

Deborah Kanani
POB 211
Comptche, Ca. 95427

Re: Grocery Outlet Fort Bragg

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of the proposed Grocery Outlet for Fort Bragg, California. I have lived in Mendocino County for 50 years (on the coast 14 years and in Comptche 36 years). I shop about ½ the time on the coast and ½ the time in Ukiah. I find the coast to be a few minutes closer and much more convenient during the summer because of the heat in Ukiah. I am on a fixed income and I do not have the resources to do all my shopping at the “over priced” Harvest Market although I do go there for certain items. I also go to Safeway and Down Home foods. In Ukiah I shop at Grocery Outlet because the savings are so incredible as well as the Ukiah Co-op (which offers many items priced lower than Harvest.

I would love to see a Grocery Outlet in Fort Bragg and would go to the coast more often if I had this option. I have been very happy with Grocery Outlet in Ukiah and Willits. They provide good products at a fraction of the other stores and I am able to find some of the same brands that are unreasonably marked up by Harvest and Safeway.

I think that the arguments against Grocery Outlet are created by a very short sighted view of what is happening in Fort Bragg. First, for decades this town was created and supported by the logging and fishing industries which have mostly disappeared. In the last three decades Fort Bragg and Mendocino have been supported by the visitors and vacationers from out of town and not by local industries. Secondly, when the county/state legalized Marijuana we saw the last beacon of our economy dwindle to the point of making Fort Bragg a ghost town. The Covid problem hit our community hard as well and many businesses and restaurants have had to close. The building trade has also taken a big financial hit (as a result of legalizing Marijuana and rising lumber prices) and the economy is now a disaster.

Those folks who think that Fort Bragg is a quaint little fishing town that needs to be “preserved” should re visit the reality of all the folks who have no means of income (the mill closed because there are no large areas of timber left and the Salmon fishing died because of over harvesting of the river canopy), no jobs, rampant homelessness and no housing, lack of quality medical services and certainly not enough money to spend on high end grocery stores!

On behalf of those of us who are still trying to make a life on the coast, I am pleading for the option to buy affordable groceries and get a few jobs for those with limited skills and little or no education. The Grocery Outlet is generally run by a local team and this would be another big benefit for the community. Please welcome this business and be grateful that they are willing to take a chance on this community.

Thank you,
Deborah Kanani

From: kashiwa@mcn.org
To: [CDD User](#); [O"Neal, Chantell](#); [Gurewitz, Heather](#); [Miller, Tabatha](#)
Subject: Grocery Outlet Bargain Market
Date: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 3:34:35 PM
Attachments: [GOBM_LKashiwada_Comments_May26_2021.pdf](#)

Greetings,

Please find attached my comments about agenda item 6(21-249)on tonight's Planning Commission meeting.

-Leslie Kashiwada

Best Development Grocery Outlet Bargain Market May 26, 2021
Comments submitted by Leslie Jan Kashiwada, Ph.D., kashiwa@mcn.org

The staff report for this project recommends adoption of the resolution approving Coastal Development Permit, Design Review, Merger, and adopting the Initial Study MND pursuant to all the evidence presented, both oral and documentary, and further based on findings and conditions state therein.

I am surprised that this recommendation includes adoption of the Initial Study MND, without significant change or new evaluation. In particular, I found the dismissal of community concerns to be disconcerting, especially the statement that, 'These comments have been considered and none of these comments change the conclusions of the Mitigated Negative Declaration. Additionally, no further changes to the project were made as a result of these comments.

For this reason, I am resubmitting my comments about the shortfalls of the Initial Study MND, with the following additional input:

Building Re-Use versus New Building: See my comments below. There was no substantive discussion of this aspect of the project, even though adaptive re-use of existing building is a stated policy with the Coastal General Plan.

Biological Study – Biota: See my comments below and those submitted by CDFW. A token Wetland Report was prepared to supposedly address the issues brought up by CDFW. This consisted of one afternoon in March 2021. Given the current extreme drought conditions, it is not surprising that wetland conditions were not detected. And the four test locations were placed well away from the area that is most likely to sustain wetland conditions in non-drought years (this is the area where an engineered swale is proposed). None of the other concerns brought up in my comments or by CDFW were addressed.

Water Usage: See my comments below. Currently the city does not have sufficient water to support any new development.

Traffic Study: See my comments below. This project will increase traffic and the city should be prepared for an increase in vehicular and pedestrian accidents. This is especially true if the left turn prohibition on North Harbor Drive is removed. I personally know of a serious t-bone collision from someone turning left onto Hwy 1 from Safeway, and we will likely see many more of those types of accidents with this development. Unfortunately, any serious collision in the vicinity of this project will impede the ability of emergency vehicles to move freely to the accident, and potentially to impede movement of emergency vehicles to the south.

Economic Analysis: See my comments below. Any development of this size needs to include an unbiased economic analysis of benefits and losses. This is a loss to existing businesses, but a gain for local residents. This was not addressed. There will be an impact on similar businesses, but with a benefit of additional shopping options to residents (perhaps resulting in fewer trips to Willits or Ukiah). There will be some additional jobs, but how many and at what pay level? This was not addressed. Most

jobs in this kind of store are part-time and do not pay benefits. Is this the kind of jobs the city wants to support? This can't be analyzed because no information was provided.

Many of the deficiencies are the result of ignoring existing policies, poorly supported analyses, errors of omission (and commission), and wishful thinking. The job of the Community Development Department should be to require full, accurate analyses, which the Planning Commission and City Council can use to make decisions about approving or denying permits. In this case, and others, it seems city staff and helping developers jump through required "hoops" with little critical assessment of whether or not the actual information needed to make an informed decision was provided. City staff should represent the citizens of the community as much as developers.

-Leslie Kashiwada

Initial Study and Environmental Checklist for Best Development Grocery Outlet Bargain Market Jan 20, 2021

Comments submitted by Leslie Jan Kashiwada, PhD, kashiwa@mcn.org

Building Re-Use versus New Building

The Initial Study indicates that the project proposes to tear down the old Social Services Building (16,436 sq ft) and build a new building (16,157 sq ft) with a very different footprint and much greater visual impact. Given that adaptive re-use of existing buildings is a stated policy within the Coastal General Plan, this study needs to discuss the feasibility of repurposing and retrofitting the existing building, including a cost-benefit analysis of re-using the existing building versus demolition with a new building.

Biological Study - Biota

The site doesn't appear very interesting biologically, but the Biological Study was very superficial and severely lacking as a thorough effort to characterize the environment at the proposed site. The biological study consisted of one day on site (August 9) including a plant inventory (methodology not provided, but likely just a presence/absence survey) and visual evidence of animal activity (noting only gopher mounds and a crow). No mention was made of insects, reptiles or amphibians. The proposed night survey for bats (potentially roosting in the old building) was not conducted because of weather. In addition, the survey only included the south lot. The pine and mature cypress trees on the western edge of the northern lot were lumped in with "shrubbery planted around the edges." There was no mention of the habitat provided by these trees (more on this below). The study recommended a follow-up survey on bats and the Initial Study mentions a bat survey will be required as a mitigation (page 10). There is no indication of when that survey will be conducted; only that, if bats are found, then CDFW will be consulted. That study should be done sooner rather than later in order to settle this issue before more time and money are spent on the project.

The proposal makes no effort to retain existing trees on the western edge of the northern lot, and only mentions new landscaping. The new landscaping includes Monterey cypress, but it will be many decades before any of them reach maturity, if they ever do. Because Monterey cypress trees have spreading limbs, these trees may be kept trimmed in a way that will not develop the habitat provided by the mature trees currently on site. In addition, because Monterey cypress is not native to the area, there should be an effort to find more appropriate native evergreens to use for landscaping. The existing trees (see photos below) should be retained to the maximum extent possible, and the study should address

how this objective can be achieved. New trees should only be planted where there are currently no trees, or where an existing tree has to be removed, and they should be substantial in size.

Biological Study - Soils

The biological study noted that the soils are hydric, but no wetland species were found. However, the date of the one-day survey was at the end of the summer (dry season) and therefore those conclusions are at best preliminary, pending further surveys done at a variety of times throughout the year. A one-day survey does not provide sufficient data for a complete characterization of any site, no matter how uninteresting or disturbed.

Water Usage

The Initial Study notes that the change of site usage from offices to retail will include increased water use (especially given that the existing building has been vacant for over a decade). The report discusses the City's water supply (page 68), but there is no analysis of the amount of water the project will need and how that need will be met given that the City has had repeated water rationing during the dry season (even with several water storage reservoirs, which only store water – they do not produce new water). For comparison, KASL Consulting Engineers produced a Water Model Study for the 2015 Hare Creek Project MND, which noted that the average day demand would be 8,260 gpd (peak hour demand of 23,128 gpm). Although not directly comparable (The Hare Creek Project was much larger), most of that water use was allocated to a Grocery Outlet Bargain Market. The city's own water analysis shows that a minimal rise in sea level in conjunction with king tides will produce multiple days where the water system will not be able to draw water because of saltwater intrusion. This kind of in-depth look at water use and availability is essential for every proposed project that will depend on the City for its water supply, including this one.

Water System Infrastructure

The Initial Study barely mentions the capacity of City water system (infrastructure) to serve the needs of the project. On page 4 (and page 67) it states that "The existing water connection on South Street includes a 6-inch fire service line and is proposed to be the main water service to the building, with a new 6-inch fire connection to be constructed to the east of the existing connection. A total of three (3) fire hydrants with valve lines are proposed for fire suppression on the Site." Note: page 67 says there will be a new 8-inch fire connection. The KASL Water Model Study referenced above relied on a report taken from the City of Fort Bragg, Phase 1 Water Facilities Study: Existing Water Collection, Distribution and Capacity, Nov 2013 for a baseline of existing system demands. The Phase 1 Water Facilities Study noted some areas of low water pressure that might not meet demand on the south end of town, particularly at fire hydrants. Is this no longer an issue or will adding a new 6-inch (or 8-inch) fire connection further reduce water pressure in the area? Has any new data been produced that show water pressure at fire hydrants meets all current applicable requirements?

Storm Water Drainage

Storm water drainage is addressed in a very perfunctory way (page 5 and page 69). The Initial Study states that the swale and "bioretention facilities [are] sized to capture and treat runoff from the proposed impervious surfaces produced by the 24 hour 85th percentile rain event..." The study does not address runoff that exceeds this percentile. No system can retain all the water that might result from an atmospheric river dumping massive amounts of water in a short period of time. Because the site is in

close proximity to the Noyo River and the Pacific Ocean there needs to be a Water Quality Management Plan that addresses these significant events, which will be more common in the coming years.

Traffic Study

The findings of the Traffic Study were not fully addressed in the Initial Study. In fact, the Initial Study concluded that would be a less than significant impact on transportation (based on VMT instead of LOS). I work in the harbor and make a right turn at North Harbor Drive every weekday on my way to the CDFW office (excluding this pandemic period). I usually drive out via South Franklin Street across South Street and take a left turn at the 4-way stop at Cypress Street. This affords me the safety of a left turn at the traffic light at Cypress Street onto Highway One. Crossing South Street at South Franklin Street (a 2-way stop) can be a challenge and the increased traffic brought about by this proposed project will only make it worse. In addition, I regularly see people illegally turning left onto Highway One from the Arco Station (signage at North Harbor Drive indicates "no left turn") and turning left onto Highway One from South Street, an action that is allowed but often harrowing.

This proposed project would bring significantly more trips from both the north and the south and the Traffic Study indicated that LOS will worsen. The Traffic Study recommended improvements at several intersections to help mitigate those negative impacts. However, I do not think those improvements are viable for the following reasons:

- 1) The intersection of Highway One and North Harbor Drive is too close to the bridge for a stop sign or light. Was CalTrans asked to comment on this? I suspect that even the intersection of Highway One and South Street is too close to the bridge for stop signs or light. I assume the entrance to the Grocery Outlet Bargain Market was located facing North Harbor Drive to keep traffic off South Street as much as possible.
- 2) South Street is the primary access for ambulances to the hospital. Putting any kind of traffic control on South Street at South Franklin Street could negatively impact this access route.

Unfortunately, neither the Traffic Study nor the Initial Study address the issue of intersection improvement feasibility. In addition, despite the recommendation of the Traffic Study, the Initial Study did not indicate any responsibility on the part of the developer to pay for any road improvements (independent of feasibility). Is the City willing to let LOS worsen, including more accidents in the affected intersection, especially on Highway One and South Street? The issue of using VMT instead of LOS as a measure of impact is something the Initial Study said the county and city need to address (pages 61 and 62), but I think these metrics are only indicators, and likely not very good ones for area like the proposed site which has complex intersections.

Note on Zoning

The zoning is mostly described as Highway Visitor Commercial (pg 1, 3, 7, 46, Figure 2: Land Use Designation Map), but the Site Map lists zoning as General Commercial (pg 89).

Economic Analysis

This Initial Study goes through a checklist of CEQA evaluations, but an Economical Analysis is not included. Perhaps it was not a required part of the report, but it should be. Before progressing further with this project, the impact on existing grocery stores must be analyzed. Can the community support another grocery store or will one of the existing full-service stores go under? Are the anticipated tax receipts from the proposed Grocery Outlet Bargain Market offset by loss of tax receipts at the other stores? If so, by how much?

In addition, the Initial Study indicates that the store will be operated by 15 to 25 full-time staff and 2 managers. What are the salary ranges for these full-time employees? My research shows that there will be corporate pressure to staff the store at the lowest possible level and that many of those employees will be part-time to avoid paying benefits that often come with full-time employment (a quick scan of reviews about pay and benefits indicates that even full-time workers don't receive benefits: <https://www.indeed.com/cmp/Grocery-Outlet/reviews?ftopic=paybenefits>). I recommend the City conduct an analysis of the employment practices of the other large local franchise stores (Safeway, Dollar Store, Rite Aid, CVS in Fort Bragg and Grocery Outlet Bargain Market in Willits) to determine the most realistic employment model for the store. Relevant metrics would include square footage of retail space, number of check-out stations (staffed and self-serve), employee classifications with both full-time and part-time salary ranges (and which, if any, are covered by a union contract), the number of full- and part-time employees in each classification, and turnover in each classification.

Conclusion

This Initial Study is sorely deficient. While it ticks off "required" boxes, it does not provide the most important information for City Staff, the Planning Commission, or the City Council to make a truly informed decision about this project. We should want smart, forward-looking economic development using a wide perspective on how the different parts of the local economy work together. Merely describing the bare minimum required by law, with no analysis of interdependent factors and cumulative impacts can lead to hollowing out the local economy. The pandemic has devastated our local businesses, and I encourage using a very critical eye on proposed development by non-local corporations. There is a plethora of research showing that this type of development extracts more from the local economy than it brings to it. Instead, I encourage the City to propose pro-active measures to support and foster local businesses. Unfortunately, the Fort Bragg Community Development Department is minimally staffed and only has the capacity to react to applications by property owners with the money to go through the permitting process. This makes the City low-hanging fruit for large corporations to bring franchise businesses to town, which will turn us into Anywhere, USA.



From: [Karen Knoebbler](#)
To: [CDD User](#)
Subject: Grocery Outlet
Date: Tuesday, May 25, 2021 11:40:16 PM

Dear CDD

Let the Grocery Outlet come to town. They have a great business model, they are thriving and could hopefully bring some life to this stricken town. They offer us customers a very interesting shopping experience with the great prices and their generous offerings of organic meat and cheese and their unusual items that fly through never to be seen again. Always a treasure hunt at Gross Out!

Sincerely
Karen Knoebbler

Sent from my iPhone

O'Neal, Chantell

From: Karen Knoebbler <nobler@mcn.org>
Sent: Wednesday, April 14, 2021 7:37 PM
To: Albin-Smith, Tess
Cc: Lemos, June
Subject: Grocery outlet

We want a Grocery Outlet. It is always interesting to see what exotic wonderful food or sundry is passing through. Lots of discounted quality products to be found, as well as some mainstream funky food cheap. The Willits building is one of the best in the mall. And here they will add life to a funky unused building. What is not to like?

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Joy](#)
To: [CDD User](#)
Subject: Support for the Grocery Outlet Market
Date: Tuesday, May 25, 2021 8:36:06 PM

Members of the Fort Bragg Planning Commission -

I'm writing in support of the Grocery Outlet Market. I shop at Safeway, Purity and Harvest as well, but I drive at least once a month to the Grocery Outlet in Willits and it would be nice to be able to walk to one right here in Fort Bragg instead.

Joy Korstjens
516 S Whipple St.

From: [CJ Lewis](#)
To: [CDD User](#)
Subject: Grocery outlet
Date: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 11:29:29 AM

Hello,

I am a resident of Comptche and would like to express how grateful I would be for a grocery outlet in the area. I lost both of my careers due to Covid, I was a massage therapist and a nanny for a combined 40 years. I am on unemployment which as a self employed contractor may end soon, and food stamps and Medi-Cal, and I'm trying to get a financial relief fund to help me out with rent. I simply cannot afford the cost of living on top of groceries. Much less the tremendous amount of gas to drive all the way to Cloverdale to shop at grocery outlet where the prices are affordable. I know this is a tourist town but I'm my opinion if you want the locals to keep looking after the tourists you're going to have to take care of the locals first.

