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Redefining Access to Public Space: Community Relations in a New Immigrant Setting

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Redefining Access to Public Space: Community Relations in a New Immigrant Setting

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Sociology

by

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Abstract

This article examines how and to what extent charging an entrance fee at a public recreational space in a new immigrant setting affects the participation of Latino and migrant population groups at The Jones Center for Families (JCF) in Springdale, Arkansas. This study also documents how participants respond to the entrance fee system by looking at their available options to spend leisure time when living in an area with limited financial resources and recreational facilities. Using qualitative data collected in Northwest Arkansas (NWA), this study looks at how the transformation of JCF from a public to quasi-public space redefines relations between the recreation center and the community it serves.

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Redefining Access to Public Space: Community Relations in a New Immigrant Setting

Aaron Arredondo and Juan José Bustamante

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Introduction

A new wave of Latino immigrants arrived in Northwest Arkansas (NWA) during the early 1990s, attracted by work in the poultry industry as well as the quality of life in a rural setting (Schoenholtz 2005:213-214). Prior to the Latino migration of the mid-1990s, NWA had been predominantly homogenous white (Census 1990). The demographic shift that came along with Latino and other migrant populations (e.g., Marshallese) in NWA prompts attention particularly to the issues of race and class, as well as space. Actually, after an extensive analysis of the work on race across multiple journals, Brunnsma, Embrick and Nanney (2015) have announced in the first issue of *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* a necessary direction to be taken in the field and it begins with the realities of race, space, and integration/inclusion (p.205). Also, as Bonilla-Silva (2015) suggests, there remains a gap in sociological research that has recently been addressed about the importance of thoroughly investigating the nuances of how race shapes space (p.80).

Race has remained a category used to stratify people on the basis of real and imagined attributes (Omi and Winant 2015) that factor into the reproduction of racial domination (Desmond and Emirbayer 2009) and the maintenance of the racial order (Bonilla-Silva 2015). In NWA, racial integration and inclusion was not a relevant issue in an area that had virtually no racial minority population. According to Loewen (2005), NWA remained homogeneously white through legally enforced restrictions that allowed for the overt exclusion of Arkansas's blacks through the constitution of "sundown towns," where blacks had to leave the area by sunset. These restrictions were not relaxed until the 1990s, or at least by the 2000 census where it showed a slight increase in the racial minority population in NWA (Loewen 2005:935). Today, the growing presence of Latinos and other migrant groups in NWA provides a new setting for

race relations to take form as institutional practices, such as those found in public spaces, shape these interactions. In regard to class, it affects the life chances of people (Weber [1925] 1978:193) situated within an economic order that either restrains or facilitates access to scarce resources (Massey 2008; Tilly 1998). Also, space, as an organizing principle of society, affects to a certain extent the opportunities of people for integration and inclusion (Crossa 2012; Mitchell 2003; Sandler 2007). In this study, space is of particular importance for leisure and community development, a process involving Latino and migrant group integration in a new destination.

The research setting, The Jones Center for Families (JCF) allows an assessment of the effects their fee system, implemented in 2008 (Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette 2012), has on racial minorities in a new immigrant setting in terms of access to public space. Outlining the relationship between people and space, this study examines the direct and indirect effects of the fee system from three main angles. First, by looking at race as a larger social structure, it frames how racial minorities have remained systematically excluded from accessing scarce recreational and community resources found in public spaces. This study takes into account how racial minorities respond to the constraining social force that is their racial categorization. A brief overview of class-based dynamics is then considered as a means to outline how financial restraints are precluding access to scarce resources readily available to middle-class whites. Last, this study makes an assessment of how racial minorities become engaged and/or disengaged in activities at JCF by looking at their available recreational options.

A theoretical framework that situates structure and agency as mutually shaped forces is used for understanding the significance of race, class, and space in redefining access to JCF. This approach focuses on the ways that racial minorities and low-income groups are affected by the

restraining properties of the larger social structure while responding to its enabling feature; their potential for human action. Furthermore, unlike previous scholarship on race and space, (see Anderson 2012:22; Calmore 1995; Lipsitz 2007) this study is significant because it develops an account of racial inclusion and exclusion in public spaces in a historically white setting. It also adds another dimension to the mutual development of race and space by looking at how JCF has transformed into a “whitespace” (see Anderson 2012:22) while emplaced in a brown residential area. Moreover, the particularity of access to public space in a new setting is important to study because it can provide new insights into the dynamics of racialized spaces (see Calmore 1995; Lipsitz 2007) as they are being shaped by the recent arrival of Latino and migrant groups across the South.

In order to document these processes, this research study uses data gathered between Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 primarily at JCF along with other public parks and recreation in Springdale that are intended as alternative spaces of inclusion and exclusion. Participant observation and a visual ethnography were conducted along with 14 in-depth interviews with Latino, Marshallese, and whites with a low-income background to assess the transformation of JCF from a public to quasi-public space. Former and current administrators of JCF were also included in the interviews for their insights as key informants of the research setting.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Giddens (1984) conceives of social theory as fundamentally divided between agent and structure-centered approaches to social inquiry. The former focuses on the individual’s motivations and intentions as the human agency that shapes society. The latter considers how social processes help explain individual and social life. The mutual relationship between society

and individuals suggests that the constraining and enabling properties of the social structure shape individual choice and social interaction, and in turn, human agency creates, maintains, or modifies the current structure (Giddens 1984:25). Adapting Giddens's theoretical model, race is considered a social construction that has awarded meaning to certain phenotypic characteristics that are linked to systems of dominance, subordination, exploitation and resistance (Bonilla-Silva 2001; Omi and Winant 2015). In addition to the organizing principles of race, class shapes access to multiple resources and positions of power for different groups (Weber [1925] 1978) as it shapes interaction between those groups (Wright 1997). Similarly, according to Löw (2008), space as a material base, can either facilitate or restrain interaction between people. As Crossa (2012) and Mitchell (2003) suggest, space, in some ways, can draw attention to how people respond, contest, and challenge its constraining features.

