DOWNTOWN FARGO: STAKEHOLDER STRUGGLES AND THE

CRISIS OF IDENTITY

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The Supervisory Committee certifies that this ***disquisition*** complies with North Dakota State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

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This research sought to discover the social impact of demographic, aesthetic, and economic neighborhood restructuring in downtown Fargo, North Dakota. In-depth interviews were conducted with 19 cultural, economic, and practical community stakeholders, comprised of downtown Fargo residents, business owners, and community service providers. Their narratives are used to explore how spatial and economic change has been perceived, as well as how similarities and differences between economic, cultural, and practical stakeholders have shaped their perceptions of the neighborhood. This research discovers that downtown stakeholders actively manage the social identity of their community by accentuating specific aspects of the neighborhood, creating an idyllic origin story for the neighborhood and an anti-suburban character for the space. The similarities and differences between participants' community perceptions stem from the different roles they play in the community, and issues of power and marginalization are tied to the process of economic neighborhood revival. Contributions to scholarly literature on community development, urban sociology, space-based theorizing, and an expansion of stakeholder theory is discussed. The process of community restructuring in downtown Fargo has entailed a redistribution of cultural and economic power, and the narratives given about this community are found to be both a source of social marginalization and potential political action and empowerment.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Fargo, North Dakota was founded as a railroad town, growing at the end of the Northern Pacific Railroad line during the early 1900s. Surrounded by rich farmland the city has become an urban hub within a highly rural region (Census, 2010), and has been described by the local newspaper as a "miniature metropolis with nightlife and college campuses" (Bjorke, 2010). Much of what makes Fargo the upper Midwestern cultural epicenter it has begun to grow into is due in large part to the downtown neighborhood, where much of said nightlife takes place. Although the geographic size of downtown is rather small, approximately eight blocks wide by eight blocks across, the neighborhood contains a dense diversity of people and businesses. A plethora of bars, upscale restaurants and local eateries, as well as small, hip, and distinctive storefronts characterize efforts to restore and revitalize the neighborhood ("Quality of Life," 2010). A well established banking and financial industry creates a presence of affluent business people during the daytime. During the evening a lively art and music scene brings in many young people, creating an urban space comparable to that found in other much larger cities. Many of these aesthetic, financial, and cultural conditions have sprung up in the last decade, due in part to deliberate efforts to encourage investments in the neighborhood ("Renaissance Zone," 2010). Today many different people and businesses are found in downtown, whereas the previous state was that of decay, with little economic or cultural vibrancy ("Downtown," 2010).

Downtown began as the original commercial center of Fargo; however, many businesses left the neighborhood after the West Acres mall opened in the 1970's ("Downtown," 2010). As the neighborhood has undergone dramatic and rapid change in

terms of vacant buildings now being occupied and more storefronts being established, the cultural and social climate of downtown has changed as well. Downtown gentrification, and the corresponding increase in the cost of living, has been a powerful force shaping who has access to the neighborhood and who has the ability to impact the social character of the community. Furthermore, many different groups vie for access and power over how the neighborhood has and continues to develop. These groups include economic stakeholders who have financial interests tied to the neighborhood, cultural stakeholders who value downtown for its urban atmosphere and unique social assets, as well practical stakeholders comprised of the most vulnerable populations living downtown. Practical stakeholders are those who reside in this neighborhood for much more basic and functional reasons such as easy access to the city's public transportation system and the subsidized healthcare clinic.

Physical change in downtown has accelerated over the past 10 years, characterized by rapid economic redevelopment. One of the factors driving this revitalization is the Renaissance Zone Program, established in the downtown neighborhood by the city of Fargo in 1999. This program offers tax incentives for renovating vacant or rundown commercial and residential properties ("Renaissance Zone," 2010). In tandem with these spatial changes the social character of the neighborhood has changed as well. During the period of decay many poor and working class Fargoans lived in downtown due to the centrality of the Metro Area Transit (MAT) bus station, which provides access to the rest of the city for those who do not have their own form of motorized transport. Now, an increased number of affluent individuals have come to call downtown Fargo their home, impacting the availability of inexpensive housing as well as creating a more upscale atmosphere in the neighborhood. Past research on urban cities and rural communities has

discovered the potential for negative consequences resulting from rapid economic change, such as physical displacement and cultural alienation (Mele, 2000; Besser & Hanson, 2004; Aigner et al, 2004; Hardina, 2006). Discovering how downtown stakeholders perceive these spatial and cultural changes as well as the vision they hold for this neighborhood will likely be a key factor in making development efforts sustainable and inclusive.

Much of my interest in the downtown neighborhood stems directly from a lifetime of amateur participant observation. I have lived in Fargo for 27 years and have witnessed downtown change from a fairly run down, unwelcoming space into a community that is very vibrant and seems centered upon art and culture much more so than the rest of the city. Without knowing how to describe it, downtown has always seemed *different* from the rest of the city. Indeed, the primary finding from my fall 2010 pilot study was that the unique character of downtown, the anti-suburban, grassroots character that each of my participants described it as, was an intrinsic part of what makes this community so special to those who live there and/or visit it often. I have always felt a strong personal connection to downtown. When I was in high school, despite the fact it was a fairly rundown part of the city, without a doubt it was "the place to be." Downtown is unique because of the many small locally and independently owned storefronts and restaurants, setting it apart from the suburban franchised atmosphere of other FM commerce. However, there are other more understated differences such as a higher volume of pedestrian and bicycling traffic not common throughout the FM area, as well as a greater emphasis on aesthetic value and artistic expression. My personal goal for this research is to understand why I and many of my contemporaries seem to be drawn to downtown over other parts of the Fargo-Moorhead community.

Downtown has changed quite dramatically in both obvious and more subtle ways since I was a teenager, and observing this change through my daily dealings with the neighborhood has been a source of fascination for me and has instilled much of the motivation I have for this project. I have seen the impact of downtown development first hand as I have worked to help people with disabilities find affordable and accessible housing, an endeavor that has become increasingly difficult over the past few years. I have witnessed how vulnerable groups such as the poor and disabled are often inconvenienced or even downright dismissed by the burgeoning affluent cultural happenings of the neighborhood. This experience has instilled within me a deep concern for issues of social justice and accessibility in downtown. My history and long running interest with the downtown community has endowed me with a perspective that is both practically oriented and academically grounded in sociological thinking. That practical, professional, and academic perspective inspired this research project and has allowed me to discover what makes downtown interesting, compelling, and unique to the people who have made a personal and financial investment in the neighborhood. Furthermore, my experience has aided me as I searched for sources of tension, exploitation, and cultural subordination that haunt the process of community restructuring in downtown Fargo. Furthermore, this research elucidates some of the more ephemeral qualities of the neighborhood and sheds light on what may lay ahead in downtown Fargo's future.

Fargo is not a rural community; its 90,599 residents classify the city as an "urban center" within the greater Cass metropolitan county (US Census, 2010). Little research has been generated on the dynamics of change found in mid-sized urban areas situated in highly rural regions, and this research on downtown Fargo contributes to expanding

knowledge on community change and the consequences of redevelopment. Furthermore, this research facilitates an understanding regarding how different stakeholders form representations of space and is crucial to discovering ways to make the downtown neighborhood more all-embracing as well as ensuring that redevelopment efforts will be successful, beneficial, and long-lasting (Mele, 2000; Besser & Hanson, 2004; Flora & Flora, 2008). Thus the first question guiding this research is how do economic, cultural, and practical stakeholders narrate and define the space of downtown Fargo? This question attempts to understand how stakeholders have created a social identity for the space of downtown Fargo through the narrative descriptions they provide about the neighborhood. In order to answer this research question I explore how economic and community changes in downtown Fargo, ND have impacted the cultural condition of the neighborhood. Building upon the findings from interviews I conducted with downtown residents regarding community perceptions during the fall of 2010, this research sought to discover the cultural consequences of demographic, aesthetic, and economic change in the neighborhood for other downtown groups. Based in part on the data that was garnered from that research a second research question asks what are the similarities and differences between the narratives given by these three downtown stakeholders? In-depth interviews with residents, business owners, and community service providers are used to explore how spatial and economic change has been perceived by community residents in downtown Fargo, as well as understanding how similarities and differences between these stakeholder's have shaped their perceptions of the neighborhood (Charmaz, 2006; Johnson, 2002).

CHAPTER 2. CONTEXT

Community change has an impact on the social structure of a neighborhood and research in the field of community development has emphasized the importance of understanding the meaning this change has had for residents (Mele, 2000; Besser & Hanson, 2004; Aigner, 2004; Hardina, 2006; Flora & Flora, 2008). This literature review develops the connection between the social and spatial, drawing attention to its importance in effective, sustainable, and inclusive community development (Murphy & Cunningham, 2003; Flora & Flora, 2008). In order to discover how stakeholders have crafted a social character for downtown Fargo an explanation of space-based sociology must conveyed. Treating place as an "agentic player" (Gieryn, 2000, p.466) means first understanding the connection that people have with their physical environment and then theorizing about how representations of space impact the formation of cultural identity for local people and groups. Community is an inherently social concept, and recognizing the central groups who make up the downtown community, those who have a stake be it personal, financial, or ideological in the neighborhood, will be a key factor in understanding what makes downtown unique and how the connection between culture and space takes shape. This research is concerned with discovering how practical, cultural, and economic stakeholders narrate and define the space of downtown Fargo as well as the similarities and differences between their narratives. Understanding perception and the how the situatedness of stakeholders impacts their perception will shed light on the process through which a community character for downtown has been crafted.

In the fall of 2010 I conducted a preliminary study using in-depth interviews with seven long-term FM residents regarding neighborhood perceptions and attitudes toward

community restructuring. That research shed light on the issue of social representation and reinforced the notion that identity of space and identity of residents in downtown Fargo are interconnected and mutually influential. Examining the literature on redevelopment backlash puts the context of Fargo change into perspective in terms of patterns and consequences of rapid structural change and ensuing cultural consequences. In order to effectively research and synthesize the meaning that change has had for downtown people and groups an understanding of community interaction and cultural meaning making is required. The last two sections of this literature review will examine the theory behind space-based sociology and will build an argument for a qualitative methodology that will uncover the manifest and latent social consequences of community restructuring.

Defining community and community development

The classic definition for community commonly used by development researchers and rural sociologists comes from Hillery (1955) who asserts that a community is made up of people living in a geographical area, who interact with one another, and who share one or more common ties. For the purpose of this paper, downtown Fargo, ND, is a community made up of many different groups, including (but not limited to) students, artists, business owners, poor and disabled individuals, as well as middle-to upper class residents and consumers. The individuals who affect and are affected by the spatial and economic conditions of downtown, who have practical, cultural, ideological, or financial interests in the neighborhood, have a stake in how the community has and continues to change. In addition, these individuals influence the cultural and economic climate of downtown and have important resources regarding what happens in the neighborhood; thus they can be

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considered downtown stakeholders (Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001). These different stakeholders live, work, and come to downtown to enjoy music, art, shopping, and food experiences. However, since these different stakeholders have varying levels of resources to bring into the neighborhood, certain groups have a greater amount of power over the social character, economic development, and future progress of downtown (Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001).

Community development is the deliberate effort by residents, formal and informal groups, non- and for-profit companies, and state and local development planners to change the visual, economic, or cultural landscape of a place (Murphy & Cunningham, 2003; Flora & Flora, 2008). Spatial and social change are inherently inter-related (Feldman & Tilly, 1960; Walton, 1993; Gieryn, 2000), and understanding the dialectic between people and their community is a useful tool in effective community development (Murphy & Cunningham, 2003; Hardina, 2006; Flora & Flora, 2008). Gieryn (2000) points out that "place is not merely a setting or backdrop, but an agentic player in the game- a force with detectable and independent effects on social life" (p. 466). Thus understanding how change has impacted community stakeholders has implications for the future cultural and economic strength of downtown.

Stakeholder theory and downtown Fargo

An important concept necessary to understanding downtown Fargo change and the impact that it has had on community cultural formation is stakeholder theory. Stakeholder theory posits that a stakeholder is any group or individual who can affect and is affected by the achievement of an organization. This theory stems from research on business and

organizational structure, and Jawahar and McLaughlin (2001) put forward that people who have a vested interest in an organization, for my purposes the downtown Fargo community, will be treated differently based upon their resources and the community's need for those resources. Essentially, how downtown has changed and will continue to change will depend upon the critical economic and cultural resources that certain groups, who I will now refer to as downtown stakeholders, have to offer. Furthermore, the neighborhood will take shape depending upon which of those stakeholder's resources are most vital to the neighborhood's success. Community resources can be considered the assets that benefit downtown development, including economic and financial resources such as money or marketing power, as well as cultural resources such as artistic and aesthetic works or the creation of a desirable urban social atmosphere. Who has power in downtown, those with the ability to actively (and passively) shape the development of the neighborhood, have and will depend upon who has the cultural, economic, or political capital vital to the community's success. Stakeholder theory will guide this research by drawing attention to how downtown change is "dependent on resources in its environment for its survival" (Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001, p.401).

In order to understand which individuals and groups are a part of downtown culture and commerce, those who have a vested interest in the community, I have identified three main groups of stakeholders: economic, cultural, and practical. Economic stakeholders are the individuals and groups who have financial interests in downtown. These include business owners, corporate development groups, as well as the city of Fargo's planning department. Economic stakeholders may be assumed to be fairly powerful and have a very serious stake in the neighborhood as their livelihoods one way or another depends upon

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downtown's commercial success. Although there are many powerful economic stakeholders in downtown, the neighborhood is also home to many small independently owned shops that are situated on much more unstable ground. The gentrifying process in downtown Fargo has pushed out many small businesses already, and the increasing property taxes create challenges for long-term, new, and young business owners.

Cultural stakeholders are the individuals and groups who are invested in downtown on a more personal and ideological level. They embrace the neighborhood because of its perceived cultural assets, the unique art and music scene and aesthetically pleasing landscape, and tend to be younger in age. They include the many college students, local artists, and those who might be designated as downtown "hipsters" (those individuals concerned with the fashion, art, and music of urban culture). It may be assumed that cultural and economic stakeholders may overlap since much of what makes the downtown neighborhood culturally significant is the abundance of independently owned small businesses and artistic venues.

Practical stakeholders are the most vulnerable individuals who live in downtown, as well as the service providers they may commonly come in contact with. Practical stakeholders live or frequently visit downtown because of the easy access to public transportation, subsidized healthcare, and the many social service providers such as the Fargo Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FHRA) and the Cass County Courthouse and Annex. They are "practical" stakeholders because they reside downtown because of its utilitarian value, rather than for cultural or commercial opportunities. This may include the working poor, aged or disabled individuals, and homeless or residentially transitioning individuals and families. As downtown has undergone the gentrifying process over the last

decade many of the low income rental properties have begun to disappear. One clear example of this phenomenon is the exodus of the Fargoan, a week-by-week temporary housing property located on Broadway, an event that helped to draw my attention to the impact of downtown change. Although this establishment was not necessarily a "cheap" housing source, it provided a place to stay for individuals who experienced sudden residential displacement, eviction for example, or individuals who were recently released from intuitions such as prison or the state mental hospital. The Fargoan was an important social and residential resource for the community because it did not require a lease or rental down payment and was located literally next door to the Fargo Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FHRA) building. For many FM residents the Fargoan provided a safe and strategically placed housing alternative when facing emergency housing issues. The space where the Fargoan used to be has now been converted to expensive condominiums, priced at around $250,000, with high end boutiques on the ground level. Needless to say, practical downtown stakeholders no longer have ready access to that space, and thus their perspectives on downtown change comprise an important alternative viewpoint on the impact of redevelopment.

Preliminary findings from 2010 interviews

In the fall of 2010 I conducted a research project about downtown change and the impact it has had on community residents. I did seven in-depth interviews with individuals who had lived in the Fargo Moorhead area for at least 10 years and who were now residing in the downtown neighborhood. I talked to men and women from ages 20 to 50 with a mix of gay and straight identification. One of my participants was a home owner who lived just

a few blocks north of the commercial center of downtown, while the other six participants rented apartments in or very close to central downtown. Over half of the sample had backgrounds in art, some of whom were actively making and showing their work locally. All seven participants had very cultural and/or aesthetic expectations of the downtown neighborhood and were selected for participation in the study because they had expressed to me directly or through intermediaries that they were concerned and invested in the current and future state of the neighborhood. Since these participants have ideological expectations for the neighborhood they can be considered primarily as cultural downtown stakeholders.

