UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

# Environmental Justice in the Urban Neighborhood Parks of Minneapolis, MN and Chicago, IL

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the school of Social Ecology
In the department of Urban Planning and Public Policy

by

Tera Corinne Dornfeld

Dissertation Committee:
Professor D. Feldman UC Irvine, Chair
Professor S. Bollens UC Irvine
Professor R. Matthew UC Irvine
Professor J. Pratt UC Irvine
Professor N. Ulibarri UC Irvine

2019

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my committee, Doctors David Feldman, Scott Bollens, Richard Matthew, Nícola Ulibarrí, and Jessica Pratt, for taking their time to provide insights into my research design, analyses, and scholarly writing. Our conversations and their feedback have shaped my work into a piece of scholarship that I am proud of. I feel capable of addressing new research challenges in my future. I am grateful to my supportive colleagues and friends. We have spent hours on end speaking about research as well as teaming up to take much-needed breaks from research. They have reminded me that I can do it, taught me to think critically, and showed me how to be a friend who is considerate and supportive of others. Without them, this process would have been miserable. Finally, I am eternally thankful for my family. They have been my number one support system since I was born. When I question myself or my capabilities, they do not miss a beat to reassure me that I can get through whatever challenges I might face. Financial support was provided by the University of California, Irvine.

# CURRICULUM VITAE

## EDUCATION

University of California Irvine, CA — September 2013 – September 2019
PhD in Urban Planning and Public Policy — GPA 3.98

Indiana University- Purdue University Fort Wayne, IN — August 2008 - August 2011
M.S. in Biology — GPA 4.00

Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, IA — August 2003 - January 2007
B.A. in Biology — GPA 3.67

## RESEARCH OVERVIEW

I use qualitative and quantitative methods to study urban inequality. I situate my research in urban, neighborhood parks and seek to understand how the public can participate in decision-making about parks. Parks are unique in that they have the potential to include diverse stakeholders who use parks for a variety of reasons. However, studies have shown that poor communities and communities of color often lack the largest parks with the best amenities. This means those communities miss out on use of parks for physical, social, and environmental health benefits. However, if the public participates in decision-making, historically under-served communities may be able to create the parks and decision-making processes they deserve.

My data collection strategy emphasized embeddedness and triangulation. I interviewed a variety of perspectives (planners, designers, technicians, park supervisors, and citizen advisory council members) and research techniques (interviews, observations, document analysis, and participant observation). I utilized theories of Environmental Justice, Collaborative Governance, and systems theory to understand my data. Findings about participation can be applied to other public services. Next, I seek to extend my research by leveraging parks as spaces for urban conservation interventions, for example the siting of ecosystem services within parks without displacement resulting from improved parks.

## RESEARCH

**Dissertation: Environmental Justice and Urban Neighborhood Parks**
University of California, Irvine

- Successful defense of dissertation (July 2019).
- Data collection
    - GIS spatial analysis of census tract and park polygon data
    - Qualitative data collection and content analysis of interviews with park supervisors and employees, observations of park use, and policy documents

**Independent Qualitative Study: Place Meaning and National Parks**
University of California, Irvine (Fall 2014 and Winter 2015)

- Conducted qualitative interviews, observations, and photography for an Institutional Review Board certified research project in Costa Rican National Park to assess field site for potential dissertation research.

**Citizen Science Using Smart Phones**
Center for Unconventional Security Affairs (CUSA; Spring 2014 to Spring 2015)

- Co-authored several research and funding proposals to study Citizen Science

**Master's Thesis Research: Nesting Ecology of Olive Ridley Sea Turtles**
Proyecto Las Baulas, Playa Grande, Costa Rica (October 2009 – August 2011)

- Designed project to conduct first-ever monitoring effort of olive ridley sea turtle during olive ridley nesting season to enhance protection offered to the species within Parque Nacional Marino Las Baulas (PNMB)
- Successful oral defense April 2011 and written completion July 2011 of Master's thesis

**Field Team Manager: Sea Turtle Nesting Beach Monitoring**
Proyecto Las Baulas, Playa Grande, Costa Rica (September 2009- August 2011)

- Used strong command of Spanish language to collaborate with park rangers and local tour guides to monitor leatherback sea turtles
- Facilitated relationship with Earthwatch volunteer organization, including first-ever family team and was responsible for field experience and well-being of all volunteers
- Coordinated field team and data collection
- Created a field experience and curriculum for schools grade 6 - high school

**Black Turtle Conservation Project: Satellite Telemetry and Nesting Behavior**
Playa Nombre de Jesus, Costa Rica (June - December 2009)

- Learned to operate ultrasound machine and gained knowledge of turtle reproductive cycle
- Patrolled beach to aid in data collection and in mitigation of poaching

**Billfish Conservation Project: Satellite Telemetry and Conservation**
Gulf of Papagayo, Costa Rica (June - August 2009)

- Aided in deployment of satellite transmitters and in data collection
- Designed live bait fish containment unit for commercial use in the Marina Papagayo

**Field Team Member: Sea Turtle Nesting Beach Monitoring**
Archelon Sea Turtle Protection Society, Zakynthos, Greece (May – July 2008)

- Led night patrols to tag and monitor loggerhead sea turtles which facilitated beach protection
- Presented slide shows at local hotels to describe sea turtle biology and inspire conservation practices in visiting tourists

**Field Team Leader: Sea Turtle Nesting Beach Monitoring**
Proyecto Las Baulas, Playa Grande, Costa Rica (December 2006- March 2008)

- Led night patrols working to collect nesting data for the critically endangered leatherback sea turtles
- Managed protection and data collection efforts for beach hatchery

**Independent Qualitative Study: Stakeholder Relationships in Park Formation**
Proyecto Las Baulas, Playa Grande, Costa Rica (December 2006- March 2008)

- Designed and conducted a series of personal interviews, in English and Spanish, to understand relationships between national park officials, biologists, and local residents following formation of two national parks made to protect sea turtles

**Field Team Leader: Sea Turtle Hatchling Predation**
Proyecto Las Baulas, Playa Grande, Costa Rica (December 2006- March 2008)

- Under direction of Dr. S.A. McCollum, created hatchling 'jackets' to tow lighted floats and understand near-shore predation patterns

## TEACHING

**Pedagogical Fellow**
University of California, Irvine (January 2017 – January 2018)

- Selected as part of a diverse and promising group of Teaching Assistants who receive instruction and experience in backward course design, cultivating student-centered teaching strategies, and evaluating fellow teachers.
- Designed and facilitated a two-day training workshop for incoming teaching assistants in UCI Anthropology department
- Chosen to lead the Fall 2017 'Successful Course Design' workshop series at UCI

**Teaching Assistant**
University of California, Irvine (January 2014 – December 2017)

| *Course Taught* | *Description of Responsibilities* | *Class Size* | *Student Learning Objectives* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Naturalistic Field Research Methods | - Lead a weekly discussion sections to prepare students to choose qualitative research questions, collect data, analyze results, and write a scientific paper detailing their findings.<br>-Grade papers, guiding students on research procedures as well as writing<br>-Held weekly office hours to offer individual and group guidance to students during research and writing | 190 Lecture<br><br>25 & 50 Discussion (1 section) | -Create a social science research paper following TA and peer edits.<br><br>- Design a qualitative research project and collect data |
| Community Health | -Lead 3 weekly discussion sections to assist Urban Planning and Public Health students reporting on city's system-based approaches to health<br>-Held office hours to discuss student reports | 120 Lecture<br><br>40 Discussion (each section) | -Assemble city planning and public health data<br>-Reflect, through written and oral presentations, how individual health constrained by environmental conditions mediated by city planning |
| Poverty & Inequality | -Maintained an online learning management system through Canvas; included grading papers, emailing students, and updated course content<br>-Engaged with students during weekly lectures (using Zoom) | 185 | -Within an online learning environment, connect poverty's influence on individuals across a variety of contexts (e.g. the clothing industry) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | -Encourage student reflection with tools with discussion forums and research papers | | |
| Divided Cities | -Graded student papers on city planning department responses to urban conflict | 100 | Analyze the role of urban planners in conflict-torn cities |
| Sustainability I & II | -Organized and graded students' final projects: research papers and videos<br>-Instituted reflexive journaling of behaviors<br>-Graded papers and made announcements<br>-Held weekly office hours | 300 | Evaluate 'sustainability' from a variety of theoretical perspectives (Q I) and reflect on individual contributions to sustainability (Q II) |

**Science Academy Facilitator**
Madison Elementary School, Santa Ana, CA (Summer 2016)

- Worked with elementary school teachers, UCI COPC coordinator, UCI Latino Health Access, and Madison Neighborhood Association to teach elementary school students during daily, six-week, summer science academy
- Developed original curriculum and presented resulting lesson during one week of camp
    - ***Student Learning Objective*:** map their neighborhood, collect biological data at their school, and describe how their neighborhood functions as an ecosystem.

**Limited Term Lecturer**
Indiana University – Purdue University, Fort Wayne, IN (January - May 2012)

- Co-developed and taught two sessions of course 'People and the Environment'
    - ***Student Learning Objectives*:** synthesize lecture and readings on current environmental issues into papers and critically reflect on their own behaviors within the context of those issues by submitting weekly reflections using Blackboard's 'Messageboard' feature

**Adjunct Professor**
Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana, Fort Wayne, IN (August 2011 – May 2012)

- Developed and taught course 'Spanish for Medical Professionals'
    - ***Student Learning Objective*:** memorize Spanish vocabulary and dramatize, in Spanish, common scenarios with patients in a clinical setting
- Organized and taught multiple sections and semesters of lecture and lab components of course 'Anatomy and Physiology'
    - ***Student Learning Objectives*:** describe physiological processes of the human body and identify the organs of the body where they take place

**Adjunct Professor**
Indiana Tech, Fort Wayne, IN (August 2011 – May 2012)

- Developed and taught course 'Pathophysiology' for biomedical engineering students
    - ***Student Learning Objective*:** describe the etiology of a variety of diseases
- Developed and taught adult, continuing education course 'Anatomy and Physiology'
    - ***Student Learning Objectives:*** describe physiological processes of the human body and identify the organs of the body where they take place

**Teaching Assistant**
Indiana University – Purdue University, Fort Wayne, IN (August 2008- May 2009)

- Taught lab components of course 'Anatomy and Physiology'

***Student Learning Objective*:** identify the organs of the body where physiological processes (discussed in lecture, led by professor) take place

## AWARDS, GRANTS, AND FUNDING

Social Ecology Alumni Fellowship (2019) $900

Social Ecology Dean's Spring Dissertation Writing Fellowship (2019) $12,886

Department of Urban Planning and Public Policy *In-Absentia* Funding (2019) $2,000

Public Impact Fellowship (2018) $1,000

Department of Urban Planning and Public Policy Summer Funding (2018) $3,000

Winter 2018 Dissertation Data Collection Stipend (2018) $1,000

Department of Urban Planning and Public Policy *In-Absentia* Funding (2018) $6,000

Course Design Certification Instructor Funding (Fall 2017) $750

Pedagogical Fellows Award (Summer and Fall 2017) $2,000

Department of Urban Planning and Public Policy Summer Funding (2017) $3,000

Spring 2017 Dissertation Data Collection Stipend (2017) $1,000

Graduate Research Assistantship (summer 2016) $2,300

Department of Planning, Policy, and Design Summer Funding (2016) $1,500

Department of Planning, Policy, and Design Summer Funding (2015) $3,500

Graduate Student Mentoring Award (Spring 2015) $200

Association of Graduate Students Travel Grant (Winter 2015) $400

Citizen Science Conference Travel Grant (2014) $180

School of Social Ecology Dean's Award for Community Engagement (2014) $1,500

Department of Planning, Policy, and Design Summer Funding (2014) $1,500

Earthwatch's Neville Shulman Small Grant (2012 - 13) $800

International Sea Turtle Symposium Student Travel Grant (2011, 2012, 2013) *various*

## INVITED LECTURES

University of California, Irvine

- Qualitative Data Collection. February 2017
- Sea Turtles. February 2017
- Inductive Qualitative Data Analysis. November 2016, 2017
- Environmental Psychology and Neighborhood Parks. Summer 2016
- Inductive coding of qualitative research data; delivered to 300 undergraduate students. Spring 2015; Spring 2016
- Qualitative data analysis; YouTube video created and delivered remotely to undergraduate students. Fall 2015

- Epistemology, data collection methods (survey, interviews, observations), and data analysis; delivered to select team of NSF-funded undergraduates working on UCI's PIRE project. Spring 2015

Elementary and High Schools in United States and Costa Rica

- Presentations describing sea turtle biology, ecology, and current threats ultimately, seeking to foster a desire for conservation (March 2008 – Present)

## OUTREACH

**Board Member**

People for Parks 501(c)(3) non-profit, Minneapolis, MN (January 2018 – July 2019)

- Leading spatial analysis of funding distribution
- Interim Secretary
- Contributing to grant-review process to ensure equitable awarding of funds

**Reading and Writing Volunteer**

Minneapolis Community Education, Minneapolis, MN (January 2018 – April 2019)

- Meet weekly with adult learners, building on existing knowledge to strengthen reading comprehension skills in preparation to take GED exam

**Station Coordinator**

The Leatherback Trust, Playa Grande, Costa Rica (August 2015 - February 2016)

- School Group Leader: Designed and led activities related to coastal eco-systems and translational science for visiting school groups from grade 6 to university-level students
- Managed station logistics including purchase of supplies and visiting groups
- Advised business intern as she prepared curriculum for school groups and organized expenses

**Community Outreach Coordinator**

The Leatherback Trust, Playa Grande, Costa Rica (2012-13; 2015-16)

- Engaged population living near Las Baulas Marine Park in conservation efforts
- Shared scientific data with local residents, students, and tourists
- Created conservation-themed symposium for students from five local high schools

**Teen Team Facilitator**

Earthwatch Institute, Boston, MA (July 2011; July 2014; July 2015; July 2018)

- Set tone for scientific research experience for teens at several global field sites
- Bridged relationship between teen research interns and field site staff
- Managed dynamics and planned activities for teens during 'down-time'

## PUBLICATIONS

Robinson NJ, **Dornfeld TC**, et al. (2016) Plastic fork found in the nostril of an olive ridley sea turtle. *Marine Turtle Newsletter* 150

**Dornfeld TC**, Robinson NJ, Santidrián Tomillo P, Paladino FV (2014) Ecology of Solitary Nesting Olive Ridley Sea Turtles at Playa Grande, Costa Rica. *Marine Biology* DOI 10.1007/s00227-014-2583-7

*Under Review*

**Dornfeld TC** and Flores N (2018) Reimagining Citizen Science for Women's Human Security: Shifting Power with Critical Pedagogy and Feminist Perspectives. In Matthew RM, Hoogensen G, Weitsmann P, Davis NC, **Dornfeld TC** (Eds.) Women and Human Security (pages X-Y) Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.

Matthew RM, Hoogensen G, Weitsmann P, Davis NC, **Dornfeld TC** (Eds.) (2018) Women and Human Security. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.

*In Preparation*
Dornfeld, TC (2019 *expected*) Spatial analysis of urban park distribution in the Trust for Public Land's top-ranked city park systems.

## PRESENTATIONS

**Dornfeld TC** (2018, October) *Urban Parks as Collaborative Decision-Making Sites.* Talk given at Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning Conference.

**Dornfeld TC** (2018, June) *Environmental Justice in Urban Parks.* Talk given at Association of Environmental Sciences and Studies Conference.

**Dornfeld TC** (2017, April) *Environmental Justice: The Case of Neighborhood Parks.* Talk given at annual Association of Graduate Students Symposium.

**Dornfeld TC** (2015, April) *Understanding the meaning residents attribute to a changing Costa Rican national park: A park for people and sea turtles?* Talk given at George Wright Society Conference on Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites.

**Dornfeld TC** (2015, March) *Understanding the meaning residents attribute to a changing Costa Rican national park: A park for people and sea turtles?* Poster presented at Science for Parks, Parks for Science: The Next Century, meeting presented by UC Berkeley, the National Parks Service, and National Geographic Society.

**Dornfeld TC** (2015, February) *Citizen Science: Potential to Breathe New Life into a Costa Rican National Park.* Talk given at Inaugural Citizen Science conference.

**Dornfeld TC**, Reed KM, & Paladino FV (2013, February) *A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Education at a Sea Turtle Nesting Beach in Playa Grande, Costa Rica.* Talk given at the annual International Sea Turtle Symposium

**Dornfeld TC,** Blanco GS, Koval J, Plotkin PT, Reina RD, Saba VS, Santidrián Tomillo P, Stokes LW, Swiggs J, Wallace BP, Spotila JR, & Paladino FV (2013, February) *Experiencing Science to Cultivate the Desire for Conservation at Home and Abroad.* Poster presented at the annual International Sea Turtle Symposium

**Dornfeld TC**, Zabriskie JM, Spotila JR, & Paladino FV (2012, March) *The Leatherback Trust: Past, Present, Future.* Poster presented at the annual International Sea Turtle Symposium

**Dornfeld TC** and Paladino FV (2011, April) *Nesting ecology of solitary olive ridley turtles, Lepidochelys olivacea, within Parque Nacional Marino Las Baulas.* Talk given at the annual International Sea Turtle Symposium.

## PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Session Chair AESS Conference 2018

Ad Hoc Reviewer for Marine Turtle Newsletter

Volunteer Juror for Sustainability II Student Film Projects Festival (Spring 2015, 2016)

Student co-representative of the UCI Planning, Policy, and Design department (2014 – 2015)

## MENTORSHIP

University of California, Irvine (Spring 2014, 2015)
Invited panelist and speaker at networking event for undergraduate sustainability students

United Nations Women, LA Chapter (Spring 2014)
Assisted undergraduate researchers with content analysis

The Leatherback Trust Playa Grande, Costa Rica (June 2012- August 2012)
Coordinated student intern's survey of businesses' attitudes and potential collaborations

## SKILLS AND CERTIFICATIONS

Wilderness First Aid (June 2018)

UCI Course Design Certification (Fall 2017)

UCI Center for the Integration of Teaching, Research, and Learning; Associate (Spring 2017)

Spanish language Fluency

Earthwatch Teen Team Facilitator Training (May 2011, 2014, 2015, 2018)

## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Planning Association (APA; member since September 2013)

American Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP; member since August 2017)

Citizen Science Association (member since January 2015)

# ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Environmental Justice in the Urban Neighborhood Parks of Minneapolis, MN and Chicago, IL

By

Tera Corinne Dornfeld

Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Planning and Public Policy

University of California, Irvine, 2019

Professor David Feldman Irvine, Chair

Unequal park distribution threatens park access, especially in underserved communities as does a lack of recognition for users' preferences. A lack of park access decreases the health benefits from parks available to communities. Thus, park access is an issue of Environmental Justice (EJ). EJ scholarship traces injustices to a lack of procedural justice which, I studied as public participation in decision-making about how parks look and operate. I asked the research questions, "How are park systems modified to better align with the public's preferences?" and "What is the public's role in driving those changes?" I drew on collaborative governance (CG) and social-ecological systems (SES) perspectives to understand the public's role in park decision-making. I collected data in Minneapolis and Chicago. Both top the Trust for Public Land's list of "best" city park systems and allow the public into decision-making to tailor park infrastructure and operation. I 1) reviewed plans and policy documents; 2) interviewed decision-makers including park supervisors, instructors, planners and administrative authorities, and public advisory councilors; 3) observed decision-making during daily park use, programs, and park board and advisory council meetings. Using the CG perspective, I found public and governmental collaboration in decision-making in four venues: board and advisory council meetings, programs, and daily park use. At times the public's participatory preferences were incongruent to opportunities offered by government officials. Using the SES perspective, I found that park systems (parks and decision-making processes) were flexible. This allowed the public to address incongruence by modifying park systems using material and human resources, like knowledge of EJ. Participation in decision-making began to address procedural, recognition, and distributional justice by modifying existing, often-exclusive park systems.

## Statement of the Problem

Urban parks make cities healthier. Parks are natural, green spaces where you can recreate, relax, and gather with friends and family. Ideally, everyone should have access to parks offering these health benefits. Everyone should also have access to parks where they can recreate how they choose. However, access to these benefits is not equally enjoyed for two major reasons.

First, urban park space is not equally distributed (Wen et al., 2013). Indeed, historically underserved neighborhoods have the smallest parks which, are thought to offer fewer of health benefits and create congestion for users. This situation is inequitable because underserved neighborhoods are often in greatest need of parks. Residents might not be able to afford separate child care, gym memberships, or spaces to gather and play in their backyard (Wolch et al., 2005).

Further, access to parks is not equally enjoyed because the most recent era of park design did not recognize that users have diverse needs for their parks (e.g. see Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995; West, 1989). Indeed, many parks in the United States have an identical, generic form: a baseball diamond, playground, and pool. However, as demographics of the US are changing, groups who seek alternative amenities will suffer when they cannot do what they want in parks. Groups with interests different from the dominant culture, for whom parks were designed, may avoid parks that do not meet their needs.

Thus, park access is threatened by injustices of distribution and recognition. Lack of access is problematic because parks are spaces people depend on, that provide health benefits, and that are funded with tax dollars. It is unjust and fiscally irresponsible to allow city parks to be systematically inaccessible to underserved neighborhoods. Theories of environmental justice (EJ) have shown that underserved communities predictably lack environmental goods (or traditionally in EJ literature, are sites of environmental harms). Scholars also explain that injustices occur because underserved communities are powerless (Young, 1990) to make decisions. In this way, the problem of a lack of access to park space is preceded by a lack of access to decision-making space. For parks, decisions would include distribution, design, and operation.

The systematic inaccessibility of parks for underserved communities constitutes an environmental injustice. First, environmental injustices are rooted in a lack of access to decision-making processes that leads to unequal distributions and a lack of recognition of unique park use preferences. Although building new parks could address unequal distributions, building more parks may not feasible in spatially-constrained urban areas. Second, creating a new park may replicate existing park forms that do not recognize different park use preferences. Further, replicating existing park designs may even constitute an act of green gentrification. Addressing injustice requires that existing parks are designed and managed in ways that are inclusive of all. I contend that it is appropriate to include diverse stakeholders, especially members of the public, in decision-making about how parks look and operate. This is because anyone *could* use parks and could be an expert in how parks *should* look and operate. Further, at present, many of the public's needs are not being met by their parks. Insights from members of the public, concerning how parks look and are operated, could assist in the creation of parks that they want to use thus, increasing park access.

## Research Objective

I utilized the perspectives of Environmental Justice (EJ), Collaborative Governance (CG), and Social-Ecological Systems (SES) to better understand the relationship between public participation in decision-making and mitigation of issues of access to parks and to decision-making processes. I contend that if the public is included in decision-making about how parks look and operate, then distributional and recognition injustices can be addressed. Injustices are addressed because resultant parks will better recognize diverse use preferences, as opposed to the generic parks that have been the norm for park design. More, decision-making processes will better recognize how the public wants to participate, as opposed to "minimum standards" like board meetings. From these perspectives and contentions, I asked the initial research questions (below, first bullet point) that directed the 'scoping' phase of my data collection. After time in the field, I found my data could respond to more specific and empirically analyzable research questions suggested by literature concerning parks and public participation. I devote one chapter to answering each of these questions.

## Research Questions

- (Scoping questions) "Is environmental justice (EJ) perceived as a salient issue for stakeholders?" and "What is the public's role in making decisions about how parks look and operate?"
- (Chapter 4) "How do stakeholders define access?" and focusing on procedural justice, "Where can the public participate in decision-making?"
- (Chapter 5) "Do any elements appear to have greater salience for park-based collaboration?"
- (Overarching, post-analysis questions guiding remaining chapters) "How are park systems modified to better align with the public's preferences?" and "What is the public's role in driving those changes?"
- (Chapters 6 & 7) "How can resources transform park systems?"
- (Chapter 8) To study Chicago's Park Advisory Councils I asked, "How are park groups supported or constrained?" To study Minneapolis' Community Advisory Committees I asked, "How can discourses change?" as well as "How do plans and policies respond to contestation of gentrification?"

## Research Approach and Methodology

To address these questions, I investigated two cases: the park systems of Minneapolis, MN, USA and Chicago, IL, USA. Both top the Trust for Public Land's (TPL) list of best city park systems, scoring highly on park funding, acreage per capita, walkability, and presence of four different amenities. Further, in both cities, new strategies for public participation helped tailor parks to the needs of changing and previously-disempowered demographics. Both on-site and remotely, I conducted 71 interviews with park administrators, park supervisors, program leaders, planners, and advisory council members. In both cities I also conducted 168 total observation sessions which, focused on indoor and outdoor "daily park use," including events (111 observations), programs (16), advisory council meetings, focus groups, and engagement sessions (33), and park board meetings (8). I analyzed policy documents pertaining to advisory councils and gardens as well as master plans.

In my investigation, I operated under the assumption that environmental injustice could occur in parks in neighborhoods where theories of EJ predicted injustice was likely. I considered these neighborhoods as underserved: low-income and home primarily to people of color. I also assumed that city park systems ranked highly by the Trust for Public Land (TPL; a non-profit organization dedicated, in part, to park creation) could provide meaningful opportunities for public participation, even at parks in neighborhoods predicted to be sites of environmental injustice. Thus, when selecting data collection sites, I chose parks in underserved neighborhoods but also in cities with highly-ranked park systems. I hypothesized that parks located in underserved neighborhoods but in city park systems ranked highly by the TPL could overcome injustice through public participation.

I also assumed that I could compare two different types of advisory councils, one in Chicago and one in Minneapolis, despite the councils differing in some ways. For example, PACs are associated with one park throughout the park's lifespan versus the CAC's one to two-year commitment to making-decisions about a section of the park system. Despite differences, I assumed that comparison was appropriate. I investigate the outcome of this assumption throughout the dissertation. This research focused only on cities with park systems where I expected to find meaningful public participation in decision-making processes, such as the inclusion of the public on advisory councils. Therefore, I must carefully gauge the transferability of my findings to other settings.

## Goals of the Research

My goal was to understand environmental injustice in urban neighborhood parks. Guided by the perspective of EJ featured in the literature as well as in stakeholder interviews, I came to understand "access" as the foundation of injustice. To this extent, environmental injustice as an issue of access was two-fold: a lack of access to parks the public wanted to use as well as a lack of access for the public in park-focused decision-making processes. Alongside understanding injustice, my research goal was also understanding how injustice could be overcome, specifically focused on public participation in decision-making about how parks look and operate.

With these goals, my research centered on studying inclusion of the public in decision-making about parks, a topic that I expected the public to have experiential knowledge. However, when I chose to study EJ in urban parks, I expected that experiential knowledge would include topics related to conservation. I found, however, that to park patrons parks were providers of social services, rather than spaces for urban conservation. Members of the public had knowledge of their own and their community's needs for these services. Further, members of the public's knowledge included connecting a lack of social services to larger issues of environmental injustice, like inequity and displacement. In this way, an unexpected goal became studying the public's knowledge.

Finally, in terms of understanding how injustice could be overcome, I was interested in the results of public participation in decision-making processes. Though in some ways the scope of my work was limited temporally (i.e. I could not follow the complete re-building of parks in Minneapolis) I could examine the response of parks and parks department staff when members of the public shared knowledge during decision-making. The responsivity of the park environment (physical spaces and employees) was key to the process of modifying parks and decision-making to better recognize the wants and needs of the public and thus, improve park access.

## Context: Parks' Relationship to Larger EJ issues

An inaccessibility of urban parks and decision-making is problematic from a normative viewpoint; indeed, everyone should have access to parks. However, viewing parks within the context of larger social equity and well-being issues underscores why a lack of access to parks and the benefits they provide are problematic. Further, a role for parks is implicated in addressing these broader issues.

### Unequal Cities

Beginning with Jacob Riis' work, "How the Other Half Lives," concerned public figures as well as those dwelling in cities' poorest neighborhoods have experienced the inequality that is purposefully built into cities. Planners and engineers divided cities by designating certain areas for certain land uses, like residential, commercial, and industrial. Certain areas of the city have also been designated for unwanted land uses, like freeways, garbage dumps, and toxic waste-producing facilities. The legal

practice of zoning keeps unwanted uses separate from most of the city's residents. However, racism, a lack of political power, and policy tools like racial covenants have allowed the co-location of unwanted land uses and the poor and people of color (e.g. Bullard, 1990; Pellow, 2002; work of the Minneapolis-based Mapping Prejudice project at https://www.mappingprejudice.org). In Minneapolis specifically, residential segregation occurred simultaneously with the building of a new freeway directly through the neighborhoods that were available to people of color (see Altshuler, 1983). As seen in Minneapolis, once residents were segregated, inequality was sanctioned. Relying on property taxes for funding often rendered public services, like school buildings, emergency response, and libraries of a lesser-quality in underserved neighborhoods compared to wealthy neighborhoods. As a result of inequalities in public services, like parks, the poor and members of communities of color are persistently *underserved* by cities. Thus, parks are but one symptom of larger inequality.

**Human Health**

Heart disease is the number one killer in the United States (Center for Disease Control (CDC), 2015). Though instances of cardiovascular and heart diseases had been declining, the decline has slowed in recent years (Sidney et al. 2016). Encouragingly, physical activity can decrease the likelihood of heart disease (Bedimo-Rung, Mowen, & Cohen, 2005; Powell et al., 1987). To this extent, the parks literature is focusing much empirical research on the relationship between park access and health outcomes (e.g. Bedimo Rung et al. 2005; Hillsdon, Panter, Foster, & Jones, 2006; Huston et al. 2003).

Sadly, these studies also show that Black and Latino people face more barriers to park access. For example, underrepresented neighborhoods and their residents which, may lack resources to fund parks or to access parks, may also lack resources to travel to other services to meet physical activity needs (like driving to and joining a fitness club; Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995; Wolch, Wilson, & Fehrenbach, 2005). These barriers may explain why Black and Latino people are less likely than their white counterparts to meet daily physical activity requirements (Go et al., 2013) as well as disparate health outcomes across race and socio-economic class (Guralnik & Leveille, 1997; Mays, Cochran, & Barnes, 2007). Thus, the role for parks as providers of health benefits is clear as is the need to address inequalities in park access.

**Planetary Health**

A crisis of human health occurs in tandem with a crisis of planetary health. Indeed, the changing climate is producing catastrophes like rising seas, increased severity of storms, and loss of biodiversity. As the impacts of climate change vary geographically, so must the solutions. In urban areas, for example, greenspace can be leveraged to lower temperatures (Jenerette et al., 2011). Aligning with park-based environmental injustices, however, researchers of urban greenspace have shown that affluent white neighborhoods are more likely to be vegetated than poor and neighborhoods of Color; thus, white neighborhoods are better protected against temperature stress associated with a changing climate (e.g. Harlan et al. 2007). By providing vegetative cover, improved park access can be an important component of more just urban climate change mitigation strategies.

**Housing**

Perhaps instigated by a changing climate that rendered one's livelihood unproductive, a chance at a better life, or the historic lack of access to suburban homes for the poor and people of color, much of the population lives in urban areas. Further, urban migration is increasing with 68% of the population predicted to live in urban areas by 2050 (UN, 2018). New urban residents will need places to live. To meet the housing crisis, we will need to increase housing density. As a result, homes with private backyards may no longer be the norm. Thus, increased density will need to be met with concurrent dedication of land to parks or improved park access. Further, existing residents often consider their homes as investments, a way to ensure sufficient funds for retirement. These residents also benefit from parks when parks increase the property value of surrounding homes. In this way, building housing and parks can provide for human health, financial well-being, and eco-system services but both housing and parks must be developed to consciously avoid displacement and gentrification (see literature review).

**Civic Engagement**

The public may feel overwhelmed by the existence of numerous environmental injustices. This may stem from feeling powerless regarding one's own role in creating solutions. Indeed, Iris Marion Young explains that people who are powerless may not participate in democratic institutions because they

feel their voice means nothing (Young, 1990). One's voice meaning nothing may stem from a lack of community. Indeed, connections to others can amplify a single voice for example, connecting it to powerful individuals who can influence public policy. In this way, lacking a sense of community may precede feeling powerless to address environmental injustices.

When it comes to developing a sense of power, part of the problem may be that spaces for the public to develop a sense of community are lacking. Indeed, in a time perhaps rightly characterized by the work "Bowling Alone" (Putnam, 2000), Fung & Wright (2001) speculate that a lack of civic engagement has been responded to by limiting government rather than improving participation. However, the issues of environmental justice related to parks as well as to larger issues of human and planetary health and housing suggest public disuse and inactivity. Therefore, it seems that remedying issues of disuse and inactivity would *depend on* public participation.

Parks, and decision-making venues associated with them, could be spaces that develop a sense of community. Parks could facilitate public participation by providing for face-to-face interaction, something sorely needed in our urban society today where people rarely can interact positively and civically outside of the workplace. Indeed, organized participatory venues (like advisory councils) may create spaces for organized groups to participate but also, provide regular opportunities for anyone to connect to powerful individuals who can influence public policy. Similarly, increased acknowledgement of board meetings as useful spaces for sharing the public's opinions as well as novel spaces as participatory venues, like programs, might offer additional spaces to increase public participation and develop a sense of community. To understand public participation as decision-making about the look and operation of urban parks, I draw on three conceptual frameworks.

## Conceptual Frameworks

### Environmental Justice

Park theorists and scholars have labelled the predictable lack of access to parks as an issue of environmental justice (EJ; Boone et al., 2009; Floyd & Johnson, 2002; Tarrant & Cordell, 1999). Thus, scholars situate the *lack* of access to a health amenity alongside the predictable exposure to health dis-

amenities, like toxic waste dumps. Using the framework of EJ guides an understanding of the causes of injustice as well as solutions to increase access.

Much of the parks and EJ literature understands the cause of injustice as a problem of distribution. Distributional injustice is the systematic and planned lack of access to large (and to many, lower in quality) parks in minority and low-income neighborhoods (Boone et al., 2009; Wen et al., 2013). To a lesser extent, scholars imply recognition injustice for a lack of access to parks. Recognition justice focuses on how parks look and operate, rather than park size or abundance (see Scott & Munson, 1994). As such, an inaccessible park is one where you cannot do what you want. A lack of recognition and concurrent inaccessibility more often befalls underserved neighborhoods.

Importantly, EJ urges members of the public and practitioners to question the process of decision-making. Specifically, procedural justice calls for the public to have a voice in decisions *before* goods and services are distributed unequally or designed without recognition. Indeed, scholars of procedural justice (e.g. Bullard, 1990; Young, 1990) describe how concurrent procedural access, the early and meaningful inclusion of a wide variety of park users in the process of decision-making, combats *powerlessness* and the perpetuation of distributional and recognition injustices.

**Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh's (2011) Collaborative Governance**

Thus, a focus on procedural justice is key to ensuring that under-served groups have a voice to speak against environmental injustices. I conceptualize procedural justice as institutionalization of the inclusion of the public in decision-making about parks. To operationalize and thus study procedural justice, in part, I drew on the frame of collaborative governance (CG). I used Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh's (2011) model to guide data collection and portions of analyses.

**Social-Ecological Systems (SES)**

To operationalize procedural justice as well as guide portions of analyses, I also considered the Social-Ecological Systems (SES) perspective (Stokols, 2018; Stokols, Lejano, & Hipp, 2013). Using this perspective, I saw parks as part of a larger, social-ecological system as well as located human beings within natural systems, rather than separating humans from nature. In this way, the SES perspective was

valuable to systematically investigate the context in which the CG model sat. Indeed, from the SES perspective, environments are considered multi-dimensional, comprised of natural, built, socio-cultural, and virtual realms. Environments are also seen as nested, (e.g. a single park would also fit within progressively larger entities, like a city park district, and then larger entities like a state, nation, and world). Further, though an individual may participate in decision-making at their local park, their decision-making capacity would be influenced by park policy determined at progressively broader levels as well as the varied jurisdiction of stakeholders at each level.

The goal of SES analysis is to explain and predict why individuals have behaved in a certain way within their unique environment. To facilitate such understanding, the multi-dimensional and nested environment is examined within a broader scope temporally, spatially, socio-culturally, and virtually. Within the broadened scope, studying with a SES perspective also includes both objective measures of phenomena as well as individual perceptions of the environment. Further, a broad scope provides insights about abstract phenomenon like "justice" which, are not easily quantified with a single objective measures but instead suggest a complex set of relationships.

SES can also guide analyses concerning "transactions' of resources like the back-and-forth of dialogs occurring during collaborative decision-making. Within social-ecological systems, the inputs of stakeholders are exchanged in a series of transactions. Inputs include multiple forms of capital, including knowledge about parks and environmental justice. Further, the commitment of the social ecological system to the semiotic as well as the natural world implies that meanings of concepts discussed within systems, like "gentrification" or "equity," are context-dependent and are expected to vary based on a stakeholder's vantage point. As concepts like these are demonstrably not neutral (Checker, 2011; Dooling, 2009) an analytical method that intentionally incorporates difference in meaning is crucial.

Finally, the SES perspective emphasizes the outputs of the system. The series of transactions modifies the environment or drives adaptations among stakeholders. Of note, in many aspects of my research when the public offered input, the response of the "environment" was represented by the response of planners or other administrators. In this way, the environment was modified by changes to

park policies or plans. In other situations, when no planner or park administrator was present, the public might physically modify their environment, for example by changing how a piece of park land was used.

## Findings Summary

I found that decision-making took place in four distinct venues that varied in terms of their formality, centrality (the entire park system v. one park), and the permanence of the decisions made. I also found that the amount of jurisdiction the public had to make decisions about how parks looked and operated varied by venue. Following the scholarly literature and information gathered from various sources during 'scoping,' I had expected to find public participation in the board meeting and advisory council venues. However, viewing the scoping data through the lens of Emerson et al.'s (2011) model, I saw that the public also made decisions in the "venues" of park programming and daily park use.

By analyzing urban neighborhood parks as systems (following a social-ecological model), I could examine the diversity and impact of inputs offered by the public. Specifically, I found evidence of inputs as human resources (human, social, and moral capital inputs) as well as material resources (the ability to transform physical spaces with financial capital and technology, physical objects, behavior, and meaning). Also, I observed the meaning with which the public imbued actions and objects and that such meaning led to contention during some collaborations. In turn, these inputs were responded to by policy-makers such that outputs (park designs, policies, and physical park structures) reflected the inputs.

In addition to the unique types of input the public offered during collaborative decision-making and the responsiveness of parks departments (thus, the "park decision-making environment) to those inputs, I also observed the flexibility of the park system. This include parks themselves and decision-making venues within parks. These three pieces allowed the public to adapt to and modify both parks and park decision-making processes to recognize their needs and wants.

## Contributions of the Findings

While overcoming environmental injustice requires that the public be included in decision-making, it should also be acknowledged that members of the public possess a special knowledge important for making decisions. Indeed, my work made explicit that the value of the public comes not

only from their participation in a process but because they are valuable contributors of knowledge as well as other human, material, and semiotic inputs. I catalog the types of inputs, with examples, offered by the public during decision-making about urban neighborhood parks.

Further, I show how the public's contribution to decision-making need not be limited to formal venues. In addition to board meetings and advisory councils, I have found that daily use and programs are spaces where the public's input can also influence spaces, processes, and outcomes within the park system. Importantly, the program and daily-use venues are regularly accessible and close to home, addressing many barriers that may prevent the public from participating in decision-making. Thus, participation in decision-making about parks need not be limited to formal or existing venues.

Further, the publics' input to the park system at these four venues impacted the system such that it was more environmentally just. In terms of distributional justice, final plans more equitably distributed resources than existing parks; through agreements to share space and time, programs effectively increased the space of existing parks. In terms of recognition justice, final plans, refurbished parks, and programs adapted to the publics' inputs and recognized the local community's needs. During daily use, the public used parks as they needed, rather than following the rigid form implied by park design. Finally, in terms of procedural justice, the public's inputs to the board meeting component of the park system modified the system by increasing the public's time to participate. During advisory council meetings, inputs initiated a chain of responses that also tailored the participatory milieu of the advisory council to be more congruent with the public's participatory preferences as well as improving access to parks.

With respect to environmental justice for the local park, my work underscores the idea that improvements to access need not be limited to building new infrastructure or acquiring new park land. Indeed, changes that do not require something new are attainable for all parks as they are independent of park size and budget. Further, using existing structures generates less waste and may be less likely to promote gentrification and lead to displacement. Inputs that contributed to the transformation of space were thus key to modifying existing park space to meet stakeholders' needs and wants, especially in small

spaces and with limited budgets. In this way, my work supports emerging urban design ideas about flexible space.

Flexibility and justice come together in park programming. Programs are unique to local parks and can be added or subtracted quarterly to meet users' needs. Users only needed to ask their park supervisor and a response "chain" was set in motion. Further, members of the public utilized professional skills when they were paid to lead programs. Therefore, I see great potential in programs to act as a proximal response to environmental injustice, perhaps concurrent to a wait for distal changes, like gaining funds to build a new gymnasium or acquiring new park land.

Drawn the from the concept of social-ecological systems, I showed how the role of the public in decision-making about parks can be considered a series of diverse inputs that in turn, are responded to by the park environment and other stakeholders. To this extent, the existence of a flexible system and the acknowledgement and valuation of the public's inputs cultivate a responsivity of parks and park staff that can modify how park systems look and operate. I offer these three ideas and their interconnectedness as a starting point to examine other cities' park systems or perhaps study other public services as collaborations and social-ecological systems that may be flexible and modified by public input.

## Chapter Overview

### Chapter 1: Introduction

I introduce the problem and situate it in a broader context. I also pose my research questions and the theoretical frames I used during my data collection. I then summarize my findings and their contribution to urban planning and environmental policy.

### Chapter 2: Literature Review

I define parks and then situate amenities like parks alongside locally unwanted land uses and use the lens of Environmental Justice (EJ) to explain how parks can also be considered spaces of environmental injustice. These explanations focus on unjust distributions of parks. I then shift away from where parks are distributed spatially to focus on barriers that might prevent park use, even when parks are present. I then discuss the benefits parks are purported to offer (which, people miss out on when they lack

access to parks). Simultaneously, I posit how the short list of what parks "should be" constrains what is considered an acceptable use of parks. Doing so leads to my problematization of the generic form parks often take. Thus, I add detail to my conceptual frame of EJ by discussing recognition and procedural justices. I end by following the call of the EJ literature and examining the role for the public in deciding how parks look and operate. I provide detail to the frames that I will use as analytic tools throughout my discussion and analysis.

**Chapter 3: Method**

I describe the theoretical underpinnings of my method and justify my case selection. Then, I describe the process of data collection, beginning with scoping, and detail my process for: observing, attending meetings, interviewing, attending programs, and studying documents as well as my reliance on triangulation. I then describe my content analysis and subsequent iterations, analyses of daily use, program, and board meetings, and use of the SES perspective. I end by presenting ethical considerations, describing care for validity, reliability, and generalizability and then, limitations.

**Chapter 4 Results: Environmental Justice as Access in Minneapolis and Chicago Parks**

After using two using the two research questions, "*Is environmental justice (EJ) perceived as a salient issue for stakeholders?*" and "*What is the public's role in making decisions about how parks look and operate?*" to direct the scoping phase of data collection, I use the results chapters (beginning with chapter four) to answer more nuanced research questions from my data. In chapter four, I first answer the question, "How do stakeholders define access?" I examine environmental injustices as experienced by stakeholders in Minneapolis' and Chicago's urban neighborhood parks. I then compare my findings with the scholarly literature's conceptualization of environmental injustice in parks which, is focused mainly an unequal distribution of parks. I expand the literature's definition when, like the Social Sustainability theory as described by Low, Taplin, and Scheld (2009), I consider access as the presence of a park people *want* to use rather than the presence of 'just any park.' My measurements include multiple stakeholders' perceptions of access as well as multiple uses for parks because I am aware that park stakeholders experience and interpret access and park use in different ways (Gobster, 1998; Low et al., 2009).

In chapter four I also focus on procedural justice by answering the question, "Where can the public participate in decision-making?" To this extent, I explain four decision-making venues: board meetings, advisory councils, programs, and daily use of parks. In each venue, the public collaborates with park staff (like supervisors or administrators) by offering inputs to the park system.

**Chapter 5 Results: Collaborative Governance in Park Planning**

To understand the public's role in decision-making, and thus operationalize procedural justice, I drew on the collaborative governance model of Emerson et al. (2011). I collected interview and observational data from each of the decision-making venues using the model as a guide. Then, drawing on an understanding that decision-making opportunities offered by government officials often differ from the public's preferences as well as Emerson et al.'s call to examine the fit of their model to other contexts, I posed the question, "Do any elements appear to have greater salience for park-based collaboration?" I find the model can explain many elements of collaboration in the board and advisory council venues, though there is some incongruence between my data and the model. However, the model was not useful to explain program and daily use venues and I sought another analytic lens for chapters six and seven.

**Chapter 6 & 7 Results: Social-Ecological System Inputs: Material (6) and Human (7) Resources**

Noting the incongruence of Emerson et al.'s model to some aspects of the board and advisory council venues as well as the model's inability to explain the program and daily use venues (venues created informally to modify park systems), I posed two questions that guided post-analysis work. I asked the post-analysis questions, "How are park systems modified to better align with the public's preferences?" and "What is the public's role in driving those changes?" These questions will be answered in greater detail and based on perspectives from the literature in chapters six through eight.

Chapters six and seven explore the inputs the public transacts within the park decision-making system by answering the question, "How can resources transform park systems?" I consider inputs as the material, human, or semiotic offerings to the park system which, allow members of the public to transform a park or decision-making venue into spaces they want to use. Chapter six addresses material resources inputs while chapter seven addresses human resources. In both chapters, I examine the four

decision-making venues for types of inputs offered. I also explore the response to the public's inputs, considering that many other fields (e.g. citizen science, traditional ecological knowledge, and early EJ work) rely on the public's inputs but the input types vary as do professionals' response to those inputs.

**Chapter 8 Results: Implications of the Social-Ecological Systems Perspective**

Broadly, my goal was to understand why some decision-making processes were more complex and perhaps led to certain outputs. To do so, I expanded the temporal scope of analyses. I also examined the natural, built, and sociocultural (including the meaning of actions and objects) contextual dimensions. Further, I understood parks as nested with broader categories (e.g. neighborhoods). Then, to address this broader goal, I chose examples from my data that could speak to topics in the current park literature. In the first portion of the chapter, I focused on Chicago's park advisory councils (PACs) and asked the question, "How are park groups supported or constrained?" Then, I focused on Minneapolis' community advisory committees (CACs) and asked the questions, "How can discourses change?" as well as, "How do plans and policies respond to contestation of gentrification?"

**Chapter 9: Conclusion and Significance**

In this chapter I restate the problem that drove my research and my research questions and then summarize my most interesting findings. After this, I discuss implications for using theories of EJ, CG, and SES to study urban neighborhood parks. Then, I find my place within the academic literature by comparing my results to existing research. I take time to present the importance of park programs in terms of procedural, distributional, and recognition justices. Finally, I offer suggestions for future research as implied by my findings.

# Chapter 2. Literature Review

I address a lack of access to parks by examining how the public can create parks they want to use by concurrently collaborating in decision-making processes where their knowledge, among other inputs, is valued by park administrators. In this literature review, I first define parks. Then, I explain why despite (or because of) the benefits parks are assumed to offer, they are inaccessible for many. I explain how lack of access can be considered an issue of environmental justice (EJ) and use a lens of EJ to examine how injustices (distributional, recognition, and procedural) are perpetrated in parks. As EJ emphasizes participation in decision-making (procedural justice) to address injustice, I then draw on social-ecological systems (SES) and collaborative governance (CG) perspectives to understand the public's role in decision-making about parks. SES and CG operationalize procedural and recognition justices by providing a way to study collaborative decision-making.

## Defining Parks

Parks in the United States often take on an almost mythical status, with the most famous perhaps being the national parks (termed America's Greatest Idea; Reilly, 1985). National parks were created by men including: John Muir, President Theodore Roosevelt, Horace Albright, and Frederick Law Olmsted, all of whom championed the protection of vast areas of land that would be held in public ownership. Creating parks is thus a "democratic action" as space is accessible to everyone, rather than a private land owner. Threatening that access however, is the far-removed location of many national parks and use fees.

As a counterpart to national parks, neighborhood park creation can also be thought of as a democratic action. However, in the case of neighborhood parks, land is put into public ownership much closer to home and can be accessed without payment (Harnik & Simms, 2004). Neighborhood parks are smaller in size, contain amenities like recreation centers and playgrounds, and are mainly used by the surrounding community (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995; Sister, Wolch, & Wilson, 2010).

## Acceptable Park Uses

There are narrow conceptions of what a park *should* be, conceptions little-changed throughout history. Constrained by these narrow conceptions, park designers and managers may not realize the existence of, or worse criminalize, other park uses (Dooling, 2009). Here, I describe the benefits of parks that correspond to how park planners, administrators, and authorities expect and allow parks to be used.

**Environmental Benefits**

The public parks movement began in 1830s Britain and peaked from 1885-1914 (Jordan, 1994). Parks were created by Britain's landscape architects and were thus, spaces to showcase plantings, lawns, and gardens. In this way parks brought nature into the city and were valued for environmental reasons. British conceptions likely influenced F.L. Olmsted's translation of parks onto the US landscape. Most famously, Olmsted's Central Park in New York replicated designs found in the lavish country-sides, sprawling vistas, and plantings of Western Europe (Jones & Wills, 2005). In addition to beauty, Olmsted saw parks as the "lungs of the city," bringing fresh air and green, open space to the deplorable conditions created by the Industrial Revolution (Hall, 2002; Peterson, 1983).

Today valuation of parks for environmental reasons persists. Parks protect urban greenspace from development. In doing so, parks can address the loss of biodiversity (the number of species of flora and fauna, the abundance of each, and their habitats). This is because major causes of biodiversity loss are anthropogenic, like habitat encroachment. By protecting land, neighborhood parks are protecting habitat (e.g. Jokimäki, 1999). More abstractly, Dunn et al.'s (2006) "Pidgeon Paradox" argues that as greater population growth occurs in urban areas, support for conservation rests with urban residents who after experiencing flora and fauna locally are more likely to support conservation globally.

Parks may feature large stands of trees and other natural features like native plants and rain gardens. However, prioritizing funding for these features may leave some feeling 'unseen,' like their needs, often for social services or children's activities are unmet. Indeed, promoting the environmental benefits of parks may be considered an elitist pursuit. Historically, members of the environmental conservation movement have been white and affluent, often unwelcoming to Black, Brown, and poor people (Bretting & Prindeville, 1998; Camacho, 1998; Robyn & Camacho, 1998; Sandweiss, 1998).

