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Yasmin Radjy
University of Pennsylvania

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Abstract

In this paper, I discuss the literal and figurative boundaries that stand between Penn students and West Philadelphia.

I begin by discussing the theory behind walls and boundaries, then applying this theory to the urban environment and then to town-gown relations, finally applying these theories to the case of Penn and West Philadelphia.

In order to fully understand the walls that stand between campus and community, I look at the history of town-gown relations—both nationally and at Penn, dividing up the history into three phases: first, the nineteenth century, during which the “Ivory Tower” relationship of division first began; next, the post-World War II era, when race and class issues became relevant in campus-community relations, as relations became increasingly divided and turbulent; and finally, the post-cold war era that has lasted until the present day, during which the importance of knocking down barriers between institutions and communities has been emphasized.

After this theoretical and historical background, I will begin to look more specifically at the current walls between Penn and West Philadelphia. I conducted a series of focus groups to define and analyze these walls. I asked 32 undergraduate students to answer a series of questions about their perceptions of and relationship with West

Philadelphia—through a short written survey, a cognitive mapping exercise, and finally a group discussion. After these focus groups, I arrived at 4 general claims:

- 1.) There are physically definable walls between Penn students and West Philadelphia. Even though these are not literal walls of stone, Penn students can define specific physical boundaries between themselves and West Philadelphia.
- 2.) Students’ perceptions about the neighborhood tend to create these physical boundaries more frequently than personal experiences do.
- 3.) The nature of the remaining walls leads to a specific type of relationship between Penn students and West Philadelphia—one that is based on community service and daytime activity over social and/or nighttime activity. This relationship is hierarchical in form and it involves a number of racial and class issues.
- 4.) These walls can be broken down by factors such as transportation options, aesthetics, and social and commercial activity, as these often change students perceptions of West Philadelphia

I conclude that the best way to knock down the barriers between town and gown is to encourage individuals from Penn and West Philadelphia alike to mix in neutral spaces such as restaurants, bars, and cafés, where hierarchies are not involved and barriers can organically deconstruct.

Keywords

Urban Studies; Philadelphia; West Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania; students

Disciplines

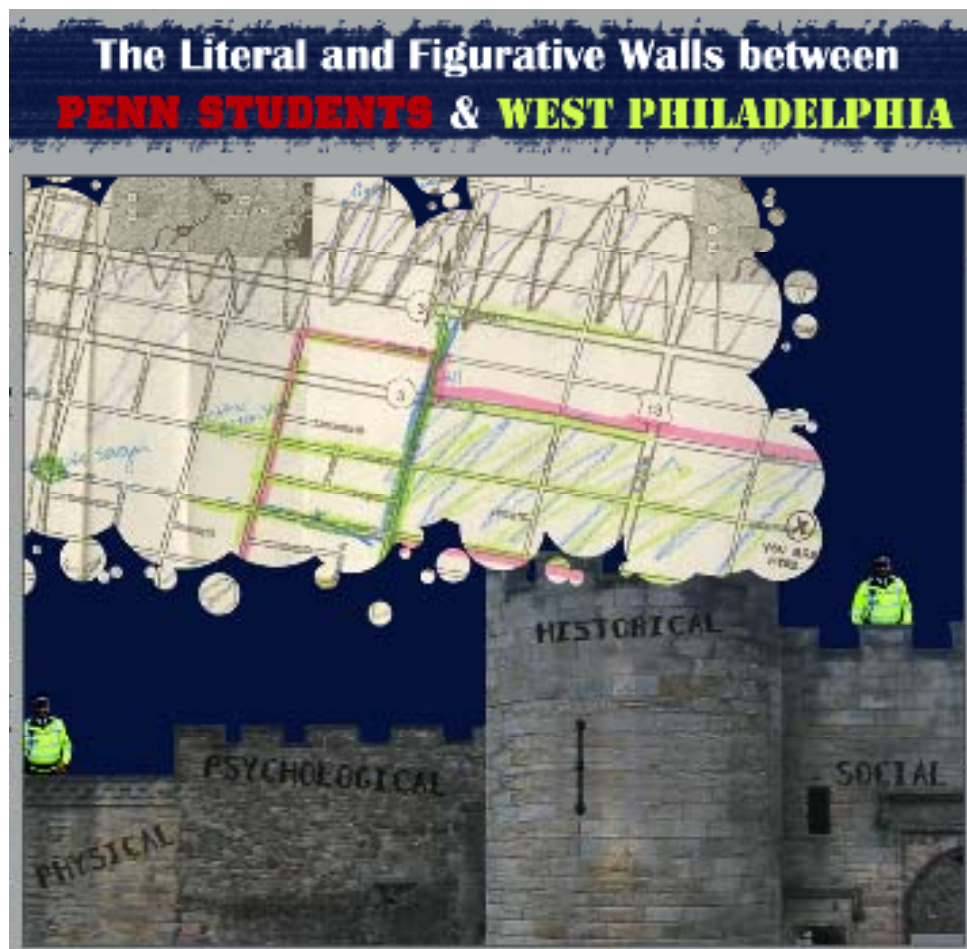
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Yasmin Radjy
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Introduction:

“We demolished literal and figurative walls that kept Penn and its neighbors from forging nourishing connections with one another. We restructured buildings and open spaces to make the campus “more like seams and less like barriers” to the community, as [Jane] Jacobs had advocated. And we worked to unite “town and gown” as one richly diverse community that could learn, grow, socialize, and live together in a safe, flourishing, and economically sustainable urban environment.”

- Judith Rodin, *The University and Urban Renewal: Out of the Tower and Into the Streets*, 2007¹

I remember laughing out loud the first time I read that statement. Was Rodin describing the same University of Pennsylvania that I have attended for the past three and a half years? In my experiences at Penn, the walls between students and West Philadelphia have seemed stronger than stone.

I began my years at Penn no differently from most out-of-state suburban freshmen: petrified. I had heard talk of the dangerous “ghetto” of West Philadelphia before arriving, and upon setting foot on campus I became quite aware of how important security was to the University. On my first day of New Student Orientation I was overwhelmed by security: My RA asked me to put countless security phone numbers on speed dial, ranging from “On-campus Emergency” to “Off-campus Emergency,” from Walking Escort to Driving Escort. I had to memorize the last four digits of my social security number if I wanted to cross the security gate in front of my dorm room. I had to use keys to open my dorm’s communal background. And most importantly, I was told that I should be wary of ever setting foot West of 42nd Street.

¹ Rodin, 11

These fears were further amplified due to my involvement in the Spruce Mentors Freshman Residential Program. While the intention of the program was to immerse freshmen into West Philadelphia through tutoring elementary school students at a local school on 46th and Woodland Avenues, it accomplished quite the opposite effect. I soon discovered that the thought of “getting to know” the neighborhood was completely outside of the realm of consciousness of my fellow mentors and I: we were told explicitly that it would be unsafe to walk to the site and we should always take a trolley; we were forbidden from going to the site alone, but rather had to always go with a partner and if our partner couldn't attend, we had to inform our advisor. Our advisor gave us a lengthy briefing on issues of security and crime in the neighborhood, but never about community events or amenities. Through these first experiences in community service, I came to associate fear with West Philadelphia—my new neighborhood.

Ironically, implementation of community service programs is one of Penn’s signature “barrier-breaking” sectors. But over the past years, I have continued to have similarly divisive experiences through involvement in community service programs and academically-based community service (ABCS) classes.

My notions about West Philadelphia only began to change once I began to have exposure to the neighborhood through restaurants, bars, and non-Penn-based community activities. I soon began to see West Philadelphia not as a homogeneously blighted, poverty-stricken, crime-ridden, black neighborhood, but rather as a diverse community, with residents from a number of different national, ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, and social groups.

I came to see that while some streets West of campus are blighted and depressed, others are thriving; while some areas were exclusively residential, others are bustling with business activity of a variety of types; while some blocks are African American, others are Laotian or Ethiopian; while some homes belong to families, others belong to artists or professors or anarchists; while some homes show signs of neglect and deterioration, others are gorgeous and well-maintained Victorians with expensive cars parked out front. I became increasingly curious about the diversity of this new and estranged territory, that I had spent my first years at Penn discounting as a devastated and unwelcoming place.

Additionally, and more importantly, I became curious about the factors that had held me back from exploring the West Philadelphia I have grown to love. I wanted to understand why I had come to cherish the positive aspects of West Philadelphia, while many of my friends and acquaintances had not. I sought to explore the boundaries—social, historical, psychological, and physical—that divided Penn students from West Philadelphia. My hope was that such a study would give me insight into the factors that influence neighborhood dynamics, perceptions, and divisions.

Literature Review:

...There where it is we do not need the wall:
 He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
 My apple trees will never get across
 And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
 He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors'.
 Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
 If I could put a notion in his head:
 'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
 Where there are cows?
 But here there are no cows.
 Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
 What I was walling in or walling out,
 And to whom I was like to give offence.
 Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
 That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,
 But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
 He said it for himself. I see him there
 Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
 In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
 He moves in darkness as it seems to me~
 Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
 He will not go behind his father's saying,
 And he likes having thought of it so well
 He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors."

- Robert Frost, "Mending Wall"

Walls and fences, as far back as ancient Roman times, have been viewed as instrumental units in the retention and renewal of human relationships. In fact, the god of boundaries, Terminus, was once one of the most important Roman household gods. So important was he that the Romans even honored him annually in the Festival of the Terminalia, a ritual that not only reaffirmed boundaries, but also provided the occasion for predetermined traditional festivities among neighbors.² The idea of the wall has remained an important unit in human relationships in a number of societies and eras.

² Monteiro

Walls and boundaries of all types have even lasted in places where they have proved to be unnecessary or counterproductive. Robert Frost makes this last point in his poem “Mending Wall,” in which he describes the narrator’s neighbor, a man who continues to rebuild the fence dividing their respective properties despite the fact that it becomes no longer necessary to do so. The neighbor repeats the phrase that his father once taught him, “Good fences make good neighbors”, as he repairs the fence time and again. This phrase, which can be traced to the Middle Aged Spanish phrase “Una pared entre dos vecinos guarda mas (haze durar) la amistad”³, reflects the widespread belief of the importance of divisions between individuals for positive relationships. Frost shows us the antiquated nature of this belief, however: the neighbor, when questioned about the logic behind the need for maintaining these walls, is unable to come up with clear answers. The narrator mentions the importance of knowing what one is “walling in or walling out”, pointing out that although these walls were originally necessary to keep out cows, there are no longer any cows that need to be fenced in. According to literary critic George Monteiro, “What impresses itself upon the poet is that, for whatever reasons, men continue to need marked boundaries, even when they find it difficult to justify their existence”.⁴ This idea of the need to mark boundaries and create walls, even when unnecessary or perhaps even harmful, is an interesting one that continues to be enormously relevant in a number of contexts.

One of the places where Frost’s message seems most relevant currently is in the modern city. Walls, whether tangible or intangible, physical or social or economic, official or customary, play an important role in the urban environment. Although they by

³ Monteiro

⁴ Montiero

no means exist exclusively in cities, these dividing lines are crucial to the metropolis, as they shape its character, layout, and structure. They vary from jurisdictional lines among municipalities, defined at most by signposts,⁵ to the walls of modern skyscrapers, separated from city streets by physical walls of stone and steel, to the implied walls that define private space in modern homes and offices,⁶ to the social and psychological boundaries separating various neighborhoods and groups within the city. No matter the nature or composition of these walls, however, their purpose and effects relate to division and separation-- whether for better or for worse.

The fundamental intention of walls and boundaries, both within and outside the urban context, is, according to urban planner Peter Marcuse, to provide security and protection: from literal security against the elements (wind, rain, cold), to security against attack and protection of privacy. Depending on their social role, however, Marcuse argues that these same walls can oftentimes create fear instead of providing security. In fact this fear, although sometimes unwittingly, it is often their very purpose, and it affects the nature of the relationship between those on opposite sides of the wall.⁷ He claims that walls, specifically “walls that act as boundaries”, often suggest relationships of separation, distance, fear, tension, hostility, inequality, and alienation between those on either side. Marcuse also distinguishes between the divisive nature of walls and that of boundaries. He claims that because everything has boundaries, the term is neutral and says nothing about the relations of those on opposite sides.⁸ As previously mentioned, however, many walls act as boundaries:

⁵ Marcuse, 101

⁶ Marcuse, 101

⁷ Marcuse, 101-102

⁸ Marcuse, 101-3

A boundary, whether represented physically by a wall, or socially by the representations of architecture and design, or purely by social and cultural differences as it is crossed, should protect and provide security. It should not denote a hierarchy or an inequality of wealth, power, or status on either side...It is the exclusionary and oppressive character of boundaries, and the walls that are likely to represent them, that inspires fear. Such walls, in a decent society, should be unnecessary.⁹

Marcuse, like Frost, sees that these types of boundaries or fences, by “walling in or walling out”¹⁰ certain groups or individuals, are key in the construction of relationships, and in turn, the construction of cities and communities. Also like Frost, he criticizes this reality, arguing that: “Perhaps one way of defining a better society would be to speak of it as a wall-less society, a society in which the divisions among people were not equated with the walls between them.”¹¹

The negative consequences of walls are further elaborated by Jane Jacobs in her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. She first discusses the “Turf system” as an important way of examining divisions in the urban environment. The turf system that she describes, in its historical form, is gang-related: a gang appropriates as its territory certain streets or housing projects or parks—or a combination of the three. Members of other gangs then cannot enter this Turf without permission of the Turf-owning gang, or if they do so it is at the risk of being beaten or run off.¹² Jacobs shows that this Turf system of boundary creation is not exclusive to gang communities, and that it is actually quite a common phenomenon in the urban environment. She describes the way in which Turf systems exist in redevelopment projects of cities, with middle- and upper-income housing occupying large sections of the city and in turn, creating their own

⁹ Marcuse, 114

¹⁰ Monteiro

¹¹ Marcuse, 112

¹² Jacobs, 60-61

grounds and streets within the urban context. The technique behind the creation of these “islands within the city” and “cities within the city” is to define the grounds of the Turf and fence out other “gangs.”¹³ Jacobs mentions that, on the whole, people seem to get used very quickly to living in a Turf with either a figurative or a literal fence, and to wonder how they got on without it formerly—an argument similar to that made by Frost.¹⁴

Jacobs further discusses the strong presence and negative consequences of literal and figurative divisions in the urban environment in her discussion of borders in the city. Although here she refers specifically to borders of territorial use, a slight definitional contrast to the “walls that act as boundaries” that Marcuse discusses, the two analyses are still quite comparable. Jacobs explains that “borders in cities usually make destructive neighbors”¹⁵, mentioning that, “...wherever they work best, street neighborhoods have no beginnings and ends setting them apart as distinct units.”¹⁶ She describes the phenomenon of “border vacuums”-- the idea that borders can form vacuums of use adjoining them by oversimplifying the use of the city at one place-- and mentions that this concept seems baffling to many city designers: “Borders, they sometimes reason, are a feasible means of heightening intensity, and of giving a city a sharp, clear form, as medieval town walls apparently did with medieval towns.”¹⁷ Jacobs argues that although this idea seems plausible, even when borders of use concentrate city intensity, the zone along the border itself seldom reflects that intensity. Borders of any kind, then, just end

¹³ Jacobs, 61-62

¹⁴ Jacobs, 64

¹⁵ Jacobs, 257

¹⁶ Jacobs

¹⁷ Jacobs, 262

up dividing the city into pieces.¹⁸¹⁹ In a point similar to Marcuse's, that boundaries "should invite their crossing" rather than divide neighborhoods, Jacobs argues that the success of neighborhoods depends largely on the overlapping and interweaving of their streets with other urban neighborhoods.²⁰ Borders of use then, like any other kind of wall already discussed, can have negative consequences on cities if they provoke disparities between the people or areas on either side.

The relationship between walls and fear / safety

The relationship between walls and fear is undeniable: as mentioned earlier, the very purpose of walls, whether they be literal or figurative, frequently relates to issues and perceptions of safety. In fact, to reiterate a previously mentioned point by Marcuse, walls produce and reflect fear as well as security.²¹

This fear, while "a natural and commonplace emotion", according to leading fear-of-crime researcher, Mark Warr, can have both positive and negative effects depending on whether or not it is out of proportion to objective risk.²² Warr elaborates:

Under many circumstances, [fear] is a beneficial, even life-saving emotion. Under the wrong circumstances, it is an emotion that can unnecessarily constrain behavior, restrict freedom and personal opportunity, and threaten the foundation of communities.²³

¹⁸ Jacobs, 262

¹⁹ Jacobs, 264

²⁰ Marcuse, 114

²¹ Marcuse, 102

²² Wilcox, 220

²³ Wilcox, 220

In addition to being both positive and negative, fear—specifically fear of crime—is also multidimensional, composed of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components.²⁴

Additionally, an important element of fear is perceived risk.²⁵

The multiple dimensions of fear, although pertinent anywhere, are often cited in reference to the urban environment. According to Donald J. Olsen, the city has been traditionally regarded as the manifestation of “all that is rotten in society,” and “the modern scholar approaches urbanization as a pathologist tracing the course of a disease.”²⁶ This negativity traditionally associated with cities often translates into fear. Urban residents around the nation, like those of preceding generations, feel intimidated by their streets, parks, and other public places, particularly after dark or when too many strangers are present.²⁷ The issue of safe streets has become, according to urban sociologist and former Penn professor Dr. Elijah Anderson, “especially acute in the city, particularly in underclass ghetto communities and adjacent areas undergoing transitions in race, class, and culture.”²⁸ Anderson points out that “[as] the social life of the ghetto deteriorates, those living in middle-class areas nearby...feel the impact.”²⁹ As one of the central concerns of all residents is that of safety in public,³⁰ safety and-- perhaps even more importantly-- the perception of safety, are extremely important in the urban context. Jane Jacobs alludes to the importance of such perceptions when she mentions that: “It does not take many incidents of violence on a city street, or in a city district to make

²⁴ Wilcox, 224

²⁵ Wilcox, 324

²⁶ Olsen, 3

²⁷ Anderson, 1

²⁸ Anderson, 1

²⁹ Anderson, 4

³⁰ Anderson, 4

people fear the streets.”³¹ Fear of the streets is, according to Jacobs, detrimental to a city: as people begin to fear the streets, they use them less, which in turn makes the streets even less safe.³² In fact, Jacobs claims that the perception of safety and security on the street is the “bedrock attribute of a successful city district.”³³

Perceptions of safety in the urban environment, in addition to being important, are also quite complex. According to Kevin Lynch, associate professor of planning at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, “Most often, our perception of the city is not sustained, but rather partial, fragmentary, mixed with other concerns.”³⁴ Many of these concerns are similar to those described earlier as factors in creating walls and boundaries in the urban environment; namely, race, class, media, and gender. This overlap is logical: as mentioned, fear and perceptions of safety are related to the creation and presence of walls in cities. In order to understand walls and boundaries in the urban environment, I will examine the contributing factors to the reality and perceptions of safety in cities, focusing on each factor individually.

Perceptions of safety and the boundaries they create in the urban environment are inextricably linked to issues of race in this country. According to a study conducted by Lincoln Quillian and Devah Pager at the University of Wisconsin- Madison, neighborhood racial composition does indeed influence the perception of crime in a neighborhood.³⁵ They argue that while the percentage of young black men is indeed positively correlated with perceptions of the area’s crime level, these evaluations may be

³¹ Jacobs, 38

³² Jacobs, 38

³³ Jacobs, 38

³⁴ Lynch, 2

³⁵ Quillian, 720

systematically biased by neighborhood racial composition, even among neighborhoods with identical rates of “real” crime.³⁶

Quillian and Pager’s study suggests that racial makeup, while not the only contributing factor, is especially likely to affect perceptions of neighborhood safety for two reasons:

First, a neighborhood’s racial composition is an observable characteristic, especially in the segregated United States... This is consistent with the long-standing theory in urban sociology that city dwellers rely heavily on visual cues to evaluate the threat of strangers in public places. Age, race, and sex are among the most obvious and important of these cues.

Second, stereotypes associating members of certain minority groups—in particular, African-Americans—with crime are pervasive and well-known by all Americans.³⁷

The mentioned association of blacks with criminality is neither a new phenomenon nor one that has changed in recent years, as stereotypes tend to be quite resilient.

Additionally, this association is not baseless-- it has its roots in an objective reality: crime rates are in fact positively correlated with the percentage of blacks in a neighborhood.³⁸

While stereotypes can “serve as “functional heuristics” in the face of incomplete information”, Quillian and Pager’s study suggests that, “Whites (and Latinos) systematically overestimate the extent to which percentage black and neighborhood crime rates are associated.”³⁹ The stereotypes in which these generalizations are based are important to examine, as “information consistent with a stereotype is more likely to be

³⁶ Quillian, 726

³⁷ Quillian, 721

³⁸ Quillian, 749

³⁹ Quillian, 749

noticed and remembered than information that is not.”⁴⁰ This makes stereotypes difficult to break, primarily because information contradicting them is likely to be discounted.⁴¹

It is important to note that the effects of stereotypes and the expectations they engender in the urban environment can be quite significant, not solely for their distortions but also because they influence judgments and actions.⁴² These judgments and actions can range from public interactions between two individuals to larger social trends in cities. Regarding public interactions, Anderson supports Quillian and Pager’s earlier claim about the importance of visual cues in stereotyping: he argues that, people are conditioned to rapid scrutiny of characteristics such as looks, speech, gender, and race when distinguishing how suspicious or dangerous the other is.⁴³ These public interactions can have implications for larger social phenomena, the most sweeping of which are described by Jane Jacobs: “Sidewalk public contact and sidewalk public safety, taken together, bear directly on our country’s most serious social problem—segregation and racial discrimination.”⁴⁴ These problems of literal and figurative racial boundaries, like stereotyping, are neither new nor disappearing phenomena in American cities. In fact, many contemporary middle-class whites and blacks alike see an area with a large visible black presence in a neighborhood or city as “bad” or marginal, even if blacks constitute a minority in the area.⁴⁵ Race is thus still prejudicially linked to the gauge of a neighborhood’s quality, and the stereotypes that form lines of racial division are often seen as boundaries of marginality.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Quillian, 723

⁴¹ Quillian, 723

⁴² Quillian, 722

⁴³ Anderson, 208.

⁴⁴ Jacobs, 94

⁴⁵ Anderson, 154

⁴⁶ Anderson, 154

One cannot discuss race in the U.S without connecting it to class. Class is thus an enormously important factor in the discussion of fear and perceptions of crime in urban neighborhoods. As mentioned earlier, however, class is less obvious than race at first glance, thus bringing race to the forefront of discussion. That said, Anderson argues that class is the underlying issue: “This simplistic racial interpretation of crime creates a “we/they” dichotomy between whites and blacks. Yet here again the underlying issue is class.”⁴⁷ He discusses the fact that while the mental association of race and criminality influences the judgment of white and black residents alike, black use more individuating information—such as class indicators—to distinguish more- from less-dangerous young black men than do white residents.⁴⁸

It is important to note also that these issues of race and class, in addition to forming neighborhood boundary lines related to fear or marginality, also form social boundary lines. In other words, the prejudicial link between these factors and marginality and crime exists not only on city streets, but also in social contexts. A 1991 study of high-rise housing projects in Calgary and Edmonton supports this point: the results indicated that residents who felt different on the basis of ethnicity, age, or socioeconomic status from the neighbors surrounding their building were less likely to form acquaintances with neighbors outside that building. In effect, they were “pulled” into interaction with the other members of their building, and limited in their interactions with surrounding neighbors”.ⁱⁱ

Gender also plays an important role with regard to perceptions of safety, in two different ways. First, gender is linked to ideas of urban fear due to the association of

⁴⁷ Anderson, 208

⁴⁸ Quillian, 724; Anderson, 208

males with criminality, as mentioned briefly in the previous section on race. Next, women tend to be associated with having higher levels of fear and increased perceptions of crime. In fact, according to a study by Pamela Wilcox et al., women's relatively high levels of fear despite low levels of actual victimization and perceived risk, have been a source of important research: "This research highlights not only women's uniquely elevated levels of fear (in comparison to men's fear) but their particularly elevated levels of fear of sexual assault specifically."⁴⁹ This distinction between the fear of men and women is important to consider in the urban context, as it affects the way in which the respective genders interact with their surrounding environment.