The overriding theme that came from of the 2010 research was that people who live in and embrace the downtown Fargo neighborhood did so because they perceived it as having greater urban cultural and aesthetical value, and considered the space important because it was seen as being in opposition to the surrounding FM area. Furthermore, participants conveyed a sense that their personal identity and the identity of the downtown neighborhood were indelibly interconnected. This study discovered that the physical landscape and economic development of downtown Fargo has had a significant impact upon the people who live in the neighborhood in terms of how they defined the community as well as how they created a sense of identity for themselves within that space. Another important finding from the 2010 research was how cultural stakeholders expressed concern over the future development of the neighborhood, specifically in terms of the availability of affordable housing. As downtown has begun to be promoted to more affluent residents many high end condominiums have been constructed, often with a price tag over a quarter of a million dollars; needless to say many cultural stakeholders and vulnerable populations

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living in downtown cannot afford those housing prices. The rents of several participants in the 2010 pilot study had gone up within the last three months of our interview with future hikes near in sight, a trend that represents a very tangible example of the impact of downtown gentrification.

These preliminary findings illustrate how change and the process of presenting that neighborhood change have had very important consequences for those who want to participate in the downtown neighborhood and signals a need for a more in-depth understand of how other downtown groups have defined and narrated the space of downtown Fargo, as well as how and why those narratives may vary. Conflict regarding who has the power to shape the development is in line with stakeholder theory described by Jawahar and McLaughlin (2001) in that "stakeholders most likely to have access to resources for organizational survival [in this case downtown economic vitality] will elicit more attention from organizational decision makers than stakeholders who have less access to such critical resources" (p.389). A substantial element of the redevelopment process has depended upon the moneyed stakeholders of downtown and accordingly these individuals and groups have tended to have greater influence in terms dictating the direction that development takes as well as defining the target market for which downtown change is presented to. In line with the stakeholder perspective, economic stakeholders have had a dominant impact upon the community due to the fact that they have readily recognized community resources, such as investment power and/or political capital. Understanding how the resources of cultural and practical stakeholders have impacted the neighborhood, or have failed to be recognized, will shed light on community tensions in downtown as well as how the neighborhood has and may continue to be defined and developed.

The vision that downtown residents in the 2010 pilot study had for their neighborhood was closely linked their personal political outlook; the downtown neighborhood took on a meaning for them that was somehow more real and more valuable than that which could be found in the outlying community. Using a place-based social theory to analyze downtown stakeholder's perceptions of their community provides insight into the daily meaning making that takes place in the neighborhood, and this preliminary study sheds light on how struggles over representation play out in the manifest and latent consequences of development. And thus the tension between stakeholder attitudes and vision for downtown is not simply a matter or financial loss or gain, but rather the struggle for a deeper, more socially significant impact upon downtown.

Community development in rural and urban areas

Research on rural and urban community development efforts elucidates how spatial and social changes are interrelated. Rural communities, often characterized by low economic and population growth or decline, can benefit greatly from community and/or economic development. These efforts can also backfire. When drastic economic changes are made, disruption to the identity of local residents can bring more financial harm than gain, potentially destroying the cultural character which made that community desirable in the first place (Besser and Hanson, 2004; Murphy and Cunningham, 2008). Research by Besser and Hanson (2004) on the impact of locating prisons in small towns as a "development of last resort" discovered that "significant and sudden events that upset the community status quo, such as a prison or large business opening or closing, reverberate throughout the community beyond the economic sector, impacting community social

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relations and quality of life" (p.3). Furthermore, when development efforts do not mirror local residents' long-standing cultural expectations for their community, development efforts may prove to be ineffective, culturally alienating, and harmful to the local economy (Knapp & Simon, 1994; Shaffer, 1995; Stallman & Jones, 1995; Aigner et al, 2002; Licktenstein, et al, 2004; Besser & Hanson, 2004). Indeed, this research sought to understand how downtown residents may have experienced an altered or damaged sense of community identity due to the significant changes taking place in their neighborhood in order to provide insight into the economic and cultural viability of downtown.

Although the magnitude of economic change can be quite different in urban (compared to rural) areas, the same spatial/social connection holds true for both settings. Urban redevelopment is often characterized by financially powerful stakeholders vying for control of a neighborhood. Mele (2000), in his extensive research on the Lower East Side of New York City, examined the impact of changing forms of neighborhood imagery and cultural representation brought about by economic restructuring. He found that the marginalization of existing residents and their cultural presence in the neighborhood went hand in hand with redevelopment, and Mele asserts that "an intrinsic component of the political economy of neighborhood change is the definitions and presentation of the neighborhoods existing status as problematic and urban restructuring as ideal or necessary" (p.18). Part of the process of economic change, and the corresponding displacement of the preexisting social structure in places like downtown Fargo, involves selling redevelopment as necessary and good while simultaneously characterizing the past condition of the neighborhood as undesirable and requiring change. Although many positive changes may accompany the revitalization of a neighborhood such as downtown Fargo, often the most

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harmful consequences are hidden from public discourse, such as concerns with community social justice, issues of housing inequality and the symbolic displacement of existing residents. This process of marginalization can be seen in the redevelopment of other large American cities as well.

In an effort to bring back white middle-class suburban consumers, downtown development in pre-Katrina New Orleans was fashioned to attract suburban visitors rather than the practical needs of residents, leaving the community devoid of practical services and businesses such as grocery stores. Mosher et al (1995) found that "the homogenizing processes were tested and improved in several large American cities before they reached New Orleans and transformed the historic urban landscape at the foot of Canal street" (Mosher et al, 1995, p.512). Indeed, redevelopment in downtown New Orleans served to perpetuate racism and further entrench poverty within the community, while simultaneously destroying the historic and cultural capital of the community for the purpose of economic gain (Mosher, 1995).

A local example of negative consequences of rapid development can be found not far from downtown. West Fargo, whose boundary butts up directly with the city of Fargo, has been experiencing economic difficulty due to the fast pace of early development efforts. During the past 10 years West Fargo has expanded westward and southward, primarily in the form of residential property construction. Since 2000 West Fargo has doubled in size geographically, the population has grown by over 50%, and the city is now the fifth largest in the state (Daum, 2011). However, the low commercial to residential property ratio has led to a financially strained public school district and limited space for future expansion of businesses and tax revenues. According to the local news paper "vast

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residential development quickly swallow up available land, reducing the chance for commercial enterprise" (Daum, 2011, p. A3). Although the city of West Fargo has fought to accumulate more land, often in the unpopular form of farmstead appropriations, the city is cut off by a river which floods in the spring as well as the city of Fargo's boundary. Indeed, the pitfalls of rapid development are an important issued faced by this community, as "city officials acknowledge that, in some ways West Fargo grew almost too fast for its own good" (Daum, 2011, p. A3). Revitalization efforts have long lasting effects upon a community and carry the potential to both benefit and hinder the cultural and economic development of its local citizenry.

Tensions of representation: downtown change and challenges to community identity

The social character of a neighborhood, imbued by those within and outside of the community, is influential in shaping how people think, feel, and act within that space (Reitzes, 1986; Aigner, 2004). Community tensions often center on economic changes and the cultural consequences that ensue (Knapp and Simon, 1994; Hardina, 2006; Mele, 2000). Knapp and Simon (1994) point out that "interests served by economic development are determined by those interests that sponsor economic programs and participate in economic decision making" (p.131) Many community development researchers and practitioners insist that, in order for development efforts to be successful and sustainable, it is necessary to incorporate the experiences and perceptions of local residents into the process and direction of community change (Murphy & Cunningham, 2003; Hardina, 2006; Flora & Flora, 2008). However, since downtown Fargo stakeholders must share finite resources, certain groups will dominate the cultural representation of downtown and

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thus the future social climate of the neighborhood (Mele, 2000; Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001).

Researchers in the field of community development are highly aware of the importance of cultural representation in reorganization efforts (Flora & Flora, 2008). The peril of cultural domination is often part of many redevelopment works, and the United State's effort to relocate and reeducate Native Americans is a prime example of this subordinating process. The Dawes Act of 1887 was aimed specifically at replacing Native American culture with the culture of European newcomers, with the goal of forcing Native Americans to be more like whites-and to take their land. The struggle over cultural representation is often fraught with purposes of economic gain, and the importance of cultural security and identity cannot be understated. Flora and Flora state that "cultural capital determines how we see the world, what we take for granted, what we value, and what things we think can be changed. Hegemony allows one social groups to impose its symbols and reward systems on other groups" (2008, p.62). Hegemonic processes are part of social restructuring and can have an enormous impact upon the cultural identity, social well-being, and political power of subordinated groups.

A necessary element to any type of community and/or economic development activity includes selling a vision for redevelopment. Mele (2000) contends that "representations exist not simply as descriptions but also as ready explanations of the social, economic, and political features of a given place" (p.17). The representation(s) of downtown, the social character imparted by the spatial dimensions of the neighborhood, has an indelible impact on who is included and excluded, physically and symbolically. For this reason the narratives of various downtown stakeholders, how they have defined

downtown, how change has been perceived, and what expectations they hold for this space, is significant to the future state of the neighborhood. This dialectic of people and space also has the potential for conflict, and struggles over representation often go hand in hand with economic change. Mele (2000) observed this process in the lower east side of New York City, finding that as more affluent people moved into the neighborhood, drawn by the uniqueness of the avante-garde art scene coupled with cheap rental spaces, the long-term and less affluent residents were pushed out physically and also in terms of their social and cultural presence in the neighborhood.

The social characteristics ascribed to space and place influence the perceptions and behaviors of individuals and groups within that space, as "images refer to the cognitive meanings which individuals use to order and interpret the physical and social reality of an urban setting (Reitzes, 1986). Mele (2000) asserts that "unlike the fixed grip over society implied by domination, representations are hegemonic processes that tend to pervade the everyday consciousness of non-residents and residents alike" (p.15). The change in downtown imagery has led to a much less visible but enormously influential shift in the power dynamics of the neighborhood. Although the practical stakeholders of downtown do not bring in the same cultural and economic resources of other downtown groups, such as money or an urban ambiance that recent revitalization efforts have sought to capitalize upon, their need for other types of neighborhood resources, such as access to the downtown subsidized healthcare facility or the public transportation system, are just as important and less easily transferred to other areas of the community. Furthermore, as Mele has pointed out, the type of change that has and continues to take place in downtown is shaped by both

non-residents and residents alike, creating a setting ripe for complex and conflicting representations of space.

Indeed, in order for many of the young students, hipsters, and artists to move into downtown Fargo and create the distinct social character and cultural space it has become today many less powerful residents have had to be pushed out. Downtown change has depended on defining the past state of the neighborhood as run down and in need of repair, thus spurring efforts to "revitalize" the neighborhood. However, this process has the potential to accelerate and as gentrification pushes out more and more people, downtown may come to exclude more than it welcomes. Research and practice in the field of community development stresses the importance of understanding the vision that residents and local business people have for their community and how that vision is crucial to sustainable and inclusive development (Aigner et al, 2002; Murphy and Cunningham, 2003; Hardina, 2006; Flora & Flora, 2009. In this research I elucidate some of the ways this type of successful development might be possible for downtown Fargo. Without an understanding of economic, cultural, and practical stakeholders' sense of community, development efforts can easily favor neighborhood elites at the expense of further excluding less powerful residents. Many of the cultural changes that have been so warmly received by this community were brought about in large part by the economic investments made by local business owners in tandem with city or corporate economic development efforts. Understanding the social identity that economic, cultural and practical stakeholders have imbued upon downtown Fargo, as well as the similarities and differences between these three groups, will shed light on how downtown could develop in the future as well as possible issues of unity and division.

<u>Why space matters</u>

When attempting to unravel the significant features of a given locale's cultural

milieu, be it the household or the neighborhood or the state, characteristics such as race,

gender, and class are at the forefront of sociological inquiry and theory. However, there

must be a place for space in that equation as well. Tickamyer (2000) insists that "relations

of power, structures of inequality, and practices of domination and subordination are

embedded in spatial design and relations" (p.806). In order to unpack the social reality of

the individual her/his physical reality must be put into context. Downtown Fargo is an

urban space that has been imbued with a socially and culturally significant character that, at

least according to many of the residents interviewed in 2010, many other parts of the city

do not seem to possess. This social identiy has been formed by certain stakeholders over

the past decade based upon the types of resources they bring to the community, with

various manifest and latent consequences such as infrastructural rehabilitation, aesthetic

revitalization, and an increase in the cost of living. Through this research I embark on a

greater understanding of not simply what downtown stakeholders think or what they expect

from their community but how those perceptions have shaped the mainstream

characterization of downtown as a dynamic space as well as the future direction and social

impact of neighborhood change.

The place for space in sociological inquiry, like issues of gender, race, and

economic stratification, can be found on multiple levels. According to Lobao and Saenz

(2002) "macro-level social forces work themselves out at ground level" (p.499); through

research on the placed experiences of the individual, as well as their respective social

groups, a sociological understanding of the structural phenomena which governs their

existence becomes clearer. Space-based sociology asks questions such as: how has downtown change impacted structural inequality in the neighborhood and why have physical changes had such a powerful effect on the culture of downtown and the social expectations people hold for the community? These questions are driven by theoretical thinking that puts space at the heart of its inquiry and seeks to understand cultural and space on multiple and intersecting levels. As western society incorporates more of the virtual into its daily functioning the influence of locality becomes increasingly vague. No longer as deeply impeded by vast physical distances, we are able to communicate with others on the opposite side of the globe through virtual mediums, making differences of ideology and orientation of increasing consequence.

Globalization and the ensuing reformation of social relations have had an important impact upon places like downtown Fargo. Much of Western society is characterized by highly autonomous individuals residing in socially isolated types of communities, and the suburbs characterize much of American spatial existence. However, downtown Fargo attempts to defy this type of spatial-cultural organization and has deliberately been developed and thus accordingly embraced as an urban space because it is perceived as separate from the more suburban environment of the surrounding community. Lemert (2004) asserts that in modern society time and space are crucial features of human interaction and that social structures, or governing patterns of social action, interation and organization, have become stretched due to technological access allowing us to reach those on the other side of the globe while potentially ignoring the person sitting next to us. Lemert (2004) states that

Wherein premodern and early modern times, before the rise of the urban

conglomerate, the locale lent time a place, in late modern or postmodern

social arrangements the locale is uprooted by the speed with which time

connects it to the far corners of the global spaces. To speak, thus, of

globalized time-space is to suggest that the network of global social

relations reaches across space both to import the distant into the locale and

to pull the local into the global (p.224)

Based on preliminary findings from the 2010 pilot study, this research on downtown Fargo

begins with an appreciation for the intense sense of collective social and spatial identity

experienced by those who are referred to as cultural stakeholders. Downtown Fargo is a

place that has seemed to retain its localized nature, and many forms of commercial rhetoric

and propaganda emphasize the uniqueness of this space (for example both "downtown

baby", created by the Downtown Community Partnership, and "live, work, and play

downtown" coined by the downtown development organization The Kilbourne Group, are

used as promotional rhetoric that accentuate the cultural and urban appeal of the

neighborhood). This connection between the global and the local, the individual in real vs.

virtual space, is a crucial element to understanding the significance of downtown cultural

organization as well as elucidating why certain groups form the attitudes that they do about

the area. As Paulsen (2004) points out "a rich and accurate understanding of social life

requires consideration of the contexts in which that life is lived" (p.243). It is people and

the interactions they have with one another that makes place out of space and this research

examines how daily narratives about downtown Fargo have given shape to the formation of

s social identity for this community.

Indeed, the individual is not only influenced by their environment but in turn has the ability to construct a social meaning for their physical locality. How this dynamic has played out in downtown, the dialectic of social and physical space, requires greater sociological attention to spatial theorizing if one is to understand the changing culture of this mid-sized Midwestern city in a holistic manner. The social milieu of an area can come about through unintentional action, as is often the case with places that become run down or ghettoized, and it is frequently through the shared representations of local insiders and outsiders that the social character of a place begins to take shape. However, Paulsen (2004) points out that "this work of narrative place construction occurs through more formal means as well, as accounts of places are actively renewed through ritual (parades, pageants, reenactments) or concretized in the preservation and interpretation of historic sites" (p.244). The economic stakeholders in downtown Fargo, the long term and recently established business owners who occupy its storefronts, as well as the formal city planning departments or development corporations that work in this area, have made a deliberate effort to recreate this community. A prime example of this effort is the Renaissance Zone program, which offers tax abatements and monetary assistance for the rehabilitation of commercial and residential properties. The city of Fargo in tandem with the North Dakota Historical Preservation Society has made a deliberate effort to rejuvenate the original heart of the city and as a result many of the previously vacant buildings in downtown, which had contributed to economic decay and a desolate visual landscape, have now been renovated into upscale shops, bars, and apartments ("Renaissance Zone," 2010). Redevelopment efforts by city planners, development corporations, and individual entrepreneurs have been

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interpreted and built upon by the many other individuals and groups who have formal and informal ties to the neighborhood.

