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How Culture and Storytelling Can Influence Urban Development: An Ethnographic Look at the

Community-Driven Revitalization of Newtown in Sarasota, Florida

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Dedication

       I dedicate this work, along with everything I do, to all of my past, present and future loved ones that make everyday goals and efforts all worthwhile. I would specifically like to thank my parents, for their bottomless support, and my brother, for being my rock and always coming through for me (most recently when he helped me figure out how to do several kinds of page numbers in a single document). I would also like to thank my closest friends to date for supporting me whenever and however they could (as well as my therapist for being good at her job) throughout the 2020 experience of the thesis process.

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Abstract

When Americans think of Florida, tourist attractions often trail the initial thoughts of alligator sand chaos. Disneyworld and its neighboring parks are set up for optimal experience and consumption, the thought of a trip South along the coast for a sweltering beach day, sipping on a frozen drink in January sings to Midwesterners. For residents of these seaside cities, such as Sarasota, the experiences of the space are much more complex. Within the broader contexts of the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement following the murder of George Floyd and a global pandemic that impacted America's marginalized populations disproportionally, this anthropological study evaluates the role of the Sarasota African American Cultural Coalition (SAACC) in reclaiming narratives of place and securing equitable representation of their narratives. The goals of this study are: 1) to demonstrate how informed non-profit engagement and arts can reshape understandings of locality, 2) to explore the consequential roles of representation on social media in tourist-oriented locations, and 3) to further our discussion of remote and online methods during a time of physical distancing.

I. Introduction

Even before the year had ended, people had started to routinely refer to 2020 as tumultuous or "crazy," globally, nationally, and locally (Salo, 2020). The entire world struggled to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, and protests for racial justice were regular occurrences in the United States and in Florida.   In Sarasota, counter-protests against the wearing of masks accompanied footage of packed beaches, disappointed online observers and leading to the fleeting 2020 hashtag, #Floridamorons. Among those navigating these political tensions and a global crisis were non-profits with missions to bring positive change to marginalized communities. Even before the pandemic, organizations like Sarasota's Newtown Alive were turning to heritage tourism to resist gentrification and the erasure of Sarasota's historically Black community. This thesis explores how the broader pattern of how gentrification has shaped spatial negotiations in a city that is still experiencing growth during this tumultuous period. Here I turn an ethnographer's gaze to Newtown Alive[1] and the Sarasota African American Cultural Coalition (SAACC) to understand how their organizers were both responding to the increasing pressures on urban "development" in Sarasota as well as the challenges brought by the pandemic and politics of 2020.

Sarasota is a slow growing, tourist-oriented, South Florida beach city. Within the boundaries of North Sarasota lies Newtown, Sarasota's historic Black community. Newtown was the remaining of its two historic Black communities. Overtown, Sarasota's oldest Black community, lost most of its historical residents, as the area was rebranded the gentrified

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[1] Newtown Alive is the name of a non-profit organization, as well as its materials, including an ethnographic book.

"Rosemary District" in the 1990s. The loss of Overtown prompted Fredd Atkins, the first Black mayor of Sarasota, a former city commissioner and longtime Newtown resident, to begin efforts to protect Newtown from the socio-cultural erasure of gentrification (Redfern, 2003), as the adjacent downtown area of Sarasota expands. Local anthropologists, mainly Dr. Rosalyn Howard from the University of Central Florida, became involved when the project received official city and county support in 2014. One major outcome of those projects was the Sarasota African American Cultural Coalition (SAACC). The SAACC's overarching goal is the construction of an African American Arts and Cultural Center in the city of Sarasota. What began as an urgent effort to use ethnographic and oral history methods to preserve Newtown's stories and memories grew quickly into a local movement to reshape narratives and power dynamics within the cityscape.

Gentrification is not a passing fad, as a 2019 *City Lab* article pointed out. The study featured found that US migration to urban areas has only increased in the 2000s (Lee et al. 2019). The authors cite amenities and access to transit as two major components but note that it was only certain types of cities - "cultural hubs" - that experience this rapid growth (Lee, Lee and Shubho, 2019). Cultural draws to urban spaces involve novelty; for young professionals that grew up in the suburbs, novelty and risk observed in cities involve aestheticized experiences heavily contextualized by race and class (Zukin, 2009: 4). Patterns of gentrification are often criticized for trivializing pain and strife happening within marginalized communities of color, in that gentrifiers are looking to engage with the "excitement" that their parents or grandparents moved away to avoid, the race-based decision making that led to additional hardships for inner-cities in the first place. Gentrification was first coined in the 1970s to describe patterns of longtime suburban residents returning to the city following the mass exodus known as "white

flight" in the 1950s and 1960s (Thomson, 2014). In the 50 years since this trend was first observed, the faces and storefronts of longtime Black neighborhoods have changed, new social and economic groups have since formed, risen, and fallen, or moved into larger urban hubs (Zukin, 2009).

During the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, an internship with the SAACC gave me privileged access to the inner workings and decision making of the organization and its directors. How do such non-profits' directors and various stakeholders (public, private, local, national) negotiate a) budget limitations, b) informational and media barriers, and c) gentrification and d) political tensions around race and memory in the US South? How does social media engagement at all scales around Sarasota shape, reproduce, and/or resist existing race and class inequalities in the city? This project contributes to existing anthropological scholarship on heritage tourism, city migration, revitalization and gentrification (Rodriguez and Ward, 2018; Billingham, 2015; Harvey, 2002; Gravari-Barbas and Guinand, 2017). As the social media intern for the SAACC and someone born and raised amid Sarasota's racial and class divides, I was also personally interested in evaluating these patterns as they came to a head in the context of 2020's global pandemic and emerging conflicts around race and racialized violence.

Background

Flanked with semi-operating plaza after strip-mall, Sarasota's suburban layouts exemplify "urban sprawl," defined by environmental law scholar, J. Celeste Sakowicz as "low density development on the edges of cities and towns that is poorly planned, land-consumptive, automobile dependent and designed without regard to its surroundings" (Sakowicz, 2004: 402). Based on discussion with many other young Floridians, Tampa, St Petersburg, and Miami seem to be the South Florida cities where young people are flocking the most from their suburban

upbringings. Such cities offer not only beaches and warm weather but arts, museums, and nightlife. The pressure to emulate such success is growing in Sarasota. Because investment in Sarasota over the past 75 years has focused largely on accommodating wealthier, White retirees, Sarasota has been late to attract a younger demographic, despite the fact Sarasota's population is not as monolithic (old, white) as the city's branding might make one assume (Census Bureau, 2019). Sarasota's tailoring of planning decisions to retirees has even been suggested as a major reason the city has struggled to retain young professionals (Conway, 2016; Levey-Baker, 2017). Using the example of the local outcry made when a Taco Bus restaurant was prevented from opening in downtown Sarasota due to accessibility requirements, Shelby Webb (2016) argued that the messaging was clearly unwelcoming to younger people. The theme of generation will continue in this thesis, as both a challenge to inclusive movements to rebrand the city, as well as a key to future organizing and cross-racial/class collaborations among community stakeholders.

Sarasota is located south of the city of Bradenton, or Manatee County, a middle- and lower-income area where much of Sarasota's labor force comes from. To the south of Sarasota is Venice, a quieter area and more of a "sleepy beach town" than Sarasota based on my own experiences there, over a period of two decades . Given how much of Sarasota's arts and tourism economy is located at the north end of the city, tensions surrounding wealth and appearance between Sarasota and Manatee counties are tangible; Bradenton is sometimes "charmingly" referred to as "Bradentucky" by Sarasota residents to denote the "rowdy" behavior of "rednecks" and unsightly landscapes of the lower income communities that lie just 15-minute drive northwards. One entry for "Bradentucky" a 2009 *Urban Dictionary* entry defines it as "local reference to Bradenton, because it is so ghetto and redneck." This nickname became so commonplace that it was claimed by a roller derby team in the area, the Bradentucky Bombers

(see "What is Bradentucky?" 2017). The use of the "Bradentucky" moniker by Sarasota residents serves to distance Sarasota's brand from pervasive issues that, in reality, are very much present in Sarasota County, such as drug addiction (Lakeview Health, 2019) and homelessness (D'Souza, 2014) – issues still very strategically absent from the representations being produced of the city in the wake of the Great Recession.

Considering the context outlined above, how are the local Newtown advocacy groups working to support and represent a historically marginalized community amid creeping gentrification in Sarasota? In Newtown Alive's partnership with Visit Sarasota[2] to bolster its historical narratives, are details and reflexivity on issues being lost, or can they carve out space for fully representative, but difficult narratives? As I mentioned, in order to answer these questions, I interned with the SAACC to help generate local awareness of their goals for Sarasota, including the construction of a museum and cultural center. As a part of the internship, I familiarized myself with the archives compiled and presented by past Newtown Alive initiatives and kept updated on current non-profit work in the Newtown community, such as the many functions organized by the local Multicultural Health Center during the heights of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As one may imagine, with so much historical wealth and a history of segregation and gentrification, certain aspects of Sarasota's history are more exposed than others in typical representations of Sarasota. The MTV "reality" show *Siesta Key* features mansions along the beach as well as a young, attractive, predominantly white group of "friends" sorting through love triangles against the backdrops of the city's most pristine settings (Head, 2019). While this thesis

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[2] The city's main tourism agency.

will not focus on such popular representations of Sarasota, *Siesta Key* serves as an example of one prevalent imagining and representation of Sarasota as a playground for children of the elite.

But, in short, there is much more to Sarasota than what *Siesta Key* features, from the historically Black community to the retirees to a younger generation of urbanites pushing to reshape the city's image (Conway, 2016). Further, Sarasota is dealing with an intersection of issues related to its image and identity: a history of racial segregation, urban renewal and gentrification, and climate change (including rising sea levels and red tide). Prior to the spread of COVID-19, or Coronavirus, the city had a number of new and growing social hubs that seemed on the upswing. Gulf Gate Village, over the last ten years, has become popular among locals and tourists alike. The "village" consists of six strip plazas on the four streets that lie between U.S. 41 and the Gulf Gate Estates suburbs. There is no uniform theme connecting the businesses, which consist of breakfast cafes and boutiques neighboring dive bars, a smoke shop and tattoo parlors. This destination is not considered by local media to be as "upscale" as its counterparts in St. Armands and the downtown area, but it has continuous foot traffic from community members looking for something to do, like trivia nights at Gulf Gate Food and Beer or karaoke at Clever Cup. Due to its location across from the South Bridge and the nearest Publix to the beaches, it creates an atmosphere welcoming to younger urbanites as well as tourists staying on Siesta Key also frequenting the suburban Gulf Gate Village. While Gulf Gate's liveliness is not the primary focus of this project as it is removed from the growing downtown, it certainly demonstrates local interest in affordable dining and recreation.

Historic Context and 'Newtown Alive' Archival Findings

Established in 1902, the town of Sarasota has long been a small-scale spectacle for those who venture to South Florida. Ten years after its founding, circus mogul John Ringling and his wife, Mable, purchased 25 percent of Sarasota's land, predominantly on the bayfront. This led to long-lasting, deep-rooted ties to the circus; circus performance is presently an activity found on the schedules of interested Sarasota high school students. There is also an art museum, an art and design college, and many other prominent buildings in the downtown area that still bear the Ringling name. The city clearly has the roots and resources for a lively arts scene. However, these spaces have long been very exclusive; Sarasota also has a history of racial segregation dating back to its founding.

Early Black residents came looking for work and most often found jobs farming, laying the railroads, or as domestic servants (Howard and Oldham, 2017: 1). As the 20th century progressed, Sarasota was slow to accept national and local movements for integration. Beach segregation was protested with weekly caravans from the Newtown community, led by the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), from 1955 until several years after the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964 (Howard and Oldham, 2017). In spite of the Brown v. Board ruling in favor of the integration of schools in 1954, the city of Sarasota refused to do so until 1968. When it finally did reluctantly integrate the schools, it did so by closing the Black school, Booker High School. This led to a widespread school boycott in the Newtown community, where they set up Freedom Schools in their churches. The city was finally willing to renegotiate in 1970, when they reopened Booker High School as a Music and Performing Arts magnet school to attract white students, which they argued would foster further integration (Howard and Oldham, 2017).

In receiving local and Federal grants and permissions to showcase Newtown's history, Dr. Rosalyn Howard, as a practicing anthropologist, was included alongside Vickie Oldham, a local consultant, to oversee the research. Dr. Howard is a cultural anthropologist at University of Central Florida who specialized in study of the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean. The data collected by Oldham, Howard and their team from available archives and centering findings from oral history interviews were put towards their book, *Newtown Alive: Courage, Dignity and Determination* (2017). This book provides much greater detail on the stories I would regularly see in Vickie's presentations to local clubs, and as posts on the Newtown Alive social media. Online pages dedicated to the stories and their settings are also on the Newtown Alive website for visitors to engage with in a clear and accessible manner. In presenting these stories and archival news reporting, Newtown Alive is a direct answer to the cultural erasure, further explored in the literature review (Redfern, 2003), caused by patterns of gentrification. For Newtown Alive, Howard and collaborators conducted over 40 in-depth oral history interviews, predominantly with older (>50 years) residents. Their accounts, as well as archival research, informed tours and presentations to community organizations. For me, gaining access to and understanding this earlier work was essential to forming an evaluation of how the effectiveness of these initiatives in reaching Sarasota's tourists and residents outside of Newtown.

Honestly, I was not always clear on the exact role anthropology played in the formation and organization of Newtown Alive. While Dr. Howard facilitated research on Newtown's living history and stories, community members were always at the forefront of shaping and producing the narratives presented to outsiders. In the dissemination of these stories to broader Sarasota, the central roles of Newtown's community members are very evident; more so, even, than the initial

methods used to gather and organize the oral history and presentations. The chapters throughout the book draw from what the interviewees had to say on wide-ranging subjects such as desegregation, education and schools, churches, and sports. But the history also comes across as objective and clear rather than complicated and contested. For this introduction section, I briefly overview three important context chapters researched and presented by one of the non-profits involved in my thesis evaluation.

In the *Newtown Alive* (Howard and Oldham, 2017) chapter on desegregation, the authors draw upon archival research to present realities for Black residents of Manatee County, of which Sarasota was a part until 1921 (2017: 130). They cite a USF honors thesis to demonstrate that Florida was the leading state in the country for lynchings per capita from the 1890s to the 1920s (2017: 130). To give an example, the book recounts how a train conductor hit a Black passenger over the head with a revolver when the passenger demanded the correct change from the day prior (2017: 132). The chapter next features oral history interviews on life in Sarasota during the 1950-60s. Multiple interviewees cited Fruitville Road (a visible threshold to this day from Newtown to the downtown area of Sarasota), as a Mason Dixon line they could not cross, especially after sundown (2017:132). Interviewee Reverend Jerome Dupree described having to go to the police station for permits to do his job at the bowling alley. This chapter demonstrated in-depth the living memory of being excluded from Sarasota's crowned and coveted spaces.

The *Newtown Alive* (2017) politics chapter opened with localized discussion of voting rights historically and went into contemporary challenges to unfair electoral processes. In the 1970s, Newtown citizens and the local NAACP began to organize resistance to the inequitable local systems that kept them disempowered. Oral history interviewee Dr. Edward James II explained how they first asked the city to have five single member districts after they had five

Black candidates run for City Commission nine times with not a single win (2017: 146). The city refused until they sued, at which point Sarasota filed an affirmative defense to avoid going to court saying they could fix things independently if the suit was dropped, which the NAACP refused, and a fairer process was supported by the judge in 1979 (2017: 146). This legal battle is still discussed in community outreach presentations to emphasize the importance of participating in local politics from Newtown and the significance of political support from the larger Sarasota community. During my observation period of nine months, Walter Gilbert III, a longtime Newtown resident who plays a large role in NTA, ran for the Charter Review Board, which updates the county charter as they deem necessary. I first heard about this at a presentation to the Longboat Key Democratic Society in a bid for financial and electoral support. Gilbert, running as Non-party affiliated, lost to a Republican candidate, and, upon closer inspection, I found that not one Black person was elected to the Charter Review Board from any district. Out of 36 positions filled via election in November 2020, two of the winning candidates were Black.

