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Cultural Placemaking in Washington's U Street Corridor: A Catch 22

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Urban and Regional Planning at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

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May, 2020

Acknowledgments

To my family and friends that motivated me with constant support and positivity, I could not do this without you. Thank you to Dr. Howell for the outstanding guidance, along with my other committee members Dr. Dickinson and Dr. Fasulo for their invaluable support. Thank you to the universe and God for keeping me grounded. The support from any and all involved in my journey of completing this thesis is greatly appreciated.

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Abstract

Placemaking is a tool largely employed in gentrifying cities to create social and cultural character in space. However, the informal placemaking that naturally occurs in communities and public space is often left out of the placemaking planning process. Informal placemaking that existed in space before and after gentrification, often by the working class, may find itself the target of policing from class and racial power structures that new residents now making up the majority bring. Alongside gentrification is its use of placemaking as branding for space, which Black American culture is increasingly being operationalized. Using Washington D.C.'s U Street Corridor as a case study, an area that is historically Black with a strong application of Black branding, the purpose and use of informal placemaking in contesting space is examined.

Introduction

Culture has long been an important element for individuals in society that can affirm sense of belonging and identity. Cultural groups influenced by factors such as race, ethnicity, and class can create community and spaces built on their culture that supports sense of place and produces feelings of ownership over space. As time goes on, the transformation of community and space happens for various reasons often resulting in major change to physical infrastructure and demographics. Urban regeneration, historically through urban renewal or revitalization, has generally prompted gentrification and relocation of the creative class. Planners, local government, and residents often acknowledge the transformation of space and “new” community by fostering sense of place through placemaking. This formal placemaking refers to partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors that strategically shape the physical and social character of space through arts and cultural activities (Frenette, 2017). Informal placemaking takes place with the same purpose but in an opposite manner as a grassroots do-it-yourself form of urbanism with little partnership or organizing outside of community (Sweeney, 2018). Furthermore, the informality rests on the dynamics of race and class in space that brings misalignment with cultural norms.

Washington D.C.’s U Street Corridor is an exceedingly gentrified area that houses a large creative class population with a strong presence of both formal and informal placemaking. The corridor is a long-standing entertainment district that was once a historically black community. In recent years the corridor, and DC overall, has seen issues surrounding informal placemaking mainly centered around noise and “loitering”. These events have prompted discussion about the

use of public space and gentrification. Protest and demonstrations such as Sound Proof DC and Don't Mute DC have followed bringing increased attention to informal placemaking.

As issues surrounding placemaking continue in the corridor, this thesis aimed to investigate informal placemaking's connection to residents' sense of place and how its usage impacts and influences the narrative of the U street corridor. It distinctively focuses on an area that was once home to a large Black community that still uses its Black history and culture in formal placemaking to establish a brand for the corridor despite the decline in Black residency. In doing this the corridors Black culture and history remain on display through formal placemaking, but the sense of belonging and ownership may be diminished as a result of changes in community structure and power. Yet informal placemaking still occurs, which may allow residents to not only establish sense of space, but also counter and challenge the construct of culture in space. In examining informal placemaking, this thesis ultimately hoped to uncover informal placemaking's ability to reinforce a sense of place. Conducting this research provided insight that informal placemaking can be used as a tool that combats the negative components of gentrification, such as cultural displacement. It acts as a last chance fight and form of insurgent planning for visibility in space that challenges newer narratives in the corridor. It also revealed limitations on the benefits of black placemaking and its use in upholding existing structures of class and race in gentrifying communities.

Case Context

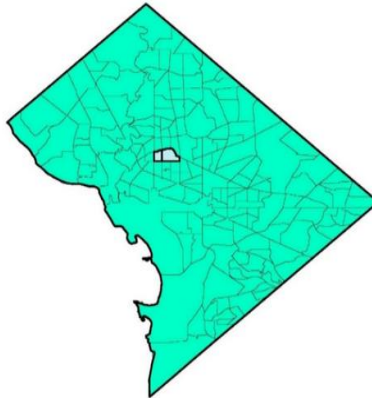


Figure 1. The U Street Corridor

The corridor extends roughly from 16th Street on the west to 7th Street on the east and from S Street on the south to Florida Avenue on the north. It is also often called Shaw/Cardozo. Until 2000, the U Street corridor was predominantly African American with a huge presence of Black culture and a self-sufficient economy. As of 2019, neither the corridor nor Washington D.C. as a city remain majority black.

The U Street Corridor

The Greater U Street Corridor is a Victorian-era neighborhood, developed largely between 1862 and 1900 as a response to the need for housing following the civil war. As a reaction to segregation and the great migration the corridor became a central point and cultural hub for African Americans. Both free African Americans and war refugees from the south contributed to the doubling of the African American population in the area (Williams, 2003). Howard University, a historically black college and university, was founded in 1867 and became an attraction for black students across the nation that brought them to the area. Howard University greatly contributed to the rise of the Black middle class in the district, much of which

resided in the corridor. By 1894 more than 3,000 black families owned their own homes in the District, the total value of assets owned by black Washingtonians that year was estimated to be about \$17 million (Carlson, 1996).

Beginning in the 1890's racial hostility took place across America, including the District of Columbia. Civil right laws that were put in place to aide African Americans during the reconstruction period were ignored and legally dropped in 1901. Segregation and Jim crow laws followed (Williams, 2003). The existing neighborhood became populated by African Americans fleeing to one of the only parts of the city for them. At the start of the decade, Blacks accounted for approximately 45 percent of the city's population as a whole and 50 percent of the population of the Fourteenth Street corridor. By 1960, they accounted for 71 percent of the city's total population and 84 percent of the Fourteenth Street corridor's population (Marcuss, Burgues, & Stephen, 2017).

The "City" Within a City

Once referred to as the Black Broadway, the area briefly held the largest urban African American community in the nation, until surpassed by Harlem (Mcmahon, 2016). The area was considered a "city within a city" mainly because African Americans were able to establish businesses freely, unlike other regions across the nation with strictly enforced Jim Crow laws. These businesses were provided loans by the city's oldest black owned bank —the Industrial Savings Bank at 11th and U Street. The Whitelaw Hotel at 1839 13th Street, NW (1919) was the only lodging facility in the city dedicated to African-American patronage (Williams, 1998). Aside from these major businesses, the blocks of U Street were filled with smaller establishments such as restaurants, retail, and service stores. Between 1895 and 1920 the number of black-owned businesses in Shaw/U Street grew from 15 to 300, and the area boasted all of the

city's "colored" high (Smith, 1998). As U Street became populated the area grew and expanded with new buildings, many built and designed by Black architects for the African American community. Much of this architecture is still standing today or has been restored including the Whitelaw Hotel and the Howard theatre.

The area housed prominent scholars, entertainers, and businessmen. Members of the community included Duke Ellington, Thurgood Marshall, and Ralph Bunche. Famous entertainers that frequented the corridor and its theatres included Cab Calloway, Pearl Bailey, Billie Holliday, Redd Foxx, and Nat "King" Cole. The corridor housed a substantial black middle class. Howard University's impact on the Districts black middle class cannot be overstated.

“Chartered by Congress in 1879, the university boasted the first black medical, dental, and law schools in America. A black architect, Albert Cassell, designed many of its buildings. It was also the first black university to offer a liberal arts curriculum. In addition to drawing countless talented and ambitious blacks to the city, Howard University helped shape the values of its many graduates who remained in Washington” (Carlson, 1996)

As of 1960, nearly 50 percent of African- American physicians, dentists, architects and engineers had been trained at Howard University, along with 96 percent of all black lawyers, who in turn provided many of the leaders and the strategies for the modern civil rights movement (Smith, 1998).

The U Street Corridor Decline

The depreciation of the corridor aligned with the decline of the District overall, as residents began to flee to the suburbs. The Districts population which stood at a little over 800,000 in 1950, fell by 38,000 to 764,000, in the ten years between 1950 and 1960 (Marcuss et al., 2017). Diminishment of population in the corridor followed. However, two major events accelerated the decline. The riots of 1968 were the first blow to the corridor. In 1968 the

assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. sparked devastating riots as the tipping point of frustration with numerous racial injustices taking place in America. Although started with peacefully intentions, the riots closed most of the U Street black businesses and forced many residents to move. Rioting in D.C. began in the heart of “Black Broadway” at the corner of 14th and U streets, with a brick thrown through the window of a People's Drug Store (Marcuss et al., 2017). The Redevelopment Land Agency estimated that the damaged property, exclusive of land and inventory, was valued at about \$13.3 million. Almost one-half (49.6 percent) of the total damage in dollar value was on 14th Street NW (United States. National Capital Planning Commission). More than 4,000 homes and 270 of the 320 businesses along 14th Street between Thomas Circle and Park Road were destroyed in the turbulence that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. (Spinner, 2000). Rebuilding of existing establishments was bleak as business owners looking to rebuild on 14th Street found it nearly impossible to get insurance or loans, particularly if they were black. (Spinner, 2000).

Partly in response to the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., in the same year of 1968 came the passage of the Fair Housing Act. The corridor was home to a mix of black classes but was a central point for middle and upper class of African Americans. Along with the desegregation of schools, the Supreme Court ruled against restrictive covenants and the passage of the 1968 Fair Housing Act followed. In response, upper- and middle-class Blacks could finally move and explore other areas of DC or the suburbs and did so. “Over the decade that followed the 1968 riots, black families began leaving the city for the suburbs at the rate of about 1 percent of the population a year. Since 1970, Washington lost fully a quarter of its population—186,000 people—most of them middle-class families, and many of them black”

(Carlson, 1996). Given the disappearance of the black middle class, the working class that remained witnessed the dwindling of the corridor and the end of its “Black Broadway” era.

U Street Post Riots

Years following the riots ushered in U Street’s portrayal as a drug and crime infested area. Crime was not uniquely linked to the corridor; the city as a whole was branded as a crime capital following the riots. The District’s crime rate grew by 20% from 1969 to 1970 (Valentine, 1980). Despite its adverse condition, culture in the corridor prevailed. Existing culture in the corridor found new passion, along with the emergence of other cultures locating to the corridor. Black pride, power, and culture swept the nation, including Washington D.C. Black culture remained in the district, as Howard University, a pinnacle institution for black culture, withstood the riots. The institution and the corridor were already instrumental in the civil rights and black power movement, hosting headquarters for both the NAACP and SNCC. A group of SNCC members, opened the Drum and Spear bookstore at 14th and Fairmont, a space meant to activate the Black community by representing and defining Black identity in a positive light to counter negatives images globally (Beckles, 1996). However, black culture was no longer the only one in the region. Staring in the 70’s white female artists and Washington’s white gay community began to venture into and establish a place in the corridor (Kashino, 2018). Simultaneously, the punk movement found footing in the region. In May 1980 the Atlantis reopened as the 9:30 Club giving D.C. a stable all ages venue the drew young crowds, many from the surrounding suburbs (Wolf, 2007). “Fourteenth Street was the incubator for people thinking much differently about the world” (Kashino, 2018). This mixing of cultural and groups has been described as interracial vice districts and zones of contacts. These zones have frequently been located in the black neighborhoods of American cities, and while tension still

exists, these spaces become grounds where the diverse becomes transformed into an intercultural resource (Ruble, 2011).

The 1970's -80's also gave birth to the DC staple that is Go-Go music. In the early 1970s, musical pioneer Chuck Brown began laying the foundation for a new and innovative sound in Washington, D.C., called Go-Go music. (Reynolds & Zimmerman, 2015) Once again, it is the culture that attracted and kept people in the corridor. "The importance of music during the 70's can't be overstated. It was a salve for fresh wounds following the civil rights struggle, a counterbalance to malaise, disillusionment, and violence in its aftermath, and a positive force through which the community reaffirmed its identity" (Cherpes, 2017).

Revitalization & Redevelopment of the U Street Corridor

Urban renewal was already planned prior to the riots given the advantageous location of the corridor. Under the 1969 urban renewal plans the District of Columbia acquired thousands of vacant rowhouses which ignited fear in residents about change and their future in the city (Meyer, 2015). Revitalization plans were drafted up, including the reroute of the green line metro which brought major change to the corridor. By 1992 the city government was onboard with revitalization efforts. The city began constructing a \$42 million municipal center at the corner of 14th and U Streets with offices for 1,000 government employees. Project supporters believed that development of the municipal center would have a ripple effect in the neighborhood, spurring medium- and small-sized commercial development (Eamon, Higginbottom, & Sack, 1998).



Figure 2. Municipal Reeves Center 2019

The final catalyst for redevelopment was the construction of a Metro stop, connecting the trendy corridor to the rest of the city. The Metro green line plans were originally a part of the rebuilding program to restore the corridor after the riots (Feaver, 1980). In 1985, the Metrorail system chose the U Street corridor for a subway stop that would have a five-year construction period. The process was troubling for surviving businesses who were faced with torn up sidewalks and streets that discouraged visitors. The logistics were so bad, long-standing Ben's Chili Bowl owners considered closing, which was not even consider after the riots (Kashino, 2018). Following the opening of the green line in 1991, the corridor became a prime place for development. "Businesses that had previously boarded up lacked the capital to simply reopen when people started coming back to U Street, and those that had held on were faced with higher costs as they were encircled by new development" (Cherpes, 2017). Amid new development, the corridor acknowledge its past with the historic U Street Historic District designation in 1998. Designated properties within the historic district included:

1. Evans-Tibbs House, 1910 Vermont Avenue, N.W. (NR Listing 9/8/87)
2. Lincoln Theater, 1215 U Street, N.W. (NR listing 10/27/93)
3. Prince Hall Masonic Temple, 1000 U Street, N.W. (NR listing 9/15/83)
4. Southern Aid Society/Dunbar Theater, 1901-03 7th Street, N.W. (NR listing 11/6/87)
5. True Reformer Building, 1200 U Street, N.W. (NR listing 1/9/89)
6. Frelinghuysen University (Edward Goodwin House), 1800 Vermont Avenue, N.W. (NR listing 11/95)
7. Lincoln Congregational Temple United Church of Christ, 1701 11th Street (NR listing 2/24/95)
8. Anthony Bowen YMCA (12th Street Branch), 1816 12th Street, N.W. (NHL listing 1994)
9. Howard Theater, 620 T Street, N.W. (NR listing 2/15/74)
10. Whitelaw Hotel, 1839 13th Street, N.W. (NR listing 7/14/93)
11. Mary Ann Shadd Cary House, 1421 W Street, N.W. (NHL listing 12/8/76)
12. Manhattan Laundry, 1326-46 Florida Avenue, N.W. (NR listing 11/21/94 (United States Department of the Interior National Park Service, DC Government Office of Planning, 1998)

Present Day U- Street Corridor

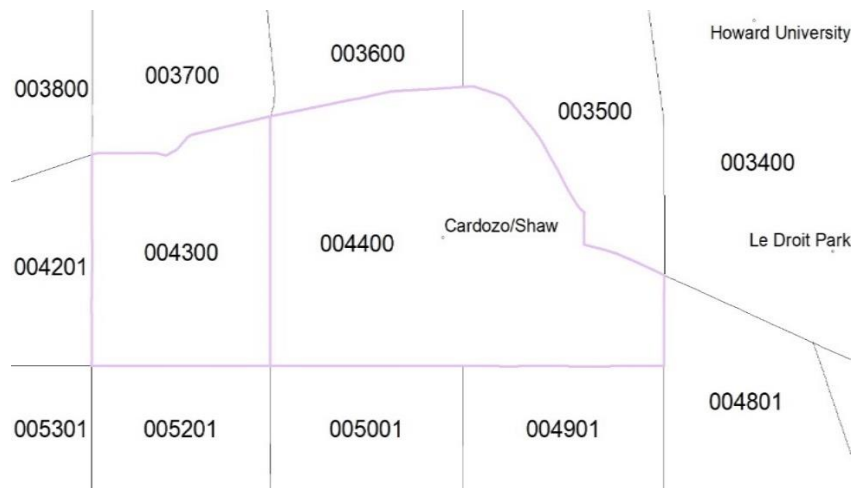


Figure 3. U Street Census Tracts 43 & 44

Census tracts 43 and 44 cover the entirety of the corridor. As of 2017, the Median household income for the area was \$132,877. The median income for African Americans/Blacks in census tract 43 was \$21,179 as of 2017. The median household income for Whites in the same tract was \$114,645. In census tract 44, Whites median household income was \$179,853. Today the total population is 9,418, being 68% white (6,293) and 21.2% Black (2,000).

(U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2017 5-Year Estimates. Total Population)

Starting in the 90's a resurgence of development took place in the area, leading to the current booming social nightlife of the U Street Corridor. Today the area is at the center of Washington D.C. culture with art, dining, luxury apartments, upscale retail, and concert venues among other things. However, the district is now home to a mixture of cultures that reflects the changes that have occurred in the region. As the area has witnessed striking demographic change cultural norms have begun to clash.



Figure 4. Metro PCS, 7th Street and Florida NW, October 2019

All photos by the author except when noted.