Further, a rhetoric of conservation can be a device to keep people out of parks- and even for keeping immigrants out of the country- citing parks as pristine places that people would make dirty with their actions or potentially, their Black and Brown bodies (Del Valle, 2018). However, people of all races and ethnicities value environmental benefits of parks (Roberts & Chitewere, 2011). Thus, environmental consideration need not preclude simultaneous focus on social or athletic concerns, should include perspectives from all races, ethnicities, and incomes as well as acknowledgement that a lack of environmental consideration may stem from experiences with exclusion and hostility.

**Health Benefits**

In tandem with bringing nature into the city, Britain's earliest parks were thought to provide health benefits for the working class (Jordan, 1994; Peterson, 1983). Today, underrepresented groups continue to face barriers to health care resulting from racism, discrimination, inability to afford treatment, and stigma (National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), 2015). In this way, parks today remain necessary to provide resources for underrepresented groups.

**Social health.** Parks have long been spaces for familiar and friendly gatherings. Parks are especially important when large families share a small home. Parks can provide an extension of the home (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995; Gobster, 2002) by serving as a space for family gatherings or meeting grounds for broader social groups (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995; Low, 2000; Boone et al., 2009). With respect to mental health, today's escape from the workplace is just as necessary as escape from the factories of the Industrial Revolution. As urban oases, neighborhood parks provide the opportunity for contact with nature, which has been shown to mitigate the adverse effects of stress (Ulrich, 1984).

**Physical health.** As the "lungs of the city," early parks were a key strategy of the Sanitation Movement, created to address public health problems (Peterson, 1983). In New York Central Park was created. On the West Coast, the "lungs of the city" and respite from the workday rationale also prompted creation of San Francisco's Golden Gate Park (Pollock). Physical health was also provided by parks when parks were places to engage in fitness. Gymnasia and open fields in were used for organized sports. In

large part due to Jane Addams' Hull House and its efforts in the Playground Movement (Davis, 1983), park play was largely a pursuit for children.

Today, physical health and play are perhaps *the* defining features of parks. Physical health was the focus of the keynote lecture at the 2015 Parks for Science and Science for Parks conference and was the topic of several presentations at the American Planning Association of California's (APACA) 2016 conference. A focus on parks as providers of health benefits is common in scholarly articles (mentioned in 30/45 articles reviewed to create my content analysis). In practice, children are sent to parks to play and planners ask the public, "What do you like to *do* in parks?" This suggests parks are meant to be used as spaces for active recreation. More passive uses like socializing or sleeping may receive decreased priority. For example, a sitting group may be asked to move for a soccer game or a homeless camp may be required to move from public spaces every 90 days (Dooling, 2009).

### Economic Benefits

Parks provide economic benefits. Parks may reduce public spending by promoting exercise and thus mitigating public health costs as well as by providing ecosystem services to address environmental hazards (Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); Ernst, Harnik, & Keenan, 2018; Lowry, 2010; Reilly, 1985). Parks may generate income by hosting events, creating jobs, and attracting new tax-paying residents. Further, parks continue to be associated with increased property values (statistically significant increase in property values for homes as distance from parks decreased as discussed in Hammer, Coughlin, & Horn, 1974; Curran & Hamilton, 2012).

## Environmental Justice as Distributional Justice

### Unequal Distribution of Parks

Neighborhood parks are designed to provide benefits and be accessed by surrounding communities (Harnik & Simms, 2004). However, many communities cannot access their parks. Aligning with scholars of EJ, I conceptualize a lack of access to parks as an environmental injustice (Boone et al., 2009; Floyd & Johnson, 2002; Sister et al. 2010; Tarrant & Cordell, 1999). Within the EJ literature, scholars most often study access as an issue of distributional justice. Scholars focus on who can access

parks by comparing the number of parks in a geographic area to census data on demographic variables, like race and income, attempting to illustrate broad-scale patterns of access.

However, scientists have found it difficult to discern a pattern (Wen et al., 2013). On one hand, Wolch et al. (2005; 17) found that racial minority groups in Los Angeles, especially Latinos, as well as low-income residents were less likely to live near a park than white counterparts. This finding is supported by the unequal distribution of parks reported by The City Project (pertaining to California State Parks; García et al., 2011) and The City of Los Angeles' Department of Recreation and Parks' 2009 Citywide Community Needs Assessment (pertaining to city parks; City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, 2009). Conversely, much scholarly research (e.g. Cutts et al., 2009 in Phoenix, Arizona, USA; Boone et al., 2009 in Baltimore, Maryland, USA; Weiss et al., 2011 in New York, USA; Wen et al., 2013 using a national dataset) has found that minority groups are *more* likely to live near a park. Delving deeper into that relationship, Boone et al. (2009), Cutts et al. (2009), Weiss et al. (2011), and Wen et al. (2013) all found that though minority neighborhoods did have more parks, those parks were smaller in size than parks in white and affluent neighborhoods.

Bringing understanding to the potential consequences of smaller-sized parks, Sister et al. (2010) developed the Park Service Area (PSA) measure. PSA is calculated by determining each resident's nearest park and then for each park, calculating the number of residents for whom that park is their nearest park. Sister et al. (2010) found that many minority, especially Latino, and low-income areas have higher PSAs: their parks are used by a greater number of people than parks in areas with more white or affluent residents.

**Racist Underpinnings of Unequal Distributions**

Within planning literature, lack of access to parks can be understood as the result of racist land use planning and resource distribution policies as well as segregation. Historically, less open space has been available for underrepresented communities (Thomas, 2010; 512; Wolch et al., 2005). This is because neighborhoods to which underrepresented groups were relegated were concentrated in the city; there, concurrent siting of residential, commercial, and industrial development left less land for parks (e.g.

Peterson, 1983). In contrast, ample space for parks and personal lawns existed in the suburbs but were accessible only to white and affluent people. These residential patterns were in part the product of:

- Exclusionary zoning that forbade minority residents to occupy majority-white residential blocks
- Restrictive racial covenants limiting access to city properties- the *de facto* segregation of the city
- Discriminatory lending practices that impeded Black families' financing of suburban homes
- "White flight" of wealthy folks and investments to the suburbs, confining people of color and less money to the inner city (Boone et al., 2009; Pellow 2002; Thomas, 2010; Wolch et al., 2005).

**History of Environmental Injustice**

Underrepresented, minority and low-income, groups have long-suffered a lack of physical access to parks: insufficient amount of park land and inability to use park land to meet one's needs. By framing a systematic lack of access to parks as a systematic denial of health benefits, scholars have invited an expansion of EJ to include neighborhood parks (Boone et al., 2009; Floyd & Johnson, 2002; Tarrant & Cordell, 1999). Through an EJ lens, the problem is that underrepresented groups have less access to parks, and thus fewer health benefits, when compared to white and affluent groups.

Broadly, the EJ movement contends that environmental issues are social justice issues and supports this contention by demonstrating that environmental hazards cause health problems and are disproportionately placed in communities of color (Anguelovski, 2015; Bullard & Johnson, 2000; Commission for Racial Justice, 1987; Sandweiss, 1998; White, 1998). Early EJ work began with the cataloging of distributional injustices (e.g. the work of Bullard and the United Church of Christ). Their cataloging offered undeniable proof of the systematic siting of noxious land uses, like heavily-polluting factories and garbage dumps, in communities of color (Agyeman, Bullard, & Evans, 2002; Bullard, 1990). For example, three out of five Black and Latinx people live in a community with a toxic waste site (White, 1998).

**Use of public knowledge.** Interestingly, and applicable to parks, the earliest data collected on unfair distributions, were collected by non-professional members of the public. Indeed, the cases brought

forward by Robert Bullard, Lois Gibbs, and others were draw from lived the experiences of People of Color, acknowledging what they felt and smelled in their communities. Based on their aggregate experiences, scholars could demonstrate that race was the number one predictor of where a noxious land use would be cited.

Environmental justice's emphasis on cataloging injustices and accepting the public's knowledge is to this dissertation. When it comes to knowledge, I will focus on its utility and multiplicity, as early EJ scholars had done. Importantly, the public's knowledge, they incorporate their lived experiences but also an understanding of deeper, historical components of EJ. For example, historic underfunding or long-standing racism in other aspects of public life. The public's knowledge can alert policy-makers that injustices, especially with underlying components of racial discrimination persist. Further, studying decision-making also emphasizes the responses to the public's knowledge. In this way, focus is turned toward modifications of the public, park administrators, and the park environment. Often, this includes changes to the distribution of park resources.

**Distributional Injustice as Social Access Barriers**

In cases of injustice, a pattern emerges, and is acutely felt by community members. Injustices are first catalogued according to who has what and who is missing out. Attention is drawn to the straight-forward quantification of public parks. Nuance is added to distribution data by examining the possibility of using existing parks. To this extent, when thinking about who has access to parks, one must consider not just the number of parks but the *efficacy* of those parks: the likelihood that they can be accessed by users and their ability to meet various user demands (Thomas, 2010). Some scholars contend that ability to meet demand may be related to park size (e.g. PSA; Sister et al., 2010). For these scholars, smaller parks are more likely to be congested and thus, see increased competition for park resources (e.g. open space for recreating). In addition to a park's size, Weiss et al. (2011; 304) suggests additional barriers that impede park access, "Although a strong assumption, it is likely that poor safety or environmental conditions might reduce park usage." Thus, social factors can also impact access.

**Time.** Barriers to accessing parks can begin before the park is even reached. Indeed, Hendon (1991); Eyler et al. (1998); Loukaitou-Sideris & Sideris (2009); Sister et al. (2010) report that many poor and minority residents do not have the time to visit parks. Examining wilderness areas as well as other types of recreation, Hendon (1991) found that poor residents could not afford to devote time to personal leisure like more affluent counterparts could. Even when people work in the home, free time for park visits may not exist. Indeed, women in Eyler et al.'s (1998) study, women reported that they were too busy with housework to leave and spend time in a park. When women working from home and parents spending long hours away from home at work, are too busy to visit parks, the barrier of time to park access is also transferred to children who are kept from parks when adult chaperones are busy (Loukaitou-Sideris & Sideris 2009).

**Travel.** When a shortage of free time does not preclude neighborhood park visits entirely, travel to the park may prove a nearly-insurmountable barrier (Cutts et al. 2009; Scott & Munson, 1994; Weiss et al. 2011). Indeed, Weiss et al. (2011) in a discussion of "social access" demonstrate that safety concerns in areas surrounding parks: noxious land uses, traffic violations, and crime, if assumed to keep people from using parks, actually decrease the amount of available parks in poor and minority area, effectively upsetting the trend that these areas have more parks. Indeed, Cutts et al. (2009; 1320) note that while low income neighborhoods actually have a greater number of parks, perceptions of unsafe neighborhoods and streets may limit the accessibility of the park. Practically, Kelly et al. (2007) details the deplorable quality of sidewalks in poorer areas; issues of safety may be sufficient to impede travel to parks.

**Safety.** Safety concerns follow many patrons into their neighborhood parks (Westover, 1985; Scott & Munson, 1994; Gobster, 1998; Loukaitou-Sideris & Steiglitz, 2002; Cutts et al., 2009; and Roberts and Chitewere's (2011) discussion of national parks, especially the fear of the unknown). Concerns may be related to health. Indeed, intersecting the proposed study with existing environmental justice scholarship, safety concerns extend to those of toxic contamination; indeed, (White, 1998) reports that children of color are more likely to play in contaminated parks.

Safety concerns may also be related to a lack of access. Jacobs (1960) reports a feedback loop, observing that without many people passing through the park as well as centering important civic buildings and functions around the park, potential users felt like there were fewer eyes surveilling the park. Thus, Jacobs asserts that parks become unsafe precisely because they are unused.

**Companionship.** Linking to safety, Eyler et al. (1998) and Krenichyn (2006) show that women are more afraid of parks than men (in the day and, with a much greater difference, at night) and are less likely to use the parks alone. Women would, however, use park at night if an organized activity were taking place (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2005). Thus, a lack of access for one woman often translates to a lack of access for many women; lack of reaching "critical mass" means fewer women use the park in total.

Indeed, potential users may avoid parks if they do not have companions to go with them (Eyler et al., 1998; Giles-Corti & Donovan, 2002; Howard & Crompton,1984). More, some users may prefer to use the park as a social space (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995) and may form social relationships in parks (Krenichyn, 2004). A similar reality exists for children. Children are often forced to avoid parks if parents are unable to accompany them (Loukaitou-Sideris & Steiglitz, 2009). Thus, if parks do not offer activities that promote such companionship, parks may be underused. Indeed, Mowen et al. (2007; 177) recommend "promotion of social networks to support activity" in parks.

**Discrimination.** Boone et al. (2009) and Roberts and Chitewere (2011) detail the overt racism, including the yelling of racial slurs, perpetrated in parks. Less overt, West (1989) and Roberts and Chitewere (2011) report that some patrons still experience racism when they feel like certain parks are only for White people and as such, feel uncomfortable there. Further, Byrne, Wolch, and Zhang (2009) and Roberts and Chitewere (2011) note that signage and printed materials that promote the park and state park rules, often appear in only one language and make minority groups feel unwelcome or unsure of how to use parks. Finally, in Golden Gate State Park, Roberts and Chitewere (2011) report that non-white groups described feeling that they not belong in parks because of a lack of minority representation in park management. Thus, when parks welcome only the dominant culture other users are denied access.

## Environmental Justice as Recognition Justice

**Generic Park Form**

Parks are assumed, often unquestioningly, to benefit communities by increasing environmental quality, public health, and economic value. These benefits support the existence of parks and suggest the role for parks. Similarly, the physical form of parks is unquestioned. Many parks take a similar form, reminiscent of historic park forms. This park form may be deemed necessary to ensure the park provides benefits and is used in an acceptable manner. In this way, a park's form would suggest how a park should be used. I find this narrow conception problematic. The "generic form" parks take is problematized throughout this dissertation, prompting many modifications the public seeks for the park system. Further, the implications of creating parks that have a generic form (i.e. displacement and gentrification) are lingering "negative feedbacks" or "stresses" to the park system that remain to be addressed.

**Generic parks reproduce dominant views.** Indeed, in their existing form, parks largely reflect early conceptions of what a park *should* be and how people should be using that park. Parks often take the generic form designed by white, male, landscape architects (e.g. Horace Cleveland and Frederick Law Olmsted). In taking forms favored by European elites, parks reproduced dominant ways of thinking. In addition to natural elements, the amenities within parks constricted what should be done in that park (e.g. get exercise on playgrounds but not stray from park paths). However, the men designing parks failed to consider that groups may have needs different than the dominant culture (Khokha, 2009; Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995; West, 1989). For example, giving voice to women's concerns specifically, Krenichyn's (2006) interviews revealed that parks have too few spaces for women.

**Consequences of generic parks.** If one desires to use a park differently than as intended, they may feel like the "Other," someone not meant to benefit from parks. For example, Central Park, envisioned as a place for all, was also meant to be a moral theater where the poor would abandon their idle and unsavory practices and follow behaviors modeled by wealthy park-goers (Hall, 2002; 46; Jordan, 1994). In parks people could learn how to behave to fit in' with the white and wealthy of the United States. As such, parks were meant for everyone to use but only in appropriate ways. Current parks are in danger of replicating this same homogenizing goal. Presently, when parks are built and then "claimed" by

new gentrifiers, these new users can set the tone for how a park should be used. New residents label the behaviors of the "Other" as problematic and seek to shut them down. For example, Checker (2011) details how the once-vibrant drum groups and picnickers were reported to authorities after new users determined the drums and picnics were a nuisance. As such only "certain kinds of cultural expression" are sanctioned in parks (Checker, 2011; 224).

Some parks may include open spaces that do not imply a specific use. Here, people are free to use parks as needed (at least until reprimanded by authority figures). However, in small parks which, are more likely found in underserved communities (Boone et al., 2009; Cutts et al., 2009; Wen et al., 2013), people have less space to "appropriate" (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995). With less space, users experience greater limitations to use, *vis a vis* a larger park.

Adherence to unchanging, generic park forms perpetuates issues of access. Seeing urban parks as natural spaces leaves those with more socially-focused concerns feeling unwelcome. Utilizing only the dominant culture's preferred park form implies that parks are meant for some users but not all. As generic parks do not recognize all the ways groups need to use parks, if environmental injustice is only addressed by creating more, generic parks, many groups will continue to lack access.

**Gentrification and Displacement**

**Definition.** Creation of new parks is often unquestioningly considered a benefit for communities. For example, the creation of new parks in underserved communities is often done under the guise of "revitalization" or "sustainability." However, the parks built in underrepresented communities are not intended for use by existing residents. Instead, parks are like a Starbucks, generic in their form. These parks are tailored to the preferences of dominant, and often affluent, groups. The resultant parks often follow a historic form, like an open space with solitary walking trails. The parks drive up property values by creating a set of amenities tailored to the dominant, and often affluent, group. The parks attract affluent groups who can afford to purchase the newly, more-expensive properties that were affordable for buyers or renters at the previous, lower price. At the same time, the original, underrepresented residents who

were meant to benefit from the new parks are displaced. They are forced to seek housing in a different neighborhood and thus, cannot benefit from the newly-created park (Curran & Hamilton, 2012).

This story is not new. In the creation of the earliest US parks, existing people were displaced. For example, in New York's Central Park land was taken from the 589 tax-paying, Black residents living in Seneca Village. The village and others like it were bulldozed to make the park that primarily benefited real estate tycoons (Martin, 1997). Additional displacement followed the new park. Surrounding property values increased and available housing for poorer residents decreased because homes near the park were no longer affordable. Though parks had been considered places for social uplift, when parks removed the homes of Black residents any resulting "uplift" was limited and contentious (Checker, 2011).

**Contesting park narratives.** In this way, a paradox emerges: parks are touted as benefits for underserved communities but are coopted by urban land profiteers and become devices to increase properties values, not to benefit residents. Parks become burdens. As explained by Anguelovski (2015; 24), "Municipal neighborhood greening and its accompanying discourses create new conditions for reinvestment and often new profit, exclusion, and displacement of vulnerable residents." As such, parks are no longer public spaces because physical bodies are moved out of the park or neighborhood to make way for the interests of capital. Further, park form may be generic, rather than targeted to the needs of the local community. In this way, creating a new park is understood as an act of ecological gentrification (Dooling, 2009). Dooling (2009) purposefully chose her words; "ecological" emphasizes the "nature in the city" discourse that makes park creation almost uncontestable and deliberately includes humans as a part of the environment. Choice of the term "gentrification" contests the idea that building a park automatically produces a universally-enjoyed public good. Building a generic park introduces an often-unexpected reluctance and even rejection from community members (Checker, 2011). Planners or administrative officials may see parks as tools to produce prescribed outcomes: health and social reform. However, community members are often wary.

Further, current park users and nearby residents may have different ways of envisioning what a park should be and how it should be used. For example, Dooling (2009) shows how homeless people saw

a park as home. Checker (2011) shows how neighborhood residents see parks as gathering places to "shoot the shit" and smoke a cigarette in peace. These people may wish to have a park that meets their needs, rather than those of potential investors. Privileging some values for and uses of parks (e.g. parks as green space) erases others (e.g. parks are home). Dooling (2009) offers solutions that begin with listening to those who see parks as used in a multitude of ways. Concurrently, those in power must implement solutions offered whilst they are listening (Dooling, 2009; see also Curran & Hamilton, 2012).

**Recognition Justice**

Valuing the knowledge of diverse park users and responding to their "input" by implementing their ideas recognizes the unique ways in which people use parks. In this way, environmental amenities like parks, could better meet communities' unique needs (Anguelovski, 2015). To this extent, Low et al. (2009) utilize the Social Sustainability theory and prioritize analyses of access to parks in the creation of spaces for a variety of culturally diverse pursuits. In their work, a park need not be a series of amenities that instruct patrons how to use the park. Instead, they advocate for open space for everyone to do what is culturally appropriate for themselves in the park.

Low et al.'s type of study and advocacy are key because injustice can take the form of a lack of recognition; this happens by assuming the needs of the dominant culture reflect the needs of all (Fraser, 1995). In parks, injustices of recognition are perpetrated when parks are designed to meet only the needs of the dominant culture but are assumed to meet everyone's needs. In this way, recognition injustice is oppression related to one's culture. Acts of recognition injustice are largely symbolic. They include making "Others" feel invisible, disrespect, and cultural domination. Cultural domination, a form of recognition injustice, aligns with Young's (1990) cultural imperialism. Young (1990; 59) asserts that cultural imperialism involves the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture such that, "Without even noticing they do so, the dominant groups project their own experience as representative of humanity." If the dominant group is the norm, everyone else is different and becomes the "Other."

However, when communities engage in EJ projects on their own, rather than generic initiatives that do not prioritize equity, "[Communities take on initiatives] in order to overcome environmental

trauma and fear of erasure, remake place, and create safe havens for residents," and thus build environmental health (Anguelovski, 2015; 26). Thus emerges the need for "green enough" strategies (Anguelovski, 2015; Curran & Hamilton, 2012) where the unique ways communities seek to use parks are recognized. Parks are tailored to what existing community members need rather than creating parks that are a for-profit scheme or operate as if equity did not matter (Feldman & Whitman, 2010).

## Environmental Justice as Procedural Justice

My dissertation sits at the intersection of recognition and participatory justices. I seek to understand how park systems (physical parks and decision-making processes) can better recognize the public's needs and wants and thus, yield improvements to access to both parks and decision-making. Increasing recognition for how the public wants to use parks and participate in decision-making will occur, in part, when space is made for the public's inputs during decision-making processes and responses are given to those inputs. In this section I explore collaboration between the public and government bureaucrats during decision-making about parks using SES to examine transactions among stakeholders and the park environment as well as Emerson et al.'s (2011) model of collaborative governance.

### Public Exclusion because of a Lack of Power

Before examining how the public's input might be included, I first explore why and how the public has been excluded from decision-making. Indeed, imbalances of power undergird the decision-making processes that allow for recognition and distributional injustices to persist. Imbalances allow for those in power to make decisions quickly and covertly. In doing so, the powerful bypass engagement of less-powerful communities who will ultimately be impacted by the decisions. When underserved communities cannot make decisions, they are kept *powerless* (Blog; Young, 1990). The following are examples which illustrate some of the patterns of power imbalance I have noticed in the EJ literature.

**Political power.** Power imbalances may manifest when minority communities are targets for unwanted land uses because they are deemed less likely to wage collective action. For example, Hamilton (1993) showed that demonstrated political power (voter turnout) increased, the likelihood that area would

be sited for a locally unwanted land use (LULU) decreased. Indeed, in Hamilton's sample, communities of color were significantly more likely to be sited for LULU expansion than white communities.

**No good choice.** Imbalances of power occur when underserved communities have no choice but to accept environmental burdens. Bullard's (1990) and Pellow's (2002) work shows how communities are not consulted before a burden (like a factory) is built. If communities protest, burdens are often framed as the only economic option. This superficially forces a choice between health and financial security because they communities were not given the option to deny the burden in the first place.

**Lack of transparency.** Decision-making may take place beyond the view of the public. For example, San Diego's Chicano Park (established in the 1970s) shows the political struggle undertaken by a traditionally underrepresented group when trying to obtain a new park for their community. The group's promised park area was surreptitiously taken from them for government use. Only after a lengthy legal and grassroots battle was the park returned (Robles & Griswold de Castillo).

Empirical cases show those in power can continue to place burdens with or deny amenities to underserved communities because institutionalized power imbalances allow exclusion of groups from decision-making. Thus, scholars of EJ converge on the same final point: to avoid injustices of distribution and recognition, those whose lives are impacted by decisions must be involved in decision-making before the harmful impacts of a decision are felt. In this way, Fung and Wright (2001)'s point that institutions must be *transformed* is key. We must institutionalize public participation in decision-making procedures so that the public can be involved before lives are impacted for the worse.

**Public Exclusion because of a Reliance on Elite Knowledge**

Those in power, like park planners, can act unilaterally. Without community input, those in power alone can decide parks look and operate. I now explain how this behavior is sanctioned.

**Need for technical experts.** Early cities swelled with the congestion of industry and population growth. However, without an overarching guide, housing, industry, and their effluents co-mingled. Awareness of population growth was considered alongside newfound scientific understanding of disease such that both problems were technical issues to be addressed with Sanitary Reform. The "reformers"

could bring cleanliness and infrastructure to 'The City of Dreadful Night.' Thus, technical experts, like engineers were hired to map and build systems to transport water in and pump waste out (Hall, 2002; Peterson, 1983).

**Professionalization of planning.** City officials also sought to move beyond sanitation to comprehensively address city ills. Inspiration was drawn, in part, from parks. Indeed, begun in the 1850s, park planning demonstrated the long-term vision and dedication of large swaths of lands to one purpose (Peterson, 2009). The first comprehensive planning efforts were undertaken for Washington, DC. Prefaced by expert data collection, the plan aligned with the ideals of the elite City Beautiful movement, e.g. civic art, slum removal, and dedicated park space. The plan inspired further reports and recommendations made by experts regarding the condition of other cities.

These efforts instigated the first National Planning Conference. This and subsequent conferences, invite-only affairs with predominantly male attendees, created and determined the goals for the field of urban planning. The conference leader, Olmsted Jr. shaped planning as the pursuit of a livable city, rather than of social reform, as his opponent (Marsh) would have done (Peterson, 2009). Olmsted Jr. also shaped "the planning field as a technical art" and was adamant that engineers and actors on the ground shaped plans through continuous administrative oversight (Peterson, 2009; 130). However, the, "City Beautiful method of devising expertly crafted comprehensive plans" persisted (Peterson, 2009; 131).

**Planners are technical experts.** Historically, cities had technical problems that were solved by technical experts. They collected data and then devised solutions shown in comprehensive plans (Peterson, 2009). Urban problems are still seen as technical. More, the City Beautiful Movement's reliance on expert planners persists in valorization of the rational-technical model of decision-making.

Planners are hired to address technical problems because they alone hold elite, highly scientific knowledge. Planners first gain access to this knowledge by earning academic accreditations. They become capable of understanding, collecting, and utilizing scientific knowledge on topics like zoning codes, traffic patterns, or demographics.

Then, in the rational-technical model, the expert planner can independently collect data, alone determining which questions and whose data are valid. Long-term predictions are made by feeding data into the rational planning model. In this model, the planner uses scientific information to determine a set of objectives and all possible policy solutions. She alone evaluates and chooses the best alternative. Planners then write and recommend final plans to the elected officials (the planning commission and city council) who vote on the plan.

A planner may also seek little outside input to choose the best alternative not just because she is an expert but because scientific knowledge is not accessible to all. For example, many lack the financial resources necessary to subscribe to a scientific journal or even to own a computer on which to seek scientific knowledge. Understanding scientific knowledge requires another set of resources: the technical resources necessary to understand how to read the content of scientific papers and to interpret statistics. Technical resources can also include knowledge about how to collect one's own scientific information. This can include asking research questions (Feldman & Whitman, 2010), collecting data in the field (Ottinger, 2010), or obtaining funding for data collection projects.

**Urgent, post-political problems.** Today, expert solutions are decidedly urgent because society is faced with wicked (Rittel & Webber, 1973) or even, super wicked problems (Levin et al., 2009), like climate change. Such problems become "post-political" because they are thought to be of agreed-upon definition and severity; such problems are beyond debate and require immediate solutions crafted by scientific and technological experts (Checker, 2011). For example, the role of parks as ecosystem service providers and the need to build more service-providing parks may seem "unquestionable" given the facts of climate change or public health crises. However, seemingly-neutral language (previously "revitalization" and now "sustainability") displaces and withholds investment from underserved communities. In the case of parks, sustainability discourse masks unequal urban development and positions parks as unquestionably-positive tools (Checker, 2011; Dooling, 2009).

**Bureaucracy**

Use of the rational planning model and its emphasis on technical knowledge, bolsters the exclusivity of the larger bureaucracy. Planners and other administrators also hold elite knowledge for navigating within the bureaucracy. For example, they know the process of presenting a policy at a park board hearing, the regulations that constrain and allow action in the city, and the proper behavior within a deliberative forum. Without a knowledge of larger systems, the likelihood of outsider groups being able to participate in the creation of new park plans decreases compared to groups with greater knowledge (Scott & Munson, 1994; Wolch et al. 2005).

As members of the bureaucracy, planners work "one step removed" from government (Davidoff, 1969). As such, planners are independent from private industry as well as from political whims because they are not elected officials. Indeed, as bureaucrats, planners are not beholden to votes. However, they are answer to voters in two ways. They face and are accountable to the public, especially in matters concerning spending of public funds. Further, they are required to vie for funding for their projects. This often means aligning themselves within an "Iron Triangle," advocating for policies that will gain support from special interest groups as well as elected officials.

Without being subject to elections, bureaucrats' tenure is longer than politicians' tenure. Bureaucrats come "conservers of procedure (Peters, 1981; 70)" and thus, may be blind to alternative ways of doing things. As such, their role also earns bureaucrats their harshest critiques: rigidity, red tape, and inefficiency. Bureaucrats may uphold the status quo, even if this means further injustice. Though bureaucrats face criticism, rigid adherence to procedures affords a certain degree of protection, as one can remark, "I was just following the rules."

The bureaucracy's hierarchical structure emerged as an important element in my research. In a hierarchy, the few at the top have the power to make decisions. Those at the bottom have the technical knowledge used to inform decisions. Thus, lacking power within the bureaucracy, lower-leveled bureaucrats are beholden to their superiors. However, decisions made at the highest levels of government are enacted on the ground by lower-leveled bureaucrats. This means lower-leveled bureaucrats have power *outside* the bureaucracy. In this way, lower-leveled bureaucrats are *policy administrators* (Peters,

1981). When policy administrators face pressure on the ground, they may choose to enact policy in form (and thus, in compliance with red tape) but not in substance. In this way, policy has some degree of flexibility at the local level (Peters, 1981).

**Disruption**

The flexibility of policy at the local level creates an opening for the public. When plans and policies are enacted in response to pressure at the local-level, the public's knowledge may steer policy towards local priorities. This access point for the public's input is important. However, this inclusion of knowledge occurs far from the center of the bureaucracy. At the bureaucracy's center, the rational-technical model's valorization of planners' elite knowledge and working alone may persist. For the public to have a voice in policy formation (prior to steering policy enactment), they must disrupt two ideas.

**Disrupting generic forms.** First, the public must disrupt the idea that parks are universally beneficial, especially that parks are beneficial when they take a generic form. Further, concerning the idea of generic form, there must be disruption of the idea that decision-making is only useful when it takes a form specified by planners. Seeing the "reality" of what parks and decision-making can be as "multiple" means employing an interpretive perspective to understanding park systems (Mol, 1999; Roth & Mehta 2002). To this extent, the nature of reality concerning what a park system *should* be differs according to the position of each stakeholder with respect to the park and other stakeholders. Further, seeing reality as multiple also implies that discourses surrounding terms like "gentrification" and "equity," that often characterize goals of EJ, are not universally understood or neutral. To this extent, definitions are multiple and as Feldman and Whitman (2010) explore with respect to equity, change over time and are relative to one's own position and an area's history, especially of past discrimination. However, finding common threads is possible and doing so creates common ground for compromise. Thus, decision-making processes should be open and the goals for outcomes should be negotiable (Checker, 2011; Dooling, 2009; Feldman & Whitman, 2010).

**Disrupting elite knowledge.** Second, the public must disrupt the idea that the *only* knowledge that matters is planners' elite, technical knowledge. Again, Fung and Wright (2001)'s transformation of

institutions is key. Public participation must be institutionalized within decision-making processes so that the public can gain knowledge of how to operate within existing institutions and more importantly, so that they can contribute their inputs to decision-making about how parks look and operate.

**Knowledge pluralism.** Parks present a unique space to examine decision-making. Anyone has the potential to use or feel impacted by a park, so park stakeholders are numerous and diverse: park users, adjacent lot owners and renters, city tax payers, and passers-by. The variety of stakeholders may be the result of neighborhood parks' drop-in design that makes their boundaries fluid (Harnik & Simms, 2004; Machlis & Field, 2000). Further, anyone who has used a park could be considered an 'expert' in how to use parks and thus, able to contribute inputs to decision-making, like knowledge (human resources) or even material resources (e.g. preparing food for a meeting) as well as imbibe the process and parks with their own meanings. Parks are different than other public services, like schools, because not everyone can attend school, or roads, because though most would consider themselves an expert in using roads, not everyone would consider themselves an expert capable of designing roads.

Diverse stakeholders are expected to have diverse life experiences in and out of the park that confer upon them a type of "expert" status. These stakeholders should inform neighborhood park plans (Kaltenborn & Williams, 2002; Montoya & Kent, 2011; Olsson & Folke, 2001; Skogen, 2003). The public may serve as experts when they have a "sense of outrage precipitated by failure on the part of dominant groups" such that they identify when actions are inequitable, even if experts may not have this sense (Feldman & Whitman, 2010; 297). Perhaps this is because inequity often stems from previous discrimination which, has often excluded groups from venues where they could contest burdens. As part of an elite group, planners or other decision-makers may not have had these same experiences.

This reasoning also follows arguments that local knowledge should hold value equivalent to that of scientific knowledge. Indeed, scholars argue that focus on only a single source of knowledge (e.g. planners' elite technical knowledge) devalues other ways of knowing and prevents participation for those that hold other forms of knowledge (e.g. Agrawal, 1995; Berkes, Colding, & Folke, 2000; Olsson & Folke, 2001). Further, valuing only scientific knowledge means that people possessing other forms of

knowledge are often seen as having knowledge deficits (Bengston, 2000; Kaltenborn, Riese, & Hundeide, 1999).

Autonomy and reliance on a single form of knowledge can both be subsumed under the larger critique of cultural imperialism (Young, 1990). In addition to when parks take a single form based on the preferences of the dominant culture, cultural imperialism in park planning also occurs when planners utilize only a single type of knowledge to inform the design of a park. Further, cultural imperialism occurs when planners utilize only a single format for meetings, for example the style of deliberation about decisions or the language in which meetings are conducted.

**Knowledge Contributions**

The scholarly literature describes the public's "inputs" to decision-making venues as knowledge of how parks are used and community connections. Thus, the public is acknowledged to have experiential knowledge, gained by living in community and regularly using parks. Valuation of these types of knowledge by park administrators aligns with Berkes and colleagues' concept of traditional ecological knowledge that the public gains from daily interactions with their environment. For example, hunters who have a long history of living in one place can describe and make predictions about the phenology of their target species to a degree that is comparable to scientists (see extensive work by Berkes and colleagues including Berkes et al., 2000; Olsson, Folke, & Berkes, 2004). When they use parks regularly, people gain knowledge about their park, even becoming experts. Planners' valuation also aligns with Fung and Wright's (2001; 18) EDD where "ordinary citizens" can "apply their knowledge" to develop solutions to problems based in the local context. Thus planners, aligning with Fung and Wright (2001; 18), "Turn away from the commitment that complex technical problems are best solved by experts" reasoning that some problems, "may require the variety of experience and knowledge offered more by diverse, relatively more open-minded citizens and field operatives than by distant and narrowly trained experts."

**Connections.** I expand briefly on connections as an important type of knowledge (Adams, 2004; Emerson et al., 2011; Innes & Booher, 2004). As one example of a type of connections knowledge, Emerson et al. (2011) note the importance of active practices to investigate which stakeholders are

missing. The public holds this knowledge. Further, Innes & Booher (2004) detail how successful collaborations include formation of networks which, build institutional capacity to function within complicated and once-exclusive decision-making venues. The authors assert that for all voices to be heard (and heard more loudly than in a representative democracy) individuals will be best served by joining a larger group that speaks to their interest, working together to gather resources and articulate priorities, and then sending to longer-term deliberations a representative of their group. These groups will need technical and financial resources to be able to stand (or sit) alongside more experienced voices. By drawing on connections, the public may be more likely to procure the resources necessary for their success alongside more seasoned stakeholders.

My data build on the broad discussion of knowledge as an input by describing several topics on which the public can contribute knowledge: park use, professional skills, connections, and environmental justice sensibility as well as "proving" they are worthy of inclusion via "technical posturing."

## Collaborative Governance

To understand meaningful public participation, I chose to examine the degree to which members of the public can collaborate with those in power. In part, I drew on Emerson et al.'s (2011) model of collaborative governance (CG). The model details the necessary components of a collaboration. In addition to Emerson et al.'s model, several other authors have examined elements of collaboration. Though I do not study all such elements in my research, I wanted to acknowledge them here.

### Devolution of Power

Valuing public input is an essential precursor to the central government's devolution of power to stakeholders operating at local-level nodes. Importantly, when the public operates at the local level, they remain connected to the central authority for resource exchange (including mediation for issues that cannot be addressed at local level), communication, and responsibility. In addition to these connections, those at the center of the bureaucracy are meant to act as "facilitators." Facilitators build the public's participatory capacity by showing them how to navigate within the bureaucracy and effectively deliberate in a political forum. Indeed, Fung and Wright (2001; 29) note, "Most nonprofessionals lack the capacities

to participate effectively in functionally specific and empowered groups. Rather than retrenching into technocratic professionalization, however, some have established procedures to impart the necessary foundational capacities to participants who lack them."

**Coming to the Table**

**Lack of participation for all.** Participation in collaborative decision-making begins with a spot for the public at the table. Historically, however, members of the public have been *tokens*, hand-selected and beholden to elites (Arnstein, 1969). They are expected to rubber-stamp any idea handed to them. Rubber-stamping gives the appearance of participation without the associated injection of diverse viewpoints into final decisions. When participants in collaboration are volunteers, not hand-picked, participants often fit into a narrow mold: white, affluent, and well-educated (Feldman & Whitman, 2010; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; see 'Barriers').

**Participation for all.** However, Scott and Munson (1994; 92) suggest that most parks and recreation professionals don't know what all users need or want from parks; thus, they advocate for "a revitalization of democratic decision making and empowerment of people with low incomes" and to "go beyond tradition needs assessment methods" for those who may not be able to articulate their needs during traditional processes. Roberts and Chitwere (2011; p366) underscore this point by stating, "Park managers need to be more aware of the experiences and perspectives of people of color." In alignment, Fung & Wright (2001) are clear that ordinary people must participate in their model of empowered deliberative democracy (EDD). Fung & Wright (2001) thus underscore the importance of bringing representative stakeholders to the decision-making table and in doing so, align with foundations of procedural justice and components of Emerson et al.'s (2011) model.

**Deliberation**

Stakeholders at the table will thus represent the underlying population. Then, a forum must be created where participants can present their viewpoints and listen to those of others (Bächtiger et al. 2010; Emerson et al., 2011; Fung & Wright, 2001). The public are capable deliberators because, as Fung and Wright (2001) include their model, the deliberations focus on tangible, everyday problems. In response to

presenting and listening, participants may moderate their own thinking about an issue (Bächtiger et al. 2010; Fung & Wright; 2001). Empirically, Fung & Wright (2001) note that consensus is not often reached (a feature of the Habermasian ideal, see Bächtiger et al. 2010) but importantly, most participants can find reasons to support the ultimate decision.

**Outcomes**

The Habermasian ideal of deliberation suggests that when a group can engage in rational discourse then, superior solutions to a problem (e.g. increased consensus, compliance, and ingenuity) will result (Bächtiger et al., 2010; Mutz, 2008). Though Habermas posited an ideal, practitioners do subscribe to the belief that deliberation (as opposed to a single decision-maker) and reaching consensus yields a greater diversity of solutions (Brown & Weber, 2011; Wondolleck, Manring, & Crowfoot, 1996) and greater compliance (specifically related to parks, see Scott & Munson, 1994; also, Fiorino, 2006; Fung & Wright, 2001; Hirschnitz-Garbers & Stoll-Kleemann, 2011; Reed, 2008). Of note, the Habermasian ideal emphasizes the act of deliberation but the EJ frame emphasizes the diversity of viewpoints as key to crafting durable solutions because those solutions recognize diverse preferences.

**Barriers**

I delineate my research to examining the process of participation once the public *has* a seat at the table. However, I do want to be explicit in saying that many face extensive barriers to even getting a seat at the table. They face barriers related to time- either they are not invited early in the decision-making process (Arnstein, 1969; Force & Forester, 2002; Masuda, McGee, & Garvin, 2008; Wondolleck et al., 1996) or they cannot take time from other obligations, like work (Wondolleck et al., 1996).

Additional barriers occur during deliberation: 1) meeting format, including cultural norms (Umemoto & Igarashi, 2009) as well as power dynamics, like gender (Karpowitz, Mendelberg & Shaker, 2012; 2) participant resources including amenities (childcare, food, and translators) and social, technical, and financial resources that may render some better prepared to participate (Ansell & Gash, 2007; Johnson et al., 2004; Kaltenborn et al., 1999; Koontz et al., 2004; Wondolleck et al., 1996); 3)

discrimination especially speaking only dominant languages, e.g. English, or relying exclusively on "technical jargon" (Skogen, 2003; Umemoto & Igarashi, 2009).

Thus, I restate, even when efforts are made to include the public in decision-making, participants are most commonly white, well-educated, and affluent stakeholders (Feldman & Whitman, 2010). Underrepresented groups are less likely to participate in public decision-making (for low-income groups, see Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). If "participation" only includes the white, well-educated, and affluent, a populace's full range of values and knowledge are not included in decisions (Scott & Munson, 1994).

## Venues for Public Input

I conceptualize the components of a park system as venues where the public can participate in decision-making. In the following section, I offer theoretical understandings of four venues: board meetings, advisory councils, programs, and the daily use of parks. Many cities' park administrators have deliberately included the public in decision-making at these venues. This act acknowledges a multiplicity of ways of knowing parks as well as a desire for parks that recognize the public's needs and wants.

### Board Meetings

Board meetings are an invitation to the public to address a government board. They are a ubiquitous method of satisfying public participation requirements, despite often being considered the minimum amount of public participation. In this way, Arnstein's (1969) consideration of board meetings as "consultation" and thus, a "degree of tokenism" on her ladder of participation seems appropriate. The public is invited to participate and share their knowledge about parks only, despite being knowledgeable on many other topics. Further, because there is no redistribution of power, there is no guarantee that the public's input will impact future changes. Indeed, the public is not given resources to complete projects themselves or make final policy decisions. Adams (2004; 44) supports Arnstein (1969) when writing that public meetings are rituals, rather than an opportunity to influence policy outcomes and as such, they provide "a false sense of legitimacy."

However, Adams contends that public meetings, like board meetings, are useful because they provide *another* space for the public to participate in decision-making. Emphasizing the word "another," I

understand Adams as an advocate for public meetings as one tool among many. In terms of systems thinking, multiple decision-making venues are emphasized as components within a larger park system. The public may deliberate with public officials in other decision-making venues but not in board meetings. However, near the end of the policy cycle (e.g. at a public hearing) the presence of the public increases the responsiveness of public officials (Adams, 2004). Throughout a policy cycle, the public connects with officials by supporting the issues they raise in meetings. Further, meetings provide a space to connect with other attendees. Perhaps most importantly, Adams (2004) details how the public's early attendance at public meetings may help set agendas. In this way, their participation becomes active. The public brings attention to topics of interest by speaking about them during public comment. These topics may be added to the agenda of future meetings. Agendas are also set when the public attends meetings regarding issues that would have otherwise been overlooked, increasing an issue's relative priority.

**Advisory Councils**

Different than board meetings, advisory councils provide a "forum for citizen involvement in decision-making (Lynn & Busenberg, 1995; 148)." Engagement gives transparency to public sector decision-making while also informing public officials of the public's views (Innes & Booher, 2004; Lynn & Busenberg, 1995). At their best, advisory councils align with Fung and Wright's (2001; 23) EDD where "transformations attempt to institutionalize the ongoing participation of ordinary citizens, most often in their role as consumers of public goods, in the direct determination of what those goods are and how they should be best provided." In this way, the ability for a two-way flow of information between the public and policy-makers is key. When information is shared, the public impacts decisions by redirecting debates to priority areas, building consensus, and calming hostile attitudes (Innes & Booher, 2004).

For the public to have power during meetings, they rely on others' as well as their personal capacity. Hannah & Lewis (1982) explored initiation of problem-solving during advisory council meetings. They found that the public had more success initiating when they had external connections to community groups. The authors explain, "Citizen-controlled committees clearly do not depend on the city bureaucracy solely for information or for support, but use their own resources in gathering material and

for mobilizing support for their activities (Hannah & Lewis, 1982; 46)." From these connections, the authors found it was important for council members to receive technical information from a variety of sources, not just policy-makers. The authors also found a positive correlation between initiation of problem-solving and council members' having a professional occupation though no correlation to tenure (greater than three years) of members or gender.

Perhaps despite the capacities of the council members, the role of the council is circumscribed by the "intentions and expectations" of the public office who initiates the council (Lynn & Busenberg, 1995; 159). Thus, at their worst, advisory councils align with Arnstein's (1969) *manipulation*. Manipulation occurs if information is withheld from councils and when councils are in place only to rubber-stamp something long-ago decided (Lynn & Busenberg, 1995).

**Programs**

Historically, programs were organized around a park's permanent features, like swimming pools and playgrounds. Monitored use as well as directed use was also important to the Playground Movement. The movement's leaders championed designated play areas for children, believing that constructive play led to the creation of morally upright citizens (Davis, 1983; Frost, 2010). First, the playgrounds were built spaces intended for play; a contrast to the dirty streets, abandoned buildings and empty lots previously available for children's play during the Industrial Revolution. Second, at playgrounds children established a framework for democracy: they interacted with children of other ages, sexes, and ethnicities, they learned to appreciate the diverse viewpoints of others, and creatively solve conflicts (Spain, 2001; Frost, 2010). Finally, playgrounds were supervised by local women. This meant that playgrounds were not a place to foster bad behavior but instead were an extension of the settlement house classroom and a place to construct good behavior in the children. Moreover, as playground supervisors were paid, playgrounds constructed economic opportunities for the local community (Spain, 2001).

However, in this way, playgrounds required children to conform to the moral standards of the dominant culture. In general, programs were built around existing features of parks and to meet needs deemed important by park staff, not community members. Thus, when programs were chosen by the

dominant culture as a way to transform behavior, they were an extension of Olmsted's moral theater and thus, were tools of oppression. However, if programs were a response to how people want to use parks and places of local employment, then Arnstein (1969) may place programs as a *partnership*. As partners, the public and park staff share power and co-establish ground rules. Though Arnstein (1969; 222) does note, "In most cases where power has come to be shared it was *taken by citizens*, not given by the city," Further, if the role of program developer and instructor is transferred from park staff to the public, programs may also be an instance of Arnstein's *delegation* as well as Fung and Wright's (2001) EDD, featuring *devolution* of power. Currently, the empirical literature has paid little attention to park programs. Scholars note the importance of programs for drawing participants to parks (see Cohen, et al. 2010; Eyler et al., 1998; Loukaitou-Sideris & Sideris, 2009; Wolch et al., 2011 who examine program access). However, program initiation and operation were not their explicit focus.

**Daily Use**

The public makes decisions every time they visit a park. However, consideration of daily park use as a decision-making venue may be under-appreciated, especially by officials nearer to the center of the bureaucracy as well as scholars. Conversely, Loukaitou-Sideris' (1995) appropriation of space within a park may constitute an act of decision-making. The author describes Hispanic users how, "when no soccer fields were present in the park, players typically would adjust the space to their needs, bringing their own goal posts with them. Most family groups accommodated their visits to the park with many items from home (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995; 94)." In the author's description, park patrons problem solve by adapting park space to their needs. In this way, there is an unexpected flexibility of the rules of a generic park. Arnstein (1969) may view daily use as a partnership between patrons and park staff. As staff do not interfere with appropriation of space, power may be "*taken by the citizens*, not given by the city (original emphasis retained; Arnstein 1969; 222)."

## Systems Thinking

To study a space for the public to include their knowledge as well as the responses to that knowledge from the parks and other stakeholders, I saw the importance of viewing parks as a system.

This is especially important when traditional parks and decision-making venues may not recognize the recreational or participatory needs of the public. Fung and Wright (2001; 26) support the characterization of decision-making as a system by including a shortened feedback loop as a positive outcome of their decentralized deliberation. Innes & Booher (2004; 428-29) offer further support, describing the importance of participation that takes an extended temporal scope where there is more than a "reaction" from the public to government proposals but instead, sustained "interactions" among various stakeholders where policy can be modified before final decisions are made. To enable study of public participation in decision-making as a system made up of "interactions" I draw on systems theory. Systems approaches allow for a complex series of overlapping adjustments to and modification of the environment to be understood by purposefully viewing them within their unique context. Further, viewing the complex series of adjustments and modifications are viewed as "responses" and thus, in relation to one another.

**Social-Ecological Systems (SES) Perspective**

I draw on the Social-Ecological Systems (SES) perspective described by Stokols et al. (2013) and Stokols (2018) specifically. SES expands upon the categories for inputs that can be offered during decision-making. They can be material, human, as well as semiotic. Human inputs were of interest to my work because they include knowledge: personal capacities, connections to others, and morals. In the case of parks, high-levels of moral capital, shared across stakeholders would be required to prevent environmental injustices. By considering the public's knowledge as an input, it can then be responded to by the environment and other stakeholders. Further, SES' semiotic component refers to the world of meaning and implications related to the physical world of actions or objects. For example, a social-ecological system would encompass the quantification of different amenities within parks but also, analysis of why people come to a park and why different amenities are more important to their visit.

For SES, feedback mechanisms are also key. Inputs are transacted among stakeholders and their environment. This means that actions initiate responses and counter-responses through which stakeholders adapt to changes to their system and in turn, also influence their system. In a continuing and iterative fashion, stakeholders prepare subsequent responses to the newly-changed system. Outputs are

produced by transforming inputs within the system. Thus, I examine not only the role for the public in offering input but also, the response to their input. In my research, outputs are plans, policies, and physical changes to parks (e.g. a new kitchen backsplash) or how parks are used (e.g. new programs).

## Questions Raised by the Literature that Remain to be Answered

### A Need to Understand Lack of Access to Parks as an Environmental Injustice

**Parks as sites of justice.** EJ is often conceptualized as an unfair distribution of environmental burdens. The proposed study would contribute to the growing study of EJ as a lack of amenities (invited by Boone et al., 2009; Tarrant & Cordell, 1999). Further, there is a need to understand EJ with respect to the context of parks and recreation specifically (Floyd & Johnson, 2002; 71).

**Procedural justice.** An understanding of park access through the frame of EJ necessarily includes the operationalization of procedural justice. This is because scholars call for procedural justice to address other injustices but often, do not specify its operationalization. I operationalize of procedural justice using Emerson et al.'s (2011) Collaborative Governance (CG) model as well as an SES perspective to guide data collection and to undertake a content analysis. Engaging CG and SES to study environmental justice successfully joins three conceptual frameworks. This is a productive and hitherto neglected research pursuit.

