8-2014

Community at the Courts: Social and Community Interactions at Public Basketball Courts

Elizabeth Arnaud Fogle
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Community at the Courts: Social and Community Interactions at Public Basketball Courts

Community at the Courts: Social and Community Interactions at Public Basketball Courts

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

by

Elizabeth Fogle
Missouri State University
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, 2012

August 2014
University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation for to Graduate Council.

_____

Dr. Brandon Jackson
Thesis Director

_____

Dr. Juan Bustamante
Thesis Committee

_____

Dr. Lori Holyfield
Thesis Committee

ABSTRACT

Based on over 60 informal interviews conducted at two public basketball courts, this study utilizes grounded theory to trace class- and race-based differences in the social interactions occurring at both parks. By comparing social interactions between a white, middle class basketball court, and a black, lower class basketball court, I argue that social engagement is not be declining for all segments of society as some theorists suggest. Moreover, I argue that the relationships forged at the basketball court in a predominantly black, working-class neighborhood prove to be more meaningful and have deeper benefits than those forged at a basketball court in a white, middle-class neighborhood. I show that public places serve as a source of social status for participants of pick-up basketball and that social status stemming from pick-up basketball varies in importance based on the socioeconomic status of the participants. Further, I contend that public places in low-income neighborhoods can serve as a vehicle for establishing social networks in the surrounding community, affirming and maintaining status, and realizing personal fulfillment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I am grateful to Dr. Brandon Jackson for taking a risk with me. You have guided me, pushed me, challenged me, and inspired me. Thank you for the countless hours you have spent helping me, and always doing it with a smile on your face. I am also indebted to my committee members, Dr. Holyfield and Dr. Bustamante, for all of the guidance, encouragement, and feedback they have given me over the course of this project. Your passion for your students is unparalleled and does not go unnoticed.

I am eternally grateful to my family for their love and support over the past two years. You guys picked me up when I was down, always believing in me and never letting me give up on my dreams. Your love and compassion for the world around you has made me who I am today. You are my heroes.

Finally, I am overwhelmingly thankful to God for giving me the opportunity to pursue graduate school. I hope that I can use this degree to serve as His hands and feet and enact a positive change in His world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

With the advent of technology and the increasing individualism of U.S. culture, fewer and fewer people are turning to public spaces as a venue for socialization (Putnam 1995; Costa and Kahn 2001). In *Bowling Alone,* Putnam argued that social interactions have been in decline since the 1950s. Instead of being out in the "real" world, meeting people, and forming social bonds, more people are choosing to stay inside to watch TV, play video games, and spend time on the computer (Putnam 1995). This decline in social interactions is important as an impressive body of research suggests that social networks help make us "healthy, wealthy, and wise" (Putnam 1995; 288; Lin 2000; Coleman 1988). Research has shown that increasing one's social interactions can lead to employment opportunities, pay raises, lower rates of obesity, higher levels of education, and numerous other benefits (Putnam 1995; Lin 2000; Coleman 1988). In sum, social networks can have a constructive and positive effect on individuals and communities as they bring people together and serve as a source of social cohesion.

Although scholars have discussed the decline of social interaction and community activity in contemporary United States, research on race and class-based differences on social networks and community interaction is limited (Putnam 2000; Boggs 2001). For example, Putnam's work focused on middle-class white social networks while neglecting to consider how race and class might impact social relationships (Putnam 1995). Similarly, Boggs argues that the current indicators of social interaction can be categorized as arbitrary--favoring older, middle- to upper-class whites, while failing to include alternate conceptions of social capital (Boggs 2001). But this does not mean that race and class differences in community activity have been ignored. On the contrary, some researchers have pointed out that community engagement may operate differently in working-class and non-white communities (Anderson 1978; Smalls 2009; Horvat,

Weininger, and Lareau 2003). I build upon this work by comparing and contrasting two racially and socioeconomically diverse public spaces in order to examine the construction of social networks at these two sites.

The purpose of this study is to examine two public parks with basketball courts as a site of community and social interaction. Here, community and social interaction is defined as the social bonds that may take place within a given community. By comparing social interactions between a white, middle class basketball court, and a black, lower class basketball court, I will argue that social engagement may not be declining for all segments of society. Moreover, I argue that the relationships forged at the basketball court in a predominantly black, working-class neighborhood prove to be more meaningful and have deeper benefits than those forged at a basketball court in a white, middle-class neighborhood. Similarly, I reveal that these public spaces serve as a source of social status for participants as well as provide evidence for the view that sports play a different role in people's lives based on their socioeconomic circumstances. Further, I contend that public places in low-income neighborhoods can serve as a vehicle for establishing social networks for the surrounding community.

Throughout this paper, I examine how social and community interaction differs among basketball players at two public parks by highlighting differences in the establishment of social networks, status attainment and affirmation, and the personal fulfillment provided by sports. I offer a theoretical framework of the topic, paying particular attention to race and class based differences in social status and social networks. Next, I outline the methodological approach of this qualitative study while identifying the data gathering, sampling, and data analysis techniques. After discussing the methods and setting, I put forth the findings of the research, demonstrating that community engagement is not necessarily declining but may operate

differently for non-whites and working class citizens. The final section includes a discussion of the importance of public places, along with suggestions for future research.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this section, I review relevant literature on the relationship between public spaces and the main three themes of this paper: social status, social networks, and the role of sports in individuals' lives. I give special attention to the negated effect that race and socioeconomic status have on this particular relationship.

The Importance of Public Places

The concept of "place" is often discussed in sociological literature. Place consists of three defining characteristics: geographic location, material form, and investment with meaning and value (Gieryn 2000). A place is a "unique spot in the universe" with defining characteristics that separate one location from another (Gieryn 2000: 464). Places have flexible boundaries. Additionally, places must have physicality. They are created from things or objects at a single, particular spot and social interaction occurs *through* these material forms that we design, build, and use. Finally, a place becomes a place when individuals give it a name and identification. Places are both physically and symbolically constructed, as people must give meaning and value to them. Places must be "interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined" (Gieryn 2000: 465). The identification of a place is flexible as it varies from culture to culture, is constantly changing, and is unavoidably challenged (Gieryn 2000).