This clash was highlighted recently when an informal cultural landmark found itself at the center of policing due to sound complaints from a resident. This cultural landmark is a locally owned Metro PCS store that sits at the corner of 7th Street and Florida NW. It's owner for 24 years, Donald Campbell has been playing go-go music from the Metro PCS making it one of few places one could still hear go-go in a public space in the city in recent years (Mock, 2019). Campbell was approached by T-Mobile (which acquired Metro PCS), informing him that

he would need to get rid of the music. This instruction came in the wake of a nearby luxury Shay apartment resident threatening the company with a lawsuit over the sound (Kurzius, 2019). In response to this news, members of the community and the District took to social media creating the hashtag “Don’t Mute DC”. Using the hashtag, thousands called for the store's management to bring the music back, critiquing the move as erasing black people and culture in DC at the hands of gentrification (Paz, 2019). The hashtag drew support from DC officials including the mayor, along with a response from the CEO of T-Mobile with a decision to keep the music going and compromise with the neighborhood on volume (deHahn, 2019).

The matter is bigger than a noise complaint from residents, as go-go music is a DC birthed form of culture (specifically black culture) that has filled the district since the 70’s. Go-Go music has endured through decades of cultural shifts that resulted in it actively being policed. This policing began in the 1990s and 2000s, with D.C.’s city council passing of curfew laws, levying heavy business property taxes, issuing liquor board violations, and intensifying law enforcement around go-go venues, all of which nearly eviscerated go-go culture from Washington’s landscape (Mock, 2019). Campbell’s action of cranking go-go from his Metro PCS store is a clear example of informal placemaking. The use of music in public space is an attempt to keep culture alive. As Campbell states, “Generations of Howard students, generations of people know that I play music every single day, I always liked the go-go bands, I always tried to keep the music alive” (Kurzius, 2019).

Through Campbell's actions the power of informal placemaking is revealed. The District rallied behind the matter with a Moechella demonstration (referencing Coachella festival through African American Vernacular English distinct to DC) that shut down the U Street corridor as thousands of native Washingtonians celebrated the spirit of go-go music and peacefully protested

the effects of gentrification on historically black neighborhoods of Washington, D.C. (Paz, 2019). Calls for go-go to be designated as the districts official music has begun see support from legislators (Giambrone, 2019). However, this can be viewed as a form of formal creative placemaking, prompted in response to informal placemaking.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The focus of this thesis requires an understanding of the background and prior research on placemaking as a planning and development tool, as well as the purpose and role of placemaking (both formal and informal) from a social and cultural aspect. Thus, the following themes were reviewed: culture, culture in public space, community & neighborhood culture, community place attachment & sense of place, placemaking, cultural planning, cultural districts & branding, and gentrification.

Culture

Culture is an important attribute that can define a person's identity, drive their way of life, along with how they interact with others. Researchers and sociologists have struggled to define culture due to its complexity. Culture has generally been accepted and defined as a set of values and beliefs, or a cluster of learned behaviors that we share with others in a particular society, giving us a sense of belongingness and identity. Culture, at its most basic level, can be conceptualized as shared symbols, norms, and values in a social collectivity (Walsham, 2002). Culture not only influences self-behavior but it also influences how people interpret behavior. This makes culture both an individual construct and a social construct. Individuals in a culture interact with each other at different levels, in these interactions, individuals take the perspective of their interaction partners and develop common representations of the culture. (Ching Wan,

pg.3, 2003). This process happens in communities, especially urban ones, where people from different or similar backgrounds join together to create the culture of a location.

Formal and Informal Culture

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital refers to an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society (Yosso, 2005). The term "legitimate culture" has been used interchangeably with cultural capital without specification of if by legitimate culture mean signals which are largely believed to be "most valued" (i.e., prestigious) or if they refer to those that are "respectable" (i.e., good but not prestigious). (Lamont & Lareau, 1988, p. 156). Given the emphasis on privileged groups and what is valued, sociologists extended this view to understand cultural capital as a tool used for social and cultural exclusion.

Culture and culture capital are not restricted to class or race, but its use for social mobility relies on its value to privileged groups in society. Thus, White, middle class culture is deemed the standard for value, and therefore all other forms and expressions of 'culture' are judged in comparison to this 'norm' (Yosso, 2005). From this, formal culture is the culture and standard of this same privileged group. Informal culture then becomes culture that does not meet the standards or norms of this group. This directly translates in public space, as white public space where whites are invisibly normal, and in which racialized populations are visibly marginal and the objects of monitoring ranging from individual judgment to official english legislation (Hill, 1998). This space may entail particular or generalized locations, sites, patterns, configurations, tactics, or devices that routinely, discursively, and sometimes coercively privilege Euro-Americans over nonwhites (Page, 2009). Pulling from critical race theory, white

privilege is manifested in public space. Price noted this when observing the construction of whiteness in Washington DC finding that “Through the maintenance of "White public spaces" constructed early in the District's history, federal professionals have created social and economic barriers which tend to privilege the interests of the professional Anglo-American minority over those of the African American majority residing within the District” (Price, 1998).

Continuing to pull from critical race theory, the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups can go unrecognized and unacknowledged (Yosso, 2005). Inherently communities have their own culture, but it is often not valued by privileged groups. This culture is formed by marginalized groups in the public spaces they occupy and dominate, many of which formed due to the exclusion from privileged community and spaces. This community space allows the creation of culture unattached or in line with privileged norms. The culture formed in marginalized space is valuable and considered formal in this space. Formal culture of marginalized groups becomes informal culture in the presence of white dominated space. The informality of culture, depends on who its interpreting, using it, and most importantly what group norms dominate the space. The cultural capital that is present in minority dominated space becomes a weakness and target when compared to cultural values of Eurocentric middle-class standards. Urbanist Elijah Anderson highlights this in his examination of public space, although it should be noted the same situation is interchangeable between groups and race.

“When present in the white space, blacks reflexively note the proportion of whites to blacks, or may look around for other blacks with whom to commune if not bond, and then may adjust their comfort level accordingly; when judging a setting as too white, they can feel uneasy and consider it to be informally “off limits.” For whites, however, the same settings are generally regarded as unremarkable, or as normal, taken-for-granted reflections of civil society” (Anderson, 2015).

Gentrification can bring this circumstance to spaces that previously would not be accustomed to demographics that would allow this dynamic to happen, especially in public space where both formal and informal culture converge.

Culture in Public Space

Public space presents the opportunity for just city principles of equity, diversity, and democracy to flourish. Public space functions politically as it gathers people from all walks of life in the democratic practice of liberty and equality (Bodnar, 2015). While implementation of these principles are not promised, the presence of culture is, which is used to illuminate public space. Both physical and social dynamics of public space play a central role in the formation of publics and public culture (Ash Amin, 2008). This culture is on display in the daily lives and usage of markets, coffee shops, parks, and plazas among other things. Culture is also used as an expression of identity and for recreation in public space with festivals, carnivals, and other large community-based events. While city culture grows naturally, open public spaces with mixed use gives sway to practices that may serve the interests of the powerful leading to inequality for vulnerable people and groups (Ash Amin, 2008). Culture is also used symbolically throughout cities and space, often displayed through historic districts and branding. This same culture can be used to bring about change. In Washington D.C. black musicians during the “Black Broadway” era used their talents in public space intentionally, to bring the races together and fight for equality, but also facilitate a black community and identity for space (Jackson, 2016). Although everyone may be able to shape the culture in public space, that does not mean everyone's culture is accepted. This is shown in culture that is policed such as graffiti, skateboarding, and street

music among other displays of informal culture. Given the wide range of ways culture can be presented literature has tried to capture the various functions and uses of culture in public space.

As mentioned above, festivals are an example of large community-based culture on display in public space. Tailgating, a similar event, has been identified as a form of community culture established in preexisting-built environments. Researchers argued that “Tailgaters are essentially nomads recreating their home out of their transported storage for each game day experience” (Sherry & Bradford, 2012 pg. 134). This argument is backed with the analysis that tailgaters refer to parties parked nearby as “neighbors, and co-locate by camping in close proximity to relatives and friends, the latter often having been acquired in one’s tailgating career. Studies like this highlight that culture in public space can help strengthen bonds and show the fluidity of space. As researchers pointed out, The parking lots do not change, but the composition of the neighborhoods erected upon them from differs from week to week (Sherry & Bradford, 2012).

Culture in public space can also have the role of being an unlikely/informal location for education and refuge. This is presented in NGO supported community libraries. Community libraries, while only part of a larger empowerment and development strategy, can play an important role in providing a sense of place and belonging (Kamal, 2012). These libraries, located worldwide, are an example of recreating public space use and purpose. These libraries go beyond their educational purpose by offering a temporary relief from domestic duties, as a space outside the home to be active and social for adults, especially women. Communities libraries are also a safe and secure alternative to the “streets” for children. Researches observing Bangalore's libraries note, “marginalized populations do not have the luxury of patronizing the 'public' spaces

of upper middle class and rich Indians, such as malls and public parks with admission fees. (Kamal, 2012).

While public space might be open to everyone, its usage and purpose is not always the same. Researchers unveiled this when observing cultural differences in park usage. They found that there was a higher incidence of group-oriented activities such as social activities, team activities, community activities, and food-related activities among the ethnic groups. Researchers drew a connection to both cultural and socioeconomics stating “The symbolic significance of food as a means of reinforcing ethnic identity in traditional Hispanic and Korean cultures, especially during ethnic get-togethers, may explain the high incidence of food-related activities during visits by these groups to parks, forests, and recreational areas (Godbey, 2005). There were also results that reiterate that public space has different value and purpose for people. Researchers found that the Hispanic and African American groups included in this study were characterized by a low socio-economic status and respondents belonging to these groups were less likely to have backyards for private picnics and barbecues (Godbey, 2005).

While public space is “open to everyone”, literature has closely followed how youth culture and other informal cultures are displayed and critiqued. Karen Malone observed the street life of Australian youth and noted “For many young people, the street is the stage for performance, where they construct their social identity in relation to their peers and other members of society. Many of the identities young people adopt within the public domain are contradictory and oppositional to the dominant culture (messy, dirty, loud, smoking, sexual); others have an easy fit (clean, neat, polite, in school uniform)” (Malone, 2002). These “performances” often fuel stereotypes; thus youth culture is policed through things such as curfews and refusal of entry in certain spaces. Yet in displaying their culture in public space,

youth and those with other informal cultural emphasize the problems with dictating usage of public space. This is more clearly seen in skateboarding. In examining skateboarding culture Chihsin Chiu found that “young skaters usually have affection for certain places, and the prohibition of skateboarding causes a disruption of place attachment for them. Moreover, designated space, such as skate parks, does not lead to conformity of culture to that space. Social production of space does not always contain culture, and in some instances creates subcultures. This is seen in park skaters versus streets skaters. Essentially, street skaters search for skating affordances from the existing environment, whereas park skaters utilize purposely built environments that match their requirements (Chihsin Chiu, 2009).

Art is also one of the most blatant ways culture is revealed in public space. The heavily critiqued practice of graffiti is an example of this. Graffiti and tags represent an early expression of street art meant to spread an individual’s name, originating in New York in the 1970s and contesting the marginality and ugliness of social life through the repetition of nicknames or words of rebellion on public walls (Visconti, 2010). While street art has garnered more affection in public space as seen through murals, the more informal practice of graffiti is still frowned upon and policed in certain public spaces.

Community & Neighborhood Culture

Culture plays a key role in the foundation of sense of community. Researchers have found that culture—like other forms of civic engagement—strengthens relationships among local neighborhood members as well as their determination to be involved in community life (Stern & Seifer, 2008). At the same time, because of the participation patterns it generates; culture, more than many activities, fosters connections across neighborhoods and social groups (Stern &

Seifer, 2008). This dual role helps strengthen and build bridges between communities, as “Many people go to locations to engage in the activities and to be among others and to meet new people and to share meanings of the scene with friends and strangers. What they are after is not just the enjoyment of activities, but to become involved in collective expression or ‘action’” (Irwin, 1977).

While community culture is not “radical” it does employ the usage of community-based planning. Community culture is created and established by residents without the top down influence of rational planning. While neighborhood culture is often a creation of the merging of culture, neighborhood culture can be constrained. Fischer argues this with the theory of subcultures. Urban areas allow for the creation and maintenance of new subcultures that mold the tastes of the city’s diverse population (Fischer, 1975). Subcultures and identity enclaves can create scenes that enliven certain aspects of the city’s overarching culture because of the scenes’ public availability and accessibility (Borer, 2006).

Community, Place Attachment, & Sense of Place

Sociologist Joseph Gusfield defined community in two ways. The first being the territorial and geographical notion of community —neighborhood, town, city. The second is "relational," concerned with "quality of character of human relationship, without reference to location (Gusfield, 1978). Using Gusfield’s definition as a base, four elements that construct a community have been identified including; membership, influence, reinforcement, and shared emotional connection (McMillian, Chavis, 1986, pg.9).

As the idea of community solidified, attachment to community became the focus of much urban planning research. Theorists were quick to notice the importance of place to people. Place

attachment has been defined as one's emotional or affective ties to a place, and is generally thought to be the result of a long-term connection with a place (Smaldone, 2007). Racial, ethnic or class identity all influences sense of attachment to a particular place (Rose, 1995). The concept of "sense of place" typically is used to refer to an individual's ability to develop feelings of attachment to particular settings based on combinations of use, attentiveness, and emotion (Stokowski, 2002). Sense of place is distinguished from the concept of place attachment by suggesting that sense of place takes into account “the social and geographical context of place bonds and the sensing of places, such as aesthetics and a feeling of dwelling” (Gerard Kyle, 2007). The identity of the place is established through users’ positive identifications with the places, the feeling of satisfaction, enjoyment and security (Ujang, 2009). Generally, most place attachment theorists argue that both physical and social space matter in place attachment.

Researchers have found that much of human relationship and membership in community is based off relationships with family and friends. Specifically, the systemic model of community attachment model holds that relationships with family and friends root people to their communities and foster feelings of inclusion, compatibility, belongingness, and connection to a geographic place (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974). The model relies on three elements: proportional presence of friends and family, frequency of contact, and valence ascribed to friends and family (Jorge A. Gonzalez). Research by Sampson that relied on the systemic model of community found that length of residence had direct effects on individual-level local friendships, attachment to community, and participation in local social activities (Sampson, 1988). Through use of these elements’ community residents can redefine or find identity. Researchers have also identified five variables that build neighborhood attachment which include: institutional ties, social neighboring, organizational involvement, kin in neighborhood, and friends in

neighborhood attachment is built (Fischer,1977). Research assessing place attachment in a revitalizing Baltimore neighborhood found that place attachment is higher for homeowners, long-term residents, and non-Whites or Hispanics. This is important as these groups are also the community impacted by revitalization (Brown, 2002).

However, place attachment is not only connected to family and friends, but also with culture. Research done in Malaysia found that place attachment contributes to the preservation of local place identity and continuity of personal and cultural identity. Results from the study found that cultural expression strongly manifested during ethnic festivals, the items sold and the general atmosphere of the shopping streets (Ujang, 2009).

Placemaking

Cities are ever changing entities that continue to shape how people experience life. Planning has made strides in extending its gaze and purpose past physical structures. The discipline shifted towards addressing other components such as social implications. One way to address these components is through placemaking. Placemaking as a concept emerged academically in the field of urban planning/design in the 1970's, and existed as a method to arrange "physical objects and human activities (Richardson, 2015). While placemaking can be traced back to early planning, the concept gained popularity in the 1960's. Jane Jacobs and William Whyte are often credited with popularizing placemaking, by pushing for the design of public spaces (specifically for people) that includes social and cultural components. (Storm, 2015) Placemaking is generally understood as a process of reshaping space in order to make it more appealing and useable, and to generate a sense of place (Sweeney, 2018). Placemaking can be defined as the deliberate shaping of an environment to facilitate social interaction and

improve a community's quality of life. Placemaking is meant to be a catalyst providing a way of playing off the natural assets that exist within every community, but also strengthening partnerships between communities, organizations and government (Perry, 2012). Although placemaking is a bottom-up process, it has begun to receive widespread funding and attention from federal agencies (Toolis, 2017).

Informal Placemaking

Much of literature discussing placemaking, specifically planning in public space, is focused on formal placemaking. Formal placemaking is often included in city plans and funded by government and private organizations. This is expected, as these partnerships are partly what makes the placemaking formal. Informal placemaking is absent of these partnerships and has been viewed as a form of do-it-yourself urbanism. Informal or DIY urbanism is frequently characterized by smaller-scale, grassroots spatial practices which challenge the optic of precinct-level regeneration projects (Sweeney, 2018). Furthermore, beyond community projects, informal placemaking projects may be strongly informed by activist movements that intervene in the urban fabric in ways government may be incapable or undesirous of doing (Ruming, 2018). In this way, protest and large demonstrations such as street festivals addressing political and social issues can be viewed as informal placemaking and mirror the base of insurgent and radical planning that are largely informal. The most prevalent defining element of informal placemaking in literature is that it is created without city or government approval. These unsanctioned tactical actions may include things such as painting bike lanes and crosswalks without city approval, turning overlooked road medians into flourishing gardens, creating markers commemorating unheralded events, converting parking spaces into impromptu parks, installing faux-civic signage

to “enact” hoped-for policy changes, and building and placing public street furniture in areas that lack it (Douglass, 2015). However, although unsanctioned, these instances can still be viewed as formal placemaking if aligned with the cultural norms of the community.