As the visual and financial characteristics of downtown Fargo have changed over the last decade (new storefronts and different types of businesses and housing) the social character of the community has shifted as well. Downtown is promoted as a unique cultural asset for the Fargo Moorhead (FM) community, with city and corporate development groups emphasizing the urban appeal of the neighborhood ("Quality of Life," 2010; "Downtown," 2010). However, in a place with such a high degree of economic and cultural diversity as downtown Fargo, understanding whose version of community is being accepted and whose version of community is being subordinated to the vision of others becomes critical to the neighborhood's future. The potential for tensions over space and representations of that space become more pronounced when community change happens rapidly (Mele, 2000), as it has in downtown Fargo. Understanding what this change has meant to community residents and cultural stakeholders is crucial to elucidating how structural development has impacted changes in culture.

In order to understand the cultural consequences of physical change taking place in downtown Fargo over the last decade this study will pursue the following research questions:

RQ1: How do practical, cultural, and economic stakeholders narrate and define the space of downtown Fargo?

RQ2: What are the similarities and differences between the narratives given by practical, cultural, and economic stakeholders?

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

In order to best answer the two research questions several considerations must first be addressed. According to Maxwell (2005) four basic areas of research design must be coordinated in order to reach a holistic approach to answering the research questions. These include goals, conceptual framework, methods, and validity. A graphic display of this model is shown below:

Figure 1. Model of research design
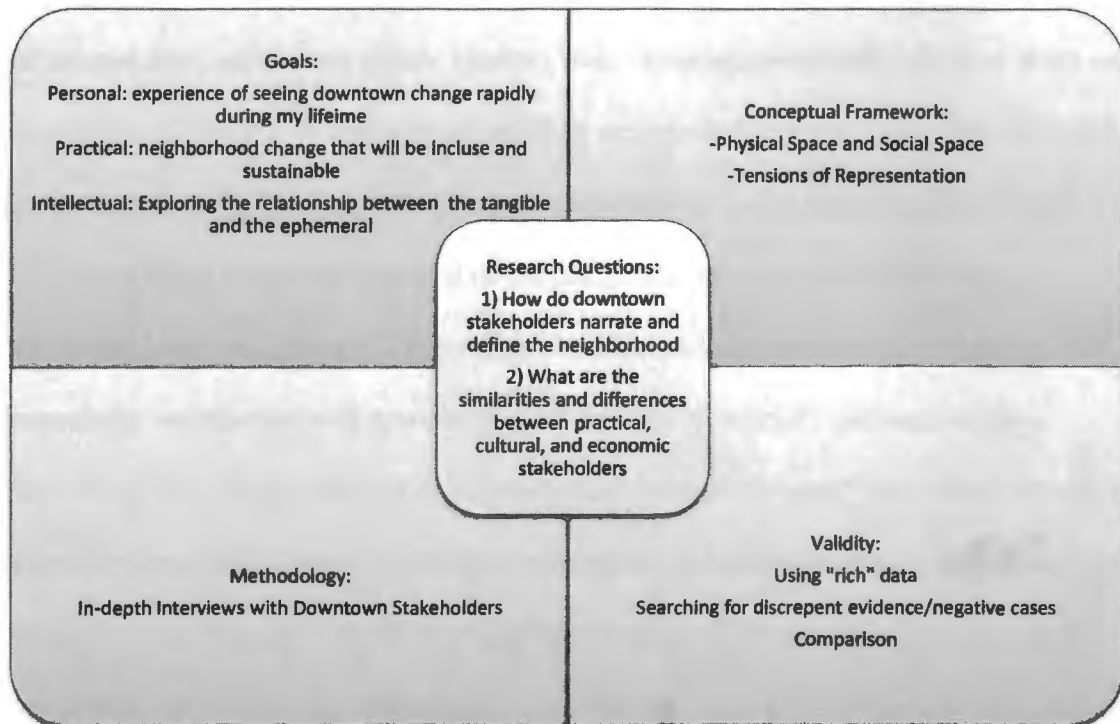
Maxell (2005) asserts that "the different parts of a design form an integrated and interacting whole, with each component closely tied to several others" (p.4). Thus, in order to answer the question of how downtown stakeholders narrate and define their neighborhood and how their position within the neighborhood impacts that perception, I shall address each area of this model individually.

Goals

    My personal goal for this research is to understand why I, and many other people who live in the FM community, are drawn to the downtown neighborhood in a manner no other space in the area seems to compete with. I have seen downtown change first hand and have a clear memory of its past state of decay. Before the process of revitalization in downtown began many of the "typical" (or at least most visible) downtown residents were individuals who relied upon public services, such as the Metro Area Transit (MAT) bus station and the Cass County Public Health Clinic. Although potentially many of these same individuals still live in or near downtown, they are relatively invisible and little attention has been paid to the hidden consequences of downtown revitalization on their overall wellbeing. These important practical resources, public transportation and access to subsidized healthcare, are vitally important to the most vulnerable population in the FM community and the threat of downtown gentrification completely pushing out these individuals comes with valid concern, much like Moser (1995) and Mele (2000) found in New Orleans and the Lower East Side. Furthermore, an additional area of trepidation comes from the fact that redevelopment efforts meant to increase the economic viability of a community are not always effective, such as the "prison town" dilemma described by Besser and Hanson (2004) (see also Knaap & Simon, 1994) or some of the issues of limited space found in West Fargo (Daum, 2011). And thus a practical goal of this research project is to understand how future change in downtown can be both inclusive and sustainable.

    From an academic standpoint little is known about the dynamics of urban restructuring in mid-sized cities situated within highly rural regions like Fargo. As mentioned earlier, much of the research on neighborhood and community change comes

from very large metropolitan cities or from rural sociological research. This research

bridges that knowledge gap and explores a unique and under-researched setting.

Furthermore, the connection between physical and social space is an important area of

sociologic theory and research and the attention to the hidden consequences of tangible

events expands the understanding of space's place within sociology. Thus, the intellectual

goal of this research is expanding the understanding of community development within a

uniquely urban setting *and* furthering the development of space/place based sociological

theory.

Conceptual framework

Much of the conceptual framework of this project is described in Chapter 3;

however, several key points must be emphasized to better explain why a qualitative method

is necessary to best answer the research question. First, the space based theory put forth by

Gieryn (2000), Tickamyer (2000), and others, points out that understanding space is a

crucial element to the formation of social knowledge and interaction, and thus drives the

need to focus on downtown specifically and not north Fargo in general. A theoretical

sampling of stakeholders who are deeply invested in downtown will provide much more

rich and valuable information than a random sample of the entire FM community. Also,

downtown has a distinct social character which is recognized by many people and has been

capitalized upon in the form of promotional rhetoric ("downtown, baby" and "work, play,

and live downtown"). Understanding the complexities of social identity formation and the

perceptions of the people who live, work, play, and actively try to shape the neighborhood

into something new, cannot be discovered through quantitative surveys. Rather, the ability

to probe important topics and to discover new and unrecognized interpretations of space was best addressed through face to face interviews with stakeholders who depend on this community for practical, cultural, or economic matters.

Addressing how downtown has been represented and how certain groups benefit or suffer due to various forms of representation was best explored through the qualitative method and in-depth interviews, a process that allowed for subtle and often hidden forms of marginalization to be discovered. Mele (2000) found that much of development work, economic or otherwise, involves "selling" a vision for that space while simultaneously characterizing the past or current condition as negative. What is compelling about downtown Fargo is the manner in which representations of the community may simultaneously benefit and hinder the same individual. For example, in the 2010 pilot study many participants characterized downtown gentrification as negative, citing the increased cost of rent and too many specialized boutiques popping up in the neighborhood as frustrating and dysfunctional. And yet, much of what made downtown culturally significant to those same participants was due directly to the aesthetic and commercial consequences of economic gentrification. Getting at the complexity of this issue required me to probe participants on new and important topics, and this research gained analytic and theoretical depth from my ability to conduct face-to-face interviews.

Methodology

Research design

In order to best answer how practical, cultural, and economic stakeholders have narrated and defined the space of downtown Fargo as well as the similarities and

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differences amongst them 12 additional in-depth semi-structured interviews took place

after the 2010 phase of data collection (see Appendix B for interview questions). The 2010

preliminary study had 7 participants who could be considered "cultural" stakeholders.

Their narratives were included in the final write-up and their transcripts were re-coded

alongside new data. The 12 new interviews were with economic stakeholders, such as

businesses owners and city development officials. I also interviewed service providers who

work with vulnerable populations in downtown and who will thus represent practical

downtown stakeholders in this study in order to offer an alternative and less-mainstream

perspective on downtown change. Interviews lasted approximately one hour at a location of

the participants choosing and were conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow

participants to focus on topics most important to them (Weiss, 1994; Johnson, 2002;

Charmaz, 2006). An interview protocol with six open ended questions was prepared

beforehand (see Appendix B) and was modified as needed so that the interview took place

in a conversational manner that was meaningful and significant to the participant (Weiss,

1994).

Sample

    A theoretical sampling method in tandem with a snow-ball sampling method was

used to solicit research participants who were considered key actors in the downtown Fargo

community. This decision was based on Jawahar and McLaughlins (2001) stakeholder

theory and speaks to the application of my research questions. This research is concerned

with understanding the perspectives of the people and groups who have strong personal,

professional, and financial interests in downtown Fargo and using a theoretical sampling

method allowed me to identify and seek out the individuals who have been impacted by

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neighborhood restructuring and who were strongly invested in downtown and the future state of the community. Furthermore, by considering participant suggestions made by other individuals who have substantial knowledge of the community allowed me to seek out the individuals who would fit most directly with stakeholder theory. Furthermore, a theoretical sampling framework allowed me to uncover the many different players in the downtown community and identify the three important downtown groups, cultural, economic, and practical stakeholders, and thus allow for a deeper and more significant scholarly understanding of downtown narrative formation and the process of community identity formation.

For the first round of data collection, occurring during the fall of 2010, I solicited interviews with cultural downtown stakeholders by asking academic colleagues and other contacts in the downtown neighborhood to identify potential participants. In order to qualify for the 2010 data set participants must have lived in the FM area for at least ten years and reside currently in the downtown neighborhood. After this initial phase of data collection I sought out additional interviews with downtown stakeholders during the spring of 2011 and, based off of stakeholder theory and preliminary findings from the 2010 data set, I identified participants who represented other important groups within the downtown community. Most of the participants from the 2011 data set can be considered economic stakeholders, individuals who were involved in the commercial district in downtown. I also interviewed as practical stakeholders during the 2011 data collection phase, who are represented in this study by community social service providers. For the second round of data collection I did not require a specific duration of residency in the FM community but I did required that participants currently lived or owned a business in downtown, or who

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worked with individuals who were residents of the neighborhood. The reason I chose to drop off the requirement of ten years as a FM resident was due to the desire to collect a sample that represented a wide range of downtown stakeholders and thus the residency duration requirement became irrelevant. I created a sample that represents a wide variety of downtown perspectives but is populated by participants who all share significant personal, professional, and/or financial ties to downtown Fargo, in line with the Jawahar and McLaughlin (2001) stakeholder theory.

The majority of the cultural stakeholders who participated in this study were interviewed in the fall of 2010 but a few additional cultural stakeholders were interviewed during the spring of 2011. I was able to interview a wide range of downtown cultural stakeholders, from individuals who lived in downtown for several decades, to people who had moved into the neighborhood during the revitalization process, as well as someone who had lived in the FM community for her entire life but had just moved to downtown within the past year. In order to solicit economic stakeholders I walked through the downtown neighborhood and brought letters containing my request for interview participation form to approximately two dozen businesses. I made a specific effort to solicit interviews with business owners considered important stakeholders in downtown commerce, based in part on what other cultural stakeholders had suggested during my first round of interviews conducted in the fall of 2010. I also used my long term knowledge of the downtown neighborhood to select businesses that were considered important actors in the commercial district, including businesses that had been in the neighborhood for many decades as well as the newer businesses that represented a significant change in the economic climate of the neighborhood. During the interview process with cultural and

economic stakeholders I asked participants to tell me who the important actors were in downtown, the business owners or other groups or individuals who have an influence over neighborhood change and/or represented an important element of downtown community culture; I then attempted to obtain interviews from the stakeholders who were identified by those participants. For my initial round of interview solicitation with economic stakeholders I tried to recruit as many downtown businesses to participate in the study. Subsequently I focused in on trying to get interviews with key community players, those suggested by participants as well as specific individuals that myself and my thesis committee agreed fit with my theoretical criteria.

I was able to interview a wide range of downtown economic stakeholders, from individuals who worked for the City of Fargo, people who have been directly involved in revitalization efforts, as well as a number of different business owners. I spoke to owners of large establishments as well as small shop owners, restaurateurs and gallery owners. I sampled from a wide range of long term business owners who have had establishments in the downtown neighborhood for several decades, to within the past ten years, to very recent business owners who had only opened shop within the last year. My overall sample contains a wide range of demographic characteristics, and participants ranged in age from 20 years old to 65, with a fairly balanced male to female ratio. Many of my participants were involved in the local arts community, and each participant made pre-interview comments that stressed their ideological appreciation for the downtown neighborhood. I also interviewed affluent residents in downtown and consider them to be both cultural and economic stakeholders due to the large investment they have made in living in downtown. These affluent property owners add an important element to the dimensions of community

stakeholdership in downtown and they, the individuals who live and rent the high-end residential and commercial spaces which have been dramatically renovated and refurbished during the process of neighborhood change, were mentioned by several participants as an important element of what change has meant in this community. Collecting a sample that represented a wide variety of stakeholders was useful for understanding the process of neighborhood change from as many different perspectives as possible.

It soon became apparent to me that the line between economic and cultural stakeholders was not a ridged one, but rather participants ranged on a scale of economic and cultural affiliation with the neighborhood, with several participants overlapping in both categories. Thus, I have considered the groups of cultural and economic stakeholders as one and analyzed their narratives together, and will thus refer to them as "cultural and economic stakeholders" (see Table 1 for a ranking of the 16 cultural and economic stakeholders, a brief sample description and the number years they have been downtown stakeholders). During the coding process I analyzed their responses together while keeping practical stakeholders separate as a means to determine the greatest degree of similarities and differences between economic and cultural stakeholders and the practical downtown stakeholders. When discussing individual participants I make reference to their status as economic or cultural stakeholders or both, however, the data analysis process consisted of looking at these individuals together, as part of one group of downtown cultural and economic stakeholders.

When seeking out participants who qualified as practical stakeholders I attempted to solicit interviews with social service providers who address issues of housing and homelessness within the downtown neighborhood. I found that these practical stakeholders

Codename	Economic/Cultural Status	Participant Description	Yrs as Stake-holder
Alvin	Economic Stakeholder	A very recent business owner in downtown, weak cultural interests	1 yr
Herbert	Economic Stakeholder	Works for the city and manages downtown economic programs	10 yrs
Harold	Economic Cultural Stakeholder	Works for the city and is involved in downtown community planning	5 yrs
Donna	Economic Cultural Stakeholder	Part of upper management at an iconic downtown business	10 yrs
Antoine	Economic Cultural Stakeholder	Has owned an influential downtown business for several decades	25 yrs
Desman	Economic Cultural Stakeholder	Grew up in Fargo, owns an upscale downtown restaurant	10 yrs
Frederick	Cultural Economic Stakeholder	Owns an art gallery on the main commercial strip	5 yrs
Angela	Cultural Economic Stakeholder	Has managed a non-profit organization for about a decade	10 yrs
Tammy	Cultural Economic Stakeholder	Owns upscale property in a historically renovated building	20 yrs
Stella	Cultural Economic Stakeholder	Manages a small independent business that is just off Broadway	15 yrs
Henry	Cultural Stakeholder	Grew up in Fargo, has lived in the neighborhood for over two decades	25 yrs
Norman	Cultural Stakeholder	Lives, works, goes to school in downtown	5 yrs
Sandy	Cultural Stakeholder	Grew up in Fargo, recently moved to the neighborhood	5 yrs
Harvey	Cultural Stakeholder	A local artist, has lived in the neighborhood for over a decade	15 yrs
Nancy	Cultural Stakeholder	Owns a house just outside of the main commercial district	30 yrs
Mimi	Cultural Stakeholder	Lives in a downtown apartment, interested in local art and social scene	10 yrs

Table 1. Sample description and economic/cultural ranking

varied most significantly in terms of the level of vulnerability the individuals they served

experienced within the community. I interviewed three individuals who represented

practical stakeholders in downtown and I have used their narratives primarily as a means to

respond to the dominant characterization of the neighborhood given by the cultural and

economic stakeholders (see Table 2 for a list of practical downtown stakeholders, a description of the services they provide and a vulnerability ranking of the populations they serve). It should be noted, however, that all three practical stakeholder service providers voice a personal perspective regarding downtown that mirrored the narratives given by cultural and economic stakeholders. However, their inclusion in this study was primarily used as a means to understand the downtown community from the perspective of the individuals that they worked with and as such their narratives represent that practical stakeholder perspective and were coded accordingly.