**Gentrification and displacement.** Green gentrification occurs when injustices are addressed via park construction or refurbishment and then, existing residents are displaced. Indeed, Anguelovski (2015; 30) describes the need for further study, "Yet, this most recent aspect of EJ mobilization—as the defense of the right to place and territory, the right to stay without being displaced, and the right to remain protected from waves of uncontrolled investment, land grabbing, environmental profit, speculation, and disinvestment—is still understudied." Relevant to my work, the author emphasizes a need for study at the microscale: understanding individual resistance and adaptation to the negative impacts of gentrification.

**Recognition justice.** Several questions remain with respect to defining the role that a lack of recognition justice plays in greater issues of environmental injustice as a lack of access in parks. Fraser

(1995) defines recognition justice theoretically. However, I do not see explicit naming of this phenomenon in parks (but see Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995 "appropriation of space" and Low et al., 2009).

**A Need to Understand the Process of "Appropriating Space"**

Loukaitou-Sideris (1995) details park users "appropriating" a space that has been designated for one use so that that space can serve a new, more culturally-appealing use. However, Loukaitou-Sideris' (1995) aim was not to detail how this process occurs or conceptualize doing so as an act of decision-making. My work fills this gap and responds to and justifies a trend in urban planning toward including more flexible space in parks. This is seen, for example, in creating parks from limited available space in Downtown Toronto, Canada (J.T. Garrett, 27 April 2016) as well as public parks in Pittsburgh, PA (Design Center Pittsburgh, 2016).

**A Need to Study Park Decision-Making and the Role for the Public**

In creating my model of EJ, I found that very few studies of urban neighborhood parks focused on the impact of decision-making on park access. Few studies mention that the process for determining distribution is important. Concurrently, few begin their work by asking how and why inequality exists in the first place.

**Role for the public.** A need also remains to understand the role for the public in park decision-making. Studies of national parks highlight the public's role, focused on bringing together diverse values in contexts where stakeholders have longstanding place-based and economic connections to the park (e.g. generations of ranchers, Kaltenborn et al. 1999; ranchers and tourism-proprietors with longstanding contracts at Yellowstone National Park, Yochim 2013). However, work remains to be done on the inclusion of diverse knowledge for neighborhood parks. These are spaces where many of the stakeholders do not have the long-standing place-based (e.g. in the case of recent immigrants) and economic ties (e.g. in public parks without tourism) to the land and whose knowledge may vary substantially from the dominant culture. This type of information will be especially important with on-going immigration and urban population growth. While the restoration literature does address bringing together diverse values in outdoor spaces, the focus of this literature is not specifically to bring about procedural justice to address

environmental injustices. Therefore, there is a need to focus on inclusion of the public's knowledge during neighborhood park planning.

Such a focus implies also a need to understand the different types of knowledge that may be held by the public and offered as inputs during park decision-making. As members of the public are uniquely situated as park experts, they may provide new types of knowledge. Doing so could add to the types of knowledge considered "inputs" within the social-ecological system perspective.

**Decision-making venues.** The literature calls for more information about specific places for decision-making. For example, there is a need to examine the role of the public on advisory councils. Indeed, Lynn & Busenberg (1995; 160) review advisory council studies and note a greater focus on outcomes rather than the processes to reach those outcomes. Further, many studies exist about advisory councils outside the neighborhood space (e.g. forest management advisory councils). Therefore, collection of data about advisory councils operating at the neighborhood level is missing. From such study, others can engage in a comparison of the two advisory councils, examining for productive similarities and differences.

Additionally, there is a need to examine the role of the public in informal decision-making sites. For example, women have a different and hitherto un-heard set of preferences for park use that include social aspects of fitness (Eyler et al., 1998; Krenichyn 2006). Further, women lack access to park space (Loukaitou Sideris 2005; Scott et al. 2007). By studying a program type that is heavily utilized by women (Zumba) I offer insights that may expand park access for women. Programs and access, so far, are not a large focus of the parks literature. Through the example of Zumba, I invite other scholars to examine programs as a site of decision-making and a response to users who may have different park preferences and barriers to access. Indeed, there are many ways in which a richer understanding of the role for the public in parks and decision-making about parks will yield productive insights and suggest better questions for future research.

# Chapter 3. Method

To understand how parks could be sites of environmental injustice and how to address injustices, I began data collection by asking the scoping research questions, "Is environmental justice (EJ) perceived as a salient issue for stakeholders?" and "What is the public's role in making decisions about how parks look and operate?" I collected data from two cases: the city park systems of Minneapolis, MN and Chicago, IL. After collecting data during the "scoping' portion of my research I found four different decision-making venues. These venues facilitated public participation in decision-making about how parks looked and operated. I collected data from each of the four venues by interviewing stakeholders involved in collaborative decision-making, observing park use, including programs and stakeholder meetings, and analyzing documents like final policies and master plans. As I collected data, I also examined data using content analysis. For analyses, I compared my data to a model I created of EJ as well as an existing model of collaborative governance (Emerson et al., 2011). Also, I employed a social-ecological systems perspective to more deeply explore resources transacted among stakeholders during collaborative decision-making, links between system inputs and outputs, and to guide the extension of the temporal scope and dimensions of my data during analyses. Emergent patterns allowed me to pose additional research questions (see chapter overview). After data collection, I asked the post-analysis research questions, "How are park systems modified to better align with the public's preferences?" and "What is the public's role in driving those changes?"

## The Case Study Method

The case study method (Yin, 2009) guides collection of qualitative and quantitative data to test hypotheses, like a scientific experiment, but also recognizes the importance of situating and studying the research problem in context. In this way, the case study method aligns with EJ which, asks scholars to situate their case of injustice within a larger system of oppression (e.g. Pellow, 2002) as well as aligns with Emerson et al.'s (2011) model of collaborative governance and the social-ecological systems (SES) perspective's (Stokols, 2018) emphasis on studying context.

I utilized Yin's embedded case design. Within the larger cases, Minneapolis' and Chicago's park systems, I also compared embedded cases: decision-making venues. Venues vary on the independent variables: formality, centrality, and the scope and permanence of the decisions made. While some scholars advocate random sampling to test patterns (e.g. King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994), Small (2009) and Yin (2009) find bias in a random sampling approach and instead, support measuring variables in multiple contexts: literal (producing identical results) and theoretical (producing predictably different results) replications of an original case. In my work, the four types of decision-making venues were different (theoretical replication) but each city had one of each venue (literal replication). The materials transacted were the dependent variables. They changed in each venue and included a venue's flexibility, the public's knowledge as well as the responses of the environment.

Yin's (2009) deductive approach requires the researcher to determine her analytic technique prior to data collection. In this way, the researcher collects identical data that allow for comparisons among cases and to patterns specified by the theoretical literature. In each decision-making venue, I collected data on the collaborative dynamics specified by Emerson et al.'s (2011). Further, I created my own model of EJ by drawing on a review of 45 empirical articles and four theoretical works. I also used Loukaitou-Sideris' (1995) "appropriable space" to guide focus during observations of daily use in both cities. Finally, I used SES to examine transactions of resources within venues, responses, and adaptations and modifications of stakeholders and the environment. During analyses, I tested adherence of my empirical data to theoretically specified patterns.

## Positivist and Interpretive Paradigms

I do not adhere exclusively to a positivist or interpretive research paradigm. First, though I began by collecting identical data in each case, pre-determined by theory, I adjusted my research during data collection and analysis. Indeed, my initial study design was guided by Yin but my research question evolved in the "scoping" phase of data collection. Further, during data collection, I slightly adjusted observation and interview guides to fit the stakeholder or the decision-making site. During the process of content analysis, I began with two models and fit data into the models' categories; then, I iteratively

refined the model categories and added in additional data. Thus, data analyzed earlier were fit into different categories than data analyzed later.

Adjusting interview and observation guides allowed me to collect data that highlighted the subjective perceptions of reality. I focused on groups of stakeholders who perceived parks and decision-making process differently. In interviews and observations, I participated in multiple performances of reality (Mol 1999) which, showed the nature of reality to be "multiple" and informed by diverse life experiences and knowledge (Mol, 1999; Roth & Mehta 2002; Scott & Munson, 1994; Yanow, 1999). Further, slight iterations permitted response to new ideas and the need for new data (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Geertz, 2001). In sum, iterations created balance, as opposed to strictly delineating between positivist and interpretive work and addressed my opposition to an objective understanding of reality.

**Cases: Park Systems**

To facilitate comparison, I selected two cities, Minneapolis and Chicago, and defined my cases as the city's park system. Each park system was designed in the same era, by an expert landscape architect (including Horace Cleveland in both cities), on land set aside deliberately for parks, and was explicitly conceived of as an interconnected system of parks (Bachrach & District, 2008; Smith, 2008). Presently, both cities' park systems are ranked highly by the Trust for Public Land (Table. 3.1). Each year, the Trust for Public Land ranks the 100 largest city park systems on four criteria: acreage (media park size and park land / total city land; investment (public dollars, non-profit dollars, and volunteer hours); amenities (basketball hoops, playgrounds, dog parks, recreation centers, and recently added splashpads and restrooms; access as percentage of the city's population within a 10-minute (half-mile) walk of a park.

Table 3.1 TPL rankings for Chicago and Minneapolis park systems

| | TPL Rank / 100 | | TPL Score / 100 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | Chicago | Minneapolis | Chicago | Minneapolis |
| 2019 | 10 | 3 | 75.4 | 81.8 |
| 2018 | 8 | 1 | 76.1 | 84.2 |
| 2017 | 11 | 1 | 71.0 | 87.5 |
| 2016 | 15 | 1 | 69.0 | 86.5 |
| 2015 | 12 | 1 | 70.0 | 84.0 |
| 2014 | 16 | 1 | 62.5 | 82.0 |
| 2013 | 16 | 1 | 61.0 | 81.0 |
| 2012 | 14 | Not listed | 59.0 | Not listed |

Table 3.1 TPL rankings and scores for Minneapolis and Chicago 2012- 2019.

**Public Participation in Decision-Making**

Both cities use standard practice: public comment periods at their Park Board of Commissioners' meetings. Both cities also have policies that call for public participation on advisory councils. I focus on Chicago's Park Advisory Councils (PACs), who are dedicated to improving their individual parks, and Minneapolis' Community Advisory Committees (CACs), who gave insight during policy-making and master-planning for the entire park system.

**Minneapolis.** City-wide master planning began in Minneapolis in the summer of 2015. Community and park board members felt that many parks not meeting the needs of the growing and diversifying population of the city. Indeed, parks were last updated in the 1960s and they took a homogenous and generic form: grass, baseball fields, and playgrounds. To formalize and ensure public participation in this process and for other policy-making initiatives, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) updated its Community Engagement Policy in fall 2018.

Parks in Minneapolis were also not meeting community needs because of unequal investment in the city's geographic North and South. In part, many natural amenities, like large lakes, are in the South and have attracted investment. However, racist covenants and zoning gradually restricted housing options for people of color. Futher, until the 1960s, funding policies like the Elwell Law (1911-1960) allowed to "assess property owners…for the improvement of neighborhood parks and playgrounds" which meant wealthier areas could give more money to improve parks (see Smith, 2008; 133-134).

**Chicago.** Unequal investment as well as lack of accountability also spurred community engagement in Chicago. Indeed, PACs were originally formed as "watchdogs" for individual parks which, seemed necessary considering unequal funding for certain areas of the city. For example, the Chicago Park District (CPD) was sued in federal court for systematically withholding resources from parks in Black and Latino neighborhoods, policies largely instituted by Park Superintendent Ed Kelly. In 1983, the CPD entered into a consent decree with the federal government and undertook systematic changes to its funding practices; structural inequities were believed to be addressed and the decree was lifted in 1989 (Friends of the Parks, 2018). Black and Latino neighborhoods are largely concentrated in South and West Chicago and at present, many Chicagoans feel park policies are still racist, for example, charging that the 2019 budget underfunds programs, new acreage, and capital improvements (Friends of the Parks, 2018; Ihejirika, 2018).

Both cities have pasts tarnished by racism that is still felt as a lack of access to parks and unequal funding. While, racial inequality is not unique to Minneapolis and Chicago, both cities' park systems are highly-ranked by the TPL. Therefore, I determined they would present the best chance to observe effective strategies for addressing environmental injustices in parks.

## Selection of Parks and Meeting Sites for Observation

In addition to selecting cases, I also selected parks in which to conduct "scoping" interviews and observations. I chose parks where, based on the neighborhood's socioeconomic characteristics, there could have been environmental injustice. Thus, for "scoping," the first portion of my data collection, I selected focal parks: five acres (thus, potential for congestion) and located in neighborhoods with lower than city-average median incomes and with percentages of Latino and Black residents above the city average. I selected two parks in Chicago's West side and three parks in Minneapolis' South (later adding MG Park in Minneapolis' North Side; Table 3.2).

In Minneapolis, focus on the geographic south, and later north, was supported by MPRB's equity-based criteria that guide funding. The criteria consider park and neighborhood condition. The latter includes neighborhoods classified as Racially-Concentrated Areas of Poverty, acknowledged by MPRB to

have "historically been underserved by public investment (MPRB, 2016; 4)." According to the schedule for funding established using the equity-based criteria, of the 30 parks in the greatest need for funding, 13 are in North and 14 are in South Minneapolis.

Table 3.2 Focal parks

| **Park Pseudonym** | **Acres** | **Income $** | **% Black** | **% Latino** | **% White** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Chicago* | | *47,300.00* | *32.3* | *28.2* | *32.2* |
| *Cook County* | | *55,251.00* | *23.7* | *24.7* | *43.1* |
| C2 | 5.63 | 37,300.00 | 4.2 | 80.9 | 12.5 |
| C5 | 7.32 | 41,187.00 | 1.6 | 84.2 | 10.7 |
| C1 | 3.17 | 34,100.00 | 86.1 | 8.0 | 4.6 |
| *Minneapolis* | | *57,186.00* | *18.0* | *10.0* | *60.3* |
| *Hennepin County* | | *65,834.00* | *12.0* | *6.8* | *70.4* |
| MJ | 6.27 | 46,055.00 | 29.7 | 31.8 | 24.6 |
| MB | 6.46 | 35,224.00 | 28.0 | 34.8 | 15.3 |
| MI | 7.08 | 25,632.00 | 42.4 | 23.8 | 21.4 |
| MG | 25.48 | 39,697.00 | 54.5 | 8.5 | 18.4 |

Table 3.2 Focal parks compared to city and county demographic information. Parks were selected to have relatively the same acreage (apart from MG park which, I followed during master planning). Parks were also selected from neighborhoods where median income was less than the city and county median income (written as Income $). Parks were also selected from neighborhoods where the percentage of Black or Latino residents was greater than the percentage for the city and the county. Data were obtained from Statisticalatlas.com; city-data.com; American Community Survey (ACS) 2015; MNCompass.org; Minneapolisparks.org; Chicagoparkdistict.com.

After scoping, I began studying the four decision-making venues. For daily use, continued to observe focal parks but also observed programs in neighborhoods across both cities. I attended board meetings in both cities. I participated in programs held in racially and economically diverse neighborhoods. In Chicago, I selected as many PACs to observe and interview as possible, with many connected to parks in underserved neighborhoods. In Minneapolis, I would have selected CACs connected to my focal parks in South Minneapolis; however, the South service area CAC's work had concluded when I began data collection. Thus, based on socio-economic data and funding schedule rankings, I concluded that North Minneapolis also demonstrated potential for environmental injustice. In

support of my choice, North Minneapolis has historically been the harshest critic of the MPRB in terms of inequalities in resource distribution (Fernández Campbell, 2016).

**Scoping**

I began the "scoping phase" of research in Spring 2017. I asked the scoping research questions, "Is environmental justice (EJ) perceived as a salient issue for stakeholders?" and "What is the public's role in making decisions about how parks look and operate?" In Minneapolis I observed (see observations below) focal parks on my own. In Chicago I was led on tours (see tours below) by my key informant. My key informant chose parks based on the previously-mentioned socio-economic criteria as well as parks that were representative of all parks within the CPD system. Of note, in my research I describe visiting a variety of facilities in Chicago. A-facilities are the largest and have more amenities; facilities grow smaller until one visits D-facilities. Indeed, facilities are ranked by their size and number of amenities. Thus, rank is dependent on the amount of land available for that park, not the economic status of the neighborhood the park is located. To accommodate this, I visited D-type facilities in very wealthy neighborhoods as well as large and beautifully-appointed A-type facilities in poorer neighborhoods. I do not want to give the impression that A-facilities are only located in wealthy neighborhoods and D-facilities in poorer, such an impression would be untrue.

During observations, I also interviewed park supervisors (see interviews below). Further, I began meeting with centrally-located administrators (e.g. planners, program or department heads, and managers). Central administrators' point of view spanned multiple parks as opposed to park supervisors who operated within a single park. This network of supervisors and administrators and especially my key informant in Chicago updated me on upcoming park meetings and helped me develop a rapport with subsequent stakeholders (e.g. gain access to additional park supervisors or program leaders).

Reflecting on completed scoping interviews, I saw that in both cities, park supervisors repeatedly discussed programs and the flexibility of spaces used for programming. Further, most mentioned the importance of advisory councils during decision-making. From my field notes, I noticed that park patrons were appropriating space to meet their needs. Therefore, I saw public participation in decision-making

was possible at several different venues: daily park use, programs, advisory councils, and Board of Commissioners Meetings.

I focused my data collection on how the public collaborated with the parks departments and use space in each of these decision-making venues. I also embedded myself in case sites by moving to Minneapolis and making seven trips to Chicago. When I could not be in Chicago, I conducted telephone interviews and followed current events via email list servs and newspaper articles.

## Justifying Choice of Collaborative Governance Theory

Emerson et al.'s (2011) model of collaborative governance guided my choice of interview questions and observational focus. I also used model components to create categories for my content analysis. Use of this model is justifiable for data collection and analyses because it is a synthesis of components necessary for collaboration drawn across disciplines, including planning and environmental governance. Further, Emerson et al. (2011; 2) define collaborative governance as, "The processes and structures of public policy decision making and management that engage people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and /or the public, private and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished." In this way, the model: assumes participation of multiple stakeholders, include the public; emphasizes solutions that would be unattainable without the diverse set of stakeholders; includes 'context' and thus aligns with Pellow's (2002) proffered framework to understand EJ as well as a hallmark of the Case Study Method's (Yin 2009); accommodates departures from formal collaboration. The model has been used to study Natural Resources Management. By considering urban parks as natural resources (Thomas, 2010), the model is appropriate for my data.

## Observations

During each park observation session, I walked a lap around the park's perimeter and selected a series of vantage points (in view of a playground, athletic field, or front desk). Every 30 minutes I rotated to a new vantage point. I recorded "thick description" (Geertz, 2001) of scenes, each about five minutes long. I focused on the use of space as intended as well as "appropriating" space (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1995). I also noted the presence of social access barriers. Within 24 hours I typed up and stored my field

notes as Microsoft Word Documents on my password-protected computer. Later, my network urged me to observe a representative sample of parks throughout each city's park system. So, I expanded observations to include parks in neighborhoods across the cities and of different socio-economic statuses.

### Tours

When I expanded observations, this included park tours. I spent 10-30 minutes in a variety of parks. I observed how space was arranged and used. I had informal question-and-answer sessions with the tour guide (in Chicago, my key informant and in Minneapolis, a team of planners, designers, and architects from MPRB) as well as with park supervisors.

## Meetings

I was a participant observer at board of commissioners' and advisory council meetings. I learned about both types of meetings from list-servs or network connections. With respect to board meetings, in Chicago, I attended meetings when possible during research trips. In Minneapolis, I attended as many meetings as possible, especially when a public hearing discussed a policy or planning project I followed.

During meetings I introduced myself as a student studying parks. I took hand-written notes, using Emerson et al. (2011)'s CGR model to direct my focus. For example, 'Diversity Represented' and 'Discovery of Shared Interests' were fulfilled when I recorded how stakeholders described why they were at the meeting and how they defined problems. I recorded who deliberated, about what, items used for deliberation (like drawings), and if the meeting format could be modified. I recorded 'Determinations' made. For 'Procedural and Institutional Arrangements,' I also included concepts discussed by Koontz et al. (2004) and thus recorded: meeting location and accommodations, rules, questions asked of the public, and information shared by all stakeholders. While I did not often use the EJ literature to guide observations, the EJ literature did drive 'following-up.' Indeed, when topics like race, gentrification, and access came up during observations, I paid close attention and recorded scenes in greater detail. Within 24 hours after a meeting I typed up notes and added additional detail. Notes were saved as Microsoft Word documents on my password-protected computer.

### Minneapolis

With respect to advisory council meetings, in Minneapolis I followed advisory councils updating community garden and recreation and program policies. These policies impacted the entire park system. Further, I attended several service area master planning meetings (to explore differences across the city) but focused mainly on North Minneapolis. In North Minneapolis, planning had just begun at the time of my data collection, so I could attend: advisory council meetings, 'open houses' of the design process, traveling showcases of the in-progress designs, and working group meetings for individual park design.

**Chicago**

In Chicago, I attended two advisory council (PAC) meetings (though one was cancelled before the meeting could begin, due to low member attendance). Therefore, I attended fewer advisory council meetings than I did in Minneapolis. Further, the advisory council meetings I attended in Minneapolis focused on master planning or policy projects, but I could not attend equivalent master planning meetings in Chicago. Therefore, interviews, observations, and documents about Chicago's PAC and planning meetings served as a 'counterbalance' against which to position findings from Minneapolis.

## Interviews

### Participant Selection

During interviews, stakeholders explained their perspectives on public participation in each of the decision-making venues (Table 3.3). As seen in Table 3.3, I could not always collect equivalent data from cases or had few interviews from one case. Therefore, I compensated. For example, I interviewed only one park board commissioner. However, I supplemented this by attending board meetings and asking advisory council and Central Engagement Administrators about board meetings. Also, interviews with planners and PAC members compensated for lack of attendance at planning meetings in Chicago. Neighborhood councilors and non-profits offered a contrasting perspective to park system employees; however, in Chicago, I could not meet with these groups. To compensate, I read their publications. Finally, as mentioned, I attended fewer advisory council meetings in Chicago than in Minneapolis. I compensated by interviewing additional PAC members and asking questions about PACs during most interviews (e.g. with park supervisors).

Interviewees were people I researched, met spending time in parks (meetings, programs etc.), or referred to me by other interviewees. I initiated contact with perspective interviewees via email or in person, giving them my business card. If they emailed me back, or immediately provided me with their contact information, I would email them the IRB-approved study information sheet and a copy of the interview questions. We would schedule an interview and meet at a location of their convenience. With consent, I recorded as many interviews as possible using my cell phone. I transcribed all interviews using my PC's "HP Groove Music" standard, audio playback software.

Table 3.3 Stakeholders Interviewed

| **Stakeholder Interviewed** | **# Chicago** | **# Mpls.** | **Daily Use** | **Program** | **PAC/ CAC** | **Board Meeting** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Central Engagement Administrator: planner, area manager, etc. | 8 | 4 | X | X | X | X |
| Central Program Administrator | 4 | 2 | | X | | |
| Park Supervisor or Staff | 19 | 15 | X | X | X | |
| Park Program Leader | 3 | 1 | | X | | |
| CAC or PAC member | 7 | 3 | X | X | X | X |
| Neighborhood Councilor | 0 | 3 | | | | |
| Non-Profit | 0 | 2 | | | | |

Table 3.3 Number of interviews conducted, including dual Interview & Observation events, for each city. I also show which stakeholders were asked questions about each of the decision-making sites. I also conducted interviews with two melittologists and one public volunteer who, informed the research but did not fit into the categories above. In total, I conducted 41 interviews in Chicago and 30 interviews in Minneapolis.

**Questions**

On average, interviews lasted 30 minutes to one hour. I presented a study information sheet and sought informed consent (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 2000). My interview guide included concepts from the EJ literature. I asked specific questions about safety as a barrier to park use during supervisor interviews. Often, the EJ literature served mainly to drive following-up. In this way, when justice topics like race, gentrification, and access came up during interviews I asked additional questions. I also used interviews to understand the procedural justice called for in the EJ literature. I operationalized procedural justice by structuring my interview guide to cover each aspect of Emerson et al.'s (2011) collaborative

governance regime (CGR) model. Portions of my interview guide featured resource exchange concepts from Koontz et al.'s (2004) model of collaborative environmental management.

My focus was always tethered to concepts of the CGR model and EJ. I asked some questions to all stakeholders: their definition of a high-quality park, why they got involved with parks / a specific project, their role, and if involvement was worth it. Conversely, some questions were tailored to different stakeholders. Questions also evolved over time. For example, I clarified observations from meetings, programs, or in daily park use. I pursued interesting themes with follow-up questions, "Could you tell me about a time when…?" (Weiss, 1994). Questions for different stakeholders included:

- Park supervisors: "How are new programs established, what are your main safety concerns and how are those addressed, and do people ask for more 'nature' in parks?"
- Program instructors: "How are programs developed and how can they be modified in response to participants' needs?"
- CAC and PAC members: "What types of decisions are you able to make, do you think you've had the opportunity for your voice to be heard, do PAC / CAC members represent the diversity of the surrounding community, and during meetings, can you share your professional expertise?"
- Central Engagement or Program Administrators (e.g. planners, designers, managers, and department heads, like the 'nature' department): questions focus heavily on clarifying procedures and observations made at meetings, "I noticed you did X behavior, can you tell me more about that?" I also asked about the public's role and environmental justice sensibility, probing use of words like gentrification, racism, and equity in policies and during meetings.

**Programs**

During scoping in both cities, supervisors described how the public could influence creation of new park programs. To study this process, I was a participant observer in Zumba classes preferentially, or another fitness class. I chose Zumba because the scholarly literature emphasizes parks as spaces of

cardiovascular fitness while also noting a paucity of users identifying as women and girls in parks. Most Zumba participants are women (Loukaitou Sideris & Sideris, 2009) so, I could easily participate.

I observed music and accessories, actions of and rapport between participants and instructor, live instructor versus YouTube videos, and accommodations (like spoken language). As soon as possible after the class, I made jots that I later transformed later into full field notes. I always disclosed that I was a student and asked the instructor for an interview. I would share my business card or obtain the instructor's contact information and follow up with an email and study information sheet.

### Documents

Board meeting minutes and agendas were available electronically for both cities but lacked the level of detail I obtained during observations. Since I had attended multiple board meetings in each city, I did not supplement them by also analyzing meeting minutes or agendas. Documents established the park boards' expectations for advisory council members; I analyzed policy documents for community engagement (Minneapolis) and PACs (Chicago). As I attended few PAC meetings, I inquired about obtaining PAC meeting minutes. However, I was not given access. Minutes were not available online; perhaps because the CPD's PAC guidelines and code of conduct do not require or suggest making meeting minutes public. I used supplemental documents (e.g. park plans and guiding principles) from CAC meetings and final plan and policy documents to assess the responsiveness of park employees to the public, describe instances of 'flexibility,' and supplement observational data.

### Triangulation

To obtain balanced perspectives from both cities on public participation in general as well as pertaining to all decision-making venues, I practiced triangulation (Table 3.4). In both cities I collected data from all four decision-making venues. I collected several different data types: structured interviews, observations of park use and meetings (Table 3.5), and documents. As mentioned, when I had comparatively less data from one type, I collected other types of data to "compensate." Also, I used different data types to provide different "angles" of insight to the role of the public or a decision-making site. I interviewed stakeholders from multiple vantage points (e.g. supervisors and PAC members) to

understand their perspectives on the public's role or a decision-making venue. I varied the date, time, and geographic area as well as type (e.g. planning v policy meetings) of observations.

In this way, I used triangulation to verify the accuracy of a single source by comparing it to other types of data and other subjects (methodological triangulation; Jick, 1979; King et al., 1994; Roth & Mehta, 2002; Weiss, 1994; Yin, 2009). Further, I contextualized interviewee responses based on their occupational position (Roth & Mehta, 2002). Finally, I reduced misunderstandings resulting from favoring a single data type (e.g. observing a behavior that I do not understand but not questioning anyone regarding its meaning; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2000).

Table 3.4 Number of data collection events

| Type of Data | Number for Chicago | Number for Minneapolis |
|---|---|---|
| Observation of Park Event | 2 | 2 |
| Observation of Park | 21 | 65 |
| Focus Group | 0 | 2 |
| Interview | 26 | 27 |
| Interview & Observation | 15 | 6 |
| Meeting | 4 | 39 |
| Program | 5 | 11 |
| **TOTAL** | **73** | **152** |

Table 3.4 Number of data collection events, by type, for each city.

Table 3.5 Number of meetings attended, by type

| Type of Meeting | Number for Chicago | Number for Minneapolis |
|---|---|---|
| Board of Commissioners | 2 | 6 |
| PAC meeting and conference | 2 | N/A |
| CAC Service Area Master Plan | N/A | 10 |
| CAC Policy | N/A | 8 |
| Additional Service Area* | 0 | 9* |
| Additional Policy** | 0 | 2** |
| Neighborhood-organized | 0 | 4 |
| **TOTAL** | **4** | **39** |

Table 3.5 Number of meetings attended, by type, for each city. Service area master plan CAC meetings in Minneapolis total includes working group meetings (2). *Additional Service Area Master Plan meetings: community workshops and open houses (6); engagement on design following approval of a master plan (2). **Additional Park Board organized policy meetings: listening sessions (2).

## Content Analysis

I followed the methodological guidance of Weber (1990) to systematically analyze large amounts of textual data. I also followed Hsieh & Shannon (2005; 1278) who seek to understand textual data's "contextual meaning" and "the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns."

I followed Hsieh & Shannon's (2005) guidance for directed content analysis. Here, interview questions and observational focus are guided by a theory. Then, that same theory determines the categories for content analysis. For my data, I used the same conceptual frameworks (EJ and Emerson et al.'s (2011) CGR) for data collection and to establish the categories for my content analysis.

The researcher analyzes data by classifying text into categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Weber, 1990). In this way, the researcher participates in a data reduction. I reduced my collection of board meeting observations, all advisory council decision-making venue data (interview transcripts, field notes, and documents), and all data from programs to a fewer number of categories and then, to an even fewer number of themes. Content analysis also organizes data, so the researcher can visualize patterns and make comparisons; for example: changes over time, themes and the sources discussing them, and presence or absence of data for categories.

After establishing categories, Weber (1990) describes a "cycle" of inserting a sample of data into categories, assessing reliability, and revising the "rules" for assigning data to categories. The cycle continues until sufficient reliability, ability to consistently assign data to appropriate categories, is achieved. Then, remaining data are coded. In the rest of this section, I describe establishing categories and the "cycle" of inserting sample data, revising categories, and documenting rules for my data.

### Establishing the Categories for Procedural Justice

**Categories for CG.** My research on environmental justice in parks focused on procedural justice. I studied procedural justice by collecting data on public collaboration with government officials in four decision-making sites. Emerson et al.'s (2011) CGR model guided my data collection as well as construction of categories for analysis. I translated the model to content analysis by making each of the

model's collaborative dynamics and subcomponents into a category. I had 25 procedural justice categories in my first iteration.

**Categories for EJ.** I also used content analysis to explore how stakeholders were discussing and enacting EJ. I built my own set of categories for analysis. I synthesized how EJ was understood by influential scholars: Bullard (1990), Young (990), Fraser (1995), and Pellow (2002), chosen because they were covered in UCI coursework and suggested by colleagues. These authors defined an environmental injustice as the predictable and disproportionate distribution of environmental harms, that caused health disparities, to communities of color. Distributional conceptions of justice were discussed most frequently but sources also called for procedural justice and some, for recognition justice.

Additionally, I reviewed 45 articles about parks from the perspectives of (according to publishing journal): Park and Recreation Administration, Leisure Studies, Geography, Landscape and Urban Planning, Public Health, and Medicine (especially the American Journal of Preventative Medicine). The articles and Table 3.6 underscored the suitability of EJ to examine parks. Indeed, many of the park studies linked unequal health impacts to unequal park access to a neighborhood's racial composition. Some articles also focused on justice in terms of park quality, including funding and programs.

Table 3.6 EJ Content Analysis Categories

| **Author** | **EJ Content Analysis Categories** | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***Distib &Acces*** | ***Proced*** | ***Recog*** | **Race** | **Health** | **Equity** | **History** | **Park Funds** | **Park Use Barriers** | **Park Program** | **Park Quality** |
| Bullard | X | X | | X | X | | | | | | |
| Fraser | | | X | | | | | | | | |
| Pellow | X | | | X | X | | X | | | | |
| Young | X | X | | | | | | | | | |
| Articles | 45 | 11 | 21 | 31 | 30 | 20 | 15 | 11 | 29 | 10 | 13 |

Table 3.6 Categories for my first iteration of a content analysis to study EJ are listed horizontally with the authors or articles discussing these categories listed vertically. The italicized terms are also types of justice: Distributional (also considered "Access"), Procedural, and Recognition. The numbers listed in the "Articles" row represent X/45 articles that mentioned a category. The count for "Use Barriers" represents when an article mentioned at least one barrier. Categories including "Park' in their title are unique to the park literature.

**Testing Sample Data**

To test my categories and associated coding rules, I selected a stratified sample of 34 pieces of data that encompassed three of the decision-making venues and multiple perspectives: field notes from trips to Chicago, interviews with park supervisors, board of commissioners' meetings, and CAC meetings for both planning and policy projects (Weber, 1990). In the first iteration of my content analysis, I did not require categories to be mutually exclusive (the choice of the researcher; Weber, 1990). I copy-and-pasted sentences or phrases from the sample of data into categories. I made choices about which categories to insert sample data based on my familiarity with Emerson et al.'s (2011) model and the EJ literature.

When all 34 pieces of data were inserted I created a coding rules document. Moving from one category to the next, I read all data pieces I had inserted into each category. I looked for repeated words or themes (using inductive coding; Locke, Feldman, & Golden-Biddle, 2015). As Weber (1990; 23) described, "Testing not only reveals ambiguities in the rules, but also often leads to insights suggesting revisions of the classification scheme." In my own work, I revised my classification scheme as well as the categories by: noting where to find data to fill categories, specifying, sub-categorizing, and adding or subtracting categories.

**Where to find.** As Emerson et al.'s (2011) model had guided interview questions and observational focus, there was often a near-perfect fit for my data into a category. In these instances, the coding rules directed where to look for examples of a category. For example, data for the category "discovery" were found in my field notes where I had described stakeholder introductions.

**Specifying.** Coding rules specified, "This is what category X means for my data." For example, in the category, "Addressing dynamics that keep people from attending meetings," the words serving food, providing childcare, and being sensitive about language used (e.g. English v Spanish or Somali, or using appropriate gender pronouns) occurred frequently. Thus, the coding rule stated that for all subsequent data, I only inserted information related to food, childcare, and language. The new rule was checked for resonance with Emerson et al.'s (2011) original model as well as information on meeting participation barriers related to meeting format (APACA, 2016).

**Sub-categorizing.** I followed Hsieh & Shannon's (2005; 1282), "Depending on the type and breadth of a category, researchers might need to identify subcategories with subsequent analysis." For example, Emerson et al.'s (2011) model included "deliberations" that I originally operationalized as the categories: verbal presentations of opinions, discussion, and reaching consensus. However, my data showed the need to make a subcategory to include deliberations about plan drawings.

**Adding and subtracting.** Though I originally did not require categories to be mutually exclusive, sometimes I noticed a pattern where the same phrases or themes fit into the same two categories. In these instances, I created rules declaring that data should go in one category and not another. When I noticed repeated mention of concepts not specified by EJ or CG models, I added categories.

### Revising the Analysis Categories

I created coding rules for every category; in doing so I refined my content analysis categories. Importantly, as my stratified sample of 34 pieces of data had not focused on PACs, I focused the second iteration of the content analysis on PAC data. While adding in new pieces of PAC data, I moved back and forth between the rules created from CAC data and their fit to PAC data. Further, I found it productive to sequentially analyze interviews of PAC members and then, their park's supervisor. Then, I revised the coding rules to better fit CAC and PAC data. Working PAC data into the second iteration yielded three themes (in parentheses) which, mapped onto three types of justice: distribution (flexibility), procedural (the public's knowledge), and recognition (responsivity). The model was best suited to study the advisory council decision-making venue, as more of my data fit into model categories. Data from program and board meeting venues fit into some categories so I also examined data for instances of my three themes.

## Analyzing Daily Use Data

I focused on use of inductive coding (Locke et al., 2015) to analyze daily use data. I read observations and made a list of how patrons used park infrastructure or spaces as intended (e.g. playing baseball on a baseball diamond) and when they "appropriated space" (e.g. playing soccer on a baseball diamond). Then, for appropriations of space, I created sub-categories as I read through the data. I ended with categories that explained how park space was appropriated: change / partition the use of existing

space; use of open space; no use of an element; walking through a park but not on a path; police and safety; social or care by staff; and behaving like one is 'at home.' After distributing the data into categories, I narrowed in, looking for patterns in only two categories: change / partition the use of existing space and behaving like one is 'at home.' I selected these categories because they spoke to the idea of appropriating space and how that occurred.

## Use of the Social Ecological Systems (SES) perspective

From the first draft of my result sections, a pattern emerged suggesting that I could gain additional insight by examining data as a series of inputs, feedback, and outputs to a larger system of park decision-making. I became familiar with the SES perspective through readings (e.g. Stokols, 2018; Stokols et al., 2013) and meeting with Stokols (personal communication, June 2019). Then, I categorized data from existing chapters into material or human as well as semiotic inputs. I detailed the transactions of these inputs among stakeholders in all four decision-making venues.

### Four Scenarios

Further, I selected four scenarios to understand how different contexts might impact the decision-making, one example in each city where the process easier and one where it was more complex. I studied two CACs, one focused on the construction of community gardens and the other, a sports dome. I followed the transaction of all three types of inputs and used open-coding to analyze all data pertaining to the inputs offered by the public and the responses by park-affiliated stakeholders (e.g. planners or park supervisors). In doing so, I also examined how the public did or did not turn the focus of discussions towards their priorities as well as how their inputs impacted final outcomes.

Following the SES perspective, I expanded the temporal scope of data collection to follow the evolution of the discussion of EJ topics. For each scenario, I reviewed data from board and advisory council meetings in chronological order (when possible). I also expanded the socio-cultural scope of analyses to include "neighbors" and other members of the public who spoke at CAC meetings and public hearings; doing so showed how EJ topics were interpreted by a variety of stakeholders. Expanding scope to the virtual dimension was mentioned by some stakeholders. Further delimiting the scope of my work, I

did not expand the spatial dimension beyond neighborhood parks. Of note, some stakeholders expressed concerns that parks were duplicating resources provided elsewhere (e.g. the YMCA or library) and this duplication may also guide subsequent data collection.

## Ethical Considerations

My research was governed by the University of California, Irvine's Institutional Review Board (IRB). My study was approved in April 2017 (HS# 2017-3423 *Environmental Justice: The Case of Neighborhood Parks*) including my methods, informed consent and confidentiality practices, and any potential risks to participants. In my approved application, I highlighted the importance of maintaining anonymity of interviewees and observation sites (apart from cities) and maintaining the confidentiality of interviewee responses.

During interviews, I disclosed that we could stop the interview at any time and that interviewees could abstain from answering any questions. I was respectful of interviewees when approaching sensitive topics and abandoned a line of inquiry (this happened rarely) if an interviewee seemed uncomfortable. I did not interview minors. For observations, I met with park supervisors to introduce myself as a student researcher and obtain consent to observe their parks. I attended public board meetings as a member of the public, not introducing myself. I introduced myself at advisory council meetings and asked permission to take notes. When speaking candidly with anyone, I always asked their permission to use any information provided as background information to my research. I kept data on my password-protected computer.

I collected data in a total of 44 different parks in Minneapolis and Chicago. When discussing those parks here, all parks have been given a pseudonym. Parks in Minneapolis begin with "M" followed by a letter (A-N) while parks in Chicago begin with a "C" followed by a number (1-8). All interviewees have been given pseudonyms; this is their position in the park system (e.g. planner) followed by a number. All genders have been intentionally removed and replaced with they /them / their. I have intentionally chosen the term "the public" to talk about non-professional (e.g. park staff or bureaucrats) people involved in decision-making.

I shared research findings with key informants in both cities and invited their comments on my work. I have revised certain aspects of this dissertation in accordance with feedback. I note here that The Chicago Park District (CPD) uses the term "underserved" to mean usage of a park. I use the term in a different way. I do so to explain areas of the cities that have been neglected by investment in infrastructure like roads and schools. Therefore, I may have misinterpreted CPD employees at times during my data collection as we were operating under different understandings of the term "underserved." When my key informant in Chicago pointed out this difference; however, they did not say that the research credibility had been jeopardized.

## Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability

I use discussions of both positivist and interpretive validity, reliability and generalizability to justify my data collection and analysis methods. Theoretically, it is possible to draw a line neatly between the two epistemologies but in practice, I found it difficult. As I collected data and directed content analysis using existing conceptual frameworks, my work aligned with a positivist ontology. However, because I sought multiple perspectives on issues and refined methods to better fit data, I also aligned with an interpretive ontology. Therefore, I include both paradigms in assessment and justification of my work.

### Validity

**Positivist paradigm.** I achieved construct (correctly operationalizing concepts; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 2000; Yin 2009) and content (covering all aspects of a concept; Adcock & Collier 2001; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 2000) validity by collecting data following a pre-determined model (Emerson et al., 2011) as well as a model constructed from theoretical and empirical research (my EJ model). The pre-determined model was supplemented with model concepts from Koontz et al. (2004). Emerson et al.'s (2011) model reinforced the construct validity while park supervisors' discussion of partnerships reinforced environmental validity. Then, when I saw aspects of my data required further explanation, I turned to the SES perspective to ensure all aspects of my data were explained theoretically. By using conceptual frameworks to guide data collection and analyses, standardized procedures were replicated for all data (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 2000; King et al. 1994; Weiss 1994; Yin 2009).

**Interpretive paradigm.** Though interview questions evolved over time, I remained faithful to questions that centered on the CGR model and EJ as well as clarification of events I had observed in meetings, programs, or in daily park use. I also used concepts generated from local context (Becker, 1996; Emerson et al., 1995; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Finally, I assess the validity of my findings by seeking feedback from key informants (Acker, Barry, & Esseveld, 1991; Lin, 1998). I also aimed for trustworthiness- proving I was "there" using "thick description" in my field notes (Becker, 1996; Geertz, 2001; Goffman, 2001; Goodwin & Horowitz, 2002; Lin, 1998; Roth & Mehta, 2002) and therefore, could understand why subjects behaved as they did (Becker, 1996; Lin, 1998).

**Reliability**

**Positivist paradigm.** I used EJ and CG models to create categories for my content analyses. Weber (1990) states that reliability is often achieved by using multiple coders or measuring if the same person inserts the same data into the same category repeatedly. I did not use these methods, or computer program-aided coding, to increase reliability. However, I wrote coding rules (Weber, 1990) to increase the replicability of my content analysis; reviewers and subsequent researchers could assess results and attempt replication (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 2000; King et al. 1994; Weiss 1994; Yin 2009).

**Interpretive paradigm.** By creating new categories for data that did not fit into existing categories, I saw interesting phenomena not captured by the original content analysis categories (based exclusively on my conceptual framework). This increased the "trustworthiness" of my work (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Further, I gained interpretive reliability by adjusting content analysis categories to better fit my data as well as by adjusting my data collection guides for each stakeholder group, recognizing that each had a different perspective on decision-making.

**Generalizability**

Without random sampling, I could not prove causation (Lin, 1998) nor make inferences (King et al., 1994). However, I could seek Schwartz-Shea's (2014) interpretive *transferability*, inviting reviewers and researchers to gauge the plausibility of applying findings from one case to other cases or back to theory, to ask *better* questions about how a relationship works in other contexts.

## Limitations

I spent far less time in Chicago than in Minneapolis and therefore, have fewer observations of board meetings and especially, advisory council meetings. As mentioned, I relied on interviews to supplement what could be a devastating lack of data. Further, I was unable to attend Chicago's master planning meetings. Therefore, I could not directly compare the master-planning processes of Minneapolis and Chicago. I did, however, use documents and a planner interview from Chicago as a "counterbalance" to gauge the novelty of Minneapolis' planning process. However, a lack of time was not my only barrier to data collection. Indeed, in Minneapolis I was denied access to PAC-type meetings that occur at some parks. Therefore, I was unable to directly compare Chicago's PACs to the Minneapolis equivalent.

While I observed parks in white and wealthy neighborhoods, I did not follow the park master planning processes there. I focused on park planning in underserved neighborhoods. Thus, I lack park planning data from white and wealthy neighborhoods and I cannot prove if justice happened differently there versus underserved neighborhoods. However, I did follow policy CACs where members addressed issues for the entire park system. These processes were similar to park planning in underserved areas. In this way, the process of achieving procedural justice may *not* be unique to neighborhoods where there are predicted to be environmental injustices. I can then suggest that collaborative decision-making could lead to addressing environmental justice in any neighborhood.

# Chapter 4. Environmental Justice as Access in Minneapolis and Chicago Parks

"I think of a park as an area to be used and to be congregated at by the neighborhood or whoever may be coming through. So, if that's a pick-up game on the field or if that's a meeting about bike lanes, that's what we're here for -MK Park Supervisor, Minneapolis."

## Access to Parks

Lack of access is presented as *the* paramount issue of environmental injustice in urban, neighborhood parks. The literature often measures access as an issue of distribution, like original cases of environmental justice (e.g. Bullard, 1990), using unequal distributions to prove that inequality exists. In the case of parks, empirical studies collect quantitative data that measure a group's proximity to parks (as number of park or parks acres) within a defined area or travel barriers (as safety and access to routes) encountered *en route* to a park.

For example, Wen et al. (2013) describe environmental justice as a lack of high-acreage parks for poor communities and communities of color. Similarly, when ranking city park systems, the Trust for Public Land (TPL) focuses on quantitative measures (see method). In doing so, such studies bolster the existing literature that conceptualizes environmental injustice in parks as a problem of distribution.

A smaller body of "social access barriers" literature uses qualitative data to understand perceptions of access (see literature review). Authors have explored how barriers of time, travel, safety, companionship, and discrimination can limit park access even though physical parks are present. In this way, the distribution of parks becomes only one way to understand access.

As the study of environmental justice in parks is relatively new, compared to the use of EJ to describe the unequal distribution of environmental hazards (like toxic dumps), a need emerges to explore injustice in parks and especially, how access is experienced. Rigolon & Flohr (2014), perhaps following the social access barriers literature, encourage examination of access using qualitative means. Such studies would apply qualitative measures to a problem that has been examined to a much greater degree as one of distribution, studied using quantitative means. Therefore, I asked the research question, "How do stakeholders define access?" My work fills a gap in the parks literature by adding further

understanding park access as an issue of environmental justice. I do so by collecting qualitative data to add understanding to the way access is experienced, beyond the distribution of parks.

## Access to Parks According to Stakeholders in Minneapolis and Chicago

### Getting More People to Use Parks

Park staff show that access, as people using parks, is an important concern when they describe use of advertising as a way of getting more people to use parks. Like a business trying to attract more people to a retail location with targeted ads or fliers, park staff advertise their parks. In Chicago, Aldermen put park schedules on their websites. An instructor might also advertise to attract people to a park. For example, to attract people to a new program, a Zumba instructor from Chicago might, "You know, um advertising, right? Put- making fliers, going and speaking to people."

Advertising is necessary because many park supervisors believe people are not aware of what parks offer. Park supervisors in both cities invited the public to Open Houses (MB and C1 Parks). The C5 Park supervisor rationalized that parks used to be the hub of the community. They offered a diversity of activities and everyone was in the park. The supervisor continued, explaining how it wasn't just the activities but, "How warm the park district, pretty much, encouraged people to come in. It is still the same way but now the people in the community have to be aware. Because I think, the people, the community, have lost touch. One for a fact of working a little bit more longer hours than before, ah school is longer than before- you're getting more homework." Perhaps because people are busier and spending less time in the parks, they are less aware of what parks offer. The C5 Park supervisor described, "So what the park district now has to do a little bit extra more work, where in the past they didn't have to do that, they have to do that extra work- 'Hey, we're still here for you, just come on by, even if it's an hour.'"

The MC Park supervisor in Minneapolis supported the belief that people are not aware and adding depth, explained how lack of awareness intersects with feelings of not belonging, "Inside our building we do programming too, like a lot of immigrant families, they'll just utilize our green space but not use our inside so much, you know, so there's gotta be, there's more work that's needed for immigrant families, such as, uh reaching out, engaging our community, making sure that, uh they know that they

have just as much access as anyone else in this neighborhood, or anybody else in this city, right. It's a challenge, it is, but at the same time, uh you want to be able to again, our demographics are changing so much, not just here but throughout Minneapolis."

My data show that access is deeply important to park staff. Getting more people, often through advertising, is discussed in all parks by staff, instructors, and advisory council members. Further, supervisors often talk about wanting to get many participants in the park for programs and activities. They try to 'get the numbers' to make their bosses happy. In this way, the goal of access runs throughout the park bureaucracy. Supervisors want to please their superiors by attracting participants. Finally, the deep importance of access is shown when supervisors wanted to expand their role, functioning as advocates, to help groups feel like the park was a place for them. Interestingly, the supervisors often framed this lack of access as a lack of understanding what parks had to offer. Instead, I wonder if patrons are aware of what the park offers but know, what the park offers does not align with their unique interests. Further, patrons may not be aware but their lack of awareness may stem from a lack of inclusion in the decision-making processes that determine what is offered in parks in the first place.

**Access Measured as Use**

Before improving access, a baseline must be established. Park administrators closer to the center of the bureaucracy often thought about access numerically, like participant counts. However, supervisors and staff at individual parks were more specific. They wanted people to visit their park but more, they wanted people to use their park. The MH park supervisor lamented a lack of use and suggested increased use was desired, "We have a Zumba class that's very well attended, but I wasn't feeling like people were actually coming into the building and utilizing it any other time than during Zumba." PAC (Park Advisory Council) member #1 described wanting more use of the park and discussed the ways they wanted people to use the park, "I'd really like the people in the community to think, 'This is my park, I can come here, I can hold meetings here, I can have fun here, I can just come and you know, in the summer there'll be a farmer's market." Finally, a planner in Chicago described how a high-quality park would be accessible; as such, defined access as use of the park, "I mean for me, I guess, and how we

operate it would definitely be a park that you know, is accessible and is accessible to a lot of different users and has a variety of amenities to offer and a lot of programming to offer."