Informal placemaking is also defined by misalignment with cultural norms in space. Cultural and social capital define what is informal in space, which is based on the cultural norms of the privileged. Urban informality, refers to “self-organized placemaking by the poor to create cooperative communities where formal planning favors established and affluent residents over those who are newer and have lower income” (Doostvandi, Milad, 2019). Urban informality allows excluded groups to create affordable communities where disadvantaged groups can enjoy the economic and social opportunities that cities offer, these disadvantaged groups are often working-class minorities. The rejection of local working-class values and segregation practices of the middle class may further threaten longtime residents' sense of belonging to the neighborhood (Lager, 2013). While this concept typically references informal settlements, the same principles are true of informal placemaking. Cultural actions outside of the majority’s cultural norms are still valuable and affirm sense of place. These informal actions are committed by those who lay outside the cultural norms, which in many gentrifying communities are working class and minority residents. Street memorials are an example of this, they violate several urban design and civil codes but they are important part of cultural grieving practices and they structure community relationships (Steinerts, 2017). Other types of informal placemaking exists with a “negative gaze” from privileged communities that can lead to policing. Informal placemaking actions such as street art and “loitering” are examples of this. Black and Latinx communities in Oakland saw this in the policing of street drummers and “gang” culture. Rather than banishing residents from the city, individuals targeted by the injunctions are instead denied

the right to roam freely in city space, provoking a sense of illegitimacy in their own neighborhood (Ramirez, 2019). Furthermore, cultural actions that are seen as informal or illegal can take away placemaking spaces. Toronto's 'shisha ban' is an example of this as it forced nearly 70 predominantly Black and brown Muslim migrant-owned businesses to close, leaving owners to question if their culture has a place in the city (Hassan, 2016).

Black Placemaking

Literature on black placemaking is important because in several instances of gentrification, and in this research, the decline of the black population in urban spaces coincides with a rise in white population. As George Lipsitz argues, "the racial imagination that relegates people of different races to different spaces produces grossly unequal access to education, employment, transportation, and shelter. It exposes communities of color disproportionately to environmental hazards and social nuisances while offering whites privileged access to economic opportunities, social amenities, and valuable personal networks" (Lipsitz, 2011). In acknowledging this disadvantage, Black placemaking becomes important because it provides validity and humanity of Blackness in urban space, although the it is still subject to policing and destructive planning practices. Black placemaking refers to the ways that urban Black Americans create sites of endurance, belonging, and resistance through social interaction (Hunter et al., 2016). Black urban placemaking is grounded "in the realm of day-to-day life, of daily survival" as individuals contest social and spatial structures and claim the place and space necessary for progress (Haymes, 1995). These black placemaking social actions can be interpreted as informal in public space. Additionally, protest have long been used as informal black placemaking that has generated major policy change. In recent years protest as placemaking has continued both

large and small scale. Yet, these protests of resistance clash with business in privately managed public spaces that were crafted with formal placemaking elements that repel the race–class battles of past generations (Fischer, 2014).

While black placemaking can happen informally it also can be tied to formal placemaking, especially when black history is used. Historic monuments and statues can become “cultural safe havens” as witnessed with a religious vigil against urban violence on the neutral ground that is the memorial to Martin Luther King Jr. (Carter, 2014). As Catherine Michna, asserts, “creating public city spaces for the remembering and celebration of grassroots resistance movements and local counter histories of place can transform democratic practices in cities because doing so intervenes in lived, spatial practices in a way that encourages city residents of all class, gender, race, and ethnic backgrounds to come together and think critically about the historical structures underlying present-day inequalities” (Michna, 2009).

Black people are not a monolith, class is another divider that functions the same way in black culture. Market-driven formal placemaking increases the visibility of the black middle class (or rather, the subset most marketable to white gentrifiers) and “highlights benevolence toward the black poor, but it throws shade at the black citizen” (Montgomery, 2016). In these instances, formal placemaking benefits for working class Blacks are limited. As Montgomery highlights, placemaking may increase racial co-presence and diversity but low-income residents have low priority in the planning of amenities for privatized space— meaning they can enjoy public space features but cannot afford its pricey establishments.

Cultural Planning

Culture is an inevitable formation in individuals and communities. Thus, the planning field was bound to address culture in the spaces it develops and has done so since its inception. Broadly defined, cultural planning is about recognizing and enhancing the cultural aspects of daily city life and its places (Winter and Company, 1992). Essentially, cultural planners and the plans themselves must define what culture is. While planners tend to ere on the side of inclusiveness, a consensus on the definition of culture has not been established (Jones, 1993). This is largely because culture differentiates by location and group. Thus, the role for cultural planners takes on many forms. Regarding the role of planners, Sung-Ryun Rim suggests that “Cultural planning is the planner and the poet coming together to serve the people...A broad based, participatory process to improve the quality of life so people can give meaning to the things that are special about the place they live” (Rim, 2013). In this way, cultural planning largely relies on the basis of communicative actions planning understanding of the coordination of action through discussion and the socialization of members for the community (Zhang, 2012). Research from human geography planners suggest that cultural planning can create spaces not just places. In particular, cultural planning is seen to be necessary to give meaning to the local environments sense of place, or the meanings imbued to local environments, are erased by contemporary social and economic status (Stevenson, 2005). Cultural planning can create sites that have a distinctive, locally-sympathetic, identity to help mitigate social and spatial (Dowling, 1997).

Cultural Districts & Cultural Branding

The power and the presence of culture goes beyond communities. Local government, businesses, and other agencies use culture to form cultural districts and brand cities. Culture has been used as a means of urban revitalization, economic development, and social inclusion. Cultural districts and their purpose are not new in theory, they follow the purpose of the City Beautiful era when world fairs and facilities such as the Field Museum in Chicago were seen by public officials as boosting the city image and attracting visitors (Grodach, 2002). Even closer in connection are the goals of cultural districts and urban renewal which both hold the goal of “revitalizing” areas, largely through beautification and image to attract new residents and bring economic improvement. While some cities were already branded by their culture, since the 1960s cultural districts began to rise across America and literature tracked their implementation.

Many cultural districts are located in hubs created in former warehouse districts or other ‘marginal’ areas intentionally revitalized for a specific group of people; the creative class. While cities and metropolitan areas still compete to lure corporate firms to spur economic growth, many began appealing directly to the ‘talent’, most notably a cohort of educated professionals Richard Florida defines as the ‘creative class (Bereitschaft, 2014). Florida’s argument relies on the human capital theory which establishes that creative people are the driving force in regional economic growth (Florida, 2003). Thus, economic growth will occur in places that have highly educated people. The ‘creative city’ can be interpreted as the city with the highest actual presence of—or potential to attract—the creative class (Comunian, 2011). Creative cities achieve this through the promotion of culture, cultural diversity, and entertainment.

Cultural districts have been defined as “as a well-recognized and labeled area of a city with a high concentration of cultural facilities as the anchor of attraction” (Krump, 2001). These districts are typically bound to a few blocks and include mixed uses. Art is typically the basis of cultural districts. However, with a focus on fine arts some forms of creativity struggle for legitimacy, especially those that emerge from the experience of alienation and social marginalization (Morgan & George, 2012).

Literature on cultural districts has critiqued the lack of authenticity (Zukin, 2010). Many areas that become cultural districts already possess culture that was formed without planning intervening. Montanari and Mizzau argue that the more cultural districts are anchored in a local geographic, social or cultural context, the more they could be able to evoke local heritage, traditions and attachment to a place, thus increasing their potential of appreciation (Mizzau & Montanari, 2008). Researchers applied this when analyzing Piedmont, Italy’s music scene and found that local policy-makers properly managed to favor the emergence of a cultural cluster that local and external audiences perceived as really authentic, by nurturing existing local cultural 'germs that were consistent with the regional history (Mizzau & Montanari, 2008).

While cultural districts may represent local community and city culture, it does not mean the districts are led or formed by residents, instead many actors may be involved. Kushner and Arthur examined who exactly administers cultural districts and found that major districts are administered by private not-for-profit organization along with forms of cultural district administration include volunteer management, public-sector arts councils, and quasi-governmental organization such as a Business Improvement District (Kushner & Arthur, 2001). This administration of cultural of districts have the important role of securing funding for the districts and attracting the participation of private actors.

Black Branding

As noted in cultural planning literature, cities are specially branded through market driven commercial/private spaces along with formal placemaking elements that are a part of this branding. The culture used for branding is typically local to the community and also fits the diverse and hip image of the creative class. Derek Hyra refers to “black branding” as “Incorporating expressions of black identity into a community’s environment, which today often involves the commodification of aspects of blackness to facilitate neighborhood revitalization and development” (Hyra, 2017). Black branding becomes a part of the diverse image the creative class is attracted to, however the social justice awareness typically attached to diversity is traded for an aesthetic of “cool”. In this format blackness enhances rather than threatens the esteem of a given neighborhood (Modan, 2008). Especially since this Blackness is in branding, not the presence of black people. Furthermore, black branding allows a perceived proximity to a “iconic ghetto image” that is hip and authentic, but the poverty and violence that had real consequences for longtime black residents, is not experienced (McGee, 2018). As an aesthetic, blackness no longer relies on the presence of black people, or in this case black limbs for social traction (Summers, 2017). The absence of black people allows blackness to be defined and experienced by others.

Gentrification

Ruth Glass first created the term gentrification in the 1960s, to refer to the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the central city into middle-class residential and/or commercial use (Zukin, 2018). Furthering the definition, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development defined gentrification as the process by which a neighborhood occupied by lower income households undergoes revitalization or reinvestment through the

arrival of upper-income households (Jackson, 2015). Gentrification has been connected to the recent movement of people back into the city, reversing the trend of moving out to the suburbs (Hyra, 2014).

Physical displacement has been identified as a consequence of gentrification and the major focus of literature. Physical or direct displacement can be described as the “relocation of residents to a place which is separate from their original location, so that there is perceived distance between the two and they are no longer part of the same neighborhood as before (Kearns & Mason, 2013). Policies that have induced gentrification usually come as ‘mixed income housing development’ or ‘urban renewal/revitalization’ plans and encourage investment by private developers (Alfonso, 2016). Those who avoid physical displacement are introduced to mixed income communities which have been proposed as a form of “positive gentrification” that can deconcentrate poverty (Chaskin & Joseph, 2013). Robert J. Chaskin and Mark L. Joseph investigated this idea and found that deconcentrating poverty through mixed-income development provides a potential mechanism to reduce the isolation that low-income families face. However, it also generates a set of basic tensions. Researchers noted that “Despite the greater degree of corporate control over life in these developments, these new communities show little progress towards bridging the huge social divides among residents” (Chaskin & Joseph, 2013).

As Mark Davidson points out “it is impossible to draw the conclusion of displacement purely from the identification movement of people between locations. People can be displaced—unable to (re)construct place—without spatial dislocation” (Davidson, 2009). A consensus on additional consequences for residents outside of physical displacement has turned literature towards cultural, symbolic, and social displacement. Social displacement relates to the loss of

sense of place. This can occur when there are changes in ones position in the neighborhood structure and in government interventions that is initiated by different groups with different interests which can contribute to a sense of loss of stability and control, and constitute a type of displacement (Shaw & Hagemans, 2015). Furthering this, Zukin states long-term residents often feel uncomfortable when the ethnic ownership and character of local stores changes, creating a different sense of place. An example of change in place is provided in findings that “Men and women who are used to congregating on the street to play dominos or chat may be pushed out of their space by social pressure and more vigilant policing” (Zukin & Walker, 2009). Stabrowski argues that everyday displacement is experienced through the production of new spaces of prohibition, appropriation, and insecurity that constitute a form of neighborhood erasure. (Stabrowaski, 2014).

Location is not enough to create sense of place in itself; it also emerges from involvement among people and between people and place, thus gentrifying neighborhoods, have found often competing representations of place between longstanding residents and incoming gentrifiers (Twigge-Molecey, 2014). The mixture of these competing representations can result in cultural displacement. According to the literature cultural displacement occurs when the norms, behaviors, and values of the new resident cohort dominate and prevail over the tastes and preferences of long-term residents (Hyra, 2014). However, cultural mixing has been viewed in a positive light through the idea that a multicultural community is created. Chris McChesney argues this when examining the GLBT cultural presence in a previous African American dominated area in Washington DC. McChesney states “While the African American community’s opposition to their displacement is understandable, the creation of a new cultural

community should be encouraged. A community may lose one of their neighborhoods, but a new minority community then gains a neighborhood” (McChesney, 2005).

Cultural displacement refers to “the environmental and physical changes re-inscribed into the locality – in terms of commercial changes, forms of physical upgrading and restoration, aesthetic remakings and even the more forceful demolition and modification of the neighborhood by new residents” (Atkinson, 2015). Symbolic displacement can be revealed through change in spatial aesthetics by private and public interventions aimed at refurbishing, and somehow sanitizing, specific zones of central neighborhoods in order to make them suitable for middle class (Julier, 2005).

Summary & Gaps in Literature

Literature has covered a lot in terms of the rise of cultural placemaking and planning, the impact it has on sense of place, along with its connection to gentrification. According to the literature, culture and cultural capital can become a classist and racist structure when operationalized in public space. When applied in public space this cultural capital can be advantageous to the privileged class and plays out in cultural districts. This is shown in districts focusing on “fine arts” in placemaking while informal culture that is not aligned with the privileged is policed or ignored. These cultural districts can be linked to the creative class which also specifically caters to the highly educated and “talented” middle/upper class. Literature has also confirmed that people have attachment to space, which can be altered by demographic changes brought through gentrification. Moreover, physical displacement does not have to happen for disruptions in sense of place. Cultural displacement can occur in response to changes in neighborhood and community structures. Given the literature on arts and cultural districts it is

clear that the presence of culture does not mean that there is a connection to sense of place. The dynamics of a place, such as who administers and occupies it, can also influence the connection to space. This can be seen in cultural districts and formal placemaking that is intentionally meant to serve privileged groups and the “creative class”. This calls attention to the need to question who informal placemaking serves.

In response to gentrification and cultural displacement planners and researchers have commonly focused on formal placemaking. In the context of gentrification this focus has been on instilling diversity, which in some ways is the opposite of supporting informal culture which is often administered by specific singular groups. It is important to focus on how residents respond to gentrification outside of formalized placemaking which may negatively influence sense of place. Informal placemaking has mainly been addressed in discussing black culture and urban “street” culture. There is less of a spotlight on informal placemaking and the change in purpose and meaning it takes on in a new “gentrified” setting. Moreover, literature has acknowledged that “black branding” can be used in gentrifying cities, but there is slighter consideration on how this is used in placemaking. What is less known is how informal placemaking functions in response to gentrification, specifically in a space with blackness in formal placemaking that counters it. This thesis takes on the issue of informality in black placemaking in the face of gentrification.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Questions

This research is meant to explore informal placemaking’s connection to residents' sense of place. In addressing this research was conducted for understanding on how informal placemaking is used, its connection to place attachment, its relation to preexisting culture, and its acceptance in comparison to formalized placemaking and gentrification. The corridors use of

black culture in both formal and informal culture, along with gentrification, required observation of differences in both class and race. Furthermore, due to placemaking's economic development purpose/anticipation this research looked for any economic impact of both formal and informal placemaking. Especially for black residents, whose culture is largely visible in the corridors placemaking. In this research informal placemaking can be defined as placemaking actions (typically pre-existing) created and administered naturally by residents. Formal placemaking can be defined as planned placemaking actions that are a collaboration between residents, government, businesses, and local organizations.

The main question this research sought to answer is:

1. What role does informal placemaking play in establishing sense of place in a gentrifying community?
2. How does this play out in an area that uses black culture for formal placemaking while simultaneously policing black culture in public space?

Addressing this question also meant investigating:

1. How is informal placemaking administered by residents in the corridor?
 - a. What does informal placemaking in the corridor look like?
 - b. Who is creating and leading informal placemaking?
2. What forms of formal or informal placemaking affirm residents' sense of place and place attachment?
3. How is informal culture interpreted in the corridor?
 - a. What is the response to informal placemaking and culture both by residents, law enforcement, and the local government?
4. How does black formal and informal placemaking differ in the corridor?

Methods

Ethnography is an applied research method most often used to study cultural interpretation (Youker, 2016). Ethnographic methods can specifically be used to develop an in-depth understanding of culture from the perspective of its members (Nastasi, Varjas, Bernstein, & Jayasena, 2000). Due to the research trying to understand a community's use and cultural connection to place an ethnographic approach was used with mixed methods including, observation, archival research, descriptive analysis, and interviews. The U Street Corridor in the District of Columbia was used as a case study critique. The U Street Corridor was selected because it has visible formal and informal placemaking and a unique African American history that has remained in the corridor alongside gentrification. The corridor has also seen recent incidents centered on both formal and informal placemaking actions.

Observation

Observational research is a method that fulfills the need to study and understand people within their natural environment (Baker, 2006). Direct observation is meant to study phenomena of interest without becoming a part of them, in doing so the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the setting (Ewing, 2014). Observation was used to identify formal and informal placemaking in the U Street corridor. The observation area included commercial, residential, and educational, and public space within the corridors perceived boundaries. Observation was conducted in public space and inside establishments in the corridor that consist of placemaking elements. Observations were documented in both text as notes and photography. Observation took place both day and night at different times to assess changes in placemaking and interactions with placemaking. Observation was used not only to identify informal

placemaking and culture but also response to it by those occupying the corridor. Observation in the U Street corridor began in October 2019 and concluded March 2020. The corridor was observed biweekly for a duration of three to six hours. Observation was isolated up until February 2020, the start of interview conduction.