Sincerely

Cynthia Lewis

cynthiajeannelewis@gmail.com

(415)261-1048

From: [Marilyn](#)
To: [Albin-Smith, Tess](#); [Lemos, June](#)
Cc: [Peters, Lindy](#); [Norvell, Bernie](#); [Morsell-Haye, Jessica](#)
Subject: Grocery outlet
Date: Wednesday, April 14, 2021 11:11:34 AM

Hello, I would just like to go on record that I support Grocery Outlet coming to Fort Bragg. This town and the people that live here deserve options. Also, I feel the same way about Dollar General. Frankly I find it ridiculous that we need to sign a petition to allow a grocery store to come to town. Again, this community deserves options. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Gary McCray](#)
To: [Peters, Sarah](#)
Subject: Re the Proposed Grocery Outlet Store (Previously sent addressing - in error - Dollar General Store).
Date: Monday, May 24, 2021 6:03:29 PM

Dear Planning Commission,

There is currently a petition signed by over 400 people to NOT interfere with the permitting of the proposed Grocery Outlet Store.

Honestly I think virtually all of the resistance comes from existing Fort Bragg Businesses to stifle competition on their behalf.

But truly that is not in the best interests of the residents of Fort Bragg and the surrounding area.

Our Safeway is listed as a Tourist Area Grocery Store which allows them to charge (considerably) higher prices than say the Safeway in Willits (let alone Sacramento).

Harvest has exceedingly high prices (their rotisserie chicken is more than 4 times the price per pound of the ones in Costco in Ukiah.) and that is representative of their entire pricing structure.

All this while the average income in Fort Bragg is truly in the toilet.

By killing the Grocery Outlet Store you will be only benefiting a very few already wealthy people at the expense of the entire local population who would benefit greatly from some actual competition rather than grossly inflated prices.

The supposed concerns regarding additional traffic have all been fielded by the existing food purveyors and their toadies and have no real substance.

It is up to you who do you want to serve, the people of the Fort Bragg area or a tiny self serving local business cronyism.

Best Regards,

Gary R. McCray 16951 Franklin Road - PO Box 1744

Fort Bragg, CA 95437

From: [Timothy McGuire](#)
To: [Lemos, June](#)
Subject: Grocery Outlet
Date: Wednesday, April 14, 2021 1:33:54 PM

I want Grocery Outlet in Fort Bragg.

Timothy McGuire

From: [JULIE MCHENRY](#)
To: [CDD User; Lemos, June](#)
Subject: Grocery Outlet
Date: Tuesday, May 25, 2021 2:50:15 PM

To: Fort Bragg Planning Commission,

I am writing in support of the Grocery Outlet, specifically the proposed location on South Franklin Street. I believe it to be a perfect location considering it to be near to a new low income apartment complex and the ones by the hospital. Many will be able to walk instead of drive to the store.

Fort Bragg is an economically depressed city, many families and the elderly depend on the food bank because they cannot afford the high cost of groceries and rent here. Many others travel to the Willits Grocery Outlet.

I also believe we need another food source, during the Wild Fires Safeway closed it's doors on the second day of the week long outage. Shelves were empty in our other stores. During the Pandemic shelves were empty, shelves are empty many times due to the thousands of tourists we have utilizing our stores.

Grocery Outlet is not going to put our other stores out of business, we heard this argument when Taco Bell and Dollar Store were trying to come in. More Mexican Restaurants opened after. Another argument was the traffic problem at the intersection. Well it worked out fine. The road block rhetoric is really getting old. This community needs a Grocery Outlet.

Thank you,
Julie A. McHenry
Fort Bragg

From: jay@mcn.org
To: [CDD User](#)
Subject: Please add to Public comment ? regarding Grocery Outlet plan ie Parking for RV;s, rhododendrons and parking on S Franklin St]
Date: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 4:44:17 PM

I am going to try and call and or zoom in to read this publicly but please add to the written comments.
Kind regards,
Jay

----- Original Message -----
Subject: ? regarding Grocery Outlet plan ie Parking for RV's rhododendrons and parking on S Franklin St
From: jay@mcn.org
Date: Wed, May 26, 2021 2:19 pm
To: cdd@fortbragg.com

I have a couple questions I can not find the answers to in reviewing the Proposed Project for Grocery Outlet.

Will there still be on street parking on both sides of S Franklin St where the project is proposed as there currently is?

Where is there enough space in the Proposed parking Lot for for an RV or Vehicle with a Travel Trailer attached to park?
It appears as or I can't see any spaces long enough to accommodate any type vehicle bigger than a regular car and or pickup truck with out blocking several parking spaces.

and will they be asked to keep all the beautiful rhododendrons now growing on the East side of the current building?

Kind Regards,
Jay McMartin-Rosenquist

From: [Scott Menzies](#)
To: [Lemos, June](#)
Cc: [Peters, Lindy](#); [Norvell, Bernie](#); [Morsell-Haye, Jessica](#); [Albin-Smith, Tess](#); [Rafanan, Marcia](#); [Miller, Tabatha](#); [CDD User](#)
Subject: Grocery Outlet: A resource supporting *rejection*
Date: Tuesday, May 25, 2021 6:29:40 PM
Attachments: [Menzies, S - 2008 - Small Indy Biz and Passive Community-Building.pdf](#)

Dear Planning Commissioners,

Seeing as I did my Master's thesis essentially on this issue, I figure I'll submit it as a resource in support of *rejecting* the Grocery Outlet, as well (linked and attached):

<https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/concern/theses/8g84mp545?locale=en>

Thanks for your work,
Scott

Scott Menzies, M.A. (Environment & Community)
Instructor/Proprietor
Perfect Circle T'ai Chi Martial Arts
P.O. Box 1243, Fort Bragg, CA
530-410-3333 (cell)
707-962-3009 (studio - ringer always off)

FROM THE LOCAL PUB TO THE CORNER STORE: A PILOT STUDY ON THE
IMPORTANCE OF SMALL, INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES AS SITES OF PASSIVE
COMMUNITY-BUILDING

HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

By

Scott M. Menzies

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of Humboldt State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

In Social Sciences: Environment & Community

December, 2008

FROM THE LOCAL PUB TO THE CORNER STORE: A PILOT STUDY ON THE
IMPORTANCE OF SMALL, INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES AS SITES OF PASSIVE
COMMUNITY-BUILDING

HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

By

Scott M. Menzies

Approved by the Master's Thesis Committee:

Dr. Betsy Watson, PhD., Major Professor Date

Dr. Mark Baker, PhD., Committee Member Date

Ms. Suzanne Burcell, MBA, MA Education, Committee Member Date

Dr. Mark Baker, PhD., Graduate Coordinator Date

Chris A. Hopper, Interim Dean Date
Research, Graduate Studies & International Programs

ABSTRACT

FROM THE LOCAL PUB TO THE CORNER STORE: A PILOT STUDY ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SMALL, INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES AS SITES OF PASSIVE COMMUNITY-BUILDING

Scott M. Menzies

In an age of the ever-increasing scale and mega-corporatization of the means of daily existence through such entities as Wal-Mart, Costco, Starbucks and Home Depot, are we losing the places and spaces that we, as people, need in order to stay psychologically, socially, and culturally healthy? Is the local Wal-Mart as equally capable of acting as a site of community-building as the old general store? Is a chain-formula Starbucks just as good as an independent coffee shop or the old “local pub”? Can Starbucks ever be a place “where everybody knows your name”? Does it even matter?

This pilot study explores small, local, independent businesses as sites of passive community-building as compared to their larger and/or mega-corporate counterparts. Chain coffee shops are compared to independent shops using direct observation and qualitative interviewing. Small natural food stores are compared to their post-expansion larger versions through qualitative interviewing.

Preliminary results indicate that small, independent businesses are the best sites of community-building. However, both chain stores and the larger natural food stores were found to serve other goals and objectives, the importance of which individual communities should be ready to debate.

摘要

从当地酒吧到街头小店：
关于小规模独立企业，作为被动式社区建设地点的重要性之初步研究。

Scott M. Menzies (孟志豪)

在如沃尔玛、好事多、星巴克和家得宝等大型企业规模正在持续增长的时代，作为人类的我们是否正在丢失能让我们从心理上、社会上和文化上保持健康的空间？在当地，作为一个社区建设地点之一的沃尔玛是否能替代古老的杂货店？以连锁方式经营的星巴克是否能媲美于独立的一家咖啡店或者是酒吧？在星巴克，是否人人都能熟知彼此？它对于人们的生活是否至关重要？

这份研究报告把作为被动式社区建设地点之一的当地小型独立企业与它的竞争对手----那些规模较大的或（和）大型企业相比，而后作了一番探索。通过直接观测和定性试验，连锁咖啡店被比做了独立的商店。通过定性试验，小型天然食品店被比做其后因扩展而形成的大型商店。

初步研究的结果表明，小型独立企业是最佳的社区建设地点之一。然而，连锁商店和规模较大的天然食品店，都是为了其他目标而设立的。这些目标的重要性，将会激起个体群的争辩。

摘要

從當地酒吧到街頭小店：
關於小規模的獨立企業，作為被動式社區建設地點的重要性之初步研究。

Scott M. Menzies (孟志豪)

在如沃爾瑪、好事多、星巴克和家得寶等大型企業規模正在持續增長的時代，作為人類的我們是否正在丟失能讓我們從心理上、社會上和文化上保持健康的空間？在當地，作為一個社區建設地點之一的沃爾瑪是否能替代古老的雜貨店？以連鎖方式經營的星巴克是否能媲美於獨立的一家咖啡店或者是酒吧？在星巴克，是否人人都能熟知彼此？它對於人們的生活是否至關重要？

這份研究報告把作為被動式社區建設地點之一的當地小型獨立企業與它的競爭對手----那些規模較大的或（和）大型企業相比，而後作了一番探索。通過直接觀測和定性試驗，連鎖咖啡店被比做了獨立的商店。通過定性試驗，小型天然食品店被比做其後因擴展而形成的大型商店。

初步研究的結果表明，小型獨立企業是最佳的社區建設地點之一。然而，連鎖商店和規模較大的天然食品店，都是為了其他目標而設立的。這些目標的重要性，將會激起個體群的爭辯。

Thanks to Professor Zhang Xi (张西), HSU, and Chen Guo-Yu (陈国语) for translation. 谢谢!

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Robert W. Menzies, whose jokes about being caught down at the “local pub” represent a bygone era when those places were where neighbors and friends gathered. I hope that we can get back to that place, be it the local pub, corner store, or coffee shop.

Thanks, Dad.

Robert W. Menzies – 1930-2006

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My sincere appreciation to all those who helped me and made sacrifices so that I could write this thesis. To Dr. Michael Smith, thank you for your Community & Place course, which helped solidify my plans for this program. To my Committee Members, Sue and Mark, thank you for your support and guidance throughout this process. To my Chair, Betsy, thank you for your guidance and hard work in the face of tough times. To my Mom II, Donna, thank you for your love and support, and all you've done for me and my father. To my mother, Pat, and my late father, Robert, who passed on while I was in this program, thank you for your loving support, and for raising me to be independent and then having the strength to let me go experience the world – an experience without which this thesis would not have been possible. To our cat, Asha, thank you for keeping my spirits up with kisses and nuzzles. And, most of all, to Emily, thank you for supporting and putting up with me through this challenging chapter of my life. May this thesis help create communities in America that are as vibrant as those in which we lived in Asia and elsewhere. 我愛你。

धन्यवाद ।

This thesis was written on a Kubuntu Linux operating system using OpenOffice.org software and printed at a locally-owned, independent copy center.

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PREFACE – SUBJECTIVE MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS

This paper was inspired by a trip to Europe and then seven years' residence in Asia, where I experienced a taste of what it was like to be part of a community in cultures that are older and run deeper than my own. It seemed to me that it was the the physical design of the community (the “built environment”), that allowed the small businesses present to be a major factor in facilitating our (my partner Emily and I) becoming part of those communities. We enjoyed a sense of community overseas that we'd never had in the States, before or since.

Realizing that it was the staunchly automobile-centered lifestyle and community designs of America that were preventing us from building community or deepening our local cultures, it became my passion to explore and advocate for effective ways of realizing community here in the States. This paper is part of that work.

The prototype of what became this thesis came from an essay I wrote on chain stores, where I labeled them “Trojan horses” in our communities. Such establishments present all the outward cues that make us feel part of a community, in terms of familiar signage and menus. This works, I argued, by tapping into a deep-seated need for connection with fixed landmarks that, at least historically, represented a *specific location*, be it the local general store or a familiar tree. In other words, at that time, repeatedly seeing the same signage meant we were seeing the *same place*, and, inside, the *same people*, not just the same brand. Yet in this new age of chains, we step into this

“familiar” place only to realize that, because of the anonymous employee faces and practiced scripts, it's a farce. From that original essay:

Though on the surface we feel comfortable patronizing such establishments, each time comes with a small slap in the face, and a reminder that we've been tricked, yet again. Here you've gone into a familiar-looking establishment that makes you feel, at some level, comfortable, just to be greeted by [a stranger]. You're referred to as a “guest”, when anyone ... knows that a guest is really someone whom you've invited into your home to visit and spend time with. A small tinge of disappointment with each visit, it just reminds us that we're taking the easy way out.

I ultimately decided that this work would best be served by returning to school, where, during coursework, I was exposed to John Freie's concept of “counterfeit community” (Freie, 1988: 5). A criticism of chain/franchise establishments like Applebee's, which claims to be a “neighborhood grill and bar” (11), counterfeit community clearly resonated with my experiences and previous writing, striking a chord in me and helping provide focus to my work. In short, I wanted to learn how to identify and resist counterfeit community while encouraging real community.

To that end, in this paper I explore small, independent businesses as a tool to encourage real community. I begin by putting this concept in context with the larger picture, then drawing the reader from why building community is important, through the possible strategies of community-building, and the risks and failures of those strategies, to finally looking at the role of small, independent businesses as sites of passive community-building. I finish with some implications of my findings.

It is my belief that, if we can better understand the sociological role of small businesses in our community, we can better understand how we can use them to build real community – *without even trying*.

INTRODUCTION

As a rough rule of thumb, if you belong to no groups but decide to join one, you cut your risk of dying over the next year *in half*. If you smoke and belong to no groups, it's a toss-up statistically whether you should stop smoking or start joining. These findings are somewhat heartening; it's easier to join a group than to lose weight, exercise regularly, or quit smoking. (Putnam, 2000: 331)

Probably the most shocking statistic in Putnam's *Bowling Alone*, the preceding passage is a poignant and grim illustration of the importance of sociality in our lives as humans. Putnam's book addresses, in detail, the decline of civil society in America, and how that decline negatively affects all aspects of our lives. It points to a need to figure out how to reinvigorate civil society. In other words, we need to be building community to reverse the negative trends that Putnam outlines.

Discussion on the need for community-building is certainly not new. More recently, though still linked back to the 1960's through the famous architect Jane Jacobs, discussion about the role of community design in a healthy society has become more popular – comparing the automobile-dependent, generally sterile “cookie-cutter” suburban sprawl to the more vibrant, walkable urban areas that Jacobs so valued. We hear a lot about “mixed-use” and “live/work” – where commercial and residential are mixed and people live above or with their place of business – as if it's some kind of new cutting-edge concept, not the mainstay of pre-automobile civilizations. Perhaps, to a society so long ago forced to become dependent upon the automobile by oil-based special interests, it is “new.”¹

1 In the mid 1920's, Standard Oil, Firestone, and other automobile-related companies bought up and shut down streetcars in over 85 cities across America (Girardet, 2004: 134). In Eureka, California, part of that deal was to *burn* the trolley cars, carved out of old growth redwood. (Continued on page 5)

With the sharp rise in the cost of oil in mid-2008, this discussion became even louder, since oil consumption depends largely on community design. If most services in a particular neighborhood are available within walking distance, it reduces the amount of driving required. For advocates of “smart growth,” which involves creating “walkable communities” and the application of mixed-use and live/work development, the rise in oil prices was a boon. It likely accomplished more toward their goals in a few months' time than years of advocacy had.

While the mixing of commercial and residential as a way to solve a host of problems in our communities is becoming a more accepted strategy, at this time it is less common to hear within the community-design discourse discussion about *what kind of commercial we want in that mix*. That discussion is being held elsewhere, however, with folks talking about what kind of businesses they want in their communities in general. As local chapters of organizations like the American Independent Business Alliance (www.amiba.net) and Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (www.livingeconomies.org) grow stronger and more wide-spread, more people are beginning to think about the role of businesses in their communities above-and-beyond the provision of goods and services. More and more data is being generated that proves that small, independent businesses provide a host of hidden economic, social, and cultural benefits.² More people are questioning the net value of mega-corporate organisms like Wal-Mart, Home Depot, and Target in their communities.

The sub-plot of the 1988 movie *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* is based upon Los Angeles' actual experience with this act.

2 For a list of relevant studies, see <http://amiba.net/recommended.html>.

Yet there is surprisingly little in the form of studies looking specifically at small businesses as sites of community-building. With chain and formula establishments like Starbucks, McDonald's, Wal-Mart, and Home Depot having become so ubiquitous in America (and elsewhere), we still don't really know what effect they are having on our communities from a social point of view.³ Though it's not likely, due to growing resistance, that we'd ever be fully “taken-over” by chains, it might help to frame our exploration by asking ourselves the extreme: “If chains and formula establishments spread to the point of being our only places of trade, how would that affect us as social and psychological beings?”

