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Taming Place: Faubourg Tremé, the Insurgence of Interstate 10, and the
Redefinition of Black Educational Space

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Education

by

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May 2017

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ABSTRACT

In most of the United States, the central area situated between boulevards is referred to as the median; however in New Orleans, Louisiana, since the Civil War, the area is called the neutral ground. This qualitative study concerns the neutral ground area of the segment of North Claiborne Avenue which runs through Faubourg Tremé, the oldest Black neighborhood in the United States. My interest in this specific space stems from the fact that I understand it as a space of Black education. The problem is that between the years of 1961 and 1969 the government procured the neutral ground as a green space and used it to construct interstate 10. For this study, I explored the narratives surrounding this construction in order to better understand how the educational trends in the Black community of Faubourg Tremé shifted due to the construction of I-10. Black educational spaces, in response to engaging the meanings of the construction, were something not relegated to the brick and mortar institution. Rather, Black educational spaces were those simultaneously embodied and/or places re-imagined in multidisciplinary capacities through community engagements. It is this consideration which functioned as grounding for my inquiry into the neutral grounds of Faubourg Tremé and the broader North Claiborne Avenue corridor. Altogether, this study resulted in increased understanding of how collective spatial embodiment and/or re-imagining of place occurs through communal memory in response to violent infrastructural change.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: EVOLVING SONORITIES, MY NASHVILLE, DAD'S NASHVILLE, AND GAZES TOWARD FAUBOURG TREME

Often, I must explain to those who inquire about my first name, Reagan, that my parents were in no way supporters or proponents of Ronald Reagan's administration. I was born in 1979, approximately 2 years prior to Reagan's administration. Technically, I am situated as a child of the 1970s who rode the cusp of 1979 into the 1980s. My memories of childhood reside in the 1980s, laced with images of Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" slogans cast on backgrounds of kelly green. Those drug campaigns were widely televised in harmony with the images of the Los Angeles Police Department Chief of Police Daryl F. Gates's fondness for the militarization of the police force demonstrated in his "Operation Hammer"¹ initiative. As a result, many Black families' homes became the targets of police drug raids justified around notions of "probable cause." While the police force was there to serve the community, it stands as an oppressive imprisoning force for the Black community.

These oppressive actions taken against Black communities throughout the United States resonate as an echo of the often reckless, insensitive actions taken by governmental agencies, such as the police. Whereas Operation Hammer inflicted oppression through militarized law enforcement tactics, this notion of oppression can be understood as well when processing the imposition of physical structures in communities. One such structure

¹Started in 1987 by Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Chief of Police Daryl F. Gates to quell gang violence along with drug trafficking in Los Angeles, California, the "Operation Hammer" initiative translated to targeting Black and Hispanic residents of Los Angeles through the LAPD's use of militaristic force. During this time, the LAPD used military vehicles equipped with battle ram extensions to violently enter residents' homes, and helicopter surveillance to scan neighborhoods. As a result of the LAPD's negligence, many community members were unjustly targeted, which led to, but was not limited to, incarceration, destruction of home and contents, racial profiling, and murder.

is Interstate 10 that runs through the New Orleans, Louisiana, neighborhood of Faubourg Tremé.

Before discussing Faubourg Tremé, I must mention my birth home of Nashville, Tennessee. Specifically, I was born in North Nashville, where the Black community was situated. Before my birth, the construction of Interstate 40 dramatically shifted the geography of North Nashville, similar to what Interstate 10 did to Faubourg Tremé. Reflecting on the negative effects of Interstate 40 in Nashville caused me to inquire about how these infrastructures functioned outside my home city. Before I discuss Faubourg Tremé, I will share my recollections as a child walking to my grandparents' house and having to cross over Interstate 40.

The aerial satellite image below shows the paths my siblings, cousins, and I walked after school each day.



Figure 1. Google Satellite Image of Personal Walking Path

I attended Kindergarten and 1st grade at St. Vincent DePaul, a private Catholic School located in North Nashville near interstate 40; the image starting point says Lead Academy, the charter school that later occupied the premises of St. Vincent DePaul. After school, with my brother, two cousins, I made the brief trek back to my grandparents' residence where we waited for our parents to pick us up. Our path to my grandparents' home intersected Interstate 40. We often took 17th Avenue, which required us to make a sharp 90° turn to the right on Scovel Street. In this part of our journey, we had to briefly walk opposite the direction of my grandparents' residence, parallel to Interstate 40. Afterwards, we made a left turn onto D.B. Todd Boulevard and crossed over the interstate. Shortly after crossing Interstate 40 we turned left and walked down Jefferson Street, a historically important avenue in the Black Nashville community, then made a left to cut through the NAACP's parking lot, which took us to the backyard entrance of our grandparents' residence. During our walks, I often wondered why someone constructed two separate avenues under the name of Scovel Street. If Scovel Street was the same avenue, I did not think that I should be required to make the sharp right, requiring me to briefly move in the direction opposite my grandparents' house.

That was my perception as a child. I was too young then to consider the likelihood that the construction of Interstate 40 had imposed a series of boundaries throughout the neighborhood, which segmented it as in the case of Scovel Street. As a child, Interstate 40 was as natural to the environment of North Nashville as the neighborhood corner stores and its schools. The bridge over I-40 where my brothers, cousins, and I walked after school resembled the bridge across a castle's moat; however, the figurative water life below the bridge was represented by the impatient, predatory, resonant cries, and roaring of

automobiles' engines. From above, the combination of all this activity and cacophony reverberated throughout the bridge's structures, creating the unsteady feeling that perhaps the bridge could eventually fail. Below, the passing vehicles resembled the artwork of Beauford Delaney² in the blurring of the vehicles' individual shapes. Our perception was reduced to a series of distortions of spectral color shifts determined by the vehicles' rates of speed along with sonic cacophonies comprised of low, high, short, long, accented, legato, and shrill sounds.

Gazing Back Towards Dad's Nashville

Considering the phenomenon of Scovel Street and Interstate 40, I thought of the narrative my father shared with me about how the last house his parents occupied was not the one of his birth. He explained that the original residence was torn down in 1968 as part of procuring land for Interstate 40 in Nashville.

To receive a narrative from another is to be presented with an ever-expanding entity. This narrative entity grows and expresses itself in an individual's conscience through tangential shifts in perspective. The non-linearity of perspective is the reaction, which occurs in the relationship between received narrative, self, and experienced life. My father's narrative is an ever-expanding entity for me. I embodied my father's narrative of his birth home and this narrative has become essential in my epistemological/ontological shifts of perceiving community places and spaces. My father's narrative about his birth home represents the ever-expanding entity to which I have a tangential relationship.

Reflection upon my father's narrative, in conjunction with my relationship with his parents'

²A Black painter most commonly associated with the Harlem Renaissance, Delaney's painting style in the 1930s-1940s is described as abstract expressionism. In my comparison, I was thinking about his painting *Can Fire in the Park* (1946) in which the figures are visually distorted.

second residence, raised my awareness of additional possibilities regarding the space my grandparents' house occupied, and I questioned what had happened. This reflection has expanded and influenced how I conceptualize the neighborhood space where my grandparents' residences old and new, both were located.

Passing through the door of my grandparent's second residence took me to the front porch. Panning left to right I was surrounded by a series of physical and aural boundaries. The first image was that of Interstate 40, the sounds and images of which radiated urgency. As a child, I often sat on the porch, gazing over and through the vegetation conquering the rusty fence, above which an impatient elevated level of traffic continually rumbled. Interstate 40's skeletal concrete structure simultaneously acted as an amplifier, and as a reminder of the automobiles' dominance. 14th Avenue, the street running in front of the residence, standing as a boundary before my eyes reached the rusty fence, was one of the many streets in the North Nashville community that became a dead end as a result of the construction of Interstate 40.

Situated in close proximity to my own narrative, my father's narrative led me to how I naturalize the boundaries imposed by Interstate 40. Specifically, his narrative was a reminder that once the neighborhood and its streets did not include dead end denotations. The interstate was simply a parasitic device that siphoned, complicated, and redirected business and commerce, further preventing them from entering North Nashville, fracturing the community, and merging with economic disparagement throughout.

I present this narrative to give some insight into memories that inspired my research topic. My father's narrative was his experience of being displaced from his birth

home as a result of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956³, enacted during the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration.

My father's narrative and mine were located in Nashville, Tennessee. Reflecting upon these narratives, the larger issue I considered was that of community space. Furthermore, the reconfiguring and reduction of community space through the implementation of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 resulted in the reduction and reconfiguring of educational spaces. Moreover, access granted by Eisenhower's bill in other cases equaled non-access for opposing communities' community spaces. Spaces where interstate construction was imposed, once occupied by homes, businesses, parks, etc., resulted in an overall loss of areas where community members were able to exist communally. Community spaces are educational spaces, and the limiting of community spaces created an educational dilemma through the reduction and displacement of the possibilities for communities to be communal. Considering what happened to Black communities in Nashville as a result of the construction of Interstate 40, I saw a parallel with the detrimental consequences of Interstate 10's construction through the neighborhood of Faubourg Tremé.

My study is situated in Faubourg Tremé where I address how the reduction and reconfiguration of educational space resulted from the construction of Interstate 10. I refer to the space between the two North Claiborne Avenues, originally a neutral ground, and on which I-10 was constructed, as an educational space. The aerial and ground level photos

³The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 allowed for the construction of approximately 41,000 miles of interstate throughout the United States (Crutcher, 2010). For many African-American communities Eisenhower's bill translated into the erection of expanses of interstate extending through their communities. The end result consisted of, though was not limited to, community displacement, community cohesiveness, culture, identity, forced business closures, and loss of historic structures.

below show North Claiborne Avenue neutral grounds pre-Interstate 10. The neutral ground in the aerial photo can be identified by the linear arrangement of approximately 500 mature oak trees.

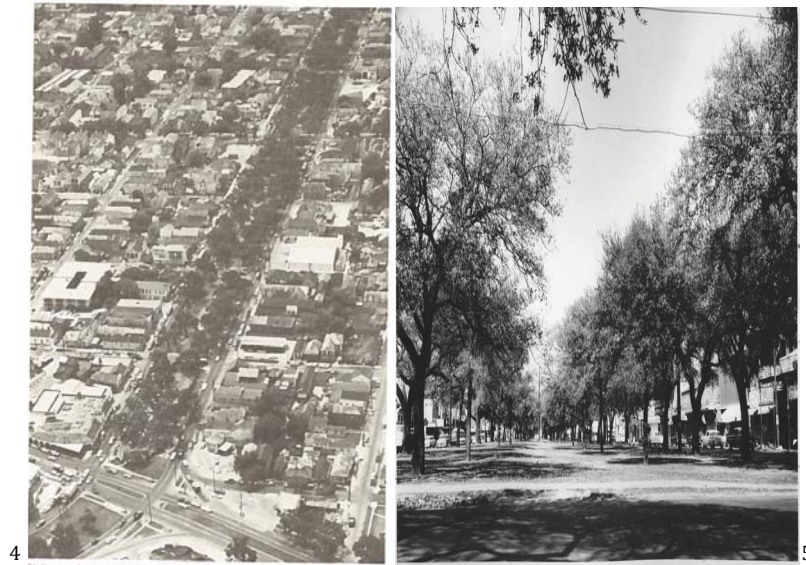


Figure 2. North Claiborne Avenue Aerial and Ground Level Neutral Ground Photos Pre Interstate 10

The following set of photos presents both an aerial and ground level perspective of the neutral grounds with Interstate 10 construction. The aerial photo depicts a substantial completed segment of Interstate 10, whereas the ground level photo shows the fully completed interstate expanse.

The neutral grounds, once a green park like environment, were transformed into a concrete graveyard.

⁴This photograph is from the Claiborne Avenue Development Team (CADT) 1976 study. The photograph presents Claiborne Avenue in 1966. This study was obtained from Hill Memorial Archives located on the Louisiana State University Campus in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁵This photograph was obtained from the New Orleans Public Library Archives (Photographer Unknown, Undated).

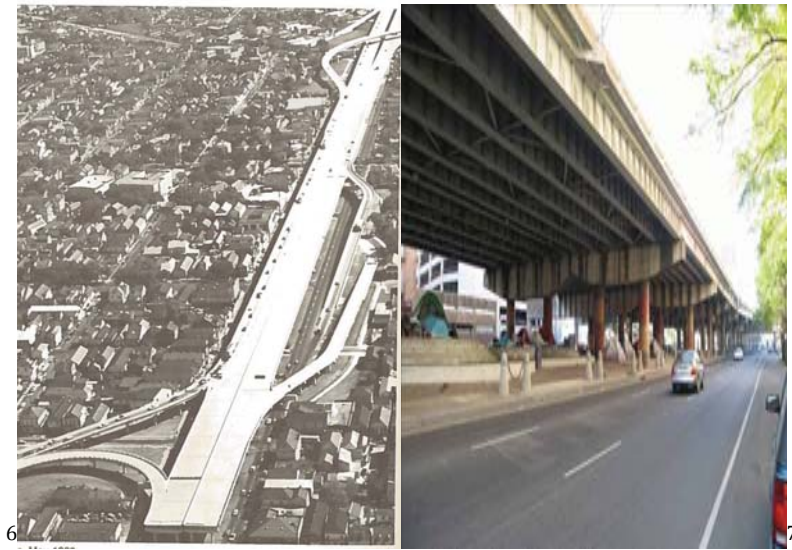


Figure 3. North Claiborne Avenue Aerial and Ground Level Neutral Ground Photos Post Interstate 10

In the following section, discussions shift from my home to Faubourg Tremé. A quote from scholar Fran Tonkiss (2003), specifically her observation of the improvisatory nature individuals employ when navigating city places, inspired my thought and inquiry regarding Faubourg Tremé. I engaged an analysis of Michael Crutcher's book *Tremé: Race and Place in a New Orleans Neighborhood* (2010) with attention to the chapter titled "Killing Claiborne's Avenue," through which I explored his assertion of losing "place" (p. 65). For the continuation of the chapter discussion, I situate and understand the neutral grounds as a multidisciplinary Black educational place. My suggestion in this analysis is that, to better understand the tragic implications inflicted on communal educational ways of existence, it is necessary to acknowledge that the topography, physically and sonically, of

⁶This photograph is from the Claiborne Avenue Development Team (CADT) 1976 study. The photograph presents Claiborne Avenue in 1968. This study was obtained from Hill Memorial Archives located on the Louisiana State University Campus in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁷This photograph comes from the online article "Ten North American Freeways Without Futures" (Fox, 2008). This article can be obtained from www.treehugger.com

Faubourg Tremé and adjacent neighborhoods was shifted, therefore rerouting communal learning.

Gazing Toward Faubourg Tremé

Walking the city, people invent their own urban idioms, a local language written in the streets and read as if out loud. A strange city, too, can seem like a language you don't know. Gradually you pick up a few words, recognize certain expressions, try out some turns of phrase. Walking, we compose spatial sentences that begin to make sense, come to master the intricate grammar of the streets; slowly, we learn to make the spaces of the city speak (Tonkiss, in Bull & Back, 2003, p. 305).

Tonkiss' (2003) discussion of "Walking the city" speaks of the spatial improvisation individuals employ through their excursions within a city space. Additionally, Tonkiss acknowledged the space of a city as containing a "local language" constructed through walking. She explained that the specificity of the city space presents a challenge to those entering it, unfamiliar with the "local language" of that space, yet emphasizing that the strangeness of the space to the individual eases through gradual trial, error, and improvisation.

While Tonkiss framed strangeness in a city according to one's unfamiliarity with the community being entered, Crutcher (2010) extended the notion of strangeness within a city. Crutcher presented the perspective of what it means for a community to become estranged from city places once considered home. Furthermore, Crutcher's discussion proposed what it means for a community's rootedness to place to be severed and lost through construction of city infrastructure.

Crutcher's (2010) chapter titled "Killing Claiborne's Avenue" in his book *Tremé: Race and Place in a New Orleans Neighborhood* dealt with the notion of losing "place" with the construction of Interstate 10. Specifically, Crutcher (2010) wrote:

Perversely, the construction of an elevated rather than grade-level highway means that the physical space still exists. But most of the life and activity that once filled the area between northbound and southbound lanes of Claiborne Avenue now in the shadow of the highway, is gone. The “place” of Claiborne Avenue, at least as it had existed, has been lost forever (p. 65).

Crutcher’s notion of lost “place” was a commentary on the elevated segment of I-10 that was constructed between the years 1961 and 1969. Crutcher explained that the construction process involved procurement and demolition of expanses of the neutral ground⁸ that extended through the neighborhood of Faubourg Tremé. The neutral ground proved to be more than just an expanse of land containing approximately 500 oak trees. In the Faubourg Tremé neighborhood, it served as a multidisciplinary communal space. In this space, the blow of Jim Crow’s ethic, which emphasized racial segregation and substantially limited and denied access to public facilities, was lessened for children through appropriating the neutral ground as their playground. Additionally, the neutral ground functioned as a public gathering place for families and the larger community, for play and organization of civic activities, i.e., social aid and pleasure clubs and engaging in Black Indian masking ceremonies.

Some of the many examples to consider when attempting to conceptualize the multidisciplinary capacities of the North Claiborne neutral ground can be addressed with the examination of Mardi Gras celebrations in New Orleans. Historically, Mardi Gras was racially segregated forcing Black communities to establish traditions in their communities apart from the White celebrations in the French Quarter. This resulted in the development of an estimated 270 Black krewes, or carnival organizations, such as The Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, The Baby Dolls, Original Dukes Club Inc., to name a few, which formed

⁸The term neutral ground refers to the central area of land between two boulevards. This expanse of land is also called a median.

partly in response to racial segregation of Mardi Gras celebrations (O'Neill, 2014; Vaz, 2013). Furthermore, these krewes presently and in the past organized and paraded throughout North Claiborne Avenue street and neutral ground area.

Additionally, when addressing Black Indians, often referred to as Mardi Gras Indians, I saw the North Claiborne Avenue street and neutral grounds as being utilized as educational space for imparting and sustaining Black Indian traditions⁹. For further clarification, the tradition of the Black Indians is approximately 150 years old (O'Neill, 2014) and relations amongst opposing groups (also known as gangs and/or tribes) originally were violent in nature however this violence has ceased overtime (Brown, 2014). Presently, battles amongst any of the groups are carried out symbolically. An example of these symbolic battles is expressed through the meetings of opposing chiefs attempting to upstage each other through displaying and parading their most flamboyant custom regalia. Comprised of mainly Black working class people, Black Indians are most commonly recognized for their highly personalized regalia, fashioned most closely after that of indigenous Plains cultures (Brown, 2014), traditionally unveiled on Mardi Gras day. Additionally, each group also has a series of signals, expressed through movement, vocalizations, and music. In regard to place, Kennedy (2010) details Chief Donald Harrison, Sr., of The Guardians of the Flame, having group members engage signal practice on the neutral grounds of North Claiborne Avenue. Signal practice prepared members to expand over several city blocks from in back and rear and inform group members about any dangerous situations. The more important point I saw is that the neutral grounds served as

⁹In respect for this tradition, I say Black Indians as opposed to Mardi Gras Indians. I do this in acknowledgement that those participating in this tradition live as Black Indians beyond the Mardi Gras season.

a place of learning for some various Black Indian groups to impart and exchange knowledge regarding communication and rituals (Kennedy, 2010).

Through the segregation of Mardi Gras celebrations, the Black community developed traditions, organizations, and rituals indigenous to their neighborhoods and North Claiborne Avenue, both the street and neutral ground, was where the community gathered, exchanged, and expressed idyllic possibilities in addition to echoing folkloric resonances. In reference of the previously mentioned examples of carnival organizations and the Black Indians, I choose to consider to Faubourg Tremé's neutral ground as a multidisciplinary educational space, given the fluid, continual, and heterogeneous types of learning that occurred.

An educational space is a multidisciplinary space. Regarding marginalized communities, it is essential to acknowledge the interconnected and interdependent function of public community spaces to further understand the rich nuanced ways education emanates for the community. My assertion of educational space as multidisciplinary space is situated in the context to consider how learning occurs and has occurred in spite of the governmental oppressions resulting from the erection of structures such as interstates. In denoting a space as educational, I seek to become open to the variety of ways a community continues to be communal. Communal learning, both living as a community and learning to be communal, is an educational pursuit gleaned from both spaces denoted as educational (i.e., schools) and community spaces (i.e., parks, convenience stores, streets, etc.).

The construction of I-10 created an educational issue for the community through violently shifting the sound symbols. Therefore, sound is an essential area of exploration

for this study and it is equally important that I engage the spatial reorganization of Faubourg Tremé through the imposed shift of sonic topographies. As Gershon (2011b) emphasized, sound represents a series of embodied knowledge. Sound is as much a narrative as the written or spoken text. Sound exposes consonant and dissonant depths of meaning.

How might the neutral ground have sounded without the dead structure of I-10? As I asked this, I attempted to imagine the neutral ground as a space not sandwiched between horizontal and vertical layers of concrete, acting as skeletal amplifiers, distorting the automobiles violent interactions with road surfaces. Underneath the interstate, steel adornments bow in submission to the concrete roadways above them. Additionally, the towering interstate structure achieves dominance through the army of violent cement pillars appearing stationary and lifeless. Yet when standing near or touching these pillars, one is aware of the movement, expressed in the vibrational attacks transmitted through structural hierarchies. First, the automobiles' dictatorial, anxiety-stricken brays, followed with the broad distribution of frequencies from the pavement and steel, and lastly the army of cement columns carrying out the orders through sonic warfare in their rootedness to the once neutral ground of Faubourg Tremé. Standing under the interstate structure, one is engulfed in the extremes of high and low frequencies creating variations of displacement, extinguishing memories of the life once existent on the neutral ground pre-Interstate 10.

As I experience the current state of the neutral ground, the prior image I attempt to conceptualize is both visual and sonic, undergirded by a chorus of 500 oaks fighting with the wind and discarding leaves from their branches, and paving the grass underneath. The patchy temporary surface formed by the leaves sounds out the reactions of humanity as

individuals navigate its uneven spaces. However, I am challenged by the dominance of the current view of the neutral ground that projects only a “shadow” of the previous space. Crutcher (2010) wrote of the losing of “place” with the intrusion of Interstate 10. Furthermore, I would say that the intrusion of Interstate 10 brought with it an expunging of a “local language”.

Applying a historical gaze towards Claiborne Avenue, with attention to the neutral grounds centered in the Faubourg Tremé community pre-Interstate 10 construction, presents infinite layers of the possibilities of how the space functioned. Crutcher (2010) mentioned how the neutral grounds in the 1929 report on recreational park facilities functioned as a space for Black children in the community to engage in outdoor activities unavailable due to grasp of the ethic of Jim Crow-mandating racial segregation of public parks. For Blacks this simultaneously translated to non-access to public park facilities in addition to reduced construction of park facilities in their communities. Furthermore, the only space available to Black children then was Thomy Lafon Playground, located uptown at Magnolia and Sixth, approximately a 3 mile walk from Faubourg Tremé.

Tonkiss’s quote at the beginning this section, in conjunction with the loss of “place” according to Crutcher’s discussions of Faubourg Tremé and the neutral ground, caused me to think of I-10’s construction as much more than an instrument of community displacement. Altogether, the construction of I-10 through the neutral ground of Faubourg Tremé was of a space cradling the varieties of “local language [s].” As a result, these resonances/resoundings (Gershon, 2013) recalled my father’s narratives of the evolving sonorities of their home spaces.

My focus with this project considered how to conceptualize the neutral ground of Faubourg Tremé as an educational space through its multidisciplinary community function. Additionally my study addressed how the construction of I-10 shifted modes of learning within Faubourg Tremé through the destruction of the neutral ground.

My research was guided by the following questions:

1. How do we theorize a Black space of education in Faubourg Tremé pre and post I-10 construction?
2. How does consideration of environmental sound topographies in Faubourg Tremé extend perspectives in conceptualizing an educational space?
3. In understanding I-10 as a tamed space, how are themes of forgetfulness expanded?

Significance of the Study/Rationale to You and Researchers

First, there have been few to no studies pertaining to the theorization of the educational spaces in Faubourg Tremé. The meaning of educational space in this study was not limited to the physical school building; rather, educational space included all the areas in which communal interactions occurred. In conducting this research, I addressed the multidisciplinary capacities in which community spaces were forced to function as a result of racism and economic disparities.

Second, this study considered sound meanings outside the musical domain. Addressing sound in this manner acknowledged considerations for the nuances in communities' communications. Finally, this study is beneficial in considering the oppression of city infrastructures and how they challenge communal educational networks.

The Composition of this Work

In chapter 2, History as Transcendent Space, I considered the elasticity of history. I assert that history is embodied in conceptualizing Faubourg Tremé. To aid me in navigating the broad non-linear historical narrative of Faubourg Tremé, I looked to the scholarship of Petra Hendry and Annie Winfield (2013), Robert Helfenbein (cited in Malewski, 2010), Walter Gershon (2011a, 2011b, 2013), and Kofi Agawu (2003). Additionally, I challenge the Post World War I, northern territorial, paternalistic paradigm Black intellectual traditions to consider why Faubourg Tremé, and broadly, the southern United States territories, must be elevated in the grander discourse of Black intellectual/educational histories. In the chapter's conclusion I offer possibilities through hope and responsibility to invert the metanarrative of Black intellectual traditions in the United States.

Chapter 3, Methodology, Research as Vulnerability, begins with the core discussion of vulnerability. The acknowledgement of vulnerability was intended to express my understanding of research as ontology. I follow with an explanation and discussion of narrative inquiry, autoethnography, acoustemology, critical geography, and archival research, the tenets that formed the theoretical background of my study. An explanation of my research design rationale is the penultimate discussion. I grappled with the key issue of the researcher's responsibility to present multidimensional contexts within a one-dimensional artifact. In the final discussion I explained the improvisational nature of ethics through the thoughts of Jacques Derrida (1994, 2002), Ralph Ellison (1947/1980), and Cornel West (cited in Menand, 1997).

Chapter 4, The Learning of Community, introduces my community engagements within Faubourg Tremé. In the engagements with community members and potential

participants, I simultaneously disclosed my struggles with anxiety and feelings of voyeurism in attending community meetings. Additionally, this chapter was the start of my going to the Amistad Archives, located at Tulane University. The core discussion in this chapter is situated around my conversations with two participants, one who was a life long resident of Faubourg Tremé while the other had lived there for approximately 8 years at the time of our conversation. In the conclusion of this chapter I consider the ontological and epistemological relationships the participants had with historical discourses about Faubourg Tremé.

Chapter 5, Hope in the Resiliency of Ritual, is an analysis of selected archival documents. The first document discussed from the Amistad Archives is “A Memoir of Mardi Gras 1968”, a journal article by New Orleans playwright and historian Tom Dent (1980). I was most intrigued by the segment that presented a recollection of the North Claiborne Avenue corridor pre-I-10. After analyzing of the selected passage, I address three newspapers articles to examine disperses of economic capital situated in some of the preservationist societies. The chapter discussion follows and I conclude with a discussion with a participant in which I inquire about the neutral ground pre-I-10.

Chapter 6, The Socio-Sonic, developed from discussions with two of my participants that organically arose regarding sound. This chapter includes an explanation of the term socio-sonic, a term I use to describe the aural, oral, and spatial interaction in which communities engage when together. After an explanation of the socio-sonic and the scholars informing its foundations, discussion is devoted to analyzing interview segments with two of my participants about socio-sonic relationships.

Chapter 7, Conclusion, The Dissonances with the Recapitulation, is a brief reiteration of the discussions presented in the dissertation. I also process the possibilities of Faubourg Tremé in re-imagining and re-thinking geographies of Black intellectual traditions in the United States. To articulate this point, I return to Miles Davis and use his composition “So What” as a lens of analysis.

CHAPTER 2. HISTORY AS TRANSCENDENT SPACE

History is an elastic space that transcends boundaries. When the engager leaves himself or herself open, he or she can incite multitudes of meaning in history's ability to shift, connect, and complicate meaning. In this part of my discussion, I consider the elasticity of broader spaces and specific historical events that occurred in Louisiana in order to approach earlier historical points pertaining to space and place in Faubourg Tremé. While 1812 was the year city surveyor Jacques Tanesse officially plotted Faubourg Tremé, the resistance ethic permeating place began with the Haitian Revolution of 1795 and was re-embodied in Louisiana 100 miles north in Pointe Coupée Parish, the site of one of the bloodiest slave revolts in American history (Hall, 1992). Additionally, when considering place as rooted in Faubourg Tremé, I address the resistance ethic through examining Congo Square. With these two events, I consider how Faubourg Tremé might have been conceptualized pre and post 1812, and further developed with attention to that ethic of resistance that developed in response to the oppressive circumstances of slavery and oppression. I acknowledge that these histories are not linear, therefore, my intent is not to right nor write histories through heroism or linear mappings. Rather, my concern contends with engaging the variations of meaning gleaned while attempting to stay aware of the resonances deemed as the past. While the event is past, its resonance always remains present. Thus, humanity builds upon the continuum of those resonances incited by historical events (Gershon, 2011a).

Before analyzing the Haitian Revolution and the events that took place in Congo Square, I discuss the theoretical concepts that informed how I approached these two

historical events. The first concept is from Petra Hendry and Annie Winfield, the second from Robert Helfenbein, and the third from Kofi Agawu.

Hendry, Winfield, Helfenbein, and Agawu

History as memory work compels us to re-turn not to the past to re-capture, but to explore relationships that re-turn us to difficult and disorderly spaces. History, in this sense, is not a discipline but a form of relational ethics. (Hendry & Winfield, 2013, p. 20)

Hendry and Winfield (2013) argue the importance of situating history as memory work as opposed to a rigid methodology. The relational ethic described is infused with the responsibility of being vulnerable to the constantly evolving ranges of connections intersecting, bleeding, and melting rigid notions of time and space. Thus, the ranges of connections Hendry and Winfield described conjure the possibilities of negated and created disordered spaces in history.

Hendry and Winfield (2013) critiqued history as representation. Moreover, history should not be approached with an ethic of attempting to rekindle a specific moment. For Hendry and Winfield (2013), an ethic that situates history as isolated moments decontextualizes and reduces the presence of events' resonances; they view history as an ethic embodying act in which to be engaged through continuums of developing questions without the threat or comfort of finiteness, dependent upon the engager. The scholars emphasized the "re-turn" and the "re-capture[ing]" of history beyond an isolated moment. Their notion of history is that it is a tension expressed and carried out through events; however, once the event passes, the resonances of the events' highlight still remain (Gershon, 2011a). Additionally, these resonances continually permeate and reconfigure themselves throughout existence. It is the resonance of these tensions that creates and sustains the connections across time and space mentioned in the latter of their discourse.

Hendry and Winfield (2013) emphasize that history needs to be approached with an intent to be present towards negated, layered, and overlapping agents. With this realization, history is acknowledged as occurrences coexisting in the past and present. Furthermore, history is a situation whereby meanings reside in possibilities of what a community is able to learn about the constructs of the present variations of their epistemologies and ontologies.

Hendry and Winfield's (2013) discussed history as "relational ethics," the possibility to become open to webs of relationships beyond linear conceptions of time and space. In further exploring history as transcendent space, "relational ethics" took me to critical geography. In "Thinking Through Scale: Critical Geography and Curriculum Spaces", Helfenbein (in Malewski, 2010) framed his discussion of space in three ways: "1. spaces that speak, 2. spaces that leak, and 3. spaces of possibility" (p. 305). Helfenbein acknowledged that space is not static. Space is temporal. Thus the plural denotation of multiple spaces is not a demarcation. Space acknowledges the connectedness along with the constant shifts in meaning occurring within and around. While a space can be understood as distinct, it also is not neatly confined; rather space, according to Helfenbein (in Malewski, 2010), is dynamic through the expressions of speaking, leaking, and possibility. His discussion identified the actions occurring within a space and considered how the characteristics of neighboring spaces are transmitted. I further assert that Helfenbein's characterizations situate space as resistant because of the dynamic, unsettled reformulations that space continually assumes. Space as leaking, speaking, and being full of possibilities is an acknowledgement of space's resistance to stasis.