Service providers were used to represent practical stakeholders because 1) it was difficult to identify persons who could be considered "vulnerable" and attempting to seek out these individuals raises many problematic ethical concerns and 2) service providers were more likely to have a long term, holistic understanding of the issues faced by the individuals they serve. Furthermore, they represent practical downtown stakeholders since they also function as advocates for these groups and potentially have a more in-depth understanding of the manner in which vulnerable populations are able to participate in the downtown neighborhood and/or the ways in which their presence has been marginalized during the process of restructuring.

Codename	Area of Social Service	Vulnerability Ranking (of clients served)
Paul	Assists individuals with developmental disabilities live independently in the area	Least vulnerable
Peter	Addresses issues of housing and residential accessibility	Varying levels of vulnerability
Sonya	Operates a homeless shelter, has addresses issues of chronic homelessness in the area for over two decades	Most vulnerable

Table 2. Sample description and vulnerability ranking

Data Analysis

In order to understand participant's narratives as fully as possible I transcribed each interview as closely to the original conversation as was feasible. To ensure the greatest amount of accuracy interviews were transcribed shortly after the interview occurred, and most interviews were completely transcribed before another interview took place. This rapid turnaround rate allowed for coding and initial analytical memos to affect the direction of future interviews and allow for significant themes within participant narratives to be recognized as soon as possible (Gibbs, 2007). In rare instances certain words or phrases were unclear on the recording; however, I made editorial notes within the transcripts to best represent the intended meaning. Overall, participants were comfortable with the interview process and needed little coaxing to expand upon their ideas and descriptions of downtown.

After all of the 16 interviews with cultural and economic stakeholders were transcribed coding began. The 7 interviews conducted in the fall of 2010 were re-coded alongside the 9 interviews conducted with cultural and economic stakeholders collected during the summer of 2011. Instead of beginning the coding process by going line by line through individual transcripts, large sections of the interviews were coded into four categories (presented below) that fit with the research questions, the interview protocol, as well as theoretical understandings of the topic and researcher impressions. There were several reasons for this large categorical breakdown to occur before line by line coding. First, because of the large sample it was easier to keep the "who" and "what" clear in my mind by separating narratives into the major topics that were discussed. Instead of approaching the data on an individual participant basis I did a macro-type coding of the material, identifying and categorizing large sections of the data, and then grouped that data

into a document that focused on participant discussions of the same topic. This subsequently allowed for more finely tuned coding to occur within these topical categories. Second, because the interview protocol remained fairly consistent throughout the data collection process, it was easy to identify which areas of community narration and description participants were focusing on. If participant narratives overlapped in certain areas those sections of dialogue were put in both relevant categories, which allowed for connections between topical categories to occurring during the line-by-line coding process. It should also be mentioned that within these large categorical documents participant narratives were order in the same fashion they are found in Table 1, that is, according to their economic and cultural position within the neighborhood. This also further facilitated the analysis process and allowed for areas of similarity and difference to become clearer.

There were four main categories that participant narratives were sorted into, these include:

Identification: descriptions of the downtown neighborhood, usually in response to the interview question "how would you characterize the downtown neighborhood". Often participants would describe downtown in terms of how it was different than other areas in the FM community.

Stakeholders: participants discuss other members of the downtown community as well as neighborhood outsiders. This became the largest category in terms of the amount of narrative that was grouped into this category.

History: Participants describe the past condition of downtown as well as the process of change. Often in response to the interview question "when you think about change in downtown, what comes to mind?"

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Vision: Participants respond to the interview question "what would you like to see happen in the future for downtown?"

After each of the cultural and economic stakeholder's narratives had been broken apart and reorganized into these four categories line by line coding began. I used an open coding method to discover important initial concepts within the transcripts, allowing for themes based in the content of participant narratives to emerge (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Since open coding is an inductive process it allowed for the meaning that lies within the data, significant events, interactions, differences and similarities within and between transcripts, to come out (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The intention of open coding is to move from mere descriptive coding, which only provides common sense interpretation of the data, to more theoretically significant and analytically sound themes. Analytical memo writing also allowed for similarities and differences between the categories "identification, history, stakeholders, and vision" to be discovered, and assisted in establishing codes that explained the significance of the data (Maxwell, 2005). Analytical memos further allowed me to describe and document the initial impressions and theoretical direction of the research in a methodical manner and to contribute to the analytical depth of the data (Maxwell, 2005).

As analytical themes developed out of the four categories thought mapping was used to determine areas of similarity and difference between the themes and make connections between the five categories. Thought mapping is a process where the researcher physically draws out the analytical process and works to establish more concrete and connective impressions of the data. Thought maps were used as a form of analytical memo writing as well as being used as a way to axially code the interviews, to break them

apart and put them back together in a theoretically significant manner. Crestwell (1998) asserts that the purpose of axial coding is to sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data so as to reassemble it in new and significant ways. Thus axial coding, in conjunction with thought mapping, further allowed for relationships within the data to emerge. Axial codes were then compared across all four categories and through this process the connection between categories and participant narratives was discovered.

These axial codes allowed for significant themes to be bridged across several transcripts, thus facilitating a more concrete explanation of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As codes became more refined and a greater number of analytical themes begin to emerge from the data sensitizing concepts were used to deductively explore the data (Bowen, 2006). These sensitizing concepts utilized the theoretical understanding garnered from the literature review to provide a deeper understanding of how downtown stakeholders perceive the neighborhood as well as how their social positions affected those perceptions. Sensitizing concepts also came from the analytic memos with the intention of combining initial themes from open and axial coding with findings from past research in order to best answer the research questions

Narratives given by three practical stakeholders, although transcribed immediately after the interviews were conducted, were coded after the cultural and economic stakeholder analysis had taken place. The purpose of the practical stakeholder perspective in this research is to facilitate an understanding of how their experience in downtown may differ from the more dominant cultural and economic stakeholder perspective. The data from practical stakeholders were used to respond to the main narrative being crafted about downtown Fargo in order to give the greatest depth in areas of similarity and difference.

Thus, the primary findings for this study focus on first understanding how cultural and economic stakeholders characterize the downtown neighborhood and how their narratives imbue a social identity upon the neighborhood, followed by an analysis of areas of similarity and difference between the three stakeholders concerning this dominant neighborhood narrative.

Validity

According to Maxwell (2005) validity in qualitative research involves "providing a clear argument that the approaches described will adequately deal with the particular threats in question, in the context of the study being proposed" (p.107). This research addresses issues of validity through attention to several important elements of the design: using "rich" data, looking for discrepant evidence and negative cases, and comparison across participant narratives. Using rich data, that which is "detailed and varied" (Maxwell, 2005, p.110) was possible since in-depth interviews were the primary source of data collection. In-depth interviews allow for probing into important and significant elements of participants understanding of downtown and provided the thickest description of the research topic (Charmaz, 2006). The interviews, although a interview protocol was created before hand, were conducted in a semi-structured way that allowed for participants to focus on the issues that seems most relevant to them (Maxwell, 2005). As a result some interviews lasted for over three hours, and no time limit was placed upon the interviews so as to encourage participants to expand upon their perceptions as fully as possible. Furthermore, the large sample size, a total of 19 interviews, increases the validity of this research because it aims to understand downtown change from many different possible

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perspectives. As mentioned in the "sample" section, I interviewed people who had lived in downtown for several decades as well as those who have moved to the neighborhood within the last year, and many other points of residency in between. I talked to large businesses, small business, and those that were long established commercial enterprises as well as new upstarts. Although I was only able to collect three interviews with practical downtown stakeholders they represented significant issues of social justice and stratification within the neighborhood.

Also, attention to negative cases which emerged from the data increases the validity of this research. Searching for negative cases and discrepant evidence supports the logic behind analytical interpretations, and attention was paid to any "pressures to ignore data that do[es] not fit … conclusions" (Maxwell, 2005, p.112). Interviews with practical stakeholders represent some of the negative cases in downtown narrative formation, and the inclusion of their perspectives in this research expands the scope of this study and attempts to actively look for areas of dissent and participant conflict. Also, the emphasis on discovering the similarities and differences within downtown perspectives further aided me in paying close attention to areas of differentiation, however small they may have appeared. Narrative comparison was at the heart of the data analysis process and strengthened the validity of this research.

Feedback from advisors and academic colleagues on coding and transcription also assisted me in terms of checking for biases, assumptions, and flaws behind my analytical logic and method. Comparison between participant narratives, attention to how factors such as interview setting, duration in the FM community, and other relevant characteristics that may influence participant narratives was an important element not only in the analytical

validity of the research but also speaks to the heart of the research questions themselves and the qualitative method. My awareness of how setting and social situatedness impacted the narratives given by participants was done to increase the richness of the data and to add further dimensions to how my sample impacted my results. A qualitative method and research design allows for factors such as social stratification and the importance of the interview process itself to contribute to the data set and analysis and was thus embraced throughout this study.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Participants for this study were asked to discuss the downtown neighborhood regarding a number of issues, from community characteristics, what they thought were the most important changes that had happened to the neighborhood, as well as discussing what they would like to see happen to downtown in the future. Although all three stakeholders, economic, cultural and practical, place a greater value on the downtown neighborhood and experience an intense personal connection to the space, they have differing abilities to impact the crafting of a dominant downtown narrative. This chapter provides a breakdown of the different ways these stakeholders relate to the FM community. The first theme, "managing community identity", is followed by three sub-sections titled "historic ideal: origin story vs. negative associations" and "urbal ideal: anti-suburban characteristics", and "space, place, and identity". The second theme "areas of similarity and difference: whose community is it anyway?" and has four subsections, titled "similarities: sense of place and contested ownership", differences: attitudes towards outsiders and unlikely allies", "conflicting perspectives: historical narratives and issues of social justice", and "staking a claim: community tensions and issues of power". The economic and cultural narratives will be explored in the first theme since they represent the mainstream dominant characterizations of the neighborhood, and the practical stakeholder perspective will be introduced in the second theme as a means to illustrated similarities and differences of perception in downtown as well as issues of neighborhood power and representation.

The first theme "managing community identity" describes how downtown cultural and economic stakeholders craft descriptions of their community and how that narrative directs and defines the social identity of the neighborhood. This research discovered that

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economic and cultural downtown stakeholders create and justify an elevated community status in downtown by accentuating the positive and desirable characteristics of their community while simultaneously marginalizing certain negative aspects of the neighborhood. Participants narrated about the importance of downtown's origin story as it imparts aesthetic and cultural relevance to the space, as well as touting the value of urban characteristics such as pedestrian lifestyle and an independent and artistically-centered business district. However, participants also tried to manage the less desirable aspects of community character by marginalizing low income groups and associating them with negative aspects of downtown's recent past. Participants also actively combated common criticisms of the neighborhood, such as a lack of parking, by stressing the ideological vision of their community's configuration. The ability to shape and direct the social identity of downtown was found to be a significant feature of stakeholder power.

The second theme "similarities and differences: whose community is it anyway?" addresses the second research question and discusses how downtown stakeholders have varied in their ability to manage the identity of downtown, as well as how stakeholders are impacted by the process of neighborhood change. Although practical stakeholders were found to experience a heightened sense of community identity and strong personal ties to this neighborhood, other cultural and economic stakeholders have continued to contest their place within the social and physical landscape of downtown. Perceptions toward outsiders also varied amongst stakeholders, with cultural and practical stakeholders experiencing greater distrust while economic stakeholders tended to express a greater acceptance of other groups in downtown. This attitude toward other downtown groups draws attention to how one's position in the neighborhood impacts their perception of community issues. This

research found that participants who had multiple roles within downtown, as economic, cultural, and even practical stakeholders, were the most conscious of the impact of restructuring and expressed the greatest criticism of gentrification. Economic enterprise has been a crucial factor in crafting a mainstream narrative about downtown, shaping the dynamics of power and social representation in this community, and carries implications for the future development of the neighborhood and the potential for certain groups to maintain community ties.

The last chapter of this thesis remarks on the implications of this research, how it relates to and expands on existing theory in the areas of community development, urban sociology, place-based sociology, and stakeholder theory, as well as suggestions for making downtown inclusive and sustainable as it moves into the future.

Managing community identity

Cultural and economic stakeholders described the social character and community identity of the downtown neighborhood in a number of ways, from discussing the past condition of the neighborhood, to describing other types of people who live in downtown, as well as how their community was different from the rest of the Fargo Moorhead metro area. The most salient feature of the narratives given by economic and cultural stakeholders was the way they actively *managed the identity of downtown Fargo*; in other words, they crafted a community narrative about downtown in a way that fit with their own political attitudes for what neighborhood organization should be, and deliberately accentuated certain features of the neighborhood in a positive manner. The main areas in which these cultural and economic stakeholders actively shaped community identity was the manner in

which they discussed the history of downtown as a crucial part of the social character of the neighborhood as well as describing features of downtown in a way that fit with an urban ideal for community formation.

Participants described living downtown as requiring "a different way of thinking" (Mimi), and would create a call and response narrative that was aimed at turning certain criticisms about the neighborhood into positive features that contributed to the elevated sense of community identity and valuation. For instance, many participants discussed the issue of parking and traffic in downtown and how neighborhood outsiders perceived the lack of parking and the slow pace of car traffic to be a detriment to the neighborhood; however, they would respond by accentuating how downtown was a walkable space, and the conduciveness to pedestrianism was part of what made downtown distinct from and superior to other areas of the FM community. Frederick, a cultural and economic stakeholder, describes the difference between expectations for downtown versus the mall area by saying:

> The perception is that if you come down to shop and park in the US Bank parking lot it's farther than parking in West Acres parking lot. It's just a matter of they can't see my storefront from there. If you are at the mall you can see Sears, you can see the sign so they can walk towards it. Here the perception is there's nowhere to park; they want to park in front.

Harold, a city planner, makes a very similar comment about downtown expectations being different from what is commonly accepted outside of the neighborhood, stating

> You have these perceptions that it's easy, that you can pull up at the front door at West Acres and downtown always has parking issues. We took this

entire map of the downtown area and it fit, the whole downtown fit inside

West Acres mall. The difference might be that if you went to the Sears wing

and park down there and see the door 200 feet away, walk to it, where

downtown you're parked down the corner or around the block and it's only

100 feet away you just can't see the door.

Crafting a social identity for downtown involved reframing many features of the

neighborhood in a manner that accentuated the desirability of the neighborhood, and was

done as a reactive and preemptive response to criticisms about the community. The major

topics through which this process of actively managing the identity of downtown took

place was the creation of an idyllic historic narrative for downtown, as well as creating an

idyllic urban identity for the neighborhood. Although there was variation to the extent that

participants embraced these ideals, every single participant focused on the history of the

neighborhood as well as the urban character of downtown as defining features of their

community. The following two sections explain this process of active reframing as it

relates to crafting a historic ideal and an urban ideal, and the third section discusses

theoretical implications of this process as well as how it might answer the first research

question.

Historic ideal: origin story vs. negative associations

Cultural and economic stakeholders emphasized the historic nature of downtown as

an important feature of their community's distinct social and geographical character.

However, the way in which these cultural and economic stakeholders discussed the history

of downtown differed quite dramatically when discussing the distant past of the

neighborhood, downtown as the original center of the city, compared to the more recent

past condition of the neighborhood. The *origin story* of downtown was highlighted as a crucial part of community identity, imbuing the neighborhood with a plethora of pre-established cultural importance and aesthetic value. Herbert, who has been actively involved in the process of change, says simply that downtown is "where everything started". The origin story of downtown was given as a justification for what made the neighborhood unique and desirable to this study's participants. Desman, who grew up in Fargo and now owns an upscale restaurant, says of downtown

> It's old and grotty. As much as Fargo has history it's where the history is.
> There's old buildings, full trees and established infrastructure. It may always
> be in need of repair and change but it's all here.

When describing downtown's origin story, its distinction as the founding commercial center of Fargo, history was seen as a very important part of community identity in terms of the aesthetic features of the neighborhood as well as representing a tangible reason for why downtown should be the current cultural center of the city.