The final chapter of the *Newtown Alive* book that I evaluate here as contextual is the redevelopment chapter. The redevelopment chapter discusses the need for intervention in Newtown to go beyond beautification and focus on social and economic solutions for the community (2017: 200). This chapter introduces the Newtown Community Redevelopment Area Plan (CRA), which was written by Newtown residents and supported by the City of Sarasota in 2000-01 (2017: 201). It discusses the deterioration of Newtown at the hands of city negligence, as well as the importance of centering voices of those impacted by these wrongs (2017: 202-03). This brief chapter closes by presenting the issue that, as of the 2008 economic crash, 60 percent of real estate in Newtown is owned by outside investors rather than community members (Howard and Oldham, 2017: 204), this is something that Oldham identified as a persisting issue

in 2021. The chapter closes on an uplifting note describing the importance of developers working with longtime, vested community members to redevelop without gentrifying (2017: 204). The book's reflections on redevelopment, as well as my time in the field reflected that city officials are listening, but the historic divide between Newtown and other Sarasota residents still exists.

Online content analysis, which is described in more detail in the methods chapter, conducted for this project reflected that there is sometimes a disdain for inclusivity and political correctness by local republicans, which is the majority of voters in Sarasota County. One of the oral history reviews reflected how, like any population, the Newtown community is not monolithic in their ideals for Newtown's future, with one interviewee saying she would like to see it become its own, independent town within Sarasota (2017: 213). In a brief survey I conducted and will discuss further in later chapters, one respondent said outright that they wanted to see Newtown gentrified over and residents pushed out. The stories featured throughout the book give perspective on living in Sarasota that many residents today would not otherwise connect to the locality that they are inhabiting and presently experiencing. This is important in how they may talk to others about the visible wealth disparity with Newtown, how people may vote in the future and how they would like to see the city change as it grows.

As seen in the struggles for equal access to education and beaches in Sarasota, activist organizing is what has driven progress for racial justice, and this is still the case today. The SAACC, based in Newtown, the city's historic Black community, is pushing for racial justice and preserving Sarasota's Black heritage through educational initiatives. These include the 15-stop Newtown Trolley Tour, which was established through coordination with the City Commission, five non-partisan elected city officials that govern Sarasota. These efforts combat the erasure of Newtown's history from local memory as Ringling College expands onto Martin

Luther King Jr. (MLK) Way. All information I gathered on Newtown initiatives came firsthand from Newtown's educational materials or from observations made during my internship as Social Media Coordinator for the Sarasota African American Cultural Coalition (SAACC) during the heights of the pandemic. The internship began May 2020 and continued at a reduced capacity past the writing and submission of this thesis during summer 2021.

Forming Central Questions

Sarasota, especially its downtown area, has long been contested by various city stakeholders, and was heavily segregated during the Jim Crow era. It is hardly surprising to find that such a segregated and redlined area is currently torn between multiple imaginations of the city: as a place to work, a place to live, or a place to vacation? As a place for whom? By observing strategies employed by Sarasota's Black community to avoid erasure throughout these ongoing negotiations, this thesis explores how local politics influence the physical course of the city. Particularly with the impact of the tourism industry, in downtown Sarasota, image and branding are essential to local businesses. Yet while tourism is generally associated with leisure rather than work (MacCannell, 1976), tourists are diverse, and there are many areas of overlap, cohesion, and collaboration. For example, for many Sarasota residents, cultural and city resources, especially around tourism and urban renewal, are also economic resources and places of work. There is notable overlap between tourism experiences and the lives of residents, and this is increasingly prevalent as new spaces of interaction and cultural production are being created from Gulf Gate to Newtown. Can Sarasota residents, especially those from historically marginalized communities, also participate in these spaces and have input into the "Sarasota" that is being branded and sold? Can the tourist experience be redefined for a more diverse population of tourists, and if so, how?

The overarching questions that I had when first conceptualizing this project in 2019 were: How do different groups of people generally view life in the shared spaces of Sarasota? How do they present it on social media? What are the commonalities and the most striking differences? These questions were more existential and complicated; inspired by the disconnect in narratives that was easily observable between *Siesta Key* and *Newtown Alive,* despite their close proximity to one another. Growth and progress are derived from shared understandings of current issues that do not entirely exist, therefore representation (elected officials) of (ideally) the majority decide how to progress. This understood, one can see there is power in representation and narrative; I wanted to use this study to begin investigation on how representations are constructed and reproduced by local interest groups, and the impacts of narrative contestations upon city policy.

This inquiry was formed out of personal experiences in American classrooms and the extreme discomfort in acknowledging painful histories and white guilt. It also came from an understanding of Sarasota's progressive ideas being liberal at best, the public and politicians being predominantly conservative. Sarasota's older residents lived during segregation, and some were bound to have parents and family members that wholeheartedly agreed with discrimination. These reflections led me to wonder how non-profits like the SAACC make remembering marketable? Reflecting upon the advertising purpose of a tourism agency, how is Black history made marketable? Data from this project speaks directly to that question, demonstrating how local Black perspectives were sought out by consumers amidst the current national movements for racial and social equality.

Finally, what dimensions do real-world issues, such as climate change and its pervasive impact on Sarasota's environment, add to existing narrative conflicts and tourism-oriented

imaginatives? "Climate change" was the most concise example for phrasing this question, but I am also interested as it pertains to racial inequality and gentrification, how narrative gains footing nationally and the influence observable locally towards goals of coalitions like the SAACC to shape the environment, as well as how issues of environment are being defined to begin with. By evaluating the SAACC's representations of history, memory, and change, I hope to demonstrate the multitude of considerations necessary for sustainable, equitable urban growth. I was also curious to consider how Sarasota's tourism advocates and stakeholders, specifically Newtown outreach initiatives, were operating and changing strategies amidst the COVID-19 outbreak. Documenting remote developments, as well as local frustration with, and eventually rejection of, isolation over time led to endlessly interesting observations that are woven throughout this entire body of work.

II. Literature Review

Having outlined academic research specific to Newtown in background sections, I will shift to broader scholarship in this chapter to establish the original and contemporary, adaptive definitions of gentrification, as it has often evolved to suit the places and times of its application. Along with providing definitions, the gentrification subsection of this review will detail the updated and widespread applications of the term since its initial conception in 1964. Following discussion of academic and public uses of "gentrification," this chapter will provide an overview of (heritage and) tourism scholarship, as it relates to building and reinforcing narrative that, through popular, idealized majority as it equates to generating revenue, shapes local environment. Finally, I will provide an overview of the fields of digital and media anthropology in order to demonstrate its applicability and relevance to this project, as well as future studies on heritage, tourism, urban planning and environment.

Gentrification and Place Theory

'Gentrification' is far from a new concept, having originated in the 1960s, but is still in vogue, both within and outside of the academy, for describing the persisting (U.S.) trend of people gravitating back to urban centers from suburban areas. For this section of literature review, I will use academic literature spanning from the 1960s to present day to discuss 'gentrification' in its original context, then move on to evaluate how it has been used in the United States over time and, finally, how the concept is still being shifted to suit new contexts and being applied in contemporary scholarship. I will not solely be drawing from anthropological theory for this analysis, as there is a lot of overlap with other fields such as sociology, urban

design and geography. I will also utilize mainstream news publications to demonstrate how academic work shapes cultural movements and understanding, which in turn leads to updated anthropological work.

The word "gentrification" was coined by British, Marxist sociologist Ruth Glass in her observations of London, which were published in 1964 in *London: Aspects of Change*. Glass was educated at the London School of Economics and spent two years at the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University in the early 1940s. She returned to London to join UCL and founded its multidisciplinary Centre for Urban Studies. In her conception of "gentrification," she adapted the term "gentry," which refers to people just below the wealthiest class in the United Kingdom (UK) (Thomson, 2014). However, Glass was careful to specify that "gentrifiers" did not necessarily consist of the mega wealthy, rather it was largely middle-class, artistic liberals driving these changes (Glass, 1964). Glass was mainly discussing class gentrification in the context of London, but it has become synonymous with racialized displacement in the United States.

The United States has a distinct history of housing discrimination (Massey and Denton, 1993). Redlining policies, where government surveyors used race to grade neighborhoods to assess risk for local lenders, began in the 1930s (Massey and Denton, 1993). The economic consequences of this racialized policy are still being felt today (Mitchell and Franco, 2018). Following World War II, housing loans were given to (white) veterans and Levittowns were built en masse, but only accepted white residents. The growth of suburbs and the availability of cheap Federal housing loans to white veterans led to the fleeing of working-class white families from cities, leaving most others behind. With them went the tax base and government funding and support for social services like schools. Counterculture to the suburban ideal also began in the

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1950s, notoriously led by 'beatniks' based in San Francisco (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998). By the 1970s, with the continual rise of white-collar work and deindustrialization shifting the economy, white professionals began to set their sights on urban areas once more, and American sociologists began using 'gentrification' to describe these "return" migration patterns in their analyses (Harvey, 1989).

While modernism, as a movement from which the suburbs were conceptualized, focused on functionality and mass production following World War II, post-modernism emphasized the value of aesthetics and the organic (Harvey, 1989). In his discussion of time and space as forms of social power, Harvey (1989) demonstrated how value was assigned to urban aesthetics based on their representations of identity and individualism. In her 2009 book, sociologist Sharon Zukin also focused on the historic cultural draws and current trends that perpetuate gentrification. Like Glass, she pointed out that it is not the uber-wealthy that have taken interest in fixing up properties in previously red-lined districts for the vibe or aesthetic, but rather it was people with cultural capital like writers, artists and professors who were drawn to the very things that drove people out in the era of White Flight, such as old houses, crowded streets, and cultural diversity. In his brief analysis of the *New York Times'* usage of the term, Thomson (2014) pointed out that ongoing conversations about the detriments of gentrification often come from people who are actively perpetuating this pattern. People caring about an issue that they themselves are causing seems counterintuitive. This is where the simple technicalities of the gentrification process are not only worthwhile, but also necessary, to bring into discussion. An artist, or even several, moving into a historically disadvantaged area is not what ultimately causes displacement, rather it is the value that they are assigning to the area that sets this consequence into motion. Once developers, and local businesspeople, see desirability the cost-of-

living increases, which drives longtime residents, who gave the area aesthetic "character" that drew in respectable, educated folk in the first place, are priced out.

An evaluation of net migration by neighborhood reflected that the millennial generation is not likely to stop moving to urban centers anytime soon (Lee, Lee and Shubho, 2019). Urban planners have more recently turned their attentions to obvious inequalities as a means toward protecting longtime residents from price gouging. 47 percent of New York apartments are rent-controlled (Bevan, 2014), and protests involving the issue of gentrification get attention and help shape local policy, as seen in the 2014 San Francisco protests of Google's privatization of the area's transit system (Gumbel, 2014). However, even if longtime inhabitants of the urban spaces avoid being priced out, people are still watching their homes be transformed, longtime community staples being altered, for and by newcomers (Redfern, 2003).

Contemporary scholarship so far reflects the need for not only continual research on the matter, and elaboration on the many contexts in which it occurs, but also the need for willingness by scholars to critically engage with the political realities of this theory and to be self-reflexive in their positionality within the larger conversation.

Since gentrification has been around as a theoretical framework, it has been adapted to many contexts as a moniker for the consequences of "wealthier" persons enjoying, then ultimately taking over, the culture and/or convenience of a space that "poorer" groups cultivated. Chase M. Billingham wrote about the many applications of the theory in his 2015 article "The Broadening Conception of Gentrification: Recent Developments and Avenues for Future Inquiry in the Sociological Study of Urban Change." Billingham provided five dimensions to gentrification scholarship and made the argument that they should be included in the broader conception of the term in order to unify the body of academic work. In selecting Sarasota's

Newtown as a field site, I followed Billingham's model for expanding criteria for study of gentrification patterns. He suggested broadening the geographic scope (1), as well as the character of spaces where it occurs (2) and the characteristics of gentrifiers (3). He also advocated for incorporation of social and economic institutions outside of the housing market (4) and larger discussions of the political ramifications beyond displacement (5). His analysis built to the larger point that sociologists should not shy away from engagement with "gentrification" due to the political implications of the term, as scholarship, as the matter is continually pressing. I will next briefly explore a few of the avenues that scholarship is taking.

Counter Representations of Gentrification

Recently anthropology has continued to engage with the concept of gentrification. Anthropology and Gender Studies scholar, Anna Maria Sorainen, provided an anthropological perspective on the topic with three different "scenes" that uniquely embody the types of spaces that attract newcomers, resulting in gentrification. A fourth "scene" she then explored was the "gentrificators" (Sorainen, 2016) themselves, to make the point that gentrification does not just happen, but it is a type of intentional homogenization of experience that is often carried out to the ends of corporate gains, picking on Starbucks specifically. This analysis provided insight on an additional facet of the issue that corporations of convenience, like Starbucks, Wal-Mart and Airbnb, have followed economically privileged consumers to urban spaces, contributing to the loss of community by driving out independently owned stores in these communities (Sorainen, 2016). Another example of both anthropological engagement with the term and broadening of it through variation of the context in which it occurs, is the work of Harvard anthropology professor Michael Herzfeld's in *Tourism and Gentrification in Contemporary Metropolises:*

International Perspectives (2017) using case studies in Greece and Thailand to examine the impacts of booming tourism economies on the lives of residents.

Often seen as tourism hubs or sleepy beach hangouts, the towns along the coast of Southwest Florida are not what typically come to mind when reflecting on "gentrification in the United States. It is commonly used in the United States to refer to recent migration patterns surrounding its metropolitan hubs like New York cities, San Francisco, CA Chicago, IL and later Portland, OR (Osman, 2016). But Sarasota, with an estimated 57,738 residents (World Population Review, 2020), is a much smaller, half urban, half suburban area that relies largely on tourism dollars. However, tensions surrounding race and class are woven into Florida's history and felt everyday within its disadvantaged communities, especially as its tourism industry booms and the city continually grows. The context is important to consider when evaluating Sarasota, and throughout work on this project I utilized comparisons of the Sarasota's Newtown to similar gentrification cases in the region like Tropicana Field and 22nd Street South in St. Petersburg where a corridor of thriving Black businesses was destroyed by the nearby construction of I-275 (Simner, 2017). I will also compare Sarasota to the ongoing disputes in Miami's Overtown and Little Havana, where developing luxury condominiums have pushed the long neglected, lower class residents out as local politicians pursue "global city" status (Samara and Chang, 2008). There is a larger discourse around these cases that include arguments that anti-gentrification activists are harming the communities they seek to protect (Kadsin, 2020). My investigation of Sarasota ultimately explored a new middle ground that is developing as community-based groups work to become a part of the largely discussion and try to resist the erasure of the city's history and historical neighborhoods in the face of new investments. In defining erasure as an anthropological process, I looked to *Friction* (Tsing, 2005). This ethnography explored change

and spatial conflict on a global scale, with a focus on outsider capital interests reshaping Indonesian rainforests. She found that the expansion process of globalization caused an inevitable "clash of cultures," based on a multitude of understandings and interpretations of the one space (Tsing, 2005). Tsing depicted erasure as a complicated process involving a web of negotiations of perspective (Tsing, 2005). This work was directly inspirational because I entered this project with a curiosity of how different parties viewed the developing spaces of downtown Sarasota.

As Zukin pointed out with several of New York's cities, the current appeal of urban centers typically stems from the options they provide to patronize arts, cultural spaces, eateries of (non-white, non-suburban) culture. Using this sentiment, *Washington Post* writer Jesse Van Tol took a different approach than Kadsin in arguing for the potential benefits of gentrification in his 2019 article "Yes, you can gentrify a neighborhood without pushing out poor people." This article was more thought out and made the argument that gentrification did not always involve displacement, especially if it is not happening rapidly, using U.S. Census Bureau findings and demographic data from 2000 to 2013. Van Tol advocated for thoughtful revitalization policies such as property tax breaks for longtime residents and preservation and expansion of public housing. While Van Tol's observations and ideas do not address every concern with the gentrification process that has been raised by those most impacted, it does far better than Kadsin's article at evaluating the reality of the ongoing situation.