Use, as a goal, can have profound importance. As emphasized by a PAC member, "[Businesses complain], 'There are too many kids on the street, there is too much going on, there is too much crime, there is too much violence.' These children, these young people, these families, they need a place to go. They need some place safe to be. In order for me to do that, I have to create an environment that's welcoming for them to be in." Further, a C5 Park PAC member stated, "One of the issues in our community, is that the Latino community is kind of like forced inside their houses with the community violence and situations like that. And we thought that by having a renovated park we could address some of those issues- trying to make the park a safer space, and like the families within our community to enjoy, like a nice weekend with their kids or come see their students or their children play sports in the park." Both PAC members said that members of their community wanted a park that they could use because it is "welcoming" and that has been "renovated," rather than wanting just any park.

Thus, when measuring access, it is important to measure parks people want to use, rather than just any park. The C5 Park Supervisor captured this idea when explaining trying to start a senior program, "And it's not because I want to have this place open all day, but I want this place to be more utilized." Further, I ask the MD Park supervisor about a high-quality park and the supervisor answered, 'You could have the nicest park but if no one uses it, it doesn't matter. [In contrast,] You could have a "rag tag four-year-old building like this one" and people use it. The importance is not park presence but park use.

**Barriers to Park Use**

Use and use barriers are experienced in many ways. Through stakeholder interviews and park observations, including participation in adult fitness classes, I found that stakeholders' experiences with park use and barriers fit into the categories: time and childcare, welcoming and languages, funding, and gentrification. Three additional categories (safety and supervision, ownership, and distribution) emerged. However, I do not address safety any further in this dissertation; it is the subject of many empirical articles on parks (see Westover, 1985; Scott & Munson, 1994; Gobster, 1998; Loukaitou-Sideris &

Steiglitz, 2002; Cutts et al., 2009; as well as Eyler et al., 1998 and Krenichyn, 2006 both examining unique threats to women) and could encompass a separate dissertation. Concepts of distribution will be discussed throughout the dissertation while ownership is suggested as a topic for future research.

**Time and childcare.** Program instructors and supervisors cited lack of time as a barrier to park use. In studying adult fitness programs, I was drawn to a lack of time for women caregivers specifically. Caregivers need assurance of supervisor for their children so that they, the care-givers, have time to use a park. For example, during Zumba classes in both cities, children were present. Children were occupied with toys, iPhones, or free lunches, or participated alongside caregivers. In a Zumba class in Chicago, a woman held a baby in her arms while she exercised. Observations were complemented by an interview with a Chicago program instructor, "Yes, I believe you saw Kathy [name changed] bring her, I think they are, twins, to class. I don't have a problem with them bringing kids, they used to have a babysitting service during my class where she would drop them off but they stopped that. But I mean, I let them come, it's as long as they're not disruptive, I don't mind at all." These data demonstrate how caregivers were assured time to participate because a barrier to using parks, childcare, was addressed.

Childcare was also perceived as a barrier to park administrators in Minneapolis. During several of the meetings I observed, childcare stations were set up with coloring sheets and crayons. Children were also permitted to sit with parents during meetings; councilors felt comfortable to leave during discussions to take a fussy child into a hallway. Thus, the barrier of time and childcare specifically, can be addressed by supervisors as well as park administrators in multiple decision-making venues.

**Welcoming and language.** The Supervisor at MH Park used the word “welcoming” to describe a high-quality park; and in doing so, placed importance on people feeling like they could use a park. Indeed, this supervisor described a high-quality park as safe but also said, “If the desk staff is not welcoming, makes people feel invited, like they’re a guest every day, and they’re special to us, I don’t think they’re going to come back either.” I felt welcomed when instructors invited me to participate in fitness programs. Welcoming efforts were not limited to me, an out-going white woman. Supervisors and staff across cases called park patrons by name, conversed, and recalled patrons’ personal details.

Positive interactions in parks like the ones mentioned above can include more park patrons when communication occurs in multiple languages. My observations show inclusivity with respect to spoken language. In urban garden CAC meetings, participants discussed how to determine which additional languages to include on signage. In both cities I saw signs for park rules and with construction updates in multiple languages. In programs, participants demonstrated the importance of language inclusivity by speaking additional languages. As a participant observer in a Zumba class in Minneapolis, a woman asked if I spoke Spanish. She told me that the entire class would be conducted in Spanish. Further, a program instructor in Chicago described switching between languages to facilitate understanding for all participants. Of note, in visiting other types of stakeholder meetings across cities, language inclusivity was demonstrated by sharing preferred gender pronouns. This might be an area for park systems to expand their use of welcoming language.

Park spaces could also be made to feel welcoming, perhaps "like home," by serving food. In both cities, food was served at advisory council meetings. In Chicago, the C5 Park supervisor reported that PAC members brought food to meetings. Conversely, in Minneapolis, the planning team provided food and further, during service area (versus planning) meetings, sourced the food from locally-owned restaurants. In both cities, food acknowledged the occurrence of meetings during the dinner hour, provided an incentive for participation, and allowed individuals to take a meal together. The Minneapolis case is interesting in that only recently did planners gain ability to serve food. Previously, budget dollars could not be spent on food. The existing planning staff felt food was important to show they valued public participants and so, planners lobbied to have the system rules changed.

**Undependable individual funding.** Undependable funding creates uncertainty regarding the ability to use parks. Undependable funding means one may not have enough money to pay for programs, childcare, or park events. Further, if one is unfamiliar with parks (see earlier suggestions about lack of awareness), they may assume park fees are expensive or inflexible and thus, avoid using parks.

Parks departments and PACs demonstrated an understanding of individual barriers. As such, many programs are free or free for a trial period and then, fees remain low. Further, fee structures are

deliberately nuanced. Fees are modified by age and area of the city. A kick-boxing instructor from Chicago explained, "Typically senior classes are free. Kid's classes, depending on where, are sometimes free. Um a lot more um lower-income communities have more free programs but in my area that's not really an issue so they typically charge for the kids' programs. Um and then the standard adult classes, seniors get half off." Equity is enforced such that those who can pay, pay, and those who cannot, pay less.

***Redistribution.*** Here, an important insight is gleaned. In both cities, funding from wealthier patrons is dependable. They can afford to pay to use their parks. In contrast, people in underserved neighborhoods and groups may not. Supervisors in Minneapolis mentioned that dependable funding is re-distributed, "The nice part about being in our large system is if I lose money on this, there are other sites with other programs that are a lot busier that are generating revenue through the roof. So, just because I may take a hit on this one, and even if my budget goes down a little bit or I go over budget, somebody else is generally able to make that up too (MK Park)." The park supervisor's comment is supported by a MPRB administrator, 'So, what one park earns it does not keep but puts back into the system. This is how we fund things.' Thus, uncertainty in funding is countered by collecting money from profitable parks or programs and sharing it with parks that have less dependable income.

Redistribution to individuals also occurs when parks departments (seen in both cities) offer scholarships. During the November 2018 board meeting in Chicago, I observed a debate about paying for day camp using an online platform. Day campers with financial need received a 50% discount. The MC Park supervisor in Minneapolis described a similar system, "So basically, if they don't have any money, we'll find a way for them to play, right. Uh so if it was uh, let's say fifty dollars for football. If our fee assistance, we can help with half of that, or uh or uh a full fee assistance as well. But again, there is a system in place where they have to fill out paper work and see if they qualify."

PACs also offer scholarships for underserved communities using proceeds from their fundraisers. A PAC member explained, "I have to have funds to create park programs for these people to be a part of. I have to buy equipment, I have to, they're underserved, they may not be able to pay for these programming." Another PAC member explained their goal of raising funds to help youth, "So that they

could take a class or a program offered in a park and, you know, so many low-income people in that contiguous neighborhood that it's hard for them to afford it. So, and I think that's important too." In this way, parks departments and PACs recognize the barrier of undependable funds at the level of the individual and address this barrier by redistribute funds to offer scholarships.

**Undependable park funding.** Funding from parks departments that makes parks usable (e.g. for new playground equipment) can also be undependable. Concerns about funding may be rooted in historically unequal funding (see introduction). Further, dependability of funds may also be of concern due to a lack of transparency in the fund distribution processes. When comparing park department and city funding PAC members demonstrated the belief that transparency was lacking for parks. PAC members called the Aldermen's participatory budgeting "democracy in action" because constituents "vote on ideas." In contrast, they called the park board's budget distribution "mysterious." Another PAC member mused, "Cause it seems that park district, well, how do they allocate money? That's the question." Steps had to be taken to understand this mysterious process; a PAC member said they had to do "research" to determine how funds were distributed. I remained confused on the process after a PAC administrator's explanation. I was told that parks don't get equal funding but instead, "It depends upon what program is going on, um how large the park is, how much staff there is, you know some parks have one person, maybe a part-time rec leader. Some parks have a lot more than that. It's all depends upon the size [also, interviewee notes, type of building e.g. pool]." I could not immediately detect a clear pattern for distribution. Mystery and complexity may be the reality for people further from the bureaucracy's center.

***Addressing transparency and historic funding imbalances.*** Now, MPRB now redistributes funds to individual parks systematically based on criteria that explicitly consider park characteristics (condition of assets like playground equipment) and previous funding as well as data on community characteristics (density, youth, crime, and percent poverty and people of color). Thus, funds are redistributed based on equity criteria. In Chicago, interviewees suggested that park funds are redistributed, rather than being retained by individual parks. For example, a park administrator noted, that day campers paid $1,100.00 at

a park and the administrator found, 'It odd that the park can bring in so much money from camp but then not be awarded upgrades.'

***Contested redistribution.*** However, as suggested by the last quote, contention surrounds certain acts of redistribution. Often, parks do not want to redistribute "their money" to wealthier parks. The act of redistribution is thus, expected to be a tool for equity, funding to underserved parks, rather than for equality. Support for redistribution as equity is captured in two quotes from Minneapolis. During a recreation and program policy CAC meeting, a member recalled everyone wanting free youth programming. A park administrator explained, 'But remember we talked about this? We said it would be for all Rec Centers- even [a park in a wealthy neighborhood]- and you felt uncomfortable with that. You thought if a rec center could charge and people could afford to pay that price, they should pay it.' During a service area CAC meeting, a member of the public asked, 'How come we give up our space at [a North Minneapolis park] and when we make money on those things [a new amenity] it doesn't go back to us? It goes to MPRB!' To this, a planner responded, 'That money is distributed to all, including [the park in question], through the General Fund. And we can build a fee structure into our master plan.' In both, planners and administrators may have supported redistribution but honor the public's opinion that it should be a tool for equity.

In Chicago, I did not find evidence of a redistribution mechanism at the park department. However, I observed that PACs smooth the uncertainty of park funding. They work with stable, outside partners, like Aldermen, as well as fundraise with community partners and at events.

**Deserving the Best, Gentrification, and Displacement**

Historically, funding for neighborhood parks has been unequal. Disparities among different areas of the city are emphasized by the way parks look (see literature review). In Minneapolis during a service area meeting, a member of the public observed, 'If they can have fish and chips at Lake Harriet, why not in our neck of the town? We need restaurants and ice cream and art for people.' Lake Harriet is in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Minneapolis. In Chicago, PACs saw how parks in some areas were lacking, compared to wealthier areas. For example, PAC #1, "So, and my thought was, it's [a park] on the

South side or the West side so the city doesn't pay much attention to it. You know, that's the way they are, and I wanted to make sure that the people are properly served in the neighborhood there, in [neighborhood name] on the West Side."

Thus, many stakeholders and this PAC member believed, "People have a right to have um you know the best possible facility in their community." More specifically, underserved communities and historically underfunded parks deserved to get what they need and to reimagine parks. As CAC member #2 stated, "For a place like North Minneapolis, that is ground zero to a lot of our issues in the state of Minnesota, not just Minneapolis but the state of Minnesota, to ensure that we, get what we need in order to be successful, is critical. And in partnership with everybody. Cause the other thing is that because we have not had the opportunity um in quite some time to really reimagine how are parks could look and really think about how that investment could really create economic opportunity."

CAC member #2's quote imagined parks as economic opportunity engines rather than tools for displacement or gentrifiers. However, building large, attractive facilities that would rival Lake Harriet, may serve to bring all areas of the city to the same level but simultaneously, instill fear in community members. For example, in a service area meeting, a member of the public was afraid that people from outside the neighborhood would take priority time slots on newly renovated fields. To this, another member of the public replied, 'Who do you think "they" are that's going to come and take our fields?' The original speaker replied, 'This has happened before!' and explained how suburban leagues can't get enough space to play so, they come into the city to use fields (also see chapter 8).

Fear of gentrification and displacement from renovated parks are not unfounded (as explained in literature review). Thus, it is understandable that when gentrification and displacement are possible, the public wants to 'be out in front of development' (stated by a youth programming staff member in Chicago), to preserve their ability to use parks. The public may also pursue anti-gentrification agendas when serving on advisory councils (see chapters 7 and 8). Operating within their jurisdiction, supervisors may combat generic park form by changing how parks look on the inside. Inside park buildings, especially bulletin boards can reflect the surrounding community (see chapter 6). Programs are also

within the jurisdiction of the supervisor and can modify a park's generic, physical form. Finally, operating within their jurisdiction, park administrators can combat generic park form by changing park policies. In doing so, parks become a reflection of community priorities, rather than just another Starbucks.

**Recognition**

In considering how parks can "reflect" a community, I drew on Fraser's (1995) description of recognition as the affirmation of individual differences in public policy initiatives (see literature review). I extended the theory to parks, contending that a lack of recognition occurs when park designs do not reflect users, especially changing demographics. Further, a lack of recognition occurs when parks do not operate in ways that resonate with their users, like when people cannot find park activities that match their interests or, in an intersection with procedural justice (see literature review), when the public does not have venues in which to legitimately participate in decision-making.

The following quote from a C5 Park PAC member, unites and highlights the major points I have attempted to make thus far: access as an important concern, measuring access as use, and recognition justice as a way to address use barriers, "I think the reason why we started a [advisory] council was because the park was not being used, it couldn't be used . . . we knew we needed this park to be renovated, especially if the high school teams were going to, we needed a place to hold high school teams as well. . . And we thought that by having a renovated park we could address some of those issues- trying to make the park a safer space, and like the families within our community to enjoy." Since their renovation, the PAC member reported, "We have seen an increase in park usage since the renovation was done um now any time of day that you go or pass through the park you can see people playing soccer, running on the park, or just doing different activities."

To create parks that people want to use parks departments in both cities opened decision-making processes to include those who know parks best: members of the public. This is a marked change from the drawing up of plans and waiting for public comment on largely-complete ideas about what parks should look like. Thus, by opening decision-making to the public, park administrators increase two types of access to park systems: use of individual parks and participation in decision-making venues.

**Access to Decision-Making About Parks**

When members of the public attend public hearings, speak at public comment, and give feedback to park supervisors, they show a desire to have access to decision-making about their parks. Further, the public seeks new types of participation in decision-making. To this extent, both cities' parks departments use novel methods of public participation in deciding how parks look and operate.

**A need to change the participatory process.** The need for novel methods is due, perhaps, to the fact that parks were not historically inclusive during decision-making (see literature review). In my data, a Minneapolis planner #2 discussed that previously, despite some contrary examples of lively discussions, decisions largely excluded the public, "Back in the 20s and the teens and early 30 when Wirth was superintendent, like people didn't really engage with the public at all. So that HAS been a bit of our legacy going through. Um but we've stepped it up like six notches um for a couple of reasons."

The shift towards inclusion was explained by that same planner, "Number one, um, you know the community has stood up and demanded that of us. And I tend to feel that you know, we are a public agency and we SERVE the people that are out there using the parks. And so, if they're asking for a new type of playground, we need to think about how to deliver that. If they're ASKING for a new type of project *process* and a new type of engagement, then we should think about trying to deliver that in the same way that we might deliver that new playground." To this extent, in Minneapolis, the public participation process, as well as park master plans and policies, are being redesigned.

Part of the reason parks departments are seeking public input is the realization that, as Minneapolis planners repeated in several meetings, park user demographics changed considerably since parks were last designed. Rather than assume they can understand diverse users and their preferences, planners in both cities were talking to park users early in the design process. In Chicago, a planner explained, "The PACs in [lists a few parks], they're all really active. And just the communities surrounding the parks are really active too, there's just a million community groups in this area. So, um we decided we'd just kind of do a full, comprehensive look at the park at that point." Similarly, a Minneapolis planner, "The community wants a greater diversity of recreational options than ever before."

**Public input matters.** As stated by Minneapolis planner #2, "I think sometimes agencies draw this line sort of between their consulting team and their inhouse folks as the experts and then, there's the public, over here [like separate, far away, different]. Um, and I think the public knows these parks better than we do." And later in this portion of our interview, the planner explained why some are hesitant to include the public, "You have some designers and planners who are still in that like, 'I'm the expert and I know best,' kind of mode. [And they'd say], 'And what I need to do is CONVINCE the public that my ideas are good for them'- right? And it's a design-centered design. And then you have on the other side you have, you have more community-centered design. Which is, that we have expertise to design parks and plan parks but it's not the ONLY expertise. And we want to bring the public sort of into that expert wedge and work together with them on it." Different from some planning processes, this Minneapolis planner valued and more, saw important distinctions between the knowledge of the public and planners.

I have presented two cases in which access to both parks and decision-making about parks are important concerns for stakeholders within park systems. To address both types of access concerns, decision-making processes within park systems are changing to include greater public participation.

**Concluding thoughts on EJ as access to parks**

Many researchers have defined injustice in parks as an issue of access and operationalized access as the possibility of park use, without considering the characteristics of individual parks. Indeed, empirical studies collect quantitative data that measure a selected group's proximity to parks (as number of park or parks acres) within a defined area or travel barriers (as safety and access to routes) encountered *en route* to a park. In this way, access studies measure the potential to use "just any park."

Stakeholders in my cases did describe park access in terms of distribution, like the literature. Additionally, I discovered a discrepancy: even though a park was present and could provide benefits, the park was inaccessible because people did not want to or could not use it. I found that stakeholders also describe access in terms of recognition and procedural justice.

In terms of recognition justice, stakeholders described access in terms of parks as places that they could use. They also described the importance of participating in decision-making about their parks. This

information extends the literature by showing how Fraser's (1995) concept of "recognition justice" can be extended to urban neighborhood parks. Thus, my work extends dialog about environmental justice such that scholars and practitioners should consider access as not just the possibility that one could use "any park" but that one can use a park that appeals to one's needs and wants. In practice, measures of access may be expanded to measures of recognition justice. For example, the TPL may include number of programs that have been requested by community members or number of programs that are instructed in languages other than English.

In terms of procedural justice, scholars of environmental justice urge examination of the political processes that produce those unjust distributions in the first place. Yet, environmental justice literature provided less insight on the measurement of or mechanism behind procedural justice. Therefore, I considered the broader field of participatory studies. Many scholars explore traditional decision-making spaces like board meetings (Adams, 2004) and advisory council meetings (Lynn & Busenberg, 1995). However, these locations are often problematized (see Arnstein. 1969). Like access issues related to physical park space, decision-making venues can also feel like they were not made for the public. Often, the public's participation becomes tolkenism- the public may be consulted (board meetings) or manipulated (advisory councils) such that their input has no impact on final decisions.

Like the EJ literature, in the case of parks I also found few studies exploring procedural justice. Those in existence hinted at the importance of meeting people where they are. This includes talking informally with stakeholders about parks during community events (see Hou & Rios, 2003 where support was gathered and questions were answered concerning a new park during an Earth Day celebration and other events), rather than at meetings expressly organized for decision-making. However, such efforts were not described as participation in decision-making, suggesting they were seen as informal efforts happening apart from formal decision-making.

Parks scholars like Rigolon & Flohr (2014) as well as traditional EJ scholars link unjust outcomes to a lack of decision-making, I wanted to understand how the public could be included in decision-making about parks. Considering the lack of focus on formal decision-making in other areas fields of study (but

less so for parks except for Rigolon and Flohr) as well as the seemingly-under-appreciated value of unconventional spaces for decision-making in parks in particular, I began by using the model of Emerson et al. (2011) to understand where the public could make decisions about parks. In this way, I can advance what we know about parks and decision-making in parks by contributing to theoretical literature and offering guidance for park management. In this second half of the chapter, I ask the research question, "Where can the public participate in decision-making?"

## Access to Parks as Procedural Justice

### Framework to Discuss Four Decision-Making Venues

The previous sections defined access as the ability to use park and then, access to decision making about how parks look and operate which, impact park use. Now, I explore access to park decision-making in four decision-making venues within the park system: board meetings, advisory councils, programs, and daily use (Table 4).

Conceptually, the four decision-making venues differ in formality, centrality, and scope and permanence of the decisions. I drew distinctions based on characterizations of collaboration and bureaucracy made in the literature as well as my observations. To this extent, the importance of formality is based on the "capacity for joint action" collaborative dynamic of Emerson et al.'s (2011) CG model (see Table 5.4). Presentations are a measure of leadership within Emerson et al.'s (2011) "capacity for joint action" and in my work, demonstrate the distance from the center of the bureaucracy. Feldman & Whitman (2010) also describe a need to examine centrality by noting that the closer a stakeholder operates to the center of the bureaucracy, the greater their power to impact final decisions. Finally, I observed differences among the sites with respect to the scope and permanence of decisions. Considering permanence acknowledged that, "Citizen advisory committees are not traditionally given final decision-making power" and whether councils can meet their goals is highly-contingent on the amount of power given to the council by the convening institution (Lynn & Busenberg, 1995; 148).

Table 4 Decision-Making Venues

| Venue characteristic | Alignment to Emerson et al. 2011 | Additional support for characteristic |
|---|---|---|
| **Formality** | Location & regularity | |
| **Formality** | Rules | |
| **Formality** | Meeting format | |
| **Centrality** | Who presents or gives reports? | Feldman & Whitman, 2010 |
| **Scope** | | Observation |
| **Permanence** | | Observation |

Table 4 Differences between decision-making venues determined using Emerson et al.'s (2011) 'capacity for joint action' collaborative dynamic. I include information on decision scope and permanence after finding this to be a difference among sites during observations. Feldman and Whitman's (2010) work supports focus on centrality.

## Board Meetings

**Formality.** Decision-making procedures are very rigid. First, the room suggests formality. Upon entering the meeting room, the public was asked if they would be speaking to the commissioners. Their decision to participate was limited to this "opening" and had to be made before the meeting started. The public sat in their designated section of the room, separated from the park board commissioners by a physical barrier. In Minneapolis, the public and professionals separated further, preferring the left or right side of the room and non-professional or professional dress. Separated from everyone, the board of commissioners sat behind a table and spoke into microphones. The difference between everyone else and the commissioners was further highlighted in Minneapolis, as commissioners sat on an elevated platform behind a large wooden, semi-circular desk, illuminated by theatrical lighting. In Chicago, meetings were moved once per quarter to a neighborhood park; formal regalia was packed up and reassembled in the host park, complete with table cloths for the commissioners' table.

When speaking, commissioners in both cities followed Robert's Rules of Order. For public participation, meeting agendas guaranteed "Open Time" (Minneapolis) or "People in the Parks" (Chicago). In both cities, board meetings were paused for public participation. That time closed, however, after those who signed up had spoken. For example, during a board meeting in Minneapolis, the board president stopped the meeting at 18:00 for a Time-Sensitive Public Hearing concerning PB2-13: changing the public toilet use ordinance. The president noted that no one had signed up to speak and asked three

times for speakers. No one responded, and the president closed the hearing. In Chicago, the board president stopped the meeting by stating, 'It is now time for People in the Parks.'

More, before their portion of the meeting, members of the public were read participation guidelines. Further, the neon red numbers of a countdown clock, positioned behind the commissioners, were a constant reminder of the limits of their participation. In Minneapolis, the chair of a commission set the time limit for speakers and then asked the secretary to change the digital timer to two minutes. To reinforce the time limit, in Chicago, a screen displayed a timer website with a two-minute countdown clock. The app re-started for each public commenter. The secretary interrupted every speaker when 30 seconds remained, 'You have 30 seconds left' and when the time expired, 'Please make your concluding remarks.' In contrast to the time limits imposed during public comment, professionals spoke without limits. More, they were asked and could respond to questions.

**Centrality.** Board meetings were the most centrally-located venue for decision-making. Stakeholders used the term "downtown" to describe the decisions made and the powerful folks working at the center of the park bureaucracy. Both cities' board meetings generally took place in a central office, near the city center. They occurred on Wednesdays at a set time which, was advertised on each city's website and via subscriptions to email notifications. However, my key informant spoke as if "everyone knows" when the meetings were because they occurred predictably. Demonstrating the power of the board members, not the public, the board president's gavel called these meetings to order and moved meeting participants through agenda items.

**Scope.** Agenda items were broad in scope. For example, in Minneapolis I attended public hearings related to a new service area master plan as well as community garden and recreation program policies that would govern the entire city for decades or inform yearly budgets. Therefore, while this site addresses big issues, they may be broader in scale than issues the public is used to considering. To this extent, the public was expected speak about their personal experience with a single park or policy.

**Permanence.** Agenda items determined in this venue will last for a comparatively long time. Budgets will govern a yearly cycle. Plans often have a life span of 10 years or more. Policies may only be

updated when concern is expressed regarding their ability to meet park patrons' needs. Thus, the permanence of decisions is much longer for this venue (as well as for the advisory council venue, next section) than the program and daily use venues.

**Advisory councils**

**Formality.** In terms of schedules, PACs met at their individual parks at a set time and date. This was codified in the PAC Guidelines, set by the Chicago Park District (CPD) Part III: Policy. A. Membership and Meetings. "4. We request that every January each PAC post a calendar of their scheduled meetings for the year and provide a copy of such to their respective park, or establish a regular meeting date and time (e.g. the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m.)." This regularity was corroborated by PAC members, for example, "Our meetings are every third Friday of the month at 6pm at 6 o'clock" and by park supervisors. Master planning CACs met at various parks in the service area they were planning; policy CACs met at the MPRB headquarters. Different from Chicago, the time and date of the next CAC meeting was scheduled at the end of the current CAC meeting. Ad-hoc scheduling was strategic, allowing groups to complete outside tasks (e.g. special councils met or additional focus groups were held) before the next meeting. Plans to learn about the next meeting were described by a CAC member, "In fact, I should write back to [planner] as well because I haven't heard…. So, we did have an evening one before but we thought maybe we should switch it up to like see if a different time and day would work for other- to get a different group of people."

In terms of meeting format and rules, the CPD supplied PACs with a Code of Conduct, By-Laws, and Advisory Council Guidelines, the last created for, "Successful and equitable operation of every PAC." In these rules, for example, the CPD, "Encourages the use of Robert's Rules of Order (condensed version included in this packet) to govern all PAC meetings (PAC Guidelines document Part II: Initial Meeting and Election of Officers)." The CPD, at the center of the bureaucracy, supplied rules to, "Ensure a certain level of consistency" among its decentralized nodes. PAC members were aware of the CPD's rules. However, bureaucratic formality was modified at some decentralized nodes. A C5 Park PAC member discussed revising rules, "So we have park by-laws that we follow and the PAC can change and

every year we revise our bylaws and add or remove things based on how we feel it worked out and also the park district has a Code of Conduct that we should follow." Further, a C2 Park PAC member struggled to remember formal procedures, “Um, I forgot the whole rule of, what’s that rule? Of how you conduct a meeting? Um, there’s a certain term for it, um named after the structure of the program, where you do have to have, ahhh I forgot the name of it!” In Minneapolis, I observed advisory councils vote on MPRB-suggested ground rules and add their own rules during their first meeting. The processes involved a discussion of and agreement upon rules for the group, rather than being handed a packet of rules. The process felt less formal than Chicago.

In terms of meeting format in Chicago, PAC members explained that their meetings were places for discussion in which the PAC members set the agenda. For example, PAC #5, “The PAC is essentially an open forum for the community. So, we can introduce a question, a concern, an issue and invite the politicians to discussion." Conversely, a newly-formed PAC looked to the CPD for guidance, ‘We are going to have [PAC administrator] tell us “what we need to do and what we shouldn’t do”’ and asked many questions, suggesting they will be ready to set their own agendas for subsequent meetings. PAC members also described meetings as less formal than envisioned by the CPD. The CPD PAC Guidelines (Part II: Initial Meeting and Election of Officers) state, “3) Each voting member is allowed one vote. 5) Any attendance requirements for voting must be established in the by-laws.” In contrast, a C2 park PAC member said, “So, it’s just a group deciding or determining what we want to do for that event or program. So, it’s, I guess, not really a vote, I don’t think we really have an opportunity to, um, I don’t think many things have come up where we’ve needed a vote, you know, it’s pretty much just everyone just kind of yeah…” This suggests the PACs experience their meetings as more informal than expected by the CPD.

In terms of meeting format in Minneapolis, an overview of CAC meeting goals was sent out before each meeting. Then, at the start of the meeting the planner and less-frequently the CAC Chair stated that the CAC asked questions first then any other members of the public. They also reiterated the meeting’s goals. The CAC’s satisfaction with park designs or policy moved the project forward.

Meetings were flexible as CAC members were learning new skills or addressing a new aspect of the plan or policy. Also flexible, the CAC was given power to modify the agenda as well as extend the meeting time. In terms of time, their arrival determined meeting start time. They extended time for questions. CAC members also extend timed by forming working groups to further discuss complex parks. In terms of agenda-modification, administrators follow the public's requests. For example, community garden CAC meetings focused on concerns voiced previously by CAC members (e.g. via email). Also, the planner asked CAC members which aspect of the policy they wanted to tackle during that meeting and then, the CAC addressed that aspect (e.g. procedures versus policy language). For a service area CAC meeting, a planner was 'open to the public's suggestions' to customize the engagement process.

During an interview, planner #2 explained this flexibility and responsivity, "[For a previous service area project] We're just getting um we're getting a lot of pushback and we haven't shown any park designs yet. Like I don't understand what's going on.' Um, and there was a lot of suggestions made. Folks didn't think we were doing enough kind of like 'front end engagement.' And so that was the first project where we did this kind of huge, 'Summer of Engagement.' Where we just kind of said, 'alright, let's look at kind of every major event that's going to bring people into the parks, that summer, and let's be there." Of note, in both cities, advisory councils were seated side by side with park administrators, at the same table, rather than the formal separation and demonstration of bureaucratic hierarchy that was observed in each city's board meetings.

**Centrality.** Advisory councils, compared to board meetings, are one step further from the bureaucratic center. However, the most important distinction was the interaction between the public (advisory council members) and policy-makers. The public spoke freely to policy-makers.

In terms of leadership, PAC members and CPD administrators differed with respect to perceived formality of PAC meetings (previous section). Perceptions also differed with respect to who was the meeting leader. This difference was demonstrated during "reporting." A PAC administrator saw the PAC meeting as centered on the supervisor's role because the supervisor gave reports, "So every month advisory councils have meetings and the supervisor is OR a designate should attend- whether it's the area

manager or a Rec Leader, comes to the meeting, they give their report." In contrast, a PAC member emphasized their own reports, placing them first when describing meeting format, "Generally what we do is, we do a president's report out, a financial report, we review minutes from the prior meeting, we do a park manager's report, we um do a programming report and that is determined if we are doing any activities um coming up for the next month or if we are working on programs." I observed conflict during a PAC's first meeting when it was unclear who would give and request reports as well as who would be prioritized in scheduling meetings. A PAC member declared, "We're going to work towards accommodating your schedule [the supervisor] and mine, cause I'm everywhere. Now, [supervisor's name], what kind of reports can we expect from you?" Then, a PAC member noted community concern regarding adult winter programming. The supervisor replied, 'I can give you a full report right now. That's why I need to be at meetings.' This scene shows each group asserting dominance; the PAC member, by asking for a report, and the supervisor, by stating they could give a report "right now."

During CAC meetings, reporting was less contentious. Reports were usually given by MPRB staff and not CAC members. Thus, there was no ambiguity in the role of leader. Though not presenting, CAC members asked questions throughout presentations. Additional power was given to the CAC Chair. They called the meeting to order and introduced the meeting agenda or ground rules.

**Scope.** Some advisory councils made decisions less broad in scope than the board meetings. Each service area CAC master-planned all parks in one of the city's six districts. For PACs, decisions were made for a single park. However, Minneapolis' CACs focused on urban gardening and recreation and programming policies that will govern activity for the entire park system.

**Permanence.** Like board meetings, advisory councils also made decisions concerning long-term vision. In Minneapolis, that long-term vision concerned plans and policies. CAC members and planners agreed that advisory councils functioned to make recommendations rather than final decisions but differed in the perceived importance of that task. Planner #2 explained, "The CAC is the one that's really DRIVING our decision-making. So, if THEY think there ought to be changes in what we have drawn, they will say so and we respond. So, even at that stage, we're not just bringing out these designs and

saying, 'Hey, here you go, this is it, this is what we think is right, can you recommend it?' We're saying, 'here's our best guess, why don't you weigh in on that, tell us what you think.'" For CAC members, however, "offering a recommendation," vis a vis real change, could be troubling. For example, the recreation policy CAC was establishing funding priorities for the yearly budget but a CAC member was upset by their relative lack of impact versus their efforts, "We have been working here for a long time so why are we going to only ask for a single year?" and, "So how do we ensure they have these priorities in years to come?" A PAC's long-term vision is for a single park not the park system. Indeed, PAC members described working for years to complete a certain project. However, unlike CACs, they execute park improvements: working with designers, fundraising, and implementing changes to their park.

**Programs**

**Formality.** The process of creating new programs appears informal. Members of the public need not attend formal board meetings or join advisory councils. Instead, a group with a unique interest (e.g. a Senior's Club or Zumba) can ask their supervisor, whose "door is always open," to create a new program. Then, a supervisor has autonomy to add a new program to the park's schedule for the following quarter. In this way, a group's unique interest, like Zumba, is acknowledged by park administrators because that interest receives a formal place on the park's schedule. In this way, programs become dependable; a program's participants meet at the same time, perhaps daily or once per week, at the same park.

**Centrality.** Programs are created by the supervisors of individual parks because supervisors have a high level of autonomy. They do not need permission to create new programs; however, they may need to justify, to their bosses, continued funding for programs that are not attracting large numbers of participants. Supervisors can also modify programs. Modifying hinges on instructor responsivity to the public. The public's inputs also leveraged. The supervisor at Minneapolis' MB Park explained hiring community members as instructors, "Or it's even, people come in with their talents and skills and sometimes just want to have a class. So, they're looking actually, like how can I do it? Can I rent the space? Can I, you know, Can I teach yoga here? Can I do hip hop? Or, 'I'm starting my own business, or I'm doing something..' and a lot of times actually, it's more money to rent it and start your own business

where it's like, I can be like, 'you know what, that's a great opportunity, let's try to put you on payroll and we can offer the class and work together and make it like something for the community.'"

**Scope.** Programs of the same name may be offered throughout a park system. However, I will show that the instructor and participants modify programs to the needs of an individual park and its patrons. Thus, the way a program is run will differ for each individual park.

**Permanence.** To quickly create programs, supervisors partner with instructors and rely on flexible time and space within their park to accommodate a variety of group interests. Supervisors can debut new programs on the park's official schedule for the following quarter. Similarly, if programs are poorly attended, they may be canceled, and new programs introduced.

**Daily use**

**Formality.** When exploring observational data and considering Loukaitou-Sideris' (1995) "appropriation of space," I saw the daily use of parks as an additional decision-making venue. Decisions made here constituted the least formal decision-making process. The public often not consult anyone before determining how they used a park. However, the tacit approval of the supervisor or an exchange of resources may be required for someone to use the park in a certain way. This included a supervisor not stopping from someone using a space (e.g. a tennis court) in ways other than intended (e.g. for soccer practice). This also included borrowing equipment from park supervisors. I observed supervisors' amenability as well as denial to requests to borrow equipment.

**Centrality.** Decisions are made furthest from the center of the park system's bureaucracy. They take place at the individual park, like programs. However, unlike programs, decisions about daily use do not require bureaucratic actions by the supervisor (e.g. adding a new program to the schedule) and only sometimes entail dialog with the supervisor. The public largely has the freedom to use parks as they like.

**Scope.** The decision-making procedure during daily use was narrow in scope: a park patron decided what they want to do during a single park visit. The public did not make permanent modifications to a park but in their choice of activities, made temporary modifications to its aesthetic and operation. In this way, the public took power by modifying parks not designed in consideration of their needs.

**Permanence.** Decisions made during daily use of a park may conclude in a matter of moments or at the end of a day. The modifications made to a park environment during daily use were largely erased at the end of the night. They lacked the permanence of long-term park vision or a program featured on a park's quarterly schedule.

**Looks can be deceiving: Flexibility**

When I began collecting data, these decision-making venues appeared as formal, rigid, inflexible spaces where members of the public would encounter great difficulty participating. I was given this impression because of the formal rules or the physical structures put in place at each venue. The rules and physical structures created the venues within park decision-making environment but also, what appeared to be an inflexible environment that the public would need to confront. However, as I continued to collect data, I saw that the park decision-making process was a system that could be modified.

Indeed, drawing on Stokols' (2018) SES perspective, Loukaitou-Sideris' (1995) "appropriation of space" and Adams' (2004) unexpected, public-led agenda setting, I found the theme of "flexibility." Flexibility of each decision-making venue allowed the public's knowledge and other inputs to enter the system and "transact" with the decision-making environment (e.g. the physical structures and rules) and other stakeholders. In this way, flexibility was a precursor to public participation in decision-making about parks. As a result of flexibility, participants modified each decision-making venue to have greater congruence to their participation preferences.

**Conclusion**

To address issues of park access, administrators aimed to create parks that better recognized how the public wanted to use their parks. Members of the public were included in decision-making about how parks look and operate. During my analyses, Emerson et al.'s (2011) model brought understanding of this inclusion by conceptualizing various actions undertaken within parks as decision-making. The literature had not mentioned informal park spaces as venues to make decisions but did mention work done "informally (e.g. Hou & Rios, 2003)." Thus, I extend the literature on decision-making in parks, and perhaps extend to other public services. I described two venues that are expected spaces for decision-

making (board and advisory council meetings) as well as two unconventional venues (programs and daily park use). This means that members of the public are not limited to formal or traditional venues for decision-making. Instead, and especially by employing non-traditional venues, those in power like government officials can meet the public for decision-making at locations closer to their homes and meeting times need not be pre-determined. These unconventional spaces may be more convenient for and resonate with the public's preferred participatory style. Of significance, I show a transformation of decision-making. I reconceive the types of venues in which decisions can be made. The public's local knowledge now has a space in which it can be shared and where it is valued.

Broadly, this chapter and the data analyses described within added nuance to the idea of access. Indeed, my data captured access as a feeling that this "park system" isn't for us: fears of a lack of access to parks because they were designed for or to attract wealthy patrons, and the decision-making processes reflect bureaucratic norms, not how the public might choose to structure participation. As will explore in the subsequent chapters, the literature discusses this lack of congruence between the public's diverse preferences and "generic" park systems.

# Chapter 5. Collaborative Governance in Park Planning

The work of EJ scholars (e.g. Bullard, 1990; Sister et al., 2010) and scholars of justice (e.g. Young, 1990) has proven the existence and harmful impacts of distributional injustices concerning environmental hazards and amenities. In addition to showing when distributions are unequal, these scholars urge examination of *how* distributions are unequal. To this extent, they urge examination of how decisions about distribution are made.

Indeed, one may consider the "first wave" of participation to be board meetings which, often appeared to lack congruence to the needs of participants. In the cases I selected, Minneapolis and Chicago, the public demanded to be included in decision-making about public park provision. The response to demands for more meaningful inclusion, created the "second wave" of participation. To this extent, alongside board meetings, parks departments in both cities created advisory councils. The advisory council decision-making venue created space for the public, as advisory council members, to come into direct and regular contact with park administrators and in doing so, provided a space for both stakeholder groups to engage in two-way dialog. In this way, advisory councils may have a greater say about access because they can engage in formal deliberations with park administrators. For the purposes of my research, this may allow them greater input during decision-making about how parks look and operate thus, serving to create parks that recognize local users' preferences.

To understand the role for the public in decision-making, I first investigated the conventional (board meetings and advisory councils) and unconventional spaces (programs and daily use) where that decision-making took place (chapter 4). In this chapter, I evaluate the role for the public in a process of making decisions that had been the responsibility of government officials alone (e.g. planners). To undertake this evaluation, I chose to examine if members of the public collaborated with government officials. I used a model of collaborative governance to determine if in my cases the public was collaborating with government officials as well as begin to understand importance of model elements.

## Use of Emerson et al.'s (2011) Model

I selected Emerson et al.'s (2011) model of collaborative governance; the authors systematically reviewed literature from a broad range of disciplines, including planning, public management, and natural resources management, to develop a model capturing the necessary elements for a collaboration. Their collaborative governance regime (CGR) is made up of internal collaborative dynamics that produce collaborative actions. The CGR's internal collaborative dynamics are presented as three areas of interaction between various public and professional stakeholder groups.

**Collaborative Dynamics**

The first dynamic is principled engagement: the ability to share one's own knowledge and values (discovery); joint problem definition then, reasoned deliberation based on the input of new information; setting and accomplishing smaller, tangible goals (determination). Principled engagement fosters the second dynamic, shared motivation: building trust and showing respect so all feel comfortable sharing knowledge; perceived legitimacy of other participants; commitment to the process. Together, principled engagement and shared motivation cultivate the third dynamic, capacity for joint action: procedural and institutional arrangements that structure the participatory forum; leadership; knowledge sharing, including resources (personal, technical, and financial) which, can be leveraged and redistributed. The three dynamics interact with one another to facilitate collaborative actions. Collaborative actions, as solutions, are more innovative and likely to be adhered to than those crafted by either the public or government officials alone. In this way, the model provides a detailed list of elements thought necessary for collaboration. By understanding how well my data fit into this model, I could understand if collaboration had occurred in my cases. Doing so would respond to Emerson et al. (2011; 21) who had implored subsequent researchers to test their model by applying it to a variety of cases and find the limits of its explanatory power.

**Lack of Congruence**

Further, I was eager to add to the literature that describes a lack of congruence between bureaucratic decision-making and community-driven practices. For example, Hou and Rios (2003) and Dooling (2009) explain that community-led work is different from bureaucratic practices. Indeed, Hou

and Rios explain that the traditional model of public participation is insufficient to explain community perspectives on participation and in practice, is insufficient to satisfy how community members prefer to make decisions. Specifically, when participatory processes are community-led, they are characterized by greater fluidity and complexity than government-led participatory processes. I wanted to examine if my cases offered support for this incongruence.

I asked the research question, "Do any elements appear to have greater salience for park-based collaboration?" I created a table of the model's framework (Table 5.1). For each collaborative dynamic, I positioned the original model alongside my final model iteration and the questions I asked of my data. By showing which components of collaboration pertained to, had to be modified, or were eliminated in investigating my data, I demonstrated where Emerson et al.'s (2011) model could describe my data. The comparisons made in each table are followed by a discussion of model components that I supplement with quotations from interviews and excerpts from my field notes. In sum, by exploring the fit of my data to Emerson et al.'s (2011) model, I show where the model can explain my data and congruence between public preferences and participatory opportunities offered by government agencies.

Table 5.1 Emerson et al.'s (2011) model of Collaborative Governance

| **Collaborative Dynamic** | **Principled Engagement** | **Shared Motivation** | **Capacity for Joint Action** | **Collaborative Actions** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sub-component** | Discovery of shared interests | Building trust | Procedural and institutional arrangements | |
| **Sub-component** | Joint problem definition | Respecting others' knowledge | Leadership to drive collaboration | |
| **Sub-component** | Reasoned deliberation | Perceived legitimacy of others | Shared knowledge | |
| **Sub-component** | Making small-scale determinations | Shared commitment to process allowing boundary-spanning | Shared resources (personal, technical, and financial) | |

Table 5.1 Emerson et al.'s (2011) original framework for collaborative governance. Collaborative dynamics run along the top row of the table while sub-components of those dynamics run down the left column. Collaborative dynamics build upon each other moving from left to right. For example, principled engagement is a prerequisite for development of shared motivation, and both are required for development of the capacity for joint action.

**In Addition to the Model**

**Drivers of collaboration.** Emerson et al.'s (2011) collaborative governance model emphasizes the relationship between collaborative dynamics and actions. I focus most of this chapter there as well. Additionally, the authors note the importance of "drivers" that catalyze participation. Emerson et al. (2011) named four as necessary for collaboration: leadership, consequential incentives, interdependence, and uncertainty. For my data, leadership was demonstrated by the park departments in each city who initiated the public's participation; MPRB and CPD modified the existing decision-making environment, at the public's request, to allow for greater public participation in decision-making. In Minneapolis, consequential incentives existed in that without early public input, planners risked dissatisfaction or protest of plans and policies. This is because planners were unfamiliar with all parks in the system, changing demographics and associated park use preferences, and the nuance of topics like food justice; all these were topics the public had demanded their parks address. In a park system that prioritized use (see chapter 4), designing parks to promote use was a priority. In Chicago, in addition to leadership, I saw interdependence. The CPD often had to collaborate with PACs to fund projects; for example, PACs could seek Aldermanic funding in a way that was inaccessible to the CPD.

**Who is at the table.** Emerson et al. also note the importance of who is present at the decision-making table. My iteration of Emerson et al.'s (2011) model also includes "who" was at the table. I operationalized this with data from PAC and CAC members explaining if they felt they were advocates for a wide variety of "their constituents" and their parks versus advocating for how they personally used a park. Further, I asked CAC and PAC members if they believed their council members represented the neighborhood. Interviewees in each city noted that their council could be more diverse. A CAC member mentioned that many participants are "recycled," serving on many different advisory councils. Another CAC member in Minneapolis mentioned a lack of racial diversity and reasoned that there may be a lack of economic diversity as well. Despite CAC members' perceptions, a planner in Minneapolis hoped, "Equity is also in part, about that empowerment, of having some decision-making authority. You know, so, trying to make sure our CACs are representative of the communities that they're in, in terms of especially racial diversity." PACs were also seen as the voice of their community.

**Context.** Emerson et al. (2011; 20) note the importance of context's influence on collaboration, "We assert that collaborative governance unfolds within a system context that consists of a host of political, legal, socioeconomic, environmental, and other influences." While offering direction as to which contextual dimensions to examine, Emerson et al. (2011) provide limited analytical guidance compared to the collaborative dynamics. Therefore, I collected background information on each case but without the focus I had when using the model to data collection about the collaborative dynamics.

**Feedback and adaptation.** Emerson et al. (2011) state that the CGR will be more sustainable when it can adapt over time (model proposition #10) and that CGRs will adapt quickly because they are required to produce outputs to justify their existence. However, the model implies that feedback and adaptation but only after decision-making has concluded. To capture feedback throughout collaboration, I employ the SES perspective (chapters 6-8; see chapter by chapter overview).

**Principled Engagement**

Table 5.2 Principled engagement

| **Collaborative Dynamic** | **Principled Engagement** | **My iteration: sub-component revised** | **My iteration: fit to PAC data** | **My iteration: fit to CAC data** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sub-component** | Discovery of shared interests | *Why did you get involved?* | use professional skills; advocate for better parks for the community, especially underserved | use professional skills; advocate for better parks for the community, especially underserved |
| **Sub-component** | Joint problem definition | | | |
| **Sub-component** | Reasoned deliberation | *Did verbal dialog occur?* | Yes | Yes |
| | | *Which topics were discussed?* | Events, reports / updates; fund allocation | Give opinions on parks, EJ sensibility |
| | | *Could someone listen to you? (potential for dialog)* | Supervisors attend meetings | People take notes, circle back to missed comments |
| | | *Did discussions occur in other dimensions?* | Drawings during planning meetings; reports; virtual | Drawings during planning meetings; virtual |
| **Sub-component** | Making small-scale determinations | *Could the council make changes to parks or policies?* | Physical infrastructure only | Park master plans; city-wide policies |

Table 5.2 A comparison of the principled engagement collaborative dynamic and corresponding components for Emerson et al.'s (2011) collaborative governance regime model to my advisory council data.

**Discovery and definition.** The first two components of the collaborative dynamic principled engagement (Table 5.2) are discovery of shared interests and defining the problem the group would be collaborating to address. I modified the original model by asking a single question to discuss discovery and definition. My data were better suited to respond to, "Why did you get involved?" Indeed, many interviewees answered this question during interviews by defining the role of an advisory council member. In both cities, members of the public on advisory councils as well as park's department representatives saw the public as the voice of the community, advocating for the community and providing a community perspective. However, council members and parks departments disagreed in that the council members also believed that they would be taking a bigger role, using professional skills and leading change but parks departments saw the public's role as one supporting the park (Chicago) or to making recommendations (Minneapolis). With respect to Emerson et al.'s (2011) original question about defining the purpose of collaboration, the MPRB had already defined the project scope (a new master plan) and that the CAC could make recommendations. The CPD had determined that PACs could work on certain types of projects in their park only. Thus, by defining the role of the advisory council, the parks departments also seemed to define the problem the collaboration would address.

**Deliberation.** Hard conversations and even disagreements are an important component of Emerson et al.'s CGR (2011; 12). Like Emerson et al. (2011), my data were able to answer the question, "Did verbal dialog occur?" In my data, I observed the greatest number of conversations between park employees and members of the public at the advisory council venue. In both cities, discussions had verbal dialog, I observed planners responding to seemingly-endless public questioning in Minneapolis. CAC member #2 recalled discussions, "From MG Park's perspective, we'll bring it back to our subcommittee and say, this is what we got now, what do you guys think? And then we'll haggle and everything else. And you know, people are still going to scream and holler about some stuff." In Chicago, I observed only one meeting. Therefore, I relied on interviewees' statements in which, they said meetings included discussions and reports. For example, PAC member #5, "Every meeting is an open forum. And so, they're

always contentious which, is fine. We always have lots of different viewpoints from lots of different ideas. People come in to air those ideas. So, our PAC meetings are always, uh, always wonderful."

***Adding nuance.*** I added nuance to Emerson et al.'s (2011) model by cataloguing topics discussed during meetings. I noticed that, in line with the division between what is expected for CACs versus PACs, PAC members reported that their discussions centered on events, updates including reports, and funding. For example, PAC member #2 reported, "We're pretty informal but it's so of uh.. If we're going to have Earth Day, we decide on a date, how to get the word out. If we are going to do a park event we need to start finding people to, you know, like offer dance lessons, sort of offer CPR classes or face painting. That kind of stuff. And occasionally, we have a small pool of money and, 'Should we buy something for the park?' you know, 'Should we support a certain program?' and uh those are the kind of discussions we have." Interviews with CAC members and my observations revealed these meetings more often focused on members' opinions on parks as well as insights regarding environmental justice sensibility. For example, CAC member #2 offered a positive view on meeting discussions because of the focus on ethics, "It's been worth it because we're able to have these deeper discussions and everything else."