Frederick, an economic stakeholder with strong interests in the cultural development of the area, tied the history of downtown to its current community identity as the cultural hub of Fargo by saying

> It's the historical nexus, downtown is where everything started...this is
> where all the traffic from the railroad workers and such came through, this
> area and North Fargo. A lot of the historical vestiges and older buildings are
> down here, some of the more recognizable monuments from the early 20th
> century. Now I see it as the center for independent business, a walkable
> city...I see that as part of the revitalization, new businesses as well as

revitalization of the old historic sites. I see it as a unique neighborhood

that's walkable and very centralized, in high contrast to what's happened out

beyond 13th Avenue.

The history of downtown, its status as the commercial and cultural center of the city, was

given credit as stirring interest in the neighborhood and prompting revitalization efforts.

Tammy, a wealthy property owner and someone who was influential in spurring initial

efforts to revitalize the neighborhood, stated that

There's definitely an interest from a lot of people in the historic aspect of

downtown, and you're starting to see a little more of it in the older homes

that surround downtown. Certainly the redevelopment of buildings like the

Ford has been huge to bring that whole historic aspect.

The origin story of downtown, the emphasis on the distant past as an important source of

current neighborhood social and aesthetic appeal, was echoed by cultural and economic

stakeholders alike. Much of the draw for young artists living in the neighborhood, along

with the recent and long term independent business owners and the wealthy entrepreneurs

and developers who have begun to capitalize on pre-existing infrastructure, was tied to the

cultural value and aesthetic appeal of community history associated the downtown

neighborhood, and thus stressed heavily within their narratives.

However, when economic and cultural stakeholders gave descriptions about the

more recent past, the downtown neighborhood as it existed before revitalization efforts

began in the late 1990's, they characterized that recent past in ways that accentuated how

undesirable the neighborhood was during that time. Many participants gave quite dramatic

descriptions, such as Alvin, a new business owner in downtown. He says

> it was a slum neighborhood...I remember cruising Broadway when I was in
> high school. It was just trash at that point.

Furthermore, these stakeholders associated the deteriorated condition of downtown 15 to

20 years ago with people who were poor, homeless, or suffered from mental illness and/or

substance abuse and addiction, e.g. practical downtown stakeholders. Henry, who has lived

in downtown for several decades and moved in before the process of revitalization began,

describes how a co-worker was afraid to come to the neighborhood because of the presence

of impoverished groups.

> She dreaded coming downtown [before revitalization]...lots more people
> that were here, I don't know if transient is the right term...but people that
> would be publicly drunk, more panhandlers. You'd see people urinating out
> in the street. Now I see people [his co-worker] like that downtown all the
> time.

Indeed, Desman points out that the removal of these groups was a necessary step in the

process of change, stating that

> This area used to kind of be the Times Square of Fargo, the rough section
> with lots of bars, the alcoholic section, the homeless section. The idea that
> they were gonna get rid of those things, which were kind of landmarks, that
> those had to be torn down was more than symbolic.

Although not all cultural and economic stakeholders had the same level of animosity

toward practical stakeholders, the *negative association* of low income groups with the

undesirability of downtown's recent past was omnipresent throughout the narratives given

by economic and cultural stakeholders alike.

Nancy, a homeowner who lives just a short distance away from the central commercial district, discussed bringing meals to temporary rental places (like the Fargoan) that housed many low income and/or disabled individuals, properties which were fairly common in downtown before revitalization efforts began. Her fear and unease with visiting these establishments is quite indicative of the negative associations participants had with the previous state of the neighborhood. She says:

> I delivered food to the Donaldson and some of the other places on Broadway. It wasn't a very pleasant experience, a little scary…but then there are changes, like the old Hotel Donaldson is not a flop house anymore. It's a much nicer establishment.

As Desman points out, the physical and symbolic removal of low income groups and their social and visual dominance in downtown and their replacement with wealthier economic and cultural stakeholders seems to have been a necessary step for this study's participants to want to live in or be a part of downtown now. Donna, who has been involved with an organization cited by many other participants as representing a visual and cultural sea change within the neighborhood, talks about the previous state of the neighborhood by saying

> When I was in high school you did the thing where you cruised Broadway but you were never really supposed to get out of the car because it was shady…it's gone from a place where I never went to now to a place that I'm at all the time and love to be.

Perceiving downtown as no longer being a place so stoutly associated with low income people is a crucial step to managing the identity of downtown Fargo. This identity

management does not deny that low income groups are still a part of downtown, but rather it makes practical stakeholders less threatening by disconnecting them from the current social character of the neighborhood. The passive marginalization of low income groups and the thinning of their visibility upon the downtown social landscape has been a key factor in the process of neighborhood change and was echoed again and again within the narratives given by downtown cultural and economic stakeholders.

Urban ideal: anti-suburban characteristics

Cultural and economic stakeholders managed the identity of downtown by framing specific characteristics of the neighborhood in a positive manner. For these participants downtown embodied an urban ideal, a community center that would be common in much larger cities. And yet downtown was not only characterized as embodying all of the positive characteristics of the urban but also in some respects a small town environment as well. Downtown was described as an urban space within the greater, more suburbanized FM community, and as such given characteristics like dense, vibrant, eclectic, and pedestrian friendly. Participants described their neighborhood as having an abundance of unique commercial establishments, independently owned shops and restaurants, and an active art and music scene. However, downtown community identity was also perceived as having advantages often associated with living in a small town, such as knowing your neighbor and having a sense of intense interaction with other members of the community. Many participants described downtown as "small town" (Nancy) and feeling like a "community within a community" (Angela and Mimi).

Managing downtown's identity as an idyllic urban space involved framing certain characteristics of the neighborhood as positive and in defiance to the suburban atmosphere

that participants perceived as being the standard type of community organization found throughout the rest of the FM area. These positive urban characteristics contributed to the social character and community valuation that participation placed upon downtown. For example, many participants discussed how neighborhood outsiders thought that parking in downtown was a drawback, but would respond by saying how people in downtown would rather walk and ride their bikes than drive. This urban ideal was often framed in a way that accentuated how downtown was in opposition to the type of community organization found throughout most of the rest of the FM area (suburban) and consequently imbued a sense of (urban) superiority for the downtown neighborhood. Characterizing downtown as urban, and just as importantly as *anti- suburban*, is fundamental to how cultural and economic stakeholders have attempted to manage the identity of this community and accentuate its social and aesthetic value. Norman, who by self proclaim embodies the commercial rhetoric of "live, work, and play downtown" works, goes to school, not to mention lives, in downtown. When describing his community Norman says

> I think what sets it apart is it's all very close, very walkable. I think there's more of a community feel then the rest of Fargo because everyone is always out walking around on the street…It's as close as you can get to a big city feel when you're in Fargo. I cringe at the thought of living in a split level in a cul-de-sac and not knowing any of my neighbors, where I have to drive everywhere for everything.

This issue of defining downtown as superior because of its dissimilarity to the outlying FM community was echoed over and over again by participants, from long term to recent residents, and amongst the most wealthy and powerful participants to the "starving artists".

Harvey, a local artist and long-term downtown resident, describes the intangible feeling he has about downtown and how the urban atmosphere this community exudes as in stark opposition to a suburban environment, saying

> The rest of Fargo seems boring, and downtown seems more like a real community…Downtown, I run into people that I know on a daily basis just walking down the street, just walking my dog. And down in the West Acres area you do run into people you know but, I don't know how to describe the feeling. When I meet people in that area [by the mall] it's usually a quick hi and bye. And when I'm in those areas I don't really feel like chatting with anybody either myself. It's just kind of, I feel more open downtown.

Again, not only do these participants identify the significance of the downtown community and its cultural draw as urban/anti-suburban, they actively create narratives that respond to real or imagined criticisms by outsiders.

Mimi, a young woman who is active in the art community and late night social scene so prevalent in this neighborhood, perceived a need to change people's minds when it comes to thinking about downtown Fargo. Mimi responds to criticism of the neighborhood by saying:

> The thing I hear a lot is that it's really hard to park downtown, or apartments are really expensive. In my opinion it's not really hard to park but that's the way of thinking. In downtown everyone is ok with walking, it's kind of a thought process. You have to train people to think differently.

She goes on to describe this anti-suburban sentiment further by saying

> I feel like when I go to West Fargo or basically anything less than 25th street, everything seems cheap and franchised. That's just the way of thinking out there.

This anti-suburban attitude was expressed not only by characterizing downtown as urban but also by way of describing the community as embodying a small town way of life. Several of this study's participants came from small communities and cited this as a reason why they were drawn to downtown. This narrative of downtown resembling a small community was done to emphasize the interaction that they had with other community members, exemplified by Donna, who grew up in a small community. She describes why she embraces downtown, saying

> It's very unique, a small community, small community based. It's definitely a niche group that are downtown, that go downtown. They tend to be a little bit more open-minded and see the world in a different perspective. It's not just chains; it's more about the independent owned businesses. That's why I was drawn to downtown… why I like downtown. I came from a place that was smaller and very community based and downtown is that as well. It's just an atmosphere and a feeling, open minded and more willing to help people…community oriented.

Participants managed the identity of downtown Fargo by emphasizing the community characteristics that made it an idealized urban neighborhood with all of the advantages of small town living, while simultaneously minimizing certain attributes that could potentially be seen as negative. Parking was a major issue that these cultural and economic stakeholders managed by accentuating how pedestrian and cycling activity was the

preferred mode of transportation in downtown. Although some participants complained about the lack of a grocery store, the emphasis on independent business was used to buttress the heightened sense of superior community organization.

Donna, who describes how the independent business owners had more of a commitment to the community, is echoed by Frederick, a local gallery owner who is extremely invested in the cultural and economic development of the neighborhood. Explaining why commerce works differently in downtown, and contributes to the sense of community cohesion, Frederick says

> What's bringing people down here is independent business, the relationships, like I have with my clients, and restaurants, and then the hotels obviously. I think they are looking for an environment instead of just a commodity driven lifestyle. They're looking for an experience instead of just buying items. I've had arguments with people that go by, why would I buy from you when I can buy online; because I know your dog's name. There needs to be some recognition for that experience rather than having it just be a commodity driven experience.

Indeed, managing the identity of downtown, emphasizing the cultural importance of the neighborhood (and the people who live and own business's there) centered on wanting something different, more valuable and exclusive, than that which is found in outlying "suburban" areas. This urban ideal was a major part of what has drawn in and kept the cultural and economic stakeholders of this study downtown, and they actively tell stories and give descriptions of these positive attributes in an effort to justify their deep personal connection to the neighborhood and manage the social character of this community.

Cultural and economic stakeholders in this study have tried to create a social identity for downtown by crafting narratives that accentuate the anti-suburban character of the neighborhood. The features which received the most attention in this process of identity management were 1) embracing the architectural density and visual uniqueness of its commercial and residential spaces, 2) stressing the pedestrian friendly design of the neighborhood's streets and walkways, and 3) celebrating participant's sense of intense community interaction and neighborhood social cohesion. These attributes embodied an urban ideal for the downtown neighborhood, or at least defied what these participants saw as the typical type of community configuration found in suburbanized spaces, stressing the historic and aesthetic relevance of the neighborhood. At the heart of this process of actively managing the social character and community identity of downtown was creating an origin story that reinforced the social superiority and aesthetic value of this space, while simultaneously marginalizing the less desirable presence of impoverished and homeless persons from this now sacred social landscape.

The first research question in this study asks, "how do downtown stakeholders narrate and define the space of downtown Fargo?" This active process of narrating downtown as idyllic in both its physical and social manifestations has come to create a sovereign social character for the neighborhood. Gieryn (2000) has asserted that places have a social character all their own, with the nuances and particularities of any social creature, and that these characteristics impact the manner in which people within that space will conceive of it and themselves within that space. However, the social identity of downtown Fargo does not have a life independent from the people who narrate it, and that

identity has been shaped by powerful groups within the downtown community. I have made the point of not fully differentiating between cultural and economic stakeholders in this study because the process of economic development has gone hand in hand with the cultural development of the neighborhood. However, the economic side of this process of change and community reformation has had a much stronger sway over the type of development that has taken place as well as the lens through which that change can be seen. As such the economic interests within downtown have a much more powerful capacity to impart their voice upon the narratives expressed by other downtown stakeholders. Stakeholder theory is a useful tool in deconstructing the different actors that are found within a community, as well as understanding the role that different individuals and groups play in the process of change and their part in crafting a social identity for that space. Although stakeholders are individuals and groups who impact and are impacted by a community, the level to which they impact and are impacted varies greatly. Practical stakeholders are greatly impacted by downtown in many ways, from the neighborhood being a center for their social and possibly social serviced lives, and yet they have almost no influence in shaping the mainstream character of the neighborhood except the way in which other downtown stakeholders have narrated about how downtown is no longer being defined by them.

Examining the similarities and differences between economic, cultural, and practical stakeholders will further explain how downtown has become a socially and culturally significant space, unique and cherished amongst downtown stakeholders and within the larger FM community as well. Issues of power and community ownership play out within the tensions of representation, neighborhood ownership, and the version of

community that is being accepted and promoted for this space. The next theme speaks to these similarities and differences between stakeholder narratives. A discussion of community perceptions and expectations given by all three downtown stakeholders will be explored, and the paper concludes with implications for future development of downtown as well as contemplating the fate of the different stakeholders and the future of downtown Fargo.

Areas of similarity and difference: whose community is it, anyway?

This theme addresses how downtown stakeholders have interpreted and acted upon the management of community identity in various ways. Participants varied in terms of embracing downtown for its urban appeal and anti-suburban social and physical organization, and presented competing versions of downtown history. Issues of power and representation are discussed as well as the implications for certain groups impending ability to participate and take ownership over this space. The first section discusses the similarities between all three groups of participants, the tie that binds them all together and makes them downtown stakeholders. The following sections discuss differences between stakeholders, from attitudes towards outsiders, the issue of differing versions downtown history and the implications for social justice issues within the neighborhood, as well as examining the role of power and vulnerability within the community during the process of change.

Similarities: sense of place and contested ownership

The cultural and economic stakeholders in this study all conveyed a heightened sense of community value and expressed a superior social identity upon the downtown

neighborhood. For practical stakeholders this sense of pride and intense personal connection was also a substantial element to their perceptions about the community, and they too experienced a heightened sense of community allegiance downtown. Downtown was seen as a space that was familiar, friendly, and offered social opportunities that many of the most vulnerable members of the FM community could not find elsewhere. Sonya, a director of a homeless shelter and an individual who has dealt with issues facing low income people in this community for several decades, described this sense of community identity by saying

> The homeless population still feels more comfortable downtown than anywhere else in town. I think they feel less noticed, even though it seems to me that people make more assumptions about them downtown…They know each other, that's where their community is. Even though downtown continues to try to create ordinances or something to drive them out, off of Broadway, into the shadows, we also know that the majority of the homeless population, that their sense of community, their community is still downtown. They might have to keep moving or not sit on a bench for too long, they might not be able to panhandle, but they will be able to say hey and do a knuckle bump with somebody that they know because they both know they're homeless and they're part of the same community. They're not going to be able to do that [interact] outside Hornbachers on 32nd. It's like the whole where everybody knows your name bar routine thing.

Like cultural and economic stakeholders, part of what leads practical stakeholders to impart the downtown neighborhood with a heightened sense of communal identity and social vibrancy is it's distinction from other parts of the FM community.

The downtown neighborhood is conducive to building a greater sense of community identity amongst people who are low income, possibly homeless, or disabled, or suffering from mental illness and/or substance abuse problems, not because of the vibrant night life or the abundance of cultural venues and events sought by cultural and economic stakeholders, but rather for *practical* reasons. Instead of being a place where one might hang out with friends at a hip new bar or restaurant or catch a show, homeless people and other people living in poverty come to downtown because many of the social services and supports they need to stay alive are located in this neighborhood. Although homeless shelters are spread throughout the FM community several are located in downtown. In addition to the shelters, many other day supports are located in the downtown area, including the Salvation Army which provides free breakfast and lunch, the Labor Ready building that offers the potential to make a few dollars, as well as there being many spots to hide during the daytime when the shelters are closed. Peter, who deals with housing issues in downtown and throughout the FM area, describes the importance of downtown accessibility to the daily functioning of many vulnerable populations by saying

> It is the central location for a lot of social services. Cass County Social Services is here, Public Health is here, the Housing Authority. The police station is here, it's a really important local location. Woodrow Wilson is near here for alternative education and I think that's really good. Especially when I work with the homeless population it's very useful to have a central

location where people can bebop around and they don't have to take buses here and there so much. I think that it's really good to attempt things like Cooper House [a wet long-term shelter] and to make affordable housing downtown because it decreases the number of homeless people who are roaming down here. Create supports for people who would anyways be downtown so that they are still downtown but are being housed there and still can get their services here. I think it's a geographic center, and that's important.