The goal of this paper is to provide a pilot study that can help begin to answer the above question by attempting to look for indicators as to how well businesses act as sites of passive community-building. To this end we will be comparing independent and national chain coffee shops as well as the pre- and post-expansion versions of two natural food stores. [Appendix E](#) presents a local example of the small, independent business being used as a tool for community-development.

³ Part of my experience living in Asia was seeing a Starbucks in Beijing's ancient Forbidden City. In spite of myself, I recall buying a coffee there. It was just too weird to pass up.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

What happens when people come together and interact? Does it matter who they interact with – a stable group of people or strangers, or both? Does it matter if it's face-to-face interaction? Are the results of such interaction good or bad for the individual? For society?

These are the things that I want to know.

Most people would likely have answers to these questions without ever reading a page of academic literature. Much of it would be opinion, of course, but, as Jurgen Habermas wrote, quoting an 18th century noble, public opinion reflects “the genuine needs and correct tendencies of common life” ([1962] 1989:120).

That said, this is what I think:

When people interact, they create relationships. Those relationships can be deep or shallow. Shallow relationships come from infrequent interaction with a large number of people. Deep ones come from repeated interaction with a smaller, stable group of people. Face-to-face interaction is important because it lends a legitimacy to any relationship that taps into what it means to be a human being – a social organism whose evolution has never come in isolation. Face-to-face interaction is a necessary part of our days, exposing us to a spontaneity that keeps life interesting. Repeated face-to-face interaction with the same individuals also indicates that you likely live in the same region, giving you even more common ground upon which to relate at a deeper level.

Interaction is good for the individual. It gives him or her an awareness that they are not alone in the world, keeps (as a friend of mine once said) a person's "quirkiness in check," and provides them with information about their communities. Especially for deep relationships, it gives people others that they can count on in times of need, when Amazon.com, Google, and internet friends residing across the country or world are of no use (at least until technology can fit a cup of sugar through a broadband line).

By being good for the individual, face-to-face interaction is generally good for society, which is simply made up of individuals. If interaction makes for happy, well-adjusted individuals, which I believe it does, then the cumulative effect of such individuals would be a generally happy, well-adjusted society.

I would guess that my opinions above are likely not radically different, in general, from those of the American society in which I reside, or even most other societies globally. That said, I would expect that, its being intimately connected to the concept of "interaction," very few people would find the concept of "community-building" to be repugnant in any way. I will back this assertion with the knowledge that there are any number of organizations out there that are currently attempting to do just this, including Canada's Public Dreams Society, whose mission heading states prominently the developing of a "shared culture," as well as City Repair, a Portland, Oregon organization that uses neighborhood art projects, among other things, to build community. Here in Eureka, California, we can find Better Together, a project of First Five of Humboldt County; Humboldt Partnership for Active Living (HumPAL); and the Healthy Humboldt

coalition – all organizations working in one way or another to help build community in Humboldt County, California. I'm sure I've missed a number of others.

My goal for this paper is to provide support for the concept that community-building is important, as well as fill the more specific gap that my hypothesis attempts to address.

Social Capital and Interaction

The discourse on social capital, which is more of a debate about what the term means and how it should be used, is too long to fully address here.⁴ Suffice it to say that social capital is the measure of the “value” of relationships, in one way or another – value being broadly interpreted by folks like Putnam, as opposed to the more strictly economic sense that the use of the term “capital” implies.

Capital, which, in its objectified or embodied forms, takes time to accumulate and which, as a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being, is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible (Bourdieu, 1985: 241 [1983]).

In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam illustrates, in great detail, how social interconnectedness (which, again, he calls “social capital”) is on the decline and that the absence of this “social capital” is detrimental to individuals and society. Michael Woolcock, citing Emile Durkheim, would agree.

4 The bulk of the discourse on social capital can be found in Putnam, 1993a, 1993b, 1995, 1996, 2000; Portes, 1998; Portes and Landolt, 1996; Woolcock, 1998; Florida, 2002; Jeanotte, 2003; Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu, 1985: 241 [1983]; and Shuman, 1998.

Classically associated with urban settings and modernization is [Durkheim's concept of] anomie, where individuals have newly-found freedom and opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities but lack the stable community base to provide guidance, support, and identity. The normlessness of anomie results in not only heightened cognitive dissonance for individuals but also increased rates of disaffection, suicide, and violent crime across society. (Woolcock, 1998: 173)

To help clarify for myself my understanding of social capital, I created [Diagram 1](#) to show the relationships between the various elements I see surrounding social capital. Social capital, being “social,” ultimately comes from interaction. We need to look at what is created through interaction – relationships – and then use concepts like social capital as a lens to examine those relationships, rather than assume that interaction only generates social capital.

Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure. (Coleman, 1988: S98)

The same interaction that generates social capital also likely generates other things, including the “shared culture” mentioned in the Public Dreams Society's mission statement. From there, the many personal benefits of social capital, to me, stem from an individual's *awareness* of the presence of meaningful relationships. That awareness helps people be more secure, happier, and healthier, à la Maslow's famous Hierarchy of Needs. Alejandro Portes states it eloquently:

That involvement and participation in groups can have positive consequences for the individual and the community is a staple notion, dating back to Durkheim's emphasis on group life as an antidote to anomie and self-destruction and to Marx's distinction between an atomized class-*in-itself* and a mobilized and effective class-*for-itself*. In this sense, the term social capital simply recaptures an insight present since the very beginnings of the discipline. (1998: 2; italics added)

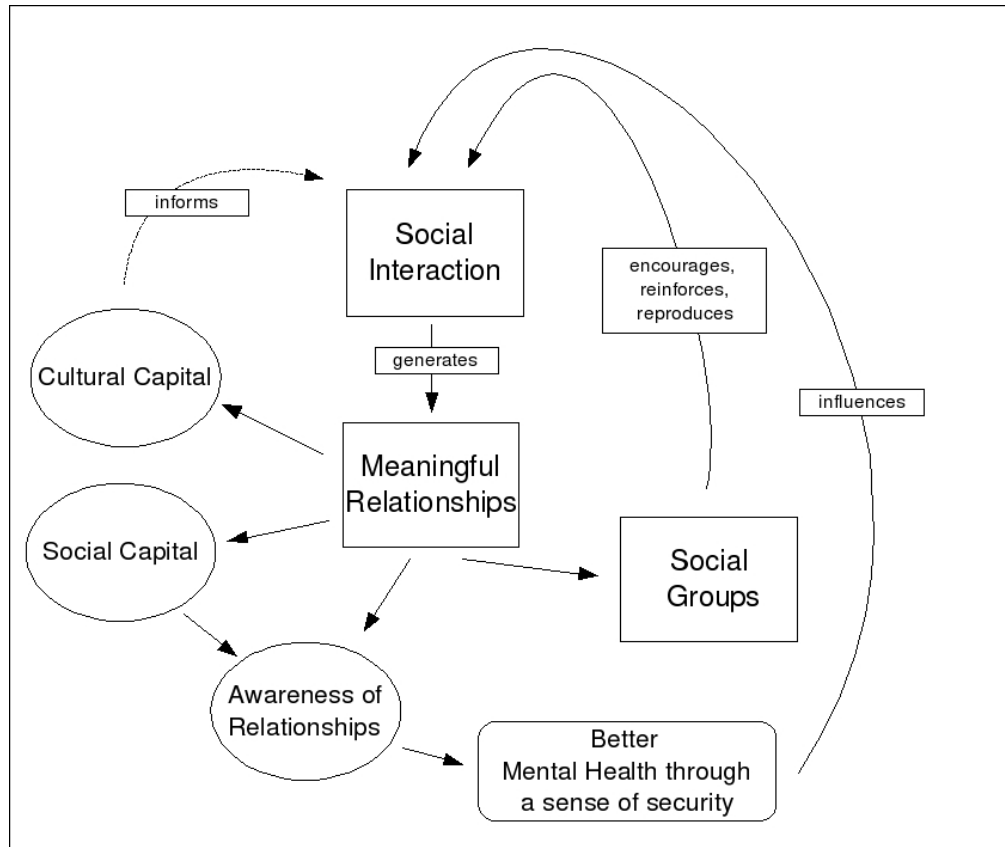


Diagram 1: My conceptualization of the relationship between interaction, social and cultural capital, and increased social and personal wellness.

There is another aspect of Putnam's "social capital" that is relevant to our discussion. In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam fine-tunes his "social capital" by differentiating it into two kinds: *bonding* and *bridging* (2000: 22-24). Bonding social capital is the social capital of members within a group (exclusive or in-group). Bridging social capital extends between groups (inclusive or out-group).

Bridging social capital is beneficial because it is inclusive of other groups, which can create “weak” ties through which important information unavailable within the in-group, but important to members of the in-group, can travel (Putnam, 2000: 23).⁵ The “strong” ties of bonding social capital, however, are “good for undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity” (22). Generally speaking, a healthy community would have a balance of both.

Expanding upon how this relates to my claim that it is the awareness of relationships that is beneficial to mental health, I believe it is an individual's awareness of their bonding social capital (“strong” ties) which allows them to take comfort and security in the fact that they are part of a social network that they can count on. This raises their sense of safety and security, and, in turn, helps maintain good mental health. The “weak” ties of bridging social capital would include the cross-country internet friends who are fun to chat with on-line, but who can't really “be there” for you when you're in crisis and need a shoulder to cry on (as opposed to a computer keyboard).

To summarize, I will use terminology from the above discussion as follows:

I feel any term utilizing the word “capital,” for clarity's sake, should be reserved for an economics discourse. That said, in this paper I will avoid using the term “social capital” to describe the personal, cultural, and social benefits of interaction. My use of the term “social capital” will be kept within the bounds of the definition of “capital” itself: the value of accumulated relationships (in both number and strength) that can

⁵ Putnam credits economic sociologist Mark Granovetter for “weak” and “strong” ties. See Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. “The Strength of Weak Ties,” *American Journal of Sociology* 78: 1360-1380.

leveraged by the individual to accomplish a given task, and which, like any other capital, can be depleted if over-used.

In the place of Putnam's "social capital," I will refer to bonding and bridging *interaction* or *sociality*. I will generally refer to the substance of sociality as "meaningful relationships," be they strong or weak. To avoid confusion, when I refer to Putnam's "social capital," I will put it in quotes. Economic social capital will remain unquoted.

James Coleman's "Closure"

Another concept that will be useful for our exploration of community-building is James Coleman's concept of "closure" (1988: S105-S108). Closure provides a framework within which to analyze one aspect of the quality of relationships, by moving to the next dimension, if you will: the relationship of relationships. With closure, a person's relations (as in friends/acquaintances) not only know that person, but also each other. In this sense, the group is "closed," where at least a few of a person's relations know each other, rather than "open," where a person's relations do not actually know each other. This is important in the establishment of social norms, the sum of which translate to a kind of social law, that, as mentioned above, helps keep folks' "quirkiness in check" and ensures that their behaviors fall within a generally acceptable range. With closure, a person's relations are able to communicate with each other, such that they can "combine forces to sanction [a person] in order to constrain [their negative] actions" as well as "develop norms about each other's behavior" (S106).

The average person would call this “peer pressure,” and, perhaps appropriately, Coleman uses schoolchildren and their parents as an example. While peer pressure is generally seen as negative – kids goading each other do to harmful things like jump off of bridges or worse – it simply means that peers are able to help regulate behavior, which is an important part of being within a community.

Closure “creates trustworthiness in a social structure” (S108). Without such closure, as in situations where the parents of schoolchildren don't actually know each other, a situation is set up where it is more difficult to enforce basic social norms in reference to their children's behavior. In this sense, closure and bridging interaction are very similar. This, then, lends support to the benefits of repeated, face-to-face contact as a method of defining a generally accepted social law as to how to behave. If that closure also includes the parents, it would be more accurately described as a closed, bridging interaction between the two in-groups of parents and children. With this, the children's “social law,” which could include rampaging and other potentially harmful behavior, becomes tempered by the closure and bridging interaction of the parents. In other words, it would be battling the children's “peer pressure” with the parents'; pitting the children's social law against the parents'. This can only happen if the groups have closure.

The concept of closure allows for a complete communication that helps strike a balance between bridging and bonding sociality, such that the bridging interaction helps keep the bonding interaction in check for groups. Through this, communities and society can maintain a level of generally accepted behavior.

Etienne Wenger's "Communities of Practice"

Etienne Wenger points out that “engagement in social practice is the fundamental process by which we learn and so become who we are” in what he calls “communities of practice” (Wenger, 1998: abstract).

These are “communities” of people brought together for a specific purpose, be it functioning as a family, working in a job, sitting in a classroom, or practicing as a garage band (6). What they are doing together in that particular situation is their “practice.” In this way, communities of practice “develop their own practice, routines, rituals, artifacts, symbols, conventions, stories, and histories” (6). In essence, such communities are creating a shared culture. This definition also sounds very much like what we might expect to hear social and cultural capital refer to, depending on the source.

Community-Building to Reverse the Decline in Civil Society

The reproduction of social capital presupposes an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which *recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed*. (Bourdieu, 1985: 250 [1983]; italics added)

If social capital and meaningful relationships are important for the well-being of individuals and society, and social capital is generally built as a byproduct of other social activities (Coleman, 1988: S118; Putnam, 1993a: para 13), then countering the negative effects of the decline of civil society and increased isolation means striving to find ways to encourage interaction with the hope of building community.

Active versus passive community-building

I see community-building techniques as falling generally into one of two categories: active and passive. Active community-building involves things like events, such as block-parties, potlucks, meetings, etc., where someone is actively planning an event that brings people together. The periodic art walks put on by many cities are an example of this.

The “problem” with active community-building is that it often requires what I call an “intention subsidy,” meaning that one or a few passionate people are behind the work and that, often, if those people leave, the work slows or stops altogether. Mark Lakeman, founder of Portland, Oregon’s City Repair (www.cityrepair.org), stated, after a talk at Humboldt State University in 2006, that many of his organization's projects “are very fragile.” They can fall apart tomorrow if some of the key players change.

The ideal of passive community-building, on the other hand, is to be able to “set it up and let it run.” This means that whatever system has been created will continue to build community without any active work on anyone's part. In other words, people will build community without even trying.

During his talk, Lakeman (2006) pointed out that people who live in places that naturally encourage community “don’t need to talk about building community. Simply by coming outside and moving through the commons they have a chance to see each other.” He, like many others, points toward the healthy communities found in Europe as

a resource for things we should be thinking about here, in terms of our community designs.

Jan Gehl's book *Life Between Buildings* (2004 [1980]) discusses this kind of passive community-building. He uses his Contact Theory to support the need for community design that encourages interaction, or “life between buildings.” He defines multiple levels of contact, noting that the lower end of the contact scale is the kind of brushing interaction found between buildings – in the spaces on the streets or in alleyways. Without this lower end of interaction, the “boundaries between isolation and contact become sharper” such that people are either alone or in the more socially demanding situation of, for example, having friends visiting at your abode. According to Gehl, “Life between buildings offers an opportunity to be with others in a relaxed and undemanding way” (83).

Connecting this back to theory, we could say that life between buildings is integral to generating weak ties, bridging (cross-group) interaction, and, therefore, bridging (cross-group) “social capital,” in addition to the strong ties, bonding (in-group) interaction, and therefore, bonding “social capital” generated elsewhere.

As Lakeman and Gehl illustrate, passive community-building strategies generally involve community design or the built environment. Current movements such as New Urbanism and Cohousing exemplify this, as well as, perhaps surprisingly, the original intent behind the modern mall. They are all attempts to create or preserve designs in our

built environment or infrastructure that naturally or “organically” encourage people to interact, without even trying.

New Urbanism is an attempt to promote development that builds community by design, and has very specific criteria that it follows (“Intro to New Urbanism,” 2007).

The Cohousing movement straddles the line between passive and active, by the creation of a small housing development that encourages interaction passively as well as offering optional community dinners, activities, and events (“What is Cohousing?,” 2008). The original indoor shopping center was also an attempt to engineer community by design (Gruen and Smith, 1960).

The risks of trying to engineer community

The benefit of well-done passive community-building is that, once the infrastructure is in place, it shouldn't require anyone to actively maintain or run it. The problem with passive community-building is the risk of unintended consequences or the possibility that it just doesn't work. If it fails for some reason, you're stuck with the built infrastructure.

The risk of unintended consequences is perhaps best illustrated by what we know of as the modern “mall.” In the 1950's, the famous Viennese architect Victor Gruen invented the first indoor shopping center as a response to the decline in civil society that he saw. Having arrived to America from Vienna, Austria, his dream was to see America be more like Vienna. Believing that “the automobile was the means by which the last

vestige of community coherence was destroyed” (Gruen and Smith, 1960: 19), his attempt at a solution was to design the “shopping center.”

[Gruen] revisited one of his old shopping centers, and saw all the sprawling development around it, and pronounced himself in “severe emotional shock.” Malls, he said, had been disfigured by “the ugliness and discomfort of the land-wasting seas of parking” around them. Developers were interested only in profit. “I refuse to pay alimony for those bastard developments,” he said in a speech in London, in 1978. He turned away from his adopted country [America]. He had fixed up a country house outside of Vienna, and soon he moved back home for good. But what did he find when he got there? Just south of old Vienna, a mall had been built—in his anguished words, a “gigantic shopping machine.” It was putting the beloved independent shopkeepers of Vienna out of business. It was crushing the life of his city. He was devastated. Victor Gruen invented the shopping mall in order to make America more like Vienna. He ended up making Vienna more like America. (Gladwell, 2004).

