SOCIAL CAPITAL AND THE “SIDEWALK BALLET”
EXAMINING HOW STREETSCAPE DEVELOPMENT CAN INFLUENCE A NEIGHBORHOOD’S SOCIAL CAPITAL

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ABSTRACT

Designing a neighborhood’s streetscape to be walkable is recognized as a successful way to encourage positive changes such as economic development, neighborhood stability, and social capital. My research focuses on how a walkable streetscape can influence a neighborhood's level of bridging social capital through the formation of weak social ties. I take Springwells — a Detroit neighborhood whose main street has recently received substantial streetscape improvements— as a case study. Applying criteria specific to bridging social capital (informal socialization and generalized trust) and the four criteria to measure walkability, I analyze the theoretical and actual results that an increase in walkability can have on a neighborhood’s social capital. This process brought to light the tangling of several stronger social capital determinants, which worked against the formation of bridging social capital. In sum, this thesis hopes to add to the existing research on walkability and social capital and help to reveal the gaps that exist between theory and practice in neighborhood design and community development.
I would like to thank my thesis advisor Fr. Matthew Carnes, S.J., the professors and staff at the Universidad Nacional de General San Martín (UNSAM) in Buenos Aires, Argentina and Georgetown University. But mostly, I want to thank my loved ones for their relentless encouragement and life lessons.

Cheers!

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I: SOCIAL CAPITAL AND THE SIDEWALK BALLET

1.1 Social Capital in the Neighborhood ................................................................. 3

1.2 Defining and Measuring Social Capital ............................................................ 6

  1.2.1 The Four Views ......................................................................................... 12

  1.2.2 Bonding, Bridging, and Linking Social Capital ........................................ 15

  1.2.3 Balancing Social Capital in the Neighborhood ......................................... 20

  1.2.4 Social Capital and the Built Environment ............................................. 22

1.3 Walkability ........................................................................................................ 25

  1.3.1 Useful, Safe, Comfortable, Interesting ..................................................... 26

1.4 The Importance of Social Capital for Neighborhood Stability ......................... 28

1.5 Approaching the Study of Social Capital ....................................................... 30

## CHAPTER II: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO SOCIAL CAPITAL RESEARCH

2.1 Approaches to Social Capital Research ......................................................... 32

2.2 Springwells Overview ....................................................................................... 39

  2.2.1 Balancing Bonding and Bridging Social Capital in Springwells ................ 41

2.3 Introducing the Question ................................................................................. 44

  2.3.1 Interviewee Selection Criteria ................................................................. 46

  2.3.2 Possible Biases ....................................................................................... 48

  2.3.3 Interview Format and Questionnaire ....................................................... 49

  2.3.4 Definitions and Accommodations .......................................................... 51
CHAPTER I:  
SOCIAL CAPITAL AND THE “SIDEWALK BALLET”

“There is no logic that can be superimposed on the city; people make it, and it is to them, not buildings, that we must fit our plans.” Jane Jacobs

Although the study of social capital has an extensive history in the social sciences, modern theory and discussion have recently come back into the spotlight after scholars such as James Coleman and Robert Putnam published their research on civic participation in the 1980s and 1990s. The conversation around social capital continues today, with efforts to clearly define and quantify the term and to better understand its role in community development.

My particular research on social capital aimed to understand how streetscape initiatives aimed at increasing walkability can influence a neighborhood's level of bridging social capital. I selected the neighborhood of Springwells, Detroit and utilized a qualitative approach, collecting insight from 15 interviews with neighborhood residents, business owners, community workers, and others. I took the results and painted a more thorough picture of the neighborhood, which I then used to analyze the effect the streetscape project may have had on walkability and the selected measures of bridging social capital.

My hope was that, through this process, I could better understand how the development of a streetscape, loosely defined here as the natural and built fabric of the street in a public setting, could affect a neighborhood's walkability and bridging social capital.

The research gained insight into the historical and socioeconomic context of Springwells, including details surrounding the rebranding of the neighborhood and the “revolving door” phenomenon. Throughout my interviews, an “us versus them” sentiment also emerged. These factors could have influenced the effects of increased walkability on the weak ties of bridging social capital in the neighborhood.

Chapter 1 begins by exploring the existing literature and research around the subjects of social capital and walkability. With the terms defined and expanded, Chapter 2 presents the methodology chosen to conduct my research. In the second chapter, I will explain the reasoning behind electing to use a qualitative approach, and offer a comprehensive overview of the interview questions. Chapter 3 presents the results from my research, including excerpts from key informant interviews, as well as insight gathered from additional sources in and around Springwells, Detroit. Finally, with the evidence presented and the context expanded, Chapter 4 analyzes the results and explores the policy implications.

In the first section of Chapter 1, I will draw from the works of the aforementioned authors, along with research done by Francis Fukuyama, Pierre Bourdieu, Michael Woolcock, and Jane Jacobs, to define and describe the dimensions of social capital; I will specifically examine how it is expressed in a neighborhood setting. After defining the term and distinguishing its various dimensions, I will take the synergistic perspective to analyze the fluid nature of social capital within a neighborhood.

Finally, I will explore the foundational insights concerning the role the streetscape dynamic, specifically in terms of its walkability, can play in fostering the creation of weak bonds.
and *bridging social capital* between existing community members and neighborhood newcomers.

### 1.1 Social Capital in the Neighborhood

Social capital has been touted as the missing link in global economic development in recent decades². Before the 19th century, Alexis de Tocqueville praised the idea of social capital, observing in his book *Democracy in America*, America's unique tendency towards civic association. He emphasized the importance of this idea, writing that "Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations. There are not only commercial and industrial associations in which all take part but others of a thousand different types - religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute. . . . Nothing, in my view, deserves more attention than the intellectual and moral associations in America."³

Why did Tocqueville put such a high value on the civic associations in America? Furthermore, if social capital is so pervasive throughout society, what role might it play in influencing the different types of social networks in a neighborhood? Beyond a way for one to quell the natural desire to feel safe and comfortable in their home and surroundings, social capital is considered a key influencer in political, economic, and societal matters.⁴ At least, it’s a

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result of a healthy and engaged community; at most, it is a predictor for economic success and social welfare.\(^5\)

An example of social capital's beneficial role in neighborhoods was explored through a study done by The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston in 2009.\(^6\) This study sought to identify the common attributes of economically "resurgent" communities, and discovered that the critical factor encouraging some communities to thrive and others to struggle was the presence of consistent and long-term collaboration among groups and leaders. In other words, social cohesion, collective action, and a network of key influential actors outweighed geographic and demographic advantages or disadvantages when it came to community economic resurgence. Social capital, which will later be defined to embody the essential networks and norms that facilitate cooperation between two or more individuals, may then play a vital (though sometimes concealed) role in the economic future of our neighborhoods and cities. Echoing these results, Avenir Grief summarizes well:

> Past, present, and future economic growth is not a mere function of endowment, technology, and preferences. It is a complex process in which the organization of society


plays a significant role. The organization of society itself, however, reflects historical, cultural, social, political, and economic processes.\(^7\)

If the relationships within and between social groups can influence a community's economic growth and the effectiveness of governance, then they are indeed deserving of attention when designing policies that affect our neighborhoods. Governments that act with indifference to the community's social dynamics, or that are corrupt, can affect a community and the various development initiatives differently than governments that uphold the rule of law, honor contracts and resist corruption.\(^8\) On a horizontal level, moving beyond its role in informing public policy, neighborhoods that boast a plentiful stock of social networks and civic associations are in a stronger position to confront neighborhood decline and take advantage of new opportunities.\(^9\) This allows for neighborhood resiliency when asked to respond effectively to environmental or political change.

In addition to improving the economic outlook for a community, the creation of social capital has been celebrated by some scholars for being a solution for problems such as urban poverty, crime, and inefficient governance\(^10\). In his book *Bowling Alone, The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Putnam argues convincingly that effective democratic


governance depends on social capital.\textsuperscript{11} As social capital has its origins in individual relationships and is mainly cultivated on the community level, those working on planning and policy at the community, municipal, and regional levels have the opportunity to create a context conducive to the growth of social capital through encouraging effective and inclusive governance.

Not all forms of social capital produce such glowing reviews, however. Later in this chapter, I will explore the various types of social capital, including \textit{bonding social capital}, one that is more commonly associated with adverse outcomes. I will then examine the multiple dimensions of social capital and delineate the characteristics that will be observed in the thesis case study on Springwells, Detroit.

\section*{1.2 Defining and Measuring Social Capital}

Social capital is an “elastic term”,\textsuperscript{12} with various interpretations and uses. Academics such as James Coleman, Pierre Bourdieu, Francis Fukuyama, and Robert D. Putnam have contributed to what is now widely considered part of its malleable definition and conceptualization, bringing into light the need for further clarity around the subject, preventing it from going "from intellectual insight appropriated by policy pundits, to journalistic cliché, to eventual oblivion."\textsuperscript{13}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Portes, Alejandro. "Unsolved Mysteries: The Tocqueville Files II." \textit{The American Prospect} (1996).
\end{itemize}
A single definition has yet to be accepted by the various disciplines studying the concept of the term, and this is due primarily to the many different functions, forms, and expressions of social capital. Common between academics is the assertion that social capital intertwines with social networks; incongruent in their theories is whether or not the social networks (and associated norms) are the source or the result of social capital.

An example of this could be the concept of “trust” commonly associated with social capital: once social networks are in place, the reciprocal relationship between trust and norms may affect the networks themselves, growth in one leading to growth in the other. In this situation, it may not be possible to distinguish if trust is the source, attribute, or result of social capital. According to Putnam, social capital consists of "connections among individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." In this way, he argues that social capital is both the source and the result of these networks and norms.

Francis Fukuyama claims that trust, networks, and civil society arise as a result of social capital, but are not in themselves social capital. Fukuyama commented on previous shortcomings in defining social capital, writing, "While social capital has been given a number of different definitions, many of them refer to manifestations of social capital rather than to social capital itself." He goes on to define social capital as an "instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals."

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Michael Woolcock defines social capital both as "the information, trust, and norms of reciprocity inhering in one's social networks"\(^{16}\) and “the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively.”\(^{17}\) The sharing of information, trust and norms are resulting aspects of the social capital, promoting cooperation between two or more individuals. In this way, they may be measured and studied as signs or results that point to the existing level and form of social capital, but should not be confused with social capital itself.

Finally, presenting a different perspective is the theory presented by Jo Anne Schneider, a research professor at George Washington University. In this paper, Schneider argues that social capital more closely resembles the type of process networks use to function, rather than the outcome or result. She writes the following:

“Social capital is a structural aspect of communities, embodying the context-specific networks that people and institutions use to achieve their goals. Drawing on the works of Portes (1998) and Bourdieu (1986), social capital is more of a process, rather than a quantifiable set of relationships… researchers and policymakers cannot necessarily identify social capital by counting connections because often the quality of these relationships is more important than the quantity.”\(^{18}\)

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Beyond the debate of whether social capital is the cause, the effect, or the process of it all, is the question of assigning dimensions and characterizing social capital. In 1986, Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, anthropologist, and renowned author in the mid-1950s, wrote The Forms of Social Capital. This paper outlined his theory of the different forms of capital and focused mainly on the form found within networks and relationships. In this article, Bourdieu argued that social capital is a personal asset that provides a tangible advantage to the connected parties. Bourdieu used the idea of social capital to contrast with economic capital, which he criticized for being a measure too narrow to embody the types of capital that generate power in society.

In this article, Bourdieu defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possessions of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words to membership of a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word." This definition presents social capital as being an asset to the individual by alluding to the perils of social inequality, where social mobility depends heavily on whom you know and the connections you or your family have made.

While Bourdieu explored social capital as being an individual asset, the idea was not ubiquitously accepted. As sociologists Baron and Hannon lament in their efforts to distinguish terms within the "plethora of capital," the indiscriminate uses of social capital, among other capitals such as economic capital or physical capital, serve only to dilute the term. They

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comment on how too much is trying to be explained by too little, writing that sociologists "have begun referring to virtually every feature of social life as a form of capital."  

One such attempt to pin down the definition contrasts Bourdieu's individualistic conceptualization of social capital. James Coleman saw social capital as a collective asset expressed in the form of social networks of trust and reciprocity. Coleman was a Chicago-based American sociologist and political theorist. In 1988, Coleman published a paper proposing a model where social capital was a resource that a person could access, not dissimilar to other resources such as human capital, physical capital, or economic capital. This resource was not necessarily owned by the individual, but instead acted as a pool from which he or she could draw. For example, if a person lived on a street where they could rely on their neighbors to hold onto their house key and keep an eye on their home while they were out of town, then that would be a form of social capital that they could access when necessary.

This model proves to be a broad view of social capital, one that does not favor powerful elites over the marginalized or vulnerable but is made available to many types of communities. Coleman's definition of social capital hinges on the social structure that facilitates collective action. In short, social capital "inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons." Coleman states his definition for social capital as follows: Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a

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durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.\textsuperscript{22}

Within the same line of thinking as Coleman, and again contrasting Bourdieu's idea of social capital being an individual asset, Putnam also viewed social capital as a collective asset and broadened the concept to a societal level. As a collective asset, one can measure social capital by the amount of trust and generalized reciprocity in a community. Putnam writes in an essay for The American Prospect, "A society that relies on generalized reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society, for the same reason that money is more efficient than barter. Trust lubricates social life."\textsuperscript{23}

The study of social capital is, to this day, an ambiguous topic for academics and policymakers. Due to the various definitions claiming to encompass social capital, the concept has been stretched and contoured in a way that embodies many types of networks. These networks traverse levels of individuals, groups, and institutions, leaving the term ill-defined. While various authors argue there is a need for a clearer understanding of social capital, others claim that a broad definition allows for the complex nature of these relationships to be better incorporated.\textsuperscript{24}

Some of the most contested dimensions of social capital are those of trust, norms, and reciprocity; while some argue that the definition of social capital includes these dimensions,


others conclude that social capital results in these dimensions, and therefore should not be
defined by them.

The widespread understanding of social capital as defined by Putnam (that is,
connections among individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and
trustworthiness that arise from them) is seen by some academics to be a flawed concept, and that
as long as we continue to make community development decisions based on his idea, that the
resulting practice will be similarly flawed.\textsuperscript{25} One such academic, James DeFilippis, argues that
the popular concept of social capital is disconnected from its origin in capital. Instead of
equating the social networks and trust in relationships with something that generates value
(material or otherwise), the popular definition conceptualizes those networks as value in
themselves.