The pedestrian aspect of downtown culture takes on another dimension when seen from the perspective of practical stakeholders. Since these folks might not have a vehicle which they can drive out into the more suburban, sprawling growth areas of the FM area, and because they sense that other people who are similar to them have a welcoming attitude in this neighborhood, a "walkable" downtown further adds to their personal connection and greater sense of place in this space.

Despite active and passive to push efforts to push low income groups out of downtown, such as anti-loitering and anti-panhandling laws and their exclusion from dominant community narratives, practical stakeholders have continued to claim this space as their own. However, though not a sentiment shared by all economic and cultural stakeholders, a few participants expressed a desire to see people who appeared impoverished, especially homeless people, removed from downtown completely. Alvin, a very recent business owner, characterizes the presences of homeless persons in downtown as problematic, and responds to the question of what he would like to see change in downtown by saying

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> Clean the riff-raff up, that would be a big thing. We get a lot of bums who come in and they just want to cause a ruckus...it would be nice to see that cleaned up.

Part of creating this new and improved social identity for downtown has involved actively and passively working to remove the presence of practical stakeholders from the neighborhood, from passing anti-panhandling and anti-loitering laws within downtown's boundaries to creating community narratives that exclude and marginalize their presence. Antoine, a long term business owner, has tried to advocate for the removal of low income services in downtown at various points over the years. He states:

> When we first came here I used to call downtown the dumping ground, where the city of Fargo and the community put the stuff they didn't want to see. Whether it was mental housing for the disabled or chemical dependency housing it was all downtown. In fact it got to the point where I would go to meetings, planning meetings and city meetings, and say no don't put it downtown anymore...there was no point before in putting money into the roads and making it look pretty when we didn't have any pretty people down here.

Although not all participants were nearly as active in voicing their disdain for a perceived over an abundance of practical stakeholders in the community, giving a narrative that marginalized their presence in the neighborhood has been a key factor in how cultural and economic stakeholders have actively managed the community identity of downtown.

Antoine conveys his perception that "it was all downtown," his sense that issues of homelessness has and continues to be more pervasive in downtown, and that in the past

downtown was only place within the larger FM community that had a concentrated number of low income groups. However, Sonya points out that people often are more conscious of the presence of homeless people in downtown and are more likely to characterize them as such without knowing the specifics of their situation, a phenomenon that also sets downtown apart from other parts of the FM community. Sonya states:

> I see homeless people all over town, but I know how to look for it…I think that people have a little bit more of an expectation to see those folks downtown, maybe if they're acting a little bit unpredictably or erratic. I think that people think there's an increased chance of seeing somebody who's an odd character or possibly homeless downtown, so I think the folks downtown make assumptions about those folks based on their expectations, that anybody who looks a little bit homeless or disabled is somehow now homeless. Whereas when you get out of downtown I think the shock of having somebody like that in the store is so freaky that people are too busy freaking out about it. The homeless factor outside of downtown is essentially panhandling and cart people, it's almost like a novelty.

Although practical stakeholders are faced with varying levels of animosity and disdain from other downtown groups they have not been dissuaded from remaining physically and emotionally connected to the community. However, this marginalization has not gone unnoticed by these stakeholders, and Sonya says:

> Homeless community has a strong sense of community, that's why it's so hurtful to constantly be told to move on. I can assure you [there is] a strong sense of community, that's why they all sandbag houses when they're

homeless. They try to help out, help each other out, because they sense community just like you and I do. You don't need to have a home to understand what your community means to you…Changing how people see homelessness downtown, I suspect people will always be a little bit freaked out by it, but what can we do to change that image that it's not all dangerous, wacked out people. They're not going away; they're going to be downtown.

Practical stakeholders, because they need downtown in an immediate and sometimes life-dependent way, continue to come downtown and be socially connected to this space. However, for a variety of reasons such as fear, misunderstanding, or aesthetical expectations of this space, their presence continues to be contested by other stakeholders.

Crafting a community identity in downtown has entailed many different individuals and groups vying to control the image and characterization of other stakeholders within the downtown social landscape. As a long time case worker like Sonya points out, the perceptions that downtown stakeholders have of each other and the other people who come to the neighborhood is a crucial element in this process. However, this process of narrating about the representation of others is not exclusive with regard to impoverished or homeless persons, but rather cultural and economic stakeholders also attempt to manage the place of outsiders within the community, as well as the identity of one another.

Differences: attitudes towards outsiders and unlikely allies

A shared attitude between cultural and practical stakeholders is the distrust towards outside groups of people, specifically college aged men. However, their reasons for these misgivings come from different types of experiences. Many cultural stakeholders perceived

that downtown outsiders come to the neighborhood only to party, to bar-hop and drink to excess, and as a result ended up "trashing" the neighborhood and disrespecting their sacrosanct space. Mimi asserts that

> I think about how people from outside of downtown come into downtown because it's shiny and sparkly and new, but then they just leave all their crap everywhere. They don't really respect it. They leave garbage everywhere, they use it for their photo shoot background or treat it like it's exotic but they don't respect it because people actually live here.

Indeed, this is a sentiment echoed by several other participants, including Sandy, who was particularly harsh towards the party scene downtown (despite the active night life of downtown being a major factor for both her and Mimi wanting to live in the neighborhood).

> [Recalls encountering people out bar hopping] walking down the street and seeing some guy pissing in the doorway of the Spirit Room. I saw that multiple places, it bothered me because it's not a public restroom. That's how they treat it, they spit on the ground, if you walk down Broadway, they spit their gum out and throw cigarette butts everywhere. They're loud and obnoxious. I get that you're a kid and you're unleashing whatever, you want to be young and crazy, but they're really disrespectful to downtown and that pisses me off.

Although Mimi and Sandy both embrace downtown because of the vibrant social life it offers they also value the neighborhood beyond the bar scene. It is the perception that

outsiders do not recognize the aesthetic importance of downtown, will leave messes and mar the streets with their youthful indulgences, which incites their animosity.

The influx of young people into downtown and especially the growing attraction of downtown as a vibrant hub of night life and social drinking in the FM area has had a different set of negative implications for practical stakeholders. Cultural stakeholders are drawn to downtown for ideological reasons, because they see it as a community they can deeply identify with and therefore might be wary of sharing this new and precious space with outsiders who do not appreciate it on the same level or for the same set of reasons that they do. However, whereas cultural stakeholders seem to dislike outsiders because they find them annoying and disrespectful, some practical stakeholders have faced increasing harassment downtown and have become increasingly vulnerable to physical and psychological attacks from other groups as a result of amplified social activity. Sonya described witnessing an incident where a man who was chronically homeless and whom she had known for many years was ganged up on the street by a group of young men. She told this story:

> One of the things I have seen is the picking on the homeless, that's one of the things that has changed for homeless people downtown. At night I don't see nearly as many homeless people now as I did three years ago. The more students that end up downtown, and it's not just students, but you have those young people who like to go to the party places, the bars, the clubs [has led to an increased] number of homeless people that get picked on, because they're obviously drinking or obviously disabled or obviously mentally ill, that part has gotten worse…Last summer, twice in the same week, I watched

the same guy get picked on by a group of young guys. I know his history and why he looks so rough; he is one of the most chronic addicts I've met. He's downtown panhandling and he shouldn't be, that's totally inappropriate, but what's happening right across from HoDo or a block down, he's standing on the corner and he's panhandling. Then I watch all these guys, twice in one week! He gets mouthy I'm sure, then what do they do, that's an open invite. They've got their cell phones out, you know damn well it ended up on YouTube, and they're videotaping each other while somebody goes up and keeps aggravating him, antagonizing him. This is a man who's an unbelievable artist and I know who he is, so to be at this stop light and see that happen, to watch them aggravating him and him mouthing off. These guys are physically in way better shape so they can sprint away from him so they think nothing about terrorizing him. I've seen that many times with homeless folks being picked on, and always somebody has a camera, it's so gross to me. I see that happening more because downtown is busier and bigger than it's ever been.

This story is a good example of how the increased activity in downtown has led to many more risks for the most vulnerable populations in the FM community. Sonya describes how fewer and fewer homeless people spend time in downtown at night because of the increased violence and harassment they have come to experience. Sonya sees people living on the street as being at the greatest risk for being physically and psychologically assaulted, despite a general sense of homeless persons themselves being dangerousness and that perception used as justification for their displacement from the neighborhood.

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Cultural stakeholders also took issue with the presence and the apparent dominance of wealthier downtown stakeholders. Despite the economic development and financial investment that was required to rehabilitate and rejuvenate the neighborhood, restoring old buildings and adding to the overall aesthetic appeal of this space (and much of what has drawn cultural stakeholders to the new and improved downtown neighborhood), cultural stakeholders resented the presence of affluent residents and shoppers and blamed them for the lack of practical resources within the neighborhood. Many cultural stakeholders described an over abundance of "boutique-y" type shops and worried that downtown was becoming just another shopping area for wealthy middle aged women. Angela, a cultural and economic stakeholder who has started a grassroots non-profit community organization in downtown, expresses a general feeling of distain and disapproval toward wealthier downtown groups voiced by many younger participants by saying:

> putting in the condo's and putting in higher end restaurants and boutiques, and it's kind of frustrating because a lot of those things appeal to 40 year old women, who like fancy shoes and purses.

Yet despite these petty resentments, the expanding presence of affluent downtown residential and commercial properties carries real consequences for cultural stakeholders. Downtown gentrification, although ushering in many of the cultural and aesthetic changes which are so appealing to their ideological ambitions for community formation, contributes to their fear of eventual dismissal from the neighborhood. Harvey, a local artist and a long-time resident of downtown, remarks on this phenomenon and the dual sides of development by saying

It's beneficial because it brings more people with money downtown that are

gonna spend their money downtown. But it also is driving the variation of

people who live there out, because it's driving up the rent prices. People

with my type of income, pretty soon we won't be able to live downtown

because we won't be able to afford too.

The topic of housing, the increased cost of rental properties as well as commercial spaces, was an issue that many participants cited as the biggest drawback to downtown development.

Not only has it become more difficult for poorer cultural stakeholders to find an inexpensive apartment in downtown, this trend has impacted practical stakeholders as well. Cost is not the only factor; development efforts geared at increasing commercial activity in the neighborhood have translated into a sharp increase in the demand for downtown housing. Although there are a few large apartment complexes in the neighborhood, many apartments are located above the street-level shops, a mixed-use design that contributes to the density and urban feel of the neighborhood. Sonya discusses barriers to downtown residency for practical stakeholders, saying:

It is definitely getting harder for low income people to find housing in the

downtown. There are a number of complexes that are low income or HUD,

FHA, those places are great. But a lot of the people you work with have

issues with Housing and can't reach their requirements. When NDSU and

everyone else started coming in, I just recently had to look for an apartment

for myself, I want to live downtown because that's where everything is

happening. I could see that they were really catering to the students. Places

you used to be able to get an apartment you just can't anymore. It pisses me off when I have to listen to the critics talk about we don't want these folks downtown, people are out of their cars walking from store to store [and homeless persons make them feel unsafe], have you not existed outside of your own skin?

For practical stakeholders not only has finding a place to live in downtown become much more difficult over the past decade, creating an atmosphere that is appealing to wealthy shoppers and downtown residents has led to the active pushing out and passive marginalization of these groups. Sonya sees the lack of low income housing and the initiative to exclude vulnerable populations as a consequence of development marketed to more affluent patrons. Indeed, part of crafting an urban ideal for downtown has involved actively reshaping certain conditions of the neighborhood, and minimizing the presence of impoverished or homeless people is a key element in this process. In order for people to want to utilize the sidewalks and walk from shop to shop they need to feel safe, and making people feel safe has entailed enforcing stricter panhandling and anti-loitering laws in downtown, and remaining vigilant about telling people to move along who might otherwise hang out on a bench or sidewalk.

Not only do impoverished groups need access to downtown because it is the geographic center for many social service agencies, but, as discussed in the previous section, their sense of community and social experiences remain centered in this space. Sonya explains why living in downtown is so valuable for low-income and vulnerable populations by saying

When we saw people starting to get into [subsidized] Housing what we

found was that the isolation, the fear of the unknown, the quite was going to

be deafening…You sleep in a shelter and sleep next to 30 guys and you go

to the soup kitchen and you sit at a table with five ten people in a room full

of 100-200 people…You're just surrounded by people, and you move into

an apartment and bam!…all of sudden the isolation makes them feel like

they don't know how to stop and make friends, now all of a sudden they've

been stripped of all the folks around them. It's a community and it's a

culture of respect for community. When you strip someone of that, it's

alienating.

The cost and inconsistency of bus routes throughout the FM area makes transportation a

profound issue for low income groups, and living in the more suburban designed parts of

town can be an isolating, and expensive, experience. Discussing issues of transportation

and housing for low-income groups in the FM community Peter says

I think about the barriers to services, and the number one biggest barrier that

I always come across is transportation. If people don't live downtown they

need to get here for some reason or if they live downtown they need to get

somewhere else for work. That's a bad thing…Transportation is difficult

because the bus routes don't go to the industrial park in Fargo, which is

really difficult. And there are no social services that provide free bus tokens

or vehicle maintenance help…Even para-transit is $2.50 a ride, which is

very expensive for people with disabilities. One trip for the day, even if you

only do one stop, is going to cost you $5.

From issues of transportation, to housing, to access and the ability to remain connected to the social atmosphere of downtown, cultural and practical stakeholders share many of the same fears and challenges as downtown has become a more expensive place to be a part of.

Powerful economic stakeholders do not share the same financial barriers as do poorer downtown groups, and as a result they expressed much less resentment toward downtown outsiders or other groups of people who are part of the neighborhood. Tammy, a long time supporter of downtown and an individual who has been crucial to starting the process of community redevelopment, has a strong sense of identification with her fellow downtowners. She tells a story about being downtown during the zombie pub crawl, an event where people dress up in costumes and go from bar hop to bar all night. She uses this as an example of how she sees people differently in downtown, saying

> You know and understand the people who get attracted to downtown, you have the same mindset and you understand where they're coming from. And you trust them more maybe, you get to know them and trust that kind of persona. If I would have seen a group of zombies at the Hub I would have gotten out of there...even ones that come just for an evening, they come for that sense of community energy.

Furthermore, Tammy does not feel threatened by the presence of low income or homeless people in her community, and instead sees them as contributing to the urban feel of the neighborhood. She states "there's got to be that mix, you've got to be able to see a suited person going to work and then someone who's obviously homeless. It has to be a mix or it won't work".

Indeed, Tammy articulated a great deal of sympathy for individuals who seemed impoverished and who might possibly be living on the street, and did not express animosity but rather compassion and a desire to understand their plight. She relayed a story about finding a man sleeping in the lobby of her building, one of the most spectacularly redeveloped properties in downtown. Instead of feeling afraid, which she said some other residents expressed to her, she and her husband had a conversation with the man and "thought good, he found someplace warm". One of the reasons why affluent downtown residents like Tammy and her husband may not feel threatened by outside groups or the presence of homeless people in downtown is the ability of powerful stakeholders like them to shape the identity and future development of the neighborhood. They can feel secure in knowing the neighborhood is theirs for the taking and not homeless, rowdy bar-hoppers, nor any other group threaten their ability to make this space their home. Since Tammy has the resources vital to downtown development, both cultural and financial, her position within the neighborhood is not contested, at least not in any way that may impact her actual ability to participate in the neighborhood.

Perceptions of social justice issues in downtown and differing views of the historical narrative also varied amongst participants and, based on the sample of this study, individuals who occupied both economic and cultural identities within downtown had the greatest awareness of competing versions of community identity as well as the impact redevelopment has had upon practical stakeholders. The next section explores these critical perspectives and offers some possibly explanations for an awareness (or lack thereof) of such issues.

Many of the participants in this study described downtown's recent past as unattractive and tied this undesirability to the presence of low income groups. Thus the physical and social displacement of practical stakeholders was justified as a necessary and crucial step in current community formation. However, several participants found this process problematic, and this critical perspective was voiced by the participants in this study who had both economic and cultural stakes within the neighborhood. Perhaps their status as occupying several roles within this community has allowed them to be more aware of the consequences of community revitalization faced by these marginalized groups; possibly because both their personal and professional lives are so deeply connected to the success of downtown and have a more tenuous foothold within the community they can better sympathize with other economically and socially vulnerable groups. Either way, the individuals who fell within the middle of the economic and cultural stakeholder's continuum expressed greater concern for consequences of development and community gentrification than other cultural or economic stakeholders.