As a matter of synthesis, sociologists have done an excellent job in mutually developing race and class dynamics as organizing principles of society (e.g., Cox 1948; Mills 1997; Wilson 1987), and in how class shapes space (Harvey 1982; Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1989). However, Bonilla-Silva (2015) considers that the field is behind in generating a theory of how race shapes space (p.80), despite its extensive documentation on residential apartheid (Massey and Denton 1993) and the inner city (Wilson 1987). There are hopeful prospects that the mutual development of race and space would open up a margin for a discussion on race relations as they are taking form in a new settlement with special attention to how they affect the social and everyday lives of Latino, migrant, and low-income groups in the South. To address this void, the present review centers on a discussion of race and class dynamics and how they connect with the constraining and enabling properties of space by describing its exclusionary and inclusionary potential according to how people negotiate access to public space.

RACE, CLASS, AND SPACE AS ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES OF SOCIETY

Racial Conceptions and Arrangements

Scholarly accounts of race have proposed definitions ranging from the biological and social constructionist perspectives, to institutional practices and structural arrangements. According to Taylor (2006:48-49), race as a biological category has stratified people on the basis of physical traits such as skin color and hair texture. Although there has been a general consensus among social scientists that essentialist categorizations of race are passé, Omi and Winan (2015) maintain that the phenotypic dimensions of human bodies have maintained their social meaning as markers of difference. Taylor (2006) also mentions how race as a social construction, has classified people into racial groups as influenced by inter-personal and group interactions shaped by sociohistorical socialization processes. As theorizing about race shifted from biological concepts and social constructions toward a more societal-level approach in the 1960s, an institutionalist perspective on race emerged. As discussed by Desmond and Emirbayer (2009:27), this approach moved beyond the isolated instances of intentional “racist” acts of humiliation and hate and diffused them into larger systemic arrangements of power that influences social operations and everyday life (see Álvarez et al. 1979; Blauner 1972; Carmichael and Hamilton 1967).

Bonilla-Silva (2001) offers a contemporary approach to the institutional perspective suggesting that race, as an organizing principle of society, permeates institutions and fosters systemic arrangements that reproduce the racial order. Taking into account Bonilla-Silva’s (2015) considerations, the analytical root for a better understanding of race lies in disclosing the mechanisms that result in unequal racial outcomes. Drawing from Reskin (2003), mechanism based models would help understand racial inequality through observable means, precisely

because it is difficult to explain racial discrimination as an act of humiliation or hate fulfilled by social actors or institutions. The observable realities of the oppressed condition of race are often closely knit to the economic conditions and material foundations that influence the reproduction of racial inequality (Gans 2005). However, these material conditions are not entirely exclusive to racial minorities for they affect low-income groups in general.

Continuing Significance of Class

Class has remained an unstable concept in the social sciences that is hard to disentangle from other categories of oppression such as race, especially in a racially heterogeneous society like the United States. Generally, class has been defined as a group of people that share similar “life chances” (Weber [1925] 1978:193) as determined by their possession of goods, services, and skills in exchange for financial gain in the economic order. Mostly, class has been developed as a category of oppression found in Marxist labor market relations as well as in educational performance (Lareau 1987), residential apartheid (Massey and Denton 1993), behavioral distinctions (Bourdieu 1990), racial economic development (Wilson 1987), and spatial productions (Lefebvre 1991). Although this scholarship has accomplished monumental achievements in the study of class dynamics, they have not fully explained how institutionalized mechanism reproduce class advantages and disadvantages and how subordinated groups influence the reproduction of class privileges and oppression (see Giddens 1973).

Both concepts, racism and classism, are defined as structural realities that reproduce institutional practices. Moreover, Brunnsma, Embrick, and Nanney (2015) argue that critics of Marx and Weber’s theoretical models suggest that they are class reductionist, however, their discussion on capitalism was premised on slavery being organized around a system that

privileged the dominant race (i.e. white). Therefore, the central importance of race is hard to disentangle from issues of class.

Space as Enabler and Inhibiter

Much of the scholarship on race and space has mutually developed these two concepts around racial zoning ordinances, restrictive covenants, mortgage redlining, and steering (Iceland 2009; Massey and Denton 1993), which have contributed to the formation of racially segregated neighborhoods in the United States. This scholarship has played a significant role in developing an account of geographic patterns of settlement that differentially affect socioeconomic mobilization for racial minorities, particularly as an economic segment considered as the urban poor. These studies, along with most in the sociological literature, develop spatial concepts as arising out of what people do in relation to one another (see Harvey 1982; Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1989). They tend not document sociospatial relations in terms of everyday life, but as an apparatus used to regulate capital accumulation. Löw (2008) considers such view as narrowing the margin for an “action-theoretical centered approach” to the constitution of space that would account for everyday human actions in the creation, maintenance, and modifications of spatial structures and arrangements. Also, as Gieryn (2000) implies, theorizing about space in sociology has not achieved great milestones in arranging spatial structures as material forces that can organize everyday life. Social processes seem to emerge from what emplaced actors do in physical space, but suppress how the material aspects of space (e.g., architecture, landscape, objects) also shape social processes.