Perhaps in response to nationwide shows of resistance to gentrification, a considerable number of recent articles from U.S. publications involve upsides of gentrification and solutions to the problems that incur with displacement. I will engage with a couple of examples to demonstrate how gentrification studies are not solely being used to resist the phenomenon. *The*

Miami Herald published a piece in February 2020 titled "Why Gentrification is a good thing." The author, former Miami Beach mayor, Neisen Kasdin, makes this argument with the unsubstantiated claim that many immigrants that move into areas with low property values then move out once they make enough money to do so, therefore preservation serves no one, by noting that rust-belt communities are neglected and would benefit from gentrification and by citing a study published by the Federal Reserve of Philadelphia which stated that gentrification improves the lives of long term community members. He even went so far to say that anti-gentrification activists were ahistorical and dooming the neighborhoods they sought to protect. While I do not believe the argument of this article was entirely invalid, in that investment into low-income communities will surely have benefits, I do not think it was not well-made in the sense that it entirely avoided real engagement with the drawbacks and displacement that "revitalization" often entails (Zukin, 2009: 67).

Kasdin's points would have been made in better faith if not for the pretense that empowered property developers and city officials have historically disadvantaged populations' best interests at heart in their decision making. In 2008, sociologist, Tony Samara, and activist, Grace Chang, evaluated local politics and the ongoing threat of gentrification to Overtown (in Miami) as stakeholders pursued the status of "global city." They drew from urban studies scholarship on cities as global hubs for moving money across borders, stating this status to be the goal of Miami mayor, Manny Diaz (who held the office from 2001 to 2009). The alliance, named Right to the City, linked patterns of gentrification in Miami to similar cases in Detroit, Cincinnati and Los Angeles, in their respective pursuits of global citydom. While not all Florida cities are pursuing this status, their development patterns bear similarities. In discussion of Overtown, one of Miami's historic, predominantly Black communities, Samara and Chang described the current

conditions of the area as imposed by structural neglect and the current interest of property developers to "revitalize" Overtown, given its proximity to downtown Miami.

Despite what Kadsin argued, the current communities in Overtown, as shown by Samara and Chang, need affordable housing and are not mainly made up of well-to-do migrant workers that somehow have an abundance of income to save and will soon be on to better living options. Following major highway construction in the 1960s, Overtown's vitality, its local businesses and homes were stripped away, leaving the community weakened and many still vulnerable to the decisions of developers, which are mostly, if not always, driven by the goal to maximize their own profits.

Miami's Overtown is hardly an unfamiliar story in the United States, or even South Florida, as it was also the site of the destruction of 22nd Street South in St. Petersburg for the construction of I-275. Prior to this particular bout of destroying and rebuilding, 22nd Street was a 10-block corridor of Black owned businesses, services, churches and entertainment. In "Racial Segregation in the Rise and Fall of 22nd Street South" (2017), Marvin Simner approximated the decline of 22nd Street, listing 95 businesses operating in 1963 dwindling to 14 by 1999 (Simner, 2017: 16). In examining "the demise of 22nd St." (2017: 17), Simner also presented a more nuanced argument that brought in the effects of integration, prior to the damages imposed by I-275 construction decisions, that were also noted by Newtown and (Sarasota's) Overtown residents (Howard and Oldham, 2017). Black-owned businesses that formed and thrived on limited resources during segregation did so out of necessity, as Black residents were forbidden by law from patronizing white businesses. "Critical mass", a large and consistent set of patrons, as well as nearby residents, (Simner, 2017: 17) was a key component of 22nd street's success, and these businesses were hurt by newly imposed competition from better funded white

businesses and entertainment hubs. Simner chronicled the developments of 22nd Street against a backdrop of national and local legislation spanning from the 1920s to integration in the 1960s. In doing so, he demonstrated the many factors that enriched and deprived BIPOC communities throughout the tumultuous timeline of civil rights in the U.S. and provided comprehensive analysis of what remains of these communities as they are seen and gentrified today. This overview, spanning from the 20th to the 21st centuries, complicates perceptions of how gentrification worked and continues to work. The realities that BIPOC communities, like those that formed the 22nd Street corridor, are viewed to be culturally wealthy, or novel, and are economically disadvantaged are both salient to continual trends of attracting interest then revitalization efforts. Both realities formed out of separation and structural neglect, emerging from the need for people of color to do something different, of their own because mainstream businesses and entertainment explicitly barred their very presence.

Resistance and the role of (Heritage) Tourism

Using Pierre Bordieu's concept of "symbolic capital" (1987) Harvey discussed how the marketing of unique culture (2001) has opened broader, critical scholarship on tourism and consumption of place-based experiences. In a similar vein to some of the solutions Van Tol outlined, I will now shift discussion to the role of tourism as a branding of place through narrative. The process of gentrification and resistance has been described as a struggle for the soul of a city, gentrifiers gravitate towards the culturally unfamiliar and, out of this, members of disadvantaged communities of color are taking back their spaces through stories told in the language of developers (commodification/capital). Harvey, in the introductory remarks of his 2009 piece "The Art of Rent," noted that forming such connections often entailed "many

personal dilemmas" emerging between "capitalist globalization, local political-economic developments and the evolution of cultural meanings and aesthetic values" (Harvey, 1: 2009).

Current iterations of gentrification, as well as survival efforts from marginalized communities, have involved tourism. This is in part due to the shifting nature of tourism itself. In "The penetration of everyday tourism in the dodgy heart of Raval" (Gravari-Barbas and Guinand, 2017), Dominguez and Scarnato discussed the "touristification of everyday life" (2017: 107). The "touristification of everyday life" denotes the trend among a new generation of travelers to break free of constructed tourist bubbles and pursue the experience of a constructed "real, everyday life" in their travels. This phenomenon has led to a blur between, and creeping overlap of, the designated spaces for locals and visitors as all of life becomes a commodified form of experience.

Tourism scholarship does not need to directly relate to the phenomena of gentrification itself to have close relevance to this thesis. For example, visual anthropologist and filmmaker, Jenny Chio (2013), worked to critically analyze, and then eventually distance herself, from the "tourist gaze" framing. She described her data collection filming process as learning to ignore tourists in order to tell a compelling story of what was going on in the two rural villages she studied, as she found the villagers themselves viewed tourists categorically, rather than individually. As this thesis is centered on the SAACC's efforts to shape narrative and experience, I found Chio's accounting of this process to be extremely helpful in how I conceptualized their efforts. Her choice, and success, in framing data from the perspectives of those cultivating the tourist attractions demonstrated how tourist perspectives are not always center to forming contributions to tourism scholarship.

Chio's arguments on the constructions of tourist experiences by marginalized persons who have grown reliant on their own stories, making cultural appeals to survive in an era of intense urbanization, brings this subsection to an important discussion on the inherent value of heritage and memory, beyond its ability to produce capital. Several anthropological works such as those of Cheryl Rodriguez and Beverly Ward's (2018) or James Blakely's (2001) explore the concrete meanings in such heritage for living communities. Rodriguez and Ward explore in-depth how these spaces and their stories are routinely destroyed by development (or gentrification) in favor of more profitable and/or convenient options, in their case, a Tampa Bay expressway. Combined with Blakely's work on New York cemeteries demonstrating how the histories and spaces are deeply meaningful, I had for this evaluation on why and how narratives have to be marketable to those most empowered to survive.

Gentrification, Environmental Justice and Sarasota

To varying degrees, much gentrification scholarship has focused on issues of environmental justice (Bruelle and Pellow, 2006). In U.S. contexts, this dates back to the 1980s, when a pattern of hazardous waste being dumped into or near communities of color was recognized (United Church of Christ, 1987). Robert J. Bruelle and David N. Pellow gave a well-rounded overview of how environmental degradation is felt differently depending on race and class in their 2006 article, "Environmental Justice: Human Health and Environmental Inequalities." Bruelle and Pellow explored pollution as a major contributor for general health issues of U.S. citizens in comparison to other "developed" nations, despite more spending on healthcare per capita. They provided an overview of the trajectory of environmental justice scholarship beginning in the 1970s before delving into theory on social productions and politics of environmental inequality. They approached socio-political theory from multiple perspectives,

including risks imposed by capitalist structures of production, racial segregation of impact, resistance movements (such as the Anti-Toxics movement) and both national and international policy produced in response to these movements.

A more recent analysis written by economists using the smallest unit that the census measured, blocks, to study correlation between neighborhood composition and environmental betterment initiatives reflected longstanding trends of wealthier people living in safer spaces (Gamper-Rabindran and Timmins 2011). Melissa Checker (2011) used the concept of "green gentrification" to ethnographically investigate five New York neighborhoods in comparison with Harlem. Checker evaluated the inclusivity (or lack thereof) of environmental initiatives in the areas from both government bodies and activist groups. She ultimately concluded that New York gave West Harlem Environmental Action Coalition (WE ACT) a seat at the table and adapted some aspects of their initiatives, but Checker's findings in West Harlem neighborhood reflected the nuanced issue that community-based activists were only given limited input by governing bodies to detract from their ability to criticize green initiatives as exclusionary (Checker, 2011).

Relevant scholarship reflects that environmental justice movements, like WE ACT (Checker, 2011), are routinely formed by members of BIPOC communities, with an intersectional approach to remedying spatial inequality (Ducre, 2017). In a human geography report, Susan Cutter (1995) explained that the contemporary environmental justice movement expanded dominant environmental paradigms based on the experiences of those most impacted by different manifestations of spatial inequity, such as pollution and contamination, shifting away from 'white upper class environmental rhetoric' that centered conservation of pristine spaces (Cutter, 1995: 113).

Questions for this thesis are directly interested in the relationship between tourism and gentrification along the Gulf Coast. The local emphasis on tourism also intersects with the building importance of climate change and environmental justice on a city so economically reliant upon natural coastal resources, like beaches. This is to say that while many of Sarasota's wealthy stakeholders fit Cutter's example of those who may center environmental reform on preservation of pristine spaces (Cutter, 1995: 113), such goals are now among urgent environmental issues ushered in by climate change. Southwest Florida is a unique site for research on space and place contestations due to an imminent need for anyone in the area to consider climate change that goes beyond sea level rise. The most severe examples of this are usually observed during the summer months with red tide and hurricane season. In 2018 and 2020, environmental scientist Dr. Terry Root warned of increasingly severe risks of flooding and devastating impacts for local fisheries due to the ocean's pH changing (McDonald, 2018, 2020). While climate change usually impacts low-income communities most (Islam, 2017), Sarasota's tourism economy and wealth distribution along the coast add layers of complexity to conversation on power and environment. Lower income households will struggle more with repairs for storm damages and increasing insurance rates. It is especially worrisome to consider the extent to which this can hurt local BIPOC communities if city planning decisions are made without consideration to environmental justice perspectives, as has happened with Sarasota-Manatee's past decision-making. The most significant example of this involved a beryllium plant from 1948, that was located in what was known as Tallevast, the location of the Black community situated between Sarasota and Bradenton (Braithwaite, Taylor and Treadwell, 2009: 184). This plant leaked deadly carcinogens into surrounding private wells; after receiving on record notification of this contamination in 1999, county officials took no action (Braithwaite,

Taylor and Treadwell, 2009: 185). While the Florida Department of Environmental Protection oversaw voluntary cleanup by the property's private owners, Tallevast residents were not even made aware of the contamination until 2003. (Braithwaite, Taylor and Treadwell, 2009: 185). While most of the Tallevast contamination developments did not occur in this decade, more recent environmental justice research along the Gulf Coast demonstrated the persisting consequences of air pollution in marginalized Gulf Coast communities (Costley, 2020). This preexisting issue compounded the damages of COVID-19 upon these communities, with Florida's Black population having the highest death rates from the virus (Costley, 2020).

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic was not only a major public health crisis that the city faced along with the rest of the world, but it also proved to be a pervasive obstacle for Sarasota's tourism-fueled economy. In this final subsection of the chapter, I will discuss perceptions of the pandemic in Sarasota gathered via local reporting, as well as my theoretical framework for interpreting these developments. Entering 2020, Sarasota seemed on the upward trajectory with the economy booming, as well as physical development, and potentially with it, further gentrification (Finaldi, 2021). Then COVID-19 sent everything into lockdown, leading to closed beaches, mass unemployment among those employed by the tourism and service industry, with a 60.5 percent drop in visitation, and a financial crisis among the investors driving the city's new investment (Finaldi, 2020). By the first week of April, reports from the *New York Times, Vox, CNN and CNBC*, to name just a few, were emerging about the higher case rates and death tolls amongst Black communities in the United States (Reyes, 2020). In general, pandemic policies in Florida tended to reproduce inequalities among and challenges to vulnerable and marginalized populations (see Mahoney et al. 2020).

Due to the timing, this thesis explores how COVID-19 and the lockdown have impacted Sarasota residents' perspectives and understandings of their city. Sarasota Memorial Hospital (SMH), about equidistant between Siesta Key and Newtown, was ranked within the top 100 nationwide by *US News* in 2019. SMH was close to being at capacity, given Sarasota's early alignment with Governor DeSantis' move to reopen Florida beaches before the end of April (Fanning, 2020). Siesta Key Beach was the first in the Tampa Bay Area to reopen (FOX 13 News, 2020) following a "Make America Open Again" boat rally that took place in the Sarasota Bay (Bryson, 2020). These cases show that in Sarasota, those wealthy enough to own private boats won.

Living and working in Sarasota during the heights of the pandemic, I routinely observed people linking the idea of "contagion" to certain populations of people. In a 2013 article, Robert Peckham evaluated how language of contagion influenced risk evaluation of economic downturn on a global scale, as well as how these intertwined ways of understanding influenced formulations of response. This concept is exemplified by the comparisons made by protestors that "the cure cannot be worse than the problem itself," after former President Donald Trump tweeted this about the economic shutdown caused by social distancing measures in March 2020 (Haberman and Sanger, 2020). Such a mindset demonstrated the prevalence of fundamental ethical and ideological differences in the United States when it came to addressing a global crisis, and particularly the view among the wealthy that the possible loss of profits for a year was worse than mass death. During this time, organizations like the SAACC and their collaborators held events online to maintain social distance and safety, making the decision that in-person aspects of their programming were not more important than community health. Such decisions, based upon public health advisories, would not have necessarily been political within the

Sarasota context had it not been for the broader election politics prevalent throughout the year and the pandemic. The pandemic did succeed in exposing the fundamental ethical and ideological differences held by Sarasota residents and stakeholders.

III. Methodology

This project was multi-sited and entailed the use of several methods. I conducted participant observation, four in-depth interviews with community members that were serving on the SAACC board, and also a social media-based set of visual methods that involved participants submitting art, photography, or maps that represent their ideas of Sarasota. A requirement for any of these methods was safely adhering to social distancing and stay at home guidelines.

I gathered most of the data from this project from online participant observation. This entailed attending educational lectures with which SAACC President, Lizzie Coleman[3], was involved, sitting in on monthly SAACC board meetings, and coordinating daily updates to SAACC social media. During this project, my internship as a social media coordination for the Sarasota African American Cultural Coalition (SAACC), which gave me real-time access to the planning and presentation of coalition-based revitalization of Newtown's stories. Much of the data was drawn from online content; supplemented with participant observation, in the digital and physical realms. I had familiarity with each of the field sites to varying extents, as I grew up in Sarasota. My fieldwork was conducted with a salience approach, given my preexisting knowledge of the city (Boncori, 2018). Boncori explored the concept of auto-ethnography when conducting research for her PhD in Management, Marketing and Entrepreneurship because she was drawn to the reflexive properties of ethnography, and perplexed to find that academic researchers, even within anthropology, conceal their own perceptions and feelings in hopes of

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[3] A pseudonym, all key informants have been given pseudonyms.

maintaining objectivity. Boncori argues that the researcher's experiences of their field sites are invaluable, and her use of this approach strengthened her scholarship (Boncori, 2018). Figuring that it would be dishonest, and also detrimental, to try ignoring my lifelong history with the field site in this body of work, a later section of this chapter explores the evolution of my positionality, and how I think that shaped my data collection.