Public places serve many important functions for communities (Sherer 2006; Anderson 1976). Public places are the "common ground where civility and our collective sense of what may be called 'publicness' are developed and expressed," as they operate as a reflection of individual behaviors, social processes, and public values (Francis 1989). Through interactions

occurring in public places, individuals are given the opportunity to form social networks and attain social status. Public places also offer recreational opportunities for individuals. Public amenities offer a sense of community to those living in and around them and have positive consequences stemming from an individual's involvement and frequenting of these public places (Sherer 2006; Anderson 1976).

Research maintains that public places serve as an effective and meaningful venue for social status attainment, principally to individuals from low-income circumstances. A study of street corner life at a local barroom/liquor store located in the ghetto of Chicago's South Side embodies this notion of the importance of status attainment. This public space serves as a source of social status for its patrons:

> They (bars) provide settings for sociability and places where neighborhood residents can gain a sense of self-worth. Here people can gather freely, bargaining with their limited resources, their symbols of status, and their personal sense of who and what they are against the resources of their peers and against what their peers see them really to be. Here they can sense themselves to be among equals, with an equal chance to be somebody, even to be occasional winners in the competition for social esteem [Anderson 1976: 1]

Anderson goes on to state that various crowd identities emerge during social interaction, and senses of personal identity and status are shaped (Anderson 1976: 34). These statuses are only applicable in the setting in which they are given, but remain important nonetheless. Status arrangements are constantly changing. One's status in the group depends on the impression the person gives off and on those his audience holds. An individual's aptness for a given status or place is judged by others who are competitors (Anderson 1976). In order to achieve a high-status in a public setting, other people situated in that setting must deem you worthy of a high-status. In line with this, the status arrangements may best be described as collective action: People together are constantly lobbying for advantage by reminding others through meaningful

conduct of the collective sense of who is who and who has superior status (Anderson 1976). People, through these interactions, learn how to accept and defer to people with either a higher or lower status (Anderson 1976).

The interactions occurring in public spaces not only solidify one's status, but also shape and influence one's identity. It shapes the way people view themselves in relation to the people around them. A person can self-categorize into what crowd he or she belongs in based on his/her knowledge of the subgroups, status, and identities to which s/he does not belong and which others will not allow him/her to claim (Anderson 1976). S/he learns these boundaries through the treatment s/he gives and receives within this extended primary group as others react to the self s/he presents.

Public places also offer a suitable venue for creating and maintaining social networks. Without public places, people only have the opportunity to form social networks with people who are similar to them. Public places allow for people of diverse backgrounds to intermingle. On this subject, Putnam differentiates between two kinds of social capital: bridging and bonding. He views both types as being overwhelmingly good, but he argues that the sort of social networks that connect dissimilar individuals and communities (bridging) are often more important than bonding social networks, which bring existing social units together (Putnam 2000). Public places help individuals to accrue bridging social networks. It is important to be bound to individuals who are similar to you, but arguably even more important to be socially tied to individuals who are dissimilar to you. By delving into social interactions with people from mixed backgrounds, the individuals at these basketball courts are accruing a diverse range of social networks. Granovetter (1973) asserts that weak ties are more important than strong ones because they connect an individual to other individuals who are dissimilar to them. Through

these weaker ties, individuals become privy to information that they would otherwise not be exposed to (Granovetter 1973). Weak ties can be formed in public places, as some visitors come from diverse and dissimilar backgrounds.

Through *communities of the court* people are given the occasion to socialize with one another. Oftentimes, these people come from the same neighborhood. By creating an atmosphere conducive for socializing, pick-up basketball serves as a bonding agent to strengthen social ties within a given community. People who frequent these sites often are known to one another, and there are supportive social ties for them, thus giving them a stake in the status system (Anderson 1976). By having ongoing social interactions on the basketball court, one establishes an extended primary group. These groups oftentimes become the thick of their social lives. These are the people that they really care about impressing and whose opinions matter the most to their personal identity (Anderson 1976). These primary ties in time become a source of support. Oftentimes, the relationships that form on the court are carried out in other arenas of social life. People, through these *communities of the court*, become friends, build social capital among the group, and can then call upon these social ties in times of need (Putnam 1995; Granovetter 1973; Lin 2000; Coleman 1989).

Existing literature makes the argument that different fragments of society, based upon their racial and economic backgrounds, use public places differently. In his work, Anderson (1976) discusses the role that a local barroom plays in people's lives based on their socioeconomic status. He argues, "the urban poor and working-class people are likely to experience their local taverns as much more than commercial businesses" (Anderson 1976:1). The same applies to public spaces in general. Arguably, urban poor and working-class people view public places as more than simply a place to hang out; they offer a way to establish a status

in their community. Existing research argues that white, middle-class people have less to lose in the social interactions occurring at public spaces than do the poor and working-class (Anderson 1976). Anderson claims that in the middle class setting, one stands to lose face, but that less affluent participants stand to lose a lot more (1976).

There are distinct differences in the need for low-class and high-class individuals to participate in social interactions. These need-based differences to establish social interactions are further exemplified through Mario Luis Small's (2009) research in *Unanticipated Gains*. This work asserts that high levels of social networks have bigger implications for low-income communities. His research focuses on public daycare centers. He provides evidence to show that women of lower-class status collect more benefits than women of upper class status when enrolling their child in a public daycare. For example, they are exposed to information, resources, and people that they would otherwise never have been exposed to. From acquiring information on health care to forming childcare groups with other mothers, there are tangible benefits stemming from the social networks formed at the daycare. Small argues that low-income neighborhoods can benefit immensely from their citizens amassing social networks as it allows more resources for its participants (Small 2009). Conversely, research argues that middle-class individuals are better equipped to manage their social networks than those economically worse off, as data suggests that there are existing class-specific differences in the architecture of social networks (Horvat et al. 2003). Though lower-income individuals accrue more positive benefits from their social networks, middle-class individuals have a better knowledge of how to utilize them.

