'you have to go to church,' I didn't even question it. That's the way we were raised."

During the interviews, I was surprised how emphatic the participants were in their denial of racism. They claimed that Jews and Blacks were neighbors, got along, and even helped each other. And as children, they were not aware of segregation or discrimination. It seems to me that the small neighborhood structure provided a buffer of ordinariness for the children, which occluded the view of the

walls of the ghetto. Perhaps the adults made a conscious effort to keep their children close and shield them from the obscenities of racism.

1960–1980: "There was no Clear Path…"

By 1963, when Lamar was 10 years old, many families were crowded into barrack-style federal housing projects. Single parent households began to predominate, supported by extended families of grandmothers and aunts. Although the older participants spoke with fondness and appreciation of the public housing developments of the 1930's (because they were some of the first homes with refrigeration, laundry facilities, and good indoor plumbing), the "projects" of the 1960's and 70's became places of ambivalence. Although some of the old communal neighborhood structures still prevailed and neighbors still knew each other well, they did not function anymore as a social network that protected the community against the assaults of poverty. Lamar remembers standing in the bread lines at the local recreation center "when they were passing out government cheese and peanut butter." Although Willa, in the 1940's, said "We were poor and didn't know it," the children of the transition years (1960–1980) were poor and began to know it firsthand. The rent office, where parents had to go to pay the monthly rent, became a dreaded place, a place of "depression, a lot of sad looking faces over there" where people were miserable (Calder). To have lived in the project" became a stigma, and something you did not talk about in your later biography. In slang, the housing developments were called "reservations," alluding to the segregation, indignity, and losses of another mistreated ethnic group, the Native Americans.

Although Black and White families still lived in the Hill District, the Black children began to notice that their schools had almost no White children in them anymore. The mother of a gifted child like Lamar found it impossible to move him to a better and less segregated school a short distance away. The remaining White children, who still lived in the area, were allowed to go there. Although in the 1940's there had been some unease between Italian, Jewish, and African American families, the children did attend the same schools, and often neighborliness and mutual support was more important than racial difference ("Yea, the one's that lived there, they were just neighbors. So!" Faustine said). In the 1960's, housing projects for the different ethnic groups were segregated more clearly and racial tension became apparent: "We had the White families—and the Italian families were moving out as we were moving in. So there was intermingling of different cultures. Not always pleasant and a lot of fights. Lots of fights among the parents more so than the kids" (Lamar). Although the older participants stressed that children of all ethnic groups played together, Lamar said, "We weren't allowed to play with them. They weren't allowed to play with us. There was a lot of prejudice back then."

Many of the old communal structures still survived: The children felt attached to their own block and its inhabitants, and life was very social.

You never went anywhere without somebody from the neighborhood. Because we shared families. The adage it takes a village to raise a child, it was true. It was in effect. Cause when you did something wrong in front of anyone's mom or dad, they scolded you, corrected you, sent you to your mom who scolded and corrected you and if you had a dad you got scolded and corrected for the third time. So the neighborhood took care of the neighborhood kids. (Lamar)

Like the earlier generation, the children of the '60s and '70s had to obey one rule, which almost all participants in the interviews mentioned: You had to be on your front porch when the streetlights went on at nightfall. But now the coming on of the streetlights was no longer framed in terms of cozily gathering around the radio to listen to the spooky 1940's *Inner Sanctum* radio show. Mothers made sure that children were in front of the house because they were afraid of the nighttime activities in their neighborhoods. "It saved my life," Lamar observed, because many of the kids he played with at that time, "passed away as kids because they got hung up on heroin." His mother made sure he did not associate with the "bad" kids, and she consciously cordoned off his range of play and supervised his walk through the "danger zone" when he went to visit his grandmother. As a child, he resented it fiercely.

When adults are afraid of their neighborhood, they become more vigilant. The roaming space of the children is restricted, and not all neighbors are seen as part of the community. In the transition years of the '60s and '70s, adults could still reprimand children, but only those who were counted as part of the wider family. Calder said it clearly:

You mean was it a community? Yeah. But it was changing …. On the one hand, certain people could correct me. But on the other hand the people on the second floor had no say-so at all. Because we didn't know them all that well. People were moving in and out, so it was hard to really get to know people well. So it was only the older people in the community that was really the correctors.