Media and other related sources also serve as important sources in forming fear and notions about safety in the urban environment. As alluded to when discussing race, inaccurate information from mass media can contribute to persistent stereotypes, whether they be about the link between race and criminality or something else.⁵⁰

The composite of all the described contributors to urban perceptions of safety is-- according to Kevin Lynch-- the image.⁵¹ Lynch draws central importance to the role of physical structure and aesthetics in this discussion of fear and perceptions: "...while noting the flexibility of human perception, it must be added that outer physical shape has an equally important role."⁵² This claim relates directly to John Berger's notions about the importance of the aesthetic in establishing our perceptions of, and place in, the outside world:

Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing

⁴⁹Anderson, 208

⁵⁰Quillian, 722

⁵¹Lynch, 2

⁵²Lynch, 136

which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled... The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe.⁵³

As per Berger's argument, visual cues are of central importance in the urban environment, and they could thus influence our perceptions of fear or safety. The way in which the aesthetics of our surrounding environment can affect us and, to a certain degree, establish our sense of place—perhaps through fear or intimidation. This idea, similarly to Lynch's, works in accordance with the well-known "broken windows theory." According to this theory, which initially stemmed from a 1982 article called "Broken Windows" by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, physical signs of disarray in the urban environment, such as broken windows or graffiti, reflect social disorder and are linked to increased crime levels. Similarly, visible signs of housing deterioration have a marked impact on perceptions of neighborhood crime.⁵⁴ Physical blight, then, by provoking feelings of danger or negativity can act as a deterrent from certain parts of a city or neighborhood, thus serving as a sort of spatial boundary. Fear in and of the urban environment, then, can serve as a dividing line within a space. This fear, whether stemming from reality or perceptions, whether based in prejudice or experience, physical traits or psychological ones, is important to consider.

Walls in the case of town-gown relations

The divisive role of walls, whether physical or based in perceptions of can be seen in an array of cases and contexts within the urban environment. One such example that is commonly cited is that between urban campuses and their surrounding communities. The

⁵³ Berger, 7-8

⁵⁴ Quillian, 720

importance drawn to this particular example stems from the fact that the impact of the urban university on its surrounding environment is, and has always been, quite substantial. More than half of the nation's colleges and universities are located in cities; additionally, these institutions are among the largest landowners and employers in most of these cities, as well as major consumers of private goods and public services.⁵⁵ Despite this notable impact however, almost from the beginning, the relationship between the university and its surrounding communities has been as conflictive as it has been important. The nature of this relationship is captured most commonly in the timeworn phrase of "town-gown" relations.⁵⁶ The traditional notion of the university as an "ivory tower", physically and ideologically separated from surrounding communities, has contributed significantly to this conflictive relationship. Additionally, there is something to say of the frequently stark contrast between town and gown:

It is curious...how frequently the immediate neighborhoods surrounding big-city university campuses... are extraordinarily blight-prone, and how frequently, even when they are not smitten by physical decay, they are apt to be stagnant—a condition that precedes decay.⁵⁷

The nature and role of these distinctions between institution and community have changed quite a bit since the nineteenth century. In fact, today some universities refer to the importance of the elimination of boundaries and walls between town and gown, and act toward the ideals expressed by Frost, Jacobs and Marcuse. Some universities, such as Penn, even claim that they have managed to eliminate most, if not all, of the literal and figurative walls standing between them and surrounding communities. Judith Rodin

⁵⁵ Rodin, 3; Perry and Wiewel, 6

⁵⁶ Perry and Wiewel, 3

⁵⁷ Jacobs, 258

makes a claim along these lines in her recent book *The University and Urban Renewal: Out of the Ivory Tower and Into the Streets*-- even referencing Jacobs' ideals of a city without barriers:

We demolished literal and figurative walls that kept Penn and its neighbors from forging nourishing connections with one another. We restructured buildings and open spaces to make the campus “more like seams and less like barriers” to the community, as [Jane] Jacobs had advocated. And we worked to unite “town and gown” as one richly diverse community that could learn, grow, socialize, and live together in a safe, flourishing, and economically sustainable urban environment.⁵⁸

The current phase of campus-community relations is thus of great importance with regard to the seemingly timeless idea of divisions and boundaries, as in some cases like Penn, the very existence of these walls is being questioned.

In this paper, I will attempt to examine this current phase of campus-community relations, looking specifically at the steps taken toward the elimination of a number of the literal and figurative walls, and also at the significant number of walls that remain standing between town and gown. In addition to defining what these remaining walls are, I will also look at where they stemmed from, and finally, how they affect town-gown relations today. I will begin my study with an examination of the history of town-gown relations from the 19th century until present day, looking both at general trends and themes and then focusing specifically on the case of the University of Pennsylvania (hereby referred to as Penn) and its surrounding neighborhood of West Philadelphia. I will divide this analysis into the three periods of American higher education and campus-community relations, using as my model the theory of “three revolutions” in universities' history, as described by Lee Benson, Ira Harkavy, and John Puckett in their book

⁵⁸ Rodin, 11

Dewey's Dream. According to this theory, the first phase in town-gown relations, took place in the nineteenth century as American research university began to define itself in a somewhat revolutionary way, basing itself to a certain degree on the German model. Then, at the end of World War II, the “second revolution” in higher education began with the birth of the big science, cold war, entrepreneurial university. Finally, in 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the cold war provided the necessary conditions for the “revolutionary” emergence of what Benson, Harkavy, and Puckett describe as “the democratic, cosmopolitan, civic university.”⁵⁹ This third phase continues until the present day.

After looking in depth at this historic context, I plan to examine the current state of walls (and the claimed lack thereof) in campus-community relations in greater depth, once again looking both generally and also specifically at the case of Penn. Such an analysis will provide insight both into the current state and also the future of town-gown relations, and it will also provide the framework for the ultimate goal of this study: examining how walls today, specifically those between Penn and West Philadelphia, affect students’ perceptions of surrounding communities, and in turn, the nature of student behaviors in these off-campus areas.

⁵⁹ Benson, Harkavy, and Pucket, 78

Historical Background:

Phase 1: The Nineteenth Century

The medieval city traditionally had walls around its perimeter, usually built of stone and created as a measure of fortification and defense. In the wake of modernization and urban growth and the changes in cities' defensive strategy that followed, however, most cities demolished these walls, replacing them with boulevards, like in the case of the Haussmanian development of Paris under Napoleon III, or with large-scale public developments such as the Ringstrasse in Vienna. Although the definition of the wall has not changed much since medieval times, its physical characteristics and contextual meanings have shifted. The walls of today tend not to surround cities like those of a medieval fortress, as the connotation of this has become negative and exclusionary, such as in the cases of Berlin and more recently, Jerusalem. Instead, these dividing lines tend to exist within the city. This use of walls in the modern urban area is far more complex than anything known in previous centuries, particularly because the city of today is an economically integrated whole that is internally divided:

The advent of the bourgeois epoch effectively ended the history of city walls in most of the world... Power no longer had to be exercised with the symbolism, or the reality, of superior force behind it; the combination of a new economic and political freedom meant that hierarchical relationships of power and wealth could be put in place, protected, and enhanced through more subtle means than walls of stone.⁶⁰

The end of the feudal period then, according to Marcuse, led to the beginning of a more complicated era of city walls. These modern walls have come to play a more ambiguous and increasingly divisive role, reflecting and reinforcing hierarchies, divisions, hostilities,

⁶⁰ Rodin, 11

and fears of many types.⁶¹ The nineteenth century, or the beginning of this new bourgeois epoch, is thus a crucial period to examine in order to understand the way in which walls evolved from their medieval pasts.

The nineteenth century can be characterized not only by the creation of a new type of city and new types of walls within it, but also for being the era of the planning and development of American universities. University planning in this era reflected an important set of ideals: first of all, the term “campus”, the Latin word for field, became common as an expression for an ensemble of buildings for higher education. Appropriately, American universities began to lay themselves out around a “green” or quad. This spatial setup linked faculty and students to university buildings and dorms while also keeping them away from the city, reflecting decidedly anti-urban design and planning. These campuses were usually surrounded by walls and designed to be intellectual havens, separated from the communities surrounding them. According to Perry and Wiewel, “The source of this self-containedness derived from the perceived nature of the intellectual mission of the institution and the “separateness” of the campus working to ensure the academic “community” or enclave in the service of that mission.”⁶² The nineteenth century American university, then, reflected division both spatially and intellectually.

Penn was a thriving campus in the nineteenth century, as its “focus on practical and mechanical disciplines positioned it well to capitalize on the explosion of industrial activity in urban America after the Civil War—an exploration whose spiritual and

⁶¹ Rodin, 103

⁶² Perry and Wiewel, 7-8

economic nexus, it might be argued, was Philadelphia.”⁶³ While an urban university from the start, Penn’s choices about campus expansion during this period reflected an allegiance to the mentioned principles of “campus isolation and exclusivity”—and a “commitment to escape from the worst elements of the nineteenth-century industrial city.”⁶⁴ In 1872, when the University decided to move from its older, Center City location to a “spacious new campus in the wealthy neighborhood” of West Philadelphia, “its supporters and patrons met the decision with widespread approval....By moving to the “more verdant environs of West Philadelphia, the University could create an enclosed campus with the flexibility to expand in the future.”⁶⁵ Penn’s initial move West, then, reflected ideals of self-containedness and hopes for physical growth.

The new campus centered itself at 34th Street and Woodland Avenues and soon enough, began to expand into the surrounding rural neighborhood, launching the beginning of what would become a long and turbulent history of Western growth. This expansion was further encouraged by the advent of the trolley in the 1890s, which extended growth out into West Philadelphia. The neighborhood began to urbanize rapidly and soon it became a community of large Victorian houses built for the “wealth and comfort and the delights of the middle-class, upwardly-mobile, life-is-good world” of residents.”⁶⁶ This pragmatic and natural development of both the university and the surrounding neighborhood that characterized the nineteenth-century would soon change, with the onset of deindustrialization, however.⁶⁷

⁶³ O’Mara, 145

⁶⁴ O’Mara, 145

⁶⁵ O’Mara, 145

⁶⁶ Hughes, 26

⁶⁷ O’Mara, 145

Phase 2: The Post-World War II Era

The second phase in campus-community relations took place in the era following World War II.⁶⁸ Town-gown relations during this period experienced more complications than during the previous era, as physical walls between campus and community combined with a number of racial, class, and social barriers between the two groups. During this period, urban campuses began to feel the effects of the depopulation, blight, and “white flight” taking place in the deindustrialized American inner city. Urban renewal projects of the 1950s and 60s gave city leaders a rich opportunity to address the elderly and “obsolete” infrastructure and the rising social problems of postwar central cities.⁶⁹ As the federal government allowed cities to “count” university investment as part of the local match required to leverage funds, city officials had a great incentive to seek out university partners. This came at an opportune moment: just as universities, concerned about deteriorating conditions in their neighborhoods and anticipating increased enrollments, had become actively engaged in campus planning.⁷⁰ At the same time, the tradition of campus planning as the ideal form of university urban development became something of a “science.” The notion of “campus” became further idealized and still intended to provide “relief from the communal life of the institution and removal from the stress of the general conditions of modern society.”⁷¹ It makes sense, then, that university development, informed by such ideals of separation, could easily exacerbate

⁶⁸ Benson, Harkavy, and Puckett, 87

⁶⁹ O’Mara, 155

⁷⁰ Strom, 119

⁷¹ Perry and Wiewel, 7-8

historic town-gown conflicts during this period-- often running at odds with the broader urban and community development agendas of the city.⁷²

In coordination with these national trends, town-gown conflicts reached an all-time high in West Philadelphia. Philadelphia started to witness significant economic and demographic changes during the 1940s and 50s, with West Philadelphia acting as a sort of microcosm of the city's general trends. These changes began to take place in the 40s with the arrival of thousands of African American migrants from the South.⁷³ As blacks moved in, lured by jobs in the then-thriving industrial center, whites moved out—in droves.⁷⁴ This “white flight” from the neighborhood has continued up until the present day: in a 1997 article in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Samuel Hughes cited that since 1950, West Philadelphia had lost a staggering 44 percent of its population, and many of those who left were of middle-class background.⁷⁵ While Hughes' statistic is outdated, it reflects a continuing trend.

The influx of blacks and the simultaneous decline in Philadelphia's economic base in this post-World War II period resulted in new concentrations of poor and underemployed minorities, particularly in the row-house neighborhoods of North and West Philadelphia.⁷⁶ It is important to note, however, that black poverty in Philadelphia differed from that in other cities such as Detroit and Chicago, as it did not come about exclusively or predominantly due to deindustrialization. Instead, the racism inherent in hiring practices limited jobs in the manufacturing sector, and discriminatory housing and mortgage-lending practices restricted blacks to a limited number of neighborhoods,

⁷² Perry and Wiewel, 7-8

⁷³ O'Mara, 152

⁷⁴ Hughes, 27

⁷⁵ Hughes, 27

⁷⁶ O'Mara, 152

which became increasingly crowded as more migrants arrived.⁷⁷ This is an important distinction to note, as it has had lasting effects both in a high concentration of African Americans in West Philadelphia and as it reflects the long history of black marginalization in the city.

West Philadelphia's transformation to a predominantly African American neighborhood did not, however, mean that it had become a poorer neighborhood as many assumed it had. In fact, there is little evidence of economic downturn in West Philadelphia prior to 1960, and many of the working families who moved in differed little in economic profiles from the working-class whites who preceded them.⁷⁸ Nonetheless, the African American migration to the West Philadelphia caused quite a stir, giving even Penn's liberal academics pause.⁷⁹

Penn administrators and city officials alike quickly became concerned about what they considered the increasing "urban blight" in the neighborhood.⁸⁰ Although city and university leaders connected this "blight" to increased poverty in the area, there were clearly underlying racial elements: as stated earlier, West Philadelphia's population had shifted on racial—not economic—grounds. This underlying weariness about a growing black population in the area seemed to contradict the public stance of these "progressive and enlightened leaders," all of whom would have likely professed to have been quite broad-minded in their ideas about race relations and civil rights.⁸¹ Nonetheless, this era marked the first time that the complicated and intersecting currents of race and class had become relevant in Penn – West Philadelphia relations.

⁷⁷ O'Mara, 152

⁷⁸ O'Mara, 156

⁷⁹ O'Mara, 156

⁸⁰ O'Mara, 152-153

⁸¹ O'Mara, 156

The area around the University's campus began to become more crowded, more heterogeneous, and, to some, seemingly more dangerous than before. This change was ironic, as the University that had moved the City's Western environs eighty years before to escape the disorder of the city suddenly found itself in the middle of a very urban and somewhat uncontrollable space.⁸² In fact, elite Philadelphian's concerns about the increasingly blighted state of their city spurred discussions of whether Penn should move its campus from West Philadelphia to still-rural Valley Forge, on the outskirts of the city. Although Penn did not end up moving, these conversations, which persisted until the early 1950s, are important to note because they show the beginning of the University's great political power in urban affairs. Here we see that this power stemmed from Penn's importance as an employer and landowner, and from city leaders' deep-seated fears that it might leave. In order to keep Penn in the city, Philadelphia's leaders needed to do all they could to keep the city surrounding the campus in social and economic order.⁸³

The mentioned city and university officials responded to their concerns about increasing blight by proposing large-scale, comprehensive physical redevelopment measures. These included the development of the University City Science Center in the West Philadelphia neighborhood immediately North of campus, and included the expansion of Penn campus, with the integration of the area from 32nd to 40th Streets and from Walnut Street to Hamilton Walk, uniting the scattered educational buildings.⁸⁴ These developments were made possible due to large-scale federal funding measures. By the mid-1950s, even as racial transition remained incomplete, West Philadelphia had

⁸² O'Mara, 156

⁸³ O'Mara, 146

⁸⁴ "Penn's Dream Nears Reality," 16

moved toward the top of the list for federal urban renewal funding.⁸⁵ Soon these national inversions assisted in creating a “city of knowledge”-- the nation’s first inner city science center-- bordering Penn’s campus.

Plans to create the University City Science Center in the area of West Philadelphia bordering campus did not begin solely in response to the issue of blight in West Philadelphia: Penn wanted to establish its name nationally and globally by establishing itself as a leading scientific institution and associating itself with a development of great importance. This hope related to the fact that at mid-century, Philadelphia hoped to establish itself as the nation’s technological center. This hope did not seem far-fetched: during this period, the region and its leading university had innumerable financial, industrial, and technological advances over the Bay Area. In 1940, Philadelphia was the third largest city in the country, and the region was headquarters to many leading electronic and advanced science firms. Additionally, Penn was home to one of the nation’s first engineering schools and to the nation’s first supercomputer.⁸⁶ Despite the University’s growing record of scientific and technological excellence and its local prestige, however, Penn continued to have a hard time competing with other nationally prominent universities for students. Margaret Pugh O’Mara elaborates on this point:

Until the late 1940s, Penn was a regional school better known outside Philadelphia for its winning football teams than for its academics. Many in its undergraduate student body were commuters from the city and surrounding suburbs.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ O’Mara, 157

⁸⁶ O’Mara, 143

⁸⁷ O’Mara, 145

Compounding these difficulties in “breaking out of the middle of the pack” was the fact that the neighborhood around the campus was changing.⁸⁸ Penn thus had to respond quickly to what it saw as growing problems in West Philadelphia in order to establish a name for itself.

The first step in improving Penn’s name and prestige was through physical expansion into West Philadelphia. According to City Planning professor Dr. George Thomas, as quoted in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, “...to make the modern global university, you need space. And the solution to that is redevelopment—their urban, federal partnership in which the Feds basically condemned everything it needed, and the institution could grow.”⁸⁹ This notion that physical redevelopment would affect the University’s character and clout can also be seen in a 1950 *The Philadelphia Inquirer* article: “The university’s entire expansion program... will transform the area into a “showplace campus” which university officials predict will be “one of the most beautiful metropolitan campuses in the world.”

These plans for physical expansion began under Harold E. Stassen’s years as the University’s president, from 1948 to 1953. Under his term, Penn formed a “true campus”, expanding by approximately 30 percent into the area from 32nd to 40th Streets and from Walnut Street to Hamilton Walk.⁹⁰ Stassen argued that the campus needed more room and facilities to fulfill its mission and reach its full potential, and wanted to support a plan that would make the campus both utilitarian and beautiful. A combination of these goals, Stassen believed, would both contribute to the development of West Philadelphia and

⁸⁸ O’Mara, 145

⁸⁹ Hughes, 27

⁹⁰ “Penn’s Dream Nears Reality,” 91

also fit in with the city's own interests.⁹¹ Penn's physical redevelopments and its push for the redevelopment of West Philadelphia during this era, therefore, while related in part to the desire for change in the surrounding neighborhood, also had to do with the University's need to improve its prestige and recreate a name for itself.

An important part of this goal for image creation had to do with Penn's effort in coordination with the Redevelopment Authority to re-brand the neighborhood: in an effort to distinguish the area directly adjacent to campus from the rest of West Philadelphia and to emphasize its association with the area's higher-education and medical complexes, the area formerly known as West Philadelphia began to be referred to by many as "University City."⁹² According to Lois Bye Funderburg. *CW'48*, a former realtor with Urban Developers, which later became Urban & Bye,

"Until the mid-1950s, there *was* no University City. The appellation was essentially a marketing tool... West Philadelphia was such a huge place, and we were trying to develop a market in these big Victorian houses around the University, to encourage faculty to move back into a diversified neighborhood. So we decided to designate the area *University City*."⁹³

Unlike some other research universities located in "bucolic college towns or shiny new suburbs," Penn had to "sell" its location to potential employees, and distinguishing itself from "West Philadelphia" was an important step in doing this.⁹⁴ No matter the intention of this renaming, it is important to note that it was essentially a marketing scheme. The boundaries of University City, according to Funderburg, extended from the Schuylkill River to 52nd Street, and from Haverford Avenue to the Media-line railroad tracks south

⁹¹ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 1948, 13

⁹² O'Mara, 163

⁹³ Hughes, 21

⁹⁴ O'Mara, 164

of Kingsessing Avenue—although over the years many have viewed it as a smaller domain.

There have been historical tensions between those whose interests lay exclusively in University City and those whose worldview encompassed the whole of West Philadelphia, primarily because what was left unsaid in this renaming process was that the new designation also attempted to disassociate the university community from its poor and African American neighbors. To middle-class whites and white-collar businesses, “West Philadelphia” connoted a place that was increasingly unattractive, poor, and black. Calling the neighborhood around Penn and other educational institutions “University City” was an important first step in re-creating the area as a place that was well planned.⁹⁵ Current neighborhood residents continue to remind the community of these implications associated with the area’s renaming, most recently through a guerilla marketing campaign of a bumper sticker that reads: *“This is West Philadelphia. University City is just a marketing scheme.”*

Whether by re-branding or redeveloping, Penn’s focus on meeting its own pedagogical aims as opposed to meeting community needs in these actions is characteristic of town-gown relations during this era. Penn’s “Integrated Development Plan” of 1963-1970 alludes to this priority: the “Objectives of the University” section mentions that, with regard to the larger community, Penn would strive to “encourage faculty members to engage in public and community service *to an extent consistent with the performance of their University responsibilities.*”⁹⁶ Additionally, the document states

⁹⁵ O’Mara, 163

⁹⁶ Office of the President, 6-7

that, “Plans for physical expansion are valid *only to the extent that they enable the faculty and students to attain their educational objectives.*”⁹⁷ These statements show that Penn’s focus, both in terms of community service and in terms of physical expansion, ultimately centered on meeting its own institutional ideals.

The University’s focus on campus objectives by no means signified that it did not take into account considerations for West Philadelphia. In fact, the prevailing notion during this time-- while quite elitist-- was that universities had a vital role to society’s welfare, as they were filtering systems through which the nations most promising and gifted leaders would pass through. This mentality advocated placing the greatest services and focus toward these elite students of top universities in order to ultimately impact society positively.⁹⁸

Some of the most important large-scale developments began in 1956 under Gaylord Harnwell’s presidency and Martin Meyerson’s planning leadership. Meyerson, a professor of urban planning and the future president of Penn, proposed a program of large-scale planning, redevelopment, and rehabilitation in West Philadelphia, hoping to prevent it from becoming a “sea of residential slums with commercial and institutional islands.” In the eyes of the University, that “sea” was becoming dangerous, as became apparent in 1958 when a gang of teenagers at 36th and Hamilton Streets murdered a Korean graduate student named In-ho Oh. Redevelopment objectives for the community were thus important predominantly because of the effects that surrounding neighborhoods were beginning to have on Penn. Penn thus embarked on a campaign of mostly federally

⁹⁷ Office of the President, 7

⁹⁸ Office of the President, 4

funded physical development, and during the 1960s and 70s, the University added over 45 percent of its current total square footage.⁹⁹

Before these developments took place, Meyerson recommended that Penn provide leadership and funding to establish an area-wide organization specifically devoted to neighborhood improvement. This turned into the West Philadelphia Corporation (WPC), an organization that would soon have a sizable impact on the nature of the neighborhood's development.¹⁰⁰ Cooperation between the WPC, University leaders, and the Redevelopment Authority soon led to the birth of the University City Science Center. This building bordered Penn's Northern edge: it was developed on a 23-acre tract along Market Street, from 34th Street to 40th Street.

While the original mission of this Center was to “combat community deterioration,” soon the project's true colors came out and it became clear that it intended to make West Philadelphia more white and professional. The Center provided very few jobs to poor people in the area, the majority of whom were African American; it displaced 666 residents—who, with the West Philadelphia Corporation's help, eventually found new homes but weren't always very happy about it; and finally, it caused scores of buildings to be torn down.¹⁰¹

These effects were inevitable, as the new city of knowledge could only rise after the current neighborhood fabric disappeared:

...university administrators' goal of making West Philadelphia more white and professional required the destruction of the homes and businesses of poor blacks. This aspect of redevelopment went unsaid in the relentlessly sunny publicity materials produced by the WPC. The WPC-led discussions about the gleaming

⁹⁹ Strom, 119

¹⁰⁰ Hughes, 28

¹⁰¹ Hughes, 28

modern research facilities soon to rise in West Philadelphia made no mention of the people and businesses displaced by their construction.¹⁰²

Many were skeptical and critical of this large-scale displacement of poor and minority residents without finding them adequate replacement housing. This criticism was further emphasized by the fact that the projects left wide swaths of open urban space where demolition had occurred but new construction had not yet begun.¹⁰³ While Penn was at the brunt of these criticisms, it is important to note the institution's strong political "out": here the WPC—not Penn—had been the implementing agency for urban renewal. Therefore, even though Penn administrators had had almost total control over the WPC's decisions, when these urban renewal program tactics caused widespread anger by the end of the 1950s, Penn had created a safety net for itself.¹⁰⁴

Therefore, while these developments, as well as others during this post- World War II era, put Penn on the map as a prestigious global institution, they also had grave consequences for the community. Samuel Hughes suggests that the displacement of neighborhood residents at that time "is still felt, since what is left is a combination of cold, sterile-looking laboratory buildings and vast stretches of parking lots, which give the area a desolate, industrial-steppe feeling."¹⁰⁵ Dr. Ira Harkavy, Penn professor and founder of the Center for Community Partnerships, argues that the historical downside of the Science Center, "was the very bad relationship, or a worsening of the relationship," between Penn and West Philadelphia. He mentions, though, that Penn's case was not

¹⁰² O'Mara, 160

¹⁰³ O'Mara, 161

¹⁰⁴ O'Mara, 160-161

¹⁰⁵ Hughes, 28

unique, as this occurred throughout the country. Finally, he adds “It also needs to be recognized that these [developments] were done with good intentions.”¹⁰⁶

Despite its good intentions, Penn’s physical expansions in the post World War II era engendered quite a bit of animosity and set the stage for the third and most recent and “democratic” era in its town-gown relations. In fact, by the time Sheldon Hackney took office in 1981, he recalls, “People still viewed the University as the operators of the bulldozers that bulldozed the community down. So I was always looking for ways to get that relationship onto a different footing.”¹⁰⁷ In the early 1980s, Hackney thus set the ball rolling for a more community-oriented future town-gown relationship.