Archival Research

Archival research served the purpose of identifying the history of informal placemaking and culture in the corridor along with the response from residents and local government.

Archival studies are a method in which small amounts of information from histories of organizations are used to tell a story about the dynamics of organizational environments and organizational populations (Mohr & Ventresca, 2002).

Archival documents and data were retrieved from various sources including the DC Public library archives, the Washingtoniana Collection, Howard University archives, government documents from D.C. Office of Planning and D.C. Commission for art and humanities, meeting records/minutes from neighborhood associations and organizations, newspaper archives, social media, and blogs. Archival research provided understanding of informal placemaking and how response to it evolved alongside the corridor's demographic changes. It was especially useful in investigating changes in informal and formal placemaking during the early years of development within the corridor. Due to the research focus on placemaking and gentrification, archival research focused on the 1980's - 2000's where gentrification began in the corridor. Archival research was essential in understanding how the narrative of culture evolved in the corridor.

Focus Group & Interviews

Interviews served the purpose of gathering information from residents to understand their sense of place and culture in the corridor. Sense of place was assessed through descriptions of the U Street neighborhood's and how individuals view themselves and their community within those contexts. 10 interviews were conducted with residents through convenience sampling and snowball sampling. The 5 focus groups interviewees included both current and past residents, business owners, organizers, and visitors. All resident interviews were identically structured, following the same interview guide, with some deviance in response to the natural flow of conversation and experiences of residents.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to answer questions surrounding the economic impact placemaking and gentrification had on black residents and businesses. It also helped analyze class dynamics as placemaking evolved in the corridor. Descriptive analysis covered demographic change in the corridor from 1997 to 2018. This analysis focused on changes in income. Data was retrieved from public U.S. Census Bureau data, along with data from D.C. Government including D.C. Office of Planning.

Chapter 4: Findings

Characteristics of Formal & Informal Placemaking in the Corridor

There are clear differences in origin, display, function, history, and purpose between formal and informal placemaking in the U Street corridor. There is a presence of both informal and

formal placemaking in the corridor, although they are presented at different times and forms, with different interaction levels. Formal placemaking in the corridor is displayed in the in the following ways:

- Government sponsored public art through artistic, historic, cultural, and political murals on private, commercial, and government property.



Figure 5. Murals in the U Street Corridor

- Historic designation and preservation through trials and markers in residential and commercial spaces.



Figure 6. Historic Markers in the U Street Corridor
 (Louise Burrell Miller Residence Marker, U Street Historic Trial Sign, Duke Ellington Residence Marker)

- Historic naming of streets, buildings, and parks.



(The Ellington apartments, Ben's Chili Bowl Way Street Sign, Langston Lofts apartments)



(U Street Metro Stop Signage, U Street Wayfinding)

Figure 7. U Street Apartments and Signage

- Park and plaza statues and monuments



(U Street Civil War Memorial, Duke Ellington Statue)

Figure 8. U Street Statues and Memorials

- Branded wayfinding in public space



Figure 9. Shaw Outdoor Community Markers

- Government sponsored street festivals and demonstrations: U Street funk parade
- Neighborhood and Community Outdoor events

Informal placemaking takes place in the corridor in the following ways:

- Street art, performance and vending: busking, vending of products such as oils, art, food, and clothing outside the metro and on street corners.



Figure 10. Street Artists in the Corridor

- Placement of temporary structures such as chairs in alleys and mixed-use public space.



Figure 11. Street Chair in the Corridor

- Community led street festivals & demonstrations such as Moechella
- Congregating in public space at transportation stops, in front of establishments, and on street corners in pairs or groups
- Street memorials
- Public space as housing
- Graffiti and stickering



Figure 12. Stickering and Graffiti in the U Street Corridor

While there are various forms of both formal and informal placemaking, their presence in the corridor differ in many aspects. Formal placemaking is the dominant form of placemaking in the corridor with a great visible presence. Formal placemaking typically took place in permanent ways and structures, while informal placemaking was largely mobile. From observation alone the presence of formal placemaking was noted strongly through fixed structures such as building names, murals, and plaza statues. In contrast, informal placemaking such as street performance and gathering in public space was mobile, moving freely or by force. These instances are not permanent, thus their presence in the corridor depend on time and day. Formal placemaking can also be mobile or temporary as seen through government funded/partnerships such as street festivals, but they take place with existing permanent formal placemaking structures as a backdrop. Weeknights there was a strong presence of informal placemaking, with larger groups of all ages and races gathering outside. Many engaged in public space for temporary time before heading to a private establishment. Yet, for some public space was their destination in the corridor. Observing the corridor at various times highlighted that formal placemaking was continuous due to its permanent structures although participation with these structures fluctuates. On the

other hand, informal placemaking was not constant, there was a stronger presence of informal placemaking at night and weekends. Informal placemaking is created by residents and visitors in the corridor, many of which have deep rooted history in the corridor and witnessed the corridor prior to gentrification. Their actions, that are often limited to public space, fulfil their sense of place and culture in the corridor.

Government Supported Formal Placemaking

In both informal and formal placemaking government plays a role in either the creation or dismantling of placemaking efforts that impact culture and sense of place in the corridor. In the corridor government involvement is almost exclusively supportive of formal placemaking and excludes or polices informal placemaking. Various forms of formal placemaking require direct involvement from the government, or government funded organizations. Placemaking efforts are carried out mainly by the DC Office of Planning, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, and in partnership with the other offices such as city's public works department. Placemaking in the district involving the government has largely been formal, through plans and government administered programs. Government involved formal placemaking is mainly in the form of cultural and creative placemaking, while involvement in informal placemaking is in the form of policing that can alter sense of place.

Informal placemaking has always taken place in the corridor being that is simply the natural culture that emerges from people in public space. Formal placemaking, in comparison, has not always occurred and is seemingly connected to redevelopment/revitalization efforts and the emergence of the middle class and whiter cultures in the corridor. As stated in the case context, post riots gave rise to an area that was still culturally strong but a physically depreciated

area. By the 80's the corridor had become attractive to various groups and was eyed by then mayor Marion Barry for redevelopment. Prior to the 1987 ward plan, the State of the Ward report was published which points out the conditions of the ward at the time and elements that could spur development. The report discussed redevelopment plans and placemaking in the corridor mainly focused on culture. The report starts off giving accolades to the diverse culture of the ward overall, opening the report with the following description:

“An uptown community with lively commercial areas and residential neighbors, Ward 1 has been home to a variety of cultural, ethnic and racial groups for over 10 years. The wards diversity includes soul food restaurants, African record shops, Spanish restaurants, craft shops, and bookstores representing every culture and point of view are a part of the dynamic ethnic racial and social diversity that makes up the heart of ward 1” (Government of the District of Columbia, Office of Planning, The State of Ward 1, 1987)

This description as a mixed cultural hub matches the basis of formal placemaking strategies and its purpose. Furthermore, this description in the late 80's made it a prime target area for future placemaking, which is confirmed through city plans today that reference the corridor as an example of successful cultural/creative placemaking in public space. The report notes that recent development brought more affluent groups of all races and boast of redevelopment efforts prior to this report including the Municipal Reeves Center, and upcoming green line metro, post office, and housing completion projects. While the report does not necessarily focus on placemaking it does push redevelopment which seems to be a prerequisite for formal placemaking. The report which lead to the 1987 Ward 1 plan gives a base, through redevelopment areas, for formal placemaking that makes its appearance through historic preservation in the plan.

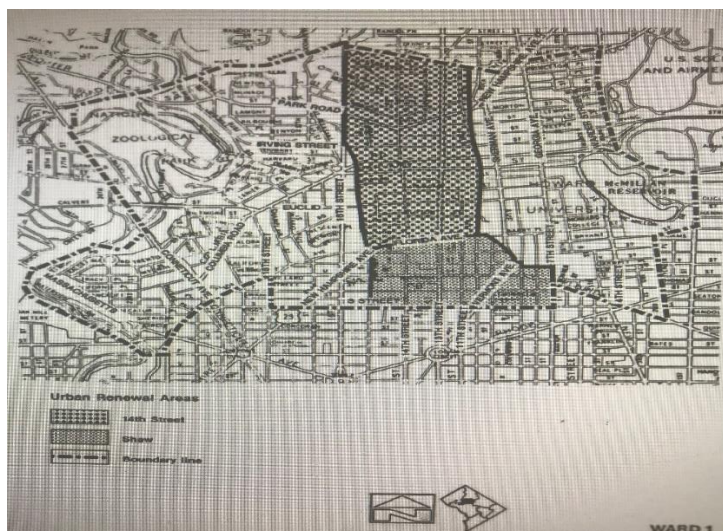


Figure 13. 1987 State of the Ward Urban Renewal Map

The 1987 Ward plan addresses community and placemaking in more detail, stating one purpose of the plan: to “help frame public decisions on the framework on the allocation of community development funds and other resources for economic development. (Government of the District of Columbia, Office of Planning, 1987). The plan also has goals of providing for the retention of and enhancement of public space, parks and public facilities, within the ward and acknowledges the special opportunities to capitalize on the ethnic diversity of the ward. While the report addresses the entire ward, it highlights that development projects are generally in or adjacent to deteriorated commercial and industrial area, and focused on the Bennet building office renovation on the south southside of U Street between 14th and 15th street, and the Jackson plaza mixed use development on U street between 13th and 11th street. The plan also calls for a feasibility and implementation study for the U Street Corridor as an arts, cultural, and entertainment district. Throughout the 90’s the corridor saw the result of redevelopment and revitalization plans implemented resulting in a new residential and commercial properties, along

with major demographic change. Early formal placemaking was enacted through historic designation in 1998 (DC Office of Planning, 1998).

Formal placemaking efforts alongside development continued and were a focus in the Summer 2002 Cluster 7 Logan Circle/Shaw District of Columbia Strategic Neighborhood Action Plan. The U street corridor is addressed with more specific development plans including the ReStore DC Main Street initiative targeting reinvestment in neighborhood commercial districts that was supposed to commit \$500,000 to the 14th Street and U Street corridors over the following 5 years (District of Columbia Office of Planning, 2002). Formal placemaking still centered on historic preservation including completion of the corridors Heritage Trail which is stated in the plan “to be developed to tell the history of the residential and commercial neighborhoods of Shaw proximity to 14th Street and U Street. “

The strongest plan that fostered the creation of formal placemaking is the 2005 DUKE Framework for a Cultural Destination for Greater Shaw-U Street Final Report. The plan itself alludes to its placemaking purpose being that it was intended to create a cultural destination. The plan gives homage to Duke Ellington on the opening page with his picture and quote, calling him Washington, DC’s Native Son & World Legend. What follows is a detailed history of the Black Broadway era highlighting prominent figures and ending with praise for historic designation and building restoration along with credit to the green line Metro for encouraging economic growth in the area. The plan leans heavy on the history already portrayed in the historic designation and trial, calling cultural landmarks “pearls on a string” of supporting mixed use development and citing the Lincoln Theatre, Bohemian Caverns, Prince Hall Grand Lodge, Dunbar Theatre, and the 9:30 Club as examples (District of Columbia Office of Planning, 2005). Unlike others, this plan has a section dedicated to Public Policy & Placemaking. Placemaking efforts in this plan

refers to “creating a cohesive and memorable place with diverse sub-areas whose primary functions and/or focus may be somewhat different.” Placemaking in this plan is most concerned with the image and beautification of place/space above anything. The plan identified six areas for placemaking efforts with three extending into the greater Shaw/Howard area, and three in the corridor including 9th Street, the African-American Civil War Memorial, and Lincoln Common. The “9th St. Eclectic Shops / Dining / Entertainment” was identified as a sub-district as a neighborhood serving commercial district with a mix of cutting edge, locally-owned boutique shops, offices, eateries and restaurants. Anchors for the area included the then redeveloped Housing Finance Agency site and the existing 9:30 Club. Placemaking is focused on beautification centered on making the sub-strict welcoming with clean and well-lit sidewalks streetscape and new landscape for greenery. Additionally, individual storefront signs are suggested to be appropriately scaled yet a highly-creative expression of business type. The African-American Civil War Memorial Sub-district was described as an active civic and cultural gateway to the Shaw community. It shows more consideration for placemaking as a facilitator for sense of place. It is proposed to be public space with cultural uses and activities at which residents demonstrate the best in civic pride. The redesign of the memorial plaza is proposed to make it a “very distinctive civic space which accommodates a variety of outdoor performances or exhibitions and which enables outdoor dining and relaxation”. The Lincoln Common subdistrict refers to the U Street Metro plaza and has more specific placemaking efforts including beautification and community engagement. Recommendations included making the plaza more pedestrian friendly and safe, using public art and a distinctive Metro escalator canopy to enhance the public space in front of the Metro station and new office buildings, and encourage use of the public space for a farmer's market, pushcarts or other activity to enliven the area. Lincoln

Common long-term development goals included seeking active ground floor retail and restaurant uses to enliven the ground floor and animate the plaza.

There is a section dedicated to African American Cultural Heritage with the goal of promoting cultural tourism initiatives based on the “rich African American historical and cultural assets of the area that will bring economic development opportunities for local residents and businesses”. Efforts to complete this goal do include placemaking actions, but once again they heavily rely on African American history and culture from the black Broadway era. Specific recommendations that can be considered tourism more than placemaking include: recognizing Cultural Tourism DC (CT/DC) as the lead agent for neighborhood organizations, formulate and coordinate expanded heritage-related programming to bring more jobs and business opportunities to the area through cultural tourism, and strengthen the capacity of local cultural attractions to provide engaging and interrelated interpretive programs that relate the history of the area in the context of African American and American history. It is also suggested that local entrepreneurs and cultural partners, establish a tour business that perpetuates model walking and bus tours, which at the time was sponsored by CT/DC and Manna CDC. These ideas may have been successful placemaking in terms of community engagement, but it is ultimately tourism. There was a possibility for this tourism to be an economic tool for black businesses but is most beneficial for those with establishments that support the Black Broadway era. Furthermore, it does not create economic opportunity beyond touring jobs.

Public art is mentioned in the DUKE plan, but since 2005 public art has exploded across the U street corridor and DC altogether becoming one of the premier forms of government administered formal placemaking. Partnered with DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, The DC Department of Public Works administers the DC Mural project, whose slogan is

“beautifying the city one wall at a time”. Local government controls the process from start to finish by selecting the property for mural locations from submitted applications, and selecting which artist and artwork is appropriate to be displayed. Murals DC clearly views public art as placemaking and is the perfect example of formal placemaking being the standard for culture and history in the corridor. The program does not consider graffiti an acceptable form of public art and typically select new mural sites for spaces that are frequent targets of illegal graffiti or are at risk for graffiti. Murals DC is seen as successful placemaking which the city believes has made a definitive impact on the city’s public landscape by revitalizing space. Success of the program is focused less on sense of place and more so on the increase of marketability, property value, and promotion of tourism. In placemaking elements that do connect more to sense of place, history is once again the focus, the department states Murals DC is a visual documentation of Washington, DC’s rich history. Aside from Murals DC, public art in the corridor also has the role of affirming sense of place through messaging. 14th & U Streets, was selected as an activation site for its Vision Zero Initiative - Public Art Placemaking For a Zero Street Harassment Project. (DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, 2016) The project is described as a public art and placemaking campaign designed to discourage and abate street harassment of residents, workers and visitors in the District of Columbia. Projects like this demonstrate how artistic and design interventions may help to deter street harassment which can prompt comfortability in public space.

While most formal placemaking efforts in the corridor has focused on historic preservation or beatification. The creative neighborhood project is one of the few efforts that acknowledges gentrification dynamics and the rearrangement of sense of place as a result. DC Office of Planning administers the creative placemaking neighborhoods initiative titled Crossing

the Street: Building DC's Inclusive Future through Creative Placemaking, which has the purpose of "promoting community-building in neighborhoods that are experiencing change with the intention to foster civic interaction and engage residents in a conversation about the future." (DC Office of Planning) The U street corridor was selected and met the following criteria:

- Experiencing rapid demographic and social change or barriers to opportunity,
- Identified in recently completed District plans or studies for arts and culture uses revitalization and/or creative placemaking investments
- Identified in recently completed DDOT livability and/or transit corridor studies for public space and/or safety improvements.

To ensure that Crossing the Street projects are truly local, curators are supposed to identify and define the spatial and cultural backdrops for creative placemaking interventions. The U Street corridor curated the funk parade, one of the most successful formal placemaking actions in the corridor that seemingly receives a warm response from old and new residents, along with visitors. Murals have also seen a positive response, muralist Kaliq Customs notes the engagement with residents and visitors from all backgrounds who ask questions and learn the meaning behind murals in progress. He recalled the following interacting when working on the Lee's Flower Shop mural: "It's cool to see people have dialogue with each other, that they don't know about the mural just in passing. People from the black congressional caucus stopped by during this time. I felt like I was a part of black history, and the rebirth of u street. I call it a rebrand, change in city, the look and feel of the city."