With the above perspectives in mind, in an effort to maintain clarity and consistency
throughout the paper, I will use Michael Woolcock's definition, defining social capital as "the
information, trust, and norms of reciprocity inhering in one's social networks." This term refers
to the pool of intangible capital, forming networks that people may call upon to address common
challenges, and provides a precise definition to be used while conducting my research.

1.2.1 The Four Views

To better understand how the underpinnings of social capital play out in a neighborhood,
a lens through which to study the idea must be agreed upon. To do this, I look at the work of
Michael Woolcock and Deepa Narayan in their paper written for the World Bank Research

Observer. This paper outlines four main perspectives: the communitarian view, focussing on the local associations, with key actors being community groups and the voluntary sector; the networks view, focusing on intra (‘bonding’) and inter (‘bridging’) community ties, with key actors being entrepreneurs, business groups, and ‘information brokers’; the institutional view, focussing on political and legal institutions, with key actors being the private and public sector; and, the synergy view, focussing on community networks and state-society relations, with key actors being community groups, civil society, firms and states.

The communitarian view, while considering social capital to be a public good that benefits all who are part of the network, assumes that social capital is inherently "good," and that "more social capital is better than less." This view has been warned against and disputed, especially given the sometimes harmful effects that an intra-community bond can have when it results in things such as gang activity, or excludes other groups from the benefits of living in the neighborhood.

The networks view utilizes the ideas of strong and weak social bonds and minimizes the nature of social groups being a "public good." This view focuses more on the micro-level, individual benefits of being a member of the social network.

The institutional view argues that the vitality of networks and civic engagement is a result of whatever political, legal, or institutional environment is present. Although this view


recognizes that social capital can have both positive and negative consequences, it fails to consider the micro components at play. Regardless of the policies influencing the populace as a whole, certain freedoms, rights, and liberties are not necessarily accessible for everyone (for example, the poor in urban slums or isolated rural towns).

In an effort to repair the disconnect between the three previous perspectives, scholars proposed the another perspective, the synergy view. This view has been selected to guide my thesis research. The synergy view attempts to marry the earlier perspectives in a way that results in a holistic perspective, including the intra- and inter-community bonds, both weak and strong, and the ways this interplays with state-society relations. From this perspective, three broad conclusions emerge in Woolcock and Narayan's paper in the World Bank Research Observer:

1) Neither the state nor societies are inherently good or bad. They are “variables” in terms of the impact on attaining collective goals.

2) States, firms, and communities alone cannot obtain the resources necessary for sustainable development and forming partnerships within and across different sectors of societies.

3) Among the sectors, the state’s role in facilitating positive developmental outcomes is the most complicated and important. Communities also play an important role in order to recognize and reward good governance.

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As the people, organizations, businesses, and even geography of a neighborhood are continually changing, it is necessary to take the most holistic view to ensure comprehensive observation. In adopting the synergistic view for this thesis, my research will better encompass the changing dynamics between the moving pieces of the neighborhood.

1.2.2 Bonding, Bridging, and Linking Social Capital

Within the various dimensions of social capital, there are three unique types of networks formed: linking, bonding, and bridging networks. These three types of networks refer to the members of the network, or, in other words, who knows whom. The type of network indicates who connects to whom and the form their relationship takes.

Linking social capital serves as a vertical network that connects social classes. This network often involves the residents, the local non-profits or neighborhood organizations, the local government, and so forth. In a neighborhood, this could be observed by the communication of needs and concerns (for example, the installation of street lights in an unsafe area) at the neighborhood-level, up to the city level, and the networks that allow for appropriate measures to be taken. This could also be seen as neighborhood-level non-profits having the networks in place to obtain the funding necessary to carry out these projects themselves.

Local governments are key players in developing the linking capital necessary to aid in the success of neighborhood improvement initiatives. Challenges such as blight, residential foreclosures, or vacancy tend to call for a skill-set beyond those that are usually found within the local community. Through financial and professional support, a local government can link the

neighborhood with the human and financial capital necessary to implement these improvement measures.

Bonding social capital is most common among family members or ethnic groups. This type of social capital has also been called "closed social capital"\(^{31}\), alluding to its exclusive nature. In a neighborhood, this type of social capital could be observed within impoverished communities who need to greater access resources, or as the “us versus them” mentality often found in hate groups such as the Klu Klux Klan. This type of social capital will be referred through often throughout my thesis, as its been found to exist and be increasing in Springwells.

Fukuyama writes in his paper titled Social Capital and Civil Society that when an individual conceptualizes strangers as being part of a category separate from their kin, “a lower standard of moral behavior applies when one becomes, for example, a public official.”\(^{32}\) He goes on to say, "this provides cultural reinforcement for corruption: in such societies, one feels entitled to steal on behalf of one's family. He explicitly warns of the narrow radii of trust associated with bonding social capital, writing:

The reason, in my view, has to do with the fact that such groups have a narrow radius of trust. In-group solidarity reduces the ability of group members to cooperate with outsiders, and often imposes negative externalities on the latter… It is difficult for people to trust those outside of these narrow circles. Strangers fall into a different category than


kin; a lower standard of moral behavior applies when one becomes, for example, a public officials. This provides cultural reinforcement for corruption: in such societies, one feels entitled to steal on behalf of one's family.

Bonding social capital is horizontal in nature, and is built among equals within a community. This type of social capital is considered to be the result of an exclusive form of social capital, one that includes people or institutions that are similar to one another. These ties are expressed as a cohesive neighborhood or ethnic group and are associated with shared interests, ethnicity, religion, or other factors. Bonding social capital has been argued at times to decrease the degree to which group members relate to and cooperate with those outside the group. Fukuyama explores this subject, acknowledging that this could lead to bad results, such as hate groups or inbred bureaucracies. He calls this type of tradition "path dependence," meaning that suboptimal norms can persist for an extended period, reinforcing themselves. He continues the discussion by arguing that social capital, among other forms of capital, can be used as a tool for social "goods" as well as social "bads":

This does not disqualify it [bonding social capital] as a form of capital; physical capital can take the form of assault rifles or tasteless entertainment, while human capital can be used to devise new ways of torturing people. Since societies have laws to prevent the

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35 “Social Capital and Civil Society.” The Institute of Public Policy, George Mason University (1999), Chapter 4.
production of many social "bads," we can presume that most legal forms of social capital are no less "goods" than the other forms of capital insofar as they help people achieve their aims.36

He concludes by asserting that there seems to exist "a natural human proclivity for dividing the world into friends, and that is the basis of all politics." With this phenomenon in mind, extra care is to be taken when measuring and working with social capital and its potential outcomes.

In this book Our Kids, Putnam highlights the problem with the correlation between poverty and increasing bonding social capital. He explores how lower social capital made available to an individual may result in less time for that person to invest in building bridging and linking social capital. This cycle increases the divide between the "haves" and the "have-nots." Putnam argues that while this may build bonding social capital, the tension creates a need for strategies to in turn increase bridging capital.

I’ll now turn the discussion towards that of bridging social capital, which exists across groups and works as a mechanism for social cohesion within a community. This type of social capital works to connect different groups and communities on a horizontal plane. Within a neighborhood, it is observed as cooperation and collaboration among nonprofit organizations, churches, block clubs, neighborhood associations, and families. In this way, bridging social capital serves to connect or "bridge" individuals of different socioeconomic backgrounds.37


facilitating the creation of “thin trust” or “weak bonds” (versus the “thick trust” or “strong bonds” often found in bonding social capital\textsuperscript{38}). These connections can bridge the gaps that would sometimes inhibit community members from accessing certain opportunities or resources.

As a consequence, the stronger the bonding ties within the organization, the thicker the trust, which may serve to weaken, in practice, the trust and cooperation that could “bridge” diverse groups in the community.\textsuperscript{39} Balancing the "us versus them" sentiment found within the strong bonds of bonding social capital, bridging social capital often consists of the thin trust found within weak bonds, and manifests between groups that are different from one another.

I will now expand upon the idea of weak and strong bonds, that is, the information or resources a person trusts the other members with. A robust, strong social bond might be demonstrated by discussing a serious health issue or a romantic relationship. A thin, weak social bond, on the other hand, would be episodic, a more fleeting tie, like a relationship one may form while volunteering.

The Saguaro's Seminar notes that a trending approach in community development emphasizes the weaker social bonds, generally expressed in bridging social capital, and believes this trend will be important when it comes to the ability to mobilize community members towards collective goals.\textsuperscript{40}


1.2.3 Balancing Social Capital in the Neighborhood

Each expression of social capital plays a part in the social well-being of the neighborhood. In a discussion of bridging and bonding social capital, Putnam offers a helpful analogy, suggesting that “bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD 40….” 41 Both strong, intra-community ties (bonding social capital) and weak, inter-community ties (bridging social capital) are needed to characterize the dimensions and understand the range of outcomes associated with social capital. 42

Looking at Putnam’s work around social capital in Bowling Alone, social capital has the ability to promote quality of life by allowing mutually beneficial norms of reciprocity, generalized trust, and cooperation to be nurtured in a neighborhood. He alludes to the process dimension of social capital when he makes a distinction between the social connections gained from ‘doing with' versus those gained from ‘doing for.' Putnam concludes that the social connections gained from ‘doing with' are much more beneficial to building capital than those gained from the check-in-an-envelope approach of ‘doing for.' In this way, the horizontal nature of bridging capital alludes to the nature of the norm of reciprocity which isn't always promoted in vertical relationships and is especially beneficial in a neighborhood setting where cooperation is required among diverse groups. 43


These horizontal relationships have a value beyond their intrinsic ability to generate trust and cooperation in a neighborhood; they are often a prerequisite to generate the linking social capital necessary for marginalized communities who are attempting to improve the conditions for their residents. The bridging social capital allows for different key individuals and leaders to be involved in making decisions at various levels of the power hierarchy in a city or town.44

Bridging capital focuses not on how the members relate to each other alone, but also on how members relate to outsiders. This is especially important in a community such as Springwells, where several ethnic groups inhabit the area, and where the population density is almost 3 percent higher than the Detroit average. The trend in density is unlikely to decrease, given the percentage of population decline is nearly 10 percent less than Detroit's average.45 With this trend, it is helpful to understand how existing residents will relate to perceived outsiders, as this will play an important part in dictating the quality of life in the neighborhood.

Specifically, with the likelihood of an increase in newcomers to the neighborhood, of interest is the effect bonding social capital may have on their formation of social networks. Fukuyama reflects on the complexities of strong bonding social capital in a neighborhood with incoming residents, writing, “A highly disciplined, well-organized group sharing strong common values may be capable of highly coordinated collective action, and yet may nonetheless be a social liability… At best, this prevents the group from receiving beneficial influences from the


outside environment; at worst, it may actively breed distrust, intolerance, or even hatred for and violence toward outsiders.”

The Saguaro Seminar's Social Capital Building Toolkit reports on the value of bridging social capital for this specific reason. The writers advise against attributing a binary value (such as "good" or "bad") to either type of social capital, as both can be good or bad for different reasons. While bonding social relationships can help with more personal issues, such as borrowing a car or taking care of someone who is ill, the bridging capital is more vital to facilitating a sense of unity and to breaking down stereotypes across different races and classes.

**1.2.4 Social Capital and the Built Environment**

The above authors have helped to provide the foundational value of social capital on which to build an investigation, providing a literary landscape that explains the importance of the social capital, and defining its dimensions. In the second part of the Literature Review, I will explore the idea of the physical environment; specifically looking at the streetscape, as a means to facilitate the growth of bridging social capital in a neighborhood. Works by Jane Jacobs, Jeffrey Speck, Michael Woolcock and Kevin Leyden will contribute to an exploration of current theories regarding social capital in the natural and built environment.

Several factors can generate social capital, while others can inhibit it. Three elements necessary to generate social capital are the following: human capital, material well-being, and


the opportunity for residents to interact (including the time and the space in which to do so)\(^48\).

First, human capital; human capital is necessary to satisfy the foundational needs associated with building social networks, (for example, the knowledge, self-esteem, or communication skills an individual uses to portray the value that they can add to a relationship). Second, material well-being; if residents are more preoccupied with the material side of their well-being (e.g., providing food and shelter for themselves or their family), then there is little social energy to be spent towards building relationships. Third, the opportunity for residents to interact; time and space to develop networks and connections among residents is necessary in order to create opportunities for residents of a neighborhood to interact. As an example, an inhibition of social capital could be that there is inadequate physical infrastructure to allow for networks to be announced, such as public spaces, telephone networks, internet access, or newspapers.

By looking at the creation of opportunities for residents to interact, this thesis views how the area in Springwells, which was optimized for walkability, has affected the dynamics of the interaction of residents and influenced this essential building block of bridging social capital. One of Putnam's principal arguments in *Bowling Alone* is that a higher level of social interaction eventually "trickles up" and results in greater group involvement; if his findings are indeed correct, then the design of a street or a neighborhood sidewalk can be influential in the creation and flow of social capital.

Social scientists and urban designers have established that the characteristics of the built and natural environment can affect the social interactions that happen in the neighborhood.

Authors such as Jane Jacobs (*Death and Life of the American City*), William Whyte (*City:*...
Rediscovering the Center), and Jeff Speck (Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time) have progressed the conversation around how the qualities of a street or public space can affect how people use them.

Jane Jacob's profound book, Death and Life of Great American Cities, has been used by urban planners and policy makers since its publication in 1961. Initially, it was, as she described, "an attack on current city planning and rebuilding," and a response to the urban planning policies that were "revitalizing" neighborhoods in New York City. Jane Jacobs provides an analysis of the nature of social networks and thin trust within the urban context, and argues for mixed primary uses, short blocks, building diversity, and density as means to creating a vibrant urban community. She writes,

“If self-government in the place is to work, underlying any float of population must be a continuity of people who have forged neighborhood networks. These networks are a city's irreplaceable social capital. Whenever the capital is lost, from whatever cause, the income from it disappears, never to return until and unless new capital is slowly and chancily accumulated.”

Jacobs continues the argument by underscoring four conditions for vital urban life, owing to “the trust of a city street [that] is formed over time from many, many little public sidewalk contacts.” She termed this vibrancy a “sidewalk ballet”, which called for the following: (1) mixed use, (2) small blocks, (3) aged buildings, and (4) a sufficient concentration of buildings.