Phase 3: Contemporary Town-Gown Relations

The escalation of the social and racial issues that dominated this second phase had a number of detrimental consequences in the following epoch, both in the general urban context and also specifically in the realm of campus-community relations. In the 1980s and 90s, the beginning years of this final stage, city neighborhoods across the country suffered from a number of urban phenomena such as depopulation and increased crime rates, which were worsened by the national crack epidemic. Although the situation was detrimental around the country, cities like Philadelphia that had been hit hardest by deindustrialization felt its effects even more. Additionally, as in the post-World War II era, these issues of decline did not solely affect the inner city: city blight began to impact urban universities as well. Additionally, the negative legacy of the previous eras of town-gown relations remained strong. Campus-community relations at the beginning of the

¹⁰⁶ Hughes, 28

¹⁰⁷ Hughes, 28

third stage, which emerged in 1989 in the aftermath of the Cold War, thus reflected a defensive response to the after-effects of the previous two stages of town-gown relations. Universities realized the inextricable link between their own institutional health and that of their surrounding communities—a realization that motivated these institutions to work more actively toward the improvement of their neighborhoods. Penn, a leader in such efforts, began by directing its attention the issue of safety and later, by adopting a more creative and holistic strategy-- one that attempted to “break down the walls” between campus and community.

West Philadelphia’s decline, which had started in the 50s, continued through the 1990s, exemplifying the issues taking place in urban neighborhoods across the country. Philadelphia was in a particularly challenged state at this time, however, and the conditions specifically in the neighborhood bordering Penn campus were among the worst in the country. Judith Rodin describes the area in the 90s:

One in five residents had income below the poverty line. Shops and businesses were closing, pedestrian traffic was vanishing, middle-class families were leaving, and more houses were falling prey to abandonment and decay.... The main commercial thoroughfare through Penn’s campus was dominated by surface parking lots, while the depressed and desolate commercial corridor of 40th Street at the western edge of Penn’s campus had become an invisible boundary beyond which many Penn students and faculty dared not venture.¹⁰⁸

The social and economic contrasts between the campus community and its neighboring West Philadelphia communities had never been so strong. Additionally, despite some efforts of faculty and administrators to reach out to the community, the relationship between Penn and West Philadelphia was “testy, to say the least.”¹⁰⁹ As described, West Philadelphia’s neighborhood decline had been a long, slow process, the result of a

¹⁰⁸ Rodin, 4

¹⁰⁹ Rodin, 4

complex interplay of factors, and Penn was well aware that reversing it would not come easily or quickly.¹¹⁰ Although the University started to realize that its community efforts and initiatives, which had been predominantly through the WPC, were falling short, it was not until the issues of crime and blight plaguing West Philadelphia began to have an impact on the Penn “island”, that University priorities began to change.

Penn was not the only university to shift focus during this period. After the cold war, a number of comparable institutions witnessed a response to the increasingly obvious, increasingly embarrassing, increasingly immoral contradiction between the status, wealth, and power of American higher education—particularly its elite research university component—and the pathological state of American cities. Accelerating internal and external pressures forced research universities like Penn to recognize that they must—and could—function as moral and intellectual institutions simultaneously engaged in advancing universal knowledge, learning, *and* improving the well-being of their local geographic communities.¹¹¹ This era therefore marked a shift in the way the university related to its surrounding community, changing to the university *of*, not simply *in*, the city—especially as intellectually, no university could be wholly self-contained.¹¹²

By transforming from big science, cold war, entrepreneurial universities to more civically engaged ones, these institutions would not only be much better able to achieve their missions, but they would also be able to produce more well-educated, cultured, and truly democratic citizens through more integrated and practical learning.¹¹³ Although Penn had realized this to some extent in the era immediately following World War II,

¹¹⁰ Hughes, 20

¹¹¹ Benson, Harkavy, Puckett, 78-79

¹¹² Perry and Wiewel, 4; Deitrick and Soska, 27

¹¹³ Benson, Harkavy, Puckett, 81; Rodin, 15

with its West Philadelphia development initiatives, this understanding only became stronger with time—particularly because the University realized, primarily through community and student activism, that it not always been an easy neighbor to live with. Ira Harkavy describes Penn’s role as a “bad neighbor” in greater detail, in an interview in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*:

“[Penn] has gone on colossal building binges, ripping up whole neighborhoods like some crazed Eastern European dictator, displacing residents and businesses for its own high-minded imperial aims.... And it has sometimes shown an aloof insensitivity to residential groups who want to be kept informed of plans that will affect their neighborhood. As a result, it has become the institution its neighbors love to hate.”¹¹⁴

The University began to elaborate on the initiatives it had launched in the early-1980s period and as time went on, these efforts became progressively multi-pronged and comprehensive, particularly under Judith Rodin’s presidency.¹¹⁵

Before discussing the multi-pronged nature of these initiatives, it is important to note that as with the post- World War II initiatives, these bold new community-oriented projects still stemmed in part from Penn’s immediate self-interest, of recruitment and retention of faculty, staff, and students.¹¹⁶ This can be seen most clearly due to the strong link between increased West Philadelphia initiatives and increased concern for campus security. At the beginning of Rodin’s term, crime was an issue and the traditional responses were not working. In August 1994, when Penn graduate student Al-Moez Alimohamad, was shot and killed seven blocks from campus, the University responded by rehashing? campus security. Despite having hired an experienced captain from the Philadelphia Police Department and started a sophisticated new public safety plan,

¹¹⁴ Hughes, 25

¹¹⁵ *Gazette* Editors; Hughes, 20

¹¹⁶ Hughes, 21

however, a rash of attacks occurred that same year: nearly thirty armed robberies on or near the campus took place in a particularly brutal September, including the shooting of an undergraduate, who fortunately survived. And then despite further attempts to increase safety, on October 31, 1996, Penn biochemist Vladimir Sled was stabbed and killed on his way back home to his West Philadelphia apartment. Penn began to see that security alone would not help to solve the University's security and crime challenges. In fact, Rodin cites the killing of Vladimir Sled as the "one decisive moment" that called for "unprecedented action" by the University.¹¹⁷ Thus began a new step in this third phase: Penn realized that it no longer had a choice but to cooperate with West Philadelphia to mend community relations: this had become a necessary step. Rodin makes this point explicitly in her book when she states that:

The issue of mending its deteriorating relations with the community and revitalizing West Philadelphia had long been on Penn's agenda, and many efforts had been made. But when the problem of security was driven once again to the forefront, we had to find an entirely new model for action.¹¹⁸

This model for action was one that included a number of different elements, the idea since a comprehensive approach had become essential.

While this new plan was multidimensional, the first of these elements related directly to safety. Although the University knew that investing in security by itself would not solve its crime problems, maximizing safety still remained its top priority, as concerns for safety in the 80s and 90s plagued students, faculty members, and other neighborhood residents on a daily basis. Dr Elijah Anderson, a former professor at Penn who has written extensively about issues of race and class and poverty in areas like West Philadelphia, discusses in a 1997 interview how the neighborhood's crime levels caused

¹¹⁷ Rodin, X

¹¹⁸ Rodin, 5

him to leave the area for Center City. Anderson talks about how he lived for 18 years in a house on Hazel Avenue, and although for a long time found it “a very comfortable place to be and live,” when crime on his block began to become a regular issue, he and his wife decided to move to Center City. He then mentions that issues such as these neither were nor remain exclusive to Penn and West Philadelphia: “Urban universities are at the forefront of all this. This is the reality that people face in such economically compromised neighborhoods.” He cites the example of Yale University, a comparable urban university that has had many of the hostile town-gown problems that Penn has had—complete with the tragic, senseless murder of a student in 1991. Also like Penn, Yale’s problems have been exacerbated by the economic decline of New Haven-- a “town” whose relationship with its “gown” has similarly been characterized by a history of hostility and distrust.¹¹⁹

Returning to the topic of safety, it is important to note the level of investment Penn began to devote exclusively to security measures: under Rodin, these figures amounted to \$18 million a year. These measures seem to have had a positive impact, as, like the University likes to boast, crime on campus has dropped substantially since Rodin’s era. That said, security remains a top priority for the University, as, according to a *Daily Pennsylvanian* interview with Penn’s Division of Public Safety’s Maureen Rush in November of this year, figures have increased by \$3 million to \$21 million under Amy Gutmann’s administration.¹²⁰ According to the 2007 Division of Public Safety Fact Sheet, current initiatives include “comprehensive safety and security measures” in what is

¹¹⁹ Hughes, 25

Other cases of town-gown relations frequently cited in comparison to Penn include Columbia University, The University of Southern California (USC), and The University of Chicago.

¹²⁰ Karas, “ONLINE UPDATE: Officials announce new security measures”

now called the “Penn Patrol Zone”, which includes 30th Street to 43rd Street, on the east-west border, and Market Street to Baltimore Avenue, on the north-south border. The Penn Police Department is the largest private force in the state, and the fourth largest in the nation—all are armed and have full powers of arrest and investigative jurisdiction. The Division of Public Safety (DPS) has 81 security officers, on foot and bike patrol, and 450 Allied Barton security guards total on the Penn account. DPS maintains an extensive network of security technology resources throughout the Penn patrol zone, including over four-hundred and fifty emergency phones connected to the University emergency radio dispatching center, 83 CCTV cameras, and hundreds of fixed CCTV cameras throughout campus.¹²¹

Although these measures have notably increased since Rodin’s administration, she made the initial decision to invest so heavily in extensive security measures. She argued that:

This isn’t about Penn spending half a billion dollars. This is about Penn leveraging its resources—its ability to convince other entities that also must make investments that *we* are serious, so *they* can be serious...we cannot do it alone... And the entity with whom we need to work the most closely is the community. It isn’t about Penn doing *for* the community or *to* the community. It is *with* the community.¹²²

It is important to note here the community-focus in Rodin’s rhetoric. She argues that Penn’s safety measures, although created initially to protect Penn students, would ideally spark greater community involvement in making the neighborhood community a safer place. The connection between safety and improved community relations can also be seen in a statement made by Amy Gutmann on the DPS website: she mentions that Penn provides the highest quality of safety and security services in order to create “A place,

¹²¹ Division of Public Safety, 1

¹²² Hughes, 20

“where students and faculty can pursue knowledge without boundaries.”¹²³ This notion of assuring the safety and well-being of students “without boundaries” through security measures is interesting, particularly because the University’s security measures do in fact have boundary lines—even though these extend a few blocks off campus.

These safety measures, while of great importance, were not the main sign of the great shift in town-gown relations that took place during this era. In fact, the University soon began to realize the importance of launching a multi-dimensional effort to improve overall safety and security in the neighborhood. Hughes supports this point in his 1997 article:

For too many people, the urban social equation—in which fun and fulfillment are factored against fear and frustration—is going the wrong way. For every person driven out by the specter of an armed gunman, there are at least as many who leave—or want to—because the public schools are marginal and the shopping is lousy and there’s no nightlife and their car just got broken into for the third time this year.¹²⁴

Improving conditions in West Philadelphia, then, can only take place by approaching multiple fronts at once. Dr. Harkavy agrees with this point: “Anything that focuses on a single-pronged attempt—by the nature of not looking at the enormous interrelated complexity that exists in an advanced society—will necessarily fail.”¹²⁵

While many other urban universities in the 80s and 90s had taken action on one front or another, “None had attempted to commit to intervening holistically in all fronts at once,” according to Rodin. Penn then became the first urban university to begin a massive project of multi-pronged, civically engaged community relations and development initiatives, and is now viewed to be a model by universities such as

¹²³ Division of Public Safety, 1

¹²⁴ Hughes, 24-5

¹²⁵ Hughes, 21

Columbia, Yale, John Hopkins, and Ohio State.¹²⁶ From large-scale physical developments both on and on campus, to commercial revitalization, to the addition of streetlights and removal of street trash, to the creation of Penn-affiliated local public schools, to the creation of a plethora of community-based programs, there has been no shortage of creative effort aimed in the direction of community engagement. Rodin states: “I am convinced that sustained community partnerships will help define successful universities in the twenty-first century; without a continuous dialogue, such partnerships will fail, and both the universities and their neighborhoods will suffer.”¹²⁷ This argument has been visibly supported by the Penn administration both from Hackney’s presidency in the 1980s until Gutmann’s administration today.

The initial steps to this new community-oriented relationship took place under Hackney’s presidency. In 1985, The West Philadelphia Corporation had become the West Philadelphia *Partnership*-- a name change intended to evoke a more equal relationship than the paternalistic one for which the WPC had become known. According to Rodin, “The emphasis on “partnerships” [in these programs]... was deliberate; it acknowledged that Penn would not and could not go it alone, as it had been accustomed to doing, often perceived as arrogantly doing so.”¹²⁸

The West Philadelphia Partnership restructured itself under Hackney’s term to become more democratic, and included equal numbers of directors from neighborhood organizations and institutions. Additionally, it encouraged the involved institutions to “Buy West Philadelphia” and “Hire West Philadelphia”—initiatives that have expanded in recent years. The most dramatic shift that occurred in this period, according to

¹²⁶ Litt, 1

¹²⁷ Rodin, 20

¹²⁸ Hughes, 42-43

Hackney himself, however, came with the initiative of Dr. Ira Harkavy and Dr. Lee Benson, to launch academically-based community initiative that got students out into West Philadelphia. He mentions that ultimately this “began to change the relationship and get Penn people into roles in West Philadelphia schools...”¹²⁹ Harkavy argues that initiatives of this nature are all in line with Penn’s founding and institutional values, specifically the vision of Benjamin Franklin. He argues: “What was the purpose of the College of Philadelphia? ‘To educate young people with an inclination, joined with an ability, to serve.’”¹³⁰ This idea soon expanded and soon more community initiatives, namely the Center for Community Partnerships (CCP) and the West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC) were founded.

Rodin cites the creation of the CCP in 1992, as being perhaps the most notable of these “partnerships.” This organization was “to involve alumni, faculty, and graduate and undergraduate students in working with WEPIC [West Philadelphia Improvement Corps] on the social, economic, and health problems of West Philadelphia.” To emphasize the importance of this initiative, Hackney placed the CCP in the Office of the President, and Dr. Harkavy became its leader.¹³¹

Despite Hackney’s well-intentioned initiatives, however, the issues of crime and community tension remained quite high when Rodin became president in 1994. As mentioned previously, the fundamental question facing the University at this time, according to Rodin, was: “Could a university so alienated from a deeply distressed neighborhood at its doorstep continue to grow and prosper?” Rodin mentions that although some suggested that the problems were intractable, others encouraged Penn to

¹²⁹ Hughes, 29

¹³⁰ Hughes, 21

¹³¹ Rodin, 41

“take a leadership role in revitalizing the neighborhood as a matter of enlightened self-interest.”¹³² And that is exactly what she tried to do.

In 1995, therefore, the University developed a plan, which started with its “Urban Agenda” in the Six Academic Priorities section of the 1995 *Agenda for Excellence*.¹³³ Rodin’s administration agreed on the same basic needs for the area around Penn, showing that they had done some listening to community activists, elected officials, students, and members of the faculty, some of whom were considered experts in these matters. The neighborhood, they argued, needed to become safe and clean; it needed a set of excellent school options; it needed a good mix of attractive, affordable residential housing; it needed vastly improved retail options and nightlife; and it needed more job opportunities through economic development.¹³⁴

It soon became clear that the central focus of much of this community involvement was education. First, the University assisted in starting a neighborhood school, the Penn Alexander School, which would benefit both the university and the community, as its catchment area would reflect the diversity – racial, cultural, and economic—of the West Philadelphia community.¹³⁵ While this ideal strongly supported the concept of breaking down barriers of all types-- between town and gown, between classes, and within the West Philadelphia community—the school tends to be criticized today for having a limited catchment area that only represents a small portion of the neighborhood population. Contemporary criticisms aside, however, this initiative was crucial under Rodin’s term in terms of faculty retention: to improve neighborhood

¹³² “Rodin: A Look Back,” 40

¹³³ “Rodin: A Look Back,” 40

¹³⁴ Hughes, 22

¹³⁵ Rodin, 157

schools would make West Philadelphia a more attractive neighborhood for faculty. The crucial area of local elementary schools was a long-standing issue for Penn, one that Meyerson had wanted to address in the 1950s but did not have sufficient funding to do so. The University of Chicago, for example, had invested heavily in regional “lab schools” early in the century, and that had helped keep child-raising faculty in the area and thus anchor the neighborhood.¹³⁶ In addition to creating a school, Penn’s schools and centers began to put tens of thousands of volunteer hours into area schools and otherwise linking the university’s intellectual resources with the needs of the community.¹³⁷ Penn’s educational initiatives soon became the focal point of the University’s publicity regarding positive relations with West Philadelphia.

Despite this focus on efforts to improve the campus-community relationship through education, there seemed to be an understanding that this was not enough. In addition to a number of economic development initiatives such as the founding of the University City District, Rodin embarked in a series of commercial development initiatives that are currently regarded to have been successful but also tend to be criticized for being too “corporate.”¹³⁸ Rodin aimed to make Penn a “destination” campus for visitors and Philadelphia residents, thus investing substantial funds in the development of the area directly around campus.¹³⁹ The two greatest developments under Rodin’s presidency were of Sansom Common (now University Square), at 36th and Walnut Streets, and of the 40th Street corridor. Before these developments, Walnut Street had been a parking lot, and 40th Street had served as a boundary past that Penn students did

¹³⁶ Hughes, 27

¹³⁷ Hughes, 20

¹³⁸ “Rodin: A Look Back,” 33

¹³⁹ Hughes, 35

not cross. The development of new retail options would provide neighborhood residents with places to go and things to do, and the hope was that students—especially graduate students—and faculty members would no longer flee in large numbers to Center City out of fear of crime and boredom.¹⁴⁰ John Fry, the University’s executive vice president in 1997, said in an article in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* that ultimately, “We’d like University City to be what Cambridge is to Harvard.”¹⁴¹ From the development of a commercial corridor to a movie theatre to a grocery store to a multi-level parking garage, these developments changed the physical layout of the areas directly adjacent to campus enormously. Whether viewed positively or more critically, these developments changed the neighborhood significantly, especially in coordination with the new notion of a growing “University City.”

Penn has effected quite a bit of change—both positive and negative-- in West Philadelphia (or University City, rather), and perhaps more importantly, it has served as a sort of catalyst for greater neighborhood changes. Crime rates have dropped, real estate prices have shot up, and most of Rodin’s initiatives tend to be viewed as being successful. In other words, although we are only in the very early stages of this “third revolution,” things seem to be moving in the right direction. Universities across the country are now knocking down some of the barriers previously standing between town and gown. They are “partnering with cities, consulting with neighborhoods, forming citizen advisory groups, and embracing mixed-use developments that blur the edges of campus rather than impose hard boundaries” in hopes of creating safe, welcoming

¹⁴⁰ Hughes, 20

¹⁴¹ Hughes, 22

neighborhoods around their campuses.”¹⁴² In fact, the entire conception of “campus” is changing and the ways it is planned and built reflect new needs of the communities—both academic and urban—that study, work, or live in and otherwise use university-owned buildings and land.¹⁴³

Despite these successes, however, there still seem to be a number of strong boundaries standing between town and gown. Concern for public safety remains strong, as avoiding events like those of the 1990s and maintaining a safe campus is both important and essential to maintain in order to retain and attract top quality students and to keep alumni support. That said, these concerns have made it more difficult to break down the literal and figurative boundaries that remain standing between Penn and West Philadelphia. To some extent, these walls make sense when one looks at the long history of division between Penn and West Philadelphia: memory takes a long time to fade.

There are signs of improvement in that these divisions have shifted geographically westward from ten or twenty years ago. These walls have changed more than just geographically, though: they seem to have evolved into more subtle boundaries, manifested through security cameras and campus security officers in florescent yellow jackets. These walls are not unjustified: although conditions in West Philadelphia have improved significantly, they are still not perfect. However, what is important to note is that university rhetoric today largely ignores the continued presence of these figurative walls, claiming that they have finally disappeared. In the university’s defense, one must remember that while universities such as Penn often have goals similar to private

¹⁴² Litt, 1

¹⁴³ Perry and Wiewel, 8

developers, their nonprofit status requires a more nuanced list of strategies to accomplish the development objective.¹⁴⁴

Noting that issues of safety sparked this involvement is an essential nuance, as these issues are subtly and directly alluded to in campus literature. Penn's involvement in West Philadelphia is argued to be two sided, and individuals such as Rodin believe that the "literal and figurative walls" that once existed between the University and its surrounding neighborhoods have been knocked down. While the current push toward eliminating divisions of all sorts between urban universities and their adjacent neighborhoods tends to be generally regarded as a positive phenomenon, these public proclamations of town-gown collaboration far surpass tangible, interactive, mutually respectful and beneficial collaboration.¹⁴⁵ Progress is being made, but as mentioned earlier, we are merely in the first stages of this "third revolution". Additionally, issues of University – community division have become more complex to break down or confront, as they are subtler.

¹⁴⁴ Strom

¹⁴⁵ Perry and Wiewel, 79

Methodology:

In contemplating Penn's initiatives to break down the barriers between campus and community, I began to consider the nature of the relationship between Penn students and the West Philadelphia communities adjacent to our campus. Based on personal anecdotes and experiences, I found that there existed a schism between the idea of a "relationship without borders" as described by campus figures such as Rodin, Harkavy, and Gutmann, and the relationship of sharp division and separation that I have seen in my day-to-day interactions. Based on my experiences, I felt that the University's attempts to knock down barriers between campus and community—the most notable of which seems to be community service—may have actually further reinforced the divisions between students and the neighborhood. I therefore sought to explore the boundaries—social, historical, psychological, and physical—that divided Penn students from West Philadelphia. My hope was that such a study would give me insight into the factors that influence neighborhood dynamics, perceptions, and divisions.

In order to answer these questions and to better understand these boundaries between Penn students and West Philadelphia, I conducted a series of four focus groups. My aim was to have 5-8 undergraduate students in each focus group, with as much diversity (race, year, perspective) as possible. I had planned to have the first focus group be a pilot group, mostly composed of friends, and then have the following three be a more random mix of participants. I sent emails to a large and diverse mix of friends and acquaintances, and contacted a few list-servs, including one of freshmen that have declared as Urban Studies majors.

I received quite a bit of positive responses and reached my ideal focus group sizes for the first three sessions, with seven participants in the first one, five in the second, and eight in the third. My fourth focus group actually exceeded my initial participant maximum of eight, with twelve student participants total. Although the number of students participating in my focus groups was similar to what I had hoped, the sample reflected less diversity than I had hoped. I received a lot of positive feedback from my friends and acquaintances, but received almost none from the list-servs (only one response, in fact). My sample could therefore be called a “convenience sample” and it is important to note that my results may not reflect the Penn student body at large.

I moderated all four focus groups while also taking some notes. In addition, I had a designated note-taker in each session, with whom I combined my notes at the end. I had a second note-taker help me in the third focus group due the quantity of participants. Each focus group had three parts: first, a cognitive mapping exercise, then a short written survey, and finally, a group discussion.

The idea for the first part of my focus groups, the cognitive map, was initially drawn from Kevin Lynch’s book, *Image of the City*. In his study, Lynch asked his respondents a series of questions regarding their perceptions of their respective cities, and one of these questions included the need for respondents to draw a quick map. Each respondent was instructed to draw this map as if they were making a rapid description of their city to a stranger. After the interview, respondents were taken out in the field to go through one of the earlier imaginary trips described in the interview. Although Lynch’s study intended to test a hypothesis of imageability, while I intended to test one of literal and figurative boundaries, it seemed that his method could apply to my study as well:

including a cognitive map would help me to quantify students' perceptions of boundaries within and just adjacent to Penn campus.

After discussing the idea of cognitive mapping with a professor who had experience using them, I saw that it would perhaps be more effective to deviate slightly from Lynch's methods for simplicity's sake. Although I retained Lynch's key ideas in my study and even used variations of a few of his questions, I decided to bring the mapping exercise to the basics, following the methodology of the mentioned professor. Instead of respondents creating their own cognitive maps, I gave respondents a blank map and asked them to color it in based on their perceptions of the area: in green, their favorite areas; in blue; the areas they found to be most practical; in purple, the areas with which they were unfamiliar; and in black, the areas in which they felt unsafe. This method seemed easier to implement and analyze, and thus more useful.