The New Urbanist strategy finds a harsh critic in Alex Marshall (2000).

The New Urban design philosophy is akin to dressing up a car to look like a horse-drawn carriage, and then saying you have brought back the intimacy and community of carriage life. (Marshall, 2000: 25) ... As it stands now, New Urbanism is more destructive than not in its effect on city planning and design. It often represents the worst of America in its ... delivery of image over substance. (32)

From first-hand experience visiting Orenco Station, outside of Portland, Oregon, I found the place to be generally dead. Composed of a section of townhouses and commercial near the light-rail station and a section of single family homes around a central park, the latter felt and looked like any other place of suburban sprawl. It was very much unlike the vibrant streets I'd experienced in Asia and Europe, which I had expected a New Urbanist development to reflect, at least to some degree.

This “deadness” is likely due to the fact that the area showed low diversity, being “inhabited almost entirely by white, affluent professionals [with] few children,

adolescents, or teenagers” (Podobnik, 2002: 253). Without a diversity of ages, from children to retirees, the community empties during the day as everyone goes to work, making it no different, really, than any other suburban area. The lack of commercial in this section reinforced this sense.

Podobnik goes on to say that “evidence of an exclusionary attitude emerges a bit more strongly in Orenco Station than in either comparison community” and that “the experience of other New Urbanist neighborhoods across the county has demonstrated that communities of this kind can become somewhat resistant to 'the outsider' over time” (254).

While a healthy suspicion of strangers in your community seems normal and appropriate, this becomes a concern if your community is homogeneous. There is a risk of engendering racist or bigoted attitudes toward outsiders. In the situation of Orenco Station, the only places where residents could potentially get to know strangers, the area's parks, were, instead, the focus of complaints by residents against use by non-residents (253).

My own first-hand experience in exploring Cohousing as a mode of living exposed me to the failure of one such project right in my region. Marsh Commons, in Arcata, California, is designed around a common area bordering a beautiful marsh, with shared facilities for use by residents, such as a dining hall for communal dinners and laundry facilities.

I was especially excited to see this development because its website indicated that commercial spaces were included on the first floor of every house unit, as well as attached to their common dining area, for a live/work mixed-use format that it was hoped would “bring members of the Cohousing group in closer contact with the larger community and afford some of us the opportunity of short commutes” ([Welcome to Marsh Commons Cohousing, 2003](#)).

To my dismay, at the time I visited the location in 2003, there were reports of fairly severe in-fighting, residents were installing their own laundry facilities, and all but one of the spaces on each unit reserved for commercial use had been converted to studio apartments and rented out to college students. There was hardly any real sense of family or community that I could see, and it seemed pretty clear that it was not functioning as it had been intended.

Considering that we have the technology to do grand scale construction in short periods of time, we also have the ability to create grave and grand mistakes in short order. The failures leave us with new problems, as in the case of Gruen's shopping center, or large-scale sterile or gentrified New Urban or Cohousing spaces that show no indication of the thriving life of Boston's West End, as described by Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961).

According to Marshall, these failures are “what happens when someone fashions a place without acknowledging the forces that actually produce a place” (2000: xviii).

Because “social and cultural capital are embedded in complex social systems that are in many ways the human equivalent of natural ecosystems” (Jeanotte, 2003: 5), what we find is that it may simply be impossible to consider all the forces involved, such that the “perfect” development can be created. So, while the passive strategy of creating a space or built environment that naturally encourages sociality makes sense in terms of an objective of sustainable (as in “self-perpetuating”) solutions, perhaps it is better to scale-downward our efforts at passive community-building to learning more about those “forces” by working with components separately.

By looking specifically at life between buildings, Gehl is essentially taking this tack of looking at one component of what makes up our built environment, and how it affects our ability to interact. My goal here is to do the same thing with small businesses.

“The 'town' was the life center of civil society ... whose institutions were the coffee houses, the salons, and the *Tischgesellschaften* (table societies)” (Habermas, 1989 [1962]: 30).

The Third Place

At the time of this literature review, sociologist Ray Oldenburg was the only modern author found to have written extensively on the topic of the role of small businesses in society, with his book *The Great Good Place* (1989) cited by numerous other authors.

Subtitled “Cafés, coffee shops, community centers, beauty parlors, general stores, bars, hangouts and how they get you through the day,” *The Great Good Place* is an only

partially-academic look at the social role of small businesses in the community. In it Oldenburg describes what he calls “third places” (where home is first and work is second) and outlines why these places are important for society. Despite making what I would consider a critical point with solution-oriented potential in terms of addressing the decline of civil society, he gets only minor mention in books lamenting that decline, such as Putnam's and Marshall's. Refreshingly, Stacy Mitchell's *Big Box Swindle* gives Oldenburg a fair shake in her section on large-scale retail and the community (2006: 92-94).

The characteristics Oldenburg outlines for Third Places are as follows (20-42):⁶

1. They are neutral grounds.
2. They act as “levelers” – The people who come shed much of their social status when they walk through the door.
3. The primary, visible activity is conversation – “When conversation is to be savored, even Mozart is noise if played too loudly.”
4. They are accessible and accommodating – They are “normally open on the off hours,” when patrons have free time, and they are located near to where their patrons live.
5. They have a set of regulars – You can generally count on them being there.
6. They have a low profile – This encourages people, like the regulars, to stay awhile, unlike “chain establishments with policies and personnel that discourage hanging out.”

⁶ I use capital letters for “Third Place” to make it easier to read.

7. The mood is playful.
8. They are a home away from home.

Third Places are places where people can go and feel comfortable. Customers will know most of the people who patronize the establishment, and the establishment will be there for them when they need it, within reason - a convenient hangout where everybody knows your name.

The establishment, then, exists not just as place for the owner to make a profit, but as a community service, and therefore, the social ties between owners, employees, and patrons are an important part of what makes establishments Third Places.

While it's nice to read about the importance of places like Cheers in society, Oldenburg provides very little solid evidence to back up his Third Place criteria, which is part of my motivation to do this thesis.⁷ Oldenburg also does not give us a clear idea about how one could *make* an establishment into a Third Place. While both Putnam and Oldenburg published follow-up books, *Better Together* (Putnam and Lewis, 2003) and *Celebrating the Third Place* (2001), respectively, both are collections of vignettes that, again, lack in the kind of hard evidence that really explains sites of community-building at a more technical level – evidence which could be then applied more broadly and looked at to influence public policy (which likes “hard evidence”).

It is also important to note that, according to Oldenburg's framework, only certain kinds of businesses can be Third Places. For example, specialty stores or establishments

⁷ For those of you who don't know or remember, Cheers was an American TV sitcom set in a Boston pub, in which the theme song proclaimed it as a place where “everybody knows your name, and they're always glad you came.” It's interesting to note that the TV show started in the early 1980's, Oldenburg's book came out in 1989, and the theme song alone hits many of his Third Place points.

that provide products that are not necessary to be purchased daily, such as music stores or bookstores, will be unable to manifest some of the above eight points (for example, #3 and #6). This does not mean that they do not have the potential to be part of a positive social structure that contributes to community-building. It just means that they're not a pub. A Third Place is really one end of a spectrum, where the other extreme would be a place of business where there was no potential to build community at all.

Because of this, the Third Place framework, while helpful in terms of guiding this research, will not be used as a strict rubric upon which to analyze data. In other words, just because an establishment doesn't really qualify as a Third Place, doesn't mean that it doesn't have community-building potential, which is why it is my goal in this paper to look more closely at the factors that make a place a site of community-building. I want to know *why* a Third Place is one, not just that they are, such that a more refined framework can be created and applied to all categories of businesses, not just those that qualify as a Third Place. I hope that this will help communities ensure that, not only do they have their fair share of Third Places, but that their other places of trade are as friendly to community-building as possible.

At the very core, what Oldenburg has done is helped to make it clear that businesses are an important component of our socio-economic fabric. They can help society counter what Marshall vividly refers to as the “crossfire of the car and television” (2000: 202), since it's unlikely that either of those will suddenly disappear (though

fluctuating oil prices are certainly putting pressure on the former). For this point, Oldenburg's work deserves a lot of credit.

Other Points on Interaction, Community-Building and Small Business

Oldenburg dedicates a whole chapter to the personal benefits of Third Places, pointing out that they allow patrons to experience novelty, keep perspective, experience a “spiritual tonic”, and have “friends by the set.” He notes that, in his own unpublished studies of over 70 taverns in a mid-western city, the ones that fit more closely with the criteria he lays out for Third Places contained more laughter (Oldenburg, 1989: 43-65).

Oldenburg also discusses the ability of Third Places to allow people to let off steam, referencing a discussion he had with a psychiatrist who believed that the lack of “safety valves such that the lively tavern once offered” made men more inclined toward domestic violence (80). Richard Sennet, referring to “Chicago’s great immigrant ghetto,” describes Halstead Street as being “crammed in 1900 with little cafés where men would come after work to let the tension drain out; talking to friends or reading a newspaper” (1970: 54). The abstract to an article on “teacher bars” (Pajak and Blase, 1980) discusses findings that show that gathering at such bars gives teachers a chance to create a “secure environment for the cathartic release of emotion for those who felt they needed it,” where they can bring up issues that they are unable to at school, as well as break out of the stereotyped roles that school culture forces them into. Such opportunities for release that establishments offer can help prevent releases at inappropriate times or in inappropriate ways.

Numerous studies have been undertaken on New Urbanist designs to determine whether, in terms of residential areas, such designs actually result in the New Urbanist goal of creating greater community. New Urbanist developments include specific features that are intended to increase residents' social interaction, such as porches upon which it is hoped residents will sit and chat casually with passers-by. These studies have found some correlation between design and interaction. For example, according to Brown and Cropper "garages that dominate house facades in many contemporary subdivisions may decrease neighborhood contacts because they interfere with casual surveillance from residents inside" (2001: 406).

Timothy Beatley (2004) states that "commercial establishments can do a much better job of fitting in and actually helping to strengthen existing neighborhoods and places." He points out how Columbus, Ohio has adopted an urban overlay zone which includes standards that require, along with having parking in back or on the side of the establishment, that "at least 60 percent of the building façade must be clear window glass 'permitting a view of the building's interior to a minimum depth of four feet'" (98).

Emily Talen writes that "an extensive study of neighborhoods in Pittsburgh ... showed that the use of neighborhood facilities (for shopping, worship, or recreation) was linked to higher levels of resident interaction" (2002: 179).

Interestingly reminiscent of Victor Gruen's initial intentions for his original Southdale shopping center, the results of a 2005 study on the mall behavior of older consumers suggest that the mall can reduce their loneliness (Kim *et al.*, 2005: 995), and

that “when shopping is seen as a social activity, consumer-market interactions have significant impacts on older consumers’ mental and physical welfare” (1011).

Reminiscent of Gruen's unintended consequences, they also point out how retailers can take advantage of these facts to increase profit (995).

The likelihood that such mental and physical benefits are limited only to the older generations is small. I would submit that it’s simply more noticeable for those who are older because of how our society tends to neglect its elderly folks.

The elderly illustrate the need for contact ... more commonly. Many of them are starved for association. When left too much alone, the aged often develop irrational fears. ... Or the mind, too much out of touch with others, may begin to dredge up past injuries, decades old, and to dwell upon them and magnify them to the point where sleep is all but impossible. Usually, in these cases, the elderly “come back to normal” soon after association is resumed. (Oldenburg, 1989: 49)

Isolation is not a beneficial state of being for people, who are meant to be around other people. Only within the last hundred years or less have we been able to provide for ourselves without anyone else’s help (it’s not “help” if it’s paid for). This ability to purchase all our needs has appeared to make others – friends, acquaintances, neighbors – almost obsolete. The automobile and cash-economy have facilitated this change. With them, especially now in the age of the internet, it’s possible to have all biological and entertainment needs fulfilled and remain in complete isolation. But, as with so many other things in life, just because we can, doesn’t mean we should. According to Oldenburg, it is those who retreat from sociality that become “dangerous people” who “eschew affiliation and nurse their pathological views apart from the observations, the objections, and support of reasonable and decent people” (Oldenburg, 1989: 49).

Regular interaction also keeps people thinking about each other, which helps ensure the safety of residents. When I was in Taiwan, the shopkeepers, expressing a level of concern, would ask where I'd been when I'd gone traveling and hadn't informed them. Similarly, Oldenburg relates a story from a woman from Arizona about a corner drugstore, where, if the regulars didn't see someone for a couple of days, they would go check on them to make sure they were all right (40).

In an age where stories of elderly, and not so elderly, folks dying in their homes and not being discovered for days or weeks have become all-too-common, it's urgent that we get to know each other better such that we can keep tabs on one other.

If greater, sustained, repeated contact promotes beneficial behavior, then it's not surprising that the opposite is true. Kelly Tian, in her article on customer fraud ([Tian, 2001](#)) points out that, because "the average length of employment of those who interact with customers is two to three months," modern business practices create situations where "customers and employees are not likely to become familiar with each other or to hold genuine concern for each others' lives. This contrasts with earlier periods of business when customers often developed friendships with store owners" (34). She blames modern urban life for the breakup of the community and family structure that typically kept questionable behavior in check through the "fear of social blame" (34).

"The public space ... of cities," according to Jacobs ([1961: 32-33](#)), "is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as police are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people

themselves, and enforced by the people themselves.” Social order is strongest when it comes from the people who are subject to it. It comes from respect for social norms that come out of a stable community of people living and functioning together for an extended period of time. The more people must interact, repeatedly, with the same individuals, the stronger such controls will be. When anonymity begins to outweigh familiarity, they begin to break down. In the case of Tian's study, this breakdown manifests as customer fraud.

“If a law, even a bad law, is left unenforced, then respect for law is weakened, and society as a whole suffers” (Dworkin, 1977: 193). Society cannot help but be harmed when harmful social deviance, even as seemingly insignificant as customer fraud might be to some, is given space to flourish.

It is also important to point out that we're not just concerned with the social interaction between the staff/owners of an establishment and their customers, but also the relationships amongst the owners, managers, and the staff. Tian points out that “clerks might anticipate that by calling attention to a suspected fraudulent return, they will elicit heated confrontations with the suspected offender, spend time in the debate that detracts attention from other customers, and risk good standing with managers if they are wrong” (32). This points to the problems that can come with a weak employer/employee relationship. Every facet of such a situation would be different if the employees, managers, owners, and customers all knew each other better.

To me this means that no local customer should remain unknown; no employee and employer should have a relationship so short-term that real trust is unable to be fostered; and no employer should betray their loyalty to an employee for the profit now or potential future profit from an unknown, one-time customer.

Location is also important to this discussion. Businesses must be close to where people live to be most effective as sites of community-building. “Physical proximity to well-used neighborhood areas, termed ‘functional proximity’ ... is associated with greater neighborhood contact in many studies” (Brown and Cropper: 406).

Where informal gathering places are far removed from one’s residence, their appeal fades, for two reasons. Getting there is inconvenient, and one is not likely to know the patrons. (Oldenburg, 1989: 33)

The entire city [of Venice, Italy] serves as their playground, and, as children grow, they can safely walk to each other’s homes, even from a very young age. ... One of the clear reasons for feeling secure is the presence of many different shops and businesses, all with a clear view of the streets and, indeed, often with open doors and windows. (Beatley, 2004: 162)

In Mexico, parents take their children to McDonald’s Playlands to protect them from the risk of kidnapping (Gori, 2004). Reminiscent of Jane Jacob’s famous “eyes on the street,” (Jacobs, 1961: 35) businesses have the ability to affect public safety where they are located. This has import considering that incidents of kidnapping have taken place right in the quiet, American residential areas many feel are safe.

“I live in a lovely, quiet residential area,” says a friend of mine who is hunting another place to live. “The only disturbing sound at night is the occasional scream of someone being mugged.” (Jacobs, 1961: 30)

Small businesses also provide for area youth. Richard Lingeman aptly describes the typical American contemporary rural residential scene, stating that “the absence of

stores, restaurants, and other public meeting places added to the pervasive sterility, which was most keenly felt by the young people who had no place to hang out” (1980: 459).

Sense of place is defined by both natural and built physical features, in addition to things such as history and culture. David Hummon lists local shopping as one of the most significant sources of “sentimental ties to local places” (Hummon, 1992: 257).

Richard Stedman, in his study on visitor-employed photography, noted that pictures participants took were not only of beautiful natural scenery, but of places where people made social contact with others, including the recreation center and the post office.

Attachment to the social landscape accumulates through repeated experience. Participants emphasized that ordinary places can become meaningful over time as memories are built through their use ... [quoting a participant:] “It’s not that we can’t make coffee at home . . . But no, we go down there, meet people and yack. Stay about an hour.” (Stedman, 2003: 594)

Noting the benefit of a stable built-environment in general, Lucy Lippard points out that “The rug is pulled from under our sense of self when stores close or switch functions, when vacant lots appear or disappear, or when buildings are remodeled” (1997: 200). Though this may point to a general aversion to change, it is important to note that small businesses compose a part of the need for stability.