***Deviating from the model's deliberation.*** As my data deviated from the model in two ways, I required more detailed categorization of deliberations (foreshadowing the utility of the SES perspective in chapters 6 - 8). Here I discuss how I modified Emerson et al.'s (2011) model to address the deviations. First, my data suggested a need to emphasize that a person in power, specifically, could listen to the public. This addition fits under the sub-component of "deliberation" (where I have located it) but also overlaps with "who is present" as well as "legitimacy." To this extent, my data answered the question, "Could someone listen to you?" At PAC meetings, PAC members stated that supervisors were present and listened, "She's [the park supervisor] usually at our meetings- or somebody from her staff. Yeah, we always have somebody from the park district. And that's another thing- it takes time to develop a relationship with the park supervisor. And I think that's why our PAC is doing well these days- because we have a great supervisor. You know, we talk to each other all the time (PAC member #2)." During interviews, supervisors said that they listened in meetings and then acted on what they heard, 'When they

[PAC and supervisor at PAC meetings] come up with solutions, it is because at the PAC meetings, people say what they like and what they don't like. It may be as simple as a light bulb is out and then the supervisor can put in a work order (C2 Park supervisor).' In Minneapolis, CAC member #1 recalled making a comment that was initially "skipped" during a discussion but was brought up later in the meeting by an administrator (a similar type of "recalling words" was observed in board meetings).

Second, though advisory councils created opportunities for verbal dialog between the public and representatives from the park department (e.g. a supervisor or a planner), the verbal "deliberations" emphasized by Emerson et al.'s (2011) model were not always required for collaboration. Indeed, I observed that advisory council members, park administrators, and members of the public speaking during public comment referenced a virtual dimension for dialog. PAC members and administrators reported hearing from constituents about park issues (e.g. maintenance via email or Facebook pages). Planners in Minneapolis referenced public comments received via email for both plans and policies. Finally, a member of the public, during an advisory council meeting, informed CAC members that a big discussion was happening on Next Door [a neighborhood-specific, Facebook-type website]. This person said that they are asking some really important questions on the site and urged the CAC to keep tuning in, to keep answering the questions. In additional to the virtual realm, dialog also took place visually. CAC members' concerns were recorded with physical media (e.g. minutes typed on computers or dialogs recorded on giant poster papers). For example, during planning meetings specifically, drawings of draft park designs were presented to advisory council members and all meeting attendees for feedback. In Minneapolis, administrators then marked on drawing (e.g. drawing in a new fence or speed bump) indicating they had heard and were taking note of a concern.

**Determinations.** Determinations are the outcome of incremental decision-making that takes place throughout the collaborative process; they may be procedural (e.g. deciding to have dialog on a new topic) or substantive (e.g. reaching consensus on a single park). They can maintain excitement for further collaboration. This component was present in my data, took a similar form to the determinations of Emerson et al. (2011) and, shows the difference in the purpose of a PAC versus a CAC.

***PACs.*** PACs complete many projects in their parks. Some are larger projects, like a kitchen remodel or installing a water feature, while others are smaller tasks accomplished regularly in collaboration with their park supervisor (e.g. work orders; see chapter 8). Perhaps working together regularly on smaller tasks like work orders may help PACs and supervisors work more efficiently on some larger tasks (though note, conflict arises for some larger tasks, see chapter 8).

***CACs.*** Conversely, CACs make changes to policy documents. For example, I witnessed real-time changes being made to the community garden policy during the August 23, 2018 CAC meeting. Two CAC members then debated the appropriate language for this section. The planner made changes to the document as they were suggested by CAC members. The planner typed on a computer, and their work was projected onto a big screen in front of all the CAC members. Regarding the changes, a CAC member commented, 'I think where it works best is not where you are typing, but the next line.' The CAC member again asked about, 'The full-time, year-round employee, "cause this is really important"' and the planner added the language along with the words "designated" and "racial-equity-trained" to the policy. I asked the planner (#1) about this during our interview and they reflected, "I wanted people to see their feedback incorporated in real-time so that I could report back within the organization to say, 'this directly reflects what I've heard in the implementation team meetings. This is what is being asked for by the implementation team attendees.'"

**Shared Motivation**

Trust builds up over time and according to Ulibarri (2015), who based data collection on the Emerson et al. (2011) model, is a feeling that others in the process were honest and sincere. In Emerson et al.'s (2011) model, trust leads to mutual understanding which, according to the model's authors, involves stakeholders feeling like their unique knowledge was respected by other participants. Trust and understanding produce a perceived legitimacy of the other participants and then, a commitment to working beyond one's own group. In this way, the collaborative dynamic of shared motivation (Table 5.3) described the interpersonal aspects of collaboration and suggested study of the semiotic realm (related to the subjective intentions and experiences of participants) and gathering data through interviews.

Table 5.3 Shared Motivation

| Collaborative Dynamic | Shared Motivation | My iteration: sub-component revised | My iteration: fit to PAC data | My iteration: fit to CAC data |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sub-component** | Building trust | *Were comments made concerning procedural fairness? Could your voice be heard?* | Park contacts got things done; comments about procedural transparency were addressed | Yes, adopt this process across city; maybe; opinion was heard |
| **Sub-component** | Respecting others' knowledge | | | |
| **Sub-component** | Perceived legitimacy of others | *Was it 'worth it' to participate?* | Yes- ability to get involved (projects and socially) | "Too soon to tell;" "learning;" "deeper discussions" but would change the process to be more time-sensitive |
| **Sub-component** | Shared commitment to process allowing boundary-spanning | *Did you work with outside partners?* | Yes, fiscal partner; funds from state and business | No, but members involved with other organizations |

Table 5.3 A comparison of the shared motivation collaborative dynamic and corresponding components for Emerson et al.'s (2011) collaborative governance regime model to my advisory council data.

**Trust and mutual understanding.** My data did not present a clear distinction between trust and mutual understanding. Stakeholders seemed to reference both when discussing the fairness of collaborative procedures, especially in responding to, "Could your voice be heard?" Interviewees cited the ability of more powerful stakeholders in the collaboration (e.g. a park supervisor) to complete projects which, made the process seem fair. However, in Minneapolis where advisory councils did not make tangible park changes but offered policy guidance, interviewees felt uncertain if one's time and opinions would be reflected in final policies and plans. The board would have the final vote as to whether to adopt a policy or plan. Conversely, CAC members working on policy also stated that their opinion was heard and that they would recommend the advisory council process be adopted through the city.

**Legitimacy.** Emerson et al. (2011) describe this as the accumulation of trust in others that made the process feel legitimate. My data instead spoke to legitimacy of the process itself. In viewing responses to the question, "Was it worth it to participate?", council members working on tangible park projects felt that serving on an advisory council was "worth it" because they got things done. Indeed, all PAC members who were posed this question (four total) answered, "Yes" almost immediately after I posed the question. They then listed what they had accomplished on the PAC socially or by completing projects. In

contrast, some CAC members were hesitant to state that participation was "worth it." For example, CAC #3, "Um [laughs] I will say [pause] um too soon to tell. Um if the park board, you know, takes to heart and implements you know, sort of the recommendations that we put forward, then yes. If they say, um, if they don't, then it, you know, then it feels less productive." Uncertainty about the adoption of recommendations left this CAC member unsure if participation was "worth it." However, CAC member #2 wanted the process adopted throughout the city but suggested major modifications if this happened.

**Shared commitment to spanning boundaries.** The final sub-component of shared motivation related to groups effectively spanning the boundary between their organizations to collaborate with one another (rather than remaining in their unique groups). This commitment to spanning boundaries was operationalized by Ulibarri (2015) as signing onto process agreements. I began to see that, in terms of spanning boundaries, advisory councils in both cities brought connections to groups outside of the collaboration with the park board. Though outside the immediate collaboration, the advisory council effectively spanned the boundary to these groups to bring funding (see chapter 8 PACs) or guidance on policy language (see chapter 8 community garden CAC) to the collaboration.

**Capacity for Joint Action**

This collaborative dynamic refers to institutionalizing the factors that enable sustained collaboration. It also discusses the components needed for stakeholders within the collaboration to produce outputs (Table 5.4). I found the model aligned with my data in terms of procedural and institutional arrangements as well as leadership.

Table 5.4 Capacity for Joint Action

| **Collaborative Dynamic** | **Capacity for Joint Action** | **My iteration: sub-component revised** | **My iteration: fit to PAC data** | **My iteration: fit to CAC data** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sub-component** | Procedural and institutional arrangements | *Location;*<br>*Rules;*<br>*Format*<br>*(see Table X Ch 2)* | *Location:* Set time at "PAC's" park;<br>*Rules:* CPD set, PAC modified;<br>*Format:* PAC set | *Location* MPRB set;<br>*Rules: G*roup set;<br>*Format:* MPRB set, CAC modified |
| **Sub-component** | Leadership to drive collaboration | *Who gave technical presentations?*<br>*(see Table X Ch 2)* | CPD; PAC members | MPRB |
| **Sub-component** | Shared knowledge | *Who prepared technical reports or statements?* | Both PAC members and supervisor | Park administrators; "tech posturing" by CAC may be considered by admins, other CAC members saw as positive |
| | | *Could the public input connections knowledge?* | PACs secured funds to complete projects | CACs determined who was missing from meetings |
| | | *Could the public input environmental justice sensibility* | Impetus to join PAC as well as for some projects | During meetings |
| **Sub-component** | Sharing resources (personal, technical, and financial) | *Were food, language, or childcare provided?* | Food; need more observations | All three were provided |
| | | *Was training provided?* | Yearly PAC conference and additional workshops | Racial equity, cultural competency, and MPRB 101 request by CAC |
| | | *Did the council fundraise? Who spent the funds?* | Yes, to complete projects; prioritization of funding | No but allocation of Community Connector funds |

Table 5.4 A comparison of the capacity for joint action collaborative dynamic and corresponding components for Emerson et al.'s (2011) collaborative governance regime model to my advisory council data.

**Procedural and institutional arrangements.** Ulibarri (2015) operationalized the procedural and institutional arrangements as: meeting frequency, location, call-in option, and date; ground rules; the presence of a third-party facilitator. I identified many of these same elements and used the information in defining decision-making venues (see chapter 4, Table 4). However, my data also showed a greater nuance in that they described who determined meeting location, rules, and the format of the meeting (e.g. who talked when and for how long) as well as who could modify (if at all) those meeting aspects. In both cities, I found that arrangements were mainly determined by parks departments but the councils had

opportunities for slight modification. For example, meeting format was established by the MPRB but the CAC could modify slightly. Similarly, formal rules were given to PACs but PACs could modify slightly.

**Leadership.** Like Ulibarri (2015), I operationalized leadership as, "Who gave technical presentations?*"* I reviewed answers to this question in chapter 4 (see Table 4) to define each decision-making venue. In Chicago, both PAC members and supervisors gave presentations; however, conflicting perspectives as to whose presentations were most important (see chapter 8). In Minneapolis, only the MPRB gave presentations thus, they did not collaborate with CACs in taking this leadership role. Important to note, opportunities were given for a CAC president to make presentations but for a variety of reasons (e.g. running late) this did not happen. In this way, Emerson et al.'s (2011) model fit to my data because in the context of park-based decision-making, leaders were present.

**Knowledge.** Emerson et al.'s (2011; 16) model described the knowledge component as a form of human capital that is aggregated, separated, and reassembled during collaboration. Ulibarri's work operationalized knowledge with a focus on technical knowledge (e.g. existence of technical working groups). My data aligned with this aspect of knowledge and was highlighted when I searched within my data for, "Who prepared technical reports or statements?" The emphasis on preparation allowed me to understand who shared and made statements (rather than formal presentations) of technical knowledge. Statements included quantitative data and scientific information.

Though contention surrounded who gave the reports during PAC meetings, everyone could *prepare* reports. During policy CAC meetings, members would often bring prepared statements from outside organizations (e.g. food justice or park equity) they worked with professionally. They would read aloud from these statements; such acts were remembered as exemplars of participation by other CAC members. CAC member #3 remembered, "You know, being very specific about you know, what they were recommending to individual parks, getting down on a very granular level, and [they; pronoun changed] um pointed out that that level of specificity was happening in the master plans and um not happening with rec quest. And [they; pronoun changed] pushed back and so now we are going to have another meeting um this week to talk about some more specificity around programming. Not, not, um just

broad general principles." During planning CAC meetings, CAC members less frequently made technical statements but they might note concerns of their constituents.

***Deviating from the model's knowledge.*** My data deviated slightly from the model in terms of the formality of presentations. It was important to focus on not just who *gave* presentations about technical presentations but look at who was able to speak about technical topics, perhaps from prepared reports, during meetings. Though councilors may not have given PowerPoint presentations, they were able to share technical information during dialogs or in reports. Further, my data deviated from the model in instances where non-technical knowledge was shared. This included knowledge related to social connections (e.g. to community members or local businesses) as well as knowledge of environmental justice. These types of knowledge arose in both cities and may be unique to the park-based decision-making context. With respect to knowledge related to social connections, I asked, "Did councils use connections knowledge?" With respect to knowledge related to environmental justice, I asked, "Did councils use environmental justice sensibility?" Councils in both cities used knowledge of connections and environmental justice but PACs were observed and described using knowledge of connections more often than environmental justice while the reverse was found for the CACs in Minneapolis (for further discussion see chapters 7 and 8).

**Resources.** Emerson et al.'s (2011) model included some degree of specificity regarding resources, noting that they could take the form of personal, technical, or financial capital. I reviewed my data for patterns that might lead to more specific definition of resources. In part, resources were provided by MPRB to address barriers to participation in advisory council meetings. I observed the provision of child-friendly spaces (e.g. coloring tables) during meetings and allowing children to attend (rather than enforcing adults-only meetings). Language barriers were also addressed when MPRB attempted to meet with stakeholders in languages beyond English; CAC members were also advocates when they reminded MPRB of the importance of hosting meetings in languages beyond English. Finally, the MPRB offered food, often catered by local businesses (also, see chapter 4 regarding addressing barriers). Noticing how three barriers were overcome in Minneapolis, I examined my data from Chicago. Interviewees noted that

food was served in meetings but I did not gather enough data to understand addressing language and childcare barriers.

Training was offered in both cities to familiarize the public with participation norms within the parks department. In this way trainings showed public participants how to adapt to the practices of the parks department. Interestingly, in Minneapolis, training also served to create a common understanding of the environmental justice topic of racial equity for all stakeholders (see chapter 8).

Financial resources were mentioned in both cities. CACs did not raise any money, though in the service area planning CAC, they allocated funding to community data collectors. However, CAC member #2 had wanted more time for this process. Further, CAC member #1 reported, "Well, the funding for who gets the money to do the outreach I guess, we did get to pick that. And then um, you know, I think well and then, [planner name omitted] asked if we think the accessible playground is something that's important because its more expensive but honestly, I think they had already decided that they're OK so, no. I think for the most part, the park board has allotted money to certain parks and they decide like, if we're OK with it, they're like OK, great." Thus, this CAC member felt like the funding choices were more of a rubber stamping, in some respects, than decisions. In contrast, PACs members reported raising funds and also spending them in their park (see chapter 8).

**Collaborative Actions**

PACs and CACs differed in their goals and scope of their work. Like shown by determinations, PACs often focused on making physical changes to their park while CACs focused on policy changes for a broader area. Thus, collaborative actions completed by PACs were related to completing physical projects (like a new kitchen or a garden) in their park while CACs influenced final service area plans or system-wide policies before making recommendations to the board of commissioners.

In terms of one specific collaborative action, my data suggested the importance of recognizing community garden data. Thus, I examined my data to consider that, "Food security is an issue in both cities; who created garden policies?" CAC members in Minneapolis co-created their community garden policy with park administrators using a process of deliberation and real-time edits to policy documents

(see chapter 8). As many examples of collaboration were drawn from community garden policy-making in Minneapolis, I sought an equivalent in Chicago. However, in Chicago, there was no public participation in formal policy-making. As noted by a program administrator working with gardens, "Crafting a policy is something that has been on my list for a while. Um but I know that city-wide, the city of Chicago just hired basically an urban ag person to develop a policy for the whole city. And so, we will be beholden to that um which I assume will be a positive thing." This implied that the public would not be involved in formal policy creation.

However, Chicago had informal policy. The program administrator explained, "We've yet to make any formal updates to our policy manual to say, you know, 'You can do this or you can't do this.' And that's intentional so we can allow people for some flexibility. Um and, and interpret things on a location to location basis." In this way, the CPD's role was more of a support system. The CPD used to offer grants, currently offer tools, and acts as a facilitator. The program administrator said, "So, we really try to facilitate spaces and groups that will in perpetuity, but be there for a very long time that's our hope and our goal." Also, PAC members were informal, garden policy creators. PAC member #3 said their PAC did not intend to make formal rules for a garden they created. Further, during the PAC conference, PAC member #3 passed on information about informal garden policy (e.g. procedures for PACs to create their own gardens). Of note, though the public was included, policies were informal and did not include explicit environmental justice (e.g. equity) considerations like was observed in Minneapolis.

**Conclusion**

In many ways, Emerson et al.'s (2011) a description of the necessary components of collaborative governance was a good fit to my data about decision-making in urban neighborhood parks. For principled dynamics, my data "fit" in the model when considering "who" was at the table, even though councils were working towards feeling satisfied with the council's degree of representativeness of the neighborhood. Similarly, my data "fit" in the model in terms of joint problem definition, despite in both cases, it not always being clear who defined issues and being largely dependent on the role defined for the councilors. Finally, like the model, I also found evidence of determinations. However, in terms of

deliberation, the model was not a good fit for my data. this was because my data showed that deliberations could take place in "realms" beyond a verbal, face-to-face dialog. Further, my data also showed the importance of having a person in power being available to listen to the public.

In terms of shared motivation, my data showed alignment (despite combining the categories) to the sub-components of trust and shared understanding. However, in terms of legitimacy, my data were more suited to describe the legitimacy of the decision-making process, not of other participants. Finally, in the case of parks, I found it important to have a model that could discuss the importance of working with partners outside the collaborative governance regime, rather than spanning boundaries among stakeholders within the regime, because outside connections helped accomplish collaborative work.

Finally, my data often aligned with Emerson et al.'s (2011) capacity for joint action, especially with respect to procedural and institutional arrangements and leadership. Considering knowledge and resources, the model was of greatest use to organize my data and look for patterns that led to greater specificity. For example, realizing that multiple types of knowledge could be exchanged among stakeholders, especially how knowledge, beyond technical knowledge, was valued within collaborations.

In answer to my research question, I found that the model elements that have greater salience for park-based collaboration, differ between PACs and CACs. Differences corresponded to the function of the advisory council. PACs focused on accomplishing tangible projects. I believe this explains why PACs interviewees frequently mentioned training, connections, and fundraising when describing their role during collaborations. Training, connections, and fundraising are elements located within the collaborative dynamics of capacity for joint action and shared motivation and had the greatest salience for PACs as these elements helped them to accomplish their goal. The CACs' goal was less tangible. CACs focused on recommending plans and policies to the park board of commissioners. During observations and interviews, stakeholders' words and actions suggested to me that visual aids (e.g. taping draft plans to walls or projecting draft policies on large screens), recording feedback (e.g. digitally using Microsoft Word Track Changes or physically writing participant comments on large pieces of paper that were visible during entire meetings to the entire group of participants), and leaders taking the role of facilitators

(e.g. explaining how to frame comments made to commissioners) were most important for CACs to complete their goals. These pertained to the collaborative dynamics of capacity for joint action and principled engagement.

I had conceptualized the model as representing government-led participatory opportunities, as the model was created using data from government-led initiatives. Therefore, alignment with the model meant that my data showed congruence between the public's preferences for participation and the government's concept of participation. In terms of congruence, I found that while the model explained my data in many ways, I also found evidence of incongruence. For one, Emerson et al.'s model (as well as the work of Koontz et al. (2004) specifically, spoke to the importance of resource exchange. While the Emerson et al. model included resources as a component of the model, it did not describe how to investigate resource exchange. The Koontz et al. case studies did provide a template to study resource exchange but did not include the semiotic realm in those analyses.

Perhaps more important, the categories of Emerson et al.'s collaborative governance model (2011) did not align with decision-making in unconventional spaces (programs and daily park use). Therefore, my data suggested the need to build on Emerson et al.'s model. In this way, I found overlap with the findings of Hou and Rios (2003) such that the public's participation preferences often differed from the participatory opportunities offered by government entities. Thus, working with the public must include meeting them where they are- rather than forcing them to fit into existing bureaucratic processes.

Ultimately, according to the model offered by Emerson et al. (2011), decision-making about the plans, policies, and daily operation of parks can be considered a type of collaboration. However, there was some incongruence. For example, Emerson et al.'s model was unable to bring understanding to the process of collaboration in unconventional spaces; though the model did reveal the existence of decision-making in those spaces. Thus, I needed another way to investigate the role for the public in decision-making and turned to the Social Ecological Systems perspective to tease apart resources (as material resources; chapter 6), knowledge (as human resources; chapter 7), and examine the deliberative process and associated outputs (chapter 8).

# Chapter 6. Social-Ecological System Inputs: Material Resources

After analyzing the data presented in chapters four and five, I posed post-analysis research questions. Using Emerson et al.'s (2011) model, I recognized incongruity between government-created park systems and the preferences of the public. Indeed, the unconventional forms taken by decision-making venues (see chapter four) as well as the ways in which the public could modify existing decision-making practices (members of the public might set the agenda toward topics not initially proposed by park staff) and parks to better align with their preferences. I reasoned that these modifications might increase congruence between park systems designed by government administrators and the public's preferences. To investigate creation of a park system (parks and decision-making processes) that increased congruence, I asked the post-analysis questions, "How are park systems modified to better align with the public's preferences?" and "What is the public's role in driving those changes?"

I asked these questions of existing park spaces, rather than new parks (new parks were the focus of Hou & Rios, 2003; Rigolon & Flohr, 2014). Thus, I fill a gap in the literature by examining how parks can be modified rather than building new parks. This again, moves from the purely distributional way of understanding issues of access to parks (i.e. privileging the solution of building new parks). While some studies (e.g. Rigolon & Flohr, 2014) describe renovation as one way to increase access, they do not detail the renovation process.

I also fill a gap in the literature by studying decision-making venues and processes that did not align with Emerson et al.'s model. To do so I drew upon systems theory. Though many authors (notably, Elinor Ostrom) engage systems theory, I chose to focus on the model produced by Stokols et al. (2013) and Stokols (2018) because of its broad categories (as opposed to the relatively narrow categories encountered in Emerson et al.'s model), focus on resource transactions, and inclusion of the semiotic realm. To employ systems theory in my analyses, I conceived of urban neighborhood parks as systems, comprised of individual parks and decision-making venues.

Complimentary to the SES perspective as illustrated by Stokols, other literatures highlight resource exchange among stakeholders (Emerson et al.'s (2011) model; Koontz et al., 2004). Further, studies like those of Hou & Rios (2003) and Rigolon & Flohr (2014) detail how members of the public often input a unique set of resources, like connections to community groups, and how such connections are useful for project mobilization. Outside the parks and collaborative governance literatures I have drawn on for this research, scholars also underscore the importance of public resources. Citizen science relies on the input of publicly-collected data. The study of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK; see Berkes and colleagues) repeatedly confirm the utility of experiential knowledge vis a vis scientific knowledge. Finally, early environmental justice work relied on the experiential knowledge of those most impacted by environmental harms to provide evidence of injustice. However, at times the utility of public resources is challenged. When the public's resource contributions are unique, falling outside the normal bureaucratic practices, some scholars and practitioners disagree if input from the public is useful or not.

Finally, chapter four shows how access was addressed with procedural justice when unconventional spaces, like park programs, became venues for decision-making. Further, access was felt as a lack of recognition justice when stakeholders felt existing park spaces (e.g. physical amenities or programs) did not meet their needs. As parks had been transformed to produce decision-making venues, I sought to examine the transformation of other park spaces to bring recognition justice. Gathering and examining data about the transformation of parks provides opportunities to dialog with existing research. With respect to decision-making venues, understanding transformation of space can extend studies (like that of Hou and Rios, 2003) that note that decisions are made in non-traditional spaces. With respect to existing park spaces, the work of Loukaitou-Sideris (1995) proves that park spaces are changed to meet users' unique needs but does not detail the process of that change.

The SES perspective, and its focus on resource transaction, provides one way to understand the resources needed to transform physical park spaces into spaces that meet park patrons' needs as recreation as well as decision-making venues. Doing so explains how recognition justice can be realized in urban neighborhood parks. To investigate resources input into a park setting, and especially, the resources

needed for transformation of parks into decision-making venues, I ask the research question, "How can resources transform park systems?"

For the purposes of discussion, and following the work of Stokols (2018), I divide my data concerning resource exchange into two chapters. In both chapters, I analyze each of the four decision-making venues by focusing the transaction of resources. When possible, I also discuss the meaning of inputs, thus entering the semiotic realm. Chapter six describes the transaction of material resources (Table 6). Then, chapter seven describes the transaction of human resources, like access to social networks.

Table 6 Material resources transacted in four decision-making venues

| **INPUTS** | **Board Meeting** | **Advisory Council** | **Programs** | **Daily Use** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Existing items rearranged to transform the room's appearance | *Table, chairs, podium, & barrier*; Park Administrator's input | *Table, chairs, & screen*; Park Administrator's input | *Support spaces & body position*; Instructor's & public input | *Art*; Anyone in community can input |
| Items brought to transform the room's appearance | | *Visual aids & Food*; Park Administrator's input (but PAC brought food in Chi) | *Sensory items & equipment*; Instructor's & public input | *Equipment & personal items*; Public input |
| Piggy-backing | | | Supervisors' input | |
| Sharing / Trading | | | Supervisors' input | Public input |
| Documents | Public input | CAC & PAC input | | |
| Funds | | PAC input | | |

Table 6 The left-hand column lists "inputs" as the material resources transacted during decision-making in each of the four decision-making venues (listed horizontally on the top row). In the cells, I add further details regarding *the type* (in *italics*) of capital and who offered each input (not in italics).

## Board Meetings

### Formalizing the Space

As described in chapter 4, the park board headquarters or even, a "guest host" park were arranged to create a formal environment. Board commissioners sat at a table covered in a table cloth or made of fine wood. In Minneapolis, theatrical lights shone down on the commissioners. In both cities, the public was separated from commissioners with physical barriers and when addressing the board, was required to speak into a microphone while standing, alone, at a podium in front of the entire room. The resulting

arrangement seemed, perhaps, imposing to public participants. However, the public could modify their environment. For example, the podium stood at a fixed height so a speaker in a wheelchair could not see over the top. However, they modified the build environment using their body, moving around the podium and addressing the board from beside it. Additionally, though there were chairs arranged in the "public' section, the public often stood or sat on window ledges in the back of the board room. They spoke during the meeting. They seemed to show that they would not treat the space as formally as suggested by the room's organization. Board commissioners did not stop them only reminding them, on one occasion, to keep their homemade signs low enough so not to obstruct views.

**Extending Words**

As discussed in Chapter 4, the strict time limits imposed on the public during park board meetings added to the sense that the public participation process was inflexible. From the semiotic realm of meaning, powerful stakeholders' use of time limits suggested that the public's inputs were less valuable than professionals' (e.g. planners and technicians). Imposing time limits on the public also signaled that they did not know how to participate in a board meeting; thus, had to be "kept on task." Conversely, professionals knew how to behave in meetings so, did not need time limits.

**Modifications.** Time limits were extended through the acceptance of speakers' documents by board commissioners. The documents would be considered by the commissioners later, in addition to the two minutes of verbal testimony. For example, during a service area master plan public hearing, a speaker mentioned they had brought a drawing of what they'd like their park to look like. At the end of their comment, the chair of the commission told the speaker, 'You had a drawing? You can give it to [the name of a park administrator in public relations] and they will give it to us [the board].' During the November 2018 board meeting in Chicago, the secretary also reminded the board of commissioners that a speaker had, 'Also submitted some documents you all have,' and then distributed documents to the board members. In response, board commissioners accepted the documents. This action implied documents would be read later, and perhaps considered when the commissioners voted.

In sum, during board meetings, a venue that seemed, perhaps, imposing and inflexible was modified by the public when they shared physical documents and when they moved their physical bodies. In this way, the park decision-making system gained congruence to participants because more time was allotted for sharing inputs and also, independent of the physical configuration of the room, members of the public were able to place their bodies where they wanted to feel more comfortable within the space.

## Advisory Councils

As described in Chapter 4, and like the board meeting venue, the park board headquarters or individual parks were transformed for advisory council meetings. However, their arrangement facilitated dialog and comfort, not a formal environment. Tables and chairs were taken off racks and set up to form a "kitchen table" where everyone sat and ate together. In Minneapolis, food was often from local restaurants. Most importantly, park administrators or supervisors sat at the same level and at the same table as advisory council members. These seating arrangements modified the park environment to be more conducive to dialog. Stakeholders were seated near each other so, they could see facial expressions and hear each other's words without microphones or fear of timers expiring.

### Visual Aids and Discussion

Often, meetings began with a PowerPoint presentation that included drawings of parks or of the participatory process. Some meetings omitted the PowerPoint but drawings of parks were taped to walls, laid on tables, or displayed on easels. Then, throughout the meeting, stakeholders referenced or pointed to drawings to contextualize their questions. More, planners and designers described how a design was changed to create compromise or used the design to catalyze a discussion (see examples below). To explain compromise during a service area planning meeting, a planner noted that while, 'Hearing both sides of the conversation, we tried to make a compromise. Our plan went over [cut down] some of the best trees in the park- some people brought that up. We rearranged. The new plan keeps the trees. Also, we slid the field over to preserve trees and retain a buffer.' While describing these changes, the planner pointed to paper copies of the park designs that were taped to the walls.

Similarly, planners in Chicago used drawings to catalyze discussions. A planner described wanting the public to "react" to drawings, "So it was a way to really pull out specific, um, improvements that people wanted to see and HOW people were relating to the park to begin with. Um and then, also, at the end of it, kind of talk to people about their overall vision of the park as a whole. Like how do you, what do you want this park to do for the community over the next like 5years, 10years, 20 years? Um, what does the park mean to you? So that was cool. We got, it was a little bit more of an intimate um conversation with the public." In both cities, drawings perhaps broached the divide between the technical world of the planner and the experiential knowledge of the public. Indeed, the drawings of park spaces created a common reference point within the decision-making system so that stakeholders could begin dialog from a common reference point. Thus, drawings were a material input to the decision-making system, supplied by planners, to help make the system more inclusive of public participants.

**Real-Time Draft Modification**

Planners and designers responded to the public's inputs by drawing with permanent marker directly onto visual aids. I observed a designer draw a new speed bump on a draft plan after a member of the public pointed out safety concerns on a road [Designer's Workshop Open House, 10 January 2018]. The permanent marker emphasized the that the changes would be incorporated in a subsequent draft plan.

Further, during CAC meeting #7 [4 June 2018], the name of each park in the service area was printed onto an 8.5 x 11 piece of white paper and taped to a wall. During the discussion, each park's paper was moved into one of two columns: "Further Discussion" or "Consensus Towards Recommendation." Column allocation was decided by the CAC after each park was the subject of "micro conversations." A planner remarked, "If we hear diverse viewpoints in this room, it is an indication that we need further discussion." By structuring the meeting as a discussion in which the CAC had the final say, the planners' input to the system was concession that they had gotten 'as close as we can to what the community wants for each of the 34 parks but we might be wrong and that's why we are here.' Thus, planners had asked the CAC for help and shown they valued the public's input. Some parks incited heated debate, most received public input as knowledge about park preferences, and at least once, a CAC member requested more

information about a design, 'In that, for the next time we discuss this park, could we get some recommendations from the team for that?' The lead planner agreed. During CAC meeting #7, park administrators also responded to the public's and CAC members' questions and feedback by writing directly onto the park papers. For example, a designer moved a park to the "Consensus" column but said (while also writing the words with a red Sharpie), 'I just want to check in: we have to talk about a toilet, bike path, and moving the playground and basketball.'

Similarly, drafts of policy documents were also projected onto large screens. For example, during the 17 May 2018 community garden CAC meeting, a planner projected a draft of the policy and used it for fine-tuning the language of garden applications. As a group, we dissected multiple areas of the policy, sections we had been discussing throughout the meeting process: tool storage, community garden leads, and who would pay for water. Then, the planner scrolled through the remaining sections of the policy, "I think there was no inequality found with," and listed a section name. 'If there's other areas, we go through them now? No questions? That's it. So, I'll be going through the document and the comments. I'll do another red-lining and set the policy out to you,' concluded the planner. Throughout many of the meetings, I observed this planner using the Microsoft Word "Track Changes" function to make changes to the policy using a personal computer, while simultaneously projecting the edits on the screen.

In our interview, I asked this planner about using Track Changes and they replied, "I don't know what more I could tell you about that procedure [both laugh] except for that was just my approach! I wanted people to see their feedback incorporated in real-time so that I could report back within the organization to say, 'This directly reflects what I've heard in the implementation team meetings. This is what is being asked for by the implementation team attendees.'" The planner felt that, "For the most part, yes," MPRB kept the public's changes in the final document. Here, the use of physical materials, in the form of a screen to project policy drafts, allowed for transparency. CAC members saw where their ideas were being added into the community garden policy and planning CAC members saw their insights applied to determine which parks had satisfactory designs and which needed more work. As the decision-making environment was transformed to facilitate dialog, via the use of visual aids, dialog appeared to

have been the *intent* of the park board. Parks departments, in both cities sought to co-create new parks or policies with the public instead of presenting and defending completed designs.

**Connections**

Both cities' advisory councils were connected to outside groups. In terms of material resource inputs, outside connections helped councils to gather technical capital to produce reports and collect data; outside connections also helped accrual of financial capital. The input of connections maps onto Emerson et al.'s (2011) capacity for joint action. When advisory councils used connections to create technical reports, Emerson et al. (2011) may consider this collaboration via sharing technical knowledge while the financial response of PACs connections would likely be considered as sharing resources.

**Connections led to reports.** In both cities, advisory councils prepared reports. For community gardens in Minneapolis, CAC members worked with outside organizations to prepare reports based on information from their organization's own community engagement efforts and priorities. Then, the reports brought forward a list of priorities that I observed to direct the focus of dialog throughout meetings and the final policy. For example, during the 26 April 2018 community garden meeting, a CAC member commented, 'I have a list here [held up a piece of lined, notebook paper with a list written in pen], if you're interested.' The planner responded, especially to the tone of the final statement, by reaffirming the legitimacy of the CAC member's input, 'Sorry, I was going item by item, I didn't mean to frustrate you.'

Further, in Minneapolis, community garden CAC members described their own engagement efforts and resulting data, 'We did our own engagement and I think that now might be the appropriate time to present that. We drafted a document of points needing to be worked on according to a racial equity lens. We found that if we apply our racial equity lens, there is no explicit racial language nor is there any evaluation of WHO gets what and access (5 April 2018).' Here, the CAC members were organized such that they could bring forward a list of priorities (see chapter 8).

**Connections led to financial capital.** CACs did not raise funds but they made recommendations about where funds would be directed. Conversely, PACs' accrual of financial capital was contingent on the PAC's input of human resource of connections. From connections, PACs raised their own funds.

## Programs

Like the room transformations observed during board and advisory council meetings, programs also transformed spaces outdoors and inside park recreation centers. In doing so, creating and operating a program constituted a formal appropriation of space for a desired use. Further, transformations, and the inputs that produce them, explain how programs confront the distributional injustices by effectively creating more space. Creating more space was importance parks as a lack of space is often considered a barrier to offering more activities. As a result, many scholars contend that park size can be used as a measure of quality (see literature review).

I observed evidence of such thinking in practice. The Chicago Park District grades parks by physical assets and size. The 'A' park is like Garfield Park- something reminiscent of Paris' Dome Church commissioned by Louis XIV. In contrast, 'D' parks are much smaller. They may be a single room and potentially have outdoor restrooms. However, in making such distinctions, administrators at the center of the bureaucracy and some scholars miss how programs can leverage existing space and thus, operate as if they were much larger. To this extent, my key informant commented that programming can transform a park from a 'D' to an 'A.' They noted that a park supervisor was, "running it like an A" even though it was a D facility. Further, I observed that the small C3 Park's size was overcome via programming. Inside the field house, paper hands displayed sign-language letters; the supervisor enrolled in a course to then teach local children. When I visited, the supervisor was gluing together old CD cases, salvaged before they were thrown away, to create candle holders. Thus, to both modify the size of a small park environment as well as respond to the public's needs, park systems in both cities created new programs. I now describe the transaction of material resources that serve to create and maintain programs.

### Making More Time for Programs

In the case of programs, I classify time as a material resource because the manipulation of time permitted existence of a greater number of programs. Further, creating more program addressed a barrier to park use- not having enough time to use parks. Time was manipulated through the practice of "piggy-backing." Mentioned by park supervisors in both cities as well as during recreation and program policy

meetings in Minneapolis, “piggy-backing” describes how parks confront lack of time by rearranging when programs are offered. The C8 Park supervisor coined the term while describing techniques to grow programs which, included, “piggy back classes” that keep kids at the park all day. Offering one-hour programs, one immediately after another, made it worth a caregiver’s time to drive to the park because they knew they would not have to pick up kids shortly after dropping them off. An assistant at C8 Park in Chicago agreed, “That’s what works.” The practice was replicated by C5 Park’s supervisor, “So let’s create a class from this time to this time, you bring in 10 of your kids, that gives you enough time to do whatever. So now, we’re kind of creating a urgency for them and also urgency for us. Us, cause we want their kids, and in return we’re kind of giving the parents their time back to catch up.”

Piggy-backing also occurred when programs happened simultaneously for different age groups, thus allowing participants (e.g. a caregiver and child) to use the park at once. This type of piggy-backing was described by a Zumba instructor from Chicago, "Most of my participants that were- that are in Zumba, are parents that have their children in swimming at the same time Zumba is going on. So, I targeted the swimming parents and I went in there, when we started the program, and um I said, ‘Hey, you know, you guys sit here for an hour or err an hour and a half, and um, I’m going to start doing Zumba here.’" This same type of piggy-backing was explained by a Zumba instructor (translated from Spanish) in Minneapolis, “The park plans to have programs for kids at the same time that there are programs for the mothers. Other programs will be listed as ‘family’ so people of all ages can enroll.”

A third type of piggy-backing added hours to a park’s normal operating period. For example, in Minneapolis, programming often stopped once children turned 18. Though parks *could* be used, there was no park programming for children over 18 years of age. In response, some parks offered ‘Night Owl’ programs. To accommodate use for special age groups in Chicago, for example, many parks opened early for Seniors (or for before-school child care).

Thus, time was manipulated to make the building available with programming when and for whom it is needed. The practice of “piggy-backing” was sanctioned by administrators in the center of the bureaucracy when, for example, busy parks were given funds to add more program time slots. PAC

members at C5 Park explained, “I know that um our numbers, ever since renovation, has gone up. So, I think the park board is starting to realize that and is able to provide us. I like, we said the space is really limited, so they are able to provide us with more funding for more time slots."

**Making More Space for Programs**

**Sharing space.** Parks can augment their size by sharing space with other public service providers. Sharing space was sanctioned by the upper levels of bureaucracy; it was discussed in board meetings and solidified in formal agreements. For example, the memorandum of understanding between MPRB and Minneapolis Public Schools details how the two parties cooperate to share resources and thus, each expands their capacities. In Chicago, a C5 Park PAC member explained how at their park, the “High school and the park district, they have a contract with the Chicago public schools and the park district, they have a contract, so they both use their insufficient property.”

Bureaucratic policies for sharing were administered at individual parks. Usually, there was a schedule to distribute space (e.g. a field or gym) by time, day of the week, and even season. For example, in Chicago, the neighboring high school, shared their pool, a feature not found in C5 Park. As the school asks for a lot [of field times] the supervisor could frequently use the school’s gym and pool. Sometimes supervisors administering the sharing sensed unfairness, as schools were often prioritized. For example, the ML Park supervisor reflected on their sharing schedule and realized, “The park gets the first priority if there’s not a school function. So, that’s kind of a, well we don’t really get the first priority then!”

***Legacy users: problems with sharing space.*** Sharing space raised concerns about priority use of desirable spaces and time slots. Some concerns arose because of legacy users (though not yet observed in Chicago). An interview with Minneapolis’ MB Park supervisor explained, “Right now the policy is if you rented the room tomorrow, like even if you had a birthday party here tomorrow in our room down the hall, for instance, you have right of recall for next year. So, tomorrow, after your party, you could book it for next year if you like, if you were a good standing user, patron, yes. So, that means, if you book the field right now, like the groups that are out there have been using the field for the whole time this park’s

been built, so, seven years. Because they're returning users. So, it's very difficult to get in until someone moves out of that or kind of moves on or there's another place for them to kind of go."

Observations of recreation and program policy CAC meetings showed the public's perspective on legacy use. Focus groups were asked about reserving fields. Results were shared and an assistant superintendent noted that they had 'Heard that the crude system that we implemented last year is working.' I believe the 'crude system' refers to having a piece of paper outside each field with a complete reservations schedule. My belief is supported by a CAC member who responded to field availability by saying, "I know there are signs about hours, maybe it comes up in focus groups, but it feels unresolved (MPRB's notes meeting #13)." This same CAC member then reported that, 'Key times of the day / week are not accessible to folks in the neighborhood.' In response, the park administrator asked if the CAC would like to explore the issue together, now, or if they and the CAC member can handle it offline. The administrator admits, 'I don't have a clear solution open and I'd like to honor leagues and honor neighborhoods.' Thus, distributional injustices still occur but park staff sought public input.

During the next meeting, a CAC member felt the issue had still not been resolved and explained that, "At MB Park they rent out [turf fields] from sun up to sun down and [the fields] are not open to pick up [games]. Can we find a balance to 'prime times' for neighborhood folks as well as leagues. There are both sides to this. It is not accessible to neighborhood people. It is just going back to that conversation and do not have a recommendation (MPRB's notes meeting #14)." During this same meeting, a conversation centered on focus groups and field use, related to navigating the online reservation system. Youth focus groups saw the reservation system as a barrier that led to feelings of insecurity. They would get to a field to try to start playing on it and someone would kick them off, saying that they had a previous, online reservation. Documents support this conversation, MPRB's focus group summary for recreation and programming policy (17 May 2018), "Youth indicated the online reservation system, fees and building hours to be barriers."

I observed scheduling conflicts, especially with respect to turf fields, high-demand programs like day camp, and high-demand spaces like gymnasiums. A staff member at C2 Park explained that kids get

angry when others are using a gymnasium and they cannot play in that space. The MB Supervisor explained this phenomenon using soccer, “You don’t have to pay for a lot. It’s easy. It’s played by lots of cultures. Right now, it’s hot. And do we have enough fields? No. and in Minneapolis, you know, I think we have like seven turf fields.” Solutions to unequal distribution of field access may be simple, a printed schedule of field availability, so that everyone has access to information. However, as this issue was brought up in multiple meetings and still, to CAC members, did not feel resolved, perhaps continued public input is needed to find another solution or perhaps, there is simply not enough park space. Sharing or piggy-backing may not be sufficient.

**Trading space.** Parks also augmented their size by trading space with members of the public or private service providers. Chicago’s C6 Park supervisor explained, “Even if we don’t have money, we have space, so we have something to trade.” In this way, the supervisor revealed that parks can leverage their public land, even if it is small, by trading it for the services of instructors who will lead programming in that park space. The trade benefitted instructors looking to grow their businesses (e.g. a dance teacher) because they received discounted studio space. Park patrons also pay instructors and parks and then, receive professional instruction. In this way, park supervisors also described trading “kids for space (e.g. C1 Park).” The logistics of a trade were outlined by a program administrator in Chicago, “[Instructors] teach X-number of workshops for me um at the demonstration garden. So, we look at some of these land use agreements as a way to sort of set up a win-win situation where they get to do really great work um and not have to worry as much about their overhead expenses or at least their land expenses. And in return, we get to take part in offering a really great benefit to the community.”

***Minneapolis.*** MPRB engages volunteers and paid instructors; regardless the process of working with outside partners appeared informal. Indeed, the ME Park supervisor recalled, “I had a lady contact me... So, she wanted to teach a free yoga class and it turns out she’s very good with social media and so now on Tuesday nights we will have between 75 and 90 people for yoga.” At MH Park, instructors may be “inherited” or drawn from the existing pottery network who, the supervisor said, “I’ll ask them first and get some references and stuff um, I’m not a pottery expert so I defer to those guys, you know like

what do they need to know. You know, I did have a brief job description just in case people call in at least I can answer intelligently but I usually talk it over with them and sometimes they've even participated in the interviews." Thus, it seemed that working with an outside partner was uncomplicated.

***Chicago.*** Perhaps highlighting its bureaucratic intricacy, the CPD's policy for trading spaces was more formal. A PAC administrator described the procedure with an example, "Like, a dance. You'd send your letter of intent to the supervisor, they will create a partnership. That partnership will go to at least 8 other people to make sure that it's an appropriate partnership. What that means is, it has, it should be, [clear in how it is] [*the audio cuts out briefly and a few times*] beneficial to the public and how it benefits the park. I mean, [bringing] more awareness, adding- giving a new program for that park- it will get approved [exhales, like this is routine knowledge]." The process appeared complicated, formal, and involving many powerful people. Indeed, many 2018 PAC conference sessions were dedicated to successfully completing partnership agreements. Importantly, the C7 Park supervisor explained another, informal policy, aimed at increasing equality: outside partners used park facilities but the supervisor made sure the facility was available for "them and us." This fair-trade policy was bolstered with a financial incentive. A partner paid no facility-use fee if they used the facility for "our kids." If not, they paid.

**Room Transformation**

Rooms in park recreation centers were re-purposed for several functions. A supervisor, in a park where I observed Zumba, disclosed that rooms got "recycled a lot." Program instructors experienced the impacts of recycling. A Zumba instructor from Chicago explained, "I have to move around through the park" to accommodate classes, especially as participation increases or when other programs need particular spaces. Park supervisors administered the recycling by shuffling program locations throughout a recreation center. The MD park supervisor explained their jurisdiction, they modified spaces temporarily but could not change physical infrastructure. For example, pointing to a room with a high, triangular-shaped ceiling, the supervisor explained the room was used for wrestling three nights a week but had to be 'broken down after.' Further, multi-purpose spaces "morph into" other spaces, serving as a wrestling room three nights a week and then a card room, and then another use.

As a program could be held anywhere, park rooms were transformed to fit different programs. Rooms were transformed when the public and park staff engaged in overlapping transactions of material resources. Transactions also encompassed the semiotic realm as park staff and the public believed a park space could serve as something beyond an empty, multi-purpose room. Parks were transformed for a variety of needs: a senior club, an afterschool childcare space, or a meeting room and likely employed similar methods for transformation. I collected observational data in adult fitness classes, so I will describe how park rooms were transformed into workout studios.

**Engaging the senses.** Lighting transformed spaces. For a slower-paced yoga class, the instructor dimmed the lights and the room felt tranquil. During Senior's Club, sunlight flooded the room; it looked and felt warm. During Zumba, the instructor asked for the lights to be turned off. They then took out two small light machines. Immediately, red, green, and blue lights flashed around the room. Smells also transformed spaces. During Senior's Club, socializing was key. To facilitate this, I felt transported to a restaurant. I smelled hot tortillas. The stage was set up as a buffet table with Styrofoam plates, tortillas, a dish of beans, a sticky roll, and Tupperware filled with produce. A coffee urn's red light glowed ON. Finally, sound transformed spaces. Across both cities, I heard different music in every class- 1970's disco, songs all in Spanish, 1990's pop hits, religious hip hop, and instrumental covers of The Who.

**Support spaces.** Instructors created a 'studio headquarters.' They brought sound systems that ranged from an elaborate set up on a table, to a rolling speaker suitcase, to a tiny portable speaker. Often, instructors kept a sign-in sheet at the studio headquarters. Further, participants transformed bleachers into locker rooms by storing their belongings during class. In Chicago and Minneapolis, I observed that as women arrived, they made a lobby, unfolding chairs from a rack, sitting, and waiting for the instructor.

**Equipment.** Rooms in parks were transformed by clearing away items. For example, I observed unnecessary mats and folding chairs pushed up against walls. As mentioned by the C8 Park supervisor, the MD Park supervisor quoted earlier, and supported by interviewees in both cities, clearing away items was thought of as "breaking down" a room. Spaces were also transformed by bringing in equipment. For boot camp and then yoga, a rolling cart was pushed onto a gymnasium floor. Yoga mats, and resistance

bands hung on hooks and weights were stacked on a shelf. In another example, before a step class, the instructor unlocked a closet. Each participant took out a step and set it on the floor. Half-way through class, the step portion concluded, and the instructor produced a reusable cloth bag. Each participant took out resistance band. Then, the instructor guided participants through a strength workout using the bands.

**Clothing.** Participants wore athletic apparel: shorts and t-shirts or stretchy leggings and tops. Zumba participants in Minneapolis even coordinated their apparel by wearing matching neon-yellow tops. Further, these participants followed online videos of Zumba studios, in Spanish, where the studio participants also wore matching outfits. Instructors also helped transform participants' clothing. For several Zumba classes, instructors brought a tote bag or plastic box filled with sashes, fringed with gold coins. Upon entering, participants selected a sash and wore it throughout class.

**Positioning bodies or equipment.** Participants formed orderly lines and remained in their places during workouts. By changing their position, they separated two different elements of a fitness class. For example, in Chicago, participants faced west during the "step" portion of the workout and stood near their plastic "steps." They re-positioned themselves for the second half of class (resistance bands) facing north, near the mirrors, in an open floor space.

**Caveats of transformation.** Transformations occurred by engaging the senses, creating support spaces, adding equipment and clothing, and positioning oneself in a space. However, according to the MD Park supervisor, some rooms just "are." For example, the computer room was always a computer room. Additionally, some spaces are unsuitable for some uses. For example, two instructors in Chicago explained how some rooms were too small to transform into particular uses, "I am limited to 20 people because I teach boot camp in a small room." The other, a Zumba instructor said that when a room reached capacity, an instructor may turn participants away, acknowledging that the room and the participants could overheat, posing a safety concern. In this way, the transforming park space was not a panacea. Transformations were limited, like when participant safety could be compromised.

With that disclosure, however, the more common experience was transformability. Instructors could overcome small spaces. A kick boxing instructor described accommodating more participants, "So

knowing that it's not a lot of space . . . I kept it low-impact. Just because it's low-impact doesn't mean that you can't get a good workout. So, I'd have them do a lot of squat holds." Further, as explained by the MH Park supervisor, "If our program were half the size that it is, it wouldn't be a problem. But we are just, we are bursting at the seams so it's hard to find space to do this, so. But we'll do it, we'll figure it out."