In considering spatial resistance, the ways in which one relates to a space mentally and physically can be done by considering New Orleans and the complexity of its spaces. It can be argued that the unique history of New Orleans, which pre-dates the nation itself, provides numerous racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse spaces that provide, as Maxine Greene (1995) described, a *quilting*¹⁰ of peoples and ideas.

Additionally, in Louisiana's history, rhythm is essential in considering the transmission of history, which converges with Jackson's (2006) discussion of "vernacular networks" (p. 765). One conceptualization of these networks can be considered through rhythm. I propose the possibility of approaching rhythm from a musicological stance to sit with the nonlinearity of history. The mention of rhythm simultaneously acknowledges how sound artifacts transmit socio-cultural information (Gershon, 2011b, 2013), along with considering how ontologies and epistemologies create variations of grooves and ostinatos¹¹. Agawu (2003) discussed "vernacular networks" (Jackson, 2006, p. 765) in the context of "everyday rhythm" (p. 73). He contextualized his discussion in relation to the rhythms that accompany traditional West and Central African dance. Agawu broke his description of the rhythmic occurrence into two parts, denoted as *topoi* and *topos*. He defined *topoi* as the macro context in which "cultural insiders" (p. 73) create meaning,

¹⁰ While used to describe the act of making a quilt, quilting in this context describes the overlapping and coming together of cultural symbols and characteristics to create a single expression.

¹¹ Groove and ostinato, from a musicological standpoint, denote rhythmic repetition; however they are used as metaphors in this discussion to consider how historical narrative circulates and superimposes itself upon, around, through, inside, etc. non-linearly. This acknowledgement calls for those engaged in the narrative to loosen the constraints, represented in preconceived ideas, of how historical narratives develop and/or end. Rather, the historical event is a groove or ostinato, constantly occurring, which spurs reminders of the possible connectedness individuals have to various subjectivities, while with each round revealing other perspectives.

whereas topos is the micro repetitive rhythmic moments within the dance accompaniment that serve as temporary points of reference for the collective ensemble, the dancers and the instrumentalists.

Another way to understand topoi and topos is comparing them to a grand musical composition versus an element or building block of the musical composition. Thus, topoi is the macro context understood as the grand musical composition, whereas topos are the smaller compositional elements that form the grand composition. The topos are also elements that migrate from the topoi and become present in various musical and cultural traditions. Agawu (2003) mentioned how topoi is rooted in specific communities and over time migrates to others. For Agawu (2003), topoi and topos and the dance are always understood as connected and as socio-cultural transmitters, though their meanings shift overtime, and across history.

Thus, when exploring the possibilities of Hendry and Winfield's (2013) assertion of "re-turn[ing] to the difficult and disorderly spaces" regarding history, Helfenbein (in Malewski, 2010) and Agawu (2003) presented possibilities for engaging those complex spaces. Helfenbein's (in Malewski, 2010) framing of referenced curricular spaces, broadly defined as spaces of learning, and how the spaces' existence can be characterized as ones that speak, leak, and present possibility. For Agawu (2003), space was situated in reference to the inseparability of dance and music in West and Central African cultures. His context addressed rhythmical topoi, the macro, and topos, the micro, which transmit cultural identity and values in addition to accruing alternative meanings according to societal migration. In this discussion rhythm is metaphorical to understand that histories themselves are ostinatos and grooves that are always occurring with degrees of variance.

Altogether, when engaging Faubourg's Tremé's history, pre and post neighborhood chartering, varieties of memory work are addressed and presented in written and oral histories, in addition to how the narrative of spatial non-linearity is produced through permeability, ostinato, and groove. These factors formulate history as transcendent space.

In the following section I problematize the narrative of Black intellectual traditions. Specifically, I consider the Harlem Renaissance and Alain Locke, one of its main proponents. I problematize the portrayal of the Harlem Renaissance as the starting point of Black intellectual traditions in the United States. Additionally, I address philosopher and writer Locke (1925) and his codification of the term the "New Negro." This aspect of the discussion is not intended to diminish the significance of Locke or the Harlem Renaissance; rather, my intent is to emphasize spaces where tremendous intellectual movement occurred before the Harlem Renaissance. Furthermore, these Black intellectual spaces were located in the South, specifically in Faubourg Tremé, and pre-dated the Civil War. Locke (1925) wrote in the gestural tropes denoting the need for the southern Blacks to transport themselves from the South to the North. While Locke (1925) identified Black's "pulse" (p. 14), the intellectual and spiritual savvy as rooted in Harlem, my concern considers inquiry into understanding the "pulse" that predated Harlem and started in a southern space, namely Faubourg Tremé.

Concerning Geography: Issues in How Black Intellectual Traditions are Historically and Conceptually Mapped

A railroad ticket and a suitcase, like a Bagdad carpet, transport the Negro peasant from the cotton-field and farm to the most complex urban civilization. (Locke, 1925, p. 630)

The pulse of the Negro has begun to beat in Harlem. (Locke, 1925, p. 14)

Locke's quotes can be read as his personal analyses of United States geographies. Locke's first statement is a description of agrarian and urban spaces, as demonstrated in his mention of Blacks' ascendance from cotton-fields to the metropolis. Locke's statement also asserted how the agrarian space was simple while the urban space was complex. Additionally, his mention of cotton fields was a denotation of an agricultural southern space whereas the northern space was characterized as an intricate industrial instrument, a machine of sorts. Thus, Locke's geographic perception was couched in an analysis of space, economics, and the intellectual capital he saw embodied by individuals while they inhabited those territories.

In the second quote Locke took an alternant approach in his geographical analysis. He identified Harlem as the essential space of intellectual birth for Blacks. While Locke's first statement can be seen as the dream and possibility for Blacks to recreate and realize their full potential, the second statement realized the dream's tangibility, so indicated when Locke identified the pulse of Blacks being located in Harlem.

Locke was one of the main thinkers who constructed the intellectual foundation of the Harlem Renaissance. Locke codified the term “New Negro” and thus identified the representative epistemological/ontological ethic that permeated aspects of the Black intellectuals’ work acknowledged as being “New Negroes.” Thus, according to Huggins (1974), Locke’s “New Negro[s]” were able to break free from enslaving regions, both literal and conceptual, i.e. boundedness to a plantation, rural, and southern spaces, and begin the process of viewing themselves beyond being beneficiaries of philanthropy from White communities by moving to metropolitan northern spaces. Furthermore, Locke believed that if Blacks were to be reborn as “New Negro[s],” the literary arts would serve as the primary vein to communicate this ethical tenor. It is important to emphasize that the Harlem Renaissance was a multidisciplinary movement simultaneously situated in the disciplines of the arts, philosophy, and social sciences, which gained momentum post WWI.

Locke was mentioned in the discussion to describe the metanarrative of how spaces of Black intellectual traditions are mapped; more specifically, the metanarratives situated the North as a space housing Black intellectual traditions (Anderson, 1988). This assertion is not to diminish the importance of the Harlem Renaissance, but rather this discussion maps Black intellectual traditions through inverting the metanarrative and looking South to Faubourg Tremé, the oldest Black neighborhood in the United States. It is not possible to fully understand the depths and complexities of Black intellectual traditions without addressing Faubourg Tremé (Crutcher, 2010). Originally, Faubourg Tremé was founded as a Black neighborhood and was the first public subdivision in New Orleans (Medley, 2014). Additionally, Faubourg Tremé existed pre- and post- Civil War.

The following section lays out the major events that established Faubourg Tremé among influential events and the influences of selected national governmental policies on the neighborhood. First, I discuss Claude Tremé, after whom Faubourg Tremé is named. Then I present an analysis of aspects of the Haitian Revolution on the United States's soil, specifically 100 miles north of New Orleans in Pointe Coupée, and the events that took place in Congo Square.

Faubourg Tremé: Rethinking Ontologies and Epistemologies Through the Haitian Revolution and Congo Square

The history of Faubourg Tremé is one of innovation and displacement. From the perspective of innovation, Faubourg Tremé existed as a space comprised of resonances from individuals who have critiqued the essentialist notions of northern paternalism towards the South. The conceptualization of Faubourg Tremé began with Charles Morand. In 1722, as an employee of The Company of the West Indies, Morand purchased the land from his employer on which Faubourg Tremé is situated. There, he successfully established a brick making plantation operation. However, in 1794, Claude Tremé, from the Paris, France suburb of Sauvigny, purchased the plantation from Morand. As a result of the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, dismantlement of large land holdings was ordered in 1812. The demarcation of large privately owned expanses of land was a part of a larger plan to stimulate population growth. Simultaneously, 1812 was the year City Surveyor Tanesse officially started to survey and plot Faubourg Tremé and the broader city of New Orleans (Toledano & Christovich, 2003). The map below is Tanesse's 1815 survey that was published in 1816. The red box denotes the land area where Faubourg Tremé is situated.

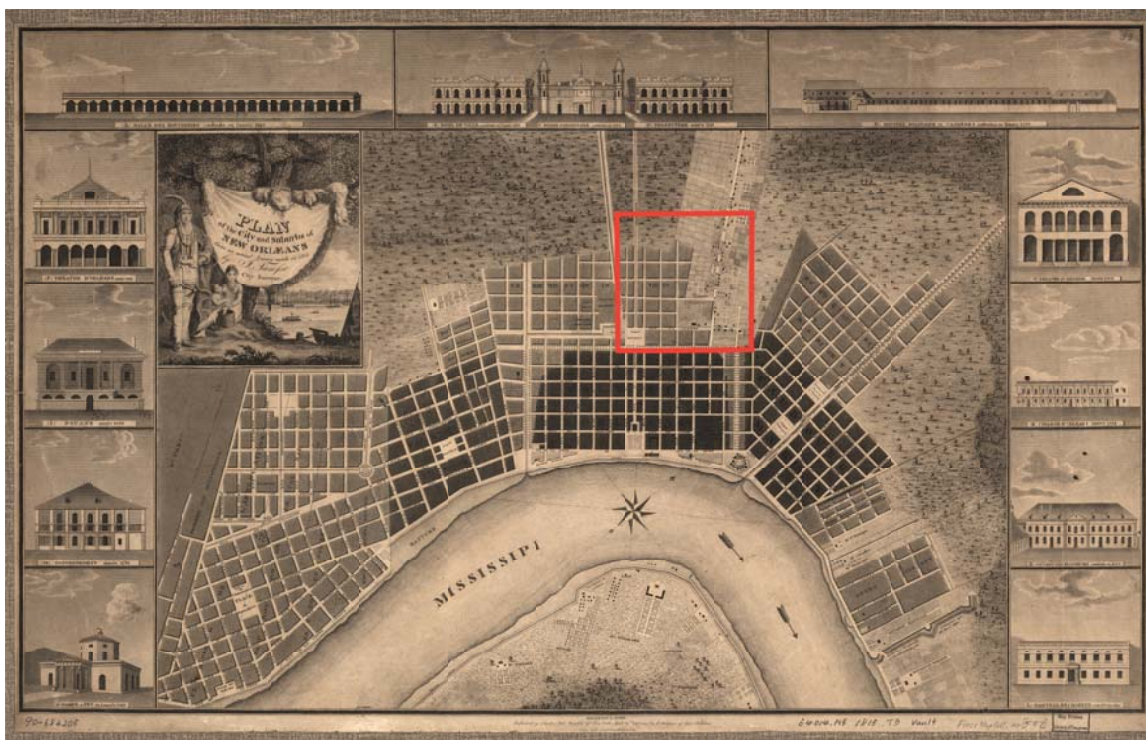


Figure 4. 1816 Jacques Tanesse Map of New Orleans and Surrounding Suburbs From 1815 Survey

Historian and poet Brenda Marie Osbey (1990) presented additional details about Claude Tremé. According to Osbey (1990), Tremé experienced a rags to riches epiphany. In 1787, Tremé gained riches when he married into the Morand family, which had extensive land holdings that Tremé eventually acquired. With the close of the 18th century approximately two thirds of the original land had been demarcated and sold. In 1810, the remainder of Tremé's land was purchased by the City of New Orleans for \$40,000. Osbey (1990) contended that Tremé's choice to sell his land to Free People of Color was an example of the peaceful racial relations between New Orleans Whites and Free People of Color. However, in her final assertion Osbey situated this argument as both "unlikely and inconsequential" (1990, p. 2); she concluded that Tremé's choosing to sell to Free People of Color was an acknowledgement of the extensive population growth New Orleans was

experiencing that pushed past the confines of the original city boundaries. Therefore, Tremé's land was an in-demand resource that coincided with the significantly large population of affluent Free People of Color (FPC) looking to purchase¹², many from Haiti.

The map below illustrates the 37 tracts Claude Tremé privately sold between 1798 and 1810 before the remainder of his land was purchased by the City of New Orleans. Additionally, the map indicates that Free People of Color (FPC) owned approximately 14 of these tracts.

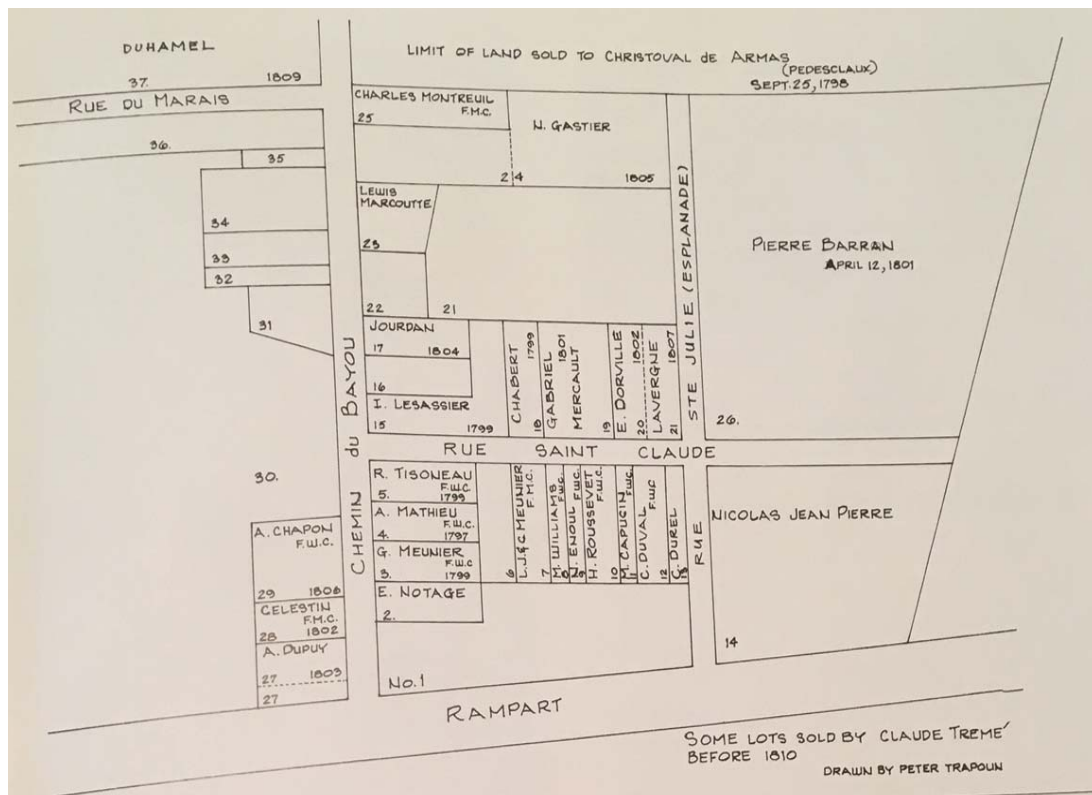


Figure 5. Map Showing Lots Claude Tremé Sold Before 1810 (Toledano & Christovich, 2003, p. 15)

¹²Free People of Color denotes individuals who existed during the colonial and/or antebellum period. These individuals were either born free or were able to avoid slavery. By 1810 the population of Free People of Color averaged 4,950 (Bell, 1997).

Faubourg Tremé is recognized globally as the United State's oldest Black neighborhood. However, this is no indication or assertion that Faubourg Tremé's cultural complexity is simple. At the core, Faubourg Tremé is an Afro-Creole space where individuals from Cuba, Haiti, and West African countries settled and reconceptualized home while simultaneously proving to be a figurative crucible of protest tradition pedagogies (Bell, 1997). Specifically, one variation of the Afro-Creole protest tradition was expressed in the written arts. Bell (1997) articulated that Louisiana laws in 1830 attempted to censure written works, both literary and periodical, that criticized racial separatism and White supremacist violence towards Black communities. Figures such as Louis Charles Roundanez who resided in Faubourg Tremé and published both the *L' Union* and *The New Orleans Tribune*, and used both papers to take public stands against racial inequity towards Black communities locally, nationally, and globally (Medley, 2014). Perhaps the more radical point to consider with addressing the *New Orleans Tribune* was an ethic espousing the necessity of equal access to education across constructed racial divides to nurture communal compassion (Melancon & Hendry, 2015). Crutcher (2010) further emphasized the importance of the Afro-Creole constituency in forming a buttress in opposition to Americanization (Logsdon & Bell, 1992). Altogether, Crutcher posited the reminder of the inability of the survival of a distinctly New Orleans culture without the Afro-Creole population. Furthermore, I argue that the meaning of Faubourg Tremé embodies that of resistance because of its Afro-Creole population.

In considering history as a transcendent space, Faubourg Tremé is conceptualized as a physical space, however I emphasize that Faubourg Tremé is an ethic. Considering the latter point of ethic, the 1795 Pointe Coupée slave revolt and Sunday Congo Square in

Faubourg Tremé were slave gatherings that occurred from 1817 to 1885. These two events, among many others, articulated both the epistemological and the ontological tenor of Faubourg Tremé's protest traditions.

To engage Faubourg Tremé's resistance pedagogies is to explore historical moments predating Faubourg Tremé's survey report by Tanesse. In 1795, Pointe Coupée Parish was an essential geographic point of resistance. Approximately 100 miles north of New Orleans one of the numerous revolts took place at Pointe Coupée on the plantation owned by Julien Poydras (Hall, 1992). This revolt simultaneously foreshadowed and globally acknowledged Toussaint L'Ouverture's influence in the United States regarding Haiti's fight for independence from France. Additionally, I argue that L'Ouverture's influence through the resistances that crossed over the Atlantic toppled the modernist notions exemplified through such figures as Georg Wilhelm Hegel, who prescribed metanarratives suggesting all people and ideas related to Africa were subpar (Buck-Morss, 2009). The Pointe Coupée revolt was the re-embodiment of an Afro-Caribbean protest ethic realized in the United States. Hall (1992) further situated the Pointe Coupée revolt as one that extended beyond racial and class lines. Therefore, this revolt had a series of alliances from impoverished White communities throughout southern Louisiana. Additionally, this revolt was sustained through a series of correspondences exchanged between New Orleans, a number of plantations throughout southern Louisiana, and globally through documents such as the Declaration of the Rights of Man. One result of the Pointe Coupée revolt was the incarceration of 57 enslaved Blacks and 3 Whites, and escalated to 23 enslaved Black community members beheaded and displayed throughout the Mississippi River territory from Pointe Coupée to New Orleans (Hall, 1992). The slave revolt of Pointe Coupée and

many others caused Louisiana Governor William C. C. Claiborne to go to great lengths to admit only slaves from Africa, fearing slaves from Haiti would continue to incite political unrest (Hunt, 1988).

The cession of Louisiana from Spain to France in 1800 did not quell the fears of slave revolts maintained by Governor Claiborne and co-commissioner General James Wilkinson (Bell, 1997)¹³. However, 1803 represented the convergence of L'Ouverture's death and Louisiana becoming a United States territory. Bell (1997) further discussed the New Orleans Free People of Color's optimistic view of their right to claim a space of equality in society through the formation of the Black Militia in 1740. Members of the Black Militia adopted a sense of pride and patriotism towards the United States assuming control of Louisiana. However, a fear of resonances from L'Ouverture's resistance caused Governor Claiborne to gradually disband the Black Militia, first with instituting White officers, and second with dissolving the Black Militia by use of the legislature (Logsdon & Bell, 1992).

In the Pointe Coupee revolt of 1795 and the development and dismemberment of the Black Militia in 1803, fear was the tension that permeated the perspectives of those governing. In the larger context, it is important to consider that news of L'Ouverture's opposition in Haiti was widespread in the United States. Specifically, individuals such as Governor Claiborne and co-commissioner General Wilkinson represented a constituency of individuals who responded in fear. Therefore, L'Ouverture's resistance became understood as an ethic, something larger than an isolated incident. However, L'Ouverture's ethic was perceived differently by the governmental agencies, the enslaved, and the Free People of Color. Governor Claiborne and General Wilkinson viewed L'Ouverture's ethic as a series of

¹³ Governor Claiborne and General James Wilkinson did not come to administrative authority until 1803.

warnings of what would occur if slaves from the Caribbean were allowed to intermingle with the slaves in the United States, as observed with the Pointe Coupee revolts.

Furthermore, for Claiborne and Wilkinson, the Black Militia represented the figurative unstable powder keg ready to explode with the introduction of counter resonances opposing control by the United States (Bell, 1997). After all, the Black Militia had pledged its allegiance to the United States with the belief that freedoms would be granted and protected, yet the foundational plan by Claiborne, Wilkinson, and the governmental agencies in Washington was for the reduction of the rights and privileges of the enslaved and Free People of Color.

Agawu's and Helfenbein's concepts present alternative ways to consider the Haitian Revolution as it related to the 1795 Pointe Coupée Slave revolt. Agawu (2003) presented the notion of *topoi* and *topos* regarding musical composition. He framed *topoi* as the macro context in which "cultural insiders" (p. 73) create meaning, whereas *topos* is the micro repetitive rhythmic moments within the dance accompaniment that serve as a temporary point of reference for collective ensemble, both for the dancers and the instrumentalists. The Haitian Revolution was the *topoi*, the macro context in which the enslaved created meaning in response to an oppressive regime. In the context of Haiti the resistant *topoi* was manifested as the Haitian Revolution. The *topos* were represented as the micro-movements that transpired in nations outside Haiti, as seen by the United States in response to the Haitian Revolution. Thus, when addressing the areas directly influenced by the Haitian Revolution *topoi*, Louisiana is an example of physical space where the individuals were influenced from the *topoi* of the Haitian Revolution. In response a series of *topos*, micro moments of resistance occurred, realized as slave revolt in Point Coupée Parish. Agawu's

(2003) description of these rhythmic categories connected them to the socio-political. Agawu asserted that the *topoi* and *topos* could be understood as transmitters of cultural identity and values. Furthermore, while the Haitian Revolution was the *topoi* that communicated cultural values, the *topos* were ethic coopted by the enslaved in Pointe Coupée Parish, which gave additional cultural meanings and contextualizations to resist slave regimes in the United States.

Helfenbein (in Malewski, 2010) described space as speaking, leaking, and presenting possibilities. His spatial characterizations described the Haitian Revolution's influence on the 1795 Pointe Coupée revolt. Furthermore, the Haitian Revolution was a space that spoke through individuals and communities seeking independence from France. It leaked through individuals who forcibly migrated from Haiti to Louisiana, transmitting oral correspondence embodying a desire to independence from France (Bell, 1997). Additionally, the leaking occurred through the written correspondences denoting tragic events in Haiti. Lastly, the space of possibility of the Haitian Revolution was re-embodied by the enslaved in Pointe Coupée who revolted.

Faubourg Tremé's Congo Square was one space of complexity in which the quilting of people and cultures occurred. The Congo Square Sunday slave dances occurred from 1817 until about 1885; the Municipal Court of New Orleans started them as a "kind of safety valve to keep slaves contented" (Stearns, 1956, p. 44). On Sunday, the slaves were allowed to gather and engage in their customs. George Washington Cable observed these gatherings and documented 18 West African cultures: The Mandingoes, Senegalese, Foulahs, Sosos, Agwas, Popes, Fidas, Cotocolies, Aradas, Nagoes, Fonds, Awassas, Iboes, Angolas, Malimbés, Yorubas, Socoes, and Ambrices (Stearns, 1956). This mixing of peoples

and cultures resulted in Congo Square becoming a distinctly different space than one made possible in Africa or in the Americas.

Additionally, Agawu's and Helfenbein's frameworks can be applied to address Faubourg Tremé's spaces, more specifically Congo Square. Buck-Morss's *Haiti and Hegel* (2009) presented an important case for porosity. Porosity is the inquiry into the ungovernable connections. Buck-Morss's context explained that porosity pertains to the possibility of how sexual commerce posed a threat to dissolving the conceived boundaries of race. Furthermore, the Congo Square sound components of dances were the agents that dissolved conceived sociological boundaries between those of the enslaved and those of the observers. As mentioned previously, while body is bounded to a space, however the sound emitted is not. Gershon (2011b) mentioned that sound is an educational system. Therefore the sound from the ceremonies that occurred in Congo Square dances simultaneously acted as an educational system in addition to the ungovernable connections that linked the enslaved and the observers. However, the ungovernability of those connections assumed differing perspectives dependent on who enacted, or intentionally put forth, symbols.

While the slaves were confined to Congo Square and separated from the outside community, the occurrences within Congo Square provided a space rich with politically minded resistance. One element of this resistance involved the unique musical traditions that evolved from the square. Sound is unlike a physical body as it cannot be grabbed and contained. Considering the square through the lens of spatial resistance, it is clear that while human bodies were contained, the sound of musical performance practice and communications was created as a result of the gatherings, resisted any sort of boundary, and freely permeated the outside community. New Orleans born pianist and composer

Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869) is an example of this manifestation. His residence was approximately a half-mile down the street from Congo Square where the dances occurred, placing him in close proximity to see and hear the Sunday gatherings (Sublette, 2008). His 1848 composition “La Bamboula (Danse des Nègres), Op. 2” stands as an example of the boundless influence of the dances. The Bamboula dance occurred during the Sunday gatherings. Bamboula describes the dance, the accompanying drum instrument whose ends were covered with stretched animal hide, and the rhythm played on the instrument to accompany the dance.

In its formulation as a dance, rhythm, and instrument, the Bamboula was embodied and transported via enslaved communities from West African and Caribbean countries to Louisiana. Gottschalk’s experiences with the Bamboula illustrate its porosity. Furthermore, Buck-Morss’s (2009) discussion of the governable vs. ungovernable connections presented another way to consider Gottschalk’s experience regarding the Sunday slave dances of Congo Square. Thus, when considering the event of the Congo Square dances, the sound components were the agents that dissolved conceived sociological boundaries between those of the enslaved and those of the observers. Again, while the body is bounded to a space, the sound emitted is not.

Per Gershon (2011a), sound is an educational system. Therefore the sound from the ceremonies that occurred in Congo Square dances acted simultaneously as an educational system and the ungovernable connection that linked the enslaved and the observers. However, the ungovernability of the connections assumed different perspectives, depending on who enacted the Bamboula rhythm. The Bamboula rhythm was intentional when expressed by those bounded to the space of Congo Square. The traditional rhythm

spoke of the simultaneous geographical transgressions between West African and Caribbean religious and folkloric culture (Mauleón, 1993). With this observation of the Bamboula, rhythm is intentional or governed. However, those who might have been observers became both passive and engaged receivers of ancient rhythms carrying the spiritual, religious, and historical capital of West Africa and the Caribbean. I see the transgression and transmigration of the Bamboula rhythm as a critique of the stagnancy in the United States of traditional geographic notions of space and place. Thus, with the violent exposition of communities from West Africa and the Caribbean across the Atlantic Ocean to the Louisiana coast, this rhythm reconceptualized cultural geographies by being absorbed into the movement and communications of everyday existence. Transporting people for the sake of forced labor was essentially a geographical extension of West Africa and the Caribbean that also encompassed parts of the United States; part of this extension was possible through the transporting of communities with the artifacts they embodied, and in this case, rhythm governed by enslaved people that was injected into the space of New Orleans that permeated its culture. Thus, when considering Gottschalk's experience with enslaved communities, the traditions governed by the enslaved were injected into the non-enslaved community. Gottschalk's experience of porosity with the Bamboula in the collective forms of dance, rhythm, and instrument made possible his composition, "La Bamboula (Danse des Nègres), Op. 2".

Other possibilities become present when Agawu's (2003) discussion of topoi and topos is applied to the events of Congo Square. Addressing topoi, the macro context, West Africa is the lens through which to reconsider cultural geographies of the Caribbean and the United States situated in Congo Square. Congo Square stood as the topoi for enslaved

communities, situated as the “cultural insiders” (Agawu, 2003, p. xx) to create, discover, celebrate, and govern meanings. However, the Bamboula was the topos, the micro repetitive rhythmic moment that circulated throughout various cultures and gave different meanings. As a result, composer and pianist Gottschalk was directly influenced by the events of Congo Square, indicated in his composition derived from the Bamboula rhythm. The Bamboula rhythm is both the literal and metaphorical topos that circulated beyond countries in West Africa and the Caribbean to Congo Square, and gave different meanings and purposes as seen in Gottschalk’s work.

Helfenbein’s (in Malewski, 2010) assertion of space as speaking, leaking, and possibility critiques the notion of space as static. Furthermore, in this metaphor, Helfenbein presented the possibility of reconsidering the meaning of the spaces of West Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States. Thus, when applied to Gottschalk’s interaction, the Bamboula tradition, and Congo Square slave dances, the vernacular networks via sound situated the spaces of Congo Square as speaking, leaking, and possibility. The space spoke through the continual interactions communities had with one another, and leaked through the cultural expressions that transgressed boundaries as independent agents, and were resituated into opposing cultures’ traditions. The space of possibility was exemplified in those who, like Gottschalk, observed and reconceptualized what was heard into other cultural forms of composition¹⁴.

The Haitian Revolution and the events in Congo Square were essential historical moments that made Faubourg Tremé possible. The variation of the Haitian Revolution embodied in the 1795 Pointe Coupée revolt and the events of Congo Square were essential

¹⁴Composition denotes not only the music but also literature, dance, sculpture, etc.

ontological and epistemological points in Faubourg Tremé. While the 1795 Pointe Coupée slave revolt occurred approximately 100 miles north of New Orleans, the resonances of this revolt came to rest in Faubourg Tremé, and simultaneously incited fear. Governing individuals such as C.C. Claiborne and James Wilkinson exemplified the fear by immediately dissolving the Black Militia in response to the revolt, fearful that the newly chartered Black Militia would immediately usurp their authority. Ontologically, Claiborne's and Wilkinson's perceptions shifted from one of viewing Blacks as powerless to Blacks as powerful. Thus, the 1795 Pointe Coupée revolt was an epistemological moment whereby Claiborne and Wilkinson observed and learned about the agency of enslaved Blacks. Simultaneously, the revolt represented both an ontological and epistemological shift for enslaved Blacks. Specifically, the Haitian Revolution was a network whereby Blacks in the United States learned how Blacks in Haiti revolted, motivating an ontological shift in re-embodying the possibility to oppose the institution of slavery.

Congo Square is an essential point for ontological and epistemological consideration. In this space the enslaved West African and Caribbean communities exercised an ontology, publically asserting the refusal to surrender their cultural identity. Furthermore, while the Municipal Court of New Orleans permitted these gatherings, they saw themselves as quelling slave revolts along with instituting a rekindling of the enslaved to maintain their cultural identity through these gatherings; the Municipal Court did not govern the enslaved communities' identity, but rather the enslaved did. These gatherings were a sensually staunch public reminder, through sonic and visual transmission, of distinct governed cultural identities through practices that predated enslavement in the United States. Gottschalk and his encounter with the Bamboula's collective expression is

one of many examples of communal ontologies in Congo Square that created epistemological moments and spurred an ontological shift. Thus, Gottschalk's ontological shift was expressed compositionally through "La Bamboula (Danse des Negres), Op. 2".