Gieryn (2000) provides insight into how the traditional approach to sociospatiality has kept space as the backdrop for something else that becomes the focus of sociological attention

(e.g., demographic, cultural, economic variables) (p.466). He suggests that the material stuff (e.g., architecture, geography, landscape) shapes social practices that in turn affect social and physical space (Gieryn 2002:342). Similarly, Gans (2002) considers a conceptual margin for space as a larger social force that is not entirely dependent on the actions of social actors. In line with Giddens's (1984) theoretical model, Gans (2002) makes the point, "individuals and collectivities shape natural and social space by how they use these, although each kind of space, and particularly the social, will also have effects on them" (p.330). Adding on to this conceptualization of space, the efforts of Gieryn's (2000) analysis involve disclosing the detectable and independent effects that space, like any other variable, has on social life. More specifically, how the social operations of the material aspects of exclusion and inclusion can become part of physical space when brought together by social actors not only as emplaced elements, but as active in the process of constituting places. This involves the relational ordering of material stuff and people to render spatial markers as recognizable in their arrangement, that is, how buildings and other markers of space are positioned and how that arrangement organizes contact between constituents (both people and material stuff) (Löw 2008). In its conceptual application to race, Brunnsma, Brown, and Placier (2013:721) look at how systemic racism is reproduced through materialized institutional symbols such as statutes in the hallways, portraits on walls, and building names that remain a hidden part of racial domination, yet a fundamental marker of whiteness.

According to Lipsitz (2011), studying the relationship between race and space allows social relations to take on their full meaning by giving race material importance through practices that affect access to public space. Previous literature has discussed a form of "defensive localism" (Lipsitz 2007:12) in well-off communities that hoard amenities and resources that are emplaced

on their part of town as they exclude outsiders from crossing over into their residential area. When there is mention of racism manifesting spatially, the conversation revolves around racial segregation and does not exactly mention how public spaces within a Latino neighborhood exclude Latinos from accessing those spaces when materialized within their own residential boundaries.

Also, Lipsitz (2011) tells of the importance of public space and its power in shaping opportunities and life chances when taking into account the significant struggles over spaces in the mid-twentieth-century civil rights era. Similarly, Crossa (2012) considers space as an active social force that has the potential to reorganize and redefine community relations through which different groups of people can overlap and potentially interact with one another for multiple reasons. According to Sandler (2007), a space is made public when it is open to diverse social actors whose presence and proximity to each other might unexpectedly produce meaningful encounters. It can in some ways draw attention to how marginalized groups respond, contest, and challenge restricted access to public space.

DATA AND METHODS

This study used a qualitative triangulation approach in collecting data, which included the use of participant observation, visual research, and in-depth interviews. According to Berg (2009), the importance of the triangulation approach was not compiling different kinds of data but in relating them in order to counteract potential threats of validity pertinent to each. This method was chosen because of the nature of the research question, issues of accessibility, and interests in the topic. Between Fall 2014 and Spring 2015, data was collected from the Jones

Center for Families (JCF) and other public parks and recreation in Springdale, Arkansas to document relations between JCF and the community it served.

Participant observations, as outlined by Adler and Adler (1994) were initially carried out through involvement with local Latino organizations and community leaders that facilitated entry into the research setting. Once in the setting, rapport was facilitated by striking up informal conversation with attendees and showing them pictures about their activities at JCF. In fact, even carrying a camera produced interaction between researcher and participant, as some attendees were eager to pose and have their picture taken. It helped with the prospects of securing an in-depth interview later on in the research cycle. Although only a slight recommendation drawn from Warren and Karner (2010) about facilitating interaction with actors engaged in the research setting, the researchers were present in the field in contextually inappropriate attire (not wearing athletic clothes) and not using the recreational amenities. Yet, navigating the setting in this fashion did not necessarily restrain any effort to document what was happening in the field.

Photographs also provided visual information and documentation with regards to how participants engaged and/or disengaged in activities at JCF. As Gold (2004) outlines, this approach allowed gaining an orientation to the field setting and was a useful aid in checking initial observations when revisiting the research setting with a sense for what it looks like. Information was also drawn from local newspapers (e.g., Northwest Arkansas Times) as well as archival data to provide some perspective on the context surrounding Latino, migrant, and low-income groups and their relationship to JCF. Several hours were spent at the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History in Springdale reading through all available local newspaper articles pertaining to JCF since its anticipation in 1994 to the present. This served as provisional research to inform the approach to the setting and to add more substance to the interviews.