I reference Boncori's work here because existing knowledge, or a salience approach, informed my navigations of the digital field sites of Sarasota-centric social media channels, allowing me to identify and analyze the most relevant to my research questions. Due to the challenges imposed by COVID-19 online methods and tools aside from participant observation, such as interviewing over Zoom, observations made on social media, were also critical to this project's data collection. I conducted content analysis, in part, through an independent Instagram account, @srqresearch. The central idea behind this was to establish Sarasota's landscapes as publicly presented by a wide range of both locals and tourists via image and caption. A common critique of social media content, academically and in general, is that it is "not real" (Postill, 2008) but this is a dated perspective. A more complex and well-rounded analysis of digital content can and should be performed as users are reflecting their ideals and that is information. Sociologist, Bernie Hogan, explored this in a 2010 article expanding upon Goffman's "Presentation of Self" to state that online content can be viewed as "artifacts" pertaining to the true experiences or aspects of an individual (2010: 380), making the argument that presentation is overly conflated with performance (2010: 379). Given this project's questions on Sarasota's potential development trajectories, discounting online public idealizations of the city, which reflect qualities that people experiencing it view most desirable, would short-sighted. That is not to say that digital representations are completely comprehensive views of the municipality either,

but I make the argument they are important pieces of information to place into the larger context of urban development dynamics. Any analysis of the SAACC's progress in Sarasota would not be complete without fully setting this context. In forming my search for larger city-scale context, I reflected on the existence of algorithms in place on social media platforms which maximize content that the user shows interest and learn how to present what information as time goes along (Hutchinson, 2016). Understanding this, I used the blank slate account of @srqresearch to align "user interests" with my research question on what is most attractive/marketable in Sarasota's spaces. The first step on the Instagram frontier was to establish digital communities, the hubs where Sarasota locals frequently engaged via comments or posting personal pictures. I did this by sifting through hashtags of the key words "Sarasota," "srq,"[4] "Sarasota-Manatee," from the independent research account.

This all said, the most prominent means for gathering information through social media engagement was still my own activity for the internship with the SAACC. While I simultaneously monitored larger Sarasota developments, I centered my online participant observation on the community happenings surrounding their projects and initiatives. These social media accounts are most engaged with those invested or interested in Newtown's history, local events and current projects. With Coleman's permission as President, I kept record of the accounts' followers and engagement with the accounts by outside entities (such as community partners) for my research. After a few months of collaborating on what, how and where to post, fielding some of the online engagement and building rapport with my supervisors, I also received permission to attend three of the board meetings they held over Zoom, which gave me much further insight on the practical negotiations behind gradual changes to a cityscape.

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[4] Shorthand for Sarasota utilized in promotional materials.

Analyzing Data

I worked through qualitative, thematic analysis in field notes, which were informed by 1. existing knowledges from Newtown Alive's materials, as I will expound upon in the following section, 2. the salience approach, as applicable to organizational studies (Boncori, 2018) and 3. scholarship on space and place, as reviewed in Chapter II. Participant observation was analyzed by indexing patterns and qualitative themes in field notes, then themes derived from field notes were applied to different SAACC and Newtown Alive Instagram posts/images to quantitatively measure engagement.

To carry out quantitative analysis, I categorized the 73 SAACC and 38 Newtown Alive Instagram posts I made into one of five themes then averaged the numbers of likes and comments of the posts for each theme. I focused on Instagram for this piece of analysis because out of all of their social media platforms, both organizations' largest followings are on Instagram.

The information gathered from social media directly reflects the non-monolith communities that Newtown Alive and the SAACC are trying to reach, and the degrees of success they experienced during COVID shutdowns. Analysis for this method was organized by logging different forms of engagement, then later placing them in the larger contexts of local developments and nationwide events, as these are the happenings with which users are engaging-in whatever manner they deem to suitably represent their views within their own social contexts (Rettberg, 2017). I considered information from board meetings and in-depth interviews to be progress and aspirations as told by the organizers themselves. Each method contributes to the larger analysis of whether the SAACC's approach to combatting gentrification in Sarasota is effective, in what ways and interpreting why.

After over three months of remotely conducting participant observation, I scheduled in-depth interviews with available board members. Four in-depth interviews with two Black and two White, and two male and two female, board members were analyzed using Otter AI transcription software to pull key words. Findings in the next chapter are presented through thematic organization of different spheres of work.

Once I gathered detailed information on Newtown Alive, the SAACC and their engagements, I concluded data collection with social media content analysis. I found that the benefits for using public social media avenues is that the information was accessible, could potentially update to photovoice and there was plenty of direct content spanning over years. The drawbacks for this method were that the information it yielded cannot always be considered reliable and the researcher is not seen or heard when engaging in the field. Analysis for social media content utilized existing qualitative project themes, constructed through the other methodologies.

Reflections on Methods Part One: Trial and Error: An Exploration of Alternative Methodologies During Shutdowns

Sarasota's local business community engages directly or is engaged by its patrons on social media every day. Such activity prompts my questions of what type of businesses are being featured most by patrons, are they the same as those being featured by publications, and, in both scenarios, who are the people that usually choose what businesses get promoted? For example, several local publications have a yearly promotion that features favorite businesses and practitioners from a wide variety of categories, such as Best Restaurant and Best Dentist, based on votes from their readerships, and the top three winners for most of the categories are often repeats from previous years. I explored the questions stated by compiling any relevant material put forward by local publications and prominent social media accounts, prior to and during my

research period. Articles I utilized were from the Herald Tribune, SRQ magazine, Sarasota

Magazine and the Bradenton Herald. I also followed and analyzed public, popular ($\geq$1000

followers) social media influencers from Sarasota or who regularly visited the city and tagged it,

as is becoming increasingly common practice in well-rounded ethnographic research (Postill and

Pink, 2012). Another idea that I explored for @srqresearch outreach activity on Instagram was

to utilize it direct new participants to the main survey page, conduct anonymous polls to gage

opinions of Sarasota and post photos, art and poetry submitted directly to the account by

participants in the research. This was designed to be a shorter version of a survey I drafted

several times throughout the planning period. I considered creating this survey through Qualtrics

to distribute to as many of Sarasota's residents and visitors as I could possibly reach. The online

questionnaire would ideally be brief, asking Sarasota residents about their views of the city, its

attractions and, from residents, local handlings of crisis such as climate change and COVID-19,

and distributed, at least in part, through the official research Instagram account as well as other

partners. Whether it was putting up flyers in parks, or posting a link in the Sarasota subreddit,

through an Instagram outreach account, or all the above, I wanted to gain as many perspectives

as possible about passing through communal spaces in the city to gain a sense of where it fit into

the schemas of its national and local contexts. None of this actually saw success. The reasons I

bring it up at all are to demonstrate the process through which my project formed and to raise

transparent discussion of potential setbacks of remote research. The central struggle for this facet

of the research was organization. I drafted a survey several times but could not quite get it right

because it was too broad and trying to do too much at once, with questions ranging from "what

brought you to Sarasota? and "what do you do for fun?" to "what is your opinion on climate

change?". As a result of lacking specific purpose on the surveys, I retreated back to the drawing

board. From there, I gathered the information that was most closely related to how the SAACC fared in Sarasota during COVID. Thinking practically about comprehensive data analysis for such a far-reaching survey now, I have only one question: could you imagine? Such a method would be amazing to implement and examine; I would love to try finding patterns in how different individuals experience the same space, and how that relates to their life experiences. Unfortunately, it is not the most precise or efficient manner for figuring out how gentrification is changing. For that, I learned the researcher must look more closely at the drivers of change. As Chio put it in her studies of rural villages in contemporary China, "The relative absence of the tourists as an active presence is intended to emphasize the point that tourists needn't always be at the center of tourism studies" (Chio, 2013: 68).

Thinking of projects to capture emotion and experience of vested community members, I considered implementing creative options any participants from this category that were interested. The prompt could have been as simple as "write about your most memorable experiences in Sarasota" or "draw a scene from everyday life in Sarasota." Following submission, a conversational interview focused on what they chose to feature in their work and why will be conducted among those interested. The goal for such projects were to serve as a means of engaging with media that encapsulates experience by prompting participants to create their own; in the process, reflecting on how their experiences relate to popular and alternative narratives of the city they inhabit. The choice to utilize photovoice and other visual methods was due in part to the results this method has yielded thus far, an example being Caroline Wang's 2003 work with her photovoice project with the homeless population in Ann Arbor, Michigan. In this case study, she posited that the photovoice method serves as a means of understanding shared concerns within a community and develops a basis for issue selection through study of

strengths and weaknesses participants choose to highlight (Wang, 2003). In viewing social media postings as an update to, or at least an extension of, photovoice, I considered whether this key principle was applicable to the content I was evaluating online.

Over time, I found myself facing the same issues of connection in implementing creative explorations with Newtown locals as I had with distributing a survey to larger Sarasota; also, that for my particular set of research questions, these projects would be reinventing the wheel. As I mentioned, views of larger Sarasota by locals and tourists were put forward to the creator's exact satisfaction as public domain via social media. As for the question of how that contrasted with experiences of Newtown, I ultimately opted to draw from Newtown Alive's archives and other existing digital materials that were previously gathered using anthropological methods, such as oral history interviews and guided community talks, to gain perspective on varying perceptions of Newtown and Sarasota, as safe isolation was longer extended and more intensive than I had anticipated.

To summarize, I did not fully get to do what I wanted to do because I was operating within the confines of 1. navigating a pandemic and anthropology while social distancing, 2. limited time to complete this project for a master's program, 3. lack of funding, and 4. the need for time to further develop skills and understandings in visual arts and visual anthropology. What I wanted, and still want is to utilize are creative, collaborative pursuits within sub-communities to visually represent how people understand and feel in their environments and inform those outputs with social/anthropological theory to construct rich, engaging narrative. However, that may be a future project? My initial hope for this project was that, through digital and physical observation, I would have opportunities to view contestations of space in terms of presentations of selves, and then evaluate whether similarities and variances are based on the spaces

themselves, the background of each participant or a combination of these factors. What I had to accept to conduct this research is that this study would be one largely of documentation, taking in and learning from what others were putting forward rather than jumping to contribution through facilitating creative outputs. Despite my own experiences of Sarasota, there was still so much I did not fully perceive going into this project, and the methods accessible to me reflected this. The methods I was able to implement still best answer the research questions because they provide a comprehensive and multifaceted look at everyday interactions between locals who fall into widely different but also intersecting and overlapping demographic categories.

Reflections on Methods Part Two: What Worked and Why

All of the considerations that I have presented thus far boiled down most concisely to "evaluation of how a heritage program, founded upon anthropological intervention, was navigating their goals for the city in a time of crisis." This project, as a culmination of all of its methodological choices, mirrors the times themselves and embodies integral elements of the actions taken by the organization in the moment. This is a fancy way of saying that this project could very much be considered a "patchwork ethnography" (Günel, Varma and Watanabe, 2020). In this article, written for the *Society for Cultural Anthropology* during the height of the pandemic, the authors suggest that anthropological fieldwork may never return to normal, and perhaps should not return to the dated standards established by male researchers with little to no family obligations seeking adventure through years long study of otherwise faraway suffering, oft inflicted by colonial violence (Günel, Varma and Watanabe, 2020). They furthered their critique of the field's practices in pointing out how pandemic-era adaptations, such as online methods, were often designed to accommodate subjects rather than the researchers themselves (Günel, Varma and Watanabe, 2020). Based on longstanding feminist and decolonization

theory, they posit that COVID-19 could serve to generally reconfigure the researcher's practice

to more accurately reflect the reality that they have personal lives, the complexity of which

shapes their productions of knowledge. In defining "patchwork ethnography," the authors

explained that it does not mean one off visits or a lack of commitment to, or of in-depth

knowledge of, the field by the researcher, rather it entails broadening scopes of what entails

traveling to the field or data collection, to welcome different forms of knowledge into the realm

of academic acceptability (Günel, Varma and Watanabe, 2020).

Brining this discussion back to how "patchwork ethnography" looked for this project, I

think traditional anthropological evaluation of Newtown Alive the SAACC would likely be able

to tell you how many people were on the trolley every week, describe how much time each of

them spent reading the plaques and why, etc. This project largely (save for the distanced events

that were able to happen at the very end) cannot, just like people could not get on the trollies at

all. However, The SAACC developments were about gathering any and all resources available

and pursuing unexpected avenues, such as educational talks on Zoom, to ultimately bolster the

work in new ways. The methodology, when not directly overlapping with this SAACC outreach

and engagement, still did the exact same in drawing relevant information from wherever it was

available.

The last thing I want to say about the methodological process is more sentimental and the

following exert articulates perfectly what that informed every decision that I made while

collecting data and continued to echo in my head as I wrote about the findings for upcoming

sections. As Jenny Chio said of her own work, "Residents of both Ping'an and Upper Jidao are

highly aware of the need to come across as a pleasant, good place to visit and understandably

saw my video work as a way to further promote their villages, a responsibility that I accept"

(Chio, 2013: 68). In working with both social media and tourism, representation is absolutely critical. Performing outreach efforts during a global pandemic for a newly formed non-profit that was in negotiations with local politicians and businesspeople regarding the logistics of their community projects, which involved timely, politically and emotionally charged issues on racial inequity was challenging to say the least. It entailed constant strategizing towards the posts made, images used and how they were captioned for NTA and SAACC accounts. Juxtaposed with ongoing, personal conversations about how every individual needs to do uncomfortable work to address and unlearn their own racism was one of the organization leader's guiding principles that they were not there to condemn individuals for what has happened in the past but work together to move forward. Talking about race and traumas inflicted upon BIPOC throughout our history is uncomfortable (Gerlach, 2018), and discomfort obviously does not appeal to people. Efforts to be true to the realities of racism in the United States when engaging with Newtown's narratives and to keep followers comfortable and listening by accommodating the sensibilities of those who did not want to engage in necessary activism often felt mutually exclusive from my position. Digital participant observation was shaped by careful engagement with contemporary sociopolitical tensions and focused on drawing relevance between current events and SAACC's work with community narratives to engage newcomers wanting to learn more during the 2020 resurgence in the Black Lives Matter movement peaceably.

Reflection on Methods Part Three: The Influences of Positionality on Data Collection

To some practitioners, pages of personal reflection on positionality do not belong in an academic thesis. However, I generally disagree with the practice of depersonalizing anthropology and, in this specific case, have multiple reasons to deem it a necessary element of the discussion. This body of work has involved exploration of how conflicting, nationwide

understandings of race and class have consequences in a localized context. This entailed a departure from traditional ethnography in several manners, including total familiarity within the field site, as I grew up in Sarasota.

Elizabeth Chin's *My Life with Things* demonstrated the value of autoethnography as a tool for examining social patterns in which the researcher, too, participates through keeping a meticulous diary of her purchases and uses of everyday items. It demonstrated how the anthropologist is subject to the social structures they write about. This is all to say that I will be talking about the progression of this project as I experienced it/myself, a fair amount here. I have provided the academic background informing this project, the data collected and have told anyone reading numerous times throughout that COVID shaped the project. Prior to placing my findings in their critical contexts, I would like to go further to show how isolation and heightened stress shaped academic perspective on prevalent issues.