Brown and Cropper refer to a number of studies in their article comparing New Urban and “standard” suburban subdivisions, stating that “others have shown that repeated contact, especially under good conditions, is associated with more favorable attitudes toward racially different people ..., greater cross-race contact ..., or neighboring...” (2001: 405). Talen refers to studies that showed that “an increase in neighboring results from greater use of public space ... and greater use of local facilities

for shopping ...” (2002:179). According to Sally Merry, the degree with which tenants in an apartment complex were familiar with each other had an impact on the level of danger that they perceived.

Where boundaries between social groups are sharp and bridged by few social ties or shared memberships in organizations, even a moderate crime rate will generate fear, which then further exacerbates the boundaries within the neighborhood. (Merry, 1981: 242-243)

Merry also points to the direct role small businesses play in getting people to interact with those they would not, otherwise.

Many local residents do work as cashiers and stock boys in the store, and, as a result, they tend to know more residents from other ethnic groups than do other tenants. All ethnic groups are represented on [this] supermarket staff. Thus, the supermarket provides one of the few settings in which individuals of different ethnic groups regularly interact socially. (51)⁸

The possibility of establishments attracting a diverse, place-based crowd is a welcome change, as many neighborhoods likely harbor more diversity than each individual’s selected social networks.

The death of the street [as a commons] has in turn killed related unifying devices, like the central town hall and the neighborhood bar. ... People move frequently; family patterns have fragmented; religions are diffuse and many, with no one faith dominant anymore in a community ... If you make that walk, carrying a home-baked pie to the neighbors, chances are they’ll like different music than you, different art, different religions. (Marshall: 60)

However, as was discussed in the Preface, we must be wary of the dangers of “counterfeit community” created by chain and formula establishments.

8 This is not to say that everything was perfect. Merry goes on to state that “interactions between *shoppers* [my italics] does not necessarily break down ethnic barriers, however, and may simply reinforce feelings of separateness.” Merry later notes that language barriers can contribute to this. This makes it clear that what I’m proposing here addresses only part of the problem. There are many other facets that must also be simultaneously addressed.

Counterfeit community projects images of community but keep us at arm's length by never asking that we act responsibly to maintain the kinds of relationship necessary for genuine community. ... But instead of creating environments and relationships that meaningfully satisfy those desires, it provides only the appearance of community and is, therefore, never fully satisfying. (Freie, 1998: 5)

Asking the Deeper Questions

Studies that begin to ask those deeper, more specific questions required to begin building a framework that really looks at the sociological role of small businesses in the community are as rare as books like Oldenburg's. Nonetheless, there are a few which can help light the path ahead.

One such project is called "The Cappuccino Community," headed by Eric Laurier and Chris Philo. Reflective of my own experiences researching this literature review, their final report (2005: 3) states "Surprisingly the social sciences have produced very few ethnographic studies of the lifeworld of cafés or other similar kinds of convivial places, and their documentation has been left to populist accounts."

The results of their project summarize nicely the place of the café in U.K. society. While they, too, address one component of the hypothesis of this thesis, they do not go into great detail or make much more than a tacit claim that there is no difference between Starbucks and independent coffee shops:

In the era where criticism of Starbucks is commonplace, and its cafés are icons of globalisation on the high street, they raise cosmopolitanism and local identity as communal problems. Yet Starbucks functions within the city much as other cafes [sic] do. As such, as hosts cafés provide places for ‘scenes’ (e.g. film, literary, business, design, goth, gay and so on) which by their ephemeral nature are otherwise hard to locate. They are places of hospitality in the city for outsiders, and each time an outsider arrives it is an occasion to produce hospitality or not. They are places of glancing mutual observation and half-grasped mutual overhearing. (15)

My criticism of this analysis is their definition of what building community means. They point out that Starbucks hosts 'scenes', which imply greater bonding interaction over bridging, and leads me to wonder what their baseline for community-building is. Is it the provision of a space for people to meet those whom they choose to meet, or is it the creation of a space where diverse groups can come together? To me, true community-building involves getting to know people from your community whom you wouldn't necessarily choose to meet.

[T]he individual with a third place has a host of friends that are not limited by the narrowness of personal choice. (Oldenburg, 1989: 63)

In this case, I believe that Starbucks and other cafés are not “essentially the same,” and believe this pilot study begins to lay proof for that claim. I might even go so far to wonder whether it is the anonymity of Starbucks that, in opposition to Oldenburg's quote above, actually encourage the existence of those 'scenes,' which one could see as reinforcing our tendency to segregate, rather than interact with those who are different from us.

This brings up the question of ideological community vs. geographic community. Not that we shouldn't have groups of common interest, but much of the point of this

thesis is my feeling that we need spaces that build community on a more geographic scale as opposed to an ideological one. Ideological community reflects the “narrowness of choice” Oldenburg mentions above. It is bonding over bridging. In a country where many of us don't even know our neighbors, I believe we need a good dose of geographic community. It is my feeling that an establishment like a coffee shop should be encouraging geographic community, where, in my opinion, the Starbucks as described above by Laurier and Philo is encouraging ideological community.

More clearly jabbing at the questions presented in this thesis are two other studies. First, a study on the effect of Wal-Marts on social capital found that Wal-Marts “depress social capital stocks in local communities” (Goetz and Rupasingha, 2006: 1). Wal-Marts are unable to make up for the loss of “important social relationships, norms and trust that were built up over time” in the small, independent stores they put out of business (2). This implies that there is something about large-scale retail that makes it less capable of encouraging meaningful interaction, putting them, perhaps, on the opposite end of Third Places on our community-building spectrum.

Second, a study comparing supermarkets to farmers markets concluded that “the supermarket is a less friendly environment than the farmer's market,” (Sommer *et al*, 1981: 17) where “more social and informational encounters” took place between patrons (abstract). The study also points out that “a farmers' market customer was four times as likely to have an encounter with a seller or employee” (16), implying greater potential for bridging interaction between folks who may not generally interact. This study has been

represented in other sources ([Korten, 2007](#)) as concluding that patrons had 10 times as many conversations in farmers' markets as in supermarkets, which the study itself does not explicitly state. The researchers provide a good set of terms for categorizing conversations: perfunctory, informational, and social interaction, with social being “a conversation by two or more people on any topic” (16).

That said, the goal of this paper is to add to the literature on community-building data on how businesses act as sites of passive community-building. Acknowledging Marshall, I want to better understand the small business as one of those “forces that actually produce a place” ([Marshall, 2000](#): xviii). I hope that this information will be used to explore how independent businesses can be better utilized for passive community-building, without the risks that come with full-scale development.

HYPOTHESIS

My hypothesis looks at social interaction and community-building against two scales, chain versus independent and small physical scale versus large physical scale, and is as follows:

1. Local, independent businesses have a greater potential and capability of being sites of passive community-building than national chains.
2. Physically small-scale businesses have a greater potential and capability of being sites of passive community-building than national chains.

The terms in this hypothesis are defined as follows:

Local pertains to the community within which the establishment resides. For our purposes, “local” means that its existence is limited to the local region, in this case Humboldt County, California.

Independent means that the business' owner is able to make independent decisions about all aspects of the daily running of the business. As well, profits are not sent out of the area to a corporate headquarters. The Humboldt County Independent Business Alliance (www.humiba.org), an affiliate of the American Independent Business Alliance, defines “independent” as being able to answer “yes” to the following:

1. Is your business privately, employee, cooperatively, or community-held (not publicly traded)?
2. Do the business owners, totaling greater than 50% of the business ownership, live in Humboldt County?

3. Is your business located in Humboldt County, with no corporate or national headquarters outside Humboldt County?
4. Can your business make independent decisions regarding the name and look of your business, as well as all business purchasing, practices, and distribution?
5. Do you have six or fewer branches or outlets?

While I did not actually ask these questions of the owners, as I felt this would compromise my research, it was generally easy to determine whether a business was independent or not by mere observation and a little investigation, if necessary.

Chain refers to shops that are owned, operated, or dictated by a national or trans-national corporation, where each franchise or formula outlet is unable to make but a few independent decisions as to the running of the business.

Passive refers to the fact that the community-building is done by design, not by intention. In other words, individuals should be building community in these sites without even trying.

To define **community-building**, following is a rubric derived from what we've discussed thus far.

A Rubric to Gauge a Site of Community-Building

Understanding that face-to-face interaction is the basis of the creation of meaningful relationships, social capital, and “social capital,” we would expect a superior site of community-building to have the potential for, and exhibit, like Sommer *et al's* farmers markets, lots of social interaction beyond the perfunctory. In other words, à la

Oldenburg, conversation is the primary activity. We would see interaction that creates meaningful relationships of any degree, from acquaintances (weak ties) to close friendships (strong ties). We would see a diversity of interaction, with a balance of both bridging and bonding interaction, creating a diversity of both strong and weak meaningful local and non-local relationships. Bonding interaction would be present to strengthen in-group relationships, and bridging interaction would encourage the creation of out-group or cross-group relationships. Using Oldenburg's criteria, the place would be a "leveler," as well as have a set of regulars and be a home away from home. We would see high closure, creating a situation where peer pressure can help mitigate extreme behavior.

As factors that affect the ability or willingness of individuals to interact will necessarily have an effect on the ability of the place to build community, we would see in a site components that increase both ability and willingness to interact. These range from the layout of the space to the attitudes of all involved to government policy.

Judging from my own personal experiences, happier individuals are going to be more likely to interact meaningfully than unhappy ones, especially employees. Happier, healthier, more secure employees will be more willing to go beyond their basic job description to interact with patrons. Patrons in a good mood will be more likely to interact with folks they know less well. We would see better attitudes, then, in a place that is a good site of community-building, and that place would encourage better attitudes. In other words, à la Oldenburg, the mood would be at least somewhat playful.

A better site of community-building is going to be someplace that people want to be and, like Oldenburg says, “stay awhile.” It should encourage folks to stay.

Accepting that most people likely generally agree on what “community-building” means, we would expect better sites of community-building to be reported as such. The presence of strangers as an opportunity for bridging interaction would help moderate the local community and create a bridge/buffer between it and the greater region, but too many strangers would indicate a lack of meaningful relationships or closure, as would a high level of anonymity. We would expect, then, to see in a site of community-building a lower, but not nonexistent, level of strangers, indicating openness by the site to the greater region, but not overly high levels of anonymity that dilute the potential for creating meaningful relationships. In other words, and acknowledging Bourdieu's statement above that recognition need be “endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed,” we would expect to see a range of interaction that indicates more repeated, longer-term interaction with a fewer number of people as opposed to more, shorter interactions with a larger number of people. We would see interactions and relationships that cross groups, especially between employees and patrons (cross-counter interaction), who are more likely to be from different social circles interacting on the common ground of business than the interactions of choice amongst patrons. Patrons would frequently run into friends that they did not arrive with to the site, and we would see a lower level of groups of friends who only interact within their group for the duration of their stay. In

Oldenburg's terms, the place would be neutral enough to encourage strangers to come, but it would still have a set of regulars who know each other well.

Personal attitudes toward community-building are both a factor in and indicator of the level of community-building in a place. Low interest in community-building by individuals in a given “community” can be a factor in its lack of community-building potential as well as a manifestation of a site that attracts such people who are perhaps interested in high anonymity.

It should be noted that a good site of community-building would also exhibit higher levels of a mix of both bridging and bonding social capital, and, in general, be better Third Places.

METHODOLOGY

To test this hypothesis I utilized two methods, direct observation and one-on-one qualitative interviewing of individuals who had relevant experiences. As per another Sommer work (1972:122), I started with the direct observation in order to help inform my interview questions.

Direct Observation

Originally, direct observation was to be the methodology I used only and exclusively on the chain vs. independent component of the hypothesis, with the interviews being limited to my hypothesis on establishment physical scale. I only completed a portion of what I had hoped to do in terms of direct observation, abandoning that methodology in favor of qualitative interviews.

To test the independent vs. chain hypothesis component I chose to look at coffee shops. While the public house, or “pub,” would seem like the archetypal Third Place, there are multiple reasons that coffee shops are a better choice for this research. First, coffee shops have become a greater part of the mainstream culture in the last couple of decades. In many ways, in the face of increasingly negative views toward alcohol, they have taken over the role of the pub as gathering places.

Second, brief research indicated that there are no clear national chain or formula pubs in Humboldt County, only bars within other types of chains (such as restaurants like Applebee's) and the local chain of Sal's bars, leaving nothing to compare. This absence of formula pubs is in and of itself an interesting phenomenon, perhaps indicating the

possibility that tavern cultures, not surprisingly, are so particular and unique that it is fundamentally impossible or impractical to attempt to make them formulaic. Even within the Sal's local chain, the establishments have unique names. While this is beyond the scope of this paper, it is certainly interesting and perhaps deserving of further research.

Third, coffee shops are easily accessible as “quasi-public” spaces (Lofland, 2006: 36) where the only requirement for entrée is the purchase of a drink, giving license for patrons to sit around for hours. While the hypothesis of this paper indicates that all independent businesses should be more capable of encouraging meaningful interaction than their national chain or over-sized counterparts, it's more difficult to gain entrée and remain unobtrusive in independent businesses that do not have loitering or lounging built into their *raison d'etre*.

There are three major categories of coffee shops: unique, single establishment coffee shops; local “chains”; and national chains.

The first kind is a category of independent coffee shops that are entirely unique in that the owner has only a single establishment. Examples of this kind of establishment are, in Eureka, 3-2-1 Coffee (now closed), Liquid Café, and Old Town Coffee & Chocolates. Arcata has Mosgo's, Muddy Waters, and Sacred Grounds. Sacred Grounds also closed down during the writing of this thesis.

The second category is local chains. These are locally-spawned chains that have multiple establishments which are all within Humboldt County, and tend to be within the larger cities of Eureka, Arcata, Fortuna, and McKinleyville. The best example of this is

Ramone's, which started out as a single establishment in old town Eureka and expanded to six outlets ([“Ramone's Bakery and Café Homepage,”](#) 2002).

The third main kind of coffee shop is the national chain. The best example of this in Humboldt county is Starbucks. Recently, Grants Pass, Oregon-spawned Dutch Bros. (pronounced “Dutch Brohs”) coffee has come to Humboldt County, but, as these are “drive-thru” establishments, I did not include them in the direct observation component of the research.

In addition, there are a couple interesting variants. Perhaps the most interesting comes under single-establishment coffee shops, where we find a non-profit establishment in addition to the typical for-profit ones. Mosgo's, in Arcata, is a non-profit coffee shop owned and run by a local church, the Arcata Vineyard Christian Community ([Hochner, 2007](#)). Because its mission is specifically one of community-building, I felt it would be interesting to include in the research, but, as with Dutch Bros., I did not include it under the direct observation methodology. In fact, it was so interesting, I decided to present it as a case-study in [Appendix E](#).

The second variation is the regional chain. Has Beans, in Eureka, which, while the only establishment of its kind in Humboldt County, has locations outside Humboldt. Originally started in San Francisco, Has Beans eventually relocated to Shasta ([“History,”](#) 2000). Whereas national chains often have multiple establishments in a specific county, city, or town, Has Beans, with the exception of Chico, California, seems to keep its

establishments spread out, which makes it like a unique, single-establishment coffee shop in the local area in which it resides.

My goal was to gather data that would allow me to assess each space for the quantity and quality of interaction within that particular establishment's "community," with the understanding that, as shown in the literature review above, interaction is the basis for the generation of, as well as indicators of the presence of, such things as social capital, meaningful relationships, and a sense of community.

I began my fieldwork by casing the establishments to consider "the suitability of the chosen setting and its appropriateness for the study's research goals" (Berg, 2004: 159).

Recognizing my own biases against national chains, I had hoped to assemble a team of observers to help counter any one observer's particular biases, as well as buffer them from me and my opinions, which did not happen. I was inspired by reading *The Pub and the People*, a long-term study by hundreds of people in England, collectively referred to as "Mass-Observation" (1987 [1943]). Writes Tom Harrison in his 1942 preface to the book:

Mass-Observation remains very much as it was at the beginning – a team of full-time paid investigators, observing others objectively; and a nation-wide system of voluntary observers providing information about themselves and their everyday lives. (xiv) ... Mass-Observation, as its name implies, considers that one of the clues to development in the social sciences is the actual observation of human behaviour in everyday surroundings. We cannot afford to devote ourselves exclusively to people's verbal reactions to questions asked them by a stranger (the interviewer) in the street, without running a grave risk of reaching misleading conclusions. (xvi)

In creating the protocol for myself, I drew from ethnographic-style studies like Michael McSkimming's (1996) to determine what I should look for to better judge the presence or absence of meaningful interaction. In order to avoid injecting my own tendencies toward wanting to know and interact with those around me, I refrained from being a “participant” as much as possible.

After an initial test run of observations, I developed a fairly standardized system of observation and chose the specific sites that I would study. My original plan for an observation regimen was much more lofty, including seven locations, specific drinks for each location, and a set of fixed-times during which I would observe, divided between weekdays and weekends, with one weekend for every three weekdays (Table 1).

Table 1: An overly optimistic initial observation regimen.