Social networks serve many important functions. First, they allow people to resolve collective problems more easily as lines of communication open up. Second, the trust stemming

from social networks allow for communities to advance smoothly. Third, social networks expand our awareness of one another and how our fates are interconnected. Social networks allow information to flow from one actor to another. For example, most Americans obtain their jobs from personal connections (Putnam 1995). Communities that lack adequate social networks find it difficult to share information, making it challenging to mobilize in order to achieve opportunities or resist potential threats (Putnam 1995). Additionally, social networks have positive psychological and physiological benefits for their participants. Research has shown that people with dense and expansive social networks cope better with trauma and fight illness better (Putnam 1995). In short, research illuminates the argument that social networks make us smarter, healthier, safer, and richer (Putnam 1995; Putnam 2005; Lin 2000; Coleman 1989).

The Salience of Sports

Research suggests that sports are much more important than a leisure activity and that participation in them can have a wide variety of benefits for the participants (Messner 1992). Sports help men to form their identities and relationships in a specific manner. Messner asserts that men learn their identities as a function of separating themselves from one another and base their relationships on their differences (1992). The way men socialize unfortunately works against the primary human need for sociability. Males have been socialized to fear that intimacy with other males will result in a loss of identity. However, they maintain a human need for closeness with others. Research argues that by providing young men with an environment that promotes both separation and companionship, sport helps to work through this detachment from one another (Messner 1989). In short, men find that playing competitively gives them the opportunity to experience emotionally safe connections with one another (Messner 1989).

Participation in sports allows for one to be respected -- a key theme in research on sports sociology. Studies spanning over a period of two decades consistently show that sports are the single most important element of the peer-status system for young American males (Messner 1992). Males are oftentimes judged on their ability or lack of ability to excel in sports. Furthermore, sports allow men a way to prove their worth to their family. Sports serve as a way to get recognition, to gain affection, to bond with absentee fathers, and to gain acceptance from older male relatives. Sports develop competence and give people the opportunity to display that competence to others (Coakley 2008). Via participation in sports, people are granted the opportunity to acquire a better sense of self through increased perceived competence, self-esteem, and self-confidence (Coakley 2008).

Through sports, men are able to form personal ties with one another. Messner points out that as men recounted their earliest experiences with sports, they often brought up feeling isolated, insecure, and yearned for connection to other people (Messner 1992). Sports offer a kind of closeness that other institutions do not offer. The relationships found in a pick-up basketball game, specifically, fall somewhere between intimates and total strangers. Players cannot presume that abandoning would be cost-free; they must be concerned with how they come off to their peers (Deland 2012). These men feel obligated to follow a certain set of norms, or code of conduct, when playing pick-up, as the social ties they have formed have come to hold a particular importance in their life. Sports create an experience of being connected to one another, of having close friends, and belonging to a group in which experiences can be shared (Coakley 2008, Deland 2012).

In his research, Messner asserts that differences in social class significantly mediate the sport experience. He argues that middle- and upper-class men limit the importance of sporting

success more than men from the lower class. For men in the lower class, success in sports serves as a venue to upward mobility. For low-income individuals, the institutional context of education and limited economic and employment opportunities make the pursuit of athletic careers seem to be a rational way to succeed. Middle class men, on the other hand, have a range of other options to achieve success (Messner 1989).

Athletic success for people with middle-class backgrounds is not as highly valued as it is in their lower-income male peer groups. It does not garner the same respect and attention. Furthermore, class privilege and education permit middle-class athletes to leave the realm of sports more easily than lower-class athletes (Messner 1992). In short, white-middle class ideals, emphasizing education and income, purport that there are other, better choices to succeed rather than pursing an athletic career. The realities faced by males in lower-class communities give athletic identities a deeper importance than those from middle-class backgrounds (Messner 2009). Sports offer individuals social connections, social status, and a means of achieving personal fulfillment. These are arguably more important to individuals in the lower-income bracket, as upper class people are constantly reminded of all of their many positive attributes and lower-class culture emphasizes sport as the main venue for bettering one's life.

For people who have recognized injustices in their life, sports allow a way to resist the domination imposed upon them (Messner 1992). When everything else seems to be out of their control, sports offer individuals an outlet of frustration and anger. Additionally, sports can serve as a way to avoid gang membership, drugs, and other detrimental life choices. Sports offer people a "way out" of their current situation:

> "Where I came from, you were either one of two things: you were in sports or you were out on the streets being a drug addict, or breaking into places. The guys who were into sports, we had it a little easier, because we were accepted by both groups. So it worked out to my advantage, 'cause I didn't get into a lot of trouble-some trouble, but not a lot"

(Messner 1992: 42).

There is substantial theoretical literature maintaining that African American families tend to push their children towards sport in an effort to obtain social mobility (Messner 1992; Coakley 2008; Adams 2012; Picou 1978). It is also argued that families push their children into sporting careers at the expense of other, more viable career options (Shakib and Veliz 2012). Research contends that the heavy emphasis on sport participation for African Americans is explained by a collection of social and economic factors (Kjerulf 2012). American culture shapes the public consciousness into thinking that African Americans are better suited for a career in sports (Picou 1978). Beginning as early as the 1900s, African American success in sports has led to an unrealistic view that sport is a promising route to social mobility. Meanwhile, the media has increased the visibility of African Americans in sports, which reinforces the cultural myths about sports being a promising career choice (Shakib and Veliz 2012, Kjerulf 2012).

Public spaces, specifically parks, play a different role in individuals' lives based on the socioeconomic status of the person utilizing them. While upper-class individuals have the option of pursuing sports at their own homes, lower-class individuals must rely on public spaces to play sports. For example, upper-class individuals oftentimes have basketball goals, baseball bats, soccer balls, or tennis racquets at their homes. People belonging to the lower-class cannot afford these luxuries, and therefore spend their time at local parks (Messner 2009). Children in poor and working-class communities rely on public spaces for sporting events, while children of higher-class status can afford to play on private, travelling teams. It is within this context that many young lower-class males found "playing sports in public parks to be *the* place, rather than *a* place, within which to build masculine identity, status, and relationships" (Messner 1992: 40).

SETTINGS AND METHODS

Setting

Data for this study derived from 40 hours of observation and over 60 informal interviews with all-male basketball players at two public basketball courts. Research was collected from August 2013 to May 2014. I gained access into this social setting through a year and a half of frequent interactions while playing basketball at Lewis and Rowling Parks. The first few times I visited the courts, I went with one of my male friends. He acted "as gatekeeper" for my transition into the pick-up basketball scene. By having an already established presence at both parks, I was able to gain entry into the occurring social interactions. I was also able to blend in to the existing social structure of pick-up basketball as opposed to appearing as a researcher. However, though the transition from participant to researcher went smoothly, it was not without its complications.