Jacob’s sentiment is echoed in the Social Capital Toolkit produced by the 2006 Saguaro Seminar for Civic Engagement in America by Harvard University. The John F. Kennedy School of Government designed this toolkit as a means to provide an overview of the different components of social capital so that communities can customize these building blocks to their unique challenges and objectives. The toolkit states, "We don't really know a great deal about how trust is established, but it appears there are three crucial elements: 1) Repeat exposure to others tends to lead to greater confidence that others can be trusted (assuming that parties respect conditions 2 and 3 below); 2) The parties are honest in their communications; and 3) The parties follow through on the commitments they make."50

As Jacobs notes, "Most of it is ostensibly utterly trivial, but the sum is not trivial at all." In sum, the casual encounters allow for a web of public respect and trust to be built in the neighborhood. Her argument coincides with the Social Capital Toolkit when it outlines the three main qualities that a city sidewalk must have in order to handle strangers and ensure safety: a clear boundary between public and private space, "eyes on the street," and relatively continuous users. In the next section, I will explore how these qualities contribute to what is termed *walkability*.

1.3 Walkability: “The Sidewalk Ballet”

In using phrases such as "sidewalk ballet," "street life," and "eyes on the street," Jacobs hints at the importance of pedestrian activity in an urban setting. Jacobs was not alone in stressing the importance of walkability for a neighborhood; others have contributed to this.

theory, including Michael Woolcock, Jeff Speck, and Kevin Leyden. In this section, I will discuss the importance of walkability (Speck and Leyden) and the General Theory of Walkability (Speck), which explains the four attributes of a walkable neighborhood: useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting.51

According to research completed at the University of New Hampshire, walkability (or walkable neighborhoods) are linked with an increase in social benefits52: “We found that neighborhoods that are more walkable had higher levels of social capital such as trust among neighbors and participation in community events,” said Shannon Rogers, lead author of the study and a Ph.D. candidate in UNH’s Natural Resources and Earth System Science program. The research concluded that high levels of social capital were correlated with a higher quality of life through improved health and economic opportunities.

1.3.1 Useful, Safe, Comfortable, and Interesting

Jeff Speck, a city planner and architect whose latest book "Walkable City" has been the best-selling city-planning title of this decade, advocates internationally for more walkable cities. Similar concepts have since surfaced, such as that of "complete streets" by Smart Growth America. Speck claims that walkability is crucial to a neighborhood's success and that a walkable city can be designed through its streetscape. In describing his General Theory of Walkability, he writes, "a walk has to satisfy four main conditions: it must be useful, safe, comfortable, and

interesting. Each of these qualities is essential, and none alone is sufficient."53 Throughout the thesis, I will use these four attributes while looking at a city sidewalk to observe its level of walkability in theory and practice.

By "useful," Speck is referring to the ease of which walking provides access to the events of daily life. That is, are these aspects close at hand and organized in a way that walking serves a resident well? Is it useful for a resident to park near the post office, walk to the bank, stop by the coffee shop, and then pick up a few groceries before returning to his or her vehicle? Speck uses the term "safe" to mean that pedestrians must be not only safe but also feel safe when walking throughout the neighborhoods. This is to say that threats from automobiles, criminals, and weather are attenuated. Speck considers the attribute "comfortable" to include spaces on urban streets that work as ‘outdoor living rooms' versus wide-open spaces that fail to attract pedestrians. And finally, he uses the condition "interesting" to refer to the unique architecture, friendly faces, and abundant evidence of and encounters with a diverse surrounding community. Jane Jacobs combines the attributes of safe and interesting in her recommendation to have "eyes on the street," noting that the sight of people attract still more people, and more people generally result in a feeling of safety. While many city planners and architectural designers of that time operated on the notion that people flow towards the sight of emptiness, today we are aware of (though perhaps not understanding) people's love of watching activity and other people.54

Speck might agree with Jacobs, endorsing that, while walking is the preferred mode of transportation in a dense and diverse urban area, a lack of density is what forces people to travel
by automobile. With people in their vehicles and off the sidewalks, the pedestrian-friendly city streets will not be found, and the vital urban life that relies on the frequent encounters may stifle the social and functional activities of residents.

Using the notion that a walkable neighborhood allows for the repeat encounters necessary to build social capital in a neighborhood, the question is, therefore: "How can we design the streetscape to facilitate the repeat encounters among neighborhood residents necessary to build bridging social capital?"

**1.4 The Importance of Social Capital for Neighborhood Stabilization**

Neighborhood stabilization is a concept used by policy makers and urban planners to encourage sustainable homeownership and combat “revolving doors” and transient residents. The goal is to enable local governments to have the infrastructure necessary to accommodate neighborhood growth and economic development by encouraging a stable residential base. Neighborhood stabilization programs often result in initiatives to rehabilitate foreclosed houses, eliminate blighted properties, and redevelop abandoned properties. The intersection of neighborhood stabilization and social capital happens in neighborhoods that have a revolving door of residents and may be combatting economic or cultural displacement, such as Springwells.

One way we can look at encouraging a stable neighborhood is through increasing a neighborhood’s social capital. Stabilizing the neighborhood has results visible through the collective (macro) lens in terms of social capital, rather than the individual (micro) lens. The

macro lens is socio-centric, and has a clear, normative point. With this approach, social capital is seen as a public, or collective good. In recent years, researchers have begun to focus on social capital as a way to bridge sociological and economic perspectives. Initiated by World Bank researchers, this approach focuses on the developmental policy of third-world countries where the notion of social capital helps to better explain economic development.56

While often referred to with expectations of solving a variety of ills, research has not yet clarified the influence social capital may have in neighborhoods with a “revolving door” of different communities and populations. Although some efforts have been made around related issues, such as immigrant integration, further research is needed to fully understand how development could act as the bridge between existing communities and newcomers.

Anecdotal accounts allude to creating a web across different groups in a neighborhood, allowing for newcomers (seen as strangers or outsiders) to feel safe and to be encouraged to participate as a community member. A common challenge found when studying a location-specific network is that a community’s network does not necessarily depend on the geographical parameters that form the neighborhood boundaries, but instead it depends on the people and the relationships they form; the geography is merely a backdrop. Without the backdrop, the web persists. In the absence of the web of networks forming a community, a neighborhood more closely resembles coordinates on a map.

56 Woolcock and Narayan, 2000: 240; see also Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2002.
1.5 Approaching the Study of Social Capital

Current research focuses on clearly defining and characterizing social capital, along with linking social capital theory to economic capital theory. Within these approaches, several gaps exist. One gap, as discussed above, could be filled by conclusively defining the term and distinguishing the aspects that cause social capital from the aspects that result from social capital. Secondly, there is a gap between the "vision" of the community's future that has been popularized by Putnam in recent years, and the "tool" of social capital that acts as a means to understand power structures and economic inequalities in society. Finally, in terms of using and measuring social capital, there is a gap that is absent of strategies developed for the transient nature of many neighborhood residents, and strategies that accommodate the changes in population either through gentrification or by other means of resident displacement.

In the interest of facilitating a more comprehensive neighborhood assessment, I will examine the different dimensions of bonding and bridging social capital at Springwells and Vernor, using the synergistic perspective to understand the greater impact that streetscape changes have had on the community networks as a whole. Using both primary sources (interviews of residents, business owners, and community leaders) and secondary sources (demographic statistics, maps, and news articles), I will attempt to answer the below research questions:

1. How did the streetscape improvement projects produce a change in the way people use the streets and sidewalks, if at all? Specifically, did the theoretical increase in the street's walkability and cause either 1) more residents to use the sidewalks as a public space for walking, playing, or otherwise interacting with other residents, or 2)
residents to use the sidewalks at different times of the day, thus interacting with a
different set of residents than before.

2. Were any changes in social capital observed in the neighborhood? And, if
changes in the social capital were observed, to what extent can these changes be
attributed to the streetscape improvement projects and their effect on walkability?
CHAPTER II:  
A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO SOCIAL CAPITAL RESEARCH

In this chapter, I will begin by exploring both quantitative and qualitative approaches to researching social capital. I will explain why I selected Springwells Village, Detroit for my research, and will then introduce the research question. Finally, with the question defined and the strengths and weaknesses of both research approaches in mind, I will explain the reasons for deciding to take a qualitative approach.

Part two of this Chapter will explain how the design of the study will work to answer the research question by offering the reasoning behind the selected questions. Following the explanations, I will stipulate the limitations to this study, and present the methods for mitigating bias in the research.

2.1 Approaches to Social Capital Research

Despite the recent interest and influx in academic research on social capital, the quality of data surrounding the nature of relationships between social variables and development is “less than ideal.” Senior researchers agree that quantitative methods measure social capital in a way that is simplistic, which can be both a strength and a weakness. While providing measurable data to support claims and track trends, there is a limit to the depth of that insight, mainly due to the nuances that arise from a diverse community in an evolving city. In order to understand the

quantitative data in a neighborhood, qualitative methods, such as case studies and thick
descriptions should be used to provide an accurate context.58

The city of Detroit has been the focus of a lot of attention in recent decades, resulting in
an impressive amount of data collection and analysis from organizations around the nation.
Correlating with the prevalent competition for development projects in the downtown area over
the past decade59, the City has seen an increase of Detroit-based data research groups such as
Data Driven Detroit (D3) (providing “accessible, high-quality information and analysis to drive
informed decision-making… functioning as a data intermediary and a partner to socially-minded
groups seeking data to drive decision-making”60) and Loveland Technologies (in partnership
with motorcitymapping.org, which serves as a historical archive of the Motor City Mapping
citywide property survey of Detroit, offering parcel-by-parcel data at detroit.makeloveland.com).

In 2012, Data Driven Detroit compiled an extensive quantitative overview of Springwells
Village as part of their Building Sustainable Communities initiative. This report included
demographic, socioeconomic, housing, land use, school attendance, and business data collected
from the American Community Survey. The presentation of these statistics raised questions such
as, How do various groups perceive the incoming development initiatives?, How is it that the
population stays the same while people are supposedly moving out of Springwells?, and, How

58 Onyx , J. and Bullen, P. Measuring Social Capital in Five Communities in NSW: A Practitioner’s Guide
University of Technology, Sydney. Centre for Australian Community Organizations and Management (CACOM),
1997.

59 For example, see article by Bullard, Stan. "Big-Name Developers Compete for Lakewood Project." Cleveland
compete-for-lakewood-project and Bennet, Emily. “A quick look at major Detroit development projects from 2016.”

60 "Data Driven Detroit." https://datadrivendetroit.org/about/
did the recent development affect existing residents and newcomers. When seeking to understand these questions and expose the why behind these trends, insight into the history of the neighborhood and the perception of its residents may be of use. These on-the-ground perspectives may shed light on social phenomena and allow us to uncover more in-depth, underlying explanations.61

For example, if the population density remains steady in a neighborhood, as is the case in Springwells, it does not necessarily mean that the resident population has not changed in the neighborhood as displacement may have occurred. This phenomenon was described by one interviewee to be a “revolving-door.”62. While some residents are moving out of the neighborhood, others are moving in (later in this chapter I discuss why this is happening). Regardless of the reasons for these relocations, the data represented by population gains or losses do not accommodate this subtle detail when we are looking at the communities that compose a neighborhood.

It's understandable to shy away from advocating for things one cannot explicitly measure; a goal with immeasurable outcomes make an unattractive place to invest time and money. Quantitative approaches provide policymakers with quantifiable results and policy goals, creating a precise scale upon which to measure the success or failure of a policy. This data is instrumental when looking at macro-level social capital concepts, and can help guide broad themes in development practices with regards to social capital. Where the numbers fall short, however, are on micro and community-level social capital concepts.


62 Interviewee - Raul Echevarría, UNI
Although there are tools that attempt to quantify social capital in a given community, such as Robert Putnam and Harvard University’s Saguaro Seminar Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey\(^{63}\) and the World Bank’s Social Capital Assessment Tool\(^{64}\), these approaches generally leave the data interpretation up to the researcher. In my research, I attempt to extend the existing research by allowing for explanations of the phenomenon to come from various viewpoints, specifically from those who are experiencing it first-hand. To contribute to the existing work surrounding social capital and its influences, I’ve asked additional questions about walkability and the streetscape project. In my study of Springwells, issues such as the “revolving door” dynamic and the historical context of the neighborhood are added to the analysis through the inclusion of community voices. I hope that this project may add value to the existing research around the balance of bonding and bridging social capital.

In my approach, I have elected to use key informant interviews to envision the historical, urban, and social context of Springwells. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) defines key informant interviews as "qualitative, in-depth interviews [that] resemble a conversation among acquaintances, allowing a free flow of ideas and information. Interviewers frame questions spontaneously, probe for information and take notes, which are elaborated on later."\(^{65}\) In interviewing people who have a particularly informed


perspective on the evaluated subject, USAID lists several advantages and disadvantages.

Benefits include the following:

1. They are an affordable way to gain a big picture idea of a situation.
2. The information gathered comes from people who have relevant knowledge and insight.
3. They allow for new, unanticipated issues and ideas to emerge.

The approach is not without disadvantages however. Below are listed USAID’s stipulated disadvantages, along with my chosen approach to mitigate them:

1. There is a potential for the interviewer to unwittingly influence the responses given by informants. To address this disadvantage, I sought to form a neutral, non-assuming approach in question-wording and interview presentation. For example, I used an open question such as “Has it always been this way?” and then, only if the answer was “no”, “How has it changed?” While my wording attempted to be neutral, suggesting that there may have been a change at all could possibly influence the interviewee’s response by implying that a change may have occurred.
2. There is a potential bias if informants are not selected with care. To address this challenge, I interviewed residents from a variety of backgrounds. To begin, I selected interviewees from both outspoken advocates and those in opposition. I also selected experts on the subject who were both skeptical and unimpressed by streetscape, along with those who helped in advocating the project since its
Finally, I selected residents and business owners who were not involved in the planning process or a community development agency at all. Biases are likely to exist in various perspectives, so instead of trying to exclude bias, I attempted to balance them by including interviewees that represented the many perspectives. This said, since there were few interviewees in total, I cannot claim them to be an unbiased representation. The fact that the interviewees were all residents who elected to stay in Springwells and were willing to speak with me allows for an additional possibility for bias.