For this cognitive mapping exercise, I took a map of Penn campus and West Philadelphia, from 36th Street to the East to 51st Street to the West, and from just South of Baltimore Avenue to the South to just North of Market Street to the North. I first asked respondents to take a minute to look at their maps and orient themselves, and in turn, mark with an asterisk the place where they currently lived. Then, I asked them to mark with a large dot all the locations of restaurants, bars, and cafes to which they had gone in the past month, and to write the names of these places on the survey sheet. This second question was intended to get a gauge for how familiar respondents were with West Philly restaurants, but after my first two focus groups, I realized that this question was not working the way I had intended: it ended up just provoking discussion within the focus group as they were filling in their maps, about what places respondents liked and

frequented. Additionally, after the second focus group, I realized that I should change the question to specify locations *West of 40th Street*, as many students were focusing their time and energy contemplating places within campus, which were less valuable to my study.

Next, I posed a hypothetical question followed by two instructional steps, drawn almost directly from Lynch's study: "Suppose you are walking from your house / apartment to meet a friend on Baltimore Avenue, between 46th and 47th Streets. Please mark with a dotted line the route that you would take. *Then:* Do you have any particular emotional feelings about the various parts of your trip? Please describe them (you can list words and / or use complete sentences)." This question was intended first of all to gauge respondents' familiarity with the Baltimore Avenue commercial corridor. I also thought that this question's focus on a specific location would allow for more precise information about respondents' perceptions; a more general question about perceptions of West Philly would be more difficult, as the neighborhood is large and diverse, with quite a bit of variability from street to street. I hypothesized that those respondents familiar with that particular part of the Baltimore corridor would cite more positive feelings than those unfamiliar with the area, who I guessed would cite feelings of fear and discomfort.

Next, I moved on to the described coloring exercise. I asked students to color in their respective maps with crayons as per the codes previously described. I both read the instructions aloud and included the coloring key on the survey in order to minimize confusion. Next, I asked respondents to use a highlighter to mark what they think the perimeter of the "Penn bubble" would be for most Penn undergraduates. The coloring and highlighting of the maps was a crucial part of the focus group, as it not only gave me

somewhat quantifiable data, but it also served as an introduction for students to begin thinking more specifically about their own feelings toward West Philadelphia.

After respondents completed this first section on mapping, they moved on to a brief written survey. This part began with a series of questions about respondents' interactions with West Philadelphia. Participants were to list all the places they have lived since having started studying at Penn, and to specify whether or not each residence was considered officially to be on- or off- campus. With this question on residence, I intended to see the general boundaries of off-campus housing for Penn students. Next, I asked how often, in a typical month, the respondent traveled West of 42nd Street. Following this question, I asked a series of questions about the nature of the activities in which respondents participate West of 42nd Street: Academic / community service; Professional (internship/job); Social (visiting friends / family); Consumer (shopping / dining / nightlife); Other (Specify). I also asked them to indicate their frequency of involvement in those activities: More than once a week; weekly; Monthly; Once every few months; Once a year; n/a).

Next, I asked participants to indicate which sources contributed to their knowledge and perceptions of West Philadelphia, from the following categories: Pre-freshman tour, Freshman orientation/NSO, *The Daily Pennsylvanian*/The DP, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Friends/other Penn students, Parents, Penn alums, or Other. I asked all respondents whether they read *The Daily Pennsylvanian* (hereby referred to as *The DP*) newspaper, and if so, to indicate how frequently they would guess they read about crime versus social and cultural events in West Philly. This last question was intended not to indicate how often *The DP* describes each of these two categories, but

rather it was to show students' perceptions of what the DP focuses on, whether that is based in reality or not.

Finally, at the end of the survey, I asked a series of background and demographic questions: gender, race/ethnicity, the type of city the respondent grew up in (urban, suburban, rural, other), whether the respondent grew up in the USA or abroad, and finally, whether the respondent grew up in Philadelphia. These background questions were included in order to gauge the bias of my sample and to see if there were any trends in response.

After the survey, I facilitated a group discussion with the entire group. As mentioned, although I also took notes, my focus was on moderating, and in each session I had a designated note-taker who was not a part of the focus group. I began all the discussions with a general question about the mapping exercise, and saw where the conversation led from there. I tried to focus mostly on discussion of the purple and black areas of the maps, and on the highlighted "Penn bubble" areas. I also asked participants a few questions about the nature of their involvement in West Philadelphia, and on the factors that have influenced them to spend more or less time West of campus

Data:

I. Written Survey Responses

FIGURE 1: Respondents' demographic backgrounds

	# Respondents	% Respondents
YEAR		
Freshman	2	6.25%
Sophomore	3	9.38%
Junior	3	9.38%
Senior	24	75.00%
GENDER		
Male	14	43.75%
Female	18	56.25%
RACE (Check all that apply)		
White/Caucasian	26	81.25%
Asian/South Asian	5	15.63%
Latino/Hispanic	3	9.38%
Black/African American	1	3.13%
HOMETOWN (Check all that apply)		
Urban	16	50.00%
Suburban	18	56.25%
Rural	3	9.38%
NATIONAL PLACE OF ORIGIN (Check all that apply)		
USA	30	93.75%
Abroad	4	12.50%
REGION (Check all that apply)		
Philadelphia	5	15.63%
Non-Philadelphia	27	84.38%

Figure 1 shows that the overwhelming majority of the respondents in this study are seniors (75 percent). There seems to be a fairly even distribution of non-seniors, with 2 freshmen respondents, 3 sophomores, and 3 juniors. This significant over-representation will be important to consider in my analysis.

There are 4 more female respondents than males, which is over 12 percent difference. This will likely prove ineffectual in my analysis, it may be important to consider a bias toward a female perspective.

The significant majority of respondents consider themselves to be White/Caucasian (81.25 percent). It is important to note also that Blacks/African Americans are the most underrepresented racial group in the study, with only 1 Black respondent total. Hispanics/Latinos are also quite underrepresented, especially as two of the respondents who consider themselves Hispanic/Latino also consider themselves to be White/Caucasian (not noted specifically in this data table).

The distribution of urban and suburban respondents is fairly equal, each at close to 50 percent (50 percent and 56.25 percent, respectively). There are very few rural respondents, though (3 total). It may therefore be important to discuss the effects of urban and suburban backgrounds in my analysis, whereas the rural perspective will be more negligible—especially because two of the three “rural” respondents also listed having “suburban” backgrounds.

The overwhelming majority of respondents are from the U.S (93.75 percent). Additionally, some respondents who noted being broad Abroad actually checked both boxes, as they spent some time living both in the U.S and abroad (not noted specifically in this data table), thus making the “Abroad” percentage even more negligible.

Finally, the majority of respondents (84.38 percent) are from outside of the Philadelphia region, so there likely exists no bias of respondents previously familiar with the city.

FIGURE 2: Respondents' residence locations since having started studying at Penn

TABLE 2a

On-campus or off-campus?

Year	On-campus	Off-campus	N/A	Total Respondents
Freshman	93.75%	0.00%	6.25%	32
Sophomore	30.00%	63.33%	6.67%	30
Junior	3.70%	92.59%	3.70%	27
Senior	12.50%	87.50%	0.00%	24

TABLE 2b

Locations of "off-campus" residence:

	W of 40th	W of 41st	W of 42nd	W of 44th	Total Respondents
Year					
Freshman	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	32
Sophomore	40.00%	16.67%	0.00%	0.00%	30
Junior	59.26%	22.22%	7.41%	0.00%	27
Senior	41.67%	16.67%	4.17%	0.00%	24

Table 2a shows that the majority of respondents live off-campus from sophomore year onwards, particularly during junior and senior years. It is important to note that the only year during which the majority of (actually all) respondents live on campus is freshman year, the only year when on-campus living is mandatory.

Then, Table 2b shows that the majority of respondents who live off-campus live between 40th and 41st Streets. Moving further west, the number of respondent residences decreases, with none living West of 44th Street.

FIGURE 3: Respondents' frequency of travel West of 42nd Street:

	Daily	More than 1x/ week (>5x/month)	Weekly (3-5x / month)	Monthly (1-2x/ month)	Less than 1x / month
# Respondents	4	12	9	5	2
%Respondents	12.50%	37.50%	28.13%	15.63%	6.25%

FIGURE 4: The Nature of Respondents' Activity West of 42nd Street

TABLE 4a: Academic / Community Service Activity
(Class tour, tutoring, community service, other)

	More than once a week	Weekly	Monthly	Once every few months	Once a year	N/A
#Respondents	3	11	3	7	3	5
%Respondents	9.38%	34.38%	9.38%	21.88%	9.38%	15.63%

→ Were these activities Penn-affiliated events / programs?

	Yes	No	I have participated in both Penn-affiliated and non-Penn affiliated programs and events
#Respondents	19	2	6
%Respondents	70.37%	7.41%	22.22%

TABLE 4b: Professional Activity (Internship / Job)

	More than once a week	Weekly	Monthly	Once every few months	Once a year	N/A
#Respondents	1	2	0	0	0	28
%Respondents	3.23%	6.45%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	90.32%

→ Were these activities Penn-affiliated events / programs?

	Yes	No	I have participated in both Penn-affiliated and non-Penn affiliated programs and events
#Respondents	1	7	0
%Respondents	12.50%	87.50%	0.00%

TABLE 4c: Social Activity (visiting friends/family)

	More than once a week	Weekly	Monthly	Once every few months	Once a year	N/A
#Respondents	5	7	6	5	3	7
%Respondents	15.15%	21.21%	18.18%	15.15%	9.09%	21.21%

→ *Were these friends / family Penn-affiliated?*

	Yes	No	I have participated in both Penn-affiliated and non-Penn affiliated programs and events
#Respondents	16	2	6
%Respondents	66.67%	8.33%	25.00%

TABLE 4d: Consumer (shopping, dining, nightlife)

Notes: thrift, food; CVS; Saigon; restaurants

	More than once a week	Weekly	Monthly	Once every few months	Once a year	N/A
#Respondents	6	9	11	2	2	2
%Respondents	18.75%	28.13%	34.38%	6.25%	6.25%	6.25%

TABLE 4e: Other (specify)

Notes: Exercise- walking, running, yoga; CVS, Greenline, Other Greenline; Running / playing soccer; studying; golf; athletic/studying; laundry, hardware; fixing my bike; running; bike rides; studying at coffee shops; café

	More than once a week	Weekly	Monthly	Once every few months	Once a year	N/A
#Respondents	2	5	3	1	0	10
%Respondents	9.52%	23.81%	14.29%	4.76%	0.00%	47.62%

→ *Were these activities Penn-affiliated events / programs*

	Yes	No	I have participated in both Penn-affiliated and non-Penn affiliated programs and events
#Respondents	0	10	0
%Respondents	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%

Figure 3 reflects that the majority of respondents (65.23 percent) claim to travel West of 42nd Street more than three times a month but less than daily. It is important to note also that four respondents travel West of 42nd Street daily, which corresponds to the number of respondents who cited living West of 42nd.

In the tables in Figure 4, we can see that the majority of respondents are involved in some sort of community service (84.38 percent), usually either weekly (34.38 percent) or once every few months (21.88 percent). Additionally, although only 27 respondents answered the second part of the question, the great majority of those who did answer said that it is Penn-affiliated (70.37 percent).

The majority of respondents have had no professional or internship experience in West Philadelphia (90.32 percent), making this a less relevant category for analysis. Additionally, the fact that 5 more respondents answered the second part of the question (about whether these internships were Penn-affiliated or not) than the initial part of the question makes these results even less relevant and raises a question of whether respondents were confused about the way in which the questions were posed.

Most respondents have interacted in West Philadelphia (78.79 percent), even if these have been somewhat infrequent. The rate of these visits seems to be at fairly evenly distributed, with about 15 to 20 percent of respondents in each category, with slightly fewer going only “once a year”. Additionally, it is important to note that most of these interactions have been with Penn-affiliated friends or family members (66.67%).

The majority of respondents have had a degree of consumption experience in West Philadelphia (93.75%), even if this interaction has been infrequent. This will be

important in my analysis, as it reflects that there is a level of both awareness of and interaction with the retail options in the neighborhood.

It is interesting to note here that a number of respondents included cafés in this section—it is possible that some respondents included cafés in their responses for the previous “consumer” section. Additionally, respondents’ noted exercise and studying frequently, thus possibly making these categories important to consider in the analysis.

FIGURE 5: Sources of Knowledge about West Philadelphia

Source:	#Respondents	%Respondents (out of 32)
Pre-freshman tour	4	12.50%
Freshman orientation / NSO	12	37.50%
The Daily Pennsylvanian / DP	20	62.50%
The Philadelphia Inquirer	9	28.13%
Friends / other Penn students	26	81.25%
Parents	7	21.88%
Penn alums	6	18.75%
Other (<i>specify</i>) <i>[see responses below]</i>		0.00%
Personal experiences: "Walking around", "feelings and observations of my own", "individual exploration", "listening", "experiences", "living here for 21 years"	6	18.75%
Community Service: "Community Service" and "Community Development Programs"	3	9.38%
Academic: "Professors", "classes in URBS"	4	12.50%
Penn Police Reports	1	3.13%
Non-Penn students: "People I met in concerts and parties"	1	3.13%

Notes:

- "I am from Philly and have many friends from West Philly. However I do not go much any more."

- Selected all categories except "Philadelphia Inquirer" and "Other" and wrote: "Influenced negatively, no longer influence."

The two most important categories in shaping students' impressions and perceptions of West Philadelphia are *The Daily Pennsylvanian* newspaper (62.50 percent) and friends and other Penn students (81.25 percent). Other categories of importance to over 20 percent of respondents are Freshman / New Student Orientation (37.50 percent), the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (28.13 percent), Parents (21.88 percent), Penn alums (18.75

percent). Finally, a number of respondents included personal experiences-- ranging from walking around to personal observations to listening--(18.75 percent), community service (9.38 percent), and academic experiences or trips (12.50 percent).

FIGURE 6: Respondents' Exposure to and Relationship with Information in *The Daily Pennsylvanian* Newspaper

TABLE 6a: Respondents that Read *The Daily Pennsylvanian* Newspaper

	Yes	No
#Respondents	24	8
%Respondents	75.00%	25.00%

TABLE 6b: How Often Respondents Read About Crime in West Philadelphia

"In a typical month, how often would you guess you read about crime in West Philly?"

	~ Daily (20-30+ x/month)	~Every other day (<20, >10)	5-10 times / month	Weekly (3- 4x/month)	Rarely (<3x/month)	N/A
#Respondents	9	7	4	4	3	3
%Respondents	30.00%	23.33%	13.33%	13.33%	10.00%	10.00%

TABLE 6c: How Often Respondents Read About Social or Cultural Events / Restaurants in West Philadelphia

"In a typical month, how often would you guess you read about social or cultural events / restaurants in West Philly?"

	~ Daily (20-30+ x/month)	~Every other day (<20, >10)	5-10 times / month	Weekly (3- 4x/month)	Rarely (<3x/month)	N/A
#Respondents	5	7	3	5	7	4
%Respondents	16.13%	22.58%	9.68%	16.13%	22.58%	12.90%

NOTE: Many of the respondents who cited "weekly" as their response also mentioned that they read these reviews in the Thursday culture and arts supplement of "The DP", called "34th Street".

The majority of respondents read the school newspaper (75%), thus making the paper's content regarding West Philadelphia relevant and important to consider.

Additionally, the number of respondents who believe that they read about crime in West Philadelphia either daily or every other day (53.33%) exceeds the number of respondents who believe that they read about social or cultural events or restaurants in the neighborhood the same number of times (38.71%) by nearly 15 percent.

II. Cognitive Mapping Exercise

Figure 7: Results for Areas Respondents Labeled as “UNKNOWN” (Purple)

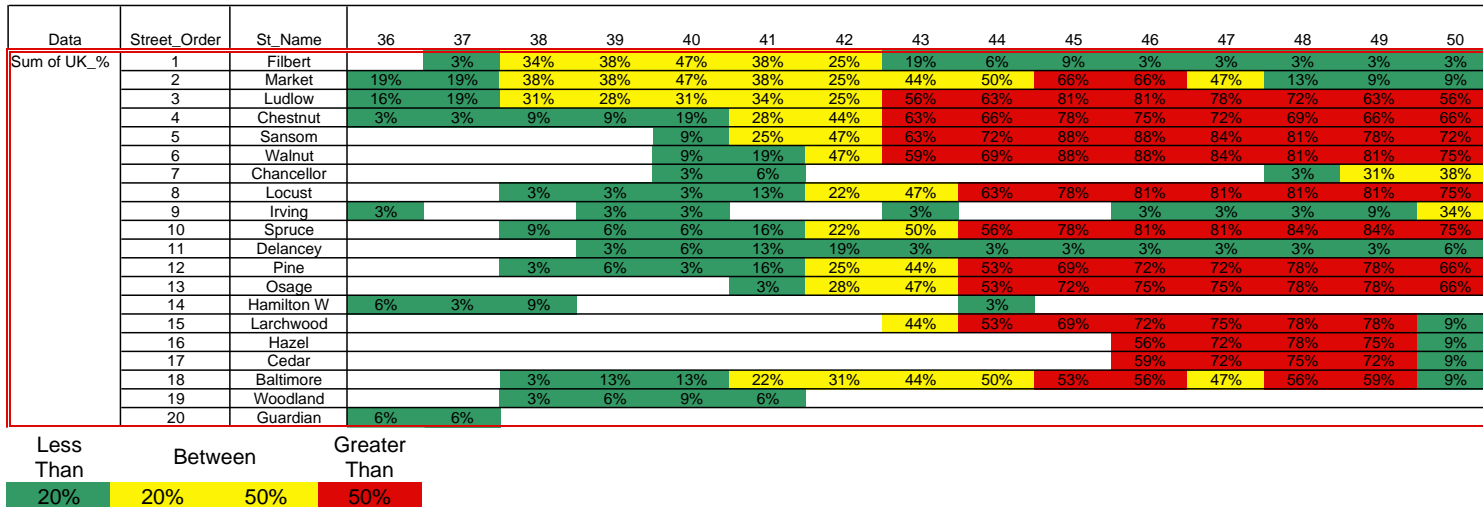
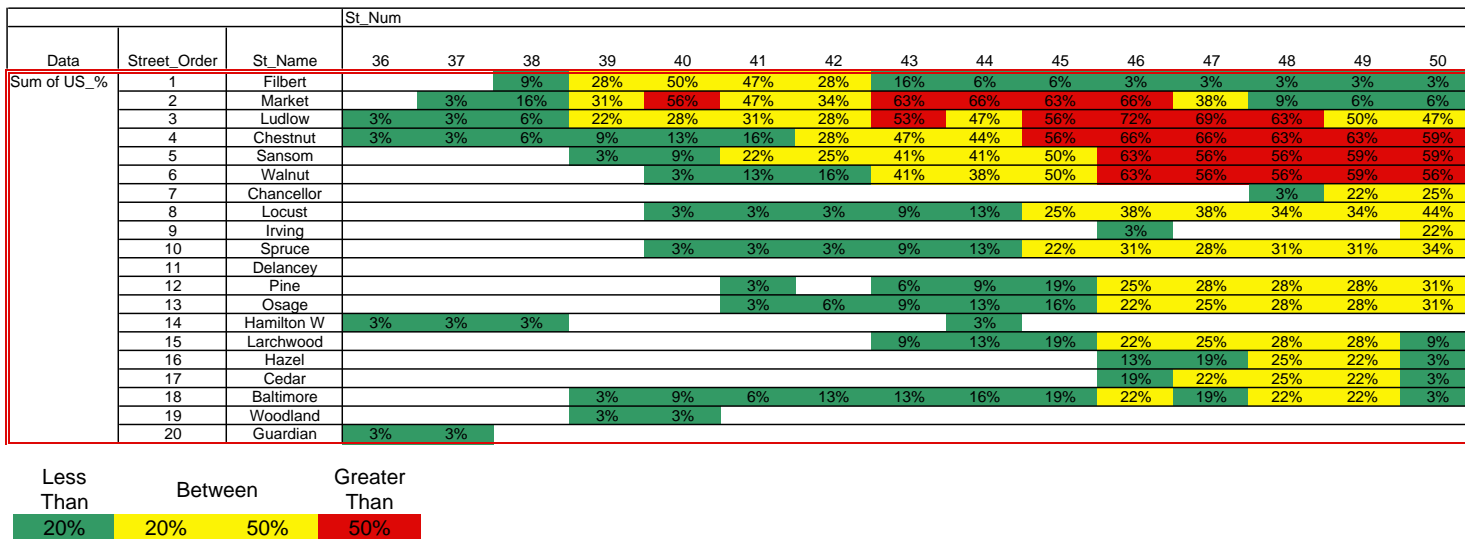


Figure 8: Results for Areas Respondents Labeled as “UNSAFE” (Black)



Data Analysis:

In my research, I attempted to answer the question of what walls—whether literal or figurative-- stand between Penn undergraduate students and West Philadelphia. After defining what walls remain standing, I planned to look at how these boundaries affect the nature of students' interactions with and perceptions of the neighborhood. Through my focus group data, I could compile some answers to these questions, which can be divided into four claims:

- 5.) There are physically definable walls between Penn students and West Philadelphia. Even though these are not literal walls of stone, Penn students can define specific physical boundaries between themselves and West Philadelphia.
- 6.) Students' perceptions about the neighborhood tend to create these physical boundaries more frequently than personal experiences do.
- 7.) The nature of the remaining walls leads to a specific type of relationship between Penn students and West Philadelphia—one that is based on community service and daytime activity over social and/or nighttime activity. This relationship is hierarchical in form and it involves a number of racial and class issues.
- 8.) These walls can be broken down by factors such as transportation options, aesthetics, and social and commercial activity, as these often change students' perceptions of West Philadelphia.

I will discuss each of these claims in greater depth, incorporating the data presented in the previous section and the qualitative results gathered from the focus group discussions (see appendices for the complete qualitative results for each claim).

Claim 1:

There are physically definable walls between Penn students and West Philadelphia. Even though these are not literal walls of stone, Penn students can define specific physical boundaries between Penn and West Philadelphia. In

discussing this claim, I will first define these walls as per respondents' cognitive maps and discussions. Then, I will talk about the changing nature of these walls, the sense of territory and ownership associated with them, and the ways in which they have been defined by campus security measures and the locations of Penn students' off-campus housing.

The walls that divide campus and community are, according to most respondents, somewhere between 41st and 45th Streets to the West, somewhere between Walnut and Chestnut Streets to the North, and at Baltimore Avenue to the South. These streets act as boundaries because respondents cite never having traveled past them and others say that they "would never" cross them (with variation in how each respondent defined the location of his or her "boundary").

These boundary lines for many respondents denote comfort and safety zones: many cite changes in emotion, safety, and alertness upon crossing these urban "walls." One respondent, in describing his emotions walking along Baltimore Avenue up to 47th Street in the written survey, wrote that he would "feel normal" until probably around 45th Street, after which point he would become more "aware" of his surroundings and "pay more attention" to who was near him. Another respondent, who defined her Western boundary at 50th Street-- much further West than most of the other respondents-- said that she would "turn around quickly" upon reaching this intersection because she felt in to be

“unsafe / scary.” Despite variety in individuals’ specific boundaries, the overwhelming majority of participants described a street or intersection in the neighborhood that acted as a wall of some sort for them—and crossing this “barrier” tended to cause some sort of change in emotion.

Although much of the discussion was centered on Western boundaries (perhaps influenced by the direction implied in my facilitating questions), many respondents cited more strongly defined boundaries North of campus than West. A few respondents found that “the prevalent fear” of Penn students “is misguided” Westward instead of Northward, and that “People think of an East/West divide when it’s really North/South.” There seemed to be debate as to the precise location of this Northern boundary, with quite a bit of discussion centering on whether Walnut Street was a boundary or a part of the “Penn bubble” of comfort-- while some found Walnut Street to be a “comfortable, busy corridor”, others found it to be “disturbing” and “torturous,” and not an area where they felt comfortable. Despite this contention, there seemed to be universal agreement that Market Street acted as a boundary line, past which they did not feel safe or comfortable. In reference to Market Street and the areas North of this corridor, respondents mentioned that “it gets bad”, it “can be pretty sketchy”, and that people began to be “huddled in the street” in a way that feels unsafe.