	Mosgo's	3-2-1 Coffee	Old Town Coffee & Chocolates	Ramone's Harrison	Ramone's Old Town	Starbucks 5 th St.	Starbucks Longs Center
9-10 a.m.							
2-3 p.m.							
6-7 p.m.							
Drink	double tall mocha with rasberry	french press	oolong tea	double tall mocha	green tea	short cappucino	short latté

As the work proved more challenging than I had expected, I decided to limit myself to two Starbucks and two independent coffee shops (3-2-1 Coffee and Old Town Coffee & Chocolates), and expand as possible or necessary. I reasoned that more data for fewer places was better than less data for more. I picked these sites because they were all relatively close to each other and in Eureka, avoiding the nearby “college town” of

Arcata. For McSkimming's study, "the majority of the patrons at a particular tavern had to reside locally in the town area rather than being transient ... College seniors will graduate and leave the area; new drinkers must be initiated into the tavern structure" (1996: 40).

A second reason to avoid Arcata is its unique municipal code that restricts the number of chain or formula restaurants in the city. Because of this, until a chain establishment leaves, no more are allowed in, and Arcata is currently at its cap. Credited by the owner of Arcata's Espresso101 for fending off repeated attempts by Starbucks to take her location, this is why there are currently no national chain coffee establishments in Arcata, leaving nothing for me to compare to Arcata's independent establishments.

I chose to observe covertly. Unlike McSkimming, whose research included being a participant and engaging in overtly obvious research-related activities, such as interviewing members of the tavern social structure and taking part in games of darts and pool, I simply wanted to be as uninvolved as possible. There are a couple reasons for this. First, by seeking official permission from coffee shop owners to do research on their premises, I was necessarily opened up to being rejected. Realizing that larger corporations tend to be cautious to the point of paranoia, my greatest concern regarding rejection was Starbucks. A British study showed Starbucks as the only company to *not* allow any interviews with its customers (Scott, 2006: 63). I was fairly certain that, were I to ask permission at Starbucks to observe, I would certainly be run up the bureaucratic ladder and ultimately rejected, which would have wasted my time only to stop my

research cold. So not only did I prefer the idea of being covert, it seemed safer to avoid rejection and detection by not asking in the first place.

Second, and more importantly to the research, covert observation avoided the possibility that the employees and owners would alter their behavior for the benefit of the researcher. Understanding that self-consciousness takes effort, long-term study participants would likely become used to me as a researcher and revert to their normal behavior. Realizing that my study would not be that long or in-depth, there simply wasn't any compelling reason to be a known researcher. In addition, because coffee shops are quasi-public places where anyone can go to stay as long as they wish (provided they purchase that drink), I did not feel ethical considerations made it imperative that I be open about my research goals. This is not to mention that, in "post-9/11 America," people are even more suspicious than they would be normally, making being a covert researcher that much more attractive. Considering that there are folks whose sole purpose in going to coffee shops is to watch people (Thompson and Arsel, 2002: 14), I didn't feel bad doing it as a researcher.

For comparison, following is the observation regimen for Mass-Observation in *The Pub and the People* (1987 [1943]: xvii):

1. Public house reconnaissance and description; preliminary penetration. 3 months.
2. Penetration by observers into all parts of Worktown pub life. 2 months.
3. Observation without being observed. 10 months.
4. Work conducted more openly; active co-operation with all sorts of people in all spheres of local life. The study of individuals, letters, diaries, documents. 3 months.
5. Data from important people. 2 months.

6. Studies of statistics, organizations and unpublished sources. 3 months.

After abandoning my original observation schedule, my much more humble goal was to stay two hours per sitting and spread my observations throughout the establishment's open hours, though I often stayed only 1.5 hrs. Recognizing that, in a coffee shop, sitting with a drink and typing on a computer for hours is as normal a sight as the espresso machine itself (especially in free wi-fi coffee shops where internet is available), I would use my laptop to record my observations – a perfect ruse to cover my actions. I would even keep a decoy application ready to open up should I feel someone peering over my shoulder.

At the top of my blank form was a set of questions to answer when I first entered the observation site. They asked to describe the scene on arrival, how I was treated, and if the employees remembered my usual. I abandoned this part fairly quickly. The middle part included space for the observations, starting with number of employees currently working as well as patrons present. The bottom repeated the questions at the top, which I also stopped using. I provided the opportunity for myself to gather many different kinds of data, which turned out to be too much. Over time I simplified to focusing mostly on the observation section, sometimes writing a summary of that session at the end if I had time.

I ended up drifting to a straightforward, write-everything-I-saw method, trying to get as much detail as I possibly could, without worrying about meaning or engaging in

any “pre-coding.” See [Appendix A](#) for the final version of my tally sheet, much of which I stopped utilizing.

Qualitative Interviews

Because our area had recently seen two of its natural food stores expand in size within one year, I felt there was a rare opportunity to examine the second component of my hypothesis and look at the scale of a store in terms of how expansion affected the establishment's community. Because the expansions were so recent, I knew I would easily find folks who had experience in both the smaller and larger stores, and I could use qualitative interviewing to get their impressions of the change. Originally, I had expected to only apply this method on the natural food stores, as doing the same kind of direct observation I had been doing in coffee shops would have been more difficult, especially in small ones, where I would have looked exceedingly suspicious. Even Sommer *et al's* (1981) methodology would have been difficult in smaller stores, and, regardless, I didn't find the thought of stalking customers terribly attractive.

However, having determined to halt direct observations in coffee shops, I chose to open myself up to the possibility of qualitative interviews around the coffee shop cultures. I was surprised to find that, similarly to the natural food stores, there were quite a few individuals who had worked at both chains and an independent coffee shop, and the breakdown of number of interviewees and their relevant experience is found below in [Table 2](#). With slight modification of the questions, I was able to apply them to both natural food store employees and patrons as well as coffee shop employees and patrons.

Table 2: Interviewees and their relevant experience.

Number of Interviewees	Relevant Experience
4	Worked at both chain and independent coffee shop
1	Worked at an independent coffee shop
3	Worked at natural food store before and after expansion
2	Patronized natural food stores before and after expansion

As my interviews progressed, my questions changed based upon my experience with what was working and what was not, though I would often utilize the “river and channel” method of interviewing, to “explore an idea, a concept, or an issue in great depth, following wherever it goes” (Rubin and Rubin, 2005: 146). This resulted in my sometimes not getting to all my questions and getting extra information I didn't plan to get. My final, streamlined, list of questions is available in [Appendix B](#). My consent form is available in [Appendix C](#).

My interviewee pool was mostly a sample of convenience, using connections I already had or could make through other avenues. I did have to work a bit harder for some interviews, and many of the more cold-call individuals I approached didn't participate. As my coffee shop interviewees were mostly individuals now working at an independent shop who formerly worked at a chain, I did try to approach employees who were currently working at a chain by going to Starbucks to look for interviewees. As I had expected, I was met with resistance – unwillingness to talk about other employees, the kind of behavior that indicated the employees were worried about saying something they shouldn't, somewhat cold treatment, and the kind of suspicion that indicates the

employees were worried about what their supervisors would think. One employee told me that she needed to “get permission.” I wasn't sure what she meant by that. I even made little business cards with a description of the thesis, an interview request, and contact information. I handed these to employees at Starbucks, as well as some other people I was interested in talking to. I was never contacted and I didn't persistently pursue the Starbucks employees, or any others who were hesitant or resistant.

For the natural food stores, my interviewee pool was very small, but composed of both employees and patrons. To ensure confidentiality I identify them as only “patron” or “employee”.

Working with establishment owners

In interviewing employees, one question that might arise is whether or not you should involve the owner of the establishment. While it may seem ethical to involve the owner in the employee interview process, the potentially thesis-killing resistance I ran into should make any researcher hesitant to do so. This was the case with one of the natural food stores, where I risked being barred from doing my work and losing one of only two opportunities to look at the expansion question.

The fact of the matter is that you do not need permission to interview adult employees, provided you are doing it off-premises. Giving an owner or manager the opportunity to prevent you from interviewing employees is basically allowing them to censor adults who are capable of making their own decisions.

In order to help facilitate the process of contacting other interviewees, I wrote a half-page summary of the research to hand to prospective interviewees or providers of entrée to interviewees, which is attached at the end of this document as [Appendix D](#). I purposely left the thesis title vague to ensure that those who received this summary would not be influenced by it. As it turned out, I didn't end up contacting any more prospective interviewees, so the summary was left unused.

To anyone who might do this in the future, I would advise leaving the owners out of the equation.

Ethics and Human Protection

While there could be some ethical considerations to covertly observing in a quasi-public space such as coffee shop, I determined that, because I do not need the rich detail of a complete ethnography, the observers' ability to observe ethically and unobtrusively would be fairly uncomplicated. Considering, as well, the research doesn't involve the personal information or opinions of anyone within the establishment, but merely little more than a tally of particular instances of behaviors, there really aren't any human subjects implications.

While interviewing employees against the wishes of the owner could be considered questionable, I will again fall back on the reality that these employees are adults who have the right to discuss their own experiences.

The qualitative interview questions and direct observation protocol were approved by the Humboldt State Internal Review Board for the protection of human subjects (i.e.,

interviewees), and it was determined that there was essentially no risk to individuals who participated in the interview process (approval #06-56). The modifications I made to the interview questions during the research did not alter their essential nature.

RESULTS

Because I ended up abandoning the direct observation tool before I got polished and streamlined at utilizing it, my best data was at the end, and, overall, it lacked consistency. I was, however, able to get from the fieldwork enough information to be valuable for this thesis and a basis upon which to reflect on and interpret the qualitative interviews. The qualitative interviews definitely fleshed out the trends seen in the direct observation, creating a nice triangulation that gives a little more solidity to the final product.

Table 3 shows the times and durations of my fieldwork. Of the approximately 27.5 hours of observation I did, I analyzed 12.5 hours' worth. Each of the three pairwise comparisons covers about four hours' worth of observation, comparing two sittings of approximately two hours apiece.

Table 3: Times and durations of direct observation at four Eureka coffee shops.

Establishment	Time Out	Time In	Duration
3-2-1 Coffee	12:14	10:42	01:32:00
Starbucks Old Town	13:14	10:49	02:25:00
Comparison One Total			03:57:00
Starbucks Old Town	15:42	14:03	01:39:00
3-2-1 Coffee	16:23	14:03	02:20:00
Comparison Two Total			03:59:00
Old Town Coffee & Chocolates	10:16	08:17	01:59:00
Starbucks at Longs	10:40	08:09	02:31:00
Comparison Three Total			04:30:00
Analyzed Total			12:26:00
Old Town Coffee & Chocolates	19:38	17:40	01:58:00
Old Town Coffee & Chocolates	15:24	13:25	01:59:00
Old Town Coffee & Chocolates	10:43	10:10	00:33:00
3-2-1 Coffee	14:08	12:03	02:05:00
3-2-1 Coffee	17:38	16:07	01:31:00
Starbucks Old Town	16:52	14:52	02:00:00
Starbucks Old Town	09:42	07:57	01:45:00
Starbucks at Longs	12:36	11:05	01:31:00
Starbucks at Longs	14:28	12:47	01:41:00
Un-analyzed total			15:03:00
Total			27:29:00

Direct Observation

Challenges and confounding factors

A significant challenge with this method was dealing with the layout of the establishments. At worst, there were two totally separate rooms that forced me to choose between either sitting near the counter to hear patron-employee interactions or in another room with, if I was lucky, a distant view of the counter. Two rooms made it very difficult to keep track of patrons.

In one of the Starbucks, there was a monolithic store display separating the counter from the patrons' sitting area, again making it difficult to hear the details of what was going on at the counter. I considered this to be of great importance in terms of observing that “cross-counter” bridging interaction, not just the bonding interaction of groups of patrons. As well, there was often music playing which further exacerbated the problem of hearing exchanges. Suggestions for dealing with this situation would be to have two observers working, or to simply filter out establishments that were not designed in a way that made it exceedingly easy to keep track of patrons and hear all interactions. An example of such a place was 3-2-1 Coffee, which, though it had two rooms, had a sweet-spot where I could plant myself and see everything inside.

Of course, keeping track of who is sitting *outside* remained a problem, but there's no satisfying every confounding factor, and it was a problem to some degree in all the establishments. One Starbucks also had a drive-thru, which, while not worth even trying to observe, did act as a confounding factor because the extra employees needed to work the drive-thru *are* inside. It's also disconcerting to try to keep track of their chatting when they're using their headsets to talk to each other like jungle commandos.

It was because I didn't feel I had the time to thoroughly address the above issues that I eventually chose to abandon this method in favor of doing qualitative interviews with coffee shop-related individuals.

A second significant challenge was keeping track of patrons in general. While in some ways Sommer *et al's* (1981) tactic of applying Barker's (1968) “psychological

ecology,” where researcher(s) track (as in follow) a particular subject while recording their interactions, might have been better, I wanted to get the atmosphere of a whole shop. That said, keeping track of a whole room full of multiple subjects was a challenge, especially during the “rush” times of breakfast and lunch. At those times when the shop was exceptionally busy, keeping track of every patron became an impossible task, and many patrons were lost or simply missed entirely. I would try to note during my observations points at which there were too many people to keep track of, or that I had lost track for any reason. Needless to say, this made for gaps and incomplete data on certain individuals, but was also indicative of the volume of customers a particular establishment was serving at that time.

A third challenge was avoiding getting dragged into participating in my surroundings. Were it not for my need to strain to hear conversations and exchanges, I would have put on a set of “Don't bother me” headphones (like I was listening to music) to ensure I was left unmolested. On more than a few occasions I did participate in my surroundings, which was generally okay, though there were a couple instances where conversations took up 15-45 minutes of my observation time. Of course, the more time I spent in a particular surrounding, the more likely it was I would become part of those surroundings as people began to feel more comfortable with my ongoing presence.

I realized after the fact that my unfixed durations-of-stay were themselves confounding factors. I had assumed that the longer I could stay during any one sitting the better. During the analysis of the data I realized that this was a mistake, as we all know

that different times of day involve different traffic and numbers of patrons. By staying longer, I risked going from one “phase” of the day to another and confounding my data. For example, in one of my pairwise comparisons I started at around 8:00 a.m. In Old Town Coffee & Chocolates, I stayed only an hour and a half, likely not long after the end of the morning rush. In the Starbucks, I stayed over two hours, diluting my morning data with a slower time of day that I didn't include in the OTC&C data. I should have stuck with my original plan to start and end at specific and fixed times for every sitting.

I also did not have an easy system in place to gauge the kind or depth of interaction that was happening, not to mention that it was often difficult to hear all interactions, much less classify them as to any quality.

By far, of the four establishments within which I did direct observation, I consider my 3-2-1 Coffee data to be the most reliable and accurate, as I could easily see and hear almost everything going on at almost all times. The others involved too high a traffic and/or layouts that made it difficult or impossible to keep track of patrons.

Statistical analysis

I chose to analyze three pairs of observations (comparing a Starbucks to an independent), where the observations were done at or near the same time of day. I tried to pick sittings that included my latest observations, when I had better polished the process.

For those pairs of data I calculated the patrons' durations-of-stay in the establishment and noted the number of “to-go” orders, likely “to-go” orders,

unknowns/lost, and visits for other reasons, such using the bathroom or, in one case, dropping off a sewing machine.

There were always patrons who were there before I came and there when I left, not to mention those patrons whom I lost track of for a period of time or entirely. In terms of duration of stay, many of my numbers were ranges or “>” or “<” times. Because of this I chose to, rather than calculate average stay times per establishment, group them based on a duration range (Tables 4 and 5). For Table 4, durations-of-stay were calculated for each patron, compiled, and divided by observation session length and hourly traffic. Table 5 does the same thing, but puts patrons in fixed minute ranges. This leaves open the opportunity for miscategorization of patrons, as, for example, if an individual was listed as “>15 minutes,” in this table they would only be reflected in the 10-19 minute range, when their stay could have actually been over two hours. The tables also reflect the number of known to-go orders, possible to-go orders, and patrons who were lost (as in “lost track of”).

Table 4: Table of direct observation pairwise comparisons showing duration-of-stay, to-gos, possible to-gos, other, lost track of, and traffic, with time groupings by “greater than or equal to” ranges.