Neighbors were no longer people you shared your life with because you knew their families, their churches, their work, and if they treated their neighbors well over time; neighbors now were often strangers next door who were not tied to "the little block," and had no attachment to its inhabitants. Under these circumstances, families seem to draw together to consciously protect their children against the encroachment of strangers, drugs, and violence. Jacob points out that drugs had always been there in The Hill, but "when I was younger, they—the older guys—they seen a young guy trying to sell (drugs), they go upside our head and say get off the street." The sense of responsibility for the community was still carried by the older generation, trying to keep their neighborhood drug-free.

In 1968, amidst a wave of violence in other U.S. cities, riots broke out in Pittsburgh's Hill District, and the National Guard was called in to quell the looting and burning. When Willa spoke about the riots she expressed the pain and confusion many inhabitants still feel: "They tore everything down—that was our means of food. The store, we really hurt ourselves. Yeah, they burnt it down." The confusion of "we" and "they" is a powerful marker of the conflict the inhabitants of the Hill District have felt about the riots. "We" African Americans were injured for generations, forced into segregated areas, unable to keep our communities and neighborhoods alive when "urban renewal" became "negro removal" (Fullilove, 2004, p. 99); "we" had good reason for destroying our cage. "They," the young and proud African Americans, were "getting back" and destroyed our remaining neighborhood blocks, burnt the stores of our Jewish and Italian neighbors, left a blighted landscape behind. The ambivalent love–hate relationship that marks the ghetto (Fullilove, 2004) finally erupted and destroyed the hated symbols of segregation, but it also left a wasteland of empty lots, burned out buildings, and boarded up storefronts behind.

Lamar was 15 in 1968. He had received a scholarship to an elite boy's boarding school in a White part of the city. He was one of 5 Black students in a school population of 305. He was at home on break when the riots broke out.

> I'm at Shadyside Academy representing the neighborhood and then the riots start and the White kids look at me and I look at them and I'm like, 'Are we supposed to be fighting right now?' You know in school. But we didn't do that at school. But we did it at home. I—talk about confused! You tell me to stay away from drugs, alcohol, all these different activities they were doing in the '50s and '60s; I get educated; I'm smart enough to go to a private school; I'm in a private school, then the riots break out, and I'm in school with the White kids but I'm supposed to hate the White kids. And remember, I'm not supposed to play with the White kids, and now I'm attending school with them. I only lasted a year or two at Shadyside Academy. … I started rebelling—I was rebelling; my community was rebelling; the country was rebelling, and I started rebelling. I don't remember for whatever reason, but just because I was Black.

1980–2004: "It's Crazy Now in this World"

During the 1980s, life in many parts of The Hill began to become more difficult for the children. Like the earlier generations, the boys still played in the woods and empty lots surrounding the projects. They built shacks, roasted potatoes over open fires, built Tarzan swings, and organized an Olympic torch bearing relay, which set half the hillside on fire. The girls were kept closer to the house, playing on porches or in the playgrounds. But "the village" that raises its children together, which

some of the older participants had mentioned, became reduced to the members of extended family. Cookouts were family affairs, not neighborhood events.

And the extended families seemed to be under much stress, with grandparents and aunts often caring for children. The children frequently moved from one neighborhood to another. The favored activity of walking to school with the neighborhood kids was replaced by busing to other neighborhoods for middle school. Fearful mothers walked their children to the school bus, worrying that they might become injured, abducted, or corrupted by crime when left alone in public. Center Avenue, the main street traversing the Hill District, became off limits to children because of shootings and drug activities. As Stan put it: "Center Avenue! It was kept from me, so I had to find out what was down there! Just hang around Center."

Stan and Darien were boys in the 1980s, and a sense of unsettledness and danger permeates the descriptions of their neighborhoods. The sense of smallness and isolation of the earlier neighborhood blocks had become territories in the "hood" for them. There were other blocks where you did not go, unless you were looking for a fight from the boys in that area. Some blocks were neutral territory in the "turf war" (Stan) between fighting boy groups. Darien created a powerful neologism to characterize the mood that permeated his teenage years: *unexpectancy.* He said:

> In general, you never know what might happen, you know in the hood, just you coming out that door, just to see what's outside, could be "a surprise" everyday. Unexpectancy. You know, like I said, you wake up every day and you could think one thing and it could turn out to be another thing, you know, so just with those "situations" at hand as a young'n, as a young kid, that is, it's just different in "my world" considering others. But as I said, depending on where you go and who you be with at those particular times can maybe make you or break you. It's all about survival, when it gets down to it. But life is what you make it, so. Just in general. You know, you never knows what lies around what corner, but you just gotta be able to be prepared and just hope, you know, you know as they say look both ways before you cross the street, so. That's basically how it is here. Just look both ways.