Subjectivity has long been explored by anthropologists, critiquing the fields original presentations of biases and scientific racism as objective, scholarly fact. Not all of my peers have agreed with me on this, but I do not think objectivity should even be a goal. All perceptions and findings are filtered through the researcher to interpret and base decisions on, every step of the process (Bervard and Gravlee, 2015). To take this a step further, I do not think this reality undermines the content of the research and can actually strengthen data interpretation if carefully reflected upon. The following is an excerpt written for a course assignment on my relationship with this project, as it progressed over the course of the year:

> "This place is impeccable, I am just trying to get my foot in the door," my father said to me as we traversed the marble floors of the lobby out to the beachside pool. His commercial cleaning company currently worked six hours on the weekends for L'Extravagance condominiums. It was an overcast day; the fog was a reprieve from the usual glaring morning sun as we cleared leaves from the tennis courts while trying to leave wet grains of court clay in place and minimal footprint traces that such a pristine

appearance was anything short of natural. My father whistled while he worked sometimes, less so on the courts where he was already coughing on the clay dust he kicked up with a rolling brush in order to clear the white lines along the court. We arrived at 7am to start with the recreational facilities; this was not a standard Saturday morning for my father but the employee who usually covered it called out sick the night before, possibly with COVID. Dad was wedged into his leather living room recliner when he relayed that he had to work early to my mother, following his 13-hour Friday, so I offered to get up and help.

As a teenager, I would help my father out with some of the bigger properties on the weekends for a little extra money. Glass towers on the gulf with refined decoration and, in the units themselves, personally picked pastel beach-themed art and chotskies. My parents moved down to Sarasota from Rhode Island at the tail end of the 1980s to help my father's parents get the business up and running. In third grade, he would bring me along on morning jobs for condominiums on Siesta Key, next stop would be a beachside mansion to pick up my friend on the way to Pine View School. Pine View was by no means the closest elementary school to either of our families, but it was the most prestigious, the gifted school where all of the city's doctors and lawyers sent their children. In seventh grade, I began to undergo what would be a decade long struggle with body dysmorphia so I had three favorite shirts, one of which had the family cleaning service logo. I remember my mother discouraging me from wearing it so much, nervous I would be judged or teased for their working-class background.

In true form of White guilt, I have spent my academic career reflecting on my own wealth and privilege beyond the utility of such reflections. I am acutely aware of my education, the connections, the flexible business experience I can list on my resume because any follow up call would be placed to my own parents, of how I can afford to call out of work to study, and of each time that I have done my best but was still one of many Fabletics spandex clad, pain in the ass customers on a Saturday. These are the spaces I feel my body crowding. Less thought of are the spaces where I must be as small, pleasant and unobtrusive as possible, behind the coffee counter, as bottom of the office food chain and on the tennis courts- making sure to leave no trace of myself as I worked. Both types of spaces are considerable, in terms of my own positionality in this project as a hometown ethnography. In terms of White privilege, I often tended to jump to the extreme- and then engage with the world as if- my whiteness has given me every advantage, in spite of not having much capital for myself. I realized over the course of 2020 this opposite extreme is also shortsighted and dangerous as it is predicated upon the long-held norm that whiteness is capital, and continually behaving as such may directly oppose goals for dismantling this standard. In discussing my own economic background here, I am not seeking to compare any experiences of White members of working classes to members of systemically marginalized groups, rather, I want to draw from my relevant experiences of Sarasota to critically examine Whiteness; the spaces where it is regularly centered, the quiet roles where it is still implicit and how both have been constructed and perpetuated by capitalism."

I put that excerpt to readers to demonstrate the following: 1. My lived experience throughout Sarasota is that money matters here, there is significant class stratification, and it is sometimes an uncomfortable city to inhabit if not wealthy and 2. My perspective going into this project lacked some important nuance due to feelings of being somewhat jaded by my upbringing here, as well as the ongoing nervousness using my own voice towards issues of race out of fear of getting it wrong, anxiety derived from feelings of White guilt. I think that I was able to do this study so remotely due to the salience approach, my extensive familiarity with Sarasota, but this also meant going into the field with deeply embedded preconceived notions. I do not think that I was wrong about these factors, outside materials reflect that I was not, but this familiarity inevitably shaped my approach to the project.

One of my early takeaways from Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider,* specifically from "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," was the urgency to find and utilize my own voice (Lorde, 1984: 40) In the activist settings in which I worked to understand and participate, online and in-person, there was a lot of rightful emphasis on the need for White people to listen and de-center their own perspective. In my singular experience, anthropology class discussion often echoed this idea. However, through more time following a variety of BIPOC creators and work with the SAACC and Newtown Alive, I began to understand that the urging to de-center whiteness was not a blanket call for silence. Lorde emphasized this in saying that "death is the final silence" and as long as we can speak and contribute, we need to do so (Lorde, 1984: 40). From that point, I think that having BIPOC community-led or reviewed avenues and resources for engagement is extremely beneficial.

IV. Findings

One would think (or hope, in my position) that virtual participant observation was as simple as ABC: Attending Lizzie's Zoom presentations to community groups as well as board meetings and coordinating SAACC social media updates. But it was anything but straightforward? Ethnography seldom lacks complications, online or offline. Digital fieldwork also complicates anthropological data-gathering processes in the sense that I was never away from the field or work; even as I write, new, relevant information to the research questions is emerging. For that reason, I will present findings yielded from more structured settings prior to reporting on digital content analysis.

Participant Observation over Zoom

It is Black History Month 2021, and many February days in Florida are 50-60 degrees Fahrenheit, but I have not been outside or out of bed for that matter because I am the sickest that I have been in years. Fever aches kept me up until 5am until I found the correct blanket-to-air-temperature ratio and was luxuriously engulfed by my own exhaustion. It is not until noon that I woke back up to attend one of the community outreach events where members of the SAACC and/or Newtown Alive initiatives give presentations on the local histories that have not been conventionally taught. I propped myself up to take notes and try not to let the "what ifs" of being sick post-2020 consume me as those presenting and audience members brave enough to turn on their cameras banter and wait for the rest to file into the virtual room.

Truthfully, apart from this instance with a nasty case of strep, so much of the fieldwork for this project looked like this scene, curled up with my laptop, alone with thoughts and observations in my own dimly lit space.

I had seen presentations presented through different local clubs and libraries of the stories on the building of Sarasota as we know it today by a predominantly Black labor force, and from *Newtown Alive* (2017) I learned of the fights their children and grandchildren took up for beach integration and school integration on their terms. However, during Black History Month, like others in the audience, I was treated with a new story; for which the work uncovering has been underway here for over a decade. It was also hardly novel in the field for entire projects to come up that I was completely unaware of, despite months of work and study. While I am sure that can somewhat be attributed to the isolation, I found that the sheer volume of work being done with Sarasota by Newtown Alive and now the SAACC was simply massive.

The "Looking for Angola" project began with Coleman's curiosity in the early 2000s, when she was asked to review a history report by the county for a documentary, being wholly unsatiated by the information and materials, or lack thereof, available at the time when trying to correct their conception that Sarasota's first Black communities surfaced after the Civil War. Per the official "Looking for Angola" website (2021), Angola was a maroon community of people who had escaped enslavement and lived well along the Manatee River from 1812 until 1821 when their homes were looted and burned. Coleman worked with New College archaeologist Uzi Baram, and other local scholars to excavate the lost settlement and add it to the body of research reflecting Florida as a refuge of freedom centuries ago. I found learning about this to be significant as it showed not only how archaeological methods are too being utilized to create narratives of place today, but also how they are being disseminated. While it is somewhat outside

of the purview of my study, I included this example as it is most recent memory of observing community outreach via Zoom and learning something that Coleman had going on that I was previously unaware of, in spite of months of dedicated study and posting on the pages.

The "Looking for Angola" presentation I described was one example of the frequent outreach events where Coleman and collaborators recounted Newtown's stories and related history over Zoom during the pandemic. Coleman, Eric Frederick and others involved presented to local clubs and interest groups, such as the Water Club and the Longboat Key Democratic Club (LBKDC). They were usually open to the public but attended by members of the club; I attended every event that I could to learn more about how the information was being received, and by whom.

When a more public community figure, Marie Selby Botanical Gardens (referred to as Selby), promoted one of these presentations from Oldham and Eric Frederick[6], around 300 people signed onto the Zoom to listen. During this Selby-hosted event in September, that specifically focused on Black laborers contributions to the Selby Gardens property, it was self-reported during the meeting that attendees were from around the state, with a few even out of the state, including Canada. The leading story for this presentation was that of Effie Blue, a live-in cook and companion for Helen Payne, the wife of a wealthy Sarasota benefactor that lived on the garden's grounds. There on the call to talk about Blue's experiences was her grandson, Stan Rivers. According to Rivers, Blue was considered family to the Payne's, who even bought her a new Cadillac every two years. Rivers recalled wanting to be dropped off blocks from Newtown's Booker High School because his classmates would make fun of him for being a rich kid. At this point in the presentation, it seemed like the Paynes were forward thinking employers. This took a

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[6] Longtime Newtown community member and political activist, introduced in the subsection on Newtown Alive's background in the introduction chapter.

quick turn when Rivers revealed that Blue was fired for making school lunches for the kids protesting the integration plan that would shut down Booker. This living story portrayed nuance in a Black experience of the space which is now one of Sarasota's top tourist attractions; it was not overwhelmingly negative, but ultimately the positives only occurred on white people's terms. In both publicized and special interest group events, I found that engagement extended beyond attendance to thoughtful questions about the presentation and the organizations' plans for the future. Questions from attendees to the NTA presenters included "Is there a curriculum guide available to educators on the local history?" and "What is one big change the African American community here would like to see in 2020?" The latter, as the Newtown Alive book demonstrated, could not possibly be answered by one person.

Board Meetings

I attended three of the monthly board meetings held over Zoom to bring further specificity to the developments that I observed in the digital field. The two-hour meetings were commenced with a prayer, usually led by Board Member, Reverend Keith Evans. With an amen and everyone saying something they are grateful for, as a part of a positive energy that was maintained throughout, they would get down to business. The meetings were moderated by the Chairman of the Board, Dr. Lincoln Reed, who had the stunning ability to crack a quick joke and get laughs out of the room, while barely detracting from discussion of the agenda items. Finding a good rapport between the board members was not shocking, as the board was comprised of longtime Sarasota stakeholders that were at least familiar with one another, with some but not all being from Newtown. SAACC board members held privileged professions, and multiple seats of significant tables in the community, with several members serving on other boards pertaining to local politics and/or non-profit work. With the board drawing from backgrounds in law,

medicine, religion and, in a couple observable cases, city politics, meetings were culminations of

different knowledges of Sarasota. In addition to taking my own detailed notes during these

meetings, Reed saw to it that emails sent to the board pertaining to these meetings included me

as a recipient. The official minutes from the meetings, as well as documents reviewed during,

were attached to these emails.

Posting as the Social Media Intern

Most days, I did not attend events or meetings and was working with the social media

pages. Early on, Coleman set up a call to introduce me to Dominique Hart, a SAACC board

member who had prior experience with promoting an organization on social media. Meanwhile,

while I was well-versed in social media, I had little experience posting in any official capacity

for SAACC. During the uptick in BLM engagement, we established a model whereby Hart

would add to the Facebook page and I would tailor Facebook content to the other platforms. This

worked because it gave a board member the primary goal of directing the vision for the online

engagement, while the actual work of maintaining the social media was left to me. I still made

creative choices, visually and on how to use perspective from the archival research to frame

things like news stories that Hart passed to me via Facebook. I also retained the liberty to add my

own posts, that I used sparingly, with much reflection on my own positionality.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, my role expanded to include the Newtown Alive

Twitter and Instagram accounts to fully engage with the growing audience. I had to establish a

system for keeping the content for each of the pages unique from one another. This was not

executed perfectly, and there was obvious overlap with important events. I would often post the

content with different captions.

To analyze the posts by engagement, I will present categories for the posts on each page and discuss average engagement by category. The categories and metrics I will be presenting are from the Instagram accounts, as those pages have the largest followings, and the platform's format allows for analysis of how people respond to certain images.

In total, as of writing this paper, I posted 73 updates to the SAACC account and 38 to the NTA account. My primary goal was to develop the SAACC account, while viewing the long-established Newtown Alive (NTA) account as an opportunity to speak to a larger following. The categories I identified for posts on both accounts are:

1. **Local news coverage** of SAACC/NTA programming and progress., derived from the *Herald Tribune*, which I talk more about in the subsection on digital content,

2. Weighing in on **national events involving Black Lives Matter**,

3. **Personalization**, as in sharing faces and personal stories of participants, such as board members,

4. Developments of, or plans for, **events and exhibits**, often promoting subscription to the monthly Newtown Alive newsletter, and

5. **Fundraising** efforts.

The Newtown Alive Facebook Page

While much news was delivered through the newsletter (discussed below), the primary curator of information for SAACC was Lizzie Coleman hersself. The Newtown Alive Facebook page was where Lizzie captioned her personally curated Newtown Alive photos with lines that flexed skills from her past life as a journalist and raw talent as a narrator. To discuss current world events as they related to local settings or Newtown's developments, Coleman used her own voice and perspective, informed not only by years of historical research but also experiences

personally familiar to her as a Black woman. Her posts for the NTA Facebook page engaged over 1000 followers in current events and local developments using both brief hooks and in-depth examples, alongside of a balanced mix of old and recent photos from Newtown. My job was to help present her message through other online channels.

National Politics and BLM

I found that, in terms of averaged "likes" on the accounts I managed, local news coverage from the *Herald Tribune* performed best, while adding the accounts' voices to the national choir on BLM and other national political events saw the lowest engagement on both accounts. One example of this was losing a follower directly after posting about Kamala Harris bringing new representation to the Vice Presidency. However, during the heightened engagement period (June 2020), several local entities reached out to support Newtown Alive and SAACC. The publisher of *Macaroni Kid*, a local newsletter with ~4000 subscribers, asked that someone from the Newtown Alive organization write an article to feature on Newtown Alive's resources and tours, as well as any specific programming for kids. Another interesting development was when a local brewery publicly declared that they were participating in a national "Black is Beautiful" challenge by donating an undisclosed amount of the profits from every purchase of an imperial stout to the SAACC before reaching out to anyone involved with the SAACC. I think, in ways, both of these engagements were beneficial to the organizations but also demonstrate the importance of holding nuanced local conversations surrounding racial healing among community stakeholders. In the first instance with *Macaroni Kid*, the organization was responsible for producing the article, even though information was readily available on the website. Ultimately, I wrote the article and sent it to Coleman for edits, but the detail that there was an intern available to help with this kind of thing was not consequential to the publication's request. The *Macaroni*

Kid staff did not go out of their way to generate content to support the organization, while it was as busy as ever with engagements, despite the information being readily available online. Circling back to the brewery participating in the 'Black is Beautiful' challenge, there were several ways that their approach to the endeavor of engaging with the movement was careless at best. Instead of first offering SAACC leadership the option of whether or not to participate in this promotion, with all of the information (such as the profit margin for donation), being made clear upfront, the brewery chose to capitalize on current events to the audience of their followers, and then present it to the SAACC in an Instagram message as this amazing opportunity that is already underway. These moments were important to me in evaluating how local community members were choosing to engage with nationwide discussions of systemic racism and local interventions, but none of these observations were expressed by Coleman or anyone else on the SAACC board.

Personalization

Tied with local news coverage for optimal engagement for the SAACC account were the personalization efforts, which included the hashtag "board members in action" that Hart originated on Facebook, showing things that various board members were doing out in the community. I was surprised that events and exhibits did not perform better by the engagement metrics of likes and comments, as these were tangible things that followers could engage. However, I saw an interesting potential explanation for this on the Newtown Alive page. During COVID, event promotion materials were often digital handouts rather than new pictures of people. I noticed that when pictures of people were on the Newtown Alive page, they garnered more engagement from followers (while the SAACC likes remained consistent). To demonstrate this, I split category four into subcategories handout post and people post and found that event or

exhibit promotion pieces featuring current photos of people performed better by an average of 24 likes. While the organizations hosted successful events over Zoom, and found a new way to reach more people, this trend suggested an inclination for more personable experiences.