Finally, interviews served as the principal component of this research study. The purpose of the interviews was to capture the narratives of people that were affected by the entrance fee system at JCF. A total of 14 interviews were conducted – 4 former and current directors and administrators of JCF, and 10 former, current, and occasional attendees of JCF. Being particularly interested in attendees with a very specific background, a purposive sampling technique was employed to recruit interviewees (Lofland et al. 2006). Moreover, the interviews were an average length of 47 minutes to an hour. Interviews were semistructured with a guide of 6 questions for direction during the conversation. Out of the 4 representatives of JCF that were interviewed, the 2 current administrators were men and the 2 former directors were women; all identified as white and upper-middle class or higher. Out of the 10 JCF attendees, 7 were Latina, 1 was Latino, 2 were white women, and 1 was a Marshallese man. All had a working-class background.

After interviews were conducted, applying Charmaz’s (2014) method, an open coding scheme was initially applied to each transcript followed by a focused coding technique to conceptualize overarching themes across narratives. In compliance with IRB guidelines, confidentiality requirements were met by maintaining the integrity of all participants through the use pseudonyms for each respondent. In-depth interviews were audio recorded and electronically stored in a cloud storage service.

ANALYSIS OF ACCESS TO PUBLIC SPACE

JCF was founded in 1995 by Mrs. Bernice Jones upon a philanthropic missions premised on the idea of not wanting to see “a child turn away” from a recreational space because of lack of a fee (Ms. Schnoor). Ms. Kay, a former representative of JCF between 2000 and 2008, outlined

some of the principal financial aspects behind operating JCF. She explained how Mrs. Jones's initial intent of operating JCF into perpetuity should have been effective had the original endowment been used for what it was intended for. During the Great Recession of 2008, the endowment was known to have taken a hit where no earnings resulted in stagnation. At that time, the staffing was cut and according to Ms. Kay, a new administration with a business background assumed oversight of JCF. In 2008, the new administration decided to institute a fee based system, where a membership and/or entrance fee was required to access the recreational amenities assuming that these supplementary moneys would once again stabilize the endowment.

When asked how much membership dues and entrance fees contribute to the current \$4 million operating budget, Dr. Rogers, a current administrator of JCF, disclosed that the fees contributed \$98,000. Based on his calculations, only 2.45 percent of the annual operating budget is comprised of membership dues and entrance fees. This begs the question if entrance fees are a good system or if they are something that needs to be explained. During the same window that the Great Recession hit, Ms. Kay revealed how the Jones Trust was also investing in other projects. She explains:

I don't think the endowment would've run out had it been used for what [Mrs. Jones] intended it to use for—[It started being used for] great projects. Projects that were not directly related to the Jones Center—Uh, the renovation of the St. Mary's hospital in Rogers. That is now the Nonprofit Resource Center. Wonderful project, however, very expensive. If you do your homework you'll see the timeline on there and it'll line up pretty coincidentally to '08 and some of the shifts that have been made.

Ms. Kay suggests that the endowment was slashed by half with the renovation of the St. Mary's Hospital in Rogers. Of equal importance is that no financial records for the years 2008-2009

were disclosed. It needs to be noted that between 2008 and 2014, the Jones Trust ran a campaign where they brought the endowment back up to its “pre-fee” level through corporate funds such as the Walton Family Foundation (Dr. Rogers; Mr. Burton). With the endowment back up to pre-fee level and with the current fees system contributing to 2.45 percent of the annual operating budget, this analysis develops an account of how the relationship between JCF and the community was redefined through the implementation of a fee by capturing the narrative of affected groups and how they negotiate access to this once free space. It documents to what extent JCF has lived up to the expectation of Mrs. Jones’s wish where “all are welcome,” to “the one center where everyone can learn, play and belong.”

What follows is an analysis of two major themes that emerged from attendees and representatives at JCF as they came to terms with the effects of the entrance fee system. The first theme captures the meanings participants associate with the social construction of a whitespace. The account is divided between administrators and attendees of JCF. Participants discuss how JCF used to serve the low-income community where it is located, which has a high concentration of Latino and Marshallese, and now JCF has turned into a whitespace imbedded in a brown residential area. This segment differs from the literature about racialized spaces where scholars mostly account for “racial projects” (see Omi and Winant 2015) that put forth the effort to exclude racial minorities from accessing better resourced white neighborhoods (Calmore 1995). As part of this analysis, JCF functions as a whitespace imbedded in a brown residential area where members of the dominant racial group shuttle in and out of the center, and those that live around it continue to face restricted access. The discussion concludes with the consequences and implications the fee system has on the integration and inclusion of Latino and migrant population groups in a new setting.

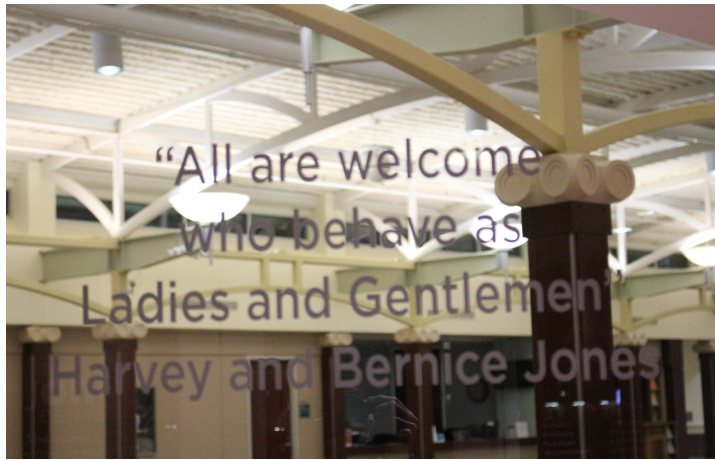


Figure 1 "All are Welcome"

The figure above shows how public spaces often represent themselves as an "all-inclusive public" (Sandler 2007:471), although in a subtle and barely noticeable manner, they can promote social exclusion. JCF communicates the message that "all are welcome," however, the fee system has constructed several criteria for admissions that were not considered when the space was free-access. Mr. Burton, a current administrator of JCF, mentions how JCF suggests some criteria that contributed to the formation of a more exclusive space.