Belonging to your hood even trumped skin color: There were "French Vanillas," White boys, in the block, but they were not thought of as White. They were all integrated or "ghettoed out," as Darien put it.

Shanika, who still experienced a childhood surrounded by family and neighbors in the early 80s, is now a mother of two boys. She worries about her children's ability to have a safe childhood. When she was a child,

> everybody cared about everybody back then. Now everybody's for their self. Now it's just—I'm scared for my boys now. Because it's horrible now. My kids think I am being rough, but I'm not. I want to know where you are, is there a time you are supposed to be here, you know, because these kids are killing kids for no reason and it's really rough out here I think for the boys, and the girls are going through a lot, too. But the

boys… you know back then we weren't worried about boys being killed or shot or found out—found somewhere with drugs or something, I mean. (…) You don't see kids outside anymore, just outside to play, just there, maybe on the street playing with rocks—you can't do that anymore because you've got people running around with guns, the drugs, and the kidnappers.

Two times in the four years that her sons were playing football at Canard field, they had to leave the game because gunshots were fired around the football field. "It's crazy now in this world. It really is," she said.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The First Generation

The three generations of children's experience of their neighborhood provide snapshots of particular moments in time in a changing community. The first generation (1930–1960) provides an almost romanticized picture of urban African American community life in the first half of the 20th century, which is difficult to imagine when you look at inner cities today. Poverty and segregation were very real for the immigrating black families at that time, but the enforced boundary line of segregation, as Fullilove (2004) pointed out, also forced stability and self-reliance on the community. In the group of interviews that cover childhood between 1930 and 1960, four major themes became apparent (which also appeared—in different variations—in the interviews with the second and third generation). The themes refer to (a) the children's relationship to a particular place, (b) their relations with each other, (c) their relationships with adults, and (d) their experiences of racism. For the first generation, the major themes can be articulated in the following way:

1. The *situatedness* in a particular location created a sense of familiarity and belonging. The first generation called it "the little world" or "*our* block."
2. The children experienced themselves as *communal* beings. The first group spoke of the people they interacted with as "the same group every day."
3. *Adults* related to children through a social structure of care and authority. The first generation experienced their childhood as "being watched" all the time.
4. *Racism* existed at the edge of children's awareness and rarely intruded into their neighborhood life: "They were just neighbors."

These four themes are closely entwined, particularly when they are examined as aspects of children's situatedness and communal experience. During the first

generation's childhood, extended families and longtime neighbors remained in the same area. Because of poor housing conditions and large families, daily life spilled out into public places, especially for the children. (Sitting on stoops and porches—and even on plastic chairs on the sidewalk—and visiting with the neighbors is still a favorite activity in some older Pittsburgh neighborhoods). "Our little world," as my participants called their particular slice of The Hill, felt safe because they knew everyone.

But more than that: Children did not live a life of solitude and privacy. They were almost always surrounded by other children. Faustine was astonished when she recognized that she had never been alone as a child: "By yourself? No. I don't know why. We just never did." Childhood was a surprisingly "tribal" and public affair. The group-life of children who grew up with each other over 2 decades in the same place was intense, especially when supervised and regulated by adults who were present only in the background. Projects that the children took on (organizing games, going places) were not individual projects, but things you did with and for others as well. The adults gave this "tribe" of children more freedom to roam because there was safety in numbers, and because older children watched out for the younger ones. This led to a more intersubjective, less individualistic sense of identity in children, especially as it was coupled with children's responsibility for their own projects and more freedom from the demands of adults. When done with school and assigned chores, children could claim their own communal play space, which was not determined and structured by adult intentions. In most contemporary American urban neighborhoods, this form of communal child life is extinct, replaced by adult organized activity and individual indoor engagement with virtual media (which, by the way, are also designed by adults). There are very few undetermined places (Langeveld, 1983a) left in the world of most American children today.