Location	#Emp	≥0	≥10	≥20	≥30	≥45	≥1:00	≥1:30	≥2:00	To Go.	To Go?	Other	Lost	Total	
STBKS Old Town	5-6	23	12	11	5	2	2	0	0	12	16	1	8	>60**	
10:49 AM	PerHr:	9.5	4.96	4.55	2.07	0.83	0.83	0	0	4.96	6.61	0.41	3.31	Traffic*	
Duration:	%Trf:	2.42	38.34%	20.00%	18.34%	8.33%	3.33%	3.33%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	26.67%	1.67%	13.34%	>24.79
3-2-1 Coffee	1	31	24	23	13	12	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	31	
10:41 AM	PerHr:	20.26	15.69	15.03	8.5	7.84	4.58	1.31	0	0	0	0	0	Traffic*	
Duration:	%Trf:	1.53	99.81%	63.28%	60.64%	34.27%	31.64%	18.46%	5.27%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.3	
STBKS Old Town	4	25	22	9	5	4	3	1	0	8	10	2	0	45	
02:03 PM	PerHr:	15.15	13.33	5.45	3.03	2.42	1.82	0.61	0	4.85	6.06	1.21	0	Traffic*	
Duration:	%Trf:	1.65	55.56%	48.89%	20.00%	11.11%	8.89%	6.67%	2.22%	0.00%	17.78%	22.22%	4.44%	0.00%	27.27
3-2-1 Coffee	2	19	14	11	10	7	5	3	1***	0	1	0	3	23	
02:03 PM	PerHr:	8.15	6.01	4.72	4.29	3	2.15	1.29	0.43	0	0.43	0	1.29	Traffic*	
Duration:	%Trf:	2.33	82.37%	60.69%	47.69%	43.35%	30.35%	21.68%	13.01%	4.34%	0.00%	4.34%	0.00%	13.01%	9.9
STBKS Longs	2-3	33	27	16	14	7	6	3	1	30	3	3	17	>86**	
08:06 AM	PerHr:	13.1	10.71	6.35	5.56	2.78	2.38	1.19	0.4	11.9	1.19	1.19	6.75	Traffic*	
Duration:	%Trf:	2.52	38.40%	31.42%	18.62%	16.29%	8.15%	6.98%	3.49%	1.16%	34.91%	3.49%	3.49%	19.78%	>34.1
Old Town C&C	3-5	19	17	17	13	7	3	0	0	24	12	0	7	62	
08:14 AM	PerHr:	9.6	8.59	8.59	6.57	3.54	1.52	0	0	12.12	6.06	0	3.54	Traffic*	
Duration:	%Trf:	1.98	30.18%	27.00%	27.00%	20.65%	11.12%	4.76%	0.00%	0.00%	38.12%	19.06%	0.00%	11.12%	31.8

*Traffic is number of patrons per hour.

**Known instances of excessive traffic or distraction where patrons were lost or missed.

***Questionable if this patron was actually there for over two hours.

Table 5: Table of direct observation pairwise comparisons showing duration-of-stay, to-gos, possible to-gos, other, lost track of, and traffic, with time groupings by specific minute ranges.

Location	#Emp	0-9 min	10-19	20-29	30-44	45-59	60-89	90-119	≥120	To Go.	To Go?	Other	Lost	Total	
STBKS Old Town	5-6	11	1	6	3	0	2	0	0	12	16	1	8	>60**	
10:49 AM	PerHr:	4.55	0.41	2.48	1.24	0	0.83	0	0	4.96	6.61	0.41	3.31	Traffic*	
Duration:	%Trf:	2.42	18.34%	1.67%	10.00%	5.00%	0.00%	3.33%	0.00%	0.00%	20.00%	26.67%	1.67%	13.34%	>24.79
3-2-1 Coffee	7	7	1	10	1	5	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	31	
10:41 AM	PerHr:	4.58	0.65	6.54	0.65	3.27	3.27	1.31	0	0	0	0	0	Traffic*	
Duration:	%Trf:	1.53	22.54%	2.64%	26.37%	2.64%	13.18%	13.18%	5.27%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	20.3	
STBKS Old Town	4	3	12	4	1	1	2	1	0	8	10	2	0	45	
02:03 PM	PerHr:	1.82	7.27	2.42	0.61	0.61	1.21	0.61	0	4.85	6.06	1.21	0	Traffic*	
Duration:	%Trf:	1.65	6.67%	26.67%	8.89%	2.22%	2.22%	4.44%	2.22%	0.00%	17.78%	22.22%	4.44%	0.00%	27.27
3-2-1 Coffee	2	5	3	1	3	2	2	2	1***	0	1	0	3	23	
02:03 PM	PerHr:	2.15	1.29	0.43	1.29	0.86	0.86	0.86	0.43	0	0.43	0	1.29	Traffic*	
Duration:	%Trf:	2.33	21.68%	13.01%	4.34%	13.01%	8.67%	8.67%	8.67%	4.34%	0.00%	4.34%	0.00%	13.01%	9.9
STBKS Longs	2-3	5	11	2	7	1	3	2	1	30	3	3	17	>86**	
08:06 AM	PerHr:	1.98	4.37	0.79	2.78	0.4	1.19	0.79	0.4	11.9	1.19	1.19	6.75	Traffic*	
Duration:	%Trf:	2.52	5.82%	12.80%	2.33%	8.15%	1.16%	3.49%	2.33%	1.16%	34.91%	3.49%	3.49%	19.78%	>34.1
Old Town C&C	3-5	2	0	4	6	4	3	0	0	24	12	0	7	62	
08:14 AM	PerHr:	1.01	0	2.02	3.03	2.02	1.52	0	0	12.12	6.06	0	3.54	Traffic*	
Duration:	%Trf:	1.98	3.18%	0.00%	6.35%	9.53%	6.35%	4.76%	0.00%	0.00%	38.12%	19.06%	0.00%	11.12%	31.8

*Traffic is number of patrons per hour.

**Known instances of excessive traffic or distraction where patrons were lost or missed.

***Questionable if this patron was actually there for over two hours.

From these comparisons, we can note a few possible trends:

1. In the independent coffee shops, more patrons stayed and sat down, and more stayed longer than in Starbucks.
2. Traffic was higher in Starbucks than in the independents.
3. Generally more patrons were lost track of in Starbucks.
4. There were more to-gos in Starbucks.
5. At Starbucks, fewer patrons lingered beyond the finish of their consumables. A change in percentage between the 0-10 or 20 and 30 minute lingerer categories indicated that there were many people who stayed less than 20 minutes. In the questionable Old Town Coffee & Chocolates data, we actually find that there was nobody listed in the over 10 minute category who was not also in the over 20 minute category, potentially indicating a clearer divide between those who were staying to finish their drinks and those who were staying to socialize.

Interaction maps

I found the easiest way to get an impression of the social atmosphere of a particular establishment during a particular sitting was to actually draw a “map” showing the individuals and their interactions during that sitting (see [Diagram 2](#) and [Diagram 3](#)). To do this, I would simply go through the data, drawing on a blank sheet of paper each patron and employee I ran across, and connecting them with lines if they interacted. This system resulted in an easily-understandable visual image of the session.

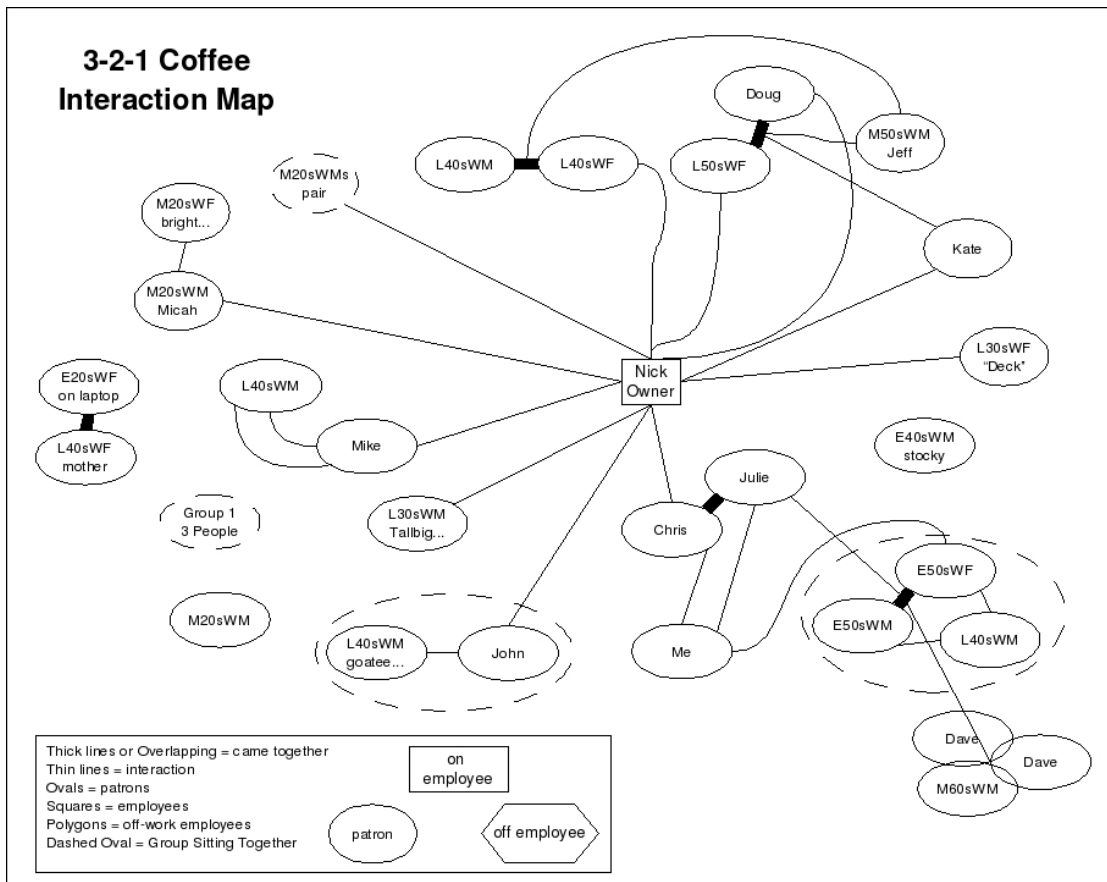


Diagram 2: This interaction map shows 1.53 hrs from a late morning 3-2-1 Coffee observation.

The maps help make the presence of bridging or bonding interactions more clear. For example, seeing a group of people enter the coffee shop and subsequently sit with each other and chat tells us little about the coffee shop itself as a site of meaningful community interaction. There is no reaching beyond their social circle by this group. Similarly, employees chatting only with other employees doesn't necessarily indicate that the shop is a site of meaningful community interaction. That said, I tried to pay special attention to looking for signs of cross-group (bridging) interaction. I also chose to look for signs of Coleman's concept of "closure." Higher indicators of closure would indicate

that, theoretically, the site would be more likely to generate and enforce social norms and behaviors as part of the coffee shop “community of practice” (Wenger, 1998).

If I didn't know or hear the name of a particular individual, I used an effective, but likely not terribly accurate, abbreviated labeling system to make it easier for me to quickly find particular individuals I'd already seen. These labels, as seen in Diagrams 2 and 3, refer to age, race, and sex, often times modified further by a piece of clothing or notable feature. Done better, such labels could hold interesting demographic information for each establishment.

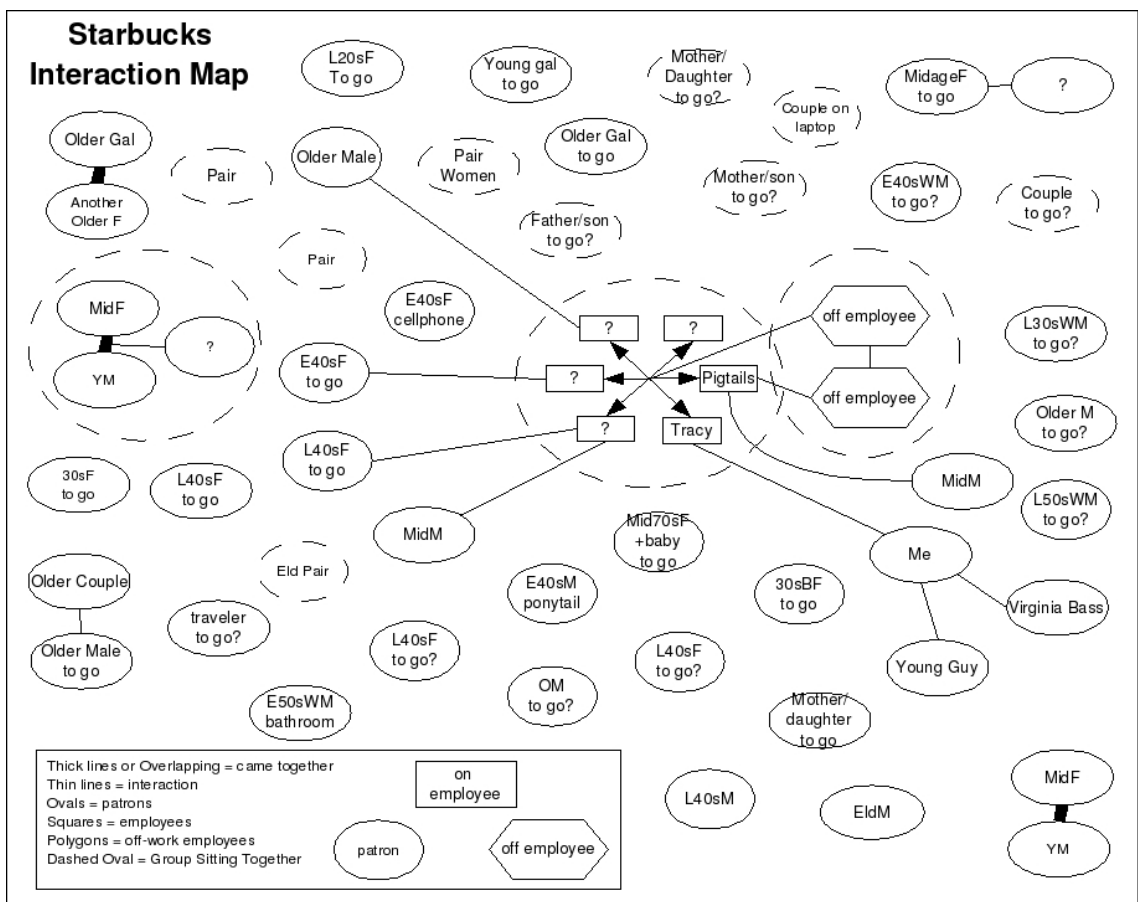


Diagram 3: This interaction map shows 2.42 hrs from a late morning Starbucks observation.

From these maps we can see a few possible trends:

1. Patrons of Starbucks tended to be more isolated, while those at 3-2-1 Coffee tended to be more connected.
2. The volume at Starbucks is much higher, and many of those patrons order to go.
3. The independent stores have more closure, more opportunity for closure, and more bridging interaction. Groups of patrons coming in together and the employees chatting together represent bonding interaction, whereas connections between patrons and employees more likely represent bridging interaction, as patrons can't "choose" the employees that serve them, while they certainly can choose the friends they arrive with. In the 3-2-1 Coffee example above, we see that the employee was a hub for interaction, implying a greater presence of bridging interactions.
4. There is less closure and less opportunity for closure at Starbucks. Opportunity for closure comes partially from patrons making a meaningful relationship with employees. Since the employees are not as transient as the patrons, as stated above, they can act as a hub of closure for the shop, but only if they are able to create meaningful, even if weak, relationships with patrons. Closure in Starbucks tended to be amongst employees and patrons, but not inclusive of both.

While my data wasn't as solid as I would have liked it to be, I definitely felt it indicated that, within the shops where the overall population and traffic was higher, the employees became more of a "team" and the patrons more anonymous – less "cross-

counter” meaningful interaction, if you will. This, then, indicates a lower level of bridging interaction, making places that served more patrons less effective as sites of passive community-building.

Out of all the shops, 3-2-1 Coffee definitely had the most “family” and interconnected feel, with a diversity of patrons and employees from all walks of life interacting (like Oldenburg’s “leveler”). 3-2-1 was also definitely the smallest shop I observed, with often only one employee working, maybe two.

I was greatly disappointed to see that it closed, from both personal and community-building points of view, and feel that its closure is a loss on a greater community scale.⁹

⁹ I never really found out why 3-2-1 Coffee closed, but apparently the owner claimed it wasn't because of Starbucks. I heard later that the employees were ready to buy the establishment and had the loans in place, but a choice by the landowner to raise the rent threw off the business plan and stopped the purchase cold. I never got the details or verified the accuracy of this story.

Qualitative Interviews

Coding and analyzing the data

Asking questions in multiple different ways and to attempt to find the hues in the answers from which the reality could be teased was often difficult, and made analysis more difficult, due to the deviation away from the standard question list. I started with initial, or open, coding to analyze the interview data (Lofland, 2006: 200), during which, as I went through my transcriptions, I noted themes and sorted them into categories.

In the analysis, I looked for data and personal reports that indicated the quality of community, related to the factors affecting the quality of community, indicated change in the quality or factors, or touched on other topics related to community-building, such as other objectives of the site or confounding factors.

As the analysis went on, and I felt myself beginning to swim in categories and themes, I decided it might help to assemble a visual diagram of some of the things I was seeing in the data, as well as things I might see in the data. To that end, I brainstormed Diagrams 4 and 5 to represent visually the relationships between the possible factors and influences and measures of a site of community-building, as well as what might happen when a store expands, respectively. This provided the framework I needed and upon which to continue to code interviewee data, the sentiments of which could be conceptually “plotted” and on this visual representation. The diagrams greatly helped to focus the sentiments that I ran into during the data analysis.