Pick-up basketball games begin when people arrive at the courts. Games usually begin after 5:00 P.M. on week nights and 3:00 P.M. on weekend days. Obviously, weather determines if and when pick-up basketball is played. Rain and cold weather both act as deterrents to participants. Individuals gather freely, self-regulate the formation of teams, and compete against one another. Games are usually played to 11 (as points are scored in increments of one and two), unless it is the last game of the day (the last game of the day is played to 15). The winning team is allowed to stay on the court and play the next team, which is formed along the sidelines during the preceding game. Players are in charge of calling their own fouls, keeping score, and maintaining peace. There are no referees or officials in pick-up basketball. The informal rules are the same at both Lewis and Rowling Parks.

Lewis and Rowling Parks are located in Basin City. This southern town has a population of 76,000, and the racial makeup of the city is 83.8% White and 6.0% African American (from 2010 census). The first site, Lewis Park, is located adjacent to the University of Basin City, the state's largest university. This park is located in an upper-middle class neighborhood, and of the interviewees at Lewis Park, 90% were white. The participants at this location were all young, ranging generally from 20 to 25 years old. There are no lights at Lewis Park, and basketball is restricted to the hours with natural night.

Rowling Park is located on the south side of Basin City in a low-income neighborhood. At this site location, 70% of interviewees were African American. There was a diverse range of ages among the participants at Rowling Park, from 15 to 50 years old. There were more spectators at Rowling Park, as children, elderly, and wives/girlfriends were often seen sitting around the park watching the games unfold. Rowling Park has lights, so participants are able to play basketball late into the evening, rather than ending games at sunset. The lights go off at 11:00 P.M. in the summer months.

Data Analysis

During my observations at Lewis and Rowling Parks, I informally interviewed participants, asking questions such as: "How often do you come to the park?" "Do you have friends that come to the park with you to play?" "Do you live around the park?" "What do you do for a living?" Other questions were aimed at learning more about their personal lives, families, relationships on and off the court, and thoughts on basketball in general. Depending on the respondent's answers, I would oftentimes ask probing questions to gather more data on particular topics. I gathered rich information on the social networks, social status, and personal fulfillment found within the basketball court structure. When possible, I would jot notes down in

my phone in order to remember conversations. I also kept a pad of paper and a pen with me, so when it wasn't my turn to play I could take notes on my surroundings. I observed both site locations a total of thirteen times each. During eleven of these of these thirteen occasions, I conducted informal interviews. The other two occasions were simply observational in nature. IRB approval was granted for the data collection in this study. After each observation, I went home and immediately typed out fieldnotes.

In this study I utilized grounded theory, which is the systematic methodology of discovering theory through data analysis (Charmaz 2006). The first step in grounded theory is data collection; there is no hypothesis or pre-research literature review. After collecting data, the second step in grounded theory is to form codes from the key concepts found in the data. Grounded theorists believe that coding is an important link between data and the emerging theory (Lofland et al 2006). I formed three types of codes: initial, invivo, and focused. Upon the completion of the twenty-six observations, I began to initial code my findings and search for common themes. My initial coding consisted of "line-by-line" coding. The questions on my interview list guided the coding of my fieldnotes and transcripts. After my initial codes were finished, I focused coded my fieldnotes and created a codebook. These focus codes served as a way to "pinpoint and develop the most salient categories in large batches of data" (Charmaz 2006; 46). I also used in vivo terms to identify any terminology specific to the population being studied. The main theme derived from the codebook indicated that these basketball courts, as public spaces, served as a site of community and social interaction and reflected socioeconomic differences of participants and surrounding neighborhoods.

Throughout this process of grounded theory, I also practiced memoing. Memos are useful tools in keeping track of ideas, categories, and concepts (Charmaz 2006). Through the use

of memos, one is able to draw the connections between codes and relate concepts to one another. The process of memo writing allows for the researcher's thoughts be converted into tangible ideas, which can then be communicated to the rest of the world (Charmaz 2006). In my initial memos, I did not have a clear vision of what this project would turn into. Originally, I wanted to study the role of gender in pick-up basketball. However, through the memoing process I came to realize that the socioeconomic and racial differences of the participants and surrounding neighborhood led to different outcomes for the players at the courts. It became evident that establishing networks, affirming status, and realizing personal fulfillment are three key themes centered around the pick-up basketball culture.

Researcher Role

My own experiences as a basketball player serve as a valuable point of departure for this study. I grew up playing basketball, beginning as early as the age of four. However, I always played in a formal setting with referees, jerseys, and spectators, or in my backyard with my friends. It wasn't until moving to Fayetteville, Arkansas for graduate school that I began to experience the pick-up basketball culture. I began to play at several of the outdoor basketball courts and was fascinated by the interactions occurring at these locations. My experiences as an athlete gave me a privileged entrée into the world of sports. I had a foundational knowledge of basketball that helped me fit into the world of pick-up with ease. As a former basketball player, I am able to have a better understanding of the love of the sport. As a researcher, it is impossible to study events or people in a completely unbiased manner (Charmaz 2006). Our own social location and relationship to the people being studied always influences a researcher's choice of topic, and I am no exception to this rule. Giving full disclosure often helps to alleviate concerns over the compromising of the research's findings (Charmaz 2006).

My interest in this topic stems from a life-long love of sports. Sports serve many important functions and can offer people a way out of bad life situations, or simply a means of entertainment and/or exercise. There were very few costs associated with this study. No monetary expenses were procured. However, time became a very valuable resource, as gathering data, coding data, and analyzing the data was a very time-intensive process.

One obvious limitation of this study is that I am a woman doing research in an all-male setting. Though I was a regular fixture on the basketball courts, it would be a mistake to assume that I was accepted as "one of the guys." I was reminded daily of my gender, and the actions on the court may have been altered due to the fact that a female was present. An excerpt from my fieldnotes summarizes this concern:

> There are a few hesitations I have about doing this research. First, it is an unavoidable fact that I am a female attempting to collect data on a group of all men. Though 99% of the time there are no problems, there have been a few moments where I have felt uncomfortable while being alone at one of the parks playing basketball. A few weeks ago, there was a fight at Rowling Park between two of the guys playing and two guys who were just walking by. It kind of scared me. Additionally, I hate when I am treated differently because I am a female. Sometimes I get messed with because I'm a girl, and I hate being touched or made the target of inappropriate jokes.