## Daily Use

I had assumed the park space itself was inflexible. Reading the scholarly literature, I believed the generic design of parks sent a message, a semiotic input, that only some park uses were appropriate. In my observations, rigid and uncomfortable benches seemed to encourage sitting up respectfully, rather than sleeping. Similarly, bathrooms that closed at night underscored that parks were only for daytime pursuits. Finally, fixed-use, single-sport spaces encouraged pre-approved physical activities. Indeed, in both cities and all parks, I observed park patrons using park spaces as expected: children always played at the playground; a few softball or football games were held on the proper fixed-use, single-sport space; basketball was played on courts; patrons exercised by walking laps around a park's sidewalk; groups grilled or sat at picnic tables. Thus, at times my observations supported the idea of inflexible park space.

However, like Loukaitou-Sideris (1995), I also observed groups "appropriating spaces" for use in ways other than intended. Like programs, park patrons modified park environments to better suit their individual needs or wants. In contrast, appropriation during daily use was informal.

### Sports

I observed groups appropriating open space and spaces designated to be used for another sport. I observed the practice in wealthy as well as underserved neighborhoods. For example, at C2 park in Chicago, I observed a family speaking Spanish and playing pick-up soccer in a grassy area between a path and softball field. A man kicked a soccer ball with two young boys. A woman watched them from a bench and would yell, "GOOOOOOOALL!" At MI Park in Minneapolis, I observed six men playing three-on-three soccer. They brought four small cones and set them up in the open space just outside the softball field. The cones demarcated two goals. The men chatted and yelled Spanish. I also noticed other sports: teens playing kickball on softball field (MB Park); kids playing football on a softball field (MJ

Park); badminton practice in an open space (MJ Park). To appropriate space, park patrons brought physical materials as inputs to the park decision-making system. In response, park staff did not interfere and park patrons could carry on modifying the park environment to meet their needs.

**Sharing Space**

Rather than a single group using an entire soccer field, skate park, swimming pool, or open space, groups partitioned the space. For example, at MI Park, two soccer games were played simultaneously such that each group used half the soccer field. The groups returned each other's stray balls. However, at times fields were too crowded, and groups were turned away (for example, MJ Park 23 August 2017); at times, the park environment was too congested for sharing certain amenities.

To share space, one party's actions signaled if a space was either available or too full. If space was available, one group remained on their "side" or limited their use to certain amenities within a park area (e.g. skate park), leaving the other portion open for other groups. In response, other groups accepted sharing by joining existing groups on a field or park area and staying within the limits of their own side.

Park supervisors respond to sharing with approval. Indeed, the MK Park supervisor expected sharing space; further, even expected rule-breaking to share space, "There's, last night there was ultimate frisbee out there which was just a group of 12 people that came down, took the greenspace, and started using it. You know um, and there's a lot of just working in conjunction. People are flexible. I have a couple nights a week a youth baseball team that practices out there and there is, technically, yeah, do they have priority because they're a park team and they use the space and, but um there's enough space where we can still accommodate just about everybody with just working together. I see a lot more use out of the facilities and the greenspace um for off the cuff things like a volleyball game or a frisbee game or games on the basketball or the tennis courts are used all the time. Um but not necessarily something that I'm in control over or something I'm programming for, its more just the space is here, and the community uses it that way." Further, this supervisor acknowledged that people might have interests other than what was programmed. A modifiable park environment allows spontaneous activities to meet the public's needs.

**Creating Personal Spaces**

**Basic needs.** Appropriation also occurred when people used parks like *their* home. People brought inputs in the form of personal belongings and created personal spaces like bedrooms. They brought blankets and clothing to parks and slept on the grass or benches. Then, from the semiotic realm, their inputs were the meaning they gave to park spaces. Indeed, people behaved as if they were in their home. For example, a woman at MI Park behaved as if in her bedroom. She completed her morning routine: she sat up on blanket under a tree and adjusted her shoes and socks. She stood, walked to throw trash in a trash can. Then, as I continually observed people doing, she went to a light pole and stood on the picnic table beneath it. She could then reach a small power box to plug in her phone to charge. She left her phone and moved on, filling a water bottle and walking back to her blanket. Seeming to know others in the park, she spoke loudly to a man and shouted to a woman.

Equally personal, I observed people applying makeup in bathrooms or bathing in parks. For example, a woman at MJ Park took off her outer clothing to wear only a white tank top over a black bra and jean shorts. While children were also swimming, she waded into the pool. She sat in water and then stood up after a minute and got out of the pool. She pulled a white cloth out of her green plastic bag, wiped her face, and put it back in her bag.

**Personal enrichment spaces.** For example, C2 Park had two gardens. The first was made in collaboration with a garden group. For the second, one woman wanted a butterfly garden. So, she brought plants from her home garden and planted them. Parks were also used for a group's sacred or special events. For example, in Minneapolis' MB Park, I observed athletes use the park as a temporary space for prayer. Athletes lined up and faced the park's kitchen window opening. They stood in a row, faced the same direction, and all bent down at the same time. I felt like was observing a call to prayer. A staff member in a blue t-shirt listened to a loud video on his phone while they prayed, not stopping them or seeming to pay them attention. After, the athletes returned to their basketball game. In terms of special events, weddings, baby showers, and birthday parties were held in parks. Two birthdays were celebrated in C2 Park in Chicago, simultaneously, in two different park spaces. One was complete with cake, chafing dishes of food, a piñata, and tables and chairs full of guests. These inputs transformed outdoor space into

party rooms. In Minneapolis' MI Park, women and children picnicked. Groups of two to four were scattered throughout a third of the park. I felt like every square meter was touched by beautiful headscarves and smiling faces. Groups sat in the shade, on blankets on the grass or on benches. The women talked and laughed, some while holding babies or tending small children. Some women ate together; one group had brought a tea pot.

**Park staff.** While park patrons were providing inputs that facilitated the creation of personal spaces park staff, like sports spaces, did not often interfere. In a park with many homeless users, a park supervisor referenced "that corner" of the park twice in our conversation. I had observed many people sleeping under blankets there, food wrappers, cigarettes, and liquor bottles. The supervisor said that the area was not safe and further, recommended I not go there at night. 'The people there drink, smoke, and shoot dice,' the supervisor said. In response to "that corner" (also observed in other parks), supervisors responded by keeping their activities separate from homeless people but also, offered respect. To this extent, the MI Park supervisor said, 'We try to stay away from that corner and that if the people from that corner come closer into the park, towards the field house, the park staff will tell them to go back and they usually listen. When you talk to people from the corner, you can't be mean about it, you have to be respectful.' The supervisor noted that it took a long time to build that relationship and it is one built on mutual respect. Similarly, the MB Park supervisor explained, "We have a lot of homeless people. Specially for the summer which, makes it kind of challenging." The challenge was other peoples' fear that homeless people might carry a weapon or deal drugs. However, in action, the MB Park supervisor knew the names of the homeless people living in the park and reported, "They're our regulars."

**Park Art**

The differences among neighborhoods and their park users were celebrated in murals painted on park walls by local artists or via art added by park supervisors. For example, at MA Park, portraits of famous Black Americans, including biographical information, were hung over the drinking fountains. A championship sports banner for 8U kids hung near the side door. In Chicago's C1 Park, recreation center rooms were named for prominent leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, like Rosa Parks. My key

informant reported getting, ‘An amazing feeling to see those names up there.’ Finally, all parks have a bulletin board but each is decorated differently and the content reflects neighborhood events and news. In a wealthy neighborhood’s park, I observed a Peanuts bulletin board with block letters, ‘Happiness is warm sunshine.’ Another board listed neighborhood news: a martial arts master who will be giving a talk; three girls who offer to walk dogs, the flier has little tear-off pieces of paper where you can take the girls’ numbers to call them. At MI Park, in an underserved area, the bulletin board had fliers and posters, including a plant sale and swimsuit drive.

**Conclusion**

My data show that different material resources were exchanged in each decision-making venue. Resources transformed the park system to meet the needs and wants of the public. During board meetings, members of the public extended the time available to them to address the board by presenting physical documents. As advisory councils, PACs provided financial support allowed for programs or enhanced experiences for park users. CAC members contributed physical documents that steered plans and policies to more closely align with the public’s wants and needs. During programs and daily use, physical spaces were transformed via physical equipment, trades, and sharing of space; doing so allowed for a multitude of different individual uses and group programs to occupy the same park space.

The material resources transacted here speak to the ways in which physical materials facilitated the transformation of spaces such that they become spaces for the public to participate in decision-making about how parks look and operate. Material resources created venues to make decisions about park use as well as transform physical park spaces of parks. The importance of physical resources is common to the literature on collaboration. Indeed, Emerson et al. (2011) as well as Koontz et al. (2004) mention the importance of obtaining and exchanging physical resources during collaboration. I added depth to the work of Loukaitou-Sideris (1995) by showing that material resources supplied by the public but also, reacted to by park administrators, were key in the appropriation of space. Of specific importance here is the evidence that material resources offered by the public are key to bringing recognition justice to parks.

The resources offered by the public transformed park systems to better align with the public's preferences.

Especially in the case of PACs, the material resources provided by the public are very much valued by park administrators. Supervisors depend on PAC funds to run their park. Likewise, the documents introduced to decision-making by CAC members shaped the focus of plans and policies, showing that administrators found them credible and representing valid public opinion. The public's input was not met with skepticism, as is often the data collected by the public during citizen science. It was instead, welcomed, like the traditional ecological knowledge studied by Berkes and colleagues.

# Chapter 7. Social-Ecological System Inputs: Human Resources

The Social Ecological Systems (SES) perspective organizes system inputs as material and human resources and the semiotic, the meaning of actions and objects. In this chapter, I analyze each of the decision-making venues by focusing the transaction of human resources (Table 7). I sought to understand how human resources can transform park systems by asking the research question, "How can resources transform park systems?" My results answer questions about the utility of human resources input by the public during decision-making. Also, they describe human resources necessary to transform individual parks into decision-making venues as well as to create physical park spaces that better align with the public's preferences. I found that I often privileged instances when the public input their knowledge and the response of professionals' (planners, park administrators, etc.) which demonstrated the value of those inputs. Like for material resources, when possible I also interpret what each input "meant" in context.

Table 7 Human Resources Transacted in Four Decision-Making Venues

| **INPUTS** | **Sub-Category** | **Board Meeting** | **Advisory Council** | **Programs** | **Daily Use** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Learning the process | | X | X | X | X |
| Time | | X | | | |
| Intentions transform | | | X | | |
| Connections | | | X | X | |
| Knowledge | Park Use | X | X | X | X |
| Knowledge | Technical | *Technical posturing* | *Technical posturing; Sharing professional experience.* | *Serving as instructors* | *Leading impromptu programs* |
| Knowledge | Environmental justice sensibility | *Distribution Procedural Recognition* | *Distribution Procedural Recognition* | | |

Table 7 The different Human Resources offered by the public during collaborative decision-making in each of the venues. Venues are listed across the top of the table horizontally while types of inputs are listed vertically on the left side. I add greater specificity for two types of knowledge inputs. For technical knowledge, I list in *italics* how the public was acting to show that type of knowledge. For environmental justice sensitivity, I list the types of justice that members of the public referenced during meetings.

## Board Meetings

### Actions Manipulate Time

**Going over time.** The public faced rules to their participation (see chapter 4). Timers limited sharing input during public comment period and sent the semiotic input that the public was knowledgeable than professionals. However, when members of the public continued speaking after the two-minute timer expired, they were able to manipulate time, speaking for as long as was necessary to convey an issue's importance. For example, during the November 2018 Chicago board meeting's public comment, I observed a speaker being reminded that time was up and being asked to make concluding remarks. However, in response, the speaker took their time and continued calmly, 'To conclude, [park name omitted] is a work of art that will be priceless to relocate and builders will be irretrievably moved apart from one another.' Going over the allotted time occurred in both cities. In response, park board members and secretaries gave tacit approval: verbal warnings but not stopping the speaker.

**Referencing.** Park administrators and technicians showed they valued the public's inputs by referring to the public's words during subsequent discussions. In this way, the public gave the same input twice and also, shaped the words used in dialog and steered the dialog towards their priorities. For example, during a public hearing for the recreation and program policy (5 September 2018), a CAC member described the lack of athletic field access (an issue they had spoken about during advisory council meetings) and a disproportionate distribution of access to leagues versus informal, public use. After the public comments, an assistant superintendent made a presentation on the same topic. They also responded to commissioners' questions including, 'What's the process we follow for moving forward. For example, how should we address scheduling on the athletic fields?' The assistant superintendent responded by referring to the CAC member's comment, 'I think we need to recognize that scheduling is but one part of the challenge. Like [CAC member's first name] had said, the leagues take up a lot of space.' In another example, during the 16 May 2018 Board of Commissioners meeting in Minneapolis, a commissioner recalled a public question from the previous meeting, a member of the public had asked, 'With a new spitting ordinance, how would safety be addressed?' The commissioners' recollection

spurred another commissioner to ask questions about safety and the board president to request a follow up staff report for the next meeting.' My observations of this act were limited to Minneapolis; I would seek additional data in Chicago.

**Expected Knowledge**

The act of participating suggested that the public believed they were qualified to contribute input. They "proved" they were qualified by beginning their public comment testimony with a statement of their name and address (as required in Minneapolis) but also, by stating how close they lived to a park, how long they've lived there, and their park use. For example, in Chicago a person began their testimony during the November 2018 board meeting, 'I've been a resident of [place name omitted] for 20 years. I am the PAC secretary.' During a 16 January 2019 public hearing in Minneapolis, public comments began with, 'I am new to the North side. I have lived here for 12 years. I moved from South Minneapolis where I lived for 30 years.' As well as, 'My grandparents are from North Minneapolis,' and, 'I grew up here and raised my kids here. We play at MC and MG Parks.' The final speaker of the hearing began, 'I have 40 years at MG University. Home for me and many.' Sometimes speakers would qualify their input by mentioning how it overlapped with their professional experience.

Inclusion of the public also suggested that park administrators valued public input. However, park administrators may expect a certain type of input: knowledge of park use preferences. For example, a PAC administrator, "They get two minutes to you know, tell us what they need. What they want. Sometimes it's just sticking up for projects or it's a meeting, or its we need this fix at our park. And it's bringing attention to whatever item it is."

In response to these expectations, members of the public did share knowledge about park use. They often gave a 'State of the Park' address about their park's amenities or programming and its condition. For example, during a January 2019 public hearing on a new master plan, a park was described as a, "Horrible park, so outdated. We can't use." Similarly, in Chicago, 'We need to improve our entrance. The ball fields are unusable because of drainage issue.' More, they emphasized *needing* a place to do an activity: playing pickleball, skating, meeting past 6:00pm, playing Sepak Takraw, and playing hockey.

During the November 2018 meeting in Chicago, a speaker had concerns about changing locations of a model train program, ‘To conclude, [park name omitted] is a work of art that will be priceless to relocate and builders will be irretrievably moved apart from one another.’ Also, speakers explained that because they use a park, they knew more about an issue and were aware of things park staff were not. Finally, speakers advocated for a project. For example, during the February 2018 board meeting, an adaptive recreation athlete asked the board to increase focus on adaptive sports in its plans, dreaming of a special facility that “we can call home.” The speaking concluded by asking the board “to invest in kids like us as we invest in ourselves.”

**Unexpected Knowledge**

Beyond park use preferences, the public offered unexpected knowledge. Such knowledge turned the park board’s agenda towards priorities that perhaps differed from what the board had intended to pursue. As mentioned previously by a PAC administrator, when the public spoke during public comment, “It’s bringing attention to whatever item it is." One knowledge type is environmental justice sensibility.

**Procedural justice.** Speakers held public officials accountable for procedural injustice. For example, during Chicago’s February 2018 board meeting, a speaker explained that their PAC dissolved and now, there was no forum for participation. Another was upset about an inappropriate amount of time for public notice and public comment for a proposed golf course. In Minneapolis, speakers commented on their involvement with master planning, perhaps thanking a planner for the engagement or describing their exclusion, wanting to be involved earlier.

**Racial disparities and gentrification.** The public also raised topics that may have felt difficult to discuss in public meetings, especially because they entailed confronting the dominant culture and white privilege. During the February 2018 meeting in Chicago, a speaker was upset about naming a park after Ed Kelly, a recently-deceased and former CPD superintendent. The speaker claimed Ed Kelly was a racist; he deliberately underfunded minority communities. In Minneapolis, during the 16 May 2018 meeting, a speaker reminded all present that, ‘This land was Dakota land to begin with and we needed to honor this.’ During the 6 June 2018 meeting, a fitness center owner said their business goal was, ‘To try

to turn over some of the health disparities felt by residents on the North Side of Minneapolis.' Finally, during the 16 January 2019 meeting, a speaker reminded everyone, 'We need to make sure we are not displacing anyone with gentrification.' While another speaker implored, 'They played on courts full of cracks. That can cause injuries. They shouldn't have to do that over at [high school near MG Park]. We have to work for excellence in North [Minneapolis].'

**Administrative response.** Knowledge of environmental justice was unexpected (it was not park use) but valued because it alerted administrators to priority issues. Following Adams (2004), the public can support and thus, build connections to commissioners, when they discuss the same justice issues. This synergy was shown in Minneapolis, a commissioner as well as a speaker during public comment during the 16 January 2019 board meeting, noted that kids in North Minneapolis had too few courts to play tennis. Additionally, unexpected knowledge may prompt an equally-unexpected response from commissioners during public comment. They may respond to the public or begin a dialog thus, modifying the rules of the decision-making venue. For example, in Chicago, during the November 2018 board meeting, a member of the public commented, 'We wanted to add our voices in concern of the increasing restrictions you've been putting on public voices and public comments.' The speaker detailed the restrictions put in place and concluded, 'This prompted us to form a Park Watch group [name anonymized].' Rather than remain quiet, as rules dictated for board members during public comment, the board president said, 'I'll address this now. It's not actually a restriction whatsoever. I have met with people. Because of the availability of more electronic information every day. Frankly, I disagree [with your claims].' Though the president broke with protocol to engage in discussion, the aim was to discredit the speaker. The speaker answered, 'Putting out information is not the same as having a dialog.' To which the president contended, 'You can schedule a meeting with a board member at any time' suggesting that this was not the venue for discussions. The member of the public concluded the interaction by responding, 'Thank you, I will but it is not the same.' In the moment, the speaker was responded to with a dialog; however, the decision-making environment was not modified to facilitate subsequent discussions.

**Unnecessary Knowledge**

When "technical posturing," the public shared knowledge that overlapped with those in power at the board meeting site. The public used expert language and prepared reports; thus, emulating the inputs of planners and technicians. For example, in the middle of the 11 April 2018 board meeting about historic preservation, a member of the public tried to interrupt by raising their hand. The third time, they paused, hand raised and began to speak, 'Could I please?! I'm sort of an expert on some of this,' and explained that Legacy Funds could be available. They closed, 'I am sorry to interrupt but I wanted to let people know that money was available.' Three commissioners said thank you, two using the speaker's first name, but then all returned to the meeting without further acknowledgement. In Chicago, a PAC member commented during the November 2018 board meeting, 'I am on the PAC and am passing out a petition to renovate the historic field house.' The speaker told the history of the park and what it meant to the community, "serving thousands of people year-round." Further, all the petition-signers thank you for making sure community voices are heard. Research supporting this is in the packet you all have. I'd like to spend the rest of the time reading aloud public comment.'

Perhaps the public engaged in technical posturing to considered equals to planners and other experts. However, such knowledge may have less value because park administrators were already seen as experts. During board meetings, there was rarely a response to this type of public input but interviews with park board commissioners are needed to gain their perspective on the utility of this input.

**A Promising Response Strategy during Board Meetings**

Parks departments in both cities responded to the public by offering to "talk offline." Talking offline extended the speaker's time and provided an opportunity to enter a new decision-making sub-venue. Thus, the offer transforms the board meeting from Arnstein's (1969) consultation, to a two-way dialog. The board of commissioners frequently extended this offer after a public comment, particularly if a distinct issue was presented. Thus, it appeared board members saw the offer as useful.

**Public response.** The public may accept this offer. In Chicago, the board president offered talking offline and a park administrator approached the podium as the speaker finished. The pair walked toward the back of the room. The administrator touched the speaker's arm while they were walking, a

caring gesture. The speaker said, ‘Let’s go back there and talk.’ Sometimes, the public did not see the offer as helpful. During the 6 June 2018 board meeting in Minneapolis, a speaker’s timer expired, ‘So, the last doc, the speaker continued, I’ll just tell you what it is.’ While explaining, the president used the speaker’s first name, ‘[Name omitted], I’ll just ask you for 10 more seconds.’ After the speaker’s conclusion, the president requested any supporting documents and said, ‘I’ll refer you to assistant superintendent [name omitted].’ The speaker sat down in front of me and spoke to a companion, ‘Do you want to stay and hear some more? Should I even go talk to [name of the assistant superintendent]?’In a final example, the speaker shows no ambiguity (like the Minneapolis example) or appreciation (like the Chicago example). To this PAC member, the offer was merely placation as it referred them to a process they had already completed rather than creating a viable alternative or solution. The PAC member stated board meetings are,

> "Not our favorite meetings," and explained, "So when you go there, you go and you have just a certain amount of time to talk to the board, um they last time that we went, we didn’t have a very good experience. . . So, we went, and we asked for the sidewalks. And we saw that for other PACs, they were saying, ‘Yes, we could do this project’ and ‘Yes’ to that person and when it was our turn to speak, we presented what we wanted, and all of that and they say, ‘Thank you for your time.’ And that’s it. And we’re like, ‘So who should we talk to about it?’ um and they basically told us to talk to our area manager um our area manager he talked to us but then we know that he makes the changes or improvements we want to make for the park to add the sidewalk that’s someone else within the park district. Um so we didn’t go back to the park board meetings."

**Public Adaptation to Board Meetings**

I have shown how the public’s inputs modified the board meeting venue so that the park decision-making system better aligned with their preferences. Sometimes, conversely, the public adapted to better fit into the existing decision-making system. The public may want to adapt because understanding how to operate with the existing system helps them accomplish goals. A member of C5 Park’s PAC recalled how at their first board meeting, they were unsuccessful in getting a sidewalk for their park, “So we didn’t go back to the park board meetings but now we’re coming back and organizing again to start going because we believe that having a sidewalk will make the park accessible to everyone and that we should have a

sidewalk." I asked if they would do anything differently for the next park board meeting and they responded, "I think we're going to hold meetings with the public officials uh we're going to ask them to send us a letter and maybe even saying that they're willing to help pay for the sidewalk and then we're going to take that to the board meeting um and hopefully. And we'll take more community members because last time, it was only five of us that went so we are going to start planning the campaign on how we're going to get the sidewalk."

**Scholarships.** Many park advisory councils fundraise to create scholarship funds (see chapter 4 and next section). To show alignment of priorities between the public and the park board, I present the following example. Park board members hoped that online registration systems that required payment-in-full would not prevent low-income users, who must to pay with a credit card and wait to be reimbursed with scholarship money, from registering for programs. A commissioner stated, 'My question is that I don't want people to be deterred from registering because they can't come up with the money up front or they don't have a credit card.' A park administrator responded that the park system was working to document financial need in their registration and thus, exempt certain users from paying in full. They stated, 'We are working on that. It's like adding information about a participant so that when someone is registering for gymnastics, it makes sure that you have had the first class in the sequence first. We are using a similar model [for funding].' This event showed a concern for affordability but also examination of procedures that had not yet been recognized as burdensome to individuals. Since this meeting, the CPD's Financial Assistance webpage has been updated to reflect the ability for patrons to show official financial need documents in-person, at their park. Their account will be updated so they are automatically and only charged the reduced camp fee (also see chapter 4).

In sum, the flexibility of board meetings allowed the public to modify the decision-making system, in terms of time and accepted knowledge, so that participation matched their preferences. With repeated participation, the public may find new ways to modify the system. In this way, the park decision-making system increases congruence with public participants. Conversely, it was also useful for the

public to adapt to the existing decision-making process to accomplish their goals. Adapting to the system may help the public to leverage alignment with board members on priority issues.

## Advisory Councils

### Transforming Space to Encourage Discussion

In chapter 6, I described the physical transformations of spaces that facilitated discussion. During advisory council meetings human inputs also facilitated discussion. Indeed, during PAC meetings, supervisors at C2 and C5 parks explained how they were present during PAC meetings so they could listen to what the PACs reported. Then, as supervisors, they could begin their part of the process to get things done in their park. As stated by the C5 Park supervisor, “I can’t be successful if I can’t listen to you.” Statements like this suggests the value of dialog with the public. Also, like Emerson et al.’s (2011) deliberation, the supervisors made PAC members feel like they would be heard in meetings.

During every CAC meeting, the park administrator’s words implied that the space served to facilitate dialog with advisory council members. For example, administrators prompted dialog. During a recreation and program policy meeting, an assistant superintendent wanted the CAC to choose language for a recommendation to the board, ‘Let’s hear some language! Come on, take a stab at it! What do you want the board to do? Increase funding?’ During service area planning meetings, the lead planner often remarked, ‘I am here to facilitate but this is your meeting.’ Input of these statements defined the public’s role as knowledge contributors and created safety in which to make such contributions. To these prompts, participants at times remained silent or in other instances, began dialog.

### Knowledge Shared

Like board meetings, inputs were expected to reflect the public’s knowledge of park use. CAC members were encouraged to make the first round of comments on park designs. PAC members regularly surveyed their park’s condition and reported to the park supervisor.

**Technical posturing.** Also, like board meetings, I observed technical posturing by advisory council members. For example, PAC members did research. PAC member #4 stated, "So I went to the board of commissioners meeting, and the goal is not to only go with a problem but to go with a solution

and so the solution was for me to go with research on ADA compliance." Similarly, PAC member #2 said, “I found out, doing some research, a hundred years ago when the park was designed, the landscape architect knew it flooded, so he had a proposal to create a wetland. And you know, that happened and it went away, and um so I’ve been saying, ‘why don’t we bring that back?’" In Minneapolis, CAC members shared technical knowledge about watersheds, peat soil, and eutrophication. Park administrators presented to the CAC about similar “hard science” topics and worked with Technical Advisory Committees.

Advisory council members may not have felt they were “posturing” but rather, capable to speak on technical topics. Indeed, many cited their professional experience and ability to leverage that experience when discussing why they joined a council. For example, PAC member #2 reasoned, “I mean my career was in construction management, you know, I am used to dealing with projects and budgets and all that." PAC member #4 said, "I have experience in working with non-profits, organizing, you know, um being in a social environment and being a little bit more vocal. So, I think that’s some of the um, the advantage is... or how would you say it? My strengths in doing that. Working here, with the council, allows for me to be able to do that." In Minneapolis, CAC member #2 was working on a development project and then, at the request of city leaders, continued that work as their appointee to the CAC. Further, CAC member #2’s educational experience was considered important preparation for their role on the CAC, “My master’s degree is in advocacy and political leadership … So, I’ve been prepped for this moment, at this time and I am really starting to understand how it can really happen.”

Conversely, those in power, at the center of the bureaucracy may not have valued the public’s technical or professional knowledge. In Minneapolis, a planner noted that if a people had professional experience, the park board would try to hire them as a contractor, implying that professional knowledge was less valuable during public engagement. In Chicago, I ask a PAC administrator if PAC members’ professional work must align with their PAC role. The administrator responded, “Not necessarily” and described scenarios where profession did not align with PAC roles. For example, a PAC member was a pilot, “Has nothing to do with parks! Um, but he is very active. He was on the committee for the PAC Conference. And he um you know, he’s part of it because he didn’t like the playground that the

community selected that is across the alley from his house. So, he got involved and they're doing like a playground project." A PAC administrator stressed that you did not need to be a professional and underscored the valuable knowledge: a connection to one's park. Park administrators expected advisory council participants to input certain types of knowledge; therefore, while council members' professional knowledge was utilized by the council members it was not always visible or leveraged by administrators.

**Connections: know who is missing.** In addition to having knowledge of park use, CAC and PAC members were considered the "voice of the community." They saw themselves as performing this role as did park supervisors and administrators. In the case of CACs, connections manifested as knowing who was missing from meetings via their embeddedness in a community network. This type of input aligned with Emerson et al.'s (2011) diversity represented at meetings. CACs made sure diverse stakeholders were included in meetings and if these stakeholders were not physically present, CACs advocated for their needs. For example, during the May 2018 recreation and program policy meeting a CAC member observed, "I didn't see any North Minneapolis people included here nor any people from [American Indian Community]. I'd like to see both, especially MG Park and especially as [American Indian Community] is looking to better its community presence. They would probably like this opportunity to have their name on something positive." In this meeting, an assistant superintendent valued the CAC's connections, 'Your endorsement goes a long way as cold-calling these groups has not been working.'

However, when the public's knowledge overlapped with connections inside park administrators' "network," administrators' responses implied that the public's knowledge was less valuable. For example, during the May 2018 recreation and program policy meeting, a CAC member noted, 'I had a conversation with Deputy Superintendent [last name omitted] about [University of Minnesota (U of M) research center] surrounding gentrification research.' To which, an administrator countered, 'That is so funny, we met on Wednesday talking about the same thing.' The CAC member replied, defending their knowledge, 'She and I met on Tuesday so perhaps that set that off.' Contention was not always observed. For instance, during a community garden meeting, a CAC member proposed, 'That we reach out to the Soil

Kitchen at the U of M. They are equipped to do things like this and might even like to partner or take this on as a project.' The planner leveraged this suggestion and reached out to the Soil Kitchen (see chapter 8).

**Environmental justice sensibility: Procedural.** For CACs, knowing which stakeholders were present extended to concerns that engagement took place in languages the group could understand. Spoken language can present a barrier to participation (see literature review). CAC members confronted this barrier by asking if due-diligence had been done to engage stakeholders in their preferred language. In this way, the CAC's input was a type of procedurally-based environmental justice sensibility. The following illustrates this; during a recreation and program policy meeting in May 2018, a CAC member asked about engagement, 'Were any language translation services offered? Were any requested?' An engagement consultant hired by MPRB responded, enunciating words carefully, 'Some people in the meetings spoke another language. All of the meetings did take place in English. We'd like to have a Somali group where we use a translator and conduct the meeting in Somali and have a Somali note taker. We got no requests for translation services.' Similarly, during community garden CAC meetings, members discussed how many languages signage would require to be inclusive of all neighbors.

Inquiries about language confronted a park system that was designed for English-speakers only. Doing so also attempted to modify the park decision-making system to ensure meaningful participation during engagement. Being held responsible to the CAC may have reminded park administrators to prioritize languages accessibility and further, to increase advertisement of translation services.

**Environmental justice sensibility: Distributional.** In Chicago, PAC members often mentioned distributional injustices, citing unequal funding allocation as the reason for joining their PAC. For example, PAC member #5, "There wasn't any funding for parks in the city during the '80s- was clearly lots of funding going to the North side and very little money going to the South side." Also, PAC member #4, "[Some groups] they're underserved, they may not be able to pay for these programming. So, if they are giving me money and if we are putting this money aside so those families that cannot pay for these programs and contribute to those costs, then these are children that are not in the streets, these are families that are not wandering around, they have a place to be." Finally, members of C5 Park's PAC felt injustice

and so started their PAC, “We also thought that um, like, one of the issues in our community, is that the Latino community is kind of like forced inside their houses with the community violence and situations like that. And we thought that by having a renovated park we could address some of those issues.”

Park supervisors, during informal conversations and interviews, echoed PAC members’ input of knowledge about unequal funding. Indeed, many park supervisors talked about learning to make do with less, especially when you are Black. This acknowledgement is imbued with meaning, offering the additional input to the decision-making system that inequal funding has long and far extended beyond park boundaries.

***Scholarships.*** PACs responded to funding inequity by offering scholarships (like the park board; see previous section). Thus, I found alignment between PACs and the CPD board. This may create traction on the issue of scholarships because many stakeholders have a common goal (also see chapter 4).

**Gentrification in Chicago.** PACs (in my observations) did not raise the issue of gentrification, like they did for the EJ issue of unequal funding. As a result, perhaps the issue remained outside the purview of and was not a priority for the CPD. In interviewing an administrator connected to PACs, addressing environmental justice issues, specifically gentrification, seemed outside of the scope of PACs and the CPD. The administrator mused, “How do you balance that in a city- have like great parks , you improve a park and people want to move there but what do you do to keep the people- there’s no answer, like what do you do to keep the people who helped make that community stay there?" Then, when I followed up, wondering about the role for PACs in this scenario, the administrator responded, “I don’t know, I don’t know how they would… cause their function is, is solely about the park. They’re a community organization and they have a relationship with aldermen. And we try to keep it just park-focused cause in some of these places, some of these communities, there’s so many different interested community groups, that these meetings could be hours long and they never get to talk about what’s going on at the park and things that are out of control of the park advisory council." Different to Minneapolis (see chapter 8), the CPD administrator saw no connection of issues within and outside park boundaries.

**Additional inputs.** In Chapter 8 I provide greater detail for the transaction of material, human, and semiotic resources using four examples from the advisory council venue. Therefore, here I mention the human inputs transacted to create a comprehensive list. In a community garden CAC example, the public input environmental justice sensibility knowledge. This manifest as procedurally-based inputs and environmental health advocacy. For the service area master plan's proposed dome, the public defined equity, displacement and gentrification. In Chicago, PACs completed projects in their parks with inputs of distribution-based environmental justice sensibility knowledge as well as connections to their constituents, power within the park, and powerful stakeholders outside the park system.

## Programs

### Knowledge About Needs

**Supervisor inferred.** The public's needs drove the selection of programs that were offered in individual parks. When inferring needs, supervisors were less likely to use formal procedures like questionnaires. Instead, they drew on their experiences in the park, growing up in similar neighborhoods, or walking the neighborhood, "Shit, a lot (C4 Park Supervisor)." The C7 Park Supervisor explained, 'It shouldn't be that complicated. We have to be aware of what neighborhood needs, and I'll try to implement.' Supervisors also relied on observations of demographic and programmatic trends, as the MK Park supervisor explained, "You don't want to program for adults if you have you know, a thousand preschoolers living in your neighborhood; you need to meet that need as well, so. Um, knowing what's around you, whose there, who your users are, programming for them." Supervisors used their best information to align programs with community wants or needs.

**Public stated.** Many supervisors used the phrase, "My door is always open" and people came and requested programs. I asked a Zumba instructor from Chicago if people knew they could ask for new programs. The instructor responded, "I get that all the time. You know [they say], 'Yeah, can we add yoga more times a week, can we do this?' you know. I get suggestions from the participants for what they want." In Minneapolis, MB Park supervisor described being asked for new programs but also, recognizing cultural differences, "The Somali men. Their women, their wives and their, yeah, family members, have

requested just to have women classes at the same time they're having, so it can flip flop and they're, they're all down here as a family and being provided for, kind of like, 'Yeah you're right, we need to realign a little bit the time of- maybe we can fix or change or offer a new program at that same time to help us just meet your needs too.' . . . just those little different cultural nuances we find kind of probably every day. Like I learn kind of a little bit. Which, is challenging and enlightening, all at the same time."

**Response.** Once a need was observed or articulated, supervisors had autonomy to implement the program. In this way, the policy at the center of the bureaucracy may have been "have programs" but the park supervisors were the policy administrators at each park. Minneapolis' MK Park supervisor described their autonomy, "The way we operate is a little different than the way a lot of organizations work because we have a little bit more autonomy based on where we're at and what the neighborhood needs are." Further, a MPRB assistant superintendent, 'The staff are the experts when it comes to more nuanced ideas about programming.' In Chicago, supervisors also had autonomy, "Over here, I'm willing, if I hear something, then I'll put it on the schedule (C2 Park supervisor)." Also, a PAC administrator explained, "Ultimately the park supervisor has the final say on what programming that they can bring to that park. and a lot of it has to do with resources. Do we have a space, do we have the staff capacity, do we have the funds / someone [muffled word] available to be able to do that? So, they'll make that choice."

A supervisor's autonomy existed within the bureaucratic hierarchy but supervisors could extend power to program instructors. For example, a Chicago yoga/boot camp instructor explained, "All the supervisors at the different parks are pretty lenient on what I want to teach because it's not like a seasonal sports class where its soccer season or basketball season or something like that. So, I will, there's no season for boot camp or yoga so if I want to teach it, I could teach it- or pull it." Therefore, leniency may be conditional, based on the nature of a program. Sometimes there is no leniency as explained by a Zumba instructor in Chicago because instructors must take their place in the bureaucracy, "I don't, you know, uh I can't make that decision [to add more programs]. I can suggest it but ultimately, I can't make that decision. You know, it's a process. It's not something I can do like, 'Oh, next week?"

New programs were added relatively quickly, 'You can't just snap your fingers but if there is interest, the supervisor can put a program on the schedule for the following quarter (C2 Park supervisor).' Though most supervisors and program instructors planned a quarter or two in advance, the MK Park supervisor described autonomy to accelerate the process, "Obviously, if something just falls into our lap, we still have the autonomy and the freedom as long as we can make it work. We can add that in as well, at any point in time."

**(Un)fair process.** Park supervisors and instructors described a simple system where the input was expressed or inferred need and the output was a new program. However, the system was largely informal and thus, perhaps hidden from the public. Those outside the process, like some CAC members, articulated a need for formalization, 'We have to make a separate sheet of recommendations for what rec leaders have to do- they have to get out and talk to communities, so they make programming that the community actually wants. They might have to get out and knock on doors and talk to the people who live across the street.' In our interview, CAC #2 said, "We can't afford to have um as I would call them, just building supervisors who are just watching the building, hanging out behind the desk." A lack of visibility for the process cast doubt on the informal system of creating new programs. Informally, a park administrator and I discussed the potential unfairness; if not everyone is connected to their supervisor, then not everyone feels comfortable or knows they can ask for what they want.

**A promising response to unfairness.** In response to concerns about informality but retaining a process that is built on connections and simplicity, a supervisor from Minneapolis' MH Park offered a promising practice, "One of my staff whose been very key in this, Um [staff name], I tried to hire staff that reflect the neighborhood and what we did after about, I'd say it was about six or seven months after I was here, um we had a listening session. And we just invited everybody. And we just said, you know, what kinds of things would you like to see in the park? And anybody was invited but actually it was mostly Latino population that came. Um we had um we had had our signs translated and our invitations and things like that. And they told us, you know, this is what we'd like. They wanted a better soccer field. And one of, well actually more than one of the little girls wanted a ballet class. So, it gave us time to

talk." Then the supervisor says, "And then, we got um those improvements done. We got a ballet class done. Um now that's three ballet classes and its full of almost all Latino little girls." Thus, the supervisor implied cultivation of a long-term relationships by hiring staff who "reflect the neighborhood" and thus, are well-poised to build trust and communicate.

**Knowledge to instruct programs.** While sometimes park staff instructed programs, when a member of the public had experience, supervisors leveraged their skills and positioned them to lead programs. For example, said MF Park supervisor, if a participant wanted to get more involved with a program, something like a Music & Movement program, the supervisor might push them to move from participation to leadership. The public also asked to lead programs. The ML Park supervisor described how, "A guy came in and said, 'Hey, I have a special talent, you know I teach guitar. Is there a way we could make it work for both of us?' So then I said, 'Well, we can, I can make you, we can make it a program, put it into our website system so everybody can see it, we can advertise with fliers if our program, if our paper program brochure is already written for that time period, we can make a flier addition on the side and post it.'" Similarly, at MN Park the supervisor described employing a talented person as a martial arts instructor, "He's like, 'Hey, you know I got my black belt and whatever and I'd kind of like to try my hand at instructing, would you let me start an introductory martial arts that kid-centered and friend and fun?'" The public believed they had skills equivalent to that of professionals and could lead programs. Further, parks departments acknowledged that professional experience by hiring and even paying them. Indeed, Chicago's Arts Department Program Administrator said that they pay people to run programs, rather than ask for volunteers, "I expect that we pay people for their work in order for it to be um valued and for people to um stay committed and to be ethical." However, in Minneapolis, some instructors were volunteers, unpaid due to budgetary constraints. In this way, the public, by determining which programs would be offered and leading those programs, modified the park system. Traditionally, park staff would have been program instructors (see literature review).

**Adapting to programs.** Participants became experts in knowing what to do during programs. They learned routines or proper form for workouts. A Zumba instructor from Chicago described the

learning seen near the end of a 10-week session, "The ladies know the music, they know when this move is coming up so they tend to go a little bit, they'll start pulling their legs up or moving a little bit faster because they're not lost." Also, participants learned the behavioral norms of the program. For example, without being told, women entered a storage closet at the start of a step program. They chose a step, brought it to "their" space, and left enough space between participants to do the workout routine. More, when the instructor paused instruction to fix the sound system, the women continued moving, not missing a beat. Knowing what to do was also illustrated when juxtaposed with my feelings and behaviors as an outsider. I often did not know the steps and stumbled. I did not know smaller nuances of program operation and made mistakes. Once, after a Zumba class in Minneapolis, I was trying to be helpful. I moved towards a fan, to put it away. The young woman next to me quickly stopped me and said, "We do a cool down." I did not know it was an inappropriate time to move a fan. Further, in a Zumba class in Chicago, I was stopped during class and asked to move my belongings to a more appropriate area of the room. These norms were never stated by the instructor but were known to the other participants.

**Modifying the system.** Like jazz musicians, once participants learned the routines, they could modify the environment by changing established routines to fit their own bodies and abilities. For example, during boot camp in Chicago, we each can chose our own color (and thus, degree of elasticity) of resistance band. During Zumba, a woman with grey hair seemed much older, she did all the movements but more slowly and "smaller" than the rest of us. Conversely, other Zumba participants elected to use ankle or hand weights to increase the difficulty of their workout. Some instructors modeled adaptations. Instructors realized people have different abilities; for example, Chicago's kick-boxing instructor, "Some people aren't able to do certain types of exercises or hold planks and things like that." During a fitness class in Minneapolis, an instructor showed adapted workout moves; rather than jumping jacks, they did toe taps. Thus, instructors' actions and statements show they understand that people have different abilities as well as that they sanction adaptations to recognize those differences in abilities.

**Programs reflect individual parks.** Across both cities, programs existed with the same name but were executed in very different ways. This was with respect to the music, age, ethnicity, and gender of

participants, the behavior of the instructors, the behavior of the participants (often mirroring the instructor), the steps, and workout tempo. Programs' reflection of the users of individual parks and the neighborhood were a testament to the input of the public's knowledge, learning the nuances of programs, and then, modifying programs (thus, the park environment) to meet their wants and needs.

### Daily Use

While many parks were not designed in consideration of or collaboration with the public, the public knew how to use parks. They used parks to play, exercise, and socialize. I observed fewer examples of inputting knowledge beyond 'park-based.' However, in MB Park I observed use of professional knowledge. A woman led a yoga class on the soccer field though she was not the instructor of an official program. My observation was corroborated by the park supervisor. People also showed connections by meeting others in the park to socialize. Though I did not interview park users, such interviews may show that the public brought multiple types of knowledge to their use of parks.

### Adapting to the Environment

To maximize their daily park use, sometimes the public adapted to their park environment. In this way, the system shaped the park users, like during board meetings. For example, anyone could use a park, but to use the park at a prime time (evenings or weekends) one needed knowledge of field reservation procedures. Indeed, recall the frustration when users could not play soccer because they did not know a field had been reserved (chapter 6). Further, interactions with other park users could require learning the rules of a new game. Finally, like was seen in the board meeting site, to maximize park use the public had to learn when and how rules were flexible, like when space could be shared or transformed.

**Exclusive spaces.** Some spaces required exclusive knowledge, mainly connections, if they were to be used and were definitively inflexible. For example, the construction of spaces like a garden or a large play structure prevented appropriation for other uses, like a family gathering or a soccer game. Further, some of these spaces may have been deliberately designed to exclude some users. A garden in Chicago provides an example of an exclusive space. It required a key to enter but only a few people had keys. A wrought iron gate surrounded the garden and further, tall plants like corn were planted along the

perimeter. No one could see in, get in, or pick anything. The park employee acting as our guide interpreted, “That tells you they don’t want you in there.” Further, signs announced security cameras. Thus, in some ways the park decision-making system remained inflexible to the public during daily use.

## Conclusion

Again, different resources were exchanged in each of the four decision-making venues. During board meetings, members of the public once again extended the time available to them to address the board but here, employed human resources to do so by speaking over their allotted time. This may be a crucial step in the process of agenda-setting (see Adams, 2004) in that the public can find extra time to ensure their priorities are heard. Advisory council members shared human resources in the form of knowledge that were different from the knowledge of park administrators (like planners). Specifically, knowledge related to environmental justice shifted the course of major planning and policy projects. This discovery places my work in communication with others studying public knowledge. Like work on citizen science (e.g. Bonney et al., 2009) and traditional ecological knowledge (Berkes et al., 2000), I position the public as important contributors of data. Importantly, like early EJ work, the public drew the focus of research, policy, and procedures towards their needs when allowed to offer input during decision-making. Indeed, early EJ work (e.g. Bullard, 1990) often began when members of the public voiced concerns about what had made them sick. Members of the public studied as a part of my data collection also directed the focus of members of the government toward topics related to their well-being, that of their neighbors, or importantly, the most vulnerable in their communities (e.g. directing garden plots towards those who demonstrated greatest need).

Also in terms of resources offered, the work of Hou and Rios (2003; 22) explored the importance of networks: using the term mobilization to describe the ability of public participants to “tap into a larger network of resources” and discussing “political crafting [seizing openings in the political system].” The human resources described by Hou and Rios aligned with my observations of the connections utilized by advisory council members in both cities. The connections drawn upon by advisory council members in my cases as well as in the work of Hou and Rios brought together diverse stakeholders for a common

goal. PAC members mobilized resources by drawing on their connections to raise funds and to bring new participants into parks. CAC members' networks informed government officials about who was missing from meetings and shaped policy demands. The broad networks needed to support park creation or operation differed from Emerson et al. (2011) model. Within that model, reliance on outside connections was a signal of decreased legitimacy of the collaborative process.

In the case of programs and daily use, the semiotic realm was key to the transformation of physical spaces. Participants had to believe an outdoor glen of trees or a multi-purpose room could become a bedroom or a Zumba studio in order to complete the transformations of park space. My work extended studies, like those Hou and Rios (2003) noted the importance of unconventional spaces for decision-making, by showing the resources necessary to transform ordinary park spaces, especially the semiotic realm. The importance of the semiotic realm is not often included in park studies and offers an important resource for park administrators to embrace when transforming park spaces.

I conclude chapters six and seven by stating that the public contributes valuable resources to ensure park systems, physical parks and decision-making processes, better align with their preferences. In this way, the public's input of both material and physical resources is key to realizing recognition justice in parks. Through the public's input, parks are no longer generic but spaces that recognize the needs and wants of unique communities. This means that parks, long considered a type of immutable infrastructure like a road or aqueduct are in fact, flexible. In parks historically, the public were made to follow strict rules, including a moral code and use of limited equipment and paths only as prescribed. However, the parks enjoyed by users in my research were not immutable. Therefore, today's urban neighborhood parks, different from national parks as well as historic understandings of urban neighborhood parks, are no longer considered infrastructure by the public. Today's urban neighborhood parks are not permanent and immobile, nor are they something to fix only when broken. Parks are flexible spaces that can be transformed by the public, not experts, to meet the needs of the public.

# Chapter. 8 Implications of the Social-Ecological Systems Perspective

In this chapter, I again use Stokols' social-ecological systems (SES) perspective to guide exploration of collaboration, and thus procedural justice, during decision-making. In chapters six and seven, I used the SES perspective to examine resource transactions. Now, in the final results chapter, I chose four examples from the advisory council venue to explore when decision-making was simple versus complex. I also chose examples that spoke to questions raised by park and decision-making literatures.

I expanded the temporal scope of analyses by following discussions over the definition of environmental justice terms (two cases Minneapolis) and discussions over jurisdiction (two cases Chicago) throughout decision-making processes. I also examined the natural, built, and sociocultural (including the meaning of actions and objects) contextual dimensions. Finally, I understood parks as nested within communities and then, within cities; in this way, history and policy at broader levels influenced actions and perceptions at individual parks.

## The Importance of Advisory Councils

Parks literature explored the function of volunteer groups (like Friends of the Parks-type groups) as funders of environmental justice. The groups accomplished this by partnering with a single park and bringing additional external funding to that park. Holifield and Williams (2014) studied these groups' operation in Milwaukee County, WI, USA (Milwaukee city ranked #24/100 by the TPL in 2019 and #22/60 in 2014). The authors found that while the park system relied on these volunteer groups, most city parks lacked these groups. However, an interesting relationship emerged such that Friends of the Parks groups at larger parks were more likely to remain active while groups formed at smaller parks were more likely to de-activate. Following patterns of park distribution, as smaller parks are more likely found in poor communities and communities of color, these communities would also be more likely to have Friends groups that deactivated. Thus, these communities would lose the additional funding that an active group could offer. The authors encouraged continued investigation of volunteer groups especially because of their potential to bring additional funding to parks and thus, act as "brokers" of environmental justice.

To this extend Holifield & Williams (2014; 76) stated, "Future environmental justice research in both Milwaukee County and other urban parks systems should investigate what makes volunteer organizations persist or disappear." Following the prompt of Holifield & Williams and further considering the input of resources, I asked, "How are park groups supported or constrained?" Such information could help to retain community-led park support groups, especially at smaller parks.

**Chicago's Park Advisory Councils (PACs)**

**Defining PACs.** PACs must be viewed within the context of the CPD bureaucracy to understand why some collaborations were more complex versus simpler. In a bureaucracy, one is expected to fulfill their role and then report to their superior. The process is dependable and unlikely to change. Further, understanding PACs includes viewing the historic reason for PAC creation (a watchdog of the CPD's decision-making system; see introduction) alongside how some stakeholders now see PACs (serving the CPD). Finally, to understand PACs one must also acknowledge conflict surrounding the role of PAC members. Stakeholders disagree about the amount of power PACs have. PAC members see themselves as connected to the park as well as outside partners; they leverage their connections to improve their park. PAC members use "I" or "we" statements when talking about what they do for their park. PAC members conceptualize their role as more powerful than supervisors and administrators who, see the PAC as somewhat subservient. They see PACs as supporters of the park supervisor and their park, often as fundraisers. As noted by one administrator, PACs should think of themselves as "park-ners" who are partners with supervisors, including expectations to *want to* fundraise *for* their park.