3. Systematic analysis of a large amount of qualitative data can be time consuming. This was indeed a challenge in completing the qualitative research. To do this, I dedicated a significant amount of time to planning the interviews. I recorded the interviews, and, upon revision, transcribed the notes and organized them by theme. For themes, I used my original categories of “walkability” and the indicators of social capital selected: “generalized trust” and “informal sociability”. I created two additional themes as they emerged: “us versus them” and “revolving door phenomenon”.

4. The validity of the data can sometimes be difficult to prove. I attempted to encourage validity by asking questions that were explicitly pertaining to the walkability and social capital in Springwells. The questions attempted to distill the effects in the community that were seen in correlation with the streetscape.

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66 See Appendix for full interview transcripts
improvements. While this was the intention, each interview is likely to have his or her unique perspective on how issues in the neighborhood intertwine.

In addition, challenging the validity of the data, is that the interview respondents mean the same thing when they use words such as “welcoming” or “strong bond”, or when they speak about things like “us versus them”. I attempted to address this challenge by asking for clarification and elaboration during the interviews. For example, when one interviewee mentioned that there was an “us versus them” sentiment in the neighborhood, I asked the respondent to verify who was “us” and who was “them”.

Despite the challenges presented by the above disadvantages, I found that the advantages of gaining a big picture idea, collecting information from people with relevant knowledge, and allowing for unanticipated ideas to emerge, made the qualitative approach favorable in my research.

Where the qualitative approach excels compared to a quantitative approach is in understanding similar classes of phenomena, rather than making statements about the likelihood it will occur across a population. Popay’s definition of qualitative generalizability states, “The aim is to make logical generalizations to a theoretical understanding of a similar class of phenomenon rather than probabilistic generalizations to a population.”

In addition, a qualitative approach for this research allows us the below benefits over quantitative:

67 Popay, J., A. Rogers, and G. Williams. "Rationale and Standards for the Systematic Review of Qualitative Literature in Health Services Research Qualitative Health Research." 8, no. 3 (July-01-2016).
1. Allowing for unanticipated answers (specifically: the Latino culture influences shopping trends, as they often go as a family to shop after the workday, and therefore after dark in the winter.68)

2. Revealing complex social phenomena (such as the transitional neighborhood69)

3. Discerning underlying explanations (for example, the relationship with the City of Detroit and the rebranding process, and how that influences their perception of physical development projects70)

In deciding to approach this study of Springwells Village from a qualitative perspective, the nuances unique to the community will have the opportunity to surface and further add to our understanding. Qualitative social capital research “provides host countries and development agencies alike with insight into the tangible reality behind quantitative survey numbers.”71 I will use the qualitative data collected to form a holistic view of the interplay between social capital and streetscape development in the neighborhood.

2.2 Springwells Overview

Located in the Southwest corner of Detroit, Michigan, Springwells Village is bounded roughly by Fort Street to the South, Woodmere Cemetery and Patton Park to the West, John

68 See full interview transcript with Theresa Zajac and Raquel Garcia.

69 Interview with John Cummings, Erik Howard, and Raul Echevarria.

70 Interview with Theresa Zajac and Raquel Garcia.

Kronk to the North, and Waterman to the East. Home to almost 21,000 residents, the 1.68 square-mile neighborhood boasts a density that more than doubles the average in Detroit (11,168 per square mile in Springwells Village, versus 4,880 average in Detroit). Approximately 24 percent of the workforce within the 1.68 square-miles is employed in the manufacturing sector, accounting for about 36 percent of the revenue in the area.

The original reason for narrowing my sight on the Southwest corner of Detroit was the steadier-than-average population trends. While the population of Detroit decreased 25 percent from 2000 to 2010, the Springwells Village neighborhood declined at a slower rate, between 12 and 17 percent between 2000 and 2010. This discovery prompted further investigation into the neighborhood, which uncovered its current transitional trend for some residents. In Springwells, there were two stages of transition: Firstly, as an industrial neighborhood (families moved in for jobs, successful families moved out to suburbs) and currently, as a neighborhood slated for density by Detroit Future City. While the transitional nature remains constant, the types of residents sharing the neighborhood has shifted from being lower-middle working class, mostly Latino residents, to middle-upper class non-Latino residents.

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76 Interviews with John Cummings, Raul Echevarria, and Phyllis Edwards.
The DFC designation for redevelopment brought not only new plans for physical developments but also a greater fear of gentrification. In the interviews, several participants reported a strong feeling of “us versus them” when referring to Springwells residents and newcomers. This sentiment (often serving to oppose bridging social capital), coupled with the recent streetscape development efforts, made Springwells a source of ample material to investigate the interplay of physical development, walkability, social capital in a neighborhood.

2.2.1 Balancing bonding and bridging social capital in Springwells

To understand what I was seeking to measure in Springwells, I first identified what would be the indicators of social capital. Bonding social capital has indicators that are distinct from bridging social capital, so it is helpful to explore and understand both. Researchers and town planners recommend a “good balance” between bonding, bridging, and linking social capital lest social fragmentation result.

The dominance of bonding social capital can help facilitate a community with strong bonds, trust, and norms within closed groups, but lacking in trust and cooperation with those outside their groups. A community with closed groups and strong bonds could result in the discrimination against, or not accepting of, outsiders. While bonding social capital generates an exclusive type of network, bridging social capital generates an inclusive one; moreover, bonding social capital relies on strong bonds, while bridging social capital relies on weak bonds.


Fukuyama argued that “the strength of the family bond implies a certain weakness in ties between individuals not related to one another.”\textsuperscript{80} As explored in Chapter One, bonding social capital networks explain how families find resources to meet the emergency needs, such as needing a ride to work or finding a babysitter for the evening. While beneficial to families when it comes to forming relationships and trust, high levels of bonding social capital may lead to the exclusion of several groups of society, and possibly conflicts between various groups.\textsuperscript{81}

My research sought mainly to analyze bridging social capital, and therefore did not attempt to disentangle the positive externalities from the negative externalities of bonding social capital; that said, further research into how to measure and characterize bonding social capital in exclusivity could be useful for future policy makers and academics.

In 2005, a study completed for the National Council of Family Relations found the following attributes to be predictors of bonding social capital: on an individual level, high resident participation, gender (higher percentage female), and race or ethnicity; on a neighborhood-level, high homeownership and high neighborhood stability. Specifically of interest to Springwells, Hispanic neighborhoods, as compared to non-Hispanic neighborhoods, were related to a higher level of bonding social capital.\textsuperscript{82}

In addition to the high measures of Hispanic ethnicity in Springwells (presently, nearly 75\% of residents identify as hispanic, and 28\% are of other ethnic backgrounds\textsuperscript{83}), Springwells


has a trend in homeownership: while Detroit has just over half of all occupied housing units as owner-occupied, and Springwells has 46.1 percent, the general trend between 2000 and 2010 in Detroit has been a decrease in owner-occupancy and an increase in rental-occupancy, while the trend in Springwells is an increase in owner-occupancy.\textsuperscript{84} With the majority of residents identifying as hispanic, and the increasing trend in homeownership, conditions are favorable for supporting a high level of bonding social capital.

While the positive results of bonding social capital are helpful to family ties, in particular, the negative externalities seen in areas with a high level of bonding social capital are concerning; several of these, including property crime such as burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson, are present in Springwells.\textsuperscript{85} If the exclusive nature of bonding social capital might result in issues such as burglary and motor vehicle theft, then the inclusive nature of bridging social capital could serve to balance out those negative externalities. With this relationship in mind, I will now explore a possible intervention that would balance out the exclusive nature of bonding social capital, tipping the scale in favor of bridging social capital: walkability.

Neighborhoods whose populations are evolving, particularly to include groups of different ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds, may benefit from increased walkability.\textsuperscript{86} While social capital consists of relationships, it is argued that designing a neighborhood to be walkable can facilitate the way people use the streets and encourage more interaction, thus allowing the

\textsuperscript{84} 2012 Data Profile. Springwells Village, Detroit. Detroit, Michigan: Data Driven Detroit, 2012.


opportunity for repeat encounters. In theory, these weakly-bonded social ties can be facilitated through these interactions, and in a neighborhood traditionally plagued by issues such as violent crime and theft, improving safety and the feeling of safety is of keen interest when considering approaches to encourage walkability.

2.3 Introducing the Question

My research will attempt to answer the following question: How has the streetscape initiative influenced dynamics of social capital in Springwells? I am particularly interested in bridging social capital and weak social bonds for reasons discussed in Chapter One. The question hinges on the assumption that the weak bonds found in bridging social capital are built through a sense of trust that is fostered by the many, casual and planned encounters of neighborhood residents. Within this theory, it follows that the more opportunities available for residents to interact within the neighborhood, the more potential there is to build weak bonds and bridging social capital.

The anchor of Springwells Village lies at the intersection of Springwells Street and Vernor Highway, the two streets of the neighborhood designated as Business Improvement Districts. Much of the commercial construction was completed in the mid-20s or earlier, resulting in a layout of density, with business fronts accessible from the sidewalk.

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The research investigates how the Vernor Streetscape Improvement Project has or has not affected the walkability and social capital in Springwells Village. To do this, I began by looking in depth at the entire process - from the genesis of the idea, to how the improvements were implemented and perceived in the neighborhood. This was a necessary step in order to broaden my understanding of the context, and was done through secondary sources (newspaper articles, recorded audio and video, past neighborhood plans) and primary sources (interviews). I sought to understand what trends existed in the neighborhood demographically and socially, and why they existed. The trends that emerged (the “revolving door,” and thoughts on community development and rebranding) are presented in the following Chapter.

Next, I examined if there were perceived changes in the way residents used the street. Again, both primary and secondary sources were used to research this question. Interview questions intended to extract information about how and why people would use the street before and after the streetscape improvements. Questions regarding street use and social capital were presented to key informants in the neighborhood, along with neighborhood business owners and employees. The results of these questions are given in the following chapter and include the main findings.

Finally, the study attempted to extract to what extent the changes (if any) could be attributed to the results of the streetscape improvement projects. In the interest of disentangling the sources of the changes noted in resident interactions and social capital, I selected questions that seek the reasoning behind certain changes in behavior (for example, I asked a series of open questions: “Would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in
dealing with people? Has it always been this way? (If the respondent answered *no*), How has it changed, and when has it changed?”

Overall, this research hopes to add to the body of knowledge surrounding social capital in neighborhoods, and how it may be influenced by incoming development efforts. In providing a qualitative perspective offered by community experts and long-standing business owners and operators, the case study of Springwells and Vernor will provide insight on how the streetscape improvement efforts have or have not affected the way residents interact on the street, and in effect, influenced the social capital within the neighborhood. This perspective will add depth to the pool of knowledge on social capital in a neighborhood.

### 2.3.1 Interviewee Selection Criteria

The research process involved a series of key informant interviews, defined by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as "qualitative, in-depth interviews of 15 to 35 people selected for their first-hand knowledge about a topic of interest. The interviews are loosely structured, relying on a list of issues to be discussed. Key informant interviews resemble a conversation among acquaintances, allowing a free flow of ideas and information. Interviewers frame questions spontaneously, probe for information and take notes, which are elaborated on later." These interviews were conducted with neighborhood leaders, decision makers, business owners/operators, and community advocates. To control for the changing population of Springwells and gather perspectives that would have seen any changes over the lifespan of the project, one criterion for selecting key informants was that they must have been either living or working in Springwells before the streetscape efforts began in 2013. While this allowed for
perspectives from those who stayed in Springwells, the perspective from those who have left the neighborhood are not included. Missing from the research would be the voice of those who have left Springwells. These voices could be telling to the reasons why residents may have felt less-connected, did not have a positive experience, or felt compelled to seek opportunities or livelihood in a different neighborhood. These voices could also contribute to our understanding of those residents who chose to stay, and point to any systematic differences that may exist.

In selecting key informants that would offer information regarding the history and implementation of the project, I first identified the various organizations involved in planning efforts within the neighborhood. These organizations included the Urban Neighborhood Initiative (UNI), which took part in the rebranding efforts in Springwells Village, along with various community planning initiatives; the Southwest Detroit Business Alliance (SDBA), which spearheaded the creation of the Business Improvement District on Vernor and Springwells; and Congress of Communities (CoC), which worked on sustainable community plans in partnership with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC).

Additionally, I identified organizations that were not involved in the planning efforts but served various populations such as the elderly, youth, faith, business, and ethnic groups. These organizations included Bridging Communities (BCI), which works in particular with the elderly; Grace in Action, which works with the youth and Christian faith groups; Global Detroit, which specializes in immigrant populations and cross-culture affairs; and Erik Howard, who works with youth and artist groups. In addition to taking part in the community planning efforts, SDBA works directly with the business groups. And, in addition to the history involving the rebranding of the neighborhood, UNI works with youth, the City of Detroit, and land developers.
Finally, I walked Vernor Street with a community member and spoke to several business owners and employees. These voices provided insight into how the streetscape was impacting businesses and allowed for further on-the-ground perspective surrounding the street’s walkability and public use. Allowing for these voices to contribute also opens the dialog for unforeseen issues beyond those customarily discussed by community development workers or planning professionals. Six businesses agreed to participate in the interviews. These businesses serve both neighborhood residents and visitors. Two restaurants participated, along with three commercial businesses. The Campbell Library also participated, agreeing to have their name published in the thesis.

2.3.2 Possible Bias

These interviews were conducted with the understanding that each interviewee might hold a particular bias. Bias from Community Development Organizations (UNI, SDBA) may include a belief that any community development is good development. As these organizations may focus mainly on securing more funding, their response to incoming beautification efforts may be biased, thinking, more is better.

Bias from businesses may be planted on the idea that, in general, more customers means more profit, and more profit is good for business. With more financial cushion in their business, and in consequence, their families and the community, a business may be biased towards the development and branding of their neighborhood, regardless of the implications it may have regarding displacement or neighborhood relations.
Finally there may be a bias from community advocates, including the belief that, in general, development may mean displacement. This belief may be rooted in the idea that the development efforts are intended to attract newcomers, versus serve the existing community.

Especially in the case of Springwells, where the development has become synonymous with the rebranding, it is not unlikely to find a bias against the development from community advocates. I have sought to balance this bias by also including perspectives from those that work in organizations whose work spans several neighborhoods or the whole of Detroit (such as Global Detroit and Bridging Communities), or has participated in the branding efforts in efforts to improve the community (Urban Neighborhood Initiatives).