Sexist remarks and jokes about my gender became a regular part of my experiences on the court. Some of the participants would clean up their language and behavior because of my presence. For example, Marshall (a player at Rowling Park) when talking with the guys said, "I took a girl home with me last night and f*cked her. I don't even remember her name. Oh sorry Bets, sometimes I forget you are here. My bad, homie". Others, however, became more vulgar, making me the object of their harassment both physically and verbally. Remarks about my body happened on a regular basis, and condemnation about a girl playing pick-up became the norm. Mark, a 30-year-old resident in the Rowling Park neighborhood, made his opinion of me quite clear by saying, "I mean I'm not tryin to be mean or nothing but girls just can't hoop like men

can. You too small, too weak. You can't dunk it. I mean I know you can play for a girl and shit but you got no business being out here with grown men. Your ass should be over there on the sidelines cheerin for me". David and Rick shared these same sentiments. David believes that "girls are only good for two things: cooking and f*cking", while Rick suggested that I should "go and sit that pretty little face on the side where I belong".

Race played an additional role in the research process. At Lewis Park, the conversation of race never came up because like me, a vast majority of the participants were white. There have been very few instances in my life where I have been in the racial minority. At Rowling Park, more often than not I was one of only a few white people. On several occasions, I was the only white person. Some of the guys playing at Rowling Park would comment on my race. I would occasionally be called names such as "little white girl" or "snow bunny". It never bothered me because it was never said in a malicious manner. I feel like I stood out much more because of my sex than I did because of my race.

Additionally, there were a few instances that I felt unsafe or uncomfortable. Drug use, marijuana specifically, was observed multiple times on the sidelines of both basketball courts. Once I was asked by one of the players if I wanted to smoke with him. I politely declined. Verbal fights often broke out, usually ending as soon as tempers subsided. Physical fights were uncommon but not unheard of. Usually fights consisted of people on opposing teams fouling a little too hard, but on occasion full-fledged fights broke out.

INTERACTING AT PUBLIC BASKETBALL COURTS

Respondents in this study frequently discussed the following three key themes: establishing social networks, affirming status in public places, and realizing personal fulfillment

through involvement in pick-up. As the research in this study demonstrates, players at Lewis and Rowling Parks differed in how they performed these three processes. In other words, this study demonstrates that social interactions lead to different processes due to the racial and socioeconomic differences of the participants and surrounding neighborhood. The findings of my research show that community engagement is not necessarily declining, but may operate differently for non-whites and working class citizens.

Establishing Networks

By observing social interactions at Lewis and Rowling Parks, apparent themes became visible regarding the formulation of social networks. Lewis Park, located in a white, middle-class neighborhood, has a tendency of bringing together individuals who already had other things in common: fraternity ties, students at the University, age, and race. Spence, a 22-year old white male, poses the question, "Yea, I mean me and Tyler and Drew (points over at them) are having a party tonight and I was, I mean we were, thinking you might want to come by. It's nothing big, just some of our fraternity friends and stuff." For Spence, the park served as a place to hang out with his existing social structure. Kyle, a 19-year old white student, echoes this sentiment: "I can't really think of a time where I hung out with someone off the court that I met on the court. I usually come here with my friends so I just kind of stick with them. There's a group of three or four of us who usually come together to play".

The men playing basketball at Lewis Park came to the court and left the court together. There were very few single individuals who frequented the court. The social structure on the basketball court did not extend into the community on a larger scale. David, a 20-year old white student, states, "It's to the point now where I know everyone who comes up to Lewis to play. A lot of them go to school and I see them on campus. I'll give them a head nod or something but I

don't ask them to hang out or anything". The relationships and friendships are location-specific, having limited boundaries tied to the physical location of the basketball court. The social networks are limited in their consequences and have little impact on the individuals who participate in pick-up basketball and for the community in which Lewis Park is located.

The social networks formed in Rowling Park serve a wider purpose and have an impact on the community at large. Participants accrued a range of benefits from participating in pick-up basketball games: monetary support, childcare, transportation, and help finding a job. Because of these additional social networks, individuals have a wider scope of people in which to learn information and gain favors from. Members of the Rowling Park pick-up basketball scene had an apparent stake in being a part of the social interaction. The following interaction offers one example of this:

> Luke (30-year old black male): "Today's our anniversary. I wanted to take her (his wife) out to dinner but my sister called and said she couldn't babysit tonight. So I guess we will have to cancel or something"
>
> Steve (29-year old black male): "Aww no man, you can drop the kids off with me and Tara. We will watch em. That wife of yours deserves at least a dinner for puttin up with your sorry ass"

As this interaction demonstrates, the men playing basketball at Rowling Park interact with one another both on and off the basketball court. In a previous observation, Luke and Steve told me they met at Rowling Park on the basketball court. Anthony, a 36-year-old black man, states:

> Yea, we are all tight. Last week someone broke into my car when we were inside sleeping. I had left my wallet in my car accidentally and it got taken. So the next day, I was walking to work cuz my window got bashed in, and Bryan was driving by. He stopped by and picked me up and gave me a ride. Which was real nice, considering I would have been late and probably fired if he hadn't of come by.

Again, these two individuals reported having met on the basketball court. In this case, the social network infrastructure of Rowling Park potentially saved Luke's job and kept him from being

unemployed. Reese is a 27-year old black man. His house flooded and everything in the basement was damaged. As soon as he noticed the flooding, he walked across the street to the basketball court and told them his situation. Without even being asked, the basketball game was put on pause and the players went to help Reese bail water out of his basement. In another example, Bee, a newcomer to the pick-up basketball scene, offers this observation:

> I'm friends with all these guys. Yea, I live next door to Big Mike over there. I work with Charles. Last week we were up here playin and I invited everyone over for a poker night. I took everyone's money (laughs) but I think they all had a good time. I probably wouldn't have met them if I hadn't started comin up here to play. I just moved here a few months ago from Texas and they the only friends I got.