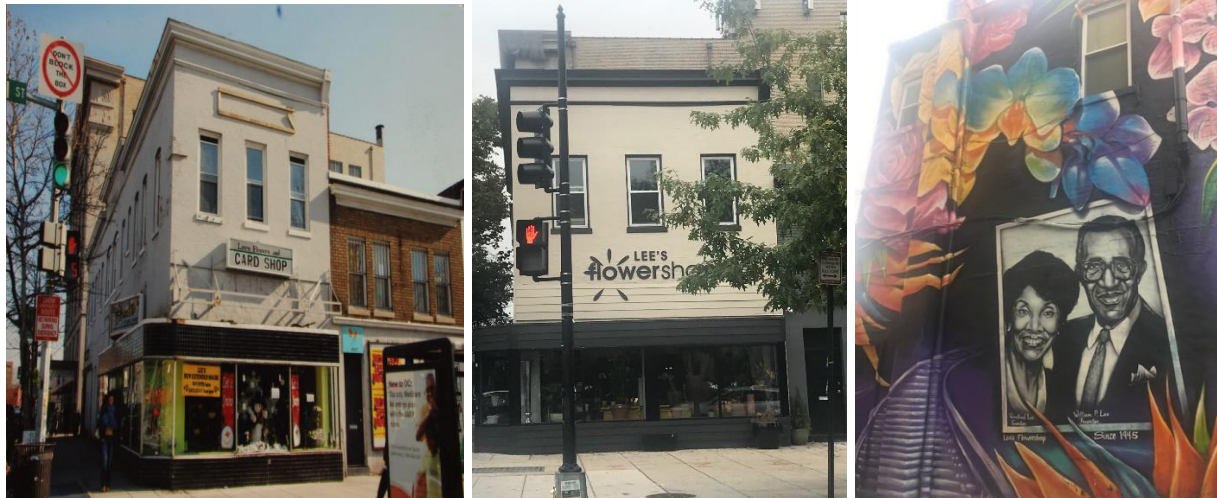
Formal creative placemaking pulls heavily from culture, DC has seemingly acknowledged this and the importance of culture in public space. The Cultural Plan for the District Act of 2015, is meant to "lay out a vision and recommendations on how the government and its partners can build upon, strengthen, and invest in the people, places, communities, and

ideas that define culture within DC”. The plan alludes to demographic changes and its impact on city culture by saying Washington, DC has “evolved from a low-value to a high-value real estate market, altering cultural geography and cultural business models in the process”. Cultural geography is defined by the plan as the distribution of cultural facilities serving cultural activities throughout the city. The solution to this is what the plan calls a new model of “culture everywhere” and seeks to increase social, informal and formal cultural spaces, and facilitate cycles of creation and consumption that “inspire and empower every resident to find their cultural voice and share it”. The plan has goals for cultural creators, cultural spaces, and cultural consumers. Cultural space goals include cultural space in the public realm and in public facilities that can be platforms for expression, more accessible cultural space, and be maintained as community anchors. Although the plan boasts of supporting informal culture and space, it quickly transitions into support for mainly formal placemaking efforts only. Recommendations included affirming civic identity and heritage through historic preservation and creative placemaking such as wayfinding. Additionally, when addressing culture in public space the plan focuses on visual and performing artist as culture curators, and not those involved in informal culture or placemaking. The plan like prior placemaking plans in the district is linked to redevelopment and economic opportunities. The plan states its strategy to sustain and create new cultural spaces depends on leveraging public and private sector resources that allows cultural space creation to be linked to the city’s growth.

Essentially, formal placemaking supports the vision and narrative that local government wants to tell, which in the corridor leaves out informal culture. It is directly tied to redevelopment plans that caters to the creative class. It supports the economic goals of revitalization using placemaking as a tool for beautification that ties directly into tourism. The

use of black heritage and “diversity” as the face of formal placemaking in the corridor furthers tourism, especially with it being a historic district. This image still aligns with the creative class who find appeal and comfort of the Black Broadway era that highlighted mainly formal and “respectable” forms of art, such as jazz and literature and less “radical” civil rights leaders. Formal placemaking ignores the black culture of the corridor beyond the black Broadway era that is mainly the culture of working-class blacks that birthed original culture specific to DC, such as go-go music. This placemaking benefits developers and the creative class in the corridor, which is largely white. Blacks who are a part of the creative class may also benefit and feel a true connection to the corridor's history and black branding. Kaliq feels that doing murals in the corridor gives him a boost of credibility in his work, stating “I get to have something on u street, a well known historic location. It gives me more credit in such a prominent space. For black artist it's hard to get credit and awareness. So to have it on a main street that was historically working class and historically black was good to be involved in. It's my community where I'm from.” Black establishments can benefit economically if they fit in with the image of formal placemaking. For example, Ben's Chili Bowl and Lee's Flowers are branded with formal placemaking murals highlighting their history of being a part of the black Broadway era. In these instances formal placemaking does affirm sense of space through meaningful history. Khaliq, who did Lee's Flower shop mural, states that the owners specifically wanted their story told:

“They wanted train tacks added because the owners met on the train, William Lee used to be a pullman porter. They were like black servants on the train. At that time it was one of the highest paid jobs Blacks could have. They opened the flower shop in 1945 but that's where they met. They wanted to connect and tell that story so people would understand it was an old establishment with deep roots in the community and family oriented. It helps people get a feel of what they are supporting. They are one of like two black business that survived the king riots in the 60s, crack epidemic, and everything that's gone on in the corridor. It's them and Ben's. I did not know the history, that they were 4th generation, until completing the mural.”



(Lee's Flower Shop Georgetown University, Lee's Flower Shop 2020, Lee's Floral Shop Mural 2020)

Figure 14. Lee's Flower Shop

Nevertheless, the timing of formal placing amid cultural and demographic change acted as an illusion. As Black residents were experiencing physical displacement, they saw themselves become the face of formal placemaking. A planning process they were actively involved in, some viewing it as honoring their history and culture while allowing them to feel a part of the community. However, black residents were taking part in future tourism and being culturally and physically displacement. At most, the black middle class, including black politicians and black business benefited. Residents found themselves either displaced from the corridor altogether or with their cultural resources and spaces replaced with formal placemaking. D.C. Congressional delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton endorsed the 2001 launch of the U street trail as the Honorary Co-Chair. (DC office of Planning, 2001) Not all black residents admired this formal placemaking or supported the U- street heritage trial, especially if they were facing physical displacement. The Washington Afro-American quoted local ACORN director Will Ward's response to heritage development in their coverage of the heritage trail. Ward stated the following: "I think that it's back-ass-wards that they displace a population then celebrate the Black History in the U street area. . . . As the city redevelops, we are not keeping the neighborhoods intact. For the U street

area, people who used to live there before gentrification are now renters in P.G. County.” (Holmes, 2015) Present day, black residents make up a very small part of the corridor's community, although black youth and middle class frequent the corridors establishments. The focus on making the corridor a “cultural destination” through black history as formal placemaking actually destroyed much of the character that several plans claimed was the purpose. The black community involved in planning and whose sense of place it was meant to affirm no longer reside in the corridor. The culture and history of the corridors once historic black entertainment and middle class live on through formal placemaking, acting not only as historic preservation but also as tourism. It also appeals to tourist, adding additional economic growth. Formal placemaking does not capture the culture of everyone in the corridor, leaving informal placemaking as an authentic and unplanned way to establish sense of place.

Policing of Informal Placemaking

Informal placemaking in the corridor is often at the opposite end of acceptable or formal culture in the corridor. This has resulted in informal placemaking being interpreted as wrong and disruptive. Things such as gathering in public space or stoop sitting are viewed as loitering. Dice and card games that have long existed in public parks are now seen as inappropriate. The soliciting of goods such as snacks and oils, graffiti, and stickering are undesirable to corridor residents, and local government. However, for those involved in informal placemaking these actions are routine gestures that have been a part of their daily lives long before revitalization in the corridor. Due to those engaged in informal placemaking often being in the minority, they may find their actions susceptible to policing from newer residents in the corridor and local government.

Placemaking and culture are both policed in the corridor through physical presence of police, city laws, program regulations, private organizations, and community policing. Policing impacts what type of culture is created in the corridor and who controls it. This ultimately impacts what narrative and culture is being displayed in the corridor. Informal placemaking is the target of majority of policing in the corridor. Formal placemaking is generally supported and created by the government but is policed through requirements and restrictions placed on programs. For example, the DC Murals public art project specifically targets graffiti, and supports to DPW's mission to clean and "beautify" the nation's capital. MuralsDC was created in 2007 to replace illegal graffiti with artistic works and "revitalize" sites within communities in the District of Columbia. In this view, graffiti as an art style is being attacked not only for being illegal, but it is also not seen as an acceptable art form. This is an example of informal placemaking being so heavily critiqued it is deemed illegal and the erasure of it is a goal for the city. Yet, graffiti is a cultural action that can certainly create sense of place. Graffiti and graffiti tagging can be very personal and has long been used as a form of social and political expression. Graffiti has historically been linked to urban youth and often connected to the local music scene. In DC, and the corridor specifically, this has meant go-go, hip-hop, and punk music. Choosing not to acknowledge this informal art form removes it as a placemaking forum in public space, possibly taking away a sense of place. Instead, the program affirms sense of place for those more aligned with the art and culture of formal placemaking.

This policing of graffiti and other informal placemaking comes not only from the government but also through residents and has ties to community development and gentrification. New and longtime residents do not always support or understand graffiti as

art/culture. However, the privileges and powers that come with newer residents can shift culture in a place and response to it in new ways. By the 90's the U Street corridor was already seeing major redevelopment and revitalization that resulted in demographic change including a larger middle class and white population. As early as 1998, the Cardozo Neighborhood Association already had plans to erase graffiti with funds for a graffiti abatement project and hosting graffiti cleans ups and promotion of this through anti-graffiti videos. Newsletters discussed graffiti in the following way:

“Graffiti continues to appear in our neighborhoods. And, we're continuing our two-year old graffiti abatement project. As you walk around the neighborhood please be aware of any graffiti you see. It really takes a conscious effort to notice it. Look at the back of signs, alley walls, and stairwells, as well as the big blank walls. In the inner city we get so used to seeing graffiti that it becomes part of the background so we don't tend to notice it. But to someone coming into the area it's very noticeable. It can make visitors uncomfortable since graffiti is frequently associated with drug or gang active. When graffiti is out of control it can also signal a neighborhood that doesn't care about its image or the quality of life of its residents. Painting out graffiti gives me instant gratification. I see the improvement as soon as the paint is on. Notice the windows of the vacant building next to the True Reformer. One minute they were covered with graffiti and old flyers, the next minute they're wiped clean. It takes two or three of us going out for one hour on a Saturday morning to take care of a lot of graffiti. If you're interested in painting out graffiti (or if you know of graffiti that needs to be painted over), give me a call. — Chuck Baxter, 232-7921, CBaxter67@aol.com (Cardozo-Shaw Neighborhood Association Newsletter May 2000)

The policing of informal placemaking culture goes beyond sense of place with goals that may intentionally or unintentionally mold what is deemed acceptable culture for future generations. Artist Khaliq who has completed several murals as part of Murals DC recalled being partnered with a kid who was arrested for graffiti tagging and being instructed to inform him on the “correct” way to partake in art. The MuralsDC initiative aims to positively engage district youth by teaching proper professional art techniques, providing supplies, and a legal means to practice and perform their artistic skill in a way that promotes respect for public and private property and community awareness. (DC Commission on Art

and Humanities) From this statement it can be assumed that they may view graffiti in some way as improper, unprofessional, or disrespectful. In fact, their website hosts interviews with past graffiti artists turned “professional” artist. It is understandable for the city to be against graffiti as it has long been scrutinized due to it being used on public and private property unwillingly, however it is still as an art form with a distinct style. MuralsDC could still implement graffiti as an artform on properties cleared through the program, but this is not the case. Instead graffiti murals are largely left out.

While informal street art such as graffiti saw an increase in policing from residents and local government, the rise of public art as formal placemaking began to flourish. This can be attributed to the rise of the creative class and gentrification in the district. Street art contributes greatly to the development of the creative city, studies have been conducted that shows murals as “street art” have ties to higher real estate property value. (O’Connell, 2015). This is apparent in the U Street corridor that has an abundance of luxury lofts and housing surrounded by murals. Residents are attracted to the culture and edge added to their space by murals but keep out actual street art such as graffiti that is so authentically “edgy” it is illegal.

One of the most prominent forms of culture in the corridor has been music, it has long been an entertainment area that houses music venues and nightclubs for various genres/cultures. DC’s African American created go-go music stands out as a unique and original form of culture. This native culture led to formal and informal placemaking that exists in both public and private places. Formally placemaking occurs through murals, exhibits, statues, street names, and parks paying homage to go-go and its creators. Most recently, as of February 2020 go-go was signed into law as the official music of D.C.

Informal placemaking came largely from black residents who started throwing go-go's, the playing of go-go music in public space through speakers or in performance also became a cultural norm. Go-go has become a face of DC culture, praised by local government but also heavily policed.

The culture surrounding go-go dates back to the 70's, with a history of policing following it. In early years this cultural placemaking was policed due to its perceived connection to violence and then for noise as gentrification induced demographic change brought different norms for culture. As go-go music grew in popularity by the late 80's it was linked to violence by the city. Policing of violence targeted go-go culture in multiple ways including new restrictions on those who were active in the go-go scene and new requirements for clubs. While go-go venues had many instances in close proximity to violence that at one time was rampant across the city, it was an organic form of placemaking, especially for Black youth. A 1985 New York Times article recalled the culture in its prime "It's another weekend at the go-go's, the Washington clubs where the music is live and nonstop. The young, almost entirely black crowds show off the latest steps and shaven-sided, flattop haircuts, as go-go bands knock out continuous dance music (Parles, 1985). In her go-go forever article for MTV Ericka Blount Danois recalls her time at as teen in DC and her love for go-go (Danois, 2017). She is reminiscent of alcohol free all age go-go venues being the spot to hear uncut go-go, dance all night, and be seen. She highlights that the Black Hole in the U Street corridor could be a safe haven of sorts from the epidemic of violence that territorial teenagers from all walks of life in the city, recalling that fights broke out regularly between warring crews who ended up in the same space. Harping on the good of go-go she also remembers bands shining the spotlight and stopping the music when a fight broke out

and recalls Marion Barry's summer youth employment program that employed young musicians on the Showmobile, a large tractor-trailer with a stage for go-go bands.

The fun and freedom in go-go ended swiftly as its connection to violence increased. In 1987, 11 people were shot outside a Rare Essence show at the corridor's Masonic Temple at 10th and U Streets NW, the response to this violence was an attack on Go-Go's by challenging or revoking club liquor licenses and changing neighborhood zoning regulations (Watofsk, 2017). The city instituted a curfew for teenagers the institution of a curfew for teens thus blocking their attendance, and eventually a "go-go report" was created, tracking where bands were playing as authorities believed the concerts often brought together feuding gangs (Ali, 2012). Popular clubs such as the Chapter III and the Black Hole, and go-go music were forced to go underground or out to the suburbs to survive. While the culture of go-go music naturally spread to surrounding areas of Maryland and Virginia, restrictions on all age go-go's created an accessibility barrier for its native DC fans. In 2005 the same year the DUKE cultural plan was released, Rare Essence lost its legendary Saturday night residency at Club U — a venue tucked inside the Frank D. Reeves Municipal Center on 14th and U (Richards, 2019). As a consequence of restrictions band found themselves with limited performance venues as the corridor and the city continued to change. Moechella organizer remembers government restrictions that made it hard for bands to play anywhere, he recalls a time when popular go-go band TCB was shunned because of a lot of violence surrounding the industry. It forced the band to take on a whole different moniker, allowing them to play in disguise. He also pointed out that the all ages restrictions and 21+ requirement alienated the bounce beat audience, which is a youth heavy subgenre of go-go.

The other way informal placemaking has been increasingly policed is over noise. This policing comes from local authorities and the community who also play a role in policing themselves or by contacting authorities. Much of informal culture includes celebration and interaction this comes in many forms such as establishments playing music outside/inside their establishments, riding or parking with music blasting, and street performances in public space (especially outside metro stops). Go-go is naturally loud and interactive, which is reflected in placemaking that involves it. Call and response between the band and crowd is a vital part of go-go. This happens in both live performance and through interaction from people walking around that hear go-go music playing. This type of informal placemaking has been policed mainly through noise ordinances. The noise control act of 1977 has been the longtime standard in the corridor, the act specifically notes street drummers as a form of informal placemaking. The corridor and city overall has seen the call for tougher restrictions on noise. The 2018 Amplified Noise Amendment was a noise ordinance that would make it illegal to play amplified sound devices in public that others can hear from 100 or more feet away (Kurzius, 2018). This amendment can be viewed as a direct attack on informal placemaking, as the bill seeks to address noise complaints from people who live and work downtown claiming noise makes it impossible to work or relax. They allege the noise is from buskers and street performers. In response artist rallied in defense of their culture and presumed rights for sense of place. Moechella organizer specifically remembers using go-go as the sounds for protest recalling his journey to advocacy:

When I came back to DC in 2016 I realized that the go-go culture was faltering. Not even faltering, It just wasn't as prevalent as it once was. So I ended up collaborating with this one media company where we would live stream go-go concerts once a month on the internet through Facebook and YouTube live, it became very popular. In the midst of that the DC council was looking to pass a bill called the amplify noise amendment act, which would have prevented buskers from amplifying their music in the street. That's basically how go-go was

started, with people being able to amplify their music. It's such a big part of DC culture, so I threw a protest on 14th and U street called Save Chocolate City. From that I met this guy from Listen Local First who referred me to the SuperPAC of democrats who used to advise Hillary. They were throwing protest outside the White House every night. They asked me to book musicians so they could make as much noise as possible. I knew musicians from the go-go world that busked, I would even ride around asking buskers on the street. In my mind organizing isn't anything but party promoting which I had a strong background in."