In the next section of this chapter, I will present the interview questions, the logic behind my question selection, and the limitations of the study. Key takeaways from the interviews are presented in Chapter 3.

2.3.3 Interview Format and Questionnaire

In designing the research, consideration was put into questions and prompts that would generate responses related to the social capital in a community, along with wording the questions in a way to make the concept accessible to the population being studied. The goal of the research was to determine if there was a change in 1) the way residents use Vernor Street, and 2) the change in dynamic of social capital as indicated by the first two dimensions of the Social Capital Index (briefly, social trust and informal social interactions). The questions were meant to be as open as possible, allowing the participant to elaborate without the presupposition of valuing or devaluing the process of development in the neighborhood. As the topics of “gentrification” and
“neighborhood development” are controversial and, at times, provoking, great care was put into conducting neutral interviews (see below for complete list of questions).

The first part of the interview was designed around a set of 14 indicators that form the well-established Social Capital Index developed by Putnam for the Saguaro Seminar with Harvard University. In the research presented in his book *Bowling Alone*, the fourteen indicators mainly measure civic participation and bridging social capital. These indicators were used by Putnam in his research presented in the book *Bowling Alone*. The measure he used averaged 14 indicators that were ‘sufficiently intercorrelated that they appear to tap a single underlying dimension,” and combined individual responses and aggregated data grouped under 5 rather intuitive dimensions. For the survey, respondents were to answer “agree” or “disagree” to survey questions, resulting in a measure (between high and low) of social capital.

While the index focused on measurement through factor analysis, the questions in the interview seek to extract qualitative information. Putnam’s Social Capital Index for the United States are based on the following dimensions: measures of community or organizational life, measures of engagement in public affairs, measures of community volunteerism, measures of informal sociability, and measures of social trust. As bridging capital is characterized by weak ties and thin impersonal trust of strangers, I decided to focus on the last two categories of Putnam’s indicators: measures of informal sociability and measures of social trust. The results of


the interviews, along with the complete list of questions used in the research, are presented in the following Chapter.

2.3.4 Definitions and Accommodations

In communicating the question prompts to the participants, several accommodations were made considering the verbiage and terms. First, when necessary, the interview was conducted in Spanish with a community resident serving as a witness.

Additionally, regarding the name of the area being studied, I elected to use the verbiage “Southwest” to refer to the area of Springwells Village. This decision was made after several conversations with neighborhood leaders, who warned of the polemic nature of the name “Springwells Village,” and the connotation and presumptions that it brought regarding the neighborhood rebranding.

To call attention to the streetscape development, I asked, “Do you recall when the streetscape changes came to Vernor?” Often the interviewee would seek clarification, asking if I was talking about the lights and the flower beds. This opened a window for us to further elaborate on the definition, mentioning that there was a series of streetscape improvements that came to Vernor in 2013, including lights, new sidewalks, graffiti removal, and flower beds.

As many of the key informant interviewees worked with the community, they often would ask questions regarding the how and the why of the research. A script was used for guidance when answering these questions, defining and describing the following terms: social capital, bonding, bridging, and linking social capital, streetscape development, and walkability.

Each interview began with the following introduction:
Neighborhood revitalization efforts often include initiatives around community development and resident engagement. This study is being completed in order to observe any changes in social capital, that is, resident networks, after the implementation of the Vernor Streetscape Project in Springwells Village. The results will be used to analyzing how street design interacts with the community, contributing to the existing foundation of knowledge surrounding social capital.

I will be utilizing a social capital scale developed by the Saguaro Seminar at Harvard University, which is headed by “Bowling Alone” author and social capital scholar Robert Putnam, to guide my interviews.

Occasionally, the interviewees would ask for further explanation about the research. I used the same definitions for the respondents in hopes to address the challenge stipulated earlier in this chapter: making sure respondents were talking about the same thing when employing the terms.

In these instances, I would explain the concept of social capital by referring to Michael Woolcock’s definition: “The information, trust, and norms of reciprocity inhering in one’s social networks.” To further explain the term, it was compared to community building, community development, relationships and social networks. It was described as having three main categories: bonding, bridging, and linking social capital.

Bonding social capital was defined as “strong ties among, leading to stronger ties with members of one’s own group.” To explain bridging social capital, I contrasted it with bonding
social capital, explaining that bridging social capital is “the kind that brings people in contact with those who are different from themselves,” while bonding social capital is “most often seen among family members or ethnic groups and has an exclusive nature, often with an ‘us versus them’ mentality.”

Finally, linking social capital was included to demonstrate the many forms that the social networks can take. Linking social capital was defined as “the kind that acts as a vertical network that connects social classes.” Elaborating, I explained that it is often involving the residents, and can help can connect them with the local non-profits or neighborhood organizations, up to the local government, then to the city government, and so forth.

In defining walkability, I used Speck’s General Theory of Walkability, citing that to be considered walkable, “a walk has to satisfy four main conditions: it must be useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting.”

2.3.5 The Interviewees

In total, I conducted seven key informant interviews and nine business interviews. As explained earlier in the chapter, the selected interviewees were chosen to represent the following groups: elderly, youth, faith, business, and ethnically diverse. Eight of the 15 interviewees agreed to be voice recorded and have their name published; I then transcribed and analyzed the recorded interviews. The remaining seven interviewees requested to not have their voices recorded.

Participants included a streetscape project consultant; a community development organization director, community organizer, and long-time resident; a librarian at the local

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library; a nonprofit leader and community development board member whose work intersects with the “branding” process in Springwells Village; a non-profit owner, community leader and youth director with unique insight into the community’s networks in Springwells; and various business owners and managers.

The central research question guided each interview: “Has the streetscaping project influenced social capital in the neighborhood?” Excerpts were taken from the interviews to add depth and insight to the dialog. In Chapter three I offer the results of my research, including an explanation and prompts to accompany the excerpts when needed.

Below is a complete list of the interviews conducted with community organizations:

1. Theresa Zajac, Vice President of Southwest Detroit Business Association (SDBA)
2. María Salinas, Executive Director at Congress of Communities (CoC)
3. Eric Howard, a professional photographer and co-founder of Expressions and Young Nation in Southwest Detroit
4. Pastor John Cummings, pastor and leader at Grace in Action
5. Phyllis Edwards, Executive Director of Bridging Communities, INC (BCI)
6. Raul Echevarría, Land Use and Economic Development Director at Urban Neighborhood Initiatives (UNI)
7. Raquel García, Director of Partnerships and Community Outreach at Global Detroit
2.4 Study Limitations

Few methods are foolproof when dealing with human nature, and the study of social capital is no exception. Social capital sets out to measure invisible networks that form in fluid relationships within a population that is transforming, but only in a place whose borders are stagnantly defined by geographic coordinates. While the complexity of social capital does not belittle the value found through its investigation, it does provide a convincing case for the importance of utilizing several approaches in our attempts to understand it better. The three main limitations to my study are as follows: the limited population sample, the generalization and applicability to other neighborhoods, and the residents’ perspective regarding incoming physical development. In the paragraphs that follow, I will elaborate on each of the limitations and explain how I attempt to control for the limitation in my study of Springwells Village and Vernor Highway.

First, a limitation would be the population sample. The small sample-size can result in increased variability and a more significant standard deviation from the conclusion. In other words, the limited population sample makes it challenging to declare the relationships between the data as significant and generalizable. Furthermore, this limitation makes it more likely that a perspective was excluded from the collected data. I attempted to counter this limitation by including perspectives from within and without the development scene in Springwells, along with voices from community residents and business representatives along Vernor. These community voices, while not all-inclusive, were selected without discrimination. Still, missing
are the voices of the community members who opted out of the interview, or who were not approached.

Second, a limitation is the study’s generalizability and applicability to other neighborhoods. In addition to the small sample size, affecting the study’s generalizability is its specificity to the neighborhood of Springwells. The questions asked were particular to the history and demography of Springwells and Southwest Detroit - it’s unlikely that the uncovered perspectives would parallel those in another city. While not generalizable, the events and intertwining ideas surrounding the phenomenon in Springwells could illuminate those in another neighborhood. Additionally, the methodological approach could be mirrored, tweaked, and applied to future studies.

Finally, the community may have a unique perspective regarding the incoming physical development, such as apartment buildings, beautification projects, parks, or restaurants. The various perceptions introduce the question, “Will Springwells Village have a different response to an incoming streetscape development than, for example, a neighborhood that already boasts well-maintained sidewalks, interesting shops, and flowerbeds lining well-lit sidewalks?” The answer is arguably, yes. While it is possible that particular changes may have occurred in the area that did not get the streetscape improvements, and could, therefore, skew the results, I chose this area in an attempt to limit extreme variations as these two locations are of similar geographic, ethnic, and cultural make-up. In this way, there was a semblance of a constant upon which I could observe the distinct outcomes on Vernor Highway. In an attempt to further control for this limitation and avoid confirmation bias, interviewees from both areas were asked the research
questions, commenting on social capital and walkability on both Vernor Highway and
Springwells Street.

2.5 A Final Thought

Neighborhoods are unique by nature, and are characterized by the people who live there. While some best practices and trends may succeed as broad and overarching themes, it might be impossible to create rules or models whose results can speak accurately for all neighborhoods. This should not discourage policymakers and researchers from working towards strategies that facilitate the manifestation of social capital, but rather remind them that the process is one of wayfinding, and that flexibility and constant adaptation is essential when serving an evolving neighborhood. Any recommendation regarding development efforts in a neighborhood must be customized in a way that recognizes the distinct characteristics of the residents, taking into consideration both the geographic and demographic forecast.
CHAPTER III:
THE CASE OF SPRINGWELLS

This chapter will present what was learned from researching the neighborhood of Springwells, Detroit. First, I will provide a brief insight into the context of physical development in Springwells, looking at the Detroit Future City rezoning plan, and the resulting initiative to rebrand several Detroit neighborhoods. Next, I will share an overview of the Vernor Streetscape Project along with the general effects the project had on the walkability and social capital as reported by the interviewees. Finally, I’ll present the additional themes that emerged throughout the research process: an “us-versus-them” sentimentality, and the “revolving door” phenomenon.

3.1 Within the Context of Rebranding

My initial introduction to Springwells was colored by the overarching theme of the rebranding and gentrification of the neighborhood. Rebranding the area once known as Southwest Detroit as Springwells Village surfaced in many of the interviews, and was considered by many to be a warning of changes to come in the neighborhood’s cultural and socioeconomic demographics.

Throughout the interviews, the topic of gentrification was often mentioned in conjunction with the City of Detroit’s recent rezoning efforts with Detroit Future City (DFC), a think tank in charge of designing the planning framework for the City of Detroit.\(^9^4\) The resulting City Master Plan was controversial due to its reportedly poor community engagement process and resulting plan. The idea was to rezone the districts and neighborhoods in Detroit, strategically designating

\(^9^4\) *Detroit Future City.* The Land Use Element, 2nd Edition. 50-Year Land Use Scenario Map: 119.
specific neighborhoods for density and focused funding. In other words, the plan focused on “sizing the networks for a smaller population, making them more efficient, more affordable, and better performing.”

The planning process for the DFC Master Plan was criticized for its lack of community input. While Detroit’s head of the Planning Department, Maurice Cox, stated that “a key to rolling it [the new master plan] out will be to consult the people who live in those areas as early as possible,” there were signs that not all resident populations had a chance to contribute.

One antidote is found in Clement’s paper, *The Detroit Future City; How Pervasive Neoliberal Urbanism Exacerbates Racialized Spatial Injustice*. Clement and his research team conducted a field survey in affected neighborhoods, having conversations with local residents. Moreover, those who had the chance to have their voice heard often didn’t get to see changes in the plan as a result.

“Though the DWPLTP [Detroit Works Project: Long-term Planning] team made a commendable effort to engage the community and educate curious citizens on the comprehensive plan, no evidence exists to suggest that citizen input changed the directives for any single geographic area… the process is found to have exhibited less interest on the neighborhood-specific wishes of residents and more interest in disseminating already established land use goals…

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Many residents were reportedly “not only unable to relocate but also completely unaware that their properties were targeted to have municipal services withdrawn prior to rezoning into agricultural or green land use.” The researchers found the engagement process to be less inclusive and more administrative, as the officials had crafted the maps and typologies before any community engagement efforts. These maps remained unchanged as observable in the DFC plan.

Further evidence of the lack of community engagement in the plan was witnessed at an initial Detroit Works public forum, where a resident (unnamed) expressed their dissatisfaction with the plan’s implementation. “Why do we have to move? Why can’t you build around us and do what you need to do instead of one: trying to burn us out, and two: trying to take us out? And then thirdly, I want to know what is going to be done to that land once you move us out? Because it seems like your downsizing is just another form of segregation… we who live in the city of Detroit have to stick together or they’re gonna take this city away from us.”\(^{97}\) This example gives an insight to the dissatisfaction and sense of resentment spurred from the rebranding processes in Detroit, echoing an “us versus them” sentiment.

### 3.1.1 Rebranding Springwells

As part of DFC’s rezoning and rebranding process, several neighborhoods were given new names, and an area of Southwest Detroit was included. Under the guidance of the non-profit organization called Urban Neighborhood Initiatives (UNI), the area locally referred to as

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"Southwest," "The Village," "Vernor and Springwells," or "Springwells," received the name of Springwells Village. For many residents, the new name signified that change, for better or for worse, was coming to the neighborhood.

"My perspective is more broad than just the name change… I would call it a neocolonial moment, honestly." Antonio Cosme, a community leader and member of the community organization Enclave, stated in a Detroit Metro Times article. Cosme went on to explain how the rebranding as part of DFC’s 50-year Framework for restructuring the city strives to relocate people from less-populated areas into denser ones. "Springwells is slated to become one of those enclaves that gets the investment, whereas the other communities around it don't. In Detroit, where the most marginal communities are — where the most water shut-offs have been happening, where the most people are getting kicked out of their houses — they're getting divested in. The other neighborhoods that they want people to move in — they rebrand it."98 The DFC executive director Kenneth Cockrel Jr. later wrote a rebuttal to the Detroit Metro Times denying that the DFC framework recommended ‘moving people from less-populated areas to denser ones’.