Altogether, in this variation of rethinking how to consider ontology and epistemology through Hendry and Winfield's posited "re-turn," the 1795 Pointe Coupée slave revolt and the Congo Square Sunday slave dances were historical points that articulated ungovernable connections. Furthermore, it was both the ontological and epistemological shifts in greater Louisiana and those concentrated in Faubourg Tremé that made porosity possible. As Buck-Morss (2009) mentioned, an element of porosity enables the ungovernable connections. Considering Agawu's (2003) discussion of *topoi* and *topos*, the *topoi* is the ontological whereas the *topos* is the epistemological. Therefore, the *topoi* is the transcendent ontological space in history that provided the rooting for communities to be present in cultural identities, whereas the *topoi* were the transmigrations of these ontologies to bordering communities. For the bordering communities, the engagement with these ontologies was the ungovernable connection that functioned as an epistemology. The epistemologies were the metaphorical shorter rhythmic cells that were appropriated and given additional meanings. Thus, Helfenbein's (in Malewski, 2010) notion of spaces that speak, leak, and create possibility can be realized as a description of the ungovernable gestures of epistemology.

The following section explores the legal roots of Faubourg Tremé. My discussion centers on the Comité des Citoyens, a grass roots organization in Faubourg Tremé dedicated to opposing racist policies; their most visible stance was against the 1890 Separate Car Act, comprised of such notable legal minds as Louis Martinet and Aristide

Mary. Following a brief description of Martinet, Mary, and the Separate Car Act of 1890, the reminder of my discussion focuses on Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes. While Desdunes was a member of the Comité des Citoyens, an outspoken opponent of the Separate Car Act of 1890 and frequent contributor to the *Crusader* newspaper, he also wrote *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire/Our People and Our History* (1911/1973). This book contains biopic sketches of prominent Blacks and Creoles of color, many from Faubourg Tremé. Desdunes presented nuanced critiques of racist policies and perspectives oppressing Blacks and Creoles of Color in addition to criticizing the biases Blacks and Creoles of Color exchanged. As I re-read the *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire/Our People and Our History* (1911/1973), I questioned Desdunes' use of the monikers Blacks and Creoles of Color. In some cases it appeared as if he used them to distinguish between two specific groups while in other cases it seemed as if he used the terms interchangeably.

Faubourg Tremé: The Comité des Citoyens

In the late 19th century pinnacle figures such as Homer Plessy and the Comité des Citoyens emerged. One must examine 1890 in Faubourg Tremé's history to observe the convergences of legal and grassroots organizing throughout the 19th century. Actions of resistance came in response to the Louisiana Legislative Code 111 of 1817 that identified individuals of African decent as Negro. Additionally, the Comité des Citoyens carried deep legal and activist knowledge and contended with the issue of segregation of public facilities through legal applications.

Significant individuals comprised the Comité des Citoyens. Attorney Louis Martinet founded the Republican newspaper *Crusader* in 1889, and through it he and the Comité des Citoyens openly opposed the 1890 Separate Car Act. Additionally, the Comité des Citoyens

also criticized Katherine Drexel for founding a separate church for Blacks (Medley, 2014). They charged that separate was never equal.

The Comité des Citoyens was also important as a cross-generational representation of activist voices, as indicated by Aristide Mary. Mary was the organization's founder but stood as the generational link between antebellum New Orleans and New Orleans in the 1890s.

It was the Comité des Citoyens that selected Homer Plessey as the individual to purchase the first class ticket on a Whites Only train car. The police apprehended Plessey on June 7, 1892 and the Comité des Citoyens took immediate action and funded the sum of \$2,767.25 for the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case (Medley, 2003). Daniel Desdunes, Rodolphe Desdunes' son, was the first to test Plessey's train boarding. Daniel Desdunes boarded the Louisville and Nashville railroad February 28, 1892, and was apprehended by the police.

Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes embodied the resistance so prevalent in the foundations of Faubourg Tremé. While Desdunes was involved in many aspects of equality movements developed in Faubourg Tremé, one revolutionary act pertains to his book *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire/Our People and Our History* (1911/1973). In this history Desdunes presented detailed biographical accounts of selected Free People of Color¹⁵. The biographical sketches depicted mostly those involved in the realms of politics and art. Considering the context of the times, this work became a resistant act when Desdunes asserted the narratives of Free People of Color as both a critique and an acknowledgement of racial injustices carried out throughout the United States. Essentially, *Nos Hommes et*

¹⁵Free People of Color denotes individuals of African decent who lived during the colonial and/or antebellum period. These individuals were either born free, able to avoid slavery, or be manumitted.

Notre Histoire/Our People and Our History (1911/1973) presented histories of individuals active in the upper echelons of art, literature, and politics and countered the rigid, oppressive nationwide metanarratives that situated Blacks and Free People of Color as inferior. A member of the Comité des Citoyens in addition to being an outspoken critic of the Separate Car Act of 1890, Desdunes presented his perspectives in the Black-owned *Crusader* newspaper; however, *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire/Our People and Our History* (1911/1973) stands as his most recognized work. While Desdunes depicted selected individuals, he also provided critiques. In one of his critiques he wrote:

“Some Creoles in our day have fallen to such a point of moral weakness that they have disowned and rejected not only their fellow blacks but even their own kin.”(p. 18)

Desdunes’ passage referenced a biographical entry about *Les Cenelles*’ (1864/1979) editor and contributing author Armand Lanusse. Regarding progressivists’ notions of Black artistic movements such as the Harlem Renaissance situated in the North, Desdunes made *Les Cenelles* (1864/1979) the center of his discussion of Lanusse. *Les Cenelles* (1864/1979) was a collection of poems and prose and Lanusse was simultaneously a principle contributor and editor. Some of the themes in this edited collection were anti racism, abolitionism, and plaçage. Desdunes (1911/1973) stated that *Les Cenelles* “represented the triumph of the human spirit over the forces of obscurantism on Louisiana that denied the education and intellectual advancement of the colored masses” (p. 10). Moreover, Desdunes acknowledged Lanusse’s edited collection as a powerful example of the creative and educational agency individuals develop in spite of being denied access to public services and human rights. Desdunes articulated Lanusse’s commitment to expunging racial prejudice, and maintained that Lanusse had no patience for racial prejudice of any

sort. In this context, Desdunes further expanded the discussion to address hatred within the Black communities in the associative and familial bonds that he saw as a lapse in morality. Simultaneously, Desdunes paid homage to Lanusse's activism and asserted the responsibility to oppressed communities, the Creoles and Blacks or perhaps Creoles/Blacks in this case, to attend to oppressive ideals that bred fragmentation via disownment and rejection. Additionally, Desdunes examined the lack of acknowledgement of the achievements of Creoles and Blacks. Specifically, in discussing the death of inventor Norbert Rillieux, Desdunes presented an analysis of how New Orleans newspapers failed to acknowledge Rillieux's race. Desdunes (1911/1973) wrote:

After his death the papers of New Orleans pretended to sing his praises, but they never once referred to him as a black man and all the intelligent persons understood the reason for his despicable silence. It was considered important to deprive the Creoles of the glory they could have enjoyed from the illustrious contributions he rendered to society. (p. 74)

Desdunes viewed the praise of the newspapers as false. While Rillieux was mentioned in various New Orleans newspapers, Desdunes saw the negation of Rillieux's Blackness as an insult. Furthermore, Desdunes saw the omission of Rillieux's race as another action to continually deny admission of the genius in Black communities that benefitted New Orleans. Desdunes mentioned Rillieux's proposed plans to New Orleans city authorities for constructing canal systems, plans that were rejected on the basis of his race.

This passage showed how Desdunes used Creole and Black interchangeably, as he did throughout his book. Perhaps this linguistic gesture was seen a representation of Desdunes' belief and cherishing of the complexity of the culture of which he was a part, in addition to a willingness to sacrifice the privileges afforded to him as a Free Person of Color of all Blacks/Creoles.

Faubourg Tremé is a Black educational space. The denotation of educational space acknowledges that the complexity and the conceptual timbre are colored through the historical events that have occurred and distinguish the tenor. The Comité des Citoyens represented the late 19th century legal basis of Faubourg Tremé.

In the following section I address selected policies and actions that systematically displaced Faubourg Tremé residents. I begin with John Kimble's (2007) analysis of the National Housing Act of 1934, and follow with an explanation of Eisenhower's 1953 Interstate Highway Commission that created the original 41,000 miles of United States' interstate. I further discuss the relation between the 1934 National Housing Act and the 1953 interstate highway commission in constructing Faubourg Tremé. Additionally, I examine other instances that occurred in 1980 and 2007 and the results and ramifications to the Faubourg Tremé community.

Policies: Resistance Resonances Re-embodied in Displacement

Faubourg Tremé's later history was one of displacement. While I-10's construction between 1961 and 1969 severely fractured the community space and makeup, another instance occurred over 30 years prior with the passing of the National Housing Act of 1934. In "Insuring Inequality: The Role of the Federal Housing Administration in the Urban Ghettoization of African Americans," Kimble (2007) discussed how the chartering of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) came with the passing of the act. Kimble's analysis was historically rooted in post World War II; with the return of the GIs, the FHA provided low interest loans for them to purchase homes. Additionally, the FHA established the first suburbs in the United States. Kimble's discussion analyzed the FHA underwriting manual that articulated specifics of how the loans were to be distributed.

In its first printing, the FHA underwriting manual instituted guidelines with racist undergirding. Examples were guidelines calling for the erecting of artificial boundaries and/or using natural boundaries, i.e. bodies of water, elevated or depressed expanses of land, to keep those deemed undesirable separated from the desirable neighborhood. The FHA manual defined undesirable populations as those of Black, or Color, and/or mixed ethnicity, while the desirable population was framed as being comprised of Whites. The manual has been amended numerous times since the 1930s; however Kimble's article critiqued the notion of amending the manual. Kimble's analysis detailed a curriculum of resonance (Gershon, 2011a). While Kimble tracked the revised racist language used in the manual, his view of this amending did not absolve the FHA or its manual of racism. Rather, Kimble thought of these amendments as cosmetic alterations with no attention to systemic reformation. Thus, a curriculum of resonance can be understood as the intentional racists underpinnings of the FHA, which served as grounds to distribute low interest loans and exacerbated degrees of economic disparagement within communities. Kimble's assertion was that if racist biases were built into the foundation of the FHA, then to assume a mere linguistic shift in the organization's bylaws did not remove inherently racist tensions.

Furthermore Kimble (2007) identified the ethic of the FHA:

The FHA's racialized vision played a crucial role in shaping changes in the supply for urban housing engendered by this demographic shift. As the government body responsible for both insuring the market's operation and ensuring its growth, the FHA sought to eliminate all elements of risk that could potentially destabilize real estate development. By equating African-American with risk, the FHA produced a lending drought in neighborhoods of mixed racial composition and directed the rain of capital to fall exclusively over homogenous, white suburbs. (p. 403)

Kimble identified what would be considered a monopoly in the world of business. Furthermore, the monopoly was situated as a conflict of interest because a single entity directed the trends of supply and demand. Therefore, what Kimble identified in the statement was an acknowledgement of the FHA as a singular governmental entity that directed supply and demand through assigning economic worth according to the communal racial composition. Thus, the FHA was privileged to determine the conditions acceptable for home lending. In their deliberations, the FHA identified Blacks and People of Color as economic risks. As a result, individuals of culturally mixed neighborhoods were met with extreme hardship in their attempts to acquire home loans. Altogether, the actions of the FHA did and still do effectively direct the wealth and capital to White individuals and neighborhoods in majority, while creating severe bouts of acquirement of low interest loans and economic disenfranchisement for communities comprised of a culturally mixed population.

While the development of the FHA had a negative effect on neighborhoods of mixed cultural population throughout the United States, essentially it became an exponent in developing and nuancing the notion of community displacement. Furthermore, I argue that community in 1934 became understood as both the act of keeping individuals confined to a space as well as moving individuals out of a space. This specific dynamic was observed in Faubourg Tremé.

Ironically, when observing the 18th and 19th centuries of Faubourg Tremé's existence along with Claude Tremé's willingness to sell personal family properties to Free People of Color, it is fascinating to consider that Tremé seemed to displace his family and himself. However, when considering Faubourg in the 20th and 21st centuries, displacement

was conceptualized within governmental policies, stemming from outside the Housing Act of 1934.

Approximately 22 years post founding of the FHA, the Eisenhower administration passed the Federal Highway Act in 1956, which allowed for the construction of 41,000 miles of interstate roadway expanses throughout the United States. Ultimately, the Federal Highway Act translated to the construction of interstate roadways through Black and impoverished neighborhoods. The end result consisted of, though was not limited to, community displacement, forced business closures, and loss of historic structures.

Historical preservation societies must be discussed when exploring the construction of Interstate 10 through the Faubourg Tremé neutral grounds. Raymond A. Mohl (2002) explained the role of White preservation societies in the routing of Interstate 10 and explained that the original plan was for the interstate to be situated along the New Orleans riverfront. According to Mohl, preservationists successfully protested construction along the riverfront and suggested Interstate 10 go through the neutral ground of Claiborne Avenue which resulted in the destruction of 170 residences and 50 businesses (Samuels, 2000).

The 1980 construction and completion of Armstrong Park on the grounds of Congo Square was another example of community displacement. The park honors Louis Armstrong and presents some interesting counterpoint. Armstrong died in his Queens, New York residence on July 6, 1971. He left New Orleans in the 1920's and refused to perform in New Orleans because of segregation (Crutcher, 2010). I mention Armstrong's geographic resistance to conceptualize the resistances around how the park to honor him was used to serve the Faubourg Tremé community. Community displacement arose in the

efforts of corporations to privatize the space of Armstrong Park, constructed on the same ground as Congo Square. Specifically, Crutcher (2010) identified the Tivoli Corporation as that entity. The Tivoli Corporation presented a \$56 million dollar proposal to increase tourism to Faubourg Tremé via the implementation of businesses and services requiring significant money from patrons. Most importantly, the Tivoli Corporation's proposed plan required that an admission fee be paid to access Armstrong Park. Faubourg Tremé community activists saw this as problematic because the fee was equated with limiting community access. Crutcher (2010) mentioned that this instance also included pushback from the Faubourg Tremé community activists. In conclusion, the community was able to effectively halt the Tivoli Corporation's proposal. Similar to Louis Armstrong's refusal to perform before segregated audiences in New Orleans, activists within the Faubourg Tremé community effectively resisted some corporate takeovers of their neighborhood.

The post Hurricane Katrina demolition of the Lafitte projects represented a reduction of community spaces by favoring replacing that space with mixed income housing rather than public housing. The rationale presented for the 2007 demolition of the Lafitte projects was that they were in disrepair. However, public housing advocates emphasized that the Lafitte projects were repairable. Additionally, Graham's (2012) ethnographic study mentioned that the space, like the neutral grounds, was central to community engagements, including civic organizing and Black Mardi Gras masking ceremonies. This reduction of community space was yet another example of an attack on Black educational space.

To conclude the historical segment of my discussion, I introduce the concept of improvisational responsibility. Improvisational Responsibility is a concept developed from

my readings of both West's (1993) idea of hope and Derrida's (in Rottenberg, 2002) idea of responsibility. I position hope and responsibility as an interpretive collective rich with possibilities to re-think or "re-turn" to Faubourg Tremé's intellectual histories and to provide alternative re-mappings of Black intellectual traditions throughout the United States. The following discussion begins with an explanation of West's notion of hope and Derrida's notion of responsibility.

Conclusion: Improvisational Responsibility and Possible Re-mappings of Black Intellectual Traditions in Faubourg Tremé

In *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*, West examined the works and thoughts of Charles Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, among others. West identified Emerson's hope as problematic due to the optimism in which his idea of pragmatism was conceived. For West (in Menard, 1997), Emerson's situating of optimism at the core of hope was problematic due to the calculated notion that a specifically allotted amount of work could be done to assure an upward ascendance of progress. West asserted that when hope is associated in direct correlation with optimism it negates the tragic. However, West's (in Menard, 1997) conceptualization of pragmatism, Prophetic Pragmatism, identified hope in association with tragedy that critiqued Emerson's notion of hope grounded in optimism. Optimism refers to seeing the future as filled with promise of a positive guarantee, which is why West challenged Emerson's notion of hope. West's Prophetic Pragmatism with attention to hope served to confront "candid individuals and collective experiences of evil in individual and institutions—with little expectation of ridding the world of all evil" (West in Menand, 1997, p. 406). Furthermore, hope as West's Prophetic Pragmatism embodied the polyrhythmic

relations characterized as fruitful desires for improvement that prevail in opposition to treacherous circumstances offering no measurable outcomes. In *Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times*, West (1993) wrote:

To talk about human hope is to engage in an audacious attempt to galvanize and energize, to inspire and to invigorate world-weary people. Because that is what we are. We are world-weary; we are tired. For some of us there are misanthropic there are misanthropic skeletons hanging in our closet. And by misanthropic I mean the notion that we have to give up on the capacity of human beings to do *anything* right. The capacity of human communities to solve any problem. (p. 6)

West presented hope as infused with tragedy to consider in the challenging conditions in which humanity exists. While the dreams rest upon improvement of oppressive situations, he demanded that we face the tragedies of situations that aid in maintaining the “misanthropic skeletons” (West, 1993, p.6). For West, like Derrida (2002), engagement of the past was essential. West’s statement about the past presented human constituencies wrought with non-belief of the possibility that individuals or communities do right are compassionate. He collectively engaged this perspective as both an observation of others but also of himself, which he indicated with his words, “We are world-weary; we are tired” (West, 1993, p.6). Furthermore, hope for West involved awareness of past and present tragedies in acknowledging and realizing that the future will also reveal additional tragedies built on prior continuums of catastrophe. However, West’s notion of hope also considered what it means to stay engaged in the fight in spite of the continual awareness of the depths of tragedy.

This hopeful energy resembled that of the 1965 protestors who marched faithfully into the violent space of Selma, Alabama, only to be confronted by policemen’s nightsticks and canine attacks. The protestors engaged in these acts of resistance with hopes of

improving the voting conditions for African-Americans, in tandem with bearing witness to their fates of being riddled with bodily harm and death. In West's framing, hope was realized in the protestors' realizations of their fates with police brutality. The protestors enacted this resistance gesture with an awareness that improvement of disparagements of voting, race, and class would not be amended, nor was there a future vision guaranteeing improvement. For the protesters, hope was situated within an understanding of tragedy, emphasizing the necessity to stay engaged in the struggle despite the bodily and psychological trauma they faced.

Thus, West's consideration of hope embodies an acknowledgement of tragedy, the sense of non-guarantee of improvement, in tandem with responsibility to engagement, whereas, Emerson's (in Menand, 1997) conceptualization of hope suggested guaranteed improvement symbolic of an endpoint. The sense of an endpoint was problematic for West because it represented a point of disengagement with the issue. However, hope as exemplified with the Selma protestors and described by West, situated the problem as never being solved, therefore, one must always be engaged.

West's (in Menand, 1997) discussion of hope faced the aporia. For him, hope was an unsolvable situation whereby the work is never complete. Rather hope acknowledged the instability of contexts embodied, externally implied, and reacted to. The contexts were pre-existent and newness of them was not developed within a vacuum. Thus, for West, improvisation grounded in hope was the study of negotiation and discovery between self and community in the will to "keep on pushin'" (Mayfield, 1964), à la Curtis Mayfield, while simultaneously acknowledging the persistence of tragedy.

In the following section I discuss Derrida's approach to responsibility. Situated similarly in an aporetic context, Derrida's (in Rottenberg, 2002) responsibility, like hope, does not have an endpoint.

Derrida and Responsibility

For the present, to me, democracy is the place of negotiation or compromise between the field of forces as it exists or presents itself currently (insufficient democracy, European democracy, democracy American-style or French-style, for example) and this "democracy to come." The negotiation must always readjust itself each day in relation to differing places. The responsibility one must take is always unique. (Derrida in Rottenberg, 2002, p. 180)

Derrida's (in Rottenberg, 2002) conceptualization of responsibility situated it as unachievable or as an aporia. I consider the specific situating of responsibility as improvisation, as improvisation is the foundation of Derrida's construction on responsibility. For Derrida, though, responsibility involved more than this. When Derrida acknowledged the impossibility for one or a community to understand the responsibility they have to the 'Other,' he identified an insurmountable divide. Responsibility in an insurmountable divide is characterized as a tension that never stops shifting or morphing into varying meanings. Therefore, according to Derrida, responsibility never ceases or is never achieved by humanity; rather, engaging tangential meanings of responsibility differ between contexts, making it impossible to settle upon a singular meaning.

Altogether, responsibility is the non-linear tension of progress sustaining the contextual instability of discourses' meanings. When Derrida (in Rottenberg, 2002) mentioned the impossibility of understanding the responsibility one has to the 'Other,' responsibility was simultaneously set as an aporia and a conceptual space in individual and community psyches where they convened with prior ideas to consider the possibility of how negotiation occurs regarding varieties of existence. For Derrida, improvisation is the

foundation of his notion of responsibility. Improvisation in this context considered the agency an individual and/or community to realize in reaction to, and within, hierarchies both unstable and rigid. Thus, improvisation is situated in responsibility for Derrida (in Rottenberg, 2002), whereby individuals and community must realize the impossibility of implying a singular ethic or ideal due to the constant contextual shift.

Improvisation situated in responsibility is the attempt to create meaning with what is available to aid in tending with the contexts that arise. Pairing West's and Derrida's notions of hope and responsibility, what I call improvisational responsibility helps me consider how they function together as reminders of the necessity to become, and, to stay aware, of problematic issues in light of unpredictable contexts and awareness, though, that poses no guarantee of improvement regardless of individual and communal intents. However, this does not negate the need to pose challenges, but instead reconsiders them in light of a more clearly defined sense of hope.

Improvisational Responsibility

For this discussion, the act of "Improvisational Responsibility" was engaged when examining historical moments in the development of Faubourg Tremé. My intent was to contend with a broader question of how geographies can be rethought by understanding Faubourg Tremé as a vital space that produced pedagogical rebar simultaneously for the South and for the United States. Geography in this discussion existed in a continuum of the physical, spatial, intellectual, and sonic. Improvisational responsibility was an ethic to engage the intellectual sonorities emerging from the contradictory and the perceived ungovernable vs. governable connections. Altogether, improvisational responsibility posed the challenge to understand the events that occurred in the space of Faubourg Tremé as

ones that occurred and still resonate (Gershon, 2011a). For us as improvisers, those directly and indirectly engaged in the history, Faubourg Tremé's history is one in which understanding the responsibility and possibilities of variation in this relationship never stop, or find a singular meaning, or give reason to turn away from tragedies that have occurred and currently occur.

This chapter began with considering history as a transcendent space. This reference to history acknowledged the elasticity of the conceptual space histories simultaneously inhabit and encompass. Tenets that informed my idea of history as transcendent space started with Hendry and Winfield's discussion of history as memory work. Their premise for situating history as memory work promoted an ethic placing emphasis on developing questions as opposed to finitudes.

Additionally, thoughts from the fields of critical geography and musicology informed my notion of history as transcendent space. From critical geography, I was informed by Helfeinbein's (in Malewski, 2010) assertion of space as speaking, leaking, and full of possibilities. From musicology it was Agawu's (2003) discussion of West and Central African dance and the inseparability of rhythm and dance. He further explained rhythm as *topoi*, the macro, and *topos*, the micro, the socio-cultural transmitters shifting in meaning.

That Faubourg Tremé's intellectual history is not situated in the grander historical narrative of the United States is an educational and geographical problem. I began analysis of this issue by challenging the assertion that the root of Black intellectual traditions was located in the North. I addressed philosopher and writer Locke and the Harlem Renaissance. Locke's thought formulated many tenets of the Harlem Renaissance, codified the notion of the "New Negro", and conceptualized the "New Negro" as mentally and

physically transporting themselves from southern spaces, thus breaking free of White philanthropy. While the Harlem Renaissance occurred post WWI, intellectual educational, resistance, legal, and artistic movements occurred in Faubourg Tremé pre and post Civil War. Additionally, while the troupe of the “New Negro” shook the chains of White philanthropy associated with the Harlem Renaissance, a significantly high level of philanthropy came from White benefactors of Black artists during the Harlem Renaissance (Boyd, 2003). For all the notions of freedom associated with the North and the ethic of White patronage, William Watkins (2001) further addressed the ethic of White patronage in accordance with Black education. Watkins situated his discussion in the North with an analysis of eugenic ideals undergirding the rationale of White patronage of Black education. Since education sits within, and at the margins of, everything, Watkins’s analysis can be applied to addressing White patronage during the Harlem Renaissance. However, in addressing Faubourg Tremé pre and post Civil War, while chartered on the lands of a plantation, the tenor of intellectual, legal, and artistic resistance movements were more independent of the control of White patronage and philanthropy.

I situated the idea of history as a transcendent space in the Pointe Coupée slave revolt of 1795 and Congo Square. Although Pointe Coupee was approximately 100 miles north of New Orleans and Congo Square was located within Faubourg Tremé, the importance of these locations was the historical events that occurred in these spaces. While important events, I consider the slave revolt in Pointe Coupée and the slave dances occurred in in Congo Square as resonances. Thus, consideration of resonance (Gershon, 2011a) does not restrict the historical event to a specific time or space, but rather proposes how the event articulates the ever-present resonances.

With this consideration, the 1795 Pointe Coupée slave revolt was a culmination of resonances orally and textually transmitted through individuals and communities who crossed the Atlantic Ocean from West Africa to Haiti to New Orleans. The arrival of these resonances denoted a simultaneous epistemological and ontological shift for communities in Louisiana. For those enslaved, an epistemological shift was the result of an engagement with the ontological resonances of the Haitian Revolution, which crossed over the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico to Louisiana. With the arrival of these resonances in Louisiana, the effect was the enslaved Pointe Coupée revolt.

Furthermore, for enslaved communities in Pointe Coupée, the revolt was simultaneously their *study of*, in addition to the reimagining of, their *being*. The epistemological and ontological shift occurred for the enslavers and enforcers of enslaving ethic, indicated by Claiborne's and Wilkinson's decision to dissolve the Black Militia. Their decisive action was based on an ontological and epistemological shift within and around them. Moreover, for Claiborne, Wilkinson, and others siding with their ideals, news of the Haitian Revolution along with the Pointe Coupée slave revolt informed them of distinct ways resistance knowledge influenced, and was re-embodied in, enslaved communities; as a result, Claiborne and Wilkinson concept of *being* in addition to Blacks was infused with fear of enslaved communities (enslaved, Free People of Color, Creoles).

For Faubourg Tremé proper, Congo Square's a space to consider when processing how boundaries are extended, broken, and/or reformed. Sound was an essential factor in the slave dances that occurred between 1817 and 1885; a body can be bound to space, however the sound cannot. With this consideration, Gottschalk's relationship with Bamboula and the formation as dance, rhythm, and instruments reconceptualized cultural

boundaries. The Bamboula illustrated porosity with the dynamic of ungovernability vs. governability; it was governable in its arrival through, and from, enslaved communities from West African and Caribbean countries situated in Congo Square. For Gottschalk, it was the sensual relationship formed with the Bamboula that caused him to become a porous subject, inciting him to compose “La Bamboula (Danse des Negres), Op. 2”.

Plessy and the Comité des Citoyens emerged when examining Faubourg Tremé’s history in the 19th century. Collective legal and grassroots organizing from the Comité des Citoyens occurred in response to the Louisiana Legislative Code 111 designating individuals of African decent as Negro and its appendage, the Separate Car Act of 1890. The Comité des Citoyens elected Plessy to purchase a first class ticket on a Whites only train car on June 7, 1892. Plessy is apprehended shortly after boarding; afterwards the Comité des Citoyes spur into legal action with the sum on \$2,767.25. However, it should be noted that Daniel Desdunes, approximately four months earlier on February 28, 1892, as part a test case, purchased a ticket on a White only car and was apprehended by the authorities. Daniel Desdunes was the son of Rodolph Lucien Desdunes, a member of the Comité des Citoyens in addition to being a frequent contributor to the *Crusader*, a Republican newspaper founded by Attorney Louis Martinet in 1889.

Desdunes was the embodiment of the resistance ethic at the foundations of Faubourg Tremé. His seminal book chronicled Blacks in New Orleans in the fields of politics and the arts, and was a resistant act to assert the importance of Free Blacks in the grander metanarrative of United States history. In his work, Desdunes also openly criticized racism and classism within the Black race. Additionally, he used Free Person of Color and Black

interchangeably, a semantic gesture representative of his embrace and cherishing of the complexity of his culture.

To conceptualize Faubourg Tremé as a gentrified space, the construction of I-10 through neutral grounds occurred from 1961 to 1969. I-10 stood as a displacement of the Faubourg Tremé community. However, in the 20th century history of Faubourg Tremé, the passage of the National Housing Act of 1934 and the Federal Highway Act of 1956 represented policies with racist tenets imbedded in their foundations. The racist tenets of the National Housing Act of 1934 were most visible post WWII as GIs, returned home from combat and low interest loans were made available exclusively to White GIs whereas Black GIs were not afforded this opportunity. Additionally, the National Housing Act of 1934 chartered the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) underwriting manual which suggested neighborhoods make use of natural and/or artificial boundaries to restrict access of undesirable populations; the FHA defined these populations as Black and/or mixed ethnicity. The National Housing Act of 1934 laid a rigid foundation, assigning cultural and economic capital according to race and ethnicity. Furthermore, assigning cultural and economic capital became a designation of value according to the body. Therefore, if the body was assigned a value along racial and ethnic accords, essentially it was the value seen in another's value, which gives value to a space. According to the National Housing Act of 1934, a population of Black and/or mixed ethnicity bodies concentrated in a space caused the devaluation of that space, whereas, the inhabiting of the space by White bodies increased the value of that space. As Kimble (2007) pointed out, these values codified in the National Housing Act of 1934 assured future disparagements and devaluations for neighborhoods of Black and/or mixed ethnicity. Additionally I saw this act as providing an

additional approach in considering the Federal Highway Act of 1956. Thus, if an ethics was formulated defining the types of bodies causing devaluation of property and/or neighborhoods it was the National Housing Act of 1934 and also the Federal Highway Act of 1956 laid the foundation collectively. The ethics of the National Housing Act in combination with local White preservation societies, routed Interstate 10 through Faubourg Tremé rather than along the riverfront of the French Quarter, as originally planned.

Based on West's (in Menand, 1997) notion of hope and Derrida's (2013) notion of responsibility discussions of 19th and 20th century Louisiana history was presented to consider the broader meaning of Louisiana, and more specifically of Faubourg Tremé, in the context of United States and global histories. Specifically, the combination of West's and Derrida's texts converged as improvisational responsibility, which seeks to acknowledge the creativity and the attentiveness that must be applied to the multiple contexts that arise in dealing with history.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH AS VULNERABILITY

A recognition of the limits of our received practices does not mean that we reject such practices, instead, we work the limits (and limitations) of such practices.

(Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. ix)

An aporia is an irresolvable conflict. Scholars Jackson and Mazzei (2012) presented an alternative for confronting the aporia of qualitative research in their discussion of the interview as a method. However, they emphasized that for all of the problems posed by situating the interview as a method, interviews should not be abandoned. Furthermore, the problems that arise are the points to explore intensely. The scholars emphasize the importance of the researcher to immerse himself or herself in the aporia of qualitative research. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) asked researchers to become one with the aporia, which also can be seen as vulnerability.

Vulnerability is the state of being susceptible to physical or emotional attack or harm. I contend that, as a researcher, there are variations of negation related to vulnerability. The problem which I often face is the notion that qualitative research privileges subjectivity. However, if as the researcher I institute a method, I am instituting a form of objectivism. Moreover, the implementation of specific techniques and methods aims to reduce potential biases in the results, and to bring forth the “core truths”; and this, to me, is problematic. Applying an epistemological gaze suggests an objective visualization of knowledge. However, my struggle in processing qualitative research is with the very notion of epistemology. Research is ontology. Therefore, if I craft a series of interview protocols I have essentially attempted, in Socratic fashion, to guide the participant towards a specific outcome. Yet, when situating the hypothetical results as a sort of objective

meaning, there is a negation of the series of biases I employed in creating the protocol. However, in situating research as ontology, this acknowledgement aids in recognizing the aporia of research. As Jackson and Mazzei (2012) suggested, rejection of the research act is not the goal; rather the challenge is to address how to continue to work with the “limits (and limitations)” of the practice. To work with the limits is to be vulnerable. Vulnerable in a sense of the inescapability that engaged the research agenda could possibly inflict harm upon the community and simultaneously the researchers. Altogether, situating research as vulnerability acknowledges the aporia.