The Monthly Newsletter

Before I delve into findings from local social media, I would like to close this subsection on online participant observation with discussion of a key informant in the digital field: the monthly newsletter. The Newtown Alive newsletter kept me up to date on the community from which I was geographically isolated and quarantined about a half hour drive south. The newsletter, published at the end of each month and circulated on our platforms by Love and me, always covered a wide array of topics and organizational developments. This is where the organization's voice on contemporary fights for racial equality was strongest. The newsletter was an effective means for taking a stance at an official capacity rather than presenting via forums of warring opinions and shoddily crafted memes. Newsletters provided long lists of multi-media resources on anti-racism for newcomers asking: "how can I help?"[7] After giving these national elephants in the room their due, the newsletters would highlight how such political tensions and the pandemic were playing out in Newtown, such as the widely accessible state-testing site set up at the Robert L. Taylor Community Center. Once providing general community updates, the newsletters would showcase present or upcoming SAACC interventions, such as partnering with RCAD students on a digital exhibit or the architect that signed on to help realize the plans for the permanent museum.

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[7] Direct quote from the May 2021 newsletter.

Digital Content Analysis

As part of my job with SAACC, I conducted digital content analysis consistently to get an idea of the politics of the Sarasota mediascape during the pandemic. As I mentioned in previous sections, 2020 as an entire year saw the heights of political contention (Lassa, Ndoen, Rohi, Fannigdae, 2020). National events, such as the election and the responses to the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, as well as how they were reported to citizens, shaped community attitudes in Sarasota. Online content analysis entailed periodic checks on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as local news coverage. This was key to building my understandings of the diverse perspectives present in Sarasota. The bulk of the digital content analysis involved direct engagement with SAACC materials and events, online and then later, in-person. However, I found that hundreds of Sarasota residents regularly take to online forums to participate in commentary on developments they view as relevant to their everyday lives. Their views constitute narratives for the city's thousands of diverse residents and stakeholders.

I was not able to pull local perception of the area from Instagram through keyword searches. The Instagram hashtag for "Newtown" in general had over a million posts from all over the world, as there are at least 20 other known Newtown's in the U.S. (according to the Wikipedia page). In seeking local specificity, I found "Newtown Sarasota" only had 34 posts, many from official business accounts, as well as NTA coverage, spanning back to 2016, and "Sarasota Newtown" did not exist as late as June 2021. Appraisals of Newtown community developments directly from its residents were derived from the Newtown neighborhood Facebook page. Posts on here were an equitable mix of leaders of organizations similar to NTA

and the SAACC posting some of their developments, businesses, such as a pawn shop, advertising their proximal services to the group and community members posting personal things that sometimes had no relation to the neighborhood other than wanting to share with people they knew from there, like memes they found funny.

Neither geotags nor the neighborhood page got at the question of what Sarasota residents outside of Newtown thought about the area or knew of the revitalization and outreach work that its organizations were doing. To get a sense of this, I turned to the Sarasota subreddit, r/Sarasota. Subreddits are communities that users can subscribe to based on their interest. My logic in posing a question to the Sarasota subreddit, "for those in the Tampa to the Sarasota area," was that the 14,700 people subscribed (as of 2021) were from or familiar with Sarasota (especially as Tampa has its own subreddit). I was inspired by a 2014 post to r/Sarasota titled "What's so bad about Newtown?," which was ideal for comparison because it was just as Newtown Alive's data collection was getting started.

The responses to the 2014 post entailed comments such as "there is nothing wrong with Newtown, just the people that inhabit it [as they have lower incomes and are in need of government assistance]" and "every town has to put their ghetto somewhere." One user even linked a 2012 *Guardian* article about British tourists killed in Newtown during a mugging, which sparked deliberation in the comments about whether the tourists were "lost looking for their hotel seven miles away in Longboat Key," as the article put it (Luscombe, 2012), or looking to score drugs. Other comments also brought up buying and selling drugs in the area, as well as a couple of jokes about "selling yourself" or scoring prostitutes. There were no outright defenses of the area and its residents in the responses, but a couple demonstrated nuance, with one, to paraphrase saying "there are drugs everywhere in Sarasota, and good things happen in Newtown too" and

another contributing the idea that there are always "ghettos" where there is cheap housing, but Newtown is "pretty tame" compared to most, citing no other experiences with low-income areas. There was also place-based discussion of what roads named after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. signify, as it is also the main corridor of Newtown, summarizing with a Youtube link to a Chris Rock standup clip on what MLK Blvd. means.

To demonstrate whether general opinion from this sample has shifted, I posted a survey on the subreddit towards the end of this project. I phrased my question much more neutrally and with the ethical disclosure that it was going towards a grad school project. This survey yielded 23 comments from 19 independent commenters. In response to my 2021 Sarasota subreddit posting, there was more of a mix than in 2014, one of the obvious reasons for this being due to the more neutral framing. I asked "locals"[8] specifically "What do you think about Newtown?" with the sub-questions in the caption of "what about its history?" or "what would you tell someone new to Sarasota about it?" In the caption, I also informed anyone interested that it was for the purposes of a graduate school research paper and specifics such as usernames would not be used. One of the "moderators"[9] pinned the post to the top of the subreddit for a week, meaning it would be featured first when someone opened the subreddit's web page, because its "not discussed much despite being a part of the Sarasota community."

Feedback was not overwhelmingly negative. There were comments about selling sex and/or drugs, the risks of shootings, etc. Someone even linked the same 2012 *Guardian* article about British tourists being murdered that had also been shared in a comment on the 2014 posting (Luscombe, 2012). But there was also debate in the responses, and also more "upvotes"

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[8] How people who live in Sarasota frequently refer to themselves and other residents, given the significant tourist presence.
[9] People who volunteer to ensure that posts and comments on the subreddit are following specific community guidelines, as well as rules general to the website.

(or likes) on thoughtful comments about why Newtown is disadvantaged. These indicate an

increased understandings of Newtown's complex history, at least from what was seen in 2014.

Commenters made greater connections between current issues and a history of systemic racism,

as several commenters brought up the history of segregation that led to Newtown's non-ideal

conditions and reputation. Multiple comments even shared educational resources including the

Newtown Alive website and videos from outreach events by Newtown community members.

In addition to this informal survey, I chose to more closely analyze the *Herald Tribune*'s

Facebook activity to demonstrate the context of conflicting perceptions to which I am referring

as it is the most widely popular local news publication that, as of writing has a following of

43,118 accounts (which is 12,000 more than its main competitor). While the publication has

always focused on Sarasota and sometimes surrounding areas of Bradenton and Venice, since its

start in 1925, it was owned by the *New York Times* until 2012. In content analysis of the *Herald*

Tribune, I found a reasonable mix between left and right talking points amidst their audience,

mixed feelings on Conservative governor, Ron DeSantis and that politically controversial news

garnered the most feedback. While the digital content analysis was ongoing throughout the

study, the examples I draw from here are from the very end of data collection in 2021. I chose

these examples due to their relevance to key subjects of this project: race, space and place.

- **Example one: the suspect book.** ~60 comments from 24 independent respondents. Found on a shelf at the Venice Police Department in February 2020 was a relic dated to the 1970-80s: a binder titled "Black Suspects Book 1." The binder was full of "Personal Information Sheets", containing details such as hangouts and friends, on Black residents who had been arrested mostly for drugs. The article quoted a longtime lawyer in the area representing a Black police officer in a discrimination case filed in 2019 against the city of Venice and its police department, citing one detail that a fellow officer left a banana in his car for him to find. The engagement I evaluated on the *Herald Tribune* Facebook post of this article was mixed. One top comment said that Merrick Garland, as attorney general, has so much work to do investigating departments like this, another said everyone there needs to be fired. Contrasting views on the article were also present in the top comments, one saying that everyone needs

to relax about this issue because who knows what the book is about (an issue that could be resolved by reading the article) and the title is labeled as opinion in big letters (of note here the opinion is not the existence of the book, it is spelled out in the title as the columnist calling it sinister). Several other commenters accused the publication and even the specific author of stoking racial tensions. One interesting comment came from someone that lived in the city for eight years and called it "a great city but extremely racist," this was interesting because 1. It reflected that people no longer living in the area follow and engage with the publication and 2. A frequent commenter replied that this view incendiary and baseless because they have friends and family there and never seen racism. This frequent commenter also said they experienced discrimination as an Italian, which a Black commenter responded to with a long, carefully worded reply on how those experiences are not comparable (both parties became more heated in an ongoing exchange here). There were several arguments, as well as questions and confident speculations of a White suspect book (which would make the whole thing non-racial according to two people), in spite of the article stating there was no such thing found or ever seen. Several people called this old news and irrelevant, none of these comments touched on the 2019 discrimination case. One person called this an attack on our local police, while another commented the popular activist phrase "abolish the police."

- **Example two: the crosswalk.** ~80 comments from 29 independent respondents. Project PRIDE, a local LGBTQ+ organization, unveiled a mural of five crosswalks in downtown Sarasota painted with the pride colors, including features the transgender flag colors, as well as black and brown for BIPOC- this is all the context needed to interpret the comments. Nine of the comments of the ~80 in this assessment were simple praise such as "beautiful!" while eight of them were reaction memes or jokes about committing equal opportunity vehicular manslaughter. A considerable number of the comments did not engage with anti-gay sentiments directly but made complaints such as why not have blue crosswalks for police or red, white and blue or an Italian pride crosswalk (from that frequent commenter discussed in example one). The frequent commenter, in one of their responses, also noted that the city of Sarasota is liberal while the county is center/right, which was an interesting observation because Leach said that in his interview, as well; prior to this project, that was not my observation. Another commenter expressed disdain several times that the city/county did this, even though it was conceptualized and funded by Project PRIDE. Several respondents expressed disdain towards sentiments of "wokeness" and "virtue signaling." It is important to note, however, that the article itself said that the crosswalk has been received well by those who have seen it, which demonstrates that the reception may be even more mixed than these comments reflect. In any and all of the content analysis presented in this chapter section, I am not trying to claim that the examples I am providing are fully representative of everyone, because that is not possible. Rather, I am trying to demonstrate the existence of complicated and contrasting views locally. I picked the specific example of the crosswalk because it gets at important themes for the project as an example of representation, diversity and inclusion through art. In their strategizing, these are constituents that the SAACC has to be mindful of, because the city officials they work closely with have to be mindful

of these views to keep their positions. Despite how powerless conservatives claim to feel amidst "woke culture," this disdain for inclusivity makes a difference in how these stories can be told.

These examples each demonstrated variations of local opinions on issues of racism and representation in Sarasota. As I will discuss later, there is a diversity of opinions among Sarasota's stakeholders, and the SAACC and Newtown Alive are clearly a part of the conversation.

In-person Participant Observation

October 2020, nearly six months after beginning this project, opportunities for reasonably safe in-person observation arose. Due to the obvious limitations, participant observation for these events were more so supportive than central to the findings. The first SAACC event I participated in was the 65th anniversary caravan recreation from Newtown to Lido Beach. The event began on MLK Way outside where Old Humphrey's Grocery Store was all those years ago. Before arriving, I picked up Ella, a Ringling College of Arts and Design (RCAD) photography student who had just started an internship taking pictures for Newtown Alive at her campus-adjacent housing, which was two minutes away from the event (since RCAD has been creeping into the Newtown area).

When we arrived, the tightly structured parking lot was nearly full, and there was a police presence directing the traffic. We had to circle a couple of times, but eventually managed to park. We both hovered semi-awkwardly near Lizzie's conversations with collaborators and attendees to let her know we were there and to ask if she needs help with anything. I was also able to formally introduce her to Ella, whom she had not yet met in person.

Following opening remarks addressed to the attendees and the local ABC 7 crew, everyone got back in their vehicles and drove the same route that was taken by Newtown's protestors every Sunday to Lido Beach. Once we arrived, the group stood and listened to longtime community members, such as Eric Frederick, who had been in middle school the beach protests. There was also discussion of new murals[10] that had recently been added to the pavilion.

The next in-person event was not held until February, as a part of Black History Month programming. It was the dedication of a plaque for Ms. Dorothye Smith at Southside Elementary School. Ms. Smith was the first Black principal in the county following integration, and by all accounts dedicated her life to community betterment outside of the school. On an overcast Saturday, folding chairs were set up several (but maybe not quite six) feet apart from one another outside of the school's front doors. When I arrived with the extra masks and hand sanitizer, I had asked Lizzie whether I should bring, cameras and a laptop for Facebook live streaming purposes were already set up, as well as a podium and bottles of water for attendees.

The folding chairs were slowly filled up with Newtown community members I recognized from the caravan event, as well as city and school board officials, everyone dressed to the nines[11]. The first person to speak was the current Southside Principal, a White woman who included a couple sentences about how she related to Ms. Smith, as she too is principal during tumultuous times, in her remarks.

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[10] During writing in May 2021, Frederick, as head of a mural iniative began painting Overton/Newtown images on buildings in the Rosemary District, which once was Overton.

[11] As in much more formally than I was anticipating, I was fortunate to have decided against leggings and gone with something nicer.

As one would hope, the principal, also, and mostly, said meaningful things about Ms. Smith's work and having the plaque there for students to learn from, but I considered the self-insertion (however brief) to be a small piece of insight (on how a privileged person is processing their positionality in contemporary racial issues and these responsive local developments).

Older speakers who personally knew Ms. Smith were featured, her brother being one of them. At one point, he made a powerful assertion that her memory is "alive and well, and in good hands." One of her friends from the Booker School faculty (before Smith became principal of Southside) reminisced on her character, sharing memories like their frequent conversations in the teacher's lounge, and the leader of a local chapter of a Black sorority spoke of the inspiration she drew from Ms. Smith's story. After hearing from Frederick and Coleman, as well as closing remarks from the superintendent, the plaque was unveiled. The event concluded with organizers and people from Newtown taking pictures with the plaque. Dominique Hart and I coordinating posting the event to social media and collapsing the setup before slowly walking to our cars. While this was my first time meeting Hart in person, we did not have to say much to coordinate, as we had been in touch regularly via email during the prior pandemic months.

Finally, for in-person events, I was asked to help work the check-in table at the closing event for the Buck O'Neill Exhibit in March 2021. O'Neill is a celebrated resident of Newtown as the first African American to hold a coaching position in Major League Baseball. This was not the first in-person event that was held for this exhibit, but the only one that I attended, rather than just presenting on social media afterwards, as I formally concluded data collection with Black History Month. However, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, data collection did not truly cease for as long as I had wifi and/or cell service, so here I will briefly describe my observations from this day.

When I arrived about half an hour ahead of the event, Lizzie was using straw ties to bind handout papers on the SAACC and how to become a donating member. I sat down with her to help and catch up a little before I took over the task so she could change her shoes. I sat at the check-in table surrounded by paper materials, a clipboard with an email list, straw-bound scrolls of SAACCred knowledge, and my own clipboard of RSVPs, and tried to check names off as fast as people filed in. The *who's-who* of Sarasota, eating the catered wings and light-bites on the basketball court, even included the city's mayor. It was also my first time seeing some of the board members in person, including those I interviewed over Zoom.

Key Informant Interviews

This section concerns the primary information I gained from semi-structured key informant interviews, although it was not often that Lizzie Coleman and I got to talk one-on-one. The first few times I met Lizzie pre-pandemic, so in-person, I thought of her as a bubbly, orange blur. She wore her hair tightly cropped surrounding a friendly face, usually paired with her rectangular glasses and a colorful ensemble. It was rare that people were not hovering, waiting to ask her a question or thank her for her relentless work, or both.