Regardless of the intentions behind the rebranding process and the DFC 50 year Master Plan for the City of Detroit, the turmoil seems to illuminate a distrust that some residents have of the city leaders when it comes to their involvement in Detroit neighborhoods. In my interviews, several participants mentioned fears that the City’s intentions were never to allow residents to have input in the development plans of their city, as the City and DFC already had a plan in mind. Several interviewees were concerned that, while the plan was well thought out and

98Devito, Lee. "Welcome to ‘Springwells Village’ -- a Southwest Detroit Neighborhood most of its Own Residents have Never Heard of. if You Brand it, Will they Come?" Detroit Metro Times (2015).
research-backed, it focussed mainly on land and economic development through bringing in new residents, versus building up the stability of its existing residents. The plan failed to gain total support from the residents before its execution in the neighborhoods, possibly due to its controversial community engagement and implementation process.

One interviewee warned of a dividing mindset that could result from the rebranding of a neighborhood: “What happens is, you wind up with an angry, marginalized, misplaced community. It’s not just displaced through economics and rent and where they can live or can’t. But displaced culturally… limited access to physical and cultural places in the community… everything that is going on here is not for them. You’re displaced culturally. Even if the space was vacant… now it’s replaced with a wall. At least vacant space is permeable culturally. That is a major liability of what’s happening.”

3.2 The Revolving Door

In addition to the challenging political landscape of Springwells surrounding the rebranding process, Springwells was described by several interviewees to have the challenge of being a “revolving door” for its Hispanic, specifically Mexican, residents. This concept was explained as the coming and going of residents to Springwells, with families using the neighborhood as a stepping stone, rather than a final destination. According to several interviewees, Springwells was the place families settled until they could afford to move Down

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99 Interviewee kept anonymous
River. “The Downriver communities that are closest to Detroit are still really affordable suburbia. So it gives people that sense of accomplishment, success…”

The beginnings of a revolving door and transitioning population can be seen in the initially erratic trend of Mexican migration to Detroit. The Mexican community in Detroit began its growth in 1918 when several hundred migrants came to work in the motor factories. By December 1920, the settlement had an estimated 8,000 population; after two month’s time, this number quickly diminished to approximately 2,500, when many of the hoped-for jobs did not materialize. After six years, in 1926, the population had a solid foundation of 5,000, and the rapidly peaked only two years after, in 1928, with a population of near 15,000.

With the depression of the 1930s, the Mexican population lost more than 50% of its population to outmigration, and it wasn’t until the defense boom of the 1940s that an estimated 4,000 to 6,000 additional immigrants and their children populated the West side of Detroit, in what is now known as Mexicantown and Springwells. Recently, the 2010 census revealed that more than 36,000 Hispanics were residing in Detroit, over 12,000 of which were living in the Springwells area.

Although the population in Springwells has numerically stabilized, there is a reason to believe that a significant number of residents are not staying long-term in the neighborhood. Throughout the interview process, four out of the seven key informant interviewees mentioned that many residents see Springwells as a stepping stone, rather than a final destination. These

100 Interview with Raul Echevarría


102 Census 2010 Summary File 1 : U.S. Census Bureau.
four interviewees cited this phenomenon to be a challenge to the community in Springwells.

Below I offer excerpts from the interviewees that focus on the concept of the “revolving door.”

One interviewee, Maria Salinas, explained how the population could appear to be numerically stable, despite the neighborhood’s trend of out-migration:

“Even though the numbers seem to be stable, there is a Down River migration of population. It’s new immigrants that are stabilizing the population while the residents that have been here a while begin to do better economically than the community… Even though numerically you’re stable, your people are not developing rootedness… And I think that part of what encourages the out-migration is the community narrative around safety and services. The poor schools and lack of safety are probably the two drivers that get people to want to leave as soon as they can. And I think the other part of it is that people still believe in that American Dream, where the goal is to get enough money to move into suburbia. The Down River communities that are closest to Detroit are still really affordable suburbia, so it gives people that sense of accomplishment, success… it’s a hard thing to be against.”

Additional interviewees mentioned the goal many families have to eventually move Down River. The lack of “rootedness” was a common theme, and could threaten to hinder the growth of the weak ties essential to bridging social capital. Salinas went on to explain the challenges that this continuing out-migration can present:
“I talked to some real good people who brought some perceptions from Mexico with them. They said, ‘Do you understand that there is a population of immigrants from Mexico who have been migrating to Detroit, and Detroit is not the destination? It’s the suburbs.’ So if you’re not invested, it’s just a stepping stone. So your thought process is not going to be, I want to keep this neighborhood clean, I want to build my house here and create community. It’s a stepping stone to what they call the afuera, the suburbs here... If you can’t figure out how to keep people from leaving, then it’s always going to be sort of this transient kind of point-of-entry/point-of-departure node... I think it’s an obstacle for the potential growth on the horizon; if you can’t figure out how to stop the out-migration, then you’re constantly going to be a community that’s unstable.”

According to Salinas, many residents may not be viewing Springwells as a place to invest their time and money into, as it is just a stepping stone. Later in the interview, Salinas described a survey she conducted independently with Spanish-speakers in Southwest Detroit that demonstrated the point.

“Almost 100% came, and have been here as much as 20 years, and their objective is to leave to the suburbs. It doesn’t matter if they have a beautiful house, have no problems... So there’s a whole generation here, who live and breathe in Detroit, but have no intention of bettering Detroit... it’s a stepping stone. They came to labor so that the next generation could go to college.”

103 Interview with Maria Salinas
Beyond the concerns associated with a transitioning population, there is the concern of a transitioning socioeconomic balance of the community in Springwells. Another interviewee explained how this balance of residents has been transforming in the recent past:

“In general, that trend [revolving door] has been a trend since the 1920s. Often it’s a landing pad, lots of immigrants… The whole town has been built to serve the industry… What’s happening now is different… All of a sudden there is a new landlord presence. Someone who is buying up the properties feels very different than when a family moved in to have a manufacturing job.”

Indeed, the new landlord presence is a concern when considering the effects of inequality on a neighborhood’s bridging social capital. The interviewee continued, warning of the negative externalities associated with this new type of transition:

“No there are power dynamics, and lifelong Southwest Detroit residents respond to this with fear. Your new neighborhoods have more clout than residents who have been in the neighborhood for a while. For better or worse, it creates fear and causes caution… what’s happening down the block? They’ll say they weren’t displacing anyone because there’s too much room in Detroit. But let’s not talk about gentrification, let’s talk about it’s liability, which is displacement. And let’s not just talk about economic and physical

104 Interviewee kept anonymous
displacement, but human, organization, physical and economic [displacement]. When you talk about physical and economic [displacement] in a silo, then you’re not talking about community.”

The interviewee suggested that the new power dynamics may cause stratification in a neighborhood that was historically more homogeneous. The resulting inequality fosters an environment of “us versus them.”

On a similar vein, interviewee Raul Echevarría made a connection between the movement of residents Down River to the influx of new residents representing a different socioeconomic background, saying, “Neighborhood transition or gentrification is partly informed by availability… the minute you are vacating space, then that opens the opportunity for redevelopment and the bringing in of people of different classes…” His solution was simple:

“The best that we can do is provide enough rationale for people to say, ‘Wait a minute, yeah, I could stay... I can see the changes.’ So by shifting the narrative, people will make the decision to stay and be part of the improvement, not take the valuation of the property and leave the community.”

As demonstrated in the above interview excerpts, the phenomenon of the revolving door in Springwells has facilitated a trend towards a more diverse socioeconomic makeup of the

105 Interviewee kept anonymous

106 Interview with Raul Echevarría
Springwells population. These circumstances, as iterated by many interviewees, may explain the growing sense of “us versus them” in the neighborhood.

3.3 “Us Versus Them”

As explored in the previous chapters, an “us versus them” sentiment is characteristic of a high level of bonding social capital, which often works against the inclusionary nature of bridging social capital. Below I offer several excerpts from my interviews that illustrate a growing sense of “us versus them” in Springwells, where “us” refers to current or long-standing residents, and “them” refers to newcomers.

“Right now, in the city, there’s been a great emphasis about people who are coming to the city, or who they want to attract to the city. So there were incentives to buy a house or fix up a house… now, the people who were already living here didn’t get those incentives, they didn’t get free dollars… So now it’s the new people coming in versus the people who have already been here. And there hasn’t been any relief for the people who have been here through the hard times, who have stuck it out…”

The above excerpt makes it clear that the interviewee feels there’s a divide in the neighborhood: “the new people coming in versus the people who have already been here.” Consistent in the interviewees was the feeling that those “who have stuck it out” in Springwells lacked equity in support and opportunity when compared with “people who are coming into the

107 Interview with Phyllis Edwards
city.” The below excerpt demonstrates how this feeling may be translated into interactions throughout the neighborhood.

“There’s this sense of, *they’re coming*. A lot of the newcomers don’t understand our norms. Again, it’s intent versus impact... I think people should know how to respect the culture they’re stepping into... We don’t want to be unwelcoming, but it’s a gut reaction! There’s a way to be welcoming... I’m not really sure what that way is, but I’m sure there is one.”

Phrases such as “they’re coming” allude to the separation felt in the neighborhood. The above excerpt hint at a sense of unfairness held by “those who have been here through the hard times” and those who “got free dollars” as incentive to move into Springwells. This sense of unfairness likely results in the lack of welcome offered to newcomers by some Springwells residents.

Another example of an “us versus them” comes from an example one interviewee gave from her experience walking down Vernor:

“On the other block, I saw this lady walking around from El Club. She had these skimpy shorts on with her butt hanging out and I thought... you’re new here... I’m not judging, I’ve been there myself. However, there are families here. People who don’t

108 Interview with Raquel García

109 El Club is a music venue and pizzeria located on Vernor Highway that opened in 2016.
know you are going to decide on how to treat you based on that… We’re going to have to take a friendly but active roll… and really remind people that they’re new here, and we ask that you participate and you meet people, and you don’t act as if you’ve been here for a while.”

In conclusion, the growing sense of “us versus them” caused by, among other factors, fear of cultural and economic displacement, may challenge the formation of weak ties. Walkability, which is known to form the weak ties of bridging social capital, is directly at odds with the “us versus them.”

In the next section of this chapter, I will explain the Vernor Streetscape Project, and then lay out the interview questions and general results. Finally, I will present the findings, organized into four focus areas: informal sociability, generalized social trust, walkability, and social capital.

**3.4 Streetscape Project Overview**

In 2007, the Southwest Detroit Business Association (SDBA) worked with business on Vernor Highway to create the first Business Improvement District (BID) in Michigan. As a BID, the following initiatives were put in motion: communication with the city, leveraging additional resources, interacting with property owners to solve safety and zoning issues, overseeing the Clean Team, and making the district “a place that customers want to shop, and businesses want to be.”

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10 Interviewee kept anonymous

Today, over 250 small businesses make up Southwest Detroit, particularly on West Vernor. This small business atmosphere has helped Springwells maintain a steady population throughout the 2008 recession and the 2013 bankruptcy. Southwest Detroit business owner Jordi Carbonell summarized Springwells’ commitment to small business in a 2013 interview with Fox News saying it is “the key to keeping community.”\textsuperscript{112}

In 2006, the Southwest Detroit Business Association, an association working with and for local businesses in the area, received a grant from a number of foundations to encourage greenway development in the neighborhood. The Project broke ground in November 2013, backed by $6.4 million in funds from grants and partnerships. It covered 2.3 miles of W. Vernor Highway, from Clark Park to Patton Park. Included in the project were new sidewalks, landscaping, and light poles with sustainable LED lights. This project addressed community concerns, and hope for an increase in public safety, jobs and economic development, and accessibility for pedestrian traffic in Southwest Detroit.\textsuperscript{113}

During my interviews, there was consistency when citing the need for upgraded infrastructure along Vernor Highway. As one interviewee stated, “of course we wanted lights”\textsuperscript{114}, and another resident and business owner, Jamahl Makled, echoed in an article on Inquisitr when asked the value of getting lights on Vernor, "Criminals are comfortable in the dark, they like to


\textsuperscript{114} Interview with Theresa Zajac
be hidden. They can work better and function better in the dark. We are constantly paranoid. How are we going to get in and out of the store every day? It's a constant fear we have."

One interviewee explained the effect that the lights may have had on investors, developers, business owners, and residents:

“The streets were dark, there were a lot of B&Es [breaking and entering]. It wasn’t vibrant, people weren’t walking… it just lacked vibrancy… Once the street looked different, you were able to plant the trees and do the rest of the improvements along the corridor. That has made it a magnet for investment; investors, developers, as well as business owners and residents are seeking the opportunity to put their product on the street. The improvements were very much needed, and it certainly enhanced and improved, and continues to be a catalyst for change in that area.”

Springwells Village received several new features, including light poles and LED lights, new sidewalks, and landscaping along 2.3 miles west along Vernor Highway to Patton Park. After the first stage of new streetlights, the remaining improvements happened simultaneously.


116 Interview with Phyllis Edwards

3.5 Interview Questions and Results

Below I offer the complete list of questions verbatim used in my research, along with the general results. In the case the interviewee offered their consent, the audio was recorded and then later transcribed for the thesis. If the interviewee did not wish to have the audio recorded, notes were taken by hand.

Focussing on Informal Sociability:

1. What is your favorite way to socialize? *Interviewees reported their favorite ways to socialize as being at restaurants, in their home, and at social gatherings. Many participants mentioned how community meetings and socializing were intertwined: for example, neighborhood groups would often meet in restaurants or homes, and meals were often served.*

2. Do you find in Springwells that people usually socialize in private (for example, a home or business) or in public spaces (for example, a cafe or park)? *Interviewees reported a “front-porch” culture, where much socializing was done on front porches or in front yards. During the summer residents use the parks. Socializing also occurred inside their houses and at public meetings (such as block clubs, or faith groups).*
   a. Has Springwells always been this way? (If no) How has it changed over the past 5 years? *Interviewees reported that Springwells has always been this way. No residents reported having noticed any changes.*
Focussing on Social Trust:

1. Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted in Springwells, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people? *Interviewees consistently responded that the trust level was high in family and friend groups, however there was a low level of trust among strangers. Several interviewees mentioned that crime has risen on the West side of Vernor, with increases in prostitution and panhandlers.*

   a. Has Springwells always been this way? (If no) How has it changed over the past 5 years?) *Interviewees consistently responded that the neighborhood has always been this way.*

In addition to collecting responses to the above questions oriented around the Benchmark Survey, the below questions were added to procure further context surrounding the project.