This sense of a Northern divide, while seemingly unanimous and also logical due to the fact that Mantua--one of the poorest and most blighted neighborhoods in the city--begins North of Market Street, was less prevalent and intuitive in the group discussion about boundaries than discussion of Western boundaries. While absent from group discussion and thus perhaps respondents’ active perceptions about the areas around

campus, this sense of a Northern divide is overwhelmingly supported by the cognitive mapping data. The areas that over 50 percent of respondents find to be unsafe are all from Walnut Street Northwards, and from 43rd Street Westwards. High concentrations of respondents (nearly 40 percent) found Locust to be the Northern dividing line for feeling “unsafe”, but here the Western boundary pushed back to 46th Street. Approximately 25-30 percent of respondents felt unsafe in certain intersections from Spruce Street Southwards, particularly West of 46th, and while these results are by no means negligible, it is still interesting to see that the majority of respondents’ feelings of danger are concentrated north.

These results are particularly interesting when compared with the areas respondents considered to be “unknown.” Here, the mapping data show a strong Western dividing line at 43rd Street, with very few North-South distinctions. 42nd Street, particularly from Chestnut to Walnut, also appears to be an overwhelmingly “unknown” area. Although in discussion, respondents cited safety issues for the creation of Western boundaries, they did not cite as many Western areas as unsafe as unknown on their maps. Perhaps these physical boundaries are, then, not lines of safety but rather lines of what is known and unknown.

This idea is reinforced by the areas labeled as “most useful”: the vast majority of these—in fact, all results above 13 percent—are from 36th to 40th Streets, meaning that very few respondents find the areas West of campus to be “useful”—whether for retail activity, socializing, academics, or otherwise. While usefulness may be linked to convenience and thus campus-oriented locations, it is important to note that the retail

options available in West Philadelphia, while mentioned by many respondents as good or enjoyable places to study or eat, are not seen as “useful.”

Although the range of individual boundary lines seems to be, as mentioned, somewhere between 41st and 42nd to the West and somewhere between Walnut and Market to the North (with the Southern boundary lines seldom mentioned, interestingly), there seems to be a general consensus among respondents that the Western boundary past which Penn students do not venture is 42nd Street. Respondents refer to “the 42nd Street rule”, which many of them mention being told during their freshman years. One respondent says that she was “warned numerous times not to go past 42nd Street because it was dangerous”, another mentions that she “would never walk past 42nd Street after dark”, and another says that “upon arriving at Penn, everything West of 42nd is black and purple,” referring to the colors in the mapping exercise used to denote “unsafe” and “unknown.” The fact that there was such a unanimous consensus that 42nd Street acted as a boundary line between Penn and West Philadelphia—an idea further strengthened by the fact that so many students had been warned against crossing it-- is important: first of all, it shows that despite differences in individual experiences with West Philadelphia, there is still an agreement on what the “general” Penn experience is and on where Penn students do and do not tend to spend time. Additionally, it makes me consider that perhaps my data is skewed: perhaps the range of boundary lines shows that my respondent sample spends more time West of this 42nd Street boundary than most Penn students do.

Whether this actually reflects skewed data or not, it definitely does show that while these boundary lines (both general and individual ones) are generally

acknowledged, they are not static like physical walls of stone would be. A number of respondents made reference to this notion, noting that “42nd Street,” as a dividing line or concept, is being pushed further West every year. One student mentioned that he did not see this as a positive shift westward, but rather links it to the idea of “University City” dominating over “West Philadelphia.” He says that the changing boundary lines signify the “displacement of West Philadelphia instead of [its] integration.” One respondent notes that the “42nd Street” wall is not a geographic boundary, but rather it is a dividing line that “extends to where big groups of Penn people are going to be” and “every year some people venture off more.” Whether this shifting Western boundary is indeed a sign of displacement or perhaps contrarily, of integration—whether it signifies positive change or negative phenomena, it is important to note that respondents agree that the line is shifting over time. This idea of fluidity seems to be supported by looking at the ways in which Penn’s “bubble” has expanded over the years, both thanks to physical developments and also greater neighborhood initiatives, such as mortgage lending programs and the founding of the Penn Alexander School, that have pulled Penn students and faculty further West.

In analyzing this notion of fluid boundaries, it becomes important to think about *what* these dividing lines, whether official or not, denote for Penn students. Already alluded to is the sense that these lines may signify changes in emotion or fear in a neighborhood. Also noted in the focus groups was a sense that, for a number of respondents, these boundary lines denote a sense of territory and ownership. This goes back to the idea raised by Jacobs of “turf systems”—that there are oftentimes dividing lines in cities that denote what areas belong to a particular “gang” or another. One

respondent mentioned the challenge that undefined and unofficial boundary lines pose in terms of denoting turfs:

“...With things as they are, when you walk West on Spruce Street, you aren’t entitled to anything. It’s hard to tell when you are no longer a Penn kid. When do you no longer own your territory because you’re a Penn kid? When do you no longer expect to be treated the way someone working on campus would be treating you? It’s an issue of ownership.”

Penn’s expansion into West Philadelphia, then, is important to students like this respondent because it makes clear the distinction between what is “owned” and what is “public.” This is a really interesting notion, especially in the open, unofficially territorialized urban environment that is West Philadelphia.

This notion of ownership is particularly interesting in reference to safety. Some students feel that the issue of safety makes it necessary to create and define physical boundaries on campus. In fact, one respondent went so far as to say that the campus would benefit from building physical walls around its perimeter:

“I see a boundary as a wall that can’t be crossed. When I got to Penn, I was surprised that it wasn’t a walled campus. To some extent, it should be walled—restricting entry. I was surprised when I saw an open campus, and assumed that meant it was safe. When I saw that it wasn’t safe, I didn’t get why we weren’t walling it off”

This statement, while quite a bit more extreme than most of the rest of the respondents, is important to take into account because it shows two important things: first, the idea that boundaries “can’t be crossed”, which is interesting when considering the described “fluid” boundaries between campus and community; and second, because it raises the issue that Penn has an obligation to make students feel and be safe—and that some students do not care about the nature of the measures that need to be taken to ensure this. Further supporting these ideas, a respondent in the same focus group mentioned that

when her mom had been a student at Penn, she had been a victim of attempted rape inside of the historic “Quad” residential development at 36th and Spruce Streets. The respondent noted that this was before Penn decided to wall off the Quad with security gates, CCTV cameras, and guards. She said further that although in theory she would not support the idea of walling the campus because of its social and political implications, her mom’s experience makes her believe that walls would likely be effective and would control crime.

Although Penn has not created physical walls around its campus to ensure safety to its students due to its well-supported belief that doing so would make security conditions worse both on and off campus, it has actually created some very clearly demarked security boundaries. I doubt it is a coincidence that what most respondents consider to be their boundary lines overlap entirely with the boundary lines of campus security: from 30th Street to 43rd Streets, from Baltimore Ave to Market Street. My sense of the importance of these official security lines can be supported by the fact that respondents seemed to be well aware of the way in which campus security defined the walls between campus and community, with one respondent even mentioning it explicitly: “The Penn bubble seems to be where Penn security stops: Baltimore to Market.”

Penn’s substantial investments in security are no joke—especially when one looks at the history of crime on and around Penn’s campus, the importance safety measures in retaining a student body (especially in the eyes of parents and alumni) become quite clear. One respondent raises this issue:

“We are paying \$40,000 per year. When we pay for something, we expect to get something of that quality in return. When we were at home, we were safe. Now

that we are paying so much, safety shouldn't change. That girl [Penn student] that got raped last week paid for the security force that didn't protect her. Our first priority should be the students and alumni, because they are the ones paying. The West Philly changes should be the 2nd priority.”

It is important to note, here, that in town-gown relations, universities' main constituencies are indeed—as mentioned by the respondent—their faculty, their students, and increasingly, their alumni and donors. Universities' development responses are thus those that meet the requirements such constituents have for the campus—what attracts good students and faculty and retains them and what donors will support.¹⁴⁶ This set of priorities reemphasizes the importance of safety initiatives, as a few respondents raised the importance of safety to their parents agreeing to let them come to Penn or to live off-campus. One respondent in particular talked about the fact that while she enjoys spending time West of campus, she then has to calm her mother's anxieties about safety in West Philadelphia: “My mother is always calling me saying ‘it's unsafe, it's unsafe.’ And I am always trying to convince her it's safe. So there are these two dueling things inside of me.”

The fact that security measures both makes students feel safer while at Penn and also makes parents and alumni more comfortable shows that Penn's heavy investment in security makes sense. That said, while respondents in all four focus groups mentioned that they feel safer and more secure where there are security guards “within earshot” or in sight, several also cited a degree of skepticism about the effectiveness and competence of the Penn security force, citing anecdotes about seeing guards falling asleep or talking on their cell phones instead of remaining alert. Additionally, while these security measures and visible police force make many students feel safer, as briefly mentioned previously,

¹⁴⁶ Perry and Wiewel, 5

these same measures also create physical and psychological boundaries between campus and community. These guards from such a wall because their ability to make students feel safe “within earshot” or “within sight,” contrastingly can also make some students feel more unsafe outside the zone of campus security—namely, West of 43rd Street. This assumption can be supported by the notion raised by a number of respondents, that perhaps the presence of these guards creates fear among students instead of preventing it: “Seeing guards makes me more aware of the danger. They make me feel like I should be afraid of something and make me feel paranoid. So there’s a feedback loop of a heightening sense of danger.”

The boundaries created by campus security also affect students’ choices of where to live, as students (and their parents) want to live where they feel safe. Respondents discussed this, with one respondent saying explicitly that “Safety has definitely been a part of choosing where I live”, and another saying “I know a lot of people whose parents won’t let them live off campus”, citing issues of safety as the reason. The location of Penn students’ off-campus housing then reflects their notion of boundaries, as students remain clustered in particular zones and thus create an expanded campus community within understood boundary lines. Respondents seem to have a sense of where this housing clustering is, and a few mentioned that this grouping occurs “out of convenience” or because students “want to live near their friends.” The “Penn bubble”, this, according to some respondents, is the extended campus “where people are living.”

Claim #2:

Students' perceptions of West Philadelphia contribute to the creation of these physical boundaries between campus and community. Additionally, these boundaries tend to be based on the unknown rather than in neighborhood realities or personal experiences. I found that these perceptions are most often of: crime and blight; a lack of options in terms of things to do, people to meet, and places to go; and finally, of distance. Additionally, I found that respondents form these perceptions in a variety of ways, the most notable of which are media exposure, personal background, the University and its physical planning, and a number of other sources that I will describe in greater detail.

I will begin by discussing the notion that students' perceptions about West Philadelphia create walls between themselves and the neighborhood. It became clear that these perceptions based on the unknown seemed to contribute more to negative feelings toward West Philadelphia than personal experiences. In other words, many students had strong negative sentiments regarding the neighborhoods bordering campus, oftentimes without ever having set foot in them. I tried to get at this idea with my question regarding reactions to walking on Baltimore Avenue up to 47th Street: I thought that respondents familiar with the corridor might have different responses to those who had never walked or dined there. This hypothesis seemed to be correct, as I soon found that respondents associated the area being "unknown" with feelings of negativity or perceptions of danger, rather than sentiments of curiosity or excitement. A number of respondents wrote that they had never been that far West before, and cited that this would probably make them feel "cautious", "nervous", "uneasy", "wary", "alert", "careful", "paranoid", or "scared".

Others made statements like “The immediate places around campus do not feel safe”, but then mentioned having spent little or no time in these places.

These responses led to a number of discussions about the connection between that which is unknown and that which is considered unsafe. Related discussion took place in every group-- sometimes organically and other times in response to my probing. Some respondents said that they considered everything “unknown” to also be “unsafe”, which made them hesitant to spend time in the areas West of campus with which they were unfamiliar: “I’m not sure if it’s a fear of West Philly [that makes me not go there] or a fear of the unknown.”

While many respondents made this connection between unknown areas and perceptions of danger, others mentioned that the “unknown” in and of itself was a strong enough factor to keep them from spending time West of campus: “If you don’t know what’s out there, you’re not gonna just wander around,” stated one student. Others noted that this association is not necessarily true. In support of this argument, one respondent mentioned that while the neighborhood directly surrounding the Drexel University campus tends to be unknown to most Penn students, she would guess that most would still feel safe there. Her implication here seemed to get at the fact that while many of the respondents in her focus group made general and theoretical points about the connection between what is unknown and unsafe, many other unspoken things had to be going on, because students do not feel unsafe in all the places with which they are unfamiliar.

This insinuation leads to my next point about the underlying racial and class issues underlying much of this discussion. First, it is important to take note of the number

of times that students unfamiliar with areas West of the “42nd Street boundary” mentioned feelings of “surprise” at how “nice” it is:

“[I was] Surprised how nice West Philly is on its center avenues...”

“I was warned numerous times not to go past 42nd Street because it was dangerous. Then the first time I went... I was surprised how nice it was and I loved it...”

A few respondents mentioned that they felt that Penn students’ perceptions of the blight and crime in West Philadelphia had their roots in misconceptions about the neighborhood. This point was made quite clear when one respondent described his sense that conditions of crime and blight tended to change rather suddenly, rather than gradually, in West Philadelphia: a student in the same focus group disagreed with this point, arguing that she happens to be quite familiar with the areas he cited, and “they’re not bad.” She argued that there are a number of false perceptions about what’s safe by those who do not know the area, and cited this as an example.

A number of respondents cited the precise moment at which their previous, negative notions had been challenged due to positive experiences. These experiences oftentimes included the initiative of another student familiar, usually familiar with the streets West of 42nd Street, to expose the other. One respondent, for example, mentioned never having walked past 41st and Spruce until his sophomore year, when a friend of his asked him to meet him at RX restaurant on 45th and Spruce Streets. He said that crossing this “boundary” really altered his notions about the nature of the neighborhood, and he began to become increasingly curious about and drawn to getting to know the area. Interestingly, this was not the only responded who cited his first experience with West

Philadelphia involving RX restaurant—a point on which I will expand a bit in my fourth claim.

While the general trend of participant answers tended to be that those who knew the neighborhood saw more positive attributes in West Philadelphia than those less familiar with the area, it would be inaccurate to depict the neighborhood West of campus as a uniformly exciting and attractive neighborhood. The students familiar with the areas West of campus did not cite exclusively positive experiences, though; rather, they tended to acknowledge the neighborhood as a complex and diverse one full of variations, both positive and negative—a sharp contrast to the uniformly negative descriptions common among those less familiar with it. One respondent talked about the fact that her limited experiences West of campus made her realize that while the neighborhood was more mixed than she had expected, her unfamiliarity with the area still held her back from being completely drawn to it: “I realized when walking to 47th Street [for the first time] that there is quite a diverse mix of sketchy to mix parts. There are many spots that seem nice but they are unfamiliar and I don’t know much about safety.” Another student who had become increasingly familiar with the neighborhood over the course of her years at Penn also discussed this mix:

“From when I was a freshman to now, I’ve grown to see the 10-block radius of West Philly around campus as a lot worse and a lot better than I thought. On the one hand, I see it as being less drastically dangerous or poor as I used to think, but I have also come to realize the amount of abysmal poverty that exists in West Philadelphia. I worked in the Mantua area recently, and freshman year I never would have expected to see conditions like that as close to Penn as they are.”

This point of view, held by most of the respondents who mentioned being familiar with the neighborhood, is further supported by the idea that West Philadelphia is not just “University City” in the way that Penn sometimes markets it (a point on which I will

elaborate soon). It is important to acknowledge the neighborhood's extensive diversity: while some neighborhoods are more or less middle-class, with a high proportion of home-owning families, sections like Mantua and nearby Southwest Philadelphia are among the poorest parts of the city.¹⁴⁷ Additionally, while some are thriving

It became clear, also, that these *perceptions* of crime were more important than its reality: while a number of respondents—perhaps even the majority—cited fear and perceptions of danger in and of the area West of 42nd Street, none had had personal experience with crime in this area. In fact, the only two respondents who did mention experience with incidents of personal assault (physical molestation and being followed), mentioned that these events had taken place within the area generally considered to be a part of the “Penn Bubble” (38th and Walnut and 39th and Chestnut, respectively¹⁴⁸). Both of these students mentioned that these incidents made them realize that they had skewed perceptions of what areas were safe. Another respondent raised a similar point: “I used to think that crime was geographically located. But after having many different friends being victims of violence right on campus, I think it’s less about location and more about street smarts...” Two male respondents further reinforced this point, stating that while, according to neighbors and newspapers, robberies take place directly outside of their homes (at 42nd and Pine and 43rd and Osage, respectively) fairly frequently, and neither of them has ever felt unsafe or had problems in the area. These points relate to Lynch’s point that our perception of the urban environment tends to be partial and mixed with other concerns.

¹⁴⁷ Hughes, 23

¹⁴⁸ While students considered these intersections to be a part of the “Penn bubble” anecdotally, it is important to note that both of these locations were commonly viewed as “unsafe” in the cognitive mapping exercises (see Figure 8 for more details.)

In addition to these perceptions of crime and blight in West Philadelphia, respondents discussed their perceptions that the neighborhood was “boring.” Several respondents (again, particularly those with less familiarity with the neighborhood) felt that the area West of campus lacked things to do, people to meet or hang out with, and places to go. This perception of boring and/or minimal options of people, places, and things West of 42nd Street held many students back from wanting to spend time in the neighborhood, in some cases more than perceptions of danger do:

“I’m not scared...the area is just a little unfamiliar as I have had no reason to go there-- no amenities I can’t get on campus draw me there.”

“[Penn students]... aren’t out there so it’s not that much fun... Penn students don’t go there so why would I go there?”

“I don’t go West... mostly because it doesn’t interest me.”

Many respondents with such perceptions wondered why students would look for restaurants and coffee shops in West Philadelphia when there was such a higher concentration of options in Center City: “I go out a lot more into Center City. There are some cute coffee shops [in West Philly]. But most of it’s pretty residential. There isn’t much to do. I go to Center City because it’s more tempting—there are more BYO [restaurants] there.” This statement further reflects the impression that West Philadelphia is an overwhelmingly residential—not commercial—neighborhood. While this perception of the residential nature of the neighborhood is largely true, as West Philadelphia has both retained its historically residential character and has yet to completely revive its aged commercial corridors, there are still a number of commercial amenities. These amenities tended to be viewed in high regard by the respondents familiar with them. One

student mentioned that while there are better eating alternatives West of 42nd Street, students opt out of them because they are “lazy and don’t eat well.”

Although there seemed to be some general agreement among those familiar with the area that high quality restaurant and café options did exist West of campus, the issue of convenience came up for a large array of respondents, including those who frequented West Philadelphia eating establishments. This perception of minimal amenities seemed to be emphasized by the fact that several respondents cited having limited time to spend off-campus: one respondent stated this point explicitly, saying that,

“The only reason I don’t go out there [to West Philadelphia] is because I don’t have free time ever, and when I do, I’m spending it conveniently, doing things to have fun, not just to go somewhere for the sake of going somewhere.”

This emphasizes the point that students’ perceptions of the neighborhood do not include commercial or social options, a belief that also seems to stem from unfamiliarity with the neighborhood rather than from negative personal experiences: not one respondent explicitly mentioned disliking the types of commercial establishments to which they had gone West of 42nd Street. The other important point here is the issue of convenience: a number of respondents cited the fact that they had “limited free time” as their reason for wanting to time in “convenient” locations. The desire to maximize convenience raises the next perception common among respondents: that of far distance.

First of all, during the focus group discussions it became clear how important the issue of distance is for students. Many respondents felt that 42nd Street was enormously far away, and that was the main factor holding them back from wanting to travel, dine, or live there:

“I’ve never walked that far by myself, so I’d feel uneasy traveling...alone...”

“...If it wasn’t so far from campus, I’d love to live there...”

Respondents reflected that distance was such pressing issue-- whether because of its connection to issues of convenience, safety, or personal laziness-- that they did not mind paying quite a bit more rent for off-campus housing that remained within the “Penn bubble”, East of 42nd Street. This can be seen in Figure 2, where it is clear that while the majority of respondents live off-campus after their freshman years, most live on the streets directly bordering campus—with most respondents living between 40th and 41st Streets and none living West of 44th Street. Respondents tended to agree that the housing stock in this zone is of a much lower quality and of a higher price range than that further West, but due to distance—and the accompanying factors of safety and convenience—they preferred to live within this “Penn bubble.” One respondent explained that her landlord on 39th and Delancey Streets charges exhorbant rent fees because of the block’s closeness to campus and due to the fact that campus security patrols directly in front. It is odd that 42nd street is considered far away when it is only 2 blocks from campus, when many of the same students think nothing of going much further to Center City for a meal and other events.

While all these issues of distance seemed to be pertinent to most respondents, a few others mentioned that this issue of distance dividing students from spending time in West Philadelphia is based mostly in perception—especially because physically and geographically this notion of far distance did not hold true:

“I think the comment “far” is interesting; it’s not far in the grand scheme of things. I think we warp distance in our mind. Things on campus feel closer. But [going West of 42nd] is a beautiful walk through a campus and [then] tree-lined streets. There’s a psychological aspect of the Penn bubble, with regard to distance.”

This notion that things West of campus seem farther away than they really are seemed pertinent to several respondents. A few began to mention “feeling bad” for not having been to “places that are so close” while having gotten to know neighborhoods such as Center City that, physically, are further away.

The mentioned perceptions of crime and blight, lack of interesting options, and long distance from West Philadelphia are particularly interesting and relevant because of the fact that so many respondents had such similar perceptions—both within the same focus group and also in distinct group discussions. This overlap makes it important to consider where these perceptions, which cause physical boundaries between Penn students and the neighborhood, come from. I found the most important influences to be the media, the respondent’s demographic background, and the University’s campus planning.

The first and most glaring influence on respondents’ perceptions of the neighborhood came from media sources—namely *The DP*. As can be seen in Figure 5, 62.5 percent of respondents cited *The DP* as a contributing factor to their knowledge and perceptions of West Philadelphia. The only category that ranked higher in forming these perceptions was “Friends and other Penn students,” at 82.25 percent. Additionally, Figure 6 shows that the majority of respondents (75 percent) read *The DP*. Although no question asked respondents to specify how often they read this newspaper, the next set of questions gauged students’ perceptions of what types of information they found in the media source. As reflected in Tables 2 and 3 of Figure 6, 13.87 percent more respondents believed that they could find daily articles in *The DP* about crime in West Philadelphia than about social cultural events.

The fact that respondents believe that media sources such as *The DP* have a sizable impact on their impressions of West Philadelphia is important. Samuel Hughes alludes to the notoriously negative impact of this publication on perceptions of Philadelphia. He describes a 1997 survey by a group of Wharton MBA students, which reflected that more than 40 percent of the 428 graduate students surveyed from several schools admitted that they “never” went past 40th Street, while another 24 percent said they didn’t go more than twice a year. Hughes believes that this suggests that some of the fear and negative perceptions come from the “shrill reporting of *The Daily Pennsylvanian* and the word-of-mouth of terrified fellow students,” a point which seems to be enormously supported by my data. Hughes interviews Dr. Lynn Lees, a professor of history, who then lived at 44th at Pine since 1974. According to Lees:

“One of the things I’m amused by is the difference between my perceptions and those of the *DP*... My perception is that the neighborhood is filled with ordinary people who raise children, who live in really nice houses with low mortgages. Their perception is that once you get past 40th Street, it’s an urban slum. It’s *not*. I do not wander around in fear of my life every time I walk out my door and to my office.”¹⁴⁹

Lees’ point not only shows the reputation of the school newspaper but it also raises the important issue of media’s potential for affecting the perceptions of an entire student body. Here it important to note Quillian and Page’s argument that stereotypes are most often reinforced by the media, because, to reiterate, “information consistent with a stereotype is more likely to be noticed and remembered than information that is not.” Considering the stereotype of West Philadelphia as a crime-ridden, blighted, black community, frequent articles about crime—or at least, the perception of frequent articles

¹⁴⁹ Hughes, 23-24

about crime—West of campus can have a sizable impact on student relationships with the neighborhood.

To the credit of *The DP*, the newspaper does not invent events or information at random: it is reporting unfortunate realities occurring in the neighborhood. These events, while infrequent, affect student perceptions of the neighborhood quite a bit. As Jacobs mentions, “It does not take many incidents of violence on a city street, or in a city district, to make people fear the streets.”¹⁵⁰ Respondents made a number of points that supported this point: they would cite one specific event as a sign of greater trends. The same month that the focus groups discussions took place, a number of crimes had occurred near campus—the first being a non-Penn-affiliated shooting at Cocobongo, a bar at 39th and Chestnut Streets, the second being the rape of a female undergraduate Penn student, and the final being an act of sexual exposure by a Penn security guard to a female undergraduate Penn student. Students thus made reference to these events when discussing their own personal thoughts on crime and West Philadelphia:

“...always hear [about] bad stuff happening on Chestnut...”

“I’m surprised to see that my friends’ Penn bubbles haven’t exactly enlarged since they’ve been at Penn. In fact, it seems that many have shrunk since the recent shootings at Cocobongo... many don’t think Chestnut or Market [Streets] are safe any more.”