Towards Feeling Another’s Narrative Resonances

An experience with narrative is sensual, further contextualized as the temporal and shifting spaces of vulnerability within one’s consciousness. The point where the individual makes meaning, possibly transformative, occurs in the webs of meaning influenced by personal interactions with the narrative. A vulnerable space is one in which the individual acknowledges both similarities and possibilities through experiencing a narrative. Yet a vulnerable space goes much deeper. Vulnerability calls for the individual to shift away from situating emotional acknowledgments as distractions to reason. Furthermore, vulnerability to another’s narrative resonances acknowledges the sensual faculties as absent of Cartesian conceptualizations. Altogether the faculties, the now conceptualized five senses, are to be understood as spectrums whereby narrative experiences are felt and processed with the possibility of the sensual and emotional spaces as ones of meaning (Gershon, 2011a). The narrative experience is a series of convergences with knowledge. David Scott (2004) asserted:

We are poignantly warned about the doubleness of knowledge: how it can obscure even as it enables, how it can disable as much as it enables, how it can imprison at the very moment it emancipates. (p. 207)

Scott's statement was situated as a critique of C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938). He problematized James's work as being stricken with a case of "revolutionary Romanticism" (Scott, 2004, p. 207) due to the overly heroic depiction of Toussaint L'ouverture.

Scott's (2004) critique of James's narrative depiction of Toussaint can be perceived as a warning to the experiencer of another's narrative. Specifically, situating Scott's statement in the context of narrative research, "the doubleness of knowledge" can be understood as the dissonances created by the convergence of individuals' subjectivities within a narrative space. When Scott's assertion is applied to narrative research it becomes a reminder to the individual experiencing the narrative how experiential knowledge shapes the direction of his or her listening (Dewey, 1934). Moreover, experiential knowledge that individuals apply in the process of listening to a narrative function simultaneously as informative and repressive constructs.

Scott's (2004) notion of the "doubleness of knowledge" in this discussion is a metaphor to process the hidden and blatant meanings the interstate systems embodied, specifically as the doubleness related to considering the interstate as a by-product of knowledge constructs. The broader intent of interstates was to give easier and faster access. If the access is understood as the impetus of an interstate, then the "doubleness" factor deals with processing how access was opened and closed through the construction. One example is Nashville attorney Avon Williams's appeal to the District Court opposing the 3.6 miles of interstate that eventually went through the North Nashville Black

community. While the highway commission saw the expanse as a necessary link between interstates expanding through Memphis, Tennessee, and Asheville, North Carolina, Attorney Williams opposed this construction. He saw it as problematic because of the boundary that it would create between the Black community and broader Nashville (*Nashville I-40 Steering Committee v. Ellington*, 1968). The appeal was declined and sided in favor of interstate construction through the Black section of Nashville, driving a wedge through the neighborhood. This effort to create access to the manufactured assemblages yielded destruction, property loss, business closures, etc. for the residents of the neighborhood, and brought with it an onslaught of economic decline and community disparagement. In this example, “the doubleness of knowledge” is observed in the creation of access. While economic decline and community fracturing were the effects of interstate construction in Nashville, I examined how these consequences occurred in accordance with interstate I-10 construction through the New Orleans neighborhood of Faubourg Tremé.

The space of Faubourg Tremé was undertheorized. The erection of the elevated I-10 system through Faubourg Tremé’s neutral ground, a.k.a. the median of Claiborne Avenue, altered the topographies of geography and sound. The redefinition of this space was essentially a redefining of a Black educational space. In this discussion, I theorize Faubourg Tremé’s neutral ground to further understand its importance as an educational space. The three research questions that drove this study are:

1. How do we theorize a Black space of education in Faubourg Tremé pre- and post-I-10 construction?
2. How does consideration of environmental sound topographies extend perspectives in conceptualizing an educational space?

3. In understanding I-10 as a tamed space how are themes of forgetfulness expanded?

For this project, narrative inquiry, autoethnography, acoustemology, critical geography, and archival research were the lenses that formed the theoretical/and or methodological background of my study.

Narrative Inquiry

An intimacy with stories was essential to understand the various meanings in this study; narrative inquiry was best suited to my study. Narrative inquiry is contested and temporal. However, I agree with Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) assertion of narrative inquiry as both the experiential and verbalized stories. Additionally, I agree with their notion of narrative inquiry as situated on Deweyian foundations, whereby the conglomeration of the interactive, continual, and situational constitute Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) definition of the three-dimensional narrative spaces. For the C&C, the multi-dimensionality yields perceptual temporality. Conceptually, narrative inquiry is a relational methodology whereby the narrative inquirers situate their lives in relation to the participants' lives (Clandinin, 2013).

For this study, narrative inquiry aided in understanding stories as a chorus of perspectives. Altogether, the narrative experience in this study was acknowledged as an intermingling of the participants' and my perspectives. The complexity and temporality of the dimensionality in this discussion is seen as the continual resonance that yielded variations in meaning. While narrative inquiry discusses the ever-expanding variations, the method also explains the inability of the researcher, myself, to separate himself from the

content of the study. Meanings in a narrative experience are created and nuanced through the variety of contexts the individual brings both as a listener and as a narrator.

Speaking three-dimensionally, I came to this study as an individual from a generation that existed post-Interstate 40 construction; who had experienced the discussions of elders reflecting on how the neighborhood community pre-Interstate 40 construction appeared, experiencing the present conditions and left speculative about what the future held; i.e., how they experienced the ramifications of Interstate 40 construction in Nashville. The challenge in this study involved my acknowledging points of similarity that I shared with the participants; however, I could not allow my personal experiences to create perceptual paralysis in listening to others' narratives.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography is qualitative a method that uses one's personal experience to process and draw connections to broader embedded socio-political and cultural meanings. Autoethnography establishes points of transparency between the reader and this researcher. Furthermore, I used autoethnography to present my previous and shifting relationships with the topic. Additionally, autoethnography aided in acknowledging my spaces of vulnerability. With Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) discussion of narrative relationships I was reminded of the temporal space in which my perspectives exist. Ellis and Bochner (2007) wrote:

After all, stories rearrange, redescribe, invent, omit, and revise. They can be wrong in numerous ways—tone, detail, substance, etc. Does this attribute of story telling threaten the project of personal narrative? Not at all, because a story is not a neutral attempt to mirror the facts of one's life; it does not seek to recover already constituted meanings. (p. 745)

Aligned with the Clandinin and Connelly's assertion of narratives as temporal, Ellis and Bochner (2002) addressed the tangential dimensions of personal narrative, i.e., autoethnography. Furthermore, they acknowledged how the presentation of one's story brings with it the possibility of rearrangement, omissions, and incorrectness, however this does not constitute threats to autoethnography. A number of scholars (Bochner & Ellis, 2002; Ellis & Bochner, 2007; Miller, 2005; Gilmore, 1994) emphasized how the intent of a personal narrative is not rooted in mirroring life facts. Altogether, the use of autoethnography in this project tracked my shifts and apprehensions during the process of engagement with others' narratives.

Sound

While narrative research was the core of this project, I guarded against reducing narrative realizations to recorded interviews or written text; rather, I employed sound as an additional text. Since sound represents a series of symbols and communications, I addressed additional narratives that could emerge from inquiring about the sound topographies of Faubourg Tremé, as Gershon (2011) wrote:

Just as an analysis of landscapes can provide important information about the contours, contexts, and histories of a particular environment, collecting and analyzing sound can similarly enhance our understandings of a given terrain and the contexts that inform the environment (p. 69)

Gershon's assertion of the centrality of sound to create meaning is not a hierarchy. His suggestion dealt with the essentiality of acknowledging sound within an environment as equally important to gleaning alternative meanings of relationships that communities create with their environments. Thus, sound is narrative as well as an agent that creates depth.

“Waterfalls of Song: An Acoustemology of Place Resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea” (1996) dealt with acoustemology, an area of study pioneered by Steven Feld. In acoustemology, sound is central to gaining additional meanings of how communities make sense of their locality. Furthermore the field engages how sound gleans alternative meanings of time and space, which provide insight into processing how communal knowledge is constructed (Feld, 1996).

Acoustemology in this study showed how the sonic topography of Faubourg Tremé shifted with the construction of interstate I-10. In situating the neutral ground as an educational space that facilitated multiplicities of community fusions, sound was an essential transport of community knowledge. The lens of acoustemology considered how shifts in community space through sound altered communal learning.

Critical Geography

Traditional geographic notions emphasize how borders are fixed and non-malleable. Critical geography seeks to question how borders are troubled and complicated (Helfenbein, 2009). Critical geography critiques the conceptualization of space as closed. Additionally, critical geography’s emphasis on understanding boundaries as permeable and flexible works to expose the variation trajectories of meaning that spaces possess (Massey, 2005). Jackson (2006) contextualized the notion of “community spaces” as malleable when processing the communicative communal dialect specific routes she referred to as “vernacular networks” (p. 775). According to Jackson, the vernacular networks hold recuperative and resilient properties for communities in times of trauma. Furthermore, I define vernacular networks as the components comprising multidisciplinary educational spaces. The collective of spaces is malleable and indigenous to the community.

In this study critical geography was applied to process the levels at which Faubourg Tremé's neutral ground functioned as a multidisciplinary community space. Furthermore, critical geography in this study took into account the multidisciplinary functions along with the shift of the neutral ground to see it as a variation of educational space.

Archival Research

In the archival research centers, my focus was on the analysis of maps depicting the Faubourg Tremé's parameters pre and post I-10 construction. I also examined the newspapers to engage find out the construction was documented. Additionally, I examined city inventories to gain some understanding about which structures were removed as a result of the I-10 construction. In seeing the archive as a source of access to information, I must present Scott's discussion around "the doubleness of knowledge." Scott (2004) offered the perspective that for all the access equated with knowledge, oppositionally, the counter resonances collectively were situated as obscurants, disablers, and imprisonments. Derrida's (1995) thought was important in further processing the challenges of archival research. Specifically Derrida wrote,

It is thus, in this *domiciliation*, in this house arrest, that archives take place. The dwelling, this place they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the public to private, which does not always mean from secret to nonsecret. (p. 10)

Derrida's statement problematized the notion of public and private. He framed the idea of the domicile as a sort of "house arrest." Furthermore, while the archive is intended to give sorts of access and protection to artifacts, Derrida's situating of the archive as an institution acknowledged the panoptic tensions.

Both, Scott's and Derrida's statements were in reference to addressing the limitations of the archive. Contextually Scott (2004) questioned the conceptual archive of "revolutionary Romanticism" that C. L. R. James constructed in his narration of Toussaint L'Ouverture's life, while Derrida (1995) critiqued the physical archive created in reference to the shift from Freud's residence to museum.

For this project, while I saw the archive as a series of possible ways to gather information regarding Faubourg Tremé, I saw both Scott's and Derrida's points as essential to inquiring into the possible ways editing occurred, occurs, and is occurring in the archives I visited.

Research Design and Rationale for Choosing that Particular Design

Data Collection

Regarding data collection, some of my information was gathered from three interviews with three community members, two of whom were residents of Faubourg Tremé, while the other participant was a resident of the 7th ward that bordered the 6th ward, i.e., Faubourg Tremé. Of the two Faubourg Tremé residents, my first participant was a White male who had resided in Faubourg Tremé for approximately eight years at the time of our interview, while the other participant was a Black male and lifelong resident who had traced his family back to Faubourg Tremé at least seven generations. The third participant from the 7th ward was a Black male who witnessed the construction of Interstate 10, which directly bisected the adjacent 3rd, 6th, 7th, and 8th wards. Though not from Faubourg Tremé, his account was still important in gaining perspective. Initially, I intended to conduct ten interviews, approximately three times each, with ten participants from Faubourg Tremé who witnessed the construction. My desire in this study was to

include a number of women's' voices. I did establish number female connections; unfortunately, I was unable to establish meeting times for interviews due to schedule conflicts. As I began to make community connections in Faubourg Tremé and bordering wards, I gathered contact information from potential participants. However, in following up with those potential participants, I was not able to establish communication. In beginning this project, I was reminded in a gentle, but stern manner by one participant that the people I was attempting to interview had full-time jobs in addition to other responsibilities. I had thought about this as well, and took it to heart, deeply. While the interviews I conducted were one-time meetings, the discussions were rich in content, and provided, and are still providing, ways for me to process the content of my study.

I completed my National Institutes of Health (NIH) certification March 8, 2013 as the image below shows.



Additionally, I contacted the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to get proper clearance for my study two times, the first on May 12, 2015 and the second time on May 16, 2016, to double check before starting my study. The IRB responded back via email both times explaining that my project did not require their clearance because the project qualified as ethnographic research which fell outside of requirement for approval¹⁶. I still elected to gain permission via written and verbal consent from the three participants before I switched both of my recording devices to the on position in our meetings. The first device for recording participant interviews was a Zoom H4 digital recording device while my second backup recording device was an Apple iPhone 6. After conducting participant interviews, I listened a number of times to each recording and then transcribed segments of our conversations for analysis in this study.

I examined documents including pre-existing histories, urban planning studies, and newspapers during my time in the archives. My journey started at the Hill Memorial Archives on the campus of Louisiana State University where I examined Baumbach and Borah's (1980) text, *The Second Battle of New Orleans*, and the 1976 study conducted by the Claiborne Avenue Development Team (CADT). I also accessed the University of Louisiana at Lafayette archives to retrieve the July 22, 1965 edition of the *Vieux Carré Courier*. I went to the State Library of Louisiana in Baton Rouge to examine editions from 1961-1968 of *Inside New Orleans*, a Black-owned newspaper. From the archives at the New Orleans Public Library I retrieved ground level photographs of the neutral grounds pre-Interstate 10 construction in addition to a March 14, 1966, article from *The Times-Picayune* newspaper. I also visited the Amistad Archives on the campus of Tulane University, where I

¹⁶The correspondence between the Louisiana State University IRB and myself is further documented in the appendix pages 176-181.

read through archival documents from the late Tom Dent whose work both celebrated and catalogued local Black culture. My attention focused mostly on his article, “A Memoir of Mardi Gras 1968” (Dent, 1980, p. 14-16).

I also gathered information by recording the sounds radiating from the Interstate 10 expanse bisecting Faubourg Tremé which I archived via my Zoom H4 and Apple iPhone recording devices to depict the intensity of the sonic environment created by the interstate. With these recordings I created a mixed media performance piece, titled “Tremé Tensions” with which to present segments of my research along with a live instrumental ensemble consisting of alto saxophone, bass, and drum. The performance piece was presented December 14, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. at the dissertation defense. The collective piece consisted of pre-recorded segments of participant interviews juxtaposed against the sonic backdrop of sonic environment from underneath Interstate 10 which faded signaling a transition into the live ensemble portion of “Tremé Tensions.”

Data Analysis

Dialogic/performance analysis examines the linguistic gestures of interviewees. I used dialogic/performance analysis to present the complexity and possible micro narratives that comprised each interviewee’s narrative account. Reissman (2008) categorized linguistic gestures in 5 ways:

1. direct speech—points where the interviewee directly quotes another individual;
2. asides—the moments where the interviewee interrupts the linear narrative for direct audience engagement;
3. repetition—the riffing moments in the interviewee’s account where specific themes are repeated;
4. expressive sounds—audible vocal gestures signaling shift and progression; and
5. historical present—points in the interviewees narrative where they switch verbal tenses from past to present tense to signal key moments. (Reissman, 2008, p. 112-113)

For the last four years I have struggled with the research issue of approaching ideas as living vs. dead. I was introduced to the thought of Gwendolyn Hall (1992), Michel De Certeau (1988), Brent Davis (2004), and Susan Buck-Morss (2009), part of a growing list of authors who represent a proverbial chorus of researchers harmonizing melodies rooted in possibility. Furthermore, these researchers inspire me through their efforts to constantly play with the historical artifacts to consider their current relevance. As a result, I am always amazed at how those thinkers present a multiplicity of contexts simultaneously within a single article or book. This ability and the responsibility the scholars assume is the notion of approaching ideas and artifacts as living.

Crisis of Representation

My main struggle in conducting this research was in its depiction. To experience ideas and thought is wrought with life and non-linearity. While an engagement with literature deals with engaging strung together words and sentences, much more happens. A literary experience involves the writer's use of words to describe emotions, sounds, smells, textures, etc. While the presentational format of literature is in a book, a one-dimensional artifact, what is presented within the book does not exist in one-dimensionality. In processing this point briefly, I was reminded of a patchwork of scenes cobbled together in my memory from literary experiences. Specifically, I recalled Aldous Huxley's descriptions of a society in which variation in life was stigmatized in his novel *Brave New World* (1931/2006). This experience for me emotionally represented bleak linear existence in which fear and a panoptic navigation were dominant. At the opposite extreme, reading Zora Neal Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937/2006) often leaves me with feelings of warmth, perspiration, and dirt roads as the narrator, Janie, navigates the mazes of

environment and gender within the Florida Everglades. Furthermore, these examples stress the difficult responsibility of the writer to present a multidimensional context within a one-dimensional artifact.

Processing the idea of multidimensionality in a one-dimensional context and thinking about my responsibility as a researcher quickly became a situation in which the two ideas interact with each other and eventually gather in coalition. As a result, concepts of time, space, rhythm, resonance, and non-linearity became central to my struggle in constructing a research design for this study. How was I to depict time, space, rhythm, resonance, and non-linearity in the context of a document? This was simultaneously a question and a responsibility.

Ethics: The Gift, *Invisible Man*, and Improvisational Responsibility ¹⁷

In anticipation of this project, tensions from Derrida, Ellison, and West created the matrix by which I addressed the ethical considerations of my actions and the research in which I engaged. This idea of how research was addressed came from Derrida's (1994) discourse on acts of gift giving. Derrida asserted that once the gift is acknowledged it is disempowered, and that acknowledgements come in the form of tensions desiring something back in return once the gift is presented to the other. This concept of the gift was illustrated in Ralph Ellison's (1947/1980) *Invisible Man* through the character of Mr. Norton who presented gifts in the form of financial contributions to the university. Yet it was his narcissism, through obsession with his destiny, which devalued his gift. Mr. Norton's situation is a reminder to researchers of the tragic space they occupy. While one

¹⁷I wrote and presented a paper in which I further discussed the idea of "improvisational responsibility". The paper's title is "Improvisational Responsibility: Derrida's Call to Play" and was presented at the Bergamo Conference in Dayton, Ohio, on October 18, 2013.

intent of narrative research is to empower and uplift communities, Derrida's (1994) notion of the gift, in the context of research, confronts researchers' intent on seeing immediate positive outgrowths of their efforts. For researchers, in the presence of Derrida's notion of the gift, to avoid devaluing their gifts, as seen with Mr. Norton, research should be given with no expectations of a return. Acknowledgements questioning the gift dynamic in research present an aporia since research is conducted with an idea of some return. I am not advocating for a turn away from research; rather I am asserting the importance of becoming increasingly engaged in the uncomfortable energies Derrida's gift exposed. The concept of this aporetic space brings me to what I call improvisational responsibility.

Improvisational responsibility was derived from my interactions with Derrida's (2002) discussions of responsibility and West's (in Menand, 1997) discussions of Prophetic Pragmatism. I sought to identify a reconciliation between these two philosophers' works because of their acknowledgement of tragedy. Tragedy for Derrida (2002) was expressed in his discussion of the inability to fully understand the depth of responsibility to the other because of the expansive, reconfigurative forms responsibility assumes. Simultaneously West's (in Menand, 1997) tragedy was situated in hope. West critiqued hope in Ralph Waldo Emerson's thought as saturated with optimism, whereas hope in West's discussion consists of bearing witness to tragedy. Furthermore, hope in West's Prophetic Pragmatism, embodies polyrhythmic relations characterized as fruitful desires for improvement, prevailing in opposition to treacherous circumstances offering no measurable outcomes (West, in Menand, 1997). Derrida's and West's thoughts about the inherent tragedy in the foundations of responsibility and prophetic pragmatism emphasized the importance of continued engaged confrontation. In their eyes, when a situation arises, individuals, such as

researchers, must acknowledge the mounting responsibilities they have in the matter, and realize that their efforts may not reap any positive outcomes for themselves or the communities with which they work.

Going into the community of Faubourg Tremé, my intentions were to bring a sort of support to the residents. However, Ellison's (1947/1980) Mr. Norton character depicted the blindness an individual develops when destiny discourses are central to aiding a community. Furthermore, the struggle I faced confronted how my research came with the intent to fulfill degree requirements, which carried the resonances of destiny completion. Additionally, when Derrida's gift and responsibility combined with West's prophetic pragmatism in what I call improvisational responsibility, I questioned how I might contend with the struggle of never being able to fully understand what occurred and what is occurring in the Faubourg Tremé community, Derrida and West broadly asserted that regardless of the tragic circumstances encountered, I had to engage with an open heart and mind.

Tension Interlude: Front Porch Education'

Education is spaced. "Spaced" commonly denotes a positioning of matter. However spaced as I use it, connected to the act of education, describes individuals' sharing and exchanging embodied ideals within a community (Middleton, 2013). What I am describing is educating. Educating is enacted when bodies disclose their internal points, i.e., thoughts, memories, or dreams, within a public sphere (Bacherald, 1958). Therefore understanding education as spaced denotes the flexibility in shifting the ethic of place inhabited. Place is stationary whereas space is mobile. The mobility of space is what gives place a layered ethic. That was my thought May 3, 2016, on my second visit on to the

Backstreet Cultural Museum in Faubourg Tremé. After experiencing the exhibits in the museum, I sat on the porch of the museum and talked to some of the neighborhood residents. The porch was the site of my spaced education that day.

After exiting the museum through its front door, I sat down next to the gentleman who had introduced himself when I entered the museum. I shared my inquiry of interstate I-10. He promptly explained that when it was built, he was a child in about the 5th grade. Within about 5 minutes, our conversation was pointed in a different direction as other people accumulated on the museum steps. Their interjections were not distractions because they simply were another element that enhanced and added layers to my inquiry.

While sitting on the porch, I witnessed how the linearity of the exchanges was interrupted by the engagements that people on the porch had with individuals passing by. I gained another perspective of how the neighborhood and the codes of the neighborhood operated, such as the popularity of New Orleans in the entertainment industry. Faubourg Tremé is related to popular TV shows based in the area such as “Tremé” and occasionally “NCIS.” These topics came up in conversation organically and the residents collectively viewed such shows with disdain. They took issue with the filming of “Tremé” and its employing people from the 9th Ward rather than people from Faubourg Tremé/6th Ward. This was problematic for them but also they identified how the show had misused and abused images related to the Mardi Gras Indians. They identified how the specific chants used in the show were either mispronounced or misplaced according to the ceremony. Regarding “NCIS”, the residents shared stories of neighborhood individuals being offered low sums of money by the filming crews to utilize their residences to shoot scenes. However, in the process some of the crews either attempted to nor did bring in ratty

furniture to make the house appear as a “crack house”; this was problematic from the community with a deep sense of its history.

The historian is often seen as someone who sits in an institution and has advanced degrees from higher education institutions that decorate office walls. However, the community members’ sense of history refuted this notion as the residents spoke about essential historical aspects of the community. The community elders who shared histories of Faubourg Tremé did not have these advanced degrees. To have individuals scattered throughout a community who embody and radiate embodied histories gives teeth to the narratives and are reminders of how the construction of history is a radical feat. Each time it is retold, history is essentially remade and exposes a series of cracks through which engagers become aware of the layers of narratives.

While hanging on the porch, a bike tour comprised of primarily White tourists came through, and, as they passed, the residents on the porch waved. Afterward, this incident sparked conversations; for the residents, the broader issue was the dependency of periphery understandings of the neighborhood without consulting with those from within. Specifically, when asked by community members from where permission was granted to film in their neighborhood, the companies responded that the city of New Orleans did. Russell¹⁸, one of the community members, with whom, I was sitting on the porch, responded with, “While you have gone to the city, what about coming to us for permission as well?” He referenced the companies receiving permission from the city for legal permission to shoot scenes in neighborhoods, but asserted that permission from the city

¹⁸ Russell is a pseudonym

was not enough. Moreover, Russell desired that film crews approach neighborhood community members and ask permission to shoot cinematic scenes in the neighborhood.

Russell recollected when prior bike tours went through Faubourg Tremé, and how the tour guide played the musical chant of the Mardi Gras Indian nations. The particular chant played, by tradition, was only to be played in response to the passing of an Indian Chief, and, therefore, the act employed by the guide was a desecration of tradition, which the guide might or might not have realized. Russell articulated the necessity to respect tradition along with the intricacies of what it is to respect tradition.

In conversation, I began to understand the community as closed but also a place in which one entering must respect the space. In my conversations with Russell, he reflected and compared the youth of today and how he was expected to operate as a youth. He highlighted that the youth of today seemed to be involved in troublesome behaviors as opposed to his understandings of how the elders of the neighborhood reared him to act and carry himself in a respectful manner; this involved waving to, and greeting individuals in the neighborhood. I noticed how people in the neighborhood interacted with one another, and, whether driving or walking, they always spoke or waved. I was reminded of a conversation on the porch with another gentleman who said that when he had worked in areas outside Louisiana, the people thought it was bizarre that he spoke to everyone. He explained and attributed his actions to where he was from, that this was New Orleans, but more specifically Faubourg Tremé.

In our discussion, areas to eat came up. The neighborhood members discussed places to eat and mentioned an Asian-owned business that prepared its traditional Americanized dishes in addition to poboys. While Russell mentioned the amount of food

was substantial, another neighborhood member echoed the sentiment and discussed how he enjoyed the food but also them as a family, and how this Asian family was viewed as a fixture in the community of Faubourg Tremé.

The day ended and everyone left the porch of the Backstreet Museum and Russell and I walked in the same direction. He was heading home and I was walking back to my car parked a few streets from his house. Russell said a few times that when I came back to the neighborhood, we should walk a little and perhaps break bread together.

The Backstreet Cultural Museum's porch functioned as a place for my spaced education. While I intended to gain more information about Faubourg Tremé inside the museum's walls, that day I was educated on the porch outside the museum. The porch transformed into an educational place through a spatial dynamic. Community members whom I met that day were the spaces embodying histories, which they communicated non-linearly to me. Most importantly, the community members spaced education through shifting the ethic of place, the porch. A spaced educative experience for me dealt with the improvisational matter in which education occurred. Perhaps the porch was not meant specifically to be a sort of classroom, however the dynamic on the porch was a reminder of why Black educational traditions must be considered outside of places designated as institutions. To do so, considers how history for Black communities has been forced to exist in response to enslaving Trans-Atlantic practices. The premise of these practices stripped knowledge of historical and cultural traditions from enslaved Blacks. To maintain and impart these cultural traditions, enslaved communities enacted improvisational acts via transforming the ethic and function of place to ensure survival of histories.

The spacing of education I received on the porch that day was essentially what Black communities have done for centuries to retain some diasporic and local connections to histories and cultural traditions in response to institutional negations. In “Chapter 4: The Learning of Community,” I return to the beginning of this inquiry and my observations and engagements with the Backstreet Cultural Museum, walking the Faubourg Tremé streets, and attending my first Historical Faubourg Tremé Association (HFTA) meeting; additionally, I include interactions with residents to address my research question of “How do we theorize a Black space of education in Faubourg Tremé pre and post I-10 construction?”

CHAPTER 4. THE LEARNING OF COMMUNITY

Layered/Conflicted Engagements and Meetings: September 8, 2015 Backstreet Museum Visit, Neighborhood Walk, and 1st Historic Faubourg Tremé Association (HFTA)¹⁹ Meeting

After prepping that involved reading additional histories related to Faubourg Tremé (Medley, 2003) and broader Black New Orleans (Smith, 2011; Medley, 2014), and developing questions to engage with community members, I finally entered the community. I did so through visiting the neighborhood fixture of The Backstreet Museum. The museum was a priceless repository of artifacts and information related to the Mardi Gras parading traditions rooted in Faubourg Tremé. Walking through the museum I came in close contact with regalia from select Indian tribes. I soaked in the sites of some costumes of the chiefs and spyboys in addition to learning bits and pieces of the history of the Indian tribes. When I entered I saw one individual whom I assumed was with the museum curator but who turned out to be a patron from out of town. I realized the prior night as I was talking with my partner that I was nervous- my standard way of being.

Peering into the hallway to the right I saw the museum's curator, Mr. Sylvester Francis, sharing knowledge with an engaged, curious audience and I was excited at the possibility of talking with him. Unsure of how the \$8.00 admission worked, I am sure I had a look of confusion; the individual, whom I mistakenly thought was associated with the museum, informed me that the process of taking money was pretty "laid back," Mr. Francis

¹⁹The Historic Faubourg Tremé Association (HFTA) is an organization, founded in 2006, comprised of neighborhood residents, dedicated to preservation of neighborhood architecture, cultural traditions, and fundraising activities to promote and sustain the historical and cultural identity of Faubourg Tremé.

finished talking with the other patrons, informed me of the admission, and placed the \$20.00 bill that I handed him in a manila envelop; he told me he would find me shortly to give me my change. As he walked away, I wished I could have spoken with him longer, but it looked like he might have been quite busy that day. I made my way to the room at the farthest right of the museum where the bulk of the handmade garments were displayed, specifically, garments donated from the Mardi Gras Indian tribes. I examined the perimeter of the rectangular shaped room, and especially the meticulous individual details that revealed the crafters' imaginations. The space was interspersed with other memorabilia such as newspaper articles, beads, cups, etc. I heard the phrase "My man" uttered behind me as I examined the costumes, and Mr. Francis brought me my \$12.00 in change. I anticipated that my chances of one-on-one time with him had increased, but he explained to me in a labored tone that he had emphysema and that he must take a little time and rest due to a shortness of breath. I finished the tour of the museum by myself and I took a second rotation of the facilities. The earlier crowd had left, and another lone sightseer entered the museum. On my second tour rotation, our paths distantly intersected as we were in the same room, and she was meticulously taking pictures of costumes. This museum was not a neat segregated cold space, but rather the exhibits bled into like a gigantic collage of items that told vivid stories of the neighborhood space.

I completed my second tour, exited the museum, and saw St. Augustine Church. I stepped onto Henriette Delille St., turned right, and saw Mr. Francis relaxing on the side patio of the museum. I waved to him, and although I wished I could have met him that day, I was not discouraged. I would return and hoped we would talk.

Henriette Delille St. intersects Governor Nicholls St. I turned left and was viewing the side of St. Augustine Church, founded October 9, 1841, and the oldest mixed racial congregation in the United States (LeDoux, 2011). Observing the structure's details, I walked along the perimeter and saw an anchor shaped object with shackles hanging from it. From a plaque attached to the wall next to the structure I learned that the structure was a shrine to "The Tomb of the Unknown Slave". This was an emotional experience for me. I read. Paused. I reflected and continued my walk down Governor Nicholls St. The street dead-ended into the Charbonnet-Labat Funeral Home, the place where I would attend a community meeting that night at 6:00 pm. I turned around and wandered a little more through the neighborhood that was in various stages of development; some places had been purchased by individuals and families who restored the homes to former appearances, while others had put personal aesthetic spins on structures, indicated by the LSU Tiger banner in one front yard; other structures were experiencing advanced stages of physical decay. In my first of what I intended to be many walks through the neighborhood, the neighborhood appeared to be a mixture of economic and racial demographics, some indigenous while others were not so much. I wondered how individuals would feel? Was the embrace open or closed according to those exhibiting the proper indicators of insider status, specifically my Blackness? Eventually I arrived at my car, famished and curious if the engagements with Faubourg Tremé residents would expand, narrow, and/or collapse the ideas I had developed and researched.

September 8, 2015—1st Historic Faubourg Tremé Association (HFTA) Meeting

Nerves, nerves, nerves!!!! They were all I could deal with when I walked into this community meeting. I emphasize the word community. I felt like an imposter. In the very

root of the word *impose*... I was imposing myself upon a community. Those were my feelings, feelings that were situated against a backdrop that was somewhat a part of this community. I am Black from the South and was the product of two parents from a community disenfranchised by governmental infrastructure, such as that of the interstate.