For partners in the planning and/or implementation of the streetscape project:

1. Who was involved in the planning and implementation of the West Vernor Streetscape Initiative? *Interviewee respondents consistently reported that the Business Community spearheaded the streetscape initiative, with the guidance of Southwest Detroit Business Association and Urban Neighborhood Initiatives, along with the financial support from several large foundations and the City of Detroit.*

2. What is the history of the project? *In short, the project’s genesis began with a design created in 2006-2007, including a Greenway Development¹¹⁸ grant and working with*

¹¹⁸ “A greenway is a corridor of undeveloped land preserved for recreational use or environmental protection” - https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/greenway (retrieved Nov. 28, 2017)
Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). Negotiations with MDOT lead the inclusion of bike lanes, and eventually the streetscape portion (LED streetlights, sidewalks, and landscaping). The streetscape portion began construction in 2013.

In addition, the following questions were asked to wrap up the interviews and uncover potential future interviewees:

1. Any there other thoughts about the community or development in Southwest Detroit?
2. Are there other businesses/groups/individuals I should speak with?

In the following sections, I will present what I learned about the community’s reception of the streetscape project. This is important to understand, as their perceived implications that accompany the streetscape development project could influence their attitude towards other residents (“newcomers”) in the neighborhood.

3.6 Community’s Reception

Overall, my interviewees reported a positive reception of the streetscape project. For example, Zajac said, “People say positive things about how Vernor looks. As a resident you feel proud and feel good about your community.” Another interviewee claimed that there were more people out, storefronts were keeping up the sidewalk outside their shops with flowers and sweeping. The interviewee mentioned that store-owners often sit outside their shops and people feel safer. He stated, “I have kids, and I want to go out walking with them. I can walk at night with them now. People went from, Vernor is awful, it’s run down with bad streets. To, it’s okay, I
might walk. The infrastructure was always bad, but now its better and people are starting to use the streets a bit more. It’s great for businesses.”

That said, a couple of the interviewees reported some disappointment in the overall process. One interviewee even said, “Not much change was seen in people walking on streets after the improvements. If anything, they [the streetscape improvements] were kind of ugly. Lights are necessary, so we’re glad to have them. But they made no change to the way people use the streets.”

Finally, another concern with the process was in the project’s follow-up, and what it meant for the future of the neighborhood:

“I think that it built some expectations of positive change, but then there has not been any major follow-up. Was it just fixing the street? I think people had some expectations of new businesses and increased commerce, and only just recently we heard that the CVS is closing… Some people might say that’s good because they don’t want the kind of change that could come.”\textsuperscript{119}

Understanding the community’s perception of the development project helps us better understand any predispositions residents may possess. In the next section, I offer excerpts from the interviews that look at the traits indicative of bridging social capital: informal sociability and generalized social trust. In understanding how residents perceive their neighborhood within these

\textsuperscript{119} Interview with Raul Echevarría
terms, we build upon our understanding of Springwells’ starting point and can navigate better the landscape of the streetscape project’s influence on the neighborhood’s bridging social capital.

### 3.7 Informal Socializing

Upon being asked the question on how residents usually socialize, interviewees reported a tendency to socialize in a mix of private spaces (such as front porches, backyards, and private homes) and public spaces (such as restaurants, community meetings, and marketplaces). Interviewee John Cummings shared his insight on how the patterns in socializing could be affected by Detroit’s weather and climate:

“I think in the warmer months you definitely see a lot more socializing outside. Front porches, sidewalks, yards... Here houses are set up so you spend time on your front porches… In the summer months every Sunday there are a massive number soccer games that occur at park, Patton park, so tons of people come out for that, there’s food there… In the colder months, there’s a flea-market people go to a lot… There is less socializing across the larger groups. Just between neighbors, because people aren’t out as much.”

While exploring how socializing may or may not have changed over the past few years, in an attempt to draw any correlation with the streetscape renovations, interviewees generally reported that the way residents socialize has not changed. One interviewee explained the social

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120 Interview with John Cummings
landscape as being intertwined with the organizational work in Springwells, something that has not changed in recent years.

“I’ve been here about four years, doing this work in Southwest. I haven't noticed it change. It’s been pretty much that way. The intersection between the organizational work and living in the community is so strong that you can get together socially and inevitably talk about the community work… it's just the natural extension.”

In summary, the interviews revealed a high level of both formal and informal socializing in Springwells. The informal socialization is a crucial component of bridging social capital. Residents did not see this aspect of the neighborhood as having changed after the streetscape project implementation. This could very well be the case. The other explanation for having no reported evidence of a change in the way residents socialize could be that the changes have been minuscule and imperceivable. If this is the case, more time would need to pass to track any significant changes in the neighborhood.

3.8 Social Trust

In general, interviewees reported that, despite the moderate crime level in Springwells, neighbors generally look out for each other. Below I offer a couple of insights from the interviews, highlighting the coexistence of trust in neighbors and a wariness of crime in Springwells.

121 Interview with Raul Echevarría
“It has always been this way, many kids will play on the sidewalks, and neighbors look out for each other. If I am going to be away for a couple of days I let my neighbors know. There is trust among neighbors and people we know, but there is still crime in the neighborhood, so it’s not like we leave our houses unlocked, and we want it to look like somebody is home.”

As for the streetscape project’s influence on social trust, in general, the interviewees reported there having been no effect. While this could be the case, there is also the possibility that the “very thin, often invisible filaments of social capital” have effects that are imperceivable to those experiencing it.

In the following section, I explore how these less-obvious changes in bridging social capital might be observed in the phenomenon of walkability, which, as explored in Chapter One, may have a positive effect on bridging social capital. I offer excerpts from the interviews that focus on walkability and their implications for building the weak bonds found in bridging social capital.

3.9 Walkability

Regarding the effects of the Vernor Streetscape Project on the walkability of Vernor, two common outcomes emerged from the interviews: more social activity in the evening hours, and storefronts receiving better maintenance. These outcomes could be valuable to building social

122 Interview with John Cummings
capital in terms of increasing the number of “eyes on the street,” and thus the safety of the street, along with increasing the number of repeat encounters among community members, which serves to build the weak bonds that are the foundation of bridging social capital. The better maintenance of storefronts and reported sense of pride in the neighborhood serve to make the street more comfortable and interesting, two of the four components of a walkable streetscape. With increased safety, more encounters on the street, and a more interesting and comfortable streetscape, Vernor Highway has, in theory, increased its level of walkability.

“West Vernor has always been a walkable business district. But certainly for early morning and at night, people feel safer.” Zajac explained that businesses welcomed the changes to the streetscape, telling a story about how one business owner even kissed the light pole. While having had some characteristics associated with a highly walkable place (such as proximity to businesses and mixed development) other characteristics may have contributed to the lack of pedestrian traffic in the evening hours. These characteristics include the lack of reliable street lighting and a deteriorating streetscape (sidewalks falling apart, potholes in many alleyways, and poorly-timed pedestrian crossing signals).

Regarding the commonly mentioned outcome of there being more activity in the evening hours, shop owners reported that there were more customers after dark, which had not been the case before the lights were installed. Many attributed this change to be associated with a greater sense of safety in the evenings.


Zajac shared an anecdote when asked if the feeling of safety had changed since the streetscape development:

“At two a.m. I was with my son in the car, as the alarm had been triggered in this building [SDBA office building]. As I was waiting outside in the car, a young woman walked down the street, she was clearly walking home from work. But she was walking down Vernor by herself and I thought, okay, she feels safe… You know, because if you don’t feel safe you’re not walking on the sidewalk, you’re walking on the street. But she was walking down the sidewalk. That to me is an indicator… before there were no lights, and that’s why merchants were complaining to us. I can’t stay open, nobody wants to come, it’s dark.”

Safety was assuredly the most common outcome cited by interviewees. Another interviewee said, “People feel safer... I have kids, and I want to go out walking with them... I can walk at night with them now.”125

Interviewee Phyllis Edwards mentioned a similar feeling of safety and increased activity in the evening hours:

125 Interviewee kept anonymous
“[There is] more security with lighting, and more shops have opened, so you have more reasons to be out and about. I’m not sure if they stay open later, but I’m sure they feel safer. I know more businesses are there now.”\footnote{Interview with Phyllis Edwards}

Throughout my interviews, businesses did not report any changes in their hours of operation, however, they did report having more customers during the evening hours, especially during the winter, when it gets dark earlier in the day.

There was not a consensus on the increased evening foot traffic, however, as two of our interviewees reported seeing no change in how people used the streets. For example, one interviewee said, “Not much change was seen in people walking on streets after the improvements. If anything, they were kind of ugly. Lights are necessary, so we’re glad to have them. But they made no change to the way people use the streets.”\footnote{Interview with John Cummings}

Still, the majority of interviewees mentioned the increased feeling of safety in the evening hours. Without the apparent danger acting to deter residents from using the streets in the evening, the level of walkability on Vernor has increased, and so has the capacity for more casual encounters.

In addition to the sense of safety and its possible contribution to increased evening foot traffic, interviewees reported a more inviting streetscape. In addition to the components of the streetscape improvements (flowers, trees, and lights), there has been an increase in street art in

\footnote{126 Interview with Phyllis Edwards}
\footnote{127 Interview with John Cummings}
the neighborhood. Furthermore, many commented that businesses were keeping up their appearances and taking more pride in their storefronts.

Illustrating this change, Edwards commented, “there is more foot traffic than other communities. I think it changed because of the improved lighting, the art that’s being put up… some of the murals. It’s more inviting than it has been in the past.” Parallel to this sentiment, an interviewee reported that there are “more people out, storefronts keep up the sidewalk outside their shops with flowers and sweeping. Store-owners sit outside their shops… People went from Vernor is awful, it’s run down, bad streets. To its okay, I might walk. The infrastructure was always bad, but now its better and people are starting to use the streets a bit more. It’s great for businesses.”

3.10 Compared to Other Parts of Springwells

The changes reported (increased foot traffic in evening hours and storefront maintenance) were concentrated on Vernor Highway. When asked about other areas of Springwells (specifically, the other BID on Springwells Street), no changes were noted. The main reasons interviewees reported for this was summed up by Echevarria: “People don’t walk around more at night because most of the businesses are closed at night. There aren't night spots… There is a need to go outside the neighborhood to get what they require… The pushback I’ve heard is ‘this is motor-city’… it’s unabashedly car-orientated.”

Zajac commented on what she heard during her meetings with business owners, saying, “The other parts of Springwells want lights as well...The fact that people at the other end of

128 Interviewee kept anonymous
Vernor want it too shows that it added value. And they want that value added to their part of Vernor as well.”

3.11 Bonding and Bridging Social Capital

Beyond the changes seen in the walkability on Vernor, during the interviewees, I implored about any changes in the elements associated with bridging social capital: social trust and the way people socialize. In general, no trends emerged. As Cummings put it, “I’ve noticed no changes in the way people interact... I haven’t seen any change in relationships among residents in past seven years. They’ve always been welcoming.”

When I explored the balance of bonding and bridging social capital, however, there was an increasing trend of the “us versus them” sentiment associated with bonding social capital. As discovered in the interviews presented earlier, the “us versus them” is already working to separate some populations in Springwells. During the interviews, it emerged that this sentiment is likely growing in the neighborhood, increasing the exclusive nature that is often the source of criticism of a high level of bonding social capital.

Zajac commented on the transforming neighborhood and its effect on residential relations, saying, “the beautification of Vernor is making Springwells much more attractive to outsiders. But there are certainly people who really want to keep the community as it was, and how they know it as they grew up here. It’s causing friction.”

Another interviewee explained who was “us” and who was “them” during this process:
“It’s long-term residents versus new or potentially new residents… I don’t think it’s necessarily Latino/Hispanics versus non-Latino/Hispanics, but definitely a Southwest Detroit versus everyone else… or Springwells versus everyone else. There isn’t that much interest in staking ground from an identity politics, but more of a bonding identity of Southwest Detroit... The ‘us versus them’ is growing.”

The words of interviewee García summarize well: “It’s Southwest versus the larger parts of Detroit and residents versus newcomers, or residents versus gentrification… We have been so isolated from the rest of Detroit, so people have connected to each other.”

### 3.12 Summary

During the interviews, community leaders were asked open-ended questions based on two indicators of bridging social capital: generalized social trust and informal socializing. Community leaders were chosen based on their connection with the existing community in the neighborhood and the scope of their work. Overall, the perspective seemed to be that, while the project certainly encouraged more people to use the streets in the evening hours and for business owners to maintain their storefronts, there was no apparent change in the level of bridging social capital. This could be for several reasons: weak social ties are less visible; social ties will take longer to form, or longer to become apparent; or that the transient nature of residents due to the

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129 Interview with Raul Echevarría

130 Interview with Raquel García
“revolving door” either limited the time available to form the social bonds, or have made those bonds short-lived.

As this change in street life was not seen in other parts of the neighborhood where the street improvements were not implemented (specifically, the BID on Springwells Street), we can entertain the possibility of a correlation between the streetscape improvements and the increased level of walkability discovered. The significance of increased walkability is in its implication of more repeat casual encounters between residents in the neighborhood. The result of an increase in repeat casual encounters theoretically fortifies the foundation of weak bonds and thus bridging social capital.

While in a perfect experiment, an increase in walkability might show direct and clear results in the levels of bridging social capital, the case of Springwells has several compounding factors that could alter the outcomes. For example, my research cannot control for the transitioning population as found with the revolving door phenomenon. Additionally, the results may not guarantee that the repeat encounters are with different groups of residents, as the residents who walk on the street during the day could be the same ones walking on the street after dark.

In the final chapter, I will discuss the significance of the findings and how they may contribute to the academic study of social capital. I also discuss the potential directions for future research along with public policy implications.
CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Summary

In the previous chapter, I presented the results of my research, including the general trends in social capital measures and walkability, along with additional emerging themes. In this chapter, I will revisit the research question, and discuss the implications of the study results for Springwells, as well as for the broader field of social capital research and public policy.

My research aimed to understand how the streetscape improvements on Vernor Highway affected the neighborhood’s level of walkability and bridging social capital. To do this, I selected a qualitative approach that included interviews with neighborhood residents, business owners, community workers, and others involved in the project. The results from the interviews were used to analyze the effect the streetscape project may have had on the selected measures of bridging social capital (informal socializing and generalized social trust) and on the neighborhood’s walkability.

The research gained insight into the historical and socioeconomic context of Springwells, including details surrounding the rebranding of the neighborhood and the “revolving door” phenomenon. Throughout my interviews, an “us versus them” sentiment also emerged. These factors could have influenced the effects of increased walkability on the weak ties of bridging social capital in the neighborhood.