These references are important because, as one student put it, “when there is one bad experience, it changes everything.” Whether respondents heard about these shootings through articles in *The DP* or through the emailed crime reports sent to the student body by the Division of Public Safety, the same point remains: media discussions on crime affect students’ greater neighborhood perceptions and can cause the formation of

¹⁵⁰ Jacobs, 38

psychological barriers between campus and community. Additionally, balancing these negative impressions and perceptions with positive news, such as stories about social, artistic, and cultural events, may prove to be ineffective because of Quillian and Pager's point about the power of stereotypes.

When considering the effects media can have on a student, particularly when considering the notion of stereotypes as reflected in the media, it is important to note that students' personal backgrounds factor in to their reactions to anything from newspaper articles to peers' words of caution. Demographic backgrounds, for example, can be very important here. While I did not manage to draw any links between respondents' demographic backgrounds and their written responses, largely because of my small sample size, respondents did discuss the importance of certain demographic factors in forming their impressions of and divisions from West Philadelphia. The demographic factor discussed at greatest length by respondents was the nature of students' hometown; namely, whether they came from urban or suburban backgrounds.

The urban-suburban divide in my sample was almost completely split down the middle with a slightly larger suburban population, with 50 percent of participants considering their hometowns to be "urban" and 56.25 percent "suburban." According to some respondents, this may have had some bearing on the diversity of my results. One respondent said that he felt that people from suburban backgrounds tended to be more "hesitant to walk around" in West Philadelphia and feel safe. He elaborated that he found these students to be "very paranoid" as compared to "urban people," who he believed "just have different capabilities in getting around in the urban context." To emphasize his point, this respondent told the group a story about a female, suburban friend who, when

coming to meet him at his apartment at 42nd and Pine Streets, would call ahead and ask him to meet her at 41st and Locust Streets. Another respondent in a different focus group told an even more extreme story to make a similar point about the importance of personal background in determining the nature of his or her relationship with West Philadelphia: she told the story of a male friend of hers, born and raised in a gated suburban community in Colombia who, upon finding out about the “dangers” of West Philadelphia, considered in all seriousness buying a gun to keep for safety measures in his off-campus apartment at 40th and Pine Streets. After recounting this anecdote, the respondent mentioned that, “For many, [Penn] is exposure to urban phenomena and fear for the first time. That’s a big difference, especially if you are used to driving [like in the suburbs].”

It is important to consider that the while media and personal demographic background are, as discussed, crucial to forming students’ perceptions of and relationship with West Philadelphia, these factors do not have to do much with Penn as an institution. *The DP*, while affiliated with Penn, is independently run by students. Additionally, while it can be argued that it is more sensationalist than many other publications, the newspaper suffers from similar restrictions and effects that other mainstream media publications do. Additionally, individuals’ demographic backgrounds and the stereotypes formed before coming to Penn cannot be screened or controlled by the University, and are thus institutionally unavoidable.

The third important factor affecting students’ perceptions, however, is more within the grasp of control of the University, as it is its own policies and its campus planning. Countless respondents mentioned Penn’s influence in forming boundaries of perceived unease or danger between students and the Western neighborhoods bordering

campus. One respondent cited Penn’s physical layout as an important contributing factor to this relationship of division: “I was thinking the other day about how the campus buildings tend to face away from West Philly, and Locust Walk is very self-contained. We don’t integrate physically.” In another focus group, a respondent made a related point, arguing that Penn’s physical self-containedness forms a part of the campus’s image and marketing technique: “Penn markets itself that way—as a campus that’s self-contained but is also a part of the city. At Penn you can do both...” This argument of the ability to both be a part of the city and also be a part of a campus is, indeed, a clear part of Penn’s marketing strategy. This can be seen in the second sentence of the introduction of the “Welcome” page of the Penn’s homepage for prospective students:

At the University of Pennsylvania, you'll find a historic, Ivy League school with highly selective admissions and a history of innovation in interdisciplinary education and scholarship. You'll also find a picturesque campus amidst a dynamic city and a world-class research institution.¹⁵¹

The missing link here is that while Penn markets itself for its integration in the city and even in the neighborhood from which it claims to have “demolished literal and figurative walls”, respondents have quite a different notion of the nature of this reality. One respondent argued that “institutions don’t like to associate themselves with the community,” and Penn’s interactions with West Philadelphia at present can be described as “Let’s make the most of this situation even though it’s not ideal.” The rest of the participants in this particular focus group agreed unanimously with this point. Participants blamed the university for the disconnect between campus and community, with one student arguing that “...[Penn] doesn’t make you feel connected to Philly or push you to explore the city.” The fact that so many respondents not only articulated a

¹⁵¹ <http://www.upenn.edu/about/welcome.php>

relationship of division between Penn and West Philadelphia but also deemed Penn the principal contributing factor to such a dynamic is of great importance—whether or not it happens to be true.

Claim #3:

This discussion of Penn's institutional role in creating or maintaining barriers between itself and West Philadelphia led me to realize my third claim: that **the nature of the remaining walls leads to a specific type of relationship between Penn students and West Philadelphia—one that is based on community service and daytime activity over social and/or nighttime activity. This relationship is hierarchical in form and a number of racial and class issues are involved.** This claim is likely the most important of the four, as it both addresses Penn's claims regarding a relationship in which the walls have been torn down, and also looks critically at the University's highly regarded community service-centered strategies.

The first part of this claim has to do with the fact that the current relationship between Penn students and West Philadelphia, whether viewed to be positive or negative -- as still having walls or having destroyed them, is one that favors community service and daytime activity over socializing and nighttime activity. As reflected in Figure 3, most respondents (65.63 percent) travel West of 42nd Street more than three times a month but less than daily. The nature of this activity overwhelmingly favors community service, though: in the tables in Figure 4, we can see that the majority of respondents are involved in some sort of community service (84.38 percent), usually either weekly (34.38 percent) or once every few months (21.88 percent). Additionally, although only 27 respondents (of 32) answered the second part of the question, the majority of them (70.37 percent) noted that their involvement and experience with community service was Penn-affiliated.

As discussed previously, Penn's focus on service, which became especially important under Rodin's presidency, had its roots in wanting to improve community relations and campus safety as much as in democratic ideals of cooperation and integration. This service-based relationship with West Philadelphia has been viewed as a success and is marketed extensively to a number of constituencies, ranging from prospective freshmen to community members to other universities. Some respondents even mentioned that this relationship was a "really big drawing point" when looking at colleges.

While these ideals regarding Penn's involvement in community service in West Philadelphia are positive, respondents seemed to be more critical of the real effects of Penn students engaging in community service activity West of campus. In fact, several respondents discussed the double-edged sort of service. On the one hand, this involvement exposed several respondents to the neighborhood in a positive way. One respondent in particular praised the positive aspects of this sort of activity:

"Community service really changed the way I see West Philly. I began tutoring as a freshman and I feel like my perspective has changed a lot since then. I no longer have the "white man's burden" feeling about community service—I see West Philly as a community. It's not perfect, but it's still a neighborhood with community. It really comes down to being respectful. The point is not to push more students into West Philly, but rather to have more people who care about the West Philly community *think* and be respectful."

This response highlights the positive aspects of community service and incorporates all of Penn's goals of breaking down barriers between town and gown through similar initiatives. Additionally, it raises a crucial point that, while a given, has not yet been mentioned: that of the need for *respect* in service interactions.

All that said, however, points like this respondent's tended to be significantly overshadowed by opposing views, which often reflected skepticism and criticism both of the purpose and the results of community service programs: "...Although community service is good and well-intentioned, we integrate ourselves in a condescending way—not as peers but as mentors..." This mention of the good intentions but resulting condescension in Penn's service interactions echoed in all of the focus group discussions. In fact, a number of those respondents who felt connected to and familiar with West Philadelphia actually felt put off by community service involvement because of the way in which they felt it cemented hierarchy into both individual interactions and more generally, town-gown relations: "I would feel strange tutoring in West Philadelphia. It feels at odds, living in the same community and doing service... you are inflating your Penn status." Community service, then, while an important part of Penn's strategy in breaking down barriers between town and gown, may actually do quite the opposite.

Despite the weaknesses and criticisms of Penn's community service initiatives, it is important to note that focusing on service-oriented activities, particularly educationally based ones such as tutoring, is the most natural thing for the University to do: these are fairly uncontroversial, marketable, and perhaps most importantly, safe activities to sponsor and encourage. In considering the importance of service as a step in ameliorating university-community relations, it is important to remember students' perceptions of danger, as previously discussed at length. Therefore, while Penn would like to maximize positive and mutually beneficial interactions between campus and community, its priority always includes taking students' security into account. The importance of daylight in students' comfort levels West of campus is of central importance to this discussion, as

community service and daytime neighborhood interactions seem to be the types of activities most supported by Penn.

The impact of time of day on students' feelings toward West Philadelphia cannot go unmentioned. While many respondents said they were comfortable in any part of the neighborhood by day, many said they would never (or would feel hesitant to) spend time there at night. This sentiment was quite widespread, as evidenced by the fact that eleven respondents out of thirty-two, in their written responses regarding the walk down Baltimore Avenue up to 47th Street, mentioned the fact that time of day impacted their perceptions. While some respondents just mentioned heightened awareness by night, others said that they would "never" cross certain neighborhood boundaries after dark. This connection between safety and time of day is not unique to the respondents of my focus groups or to Penn students in general, but rather play into the general theory behind fear.

Considering the connection between time of day and heightened and the political neutrality of community service, it makes a lot of sense that Penn would encourage daytime and service-oriented interactions between students and the neighborhoods West of campus. This encouragement, accompanied perhaps by organic factors, leads to the creation of a very specific type of relationship between students and West Philadelphia. As mentioned before, this relationship can be described as being paternalistic and hierarchical, as it puts Penn students in a position of authority over their West Philadelphia students or mentees. In considering where this structured relationship stems from and why it continues to divide students from West Philadelphia despite institutional

efforts to eliminate barriers, it becomes important to take note of the significant racial and class issues involved.

Although many students' perceptions about the neighborhood are based in part in realities about the neighborhood's blight, crime, poverty, and largely residential nature, there are also a number of racial and class issues involved. These are especially important to discuss, as they oftentimes remain unacknowledged or taboo-- especially in official, liberal university rhetoric.

The most glaring way in which the focus group discussions brought light to these issues had to do with the fact the expectation many respondents had that West Philadelphia be a poor, black neighborhood and become pleasantly surprised upon discovering increased racial and class diversity in its environs. One participant raised this point explicitly: "Moving Westward, I think that one of the reasons why people become surprised about what they see is because they don't expect to see white, middle class families in West Philadelphia." Additionally, several respondents raised these issues of race and class in their written responses to the question about their walk to 47th and Baltimore Avenues:

"[I'm] Always surprised how nice it is—well-established grad students and families..."

"There are some really beautiful West Philly residential areas, like around St. Marks Square, that are surprisingly nice and middle class bourgeois."

"I think people are surprised to see middle-class, white families [in West Philadelphia]. People imagine there to be just poor, black people."

These notions and expectations, and the surprise that follows upon getting to know the diverse and mixed realities of the neighborhood, are not necessarily negative and do not necessarily reflect underlying issues of race or class. Many of these arise from the fact

that West Philadelphia is indeed a majority black neighborhood and has historically been so—it is just that the neighborhoods encircling campus happen to be quite a bit more demographically and physically diverse. This area often referred to as “University City” has only been undergoing changes recently, though. Respondents discussed the importance of this distinction—as the “West Philly” with which most respondents are familiar is the gentrified area, whose development under the University City District came about largely due to Penn funding. A number of respondents mentioned the importance of distinguishing between “real”, non-gentrified West Philadelphia pockets and the other ones: “There’s a big transition going on from 40th to 50th. We can’t idealize West Philly—most of the neighborhood is lower in economic class and there is a lot more crime.”

Whether referring to the gentrified or ungentrified portions, however, the point remains that, as per the respondents, most Penn students have a specific, homogeneous perception of the neighborhood and it is that perception that holds them back from wanting to spend time West of campus. These notions about the neighborhood oftentimes relate, as mentioned, to racial and class differences between students and the mixed but historically poor, black neighborhood residents—factors which, according to respondents, can have the effect of making Penn students feel uncomfortable or out of place West of campus. While it would be nice to believe that undergraduate students at Penn do not have negative associations with a prominent black neighborhood presence, the overwhelmingly white respondent sample (over 81.25 percent) both explicitly and implicitly demonstrated that this was not the case.

Respondents mentioned the importance of racial elements in comfort levels and boundaries. The ability of racial and class differences to create a perception of being “out of place” is important to consider in the formation of psychological boundaries in the neighborhood. Respondents mentioned these feelings of “difference” in shaping their emotions: “Depending on what I’m wearing, I may feel out of place. The initial and last parts of the walk [down Baltimore Ave] are fine, but I feel in a different world for a couple of blocks (45th to 46th).” Another responded also alluded to this sense of standing out: “I feel really uncomfortable just walking 5 blocks away from campus. I feel like people look at me. I feel like a snob if I don’t. It’s the same feelings I had when I was living in East Jerusalem.” The notions of difference, likely tied to notions surrounding racial and class differences between Penn students and residents of West Philadelphia, cause levels of unease, fear, and division so strong that this respondent compared them to the dynamics of group division and exclusion in Israel.

The blatant sense of division relating to race and class issues among many respondents seemed to peak in a few comments related to the sense that creating physical walls around campus might actually be of benefit to the student body:

“If there was a fence, you would have to ask for permission to go to the other side. When we left, we would be visibly wealthier. With things as they are, when you walk West on Spruce Street, you aren’t entitled to anything. It’s hard to tell when you are no longer a Penn kid. When do you no longer own territory because you’re a Penn kid? When do you no longer expect to be treated the way someone working on campus would be treating you? It’s an issue of ownership.”

The physical between Penn and West Philadelphia, then, not only relate to issues of race and class, but also the accompanying sense of ownership—which not only feeds into the privilege surrounding Penn as an institution but also connects to the university’s middle

ground status between being a private institution but also a non-profit that should look after greater community good.¹⁵²

When we are talking about comfort zones, then, as one respondent said explicitly, “there [are] racial elements involved.” This idea is supported by an anecdote recounted by one participant, who mentioned that through her involvement in a West Philadelphia community service program, she began a mentor relationship with an eight-year old girl—her “Penn pal”—who she had walked home several times. Here it is interesting to note that the respondent felt much safer walking with this eight-year old than she would with someone from Penn. While this respondent claimed that this increased perception of safety had to do with the fact that the girl was “from West Philly” and therefore “knew where she was” better than a Penn student would, there most likely were some racial and/or class issues involved, contributing to her perception of safety. If not, rationally, the age difference between the respondent and the child would do away with any traditional feelings of protection.

Another interesting point relating to racial and class dynamics between Penn students and West Philadelphia had to do with the fact that respondents felt that places of mixing had more tension than places that were exclusively used or inhabited by Penn students or West Philadelphia residents. In one focus group, for example, one of the respondents noted that he feels a “great deal of tension on 40th Street”, the monumental location praised by Rodin and Penn today as an ideal center of mixing between town and gown. The other participants in this focus group unanimously agreed, and the discussion led to a general sense that this same tension also existed outside the liquor store on 40th and Market Streets, at the arcade on 40th and Spruce Streets, and at the Fresh Grocer

¹⁵² Strom, 122

grocery store at 40th and Walnut streets. Respondents mentioned that “even though there are cops in front of these places, one feels that they should feel unsafe.” Students described these locations as always having “a lot going on” and there being “lots of tension” in front of them.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is important to note that this sense of distinct racial and class backgrounds between Penn students and West Philadelphia residents contributes to a perception that there cannot be social interaction between the two groups. Respondents noted that differences between West Philadelphia residents and Penn students were clear: to reiterate a quote already mentioned in a different context, “When a non-Penn student is on campus, we notice—they get looked at. Maybe we should just stick to our own side.” One respondent cited community service in West Philadelphia as being a way for two groups to connect despite likely having different backgrounds: “We don’t have much to talk about at a bar with such different socioeconomic backgrounds.” This idea of not being able to socialize with someone from a different racial or class background culminated in one respondent’s point that he would “feel funny going to a bar on 50th Street with one of [his] buddies” because it would be him and his friend and then “a bunch of people from West Philly,” whom he does not “mix well with.” He said this would be different from going to a bar like the Continental, an upscale Steven Starr restaurant and lounge in Philadelphia’s Old City, because of how he can relate to people. “I can easily relate to a buncha white dudes at Continental.” As both the scenarios this respondent posed were hypothetical and neither of them was based in personal experience, it can be assumed that much of what he is saying relates to

perception and impression. Additionally, he quite explicitly states the way in which race and class would play into his impression of the respective bars in the two neighborhoods.

Respondents' discussions reflected these underlying issues of race and class sometimes more explicitly than others, but I was quite surprised at how honestly many respondents discussed these issues. Perhaps the taboo that surrounds these issues made me assume that students would not be so open to discuss them—particularly in a manner that reflected an aversion to interacting outside their own socioeconomic class.

Claim #4:

After considering the physical definitions of walls, understanding the perceptions that create them, and the types of relationships they create, it becomes important to then consider the ways in which these walls can be broken down. Based on the experiences of those respondents who seemed to have who have forged some sort of positive relationship with West Philadelphia, I found that there exist a few factors that break down these boundaries and often change students' perceptions of and relationship with the neighborhoods West of extended campus. These include: biking as a transportation option, nice aesthetics, and the strong presence of social and commercial activity. I will discuss each of these in greater depth, with the hopes of learning from the positive experiences of a handful of respondents.

I found first of all that transportation affects students' perceptions of and boundaries with West Philadelphia. Although respondents described walking as their predominant means of transportation and also as the best way to get to know a neighborhood in a "walkable" city such as Philadelphia, they also mentioned that safety became a bigger consideration when walking due to feeling more vulnerable. By merely changing their means of transportation from walking to biking, many respondents felt more safe and comfortable West of campus. While taxis, cars, and vans also seemed to impact respondents' comfort levels and perceptions of safety, students tended to agree that these modes of transportation did not allow them to get to know the neighborhood through which they drove, and therefore did not contribute to knocking down any sort of barriers. This point was supported by a handful of respondents who mentioned having traveled to West Philadelphia on vans fairly regularly for community service projects, but

who neither felt that they knew the area at all nor ever considered spending time West of campus for non-service-related activity. Not all respondents agreed with this point about driving: a couple of students felt that, on the contrary, driving around West Philadelphia would make them more prone to go out there.

While there existed some disagreement about the merits of driving, not a single respondent contradicted the notion that biking was a positive means of changing student perceptions about the neighborhood. One respondent, in reference to the way in which she colored her cognitive map, mentioned that she would definitely bike in the areas she had marked in black, while she would never want to “walk there or go to bars or interact with people” there. Another respondent spoke from personal experience, citing her bike as her predominant means of urban exploration: “I have a bike so I have explored more—I feel very safe and comfortable around Pine and Osage up to 47th. On Walnut and Chestnut I feel less safe.” Finally, another respondent noted in his written survey response to the walk along Baltimore Avenue in a crude but rather telling manner: “Fuck cars—I’m trying to bike here.” Students such as the mentioned respondents have thus overcome the boundaries between themselves and West Philadelphia by merely changing their method of transportation.

In addition to changes in perceived notions due to shifts in transit options, especially biking, respondents stressed the importance of the neighborhood’s esthetic factors in changing their notions about West Philadelphia. This claim relates directly to John Berger’s notions about the importance of the aesthetic in establishing our perceptions of and place in the outside world.¹⁵³ Many respondents cited the importance of the neighborhood’s greenery, beautiful Victorians, and well-maintained parks in

¹⁵³ Berger, 7-8

replacing their negative perceptions of a neighborhood ridden with crime and blight to a more attractive one. In fact, the overwhelming majority—if not all—of the respondents who discussed positive experiences in West Philadelphia cited these esthetic factors, particularly the area’s architecture and greenery, as draw factors. In the written survey question about the walk down Baltimore Avenue, several responses reflected this notion:

“I would feel exhilarated upon reaching 42nd and Locust, because I think the area is beautiful and open there...”

“Baltimore is a nice avenue so I look at the pretty houses and feel good as I walk.”

“I also really <3 the homes in West Philly, they are so beautiful.”

“... I like the feeling of walking past family homes through Osage or Pine.... The park [Clark Park] also makes me happy in a yay-green-things way.”

These aesthetic factors proved important not only in making certain parts of West Philadelphia more attractive and exciting to respondents, but also in altering their notions about neighborhood safety. This relates to the mentioned “broken windows” theory: physical signs of blight often signal greater issues of disarray or disorder. To the same token, signs of physical upkeep and a nice esthetic often signal a sense of community: “I feel unsafe on Sansom next to the beer distributor where it doesn’t feel like as much of a community. There the street is more desolate. I actually feel less safe immediately off-campus [than further out West], where it is more desolate and there is no sense of community.” These notions about the importance of aesthetic circulate back to Lynch’s points about the importance of the physical space in forming our complex perceptions about an urban area, and to Jacobs’ notion that edge areas of cities are often the most blighted.

Equally important to neighborhood aesthetic in altering previous notions was community commercial activity. Respondents who cited having spent time West of campus often cited specific commercial establishments, usually restaurants, bars, and cafés, as important draw factors in either getting to know the area or in changing previous perceptions. This point draws back to the point made earlier about the importance of RX in respondents crossing their boundaries. Penn students, according to respondents, tend to be drawn to different parts of the city due to restaurant options and social activity, so pulling Penn students West would have to incorporate these interests. “Penn students are all about spending their free time eating and drinking,” mentions one respondent, citing this as the reason why all the areas he knows in West Philadelphia have been through culinary exploration.

This exploration due to commercial presence around the neighborhood is particularly important because of the notion that enticing commercial options can make students feel comfortable, even in spite of the possibility of crime or previous notions about danger in the same area. One student made this point explicitly, mentioning that the places where he eats in West Philadelphia are not the places where he feels unsafe, but that this may very well be an arbitrary distinction.

While this commercial draw can be quite positive, it must be noted that the nature of the business matters; it needs to be the “right kind” of commercial activity for students to feel safer there. Students regard certain kinds of businesses, especially less community-oriented ones like liquor stores or bodegas, as unsafe. A handful of respondents referred to the Baltimore Avenue commercial corridor as “seedy” because of

the nature of the business of the street, particularly around 40th Street (where, it is important to note, there are no businesses to my knowledge, besides a small realtor).

Putting one's finger on what the "right kind" of commercial activity means is complex, and likely takes into account a number of racial and class issues. The issue is the amount of contradiction in what respondents consider to be ideal. While the Fresh Grocer grocery is regarded as a success in Rodin's developments, and is seen as a business that has broken down barriers both due to its location and clientele mix, respondents found it to be a place filled with "tension" and as a place where they felt unsafe. On the other hand, respondents only spoke highly of the Green Line café, though, despite it also being known for its mix of clientele and in spite of the fact that it is located several blocks further west. Commercial development, then, especially that with which Penn is involved, needs to be done with great care and consideration, as it often reinforces the very barriers it genuinely intends to break down.

Finally, in addition to commercial draw factors, respondents cited the importance of Penn-affiliated social activities in West Philadelphia in breaking down physical and psychological boundaries. While many students will not take the initiative to cross the barriers on their own, most of these agreed that they would not hold back from going somewhere where they knew they would find a Penn-centered activity. This seems to stem largely from the fact that many Penn students, according to respondents, tend to only leave campus for events organized by and for their "social scene":

"What draws me to places is my social scene and where my friends go. Part of my social scene hangs out more in West Philly and part of my social scene is more focused in Center City, so that affects where I know and where I go. Frats and sororities have their parties at bars in clubs in Center City, so that's why people are drawn out there."

This point's importance is two-fold: on the one hand, it makes it seem likely that barriers between Penn students and West Philadelphia could be torn down by merely organizing social activity, and on the other, it brings light to the fact that many Penn students may have a limited relationship with the city as a whole—prioritizing Penn-centered

Constraints:

While I managed to collect quite a bit of valuable data in my study that has allowed me to form a deep understanding of the topic at hand, it is important to discuss a few constraints to my analysis and data collection.

First, while I was able to collect a good amount of demographic data, there was one important element that I did not ask: respondents' social class. Due to the taboo of asking such a question, confounded by the fact that I knew almost all of the respondents, I decided not to include this question on the written survey. I therefore had to make the assumption that all of my respondents, for being Penn students, came from middle or upper-middle class backgrounds. This assumption may be false, thus skewing a number of assumptions I made about the class differences between respondents and many West Philadelphia residents.

Additionally, it is important to note that the fact that I knew most of my respondents may have constrained my data. The effects of this did not seem obvious, as I seemed to have gathered diverse and fairly honest results, but it is an important constraint to consider.

If I were to continue or re-do this study, I would have included quite a bit of crime statistics. I had intended to include statistics about changes in crime rates over the three phases discussed in the background section and also, more importantly, to understand the spatial distribution of crime in the mapping area. The data I did come across was not helpful and if I had had more time to do this study in greater depth, I think this would have strengthened a number of my points.