In Nashville, Interstate 40 embodied the oppressive structure. The main difference was that the interstate was ground level as opposed to elevated like Interstate 10. These systems were related by a fate that yielded tragically for both the Nashville and New Orleans Black communities. My struggle arose from deliberation about whether to start my work in my Nashville community, first or to start in this community whereby melanin permitted a shallow allowance into it. The Nashville community gave me the intellectual and critical re-bar to ask these questions. However, distantly, Tremé afforded me a similar sort of re-bar. After all, it was the Tremé community in which Homer Plessy made his faithful ride that spurred the case that informed *Brown v. Board* of education. I chose to start with Tremé, the oldest African-American community in the United States, and this awareness provided a way to savor, and to speak back and to, mentality expound in entities such as Protestantism, northern paternalism, charter schools, and Teach for America (TFA) ethics, historically and in the present. Yet, I wondered what would occur at the community meeting when I explained my presence to the community members who asked why I was in attendance if I did not live in the community.

November 10, 2015—2nd Community Meeting Adjournment

At the conclusion of the meeting, I stood up, unsure whether to leave or stick around, and Reid approached me and inquired about my research. I explained to him that the scope of my project was to consider the larger issue of how intellectual traditions are

mapped in the United States, which then connected with my explanation of the interstate system and neutral grounds. He said that my project sounded interesting and suggested that we get together the following week to talk.

Afterwards, I met Alfred Jones ²⁰, a middle aged Black man whom I saw at the first meeting but I did not introduce myself. We spoke briefly and I told him of my interest in the historical significance of Faubourg Tremé. We exchanged contact information on our iPhones, and then Carl²¹ signaled me and introduced me to Octavia Kindall²², a middle-aged Black woman. I had not seen her previously and found her to have a warm personality, like everybody else. I knelt down to speak to her and as I explained my topic, she mentioned that her 83 year-old mother would be one with whom I should speak. She explained that her mother or someone in her family lived in a house that was purchased from Claude Tremé. We also exchanged iPhone information.

Lastly, I met Dr. Simone Jones²³, Alfred Jones's wife. She was at the first HFTA meeting I attended. I did not speak with her in my first meeting attendance, however we did speak in prior meetings. I was not sure how to read her, as she seemed nice, but I was not sure whether she was accepting my presence in the HFTA meetings.

November 14, 2015: Reid

Today was the first day of starting my community interviews with Faubourg Tremé community members. Reid was the first member who responded to the mass of communications I sent to possible participants I met at the HFTA meeting.

²⁰ Pseudonym

²¹ Pseudonym

²² Pseudonym

²³ Pseudonym

Reid and I established a meeting time and location at his house on Esplanade Ave. I was nervous as I approached the wrought iron gate to his residence, as I was not sure how things would pan out. There was no doorbell so I knocked firmly on the door and I waited; no one answered. I waited a few minutes and repeated with the same result. I waited about 5 minutes before the third knock; still no one answered. I called Reid on my cell phone and the call went to voicemail. I left an accommodating message that if today was a problem, perhaps we could reschedule. After about five minutes a young Black man opened the door; I stood up from the porch steps and introduced myself. He explained Reid was just waking up and invited me in after he placed some trash in the outdoor receptacle. We made small talk as we entered the residence, which I later learned was constructed pre-Civil War, and he said that Reid had informed him of my visit. I was unsure of the relationship between him and Reid, but my nerves started calming.

Reid emerged from his bedroom after the man who received served me a glass of water. We shook hands and he walked towards the kitchen, retrieved a glass from the cabinet, some ice from the freezer, grabbed a bottle of a clear alcoholic beverage, and poured himself a drink. Reid wanted to further discuss my project and we sat on the patio, me to the his left. As he spoke, Reid leaned toward me and I took this as a sign that he did not have personal space hang-ups. The man who greeted me at the door joined us.

Reid asks me to further explain my project. After a brief discussion on the patio we moved into the house and sat at a dining room table. During our conversation, I learned that Reid had been a resident of Faubourg Tremé for approximately eight years, which forced me to rework and throw out many of my original questions. Reid's interview was

rich in possibilities of developing questions for him and other questions for community members.

Reid moved to Faubourg Tremé post Katrina from another location in the 7th ward. My original plan was to center my interviews on Black residents who had lived in the area and experienced the construction; however my interaction with Reid broadened that scope. My impression was that he came to the community, connected with the elder residents, and participated in, and attempted to uphold the traditions of Faubourg Tremé. Katrina displaced Reid, however, his displacement happened on a scale different from that of the families who were forced to move to another state temporarily and/or permanently. Reid's narrative involved a situation in which he was displaced, but found community within Faubourg Tremé; one point of our discussion involved conceptualizing home through displacement as an outsider, the context of which was presented in a discussion of legal history referencing Plessy vs. Ferguson.

Although a White man, Reid held a reverence for Faubourg Tremé's history. In preparing for the interviews I read a variety of historical works situating Faubourg Tremé (Medley, 2003) as an essential national and global legal center because of Plessy vs. Ferguson. This realization had an impact on my process of reconstructing, and creating additional, interview questions. I knew that Reid was a civil rights lawyer, and my understanding of Faubourg Tremé history was legally based. I said:

I think, man, I think that it is so fascinating, like because you start really doing a certain analysis of the history and it like it seems, from a non-legal based person, but someone who somewhat curious and dabbles in it, that it seems like this history is like, is truly a legal history in so many ways.

I acknowledged my growing interest in Faubourg Tremé's history as I shared my perspective about the history as legally based. My perspective was rooted in how

resistance movements in this neighborhood were carried out simultaneously by a grassroots effort and a legal effort. Reid responded:

It's the center... of it. It's the center of integration. Black people, white people got together here before they were ever forced to...and they always got along side by side. The church I go to, St. Augustine, I go there and I go to Peter Claver, but St. Augustine is the oldest mixed congregation in the United States. Before the Civil War people had to buy their pews; families bought their pews, White people bought a whole row of pews, Black people bought a whole row of pews. Black people got worried that White people were going to outnumber them and these are free Black people and so...they bought the third row of pews for the slaves. So slaves, free Blacks, and white people in the same church. To me that is significant and to me that is Tremé and that is where I live...and that is a tradition I respect... and want to uphold... and continue.

Reid's response briefly aligned with my perspective, however, he took it in other directions and highlighted integration in his mention of St. Augustine Church. He emphasized how its congregation was the oldest racially mixed one in the United States and he recalled details about the process of pew purchasing in which Blacks and Whites engaged, specifically Free People of Color purchasing pews for enslaved Blacks. Reid completed his statement saying, "To me that is significant and to me that is Tremé and that is where I live...and that is a tradition I respect... and want to uphold... and continue." His statement framed his understanding of a reverence of togetherness across racial and ethnic boundaries of Faubourg Tremé's history, and which he desired to maintain and keep in motion.

In response to Reid's statement I asked, "So how do you see that...how do you see that, um... idea of upholding and... extending these traditions to be continued, to...the younger community?" He responded:

That's a very good question. I'm not sure I know how to do that. I think that...I think that I need to...contribute to... the community in whatever way I can. I'm, I'm actually really glad you asked me that question because... I don't think I'm doing much... of anything to do that except that...you know I support the people I...support,

in my household...and their music lessons and...but for the neighborhood...I don't do much. I'm glad you asked me that because you makin' me think, "What could I do?" I mean, when I go to the corner store it cost me a \$1.00, but that's some White gutter punk,...you know. That's not somebody from the neighborhood. Thank you for asking that 'cause it made me think. But I'm not sure, I mean what would you say I could do?

This question caused Reid to reflect on himself as a settler in the community. While his reverence for Faubourg Tremé was reflected in his attention to recalling history and his disclosing an emotional connection to the history, he was pushed in a different direction by my inquiry, which engaged him with the meaning of upholding "a tradition." He acknowledged his caring for the community within his household in Faubourg Tremé, however, he viewed that the care within his residence as not extended to the broader neighborhood. Additionally, Reid highlighted the economic privilege indicated by his ability to "go to the corner store" and afford to pay for goods. Collectively, his earlier interview statement acknowledged his inability to repurchase housing in his prior location, and his election to move to Faubourg Tremé, revealing how the notion of his economic access was temporally spatial in reference to home.

Reid and the Dialogical/Performative

In my conversation with Reid, I was interested in considering the linguistic gestures he utilized to communicate his perspective. According to Reissman's (2008) dialogical/performance form of narrative analysis, Reid used three linguistic gestures: repetition, the historical present, and asides in the previously discussed segment of our conversation.

Repetition, the riffing moments in the participant's account where specific themes are repeated, occurred when Reid explained the significance of St. Augustine Church in response to my statement about Faubourg Tremé's legal history. The subject of the

repetition was the pew purchasing by Blacks and Whites attending St. Augustine. Reid riffed back and forth with pew purchasing as central in describing the contentions and concerns of Blacks and Whites as they attempted to solidify space with the place of St. Augustine.

Following repetition, Reid moved to the historical present, which is the point in the narrative where verb tense switched from past to present tense to signal key moments. Specifically, he stated, “To me that is significant and to me that is Tremé and that is where I live...and that is a tradition I respect... and want to uphold... and continue.” Therefore, Reid engaged a chronicling of historical events to contextualize his rationale, for what he understood as philosophies and traditions as special to Faubourg Tremé.

Lastly, asides, the moments where the interviewee interrupts the linear narrative for direct audience engagement, were presented in the second segment of our discussion in which I asked Reid how he passed on these specific traditions to younger generations. Reid became reflective and emerged with the question of, “What could I do?” This question also was an interruption to his prior linear explanations about supporting individuals within his personal residence and continued into later discussions about his outsider status.

The following section establishes and builds my relationship with Arthur²⁴, a resident who traced back his family’s residence in Faubourg Tremé approximately 7 generations ²⁵, and with whom I connected through Carl, whom I met at my first Historic Faubourg Tremé Association (HFTA) meeting. This section begins with a texting exchange with Carl, an exchange that was simultaneously a check in to see how each other was doing

²⁴Pseudonym

²⁵I emphasize that, according to Arthur, the 7 generations were a tentative speculation and that research into the generational reach of his familial lineage could uncover more generations.

and an inquiry about how I might contact Arthur as a possible interviewee. Carl and I developed a good relationship and he kindly introduced me to a number of people, some of whom such as Reid became participants in my research.

May 31, 2016: Carl and Arthur

I finally connected with Arthur. Getting to meet him was a somewhat simple yet lengthy and drawn out process. I had his name on a post it note since late 2015 as someone to contact. On May 31st I texted Carl, whom I had met at my first HFTA meeting in 2015.

Me: Hey, brother, I hope all is well. Things have been a little crazy on my part. I wanted to pick your head about a possible participant Arthur. I've spoken to him in passing, but realize he's a fruitful source regarding Tremé history, past and current. If possible, what's your recommendation on the best way to contact him? Also, we need to catch up. What's new in life?

Carl: Hey bro. All is well on my end...crazy too; so no worries. Arthur is good people. He works at Peace Casa²⁶, a senior citizen center here in N.O. That's the best way to contact him XXX-XXX-XXXX. Arthur is a wealth of knowledge and he's actually written a book around Tremé and culture etc. We definitely need to catch up. Life is life. Lol I have a gig working for the Dept.²⁷; need I say more? Lol still have a side hustle...

I responded:

Me: Thanks brother. Man you got several plates full with that one "side hustle."

Carl: No problem. Let's say a brother could use a vacation...but I'm good. How are you?

Me: I'm good man, just trying to balance several things at once.

Carl gave me Arthur's contact at about 2:30 on May 31st and I called him the next day. My anxiety and nerves were about 20 on a scale of 1-10.

Arthur's contact information was at his office as Peace Casa²⁸, a retirement community in New Orleans close to Faubourg Tremé. After some contemplation about how I would approach Arthur to discuss my project, I called him on June 1st. I felt awkward asking to speak with him and expected to be connected with his voicemail. To my surprise

²⁶ Pseudonym

²⁷ Part of this title was omitted to protect Carl's identity

²⁸ The name of Arthur's place of employment has been changed to a pseudonym

he picked up and said, “Hello”, in a welcoming tone. I launched into being a member of the HFTA, and about his book, how I had obtained his contact from Carl, and how I had been at one of the meetings with him when Bel Edwards spoke at the Charbonnett-Labat Funeral Home in Faubourg Tremé. Arthur said he would be in his office for the next hour and that I was welcome to come meet him if possible. I explained I was between New Orleans and Baton Rouge and was unable to meet him then, so he gave me his personal phone number and requested I send him a text to that number with my name. He said when I was in town to give him a call. We ended our conversation with kind words.

June 3, 2016: Meeting with Arthur

I decided not to wait and drove to New Orleans to see if I could meet with Arthur. I stopped at the Tremé Coffeehouse in the city for food and drinks and called Arthur’s personal number at 1:48 pm to see about scheduling a meeting; he answered in the same friendly tone. I introduced myself again and asked about setting a time with him. He said that we could meet in about one hour so I ordered my food and drinks and pulled out my Kindle reader with Arthur’s book downloaded with notes. I poured over my notes in anticipation of introducing my project to him.

In my car, I input the location of Arthur’s office into my iPhone navigation system. It took me to the Peace Casa, approximately a 5-minute drive from the coffeehouse. I parked, took a few deep breaths, stepped out of the car, and rang the doorbell. The attendant inquired about why I was there and I said I was there to see Mr. Arthur. After a simple buzz in, I was in the front room of the facilities. I was directed down the hallway and to the elevator to Arthur’s office on the 2nd level, the location of the administrative offices. I rounded the corner and I saw Arthur meeting with another man. It was 2:48 pm so I took a

seat within earshot of Arthur's office and decided that, at 3:00 pm, regardless of what was going on in Arthur's office, I would introduce myself. I just wanted to be sure that he knew my face for possible future interactions.

At 3:00 pm, I rounded the corner and generically introduced myself with, "Hello, Mr. Arthur. My name is Reagan Mitchell." Arthur slowly approached me with an extended hand, apologizing because he was unable to meet with me at that moment. I assured him that it was fine and he offered me the option of watching television downstairs and inquired how long I would be in town. I explained that I would be around for a while that day. He handed me a note pad and pen to write down my phone number, and gave me his business card. I thanked him again for his time and left.

By 8:00 pm I had not received a call so I called to thank him and explained that I was flexible to reschedule a meeting. The conversation that ensued organically progressed and extended in many other directions and dimensions that I never could have anticipated.

When I called, Arthur answered in his gentle manner. Arthur apologized for not calling back, and explained that he intended to but accidentally left my information at the office. He explained that when I arrived at his office, he was caught in the middle of a grant that was due that day. I assured him that no apologies were needed and that he was the one doing me a favor. He apologetically asked my name again, while I again assured him that apologies were not necessary. He responded, "To hear your name is one of the most beautiful blessings one can receive." This and many lines from our conversation exemplified Arthur's poeticism in communicating with and navigating the world. Arthur said one line that I love and see as encouraging: "The way you are doing this is how I did it, one conversation at a time." This statement referenced the interviews and conversations he

conducted throughout his lifetime to gain deeper knowledge of historical events from individuals, a parallel we observed and shared.

Arthur asked me again, “Now what is it you are working on?” I responded with a longwinded answer about how I was a graduate student in education at LSU, and that my project pertained to Faubourg Tremé, specifically the 1960s when the construction for I-10 took place. I also explained that my topic was rooted in a personal ethic that it was essential to incorporate Faubourg Tremé history into the broader narrative of United States history. I have often thought that, since Faubourg Tremé is the oldest Black neighborhood in the United States, the entire history of the United States has shifted, and this knowledge presents numerous possibilities to view national history, and in many cases world history.

Arthur listened patiently and gave an approving, “Uhm hum.” He explained that his family had been in Faubourg Tremé for seven generations; however, he thought that his family extended back much further. I mentioned his book and explained how I found it interesting and important, and thanked him again for his contribution, and his preservation and elevation of local histories. Arthur explained how he saw the importance of this book for younger generations of Blacks for building cultural pride.

When I mentioned his book, Arthur told me a devastating story about the tragedies that followed the completion of that book. He told me how the process of completing the book involved surviving Hurricane Katrina. He explained how his residence had approximately 7ft of water and how he lost all of the historical information he had been gathering for several years. It was preserved on tapes and manuscripts which were ruined by the water. Although Arthur experienced an ever-increasing continuum of pain, when I

asked him if these discussions were too sensitive because of all the memories associated with the talk, he said, “Not at all.”

Arthur spoke of the many positions he held in his lifetime and discussed in depth working for the Louisiana Department of Education. He traveled throughout Louisiana, collecting narratives, including those of Eula Mae Brown, a Black female educator responsible for fighting against economic enequity/inequality of Black educators in Louisiana. Arthur spoke of the significantly lower wages Black teachers in Louisiana were paid, and how Brown went head to head with the school board on these issues. He also shared that Katrina destroyed those tape-recorded interviews.

The following conversation with Arthur was amazing. It was in part about history, but also a pep talk reminding me to stay engaged in the process with Faubourg Tremé’s history and the broader Black United States history.

August 2, 2016: Meeting with Arthur

In our conversation on August 2, 2016, Arthur and I discussed the importance of history in Louisiana’s elementary and secondary education, and relative to textbooks. Arthur shared that in 1978 he was part of the Louisiana Black Culture Commission, and detailed how they commissioned a number of Black scholars to write an historical supplemental text to be included in the Louisiana history curriculum. The text was submitted as part of the proposal to the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) because BESE made textbook content decisions. However, the BESE claimed an inability to make such decisions, which caused the rejection of the proposed historical supplement from the Louisiana Black Culture Commission. Arthur explained that the rejection by BESE was grounds for a lawsuit; however, since the Louisiana Black

Culture Commission was a state agency without substantial financial resources, they could not to raise or sustain a lawsuit against BESE. He explained that such instances of trying to reform history curriculums were part of a grander “disheartening” set of occurrences he had dealt with overtime, and that required him to “continue the fight” with an alternative plan.

As we engaged in conversation I thought about our first discussion of Arthur’s continued fight to elevate Black historical discourse in Louisiana. After he chronicled the struggle between the Louisiana Black Culture Commission and the Louisiana BESE, I simultaneously stated and asked:

I think it’s fascinating, you know, just as the, as the few times we’ve had the talk and... you know, being familiar also with some of... you also, being familiar also with some of your written work man, I think it’s also amazing how you engage this process of fightin’ back by... prov prov, seemingly providing alternant histories and uhm...you know really elevating these like local histories and incorporating that process how you engage that is absolutely as powerful in a different way, you know?

My reference to “alternant histories” pertained to Arthur’s book that presented a distinctly Black understanding of Louisiana through chronicling both pivotal Black figures and organizations in New Orleans. I shared my observation of, and admiration for him for, elevating these “alternant histori[cal]es” discourses and acknowledged his act as a way of resistance. Arthur responded:

Thank you, but you know it’s, it’s been right there before us all these years. You know? And...all I’m trying to do...it to get the local people to embrace it and take it to the next level, but... we have to start with someone who have the capacity to do something about it or to change it, so we have to start with the political people, but you know we, we so busy sitting back here we defeated before we started “man we can’t do this, we can’t do that,” you know, see I don’t wanna listen to that kind stuff...because we know the kind of things that can be changed. Everyday things are changed, we look at all of these things that has gone by in terms of, uhh, medicine and space exploration, all of these things, that’s a change, and...so it doesn’t make sense to sit there and allow other people to tell us that “You can’t do this and you can’t do that”; we know what we can do, but some of us have allowed those people

to tuck our tails so far up our own behind...that we're afraid to pull it out...because they don't wanna feel that they gonna offend the White man. Come on, we can't do that no mo' man, we can't do that. So...you know that's, that's where I'm at, and I know a lot of people don't wanna hear those kinda things and it don't bother me that they have an issue with me, it really don't. You see, I have stepped out on faith all my life, and so it don't bother me that I don't have uhhh... the majority of people with me...because our people have always been in the minority, but that didn't stop them from...doing what they to do...to better their conditions for the next generation. See...only today do we hear that kind of dumb shit, only today.

Arthur exemplified the prophetic hope of West (West in Menand, 1997). Arthur was gracious in his response, but promptly reminded me that this body of historical knowledge has always been present. His premise was to bring awareness of local Black histories to the community. Arthur used “us” and “we” to define a collective experience according Blackness. Additionally, “us” and “we” were his acknowledgement of the insider status afforded to me because of my Blackness. He mentioned the importance of staying engaged to press for positive change, specifically the inclusion of Black history in the Louisiana K-12 curriculum. Arthur mentioned that dealing with this challenge included the obstacle of resistance from within his race that asserted the impossibility of changing Louisiana history curriculums. To him, the root of fear and pessimism from within the Black community, locally and nationally, was the result of White supremacy. This point of contention for Arthur yielded the necessity of Black communities to resist. Personally, Arthur had no desire to hear this from his own community. His mantra of serving to improve “conditions for the generation” refuted pessimism from naysayers in his fight to see greater Black representation incorporated into Louisiana historical texts. Arthur’s narrative denoted his *modus operandi* of improvisational responsibility. Moreover, he realized that the continuum situated as an upward battle required him to stay and to continually discover alternatives to remain engaged in the fight, in spite of the constantly

incurring opposition. In his concluding statement, Arthur viewed himself and others who aligned with his viewpoint as a smaller constituency outnumbered by community members who had accepted the belief of being powerless to encourage and create change.

I attempted to connect with all of Arthur's point of discussion, drawn from a plethora of experiences and knowledge. In response to his critique of the acceptance of local and nation Black communities' inability to influence change, I referenced that point and followed up with an inquiry about when Arthur began to understand the negative intents of those who opposed the elevated representation of Black figures in Louisiana history K-12 curriculums, and his responsibility to challenge those intents. I said and asked:

I mean...I guess, so.... I think as we talk, we're talking about kind of the progression of kind of a the dumbing down of a people²⁹, you know, particularly our people, but I mean like, I mean when was that, when was that you started to particularly engage that at a local level, I mean when did you start understanding that was the process?

Arthur gasped and responded:

Man...that was in the 80's when I decided to start publishing the calendar, and, uhm... it was in 1983. I was convinced then ... that...was one of the most significant things I we could do to begin the process. See, I only wanted to be a part of the movement of people that could open the door to others and when I started publishing my calendar, man there were people who...I recall this and... this used to hurt me. When I first started, uhhh... with the idea of publishing a calendar with, uhh... something one it for each of the 365 days, I didn't know whether or not it would be acceptable, but I also knew that I needed be able to determine how I could sell that in order to pay for it because I had a family, I had two kids, and I just wasn't able to do a whole lot. I couldn't save money or anything of significance because it was about living everyday and, ahh... so... uhh, I started researchin', I guess about in 1980 or something like that, and, uhhh... I remember going to... uhhh, one of the local archives and, uhhh... I was asking the lady for some information on someone and she asked me what was I gonna to do with it, and I told her that I was gonna publish a Black history calendar that only chronicled people from Louisiana and she said to me, she said "Whatchu mean? You gonna just do 10 people or 12 people?" I

²⁹In re-reading this statement/question, one critique I have of myself is of the ableist language I employ, specifically the phrase "dumbing down." My heartfelt apologies to all who find this offensive, oppressive language to be disturbing.

said “No, I wanna have something about someone or something on each of the 365 days”, and she looked me square in the eye, she said, “Well, good luck to you if find 100 things, good things about anybody Black in the state of Louisiana” ... now this was a Black woman too [*“Oh wow”* from me], and ah... you know I was kinda [a]back. But, I, I’ve persisted, I, I mean went on I kept doing what I was doing and uhhh... several years later... uhhh, I happened to talk with that same lady and she, uhhh... that year I was, the calendar was coming out late, and she asked me, uhm, why was I taking so long because... uhhh, she had already started her collection and she didn’t want to stop now... because she’d been collecting all of the calendars. So I said, “Well, you do think that it was a good idea?” She said, “Oh, yes.” She said, “I didn’t think that you were really serious about it either.” I said “Well, you know we do what we have to do”, but see that’s, that’s the kind of things that a lot of us don’t recognize how we’re tested everyday, and they just wanna see how resilient you can be...so... I tell you, man, today it’s no different, they just, they just so many people who just play these stupid little games with us, man, and can’t seem to make them recognize that we are not the enemy, we not the enemy, but they think they can make us believe that they’re so brilliant and so innovative that they could...enhance our understanding to be like there dumbasses [*“uhm huum”* from me]...so...I have, you know, tried to surround myself with...people who at least had enough courage to stand up to the plate... and like I, I tell them all the time...I have never yet heard of, of a baseball player who never struck out at the bat...but I’ve heard of many baseball players who not only... were able to bat high enough to feed their family every year, they even got a little recognition from those sources they didn’t even think of...and yet still...we sit back...and we’re afraid of one defeat...something wrong with that.

Arthur contextualized his response in the preparation of his calendar publication, a bittersweet recollection. Arthur detailed an interaction with a staff person at an archive where he conducted research and how he shared his intent with the staff person, also a Black person, of having a Black Louisianan featured every 365-calendar days. Post-explanation, the staff worker’s response indicated non-awareness of the significant roles Black communities played throughout Louisiana and its history, as she indicated that only 10-12 Black people would be chronicled for this calendar. The woman’s counter of how few Black people he would find hurt Arthur significantly, and embodied more specifically the non-belief of the rich local Black historical narratives. Arthur followed this interaction with a narrative that occurred a few years later with the same staff member, who inquired when

he would be publishing the most recent calendar so she could add it to her collection.

Arthur was amazed she had collected all of the calendars and thought they were a good idea, although initially she did not believe in Arthur's commitment to the project.

Arthur retold this story as a pedagogical act to demonstrate the significant range of challenges individuals and constituencies encounter when attempting to create change. Arthur's engagement with the staff member exposed an intimate relationship with change. The staff person's shift to trust and believe in Arthur's calendar project, in addition to the possibility of learning through his elevating Black historical narrative via the calendar, presented a pathway for the staff person to learn about pivotal Louisiana figures of her race.

Arthur's concluding subject matter presented in this interaction at the local archive is an example of the challenges posed to one's resiliency to stay engaged while attempting to create change. He associated the pushback from the opposition to being treated like an enemy. At the climax of this statement he used the word "us," perhaps to acknowledge the parallel I shared with him racially and in a sankofa³⁰ ethic acknowledging the importance of history. "Us" also seemed to denote a reaction to a broader narrative of Black communities as intellectually subpar and villainous. As I initially read these statements, I was inclined to perceive Arthur's reference to "their dumbasses" as meaning the White community; however re-listening and re-reading the transcript I realized that his "their dumbasses" comment referred to anybody assuming either/or both contrarian or complacent role to others, like himself, attempting to create change. Therefore, the "dumbass" existed simultaneously within and beyond a racial category. Additionally,

³⁰Ghanaian word in the Twi language denoting going back to retrieve.

Arthur asserted that the problem he saw with individuals in his constituency was fear of defeat, which was problematic for him. In the finality of the statement, Arthur explained that, as his personal antidote to complacency, he tried to stay in the presence of individuals who have the courage to continually stand in the face of oppressive conflict.

I went into these engagements with Arthur to talk directly about the construction of I-10; however our conversations took an alternate detour. The bulk of this interview was transcribed from our final conversation on August 2, 2016. Prior to that date, the politics of Baton Rouge and broader Louisiana were very tense with first, the murder of Alton Sterling by Baton Rouge police on July 5, 2016, and then, the murders of three Baton Rouge policemen by a civilian on July 17, 2016. Our conversation began with discussing these occurrences and, while my intent was to stay focused strictly on I-10 construction through the Claiborne Avenue corridor, it would have been unethical and inconsiderate not to engage with the presiding context and broader meanings of our engagement. Therefore, in re-listening, re-collecting, and re-reading the August 2 transcript, I understood the shift in content as a reflection on the socio-political trauma continuum we both experienced in Louisiana before our August 2nd conversation. The collective meaning I gained from our engagements dealt directly with Faubourg Tremé from a perspective of someone born in and embodying the ethic of a place. Specifically, Faubourg Tremé is the oldest Black neighborhood in the United States in which historically multiple reconceptualizations of Afro-Creole/Black protest tradition have occurred in response to racial, economic, and political injustice. My engagement with Arthur was disclosure of his ethics informed by a history of place. Arthur served as a space whose ontology developed in response to historical dynamics of a specific place, Faubourg Tremé. Arthur's familial connection to

Faubourg Tremé of approximately 7 generations denoted a deeply spiritual connection to place through which he engaged the broader responsibilities as an activist and an historian.

Arthur and the Dialogical/Performative

Arthur utilized direct speech, repetition, expressive sounds, and the historical present to share his narratives. He presented his encounter and exchange with the Black female archivist. He quoted her directly, and inserted quotations from his own reactions. Repetition functioned as a larger communicative vehicle that Arthur used to explain his rationale for engaging with the project of elevating local Black historical discourse in his exchange with the archivist. He explained the pushback he received; however, in closing this story, he cycled back and mentioned his encounter with the archivist again, when he learned that she had been collecting his Black history calendars. Arthur's expressive sounds marked the points at which he stopped to reflect and to determine the next direction of the narrative. In concluding his narrative retelling about the exchange, Arthur immediately transitioned to the historical present to describe his current understanding of the lesson to be learned from that narrative and how it pertained to the way people challenge one another to determine the depth of commitment of the other.

Conclusion

In Chapter 4, I addressed the question of, "How do we theorize a Black space of education in Faubourg Tremé pre and post I-10 construction?" I intentionally used "address" as opposed to "answer" to emphasize the variation and dynamism this question held for me.

The tension interlude in this chapter was a non-linear chronicling of one of my Faubourg Tremé educational experiences. This interlude started with one of my

neighborhood experiences of being educated by residents in a casual laid-back setting on the porch of the Backstreet Cultural Museum. Yet, my description of the situation does not denote reduced levels of rigor in learning about the neighborhood. Rather, the informal porch gathering served to inform me of interpersonal codes of being in the community.

Chapter 4 started with my observations of September 8, 2015, the day I attended the Faubourg Tremé HFTA meeting. I went to the neighborhood a few hours before the meeting to visit the Backstreet Museum and possibly to speak with the museum founder, coordinator, and curator Mr. Francis. My interaction with Mr. Francis was brief and I did not converse with him that day due to his museum responsibilities and state of health. I continued my learning of the community by walking slowly through the neighborhood attempting to be open both sensually and emotionally. When it was time for the meeting, I felt extreme anxiety about being in there, as if I was imposing myself upon a community, an imposter of sorts.

My November 10th meeting adjournment log chronicled the relationships I developed with community members with the aid of Carl, who introduced himself at my first meeting. In addition, I met many warm and kind individuals and obtained their contact information at those meetings. I followed up with community members, the first of whom was Reid, whom I met on November 14, 2015.

In engaging with Reid I learned that he had lived in Faubourg Tremé for approximately 8 years. While my intent was to interview only Black residents and those living in the neighborhood pre I-10 construction, Reid's discussed how histories of place and space encapsulate and embody the individual. Sitting with Reid, I witnessed histories of space and place as a sort of spirit that inhabited his body and Reid communicated this

co-habitation through his discussion of love, reverence, and discovery of home in a community post-Katrina. In my last question to Reid I inquired how he might extend knowledge of traditions he gained from living as a resident in Faubourg Tremé to younger generations. To him and me, his honest response was the most vulnerable point of our discussion. My inquiry was not to devalue his residential presence in Faubourg Tremé, but rather part of the larger project of contending with the discourse of research as a sort of taking. Reid was open and honest in reflecting on this final question and articulated that he thought he did not do enough. However, the other dimension I saw was that he was grounded in a struggle to transition the theoretical considerations into the practice of giving back.

My I-10 construction engagements with Arthur were minimal. In our introductory meeting, I discussed the details of my project with Arthur and he responded by sharing that he recently discussed with someone else the significant number of benevolence societies that existed in the North Claiborne corridor pre I-10. I did not think that I would speak with Arthur past the introductory meeting because of his mounting community responsibilities, and our second exchange occurred unexpectedly. After my attempts to contact him, Arthur returned my call and we discussed the current political climate of Baton Rouge and greater Louisiana. My expectation was that we would focus on the subject matter of the interstate construction; however, our conversation turned to the collective importance of his community work since the late 1970's, and the elevation of Black local historical discourse in Louisiana. Initially, as I listened to the interview, I thought that the content, while interesting, was not applicable for this chapter. Yet, reflections on engagements often reveal rich embedded meanings, and throughout our last conversation, Arthur

communicated his ontological relationship developed through generational connectivity to the space and place, in spite of the interstate construction.