The relationship between adults and children determines the nature of childhood in a particular time and place. Children are children only in relationship to those who are not defined as children, i.e., adults (Simms, 2008; van den Berg, 1961). Historically, when adults change, childhood changes along with it: In some historical periods there is hardly a boundary line to be seen between adults and children (Aries, 1962; Elias, 1978; Tuchman, 1978); in others the child is supposed to live in a world removed and protected from adult reality (Rousseau, 1762/1979). The Hill children of the first part of the 20th century lived close to and interwoven with the adult world, and were given the freedom and trust to regulate each other. These children were not naive about the adult world: They knew about prostitution, drugs, and violence. These darker aspects of adult life were given a place (quite literally down the block or behind the alley) and held in check by the neighborhood community.

The children experienced the adults in the neighborhood as an all-pervasive presence, which would supervise, support, and punish the children independent of

blood relationships. The adult community was known and internalized as the *public conscience* that always knew what you were doing. An implicit moral network—a group super-ego, so to say—kept the children tied to and in line with the norms of the adult world. This implicit ethical demand is what anthropologists sometimes call "subsistence ethics" or "moral economy:"

> both terms affirm the right of every villager, of every member of the crowd, to make survival the supreme rule of *common* behavior, not the isolated right of an individual. Both terms bespeak an attitude, an orientation that protects the weakest from ruin. Both terms claim a right to a decorous, a customary existence. (Illich, 1982, p. 111)

The Second and Third Generations

During the process of "urban renewal"(!), the Pittsburgh city government demolished large swaths of housing and destroyed the village-like block communities of The Hill, which sometimes had evolved together for decades. Although the housing stock appeared to be substandard when assessed by city planners, the communal life had been full and functioning. But it was also invisible to the eye that assessed a place merely in terms of bricks and mortar. (This is also a problem in the reconstruction of New Orleans today: Those who want to build sparkling new real estate don't understand that people might be willing to move back to their old and damaged houses because they are next to their neighbor's and friend's houses). Many families from The Hill were displaced to the outer suburbs or inner city projects. When Mindy Fullilove (2004) interviewed residents of The Hill and other U.S. neighborhoods decimated by "urban renewal," she found a deep sense of grief and long-lasting background depression among the displaced, who had lost their communities.

The children of the second and third generation suffered the effects of *displacement*. The second generation (1960–1980) was in a transition phase of changing spatial and social structures that were not fully developed until the third generation of the 1980s and 1990s. Here both generations are analyzed together. The themes of situatedness, peer-relations, relationships with adults, and experience of racism have changed in fundamental ways. Children who were 10 years old between 1960 and 2000 lived in a very different world than the earlier generation.

1. Families moved frequently and lived in particular neighborhoods for only short periods of time. The children called their neighborhood "the reservation" or the hood and had turf wars with children from other places. Roaming space was often severely restricted.
2. Children experienced their communal/public living with other children often as a dangerous activity. It was marked by poverty and violence, "unexpectancy" and "craziness."

3. The circle of adults who were closely connected with children shrank to the immediate family, often only the mother. The community had lost its moral force: "Everybody's for their self."
4. Racial tension and aggression divided different ethnic groups of children in the neighborhood.

Adults were unable to stem the tide of poverty, drugs, and violence that swept through their urban community after its essential spatial and social structures were destroyed. Children's lives were overshadowed by violence and vigilance; their roaming spaces were restricted, and play outside became a risky business. Mistrust and estrangement among the adults meant that children did not feel supervised by neighbors: The neighborhood had lost its moral force, its "moral economy."

Darien's neologism, "unexpectancy," powerfully summarizes the mood that the children sensed when their communities did not function anymore. They did not feel safe—neither with adults nor with other children—and their daily lives had become unpredictable. Their lived space was colored and reduced by the mood of impending violence. The world in which children like Darien had to find their way had become unpredictable. The neighborhood blocks were territories in a constant battle between fighting rival gangs, interspersed with the sanctuary of somewhat safer porches and playgrounds. His world, as he said, was marked by *unexpectancy*, a word that indicates a profound sense of not knowing what to expect. It was all about survival: knowing where you can go, with whom, and at what time. Constant vigilance was required to make it there ("Just look both ways"), and many boys did not survive. The adults, particularly the mothers, seemed to be helpless in guiding their youngsters through the war zone. The young were pretty much on their own, and self-reliance was a source of pride and distinction for the young men. They wanted to hang around Center Avenue and find out what was down there. Adults had no part in Darien's public world of "hood" and school. It was a world determined by peers.