For Bee, pick-up basketball allowed for a safe location to meet friends in a new city. It gave him an opportunity to get plugged into a community in which he was previously not a member of. The social networks formed on the basketball court allowed a newcomer to move from an outsider to an insider, thus offering him a place within the community's social structure.

At Rowling Park, social networks on the court extended far beyond the players themselves. Wives, girlfriends, children, and friends all gathered around the court to spectate, cheer, trash talk, and simply hang out. Joe, a 27 year old black man, states, "I bring my kids up here sometimes when their mom's gone. Everyone kinda help watch over them. That way they get to play at the park and I get to play basketball and we aren't just stuck in the house all day." Older men, who were no longer able to participate in the actual playing of the game, came to watch the younger generations and give advice. In a conversation with 48-year old Ray, he states:

> Yea, I'm too old to be playin out here with these kids. I used to play up here everyday. I uhh, I even played in college but you might have known that already. I just like to come cuz I like to tell these kids how to play. I like to tell them when they shootin too much or dribbling too much or talkin too much. They have a lot to learn. Do they always be listenin to me? No of course not.

The social networks formed at Rowling Park have tangible, real-life implications for the community in which the park is situated. Thirty-five-year old Martin describes how after a series of break-ins and robberies in the neighborhood, some of the men on the basketball court decided to create an unofficial "neighborhood watch" program and keep an eye on one another's houses and families. Charles, a 29-year old black father, talks about how there had been a neighborhood block party organized by some of the basketball players. Wives, children, and the players all came out for a big cook-out, and the women and children bonded with one another while the men played basketball. Marshall, a 34-year old black father, discussed how his friendships on the basketball court have turned out to be a helpful asset:

> Yea when I met Mike up here we both were talking about our sons and we decided to have them get together to play cuz they about the same age. Now every Tuesday we switch off watching them both so we can get some shit done without taking our, our kids with us to the store and stuff.

All of these cases demonstrate the importance of social networks in low-income communities. Through *communities of the court* people are given the occasion to socialize with one another. As this study demonstrates, by creating an atmosphere conducive for socializing, pick-up basketball serves as a bonding agent to strengthen social ties within a given community. People who participate in pick-up basketball form supportive social ties for them, thus giving them a stake in the status system (Anderson 1976). As shown, the relationships that form on the court are carried out in other arenas of social life. People, through these *communities of the court*, become friends, build social capital among the group, and can then call upon these social ties in times of need (Putnam 1995; Granovetter 1973; Lin 2000; Coleman 1989). In short, I argue that social networks in low-income neighborhoods can have a constructive and positive effect on individuals and communities as they bring people together and serve as a source of social cohesion.

Affirming Status

Research maintains that public places serve as an effective and meaningful venue for social status attainment, specifically to individuals from low-income circumstances (Anderson 1976). Research additionally argues that one's status in the group depends on the impression the person gives off and on those his audience holds. An individual's aptness for a given status or place is judged by others who are competitors, and in this case in particular status is derived from one's skill level on the basketball court (Anderson 1976). In order to achieve a high-status in a public setting, other people situated in that setting must deem you worthy of a high-status.

Basketball courts are one such venue for achieving social status. Through pick-up basketball, participants are able attain and maintain status both on the court and in the community. As noted in the literature review, there are class- and race-based differences when it comes to status attainment in public spaces. It is much more important for the lower-class players at Rowling Park to attain and maintain status on the basketball court than it is for their middle-class counterparts at Lewis Park. When a player has a bad game, or his team loses, the ramifications are much more serious for those who have more invested in the game. As the research has shown, individuals from low-income backgrounds place much more of an emphasis on excelling in sports than do middle- and upper class individuals. Oftentimes, they feel that it is their only venue for achieving success.

Status is very important to the participants at Rowling Park. Jalen, a 24-year old black man, best summarizes this sentiment:

> No, no. If you lose here, it'll ruin your day. Shit, it could ruin your week. If you lose around here, people hold that shit over your head. Grown ass men will fight out here, beat each other's asses, over this game. Losing out here is real. We lose in every other part of our lives, shit, most of us don't have jobs….or we hate our jobs, we are broke, we lost our wives, so if we lose out here, too, then we've got nothing but a pile of shit to show for ourselves.

Participants discussed the importance of winning and playing well in many of the informal interviews I conducted. They discussed the sense of rejection and embarrassment stemming from failure on the basketball court. In several instances, participants were heard insulting other players based on performances and berating players who underperformed. Pete, after missing the potential game-winning shot, vocalized his fear of being laughed at and scorned by his teammates and the opposing team. Other participants discuss how they won't let certain people play on their team because they "suck", are "weak", or "can't hoop". A person's status on the court is directly tied to his performance on the court. As Reese states, "no, no, no. It's live or die out here. If I don't win a game or if I play bad or some shit, it'll ruin my day."

For men at Rowling Park, success in sports serves as a venue for upward social mobility. For the low-income individuals at this park, limited economic and employment opportunities make basketball one of the most achievable ways to attain social status within the community. The status stemming from public parks is important to the men at Rowling Park because of their lack of options for leisure activities. For the most part, these men can't afford to belong to private gyms, clubs, or groups.

Conversely, participants at Lewis Park feel secure in their status in society without relying on their basketball skills to prove it. Participants at this park don't seem to be as concerned with their status stemming from pick-up basketball. Whether or not a player has a good game seems to be of less importance. As Eric, a white 22-year old college student asserts:

> I don't really care if I win or lose. I mean, I like winning, but I'm not gonna get upset or anything. I've got much more important shit going on than whether or not I win a pick up basketball game. I've got a school, my job, bills, the future to think about. I don't really understand those people who yell and scream and fight over a basketball game. This isn't the NBA playoffs. No one gives a shit.

Kevin, a white 18-year old participant at Lewis Park, mirrors this sentiment by saying that some days he just has to leave early if the games get too intense. He goes on to say, "I don't like the yelling or arguing or fighting over calls. It's just a sport. People should just all have fun and get along. I don't understand all the unwanted and unnecessary tension." Though these situations did not occur on a regular basis, they demonstrate the indifference of winning and losing to the participants at Lewis Park.