[JCF] probably was more of a hangout place than anything. People, especially teens, came and hung out here because they didn't have anything else to do. Now when they come, and they're members, uh, and even scholarshipped, they have something to do.

They swim, they study— they're here for a reason, other than— no reason. So we think it's a purposeful facility.

Along with the implementation of the institutionalized mechanism of a fee that produced differential access to the space, there has been an intensification of sociospatial exclusion (Crossa 2012) that has regulated who comes in and out (Mitchell 2003). As Mr. Burton

underlines, JCF has transformed from a public space where people used to retreat at no costs, to a place that requires a membership and a purpose. Although he points out that “you don’t have to come in here with a membership and you don’t have to buy a day pass if you want to spend time here,” what he describes, does not resonate as a welcome message for non-members looking for a space to come together and spend time.

Moreover, Dr. Rogers also alludes to the conceptualization of JCF as an all-inclusive public by suggesting that there are scholarships available to the community so that they may access JCF at a low-cost. Dr. Rogers mentions:

I think the utilization of the Center by the Marshallese and Latino community had diminished after fees were instituted. It initially declined quite a bit and now with the scholarship programs, increasing once again. So... It’s certainly the desire of the board to return the utilization to the pre-fee level through the use of scholarships, and targeted program.

Being particularly aware that Latino and Marshallese attendance at JCF had decreased, Dr. Rogers says that their attendance should be increasing once again because there are now scholarship opportunities available that reduce the costs of attendance. He nods at the possibility of financial constraints that the Latino and Marshallese communities might be enduring which is why they are facing restrictions in terms of access to the space. However, although there are scholarships that are meant to facilitate access to JCF, Ms. Schnoor, a former director of JCF is not entirely convinced of the inclusionary potential that the scholarship opportunity is said to promote.

After the fees, A lot of people, even though they say there are scholarships available, it’s not very widely known in the community. Plus, there’s a stigma attached asking for help

sometimes. So between the fact that it's not widely known, the stigma, plus that, kind of a chilling effect that it had on people, anyway, I think, that after the fees went into effect it just didn't feel as welcoming as it had before. Uh, Mrs. Jones was always very...just dedicated to the idea that she didn't want anybody turned away because they didn't...because they couldn't pay.

As a former director of a program that promoted Latino and Marshallese incorporation in Springdale and NWA during Ms. Kay's tenure at JCF, Ms. Schnoor suggests that the 'all-inclusive' premise of the scholarships was disputable. According to her, information about the scholarship opportunity was not adequately communicated, and this was also made obvious by Dr. Roger's admission that the opportunity was "partly communicated through word of mouth." Also, through Ms. Schnoor's involvement with the Latino and Marshallese populations in the area, she learned about the stigma attached to asking for the kind of help that involved the scholarships. She considered JCF to have turned into an exclusive space upon creating an unwelcoming environment after implementing fees.

A key point that emerged from the former and occasional attendees at JCF was that the implementation of the entrance fee system had a discouraging effect in terms of attendance. Ms. Herzet, a white woman with high socioeconomic status, exposes the symbolic aspect of the entrance fee system and begins to shape how JCF transformed into a whitespace. The restraints on her involvement were not necessarily attributable to a financial constraint that would typically be the result having to pay a fee. She says:

I don't even feel like everything is accessible for me. Not because I can't afford it—but when they put the fees, something mental happened, you know what I'm saying? It was

like I felt like it wasn't my place anymore. I felt like it was more exclusive. I don't know how to tell you about that. And I can afford to go.

Ms. Herzet remains excluded from that space even when she endured no financial hardships precluding her access. The fee system also conveys how JCF created a symbolic barrier with the community it was intended to serve. Moreover, Lori, a Latina from Siloam Springs, Arkansas (30 minutes from Springdale), continued attending JCF regularly after fees were implemented. In her case, she did not have any relationship to JCF prior to the date when the fee system was set up in 2008. She arrived to NWA in 2007 and first went to JCF when the fees had just been implemented. She says, "the fee didn't necessarily affect me per se, because I was not even aware of the fact that there wasn't a fee before." The discouraging effect the other participants mention they had with JCF does not fit her experience in NWA.

In respect to the decrease in attendance following the entrance fee system, Sandler (2007) mentions how it affects the potential of an all-inclusive space by reducing it to one that remains restricted access. After engaging at JCF on a daily basis, several groups in the community dropped their attendance after fees. Reasons given ranged from being too busy to an actual lack of money. Cassius, a Marshallese young man on a vocational track at the local community college, provides some perspective related to the conversations he had with his friends:

They came a lot! Almost 24...almost everyday, but nowadays they would come a couple of times: "Hey you goin' to The Jones Center?" "Nah, not today." "Why?" "Why? I'm busy," it's understandable. "Are you comin' today?" "Nah, nah." "Why?" "I, I have no money." "Ah, we'll find you money, let's go!" And stuff like that. And you know, we're wasting time looking for money when we could just go straight and not even worry about the fee, you know. And just play ball.