#SoundproofDC became the slogan for artists and activists held a press conference with street performances by some of DC's regular buskers in response to the amendment. (Coffin, 2018) Musicians felt the bill would criminalize busking and strip the city of its character and culture. Moreover, it brings the divide between the working and creative class to the front. Musician and organizer stated, "Street performers play so they can afford to eat, they're out there for the sake of being seen, to help tide them over. Sometimes people hear them, and they hire them. Being charged \$300 or so, they might not even make that in a day of busking" (Kurzius, 2018). Noise complaints are not necessarily new, but the uptick in complaints and response in legislation coincides with the changes of the city demographic makeup. The creative class brings structural power. Action from local government could be prompted by who the complaints are now coming from and how many. This power is not just from community residents, but also corporate businesses and organizations. Furthermore, these ordinance and laws once again highlight how a difference of culture in public space disrupts sense of place. The policing of people actively engaging in culture such as performance is one thing, but this policing also applies to others who are participating in informal placemaking culture by simply existing in public space. Those who do not see this as informal culture view it as loitering. Loitering has a history of being controversial, but in the corridor was a focus of longtime ward one council member Jim Graham. Graham was a persistent champion for anti-loitering legislation, introducing bills in 2005, 2007, and again in 2009 (Iovino, 2009). The bill would allow police officers to disperse two or more people

gathered in areas known for illegal activity referred to as Hot-Spots, and an arrest could result in a \$300 fine and/or 180 days in jail. The bill could criminalize informal placemaking such as residents socializing in public space, along with those who use street corners for work such as day laborers.

Although policing bills are enforced by local law enforcement, policing is prompted by community residents and underscores the power of community. These actions are not necessarily intended to police individuals “loitering” or their culture. These complaints come natural due to cultural norms of what is proper and safe conduct in public space and certainly on their private property. Communities often act on this by calling local authorities. It is certainly understandable that communities want safe, non-violent, and drug free spaces. However, the relationships between police and citizens, specifically African Americans cannot be ignored. Controversy surrounding police brutality and distrust between the two groups is deeply rooted in American history. This tension and history make laws prompted by community residents troubling. Calling for a police presence to combat illegal activities is one thing, but calling for police due to loitering or gathering in space is different. Often, calls about loitering are connected to a perceived sense of violence held by newer residents for a different class/race.. A June 1982 Washington Post article, *Once-Tarnished 14th Street Strip Polishes Its Image*, by Crispin V. Campbell highlights the dynamics of community power and policing with displacement as neighborhood revitalization occurs. Although the article discusses the Logan Circle community, it is centered on the development up 14th Street into the corridor. In terms of policing, the community is concerned not only for safety, but also for the attraction of new developments. This is highlighted in the articles reporting:

“Community organizations and homeowners, willing to pioneer in sometimes-tough neighborhoods, have continued to renovate the turn-of-the-century and earlier Victorian homes, and to band together in organizations such as the Logan Circle Community Association to fight prostitution, drug trafficking and other crime. Residents have testified against prostitutes in court in an attempt to secure stiffer penalties, and police have responded to citizen pressure by maintaining a high presence and by setting up barricades and roadblocks along the 14th Street corridor to confound the prostitutes' late-night customers as well as potential drug customers. Their efforts to improve the strip and the surrounding neighborhood have made it more attractive. Police said crime in the area has been reduced 30 percent” (Crispin V. Campbell, 1982)

The article also highlights policing and attitudes towards informal culture in the corridor. At the time, the Central Union Mission was relocating a facility that temporarily housed men and women in its outpatient alcohol recovery program at its new 14th street location. The Logan Circle community association became concerned. Rev. Robert R. Rich, the mission's executive director noted community concerns that the facility would draw more “derelicts” to the area after hearing the announcement about the facility. He recalls having to meet with Logan Circle Community Association and explain their programs. The Cardoza/Shaw neighborhood had its own policing efforts, a March 2002 Neighborhood association letter highlights new news that “ Julie Clarke moved that CSNA endorse a letter (previously endorsed by the ANC) calling for 14th & W to that designated as a Police Hot-Spot. Seconded by Steve Tulin and unanimously passed” (Cardoza/Shaw neighborhood, association, 2002)

Informal placemaking provides residents in the corridor with a sense of place as an alternative to formal placemaking that does not benefit them. Moreover, those participating in informal culture are not specifically doing it to be a public “nuisance” or cause disruptions. Informal placemaking and culture has existed in the corridor for decades, so it is not intentionally meant to “bother” community. Instead it is the newer community that is interrupting the precedent culture and sense of place for deep rooted individuals. However,

newer residents view longtime culture as informal and unwanted. Response to informal placemaking has led to calls for policing. This policing has the power to remove and silence acts of informal placemaking. This is extremely troubling as informal placemaking is already in the minority and one of the only forms of sense of place for long-time working-class individual's in the corridor who may not connect with much else in the corridor anymore. If informal placemaking is policed to the point of no visibility, then the only remnants of culture prior to redevelopment may be formal placemaking leaving out apart of U Streets history and culture that is already less visible.

Community Structure, Participation and Response to Placemaking

The neighborhood community plays a huge role in both the creation and policing of informal and formal placemaking in the corridor. Inhabitants of a community guide the cultural norms of the community and police actions that don't align with these norms. In this case informal culture can be prone to policing, if it finds itself outside the boundaries of a community's cultural norms. Community also impacts the physical landscape of space by presenting support or opposition to development. The structure of community influence and involvement is often complex. In theory, power in community typically follows a democratic majority rule principle, but the reality of class and race alter this. Furthermore, the demographic make-up of community can change overtime that can impact power along with cultural norms.

Community in the corridor has guided placemaking mainly in the form of community associations and organizations. Major organizations in the corridor (past and present) include The Shaw/Cardoza Neighborhood Association, The U Street Neighborhood Association, and ONEDC formerly known as MANNA. Additionally, the "U Street Corridor" is a modern

concept, there were/are many neighborhood associations involved in community decisions that overlapped with now present-day U Street boundaries. These organizations serve varying purposes and highlighted the differing focuses among residents in the corridor. Neighborhood associations typically focus on specific community projects intended to better the community and cultivate spaces for mixing and bonding but can also actively participate in policing. These associations also focused heavily on beautification and formal placemaking. The Cardoza Shaw neighborhood associations in the 90's and early 2000's had traditional projects including neighborhood clean-up days, back to school drives, holiday parties, and other neighborhood activities. Today these same activities by the organization continue in the corridor with block parties and movie nights. Associations can also become vocal about development in their area. Today the association uses social media, posting about what is opening and closing in the corridor, along with major projects such as large-scale apartments and retail renovations. These changes seem rather routine, but during the years of early development in the corridor they were a major focal point. From archives of association letters community concerns over fast food restaurants coming to the neighborhood and support for closing longtime establishments such as liquor stores/ convenience stores/gas stations are revealed. Yet, there was more support for large development's such as apartments and buildings, along with major commercial development.

Community concerns that go beyond standard neighborhood association agendas resulted in organizations targeting social issues and community equity. Manna CDC became one of these organizations impacting sense of place and the community structure through actions on affordable housing and historic preservation among other things. Shaw based ONE DC was founded in 1997 in the midst of neighborhood change similar (and including) to the corridor. The nonprofit addressed housing and community development with an understanding of its

connection to race, power, economic, political, and social forces. These efforts are helpful not only in creating equitable spaces, but also facilitating sense of place. Moreover, housing and resources that create space allowing vulnerable residents to remain in the corridor is important. You cannot be a part of a community and if you no longer live there, especially when it comes to community voice and decision making.



Figure 15. Manna Historic Whitelaw Apartment Building

Residents in the corridor, particularly the African American community had concerns over sense of place and preserving the history and culture of the corridor. Community's did this by focusing on historic preservation. Manna CDC worked on this by partnering with Cultural Tourism DC/DC Heritage Tourism Coalition to create, “Before Harlem There Was U Street”, a walking tour of the historic Shaw neighborhood. Manna CDC and DC Heritage Tourism Coalition also partnered with the DC Chamber of Commerce to create “Duke Ellington’s DC”, a bus tour of the historic Shaw neighborhood, where several Shaw residents were trained as tour guides. Neighborhood associations were active in the historic preservation and designation process

which was administered by DC Office of Planning and required community support. For example, the black community was very vocal about saving the Anthony Bowen YMCA for reasons that go beyond historic preservation, it was intended to be a “full service” neighborhood as it was in the past. Formal placemaking requires partnering with government or private associations which can lead to the rise in difference on meaning and purpose of these placemaking projects. Many community members voiced frustration on working with local government during this process:

“There is no coherent communication between the YMCA board and the Anthony Bowen management committee and the Shaw community at large. This lack of communication has led to distrust and represents a major conflict that must be resolved if the “Y” is to regain its credibility in D.C.” (Coalition to Save the Anthony Bowen YMCA,)



Figure 16. Support Images from the Coalition to Save the Anthony Bowen YMCA Report from the Washingtonian

Today the YMCA is laced with formal placemaking throughout, but also very much a part of the u street corridors community infrastructure as a resource. However, because it is a community resources it is most beneficial or used by those who are residents or in close proximity to it. This means it is not serving the same groups that restoration intended, historically it served the lower income working class in the corridor. Ultimately, its purpose changes along with who it provides sense of place for.

Community involvement and community organizations also highlight the power structure in communities and how this facilitates placemaking and culture in the corridor. Community

organizations play a huge role in placemaking as it functions in its own governing structure, often following a democratic majority role. In this structure, community support can create and support placemaking (often formal), but community dislike can prompt regulation or policing of informal culture. This community power goes beyond formal and informal placemaking. It ultimately shapes the environment of public space and the placemaking that occurs in it. Communities are often heavily involved in redevelopment and revitalization process. In all the plans discussed prior, community participation was involved in some way from kick off meetings to charrettes. However, it is important to note that community involvement did not mean equal representation or “voice” for everyone in the corridor. Many community associations have their own power dynamics and barriers of social and cultural capital that can deter involvement, such as association dues. As demographics change occurs, the composition of neighborhood associations changes with it.

Community involvement can be a part of informal placemaking but is normally a response to informal actions resulting in policing. This is seen in support of noise ordinances, anti-graffiti, and anti-loitering laws. Also, because informal placemaking is natural and is the culture from people existing in space, there is no need for community involvement. Informal placemaking is typically on a small scale between individuals or small personal groups of friends or family. Informal placemaking can be large-scale, mainly in the form of protesting. Although protesting involves some form of organizing, it is largely informal in nature and goes against government structures and rules. Protesting is also normally in response to feelings of inequality or wrong doings. Protests centered on informal placemaking such as Don’t Mute DC and sound Proof DC are examples of this. These protests were focused on saving forms of informal culture and highlight how informal placemaking can be effective in combating sense of place.

Placemaking and Sense of Place

Placemaking plays an important role in facilitating sense of place. Through formal and informal placemaking the narrative and culture of a place is displayed, and influences sense of place for residents and visitors in the corridor. The U street corridor has seen major change that has impacted sense of place for residents in different ways that is upheld through formal and informal placemaking in the corridor. Although placemaking can mold sense of place, when policed it can be lessened for others. Furthermore, sense of place is complex allowing people to feel a strong sense of place in one setting but a sense of unbelonging in the next. Gentrification is complex in this same way, being that it can bring economic growth and opportunity, but also physically and culturally displace people. In both placemaking and gentrification, those who have power in decision making govern the cultural norms in space, which directly impacts sense of place.

In the corridor, sense of place differs based on various factors including age, race, class, culture, and residency status. Furthermore, people are multifaceted and may find representation and belonging in multiple spaces for different reasons. The corridor has been a space for various groups since the 80's and has fulfilled its vision of being branded as an entertainment district and cultural hub. By the mid 2000's the corridor became recognized as a new "hip" area, the Washington post profiled the corridor with the following description: "On weekend nights and even during the week, throngs from the city and suburbs, along with hip city visitors, crowd the dozens of restaurants, bars and clubs of the corridor, a strip of U Street from 9th Street to 16th Street and blocks nearby" (Ault, 2006). This is a description that is still fitting in 2020. At first glance the corridor, especially at night, the corridor looks like a utopian multicultural space with

placemaking goals achieved with both formal and informal placemaking occurring among all groups. However, aside from standard popular commercial ones, establishments in the corridor are mainly geared toward the creative class, suburban visitors, tourist, and young adults. Youth, specifically college students dominate the corridor on weekends. Young adults from all backgrounds seemingly finds spaces for themselves in the various bars, concert venues, café's, and nightclubs. This may be in part due to the numerous colleges in DC and the surrounding area, including Howard University. It also appeals to youth in nearby suburban areas across the metropolitan region, a trend that has happened since the 80's. When speaking to an American University sophomore from Annapolis, he is easily able to name places in the corridor he enjoys and feels comfortable listing dining and nightclubs. The same was true for Moechella organizer, who rattles off entertainment establishments he frequents in the area. Another man described the U-Street culture as eclectic and fun, which he loves. The creative class is also able to find space for themselves; this space goes past entertainment elements as they are also able to find work and housing to keep them in the area. Ultimately, sense of place in the corridor rest heavily on being able to connect and find use of the establishments in the corridor. Formal placemaking acts as a bonus that aligns with the culture and image of establishments in the corridor furthering sense of place for some. In fact, it adds to the corridors hip image, affirming sense of place for youth, the creative class, and tourists that it appeals to. This was witnessed in the midst of an interview with Walker Memorial Baptist church members, two young men walked by thanking them for mural recommendations, stating they got some good pictures at Ben's Chili Bowl to post on Instagram, and asking about any other murals to visit for a nice background. Furthermore, on any given day you can find people posing with the numerous murals dispersed throughout the corridor.

Informal placemaking reveals complications with sense of place in the corridor. Not everyone can find themselves in the establishments that the corridor offers, the culture and target audience of many establishments can be a serious barrier. Working class and longtime residents, especially older Black and African Americans, can struggle to find sense of place. Longtime resident and organizer Dominic Moulden expressed he did not really feel a sense of place in the corridor and only frequents Ben's chili bowl and Sankofa bookstore when in the area. In response to no feeling of place in the corridor's establishments, some people may choose to stop visiting the corridor or only visit spaces they feel comfortable in, others may choose to stay in public space. 65 year old Mr. Black vividly remembers the corridor having grown up there after moving from North Carolina to the Shaw area where his mom was a teacher. He also recalls houses of friends that used to live in the corridor, part of the reason why he has chosen to sit on stoops. Mr. Black find space in the corridor through informal placemaking, stating he finds comfort in public space with his friends (who is with) hanging out and chatting. He declares the corridor is not meant for him anymore, and he only visits for work at a nearby club where he does cleaning. Public space becomes the home for informal placemaking. On any given day groups of black men can be seen on corner blocks and in parks socializing, typically at a reoccurring location. During one night of observation while black youth walked to nearby clubs, two older black men listened to music and danced outside their parked car. In these moments there is seemingly still a sense of place solely through informal placemaking, with alleys and public space being the "establishments" they connect to. Informal placemaking in this format acts as the only option for establishing sense of place. Although all races/groups engage in informal placemaking, especially musicians, long time seemingly working class black individuals have a stronger visible presence. This is in part due to not being able to find

themselves in the corridor's spaces, but also because it is authentic culture. To this group it is not informal culture it is just natural, and only deemed informal because of new cultural norms that go against it. It is culture that has existed in public space long before any changes or gentrification in the corridor, which is why it remains.