Sometimes stakeholders agreed. PAC members see themselves as a voice to advocate for community needs and supervisors and park administrators agree with this conception of the PAC. Stakeholders also agree that PACs accomplish projects: reporting need for a work order or alerting their supervisor to the need for a new program or other additions (e.g. equipment or a garden box). For these projects, PACs were expected to collaborate with their park's supervisor. However, I found that for many projects, the PACs collaborated with outside community members and powerful government officials and businesses. The connections a PAC relied upon created a more complex or simple decision-making

process because they created congruence or departure from the role for PACs as conceived of by the parks department. When PACs acted as was expected by the bureaucracy and relied only on their supervisor, projects were simpler to complete. However, when PACs departed from their role and worked with outside partners, decision-making was more complex.

**PAC input.** In the CPD park decision-making system, PACs' input connections: their relationship to community groups. PACs connected with community members throughout their daily lives: volunteering at neighborhood schools, attending events, patronizing businesses, or utilizing other public services. Connections also manifested as sharing knowledge during regular meetings of PACs, community groups, and park staff. A PAC administrator described the meetings and explained they were how PACs learned what the community wanted, "Yeah during the meetings. You know, there's new business. And someone can bring before them a project. Um you know, some advisory councils, like they have a Facebook page and an email account. People, you know, send them an email, like, 'I can't come to the meeting but you know please consider, you know, a new dog park or this project' um you know, they have means of communication as well." Having learned what the community wanted, PAC members then relayed that information to their park's supervisor. If the supervisor was present during a meeting, PACs followed-up with them to ensure community requests were completed.

**Work Orders**

The decision-making process was simpler when PACs connections were park supervisors and outside stakeholders less powerful than PACs. Both types of connections were drawn on for the process to put in a work order. PAC members met with members of the community and then shared their concerns about park maintenance requirements with the supervisor. PACs also conducted their own formal, park-grounds surveys. PAC member #3 explained, "We make the supervisor aware of concerns we've had or received. . . So, we usually do a monthly inspection of the park during our meetings either in the building or of the outside facilities and forward our list of concerns to the superintendent, or supervisor actually, who then gets them addressed or tells us why they are not going to get addressed right away."

Then, according to several supervisors, supervisors responded by putting in work orders. For example, the C5 Park supervisor explained, “So they’ll [the PAC] make any kind of concerns or requests, I’ll go in and talk to my area manager, ‘Hey, they need this and this and we do our own weekly request for their field or the field house.’” So, you’re able to act quickly, I asked, to which the supervisor responded, “Yes. And I’m kind of happy, cause sometimes I don’t see everything. So, if I walk around the park, everything is great and then tonight something happens and they told me, ‘Hey this and this happened.’ [I’d say] ‘OK, I’ll take this.’ I don’t take it as an offense and I’ll go, ‘Thank you, I made my rounds and I didn’t see that.’ And I’ll just go and -boom, boom, boom- and I’ll go into my computer, type up their request and send it into my area manager.” A CPD PAC administrator corroborated the chain of responses I had observed, “So if it was, let’s say a broken swing, the PAC’s like, ‘Oh, [used own name as an example], there is a broken swing, did you put the work order in?’ So, the supervisor is like, ‘Yeah, I put the work order in.’ And how that internally happens is the supervisor will put the work order in, the area manager will approve it, move it through the system, it will go to our Trades Department and they’ll order the part or have someone take a look at it. Um if it’s something like, major, like a new roof that can’t be patched, that goes into the capital fund.” In this way, transactions among PAC members, constituents, and supervisors were a regular and expected part of the CPD decision-making system. As stated by the C5 Park supervisor, though they are receiving input from PAC members, supervisors were “not offended” because the supervisors retained power as they were the only ones able to move the decision along the accepted bureaucratic chain.

**Greater Complexity**

Collaboration during decision-making process could be more complex. For example, the PAC administrator explained the process of “partnering” with the park, like if the PAC wanted to host an event,

> “You’d send your letter of intent to the supervisor, they will create a partnership. That partnership will go to at least 8 other people to make sure that it’s an appropriate partnership. What that means is, it has, it should be, [clear in how it is] beneficial to the public and how it benefits the park. I mean, [bringing] more awareness, adding- giving a new program for that park- it will get approved [exhales, like this is routine knowledge]

> and when a PAC does a partnership, that means our liability department will help cover their event. Also, they'll have the support of the marketing department, so their event can go on our App, on our web calendar and then we may or may not make a flier for them. So that's a partnership."

Despite increased complexity, a PAC to relied solely on their park supervisor; PACs directed inputs only to their supervisor during decision-making. Thus, a PACs behavior was within norms established for PACs within the bureaucratic chain.

**By-pass.** Decision-making was more complex when PAC members leveraged connections to groups outside the CPD. PACs did this when supervisors could not respond easily to PAC inputs or complete projects. Indeed, supervisors had to follow the established bureaucratic chain and offer a certain set of inputs. Conversely, PACs were more flexible. They could follow the bureaucratic chain, like in work orders, but PACs could also "by-pass" the established chain. By broadening the socio-cultural scope of the park decision-making system, I saw that PACs could step outside perhaps the traditional confines of the system. Indeed, when supervisors could not complete a project, PACs went directly to area managers or leveraged their outside connections (like a state representative).

**PAC members explained by-passing.** A C5 Park PAC member explained by-passing their supervisor to work with an area manager. This quote also implied that PACs could be in a position of power over the CPD because PACs "guide" the CPD. The PAC member said,

> "Our area manager is there [at PAC meetings] and he'll tell us, if you want to have this specific event, you're going to need this permit, need this signed by the board, so he's very much helpful in guiding us in terms of paperwork and like any little thing that we might need, he's there that day, we just let him know that that is something that we need (laughs). Like, 'Hey, um can you check in with like a local park electrician on this light or something?' we like, we kind of make sure that he knows that we need his help. I feel like that is what keeps him coming back! Like, let me make sure they are happy with this information! We very much are guiding him."

PAC member #2 also described by-passing their supervisor to work with outside partners. This PAC member gave context surrounding the need to by-pass, suggesting that CPD funding can be unreliable (see chapter 4) so, PACs accomplish projects by seeking funds elsewhere. They said,

> "The Alderman, um is on city council um, in a sense you could say they are sort of the mayor of the community. Um you know, and um, and they report to the mayor of the city. And now the park district is independent, it is an independent governing body, but if there's some things in the park that we want, we can always go to the alderman and say, 'Is there any funding available?' and um and he may be able to find some funding. Probably more important, since he's an alderman, he can make the call to somebody higher up in the park district and say, 'We need to have a discussion,' and you know, it's again, all about relationships."

Interestingly, and responding to PAC by-passes, a PAC administrator acknowledged and thus, sanctioned by-passing, "So often times, projects come about because an advisory council will go to a board meeting and you know, state that there's a need for something. And they will ask and ask and ask and they'll ask their alderman and they'll ask their elected officials and eventually it gets prioritized and um, it becomes a project." Although there is an established, bureaucratic chain where constituents speak to PACs who speak to supervisors, administrators sanctioned and may have encouraged PACs to by-pass that chain. In this way, the environment was modified by PAC actions such that the bureaucratic chain was modified to accept PACs operating outside their "normal" role.

An important part of working outside their normal role to accomplish projects was PAC members' connections to powerful persons within and outside the CPD. These powerful stakeholders were business owners, other service providers, bureaucrats, and elected officials. For example, PAC member #2 discussed agenda-setting as a benefit of knowing how to work in the bureaucracy, "Well we have to talk to the park district. And and you know, start working up that chain of command and you know, putting things in writing and saying you know, this needs to be addressed." To illustrate this point, PAC member #2 shared, "There's a pathway that is crumbling. It was put in in the 1930s, you know, it's wearing out. So, we are able to send messages to the ward or the park district saying, 'This really needs to be taken care of.' And um and eventually it gets done." PAC member #4 described benefits of knowing how to work with Aldermen, noting their contributions were not common but that Aldermen helped fund projects,

> "With the Alderman, there is funding that's called a TIF as well as um what is called the participatory budget. It's allocated to every Alderman in every ward and its um usually over ten million dollars. Every yeah, but ten million dollars is for infrastructure, for the entire ward, not just the park system. Now if you can navigate with the Alderman, to get them to help you, with some of the things you need in your park, um often times it does not happen, most Alderman do not use participatory for that space. . . So then, let's say it costs $120 thousand dollars, so maybe they split the cost in half, from the Alderman's office and the other portion came from the um the city."

In contrast, Minneapolis's CAC's were connected to community groups, rather than people in power. MPRB, not the CACs, made connections to those in power. For example, MPRB and the city signed an, "Historic agreement [that] helps address racial and economic equity across 160 neighborhood parks and provides $11 million annually to maintain, repair and replace facilities (MPRB)."

**PACs' Power and Tensions**

For work orders, PACs drew on outside connections to the public to gain knowledge of maintenance issues. Issues were shared with park supervisors. However, for larger projects that the supervisor could not directly complete, PAC's leveraged connections to powerful community stakeholders and in turn, their financial capital. Acquiring their own funds also gave PACs more power because they chose how funds they raised were spent. In choosing where to allocate funds, PACs could increase the degree to which parks recognized how community members wanted to use parks.

To facilitate this recognition, PACs often funded park activities that were already successful. For example, PAC member #2, "Like yoga, is the best example. Um some people in the neighborhood asked for yoga. And there was always sort of an informal yoga class but um what we decided to do is formally sponsor it, meaning we did a request to the park district saying, 'we're going to sponsor this program; we're going to offer it to anybody that wants to sign up.' And we found an instructor that basically volunteers their time." In this way, the PAC had power over what happened in their park. They used their funds to support existing congruence of their park environment to park users. By supporting existing programs with financial capital, PACs gave legitimacy and security to activities. Those activities became recognized with a position on the park schedule and an instructor. A PAC administrator agreed with this power for PACs, "[The PAC] they're the voices of the community so they can um make suggestions to

the supervisor. If it's something that we can't provide because we don't have the resources, you know, maybe it is a Tai Chi class, will the park PAC sponsor it?"

However, increased power for the PAC may lead to decreased power for the park supervisor. This modification of the expected bureaucracy chain caused tension. I explore tension in a few scenarios: when PACs raised their own funds, preparation of technical reports, and physical presence at meetings.

**Funding.** Though PACs raised their own funds, they could not simply exchange funds for programs because the PAC did not have complete control over funds. A PAC administrator emphasized, "The money that they raise is the PAC's money for park improvements, or projects, or programs. So, they could be raising money just to sponsor all of their events. Right. Um if they're raising it for something else, the park supervisor can make an ask but that's why you want to have that partnership, so they know what they're fundraising for to start off with. Like, gym mats." Here, the administrator also underscored two bureaucratic norms that may seem at odds. First, a PAC's input of funds may establish an expected transaction where supervisors request PAC funds. Second, while PACs have funds, they should be spent on items that have been co-determined with their park's supervisor. Funding was a complex decision-making process because funds were at once the PAC's to spend and not the PAC's to spend. It was unclear who had power over funds.

This "Schrodinger's Cat" of who makes decisions about funding was more complex when the PAC's vision for the park did not align with the park supervisor. In the following example, PAC members corroborate statements made by the PAC administrator, they explained how having their own money allowed the PAC to pursue its own mission. The first member stated, "We are currently spending most of our budget on like enriching our programs." The second added, "Having events in C5 Park that are free and open to the community, and that are for all ages is very important because our ultimate goal for C5 Park is for a place that people feel safe and are comfortable going to." Being able to pursue "our programs" may be more complicated when the supervisor wants the park to follow their vision. Indeed, in an interview, the C5 Park supervisor explained, "We'll have our own meetings personally. And I share my vision and they understand the vision I want to go to. And they do support it and they do want to get

there. I think it just takes a little time. Whereas the other PACs I have been with, we just ran really fast, they know how I am." The supervisor described a difference of vision to their PAC. This example was one of many similar discrepancies between this PAC and their park's supervisor that I observed.

**Meetings and reports.** I observed a PAC's first meeting and noted a series of transactions between PAC members and the park supervisor. The supervisor highlighted their own role and minimized the previous work of the PAC. PAC members emphasized the work for the park and neighborhood that they had already done. The following example illustrates conflict as to who holds power during meetings. A PAC member stated, 'There is a question about the calendar. Now, we already set dates before we formed. We were in a group working before we formed the PAC. We set dates when we would meet with those people- even though some of them aren't here.' To this, the supervisor responded, 'Well, I might not be able to be here, if we have a sports event.' The transaction continued in which the PAC member clarified the PAC's own importance, 'But I might not be able to be at other meetings (if we pick a new date) because I am in grad school.' The supervisor concluded, once again highlighting their own importance as well as "how things are done" in the bureaucracy, 'But I have to be here. I wasn't at those meetings (previously, when you picked the dates).'

Potential for tension between the PAC members and park supervisors was underscored by a PAC administrator, "Ultimately the park supervisor has the final say on what programming that they can bring to that park." Then, "Every supervisor and advisory council they should have a well-working partnership. It's not a reality. There are a lot of advisory councils who have a very specific mission and they just want to do what they want to do and they don't play well with the supervisor. Like, they're… how do I put this? Like, I guess there's like self- importance, like, 'we're the PAC' but no- you have to remember you're a partner and the supervisor is ultimately in charge of this park.  like you're not in charge of the park, the supervisor is. So, we have a lot of tensions in some of our- between some of our PAC members and supervisor" Ultimately, the CPD suggested that supervisors have greater power than PACs. However, quotations from the administrator, supervisors, and PAC members emphasized differences in perceptions of who is the leader among these stakeholders.

**Adapting to the System**

PACs were required to follow the CPD's rules; the rules created a complex bureaucratic system where PACs offered inputs as part of a chain of transactions which, led to project completion. More complex projects were characterized by a long and potentially complicated series of transactions and work with stakeholders outside the CPD. To help PACs increase their congruence to the decision-making system the CPD hosted a conference. Rather than modify the system to suit PAC preferences, the CPD asked PACs to adapt to better fit into the system.

PAC member #4 described the CPD's yearly conference, "The driving force behind having the conference is to update all of the park advisory board on the best practices. And so, they may be best practices on how to … for permitting. Best practices on how to get certain activities in the park. best practices in bringing the mayor's new initiatives into your park- like this is the, this may be the year of the arts and so how to bring those arts and statues into your park." This PAC member considered PACs' attendance vital to their ability to complete projects (note, PAC member #4 was a conference organizer).

During the conference, I was impressed with how, when a PAC member asked a question to a speaker, that person got a response from the speaker but also, from audience members. Often, other PAC members responded, 'This is how I did this and here is a tip OR we [our PAC] hear your idea and want to network with you.' Indeed, one PAC members even said, 'We learned how to put on our particular program by working with other PACs so now we want to pay it forward by sharing that with other PACs.'

Working with outside stakeholders may have caused tensions with park supervisors by modifying the bureaucratic chain and challenging the supervisor's power; however, the CPD promoted such work during the PAC conference. Indeed, sessions explained how to build the capacity of the PACs and provided 'pro-tips.' For example, PAC member #4 recalled, "We had this 'How it Happens' [at the PAC conference] and that covered um how you bring programs into the park and how you can connect with your Alderman and nearest city officials to get things done in your park."

PACs were expected to adapt to the existing CPD decision-making system by following the established bureaucratic chain of transactions: connecting to the community, delivering community

concerns to their supervisor, and assuming the supervisor would continue along the chain to accomplish projects. However, leveraging connections outside of the CPD, PACs gained power and completed more expensive projects. The PAC conference demonstrated the interesting duality of the PAC's role: alongside teaching PACs the rules of the CPD system, the PAC conference also showed PACs how to modify the system (e.g. by sharing best-practices for networking with outside partners).

**Conclusion**

In terms of how volunteer groups, like Holifield and Williams' (2014) Friends of the Parks groups or in my case PACs, are supported or constrained I saw that the Chicago Park District supported PACs with trainings as well as a direct connection to their park supervisor. These trainings allowed PACs to accomplish some tasks within their park (e.g. work orders). In this way, the Chicago Park District provides a model for how to support PACs in many respects (impressively, their rich portfolio of documents and in-person trainings for PACs). However, PACs relied upon by-passes for tasks they could not accomplish with only the help of their supervisor. In these instances, PACs stepped outside of their established role, for example when the PACs drew upon their connections to folks in positions of power who were not their park's supervisor, the PACs received less support. Though the PACs would complete projects, deviating from their assigned role could create tension with their park's supervisor.

The duality of the PAC's role may have caused tension between PACs and supervisors and thus, more complex decision-making. Though PACs and park supervisors wanted to improve park access by aligning the park with the needs of the community, the PAC's duality produced a jurisdictional overlap. When PACs were encouraged to by-pass the existing chain and thus, modify the decision-making system, PACs gained power. However, supervisors still were expected to follow the unmodified system. The supervisors expected PACs to follow the same system and report, literally and metaphorically, to the supervisor and would be supporting the park. When PACs by-passed the bureaucratic chain it was unclear who had power. Tensions related to unclear power dynamics were one way in which PACs grew frustrated with the park district. Such frustration could be one reason that volunteer groups de-activate. Perhaps providing volunteers and park supervisors with "job descriptions" as well as modifying existing

decision-making systems to acknowledge the importance of a PAC's outside connection could improve collaboration between PACs and their park's supervisor.

In practice, the CPD decision-making system may be moving towards increased PAC power. During the 2018 PAC conference, a PAC member asked, 'Could the Google Form survey about Park Evenings [events that will be held in a park] also be sent, in addition to the park supervisor, to the PACs?' Several PAC members nodded in agreement and said, 'Yes.' In response, the CPD answered, 'The plan is for the survey to go to the PACs in 2019. The survey now asks supervisors to indicate if they have a PAC and if so, requests / asks that supervisors talk with PACs.' In this way, PACs would have another, institutionalized mechanism to by-pass supervisors and control the way their parks looked and operated.

**Unquestioned Experts and Uncontestable Terms**

Technocrats have long held power within the field of urban planning (see literature review). Framing of problems as very complex, such that they can be addressed only with highly-technical solutions has rendered those with technical skills (e.g. planners and technicians) the unquestioned experts (e.g. climate change as discussed by Rittel & Webber, 1973). Recently, the field of environmental decision-making, especially concerns framed through the lens of sustainability, has similarly privileged technical solutions and management rather than inclusion of deliberation of diverse viewpoints. When experts are considered the only capable solution crafters, justice may be compromised. For example, Checker's (2011; 212) fears the term sustainability has become "post-political" because sustainability policy is written by technocrats rather than through deliberation and consensus; such a practice, "Shuns politics and de-links sustainability from justice."

Synergistically, the urgency surrounding justice issues like climate change also leads to demand for immediate solutions. In this way, solving problems is again apolitical as those in power may feel like there is "no time" for public input or deliberation. Technocrats are given power to act unilaterally.

With respect to my research, parks have long been considered remedies to pressing social issues. As parks offer a myriad of benefits, they are built unquestioningly. More, the repercussions of building parks are also unquestionable. Gentrification is considered an inevitable outcome of making

improvements to underserved neighborhoods (see literature review). Gentrification has been the focus of popular media, like podcasts and newspaper articles, as well as scholarly attention (e.g. Checker, 2011; Curran & Hamilton, 2012; Dooling, 2009). Focus often turns to the unfavorable outcomes of gentrification, like displacement, and their impacts on the poor and people of color. The tone of these stories is often a sense of inevitability: if amenities, like parks, are built current residents will lose their homes while wealthier people move into the community and reap the benefits of those amenities.

However, the gentrification and displacement thought to accompany neighborhood improvements (e.g. when parks are built) may not be inevitable. Researchers who began data collection in recognition of the inevitability of gentrification and displacement then ended work describing how uncontestable outcomes were contested (Checker, 2011; Curran & Hamilton, 2012; Dooling, 2009). For example, Curran and Hamilton (2012) describe how the public spoke out against a generic, potentially-gentrifying park design in favor of one that better recognized the needs of their unique community. Also, Dooling (2009) describes how a diverse public negotiated terms for "green space" such that public conceptions of nature included "human dwelling." Finally, Checker (2011) detailed a scenario where the knowledge of community, including park use preferences and EJ sensibility, shifted the course of decision-making such that planners and advocacy group abandoned a park development project.

These studies suggest that the expertise of technocrats, their solutions, and the inevitability of gentrification are instead, contestable if members of the public are included in decision-making. Following the work of Dooling (2009) and Checker (2011), there is need for understanding of how gentrification and displacement are contested and the relationship of contestation to avoiding these negative outcomes. Thus, I asked the research questions, "How can discourses change?" as well as "How do plans and policies respond to contestation of gentrification?" I used the social ecological systems perspective to follow debates about parks and gentrification taking place during advisory council and other public meetings, primarily in Minneapolis.

**Minneapolis' Community Advisory Committees (CACs)**

CACs contributed to and approved final policies for the park system or plans for a service area. CACs were convened at the request of MPRB and their work was facilitated by an MPRB staff person. Their final output was a recommendation to the park board of commissioners. All CAC members saw their role as important- representing larger interests or environmental justice topics. Further, CAC members believed they were providing critical perspectives (e.g. interpreting data) to improve parks. Two CAC members felt it was also their role to challenge MPRB by pointing out inconsistencies or asking tough questions. However, it is important to note that some CAC members were skeptical of their power. CAC member #3, "I think that I can influence my other, my fellow CAC members um, I think I can have an influence on the CAC's final report. I don't know what influence that report will have on commissioners." CAC #1 saw their role as a consultation, "I feel that this is a very park board-led initiative. That they're doing most of the work and we just show up and give our opinions. Which is good, it's great. I mean they're paid to do what they do. And they do all the legwork. They do all the plans and then they say, 'Hey, what's your opinion?'" Thus, CAC's felt they had an important place in policy and planning but could be skeptical at their power to make actual change because the output of their work was only a recommendation to be considered by people in power.

If a CAC's recommendation was accepted, the CAC could shape how parks looked and operated in policy, rather than making immediate physical changes to parks (like PACs). In this way, CACs operated in the semiotic realm of meaning. The collaborative decision-making process varied in complexity because of the diversity of stakeholders involved and their different perspectives on environmental justice issues. I studied two CACs, one focused on the construction of community gardens and the other, a service area master plan featuring a sports dome.

**CACs and Defining Equity in Community Gardens**

The community garden CAC was tasked with writing policy for the operation of community gardens city-wide. This included who would receive a garden plot and the condition of that plot (e.g. soil quality). Though stakeholders had to write policy that reflected a shared definition for an EJ topic (equity) that process seemed easier than creating a shared definition of gentrification and displacement (see dome

example, next). Stakeholders agreed about how to enact equity; they agreed on the collection of demographic information from plot applicants as well as soil testing.

**Planner interview.** The planner (#1) leading the community garden policy process shared that MPRB had not always linked concerns about equity to gardens. According to planner #1, urban gardens became spaces to pursue equity during creation of the 2014 urban agriculture activity plan,

> "Initially when the urban agriculture activity plan was being written, the word 'equity' wasn't, [pause] it wasn't something that was really at the forefront of the conversation. Because um, mostly people were trying to think about, 'OK, what does urban ag mean and what different forms could that take and where would people want to see it?' And so equity sort of came in toward the end of the activity plan formation when advocates from the broader community said, 'You know, we would really like to see you address more particularly *How this activity is going to serve ALL different residents within the city of Minneapolis* and *HOW you are going to address equity and put this through that lens.*' And so, the plan ultimately, the activity plan did that."

When community members pushed MPRB toward equity, MPRB was "motivated," said planner #1, "They really wanted to incorporate that into the language and they could see that as a concept, equity was going to become ever-more important in the planning work that was going to be done at MPRB." After the activity plan, MPRB may have expected to focus on equity in the community garden policy.

**Demographic information.** The CAC saw gardens as spaces where equity would be enacted. To enact equity, including racial equity, a debate began about the collection of demographic information from the public. In the case of community gardens, garden plot applicants would state their race and perhaps, be selected to receive plots based on racially-explicit criteria. To study the evolution of this debate and implications for equity, I collected data from five of Minneapolis' community garden CAC meetings and reviewed the final community garden policy. Allowing such debates marked a departure from the historic policy of the MPRB.

***Historically.*** MPRB resolutely did not collect demographic information to learn which groups were engaged or present at meetings. As detailed by a MPRB administrator during the 22 February 2018 recreation and program policy CAC meeting, '[The board] They don't want to ask people demographic

information. However, in 2015, no demographic information was collected during focus groups but the board had then asked, 'Who is actually being spoken to?' The board wanted information on age and ethnicity, wondering for example, if different demographic groups had been listened to during these meetings.' Further, during the June 2018 meeting of the recreation and program policy CAC, a park administrator reported that the previous board [a new board was elected in November 2017] had not collected demographic information from park patrons "because it felt invasive."

Table 8.1 Demands for Garden Policy from an Outside Organization

| |
|---|
| 1. Develop a racial equity framework, metrics and process of evaluation |
| 2. Find an equitable alternative to the proposed policy that soil testing be the responsibility of community gardeners |
| 3. Applications for community garden plots should be available in multiple languages |
| 4. Establish a truly equitable way of distributing garden plots in Minneapolis Parks (not, 'first come first serve') |
| 5. Establish racial equity metrics for appointment of Community Garden Leads |
| 6. Resolve issues surrounding lack of access to water in close proximity to urban agriculture designated zones |
| 7. Provide storage for gardening tools to ensure equitable participation in community gardening in Minneapolis parks |
| 8. Include evaluations in the Community Garden Policy to measure the racial equity performance of each of the community gardens at regular intervals |
| 9. A recommendation that MPRB fund a full-time MPRB staff position to oversee community gardening & other aspects of urban agriculture |

Table 8.1 Demands for community garden policy made by an outside food and park justice organization. Reproduced from a list printed 30 March 2018 and distributed during 5 April 2018 CAC meeting.

***5 April 2018.*** In the first meeting I attended (but not the first meeting of this process) planner #1 framed the position of MPRB, 'We've struggled asking demographic information in so many scenarios in the past. It is helpful to have insight from others on how they have asked those questions.' In doing so, planner #1 set MPRB's starting position for the discussion on collecting demographic information. Further, planner #1 acknowledged the utility of CAC input to the process. However, MPRB's position was complicated when planner #1 was undercut by another park board administrator's response, 'I don't struggle. I always say 'optional.' We have to know who we reach out to. We asked demographic information when we were putting the CACs together and people supplied the information.' Their response implied that CAC input was not needed and that asking demographic information was *not* a

sensitive topic requiring discussion. In response, the CAC's input was to reaffirm their knowledge of community connections as well as EJ sensitivity, 'In some cases, for some people, it has felt very extractive to ask for that information SO that is why we need to offer an explanation.' Thus, the CAC also began a dialog on transparency, explaining why demographic data would be collected.

During this meeting, a CAC member (also part of an outside Food and Park justice organization) presented their organization's list of demands for the new community garden policy (Table 8.1). The collection of demographic information aligned with this group's mission because such information would allow for prioritization of gardeners based on race. Doing so aligned with priorities: (#4) An equitable way to distribute plots, not first come first serve as well as (#8) Evaluations to ensure that the racial equity principles are in-tact (Table 8.1). Distributing garden plots could be a way to address historic injustices that left many folks without access to healthy food or land to grow their own food.

***17 May 2018.*** Planner #1 responded to the CAC's inputs about collecting demographic data for garden plot applications. Indeed, planner #1 projected a draft of the application onto a screen and said, 'Here are the changes people wanted to see,' and reviewed the previous meeting's discussion, 'We were talking about criteria to use when selecting applicants. How do we define what makes "good" criteria for getting plots? Of note, the City [of Minneapolis] asks no demographic information when they are taking applications; could we have a little more of that discussion?' After this prompt, the planner showed the application MPRB had already developed, modeled after the city, and, 'Basic, more so a way to follow up with people that have initial interest.' At this point, application reflected both that the city asked for no demographic information but also CAC and board members' input that demographic information was needed. Planners appeared ready to modify the MPRB system to allow asking demographic information.

Further, MPRB looked to the CAC to gauge the appropriateness of collecting information, if gardeners could be selected based on demographic characteristics, and wording of application questions. For example, a CAC member offered input about the feasibility of using quotas to prioritize access for certain groups. Planner #1 tried to be sure they understood the CAC but also, seemed to seek guidance for the form criteria would take, 'Like with job applications- do you specifically state a desired criteria- like

women and minorities encouraged to apply?' Another CAC member responded, 'Yes and. People need to know why we ask questions. We're using the equity framework- there could be three really good sentences that give people context as to why they are providing data on race, income, renter/owner.' The transaction continued when another CAC member supported this idea, 'Without a statement on why we are asking, people might omit information.' Showing attempts to respond to these bold CAC statements administrators' responses varied. One said, 'You could even give it a name, name it as an Equity Garden.' Conversely, the second's response was out of place in the context of CAC input, 'However, some people may not be gardening for food- some people may just be gardeners. We want "to be equitable to pretty plant folks."' By expanding equity concerns to "pretty plant folks," rather than exclusively to low-income people and people of color who were historically disadvantaged by the MPRB system, the second administrator exited the discussion. Their semiotic input was a lack of nuance of inequity experienced by different community groups and thus, lack of the considerations needed to realize equity.

Towards the meeting's end, planner #1 sought consensus, 'How many people think it is a good idea to ask demographics?' Many CAC members raised their hands. A CAC member offered environmental justice sensibility and nuance, 'But we have to explain it. If I am undocumented, I want to fly under the radar. They need gardens the most and might not apply because they think ICE will track them down if they give up any personal information about themselves. I think we should research what other government organizations are using for language. It is crucial to make spaces welcoming to those who need them most.' Thus, several CAC members established a new priority in the discussion: if demographic information was collected, the reasoning for doing so had to be explained.

The meeting ended with a CAC member offering input in the form a policy suggestion, 'What if instead, we didn't ask demographics but instead assessed the need for space for growing food and the need for fresh food?' Surprisingly, a CAC member shifted the discussion, questioning the need for any demographic information. After a discussion, CAC members set application criteria focused on access: 1) resident of Minneapolis 2) live within 2 miles of park 3) will grow food (preference for food growers over ornamental plants) and 4) needs garden space as a matter of food access.

***7 June 2018.*** A CAC member's words were incorporated into MPRB's definition of equity when a park administrator reiterated that collecting demographic information may deter participation by recent or un-documented immigrants. In this way, MPRB had come to agreement with the CAC to explain collection of demographic information but the process to define equity was not done. CAC members turned focus to providing equitable outcomes. A CAC member observed, 'Only a need for gardening, is the only [of the selection] criteria that has "strength in terms of access" that promises equitable distribution of garden plots.' This statement negated previous conversations about collecting demographic information but spoke to the overarching goal to define equity in terms of garden distribution.

***23 August 2018.*** Though planner #1 signaled the meeting was over, CAC members continued offering input, 'Just a couple more notes. Ideas about the identities in the application and then just one more note.' Another CAC member expanded, 'African should be a separate category- different cultural group, different experiences, different access needs. Can people check more boxes?' In response, the planner typed, adding more categories to the garden application. Showing value for CAC input, planner #1 said, 'We can use this in all surveys,' indicating an intent to follow CAC guidance and continue collecting demographic information. The CAC members continued, suggesting more categories, 'Arab or Middle Eastern.' Planner #1 responded, 'Can it be under "Other" or is that disrespectful,' and showed deference to the CAC's knowledge by adding the term, 'Arab.' Finally, a CAC member, 'With "Other," add a colon and a line- without a line, it erases that identity.' Planner #1 made this change to the draft.

***Final policy.*** The September 2018 version of the urban ag policy and application (board approved October 2018) reads, "OPTIONAL: How do you identify your race or ethnicity (check all that apply)? [lists several choices with boxes to check] Please note: MPRB is committed to creating a community garden program that ensures racial equity in fresh food access. The responses to the voluntary question about race will be used for the public benefit, as a measurement tool to understand the diversity of interested applicants and help ensure diversity among selected gardeners." This policy output, seen in the context that MPRB had not previously collect demographic information, showed how MPRB sought CAC guidance and in response to CAC inputs, created a policy that reflected the definition of equity

proposed by CAC members (collect demographic information to prioritize plots for people of color and low-income folks who need space to garden). More, the application included a statement of why data were collected. Decision-making was "easier" as MPRB relied on the CAC to guide on policy language, CAC members agreed on language, and MPRB eagerly built policy on CAC suggestions.

**Soil testing 5 April 2018.** Equity was also enacted by testing garden soil for contaminants. Table 8.1 lists soil testing as the #2 priority item. However, planner #1 responded, 'MPRB has no funding [to test soil] but we put it in the plan anyways so that people can respond.' In this way, the MPRB's response established the bounds of the decision-making environment: insufficient funds to test soil. In response, a CAC member offered a solution: their outside organization got free soil testing through the extension, 'You just call them up and ask for the supervisor.' In response, another CAC member input EJ sensibility, 'It seems like you need to have access and connections to make that happen.' The discussion ended with no funding for soil testing and a reminder that access to free soil testing was a privilege.

***26 April 2018.*** The CAC member who submitted the list of demands (Table 8.1) used an activity on racial equity to return attention to soil testing, 'Testing. The financial burden is incurred by the citizen and [in the existing plan] they *may* get reimbursed. I would say that everyone should get reimbursed.' To this normative justice claim, park administrators responded by pushing the dialog forward, asking who would, if soils were found to be contaminated, be required to pay for remediation. Planner #1 worked though logistics of what would need to be tested and classification of testing as a policy or procedure. However, CAC members wanted commitment to fund testing. They pushed park administrators about the purported lack of budget, 'Doesn't the policy inform the budget? Or do we wait for the procedure? How can we say there is not enough money in the budget if we haven't informed people of what we need a budget for?' To which the planner responded, 'No, we don't wait [for procedure].' If the community calls, we put it in [into the policy]. We draft the language [if that is what the community is saying that it wants].' This response showed MPRB's commitment to following the CAC's guidance and modifying existing MPRB policy by incorporating CAC priorities.

CAC members proposed to allocate funds towards remediation. Also, a CAC member proposed, 'If a community group wants soil testing, they need to contact the MPRB and there is a contact number right in the policy.' In response, interestingly, a park administrator seemed drastic, more in line with CAC members' input of EJ sensibility, 'I would push it one step further and say MPRB tests all soils.' In response, planner #1 prepared to modify MPRB policy with new language to test all soils. In response, a CAC member input their connection to outside groups, 'We reach out to the Soil Kitchen at the U of M. They are equipped to do things like this and might even like to partner or take this on as a project.'

This example seemed "easier" because CAC members and park staff seemed to agree to test soils. However, one CAC member (previously called out for receiving privileged access to soil testing) debated the need to test soils all, 'We only need one test per park. And it is unlikely that these sites are contaminated!' Many of the younger members, scientists or those involved with activist organizations were shocked and said, aghast, 'Where do you live?!' One explained that there are contaminated sites all over the city. However, that CAC member's alternate definition of equity, one that minimize the prioritization of soil testing and thus minimized experiences of injustice, was immediately rejected.

***17 May 2018 and final policy.*** Planner #1 proclaimed that a CAC member's connection to soil testing had been leveraged and, 'Now we get free soil screening!' No one replied to this exclamation. Befuddled, the planner responded to the silence, "You should all cheer!" The planner detailed the testing agreement, including plans for remediation of contaminated soil, 'In these cases, we have decided it may be OK to plant something different (like a tree) or to use raise beds.' Thus, priority items of soil testing as well as remediation were addressed. The final policy reads: Procedures. B. Site Selection, "For neighborhood parks with designated urban agriculture areas per their adopted master plans, optimal sites (based on sun exposure, surrounding activities, and community preference) have been identified within these parks for urban agriculture activities including community gardens. In these areas, MPRB will screen soils in designated areas for contaminants and review the need for remediation."

**Conclusion.** Though stakeholders had to draft policy reflecting a shared definition for an EJ topic (equity) that process seemed relatively easy. This may be because the prioritization of equity had been

established during the activity plan, CAC members and planners may have expected to be defining equity and determining how it would be enacted. Further, many CAC members were also members of outside Food and Park justice organizations. They often came to the meetings with a pre-drafted list of concerns or demands. Their ideas were often agreed upon by other CAC members; disagreeing CAC members were "corrected" and their contrary ideas were not allowed to redefine equity. In this way, CAC members were leading most discussions during meetings. Further, though many park administrators attended meetings, only planner #1 modified drafts and wrote the final policy. Thus, any reconciling of an equity definition, occurred between these CAC members and planner #1 who, demonstrated a willingness to change the policy after receiving input from CAC members.

**CACs and Defining Displacement and Gentrification: The Story of a Dome**

In contrast to the garden policy, this is an example of a more complex collaborative decision-making process. The CAC was tasked with drafting a master plan to determine the design of parks within one service area (one of six sections of Minneapolis). The plan ultimately required a shared definition for the EJ topics of gentrification and displacement which, manifested as arguments about a dome. Stakeholders ultimately recommended a plan with a dome but as discussion progressed, the CAC acknowledged the threat posed by the dome. Two definitions of "gentrification and displacement" evolved to discuss the dome. In the final plan, each definition was addressed with provisions to protect the community from dome-initiated gentrification and displacement. However, perhaps showing MPRB's priority, one definition was addressed with procedural recommendations. The other, perhaps with reluctance, was met with a short statement in the final plan.

**Training.** Like the garden example, discussions of environmental justice occurred before I began data collection and set the context for the decision-making process I studied. Specifically, the CAC I studied had received training, the result of a request by a previous CAC at the end of their decision-making process. Indeed, planner #2 explained,

> "So we didn't do it in the south service area but our south service area CAC made a set, in addition to their recommendation of the plans, they made a set of uh, additional recommendations which, was really cool that they did that. It was their way, [brings over a document] it was their way of saying, 'You know, hey, this turned out fine, but we think you can do better.' And so they had a, um, so we had all our basic recommendations around facilities and play and whatever. And then in the south service area, they made additional recommendations that they had written into the plan. And we acknowledged these as being part of the policy document. Um they didn't really govern this plan. But there was like [the planner read aloud the additional recommendations], 'All CAC's should begin with a Parks 101 and there was also, I think there was a Racial Equity 101 in there too.' So on that recommendation, we started doing that."

MPRB's current Community Engagement Policy (2018 draft) includes a section on procedures which reads, "Procedures. G. Roles and Responsibilities 1. Stakeholder Role. A. Contribute feedback and remain informed on a project; encourage other stakeholders to participate in the process. h. Engage in onboarding training, including racial equity, cultural competency and MPRB 101 training." Thus, the efforts of that first CAC modified the MPRB decision-making environment such that the CAC I studied existed in a context where environmental justice was institutionalized as a priority for subsequent CACs.

As experienced by CAC member #1, trainings were learning opportunities for the CAC, "They talked about how the Twin Cities you know, was Native land first and then they talked about the North side, which is where the North Side CAC, how African Americans have continually been oppressed and he brought up a map of red lining and showed how each neighborhood is actually was red lined and they brought up an older map that the park had of where people lived and the Black areas . . . They had a woman, a native woman from some organization come and give a talk. So, they invited outside speakers so it wasn't just like [name of a park administrator] as a white guy like telling the CAC about Native history." But in this same moment of our conversation, CAC member #1 speculated that the information imparted by the speaker might not have changed any CAC members' thinking, "So yeah. I mean I don't know people, I would say the age of the CAC members is you know, we're already kind of set in our ways and it might be interesting information to people or it might not be but I think it's great that they're just giving people the tools and the information that they need."

In this way, through training may be considered "for" CAC members, the original CAC may have also designed trainings an educational tool for MRPB. The training ensured all stakeholders recognized communities' lived experiences of inequality as well as contextualized desires for a park system that better reflected the public's needs and wants. In this way, for all stakeholders moving forward common ground was established to begin the process of defining environmental justice topics as well as to consider EJ as a priority during planning.

**CAC #5.** Moving forward from the common ground established by trainings, I entered about seven months into the CAC process. We reviewed results of engagement: the public's park priorities (as listed by a planner): #1 safety (lights and to a lesser extent, cameras, but less police); #2 maintenance; #3 recreation especially basketball and water parks; #4 community gardens, especially for food production; #5 community events and performance spaces; #6 aquatics; #7 preservation of natural amenities. Priorities related to increased use of the park but displacement and gentrification were not mentioned. Also, my notes contained no mention of the dome but I also did not seek out that topic.

**Working Group #1.** The dome entered discussion when CAC member #2 (also, the working group president) listed the positive outcomes of a dome. Planner #2 asked if people at the meeting preferred a dome or a baseball diamond. In response, many attendees supported the dome. Thus, discussions took the form of a pro- versus anti-dome debate. Support for the dome often included deserving something in this area of town (see Table 8.2). Framing support in this way emphasized a shared history of neglect, unequal funding compared to other areas of the city. Further, as noted by a pro-dome stakeholder, investment would send a signal that their neighborhood was worthy of investment, not their current negative reputation. A single opposition comment linked the dome to displacement.

The dome was the focal point for debating the potential for gentrification and displacement. The "anti-dome" comment captured the fear that building something new would cause displacement. In response, others argued that a dome would not cause displacement because it would be built for "us" not "them." A second aspect of the gentrification and displacement debate concerned deservedness: if "we" should be satisfied with having amenities that are "good enough" rather than "the best." Stakeholders

discussing both displacement and deservedness asked if "we" should have to pay to use the dome. High usage fees implied the dome was "not for us" to use; more, questioning if "we" would have to pay to use the dome at all, acknowledged a history of neglect, due to which, some groups deserved *not* to pay.

Thus, gentrification and displacement manifest as a dome debate about use, fees, and how this area of town "deserved" the nice amenities enjoyed in other parts of the city. Planner #2 responded by stating they were "not passing the buck" in terms of taking action on gentrification; however, and in contradiction, also explained, 'Gentrification is not MPRB jurisdiction.' Instead, planner #2 positioned the city as the responsible party and as such, 'People should comment on city's proposed general plan.'

Table 8.2 Evolution of Dome Arguments

| **Support Dome** | **WG#1** | **WG#2** | **CAC#10** | **Public Hearing** | **Oppose Dome** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Meeting Date** | March 2018 | June 2018 | July 2018 | January 2019 | **Meeting Date** |
| **Use:** 11,000 kids use | + O | + | + | | **Displace:** Displacement |
| Increased use | + | O | + O | + | Our kids pushed out |
| Keep sports teams "here" | + | + O | O | + O | Other people will come in and use |
| **Attract:** bring people to North Minneapolis | | O | + | + O | **Smaller Scale:** Repair what we have |
| | | O | O | O | Too elaborate for us (neighborhood character; over-scaled for our use) |
| **Broad Benefit:** We deserve what they have | + | + O | O | O | **NIMBY:** do Not put a dome In My Back Yard |
| It's about the community, not you | | + | O | | Turf will cause cancer for my kids |
| Leverage MPRB's attention | | + | | | |
| **Gains:** Revenue | + | | | O | **Operate:** How will we operate? |
| Increased positive reputation for N. Mpls. | + | + | | + O | Insufficient funds for maintenance |

Table 8.2 Arguments or comments in opposition of the dome. The table does not include meetings (CAC #5, 6, 7, and 9) where the dome was not mentioned. The abbreviation WG signifies a working group meeting. Arguments fell into four main arguments in support of the dome (shown with "+") which, were matched by four arguments that represented the opposition (show with "O") side of that argument.

**CAC #6.** I focused on discussion of the new master plan's guiding principles. Such discussion was important to MPRB as a planner showed a PowerPoint slide of the principles and made paper copies

available. The planner framed the guiding principles by saying, 'Based on everything I heard so far in all the engagement…' The fifth principle is pertinent to this example, "Work with partner agencies to minimize the possibility of displacement as parks improve." The planner explained the deliberate choice to use "displacement," 'Because it means people leaving an area, rather than the word *gentrification'* and then further justified the choice of displacement. Thus, the planner delimited the scope of the debate to displacement (not gentrification). Further, though not explicitly a park priority stemming from engagement (see meeting #5), MPRB interpretation of engagement data prioritized displacement. Later, the planner revealed that definition of "displacement" was still debatable; in consideration of guiding principle #5, the planner admitted to "struggling" with acquiring more land to address gaps in the amount of park space because acquiring more property meant kicking a family out.

**CAC #7.** Members of the public (a meeting attendee and a CAC member) again raised the issue of displacement, signaling its importance. The audience member was concerned by displacement in terms of "the housing crisis [their words]" and asked if we should build more houses, not parks. Also, a CAC member took issue with the language of a guiding principles document, 'How does point #5 happen? It just says that we should avoid displacement? How can we not have more specific language?' In response, planner #2 acknowledged the concern by offering to add more detailed language to point #5 to, 'Try to flush it out more.' Showing displacement was a priority but also, collecting their own data, the planner said, 'We've been trying to do some research on displacement and there is a research fellow working with the Land Trust and they are visiting Minneapolis and doing research on gentrification and displacement, we hope to learn from them.' However, like working group meeting #1, planner #2 also implied that gentrification was outside the jurisdiction of MPRB, 'We are also unique in that the MPRB is separate from the city, so if we do work in a park, there is a whole separate entity that is responsible for the vacant parcel of land across the street.' Thus, while the planner described actions that prioritized anti-displacement, displacement and gentrification were still stated as being outside MPRB's jurisdiction.

The dome had incited arguments of displacement in working group meeting #1. However, in CAC#7, the term "dome" appeared in my notes only once, referenced by a planner, 'There is still a

concern with the dome and an ensuing lack of open space.' The next comment written in my notes concerned existing canopy cover lost to an enlarged parking lot. Thus, I concluded that the dome was not a high-conflict topic among stakeholders at this meeting.

I also observed the dome was an anomaly. Building a dome incited fears of displacement in one park but building amenities in other parks did not. In another park in the same service area, a planner described, 'People living around the park that we spoke with felt that we needed more amenities to draw people to the park- the new plans attempt to draw more people to the park.' Drawing more people was not met with concerns for displacement, apart from adequate parking. Similarly, plans for another park in the service area sought to "enliven" the space with a skatepark and amphitheater. The design was praised as creating a place for kids. These amenities, just as likely cause displacement, were welcomed precisely because they would bring more people into parks. Further, meeting attendees proposed adding a food provider to a park asking, 'Why can't we have what they have?' Here, in addition to attracting more people, community members also wanted amenities like parks in wealthier areas, despite potential displacement. Thus, not all new amenities were feared as potential catalysts for displacement.

**Working Group #2.** The dome had near-equal support and opposition. Those in support continued to advocate that the dome would bring benefits that would extend to the entire community (Table 8.2). Opposition was based in fear of displacement; stakeholders framed their argument as "our kids" would not be able to use the park. Like "our kids," "we" was used frequently to explain fears: "we" would not be able to use new amenities or funds earned from them because "others" would use them. One manifestation of this argument was, 'We don't want suburbs coming in and renting our facilities!' Once, in response, a pro-dome person demanded, "Who are 'they' that will come take 'our' fields?" The anti-dome person responded, giving a face to the "Other:" when suburban fields were in short supply, "they" come to take "our" fields, this had happened before. Perhaps many CAC and community members desired greater control over dome use, including pricing. In this way, the debate became more personal: could "we" use new amenities versus "them."

Two new sides to the debate wanted the dome removed. One implied that new designs were too elaborate and did not fit with the neighborhood. These folks wanted to use money to maintain what already existed. For example, a meeting attendee argued, 'We're not asking for this elaborate plan. Why can't we just improve on what we have?' Their argument aligned with Curran and Hamilton's (2012) "Just Green Enough" case where neighborhood residents asked for local renovations be made only to suit their needs, rather than creating a generically-appealing waterfront destination. In this way, the working group #2 argument introduced gentrification into the debate that had been focused on displacement. Stakeholders questioned the dome because it seemed to appeal to users beyond themselves. The second argument did not frame arguments against the dome as concern for the neighborhood but instead, for "My Back Yard." These folks did not want a dome to block their view or, asked that a dome be placed in another park. I considered these arguments as a type of NIMBY-ism (Not In My BackYard).

In sum, everyone seemed to agree that the dome would mean more use of the park; some saw this as a benefit to the neighborhood while others were afraid of personal displacement or inconvenience. In response, the planner seemed to see the nuances in the debate and offered a community-determined fee structure, 'We can "bake operations and management into the plan" and reference models of fair funding from other MPRB projects.' In this way, the planner recognized displacement (fear that the community could not use their new park) but did not recognize gentrification or NIMBY-ism.

**Meeting CAC #9.** Discussion focused not on the dome but on other park designs for which the CAC had not reached consensus. Focus was on accommodating a greater variety of users' preferences. As in other meetings, not all proposed improvements (e.g. a park where a planner said, "We wanted to bring some things to draw people to this park") led to fear of displacement. However, unlike other meetings, some did. An audience member spoke out against connecting two parks because one park was small and would experience too much use, "It is saturated! There is no parking! There are already a lot of dogs." This echoes Sister et al.'s (2010) piece on park "congestion" (see literature review). To the "congestion" concern, a planner clarified, "To be clear, this is just a connection." A CAC member, perhaps sensing the outrage, offered a concession that this "link" might encourage people to explore other parks. However,

also like the dome, some concerns about use stemmed from NIMBY-ism. The same audience member, "What about the people who bought property with the park as our front yard? Now, more people will be coming and using the park! There are already enough dogs and a lot of people using the park. This is going to bring more people into the park!" CAC members seemed less sensitive, "One of the things we can't do is limit people to a public park." Thus, a distinction: concerns were acknowledged when they related to the broader neighborhood; those related to personal interests got less accommodation.

Of note, this distinction was not observed for a second park eliciting NIMBY and displacement concerns, "I've owned my home for 14 years. I live at that red square [pointed to an element on the design] and I've been "displaced" by this park. I rent an apartment a few blocks away. I don't think the park board recognized the impact of a lacrosse community. It feels like 3 separate parks. Lacrosse, and I have documentation, runs 6 days a week from 5pm to 9pm and that's tournaments. And its parents sitting on the sidewalk. I've talked to the park. I've asked for additional trees to be planted." The speaker later concluded, "So, anything that can be done to encourage people to stay in the park." Planner #2 responded, 'Do you think it's a possible solution if we actually move that sidewalk?' Thus, a modification was offered immediately, despite framing as a personal inconvenience, and thus, unlikely to be acknowledged. The planner's response was perhaps a testament to the speaker attending multiple meetings, pursuing outside solutions, or the problem having broader negative impacts, beyond the individual speaker. Alternately, a solution was found quickly because concern was not for a design feature (e.g. a dome) but could be remedied with a design modification.