The segment above reveals some of the spatial constraints that the Marshallese community is experiencing due to financial hardship. Moreover, Mette and Claus (2012) discuss how restricted access to public space not only restrains movement through a particular space or setting, but also produces new exclusions and hierarchical organizations. In a space where unexpected, yet meaningful encounters might emerge (Crossa 2012; Kohn 2014), JCF's fee system inhibits such potential for the Marshallese.

Participants from the Latino community also expressed similar concerns and consequent decreasing use of JCF. Adriana, a working-class Latina enrolled at the University, recalls, "we went like 3 times a week," but as soon as JCF started charging fees, she said, "there definitely has been an interruption in my attendance at the Jones Center." Andrea, a white woman from Springdale having been involved in research at JCF, she reveals:

The Latino people will straight up tell you, you know, 'it's crap that they charge now,' and, 'we used to come a lot more, now we don't,' or, 'now only one person in our family has a membership,' or, you know, or whatever. And, I mean, Springdale has a huge Latino population, right. So it stands to reason that it's this building that is in the middle of an area in Springdale that is mostly Latino, doesn't have a lot of Latino people walking through the door.

In respect to the organizing potential of space, research on Latino places has overlooked this principle by showing an overreliance on intra-group harmony and culture as an effective means to maintain the integrity of cultural place identity, for example, as Dávila (2004) and Villa (2000) have argued, when posed with the threat of gentrification. Flores-González (2001) also mentions how public space in these areas remains Latino and often accompanied by under-resourced infrastructure and inadequate public amenities in contrast to white residential areas.

However, Andrea points out how a public space enclosed within a residential area that is predominantly Latino, remains inaccessible to Latinos.

Tilly (1998) discusses how the dominant group systematically hoards opportunities and channels resources into their own group as they restrict access to subordinated groups to those scarce resources. In this case, the entrance fee has served as a mechanism of exclusion for racial minorities, as it has facilitated the hoarding of scarce recreational and spatial resources for the dominant racial group. For example, Michelle, a Latina from Rogers, recalls mostly seeing white people the times she had attended JCF on occasion. She jogs her memory and shares the following:

Yeah. So, I mean, it was mainly Anglos. Most of, when it came to the ice skate...I'm talking about the ice skating rink and things like that...um, there was mostly Anglos most of the time.

Michelle provides a brief account of what has taken form as a whitespace. In Anderson's (2012) terms, a whitespace is simply where there are few blacks considering different factors that remove their presence. In this analysis, JCF has transformed into whitespace where Latinos and Marshallese negotiate restricted access when the space is materialized within the spatial boundaries of a brown residential area.

Consequences and Implications for Integration/Inclusion

As mentioned before, Adriana attended JCF regularly for the pool and ice rink and emphasized how the pool was especially packed during the summer, "because it was a free pool." Although Adriana had not been to JCF since the fee was first implemented, Naty, a Latina

from Springdale, provides some insights of the space through her recent attendance. Her account is not very optimistic:

Like I mentioned before, it just doesn't look as inviting as it used to, to me. But, I think that we're so used to it, oh, there's obviously a pool there, we know that there's an ice skating rink, so I don't know why it's not utilized, we don't get ice anywhere.

Instead of regularly taking advantage of the unique amenities that JCF offers, Naty goes with her cousin for a walk around a public park as an alternative. Lori seems just as perplexed as Naty. Lori mentions how "it is a little confusing seeing the fact that a lot of participants have completely just stopped attending JCF, when in a sense, it is the best option for them compared to all the other ones." They were both aware that JCF offers amenities that are unique and less expensive than other recreational options, but affected groups were still not accessing these scarce resources.

Drawing from Crossa (2012), access to public space had been redefined in this setting through the response participants had to the exclusionary potential of the entrance fee system by opting for alternatives to recreation. Adriana mentions having to go to towns outside of Springdale because of their limited recreational resources and facilities. She said, "So you have to go, regardless, you have to go to another town to do something, 'cause in Springdale there's really nothing." Because Springdale has limited recreational resources and facilities, members from that community have considered other options outside of the city even when JCF, a state of the art recreational facility, remains within proximity. Moreover, Laura, a working-class Latina from Rogers, finds herself opting for more expensive recreational alternatives to JCF.

I don't go that often, it's because of the fees. If it was free there, I would probably go more often, because it's free, but I don't go that often because I find funner things to

do... Like going to Fast Lane, or going bowling, or going to the movies. And for like the pool, since they opened up the pool in Rogers, and they have bigger slides—and it's still fairly cheap, I go to that instead of the Jones Center.

Fast Lane entertainment is located in Lowell, about halfway between Rogers and Springdale. Laura would not mind the commute to JCF if it were free. Also, the pool with the bigger slides she mentions is the Rogers Aquatics Center where the price range for admissions is \$12-\$15 dollars for an adult day-pass (filed notes). The entrance fee to access the pool at JCF is \$3 dollars. On a related note, Jessica, a Latina living in Springdale mentions:

My friends didn't go. My family wouldn't go. Uh, we don't really play any sports. We don't really go skating, and if we wanted to go to a pool, we would go somewhere else... Uh, we used to go the Springdale Aquatic Center.