Before she asked me to run the SAACC social media, the only one-on-one time we ever had was at the family-owned coffee shop where I was working previously. Other customers would order the overpriced charcuterie platters we would serve on a rustic slab of smooth wood; Lizzie sat with her laptop at a table near the kitchen window and would ask me for the meats and cheeses I would otherwise have to throw out because they were haphazardly cut by my perpetually shaky coffee hands. I would happily oblige and bring them to her with crackers. We would split the plate and talk about her work, my school or sometimes just chat about random things like dating apps (she was curious, and I was 22). I never considered any bond with her to

be particularly unique. She was one of my favorite people to talk to, and still is, but I really think she can click with anyone. Not only did Coleman exhibit the ideal personality for the networking these non-profits required, but I also cannot stress enough how she also worked tirelessly. Whenever we coordinated social media posts over the phone, Lizzie was always on the move (walking or driving); this was one of the reasons why, when she agreed to interview for my thesis, I was willing to make any time she gave my work. On a Wednesday morning in September, I had gotten on to Zoom and tinkered with how I was going to record just half an hour before it started. A critically important interview, but with someone I was naturally comfortable with after months of digital communication. Emails at 2am, random calls while one or both of us were on a walk in the sweltering South Florida heat that we each knew well from our disparate childhoods in Sarasota, borrowed time to ask about how my job search was going during the COVID crisis or to talk about her upcoming in-state travel plans.

We caught up once more before I eventually began the interview by segueing into how Newtown Alive got started, how my knowledge of Sarasota's historic Black community was nonexistent before 2017, despite having grown up here. Lizzie could relate. She paused for only a quick second before launching into personal memories. "I knew that kids were drowning, and my grandmother would be really, really afraid, you know, that's why she wouldn't allow us to just run around the community and all because children would find these swimming holes and they would drown and then there was a train car behind the cemetery, and they would swim when the water would collect. Like yesterday when all that rain came, well, a train car would collect all that water and they would swim in that and um," her voice broke a little with the next detail, "people drowned," she did not linger on that statement, "so my grandmother would be very leery about allowing us to run around the community and even to deal with water." This

was her most palpable experience of the years the local chapter of the NAACP spent organizing resistance to beach segregation. In her view, Newtown's signature story was these protests for beach integration.

As Coleman and I discussed all of the little benchmarks involved in the bureaucratic processes of changing a city's landscape, I wondered whether White discomfort surrounding segregation affected these seemingly objective steps in any unseen ways and was burning to know whether she and her team felt the need to soften hard truths along the way, so I asked just that.

"We had to tell the truth," she replied bluntly, following up with background info for that statement. "We just told what we found, you know, the documentation is all there, and the oral history interviews backed up the documents that we saw in archival newspaper articles. You can't refute what the conventional thinking was of the day." I could tell she had a compelling detail coming my way.

"We've recently come across a document talking about some ordinances about beach integration. I guess these were recorded in the voices of the City Commissioners at that time. There was no getting around the fact they did not want Blacks on that beach. No Black or Brown or I say different people on that beach and it's all there in that ordinance that they made, in the law that they came up with. So, there was no, um there was no sugarcoating."

I nodded along, not really having anything to add and considering my next question, when she spoke to her experiences with sugar coating in an entirely different context

"Now, on the trolley tours, I find that there's a certain way that we tell the story because Jim Crow is bad." A small, emphasizing laugh escaping with her exhale.

"Undeniably," I couldn't help but make my own agreement known.

She continued, "It's horrible and what African Americans had to suffer through… just horrific! And there's really no getting around that story but to tell the story on a trolley tour in such a way that keeps people engaged and not feeling sad and," beginning to launch into the potential inner monologues of a tourist, "not feeling like 'Oh God, get me off of here, this story is horrible!'" Switching back into her own voice, she continued, "there's a way that we tell it because for us it's about empowerment. We look at what our ancestors suffered and say, 'oh my god, they were so strong, if they were so strong in what they endured than I ought to be strong with this little stuff that I have to go through these little hoops I have to jump through," she said, referring back to bureaucratic hoops.

In response, I drew from local experience once more, "Yeah, I definitely, I went on the trolley tour, I think like a year or two ago. I definitely noticed, like, the theme and it's definitely really interesting to think about because there's a lot of like, Sarasota largely consists of older, White people and these people were alive during segregation, their parents could have been wholehearted supporters, they themselves could have been wholehearted supporters. So, it's very strange to think about that position of sitting on the trolley and listening to like what you went through," I laughed a little nervously before making a quick addition to my own train of thought, "and what your ancestors went through."

Lizzie jumped back in immediately. "And what we've learned after years of the trolley tours is that people were oblivious, they had no idea, many of them, what happened here, even though they were living here at the time." She said with a tone of disbelief.

Lizzie continued, "I want people to understand an empowering story and I don't want them to get off the trolley feeling like 'oh my god that was the worst, it was all bad, bad, bad' when [Jim Crow] definitely was. But I want them to see another aspect, another perspective, *our*

perspective," she concluded the thought before connecting another related detail, "And also. That is why we have a singer on board as well because a singer kind of lifts the stories…"

Interrupting again I said, "I remember, that was incredible, it added another element to it like..." I cut myself off so she could articulate the purpose.

"Yeah singing took these people through these hard times and so I figure the singing will take these trolley tour goers through the discomfort."

"Putting uncomfortable conversations to music" was both an apt description of the tourism aspect, while also an intimate detail of the being in the NAACP caravans now being shared with anyone who gave their time and money to listen. The need for sugarcoating is not ideal but Lizzie's choices for including outsiders in the experience was beneficial to her goals.

Almost midway through the interview, Lizzie reflected on her latest goal of constructing an African American Museum in her very own hometown. "It's amazing and it's huge and it's intimidating to someone like me, who… that is not my area of expertise."

I gave my reply immediately, as it was one of the strongest sentiments I developed in my observations. "Yeah, but I mean you're reshaping the landscape of Sarasota to reflect the realities and the histories and these really critical stories and dynamics like I mean it's incredible. I really am in awe of, just like, your work and how much you do. I mean that's got to be so much pressure to be so representative of your ancestors and your community."

She jumped right in there. "Oh, believe me you just hit a, you just hit a nerve right there," she said.

"Oh, I'm sorry!"

She carried on very freely as she presented the driving force of her work, "No, I'm saying because it's so true. Their stories have not been told and so I get to tell them." Lizzie continued, "So understand, it's true, you feel like, 'oh my gosh, they're watching, they're over my shoulder like making sure I'm saying it right' so you know when you want to shortcut something, when you want to throw something together because you're in a hurry to get it done and get it over with? No. It's like I am constantly thinking I've got to make this the very best that it can be because they're watching. They are watching."

To gain additional perspective on how developments I observed were utilized to progress the SAACC's goals in Sarasota, I conducted in-depth interviews over Zoom with three additional SAACC board members. Following formal and informal discussion with Lizzie, each of the other interviews gave unique perspective to multiple key points on this ethnographic study of the SAACC.

After Oldham, I spoke with Reverend Evans. Evans said that he knew since adolescence that he wanted to be a part of the Church to make a difference in people's lives, but a minister who mentored Evans suggested he explore other avenues. He later joined the ministry. Leach worked for Pepsi Co. and moved to the area in 2000, because he was transferred when Pepsi acquired Tropicana. When he left his corporate position, Evans pursued ordainment and, as of the interview, served as a church leader as well as on multiple non-profit boards. Evansx was Chair of the Board of Sarasota's Education Foundation and also a board member for the local Head Start chapter. His appreciation for all kinds of education was evident in the causes he dedicated time to, as well as his enthusiasm towards the themes of our conversation. When asked what he was most looking forward to, as a SAACC board member, his response was excitement surrounding the programming and providing platforms to diverse, new artists.

Over the phone, I also interviewed the honorable Judge William E. Turner, who serves in Florida's 12th Judicial Circuit and on the SAACC board. Turner grew up in St. Petersburg and has lived in Sarasota since the 1980s. The first thing we discussed was how the organization functioned during COVID. He said he had more meetings during those months than the previous five years, over Zoom, of course. When talking about how he got involved in the SAACC, he brought up previous work with Newtown Alive and the goal that came out of NTA of a dedicated center for African American arts and culture. From there, we talked about the SAACC's role in Sarasota as it develops and grows. Ultimately, Turner thinks that expansion into Newtown is inevitable, as it has already started, but he was looking forward to the center being a major part of the city's appeal. Turner's perspective, while summarized here, is further explored in the chapter dedicated to thematic discussion, as it gets at an important element of SAACC strategizing.

Finally, I interviewed Simone Edwards, a SAACC board member that is also the President and CEO of Selby Gardens. As mentioned in the subsection on virtual participant observation, Selby Gardens is a key partner to the SAACC. Edwards relocated to Sarasota from New York for the position with an extensive arts and cultural resume, having served in positions at the Guggenheim and the Metropolitan Opera. She considers botanical gardens to be "living art," and even integrates visual art into Selby's exhibitions. A striking example of a collaboration with the SAACC that was in its planning stages when we spoke was the Florida Highwaymen exhibit, commemorating the landscape paintings done by Black artists who were shut out of museums and galleries in the 1950s and 60s, but persisted with their craft, selling directly to consumers along the Florida Atlantic coast.

Such programming is mutually beneficial as Selby is made more attractive to repeat visitors by fresh exhibits and it gives a significant platform to the SAACC, as Selby is one of Sarasota's most popular destinations.

Each of the interviews very much overlapped because, despite their widely varying perspectives, board members reached a comprehensive plan amidst the chaos of a global pandemic and the heights of national political tension in modern history. In her dedicated work on Newtown Alive and in establishing the SAACC, Coleman was constantly looking for ways to bring people into the experiences of these meaningful places and people of Sarasota's Black community.

V. Discussion

Having outlined the general findings, this chapter will analyze main themes from the findings, putting data gathered from all methods into perspective.

Local issues of gentrification and inequality

There is no question the Coleman and the SAACC board have taken on a tremendous responsibility, not just to their city and neighborhood, but also to their broader "community." It is worth considering how they construct the idea of "community" in their discussions and actions, and also how this relates to their overall awareness of the changes taking place within Sarasota. While online content analysis of local media forums reflected significant variances between local individuals' perceptions of historic inequality and how, or whether, it is reproduced today, board members exhibited a coherent strategy for outreach to a politically-mixed public in meetings and individual interviews.

I asked board members during interviews what they envisioned for the SAACC in the future. This gave a nuanced perspective on how they understand Sarasota as a growing and changing population, as well as what urban development implies for Newtown and the SAACC's board. Turner said, "look at downtown Sarasota…then you look at where the room is to expand. You can't expand south. You can't expand West because the water…Yeah, it's not an accident that they [the colleges] basically own everything on 41 north… what's happening on the 41 corridor, eventually it's going to happen on the MLK corridor[12]."

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[12] MLK is the main corridor on Newtown, whereas 41 (or Tamiami Trail) is Sarasota's busiest road.

Turner was not alone with such feelings. Turner and Coleman in particular stressed an awareness

of the larger position Newtown was in within Sarasota's rapidly changing downtown area.

"After these years of working this project, I understand now that it's never going to be what

it was - a totally African American community," Coleman said, "because the real estate is that

the value is low, and developers are coming in and buying property, and it's whoever can afford

it. Whoever can live there, whoever can rent there, so it's never going to be what we

remembered. But my hope is that its identity, and its history will never be forgotten." Such

feelings express the arts-based approach of the SAACC, which Evans also mentioned during his

interview. There was an awareness during such interviews that the SAACC is not trying to turn

back time, and they are well aware of the intrusive development into Newtown. Their visions of

the future involve ensuring there is dedicate space and memory within the current contexts of

Sarasota's developments. As Turner said, "Just like you go to St. Armands, just like you go to

the Ringling… you're gonna want to come to the cultural center. So we hope to be in the same

orbit as those places," Turner said, "You know, we see the cultural center itself being a multi-

purpose, building, in which not only can you come and discover history, but you can also come

to see lectures, you can come and see performances, you can come and see dance, you can come

and see, hear poetry. We intend for it to be used that way also, so it's a really sort of prize itself."

In this sense, the SAACC sees preserving Newtown as potentially running parallel to other

changes taking place within Sarasota, not necessarily counter to them.

Throughout his comments, Evans shared a similar sentiment and enthusiasm as to what the

SAACC can add to Sarasota, especially with its new pursuit of the arts, saying "This is already

an artist destination for people from all over the Florida, but also around the country. The idea

that we could add to that with a whole other stream of really interesting arts is and tell stories of

history has really, I think could add to the vibrancy of the whole community. And I think it really could change the picture of Newtown." Evans continued, "I'm personally most excited about the programming side, meaning the ability to actually bring a platform for African American art of various kinds, and to tell African American stories, historical stories, and to bring that to our larger community, because a whole lot of people don't know about and fully appreciate them… A physical museum is going to be a great thing. I support that, but I don't think it's central to the mission." Evans then spoke about establishing the organization as a community presence before a permanent space is established. This revealed a certain awareness of the tension between internal, community inclusion and the outward-looking, arts program that will mesh with the city's new branding.

From what I gathered, board members, of course, were not simply waiting to procure the building to begin new ventures for community outreach and dedications of space within Sarasota. An SAACC exhibit at Selby Gardens was in its planning stages when I spoke with SAACC board member and Selby Gardens CEO, Simone Edwards. As she said, "I was really honored to be asked to participate because I think this community really needs what SAACC is doing [in the long-term], and we need to pursue a dedicated space to celebrate African American history or arts. I think it's really a necessary facet to the cultural landscape of the community." Here again, her use of the term "community" is not focused just on the historical Black community but rather a more diverse and future Sarasota.

Yet as I will discuss below, while there is an awareness of these challenges brought by the changes to Sarasota's downtown, the programming has not yet adjusted completely to these more nuanced and diverse understandings of "community."

It is complicated, if not impossible, to neatly categorize NTA and SAACC organizers into a single community group. However, exploring commonalities and differences between the stakeholders I worked with is a worthwhile exercise in understanding the networking that is crucial to SAACC operations.

Data from this project, as well as prior quantitative analysis (Data USA, 2021), reflected that the majority of Sarasota's active resident population is over 35, non-Hispanic white and tends to vote conservatively. The ages and experiences of Sarasota's constituents shape how the city grows. Given the trends of younger generations to exhibit more concern for racial inequity and climate change (Parker, Graf and Igielnik, 2019), the beginning of this piece of the discussion will explore who is participating in the local developments that have been outlined by the data.

As I have mentioned, Sarasota appeals to retiree populations, their ideals and values (Webb, 2016). There is evidence that Sarasota's demographics are diversifying (Fost, 2020), and this calls into question how Sarasota is going to be, likely gradually, reshaped by these changes. To paraphrase a line from Vickie's interview, history is not always sexy. The strategy of preserving Newtown through reconstructing and presenting its heritage has been effective, and in my opinion, essential at this vital time. But as Sarasota becomes increasingly unaffordable, it is important to constantly rethink *who* constitutes the various "communities."

I discussed the larger context of Sarasota in detail throughout several sections of this work because I wanted to portray the nuances driving the ongoing but potentially lessening issue of young people leaving. As Fost (2020) reflected, while Sarasota's aging, wealthy residents and benefactors stimulate the economy, they also perpetuate the area's inaccessibility for younger

professionals, which poses a challenge to Sarasota. This demographic pressure is also important to consider for the SAACC's strategies. Multiple *Newtown Alive* oral history interviewees disparaged the youth for their lack of obligation to the community (2017: 211, 213) without much acknowledgement of the reasons younger people have decided to leave. Catering to only one demographic can be limiting for the SAACC and for Sarasota in the long-term, and it will be important to consider larger national population trends in the future. This is a concern, as Coleman expressed to me that she does not know who will take over the work Newtown Alive as its current organizers age and retire.

First, there is the question of naming and bounding any community. During Coleman's interview, she brought up the pressures of being accountable to her "ancestors" for her work with the "community." How community is defined here, by looking back at the experiences of those in the past, is worth considering. The heritage tourism presented by Newtown Alive puts heavy emphasis on the perspectives of older generation. This works to preserve what might soon be lost but needs to do more to engage the younger generation or the changes taking place today.

As educational entities, there are programs for Newtown's kids and young adults, such as a mentorship program the SAACC provided through Booker High School. This mentorship program, held over Zoom, puts teenagers heading to college in touch with worldly, Black professionals, including a Tony winner, for their advice. While this is valuable on several levels in terms of showcasing good examples and the potential for networking, it does not directly connect or involve current Newtown youth in Newtown Alive's work. It is my hope, from doing this research, that the SAACC furthers such existing steps to engage with the current community and particularly the younger generations; future endeavors through the center could involve more young people with specific NTA and SAACC projects.