Finally, while I had enough respondents and focus groups to come up with some interesting data, it would have been really interesting to conduct this study over a longer span of time. With more participants and focus groups, I may have been able to come up with more demographic trends and more streamlined points as opposed to the more anecdotally-oriented ones included in this paper.

Conclusion:

In sum, while Penn claims to have knocked down many of the literal and figurative boundaries standing between campus and community, it has only started to scratch their surface. Despite the idealistic and often well-intentioned initiatives taken by the university in recent years, many of these—those related to community service, in particular—have only maintained or strengthened the still definable walls between town and gown. The boundaries that students sense between themselves and the surrounding neighborhoods, while based in a number of factors ranging from laziness to lack of interest, are quite often based in fear—of crime, of the unknown, and of interaction outside of the Penn bubble.

While I could take this paper as an opportunity to make recommendations to Penn as an institution as I had originally intended to do, I think it would be more valuable to make recommendations to Penn students as individuals. While my data showed a few institutional weaknesses, for the most part it just reflected that personal boundaries, personal perceptions, and racial or class backgrounds affected negative perceptions of and divisions from West Philadelphia. I do not think it makes sense for me to recommend that all students be more open-minded about West Philadelphia and make more of an effort to get to know unknown areas better in order to break false perceptions about the area (although making such a recommendation would make me quite happy); the neighborhood's positive and negative traits may not be of interest to everyone, and ultimately, interactions outside of one's immediate community come down to issues of personal taste and interests. My recommendation, instead is the following:

I think that it is important that students neither idealize nor demonize West Philadelphia, but rather see it as a diverse urban neighborhood. Additionally, students should become involved in activities West of campus that promote *mixing* as opposed to activities involving more hierarchical or paternalistic relationships that maintain class or race divisions. One respondent made this point quite well:

“We should recognize that West Philadelphia is a dangerous place. But many Penn kids, instead of putting ourselves in public places of mixing (like Clark Park), deal with this by turning inward and having an “us-versus-them”, Ivory Tower mentality.”

Whether in parks or restaurants, concerts or community meetings, bars or festivals, West of 42nd Street or in the “Penn bubble”, interactions in locations of mixing are important, as it will be in these sorts of exchanges that Penn students and West Philadelphia residents, as two participants in a human interaction in an urban space, will begin to break down the barriers between town and gown and will begin to reach the institution’s ideals of seamlessness. According to Penn rhetoric, this would ultimately lead to less crime and these interactions would benefit both campus and community equally.

Let’s just see if Penn sticks by its rhetoric.

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APPENDICES:

1. Notes from Focus Group Discussions: Organized by Claim

CLAIM #1: There are physically definable walls between Penn students and West Philadelphia.

SUBCLAIM 1: Even though there are not literal walls of stone dividing campus and community, Penn students can define physical boundaries between campus and community.

1a) *WHAT ARE THESE PHYSICAL WALLS / BOUNDARIES?* These “walls” are defined somewhere between 42 and 45 to the West, and somewhere between Walnut and Chestnut to the North. **[See data tables]**

- *Western boundary is somewhere between 41st and 45th for most respondents, and is as far West as 50th for the others. Many students have never been past this boundary and many others begin to feel much more uncomfortable past this “wall”*
 - One respondent said he had **never walked past 41st and Spruce** until his sophomore year. But when a friend took him past this “boundary”, he found it to be very beautiful and really liked it.”
 - “...moving down 42nd Street to Baltimore, I would feel normal until probably **around 45th**, when I would probably get more aware of my surroundings and who was near me—pay more attention.”
 - “I was walking at night by myself to meet friends on 48th and Baltimore. I remember **feeling very unsafe between 45th and 48th Streets**, until I got to a block where I saw more people walking.”
 - When I used to go jogging, **I would never cross 50th**—I used to turn around quickly because I felt it to be unsafe / scary.
- *Northern boundary is somewhere between Sansom and Market for most respondents—or Walnut, further West*
 - “...when I walked along **46/Walnut**, I found it to be torturous. My friend’s (a grad student) house was fine, but **the area was disturbing-** I found it strange that it should be so different on Walnut, a **mere couple of blocks away from really beautiful green residential areas.**”
 - “North and West of 42/ Market can be pretty sketchy.”
 - **“...up by Market it gets bad.”**
 - One respondent notes that there is a **huge division between Walnut and Market Streets**. She describes a **big jump from a comfortable, busy corridor (Walnut) to one where “people are huddled” in the street**. She mentions that Natalie’s (on Market St) is her favorite bar and nobody goes there, maybe because of the jump to Market.
 - “I feel safe West of campus—it’s as a cool, funky neighborhood. **I feel more unsafe Northwest—from Market over, like over by the liquor store. The prevalent fear is misguided.**”

- “People think of an E/W divide when it’s really N/S.”
- One respondent says he has “...a problem with Northwest part of West Philadelphia”, referring to the Market Street area.
- Another respondent describes his changing perceptions of Philadelphia as West and East into North and South. The fact that he lives North of Penn campus has influenced the way he has sought to explore into West Philadelphia.
- “My mother is always calling me saying “it’s unsafe it’s unsafe”. And I am always trying to convince her it is safe. So there are these two dueling things inside of me.”

1b) These walls are not static. The generally accepted Western boundary for students, which seems to be around 42nd Street, is pushed further West every few years. Some students associate this push with increased knowledge and experience, while others link it to gentrification.

- In the 1st focus group, one respondent mentions that there is someone who tells students the **“42nd Street Rule”** [referring to the boundary at 42nd Street past which students are not meant to cross] freshman year...
 - A respondent in another group noted that she also was **warned numerous times not to go past 42nd Street** because it was dangerous
 - “I would never walk 42nd after dark.”
 - “Upon arriving at Penn, everything West of 42nd is “black and purple” [referring to the color-coding used in the map exercise].”
- One respondent mentions that **“42nd Street’ is getting pushed further West every year.”** He links this to the idea of “University City” dominating over that of “West Philly”. It’s the **“...displacement of West Philadelphia instead of integration.”**
 - “The Penn bubble is not geographic—it extends to where big groups of Penn people are going to be. **Each year some people venture off more.”**
 - “The bubble has been there since Freshman year—it has just shifted.”

1d) These physical boundaries, although not officially defined, still denote a sense of territory and ownership for many Penn students.

- “When I moved to the States, I was surprised that people didn’t have fences in their backyards. In America, fences [seem to] mean “we hate you”. But **those of us that grew up with fences see it as “this is mine and this is yours”.**
- “...With things as they are, when you walk West on Spruce Street, you aren’t entitled to anything. **It’s hard to tell when you are no longer a Penn kid. When do you no longer own territory because you’re a Penn kid? When do you no longer expect to be treated the way someone working on campus would be treating you? It’s an issue of ownership.”**
- “Instead of physical walls, we have invisible fences and those reflect our mentalities and actions of division.”

1d) These physical boundaries are also defined by campus security measures:

- **Some students feel that, because of the issue of safety, there is a need to create physical boundaries on campus:**
 - “I see boundary as a wall that can’t be crossed. When I got to Penn, I was surprised that it wasn’t a walled campus. **To some extent, it should be walled**—restricting entry. I was surprised when I saw an open campus, and assumed that meant it was safe. **When I saw that it wasn’t safe, I didn’t get why we weren’t walling it off.**”
 - One respondent tells the group about the fact that when her Mom was a student at Penn, someone attempted to rape her in the **Quad**, before it was walled off. The respondent said further that even though she wouldn’t support the idea of walling campus in theory, her mom’s experience makes it seem like walling would probably be effective.

- **This issue of safety and campus security are important, especially when one looks at the history of crime on and around Penn campus. Safety measures are thus a top priority in retaining student body:**
 - “We are paying \$40,000 / year. When we pay for something, we expect to get something of that quality in return. When we were at home, we were safe. Now that we are paying so much, safety shouldn’t change. That girl that got raped last week paid for the security force that didn’t protect her. Our first priority should be the students and alumni, because they are the ones paying. The West Philly changes should be the 2nd priority.”

- **Although many feel safer due to the security measures (specifically the guards), these same measure also create a physical and psychological boundary between campus and community, as they can make some students feel less safe outside the zone of campus security**
 - **“The Penn bubble seems to be where Penn security stops: Baltimore – Market.”**
 - Several respondents in all the focus groups mention **that they feel safer where there are security guards**, meaning that they **feel less safe off-campus where there are no guards**
 - “I feel safer when I am within earshot of a security guard.”
 - “Seeing a security guard makes you feel a little safe.”
 - “...the very visible Penn Security guards make you feel secure in a tangible way.”
 - “...surveillance makes people feel safer...”
 - Not all students agree: there is some **skepticism** about the effectiveness / agenda of these guards
 - One respondent in the 2nd group notes that this security is not very effective: the security guard in his building fell asleep last night when she was supposed to be watching the door. He says

the guards are not all fully trained, so **perhaps this is a false sense of security.**

- “I don’t always feel safe because of the security guards. They’re girls my age. They’re kids my age. They’re there drinking their coffee, talking with their friends, joking around. They don’t have guns and they aren’t strong.”
- “I actually felt scared of a security guard that biked past me the other day. That shouldn’t happen.”
 - In response to this skepticism, one respondent says that **even if it’s false safety, Penn security measures let Penn kids move on with their daily lives** and not worry about crime. Also, their presence **prevents petty crime.**
- “Crimes that happen in West Philly are separate from what happens at Penn. I feel like the Penn police have an agenda.”
- **Idea that these guards are actually creating fear instead of preventing it**
 - “Maybe it’s those misconceptions [about the security provided by these guards] that are holding [students] back [from spending time off-campus]?”
 - “You’re already saying the area is dangerous by having a need for security guards.”
 - **“Seeing guards makes me more aware of the danger.** They make me feel like **I should be afraid of something and make me feel paranoid.** So there’s a feedback loop of a heightening sense of danger. It’s important to remember that most violence is intra-racial anyway—as Penn students we might get mugged but we probably won’t get shot.”

1c) The location of these boundaries can be seen spatially by the location of Penn students’ off-campus housing

[See data]

- One respondent notes that most **off-campus housing is clustered in certain areas, and people want to live near their friends.** Additionally, **students are willing to pay more \$ for convenience.**
- “Safety has definitely been a part of choosing where I live.”
- “If you can live on Irving or Spruce, by campus, why not just live there? [It’s] More convenient.”
- “I know a lot of people whose parents won’t let them live off campus. Also things just feel far off campus.”
- Another respondent defines the “Penn bubble” as extended campus, “where people are living.”

CLAIM #2: These walls are based in student perceptions about the neighborhood. These perceptions are influenced by a number of sources and factors.

SUBCLAIM 1: Students' Perceptions about the West Philadelphia create walls between themselves and the neighborhood

1a) Perceptions based on the unknown seem to contribute more to negative feelings toward West Philadelphia than personal experiences do

- **The “unknown” is associated with negative feelings and danger, rather than curiosity or excitement**

Describing reactions to the walk to 47/Baltimore:

“That it would be a **new place**, a little bit **wary, alert, careful**, maybe slightly **paranoid**. Curious.”

“... I’ve never been past **45th Street** though so the higher up I walked past 45h, the **more cautious** I might be or **more nervous**.”

“**Feeling scared** was probably a **factor of feeling alone in a street I didn’t know well at all**.”

“The section from 43rd and beyond on Baltimore would be **completely new territory for me, which would either be exciting**—to see a new part of Philly—**or a little scary** depending on the time of day and whether or not I had company.”

“**I’ve never walked that far by myself, so I’d feel uneasy** traveling an unknown route alone. I probably wouldn’t go by myself—It’s worth asking a friend or a security guard because I’d never forgive myself if something happened. Also, to be **traveling alone for 3-4 blocks in a new place at night would make me nervous**.”

Discussion:

- One respondent said that **everything she found dangerous was everything that she included to be unknown**.
- Another thinks people **don’t go there not just because they are scared but also because they don’t really know what it’s like**.
- “A lot of what you feel unsafe about is because you don’t know.”
- “I feel conflicted between what I don’t know and what feels unsafe.”
- “I’m not sure if it’s a fear of West Philly or a fear of the unknown.”
- “**The areas might be nice but I have never walked there. So I don’t know if it is safe or not**... I’m a small woman and I don’t unsafe but I feel safer on campus. So why not live where I feel more safe?”
- “I see a lot of overlap between purple and black, and it is difficult to know which direction the causality lies in- do we not explore because we are afraid,

or are we afraid because we do not explore? **Also, for some reason, people don't seem to associate nice residential areas with the unknown area West of Penn Campus.**"

- **"If you don't know what's out there, you're not gonna just wander around."**
- **Other respondents answer that this association between danger and the unknown is not necessarily true:**
 - Drexel area is unknown to one respondent but she still feels safe there. **There are more factors than just the unknown that make us feel unsafe.**
 - Another respondent says his unknown areas are *just unknown*, not unsafe
- **Those who have gotten to know the neighborhood seem to see its diversity and complexity, sometimes surprising to their previous notions**
 - One respondent said he had never walked past 41st and Spruce until his sophomore year. But **when a friend took him past this "boundary", he found it to be very beautiful and really liked it.**
 - "From when I was a freshman to now, I've grown to see the 10-block radius of **West Philly around campus as a lot worse and a lot better than I thought.** On the one hand, I see it as being less drastically dangerous or poor as I used to think, but I have also come to realize the amount of abysmal poverty that exists in West Philadelphia. I worked in the Mantua area recently, and freshman year I never would have expected to see conditions like that as close to Penn as they are."
 - "I realized when walking to 47th that **there is quite a diverse mix of sketchy to mixed parts.** There are many spots that seem nice but they are unfamiliar and I don't know much about safety."
 - **"Surprised how nice West Philly is** on its center avenues..."
 - "I was warned numerous times not to go past 42nd Street because it was dangerous. Then the first time I went, when I went to RX, **I was surprised at how nice it was and I loved it...**"
 - "Upon arriving at Penn, everything West of 42nd is black and purple. When discovering things west of Penn, things become immediately green, but then when there is one bad experience, it changes everything."
 - One respondent argues that "if areas in West Philly had a better connotation, people would be more willing to go out there."

1b) These perceptions are of: Crime and blight

Describing the walk to 47/Baltimore

"Slightly more cautious. Some "seedy establishment"..."

Discussion:

- **Many respondents feel unsafe in West Philadelphia**
 - "The immediate places around campus do not feel safe."

- Some respondents cited the fact that Western areas are less populated and emptier as making them feel less safe.
- **That said, not all respondents feel unsafe:**
 - One respondent says he always feels comfortable and safe in West Philadelphia
 - West is surprisingly residential, and that is part of people's
 - One respondent argues that he doesn't think there's a gradual transition in conditions in West Philadelphia—he says that physically on 1 block the change is significant and things begin to look bad, conditions drop. Another respondent disagrees with this point—she says she's familiar with these areas and they're not bad. She says **there are misconceptions about what's safe by those who don't know the area.**
- **Perception of crime seems to be more important than reality of crime. There is not necessarily a correlation between high crime and perceptions of lack of safety [BRING IN LIT REVIEW HERE]**
 - **Two respondents said they've heard people get robbed right outside of their houses but they never feel unsafe or have any problems.**
 - **Another respondent says she feels "invincible" even though she has heard disturbing stories of violence and crime in the area.**
 - "I used to think that crime was geographically located. But after having many different friends being victims of violence right on campus, I think it's less about location and more about street smarts. I just won't go into certain areas at certain times."

1c) These perceptions are also of: a lack of things to do, people to meet or hang out with, and places to go in West Philadelphia. This is emphasized by the limited time students have to spend "off campus"

Describing the walk to 47/Baltimore

"...On Baltimore past the park I would **feel bored** and probably get on the phone or walk quickly to reach my destination."

"I'm probably thinking that I haven't been out this far since by URBS110 field trip Sophomore year—I'm not scared, ...the area is just a little unfamiliar as I have had **no reason to go there (no amenities I can't get on campus draw me there).**"

Discussion:

- **Lack of Penn students makes the neighborhood uninteresting:**
 - One respondent argues that he doesn't venture out West of campus not because he deems them unsafe, but because **Penn students "...aren't out there so it's not that much fun...** Penn students don't go there so why would I go there?"

- Another respondent said that he selected a number of parts of campus as his favorite parts of West Philadelphia because he “sees people [he] likes there.”
- **Convenience of time, location, and options seems to be really important to many students.**
 - “The only reason I don’t go out there is because **I don’t have free time ever, and when I do, I’m spending it conveniently, doing things to have fun**, not just to go some where for the sake of going somewhere.”
 - “[There are] **Not enough destinations that draw me.**”
 - “I don’t go West of RX, mostly just because **it doesn’t interest me**”
 - “**We are completely self-sufficient** in the green zone of the Penn Bubble”
 - “I go a lot more into center city. **There are some cute coffee shops** [in West Philly]. **But most of it’s pretty residential. There isn’t much to do.** I go center city because it’s more tempting there are more BYOS there.”

1d) Finally, these perceptions are also of distance. West Philadelphia seems too far away for many Penn students

Describing the walk to 47/Baltimore

“My main feeling would probably be wondering **how far away this place is**, whether I was alone or with someone, day or night.”

“**I’ve never walked that far by myself**, so I’d feel uneasy traveling an unknown route alone...”

“I love this neighborhood, such a pretty neighborhood... **if it wasn’t so far from campus I’d love to live here...**”

Discussion:

- **Distance is such a big issue for students** (out of convenience, safety, laziness) that they are **willing to pay quite a bit more for convenient housing “off campus”** but still within the “Penn bubble”
 - One respondent explains that her landlord charges more for her house on Delancey because it is considered “on campus”, and campus security patrols there.
 - During one of the focus groups, there was a long discussion about how Penn students choose to go to convenient places over places with customer service. One of these respondents mentions that **although there are better eating alternatives farther away, people opt out of them because they are lazy and don’t eat well**. He goes on to say that “**it’s not just personal convenience that affects our choices, it’s just the way things are planned out on our campus...** When Penn parents or alumni come to campus, they don’t want really good, small ethnic restaurants.... They want to see the more grand places like Marathon Grill, even if the quality of these places is lower. “Even within the campus, I am constricted to the places close to my street.”

- “I also have limited free time so my time is generally spent in convenient locations.”
- One respondent notes that, “a lot of people at Penn have very miserable lives.” He elaborates that it’s not that they are a part of the Penn bubble, it’s just that “...we are forgetting that half of Penn really works all year and doesn’t explore or go out at all.”
- Another respondent mentions that “people are very busy” and wonders if we would explore more if we were here over the summer. Another respondent says yes—boredom overtakes people and they feel a need to get off campus. One respondent agrees and another disagrees with this last point.
 - In another focus group, one respondent says that “Boredom encourages me to explore off campus”. She likes the “feeling of escaping.”
- What holds me back from exploring further is a lack of people who want to explore. Also, laziness is a factor: I never would make a point of exploring West Philly- with so many other things going on, would never make the choice to actually just go explore West Philadelphia without any reason.”
 - “It’s really an issue of convenience-- the “Penn bubble” depends on how much time you have.”
- **Some think that distance is only a perception, not a reality:**
 - “I think the comment “far” is interesting; **it’s not far in the grand scheme of things, I think we warp distance in our mind. Things on campus feel closer.** But it’s a beautiful walk through a campus and tree-lined streets. **There’s a psychological aspect of the Penn bubble, with regard to distance.”**
 - “Most of us stay on campus all the time, which makes us feel like it’s less urban. I guess we like to feel a sense of ownership in a place—maybe that’s why we stick around. Now when I realize that I have never been to places that are so close, I feel bad.”

SUBCLAIM 2: These physical boundaries and the perceptions associated with them have been defined by: media, crime reports, other people, demographic factors, etc
[SHOW DATA HERE]

2a) Media / crime reports

- **Influence of knowledge of an event taints one’s image of a particular street (well defined by knowledge of a crime through the media)**
 - **“...when there is one bad experience, it changes everything.”**
 - “I am freaked out on and around campus right now because the rape that happened on campus happened on my block. The crime feels very close to home.”
 - **Impact of shootings at Cocobongo on student perceptions of Chestnut Street:**

- **“...always hear bad stuff happening on Chestnut”** (Cocobongo shooting, other shootings). Everyone in the 1st focus group agrees.
 - One respondent said she was surprised to see that her friends’ **Penn bubbles** haven’t exactly enlarged the longer they’ve been at Penn. In fact, it seems that many have **shrunk since the recent shootings at Cocobongo**. She claims that **many don’t think Chestnut or Market Streets are safe anymore**
 - Another respondent **agrees that the bubble has shrunk down to Chestnut since the shootings**—she notes that she was followed by the 7/11 at 38/Chestnut. She still walks there but she doesn’t like it and feels anxious.
 - One respondent says it seems to her that crimes that happen close to campus are more highly publicized—we don’t ever really hear about crimes deep in West Philly.
- 2b) Demographic background
- One respondent thinks that **people from the suburbs are more hesitant to walk around in West Philly and feel safe**. He thinks **they are very paranoid** and urban people just have different capabilities in getting around in the urban context. He tells the story about his friend who calls and asks him to come and meet them at 41st and Locust on their way to his apartment at 42/Pine.
 - Another respondent tells the group about a friend of hers who said that he wanted to get a gun in order to feel safer living off campus. She argues that **where you come from completely determines how you perceive the city**. “For many, this is exposure to urban phenomena and fear for the first time. That’s a big difference, especially if you are used to driving.”
- 2c) The University / campus planning
- “...Penn students are gonna stay within the boundaries because **we’ve been told to stay within the boundaries.**”
 - **“Maybe that’s Penn’s fault—it doesn’t make you feel connected to Philly or push you to explore the city.”**
 - “I was thinking the other day about how **the campus buildings tend to face away from West Philly**, and Locust Walk is very self-contained. **We don’t integrate physically.**”
 - **“Penn markets itself that way—as a campus that’s self-contained but is also a part of the city.** At Penn you can do both: you can be on College Green or you can go into the city.”
 - One respondent thinks that, “institutions don’t like to associate themselves with the community”. He thinks that Penn’s view of West Philly can be described as **“Let’s make the most out of this situation even though it’s not ideal”**. Another respondent agrees.

CLAIM #3: The nature of the remaining walls leads to a specific type of relationship between Penn students and West Philadelphia. This relationship is hierarchical in form.

SUBCLAIM 1: This is a relationship that favours community service and daytime activity more than socializing and nighttime activity.

[Responses about Baltimore Ave]

- **Time of day, gender, and being alone / in a group have a huge impact on peoples' feelings toward West Philadelphia:** While many respondents said they were comfortable in any part of the neighborhood by day, many said they would never (or would feel hesitant to) spend time there at night [**GET LITERATURE REVIEW TOO!**]
 - “During the day, I’d feel fine about walking all the way to 47th. However, at night I’d most likely walk with a friend or even take a cab. I don’t feel safe after 42nd and Baltimore.”
 - “I would be concerned with walking on Baltimore at night.”
 - “Day, alone or with a friend—comfortable, at ease probably up to 43rd. Past 43rd, slightly uncomfortable if there are fewer people around. Night, alone—I would not walk alone—paranoid, scared, nervous, out of place. Night, with a friend—still uncomfortable, prefer to cab but may walk anyways.”
 - “Night—I would want a friend and would probably be a bit anxious. I would keep looking around and stay alert. I would only be slightly more conscious during the day than I would be elsewhere.
 - “The beginning would obviously be very comfortable / familiar until 42nd and Pine. If it was daytime or if I was with a friend I wouldn’t think twice about anything. But alone at night, there are probably spots where I’d be more stressed out.”
 - “I would only go during the day—would NEVER walk there alone at night. If I were with a large group I would be okay with it, at night or during the day.
 - “It really depends what time of day and if I’m alone. Generally, I don’t like walking alone because it’s lonely but I’d probably be more aware at night because even though it’s not particularly dangerous, it’s stupid not to be aware late at night.”
 - “Night—I would want a friend and would probably be a bit anxious. I would keep looking around and stay alert. I would only be slightly more conscious during the day than I would be elsewhere.”
 - “It really depends what time of day and if I’m alone. Generally, I don’t like walking alone because it’s lonely but I’d probably be more aware at night because even though it’s not particularly dangerous, it’s stupid not to be aware late at night.
 - “...I would never walk 42nd after dark.
 - Everyone in the 2nd focus group except for 1 respondent say that the feeling of safety depends on whether its night or day.
 - One respondent notes that time of day is irrelevant: “No, I was followed on a Sunday at 11 o’clock.

Discussion

- “I’ve explored West Philly during the day all the way to the end. 60th street. But I’ve never explored at night.”
- “I have spent a lot of time in West Philly during the day, but I would *never* go past 42nd at night.”
- “You take a risk whenever you walk at night—you have to be aware in general, no matter the location.”
- “If you’re a female, you’re going to be worried about more phenomena than a guy would think about.”
- “I feel unsafe at night wherever I am—I was attacked at 39/Walnut, so location isn’t that important.”