Although Jessica is not very engaged in physically oriented recreational activities, she and her family still opted for the Springdale Aquatic Center which charges the same fee (\$3) per adult as does JCF (field notes). One of the most obvious differences between both options is that the Springdale Aquatics Center is outdoors and the JCF pool is indoors. Moreover, Reymundo, a Latino from Rogers, finds himself wondering about recreational alternatives that are also not very convincing in terms of what amenities they offer, even within proximity to Rogers.

In Rogers, the Activity Center, you have to pay and they don't have a pool. That's why we don't really go much there either. All it is just basketball and workout machines, but they don't have a pool. That's what we like about [JCF], the ice-skating and the pool.

Reymundo, as a member of a marginalized social group, shows how he responds to restricted access to this space. The less expensive basic membership at JCF only offers what Reymundo is not very interested in, as seen above. The low-cost membership at JCF, explicitly named "Gym

& Fitness Center Membership” (field notes) only grants access to what it implies. The JCF “All-Access Membership,” which is over 3 times more expensive (field notes), includes access to the pools and public ice sessions.

Furthermore, a group of Marshallese young men that were met outside of the Springdale Youth Center (SYC) added more perspective to how the community was responding to the symbolic aspects fee system at JCF. While at SYC during a basketball event reserved for the Marshallese, a group of young Marshallese men brought up that the SYC’s membership cost as much as a JCF membership. Based on that comment, when asked why they didn’t go to JCF instead, one of them responded, “I go where the ballers are at” (field notes). It was difficult to make a connection with that piece of information when he also said that when they do go to JCF, they play in the basketball courts outside of the center in order to avoid the \$3 dollar entrance fee.



Figure 2 Inside of JCF without access to amenities.

As noted in the photograph above, white, Latino, and Marshallese young men take to the hallway and devise an alternative means for recreation while remaining inside the premises of JCF. Like Andrea said, “It’s not like they hit you up for \$3 dollars the minute you walk in.” Even when

financial constraints are a factor restricting access to the recreational amenities JCF offers, it does not mean that you can't walk through the non-restricted areas of the space. Moreover, when the young men were asked why they were in the hallway, the Marshallese young man replied, 'because it is free' (field notes). He said that when they have a bigger group, they are then motivated to pay the \$3 dollar fee to access the basketball area where they could breakdance in a corner that circumscribes the court. How often his friends access the \$3 dollar fee remains a question that alludes to the transformation of JCF into a whitespace. However, the fact that these young men were still within the premises of JCF, shows not only how they response to the implementation of an entrance fee system, but how they resist restricted access to this space.

As noted previously, adhering to Gieryn's (2000) and Löw's (2008) emphasis on space as an organizing principle of society, space reserves the potential to either facilitate or restrain interaction between social actors and groups. Crossa (2012) suggests that public space can either produce or preclude unexpected meaningful encounters between emplaced actors, contingent upon whether the space is made accessible or not. Naty comes to terms with the effect the fee system has had on racial minorities in Springdale by triangulating attendance decrease, options for alternatives to recreation, and systematic forms of racism. She explains:

Well, they charge now so I don't feel like going and that started dwindling the population, like "they charge now, they charge now, we shouldn't go." I think... it might've been that white families, the white community think, 'well, these resources are for us, we should utilize them, obviously.' Um, 'cause it's more... they're more systematically open to help white families.

According to Desmond and Emirbayer (2009), institutional racism takes form as a type of power that awards privileges and disadvantages that reproduce the systemic domination of racial

minorities. Naty nods at how systemic rewards for the dominant group are institutionalized within the public recreational space through the arrangement of a fee. Bonilla-Silva 2015 discusses how institutionalized practices that reproduce the racial order differentially award the dominant group greater access to greater resources and privileges as they remain out of reach for disadvantaged groups. Moreover, Dr. Rogers, as a prominent community leader, had been aware of such race relations in the area and considers himself to be active in addressing the issue:

We are also aware of the... trying to improve relationships between the various groups. We're trying to ... break down some of the distress, distress that is, is inherent in previous surveys about Caucasian communities in Springdale.

Although Dr. Rogers, as a current administrator, mentions the importance of fostering better race relations in Springdale, JCF does not appear to be taking as much initiative as they did in their previous administration when Ms. Kay was an administrator. During Ms. Kay's tenure, JCF ran a department called 'Department of Diversity and Inclusion.' Ms. Kay mentions:

[It was] my idea to say, 'look, we need to be doing something with intention to create an inclusive community.' And then of course there was work done with intention around helping the community, Latino and Marshallese community understanding things that they needed to know about living in Springdale, Arkansas or Northwest Arkansas, you know. Laws and education and, you know, I think we translated, we had the drivers license testing information translated into Marshallese. Did some videos, you know, about driving in Arkansas and registering your kids for school, and those kinds of things. But you know, we consciously chose not to just call it the department of diversity, but to— it was about inclusion as well.