Non-profit strategizing

My interview with SAACC board-member Simone Edwards brought a particularly large amount of information and insight into what was involved with running a non-profit. With Selby Gardens, Edwards emphasized the importance of working to make the space not only more diverse and inclusive, but also accessible. During her tenure, she has extended access to the gardens to locals that may not be able to afford memberships and has taken steps to do so with the Family Togetherness (est. 2017) and My Garden Membership (est. 2019) programs. In this sense, she pushed inclusion and accessibility not just to those "outside" the current "community," but also gave breaks to those who were there and economically unable to participate. Edwards explained such strategies were important because their programs looked to eventually include disadvantaged children, adults, and seniors, who together could enjoy and learn at the gardens.

Her job also included a great deal of networking with other local non-profits to learn about other strategies and opportunities. I found a positive feedback loop between Newtown's coalitions and the stakeholders who engaged with them. As I mentioned, most of the SAACC board members also held other esteemed positions in Sarasota, and a great deal of inclusion and networking took place through their networks. The summer 2021 exhibit at Selby Gardens, which will be showcasing the work of the Florida Highwaymen and Black artists from the 1950s and 60s, is a great example of what can come from successful strategizing and networking, especially during a pandemic.

Evans also brought up how he would give Coleman names of people to talk to for shorter-term networking purposes. "I think what [Oldham] is doing right now is right, because she's sort of turning over all the rocks and seeing what comes up and trying to piece together the

beginnings of both and bringing the right people on to help make it with people who can help," Leach said. He went on to explain that she talked to about 30 people in the city just to find a suitable temporary site for the center.

Networking was critical to SAACC operations, and general board meetings reflected this. Conversations between board members around the ongoing negotiations for the Leonard Reid[13] House as a temporary location for the museum furthered my understandings of how stakeholders were viewing the current political climate. One quote that stood out to me was from an older, white lawyer on the board referred to the SAACC as the "pretty girl at the dance" in terms of asking power for funding their projects on their terms. He pointed out to fellow board members that even if the SAACC does not get every expense covered and every event permit that they are hoping for, they are entitled and well-oriented to ask. I found this to be an interesting ethnographic moment, especially as I had been so focused on observation of how Newtown's stories were presented at the time of hearing it. I think it would be poignant for any close observer to note that, historically, such powerful people (White professionals) of the past had worked hard to suppress demands for recognition from Newtown's coalitions.

While the current political capital the SAACC is currently experiencing was referenced outright in terms of private negotiations, the general, national shift towards listening to Black voices was navigated much more carefully by board members in public spheres.

In his interview, Judge Turner said, "some people feel that you put 'Black' in anything, and it's a political statement," the context for this statement being that he noted there were people that bristled at the idea of a dedicated African American cultural center, as opposed to predominantly white spaces being more inclusive. This was also evident in the rainbow

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[13] Leonard Reid was an early African American resident in Sarasota with a crucial role in establishing Overton.

crosswalk example I discussed from the overview of *Herald Tribune* social media engagement, where commenters viewed this community installment as an overt, aggressive political statement. It was clear that this vocal set of locals were against "everything becoming political," even though space and place have always been political, just in a way that was beneficial and comfortable to them. This is an example of how tensions often (re-)emerge when painful histories are discussed openly. While some might say it is best to let painful memories die, others will argue their pain cannot heal without recognition of the past.

Coleman was well-aware of these tensions, and she knew that educating the public about histories of segregation could be tricky. As discussed in the subsection on Coleman's interview, she does not want people to walk away from presentations feeling that the learning experience was awful. Even the website (as of 2021), with its thorough information, does not give much detailed discussion of what "segregation" actually means in its many forms. As a member of these audiences, I often considered that the SAACC could and should do more to spell out through specific examples for privileged residents and patrons of Sarasota how structural and everyday violence have continued for generations. It is particularly important for understanding the impacts of a highly publicized murder, like that of George Floyd, can have on such communities. From my conversation with Coleman, I understood how the image she wanted for Newtown was that of resilience, or the story of what they did and why. Speaking to this theme of resilience, or of being survivors rather than victims, several of the oral history interviewees conducted by Newtown Alive had emphasized that the people of Newtown were not raised to be victims (2017: 213).

While I still think that speaking to privileged audiences to garner support for their initiatives is a significant part of their programming, centering the perspectives of those who resisted oppression rather than the oppression itself leaves little room for feelings of victimhood and makes the Newtown community, rather than White residents and tourists, the focus.

The Pandemic Impact

The pandemic was an important element in this evaluation of the SAACC, as in person interaction was a critical Newtown Alive strategy, and to tourism in general. One of the first things I asked each of the interviewees was how the pandemic and its safety measures affected their work. Turner found positives for working efficiently, saying, "Well, you know, here's the good thing about the pandemic, people got time. So, it's actually easy now with Zoom, to schedule and coordinate meetings, because it's easy to people, you know, people stay on Zoom all day, because, you know, they have no place to go. So actually, I have probably had more meetings during the last six months than I've had in the last, you know, couple of years, because people are at home." He also noted that this, of course, cut down on in-person interactions and events but, in her interview, Coleman concurred on the benefits. It was clear that, with networking a central strategy, the pandemic had not slowed them down but rather enabled more networking.

From these interviews, as well as my own observations, I gathered that due to the SAACC being a new organization (est. 2019), COVID restrictions had logistical benefits, especially for Coleman. "So I came home [during shutdowns], and I started grant writing, and pitching proposals and partnering with organizations in town because the museum is going to need partners with arts and cultural organizations," Coleman said. "So we continued to have meetings on Zoom with the board. And, you know, there are some definite things that I had to

do. And one of them was talk with partners about the museum and what it would do … Oh, that

was great, because I got a chance to meet leaders of arts and cultural organizations that only

heard about before." According to Coleman, these meetings led to great conversations and

strategizing throughout 2020.

Black Lives Matter

Another question related to strategy that I asked all of the interviewees was how the

nationwide summer resurgence of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement impacted work with

the organizations, if at all. Coleman's direct experiences with engagement were enlightening. As

she said,

> "In the beginning, when we started this Newtown Alive project, you know, there are
> always going to be history enthusiast and hobbyist interested, you know, and that number
> is, you know, a small number of, of diehards… after George Floyd's murder, we started
> getting calls from all corners of the community, interested in what we were doing, and it's
> as if suddenly [community] leaders kind of woke up from a deep sleep. It's been pretty
> amazing… people were [also] texting and emailing. How can I help?"

Coleman explained that all kinds of offers to contribute came from people seeing the

news coverage surrounding George Floyd and responses to the murder. Direct help for any

Newtown residents in need was prevalent, with Coleman citing examples of money for

furloughed women, food and even furniture from Sarasota residents who were moving and able

to part with it. I learned from Coleman how the organization saw long-term benefits out of such

correspondences also, including a local gallery owner's donation of Harlem Renaissance prints

from the museum.

Even the board members whose everyday lives did not involve organizing for Newtown

Alive events and outreach noticed the uptick in engagement. When discussing what recent

political events would mean for the SAACC and its negotiating power within a developing

Sarasota, Evans said, "Weirdly enough, the whole Black Lives Matter crescendo we're experiencing, I think is also drawing attention to the role that SAACC could positively play." For Evans, some of the "weirdness" he felt came from the fact that, in his opinion, the SAACC's local support base was already well-educated about the history and prevalence of racial inequality. But in his opinion, the SAACC was still in a good position to use their status in Newtown to continue their mission as an arts organization rather than becoming overly involved in racial justice campaigns.

Each of the themes explored in this chapter demonstrated the many, layered considerations behind SAACC programming, as well as the organization's present limits. In consideration of the politically empowered locale, organizers for Newtown Alive, and- by extension- the SAACC, focused on establishing the organization within the current art and tourism scenes dominated by older generations and conservative thinkers. Between gaining significant ground in their local context using solid, storytelling content and the national interest in materials and services like theirs, the SAACC has more power to expand their work to accommodate an even more diverse audience and needs to strategize accordingly from here. Even the pandemic seemed to allow further networking as well as publicity for the SAACC, despite the ongoing tensions between notions of community, strategy, and focus.

VI. Conclusion

Heritage as Resistance: A Comprehensive Picture of the Data Presented

As Coleman referenced in the narrative synthesis of a part of her interview, there is no avoiding the history, city support for segregation printed into articles of the time. By utilizing the evident history, the coalitions are able to strategically engage outsider audiences with uncomfortable issues and dynamics via concrete events. Dissemination of Newtown's narratives on these events represents a form of resistance that prevents the cultural erasure that is integral to the process of gentrification and structural racism in the United States. While social media content analysis for this project demonstrated reluctance by some White residents to engage with race critically, participant observation conducted for this evaluation demonstrated the significance of education and open engagement with BIPOC directed narratives. Newtown Alive and the SAACC formed locally specific strategies to navigate the direct challenge of general discomfort and avoidance of the history they present.

This project reflected how endeavors in heritage tourism as a means of preserving memory and community, like Newtown Alive and SAACC projects, are carefully constructed to succeed in present contexts. Success in disseminating counter narratives can be measured not only in terms of the influential persons and offices engaging with the material, but also the tangible contributions of these narratives to once exclusionary spaces, such as the fighting beach segregation mural at the Lido Beach Pavilion. In addition to marking success in disrupting previously dominant narratives, visuals like murals demonstrate strategizing in dissemination. Allowing tourists and residents alike to become familiar with Newtown's stories via tangible

culture like artworks and singing on the trolley proved critical to garnering engagement and support. Additionally, networking and forming partnerships within the established public and private tourism bodies to disseminate these cultural outputs to the public through established entities like Visit Sarasota and Selby Gardens was crucial, as participant observation reflected. The first decision to resist erasure by collecting stories to then engage in heritage tourism was one example of considering the locale in forming coalition goals. Not only is tourism an essential part of Sarasota, but also the arts, as Evans pointed out in his interview. Newtown Alive was the first step in entering the tourism scene, and the SAACC's goals for a center go further to establish previously marginalized narratives as an unwavering element in the local scene.

Going into this project, I was already familiar with extensive local heritage tourism available due to the efforts behind Newtown Alive, but not all of the crucial details of what has been accomplished and its future goals, or entirely how these things related to Sarasota as a whole. One of my central questions was whether the narratives of Newtown's community members had to be watered down for these goals to advance within this particular city's development schemas. From this research, I gained a more complicated perspective on how place narratives can be utilized towards shifting the landscape itself through outreach to gentrifiers and tourists that are otherwise largely unaware of them. Findings reflected that the pursuit of these goals through official channels did not necessarily mean that the memories were compromised for the sake of marketability, rather, they strategically empowered the storytellers (Newtown Alive's oral history interviewees) in centering the community's resilience and triumphs. This framework was doubly beneficial in that it set a positive tone that was welcoming to outsiders and celebratory for the Newtown community, as well as the children and grandchildren that were not around for the heights their predecessors reached collaboratively

during segregation. As I mentioned in the discussion chapter, based on this study, it is my formal recommendation that NTA and the SAACC, already recognizing the value of passing stories between generations, gear future programming towards involving younger people and their perspectives in this storytelling.

The organizers of the SAACC are well aware that there are changes happening in Sarasota and that Newtown will never be an exclusively Black, working class community again. However, they have implemented a strategy for representation and preservation that focuses on the cultural arts and heritage of the neighborhood. While this has proven successful, there is still work to be done. In particular, engagement with young Newtown residents will be critical for the future. As the current board ages, it will be essential to further include school students and younger community members in the specific programming of the SAACC.

The Roles of Applied Anthropology

The role of applied anthropology, put broadly, could be to facilitate between generations and across viewpoints. The successes of the Newtown Alive initiative demonstrated the capacity for organization using cultural anthropological frameworks and methods to produce equitable and inclusive narratives for outreach. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, early facilitation of similar projects is one critical role that anthropologists can, should, and often do, take on, but it is not the sole takeaway on how anthropology can be useful and impactful upon future urban planning and local politics. Anthropologists are not authorities on the places they study, however they have the training and can utilize their expertise to negotiate for policy that uplifts systemically disadvantaged populations in ways that account the cultures and goals of policymakers themselves (Wedel, 2005: 34). Newtown Alive is exemplary in its use of anthropological tools to gather community voices and, directed by these voices, begin effecting

larger changes to Sarasota, a city that was in the active, decades-long process of neglecting and erasing them.

Implementation Elsewhere

The model that Howard, Oldham and their collaborators originally implemented via Newtown Alive can and should be applied elsewhere. Newtown Alive, from the onset, required city and county support. In the absence of this, they would have likely had to seek even more private and/or grant funding to conduct the research. As Turner and Evans highlighted in their interviews, the citywide benefits that historical, cultural and arts contributions bring is what garners support from political and private stakeholders. In any local context, anthropologists can help by participating in such projects, collecting and learning the stories of longtime residents, and by collaborators and helping to disseminate them to the larger public. Another central question I had formed at the beginning of this project was on the marketability of Black history. This evaluation undeniably reflected how there are people are willing engage with national calls for inclusivity and equity in local contexts. Utilizing storytelling to educate people of longstanding inequalities in their communities gives way for people like Sarasota residents to consider voting differently and (incentivizing politicians) towards more progressive, widely beneficial policy. In that sense and many others shown throughout this work, interactive and inclusive educational programming, like that put forward by non-profits Newtown Alive and the SAACC, is critically important.

Conclusions

Finally, I would like to revisit major themes reviewed on gentrification and environmental justice scholarship, as well as the contributions of digital and physical heritage tourism productions, in relation to this work. As recently studied and shown (Lee, Lee, Shubho, 2019), people, particularly in the millennial generation, will most likely continue moving into urban centers, perpetuating the patterns of gentrification. Sarasota's Newtown, as a case study, demonstrated how the phenomena of gentrification has unfolded outside of the typical large-scale scenes found in California and New York. This was not a novel idea, as some gentrification scholarship previously suggested broadening the scope of defining qualities of gentrification (Billingham, 2015). Perhaps the most evident, of Billingham's expanded model of what gentrification can look like, in Sarasota was the socio-political implications beyond displacement; as members of the organizations expressed that they may not be able to change that impending reality, but the issues of representation and memory of Newtown, and the nearly lost Overton, were central. Tsing (2005) defined the process erasure as a series of negotiations of perspective, and these everyday contestations were seen, in both public and private sectors, throughout data collection for this project. The strategy of members of marginalized communities of sharing narrative histories to contribute the cultural capital of spaces (Harvey, 2002) in order to participate in drawing in newcomers has been utilized in other parts of the world (Chio, 2014) to adapt within their local political systems that historically neglected, or actively harmed, said communities. In demonstrating their presence and value, these actors gain negotiating power within these local political systems to not only avoid further harm, but also bring about positive change and representation for their communities. With this study taking place years following the advent of Newtown Alive, the establishment of community presence,

in both online and physical realms of Sarasota was evident, as well as negotiating power towards the goals opening an arts center entail.

During pandemic isolation, members of the SAACC emphasized strategies of networking towards these goals and connecting with audiences via digital channels, demonstrating the value of developing an online presence for outreach to both interlocutors and consumers. As the organizations grow and continue to benefit Sarasota, following the establishment of the arts center, I think that they could utilize their networks, such as the partnership with Selby Gardens and the aforementioned negotiating power they have earned, to establish programming with the set goal of garnering meaningful support for local intersectional environmental justice causes (Ducre, 2017); as Sarasota will be reshaped by the advancing effects of climate change and, historically speaking, that could bring the most harm to its disadvantaged and/or BIPOC communities. Once the organization is even more established as a citywide player, as Judge Turner expressed hope to see happen, I think that they can, and should, be even more ambitious, to check in with Newtown community members to determine their ideals for the future of Newtown, as well as general Sarasota, and set to work towards implementation of the involved goals.

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