While Reid had lived in Faubourg Tremé for approximately eight years and had an epistemological experience with the history, Arthur's ontological existence was a spiritual embodiment of histories and experiences informing the ethic of his rationale to elevate the local Black historical discourse. Furthermore, after engaging with Reid and Arthur, my spatial consideration of Black education pre- and post- I-10 construction was routed in considering how histories of events became embodied in a place. The spaces are Reid and Arthur. Reid found residence in Faubourg Tremé post-I-10 construction, whereas Arthur was there pre- and post-I-10 construction. For Reid, Black education was the process of his learning from the events, whereas for Arthur, Black education was learning but also communicating possibilities to the broader community about the importance of local Black histories.

Tension Interlude: Being Clumsy in Research

Research is a clumsy process and, as a researcher, I am a conduit through which clumsiness is manifested, giving voice to the non-linear nature through which my inquiries flow. Acknowledging clumsiness in my inquiry is an engagement with the simultaneity of oppositions and agreements with my ontological existence in my role as researcher. This is not an assertion of lacking skills or of obliviousness. Rather, my use of clumsiness is an ethic situating the act of research as an ultimate act of improvisation.

Improvisational responsibility is an ethic to engage the intellectual sonorities that emerge from the contradictory and perceived ungovernable vs. governable (Buck-Morss, 2009) connections with an understanding that the responsibility and possibilities of

variation in this relationship never stop, or find a singular meaning, or give reason to turn away from tragedies that have occurred and currently are occurring. My focus in this dissertation was to address the three research questions posed in the introduction, taking the questions outside the museum, understood as the document and a two-dimensional artifact, and the conceptualized embodied rigid spaces, and presenting individuals and communities in conversation, and presenting multiple perspectives.

In writing the above segment, I recollected reading *Miles* (Davis & Troup, 1989), the autobiography of trumpeter and composer Miles Davis written with poet/scholar Quincy Troupe. One experience Davis shared involved his termination of saxophonist George Coleman from his band. Davis's rationale was that he caught Coleman practicing his extended solos pre performance. Davis (Davis & Troup, 1989) explained that he paid his ensemble to practice publically on the bandstand and that over practicing extended solos contributed to the expunging of spontaneity from the performance.

For someone like Davis, the desired aesthetic required his ensemble to be loose enough to become lost³¹, whereby the members were required to discover alternative musical paths and devices to navigate the selected composition. Davis hired highly skilled musicians, so it was not a matter of teaching them how to internalize music. Rather, it was about Davis keeping the ensemble and himself open to alternative possibilities for conceptualizing compositions they performed numerous times, night after night; what Davis sought was an element of clumsiness in the public performance and the desire to hear mistakes and struggle in his ensemble. For him, the spontaneity and freshness in a

³¹Perhaps Patti Lather and Miles Davis existed in another lifetime in the same ensemble or intellectual situation. Like Davis, Lather referred to being lost as a state of awareness and an advantage for research-in-practice. (Lather, 2010)

performance was predicated on understanding that an ensemble member would make musical statements with a specific intention, however other ensemble members might interpret the musical gesture another way. While such spontaneity might produce what some members/listeners interpreted as mistakes, Davis saw these attributes as alternate ways, perspectives, and/or truths. According to Davis (Davis & Troup, 1989), the broader idea of perceiving what constituted a mistake was a desire to hear the struggle and raw inquiry at the core of ensemble members' improvisations.

From this perspective, improvisation is not the act of discounting, distancing, or eliminating preexisting systems of tools. Rather, improvisation is the collective reimagining of ideas within a present context in various durations of time. Improvisation also actively seeks unfamiliar relationships within broader familiar relationship. For Davis, improvisation, understood through an ethic of improvisational responsibility, was an attempt to rid the ensemble space of complacency in their engagements with music addressed many times in performance.

As a researcher, my clumsiness in this project was acknowledged and applied in addressing the physical archive and my interactions with community participants. Like an ensemble member in Davis's cohort, research as improvisation was an act of survival to understand alternative paths of inquiry when engaging seemingly familiar contexts, i.e., my understanding of being Black, communing with people and ideas emanating from a shared diaspora, and being raised in the South under the guidance of elders and ancestors, and community members and artifacts. More specifically for this project, my research examined Faubourg Tremé's histories contained in books and documents that informed the three research questions and sub-questions I presented to participants. However, after the

questions left my mouth and/or when I sat in community space observing and conversing with community members, additional meanings were yielded, the majority of which I never could have anticipated.

In chapter 5, I attend to my research question, “In understanding I-10 as a tamed space, how are themes of forgetfulness expanded?” While the ideas in this chapter overlap and at times repeat discussions in prior and following chapters, my purpose here is to present materials from archives, field notes, observations, and interviews in differing versions to address the proposed research question.

CHAPTER 5. HOPE IN THE RESILIENCY OF RITUAL

The Archives: September 8, 2015

I parked in a neighborhood a few blocks from Tulane University and Audubon Park. Crossing the neutral ground by foot with the Google maps app open on my phone, I attempted to give the perception that I knew what was going on, although I did not. As I walked to the Amistad Research Center on Tulane's campus, I thought of the resonances of irony in my attempts to find the archives. I wondered if the students, faculty, and staff understood what they had on campus or, even better, the significance of the Amistad.

I arrived at the building, entered, and walked to a gentleman named Chris; Chris was kind when I asked about the holdings the archive might have regarding the construction of the I-10 expressway through Faubourg Tremé's neutral grounds. I had emailed previously and I apologized for not setting up a research time. Chris remembered my email and assured me that it was ok. I asked about the information and he told me that they had very little. Chris headed to the holding area and emerged with a box of items. He opened it and we looked at the contents. Chris realized a majority of the contents was not related to the interstate interest and removed them; perhaps I should inquire about them on my next visit. The two folders left were articles written by Dent and the Claiborne Avenue Design Team (CADT). I realized that I had less than an hour to work through the documents so I decided to skim, make a few notes, and come back at a later date. I had an HFTA meeting to attend at 6 pm and did not want to be late.

As I read through the two folders, I gained differing perspectives, particularly from the Dent's works. Dent's (1980) piece, "Memories of Mardi Gras" (the formal published transcript and the original with his notes and edits) gave nuanced discussion and insight

into how Mardi Gras existed pre-Interstate 10 construction, and deserved more examination.

Ruminations from Dent

Experiencing space and place is sensual (Gershon, 2011a). This was emphasized when addressing the words of Dent, a Black New Orleans native who lived between 1932 and 1998, and existed in the capacities of essayist, poet, activist, oral historian, and playwright. His many achievements involved co-founding of the Umbra Writer's Workshop in New York and working as an oral archivist on the Mississippi Oral Project. Additionally, Dent produced a number of publications including two books of poetry, *Magnolia Street* (1976) and *Blue Lights and River Songs* (1982). Most importantly, Dent's writings depicted the vibrancy of his birthplace, New Orleans, Louisiana (Taylor, 2015).

In my early research on Faubourg Tremé, I found that the Amistad Archive housed some journal articles written by Dent that encompassed subject matter ranging from recollections of the neutral ground to proposed ways to redesign the space of the original neutral grounds of Claiborne Avenue. In "A Memoir of Mardi Gras 1968", Dent (1980) wrote:

In the Forties and Fifties, Claiborne, was the perfect site for Black community Carnival, the expansive oak-lined neutral ground dividing the street into two parallel thoroughfares. The Claiborne neutral ground became everyone's front yard, front yards rarely existed in inner New Orleans, the houses invariably reached out to the sidewalk. That was then. In the Sixties the city chose to construct its new expressway above the neutral ground, obliterating the greenery of what was once the "front yard." Oaks and neatly trimmed grass lawn become concrete pavement paced by ugly posts supporting the elevated expressway.

The pavement below reduced to a wasteland of parked and abandoned automobiles, an ever-present rumbling that sounds as if one is trapped beneath an airport.

Despite this awesome urban transformation, ritual does not die out. Claiborne neighborhood residents have set up card tables with portable chairs beneath the expressway, as their parents did on the former neutral ground, parking their autos in choice spots. With homemade food and coolers for drinks, portable record players for the necessary blare of music, they have secured the perfect site to witness the day's events. (p. 14-16)³²

Dent's reflections are sensual, sensual in a sense that when the reader experiences them, they loosen conceptual restraints, and the reader experiences events deemed to have occurred in the present (Gershon, 2011a). Dent rooted his sensual depiction in the 1968 Mardi Gras celebration. Spatially, he described the neutral grounds, running central to the Claiborne Avenue, boulevards ideal for such a celebration.

Historically, Mardi Gras³³ was a segregated event that confined Blacks in New Orleans to Black spaces (Abrahams, 2006). In conversation with a neighborhood resident, he explained how governance of place politics functioned via segregationist policy. For the Black community in New Orleans, temporal access to White places, like the French Quarter, was granted when Blacks entered in a servant capacity. However, when Black individual(s) completed their tasks, it was their responsibility to proverbially, and, perhaps literally in some cases, cross back over the tracks into Black neighborhood place. Essentially, it was a segregationist modus operandi that established distinct Mardi Gras celebrations along racial lines in New Orleans. While this letter from Dent was simultaneously situated in observance and reflection on Mardi Gras, the premise of my analysis considered the broader socio-cultural meanings of ritual occurring with space and place in response to environmental shift. My premise in discussing Dent's letter was not to write an expansive

³²Amistad Archives from the Tom Dent Papers (Tulane University).

³³Traditionally celebrated as a day filled with rich foods, costuming, and entertainment on the last Tuesday before the season of Lent.

history of Black Mardi Gras. Rather, Black Mardi Gras was one conceptual point of the lens to consider communal gestures in response to infrastructural bullying.

Dent described the neutral ground pre I-10 construction as a community space extending and functioning as a collective front yard for the residents. When Dent reflected on Mardi Gras in 1968, it was with a transformed vision of the neutral grounds.

Figuratively, the groves of antique oak trees were washed away through the efforts of city officials' policies, bulldozers, and concrete. Dent's reflection was tragic but not without hope (West, 1997). Dent (1980) wrote, "Despite this awesome urban transformation, ritual does not die out" (p. 14). His use of "awesome" was not grounded in admiration of the construction on I-10. Rather "awesome" was Dent's acknowledgement of the interstate structure's daunting existence and the resilient ritual he referenced was Black Mardi Gras. Dent was aware that the interstate construction procured sections of land, however, in his written account, resiliency was enacted through the Black community's engagement with Mardi Gras that day, in spite of the interstate construction. In the segment following his mention of ritual he wrote:

Claiborne neighborhood residents have set up card tables with portable chairs beneath the expressway³⁴, as their parents did on the formal neutral ground, parking their autos in choice spots. With homemade food and coolers for drinks, portable record players for the necessary blare of music, they have secured the perfect site to witness the day's events. (Dent, 1980, p. 14)

Contextually in this passage, the resiliency of ritual placed equal emphasis on the observers as well as those parading. Dent's statement presented the depths of ritual (Turner, 1966). Furthermore, ritual was not solely attributed to those community members

³⁴ Dent used the term expressway to describe the elevated road structure extending through Claiborne Avenue; however, other terms such as interstate or highway are used to describe it and similar structures.

masking and parading. In the above quote, ritual was situated in Claiborne Avenue community members assuming their observational posts that day, as their elders did on the neutral grounds pre-Interstate 10; however, in their neutral ground engagement, the greenery had been exchanged for tons of concrete and rebar. Therefore, Dent identified resiliency of ritual as the generative space comprised of observers and those parading in place, the neutral grounds. In spite of the violent dramatic reconstruction of a communal place, Dent asserted that resiliency of ritual is created through the community, in the capacities as observers and those parading, and passed down from elders to later generations. The segment of Dent's memoir further depicts the resiliency of ritual in community members creating spaces to enjoy the Mardi Gras festivities and refreshments as their elders once did, but in a reformulated, concrete laden neutral grounds.

Dent's selected statements regarding memory can be understood in a multitude of ways. Considering artworks in memory discussion, perhaps another intent of Dent's statement can be understood when listening to the first line of the 1980's Black rock group Living Color's immensely political song "Open Letter to A Landlord" (Morris & Reid, 1988). In the first line of the song, front man Cory Glover sang, "Now you can tear a building down, but you can't erase a memory, these houses may look worn down but they have a value you can't see." This statement was a critique of infrastructural bullying employed by government and corporate agencies, specifically, the destruction of homes and/or uprooting of communities in lower economic brackets. However, the grander idea of Living Color's message spoke to the oppressive government and corporate entities, in addition to publically acknowledging that, despite the practice of physically remaking spaces, it is impossible to remove the spirit of a space, even with the removal of structures indigenous

to the marginalized communities,. The spirit of the spaces is memories embodied and exchanged with individuals within and outside displaced communities. Furthermore, Living Color's acknowledgement of the importance of memory is the ethic of ritual for communities.

Essentially Living Color and Dent presented analyses of how communal memory functions post Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. For Living Color, memory is present within the community regardless of how space is decimated. However, for Dent memory was the soul of the ritual. Thus, ritual provides the conceptual space (communally, spiritually, emotionally, etc.) whereby community celebrates memory in present contexts while also being an expanding continuum, and repositioning in reaction to influxes of people and spaces. One way to observe how ritual functions transnationally is the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade. Moreover, the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade exemplifies a traumatic occurrence in which Black communities were unjustly extracted from their home space of Senegambia by enslavers. The condition of slavery was both physical and psychological (Jones, 1963/2002). Attending to the psychological trauma of slavery, enslavers strategically attempted to destroy connections to, memory of, home, Senegambia, through prohibiting ritual carried out in religious, spiritual, and musical practices. For the enslaver, the repetition of ritual would only further engage Senegambians in their desire for home which equated resistance. Enslavers' attempts to suppress and expunge ritual were based in a rationale equating rituals to a sustainer of memory that made unjustly extracted communities untamable (Hall, 1992). However, what can be learned from looking at the violent transplanting of Senegambians to the United States is how ritual situated in memory functions through positioning the possibilities, whereby enslaved communities

continued and expanded cultural practices in the United States, in addition to remaking cultural geographies. Paul Gilroy (1993) echoed a similar position rooted in a diaspora discourse in writing:

Critical space/time cartography of the diaspora needs to be readjusted so that the dynamics of dispersal and local autonomy can be shown alongside the unforeseen detours and circuits, which mark the new journeys and new arrivals that, in turn, release new political and cultural possibilities. (p. 86)

Gilroy's context of newness was not rooted in an attempt to destroy connections to manifestations of past events in present times. Rather, Gilroy's notion of newness dealt with the irreducibility of tensions emanating from the dynamic distributive extremes of people, events, time, and space. Furthermore, Gilroy's (1993) statement called for the collective inquiry into the ontological and epistemological realms as possibilities to engage Black diaspora. Thus, newness was the continual reengagement with events predating the present when considering the meanings and enhancements these events offered.

Study and engagement of the diaspora was Gilroy's broader point. He inquired how one readjusts critical space and time to view other "political and cultural possibilities" (Gilroy, 1993, p. 86). The readjustment of critical space/time of the Faubourg Tremé diaspora was the Claiborne Avenue neutral grounds. Specifically, my interest in considering varying understandings of the neutral ground was contextualized in considering the broader meaning of Black education in the United States. Traditionally, the term education might immediately transport one to thinking of the brick and mortar institution. However, my mention of education was with the understanding of how traditionally the institution has negated community histories and traditions in which they have been constructed, or rather, how the erection of an institution simultaneously tore down an indigenous learning space for marginalized communities. This is not to say that there have not been influential

institutions in communities. Rather, my intent was to consider the spectrum of education from a spatial context situated in community spaces, most specifically the neutral grounds and Faubourg Tremé.

While Dent's (1980) discussion was rooted in the memories of Mardi Gras pre- and post- Interstate 10 construction, he mentioned the resiliency of ritual in Black Mardi Gras parading and celebration traditions, and also acknowledged that ritual simultaneously builds community resiliency. What is under consideration here is referring to a repetitious event within a community as a ritual, or what ritual means in theory and practice (Turner, 2001). For Dent, ritual was viewed through the lens of Living Color, and for Gilroy, it was the discussion of the tragic, but still vibrant life of the diaspora. Following Dent's mention of the resiliency of ritual, the example presented was his observation of the community's reaction to the infrastructural epidemic of pavement and cement pillars.

In conclusion, the ritual continued unabated by the theoretical disenfranchisement of not caring about building a freeway through a community space and the material violence of destroying that space, turning open green meeting grounds into cold concrete through others. The community still positioned card tables and refreshments on spaces now paved. Dent's (1980) observation of the community still engaging in business as the usual ritual of celebration on that Mardi Gras day was in acknowledgement of how prior generations of elders/ancestors along the corridor engaged pre-construction. Dent's mention of the repetition of this gesture of communing was a specific pedagogical practice. The community's encounter with space indigenous to the elders, with the premise to commune and be together, was not simple. Furthermore, the neutral grounds served as the institution sustaining several ranges of discourse embedded within the community it

created. The range of interactions between community members was the sustenance of ritual along with the aural and oral exchange of community histories.

In the following section I analyze two newspaper articles from New Orleans' newspapers, *Inside New Orleans* and *The Times Picayune*, to examine how discourse around the construction the I-10 was depicted publically at the time of its construction. The newspaper stands as one artery of public discourse, simultaneously articulating how cultural and economic capital is leveraged individually and collectively. In the selected articles from 1965-1966, the discussions show the actions of an individual and a corporate governmental collective, both in resistance to the construction of Interstate 10. However, these two articles present the extremes of political and economic disparagement.

Representation of the Discourse

Examining the ways Interstate 10 construction was depicted in community informational veins was one means of understanding the extreme level of economic disparagement between Black and White communities in New Orleans. Crutcher (2010) discussed the intentional non-informing/misinforming of the Faubourg Tremé and general Claiborne Avenue corridor residents by public meetings of governmental corporate conglomerates, whereby community members could voice opposition to the Interstate 10 construction. Additionally, one cannot overlook the significant economic and political influence White preservation societies such as the Vieux Carré Commission, the Vieux Carré Property Owners, Residents, and Associates (VCPORA), and American Institute of Architects (AIM) had in directing the interstate away from the French Quarter, and at the expense of Black communities.

Homeowner Fights Highway Authorities

A middle-aged Negro lady promised Civil District Court Judge Howard J. Taylor that she would comply with an expropriation order obtained by the state when she appeared before him Tuesday. The judge said that he would therefore drop the contempt of court charges.

Mrs. Mildred Walls Bell appeared at the contempt hearing after spending the night in jail. Civil sheriff's deputies arrested her Monday on court order to assure her appearance.

She defied a Feb. 12 court order that told her to surrender possession of her residence at 2512 Spain Street within 30 days after notice was served. Mrs. Bell failed to show up April 9 for a contempt of court hearing, and had continued to inhabit the house which the Louisiana Department

The department had filed suit against her to secure the property for use in building the St. Bernard Ave. - Franklin Ave. section of the New Orleans Expressway as part of State Route Louisiana 1-10.

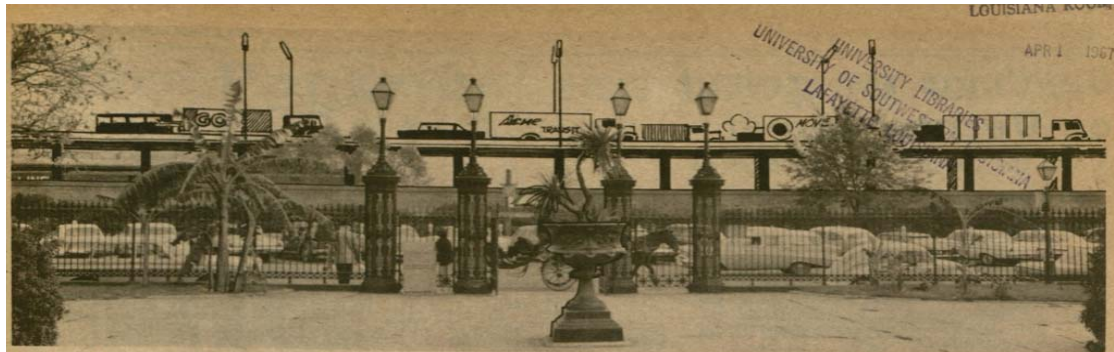
Her property is needed for a project that will cost about \$20 million.

Mrs. Bell was given about 10 days to move from the one-story frame house and double garage for which the Department of Highways has offered to pay \$9,250.

A.³⁵ of Highways wants.

Figure 6. May 1, 1965 *Inside New Orleans* Newspaper Article

³⁵New Orleans Public Library Archives



High level

These two pictures show the planned, high-level expressway (above) and a low-level expressway, (below). Arthur W. Tong took the photos, and architect Mark Lowry drew the expressway.

VIEUX CARRE COURIER



Vol. 11, No. 5

Vieux Carre, New Orleans, La.

Jan. 22, 1965

Meet to block expressway

Organizations representing thousands of persons in the Vieux Carre and other sections of New Orleans will meet next week to oppose an elevated expressway the length of the French Quarter, separating it from the Mississippi River.

The joint meeting is scheduled for 8 p.m. Friday, Jan. 29, in Gallier Hall, 545 St. Charles.

Every Orleanian (or tourist) concerned with this problem is invited to attend and express an attitude, sponsors of the meeting said. Also invited are Mayor Schiro and members of the City Council, Congressmen Hale Boggs and F. Edward Hebert, Senators Allen Ellender and Russell H. Long, representatives of the Louisiana State Highway Department, of the

dock and levee boards, city planning officials and others officially involved with the proposed expressway.

Talks will be brief, sponsors promised, and the meeting will close at a reasonable hour.

Among primary sponsors of this civic meeting are Vieux Carre Property Owners & Associates, Inc., and Louisiana Landmarks Society. As the meeting was being set up, additional organizations, including the Independent Women's Organization, offered their services and assistance. Members of French Quarter Residents' Association and of the Louisiana Council for the Vieux Carre are expected to join as co-sponsors following a special meeting of the council's board. Also available is

Mrs. Martha G. Robinson, an arch-foe of the expressway.

"A showdown on this threatened blight to the city's major tourist attraction is a matter of now or never," said Mrs. Jacob H. Morrison, president of Property Owners, and Harnett T. Kane, president of Landmarks, in a joint statement. "This issue has been simmering in semi-secrecy for many months—the climax of an effort to force upon us an expressway which we earnestly fear will do far more harm to the city than any good that might be claimed for it."

At stake are investments mounting into hundreds of millions spent by French Quarter residents and others throughout the city, Mrs. Morrison and Kane

added.

"All over the country cities are turning in bitterness against such monstrosities after expressways have ruined property values and dealt harsh blows to communities, but special interests in New Orleans are reaching out to embrace a scheme which would create an 'instant slum' in a historic area and destroy natural beauty which the federal government feels should be saved for future generations of Americans."

Concern over the proposed expressway was aggravated during the last few days when the City Council requested the Louisiana highway authorities to call a public hearing on the proposal.

The Council acted coincidentally with receipt of a

communication from Mayor Schiro, who declared, "I am in favor of the riverside expressway in the approximate location proposed by the state highway department and agree with the method of financing."

The council resolution endorsed the financial plan for New Orleans participation. The count must total not more than half the costs not covered by interstate highway financing and not more than 5 per cent where interstate financing is not available.

Total city funds are not to exceed \$1,050,000 in addition to the million dollars advanced by an earlier council resolution for expressway construction under contract in the area at the foot of Canal St., where the new International Trade Mart is being built.



B.³⁶

Figure 7. January 22, 1966 *Vieux Carre Courier* Newspaper Article

³⁶University of Louisiana and Lafayette Archives

Example A is from the May 1, 1965, edition of *Inside New Orleans*; example B is from the January 22, 1965, *Vieux Carré Courier*; and example C is from the March 14, 1966, edition of the *Times-Picayune*. All three newspapers are New Orleans-based and expressed discontent with the construction of I-10; however, the discussion of this discontent was expressed in drastically different ways. While my discussion pertained to Faubourg Tremé, it is important to emphasize the the I-10 infrastructure simultaneously bisected a number of Black neighborhoods in the 3rd, 6th, 7th, and 8th wards.

Example A referenced the 8th ward, 2512 Spain Street, St. Roch neighborhood, residence of Mildred Walls Bell, a Black woman. The *Inside New Orleans* article discussed how Bell was served a court order on February 12, 1965, placing ownership of her property in the Louisiana Department of Highways within 30 days. However, she elected to occupy the residence and did not attend an April 9th hearing. As a result, Bell was found guilty of contempt of court, was arrested, and jailed awaiting trial. Post-trial she was given 10 days to vacate the premises and was offered a meager sum of \$9,250 in compensation for her home and land. Since the median cost of a new home in the United States in April 1965 was approximately \$19,600 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016), Bell was significantly underpaid for her house and had to deal with the trials and tribulations of finding another residence.

While this article documented but one individual incident with the Louisiana Department of Highways, the incident is an indication of the legalistic and economic disparagement ascribed to Black communities in New Orleans. Legally, Bell's incident showed her inability to resist or fight the infrastructural progression regarding repossession of her home, rooted in a racial and economic superiority dynamic; it speaks to

such intentional oppression and systematic racism more broadly pervasive throughout New Orleans. Furthermore, the sum of \$9,250 that the Louisiana Department of Highways offered is not simply dismal; it provided less than half the sum Bell would have needed to purchase another residence. Bell simultaneously experienced legal and economic disenfranchisement as a result of resisting the surrender of her residence.

Acknowledgement of the private, governmental, and corporate hold of the White preservation societies harkened to the research of Mohl (2002) and Crutcher (2010). Both emphasized the prominent economic capital hold of New Orleans' White preservation societies through private, governmental, and corporate collectives, and their direct influence on interstate construction. Example B from *Vieux Carré Courier*, published from 1961-1978 and devoted specifically to issues regarding preservation of the French Quarter, presented a call for the community to participate in the meeting concerning the opposition to the interstate construction through the French Quarter. The front page article featured comments from Jacob H. Morrison, president of the Vieux Carré Property Owners, Residents, and Associates (VCPORA), and Harnett T. Kane, president of the Louisiana Landmarks Society, both of whom opposed the proposed interstate construction. In the column titled "Our Own River Road", the authors wrote:

Where, then, could this route be located to best advantage? Certainly not along the river, shutting off one of the city's best natural attractions—especially in the Vieux Carré, where tourists flock by the thousands. An expressway should really skirt the city, perhaps cross the river on the proposed Chalmette—Paris Rd. bridge—a problem for New Orleans alone. Additional city—directed traffic could moved fast on Claiborne Ave., which can be developed to the limit, with at least two upper levels and many lanes at grade. (*Vieux Carré Courier*, 1965, p. 4)

They posed the question where the proposed interstate should be located to best benefit New Orleans, and were quick to assert that the interstate should not be along the French Quarter and the Mississippi for fear that it would disrupt the aesthetics of White owned and controlled residences and neighborhoods. They then suggested the Chalmette-Paris Road bridge as an alternative; however this rationale only partially remedied the issue of growing volumes of traffic. They concluded with suggesting that the management of traffic rates would be remedied through building additional ground level traffic lanes with a maximum of two levels for traffic.

Addressing specific opponents to the interstate through the French Quarter, Richard O. Baumbach and William E. Borah (1981) presented a first hand account of their involvement in contesting the interstate construction through the French Quarter in their book, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: A History of the Vieux Carré-Riverfront Expressway Controversy*. Baumbach and Borah (1981) indirectly articulated the simultaneous existence of White preservationists in the local, economic, and political sector including the Louisiana Council for the Vieux Carré, a group comprised of approximately 30 groups aligned with history, culture, and beatification. This Louisiana Council passed a resolution in opposition to “any elevated highway on the riverfront of Vieux Carré” (Baumbach & Borah, 1981, p. 73). Additionally, individuals like Martha Robinson of the Louisiana Council for the Vieux Carré advocated for the French Quarter to be placed on the Registry of National Historic Landmarks; Stewart L. Udall, the 37th United States Secretary of Interior, aligned with Robinson’s assertion and solidified the French Quarter’s status for inclusion on the National Registry of Landmarks, which became official December 30, 1965.

Baumbach and Borah (1981) also found that the non-profit Help Establish Logical Planning (HELP) functioned to elevate discourse regarding the proposed French Quarter interstate construction. While this chronicling highlights a few individuals and preservation organizations in New Orleans, it is essential to realize the simultaneous political and economic capital such groups possessed locally and nationally, groups that situated Black communities adjacent to the Claiborne Avenue corridor at a significant political and economic disadvantage.

In example C from the *Times-Picayune*, the reader is confronted with the dramatically bolded block lettered headline “Stop the Elevated Riverfront Expressway.” Additionally the graphic is a hypothetical artistic rendering of how the interstate would look going through the French Quarter. The content of the article challenged the premise and called for additional traffic studies to refute Moses’s original suggestion of building the interstate through the French Quarter. However, examining this article further, it is a conglomeration of resistance enacted both through governmental and through corporate entities. The government employed a multitude of architectural firms with an interest in the French Quarter as independent contractors. A majority of the architectural firms from 1946 to 1957 suggested construction along the riverfront of the French Quarter; however, in 1965, urban designer Roland Katz suggested North Claiborne Avenue as the space for Interstate 10.

Additionally, this article was a presentation of the Louisiana Department of Highways’ perspective, reaching out to private architectural firms to conduct these studies and distinctly articulating a governmental and corporate conglomerate. The visual, full-page presentation of this article indicated the economic upper hand the legal and corporate

entities gained and maintained through enlarging their discourse in public information. The artistic rendering by architect Mark Lowery depicted the proposed interstate going through Jackson Square in the French Quarter. This dramatic, persuasive graphic device showed the possible changes that would be wrought to the French Quarter. It also was an indicator of access to alternative funding as an architect was hired to create a full-page newspaper ad. This full-page ad was paid for by Baumbach & Borah's non-profit organization Help Establish Logical Planning (HELP).

The three articles articulated economic disparagement between Black and White communities in New Orleans around the construction of Interstate 10. Mildred Walls Bell's residence was violently confiscated by the Louisiana Department of Highways and she was offered a meager sum of money as compensation; additionally, Bell was incarcerated. Her experience was one of many narratives that articulated the dominance of governmental corporate collectives operating within a White hegemonic discursive ethic.

The second and third articles present insight into the internal operation of White preservation collectives. Specifically, the conglomerate of governmental and corporate entities allied with White preservation societies to re-route interstate I-10 through Claiborne Avenue, as seen in the January 22, 1966 *Vieux Carré Courier* column "Our Own River Road", and a citation of urban designer Roland Katz's similar suggestion in the March 14, 1966 *Times-Picayune* article. Katz's suggestion countered those of architectural firms employed by the Louisiana Department of Highways, and recommended construction through the French Quarter. Also, articles B and C presented Lowery's illustrations of proposed interstate construction, however example B depicted the interstate both elevated and ground level, and example C was strictly an elevated depiction.

The following section shifts from analysis of various archival resources to a personal interview with Lance³⁸, a community activist born and raised in New Orleans. Additionally, he was involved with a foundation that focused on assisting in achieving homeownership for community members of low to moderate income demographics. He resided in the 7th ward adjacent to the neutral grounds of Claiborne Avenue.

Before discussing our exchanges, I give some insight into my anxieties of cold calling a participant and introducing myself as Reagan Mitchell. I present the challenge of hurdles I jumped to sit in discussion with Lance. The concluding discussion with him was a segment of our transcript and is accompanied by an analysis.

Phone Interaction with Lance

I received Lance's email with his contact information around 5:00 pm on June 7th and called him about 2:00 pm on June 8th. I connected with the answering service of his organization and left a message, and Lance returned my call at 7:56pm that night. I did not recognize the New Orleans phone number although I was expecting a call from him, but did not expect he would call me for a few days. I was caught off guard as I had eaten dinner, had drunk libations, and settled into relaxation mode. When I answered, Lance asked to speak with "Mitchell, Reagan"; I did not correct him on the order of my names.