Angela, a decade-long downtown stakeholder and the director of a grassroots community organization, gave a narrative which stressed her committed to the ideological value of downtown, a greener space that facilitates artistic expression and open community interaction. She discussed the pitfalls of economic development for low income groups, saying

> A lot of housing has changed; it used to be a lot of lower income housing. I
> think that's people perception, and why they were afraid of downtown
> because there were people paying, and there are still apartments that are on

Broadway that are $275 a month which is really cheap. That's gonna attract

students, attract some of the creative types, and it's also going to attract

people who are precariously housed or low income or might be transitioning

from being homeless or have mental health issues. A lot of that has been

pushed out, like the Fargoan is now condo's and boutiques. That was a

[once] weekly or monthly rental. It's nice that things have been refurbished

and reinvested in, but it's also frustrating to see that, to wonder where do

those people go. The whole "not in my neighborhood" is prevalent

throughout the city.

Whereas stakeholders like Alvin, who are almost singularly interested in downtown as a

commercial space and a venue for economic success, wanted to get rid of "bums" and said

he would like downtown to be a place where people fought over space, Angela saw this

process as eroding the potential for creativity and the value of downtown as an inclusive

community center. Stella, who manages a small retail store just off the central commercial

district, saw the process of development directed at wealthier patrons as a threat to cultural

development, saying

I think because of all the money that had to be put into downtown it's kind

of leaning towards being just a place for people with money... That's one of

the saddest things I've seen. It's great that we're having this growth in

downtown but I feel that a lot young people, young creative people, are

being squished out by all the money.

Stella also sees this as an important issue for practical stakeholders, and sees the process of

change as pushing low income groups "under the rug". Stella seems to identify with low

income groups more readily than the folks who live in downtown only for cultural reasons; cultural stakeholders, although aware of issues of housing and the increasing cost of downtown living, do not need to live in downtown other than because they feel a strong personal connection to the neighborhood. Mimi and Nathan both mentioned issues of homelessness but admitted they "didn't really know the situation" (Mimi) or "weren't aware of any issues" (Nathan). A seemingly subtle difference in perception, but awareness and criticism of the process of change defies the dominant narrative of downtown as an idyllic urban neighborhood.

This phenomenon of varying levels of vulnerability also influenced the perception of practical stakeholder risk amongst service providers, with individuals who provided services to the most precariously situated downtowners highly aware of the adverse impact of redevelopment and those who provided services to less vulnerable individuals less concerned with gentrification. Indeed, for service providers who worked with highly disadvantaged groups (Sonya and Peter), there was an awareness of economic and cultural stakeholders' crafting of an idyllic historic narrative and how this narrative of downtown's past was not shared by practical stakeholders. Peter, who is both a would-be cultural stakeholder in downtown (as is Stella, both voicing personal narratives of downtown that mirrored the narratives given by economic and cultural stakeholders), speaks on behalf of the practical stakeholders of this community, describes the issue of history and conflicting practical perspectives by saying

> People don't see it as being a conflict in terms of a class conflict in
>
> downtown. But people who are low income do. Oh yeah! They remember!
>
> They remember when there was more affordable housing, not just rental

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assistance or public housing, but more affordable apartments they could rent without assistance. People who are low income remember what downtown was like [before revitalization efforts] and how it was more accessible for them. There is definitely this feeling of downtown not being their space, an accessible space anymore. I don't think wealthy people see that at all, it's this imaginary, forgotten memories. I do know lots of wealthy people who live downtown, and some people who are poor downtown. I know if I lived downtown I would be here because I want to play here, I wouldn't be facing the issues the people I help get services face.

Peter is quite aware of how the people he works with, very low income folks who are trying to find housing and employment in the FM area, have become increasingly excluded and marginalized within downtown. His narrative suggests that practical stakeholders are quite cognizant of how downtown redevelopment has negatively impacted them, not only in terms of difficulties in finding housing but also how the cultural climate has been crafted in a way that attempts to exclude them. Similar to Sonya's statement regarding how the loitering laws are "hurtful" to people who spend their days on the street, the urban and historical ideal of downtown has very real consequences for practical stakeholders but remains hidden from the perception of most other stakeholders.

However, not all service providers saw downtown redevelopment as problematic, or at least not to the same degree. Paul, who provides services to individuals with disabilities and has spent his career advocating for people to live as independently within the community as possible, does not see downtown change in the same negative light as Peter and Sonya. Paul states

Our whole focus here is getting people integrated in the community and living normal lives and that, like the rest of us, is people living all over the community, having activities all over the community. So centralizing, all though in one sense it might be easier for us, it doesn't make it right or make it better for the folks we serve to have everybody right here. I think it would be not good for the city and I don't see any advantage to the folks we serve to have housing [low income/handicap-accessible] centralized in downtown. I think right now it's fairly balanced and that we should maintain that balance.

This ambivalence towards issues of accessibility in downtown stem from Paul's perception that people with disabilities should utilize downtown for the same reasons that cultural stakeholders do. According to Paul people with disabilities should come downtown because of the neighborhood's status as the social gathering place for the community, where parades take place or other outdoor summer events, but that they do not (or should not) need the space for the same practical reasons as other low income and vulnerable groups. This may seem contradictory at first, since people with physical and mental disabilities are generally very low income (many individuals at his agency rely almost exclusively on social security disability income and other programs such as section eight housing vouchers and food stamp benefits) and thus are one of the most vulnerable populations in the community. However, because of their connection to Paul's organization, the disabled individuals he represents have a team of creative case workers managing their financial lives as well as direct care workers that provide many other social supports. The isolation experienced by formerly homeless people who live out by the mall,

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an issue that was of great concern to Sonya, is offset for this group of practical stakeholders because of staff giving rides and thus connecting them to many potential social opportunities otherwise denied to other non-driving folk.

Paul expressed that he does not want to see downtown "ghettoized", a place that is for and only for low income groups. He is aware, however, that the low vulnerability experienced by the people that he serves influences this opinion, and he states

> Upgrading in downtown always has the risk of [displacement of low-income groups]. I understand that theory and I'm not sure I would be against it even knowing that. I don't see any huge advantage to our people to necessarily be living downtown. It's nice for those folks, it's easy for us when people are in close proximity and can walk here, but Fargo has a really good bus system. If we didn't have that I might have a totally different answer...The people who work with homeless people and the more needy population might have a slightly different take on this.... For people who don't have income or don't have people helping them with their money, can't get housing, I have sympathy and so you probably do need some places like that [the Fargoan, temporary housing]somewhere, but we work with Housing [FHRA] so we can help them get a real apartment.

Paul, since he has many more resources than other community service providers who are represented in this study, and because he can offer a much more comprehensive support network to the people he works with, does not share the same risk perception of downtown change as Paul and Sonya. Although his clients consume the cultural and economic resources of downtown like many other FM residents, they are not impacted by downtown

change nearly to the degree that individuals represented by Sonya and Peter are, explaining the lack of contested community narrative given by Paul. As he notes, if his "folks" had the same level of vulnerability he might be telling a different story, but when you do not face the same degree of denied access and social marginalization there is little reason to adopt a critical perspective of downtown and instead one can focus primarily on the positive aspects of community change.

Status within downtown and the level of vulnerability certain groups and individuals face, from the practical to the cultural, as well as the economic, impacts their perception of downtown change and the adherence to mainstream downtown narratives. It is interesting that all of the participants in this study conveyed the same narrative of downtown social identity; its status as an urban neighborhood that embodied an idyllic version of community formation and defied the alienating aspects of suburbanized living, the significance of history and the origin story of downtown as a crucial source of the aesthetic and cultural value in the neighborhood, as well as conveying a profound sense of pride in this community and a deep sense of personal connection to the space. However, within these narratives there were certain areas of conflict, with some participants more readily recognizing these areas of contested community identity and others not knowing or caring one way or the other.

Staking a claim: community tensions and issues of power

Stakeholders in this study have gone about crafting a social character for downtown and creating a community narrative that in some respects is quite homogeneous, with participant after participant echoing the sentiments of idyllic urban and historic neighborhood characteristics and a shared sense of spatial superiority. Nevertheless, there

are many issues of tension and conflict that exist within this social landscape. The redevelopment of downtown Fargo has hinged on onsiderable investment from the City of Fargo in the creation of the Renaissance Zone program and designating a desk that is concerned solely with issues of parking and development in that space, as well investments made by various entrepreneurs who have taken on significant financial risk but stand to make major gains in the process. However, in order to ensure the success of redevelopment efforts a revitalization of the social atmosphere of the neighborhood and the spurring of cultural development has needed to take place as well. This is why cultural and economic stakeholders overlap; they may have interests more strongly vested in one area or the other, but ultimately they cannot extricate themselves from either side of this mutual process of economic cultural development.

Understanding the many different groups that utilize the space of downtown is a complicated matter. Although many residents and business owners spend a great deal of their time in this community, many people from surrounding neighborhoods, the larger FM area and the entire region also visit and enjoy downtown. Finding a social character that is pleasing to all of them is impossible, but in attempting to advocate and advertise for the neighborhood a dominant community narrative has been crafted, one that is actively managed by the individuals and groups that have a stake in the success or failure of this neighborhood. However, because of the significant amount of money being spent in downtown and the target audience to whom it has been marketed (those wealthy consumers with the ability to financially sustain the economic growth of the community) the cultural formation of downtown has taken place in accordance with these economic objectives. This is not to say that less powerful and/or grassroots groups have not had a say; the FM Bike

Workshop, a non-profit organization that gives away free bicycles and promotes community health, was cited by many participants as representing an important element to the independent character of the neighborhood. However, though groups such as these may eke out and maintain themselves within this dynamic space, they often do not have the resources to move far beyond that nor shape the dominant community narrative.

The significance of power in downtown is the ability of groups with vital community resources to permeate the consciousness of so many other people, dictating the mainstream formation of downtown identity, without there being a collective awareness of the source. Dominant downtown narratives do not actively suppress ideas or people or social events of any sort. On the contrary, cultural and social goings on of every kind are assimilated into the shared notion of downtown as a place that is vibrant and diverse, further promoting the economic objectives of the neighborhood. The more people who come downtown and fight to stake a claim on the social identity of the community are entering as consumers of the capitalist endeavors of the neighborhood and serve to enhance the commercial objectives of powerful economic stakeholders. Again, this is why the cultural and economic aspects of the downtown community are so indelibly interlinked; the consumption of cultural goes hand in hand with a consumption of commerce. Buying a print at a local gallery or catching a band or live performance requires spending money in downtown. The significance of stakeholder theory in this research is found through the manifestation of downtown as an economic enterprise hinged upon cultural consumption; the individuals and groups with vital community resources have the greatest amount of power and thus disproportionately direct the cultural character of the neighborhood. The formation of a dominant downtown narrative is a commercial undertaking that requires the

participation of many different actors, whether they are aware of their role in the process of selling downtown or not.

Since the social identity of downtown has been dominated by economic and commercial forces practical stakeholders face a number of difficulties as a result of neighborhood restructuring. Many of the social service providers who are currently downtown, the public health clinic, the Salvation Army building, etc., were in the neighborhood before redevelopment took place. Although once a major part of the make-up of downtown, along with the banks and law firms that have always silently been there, these support agencies are becoming a less valuable element to community identity. However, their vitality within the lives of the people they serve have not lessened at all, but rather as the population of Fargo has grown the need for these types of practical resources is ever expanding. The majority of the participants in this study made note of certain downtown social justice issues, but by and large it was not a concern that they dwelled upon and rather gave narratives that focused on the passive marginalization of such groups as part of the process of crafting an idealized community identity. Peter discussed how, although most people are aware of social justice issues in downtown, it makes little impact in their daily functioning within the neighborhood, saying

> At the same time there's a little bit of guilt, oh they don't have anywhere to live, people are getting kicked out. It's very much an afterthought, more than an afterthought. It's very central for me. In general people are very focused on how wonderful the development is and just don't think too much about that [social justice issues]. I think that's very different from the people I work with who are very much concerned about downtown development,

very much an advocate for low-income people not being totally excluded from the downtown living and working environment.

Although low-income people will probably never be totally excluded from downtown, their social and physical presence within the neighborhood has certainly been contested. Since they do not (or rather perceived not to) possess many economic or cultural resources, are characterized as not contributing to the economic ventures or the cultural milieu of the neighborhood, they do not seem to matter much to other more powerful cultural and economic groups and consequently have a diminished ability to impact the formation of community identity. Instead of hostility they are faced with ambivalence, and the role of the dollar speaks most loudly when it comes to such matters. Slowly but surely, in a passive but steady manner, the social character of downtown has shifted, and as time goes on it seems that issues of power and control will become further pronounced within this space.

Although all three stakeholders, economic, cultural, and practical, place a greater value upon the downtown neighborhood and experience an intense personal connection to the space, they have differing abilities to impact the crafting of a dominant cultural identity for this neighborhood. The economic investments in downtown which have led to wide-ranging attention to the neighborhood and have facilitated much of the interest that cultural and economic stakeholders take in this space, is accompanied by very real barriers for low income groups, whether they are homeless, disabled, or young students and artists. However, the dominant downtown narrative highly depends upon the participation and endorsement of community members, and many different groups are responsible for maintaining this narrative and justifying the power structure of downtown. Certain

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individuals and groups, those who are deeply invested in downtown but who do not have the same set of financial and/or political resources as powerful economic stakeholders, have begun to offer perspectives that critique and challenge the dominant narrative and draw attention to issues of social justice and community equality and inclusion. The last chapter discusses the implications for this research in terms of contributing to the scholarly understanding of community change as well as the consequences for downtown Fargo itself.

CHAPTER 5. IMPLICATIONS

A community is not simply an assortment of buildings and people living within those structures, but rather a manifestation of the social connections (or disconnection) between individuals and groups within those spaces. Mele (2000) points out that "repeated social interactions in buildings, streets, and entire neighborhoods produce territorial meanings (e.g. 'community') and a sense of privilege and ownership of place" (p.13). Thus, deconstructing a community and understanding the social identity that has been crafted for that space is not simply about discovering the "who" and the "what" but also the "why", the "how", and the meaning that change has had for residents. Much of downtown redevelopment has entailed a reclaiming of space, taking something that was previously rundown, dilapidated and out of use, and reconfiguring it into something new. The origin story of downtown, that historically perspective that lends so much of the cultural value which is attached to this space, has been a part of this reclaiming process as well. Yet as new people come into the neighborhood and imbue their own perspective upon the neighborhood other "territorial meanings" have had to be subordinated in the process.

Downtown Fargo is a space that has been advancing in a fashion that is very different from the other types of community organization found in the rest of the FM metro area, indeed within the highly rural region. Crafting a social identity for downtown has involved actively deciding what the community can and should be and managing that identity within and outside neighborhood boundaries. Urban is defined by the US Census as a function of people and space, as a term that describes the density of population within a certain area. However, urban was defined by participants in this study as representing many other social characteristics such as "dense, vibrant, and diverse", and carried a set of

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certain community expectations. That urban community expectation was crafted by deliberate efforts to change the neighborhood. Whose version of community, who has shaped the mainstream cultural identity of downtown which permeates the consciousness of the people who live in or come to visit this space, has been formed in large part by the efforts of capitalist developers. This is not to say that their intentions have not been good, some might even say remarkable in their efforts to defy more commonly accepted suburban forms of community organization. However, redevelopment efforts have meant that cultural and economic power within downtown has been rearranged, and presented as a necessary step in the commercial development of this space.

At the crux of downtown change, what has driven this process and directs the dominant narrative that is relayed in the daily rhetoric of the neighborhood, is community revitalization as a form of capitalist enterprise. The art scene, the cultural ambiance, the aesthetic renewal of residential and commercial properties, is focused on the building of wealth and economic power. Although the cultural development of downtown is not always connected to this process directly, most local artists create independently and then come to downtown as a venue to sell and display their work; nevertheless their efforts are capitalized upon and used as a means to further this economic endeavor. The process of gentrification and symbolic reformation is not exclusive to downtown Fargo, but rather it is a process that many cities experience during periods of change and revitalization. Mele (2000), in his research on redevelopment in the lower east side of New York City, emphasized the importance of symbolic restructuring as part of the selling of that community. He says

While the images and symbols of urban decay remained the same, their

representations and attached meanings shifted from fear and repulsion to

curiosity and desire. Real estate developers were quick to capitalize on the

interest in the cultural scene, issuing in an arts-driven phase of

redevelopment (p. 233)

Redevelopment of downtown, for as much as it has been about something new, has relied

heavily upon the existing infrastructure of the neighborhood, the historic vestiges and

artists' long standing interest in the space, as a means to facilitate commercial and cultural

revitalization and justify the process of change.