Again, the importance of sports is linked to class. Middle class men have a range of other options to achieve success and status: education, employment, and family inheritance (Messner 1989). White-middle class culture places an emphasis on education and income and argues that there are better choices for upward mobility than pursing an athletic career. The realities faced by males in lower-class communities give athletic identities a deeper importance than those from middle-class backgrounds (Messner 2009). Members of the upper class are constantly reminded of all of their many positive attributes, while lower-class culture emphasizes sport as the main venue for bettering one's life.

These class-based differences in the importance of sport could explain the difference in status arrangements at Rowling and Lewis Park. As the research in this study shows, winning and losing and a participant's performance level matters much less at Lewis Park. At Rowling Park, however, a person's status is directly linked to his performance, and this status oftentimes goes beyond the boundaries of the basketball court. This is exemplified by 29-year old Trey, a black resident of Rowling Park:

> Naw that guy is legit. He balls hard. I really respect that about him. I know he's had some tough breaks and has been locked up and stuff but he is the best player out here when he comes. Some dudes up here can't stand that dude but like I said I've got mad respect for him. I even told my boss about him, tryin to get him a job up where I work up at the gas station.

Even though this particular player was not a favorite on the basketball court, his ability to excel athletically allowed him to transcend his social position and be looked upon favorably by his peers. He might even get a job out of it.

Realizing Personal Fulfillment

Pick-up basketball serves an important role in the lives of participants at both Lewis and Rowling Parks. Partaking in this particular activity allows for the realization of personal fulfillment as participants offer a diverse and extensive list of reasons why pick-up basketball betters their lives. However, there is an apparent difference in the role of pick-up in an individual's life based on the participant's socioeconomic background. Depending on one's social location, the reason for playing pick-up basketball varies.

At Lewis Park, individuals offered the following explanations for participating in pick-up basketball: hanging out with friends, exercising, being outside, and for the "love of the game" are among the most common responses. One of the most frequently cited reasons for playing pick-up was spending time with friends. In a conversation with 21-year old C.J, he discusses how he enjoys playing pick-up simply because his friends are there:

> C.J: "I honestly don't know why I come play basketball. I don't even like the sport. I'm a football player. I guess I play because my brothers come play.
>
> Me: "Real brothers? Or fraternity ones?"
>
> C.J.: "Fraternity brothers. We all come play together on Friday afternoons"

In another conversation, 21-year old college student Jase shares a similar outlook with CJ. When asked why he plays pick-up basketball, Jase responded, "I guess because my friends play. We live right down the street, and they always wanna come play, so I guess that's why I come up

here. It's fun though, it keeps me in shape if nothing else." In a similar light, Tim jokes about how he plays basketball in order to get rid of his impending 'beer belly."

Many of the participants at Lewis Park stressed that pick-up basketball was a good way of breaking up the monotony of their everyday routine. Evan, a white 19-year old, expressed this feeling by saying, "my days are so boring. School, work, school, work, then school again. Playing basketball is the only fun thing I have time for." Matt, a fraternity brother of Evan's, echoed this sentiment, "I have a test tomorrow and I didn't, I don't even wanna study. So I came out here with them (points at three boys he came to court with). My mom would say I am "procrastinating" (uses air quotes)." Here Matt and Evan are suggesting that pick-up basketball serves as a distraction from their daily responsibilities. Participating in pick-up allows them to break out of their repetitive daily routines.

Participants at Rowling Park offered some of the same explanations, with a few additional ones: getting out the house, proving one's superiority over their peers, as an outlet for frustration, and for "bragging rights". One day, when speaking with 25-year old Diondre, he opened up to me about why playing pick-up basketball had become so important in his life. He stated, "I had an offer to play in college but I got my girl pregnant and had to start working and make that money. Now I come out here and play. Not quite the same, dude, not quite the same (smiles). But I got my daughter so I'm cool with it." Here Diondre shows how pick-up basketball allowed him to remain close to the sport he loved, despite the fact that his original plan to play college basketball fell through. Daniel, a loud-mouthed 19-year old, says he plays pick-up "to beat ya'lls asses. This is the only thing I'm good at. Aint that a sorry excuse." Similarly, Quentin, a 22-year old with a short temper, asserted, "I play because I'm the best.

Look at me!" as he shot the ball from half court and missed. At this court, reputation, dominance, and status were discussed more often than at Lewis Park.

Participants at Rowling Park also emphasized that pick-up basketball served as a distraction from their daily lives. 31-year old Carlos, one of the better players at the park, laughed while telling me, "I just wanna get out of the house. I've got two kids, a wife, and three dogs. Coming to hoop is the one time I get to get out of there." Basketball serves as a way to temporarily leave behind one's life situation in a safe, healthy environment.

At both Lewis Park and Rowling Park, pick-up basketball played an important role in the lives of the participants. Men at both courts openly discussed the importance of playing basketball to their well-being, both physically and mentally. From a means of exercising to a way of establishing dominance over one's peers, basketball offers a wide and varied list of ways to achieve personal fulfillment.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The theoretical contribution of this project is to build upon contemporary social capital theorist's conceptions of social networks to include race- and class-based variability. By observing and comparing social interactions on two public basketball courts, I examine the social networks, status attainment, and personal fulfillment stemming from participation in pick-up basketball. Putnam studied bowling leagues, as well as other traditional, voluntary associations, as examples of community engagement. Because Putnam focused on social engagement among middle-class white Americans, he may have overlooked how race and class play a role in social interactions (Putnam 2000). Throughout this project, I build upon the work of Putnam and others by examining race and class differences in community activity and social cohesion

(Putnam 2005; Putnam 1995; Lin 2000; Coleman 1988). Interactions at the two public basketball courts led to differing processes among basketball players. These players differed in how they established networks, affirmed their status, and gained personal fulfillment. I argue that these interactions led to different processes due to the racial and socioeconomic differences of the participants and surrounding neighborhood. I offer that the findings in this research will continue to show that community engagement is not necessarily declining, but may operate differently for non-whites and working class citizens.