Discussion

- **Double-edged sort of involvement in community service:**

- *It connects students to the non-Penn community and has had a positive impact for campus and community:*
 - **Have affected good community relations / less crime:**
 - “It’s just as important to look at how comfortable Penn kids are to go West as it is to look at West Philly people to go on campus. My uncle, dad, and mom all had issues of actual assault when they were at Penn. In terms of crime and levels of hostility, based anecdotally, that has particularly changed. Don’t think West Philly residents love Penn, but **there is definitely less hostility.**”
 - “Good campus-community relations are mutually beneficial. Building barriers is the opposite of what Penn is trying to do. In light of recent events, we want to feel safer.”
 - One respondent says that **Penn really markets its [community service-based] relationship with West Philly and actually this was a big drawing point for her.**
 - A respondent argues that **the mentor relationship is just a natural thing to focus on.** Most Penn students are involved in activities with schools in West Philly.
 - “**Community service really changed the way I see West Philly.** I began tutoring as a freshman and I feel like my perspective has changed a lot since then. I no longer have the “white man’s burden” feeling about community service—I see **West Philly as a community, it’s not perfect, but it’s still a neighborhood with community.** It really comes down to being respectful. The point is not to push more students into West Philly, but rather to have more people who care about the West Philly community *think* and be respectful.”
- *That said, it also creates a very specific type of relationship between some students and the neighborhood (condescension, paternalism)*

- “...although community service is good and well-intentioned, we integrate ourselves in a condescending way, not as peers but as mentors. On the other hand, maybe that is just a way for people to connect when they are from different socioeconomic environment.”
 - Another respondent mentions that Sadie Alexander School is a great model for integration, but that there is the issue of the catchment area.
 - “Penn students **decide when it’s convenient to have a relationship with West Philly.**”
 - “I would feel strange tutoring in West Philadelphia. **It feels at odds with living in the same community and doing service...** you are inflating your Penn status.”
 - “There’s a lot of heartache in West Philly.”
 - “It’s good to integrate yourself into the community, but the problem is that we, as students, are fleeting and temporary. Maybe a more effective use of our time [than community service] would be to form some sort of advocacy group.”
- Criticism that community service is a part of Penn’s rhetoric of priorities but isn’t actually (budget-wise)
- o “Look at the budgets for these [community service] clubs and you see that they aren’t the priority [for the university].”

SUBCLAIM 2: Although students’ perceptions of the neighborhood are based in part about realities about the neighborhood’s blight, crime, poverty, and largely residential nature, there are also a number of racial and class issues involved

* NEED TO GET CRIME STATS FOR THE DATA IN THIS SECTION

“Moving Westward, I think that one of the reasons why people become surprised about what they see is because they don’t expect to see white, middle class families in West Philadelphia” :

Describing the walk to 47/Baltimore

- “Interested, perplexed, but not scared. **Depending on what I’m wearing, I may feel out of place.** The initial and last parts of the walk are fine, but I feel in a different world for a couple of blocks (45th to 46th).
- **Always surprised how nice it is—well established, grad students and families.** I wouldn’t walk past 48th or 50th alone—changes very quickly. Also, at night I would stay away from Clark Park. I occasionally jog / walk the dog up there, so I am comfortable.
- “...I wonder about the people, especially the families, that live in the homes I pass.”

Discussion:

- “There are some really beautiful West Philly residential areas, like around St Marks Square, that are **surprisingly nice and middle class bourgeois.**”

- “I live at 42/Pine, which is at the tip of the “bubble”. **When friends come over, they are always surprised at how nice it is.**”
- Another respondent mentions that many Penn faculty and grad students live in the parts of West Philly that we are discussing, where many undergrads assume only non-Penn affiliated people live.
- I think people are surprised to see middle-class, white families. People imagine there to be just poor, black people.
- “I feel safe West of campus—it’s a **cool, funky neighborhood**. I feel more unsafe Northwest—from Market over, like over by the liquor store. The prevalent fear is misguided.”
- “Do people in West Philly even want us to be there?”
“It depends who.”
“I agree with [second respondent]. A lot of Penn students just feel entitled and are snobby. [Brings up example of the condescending relationship between Penn students and West Philadelphian workers at Metropolitan Bakery]”
- → Idea that the “West Philly” that most students get to know is the gentrified area. “Real” thus means non-gentrified, not associated with campus (???)
 - **“A lot of the West Philly we are referring to is the gentrified area, with middle-income families. We aren’t referring to “real” West Philly.”**
 - “There’s a big transition going on from 40th to 50th. We can’t idealize West Philly—most of the neighborhood is lower in economic class and there is a lot more crime.”
 - “I went to a concert at 69th Street, had to get out at 50th to take a bus. I started to realize that I had had a totally different image of West Philly. I always had imagined it to be a bizarre Fresh Prince world...”
- **“When we’re talking about comfort zones, there’s racial elements involved.”**
 - One respondent mentions that she had an 8-year-old “Penn Pal” who she had walked home several times. The respondent **felt much safer walking with this 8 year old than she would someone from Penn because she was from West Philly** and knew where she was.
 - “I just don’t see the point. I feel that I should go to West Philly because I feel guilty, not because I want to. **I feel really uncomfortable just walking 5 blocks away from campus. I feel like people look at me. I feel like a snob if I don’t.** It’s the same feelings I had when I was living in East Jerusalem.”
 - Trinity is a physically walled-off campus. If there was a fence, you would have to ask for permission to go to the other side. When we left, we would be visibly wealthier. With things as they are, when you walk West on Spruce Street, you aren’t entitled to anything. It’s hard to tell when you are no longer a Penn kid. When do you no longer own territory because you’re a Penn kid? When do you no longer expect to be treated the way someone working on campus would be treating you? It’s an issue of ownership.
 - **Tension / uncomfortable feelings at places of racial / class mixing:**
 - In one focus group, one of the respondents noted that he feels a **great deal of tension on 40th Street** and by the **arcade by Spruce**, and also

at **Fresh grocer**. Everyone in the group agrees. Another respondent adds that he feels this **same tension outside the liquor store**. Then another respondent adds that **“even though there are cops in front of these places, one feels they should feel unsafe.”** Respondents agree and say that there is **always “a lot going on” and “lots of tension”** in the mentioned places.

- “...There are two distinct West Philly communities, and one of those is a traditional community of people that feels stepped on by Penn. So there’s Penn baggage that you have to drop off when you go out there.”
 - One respondent notes she would definitely bike in the area she marked black [in the mapping exercise], though she **wouldn’t want to walk there or go to bars there, interact with people etc.**
 - **Religion as an important factor in determining comfort levels:**
 - “A friend of mine once said that 44th is “scary” because of the mosque that is there.”
 - “When I am on 44th and I get to see people in their normal Muslim attire, it actually makes me feel safe because I associate them with regular middle-class religious families that I trust.”
- “I prefer walking on empty streets than on streets with random people.”
- **Penn students feel they can relate less to people of different racial or socioeconomic backgrounds in social settings:**
- One respondent notes he **would “feel funny going to a bar on 50th street with one of [his] buddies” because it would be him and his buddy and then “a bunch of people from West Philly”** with whom he doesn’t “mix well with”. He says this would be different from “going with a buddy to a place like Continental” because of how he can relate to people. **“I can easily relate to a buncha white dudes at Continental.”**
 - One of the respondents cites community service in West Philadelphia as a way for people to connect when they are “from different socioeconomic environments”: **“We don’t have much to talk about at a bar with such different socioeconomic backgrounds.”**
 - **“When a non Penn student is on campus, we notice—they get looked at. Maybe we should just stick to our own side.”**
 - Two respondents in the second focus group agree that Penn students feel more comfortable “in the bubble.”
- “I’m always surprised at the stark racial divide. In just 2 blocks, there is the most drastic gradient on color lines.”

CLAIM #4: These walls are often broken down by factors such as transportation options, esthetics, and commercial activity.

SUBCLAIM 1: Transportation affects students' perceptions of and boundaries with West Philadelphia. Although walking is cited as a great way of getting to know the area, a number of respondents feel more safe and comfortable biking. Additionally, many students who have gotten to know the neighborhood have done so by biking.

Describing walk on Baltimore Ave:

"Fuck cars-- I'm trying to bike here."

Discussion:

- One respondent says people don't necessarily explore the areas on Spruce going West because it's an uphill walk. She notes **she would definitely bike in the area she marked black** [in the mapping exercise] though she wouldn't want to walk there or go to bars there, interact with people etc.
- "I have a bike so I have explored more—I feel very safe and comfortable around Pine / Osage up to 47th. On Walnut / Chestnut I feel less safe."
- "Living off campus is easier with a bike."

Although taxis, cars and vans may help students get places in West Philadelphia, they do not help students to get to know the neighborhood.

- **Culture of taking cabs and driving > walking:**
 - o One respondent says that, "in her social scene, **if anyone is going to walk more than 5-6 blocks they take a cab.**" She mentions that someone she knew took a cab to Mad for Mex. This, she says, prevents people from exploring areas and interacting with the neighborhood.
 - o Another respondent talks about a time she was going to meet a friend for a party at Millcreek Tavern on 42/Chester. While she was walking over, she all of a sudden psyched herself out because she didn't know where it was. She hailed a cab and when she told the driver the address, he said he would take her but that she should really walk because it was so close. She felt silly not having walked such a short distance, but felt much more comfortable.
 - o "For many, this is exposure to urban phenomena / fear for the first time. That's a big difference, especially if you are used to driving."
- Not all respondents agree. One says she thinks **more people would be prone to go out there if they drove out there first.**

SUBCLAIM 2: Esthetic factors (greenery, nice-looking houses, parks) seem to change students' perceptions of and boundaries with the neighborhood

Respondents who enjoy spending time in West Philadelphia cite esthetic factors, particularly about architecture and greenery, as strong draw factors:

Describing the walk on Baltimore:

“...**I like the feeling of walking past family homes** through Osage or Pine **in that same 42-43 area**. The park also makes me happy in a yay-green-things way.”

“... wish walking on Osage was faster because it **looks better** than B-more.”

“Some houses along Baltimore Avenue are grand, some in for states of repair—interesting walk.”

“I would feel exhilarated upon reaching 42nd and Locust, because I think the area is **beautiful and open** there...”

“Clark Park **pretty**. Baltimore 44th-46th → blah → there is a funny advertisement for calling cards on 46th and Baltimore that I like looking at. I arrived, yeah!!!”

“Baltimore is a **nice avenue** so I **look at the pretty houses and feel good** as I walk...”

“**I love this neighborhood, such a pretty neighborhood**... if it wasn’t so far from campus I’d love to live here...”

“I also **really <3 the homes in West Philly**, they are **so beautiful**.”

Discussion:

- One respondent mentions that, as his favorite areas, he has chosen several areas on campus and also some places off-campus where he can go on **nice walks**. He really likes walking Pine between 40th and 41st. He also likes walking on Baltimore but not the middle part.

These esthetic factors also affect students’ notions about safety (“broken windows”):

- In one of the focus groups, I asked respondents **what made them feel unsafe in the neighborhood. One responded that, “it’s purely esthetic.”**
- **Graffiti** makes one respondent feel really unsafe because it “shows disorder”. She says “that’s [disorder] the feeling that you get on Walnut”. She finds the “lack of interaction” on that street “bizarre and weird” and it “scares” her. She says that it “is definitely a cultural perception,” but it is how she feels.
- **Esthetic as an indicator of “community”:**
 - o “I feel unsafe on Sansom next to the beer distributor where it doesn’t feel like as much of a community. The street is more desolate. **I actually feel less safe immediately off campus, where it is more desolate** and there is no sense of community.”

SUBCLAIM 3: The presence of commercial establishments impacts student’s relationship with West Philadelphia. Those students who have spent time West of campus often cite

commercial establishments (restaurants, bars, cafes) as important and attractive draw factors.

Describing the walk on Baltimore:

“...42nd and Pine is one of my favorite blocks of Philadelphia.... I also want to pass **Greenline** [café] because it is a great place.”

“I love Baltimore Ave—the whole corridor is so vibrant.”

“...I wonder if there’s a **market** at Clark Park.”

“Yum **Green Line**, good chai. So many good-looking restaurants, I should come out here more.”

“I feel really happy walking past Green Line and Clark Park because I have fond memories of hanging out those places.”

Discussion:

- One respondent mentions that “**Penn kids are all about spending their free time eating and drinking**,” and that’s why all the places he knows in West Philly are through eating.
- “The Fuwah market at 47/Baltimore is where I center myself.”
- “Students spend most of their time studying... **maybe if there were more coffee shops, students would explore more in West Philly.**”
- “...the higher % of commercial areas in Center City are a much greater drawing factor for students to explore there.”
 - o One respondent says **the places in West Philly, on Baltimore Ave for example, need to advertise more.**
- Another respondent draws our attention to the importance of commercial activity in terms of socializing. She mentions that she sees 40th street as a center of transit, and that she sees as many people she knows (upperclassmen) on 40th street as when she’s on Locust walk.
- One respondent talks about how one time she made an active choice to run an errand in West Philly as opposed to downtown: “Even though 45th street is closer than much further downtown,” it was an active choice on her part to “explore” in West Philly and seek to run her errands there.
- Idea that exciting commercial options can make people feel comfortable in spite of possibility of crime / previous notions about safety

Discussion:

- “I was warned numerous times not to go past 42nd Street because it was dangerous. Then the **first time I went, when I went to RX** [restaurant], I was surprised at how nice it was and I loved it.”

- Another respondent mentions that **the places where he eats in West Philly are not places where he feels unsafe**, and wonders if this is just an arbitrary distinction.
- “I realized that the line past 42 Street in my head has me scared to go past 42. I actually changed it to 43rd because I love café Saigon and I go there twice a week.”
- Needs to be the “right kind” of commercial activity for students to feel safer there. Certain businesses are seen as unsafe (liquor stores, bodegas, etc)
- “[Baltimore Ave] Some “seedy” establishment. More interesting / diverse than the Penn area.”
- “...walking along Baltimore is **unpleasant because of the business of the street**, especially around 40th Street.”
- One respondent mentioned that she thinks places like Pizza Shops, and Bodegas feel much more unsafe because “people are sitting outside, drinking” and “exchanging money.”
- “The types of businesses that are around matter.”
- Some of the commercial activity sparked by Penn (Frogro, etc) actually makes students feel unsafe. Commercial development, even with the intention of breaking down barriers, often reinforces those very barriers (race, class, comfort).
 - o In one focus group, one of the respondents noted that he feels a **great deal of tension on 40th Street** and by the **arcade by Spruce**, and also at **Fresh grocer**. Everyone in the group agrees. Another respondent adds that he feels this **same tension outside the liquor store**. Then another respondent adds that **“even though there are cops in front of these places, one feels they should feel unsafe.”** Respondents agree and say that there is **always “a lot going on” and “lots of tension”** in the mentioned places.

SUBCLAIM 4: Penn-affiliated social activities in West Philadelphia are an important draw factor and can break down physical and psychological boundaries. Many respondents won’t take the initiative to “explore” but will go wherever a social activity is organized.

- One respondent mentions that, “people don’t just walk for the sake of walking anymore. They only venture out when somebody has a party or event organized.”
- Another respondent says she and her friends will go to something that someone else arranges, but they won’t arrange their own activities. **“If you organize things out there, people will come.”**
- A respondent notes that her sorority never plans events at West Philadelphia Institutions: “There is a mismatch between location decisions and one’s social scene and friends.”
 - o In another focus group, a similar point is made: **“What draws me to places is my social scene and where my friends go.** Part of my social scene hangs out

more in West Philly part of my social scene is more focused in Center City, so that affects where I know and where I go. Frats and sororities have their parties at bars in clubs in Center City, so that's why people are drawn out there."

- "A lot of going West is based in word of mouth."

CONCLUSIONS :

...It is important to note that while the idea of commercializing and promoting Penn-affiliated social activities sound quite a bit like gentrification, that is not what I am intending to imply. These mentioned factors seem to weigh in more heavily than factors such as community service that Penn emphasizes, as they promote a relationship of mixing as opposed to a more hierarchical, paternalistic relationship that maintains class / race divisions.

- **“We should recognize that West Philadelphia is a dangerous place. But many Penn kids, instead of putting ourselves in public spaces of mixing (like Clark Park), deal with this by turning inward and having an “us-versus-them”, Ivory Tower mentality.”**
- **“The point is not to push more students into West Philly, but rather to have more people who care about the West Philly community *think* and be respectful.”**

It is important to keep in mind that the options in West Philadelphia will not be attractive to everyone. But at least knowledge / exposure to them should be an option.

Interest in exploration is there:

- One respondent says that being a senior and knowing she won't be in Philly anymore, she wants to get to know the city before she leaves. She **regrets** not having gotten to know the city.
- **“Disappointed** that there is more purple [referring to mapping exercise's color coding] than anything else.”
- **“As a senior, I realize I should explore and I want to open my mind to West Philadelphia.** I feel as though I am more open-minded than many Penn students, but I still haven't explored for some reason. I feel a step ahead **but I haven't put my thoughts into action.**”
- **“It's not that large an area to explore and there is no reason why I shouldn't have.”**
- **“Most of us stay on campus all the time, which makes us feel like it's less urban. I guess we like to feel a sense of ownership in a place—maybe that's why we stick around. Now when I realize that I have never been to places that are so close, I feel bad.”**

Not everyone is interested:

- **“I don't feel like Philly is my city so I don't feel like getting that involved or invested in it.”**
- One respondent mentions that he wants to explore other parts of the city now that he is a senior and his time in Philadelphia is being pressed. He'd like to get to know Center City, Northern Liberties, but not West Philly.

Alli says when we are first introduced to the city, we are only encouraged to see Center City and Eastern parts of Philly. We've never been encouraged to see the greater West Philly area. She thinks these things perpetuate the Penn bubble.

Josh notes that the improvement has been recent.

Carine: I don't know of a single person West of campus. We expect them to accept us even though we don't make any effort and don't even give them a chance.

It's a matter of personal taste:

- "I think **it all comes down to personal taste**. When it comes down to it some Penn kids aren't into what west Philly has to offer. I was really turned off by anti West Philadelphia mindset and culture, so I decided to explore for myself. There are two distinct West Philly communities, and one of those is a traditional community of people that feels stepped on by Penn. So **there's Penn baggage that you have to drop off when you go out there.**"

2. Sample Focus Group Survey

PART I: Map exercise

- 1.) Take a minute to look at the map and orient your self.
- 2.) Please mark with an **asterisk** the *place you live currently*.
- 3.) Next, please mark with a **large black dot** all the locations of *restaurants, bars, and cafes* that you have been to *in the past month*. Please write the names of these places below:

- 4.) Suppose you are walking from your house / apartment to meet a friend on Baltimore Avenue, between 46th and 47th streets.

- Please **mark with a dotted line** the route that you would take
- Do you have any **particular emotional feelings** about various parts of your trip?
Please describe them (you can list words and/or use complete sentences):

- 5.) Now we are going to do a coloring exercise. I am going to give each of you 4 crayons. I would like you to use these to color in your map, using the following color coding:

Green: The areas that you find to be *your favorite*

Blue: The areas you find to be the *most useful*

Purple: The areas *least known* to you

Black: The areas you find to be *least safe*

[You may use more than one color in a particular zone if need be.]

- 6.) Many people refer to there being a “Penn bubble”. Please mark **with a highlighter** what you think **the perimeter of this “bubble” is for most Penn undergraduates**.

PART II: Survey

1.) What year are you?

Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

2.) Where have you lived since you started studying at Penn?

<i>Example:</i>	Street intersection <i>39 / Pine St.</i>	Is this on- or off-campus housing? <i>Off</i>
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Freshman:

Sophomore:

Junior:

Senior:

Other
(summers, etc):

3.) In a typical month, how often do you travel West of 42nd?

4.) What sorts of activities have you ever participated in **West of 42nd**? Please indicate how frequently you take part in each of these by circling your response.

1. Academic / community service

(Class tour, tutoring, community service, other)

More than once a week	Weekly	Monthly	Once every few months	Once a year	n/a
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→ Were these activities Penn-affiliated events / programs?

Yes	No	I have participated in both Penn-affiliated and non-Penn affiliated programs and events
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2. Professional (internship / job)

More than once a week	Weekly	Monthly	Once every few months	Once a year	n/a
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→ Were these activities Penn-affiliated events / programs?

Yes	No	I have participated in both Penn-affiliated and non-Penn affiliated programs and events
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3. Social (visiting friends/family)

More than once a week	Weekly	Monthly	Once every few months	Once a year	n/a
-----------------------	--------	---------	-----------------------	-------------	-----

→ Were these friends / family Penn-affiliated?

Yes	No	I have visited both Penn-affiliated and non-Penn affiliated friends and family
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4. Consumer (shopping, dining, nightlife)

More than once a week	Weekly	Monthly	Once every few months	Once a year	n/a
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5. Other (SPECIFY:)

More than once a week	Weekly	Monthly	Once every few months	Once a year	n/a
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→ Were these activities Penn-affiliated events / programs?

Yes	No	I have participated in both Penn-affiliated and non-Penn affiliated programs and events
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7.) What sources contribute to your knowledge and perceptions of West Philadelphia?
(Circle all that apply)

Pre-freshman tour	Freshman orientation / NSO	Daily Pennsylvanian / DP	Philadelphia Inquirer
Friends / other Penn students	Parents	Penn alums	Other <i>Specify:</i>

8.) Do you read the DP?

Yes No

If yes:

- In a typical month, how often would you guess you read about crime in West Philly?

- In a typical month, how often would you guess you read about social or cultural events / restaurants in West Philly?

Please answer the following general background questions:

5.) Gender:

M F

6.) Race / ethnicity (check all that apply):

White / Caucasian	Black / African American	Latino / Hispanic	Asian / South Asian	Other. Specify:
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7.) How would you describe the city you grew up in?

Urban Suburban Rural Other

8.) Where did you grow up?

USA Abroad

9.) Did you grow up in Philadelphia?

Yes No

PART III: Group Discussion

[JUST FOR FACILITATING PURPOSES]

- 1.) *First, have everyone show their maps to each other... See what conversation comes about naturally and use the questions below to guide conversation. In bold are topics that I would really like to address at some point in the discussion.*
- 2.) Do you think your map/s are similar to or different from what other Penn undergraduates would mark on their maps?
- 3.) Let's talk a bit about each area that you colored in.
 - a. **Green**
 - i. Why are these places your favorite?
 - ii. What kind of places do you go to in this zone (restaurants? Cafes? Bars? Houses? Apartments? Parks? Open spaces? Classes? Extracurricular activities? Study spots?)
 - b. **Blue**
 - i. Why do you go to these places the most often?
 - ii. What kind of places do you go to in this zone?
 1. Restaurants? Cafes? Bars? Houses? Apartments? Parks? Open spaces? Classes? Extracurricular activities? Study spots?
 - c. **Purple**
 - i. **What do you imagine these unknown places to be like?**
 - ii. **What contributes to your not traveling to / knowing these places?**
 1. Fear? Nothing there? Laziness? Lack of Penn people? Never thought to? Don't want to?
 - d. **Black**
 - i. Describe how you feel in these places: **unsafe vs. uncomfortable**
 - ii. **What makes these places seem unsafe safe to you?**
 1. Crime (knowledge of / perception of)?
 2. Poverty (knowledge of / perception of)?
 3. Lack of security / police (Penn or otherwise)?
 - iii. Do these places seem more / less safe at **night / during the day?**
 - iv. Do these places seem more / less safe:
 1. **Alone?**
 2. With a **friend?**
 3. With a **group?**
 4. Does it matter who you're with?
 - a. **Female / Male?**
 - b. **Black /White?**

- v. What sort of safety precautions (if any) do / would you take in the zones you marked in black?
 - 1. 898walk/ride, walking with a group/friend, other
 - 2. Do you take these same precautions in purple/ green / blue?

 - 4.) **What was your image of West Philly before you came to Penn?**
 - a. **How has this changed / remained the same?**

 - 5.) **What inspired your interest in exploring West of campus or contrarily, what has held you back?**
 - a. Not interested
 - i. I feel unsafe / I feel like there aren't things to do / I don't find it to be an exciting neighborhood / I don't know much about the neighborhood / It is too far away/ Other:
 - b. Interested. But:
 - i. Haven't had the chance / my friends aren't interested / Lack of knowledge/ Too far / Other

 - 6.) **What does the term "Penn bubble" mean?**
 - a. **Do you think such a bubble exists? How is it defined? What boundaries form this bubble (physical, psychological, racial)?**

 - b. **How do you feel about places *inside vs outside* this "bubble"?**
 - i. **What makes the places *in* the bubble comfortable to Penn students?**
 - ii. **What makes the places *outside* the bubble uncomfortable to Penn students?**
-