Gentrification

The U Street corridor is one of the biggest examples of gentrification in DC, the corridor has also become a top destination. Gentrification has impacted what and who is in the corridor, two major elements that impact sense of place. Sense of place is strongly connected to physical space where people live out life. Valuable experience, memories, and events are often directly connected to space, and the people that inhabit them. The rise of gentrification led to change not only in who lives in the corridor but also what types of business and organizations are in the corridor. Gentrification in the corridor began in the 80's and major change had happened by the 2000's. Business Insider reported on this in its "14th and P picks up high-end retail" article, in which the corridor was described as:

A Once a vibrant area for upper-income families, 14th Street suffered greatly during the Martin Luther King Jr. riots and "white flight" toward D.C. suburbs. White, upwardly mobile families moved away from the city in search of better schools and safe streets. However, a renewed confidence in the city has many empty nesters and "power couples" moving back to the area. (Tobbe, 2000)

The corridor witnessed the transformation of neighborhood and local business into luxury housing and retail. During early redevelopment that sparked gentrification actions such as the green line metro construction closed many of the corridors black business that had sustained the riots for good. As gentrification expanded this meant the closing of neighborhood businesses overall. Those that did remain were long time establishments, such as the 9:30 club, that

contributed to the corridor being an entertainment district. This tradeoff has brought new residents and visitors who the newer establishments appeal too. Changes in physical infrastructure has seemingly impacted sense of place for longtime residents of color the most. When asked about sense of place, Mr. Black states he does not really have a place and that U Street establishments are not for him. Yet he does remember a time when it did, listing blocks and pointing to places that used to be African American owned supermarkets, laundromats, and nightclubs, noting that Nellies used to be Addison Scurlock studio. He recalls the riots when he was in 6th grade and that he never imagined the corridor would ever be so white. “Things got bad, it was rundown full of pimps and hoe’s but still livable though. I had so many fun nights”. He is certainly connected to sense of place through his memories, he reveals that current residents don’t bother him too much claiming they understand his history in the corridor and know who he is. True enough, as residents walk around him on the steps as they exit. While new establishments do not always appeal to some longtime residents, they do affirm sense of place for many new residents. Although Starbucks and dog parks are mocked as the face of gentrification, they still affirm sense of place and appeal to residents and visitors of the corridor. People often follow redevelopment trends that appeal to them, in the corridor major gentrification change did not happen until redevelopment efforts including physical infrastructure began to change.

Gentrification greatly changes these spaces, leading to changes in culture as well. Gentrification in the corridor has impacted who lives and frequents the corridor, ultimately changing the culture of the corridor with old and new cultures mixing. In the mist of these dramatic changes placemaking becomes important as it guides what forms of culture are acceptable in the corridor and what is policed in public space. Formal placemaking often comes

with gentrification as part of economic growth and a part of redevelopment plans. It does have a purpose of mitigating community cohesion and culture, but is also focused on beautification and branding. Gentrification brings change in physical infrastructure, but also new cultural norms. These new norms affirm the sense of place for some resident in the corridor, but for those not used to or connected to newer norms may find their sense of place is in jeopardy. The loss of sense of place has caused feelings of unbelonging and erasure mainly for longtime residents in the corridor that are historically black or African American. A recent Washington post articles captured a longtime resident feeling that newcomers make her feel invisible, "Sometimes, they look at you like, 'What are you doing here?' Or they bump you," Hopkins said. "Just now, a lady let her dog come up on my leg. She didn't say anything" or apologize. She just kept walking in the direction of Black Broadway (Brown, 2019). Similarly, Ernest Peterson, who has resided in the Shaw/U-Street area for nearly 40 year chronicled his feeling as outsider in his own neighborhood in the following way: "I go outside, and these people who been here for 15 minutes look at me like, 'Why you here?' That's that sense of privilege they bring wherever they go," he said in his front yard on a sunny Saturday in November. "I been here since '78. They been here six months or a year, and they question my purpose for being here." (Gringlas, 2017). When asked about sense of place, Kaliq had the following response:

"Wealth has changed a lot, they're trying to stop people from playing in china town and stop go-go music. We're starting to lose our place in the city because of economic reasons really and not having a solid community to fall back on. I don't feel the same freedom and connection that I used to have. People look at me now as if I'm stranger or don't belong here. I've been here for 35 years, being treated as an outcast or stranger in your own community is different. Even the police look at you differently. They used to not care, or be concerned with what you were doing before, but now they are more strict. They want to know where you're from and what you're doing. It sucks being a black man. Because in the 2000's you don't care but now you have wealthy people here and things are being done differently and the way things are perceived are different. So that's tough to navigate. People look twice, clutch their purse. You shouldn't move to an area if you're scared to walk 5 blocks down."

Gentrification is vexed because there are no right or wrong cultural norms, it is the natural actions of people that differs among different groups due to history. Gentrification can bring these cultural differences to a head and the community is often tasked with mitigating this dilemma. Through formal placemaking those with newer cultural norms seemingly win because their sense of place is affirmed through formal placemaking that aligns with their culture and dominates the corridor. However, as sense of place is threatened by the impending presence of new norms those impacted fight back through informal placemaking to secure their place in the corridor in what may be the only available option.

Diversity

Diversity has been associated with the U-street corridor post riots since the 80's when the corridor saw the relocation of white gays and female artist. When asked to describe the culture of u street, diversity is the response from a corridor resident of 4 years. She discloses that its part of why she moved to the corridor. As a black women, she asserts she doesn't feel awkward in the diverse space and intentionally visits spaces where her race isn't represented, arguing that as a resident she's a part of all spaces in the corridor and won't be shutout. A twenty something Walker Memorial Baptist church member from Prince George's county views the corridors diversity as great and feels it defines the corridor. He boasts on the corridors shared cultures and mixing, especially in dining pointing out the soul food restaurant Oohs and Ahhs down the street and Mexican bar Alero on the corner. An employee at the Thurgood Marshall Center for Services points out that its visitors are very diverse now, stating "We see people from all walks of life here for different reasons. A lot of students studying". He also mentions that "U street

used to be 95% black now its 65%.” and that he only comes for Ben’s Chili Bowl and Ben’s Next door. A 1998 report describes the corridor in the following way:

“U Street's day world is about fifty-fifty, black and white. The night world, at the clubs, is slightly more white than black. The New U at night, there are grunge white kids in thrift-shop nylon and '50s flannel mixing with grunge black kids in Timberlands and ski parkas and sweats. Buppies from Prince George's County in sharp suits and shiny BMWs. Coffeehouse saints and poets with pierced noses and musicians, musicians, musicians. Graphic designers and sitar players. Cool used bookstores and cooler clubs promoting rock and hip hop and house and jazz. It's an alternative black white grunge retro roots flared folky world. Hip. Hop. It's a street of dreams and of dreamers. One of the 15 hippest neighborhoods in North America, according to a recent chronicle of hipness in the *Utne Reader*.” (Battiata, 1998).

By the 2000’s this “hipness” had solidified and saw even greater diversity. *U Street: The Corridor Is Cool Again* by Alicia Ault captures this diversity when profiling a 47 woman from Arlington dining at popular U street restaurant Crème:

“At Creme, Ms. Sullivan's party was eating at the bar; at 8 p.m., there was a two-hour wait for the restaurant's upscale version of Southern dishes like shrimp and grits (\$16) or pork and beans (\$18). A relaxed crowd -- young and old, black and white, straight and gay -- basked in understated candlelight reflecting off blond wood and olive-tone walls. Ms. Sullivan had come on the recommendation of the bartender, whom she had known in his previous job at the upscale Marcel's in the nearby West End. What was U Street's allure for her and her friends? In part, Ms. Sullivan said, "We like the diverse crowd." (Ault, 2006)

Ironically, in 2014 Crème had to find a new location in the corridor after its original building was torn down for apartments, and in 2018 the Ethiopian owned restaurant closed for good after a 20-year run, citing the increasing cost of rent (Rojas, 2018). This depiction as a diverse space certainly continues today and is true of its visitors and establishments. However, the diversity that was present in early redevelopment was gone by the 2000’s and hyper gentrification prompted diversity to dwindle even more. Since the early 2000’s to present day the residential population is not diverse. While this lack of diversity may not impact minority residents who are newcomers to the corridor, it has impacted sense of place for some longtime residents. Although being in the corridor on weekends or at night when its diverse, this is quickly

erased when veering off U-Street during the day into more residential and working areas of the corridor. Representation and likeness matter in sense of place. While race itself is not the only form of diversity, there are cultural norms connected to race. This matters greatly, as being able to engage in cultural activities with likeminded people can bring comfortability and freedom that affirms sense of place. Dukem's restaurant manager felt the corridor used to be a haven for Ethiopians, so he didn't have to go far for culture he connected to. Now he only visits the corridor for work, and to feel sense of place he goes outside dc to Silver Spring Maryland where there is a large Ethiopian population. An elder Trinidadian member of Walker Memorial Baptist church mentions the congregation is 99% African American but members have chosen to leave due to frustration with parking and the distance from their residency. He suggests for the church to remain they must begin to cater to the new groups and cultures of all races, if not it will be the churches fault for remaining as a "black" church. While this case in particular has not yet happened, longtime residents often have to alter sense of space and their actions for the new social climate that comes with "diversity". Black residents especially have to alter place due to the policing of culture that comes with new residents. Sense there is no actual diversity, the standard of cultural norms belonging to the dominate group, which in the corridor is upper class whites. This is ironic as the corridor is marketed as diverse, but the nature of informal placemaking and its policing shows this is not entirely true.

Furthermore, perceived diversity in the corridor does not equal integration, and more often is segregated. Although diverse races and groups are able to find sense of place in the corridor, it is often because they can still find places/establishments in the corridor that represent or uphold their culture. There are in fact diverse establishments in the corridor, but there are also establishments dominated by certain groups or races. The black residents in the corridor are

present largely in spaces that they dominate, the same is true for the LGBT community with establishments' such as Nellie's. It is worth noting that segregation is by class as well as race. This self-segregation is not necessarily a problem as it often happens naturally. However, it starts to impact sense of place if one cannot find representation in the corridor and do not feel comfortable in these "diverse" spaces. It is in this instance where many longtime residents began to feel pressure unbelonging in the corridor. Additionally, even if there is racial representation that does excuse the barrier of class as seen in high end establishments. If one cannot afford to shop or dine the space is not for them which can possibly trigger feelings of unbelonging. Working class blacks are often left out of spaces and the residents who have lived or frequented the corridor longtime that cite displacement frequently. This is once again where informal placemaking happens as self-representation and the creation of sense of place. Moreover, because there is not diversity in the corridor's residents, the most represented group which is the majority white creative class, control cultural norms making longstanding culture "informal" for some.

Ownership

The dominance in representation often directly translates into perceived ownership in the corridor. Formal placemaking often mirrors current "ownership" in the corridor, informal placemaking does this as well showing past "ownership". This power of representation in numbers certainly has an impact on sense of place. Especially when this ownership dictates how and what culture functions in the corridor. In the corridor, long time and former residents report a loss of sense of place.



Figure 17. Dukem Ethiopian Restaurant

Dukem restaurant manager pointed out that the decline of the Ethiopian population meant not only loss of cultural but policing and power of culture in the corridor. This largely impacts informal culture and placemaking, he notes he used to play live music and have bands but had to stop in 2012 as residents complained, he notes that this was never a problem when the population of the corridor was largely African American. Likely because they understood norms, and participated in them themselves. However, to new majority white residents it is viewed as informal and annoying. These cultural tensions are not simply black and white. The African diaspora is known to have cultural tension, in the corridor the “diaspora war” is between African Americans and Ethiopians. The Ethiopian presence in the corridor is one of the first changes Mr. Black recalls, stating he began to realize it in the early 2000’s and was definitely against the idea of “Little Ethiopia”. In the mid 1990s, the traditionally African American neighborhood saw the settling of Ethiopian immigrants resulting in a cultural collision and the subsequent opening of Ethiopian dining and business. In 2005 the campaign for six blocks to be designated as “Little Ethiopia” was launched to recognize the Ethiopian presence and solidify their claim on the

neighborhood. The campaign garnered backlash from different groups, Paul Schwartzman captured this in his Washington Post article titled Shaw Shuns “Little Ethiopia”:

“Andrew Laurence, an advocate for the Ethiopian arts, likes to say that many African Americans have moved from the District in recent decades. “They ran out to Prince George's County; they left it for 30 years,” he said. “Now other people are coming in, and they want to reclaim it.”

“Deairich “Dee” Hunter, chairman of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission responded that many African Americans remain in the neighborhood, even as newcomers transform its character. “It's being revitalized and gentrified, and the people in the forefront are not the Ethiopian community,” he said. “The reality is that it's predominantly whites and gays, but you don't hear these populations asking to change the name.” “They haven't paid their dues,” said Clyde Howard, 71, a retired postal worker and longtime Shaw activist. “Where were they during the [1968] riots? They're Johnny-come-lately. What gives them the right? Just because you opened a store?”

“If Ninth Street does get the designation, it will encompass another group from a country with which Ethiopia has waged bitter war: Eritreans, who own four restaurants on the block. “You can't call it Little Ethiopia. We're not Ethiopians,” said Akie Esata, 36, an Eritrean singer.”

Although the Little Ethiopia campaign was dropped, the name did stick for many and is still used to reference the corridor. However, both groups lost population in the corridor due to rising housing cost in the corridor (Charles, 2018). The white LGBT community was one of the first to relocate to the corridor in the 80's. Speaking with a Jamaican resident who lived in the corridor from 2004 to 2012, he takes issue to the LGBT presence in the corridor feeling it has taken over the corridor's black history and refers to U Street as the new Adams Morgan due to the LGBT community's existence. He specifically points to formal placemaking with dislike believing the murals promote their visibility.

Furthermore, ownership in space influences how people engage in space, specifically public space. The corridor has seen struggles over ownership impact placemaking and sense of place. Howard university students, who frequently inhabit and enjoy the corridor still feel feelings of displacement due to new residents who walk their dogs on campus, picnic, and do other activities on their campus and historic yard. Megan Fitzgerald reported on the importance

of the yard and the frustration some student have, student Ian Davis stated: "Here at Howard, The Yard is pretty important to us, it is more than just a place where students like to hang out. The trees represent an important part of black history and they honor the black sororities and fraternities that do important work for their community" (Fitzgerald, 2019). Everyone does not recognize the importance or relevancy in the yard and instead view it as public space, despite Howard being a private university. On popular DC neighborhood blog the PoPville, a user posted the following story:

Dear PoPville, I had a bad experience with my (well-behaved, chill) dog on Howard University Sunday around noon. We were walking through campus when a group of students started screaming at us that dogs weren't welcome on campus. One girl yelled, "This a closed campus, I'm going to call the cops on you." The students continued to scream at us and follow us for around five minutes. Is there a policy against dogs at Howard? I've lived in the neighborhood for five years and regularly walk my dog on campus. I always pick up after her and have never had an issue. Honestly I'm a little shaken by the experience. Definitely don't want to violate policy if it exists, but I've never seen a sign or had any issues before." (PoPville, 2019)

Experiences like this highlight compactions with informal placemaking. Howard students view walking dogs on the yard as informal, but to dog walkers it a cultural norm. Furthermore, their feelings of ownership of the space makes dog walkers ignore the existing cultural norms. This has been an issue for longtime residents, an interviewee provided the following response to WAMU coverage on the topic: "Many of us, like me, have been here for decades and decades. We don't want people coming into our neighborhood, even if you're purchasing the property, and trying to change the rules that we live by" (Simmons, 2019).

The Power of Class in Placemaking

Class and power often go hand in hand, guiding the way cities and communities' function. While the corridor has long been an entertainment and cultural district, it has also become a "creative city" that centers around attracting a certain workforce and class. Cities specifically brand and

furnish public space to attract the cultural wants of the creative class. The corridor and its branding as a hip entertainment and cultural hub make it a perfect fit for the creative class. As the corridor saw changes in its class, it also saw the power that comes with it. In almost all structures, those in power have the final say and sway in actions. This holds true in the corridors community, since its early gentrifying days this power had rested in the hands of its upper-class residents (new and old) along with local authorities. This power means control of cultural norms, including creation and policing.

Government structures are inherently powerful that enforce and implement laws that govern actions in public and private space.

This makes government administered formal placemaking a powerful tool.

It asserts placemaking in extremely visible and permanent ways such as parks, statues, murals, branding, and street names. Government authorities also police in real ways including fines and other regulations that impact the actions of individuals in space. Class inherently guides government structures and placemaking because it is likely the same class that makes up the employees of local government offices and private organizations.

Table 1. 2010 Mean Income in the Past 12 Months

Race	Census Tract 43	Census Tract 44	Census Tract 43 & 44
White	62,623	75,742	69,183
Black or African American	24,986	37,185	31,086
Asian	89,478	44,883	67,181
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	57,812	26,713	42,263

Table 2. 2018 Mean Income in the Past 12 Months

Race	Census Tract 43	Census Tract 44	Census Tract 43 & 44
White	97,829	116,989	107,409
Black or African American	27,774	79,314	53,544
Asian	75,887	146,382	111,135
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	37,461	114,690	76,076

The corridor witnessed the rise of class not only through housing but also with the Reeve's center which was intended to bring government workers to the area. As Table 1 and 2 highlight, the corridor continues to see a rise in class, including the black middle class. However, it should be noted that there is still a presence of working-class blacks in the area with a drastic income difference that has not increased much. Placemaking has the purpose of spurring economic growth, which is why it is tied to revitalization plans. This economic growth depends on attracting middle- and upper-class populations who bring new cultural norms that tend to make existing norms be viewed as informal. It is important to note that while the corridor is mainly white, black people are included in this creative class and can contribute to its power. As noted above, power rest not only in government and but also the community. Community governing of placemaking works in the same way. Much of government placemaking requires community input and participation. Private organizations/b business and non-profits must also garner community support to function. In this format, those who make up community become even more important as they become the decision makers on culture and placemaking. While community can be diverse, there is power in numbers and group thinking. Often times, majority rules when it comes to clashes over ideas and

culture. This is showcased in the corridor on two levels. The first being direct involvement in informal placemaking, as seen in the Metro PCS incident. In this instance, a resident of a loft had the power and influence to have the owners act of his behalf to stop the “noise”. The next level is with local authorities, such as the corridors representative Jim Graham who consistently pushed for anti-loitering and noise ordinance legislation. Graham frequently cited community residents expressing their complaints as his reasoning. The same black woman who intentionally visited all spaces in the corridor proudly exclaims that to live in the corridor you have to have a certain salary and make at least 60,000, she brings up her residency in regard to the Metro PCS incident saying that she understands the issue, but music should be limited to commercial areas only, and that residents pay to live here so people should adhere to their complaints. This same community power can influence physical elements that support culture. This is seen in the corridor through the push for dog parks, bike shares, and bike lanes. While possibly beneficial to all, these things can represent culture and confirm sense of place for new residents but create a feeling of unbelonging or erasure for others. The power in class and race cannot be overlooked. Dukem’s manager shared frustration with getting a rooftop license for his establishments stating that “White people ask and can get one with no problem. We’ve asking for years and the answer is no” Additionally, a common complaint about gentrification from longtime residents that their request and concerns are overlooked, but newer residents see cooperation and action from local government.