Descriptions of the FM downtown neighborhood found in the narratives given by

participants for this study echoes economic interests and reinforces the symbolic

restructuring of the neighborhood. Mele (2000) has asserted that symbolic marginalization

must be presented as a necessary element to community change and used as a legitimate

justification for the subordination and exclusion of previous neighborhood groups. As we

have seen, the economic and cultural initiatives for change in downtown Fargo have often

been symbiotic, reinforcing and strengthening their mutual development. Indeed, Mele

(2000) refers to this process as a "regime of representation", and states that "despite the

various sources from which place representations emanate, however, they do not float

disconnected or remain meaningfully distinct and separate from each other. Instead,

dominant themes emerge from the repetitive circulation of sources" (p.16). The formation

of downtown social identity stems from many sources, from residents, to shop owners, to

developers, as well as the outsiders that perpetuate the channel of rhetorical representation.

Although they may not necessarily be conscious of the impact this narrative will have upon

other stakeholders, their adherence to the dominant downtown narrative in their daily telling and describing of the neighborhood is nevertheless done in tandem with powerful economic interests.

Community narrative and issues of power and stratification within that space are crucial to understanding the manner in which disadvantaged groups can or will be displaced. Tickamyer (2000) asserts that "the nested character of social processes corresponds to the nested spatial domains of varying scale that they inhabit" (p. 809). In other words, the socially constructed meaning of community impacts the social organization of that space, and therefore has a very real impact upon the people who live in and want to take ownership over their community. Relations of power are expressed in spatial terms, both directly in the form of gentrification and the increase in property values, as well is in the more subtle form of symbolic marginalization. Hard differences, a term that Lemert (2004) has coined to describe the significant ideological characteristics which separate us within time and space, is a crucial feature of the social makeup and political structuring of downtown Fargo. Modern existence is characterized by an ability to access and participate within many different types of community, from the virtual to the local to a ready access to the global. However, the hard differences between us are less tangible but much more difficult to bridge, entrenched within our basic understanding of ourselves, others and our respective lived realities. Downtown is a community made up of many different people who are sharing the same physical space but do not always share a common social reality.

Lemert (2004) points out that "to speak of difference in a sociological sense is to speak, at least in principle (but surely almost always in practice as well), of social things as

irremediably different; thus absent to each other-that is: hard differences" (p.226).

Community identity, and adherence to the mainstream social characterization of

downtown, draws a hard line in the sand amongst stakeholders. The social and

psychological space between the various groups of people in downtown is intensified

because of the relatively small geographic area of the neighborhood but high degree of

differential populations. Practical stakeholders, those who are not readily perceived as

being part of the social makeup of downtown and whose contributions to social or

economic development have principally been dismissed by the dominant downtown

narrative, are excluded from the community in a hard way. That is, they may walk

alongside other stakeholders, live next door and eat at some of the same places, and though

they are sharing the same space and many of the same expectations for that space they are

perceived as ideologically and symbolically *not* a part of downtown social identity. Despite

the physical presence of practical stakeholders in downtown the dominant community

narrative has functioned to exclude them from the social imaginings of the neighborhood.

These practical stakeholders are faced with varying levels of animosity and distrust from

other downtown groups, from representing a living eyesore upon the physical and social

landscape of the community to being virtually inconsequential; they are present in this

space but the hard differences between them and other more powerful downtown

stakeholders make them invisible.

The marginalization of practical downtown stakeholders exemplifies how

downtown change and the restructuring of not only the physical but the social atmosphere

of the neighborhood is driven primarily by economic prerogatives. Despite the intense

personal connection to downtown shared with other downtown stakeholders, practical

stakeholders are not perceived as transmitting very much economic value nor are they seen as contributing to the cultural and aesthetic ambiance of the neighborhood. I must point out that I do not mean to suggest that real estate developers or economic entrepreneurs are consciously and actively working to get rid of these populations, but rather that processes of domination and subordination are found in the various manifest and latent processes of neighborhood change. The exclusion of low income groups in downtown is not done directly, although certain ordinances have and continue to be put in place that diminish their reasons to be in the neighborhood (anti-loitering laws for example). Instead, their dismissal is symbolic; meted out through their exclusion from dominant descriptions of the neighborhood and associating their presence with negative aspects of the downtown community.

Although certain service providers have been acutely aware of how the revitalization process has negatively impacted practical stakeholders' ability to participate and take ownership over community identification, many other downtown stakeholders are fairly unaware of their plight. The exclusion of low income groups in downtown is problematic for a number of reasons. First and foremost, downtown is an extremely important space for vulnerable populations in the FM area in terms of accessing support services, from free meals to subsidized healthcare to the many service agencies that are located in the neighborhood. In many very real ways practical stakeholders *need* downtown. Increasing property values threaten not only the ability of practical stakeholders to live in the neighborhood but also the potential for the social service organizations of downtown, Salvation Army, FHA, etc., to remain there as well. The individuals who provided supports for practical stakeholders in this project noted the value of downtown as

a geographic center for services, and the loss of these long-standing organizations in downtown could potentially alter the social and geographic character of downtown in the short and long term. Furthermore, although many participants narrated about the negative features of downtown when practical stakeholders seemed to be the dominant social group in downtown, their complete dismissal from the neighborhood would take away an intangible element of downtown culture; the image of downtown being "diverse" and "urbane" would surely diminish without their presence. Cultural stakeholders share many more similarities with practical stakeholders than they do with powerful economic stakeholders, and yet they function to perpetuate the hegemony of downtown political structuring through their adherence to the dominant downtown narrative. Despite the fact that gentrification has entailed increased housing costs, a high degree of residential competition and the direction of development in downtown moving in way that is not generally in their best interest, most of the participants in this study did not identify with practical stakeholders but rather readily accepted their dismissal as necessary and good. The hard differences between cultural and practical stakeholders have been magnified by economic interests, and this has reinforced hegemonic capitalistic processes in the neighborhood.

Stakeholder theory further explains why low income groups are excluded from downtown identity formation and the process of change. Modifying the business theory of Jawahar and McLaughlin (2001) to fit with a community model of social organization allows one to pay close attention to how the groups who have the greatest amount of cultural, political and especially economic resources, will have the greatest ability to shape the character of a community and the direction that it will take in the future. It is interesting

that stakeholder theory, a business management theory, adapts so easily to community development research. And yet, when you consider that downtown and the process of change is inherently defined as a financial venture that has been driven by powerful economic and state forces, the utility of stakeholder theory is intensified. The different groups that make up downtown, and they are a wide and varied group, bring diverse assets and resources to the communal table. Cultural stakeholders who embrace downtown for ideological reasons not only consume within the neighborhood but also contribute to the sense of downtown as a hip and happening place, spatially unique with a high degree of social activity. Economic/cultural stakeholders represent the small independent sector of downtown economy, and though not as powerful as wealthy developers and entrepreneurs, they comprise and important element of the diverse and eclectic nature of downtown commerce. Economic stakeholders, the powerful property owners and development groups that have taken on the task of recreating downtown, facilitate much of the activity that other groups come for in downtown. If not for their efforts downtown wouldn't be a vibrant economy that has space for and embraces independent and grassroots activities. Since these economic stakeholders have the greatest amount of resources they have the most potential to dictate the community narrative of downtown and shape its future. And thus, because practical stakeholders possess few financial resources and have been presented as contributing little to the cultural climate of the neighborhood, they have been relatively powerless in influencing the direction of redevelopment and the crafting of a dominant community narrative.

This research contributes to the fields of community development, place-based sociology, and stakeholder theory. In terms of community development, downtown Fargo

presents a unique setting, one that is not rural but surrounded by it at great distance. Downtown is an urban space but certainly not to the scale of other large American cities; it's less than one mile radius makes it a dense but diverse section of a mostly suburbanized metro area. Furthermore, incorporating a post-modern understanding of social organization, bringing time and space into community analysis in a compelling way that emphasizes the importance of subtle forms of power, contributes to the future success of urban and rural community research and planning. Strengthening the importance of place-based theorizing within the area of critical sociological discourse and research also facilitates a more complex understanding of social stratification as it plays itself out in the daily lives of people and groups. Place matters, and many issues of domination and subordination cannot be understood outside of their locales. Stakeholder theory, an analytical model most commonly used in areas of business, has proven to be an effective tool in deconstructing complex social organizations of any type. Stakeholder theory also allows for discovering critical differences between groups, the complicated and intersecting areas of similarities, in an orderly and efficient manner. One of the limitations of this research is that it seeks out the "important" actors in downtown and therefore has been concerned with the narratives of powerful groups and their impact on community reformation. Additional research should be directed toward discovering the hidden assets and contributions of practical stakeholders, how they have managed to remain connected to this community despite active and passive efforts to exclude them, as well as how they may create counter-narratives about change, history, and other downtown populations. Although this research seeks to contribute to scholarly literature its true value lays in the manner in which it may

convey practical advice regarding the future development of downtown Fargo and the potential for addressing issues of inequality and neighborhood advocacy.

The project is significant to me for several reasons. First, as a long-time resident of this city, I have seen downtown change and have experienced the physical and ideological restructuring of this space first hand. Coupled with a sociological understanding of people and space my interest has intensified as I watch this dynamic and interesting community expand, if not always geographically but certainly in terms of the variety of people who share my interest in the scope of what downtown has to offer. I have benefited greatly from downtown revitalization; the intense personal connection expressed by each of my participants is not foreign to me. Rather, downtown is special because it is unlike any other space within the FM community. Driven by powerful economic forces which have the ability to physically change and improve the already compelling historical nature of downtown, it is a space that is filled with culture and alternative thought. It embodies a "different way of thinking" that so many participants remarked on. In many ways Fargo is a fairly isolated community; surrounded by rural towns and great expanses of farmland, downtown meets the expectations of many FM residents, young and old, for a more urbanized, one might even say cosmopolitan, experience.

However, as I have tried to stress throughout this research, community change has not come without consequences, and by and large the price of revitalization has been paid by the most vulnerable groups in the FM area. Many low income individuals find themselves in the FM community; for a variety of reasons it is primarily due to the fact that Fargo is by far the largest city in the region and offers a much broader scope of social services, housing and vocational opportunities, resources that are few and far between

within the sparsely populated region. Since downtown has a history of being the geographical hub for these services, the increased competition for space and community ownership has impacted these groups in several ways, from a symbolic sense (or lack thereof) of place as well as the very real threat of physical displacement. The fear of dislocation is found among other downtown stakeholders, those who have strong ideological ties to the neighborhood but lack significant financial resources, and their fear is not without justification. The exclusion of various groups within downtown has not been an abrupt process, or an obvious one; it is the side-effect of gentrification and economic revitalization efforts.

I have two suggestions to combat and contradict the process of symbolic marginalization in downtown. These ideas are not fully my own but rather come from both a scholarly source and a very practical one. First, I must agree with Sonya, who asserts that instead of putting resources into pushing out impoverished groups, effectively giving them fewer and fewer reasons to come to downtown or attempt be a part of this community, those resources would be much better spent educating people and providing resources that allows these groups to participate in downtown in a healthy and normative way. Instead of fighting downtown's status as the geographical center for social services, embrace these establishments as part of a truly diverse and eclectic neighborhood. Although there has been development of high end properties many buildings in downtown or nearby neighborhoods remain vacant, and the call for a greater abundance of affordable housing will impact the ability for low income groups, from the formerly homeless to students to young artists, to remain physically and socially connected to this space. Otherwise, as

Angela pointed out, the marginalization of low income groups perpetuates the erosion of downtown as an inclusive community center.

The second suggestion comes from Mele (2000) who asserts that the everyday action and visibility of local groups is a potent form of resistance in the attempt to characterize a neighborhood as exclusively middle and upper class. People out on the street, from low income groups to struggling artists to young students, have a very immediate impact on the collective character of downtown due to the highly pedestrian nature of this community's social organization. And where else in the FM area but downtown would such an active effort to reclaim communal identity take place? The process of symbolic marginalization, although driven by very tangible economic processes, is legitimated through the subtle and often unconscious form of mainstream rhetorical narration. The raising of consciousness and the incorporation of social justice and social equality must be brought into the daily presentation of the neighborhood, and saturated within the voices of all downtown stakeholders. One of the advantages of actively managing a community identity is the ability for that social character to be dynamic, to change and represent important and often invisible groups. Downtown stakeholders proclaim a desire for a broad diversity of people to comprise the downtown landscape; it is time they make this a concrete element to their ideological perceptions of the neighborhood.

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APPENDIX A. IRB APPROVAL

NDSU   NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board

Office of the Vice President for Research, Creative Activities and Technology Transfer
NDSU Dept. 4000
1735 NDSU Research Park Drive
Research 1, P.O. Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050

701.231.8995
Fax 701.231.8098

Federalwide Assurance #FWA00002439
Expires April 24, 2011

Monday, September 13, 2010

Dr. Carrie Anne Platt
Communication
Ehly 202

Re: IRB Certification of Human Research Project:

> **"Downtown Fargo and the crisis of identity"**
> Protocol #HS11038

Co-investigator(s) and research team: **Lindsay Bergenheier**

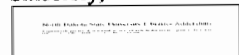Study site(s): **varied**   Funding: **n/a**

It has been determined that this human subjects research project qualifies for exempt status (category # 2) in accordance with federal regulations (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46, *Protection of Human Subjects*). This determination is based on the protocol form received 9/2/2010 and consent/information sheet received 9/10/2010.

Please also note the following:

- This determination of exemption expires 3 years from this date. If you wish to continue the research after 9/12/2013, the IRB must re-certify the protocol prior to this date.
- The project must be conducted as described in the approved protocol. If you wish to make changes, pre-approval is to be obtained from the IRB, unless the changes are necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to subjects. A *Protocol Amendment Request Form* is available on the IRB website.
- Prompt, written notification must be made to the IRB of any adverse events, complaints, or unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others related to this project.
- Any significant new findings that may affect the risks and benefits to participation will be reported in writing to the participants and the IRB.
- Research records may be subject to a random or directed audit at any time to verify compliance with IRB policies.

Thank you for complying with NDSU IRB procedures; best wishes for success with your project.

Sincerely,

Kristy Shirley, CIP
Research Compliance Administrator

NDSU

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board

Office of the Vice President for Research, Creative Activities and Technology Transfer
NDSU Dept. 4000
1735 NDSU Research Park Drive
Research 1, P.O. Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050

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Federalwide Assurance #FWA00002439
Expires April 24, 2011

Monday, April 25, 2011

Dr. Christina Weber
Sociology and Anthropology
Barry Hall 100D

Re: IRB Certification of Human Research Project:

　　　"Downtown Fargo: Stakeholder Struggles and the Crisis of Identity"
　　　Protocol #HS11255

Co-investigator(s) and research team: **Lindsay Bergenheier**

Study site(s): **Fargo, ND**　　　　　　Funding: **n/a**

It has been determined that this human subjects research project qualifies for exempt status (category # 2) in accordance with federal regulations (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Part 46, *Protection of Human Subjects*). This determination is based on the protocol form received 4/20/2011 and consent/information sheet received 4/18/2011.

Please also note the following:

- This determination of exemption expires 3 years from this date. If you wish to continue the research after 4/24/2014, the IRB must re-certify the protocol prior to this date.
- The project must be conducted as described in the approved protocol. If you wish to make changes, pre-approval is to be obtained from the IRB, unless the changes are necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to subjects. A *Protocol Amendment Request Form* is available on the IRB website.
- Prompt, written notification must be made to the IRB of any adverse events, complaints, or unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others related to this project.
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- Research records may be subject to a random or directed audit at any time to verify compliance with IRB policies.

Thank you for complying with NDSU IRB procedures; best wishes for success with your project.

Sincerely,

Kristy Shirley, CIP, Research Compliance Administrator

APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) How would you characterize downtown?

2) When you think about change in downtown, what comes to mind?

3) What are the most significant changes in downtown?

4) What do you like or dislike about downtown change?

5) Who do you think should be making changes in downtown?

6) What vision do you have for the community, how would you like to see downtown change in the future?

7) If you were doing this project with other people from downtown, what would you like to find out from them?

Economic stakeholder additional questions:

1) How has downtown change impacted the business climate of downtown?

2) Do you think downtown is a good place to do business?

3) What have been the biggest challenges doing business in downtown?

4) What are the benefits of doing business in downtown?

5) What changes would benefit your business in terms of downtown change/redevelopment?

Practical stakeholder additional questions:

1) What are the biggest challenges for people you serve who are living in the downtown neighborhood?

2) Are there any examples of how downtown change has impacted the way you provide services (you do not need to answer this question/please exclude any identifying information of your clientele)

3) What downtown changes would be helpful in your work to serve your clientele?