Side note: Sometimes I feel a little anxiety about my first name, Reagan. I mean over the years I have grown to respect and cherish my name significantly more because it is a gift from my parent and representative of the immense love, respect, and admiration they have and continually are developing for me. However, sometimes I have to reconcile this tension with assumptions people have about my personal and/or familial political beliefs.

³⁸ Lance is a pseudonym

This is not to say that Lance had this assumption about me, however my reaction had been cultivated through choruses of people asking question/making comments such as, “Are your parents Republicans?” or “I just don’t understand how a Black man can be named Reagan.” I mean, I understand the context of Reagan-post-Reagan administration. You know, the pioneering presidential administration responsible for systematically placing drugs in communities of color throughout the United States, thus escalating oppression through economic, political, and spatial entrapment. However, I was born before his administration. This is some of the baggage I carry when attempting to contact community members disfranchised by multiple presidential administrations. My intentions politically and ethically are quite opposite to those of my most famous namesake; however, because of prior experiences, I carry this baggage into my interactions.

During our eight-minute conversation, I told him that I was a graduate student at LSU and that I was looking at the interstate as a connective vein to better understand Black community oppression throughout the United States in the 1960s. In sharing my project, I realized I was speaking quickly and incoherently as I always did when talking with a potential participant. Lance deciphered some of my incoherence and obliged my request for an interview, with one condition- that I not “sell what I [Lance] give you”. I told him that my work was strictly for educational purposes. We discussed an interview date and Lance indicated that June 17th was best for him; I wrote down the date without checking my personal calendar. I thanked Lance for making the time to speak with me. In our exchange the collective tone of our dialogue softened and exposed the colloquial side. At the completion of our conversation he referred to me as “Dr.” a few times. I said, “Thanks for the blessing” as we concluded our conversation.

Later I realized that I would be in Austin, Texas, for a performance on the prior day to our interview and would not be back in New Orleans for the scheduled interview time. I realized I had to purchase a return airplane ticket if I intended to make this meeting. I had the impression that if I did not catch Lance on the 17th, it could be awhile before he was available again.

Ruminations from Lance: Spatial Exchanges Within Place

I landed at the New Orleans airport just before 11:00 am on June 17th. I had not been out of state for more than 24 hours, and was delirious from playing an extended performance at the Allways Lounge on June 15, 2016, in New Orleans, driving and performing in Austin, Texas on June 16, 2016 until 2:30 am, and then at the airport to catch my 5:48 am flight back to New Orleans. I was exhausted, hungry, and had a headache brought on by sleep deprivation, and my anxiety was intense and deep. I asked myself, in innumerable variations, "How will I interview Lance and stay alert and engaged?"

I grabbed my bag from the baggage claim and headed to my car. I needed breakfast as I tried to feel rooted again. The weather was so hot between Louisiana and Texas and I was hot, hungry, anxious, and confused. I bought food at Dot's Dinner and headed to New Orleans. The interview was at 2:00pm so I went to my friend's house and crashed for a while.

Tired and not up for conversation, I sat on my friend's couch, napped briefly, then left. My anxiety had not lessened. My navigation device kept crashing and leading me in different locations to Lance's place of employment. I arrived with about 5 minutes to sit in my car and cool down in the A/C. I cut my car engine off and paced my breathing to calm myself down. I walked to the door; it was locked. The receptionist both gestured and told

me to ring the bell; I noticed the inscription “By Appointment Only” on the door and was taken back to Arthur’s³⁹ reminder that the individuals with whom I wanted to talk had day jobs. I was humbled that Lance took the time to put me on his schedule.

The White, middle-aged receptionist buzzed me in. She welcomed me and inquired about the nature of my visit. I told her that I had an appointment with Lance. We talked about our travels and the places we had lived, and in this layered exchange she told me that Lance would be back soon. Another associate, a younger Black woman, inquired about my visit and I gave her an explanation similar to the one I gave the receptionist. She immediately contacted Lance to remind him about his 2:00 pm appointment—me. She hung up and explained that sometimes he had to be reminded or he would get further sidetracked. Eventually Lance entered from the side entrance of the building. I stood up and we greeted, I told him whom I was, and Lance apologized for the delay. Lance extended his hand; we shook, gripped, and then went in for the half hug. This gesture calmed my anxiety. Lance gestured towards the elevator and we made small talk, discussing weather and travel, on the way to his office. Entering his office, Lance gestured to me to grab the black chair and have a seat.

We started talking; I gently halted our exchange to ask Lance if we could take care of a few “housekeeping” things before we continued. He was kind and direct, the way I hope to be someday, yet quick and blunt in his response. He said that he had done “hundreds of these interviews already so whatever I need to sign just let me know so you can turn your recorder on.” I gave Lance a consent form and a black ink pen. He handed back my black pen and told me “I’m gonna sign in blue.” Lance signed the form and we continued our

³⁹ Arthur is a pseudonym

conversation. The entire time we kept strong eye contact; he rarely looked away. There is no mincing of words or linguistic code switches into formal, flattened Eurocentric style of English. We communicated colloquially in a flexible ebb and flow like the Mississippi River or the rolling Tennessee hills. He spoke and I listened. Although I had the urge to interrupt, I simply made a note on my paper and found points in the conversation to cycle back.

However, sometimes I did not. I realized that sometimes the proverbial stone must be left unturned to keep the groove going. The groove is an essential part of life. Between Lance and me, life at this point was the conversation. Conversation in some conceptualizations is adherence and respect to the groove (Weheliye, 2005). The material, or rather the riff or fugue subject in part of our conversation, pertained to considering community and re-routings of precursory communal information brought about through I-10 construction.

Reissman (2008) asserted through dialogic/performative analysis that the interview is not monovocal. She emphasized that meaning is cultivated in the relationship between the interviewer and the participant. Additionally, it was how we understood our political, social, economical, etc. personal experiences that informed the conversational tenor between Lance and me, in addition to being the filter that colored our reflection upon each other's exchanges. Thus, Reissman's (2008) thought was an essential reminder that the researcher functions as a central actor in the engagement with a participant. Therefore, I was not simply a marginal figure asking questions. Rather, Lance and I were situated as a collective, constructing/improvising meaning through personal experiences in the context of our meeting.

In the following segment of our dialogue, I presented a follow up question/response to Lance. I began with sharing the observations I made while walking the wards along

Claiborne Avenue, and my amazement at how prominent the sonic presence of I-10 always felt. I inquired of Lance about the experience of witnessing the dramatic shift in the neutral grounds. He said:

Well, well... you, you, you see, [*my personal cell phone interruption*] you see this uhm...you, you see this event unfolding in front you, but for me as a young kid I began to understand to full implications of what that meant, it was only as I began to grow and sit and listen and hear lectures, then I understood this is not good, this is certainly not good for us [*office associate interruption*], sorry about that, so what I'm saying, with respect to your question is, as a young boy you don't know what you're looking at you just see all these tractors you see stuff getting torn up and you know, you don't know... what the long term effect of that is gonna be until you're mature enough...to sit and listen...and then you listen to the conversations and then you look at it and say "Wow" ...because...it wasn't just...[*snaps his fingers to emphasize the immediacy of the construction in preparation of the I-10 construction*] the pulling up of the trees and the pouring the cement, it was all of what was adjacent to Claiborne on both sides, the businesses...the homeownership, the families...so all of those, a lot of those folks got uprooted and displaced...never to come back again, so... you know and some of these places where you see these big old columns, them columns is sitting in the middle of... what was... viable businesses to the Black community...but again in order for you to appreciate that... you have to know where you come from... in order to know where it's going, and... most... people...that's under...40 years old, I would say, they wouldn't know jack shit about that, they wouldn't know.

Lance's response articulated reengaging with memory. He repeated the statement, "then I understood this is not good, this is certainly not good for us." His use of "us" denoted regions of belonging. While on the surface, "us" in his exchange meant the immediate Claiborne Avenue corridor community, "us" also acknowledged communal categories of race, for example Blackness. Lance articulated that he was a kid when he had an awareness of the first signs of construction that transformed the neutral grounds forever.

However, processing and making sense of the catastrophic ramifications the construction brought was a reflective process in which Lance engaged simultaneously with self and communal reflection. Additionally, Lance extended his response to encompass how those 40 and older embody a specific understanding of the neutral grounds situated in an

experiential experience. Lance's response was a narration of his growth, of his development of community responsibility, and of his awareness of how the history and importance of the neutral grounds has been forgotten.

I inquired further about the point of Lance's life when he made connections regarding the construction and the reshaping of the community space.

Me: So...you talked about as a kid, you know, just the experience of... you know not really, you know, not necessarily putting two and two, two and two together what that means...but like what was the, what was the shift for you, that like, got you really thinking along this....*[conversational overlap]*?

Lance: Well it wasn't, well what happens is, is first of all I lived on Claiborne Avenue, so I could come out my door cross the street and go in the middle of the neutral grounds and pick up acorns and stuff like that. We didn't have to try to go to a park, we could play in that median and not be threatened by the, by the traffic. Because it was so fricken wide, you know what I mean, so...uhm...that, that's how we viewed it, you know what I mean, uhm...but...you know, information, information and education is crucial because now when get to look at this stuff and see... you see the level of destruction that it brought....yeah, I mean it brought destruction that can't be reversed you can't turn that around, even if you took the bridge down plant the trees put the grass, did all of that...uhm...some of those institutions of African-American ownership is gone and gone forever. In addition to that, uhm, given the way the city is being gentrified that's going to be a new, a new set of problems for the existing people who are there and trying to hold on because if you take that, that monstrosity of cement down and re-green this thing and re-tree this thing, uhm...it's going to be more sought after like you would not believe. So, it's going to get gentrified quicker that you can blink, and then the more it gets gentrified, the more expensive it is going to be to live there. So now you done create... a new wave of problems for people who are trying hold on to the last vestige what they know to be their community.

Lance utilized multiple jumps in time to construct meanings. He began with a reflection of the tangibility of what the place once was, depicting an immediacy of availability indicated by his ability to retrieve acorns. He proceeded to chronicle present and future tragedies, and the threat of gentrification. For Lance, education was a sense of embodiment grounded in his realization of responsibility for the community members to become informed via an awareness of the historical events regarding the construction. Education is not grounded in

the institution but rather it is a communal socio-ethical awareness that keeps community consciousness in a space of inquiring about the meaning of I-10 in the present, and the possibility of its removal in the future.

Lance realized that the interstate was removable, however he acknowledged that removal would only position and assure an even more violent rate of gentrification for the indigenous community. Furthermore, Lance's understanding of I-10 was simultaneously structural and economic. He intimately understood I-10 as a structure, however the understanding was rooted in an historical and present awareness of how governmental and corporate sectors have operated outside the community. In my question I attempted to have Lance locate a specific moment in which he realized the construction was problematic; however, his response was an explanation of how there was no specific point at which he became aware. Rather, awareness of its traumatic effects on the community the construction was a process. He mentioned re-creating a neutral ground green space in a tragic tone. While green space re-creation was a possibility, Lance's response emphasized the spirit of place through spatial geographies embodied by indigenous community member. Therefore, restoring a community place is about more than a physical reconstruction.

For Lance, the reconstruction of this community place was about the community members, themselves the communal spaces embodying the history and ethic which give place meaning. Lance's response prompted me to inquire further about community. His description of community was centered on a notion of unified experience. I was interested in learning more about his definition of community, and how and which community

traditions shifted as a result of the I-10 construction. The following dialogue presents my inquiry and Lance's response.

Me: Well, I think even going off, and going off...like... your explanation of community and talking about, you know, particularly a unified experience... that, that makes community also with people, I was wandering...if you could talk about like...just particularly how... how traditions were shifted with this shift of the community to because, we, I think you talk some about, like we talked some about Mardi Gras but I guess...the way that I'm, when I think about this... and... begin to inquire further, I'm interested in this idea of thinking of this idea of how, well, how community traditions shifted, maybe, what were some of the traditions that occurred, due to, because of that space, that was available, that were totally redirected in different ways...?

Lance: Well, I, I think that...you had...one of the things that effected...the space...is the...the lack of quality in the space. The quality of the space changed, start there...From there in the course of changing the quality of the space, a lot of cultural groups died off. So there had to be this rebirth of...cultural groups...to come back and reinstate what used to happen here...and...the question is, "Did it come back to what it was, or did it come back...less than?", and if I had to bet on it I would say less than. 'Cause, because there is some things that happen there now, but not at the same quality...of what was there before the quality of the area change. So when you pull that quality of the area out, you also pull the quality of the culture out. And you, in addition to that...you pull the quality of the culture down because you dislocated a lot of people who made up the culture. So now, you got, you got, its got to regenerate itself and you have people who live there that, that has been a part of the regeneration of the culture and you have people who come from near and far that come back to regenerate it because...they know what the space meant...and the importance of...of coming back there. But you, you still don't get the same...you still don't get the same quality... because... a lot have been lost. There's a disconnect...there's a major disconnect...in terms of...what was there then and what's there now. You have, uh, you have a resemblance today, and not the best of a resemblance, but you do have a resemblance of what that area represented...before they tore it apart and, and you see when you look at this thing you gotta understand it's not just about grass and cement. Yeah, it's not, it's not just grass and cement, it's ah... it's, it's, people, it's people, it's people and practices, you know what I mean, and the people and the practices is what created the quality of the area. In addition to the God given things, or the things man saw fit to put there, and you know, which is trees and grass...but, you know, in the day of the lo[bbyists], the automobile lobbyists trying to...push enforce...everybody to have a car, so then they had to have somewhere to drive it, and, and the more they had to have somewhere drive it, the more they wan[ted], wanted to get to point a to point b in a more immediate manner. So, it all... works in harmony...for some things and against some things and you gotta look at, you know, most of the people who jump on the interstate and they go over Claiborne Avenue, uhm...it's because they're trying to get to another parish. Yeah it's just, it's just a means of, of, of, of an express, an expressway to get faster to

where their going as opposed to staying on the ground, but in the meantime you, have, uhm, a change [in] environment. Yeah, total change in environment, 'cause, you know now you stuck with that and...you wanna change an environment, you take the people, whenever you take the natives out of an environment, that environment can't do anything but change...because...that's where they habitat at, you know what I mean, that's where they live, die, and live again, in that environment and all the things that constitute living...raise their families, christenings, baptisms, weddings, funerals, parties, cultural stuff, Mardi Gras, St. Joseph, uhm, whatever the event was. So, when you lookin' at that interstate, it's, it's, it's uhm...it represents...the destruction...of a people. Yeah, and you know the slick, the slick thing was, is, is how they ran it... how they governmentally ran it through there. That was the slick, that was the slick thing. I mean that was, that was slicker than goose grease. Yeah, they ran that, they ran that, they listen, they shoved it up the Black community's ass like a suppository. Yeah, so, and now 40 years plus later there's a conversation about...taking it down. Wow...so... it's like everything else... the poorest people get the worst things done to 'em, 'cause they don't have nobody to stand up for 'em, and even there's some folks who said, like the CORE group...in the civil rights movement, you know, they, while, while the federal government was, was orchestrating the interstate the, the, the stand up people in New Orleans busy demonstrating as Woolsworth [Woolworth's], so that Black people could...sit down at the lunch counter. So they don't, they didn't get a chance to...horn [hone] in on how to stop this thing from happening like the French Quarter did, see what I'm saying, when the French Quarter realized how much traffic was going to dump in the quarters... [they] say "Oh, hell no."

Lance's response was rooted in the notion of "quality." His use of the term "quality" was in reference to the collective of community members indigenous to the wards directly intersected by I-10. "Quality" was a denotation of those embodying narratives and traditions of the community that formulated the cultural activities specific to this place. Lance's response about how the shift occurred in community traditions began with a description of the decimation of collectives of cultural groups. "Cultural groups" is a broad classification describing the social aid and pleasure clubs⁴⁰ that lined the Claiborne Avenue

⁴⁰Social aid and pleasure clubs in New Orleans developed from benevolent societies. Historically, benevolent societies in New Orleans were a response to the substantial death rates of Blacks in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The benevolent societies served as precursors to insurance companies, whereby both Black and poor communities could access funding for healthcare and burial expenses. The organization of benevolent societies ranged from around neighborhood affiliation to gender (Jacobs, 1988). However,

corridor pre I-10 construction. Additionally, in an interview with local historian, artist, and scholar Arthur, he stated that more than 100 social aid and pleasure clubs were headquartered along the Claiborne Avenue corridor pre-I-10 construction.

Lance's response was a non-linear flexible presentation of time regarding space. Spatially, Lance's response referred to the neutral grounds; in the interview context, space was a denotation of physical place. Lance further described how the spiritual richness of place simplified as a result of communal displacements. The indigenous community members, as the spaces, occupied, maintained, and changed place with spiritual vibrancy. He also mentioned point of improvisational responsibility within in himself and the community.

Improvisational responsibility is a conglomerate of West's discussions of hope along and Derrida's (1994) discussions of responsibility. Collectively, improvisational responsibility acknowledges the tragic struggle of temporal and tangential relations individuals have with hope and responsibility as never settled.

Lance's discussion of community survival hinged on the regeneration of cultural traditions, specific to communities along the Claiborne Avenue corridor, and was charged with the tension of improvisational responsibility. Regeneration of the community cultural practices was the desire and/or hope; however for this to occur, quality, embodied in the prior community that occupied this place, was essential. Lance's realization of present attempts to continue and reestablish cultural practices was his acknowledgement of the

as Blacks were able to access and establish insurance agencies, benevolent societies shifted towards being social aid and pleasure clubs. The social aid and pleasure clubs are still situated as community fixtures, uniting the neighborhood; however they serve as the frontline, committing fundraising expenditures to maintain second lines, the brass bands. Additionally, they purchase police escorts, parade licenses, materials for costume construction, and insurance (Regis, 1999).

non-settled nature of responsibility embodied by some of the present inhabitants. The improvisational tension for hope and responsibility was survival situated in Lance's "resemblance." Furthermore, resemblance, for him, dealt with the passing on of memories and symbols significantly limited in ancestral and elder resonances that reduced the quality. However, resemblance for Lance also pertained to constant reflexivity, communal and self, as an improvisatory act to consider the variances of survival.

Lance's penultimate response mentioned that Interstate 10 represented "the destruction...of a people." He mentioned the historical events that assured I-10 would be constructed along the Claiborne Avenue corridor and his historically reflective conclusion acknowledged the savvy ,well-timed coalition between governmental corporate entities. Additionally, he asserted that this coalition was timed at a point in which Black resistance was weighted towards protesting segregationist policies such as Woolworth's, thus giving an unfair advantage to the governmental corporate conglomerate.

Conclusion

In understanding I-10 as a tamed space, how are themes of forgetfulness expanded? I presented this question in the interlude of this chapter. As mentioned in Chapter 3, forgetfulness was situated in Ellison's discussion of invisibility in his book *Invisible Man* (1947/1980). Ellison described the nameless protagonist in the prologue stating, "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me" (p. 3). While invisibility is the core resonance that infiltrates individual and community psyches, thus skewing awareness, forgetfulness is connected to this idea because of the sympathetic frequencies⁴¹ that carry out the duty of maintaining invisibility's authority. Therefore, the broader idea

⁴¹Sympathetic in this sense describes the additional frequencies that result from sounding one pitch.

presented in this chapter addressed practices of forgetfulness in order to consider hope and resiliency in ritual as it related to communities running adjacent to Claiborne Avenue.

My chapter discussion started with an analysis of Dent's letter found in the Amistad Archives. Dent simultaneously observed and reflected on Mardi Gras celebrations pre and post interstate construction. His vulnerability with memory allowed the reader to envision grassy, 500-oak-tree-covered surface of the neutral grounds. Dent's observation situated the community setting up and celebrating under the structure with a "business as usual attitude" as if interstate did not exist. The engagements with place, the neutral ground, and the spaces of embodiment, the community, occurred as mediums producing memory that counters structures of forgetfulness. The structures were interstate I-10 and the governmental corporate conglomerates that attempted to tame the community space through construction and uprooting of communities. The taming was shown through the Louisiana Department of Highways aggressive uprooting of Mildred Walls Bell.

Following my analysis of archival items, conversation with Lance was a lens through which to consider the complexities of survival. Furthermore, survival was embedded in a traumatic experience making it also a hopeful act. Dent and Lance discussed survival in reference to the resiliency of community rituals. However, while acknowledging that community rituals existed, Lance also mentioned how deep resonances of those rituals have lessened in response to the construction of I-10 and the displacement of principle community members. In conversation with Lance , I interpreted survival as the passage of rituals with degrees of scarring, as scarring denotes how specific details of the ritual are lost or forgotten.

Tension Interlude: Embodying the Sonics of Place

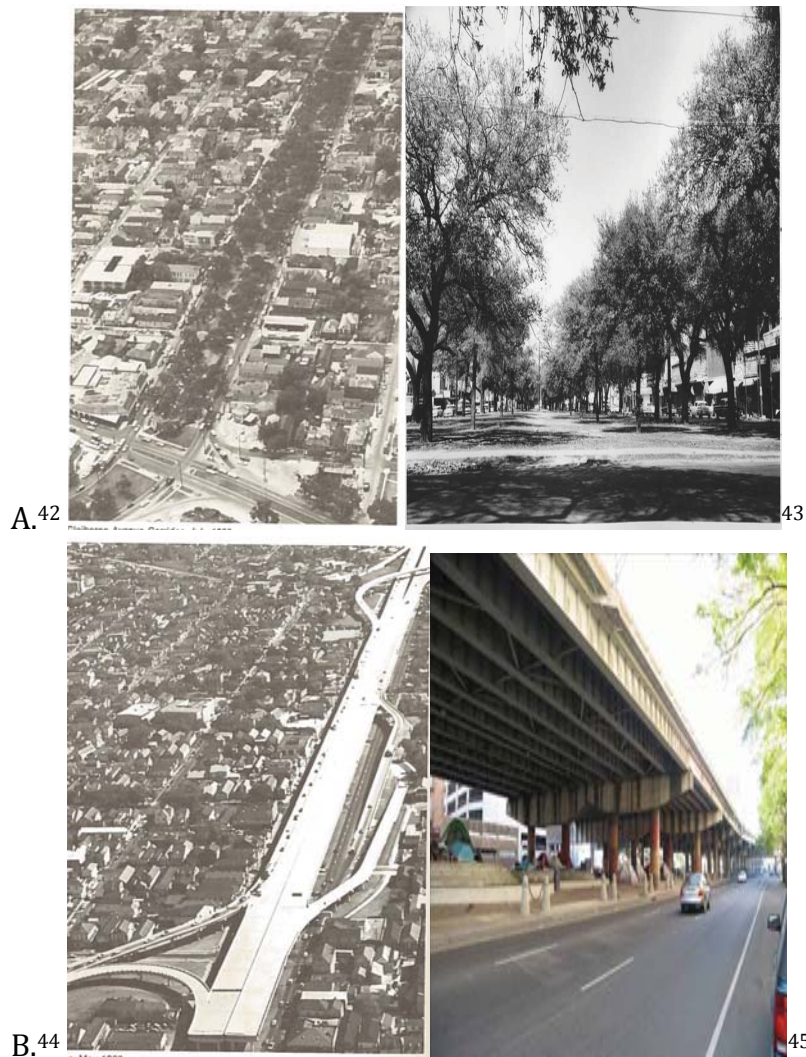


Figure 9. North Claiborne Avenue Aerial and Ground Level Neutral Ground Photos Pre Interstate 10 on the Top and North Claiborne Avenue Aerial and Ground Level Neutral Ground Photos Post Interstate 10 on the Bottom

⁴²This photograph is from the 1976 Claiborne Avenue Development Team (CADT) study. The photograph presents Claiborne Avenue in 1966. This study was obtained from Hill Memorial Archives located on the Louisiana State University Campus in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁴³ This photograph was obtained from the New Orleans Public Library Archives.

⁴⁴This photograph is from the 1976 Claiborne Avenue Development Team (CADT) study. The photograph presents Claiborne Avenue in 1968. This study was obtained from Hill Memorial Archives located on the Louisiana State University Campus in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁴⁵ This photograph comes from the online article "Ten North American Freeways Without Futures" (2008). This article can be obtained from www.treehugger.com

Photos A and B show the neutral grounds pre and post I-10. The top and bottom left photos present aerial views, whereas the right top and bottom photos are ground level views. Viewing these pictures horizontally left to right, one is taken from flying over to standing in, these spaces. The difference is the juxtaposition of several tons of concrete and steel rebar retrofitted in a space of approximately 500 oak trees. Specifically, 13½ acres totaling 6100 feet x 100 feet were extracted from the community in favor of a concrete structure totaling 3.5 miles, 100 feet wide and 25 feet in height (CADT, 1976). Example A shows the North Claiborne Avenue corridor neutral ground pre I-10 construction, whereas Example B depicts the neutral ground post 1966 construction. Examining the pictures, one wonders about this shift and how communities sensually experienced space. The top left picture presents a possibility of experiencing birdcalls and soft grassy spaces, while the bottom left photo shows the neutral grounds transformed to concrete and rebar with the addition of a rigid canopy inflicting jarring vibrations and trapping sound. A place was created where sound ricocheted and amplified the allusion of the contact of vehicles above. Most importantly, I emphasized that the place intersected Faubourg Tremé. This place was once where this community interacted, exchanged, and passed on various epistemologies. These thoughts served as the basis of my inquiry into defining the meaning of specifically Black modes of education post decimation of community spaces.

In chapter 6, I address my research question of “How does consideration of environmental sound topographies extend perspectives in conceptualizing educational space?” Like in the previous chapters, the information overlaps materials from archives, field notes, observations, and interviews. However, what distinguishes this chapter from the others is the inversion of materials to attend to the specific research question of how

consideration of the environmental sound topographies extends perspectives in conceptualizing an educational space.

CHAPTER 6. THE SOCIO-SONIC

Collectively, the aural, oral, and spatial interaction in which communities engage together are what I refer to as the socio-sonic. This idea comes from sound studies scholar Jonathan Sterne (2012) who wrote, “Social space is *sonic space*. Space is the register in which sound can happen and sound can have meaning. But space is not a static thing. It is in constant formation, dissolution and reformation.” (p. 91). Sterne emphasized the inseparability of social and sonic spaces. His use of “register” occupies a number of realms in reference to space. Simultaneously, “register” denotes sound’s dimensions while considering the index, as to acknowledge memory. Additionally, “register” articulates the proximity of relationships between people, matter, ideas, and symbols . Conclusively, space resists stasis and is constantly reformulated. My frame for socio-sonic is Sterne’s conception of the inseparability of social and sonic spaces (Blessner & Salter, 2007; Born, 2015; Chude-Sokei, 2015; Goodman, 2012; Hainge, 2013; Kelly, 2011; LaBelle, 2010; Schafer, 1993; Sharpe, 2015; Stover, 2016; Voegelin, 2010; and Wright, 2015).

The selected passage from Dent’s (1980) “A Memoir of Mardi Gras,” discussed in Chapter 5, served as the basis for this discussion on socio-sonics. However, I narrowed the focus to one profound line that I situated as an example of the socio-sonics. Dent wrote, “The pavement below reduced to a wasteland of parked and abandoned automobiles, an ever present rumbling that sounds as if one is trapped beneath an airport” (p. 14). Dent described the shift of sonic topography that blanketed the neutral grounds post I-10 construction, and compared the sensation of being under the structure as if being “trapped beneath an airport.” However his reflection was not entirely bitter, as he created a space to describe a sweet point regarding communal ritual in his statement about how “ritual does

not die out”; the ritual he referenced pertained to Black Mardi Gras parading and celebration practices. Dent’s statement can be understood in a multitude of ways regarding memory.

Dent (1980) reflected about the socio-sonic. His reflection can be read as resonances from the collision of the socio-sonics of community rituals in sacred spaces, the neutral grounds, and in micro community gatherings. He began with the memory of a green place lined with full-grown oaks and moved to a discussion on the construction of I-10 through the neutral grounds. Essentially, the shift in the sonic topography of place is one theme that undergirds his reflection. While he talked about the importance of Professor Longhair’s “Go to the Mardi Gras” (Byrd & Terry, 1959)⁴⁶ as a spatial anthem, contextually, Dent’s discussion was a connective aural and oral artery situated as a series of assemblages, offering a space of inquiry into how a community uses rituals and, simultaneously, how rituals utilize the community memory to assure the passage of tradition into the present. Tradition is memory, existing as possibilities, of how to understand the embodiment of communal ancestral ruminations in the present and in a continuum (Dyson, 2009). Furthermore, the possibility for transmission of ancestral ruminations is simultaneously sonically extramusically and musically possible in Dent’s mention of the neutral grounds’ present state as similar to being underneath an airport, along with acknowledging Longhair’s song “Go to the Mardi Gras” (1959). Extramusically, Dent (1980) developed a foundation to aid the reader, through his observation of Interstate 10’s sonic ambiance, and in realizing that in spite of the dramatic transformation of the neutral grounds, of the

⁴⁶Professor Longhair (1918-1980) was a pianist and composer based in New Orleans, Louisiana. In 1959, he composed the song “Go to the Mardi Gras” that is still covered substantially, especially during Mardi Gras celebrations.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUPkvv4H0V0>

prophetic reminder that the legacy of place, the neutral grounds, did not exist as covered by Interstate 10. Musically, Dent wrote about hearing “Go to the Mardi Gras” played and about the community’s reaction to communicate to the reader how communal memory is unearthed and re-imagined. Houston Baker (1984) eloquently articulated the remaking of memory in the present when he wrote, “Rather than a rigidly personalized form, the blues offer a phylogenetic recapitulation—a nonlinear, freely associative, nonsequential mediation—of species experience” (p. 5). Thus, when applied to Dent’s memoir about the socio-sonics of the neutral grounds, his words are mediations on the blues. Dent’s blues were the stubborn memory of the neutral ground pre I-10 in the context of post I-10. Dent’s stubborn memory was what Baker (1984) would situate as the meditative, recapitulation that every revolution presents an opposing perspective to consider communal rituals motivated through spatial socio-sonics.

While I have presented an example of how the socio-sonics can be understood in reading Dent’s reflection, it is necessary to unpack socio-sonics further. While sound studies scholar Sterne (2012) identified sonic spaces and places of communing as social, it is essential to acknowledge how communities interpret them, and their direct understandings of the sonic spaces in which they reside. I unpack the meaning of socio-sonic in tending to communal interpretations and meaning as they relate to the neutral grounds. In addition to Sterne (2012), I framed the thought of sound studies scholars Feld (1996) and Gershon (2013) in socio-sonic, and considered how it functions in discussing how individuals use sound to conceptualize space and place (Brandt, Duffy, & MacKinnon, 2007; Browne, 2015; Dyson, 2014; Erlmann, 2014; Johnson, 2013; Lefebvre, 1992; Lowe, 2015; Massey, 2005; MiKittrick, 2006; Smith, 2008; Soja, 2011; and Tuan, 1977).

Further Unpacking Socio-Sonics

Sound studies scholar Feld (1996) coined the term acoustemology. Acoustemology is “an exploration of sonic sensibilities, specifically of ways in which sound is central to making sense, knowing, to experiential truth” (p. 97). Therefore, Feld acknowledged the interpretation of contextual meanings of sound for communities as agency. While Sterne (2012) identified the simultaneity of social space as “*sonic space*”, it was Feld’s notion of acoustemology that teased out the interpretive intentionality that communities employ in the analysis of their local communal sonic places. Furthermore, my use of socio-sonic is grounded, first, in Sterne’s assertion of sonic spaces as being social space and, second, in Feld’s inquiry of sound’s centrality in constructing meaning. Additionally, the ethical consideration of socio-sonics has resonance at its core. Scholar Gershon’s (2013) assertion of sound as resonance relinquished sound from narrow conceptions situated in Cartesian bodily division. He wrote:

Sounds are a form of resonance and can therefore be understood as a kind of vibrational affect. My use of sound here is meant as a large umbrella that encompasses all sound possibilities including talk, music, and noise and I seek to make no valuation of either over another. (p. 258)

Gershon challenged anthropocentrism in how humanity privileges, orders, and values sound. His use of “sound possibilities” pushed against discussions of sound as reduced to a musicological subject. Furthermore, his acknowledgement of sound as vibrational affect, as related to resonance, decentered the primacy of the ear and considered sensual engagements with sound as a full body experience. The anthropocentric stance was also challenged in his push towards awareness of vibrational affect as related to both living and non-living matter as affected as ecological systems (Gershon, 2013). Thus, it is the susceptibility of all matter to vibrations that challenges, and perhaps topples, the hierarchy

of who and/or what is affected. Rather, all is and all are affected through vibrations. Vibrations are mediums and agents that unite and loosen hierarchies (Derrida, in Rottenberg, 2002) of matters.