One theme that emerged was that of the “revolving door,” where Springwells is often seen as a stepping stone, rather than as a final destination. This implies that not all residents move to the neighborhood with the intention of staying. The coming and going of residents
complicates the formation of weak ties, as repeat encounters are necessary to do this.

Compounding with the revolving door, the other emerging theme of the recent rebranding process brought fear of displacement for some residents, along with an increase in property costs; the interviews revealed that this has likely contributed to the “us versus them” sentiment found in the neighborhood.

Beyond the challenges facing the neighborhood, my research revealed positive results regarding the effects of the streetscape project on walkability in the neighborhood. The increased street usage at night suggests that more people are walking on Vernor; theoretically resulting in more repeat, casual encounters between residents. As this process forms weak ties, the principal building block of bridging social capital, we can conclude that the increase in walkability will allow more opportunities to build bridging social capital. Especially useful in a neighborhood with a “revolving door” phenomenon, the nature of weak ties to spread faster (and less-exclusively) than the strong ties of bonding social capital allows for more diversity and greater inclusion in the neighborhood’s social capital networks.

Although walkability increased, as shown through the heightened street use in the evening hours and by business owners improving their storefront facades, my research found that obvious changes in the selected measures of social capital were absent (or unnoticed by neighborhood residents). This result did not entirely support my hypothesis (greater walkability would lead to greater bridging social capital), as residents did not mention noting any change in the two areas of bridging social capital I selected: informal socializing and generalized trust. The absence of (or un-noted) change in bridging social capital could be in part because of the “revolving door” of Springwells, as well as by the exclusive “us versus them” sentiment found...
throughout in the neighborhood. An additional explanation is that simply not enough time had passed to allow for perceivable changes in bridging social capital. Finally, a reason for the absent or unnoted changes could be that not everyone has benefited from the changes in walkability, and although the street may be more walkable, the repeat encounters have not made more residents more likely to walk, but instead increased the street use for those who already walk. It has become clear that more research is needed to determine precisely which people are using the streets.

4.2 Social Capital, Walkability, and Streetscape Development

This thesis aimed to add to the existing pool of knowledge surrounding social capital and development in a neighborhood setting. In the literature review, I sought to understand the distinction between strong and weak ties, clarify the concepts of bridging and bonding social capital, and understand how walkability can play a part in generating the weak ties that bring it all together. The research component added a case study on Springwells, Detroit, and explored the interplay between walkability and streetscape development. The main takeaways were the following:

1. Streetscape development can increase a street’s level of walkability (Safe, Comfortable, Interesting, Useful).

2. The community’s reception of the project depends on existing relationships (between residents, community groups, NGOs, and the city), and historical/socioeconomic context.
3. Walkability and weak ties may be especially useful in a transitional neighborhood/revolving door with the bonding “us versus them”.

4. Systemic issues may play a large part in the balance of and access to social capital in a neighborhood.

For a streetscape to be considered walkable, it must have the following four characteristics: safe, comfortable, useful, and interesting. The results from the interviews showed that residents believed that there was foremost an increase in the level of safety. Secondarily, they reported that the street was more comfortable and interesting. The increase in these factors suggests an increase in walkability, which was confirmed by the rise in the use of the street during the evening hours.

Concerning the walkability, it could be argued that the results observed were due simply to the greater safety provided by the lights, and not necessarily the four components of walkability. To this point, I look at the data collected from the interviews. While all interviewees mentioned the lights as being a fundamental part of the streetscape improvements, citing it as a reason for the increased usage of the street in the evening hours, many also mentioned that the street had become more “inviting”, and that business owners and residents had begun to “take pride in the neighborhood”. Statements such as these point to aspects of walkability that go beyond the sense of safety offered by the lights. These statements suggest the street is more interesting, and perhaps more comfortable than it was before the project.

Regarding the community’s reception of the streetscape, this was found to be primarily influenced by its historical and socioeconomic context. My research revealed the strong feelings
many residents had surrounding the rebranding of the neighborhood and the associated fear of economic and cultural displacement. Many interviewees reported a general distrust of “the City” and development agencies and took the project as a sign of incoming gentrification.

Finally, in marrying the concepts together, the increased walkability may be especially useful in an area whose level of bridging social capital is being thwarted by a growing sense of “us versus them.” To counter the exclusiveness of this sentiment, a neighborhood could pursue initiatives that increase the weak ties of bridging social capital, yielding positive results in generalized social trust and informal socializing.

In sum, to answer the research question (How can streetscape development efforts and walkability affect a neighborhood’s social capital?), I conclude that streetscape development, if targeted towards improving walkability, can increase the number, and possibly diversity, of people using the street. Although it sounds like a small contribution, this shift in behavior could result in the construction and expansion of weak ties and bridging social capital between diverse neighborhood residents.

4.3 Position within Social Capital Research

This paper hopes to add to the existing body of knowledge surrounding our understanding of bridging social capital in the context of development. The research conducted aimed to gain a qualitative perspective on the effects (if any) brought on by the streetscape development in Springwells, Detroit. Beyond understanding the historical and social context of the neighborhood, the process uncovered trends that are likely affecting the neighborhood’s
balance of social capital, such as the “revolving door” phenomenon and the “us versus them” sentiment.

In theory, the increased walkability found in Springwells could lead to greater opportunities for all people to interact and form the weak ties essential to bridging social capital. However, that theory may not account for systemic influences (i.e., economic inequity, racial or cultural tensions, affordable housing, etc.). This concern has not gone unnoticed by previous academics. Putnam’s idea of social capital benefiting the disadvantaged is often criticized for not considering the relationship between social engagement in society and economic inequality.\footnote{Ferragina, E. "Social Capital and Equality: Tocqueville's Legacy: Rethinking Social Capital in Relation with Income Inequalities." The Tocqueville Review 31, no. 1 (2010): 73-98.}

In Chapter One, I defined bridging social capital and explained how an essential attribute of it is social trust. It is to this idea of trust that I turn the discussion, as there is reason to believe it may be influenced strongly by a society’s level of social equality. In the Journal of Comparative Politics, authors Rothstein and Stolle convincingly argued that citizens do not have total control over generating social capital, but rather that, due to the eroded trust between a people and their state, “the lack of social capital is caused by dysfunctional government institutions.”\footnote{Rothstein, Bo and Dietlind Stolle. "The State and Social Capital: An Institutional Theory of Generalized Trust." Comparative Politics, Ph.D. Programs in Political Science, City University of New York 40, no. 4 (2008): 441-459.} Exacerbating the issue, if disadvantaged groups are believed accountable for their position in society, further distrust and social exclusion may arise as a result, effectively reducing bridging social capital\footnote{Uphoff, Eleonora, Kate Pickett, Baltica Cabieses, Neil Small, and John Wright. "A Systematic Review of the Relationships between Social Capital and Socioeconomic Inequalities in Health: A Contribution to Understanding the Psychosocial Pathway of Health Inequalities." International Journal for Equity and Health (2013).}. In his paper on income inequality and social cohesion, Coburn argues that within the neo-liberal model, bridging social capital is exclusive and less...
available to those who may benefit from it most. According to Coburn, social inequalities are necessary for capitalism to function, and therefore social trust will inevitably decrease in societies built on capitalism. Therefore, if social equality influences the level of trust in society, and given that those less fortunate have little reason to trust, then it could be argued that to increase trust (and social capital), we must address the problem of social inequality.

Future areas to focus research would include the following:

1. The effects of weak versus strong ties on bridging social capital
2. Further distinctions between, and clarity around, the different structures and components of social capital (i.e. bridging, bonding, linking; weak, strong; radii of trust; causes versus effects; etc.)
3. Systemic issues: how they might influence the levels of social trust in a community, and who gains access to the social capital

4.4 Policy Implications

Where does this research point us in terms of public policy? Firstly, there should be a focus on creating the weak ties associated with bridging social capital. Secondly, attention needs to be paid to the broader systemic factors that are influencing the levels of social and economic equality in the neighborhood.

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The argument for building an environment that encourages the creation of weak ties hinges on the fact that weak ties are far more likely to form bridges than are strong ties.\textsuperscript{135} Through my interviews, I learned that Springwells is experiencing a growing sense of division, or “us versus them.” It follows that, if we want to bridge the divide between long-standing residential communities and the incoming residents, we should focus our efforts on facilitating the weak ties found in bridging social capital. As high levels of bonding social capital will “tend to produce cliques which are in some ways competitive and exclusive of each other,”\textsuperscript{136} a neighborhood such as Springwells, with a revolving door and high level “us versus them”, may benefit significantly from building inclusiveness through bridging social capital.

One method of creating weak ties would be through making our streetscapes more walkable. To do this, there are many approaches already in use. For example: placemaking (a collective action to reinvent public spaces and fortify the connection between people and their shared space. This approach focuses on the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution\textsuperscript{137}), complete neighborhoods (areas where all residents count on “safe and convenient access to goods and services they need on a daily or regular basis… [including] housing options, grocery stores and other neighborhood-serving commercial services; quality public schools; public open spaces and recreational facilities; and access to


\textsuperscript{137} "What is Placemaking?" Project for Public Spaces. https://www.pps.org/category/placemaking (2018)
frequent transit”\(^{138}\), *pink zones* (“an area where the red-tape is lightened”, encouraging community-supportive enterprises such as main street businesses and start-up makers like shared work-spaces, kitchens, community hubs, and markets\(^{139}\) and *mixed-use development* (characterized as walker-friendly development that marries two or more residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, and/or industrial uses\(^{140}\)).

While design is an acceptable way to influence the walkability of a neighborhood, it may not solve problems that go as deep as racial tensions or economic stress. If we aim to have more people interacting, then we cannot drive away residents through gentrification or abandon them through income inequality.\(^{141}\) June Manning Thomas, with the firm Design in Community Development of the University of Michigan, summarized the place urban design holds in community development during an interview with the Agora Journal of Urban Planning and Design. She said, “Design could help to improve the way that people interact with the space, then, of course, you should be looking at design issues. But I think in general we’ve been suffering from the effects of poor design at several levels... it doesn’t leap ahead of certain considerations like good housing and good schools…”\(^{142}\)


\(^{142}\) *Agora Interviews: June Manning Thomas*. Directed by Agora Journal of Urban Planning and Design. 2013. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPVuS7mYonQ
Thomas is correct in highlighting the futility of good physical design in a neighborhood with poor design in other areas like education or housing. These walkability design principles, while helpful for street vitality and residential interaction, may be less effective when greater social capital determinants are at play; including the socioeconomic context. To battle inequities and allow for more to access the social capital in a neighborhood, policies that level the playing field should be considered such as affordable housing, inclusive educational opportunities, job training schemes, and reliable public transport. With better access to resources and opportunities, and particular attention paid to including the disadvantaged groups in the neighborhood, we might be able to restore trust between the different levels of government (and the governed) and allow an environment conducive to the creation of bridging social capital.143

Finally, a critical consideration for future policy would be to build trust between residents, intermediaries (neighborhood organizations), and the City. Distrust erodes the base on which bridging weak ties are built, so we must focus on building and restoring trust in order to facilitate the growth of bridging social capital. Michael Woolcock said it well in The Place of Social Capital in Understanding Social and Economic Outcomes144. In this paper, he suggests methods for building trust, including targeting the excluded groups, having a commitment to transparency in development schemes, increasing dialog between diverse groups of residents and stakeholders, and establishing common language to allow open communication between residents and decision makers. Summarizing, he writes the following:


“At its best, a social capital perspective recognizes that exclusion from economic and political institutions is created and maintained by powerful vested interests, but that marginalized groups themselves possess unique social resources that can be used as a basis for overcoming that exclusion… Intermediaries such as NGOs have a crucial role to play in such a process, because it takes a long time to earn both the confidence of the marginalized, and the respect of institutional gatekeepers. In short, it takes an articulated effort of both “top-down” and “bottom-up” to help overcome this exclusion, but it can be, has been, and is being done, with positive and lasting results.”

4.5 Conclusion

To summarize, I began by exploring the relationship between bridging social capital, walkability, and a community’s streetscape development. In the first chapter, I presented the literature surrounding these concepts and argued for weak social ties in the creation of bridging social capital. I then argued a case for using walkability to facilitate the creation of these weak ties, concluding that an increase in walkability can promote the production of bridging social capital.

In the following chapter, I explained my research methodology and justified my qualitative approach. The interview questions were founded on the attributes of social capital as outlined by Putnam, focussing on the items that dealt with bridging social capital: generalized
social trust and informal socializing. The other interview questions aimed to gain insight on the concepts of walkability and the Vernor streetscape development project.

The third chapter presented the results of my interviews, which demonstrated an increase in walkability in the evenings, and a reportedly new “sense of pride” in the neighborhood. The interviews also revealed that there were no observed changes in the level of generalized social trust or informal socializing. This could be for several reasons (more time is needed to see results, people are not experiencing social capital benefits from increased walkability, or because of more extensive, systemic factors).

In this final chapter, I discussed the results of my research and put them in the broader context of social capital research and public policy. I proposed an approach to facilitating the growth of bridging social capital in neighborhoods which included the following: building trust between diverse residents, intermediaries, and the City; addressing systemic factors that hinder the economic equality and equity of opportunities for residents; and, discernibly, designing the streetscapes of a neighborhood for walkability.

I asked the question, *How has the streetscape initiative influenced dynamics of social capital in Springwells?* To answer, the results from my research cannot claim that the streetscape development has altered the dynamics of social capital in the neighborhood. They can say, however, that the streetscape development has impacted the walkability of the neighborhood. Interestingly, my research did not reveal any noticeable effects of the increased walkability on the level of bridging social capital.
Although no relationship can be determined at the moment, other factors that are likely influencing the neighborhood’s dynamic of social capital emerged. These factors include a strong sense of “us versus them,” where “us” is long-standing Springwells residents, and “them” is the City and neighborhood newcomers; a fear of economic and cultural displacement through gentrification; and an ongoing trend of the “revolving door.”

Walkability may have the power to facilitate the creation of weak ties within a neighborhood, but as long as it’s hindered by socioeconomic inequality (and the distrust the disparity spawns both horizontally between residents, and vertically between levels of decision-makers), there is little evidence to suggest it will be successful in increasing bridging social capital singlehandedly. In the words of Jane Jacobs, “Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.”

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