Within this paranoid neighborhood, parents kept their children close to the home and the children often chafed against this restriction of their freedom. "Home" was no longer the public place of the neighborhood block, but the refuge of the private residence. The public conscience of communal adult presence became largely extinct in the housing projects of The Hill, which also meant that parents—particularly mothers—felt helpless and overwhelmed in protecting their children from violence, drugs, and gang influence. Gang activity became possible when there were no "eyes on the street" (Jacobs, 1993, p. 45), and when the moral code that had governed neighborhood relations was broken. The gang members, in turn, divided the location up into turfs, which were owned and ruled by a particular group, and whose boundaries were viciously defended. They established a new moral code that governed their particular adolescent gang community, but excluded everyone else. Their use of the neighborhood space echoes the strength of

the earlier community: small group coherence with definite attachment to a particular location and an implicit moral economy. Only now the boundary was rigidly defended, and the transgression of the moral code violently punished—by the other children. Within this neighborhood dynamic, adults had lost their public moral force and effectiveness, and much of the neighborhood descended into poverty, crime, and drug-use. Although gang activity has declined since the 1980s, parents still fear The Hill's public places, as we saw from Shanika's interview: "It's crazy now in this world. It really is," because "now everybody's for their self." Poverty and violence are no longer mitigated by a communal life that protects each other's children.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Urban places are not just bricks and mortar for providing shelter. The place we call home is inscribed into our bodies; the street we call ours is the setting for our communal longing and belonging; our neighborhood is the first world that we know as a child. The bulldozing of the inner city for the urban renewal projects did not merely destroy bricks and mortar, but it devastated the emotional landscape of the African American community of The Hill District. Root shock, the experience of trauma after having been displaced, destroyed the individual's working model of the world and undermined trust, destabilized relationships, created anxiety, depleted social, emotional, and financial resources, and made people chronically stressed, irritated, and sick (Fullilove, 2004). It dispersed the community and destroyed the web of familiarity and connection that was part of a healthy local community.

Perhaps we can learn a lesson for urban development from the earlier Hill community by understanding that the physical structure of a place is deeply connected to the kind of community practices that exist there. The relationship goes both ways: Places create clearings for communal activities—or foreclose them, as we saw in the housing projects of The Hill. Changes in the community, on the other hand, can redefine what a place means and how it is used (see the different uses of the front porch or the redefinition of "the block" into "turf").

When developers or urban planners work with neighborhood communities, very rarely are the voices and needs of child citizens taken into account. Reflecting upon the childhood experiences of my inner city participants, I offer a challenge to urban planners when they redevelop urban spaces.

From the perspective of children's lives, the safest urban neighborhoods, which allow for the greatest amount of freedom, are those that encourage neighborly exchange and have child friendly *public* places where children can gather (and I don't mean the urban cages that we call playgrounds!). These places should be in close proximity to adult daily activity, which provides for the "eyes on the street" that

Jane Jacobs (1993) called for, without turning the watching of children into explicit surveillance. *How do you design and build structures that encourage neighborly exchange and allow for child-friendly public places?*

Neighborliness arises when people who live in the same place identify with the space beyond their front door. Home is not just one's house, but it can be extended to include the street, the block, or the whole quarter. Once people care for more than their own "property," true civic life can begin because neighbors begin to care for and feel connected to the larger structures of their community. When children roam these widening circles beyond the family home, they develop the confidence that the world is theirs, and that they can know it and make a difference. Pittsburgh essayist Annie Dillard—reflecting on her own childhood roaming experience—put it succinctly: "What is a house but a bigger skin, and a neighborhood map but the world's skin ever expanding" (Dillard, 1987, p. 44). In a functioning neighborhood community, children seek out places to explore beyond the home and these places are safe when adults care for the streets, the stores, the plazas, and the parks as part of their homes. *How do you get the community to think of their homes as extending beyond the front door and to care for the larger communal spaces?*

Connected with these two question is the third one: *How do you foster neighborliness and commitment to a particular place?* In contemporary American culture, we have come to think of places as "real estate" where a particular square footage is assigned a monetary value, so that it can be bought and sold at will. In our psychological life, however, places are more than that: they are the visible, tangible matrix where the quality of our lives as children and adults is anchored and enacted. *Every childhood memory is localized.* An empty city lot is not just the rubble of a razed building, but for the people who have seen it decay it is haunted by memories of the past and a painful reminder that even bricks and mortar can perish. And when they do, a part of the community dies as well. Places are the real memory theater of our communal history.

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