Informal placemaking is often the target of upper-class residents who don't support or understand some of their action, leading to policing of placemaking. However, this does not mean community members in the minority are powerless. When feeling their culture is being attacked in a severe way, individuals may begin organizing in their own radical bottom up

way with insurgent planning. This power also comes in numbers, often with support that extends outside their own community and support from the creative class is split, especially with black middle class. This is seen in response to the Metro PCS incident and Amplified noise act. Outsiders often feel like it is an attack on their group or culture altogether. Power in this way does impact and influences the government. DC's response to noise complaints over go-go has been public acknowledgment and support of go-go by making it the official music and possibly creating a museum. This response through formal placemaking highlights the power in informal placemaking and community insurgent planning. At the very least it forces individuals in the corridor to begin to acknowledge or consider the importance of other culture in the corridor that go beyond the creative class. However, this also leaves those participating in informal placemaking stuck in a loop. The root of the issue with the incident in Don't Mute DC was not go-go itself, but the informal way that residents, often of the black working class, were engaging in it. While Don't Mute DC can be viewed as a "win", the policing of it was not addressed through policy, instead there was only more formal placemaking. For those engaged in informal placemaking their sense of place is still determined by being able to dodge or adjust to the policing from upper class/new residents and the government in public space.

Placemaking Narratives in the Corridor

Placemaking in the corridor is used to facilitate sense of place, but it also serves the larger purpose of telling the narrative of culture and history in the corridor. As narratives change over time erasure of culture can be done, which can have lasting effects on communities. Formal and informal placemaking in the corridor tell two different narratives, mainly because they serve

different purposes. In doing so they set the backdrop for where the corridor is going, and which communities are a part of its story.

Formal placemaking tells a “safe” and government approved narrative in the corridor that seemingly appeals to many in the corridor but does not benefit everyone. It tells a selective history that appeals to the creative class, while also masquerading as support of black culture and “blackness”, making up visually for the black demographic that is no longer residents of the corridor both by choice and physical displacement. Furthermore, the inclusion of formal placemaking plans coinciding with redevelopment plans accents who formal placemaking is meant to serve. This being future residents of the creative class they hope to attract, and not the current residents, especially of the working class. The use of the Black Broadway era was intentionally done by district planners and Cultural Tourism DC who pushed and created many of these projects. Cities often attract the creative class through “hip” entertainment and night life. “Blackness” has often been associated with “hip” and “cool” and is often used as successful marketing. The marketing of “blackness” can appeal to black people and other groups wanting to support or align themselves to its hip image. Planners and relators recognize this and keeping this image in a historical black space is fitting. This blackness is emphasized not only through formal placemaking, but also establishments in the corridor that brand themselves as black spaces but are not black owned. This blackness through formal placemaking acts in the same way street art provides “edge” for those who would not want real street art or the people who create it in their neighborhood. The same is true of formal placemaking using the black middle class as branding, which is still black culture. However, it is not the culture of the black working class which creates much of black culture that is seen as “cool” and “gritty”. The black middle class played a role in this with politicians and community leaders who supported these actions. Howard

university is an example of this, as it is credited for producing much of the black middle class and participated in the redevelopment process greatly on its own. In response to complaints to clean up the neighborhood from its own black residents, it did so through real estate, contributing to gentrification. Maybelle Bennett, who is the director of the Howard University Community Association feels its a “damn if you do, damn if you don’t” situation. (Booker, 2017). Overall, the formal placemaking tells the narrative that the corridor is now and has always been for the creative class. It supports sense of place for the creative class which includes the black middle class. Although they too must alter their sense of place, they can still find space for themselves within the corridor. The narrative of the corridor is told through formal placemaking that focuses on “the hipness of the new u” and the “black Broadway history,” spotlighting black culture and creatives that in their time were able to capture appeal to all races and groups. This allows newer residents who make up creative class to feel sense of place, along with black middle class (at least for now). Formal placemaking makes little mention of working-class blacks that existed and remained after the decline of the corridor black Broadway era and black middle class. This absentness in formal placemaking erases their existence in the corridor’s black history and the corridor modern day.

Informal placemaking counters the narrative of formal placemaking in a visible way as it is showcased in public space. However, as stated prior, informal placemaking is largely mobile. This mobility is due to policing and also because sense of place is found in the actions of informal placemaking and not necessarily the space. Informal placemaking tells the raw and authentic narrative of the corridor, without the influence or manufacturing of the government. It also tells the narrative of the corridors past, being that informal placemaking was once the cultural norms of the corridor. Informal placemaking often tells the narrative of the working

class, specifically the black working class, who overwhelmingly made up the working class population in the corridors past and present. Informal placemaking allows individuals to add their own culture and story to the corridors narrative, and claim ownership and sense of place in the process. Although the creative class aligns with formal placemaking, it is not their only forum for sense of place in the corridor. They can find themselves in their housing, establishments, and representation in numbers. For some, informal placemaking may be the only avenue of sense of place in public space, and for some public space is home. This fight for place is generally in small scales ways such as hanging out on street corners. More large-scale forms of informal placemaking has led to impacts beyond personal placemaking. This makes government and others possibly unaware of informal culture take note. Moechella organizer detailed the process and impact of Mocehlla:

“Once I heard about dontmute dc I came down to a small mini rally that someone was having at CVS, and I ended up seeing a guy I knew from the white house (amplify noise protest) protest. He asked me to talk, and so I got the mic and said I would throw another big protest. But its not gonna be next week, it’ll be tomorrow. A real popular dj, dj heat took a picture and posted on twitter saying I said we were having a protest tomorrow at 14th and U. So that’s how it got kicked off. I used my own money and called some of the bands. I knew under the 1st amendment I was able to do a rally without interference. Once the first protest on April 9th was successful we had to keep it going, keep the people and culture strong, get people excited and involved. Create a space similar to a town hall meeting, so politicians and leaders show up to hear the community and bridge the gap between community and resources. The second protest April 3rd had like 1,500 people, the next one 3,000. I named the 3rd one Moechella and it had 5,000 ppl so I stuck with that brand. Moechella is produced by my organization. We will continue it with the intention by creating demand behind the dc culture, by inserting it back into popular culture basically making it the trend. Turn go-go from being perceived as genre of music to a symbol of our culture. U street and dc culture go hand and hand. You're not from this area if you haven't touched u street. It's the heart if the city, Midtown. That’s why it was important to do it there, not to mention that the area has gentrified. Go-go has been the official music, so a piece of paper doesn't signify anything. Law and legislature kind of unfolds like a slippery slope. It makes for a good argument on why people should push for more resources into go-go. But people should focus on go-go period, as a whole we have great artist community. It’s a way to empower them. It's a start, I would like to have a hearing on procurement or something for a budget. At least we could say it's the official music, so we should be able to strive to sustain it.”

Events like this show that there is power in informal placemaking. Especially, if it can garner support from those outside the community. Many of Moechella supporters were U street/DC natives but also people from the surrounding area. Including some who were displaced from the city and understood the culture. However, as the organizer pointed out, the formal placemaking response is tricky. It may do some good for go-go artist and possible lead to less policing of it. This would be an important improvement of conditions for those engaging in informal placemaking and prove its power in taking back space. It is certainly better than complete erasure. Even still, for informal placemaking culture that is not “art” and not as easily seen as culture it may be less effective in securing sense of place. Those engaging in informal placemaking culture that is not tied to something as well-known as go-go will have to continue their fight for sense of place daily. These informal actions are still at risk of being displaced/policed, while more popular informality such a go-go becomes “hip” and the face of formal placemaking. This possibility mirrors the implementation of “blackness” as formal placemaking through the mural and historic designation at the same time the black population was declining in dc. In this way it affirms sense of place and promotes black history for a some but can culturally displace others, acting as a catch 22.

Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Role of Informal Placemaking

Literature has pointed out that culture influences not only self-behavior, but also how people interpret behavior (Wan, 2007). This interpretation becomes the basis of distinction between formal and informal placemaking. Culture as a concept can never truly be informal, but it can be viewed as informal when interpreted through the lens of people with differing cultural norms. It is these cultural norms that govern the lives of people individually, but also in public

space. The understanding and interpretation of cultural norms is what drives the public divide on recent incidents of informal placemaking surrounding noise and loitering in the gentrified corridor. While social and financial capital may prompt gentrification, and allow it to occur, in public space it is more so the cultural capital of individuals that creates a hierarchy of “acceptable” culture and actions. As acknowledged in critical race theory, white privilege is manifested in public space and marginalized groups may see their culture go unrecognized or unvalued (Yosso, 2005). Furthermore, the culture of marginalized groups is often created in isolation from the privileged. The U Street Corridor is an example of this, as African Americans found refuge in one of the few areas in DC that allowed black people to live and thrive. The corridor birthed culture for blacks of all classes. The arrival of new groups in the corridor post riots brought new culture to the corridor allowing cultural capital to be leveraged in public space. Public space is important because it is shared space but the racial demography of the places exposed people to a shared system of exclusion or inclusion (Lipsitz, 2017)

Culture is important not only to individuals, but it is used as city identity. Moreover, this identity is marked by the newer residents whose cultural capital and privilege influence what culture and cultural norms are. As literature points out, city/cultural planners decide what is culture, but it is often already aligned and intentionally planned around the culture of its new creative class population. Furthermore, cultural capital, which can be tied to race, gives power to new residents allowing them to be the leaders and the voice of community planning that may already have inequalities due to unequal representation in demographics. Lipsitz (2019) ideals that planners can help create new spaces and spatial imaginaries by helping build communities characterized by racial and class heterogeneity, inclusion, and affordability were not the actions of planners in the corridor. Instead, the corridor installed formal placemaking trends that

followed behind market driven development which ultimately blocks the creation of inclusive space.

Redevelopment and revitalization plans are focused on creating a new space for the new demography it hopes to attract. This leaves the existing residents out of plans, which is the case in the corridor's plans. If cultural consideration is given in plans, it is mainly through formal placemaking. Formal placemaking is provided mostly through visual elements that foster belonging and sense of place, but also act as branding. As literature points out, informal placemaking is created through actions specifically meant to create sites of endurance and belonging. (Hunter et al., 2016) A stark contrast from the visual elements of formal placemaking's murals, wayfinding, and monuments. Furthermore, with informal placemaking sense of belong is not only through entertainment and culture elements but can also act as home which is seen by the many physical structures planted in public space. Unlike formal placemaking that is often permanent, informal placemaking is by actions which makes it mobile. This mobility can be by choice, but also by policing. Despite its mobility, informal placemaking actions can still be attached to place. This is seen by gathering on stoops of housing that used to belong to friends or family.

In public space informal placemaking acts as a claim for belonging and ownership in space, often fueled by history and place attachment to the community in this same spaces that they once knew. This claim acts as a resistance to gentrification that can bring feelings of unbelonging and invisibility to new residents. It becomes a bigger fight when policing of these actions occurs. Consistent with Combs (2019) ideas that the policing of black people is fueled by the perception that their actions are out of place, especially relative to whites. The response to this is to push the offender back in to place and/or to signal to others that such actions will not be

tolerated, this happens to informal placemaking such as noise ordinances where the actions are viewed as out of place and policed by permits/threats, or when police are called over actions that are not approved of in a dog park.

Informal placemaking can be viewed as radical and insurgent planning in the daily fight for sense of belonging in public space. It can become large scale when backed by massive community, and the shows power in informal placemaking that can influence policy and legislation. At the very least acknowledgment of culture may happen. However, if the response is more formal placemaking and not changes in policy to aid in the actions/purpose behind informal placemaking its benefits are questionable. Regardless, the fight continues in small scale ways through the continuance of everyday informal placemaking actions. Informal placemaking actions such as go-go offers an alternate but valid reality of life in the nation's capital, and becomes a vital part of the black public sphere (Hopkinson, 2007). However, policing remains a threat that may cause informal actions and culture to leave the space entirely. If so, the culture that makes up informal placemaking is not defeated but it is likely that sense of place in a particular space is.

Blackness in Formal and Informal Placemaking

The use of blackness in branding and formal placemaking in the corridor is once again led by planners and developers. This is seen through government offices that administer historic designation and the tourism industry that backed so much of it in the corridor. The support of the black middle class in planning is unsurprising as the "blackness" used for branding reflects themselves and may reinforce sense of place, though simultaneously upholds classist images of black history. The timing of redevelopment plans highlights who the blackness is for and its use

as an economic tool. While the community was involved, during redevelopment the cultural capital of new residents in the corridor influenced plans. Furthermore, many black residents especially of the working class may have found their voices missing through displacement or relocation. Additionally, the corridor's black Broadway theme of historic designation is a natural cause community organizations would get behind, because regardless it is positive black history. With much of black history missing in public space, any mention of it is typically celebrated. It is effective branding and acts as an illusion of blackness in the corridor. Depending on time and day in the corridor, you may see more black faces in murals than black people in public space. Black branding paired with the corridor being a cultural entertainment hub has seen much success. It attracts the creative class who often buy into the ideal of "blackness" as hip and cool. This "hipness" is an anchor in creative class culture, even when it is not centered on blackness. The creative class already finds appeal in hip entertainment establishments in the corridor, but its inclusion of black culture and establishments adds to it. However, this appeal is to blackness and black culture, not necessarily black people. Appeal peaks on weekends and in nightlife. Yet even then the connection is being adjacent to blackness and not necessarily integration in black spaces. The exception to this is sometimes dining establishments. Nevertheless, the appeal of blackness quickly disappears in residential areas where the small and less visible black population may be policed or treated like outsiders if not recognized as part of the community.

This dilemma in the corridor is in line with Summers' argument that diversity becomes a cherished asset that does not benefit African Americans. U Street's formality uses Black history that conflicts with the policing and management of informal Black place-making as seen through policing of actions such as graffiti, loitering, and anti-noise actions. As Summer points out "within the context of urban development and spatial reorganization, it is Black people, Black

humanity, and the needs of Black poor and working-class residents that go unseen and ignored. Nevertheless, Black bodies are ever-present and hypervisible (Summers, 2019). Blackness as a brand preforms best when coupled with entertainment districts, possibly because it is used as entertainment. Moreover, although the black middle class contributed heavily to this brand, its benefits in return are still limited and mostly cultural. Some may find economic benefits, but the biggest benefit may be being able to find black spaces for themselves in the corridor. Even still, those committing informal placemaking, mainly working-class blacks, benefit the least. They do not have the advantage of finding space in the corridor establishments, and instead find it in public space. Furthermore, the appeal of blackness in the corridor is still formal. As Hopkinson highlights, “the production of an official history attracts visitors and justifies the deployment of diversity as a construct that might not deter white residents and patrons. Its success set the stage for U Street to transform from a space that is sacred for one group to a “mainstream” space in the wake of gentrification” (Hopkinson, 2007) Even in formal placemaking, where go-go has been a focus, much of placemaking has been on Chuck Brown who is not only credited as a creator of go-go but also a representation of a more respected form of go-go, often viewed as funk. Go-go subgenres such a bounce beat have not been treated with the same acknowledgment and found itself as part of policing of black youth in go-go that the Mochella organizer recalled. Ultimately the corridors use of blackness does add to its entertainment appeal. For black people the appeal is not necessarily branding because it is their culture. However, the blackness in branding does not equal blackness in space. Those not of the black middle class or black youth may struggle to find place in the corridor's establishments beyond public space. Removed from its entertainment identity, blackness (especially informal black culture) depends on toleration and understanding

of residents but can still be policed. Blackness is a part of the corridor, but the corridor is not black. The cultural capital and racialization of space still operates as normal.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questions Guide

Interview Questions Guide:

1. Where are you from?
2. How long have you been a resident in the U Street Corridor?
3. What is bring you to the corridor or what is your connection to the?
4. What do you enjoy doing in the corridor?
5. How often do you frequent the corridor?
6. How would you describe the culture of DC?
7. How would you describe the culture of the U Street Corridor
8. Can you name place or location that you enjoy or experience comfort in the corridor?

9. Where do you go for entertainment in the corridor?
10. Do you have friends or family in the corridor?
11. Where do you feel a sense of place in the corridor?