While an aspect of socio-sonics challenges anthropocentric engagements with sound, the challenge functions as an aporia. Hence, socio-sonics is not a remedy to anthropocentric problem, but rather socio-sonics acknowledges the aporia as a set of ethical tensions, functioning as the affective, to consider how resonance creates broader change in all matter. Altogether, as collectively defined by Feld, Sterne, and Gershon, sound is not entirely a cochlear experience; rather, sound is a full bodily experience in which all matters reshape environments simultaneously, while all environments reshape matters through sonic engagements.

Reverting to the problematic of the anthropocentric, the following section considers how environmental sound topographies extend perspectives in conceptualizing an educational space through collectively addressing segments from participants Lance's and Reid's interview transcripts. The important connection in their discussions was their mention of sound in relation to the environments in which they resided.

Socio-Sonically Speaking and Spoken

"For you, what sounds characterized Faubourg Tremé during your childhood?" This was a question that I had listed on the participant interview protocol; it was never asked, yet in discussions with Lance and Reid, some aspect of sound was mentioned organically. What became apparent was the inseparability, but most importantly, the curriculums or resonance sound creates.

In this first transcript segment, Lance reflected on the neutral grounds pre-I-10 construction. Responding to my inquiry about what it was like to experience the neutral grounds as a green park-like place, he said:

Well, it ran through the middle of the Black neighborhood. So whether you were in the riverside of Claiborne or whether you were on the lakeside Claiborne uhm...wherever you were, even if you in the 9th ward and you came uptown, you know what I mean, from Elysian Fields to Orleans Avenue. That's a long space, and folks came there as if it was a park in the middle of the community and folks came into it and pick a spot and set up and everything else generated around that. The Mardi Gras Indians, the parades, the whatever was taking place socially; they made it a [.....] they would come on some aspect of that strip, now it didn't have swings, or in my memory, it didn't have swings or any of that but it was this beautiful very wide green with oak trees on both sides of it, so the middle was open but the shade from the oak, the shade from the oak trees came over like that which made you either be in direct sun or not be in direct sun so it was, it was, I mean... it was beautiful, yeah. I mean if your into trees and you understand the importance of trees and grass, you know what I mean, but if you don't understand those kinds of aesthetics then that creates a different, a different conversation 'cause right now I'm thinking that, you know, you got younger generations who don't know nothing about this green space and if you ask them what would you prefer they would say they want the interstate to be there and they want the interstate to be there because they feel if the interstate is there the interstate provide them a shelter for the rain a shelter of the sun and if they play an instrument or music the music gets to bounce off the bottom of the interstate so it gives it a bigger volume and they would equate that as some meaningful value, but if you ask somebody like me, uhm, you know I wouldn't, I wouldn't agree that. I would say put the trees back put the green space back take all that cement out of there.

Lance crescendoed into the socio-sonic in this segment. He described the communal aspects of the neutral grounds and the flux of the community. While in other points of our discussion he framed community in relation to the immediate members adjacent to the neutral grounds, here, Lance mentioned the pilgrimages of people from the 9th ward uptown to commune at the neutral grounds. According to Lance, the generative experiences on the neutral grounds resulted from both the immediate and journeying community members coming together for social events.

Reflecting on the physical characteristics of place, Lance described the oak trees and the shade provided by them and articulated that the neutral grounds did not contain swings or any sorts of playground equipment. Rather, he expressed that the ethics of place, the neutral grounds, was transformed through community and spatial embodiments. However, Lance concluded describing the generational divide in sonic relationships.

The latter part of Lance's statement challenged the desire he observed in the younger generation to find the interstate desirable for the utilitarian purposes of sheltering themselves from weather elements and for musical amplification; shielding from weather elements was a minor segment he addressed. The primacy of this part of the statement was rooted in generational sonic relationships. Lance observed that latter generations ascribed value to the interstate's presence because it created an echo chamber-like environment. This environment below the interstate amplifies the sound of the musical instruments. The acoustics underneath the interstate are like those of a cathedral that Lance observed that is where younger generations⁴⁷ find value in the interstate's existence. However, the cathedral-like acoustics are simultaneously what makes Lance view the structure as parasitic. He equated the echoes produced from musical practices of youth with possibilities, while they reminded him of the place that once existed. Therefore, Lance articulated his understanding of community generational disconnects through socio-sonic relationships to the echo. While mentioning sound as a related musicological subject, he situated the conditions of how sound exists as a historical trigger of how place occurred pre Interstate 10.

⁴⁷Matt Sakakeeney's (2013) *Roll With It: Brass Bands in the Streets of New Orleans* is an additional source for an alternative view of how younger generations view and understand agency around the Interstate 10 overpass.

A socio-sonics analysis of Lance's discussion segment provided acknowledgement of the prominence sound plays in making sense of place. Feld's (1996) notion of acoustemology, the centrality of sound in making sense of place, was how Lance made sense of spatial historical memories around the place of the neutral grounds, in relation to those of younger generations. Lance exemplified Sterne's (2013) assertion of the simultaneity space as both social and sonic in his reaction to witnessing younger generations interact with the present variation of the neutral grounds as sound amplifier. Essentially, Lance's social interactions and observations with younger generations around the sonic meaning of place, as related to the neutral grounds, informed his analysis through both a social and sonic lens. Gershon's (2013) discussion of resonance, situated in the broader realm of vibrational affect, challenged the paradigm of sound being situated as solely a cochlear and/or musicological experience. While Lance mentioned sound as related to music produced by younger generations underneath I-10, collectively sound was central to his analysis of gauging historical memory depths of the opposing age demographic.

In my conversation with Reid, he similarly engaged with sound as a trigger for historical memory. Our discussion of sound developed when I asked him about what it would mean if Interstate 10 did not extend through the neutral grounds.

Me: I'm really, I'm really...I'm intrigued with, through the notion of uhm...considering what it may mean...what it may mean to try do without... a structure like that.

Reid: For me it don't mean nothing. You know? I don't ride on it, I don't drive on it, I don't care about. I just hear it. I take the bus to work, but, see, I'm not like your normal person.

Me: There's that whole...thing as we sit here now and we, we hear it...we hear it as [it] we go by, and so I mean, just talk a little further with that, just go whatever direction.

Reid: When I, you don't hear it anymore. If you're here for a minute, you get used to it and don't really hear it anymore. What you do hear is the emergency vehicles and the sirens because they all pass...on the Claiborne overpass 'cause they all going to Tulane or LS[U], wherever they go, and they all been out in the East, and so you hear that all night long, you hear ambulances, but as far as the highway itself, you get immune to it, you do. You do not get immune to ambulances.

Me: Well, I mean...it seems like, it seems like in still particularly, it still affects you quite a bit through, as we sit here...

Chris: Which?

Me: Uh, I mean...just thinking about this constant drone of cars and...

Reid: It does...it does.

Me: Hm, what is it you think, what is it you that think about as you engage...in these thoughts?

Reid: [*long pause*] I think about a community...that was...a very vibrant community, and... in my view a very central part of New Orleans that was...torn apart. That's what I think of.

In this segment, Reid explained that I-10 was of no significance to him, that he did not access it to go to work, and he emphasized that he used public transportation to navigate New Orleans. However, he presented a sonic analytical lens in saying, "I just hear it." When I asked him to explain further, his response countered hearing the interstate in his prior statement and shifted to not "hear[ing] it anymore." Reid referenced growing immune to the consistent sounds of traffic coming from interstate I-10; however, emergency vehicles, in siren mode, passed by regularly, a reminder of the occupation of I-10. Additionally, Reid situated immunity from the sound of I-10 as temporal and indicated moments whereby he shifted into a mode of "social deafness" (Tonkiss, in Bull & Beck, 2003, p. 304), allowing for some immunity, situated as perceptual distance from the constant drone of traffic. Though Reid discussed experiencing some immunity from I-10, when I asked whether the sounds affected him, he responded, "It does...it does."

I concluded the segment with asking Reid about his thoughts that I-10 is in close proximity and very present. Reid explained that he thought about the vibrancy of a

community that once existed and the decimation of the community connectedness that existed in the place currently occupied by I-10.

Reid's response was grounded in socio-sonic lens. He indirectly/directly exercised points of agency through a temporal distance created by developing points of personal deafness. However, an acoustemological stance in Reid's situation involved the conceptual space he embodied through his directly relating to the sonic environment in which he existed. Therefore, the "experiential truths" (Feld, 1996, p. 97) for Reid regarding I-10 were: the simultaneity of meaninglessness; shifting of truths countering and/or reifying his assignment of the existence; and how the sound emanating from this place, a neutral ground that was once a community green space, was countered with personal reflections and speculations about levels of trauma that the government caused when it procured the community place above which Interstate 10 was constructed. Additionally, Sterne's (2013) situating space as both social and sonic was historical engagement for Reid. He acknowledged the historical importance of the neutral grounds for communities along the Claiborne Avenue corridor that arose with the social significance of place enacted through the sonic present.

Lastly, as Gershon (2013) considered sound beyond a cochlear engagement to vibrational affect, Reid's existence with sound and vibrational affect was tension that framed his sensuality with place beyond bodily faculties. Reid discovered that sound, as related to place, transcended a linear dynamic of time and space ordered anthropocentrically, and situated him as a vulnerable subject through which sound, understood as vibrational affect, kept him in a state of inquiry.

Conclusion

I envision multiple ways to address my question of, “How does consideration of environmental sound topographies extend perspectives in conceptualizing educational space?” This first variation of the response defined educational space.

In this context, educational spaces are areas in which pedagogical moments occur, within and without a codified institution. The use of the term “space” denoted the flux and temporality in which these areas exist, as well as the meanings individuals ascribed to them. Space is distinct from place as place denotes a set area. However, place embodies ranges and assemblages of spaces within and across boundaries.

Educational spaces are the temporal pedagogical areas that form in response to communal interactions. Acknowledgement of educational space as both temporal and dynamic is essential when considering the complexity of Black education and its relegation to the margins. Engaging in these complexities was in consideration of the socio-sonic conglomerate thought of Feld (1996), Sterne (2013), and Gershon (2013). Collectively, socio-sonics considers narratives beyond ocular privileging and considers how cochlear engagement, situated as acoustemological, resonant, and sonic in this discussion, can further inform one’s sensitivity to the nuances of social and ethical topographies in communities’ narratives.

In working with my proposed research question, I returned to Dent’s letter in which he described the present state of the neutral grounds as Interstate 10 laden. However, what I found interesting was his description of the sonic environment beneath I-10 as being “trapped beneath an airport” (Dent, 1980, p. 14). Dent described the topographic shift of the neutral grounds, and described the shift of space within place, specifically, the spatial

shift of educational space. The agent of spatial shift was the reverberations from automobiles traveling above. However, Dent's mention of the sonically violent environment was situated in his belief in the resiliency of rituals, as discussed in Chapter 5. Furthermore, the resiliency of rituals was based in communal memory expressed through community members on the place of neutral grounds. The community stands as the spaces inhabiting this place and sustaining rituals in spite of sonic topographic shifts. Therefore, the formulation of educational space through communal engagements of memory is a resistance point. According to Dent (1980), it is resistance in that the community continually engages in communal practices. Dent's reflections concluded that, while place was reformulated, educational spaces, community members, continued to gather and formulate community memory, creating a buttress of resistance to counter the violent sonic environment created through Interstate 10's construction.

I went into my meetings with Reid and Lance with the intention of asking directly about their respective relationships with sound. However, mentions of sound spontaneously emerged without me as the catalyst. Lance discussed his socio-sonic relationship in his generational critique of echoes, and the ways in which the community utilized the space underneath Interstate 10. He mentioned sound related to echoes from musical activities underneath the interstate, and how younger generations suffered from a lack of knowledge about how the neutral grounds existed pre-Interstate 10. He shared how younger generations placed value on the strong echo underneath the interstate; however, he opposed the echo as a reminder of the communal green space that once existed.

Reid's socio-sonic relationship was about day-to-day survival against the violent sound environment generated from the interstate. While Reid mentioned he had developed

a temporal deafness to Interstate 10, he also mentioned that sirens from passing emergency vehicles countered his immunity, or rather interrupted the temporal deafness. Reid shared that he did engage with the sound emanating from the interstate; like the echo for Lance, the sound of the interstate was a reminder of the tragic interruption that occurred for a community as a result of the construction.

The neutral grounds of Claiborne Avenue contained a series of educational spaces. Dent (1980), Lance, and Reid understood the neutral grounds as an essential space for the community to come together. Communing within a space is the act of engaging in pedagogical moments, which is education. While they all discussed memory, Dent (1980) presented community memory as a resistant action to a shifted sonic environment; memory for Lance utilized sonic relationships to identify generational historical disconnects; and for Reid, memory utilized sonic relationships to simultaneously provide temporal deafness and to be reminded of tragic community displacement. Their discussions about socio-sonic relationships aided in further understanding educational spaces as temporal, non-linear, and fluctuating as a result of sound.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION—THE SO WHATS/DISSONANCES WITH THE RECAPITULATION

The resonances of Faubourg Tremé provide a response to the so whats. The so whats function as the rigid metanarrative which collectively situates the broader southern region of the United States as devoid of intellectual traditions. Faubourg Tremé was essential in my understanding of importance of the space and place, and of how Black intellectual traditions have been forced to exist outside brick and mortar institution. Broadly, Faubourg Tremé was the place where Plessy vs. Ferguson gained life and was later re-emodied throughout the United States in Brown vs. Board of Education. The neutral ground place of Faubourg Tremé was one of many places, outside the classic brick and mortar institution, where Black modes of knowing and being thrived. Reflecting on Faubourg Tremé's neutral ground, I simultaneously reflected upon Manning Marable's (2011) *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention*. In discussion early in the book and in an interview conducted with the author, Marable discussed the first autobiography of Malcolm X co-authored by Alex Haley and mentioned that two omitted chapters were lost and re-discovered in a lawyer's office in New York; the loss and omission of the chapters are yet another example of the continuance of how artifacts of Black history are treated.

Marable's story made me think further about Faubourg Tremé and the neutral grounds, specifically, the negligence implied in 1961-1969 when Interstate 10 was constructed through the neutral grounds of the oldest Black neighborhood in the United States. Just as the two chapters of Malcolm X's autobiography haphazardly were locked in a lawyer's office, the construction of I-10 through the neutral grounds of Faubourg Tremé, and the adjacent Black neighborhoods in the North Claiborne Avenue corridor, was

the decimation of an artifact of Black history. Simultaneously, I understand the so whats for Marable's inquiry and Faubourg Tremé as spaces of inquiry providing dissonances or counter narratives to metanarratives. To further articulate the notion of the so whats, I refer to the opening melody of Miles Davis's (1959) musical composition "So What." I consider that the construction of this melody sonically verbalizes the so whats. This consideration aids me in understanding melody as metaphor as a possibility to conceptualize the intellectual gesture Faubourg Tremé posed to the broader United States.

Some roads lead to Miles Davis. In the middle tension interlude that started the chapter 5 of this dissertation, Davis was mentioned in reference to my understanding of myself as a clumsy researcher. The denotation of myself as clumsy was an acknowledgement of the improvisational element I see as essential to engaging research. In the tension interlude mentioned in chapter 5, Davis fired saxophonist, George Coleman because Davis caught Coleman practicing his solos before the performance. Davis's explanation was that he wanted to hear the struggle and mistakes that he saw as the conceptual spaces of possibility.

I reference Davis in response to a reflection on his album *Kind of Blue* (1959) and the composition "So What" (1959)⁴⁸. While listening, the slow rubato of intro bassist Paul Chambers flows with a melodic ascending figure and pianist Bill Evans answers with a short counterstatement. I focus on this part of the composition of the interplay between Chambers and Evans and the broader implications for conceptualizing Faubourg Tremé.

Chambers presented the longer melodic statement and Evans presented the shorter one. Familiar with "So What" for over 27 years, the one idea that has remained consistent

⁴⁸<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIXk1LBvIqU>

for me is that I always envisioned Evans's musical counterstatement as saying the so what, whereas Chambers' melodic statement represented the wash of discourse presenting alternative perspectives, only to be answered with a stern and firm so what. Melody is metaphor to conceptualize the statement and counterstatement.

From a spatial perspective, I consider the call and response engaged by Chambers and Evans as representative of the broader metanarratives of Black history in the United States, specifically, the metanarratives situating the crux of Black liberation history as a product from within the northern territories post WWI. This is the longer ascending melody, however the counterstatement, or the so what, is Faubourg Tremé, which figuratively shouts back though its existence pre Civil War to today. I am not insisting on an heroic narrative, but rather I see the Faubourg Tremé's as one way to re-imagine Black intellectual geographies in the United States.

In chapters 4, 5, and 6, three major themes that emerged and overlapped substantially were embodied space as: 1. educational space, 2. neighborhood as living artifact, and 3. sound as narrative. Within each of these chapters, I situated a research question as the heart of the inquiry. My three research questions were: 1. How do we theorize a Black space of education in Faubourg Tremé pre and post interstate10 construction?; 2. In understanding I-10 as a tamed place, how are themes of forgetfulness expanded?; and 3. How does consideration of environmental sound topographies extend perspectives in conceptualizing an educational space?

Chapter 4, The Learning of Community, was the start of my engagements with the Faubourg Tremé community via the Historic Faubourg Tremé Association (HFTA) meetings and visiting neighborhood landmarks. For this chapter, the research question was

“How do we theorize a Black space of education in Faubourg Tremé pre and post I-10 construction?” This chapter centered on discussions that I had with participants Reid and Arthur, residents of Faubourg Tremé. While my intent was to focus our discussions on the Claiborne Avenue neutral ground pre and post Interstate 10, the discussions expanded much further and included the common theme of the importance of history. Furthermore, Reid had moved to Faubourg Tremé and was simultaneously committed and held a deep reverence for Faubourg Tremé’s history, whereas, Arthur was born in the neighborhood and maintained an intimate relationship the history. Their historical relationships were embodied, and they were mobile spaces circulating throughout Faubourg Tremé, shifting the ethic of place. Additionally, Reid’s historical experience was epistemological as the history of Faubourg Tremé as a place shaped his ontological existence, whereas Arthur’s experience with the neighborhood history was ontological because of his familial, generational rootedness to place. Both Reid’s and Arthur’s discussions embodied history. Learning about their experiences with history and how their ontology was guided by it, embodied space functioning simultaneously as educational space emerged as the grand theme.

Chapter 5, Hope in the Resiliency of Ritual, was situated as a dialogue between Dent’s “A Memoir of Mardi Gras 1968” (1980) and discussions with participant Lance. The research question for this chapter was, “In understanding I-10 as a tamed place how are themes of forgetfulness expanded?”; I situated forgetfulness as operationalized invisibility with Ellison’s (1947/1980) *Invisible Man* in mind. I witnessed how Dent and Lance worked against forgetfulness as the tension of community memory. Both discussions were presented in a tragically hopeful stance (West, in Menand, 1997). Dent acknowledged the

presence of I-10 through the neutral grounds, however the community celebrating Mardi Gras together as families did prior to the construction was an indication to him of the resilience of ritual. Lance acknowledged that the semblance of some neighborhood rituals survived, however, he also discussed how the “quality” was not that of pre I-10 due to the displacement of elders and familial units. Therefore, a theme in the dissonances between Dent and Lance was the neighborhood existing as a living artifact. Similar to when viewing relics in a museum or archive when one may notice how the ornamentation has worn away over time, the wearing away of details presents the possibility of historical gaps. Therefore, I saw Lance’s discussion as a commentary about how Faubourg Tremé and adjacent wards survive currently, however, the removal of details through gentrification leaves the neighborhood scarred.

Chapter 6, The Socio-Sonic, was my first attempt to provide an analysis of sound discussions that occurred organically in my participant interviews with Reid and Lance along with Dent’s (1980) “A Memoir of Mardi Gras 1968”. My research was guided by the question, “How does consideration of environmental sound topographies extend perspectives in conceptualizing educational space?” In response, I created the term socio-sonic to discuss a specific set of texts from sound studies scholars Feld (1996), Sterne (2013), and Gershon (2013). Socio-sonic is the consideration of narratives beyond ocular privileging to consider how cochlear engagements, situated as acoustemological, resonant, and sonic, can further inform one’s sensitivity to the nuances of social and ethical topographies in communal narratives. In discussing the sonic presence of Interstate 10, Reid shared how “hearing this structure” made him think about the displacement and bisecting of a crucial Black neighborhood. Lance discussed the generational disconnect he

saw in younger generations as they utilized the space underneath I-10 as a amplifier for music, whereby he conceptualized the echo as a constant reminder of Black neighborhood decimation through city infrastructure. Dent (1980) discussed the sonically violent presence of I-10 as a point of reference in which the community rose up in resistance by continuing with Mardi Gras ceremonies that day. The major theme of this chapter became that of sound is narrative, which simultaneously modifies the spoken and written while also standing alone and presenting an alternant narrative.

For the fields of curriculum theory and curriculum studies, this research provides an alternative and decenters the brick and mortar institution, situating education as a spatially dynamic experience. For economically and racially marginalized communities, understanding the classroom as located in the community provides the possibility to consider the multiple nuanced educative processes that occur.

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APPENDICIES AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

A. Definition of Terms:

1. Educational Space—This term is used to denote any embodied space of learning.

Therefore, an educational space is not relegated to a school building but rather the body which inhabits physical place.

2. Sound Topographies—The sound landscapes which define space and place.

3. Acoustemology—A field of study developed by researcher Steven Feld in which sound is used to address how a communities' localized sense of acoustic environment provides an embodied knowledge of place.

B. Measures, Instruments, with their Sources:

Interview protocol for Faubourg Tremé residents who would have been teenagers to young adults when interstate I-10 was constructed.

1. What makes Faubourg Tremé a special place to you?
2. How long have you and your family been residents of Faubourg Tremé?
3. Have you lived in other areas besides Faubourg Tremé? If so, for how long and what brought you back to Faubourg Tremé?
4. Did you attend school in the Faubourg Tremé community? If so, which ones? Tell me about your school experience.
5. Describe community for you?
6. What changes within the Faubourg Tremé have you noticed during your lifetime?
7. For you, what sounds characterized Faubourg Tremé during your childhood?
8. What was the primary space you, your friends, and family gathered?

9. What are your recollections of the neutral ground pre interstate I-10 construction?
10. After interstate I-10 construction was completed what changes did you observe about community connectedness?
11. Are there any additional narratives, suggestions, or critiques you would like to add before we end our discussion?

C. International Review Board (IRB) Correspondence and Clearance from 2015-2016

From: **Institutional R Board** irb@lsu.edu
Subject: IRB Application
Date: May 12, 2015 at 12:02 PM
To: Petra Hendry phendry@lsu.edu
Cc: Reagan P Mitchell rmitc19@tigers.lsu.edu



Hi,

Your study, *Taming the Spatial: Faubourg Tremé the Insurgence of Interstate I-10, and the Redefinition of Black Space*, falls outside the scope of IRB review. There is no intervention with human subjects, nor is there use of existing human subject data. We have an FAQ on our website for information on this type of ethnographic research.

Elizabeth

--

Elizabeth Cadarette
IRB Coordinator
Louisiana State University
Office of Research and Economic Development
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
225-578-8692
ecantoll@lsu.edu

LSU Research - The Constant Pursuit of Discovery

From: **Reagan Mitchell** rmilc19@tigers.lsu.edu
Subject: **Re: IRB Application**
Date: **May 12, 2015 at 12:41 PM**
To: **Institutional R Board** irb@lsu.edu



Thank you Elizabeth,

Just to make sure, because it falls outside of the scope will I need to resubmit?

Best,

Reagan

On May 12, 2015 12:02 PM, "Institutional R Board" <irb@lsu.edu> wrote:

Hi,

Your study, *Taming the Spatial: Faubourg Tremé the Insurgence of Interstate I-10, and the Redefinition of Black Space*, falls outside the scope of IRB review. There is no intervention with human subjects, nor is there use of existing human subject data. We have an FAQ on our website for information on this type of ethnographic research.

Elizabeth

--

Elizabeth Cadarette

IRB Coordinator

Louisiana State University

Office of Research and Economic Development

130 David Boyd Hall

Baton Rouge, LA 70803

[225-578-8022](tel:225-578-8022)

ecantoll@lsu.edu

LSU Research - The Constant Pursuit of Discovery

From: Institutional R Board irb@lsu.edu
Subject: RE: IRB Application
Date: May 12, 2015 at 1:18 PM
To: Reagan P Mitchell rmitc19@tigers.lsu.edu



Hi,
No, there is no need to resubmit.
Elizabeth

From: Reagan Mitchell [<mailto:rmitc19@tigers.lsu.edu>]
Sent: Tuesday, May 12, 2015 12:42 PM
To: Institutional R Board
Subject: Re: IRB Application

Thank you Elizabeth,

Just to make sure, because it falls outside of the scope will I need to resubmit?

Best,

Reagan

On May 12, 2015 12:02 PM, "Institutional R Board" <irb@lsu.edu> wrote:

Hi,
Your study, Taming the Spatial: Faubourg Tremé the Insurgence of Interstate I-10, and the Redefinition of Black Space, falls outside the scope of IRB review. There is no intervention with human subjects, nor is there use of existing human subject data. We have an FAQ on our website for information on this type of ethnographic research.
Elizabeth

--

Elizabeth Cadarette
IRB Coordinator
Louisiana State University
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Baton Rouge, LA 70803
[225-578-8692](tel:225-578-8692)
ecantoll@lsu.edu

LSU Research - The Constant Pursuit of Discovery

From: **Reagan Mitchell** rmitc19@tigers.lsu.edu
Subject: **RE: IRB Application**
Date: **May 12, 2015 at 1:31 PM**
To: **Institutional R Board** irb@lsu.edu



Thank you again Elizabeth.

On May 12, 2015 1:18 PM, "Institutional R Board" <irb@lsu.edu> wrote:

Hi,

No, there is no need to resubmit.

Elizabeth

From: Reagan Mitchell [<mailto:rmitc19@tigers.lsu.edu>]
Sent: Tuesday, May 12, 2015 12:42 PM
To: Institutional R Board
Subject: Re: IRB Application

Thank you Elizabeth,

Just to make sure, because it falls outside of the scope will I need to resubmit?

Best,

Reagan

On May 12, 2015 12:02 PM, "Institutional R Board" <irb@lsu.edu> wrote:

Hi,

Your study, Taming the Spatial: Faubourg Tremé the Insurgence of Interstate I-10, and the Redefinition of Black Space, falls outside the scope of IRB review. There is no intervention with human subjects, nor is there use of existing human subject data. We have an FAQ on our website for information on this type of ethnographic research.

Elizabeth

--

Elizabeth Cadarette

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Louisiana State University

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Baton Rouge, LA 70803

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eantol1@lsu.edu

LSU Research - The Constant Pursuit of Discovery

IRB Questions

Reagan P Mitchell

Mon 5/16/2016 2:05 PM

Sent Items

To: Institutional R Board <irb@lsu.edu>;

Hello Elizabeth,

I hope all is well. I contacted you May 12, 2015 regarding my research proposal: "Taming the Spatial: Faubourg Tremé the Insurgence of Interstate I-10m and the Redefinition of Black Educational Space." I was contacting again you because I am still a little confused about the IRB protocol. I was told that my study fell outside the scope of IRB review, however I will still be engaging with community members, conducting interviews, and possibly publishing work from this research. Will I still need official IRB approval and if so, what is the process?

All the best,

Reagan P. Mitchell

RE: IRB Questions

Institutional R Board

Tue 5/17/2016 9:39 AM

To: Reagan P Mitchell <rmitc19@lsu.edu>;

Hi Reagan,

Your research falls into an ethnographic research category and that is why you do not need IRB approval. Has anything with your study changed from what you originally submitted?

Elizabeth

Re: IRB Questions

Reagan P Mitchell

Tue 5/17/2016 9:53 AM

To: Institutional R Board <irb@lsu.edu>;

Nothing about my study has changed. I was just concerned because some parts of my study will contain direct quotes from participants and in the future I will be attempting to publish segments of this research. I did not want to run the risk of missing something on my part. Just to make sure, I am not required to have some sort of approval from the IRB even if I am recording interviews and using direct quotes for participants in my study with intent to publish? Sorry to be hammering you with so many questions.

All the best,

Reagan

RE: IRB Questions

Institutional R Board

Tue 5/17/2016 9:57 AM

To: Reagan P Mitchell <rmitc19@lsu.edu>;

You are not hammering me with questions. I'm here to help, and I am happy to answer your questions. Even though your study involves interviewing people, you do not need IRB approval because it falls under ethnographic research. You can still publish but keep the correspondence from us so they know the IRB chair reviewed your study and deemed it not needing IRB approval.

Elizabeth

RE: IRB Questions

Institutional R Board

Tue 5/17/2016 10:03 AM

To: Reagan P Mitchell <rmitc19@lsu.edu>;

Hi again,

I pulled up the below from the chair's emails last year about your study.

Elizabeth

Based on the description the PI gave us, this project falls outside the IRB since it is seeking to establish a historical record of an event, etc. Interviews done for this type of ethnographic are not considered to involve interventions with humans. I know it is a somewhat gray area. The Board discussed this at a meeting last year we agreed with it.

D. Procedures for Obtaining Participants' Informed Consent

Below are letters for the adult participants.

I. Adult Consent Letter Sample

Study Title: Faubourg Tremé Adult Community Interviews

Performance Site: Various community sites located within Faubourg Tremé

Investigator: The following investigator is available for questions about this study, M-F, 8:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

Reagan P. Mitchell 615-243-9817

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to conduct one-to-one interviews with Faubourg Tremé residents around the histories and the memories they have of their neighborhood.

Subject Inclusion: Individuals who would have been in the age range of adolescent to adult when the I-10 interstate construction occurred through the neutral ground of Faubourg Tremé.

Number of Subjects: 10

Study Procedures: The interviews will be conducted the three phases. In the first phase the participants will be asked the 11 questions from the adult interview protocol. Afterwards, the investigator will conduct an analysis of the recorded interviews and then formulate additional questions. These newly formulated questions will be presented to the participants in the following 2nd and 3rd interview phases.

Benefits: Subjects will receive assistance from the investigator through additional volunteered time. In this allotted time the investigator will assist with community projects the participants see most appropriate.

Risks: The only risk is the inability to completely conceal participant identities. However in the effort to protect the participants, pseudonyms will be used in place of names in addition to any information which blatantly discloses their identities.

Right to Refuse: Subjects are at liberty not to participate in this study along with being able to withdraw at anytime without penalty.

Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights of other concerns, I can contact Roberts C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu , www.lsu.edu/irb . I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Subject Signature: _____ Date _____

VITA

Reagan Mitchell, a native of Nashville, Tennessee, earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Music with an emphasis in Jazz Studies. The transdisciplinary training in composition, performance, and educational philosophy has afforded him the space to explore the social, communal, therapeutic, political, and geographic implications of music. Over the course of Reagan's studies he has continually free-lanced as a saxophonist, composer, and arranger in the Nashville, Greeley, Denver, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans areas. The opportunity to perform in such culturally and ethnically diverse settings has profoundly influenced his approach to scholarship and pedagogy. Moreover, the merger of scholarship and performance has proven to be invaluable to Reagan's artistic and intellectual development. Through this expanded course of study, he has laid the foundation for a program of research on the cultural and historical influences of race, space, gentrification, auditory architecture, and communal wisdom on education. Reagan's scholarship brings together curriculum theory, ethnic studies, critical geography, and sound studies.