This study has practical, tangible implications for society. By studying the role of public basketball courts in neighborhoods, one can argue that public spaces in general serve a very important role in the society. In contemporary United States, communities have failed to invest adequately into their infrastructure of public spaces. Nearly two-thirds of the residents of America's largest cities do not have access to a nearby park, playground, or open space (Sherer 2006). Low-income neighborhoods are especially lacking in public spaces. Generally speaking, minorities and the poor have historically been forced to live in paved-over, industrialized areas with no access to public parks. Local communities often lack the ability, funds, and developmental skills to acquire property and turn it into a public space. With the current economic condition of the United States, public spaces and parks have been the first resource to be cut (Sherer 2006). Both local and federal governments are neglecting to invest in public spaces at an effective rate, though research has shown concrete evidence arguing for the positive consequences they have for communities.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I argue that social capital is constructed differently based on the socioeconomic status of those participating in the interaction. I examine how social and community interaction differs among basketball players at two public parks by highlighting differences in the establishment of social networks, status attainment and affirmation, and the personal fulfillment provided by sports. Through observing social interactions at two distinctly different public basketball courts, I am able to provide evidence to support that public places serve an important role in the life of a community.

The results of this study expand upon existing sociological theory by showing that social capital is not declining for all demographics. It has been argued by scholars that with the emergence of technological devices in the 21st century, individuals are no longer turning to public places as a means to socialize (Putnam 2000). However, as evidenced by the findings of this paper, public places are still places where people come to socialize; individuals living in low-income neighborhoods benefit greatly from the relationships forged on the basketball court. From help with childcare to employment opportunities, the social ties formed at Lewis Park have real-life implications for the participating parties. Social capital comes in many forms. Through participating in pick-up, people are given the opportunity to feel successful, to be someone important, and to have a sense of pride in something. Status can be created and maintained through one's performance in pick-up basketball.

Masculine identity is a key concept that kept reemerging in the research findings. Messner points out that one's masculine identity is closely linked to his athletic ability, and the findings of my research supported this claim (1989). For low-income communities especially, men with superior athletic aptitude are respected, celebrated, and credited with being "real" men.

Being a superior athlete allows an individual to transcend social boundaries and garner a higher social status in the community. Additional consideration should be given to the role of shaping one's masculine identity through pick-up basketball and sports in general.

One direction of future research that would deepen our understanding of the role of public places would be considering how these public places are utilized by all demographics of people, not just basketball-playing men. Most of the participants playing pick-up basketball at Rowling Park are a transient population. These men live and go to school in Basin City for a short, specified duration of time (roughly four years). The roots to the community in which they live are arguably not as deep because they know their time living in the area is limited. This could account for the differences in social interactions occurring at the two pick-up basketball sites. Future research should be done regarding the effects on social interactions at public places for transient and non-transient populations.

On a related note, it would also be fruitful to conduct similar research on a variety of other public places. Basketball courts provide a very specific niche, and that could have had an influence on the findings of this analysis. A basketball court represents a leisure activity, and research should be done on the class-based differences in social interactions at other types of public places: taverns, churches, parks, festivals, etc. Furthermore, due to the lack of variability in the sample, this study focused solely on men. The sample was further limited to men in good enough physical shape to participate in basketball. Further inquiry into this topic, with the inclusion of women, should be completed. Additionally, this study was restricted to looking at only African American men living in a low-income neighborhood and White men living in a middle-income neighborhood. Future research should be done on a variety of racial and class backgrounds.

REFERENCES

Anderson, Elijah. 1976. *A Place on the Corner*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Boggs, Carl. 2001. "Social Capital and Political Fantasy: Robert Putnam's Bowling Alone." *Theory and Society* 30(2): 281-297.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis.* Sage Publications.

Coakley, Jay. 2008. *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*. McGraw-Hill Higher Education Publishers.

Coleman, James. 1988. "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital." *American Journal of Sociology.* 95-120.

Costa, Dora, and Mathew L. Kahn. 2001. "Understanding the Decline in Social Capital, 1952-1998." Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Research.

Deland, Michael. 2012. "Suspending Narrative Engagements: The Case of Pick-up Basketball" *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 642.

Francis, Mark. 1989. "Control as a Dimension of Public-Space Quality" Pp. 147-169 in *Public Places and Spaces,* edited by I. Altman and E.H. Zube. New York: Plenum Press.

Gieryn, Thomas F. 2000. "A Space for Place in Sociology" *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 463-96.

Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78(6): 1360-1380.

Horvat, Eric, Elliot Weininger, and Annette Lareau. 2003. "From Social Ties to Social Capital: Class Differences in the Relations between Schools and Parent Networks." *American Education Research Journal 40(2): 319-351.*

Kjerulf, Dubrow, Joshua and Jimi Adams. 2012. "Hoop Inequalities: Race, Class, and Family Structure Background and the Odds of Playing in the National Basketball Association." International Review for the Sociology of Sport 47(1): 43-59.

Lin, Nan, and Mary Dumin. 1986. "Access to Occupations Through Social Ties." *Social Networks* 8:365-385

Lin, Nan. 2000. "Inequality in Social Capital." *Contemporary Sociology*. 29(6): 785-795.

Lofland, John, David Snow, Leon Anderson, and Lyn H. Lofland. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis.* California: Wadsworth/Thomson.

Messner, Michael A. 1992. *Power at Play: Sports and the Problem of Masculinity.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Messner, Michael A. 2009. *It's All for the Kids: Gender, Families, and Youth Sports*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Messner, Michael A. 1989. "Masculinities and Athletic Careers." *Gender and Society*. 3(1): 71-88.

Picou, J. Steven. 1978. "Race, Athletic Achievement, and Educational Aspiration." *The Sociological Quarterly* 19: 429-438.

Putnam, Robert D. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6: 65-78.

Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling Alone.* New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.

Shakib, Sohaila and Phillip Veliz. 2012. "Race, sport and social support: A comparison between African American and White youths' perceptions of social support for sport participation." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*.

Sherer, Paul M. 2006. "The Benefits of Parks: Why American Needs More City Parks and Open Spaces." The Trust for Public Land.

Small, Mario Luis. 2009. *Unanticipated Gains*. New York: Oxford University Press.

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

October 7, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO: Betsy Fogle
Brandon Jackson

FROM: Ro Windwalker
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 13-09-129

Protocol Title: *Communities of the Court: A Place-Based Ethnography of Pick-Up Basketball*

Review Type: ☒ EXEMPT ☐ EXPEDITED ☐ FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 10/07/2013 Expiration Date: 10/06/2014

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 (http://vpred.uark.edu/210.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 55 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.