Relative to the substantial research done in Dalton Georgia as a setting where Latinos are achieving incorporation in the South (Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2003), the case of Dalton shows how immigrant networks and social capital facilitate settlement, whereas this study focuses on how public space can either facilitate or restrain settlement. As can be seen, JCF implemented programs with the intention of opening up the opportunity structure for new migrant groups to become integrated and included in the community before the current administration took over.

Although Silver (2014) claims that contact alone does not guarantee tolerance and the kind of cosmopolitanism that would promote out-group inclusion, JCF as a public space had accomplished much more than being a setting where social actors come into proximity with one another. The programs that JCF had implemented to incorporate new settlers into the community if Springdale and NWA are no longer available. Quite frankly, according to Andrea, “[JCF says] they’re interested in being like a place for everyone, but I don’t really see them being a leader in community stuff.” Through the exclusionary practice of the entrance fee system, JCF has not been living up to Mrs. Jones’s wish and has been turning away the people it was intended to serve. Moreover, when Ms. Herzet became involved at JCF for a community service project with Latino youth, she recalled:

The kids were really excited about it. [They] took [the scholarship forms] and I saw them wagging them when they went home, but only like maybe, I’m gonna say— six out of forty kids took advantage of it at that moment. And scholarships will help, you know scholarships will help, but what I don’t get is, if you can give so many scholarships, why do you have a fee?

Ms. Herzet's dilemma involves trying to grasp the relationship between JCF and the community it serves. She pondered the thought of there being available money for JCF to cover its operation costs. Even though the Walton Family Foundation might require JCF to keep scholarship money apart from the budget, the issue is that actors from the community do not understand them very well and information about them is not well communicated. Although there appears to be an opportunity that enables access to the space, the entrance fee system supersedes other apparent efforts for the integration and inclusion of new settlers.

Overall, the findings have demonstrated that JCF has drastically deviated from the founder's philanthropic mission of creating and maintaining an all-inclusive public space in a setting that is new to immigration and racial diversity. Instead, using Lefebvre's (1991) conceptualizations, the space has restrained its enabling potential in fostering community involvement as it restricts access for racial minorities and low-income groups to become engaged in the production of sociospatial relationships. Drawing from Brunsmas, Brown, and Placier (2013), it is worthwhile noting that in a setting where the material aspects of JCF have reproduced systemic racism through the deployment of symbols that reproduce the racial order, there remains an unstable connection point. JCF was known as belonging to a brown community, and indeed, imbedded within a brown residential area, but JCF has now materialized as a whitespace that restricts access to the community it was originally intended for.

CONCLUSION

This study has applied a structure and agent centered approach in examining the constraining effects of a fee in the public recreational setting and in accounting for the enabling features of human action in response to the institutional forms of restricted access to public

space. The findings point to two substantial features that have redefined access to public space in this new setting; they involve the social construction of JCF as a whitespace and the constraining effects of the entrance fee system on integration and inclusion. The exclusionary potential of space was symbolically deployed by the implementation of entrance fee system, which made certain groups not feel welcome. However, excluded groups were able to retain some agency by opting for alternative recreational spaces as a response to the constraining effect of the fee system at JCF. Some directly resisted the institutionalized mechanism that restricted access by maintaining a presence in the halls of the JCF. Such was observed by the young men breakdancing in the middle of the hallway. Although access to alternative spaces enable the potential to organize and define community relations, affected groups remain unable to access the scarce recreational and community resources that JCF offers.

A major component of the transformation of JCF from an all-inclusive space to a whitespace is the reproduction of the racial order through institutionalized mechanisms that promote unequal access to scarce recreational resources and place a restraint on the potential for community development and meaningful encounters. In this particular public space, the fact that it is imbedded in a brown residential area raises some urgent questions about the symbolic meaning of JCF as a whitespace. The relationship between institutional forms of racism and the potential for community development is integral to understanding the nuances of inclusion and exclusion after access to public space has become redefined through the use of a fee. The efforts that the past administration at JCF put forth for Latino and other migrant groups integration, have been dissipated by the new administration with a business background employing new models that redefine access to the space along racial lines.

Moreover, while sociologists have accomplished great milestones in theorizing about race and mutually developing accounts of class and space (e.g., Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1989), there remains a substantive gap in making a connection between spatial transformations and racial constructions in new immigrant settings. Even more neglected have been the nuances of whiteness forming inside a brown neighborhood. The United States is a nation where whites have remained spatially apart from non-whites and rarely do whites have to navigate spaces that are non-white.

Limitations of this study involve the use of a sampling technique that diminishes the generalizing intentions found in statistical inference. This limits any generalizing ambition about racial-spatial relations found in public and quasi-public recreational spaces found across new settlements in the US South. Despite these limitations, this qualitative study is able to generate logical inferences about community development and immigrant incorporation in NWA. It also presents some nuances that have been overlooked in the scholarship, such as documenting the dynamics involved when there is a highly resourced public space imbedded within a vastly under-resourced residential area. On that note, subsequent research evaluating restricted access to public spaces in new settlements can draw from these findings certain elements that are particular to a recently formed brown neighborhood in the South.

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Appendix



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board

October 20, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: Aaron Arredondo
Juan José Bustamante

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 14-10-171

Protocol Title: *Redefining Access to Public Space: Community Relations in a New Immigrant Setting*

Review Type: EXEMPT EXPEDITED FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 10/20/2014 Expiration Date: 10/19/2015

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/index.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 35 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 210 Administration Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.