**Meeting CAC #10.** Dome comments shifted from mostly support (working group meeting #1), to equal support and opposition (working group meeting #2), to mostly opposition (CAC #10) where only two attendees were pro-dome (Table 8.2). Supporting the dome, planner #2 described engagement results, 'We don't have the exact numbers, like X % of people were in support of the dome. But lots of talks were done with people and with kids in the parks. Kids say that they need more space to do activities in the parks and they need a place to use in the winter. We need to consider what we have heard from the entirety of the outreach efforts, not just what we have been hearing in these last three meetings.' For the

first time, concessions were made to dome opposition; a CAC member stated, 'The dome, we do want lowered to be equal to the "cap" for residential buildings,"' and mentioned, "depressing the field" below ground because the height of the dome was, 'The most significant concern coming from adjacent neighbors.' However, planner #2 explained opposition more broadly, 'The community concerns were not just with the height of the dome. It was on the operations and the simple existence of it- that there was a dome at all, an additional building in the park during winter.'

In this way, the planner highlighted the split in dome opposition: NIMBY versus displacement. Displacement often concerned dome operation and was rooted in a history of financial neglect for the North side. For example, a member of the public commented, "We can't be guaranteed our kids will have access to be able to use that space! We are told that they hopefully will. We can't deal with hopefully because hopefully usually screws us." Aesthetic concerns drove the NIMBY "angle" for dome opposition. In response, MPRB had discussed modifications, like "baking in operations" to the guiding principles document. However, discussions had not described dome modifications to address aesthetic concerns.

Alongside dome debates, a second argument centered on the definition of "we." "We" may have separated North side residents from park administrators and from other areas of the city. In separation, North side residents were united and reminded planners of their history of neglect which, was different from other areas of the city. Recall, "we" had described who would be displaced and who was deserving.

However, unity and who was included in "we" were both contested. For example, a meeting attendee said, 'At last week's meeting [a work group meeting] we had a unanimous show of hands that we don't want that dome.' A CAC member responded, 'Don't say unanimous. "People in the neighborhood" also want the dome.' All stakeholders saw themselves as part of the "we" who was part of the neighborhood and impacted by the dome but not everyone opposed the dome. Being part of the neighborhood and part of "we" was also contested in terms of who deserved to participate during meetings. One meeting attendee accused another of not being a legitimate participant because, "You are not from here!" In defense, the accused explained, "I use the park!"

Debates about deservedness now also concerned participation. These debates pitted "neighbors" against "not neighbors" as well as long-term participants against "neighbors." "Neighbors" often complained about a lack of procedural justice: they were personally excluded from participation (especially because of a lack of personal engagement via door-knocking) and they had just heard about the process. A sensitivity emerged where MPRB sought to privilege those with a longer time commitment to the process. For example, a "neighbor" newer to the process presented a NIMBY complaint, 'The dome is better suited on 16th street. There is nothing over there, only a parking lot.' To which, a CAC member tried to move the plan for the park with the dome forward, dome included, but many attendees yelled, 'NO! NO! NO!' To which, the CAC president proclaimed, 'The CAC will vote on this! They have been here for two years!' Planner #2 acknowledged the definition of "we" during our interview by discussing neighbors' desire for personal engagement,

> "I'm just going to go ahead and be totally honest and be totally on the record, I think that um, parks should um equally serve everyone in the neighborhood. And I think it's a um, I think it's NOT appropriate for people to suggest that because they live facing the park that they should have greater say because their impact is greater. I also think their benefit is greater. And I don't think that they rate higher than people who might be two blocks behind them across an alley. There's a couple reasons for that. The primary reason is um, parks are a gentrifier and you *tend to have* a ring of home ownership right around a park, where the values are higher, and people tend to be older and more white. And if you step two blocks away from a park, the demographic will change. So, if we prioritize those that are right on the parks, we're allowing a segment of the population that might not be AT ALL representative of the neighborhood as a whole, to make decisions around the park. . . That's an easy way [calling out door-knocking] to denigrate a process that they don't like, number one. It's an easy way demand special treatment when these are ALREADY the most privileged users in the neighborhood."

In this way, the planner offered a definition for who should be considered "we:" not just "neighbors" whose homes border the park but all park users. As such, MPRB responses focused on protecting park use for all, not NIMBY concerns. In this way, MPRB and I both defined environmental justice as a concern of access, specifically, the ability to use a park.

**Planning commission public hearing.** This first public hearing for the service area master plan began with a presentation by planner #2. In their presentation, the planner contextualized the dome, 'I

think we all agree that this has been a big discussion point. It was the single-most commented item in the draft.' Public comment followed with 20 total comments; six concerned the dome. Of the six, two supported the dome but only one cited specific reasons: drawing people into North Minneapolis, increasing use for all ages, keeping sports "here," and creating a positive reputation. Four opposition comments cited: NIMBY; operations; funding (framed as sustainability or sufficient maintenance dollars); too elaborate for us ("doesn't fit the character of our park or our neighborhood") as well as linking size to drawing people from all over the city; let's repair what we have. Thus, arguments of displacement, deservedness, gentrification, and NIMBY-ism heard throughout the decision-making process were also made in the final hearing. Of the four comments opposed to the dome, two also noted that the speaker was excluded from the decision-making process. For example, 'There has not been enough community engagement with the people who live around the park who will be impacted by the dome. Even though there were 17 months of engagement, many of us just got involved this summer.'

Planner #2 continued the discussion of "we" in describing the long engagement process, suggesting some stakeholders became involved early on. In doing so, the planner perhaps framed public comments made during the meeting as "momentary outbursts" alongside months of community engagement and meetings. Further, the planner introduced amendments that would modify the CAC-developed plan based on public comments made later in the process. Thus, the board was tasked with deciding the "we" deserving to participate; their choice would be shown when voting to accept the recommendation of the CAC or the later-involved public (often, "neighbors").

Finally, planner #2 commented on how dome arguments were reflected in the final plan. NIMBY concerns were separated from displacement in a statement that aesthetic concerns were the major arguments against the dome as well as, 'Concerns about the North side being able to access the dome. Now, those access concerns, to combat inaccess, they have included some policy recommendations, should the plan be accepted.' Notice that the aesthetic concerns were not addressed by recommendations. Iinstead, the planner only explained how the final plan addressed "inaccess" with policy recommendations allowing community input on fee structures and other aspects of dome operation.

**Final service area master plan.** The dome was included in the final plan. It was mentioned 14 times (twice in drawing labels, six times discussing that both "general support" and "significant opposition" were voiced during the participatory process, four times in a paragraph about the proposed design, and twice estimating construction and operation costs). In the proposed design section of the plan, the plan preparation team acknowledged dome debates,

> "Some residents fear they will be excluded from the facility because fees will be high, because outside groups will dominate rentals, or simply because they will not feel welcome because of the color of their skin or their economic status." The plan asked future stakeholders to consider the plan's guiding principles, "Without consideration of these principles, this vision could become exactly what people fear: an exclusive playground for non-north-siders. This vision is for the north side, which deserves this kind of facility. A vision like this can also raise fears of economic displacement through gentrification. It is again MPRB's intent to build a facility like this for residents that use the park now. MPRB has little jurisdiction over housing policy, but understands that parks can be seen as contributors to gentrification. The solution, however, is not to limit park development, thereby keeping neighborhoods underserved and desirable."

In this way, the final plan acknowledged fears of displacement and gentrification and sought to protect use. In doing so, the plan defined environmental justice for MPRB within this service area. The definition appears to have been collaboratively determined as it echoed language used in dome support and opposition (Table 8.2). Indeed, the plan's definition of EJ included threats to park use related to usage fees and "Others" coming to use the park. The plan also included North side residents' lived experiences of discrimination. Finally, the plan spoke to both gentrification and displacement. MPRB simultaneously maintained their position that some aspects of gentrification were outside their jurisdiction while also, in a way that had not happened during the advisory council meetings, stating what they could do to fortify parks against gentrification and displacement. This duality was reflected in my interview with planner #2,

> "I think the gentrification / displacement is a key conversation right now. Um, and I think it would be easy for many of us at parks, because of our unique situation as a separate public entity from the city and frankly I have publicly said this before, and I am maybe walking it back a little bit. That there's not a lot that we can do because we don't control housing policy. And we don't control economic policy or zoning or planning outside of our park boundaries. You know. So that's a pretty easy way to wash our hands of it. Um

> and I think within the halls of this building, you know, there's maybe a temptation for us to be like, 'Well, we're not going to overstep and get in on the city on housing.' But at the same time, we hear from the community that parks are a 'gentrifier'- and what are we going to do?"

In the final plan, MPRB created environmental justice by using a Guiding Principles document to address fears of displacement and gentrification and protect park use, "For residents that use the park now." Principles covered four aspects of management:

- Partnership and Coordination, "2. Ensure that agreements with partners do not unduly limit community access to the facility."
- Design and Construction, "9. Seek to minimize visual impact of facilities on nearby homes through vegetation, depressing facilities down into the earth, and/or high quality façade design."
- Programming and Access, "11. Facilities should prioritize access by the north side community. 12. Access to facilities should be affordable to north side residents. 13. Decisions around access, hours, and fees should be made through a community engaged process, in consultation with park users and potential park users. 14. Programming should be tailored to what people want to do in the park."
- Operations and Maintenance, "17. Facility leadership and staff should reflect the north side community, in all its racial and cultural diversity."

The guiding principles I chose to show here spoke to questions of displacement, gentrification, and access as use. Note, the guiding principles also made concessions regarding aesthetic concerns about the dome (e.g. height; above #9) though did not remove the dome from the plan. Finally, a type of gentrification was addressed such that outside parties would not be hired to manage the new park. Indeed, during our interview, the planner recalled linking environmental justice and dome operation. Community members had been saying, the planner remembered,

> "'We're worried that you're going to build this big thing and then the people who run it, aren't going to look like, and then we're going to feel like we can't be in there. Then it's

> not going to become a place for North-siders.'" Such a fear could be realized, the planner reasoned, if hiring the most qualified person meant hiring someone from outside the park system, "And whose got that kind of experience? Again, it goes back to race being a predictor of success. Whose got the degrees to do that? Whose got the work experience? That's going to be a white person. And so, I went, 'Yeah, Oh my god yeah, you're going to get trapped into that, into that systemic racism, is going to bring someone forward that is exactly what the community feared."

The planner explained addressing fears before any dome was built, "So, what I did was I wrote a set of guiding principles for the implementation of the [park's name] dome. And we don't normally write in guiding principles for individual parks, or for future implementations. But we included in the plan." Here, in considering the operation of an amenity to protect use, gentrification and displacement became MPRB's jurisdiction.

**Conclusion**

In Minneapolis, decision-making centered on objects imbued with meaning. CAC members and the public steered the direction of debates trying to define the meaning of those objects. Gardens became symbols of equity; however, debates, related to definitions of equity, were short-lived and the group seemed able to sustain agreement on a definition of equity. Similarly, a dome became a symbol of displacement and gentrification but debates were more complex. Indeed, "Social problems are very difficult to resolve when competing parties cling to divergent opinions about the root causes of their conflict and remain unwilling to consider interpretations of the situation other than their own (Stokols, 2018; 191)." For the dome, debates concerned who would be suffer and the form injustice would take if a dome were built. Perhaps like early EJ debates, the dome presented a "nuisance." For some, the nuisance was an environmental injustice as it could not be used by local people. However, for others, the nuisance was personal (a large obstruction of an individual's park views). As in other nuisance debates (see Pellow, 2002), the dome was touted as bringing benefits that would be lost to the neighborhood if not built but also harms that would be avoided if the dome was not built. In this way dome debates were characterized by those in support of the dome who felt they deserved a high-quality amenity in North Minneapolis and welcomed the people and benefits it would bring the community. Those opposing the dome feared the

very same increase in use would lead to displacement. Some in opposition did not want a dome at all; their arguments resonated with ideas about gentrification (a dome was not what "we" wanted and felt like it was made for "others") but also NIMBY-ism.

In final plans, some gentrification and displacement definitions were not seen as legitimate, like those related to NIMBY. They were not addressed in the final plan. To this extent, acknowledgment of aesthetic concerns could have been a way to maintain another group's privileged way of life by excluding another group from benefits. This echoes Duncan and Duncan's (2011) findings from a New York case where an elite lifestyle was protected by residents espousing a wilderness ideal. Economically-privileged residents maintained and excluded others from their ideal using their capital: gifting private, protected land and exclusionary zoning. In the example of the dome, "neighbors" may have been seeking similar exclusion to retain their own "park-side" property.

Other definitions were viewed as appropriate by the MPRB. These were related to use and thus, the definition of EJ used throughout this dissertation. These concerns were addressed in the final plan. Concerns aligned with classical gentrification cases in which a generic amenity might serve to restrict use for existing residents while providing additional jobs and services for new, White and affluent park users. In this way, the benefits of a dome were also reasons for it to be feared. The final plan addressed these concerns by protecting use with guiding principles. In doing so, it addressed distributional injustices by providing additional space for North side residents to recreate. The guiding principles also offered recognition justice by creating a space that was "big," breaking down the negative stereotypes that had confronted the city but that would be managed to consider how the existing residents wanted to use their parks (e.g. reduced fees).

My findings showed that throughout public meetings, discourses were shaped when stakeholders weighed-in on problem definitions and offered solutions. Planners worked to create parks and policies that recognized the preferences of the public. They also drew upon policy tools to ensure that the public's preferences would remain a priority for future park management. Thus, I found that park administrators, like the case analyzed by Curran and Hamilton (2012), focused on the protection of members of the

public living near the park (rather than prospective home-buyers or park patrons), especially protection against the negative impacts of improvement projects. In my work as well as that of Curran and Hamilton, neighbors were protected through policy tools and recognition justice.

In terms of policy tools, the Curran and Hamilton study highlighted the importance of tools like zoning, a commissioned study, and a lawsuit. Similarly, I found the park administrators in my cases used policy tools to mitigate displacement resulting from improvements to an existing park. Administrators in my case crafted a guiding principles document that would provide protection against displacement when new park features became operational (e.g. the sports dome).

In terms of recognition justice, Curran and Hamilton studied the improvement to a town's waterway. Rather than create a nature trail that would have generic appeal for new, wealthy residents (a catalyst for gentrification), existing residents opted to clean a waterway only to remove contaminants but then leave vestiges of an industrial past. In this way, the residents created a vision of what a park meant for them and that would not displace them. Like Curran and Hamilton's findings, the participants who contributed to park design in my study also created a vision of parks that aligned with how they wanted to use parks and that would not displace them.

Also considering recognition justice, my data show how new definitions, based on public input of knowledge, can change the course of discussions and entire projects. My work focused on discourse surrounding the terms gentrification and displacement. Like the work of Checker, stakeholders in my cases contested these terms, though often gentrification and displacement were considered inevitable. Indeed, in my cases, language was negotiable so that terms like gentrification and displacement were determined deliberatively. Changing the course created greater alignment between the public and their parks and decision-making processes.

Finally, my data showed the importance of smaller-scale methods like art and programs to create parks for "us" not "them." This means that gentrification is contestable and mitigation of the impacts of gentrification (like displacement) is possible. To do so, stakeholders in my study and others (like Curran and Hamilton) relied on policy tools, recognition justice, and small-scale solutions. Thus, if decision-

making was more inclusive, the "public" involved would be neighbors to parks. Their perspectives and ideas to avoid displacement would become imbedded in plans. Additional measures to avoid gentrification and resulting displacement may also necessarily include partnership with city to examine development around parks. Such measures would perhaps function to protect the housing and rental prices for neighbors living near parks as well as zoning to protect neighborhood identity (thus adding a measure of recognition justice).

# Chapter 9. Significance and Conclusion

I began my research to address the problem that urban neighborhood parks could be spaces of environmental injustice. Injustice in parks aligns with classical conceptions of EJ: the largest (and therefore considered highest-quality) parks are not distributed to the poorest and majority people of color neighborhoods. When these neighborhoods lack access to high-quality parks, they also lack the health benefits of parks. Further, park access is threatened by injustices of recognition. Many cities' parks have a generic form, rather than recognizing the unique ways all community members might want to use parks. As US demographics change and people seek a variety of uses for parks, there is desire from both the public and park administrators to modify how parks look and operate. Theoretically, the EJ literature links distributional and recognition injustices to a lack of a procedural justice. As such a desire to change parks to better align with the public's preferences could be realized if the public was included in making decisions about how parks look and operate.

Stakeholders I spoke with corroborated claims of distributional, recognition, and procedural injustice raised by the academic literature. In terms of distribution, stakeholders cited funding disparities and I observed certain areas of the city lacked the quality of amenities seen in wealthier areas. Stakeholders had also experienced injustices of recognition. Indeed, they considered environmental injustice as an issue of access, specifically a lack of access to parks they wanted to use (as opposed to their distance from "just any park"). Finally, stakeholders sought involvement in decision-making at the outset of policy-making, planning, and design. In sum, stakeholders desired a park system (physical parks and decision-making processes) that better recognized how they wanted to use their parks and participate in decision-making than historic systems. Perhaps this was because historic systems took generic forms and decision-making limited participation to one-way conversations during public comment periods or park administrators' presentations during board meetings.

To study park systems that recognized how people wanted to use parks and make decisions, I studied distributional, recognition, and procedural justice. I began by describing distributional injustices-

gathering evidence that some neighborhoods had better parks than others. However, scholars had prompted descriptions of injustice to be positioned alongside examinations of *why* such distributions occurred. In this way, scholars prompted a tandem focus on distribution *and* decision-making processes. Therefore, I also studied collaborative decision-making between the public and parks departments. Finally, as I collected data in parks (to study distributional justice) and during decision making (to study procedural justice), I saw that decision-making often modified park systems in a way that suggested recognition justice. Indeed, decisions were made to modify parks to better align with how people wanted to use parks or participate in decision-making. I drew on a social-ecological systems (SES) perspective to understand how this recognition was achieved and also, to compliment the collaborative governance (CG) frame that had directed my data collection and initial analysis of procedural justice.

I collected data in two cities that intentionally included the public in decision-making processes. As such, the public could impact how their parks looked and operated. I reasoned that collaboration between the public and parks departments could create park systems, parks and decision-making processes, that people wanted to use. In this way, public involvement in decision-making about parks could bring distributional, procedural, and recognition justice.

**Research Questions**

- (Scoping questions) "Is environmental justice (EJ) perceived as a salient issue for stakeholders?" and "What is the public's role in making decisions about how parks look and operate?"
- (Chapter 4) "How do stakeholders define access?" and focusing on procedural justice, "Where can the public participate in decision-making?"
- (Chapter 5) "Do any elements appear to have greater salience for park-based collaboration?"
- (Overarching, post-analysis questions guiding remaining chapters) "How are park systems modified to better align with the public's preferences?" and "What is the public's role in driving those changes?"
- (Chapters 6 & 7) "How can resources transform park systems?"

- (Chapter 8) To study Chicago's Park Advisory Councils I asked, "How are park groups supported or constrained?" To study Minneapolis' Community Advisory Committees I asked, "How can discourses change?" as well as "How do plans and policies respond to contestation of gentrification?"

## Three Themes Emerging from the Data

Three themes emerged from my data to show how parks were modified in response to public input. Parks became places people wanted to use as well as venues for them to participate in decision-making. I now describe the themes: flexibility and congruence, public knowledge, and responsivity.

### Flexibility and Congruence

Procedural justice was achieved when decision-making venues were flexible. Indeed, venues gained congruence to how the public wanted to participate. In the case of board meetings, seemingly-inflexible time limits were extended. During advisory council meetings, the public could use time to engage in two-way conversations. This was largely possible as meeting agendas were flexible. PAC members determined their agendas while CAC member modified agendas set by MPRB.

In board and advisory council venues, agenda-setting allowed the public to bring attention to topics of interest. These topics perhaps, had not been on the agenda of the present meeting but after being mentioned, could be added to agendas for future meetings (Adams, 2004). Agenda flexibility may have been the result of park staff valuing additional public input. Programs and daily park use became decision-making venues largely because of the flexibility of park spaces and park supervisors. In the case of programs, indoor and outdoor park spaces could be transformed to accommodate programs the public requested from supervisors. Similarly, during daily use, the transformation of park spaces was an act of decision-making. Thus, flexibility, in all decision-making venues, allowed that modifications of parks so to better reflect how the public wanted to participate in decision-making and use parks.

When parks were flexible, distributional, recognition, and procedural injustices were addressed. When decision-making procedures and park form increased congruence to the public's preferences, the spaces were a better reflection of how the public wanted to use the spaces (recognition justice). When the

public was able to participate in decision-making and the system was modified to make space for the public, at times institutionalizing those modifications, the park system began to address procedural justices. Finally, distributional injustices were corrected by redesigning and rebuilding existing parks to accommodate a greater number and diversity of users. For example, during programs, existing space and time within a park were extending through sharing, trading, and transforming space. Thus, even small parks could effectively increase their size and perhaps, be considered as a "high-quality" park.

Thus, park spaces that are flexible will be important as park user demographics change and parks departments seek to involve the public in decision-making. Flexibility should take place in outdoor spaces (e.g. more multi-use fields) as well as inside (funding for equipment and spaces that can be transformed as opposed to single-use spaces). Further, park staff should be open to modifications of space as well as decision-making processes. Doing so would allow the public to steer decision-making towards their priorities and ultimately, the park system towards their preferences.

**Public Knowledge**

**Park use.** Members of the public input various types of knowledge into the park system. Public knowledge guided modification of parks and processes so that both gained congruence to public participants. Park administrators expected the public to share knowledge on park preferences. I observed that the public offer this input during board and advisory council meetings and when asking for programs. The public also offered input regarding park preferences in action. Indeed, I observed people using the park as expected (e.g. playing on the playground). Such knowledge was expected and sought because it is useful. Indeed, the idea of what a park "is" was not universal so, the input of a variety of users was necessary in designing parks that appealed to a diversity of preferences.

In their words and actions, the public also showed park administrators that parks could be used differently than expected. People asked for programs and program scheduling that may not have occurred to supervisors. During daily use, I observed people using the park in unexpected ways (e.g. holding large group picnics throughout the park and playing sports in spaces not designed for those sports). Though I did not interview park users, future interviews could show that the public brings additional types of

knowledge to their daily use of parks. For example, Low (2000) positioned parks as spaces for social organizing, even protest political injustices, much like the plazas seen in Latin American countries (also see Boone et al., 2009).

**Connections.** The public also shared unexpected knowledge in all decision-making venues in the form of connections. This included connections to park staff as well as to outside groups- including people in positions of power, like Aldermen and community members. During daily use and programing, an important step in decision-making was building a relationship with one's park supervisor. As the policy administrator, with connections to the central bureaucracy but operating at an individual park, supervisors were well-poised to teach the public how to participate within the existing system as well as to help them modify it. Modifications included initiating and operating programs as well as helping (e.g. renting equipment) or not hindering the public as they appropriated space within parks during daily use.

In advisory councils, the input of connections made the public valuable for reasons beyond their opinions; the public could complete tasks. With outside connections, they gained power to accomplish things that their existing role in the collaboration would not have allowed. By offering the input of connections they modified the park system to give themselves more power during decision-making. Members of the public could use resources gained from their connections (e.g. funds or a list of priorities; see chapter 8) to steer decision-making towards their priorities and ultimately, steer the park system towards their preferences. The scholarly literature also underscores the importance of connections for the public to accomplish tasks. Indeed, Hannah and Lewis (1982; 46) found, "Citizen-controlled committees clearly do not depend on the city bureaucracy solely for information or for support, but use their own resources in gathering material and for mobilizing support for their activities."

**EJ sensibility.** During board and advisory council meetings, the public also input a unique form of knowledge: environmental justice sensibility. Doing so introduced priorities that had previously been outside the purview of the parks departments (gentrification and equity in Minneapolis) or, presented perspectives not considered by the park (cases of procedural justice in Chicago). These inputs may have also been valued by planners for their novelty. Indeed, planner #1 felt "motivated" to pursue equity in

gardens though such a pursuit had not been a priority of MPRB. As such, I found that inputs to decision-making need not only take the form specified by planners and further, the knowledge valued during decision-making need not be limited to the elite, technical knowledge held by planners. In this way, I find it important that the public also seen as capable participants *outright* due to their valuable knowledges. This intrinsic valuation of the public is perhaps a contrast to scholars (e.g. Fung & Wright, 2001; Innes & Booher, 2004) who view the public's improved participatory capacity as an outcome of participation.

**Institutionalizing of procedures.** In terms of recognizing how the public wants to participate, I would like to see more opportunities for creative dialog to reassure the public that their input is valued. Perhaps speakers could have the opportunity for one comment to be responded to during public comment or be given a deadline for follow-up by a park administrator. Further, roundtable discussions with commissioners could be held. Advisory councils provided opportunities for two-way dialog and were where the public raised EJ topics. I contend that advisory councils could be the venue from which to incorporate EJ concerns into planning and policy. In terms of daily use, master planning processes as well as incremental changes to parks made by PACs often responded to how people were already using parks. The "public's perspective" gained through observation of actions should continue to be prioritized in policy to increase congruence between the public and their parks. Also, it is useful to encourage relationship-building between supervisors and patrons. These relationships could help find unique ways for the public to transform parks into spaces they want to use. This will be especially important in terms of appropriating park space to feel "like home" because using parks "like home" does not appear to be recognized in new service area master plans.

**Responsivity of the Park System**

When members of the public offered inputs during decision-making, park departments often responded by making physical modifications to parks and procedural modifications to decision-making processes. In this way, the entire park system could be responsive to public inputs. My data also showed how at times, the public adapted to better fit within the existing park system.

However, if the system is to continue to be modified in a way that increases congruence between parks and new users (e.g. recent immigrants), park staff must continue to respond to public input. This may involve holding listening sessions, being amenable to renting equipment, and keeping time and agendas flexible during meetings. Responsivity is important for environmental justice; when park staff are responsive to public input, power-sharing occurs. Powerful park employees who, historically, made all park decisions, can use their power to instead realize the public's expressed wants and needs. Ultimately, an open and fluid system is created where parks are responsive to diverse and changing park users, rather than being static and generic.

**Implications for Using Three Frames to Examine Parks**

My dissertation research was developed following the perspective of Environmental Justice (EJ). I used propositions concerning distributions (e.g. which neighborhoods were more like to be sites of injustice) to choose focal parks and to understand what injustice in parks might look like. EJ scholars also urged study of procedural justice, the decisions that led to distributional injustices. However, in the EJ literature, I did not encounter analytical methods.

Thus, I operationalized the concept of decision-making using Emerson et al.'s (2011) model of collaborative governance (CG). The model guided data collection about collaboration among stakeholders (the public and parks departments) within the "environment" of parks and decision-making venues where they determined how parks would look and operate. Then, after data collection, I assessed the fit of my data to the model. Doing so showed the explanatory power of a theory of collaboration for my data: I saw where there was congruence to my data and where supplemental insights were needed.

I used the model as a heuristic to "see" how public participation in decision-making took place in park advisory council and board meetings. While studying these spaces, ones I had considered to be spaces of collaboration, the model also became a heuristic to examine other spaces in which the public interacted with the physical spaces in parks and other stakeholders to shape how their parks were used. In this way, I saw that decisions were made in more venues than I had anticipated. The model was also useful in offering theoretical distinction between each of the decision-making venues (see chapter 4).

The model categories, when transformed into my guide for content analysis, were most appropriate to examine collaboration in the advisory council venue. The model was useful to show the public's role during decision-making as well as which characteristics of and interactions considered necessary for collaboration (by the model) were present in my data. However, while the CG model was a useful heuristic, the model may not have defined daily use and program venues as collaborations. This is because few of the model components were satisfied by data collected from those venues.

Thus, I saw where the explanatory power of the CG theory ended and where supplemental insights were needed. I required another perspective to study types of decision-making that did not fit within Emerson et al.'s (2011) model. I chose a perspective that would allow focus on collaborative decision-making in all venues. The relationship between inputs and modifications suggested a "park decision-making system" comprised of physical parks and collaborative decision-making processes. To investigate my data as a system, I employed the Social-Ecological Systems (SES) perspective. I used the SES perspective to categorize inputs to the system as well as follow the series of transactions among stakeholders in which inputs were "answered" by responses (chapters 6-8). The SES perspective guided me in capturing transactions of material and human resources as well as their "meaning" in venues where decision-making extended beyond formal dialog. The SES perspective revealed a plethora of inputs offered by the public. Thus, their role and their potential contributions may be larger than anticipated.

Further, the CG model explained that the factors necessary for collaboration were situated "in context." Therefore, SES guided the expansion of the temporal scope of analyses, examination of natural, built, and sociocultural (including the meaning of actions and objects) dimensions of the context, and placement of parks within communities and then, cities. I found how context interacted with the system's transactions and how context and inputs shaped system outputs. In this way, SES also guided the study of recognition justice. To this extent, modifications to decision-making processes as well as to park design and operation resulted in parks that better reflected the public's preferences for use and participation.

In sum, environmental justice provided the impetus for my study as well as directed my focus to decision-making. In this way, EJ defined the problem and guided me to examine procedural justice. Then,

I used CG and SES to operationalize procedural justice as the study of collaboration during decision-making. CG can be used to analyze collaboration when the format includes dialog and regularly-occurring meetings. SES can then guide analyses when decision-making is informal and might not fit the CG model's components. Further, the CG model notes the importance of context and collaborative actions. SES provided guidance on studying context. Also, SES prompted me to examine the relationship between inputs, transactions, and outputs during collaboration and thus, provided a way to link collaborative actions to the entire process of collaboration. Finally, using three frames together (EJ, CG, and SES) I found much overlap of procedural and recognition justices. I saw how public participation in decision-making was important not just to produce the output of parks that recognized the public's preference but also, decision-making processes that aligned with how the public wanted to participate.

## Dialogs with Scholarly Literature

### Appropriation of Space

Using SES illuminated the series of transactions that ultimately shaped park space. Specifically, I began to understand how this series of transactions could precede Loukaitou-Siders' (1995) concept of "appropriation of space." Loukaitou-Sideris' work named the phenomenon and described how it occurred in outdoor park spaces. I extend the work of Loukaitou-Sideris (1995) by examining the transaction of resources that facilitated the appropriation of space outside as well as inside of parks. Further, I showed how, like Loukaitou-Sideris, appropriation of space took place informally when people decided, in a moment, to use a park space other than how it was intended. Extending the work of Loukaitou-Sideris, I showed how appropriation also occurred formally. During programs, a "generic" space like a multi-purpose room was transformed on a regular schedule to become what park patrons needed or wanted.

### Measuring Environmental Justice in Parks

Many empirical studies collect quantitative data that measure proximity to any park (as number of park or parks acres) or travel barriers to any park (as safety and access to routes). Thus, studies measured the potential to use "just any park." Instead, I used qualitative data to understand access to parks people

want to use. Thus, my definition of access agrees with Thomas (2010); in considering access, one must consider not just park quantity but also *efficacy*, the park's ability to meet user's wants and needs.

I suggest that scholars can no longer rest on "park size" to determine quality of parks because the physical size of a park can be effectively expanded. Indeed, while distributional injustices exist with respect to the allocation of park land, methods exist to address these injustices. My findings concerning programs and the theme of "flexibility" demonstrated that even small parks can transform their small spaces by reallocating material resources to meet park users' needs. While many insights have come from the abundance of spatial data and from scholars, like Wen et al. (2013), who have made commendable use of spatial data to understand distributional injustices and validate the lived experience of injustice, perhaps park size has received too much emphasis. Indeed, when distributional justice studies examine park size as the only measure of quality, they miss important nuances in the relationships between parks and other spaces in the community as well as the transformation of spaces within a single park.

**Gentrification and Displacement**

My understanding of environmental injustice as a lack of access to parks people want to use resonates with academic and popular discussions of gentrification and displacement. Gentrification occurs when parks are 'Starbucks' in their form. Such parks may not be the form that people in communities surrounding the parks prefer to use. Such a mismatch constitutes a lack of recognition justice. A mismatch in which parks are built for others also marks an act of gentrification: appealing to prospective new, wealthy, and often, white, users but not the surrounding community. Mismatched, generic parks also send a message of which uses (and which users) are acceptable. When such parks are built, the accompanying fear is the displacement of existing community members; they fear they will be unable to use their parks (Curran & Hamilton, 2012). Indeed, building a large, state of the art dome led some residents to fear that their parks would become destinations for wealthy suburban sports leagues or provide jobs for elite, trained professional managers.

As I was preparing this dissertation, I was intrigued by Curran and Hamilton's (2012) discussion of "Just Green Enough." They argued that to keep parks safe from "gentrifiers," parks must lack a generic

form and universal appeal. Their argument seemed to me to suggest that resulting parks would be "less than" or unappealing. However, as indicated during discussions about the dome presented in chapter 8, a park considered "less than" or unappealing by some may be precisely what the community wants.

Thus, the gentrification and displacement debate is contentious: when new amenities are built, communities asked, "Who gets to use what." In this way, the debate included what amenities communities receive: will they be "the best" and who determines what the best is. Certainly, forcing a definition of "the best" as determined by planners, vis a vis what community members want, is inauthentic and patronizing. The debate also encompasses communities' fears that if "the best" amenities are equally distributed to everyone then, the "other" will come and displace them, thwarting community use of their new amenities.

With respect to gentrification and displacement, the themes resulting from this research: flexibility, the value of public input, and the responsivity of the public's collaborative, governmental partner are necessary to bring about recognition justice. In terms of flexibility, park spaces must be transformable to allow spaces to recognize the needs of diverse users throughout the day. In terms of public input, park administrators throughout the bureaucracy, from individual park supervisors to planners and designers, must acknowledge public input as valuable. This includes verbal input, like when advisory council members contest definitions of parks or refuse to accept the inevitability of displacement. Acknowledging the value of public input extends to human and material resources offered by members of the public to transform the park system. Finally, while there is no guarantee that a park system's responsivity to the public will completely prevent displacement, my data suggest there is an important role for such responsivity. In my data, in every decision-making venue, park administrators' responsivity to the input of the public helped increase the congruence of parks or the entire system of parks in that city (via policies) to the preferences of the public.

During daily use, flexible spaces and supportive park supervisors allowed park patrons to appropriate space to meet their wants and needs. More, supervisors supplied patrons with equipment to facilitate the process of appropriation. During programs especially, park supervisors heard patrons'

requests and created new programs, perhaps employing those same patrons as instructors. These uniquely-focused programs continued to transform throughout their quarterly-existence, changing to meet the needs and growing capacity of program participants. Programs drew local people to the park and tuned the park to local interests, rather than generic interests of potential users. During advisory councils, my data showed the power of public input to shape not only the design of parks (in master planning meetings) but also to catalyze the creation of policy documents (like the guiding principles document described in chapter eight) that would prevent displacement and promote equity by protecting access as the use of parks. Doing so created physical parks and decision-making processes that aligned with local people and thus, were less-likely to appeal to generic users, specifically wealthier prospective park-users and home buyers from outside the neighborhood. Indeed, creating parks that recognize local users rather than have generic appeal can occur at every decision-making venue. Next, I add greater nuance to two potential solutions that mitigate the negative impacts of park-based improvements. These solutions bring "the best" without telling the public what "the best" should look like.

**Short-Term Solution: Programs.** To address environmental injustices in parks, administrators must consider options beyond or in addition to building new parks or amenities. I have problematized building new because, as mentioned previously, as such a solution often lacks recognition, it may constitute an act of gentrification and lead to displacement. Further, building new is problematic when funds or open space are scarce; often the case for underserved communities. Finally, building new privileges sending existing materials to landfills and extracting virgin resources for construction and in doing so, largely overlooks ways to maximize use of existing park space and resources. Therefore, I consider programs which, rely on existing park spaces to meeting park patrons' wants and needs, to have great potential to address access issues. Further, as programs are also a decision-making venue, they are a space for the public to participate in creating parks they want to use. Programs function by leveraging diverse types of knowledge as well as by transforming or expanding existing park space.

Knowledge from the public or from supervisors' observations of the public determined the programs a park offered. Then, supervisors had the autonomy to create programs. To operate programs,

the public's knowledge was also key. They used fitness knowledge to serve as instructors and change workouts to suit their needs; in this way, the public's knowledge modified individual programs. The public also offered inputs that could modify a park's entire programmatic schedule: when they chose which programs to attend and offered feedback about program scheduling (e.g. piggy-backing). Park staff responded to inputs about programs and entire schedules by adding or cancelling programs based on attendance, changing programs or schedules based on feedback, and formalizing programs based on what worked informally. These "feedback loops" in which park staff responded to the public appeared relatively approachable for members of the public because the public regularly offered input, like requesting new programs. As a result, though a parks department may have a broad, bureaucratic policy to offer "fitness programs," the types of programs and their operation at each park were different. This was because the public, park supervisors, and instructors, acted as bureaucratic administrators.

To address diverse needs within a single park, programs expanded park boundaries temporally and spatially without having to acquire new park land. Parks shared space with neighborhood facilities (e.g. a public school). Programs also transformed existing spaces. In this way, a multi-purpose room or a field became established spaces for Zumba or toddler soccer. By transforming or sharing existing spaces, programs did not require permanent changes to infrastructure and addressed distributional inequalities by effectively increasing the size of a small park. In this way, I contend that programs are an important tool to overcome the expected "congestion" of small parks (Sister et al., 2010).

Programs also cost less than building new infrastructure. As mentioned in chapter 4, park funding presents a barrier to access because it can be undependable. As mentioned by stakeholders, even when a master plan is completed, construction is contingent on funding. Or, funds will be allocated, at the last minute, to a more pressing need. In these instances, programs may be a proximal solution to improve access, used to accompany more distal solutions like changes to infrastructure or land acquisition. Some parks, especially in underserved areas may wait years to see (or never see) funding for new amenities, buildings, or land. They are especially constrained by budget (Wolch et al., 2005). In these situations, programs may be the only way to create parks people want to use.

A park that met the needs of the community would rely on programs. Programs quickly respond to the public's request for what they want to do in their park using existing or resources that are less expensive than constructing new buildings or amenities. Key, however, is promoting the initial "requests" for programs, creating mechanisms for feedback during programming, allowing program modification, and connecting to the community to seek out members of the public with potential to serve as instructors. Thus, most important is assurance that supervisors' doors are "always open" and they are ready to respond to the public's input. In this way, an obstacle to creating parks that people want to use and thus, recognition justice, is people not knowing or feeling uncomfortable speaking to supervisors. I see great potential in the listening session example. It balanced the informality that made asking for programs approachable with transparency to encourage everyone's participation. Listening sessions may create procedural justice if held regularly and featuring dialog with park staff. As a result, participation that recognized park users would be institutionalized as would programs to meet their needs.

**Long-Term Solutions.** Smaller-scale solutions like programs may be accompanied by larger changes to parks, like building new amenities. My work explored why local park users feared new construction and how to address fears of gentrification and displacement specifically (see chapter 8). Here, I think about how to determine what "the best" new building is for a community while also, avoiding displacement.

I found that the definitions of gentrification and displacement were not interchangeable and were not the same for all stakeholders. Arguments against the gentrification and displacement, when pertaining to individual inconveniences, may in fact be arguments of NIMBY. However, other arguments against the gentrification and displacement concerned the broader community. These arguments drew on phrases like "our kids" to describe who new buildings could harm, or speculation if "we" would be able to afford or get a time slot to use a new building. Park administrators distinguished between these arguments and NIMBY. Where park administrators had said previously that concerns of gentrification and displacement were outside their jurisdiction, input from the public illustrated how some definitions of gentrification and displacement were based in concern about use which, would be guided by operation. In response,

administrators made specific policy declarations concerning operation that would protect use. Without these policies, a large, new, park building may have been a catalyst for gentrification and might have caused the displacement of local community members, in terms of using the new amenity. Indeed, many community members said they did not want such a new building, that its size suggested it was designed for "other" users. However, with policy, the amenity did not have to be kept from a deserving community. Thus, specific policy language can protect use and thus, prevent injustice, even when large, top of the line amenities are built in underserved communities.

Nuance in the definitions of gentrification and displacement drove policy. Nuance also drove a response from MPRB, an entity not previously acknowledging their power to confront displacement. Indeed, when the public raised fears of gentrification and displacement, at first, the parks department in Minneapolis had not believed they could play any role in preventing displacement. However, when planners listened to the public's input of environmental justice sensibility, it seemed MPRB's definition of displacement and gentrification were modified. As such, MPRB saw their power to address the situation. MPRB was able to ensure that even if a potentially-gentrifying amenity was built, environmental justice could be served if use were protected using strong policy language.

When a community is no longer served by existing buildings or outdoor spaces, new structures may need to be built or old spaces re-purposed. When making large-scale infrastructure changes to a park, flexibility must be a design feature of new spaces and infrastructure. Further, as seen in both cities, when designing new park elements, it is essential to draw on the public's ideas concerning design. They must be at the forefront of designing so to meet their own specific needs. In tandem, the public's fears and how the experience access must also be incorporated into designs. Both types of input should guide designs and policy that should accompany designs. Indeed, as took place in Minneapolis, policy should be included in final plans to ensure that operation of new facilities also draws on the public's knowledge.

**Future research on gentrification and displacement.** I see great potential for future research focused on gentrification and displacement. With respect to parks specifically, I hope to continue the utilization of parks as providers as ecosystem services. However, my research shows the possible

displacement that may result from improving parks when ecosystem services (e.g. planting new trees or adding gardens) are developed. My work implores inclusion of the public during decision-making about adding ecosystem services. To this extent, the public should be a collaborative partner to ensure that when services are added, they recognize the way existing park users envision function of their park. Within parks I also see focus on programs as anti-gentrification tools. As mentioned previously, they are relatively less time consuming to implement and cost less than new infrastructure. To this extent, they take place on a smaller-scale and thus, inherently are less-likely to cause displacement. I would recommend study of programs in cities not highly-ranked by the TPL to understand if programs can provide the same role is programs in my cases. Finally, as my research suggested an important means of avoiding displacement includes recognition justice, I would encourage development of metrics to measure this concept. As mentioned previously, I would also encourage park ranking indices, like those offered by the TPL to include measures of recognition when assigning ranks to cities.

**Final Considerations for Environmental Justice**

In all decision-making venues, members of the public modified park environments to create park spaces and decision-making processes that reflected their unique preferences. In this way, parks were no longer generic spaces but were a unique recognition of users.

Flexibility, as a characteristic of the park system, brought environmental justice. As was seen in programs, flexibility of space effectively enlarged park spaces. Doing so may be one step towards correcting historic distributional inequalities that allowed larger parks to be built in wealthier areas and smaller parks in underserved communities. Flexibility was also a necessary precursor to procedural and recognition justices. When parks and park decision-making processes were flexible, members of the public could modify the spaces and processes to create ones that better recognized their preferences.

Flexibility was coupled with the public's knowledge, offered as material, human, and semiotic resource inputs to the park decision-making system. Both cities I studied valued the public's knowledge. Doing so brought procedural justice in that decision-making systems were modified to better receive input from the public. Further, when the public could share diverse inputs during participation, decision-making

processes necessarily were a better reflection of the public's participation preferences. In this way, both flexibility and the public's knowledge combined to facilitate park system modification.

Ultimately, park systems, both physical parks and decision-making processes, must respond when the public offers input. Flexibility aids such responses, allowing ease in modifying the existing system for better congruence with the public's preferences. Responses underscore the value of the public's knowledge and commitment to creating parks that address EJ issues. Park system responses to public inputs must use caution if responses include building new amenities. New amenities must protect against gentrification and displacement while also, creating parks spaces that people want to use. To do so, recognition justice is paramount, small and large-scale improvements to parks must also reflect their users. Here again, there is merging of recognition and procedural justice. In order to learn what the public wants from their parks, processes for their participation in decision-making must be institutionalized. Then, recognition must also be considered when designing those participatory processes; indeed, they must also reflect the public's preferences.

When combining community knowledge with park design, we may see a radical shift in the form parks take. In this way, we may acknowledge additional benefits offered by parks. These new benefits may offer us another view of what a good park is and how we create parks that cater to local needs rather than outside gentrifiers. In the literature, the benefits offered by parks are often related to physical health, environmental health, and economic gains for an area. Some scholars also include social health benefits (e.g. a place to meet with friends or even, organize politically; Low, 2000). I would extend the definition of social benefits to underscore the importance of parks as social service providers. This includes: staff presence; childcare; free lunch; computer hubs. When parks become spaces that more people want to use, the potential for parks to offer "wrap around services" e.g. destination for childhood wellness exams or mobile vision checks etc. increases. Parks could be even greater "benefactors" of the local community.

**Future Research**

I found programs to offer enormous potential to increase recognition justice in parks as well as offer potential as a decision-making venue. To this extent, I recommend additional research to understand

if programs can be considered collaborations. I would collect data from my or additional cases to assess fit of data to Emerson et al.'s (2011) CG model. Further, I collected data that supported programs as a way to address social access barriers. This pertained specifically to the sense of ownership and companionship cultivated by programs. However, I did not have space in this dissertation to pursue these data. I see great potential in study of how programs develop companionship and ownership and how doing so, could address social access barriers to use. I recommend that studies begin by addressing the role of programs in addressing barriers for women participants particularly.

Collaborative decision-making rested on flexibility and the input of public knowledge. I would recommend future researchers explore both in other public services. Future research may examine the extent to which other public services offer flexible spaces that could be modified to meet the public's wants and needs in terms of use and decision-making processes. Also considering decision-making, future research could examine the types of knowledge that are offered as inputs by the public in other settings. Specifically, I see great potential to examine how EJ sensibility manifests in other settings.

Considering the SES perspective, I encourage future research to continue to study Minneapolis' and Chicago's park systems to enable further expansion of the temporal and spatial scopes. Doing so could trace the impact of policies and service area master plans as they are implemented, examining their impact on entire neighborhoods. This would allow for the characterization of outcomes on the neighborhood as a whole and thus, looking beyond the impact on the decision-making system. Researchers may also find it productive to expand the dimensions in which research is conducted. I found mention of virtual discussions where the public could offer input to decision-making. The impact of these dimensions on final plans and policies and to the decision-making process has implications for how participation is designed. The importance of virtual dimensions for participation might incentivize public service decision-making place greater focus on online components or, conversely, limit such discussions and focus resources on in-person dialog.

Finally, I would encourage future researchers to employ a research design that would enable greater understanding of the relationship between an inputs and outputs. Specifically, one might examine

many cases; focus could center on easily-obtainable data like meeting minutes and final plans or policies. An attempt could be made to create a list of key variables that could bring understanding to the question, "What influences the likelihood that knowledge public input will be reflected in outputs?" Doing so would show key variables that mediate the public's influence during participation. Though the SES perspective underscores how context is inherently complex, such an exercise could be an important starting point to understand which variables merit focus in future investigations.

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APPENDIX A: Interview Guides

**I.** I will interview adult **park users and non-users** to understand how high- and low-quality parks are used. I seek to learn which types of health benefits parks provide (e.g. ecological, economic, physical health, mental health, etc.) and confirming the barriers observed (time, travel, safety, discrimination, activities, amenities, and any additional barriers). Users will be asked ALL questions; non-users will be approached at community events and will be asked all questions EXCEPT #2-4. Interviews will be supplemented by observations in neighborhood parks as well as document analysis.

**Dependent variable: Social Access Barriers to Parks**

**FIRST**

1. Do you go to the park? [if NO, for non-users OMIT #2 – 4 only]
2. How often do you come to [PARK]?
3. What do you do there?
4. Who do you go to the park with?
5. Does anything ever prevent you from going to the park?

**SECOND [use these to ask more questions about any barriers mentioned; CHOOSE 2]**

**Time**

- Do you have enough time to go to the park? How do you make time?

**Travel**

- How far is the park from your home? How would you get to the park? Are there sidewalks you can use to get to the park?
- Does anything stop you from getting to the park?

**Safety**

- In the park, do you feel safe in the day? In the night?
- Have you ever avoided the park because you felt unsafe?
- Do people in the park watch out for one another?

**Amenities**

- Does the way the park is set up let you do what you want to do?
- Has the park set-up ever stopped you from doing what you want to do?

**Activities**

- Are activities planned in the park, do you attend?
- Do these activities encourage people to visit the park that might not have visited before; to use the park in a new way?

**Discrimination**

- Are the signs in the park written in the language you speak at home?
- Have you ever felt like you don't belong in the park?

**Dependent variable: Health Benefits offered by parks**

6. Why do you think [PARK NAME] is important to the community?
7. Is there anything you wish [PARK NAME] offered to your community?

**II.** Another set of interviews will be conducted with **Parks & Recreation personnel and collaborative partners** (citizen, public sector, and private sector) to characterize how collaborations are undertaken. This will allow me to collect data on the independent variable and the rival hypothesis. I will collect data on the number of collaborative partners, length, scope and types of collaborative projects, and resources exchanged during collaborations (Emerson et al., 2011; Koontz et al., 2004). I will focus only on collaborations concerning parks that provide health benefits and address barriers to access. Interviews will be supplemented by document analysis.

**Rival Hypothesis** (Parks & Rec personnel only)

1. How is your budget distributed among neighborhood parks?
    a. FOR MPLS: I read that MPRB now uses a Criteria Based System Ordinance to base park budgets on Racial Equity. Could you tell me a little bit more about this ordinance?
2. Do any areas receive special funding consideration?

**Information on Collaborative Partners** (all interviewees)

1. Would I be correct to say that you are a part of _____ group?
2. How long have you been working with / for that group?
3. What is your role in that group?

**Independent Variable** (all interviewees)

**Length**

4. For how long have you been collaborating with the park?

**Issue Definition** (Koontz et al., 2004) / **Shared Theory of Action Developed** (Emerson et al., 2011)

5. What were the goals of the project you worked on with the park?
6. How were those goals determined?
    a. Were they negotiated?
    b. Who was involved in setting the goals?

**Principled Engagement** (Emerson et al., 2011) / **Group Structure** (Koontz et al. 2004)

7. Why did you get involved in this collaboration?
8. Who from your team was involved in the collaboration?
9. Who defined the parameters for how the collaboration would be organized?
10. What are the roles for Parks personnel vs non-Parks personnel?

**Decision-Making Processes** (Koontz et al. 2004)

11. Where did you meet with the Parks & Recreation Department? (in person, email, etc.)
12. Do you think your group was able to make their opinions heard in the collaboration?
13. Did anyone or anything prevent you from speaking your opinion?
14. Who had the 'final say' in decisions?

**Shared Motivation** (Emerson et al., 2011)

15. Was participating in the collaboration worth your time?

**Capacity for Joint Action** (Emerson et al., 2011) / **Resources Shared** (Koontz et al., 2004)

16. Researchers often characterize collaborations by the type and availability of resources exchanged. These often refer to: human assistance, technical information, financial resources. Could you tell me a little more about the resources exchanged in your collaboration?