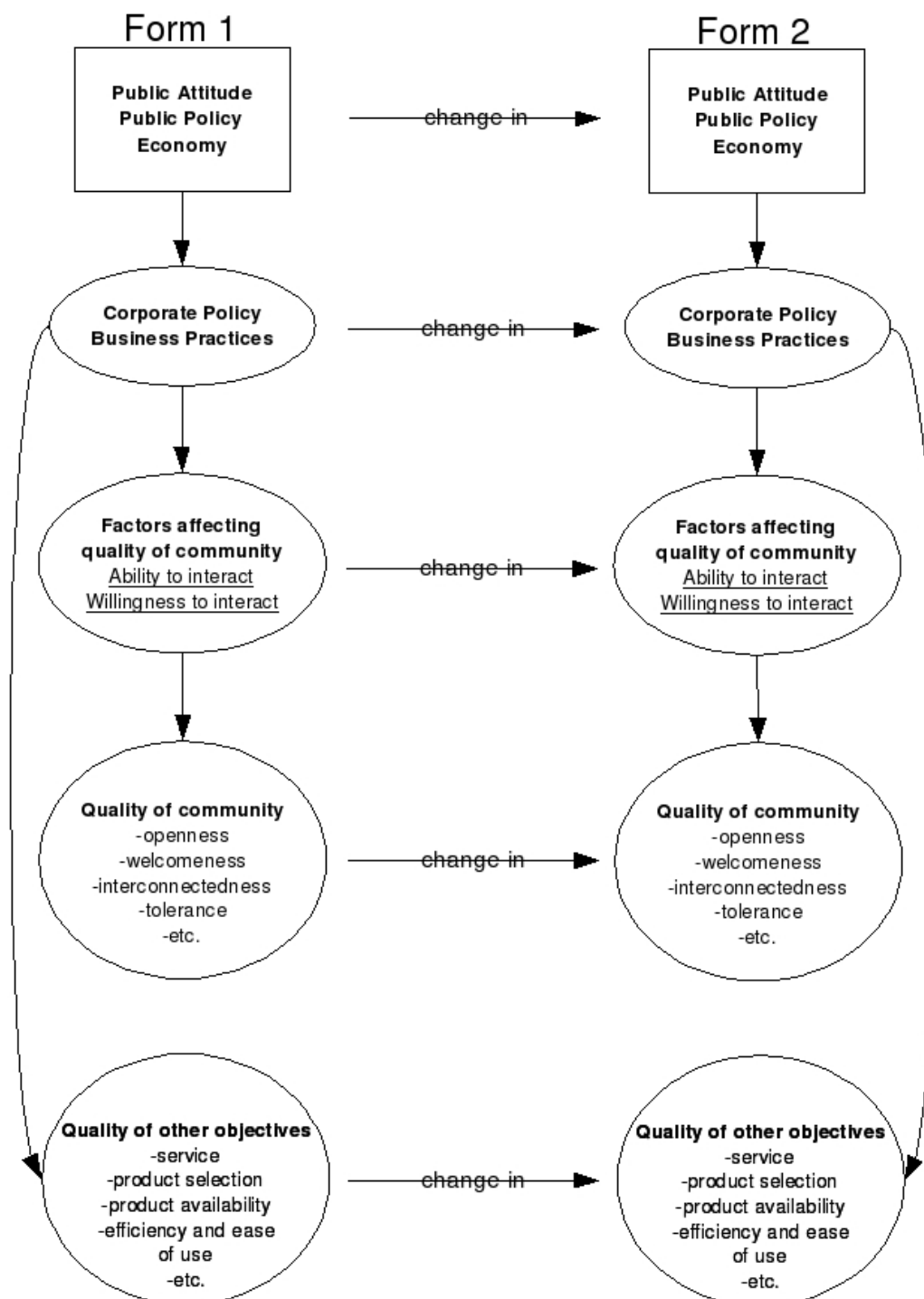


Diagram 5: Brainstormed diagram showing how a change in form might change the components of community outlined in Diagram 4.

I organize the results section using some of the points defined by [Diagram 4](#). Again, [Diagram 4](#) was created from sentiments found in the interviews, with my own brainstorming filling in the gaps. To keep this analysis from being overly tedious, I group certain related categories together. Because [Diagrams 4 and 5](#) were created after the interviews were complete, they do not necessarily align perfectly with the interview questions. That said, there are some points that came out of the interviews that are not on the diagram, and vice versa. Having used the river and channel method mentioned above, interviewee sentiments got very complicated and can often be organized in multiple ways, which means that sometimes the best place to deal with a topic represented on one part of the diagram is during the discussion of another part. I have done my best to organize these sentiments in a manner which can be easily understood and relate as closely to [Diagrams 4 and 5](#). If sentiment codes relating to a particular topic were particularly varied, I included a list of those codes.

The Effect of Corporate vs. Independent Structure on Community-Building

Confounding factors

While the data collected provided a broad spectrum of interesting information around the question of comparing corporate chains and independent establishments as sites of community building, significant confounding factors were present, making analysis difficult.

The first major confounding factor was that, because the interviewees were selected on the basis of convenience, it was difficult to control for factors other than the

fact that the interviewees had experience working at both chains and “indies.” That said, it's probably worth describing the interviewees. Because of the small population of interviewees, they have been provided with gender-nonspecific names, and I will use only “s/he” and “they/them” to refer to them:

1. Morgan: Currently employed at a relatively small indy coffee shop with minimal sit-down area and a drive-thru; had experience at another indy coffee shop as well as at least one Starbucks.
2. Lyn: Currently employed at same shop as above; had only worked at this indy shop and another, very busy, Starbucks.
3. Pat: Currently worked at an indy drive-thru with a walk-up window and bench; had experience only at this shop and a dedicated drive-thru chain establishment.
4. Chris: Currently worked at the same shop as above; had experience at multiple independent shops as well as a corporate coffee shop and corporate store with its own internal coffee shop.
5. Kelly: interviewed as a supermarket patron but also had things to say about experiences at independent and corporate coffee shops.
6. Gale Mosgofian: Manager of Mosgo's Coffee and Tea. While Mosgo's story is found in [Appendix E](#), some of Gale's sentiments will be mentioned, here.

In the end, however, it would have probably been better to stick with dine-in establishments, as drive-thrus, not surprisingly, are a very different beast than the dine-in,

especially when it comes to the effect of design on interaction, which was reported to be much more significant in a drive-thru than a dine-in.

Second, as mentioned in the Methodology section above, only employees currently employed at an independent store consented to the interview. None of the interviewees were currently employed at a chain. This has potential to skew results, as it could be assumed that those who are currently working at a Starbucks, but who have previously worked at an indy, might have a different, and perhaps contradictory, viewpoint.

Third, the personal agendas of the interviewees had the potential to skew the results. Because the discourse surrounding the topic of corporations, their spread, and their power in society is a volatile topic where emotions, attitudes, and opinions can be very strong, there was a risk of spin by the interviewees to make a particular point or stay true to an inner agenda. While I expected this might be the case with interviewees who worked at an indy shop wanting to make statements that were pro-independent, I was surprised to find an indy employee (Chris) who was so staunchly anti-“anti-corporate” that it colored the entire interview. In other words, s/he expressed great aversion toward the “anti-corporate” attitude and those who hold it. Conceding that, especially in this area, there are some pretty venomous progenitors of “anti-corporate” philosophy, backlash like this is not surprising. It was very clear that Chris was a product of that backlash. S/he had a very strong viewpoint, stating that “Independents can breed closed-minded idiocy because everybody thinks that their opinion is God.”

This is not to imply that this isn't a reasonable statement many folks might agree with. It is simply to point out that its delivery was indicative that Chris had an exceptionally strong and emotional opinion on the topic. Throughout the interview it seemed that s/he was working very hard to answer in such a manner as to avoid saying anything that might make corporations look bad or independents look "right." This interview had an exceptionally large number of conflicting answers and contradictory statements, making analysis frustrating, at best.

Though this was by far the most extreme example of interviewee attitude influencing an interview, I would, as a matter of course, attempt to tease out a clearer picture from interviewees by adding and rephrasing questions as necessary or coming at the same topic from a different angle. While this did seem to work, it, in turn, also made analysis quite a bit more difficult.

Fourth, and finally, recognizing that employee attitude is a factor of community, as shown in Diagrams 4 and 5 above, and that I was interviewing mostly employees, interviewee attitude towards interaction will definitely color their responses in the interview. Of all the interviewees, Chris also reported being averse to the idea of building relationships with patrons at work that extended outside of work. Someone who doesn't want to build community or interact with others is going to have a vastly different outlook upon the concept of the small business as a site of community-building than someone that does or is neutral.

Despite Chris' attitude, evidence was still gleaned from the interview that supported the hypothesis, and I will try to make that clear. Evidence in support of a hypothesis that an interviewee would appear to greatly wish to disprove could be seen as stronger than evidence in support of a hypothesis that an interviewee is happy to see proven.

Quality of Community

Interconnectedness – Overall interconnectedness was gleaned from sentiments relating to the following codes, drawn from the interviews: Knowing of customers/employees, sense of connectedness/anonymity, relationships between patrons, the number of regulars, a “sense of community,” a “family-like feel,” a sense of being part of the community, how the shop helped employees/patrons become a part of the community, how well employees knew patrons' usual drinks, willingness to help others out, the degree of self-policing and/or community enforcement of social, norms and appropriate behavior, people being “missed” when they weren't around for a period of time, people going to the shop for more than just the coffee (i.e., the interaction), the level of tipping of employees, and a sense of commitment to or stake in the community.

Morgan's and Lyn's sentiments clearly indicated a much higher overall interconnectedness in the independent shops than at Starbucks. This included reporting that their co-workers were their best friends and that they had also made friendships with patrons that extended beyond the boundaries of the store. They knew they could count on each other for help, and, despite one incident with Morgan which will be addressed later,

they had great relationships with their bosses. The shop felt like a family. They enjoyed going to work because they were excited to see patrons when they came in, and because they were generally missed by everyone when gone for a period of time. This interconnectedness was generally reported to be due primarily to the lower employee turnover, lower numbers of employees and patrons, and therefore lower volume and pace found at the indy, as compared to Starbucks. Both pointed out that they were even able to make relationships with patrons in the drive-thru portion of the indy store.

Starbucks was my *work*. I had a few friends from there, but I had totally my own thing going on. I was in school. I had a [partner], and ... [s/he] wasn't friends with any of them, either. And, like, I wasn't committed in any way other than, like, my shift, my hours. ... I was committed to that, and I was bummed if we had to be there any other time, like meetings. I mean, I wasn't into it. Like here, it's, like, more like part of my life. - Lyn

For Pat and Chris, it was much harder to ascertain whether overall interconnectedness was greater at the chain or independent. Pat reported that they “knew everything about” their customers and really “got into the community” while working at Dutch Bros., a Northern California/Southern Oregon chain where s/he reported the philosophy was that “Anyone can make coffee, but we're here to make people's day, make them feel good.” Employees were required to interact with customers, present with a fun energy, and “convince the customers that they really cared.”

Like, in a Dutch Bros. you were members of a community. Honestly, you were members of a community. At [the indy], although you're members of a community, I don't know, I resent people a lot more at [the indy]. People come through and I think that the energy at Dutch Bros. improved the energy of the customers. At [the indy], no matter how nice you are, people can just be rude. - Pat

Pat also reported that people definitely came to Dutch Bros. for the atmosphere and interaction it provided. S/he reported, however, that relationships at the indy s/he currently worked at were more likely to extend outside of the shop. This was reported to be due to the fact that “the people you end up talking to a lot at Dutch Bros. were kind of scary,” that some people would become “addicted to talking to you” to the point it became uncomfortable for the employee, and because the pace at the indy was much slower, to the point of irritation, actually, for Pat. The slow pace made Pat feel as if s/he wasn't needed.

Owner attitude was also reported to be a factor in the level of connectedness. For example, the stinginess of the indy owner, who, unlike Dutch Bros., did not allow employees to give away coffee at their discretion and charged for everything extra, made for a less pleasant overall work atmosphere.

Chris' attitude was that the overall interconnectedness was the same at both the independent and corporate shops s/he had worked at, however their statements made it difficult to ascertain if this was really the case. S/he said the sense of community was greater and more regulars knew each other at one specific independent shop. S/he also clearly waffled on and retracted statements that indicated that the corporate establishments had and allowed for higher anonymity. According to Chris, if places had more interconnectedness, it was due to their presence in a neighborhood where people already knew each other, and to the strength of community-building intention/willingness

on the part of the owner/manager. Chris also stated that having time was a factor in being able to interact.

Chris also mentioned that, in the larger chain store, a Borders where s/he worked as a supervisor in the music department, certain patrons had favorite employees whom they would go to, avoiding the newer employees.

Kelly, as a patron, indicated that there was a much higher level of interconnectedness at the indy s/he patronized than any Starbucks.

Morgan and Lyn also indicated that in Starbucks, they tended to be closer to employees than patrons.

In the local places that I've worked, the relationship [between patron and employee] does become more, with some people. You might have friends that started out as just customers. And you see them enough, you talk to them a lot, and I have a lot of people here now that, I mean, it's not a friendship outside of work or anything like that, but you really do get excited when they come in, and you can tell that they're excited to talk, and you actually exchange real conversation. Where, when I worked at Starbucks most of the exchange and conversation was between employees. And there really wasn't, I mean, never anybody that I really knew that would come in that would ever want to spark a conversation past just the basic "How you doing?" "How's your day going?" kind-of-thing like that. And rarely, rarely even at that. It's weird. - Morgan

Openness/Tolerance/Welcomeness – These qualities were gleaned from sentiments relating to the following codes, drawn from the interviews: A place having a better feeling or being more welcoming, the frequency of people jumping into conversations of which they weren't originally a part, a willingness of people to engage in conversation with strangers, a willingness of people to offer unsolicited advice or help to strangers, cross-group interaction or the crossing of boundaries, being a place where

strangers could get to know each other, the level of diversity of people/opinions in the shop.

Morgan's and Lyn's sentiments indicated a higher level of overall openness and tolerance in the indy shops than in Starbucks. This included a better feeling at the indies and it feeling more welcoming.

It's open. Like anybody can jump into a conversation because it's such a small area. If you're talking, everybody basically could be involved if they wanted to. ... [At Starbucks] they kept with their clans. ... I think it's way easier for people to meet and interact here than it would ever be at the Starbucks that I worked at. - Lyn

I think you get much more interaction with people on the whole in an independent, and I think it breaks a lot more boundaries than you're going to see in a corporate setting. - Morgan

For Pat and Chris, few sentiments were given that gave any indication as to the state of openness and tolerance between shops. Part of this was likely due to the fact that they currently worked in a drive-thru establishment. Chris did say there was more cross-group interaction at a specific sit-down indy s/he worked at, but s/he attributed that to the owner.

It was a small, enclosed space...[and my boss] liked to make people share tables when we were really busy. So she'd go rearrange chairs and she told us to do the same thing. - Chris

Factors affecting Quality of Community

Attitudes (Ability to Interact/Owner Attitude/Corporate Policy)– The attitude of all the players involved has a significant impact on the willingness and ability of players to interact in the establishment. This includes the attitudes of the patrons, employees, and owner/manager towards interaction and the concept of community-

building in the establishment. This is in terms of either personal willingness to interact and build relationships (under “Willingness to Interact”) or, in the case of owner/managers, willingness to create an atmosphere that allows for interaction within the variables that they can control (shown under “Owner Attitude” as an influence to “Business Practices”).

We could also look at the “attitude” of the business or corporate level ownership (“Corporate Policy” in [Diagram 4](#)), in terms of how policy is defined by priorities and how that affects the atmosphere and the willingness/ability of players to interact. For example, a corporate attitude that prioritizes maximizing profit and the movement of product is going to make policy that either intentionally or un-intentionally suppresses interaction, for example, by putting employees at stations in a more coffee-factory like set-up that prevents them from interacting with the customers.

The interaction with the community, ... I think it is location, but I think it honestly has more to do with the philosophy of the business. Dutch Bros. had one, [this indy] doesn't. - Pat

It's a social thing. It's just as social as a bar. ...and then, y'know, you have, like, Starbucks and SBC where they try to take a lot of that out and it's ... people want their coffee, people want fast pace, people want this, people want that. It's a really, really fine line that you have to walk between how personal are you gonna be and how corporate are you gonna be and how much are you gonna allow your employees or yourself as a person to put yourself out there, y'know, and people can tell. - Chris

I think [Starbucks] has the potential [to build community], but because of the corporate entity itself being detached from the community, ... it won't happen. It is just too mechanical. Everything's too mechanical. It's just assembly line – fast, fast, fast, fast. And no doubt the employees are encouraged to do that – to make it fast, fast, fast. Where, in the small shops, ... there's always little chit-chat going on on the side, and everybody's kidding with one another, just like a group, a family, and you go in there and you have all these people kidding with you and talking and so forth. - Patron

We also have to look at the domino-effect of the corporate and owner/manager attitudes and ways of running business as having an effect on the employees and patrons. While not necessarily holding an anti-interaction or community-building attitude, poor treatment of employees or poor care for their needs can make them less happy with their jobs and less interested in building community with patrons.

I think how we treat employees has a whole lot to do with how they treat each other. And the relationships we have with them and the care we give them will overflow into how they care about other people. Sometimes the bigger things get the more impersonal they get and more people fall through the cracks. - Coffee Shop Manager

Employee attitude was also reported to be affected by the sense of “ownership” they had in the work they did, as well as whether they felt “needed.”

But, from an employee standpoint, you're much more interactive in the independent than you are in Starbucks. So, you do have a much more healthier interaction because you feel valued, and I think it honestly comes down to an employee feeling like they are needed, and are wanted, and they are desired as that employee because they do what they're doing great. People need reassurance all the time, 'cause it only produces better things, and if we could just focus on more positive things like that instead of just only talking to your employees when they've done something wrong, that's also going to be a healthier interaction, for sure. - Morgan

Interviewee sentiments indicated that this sort of ownership and feeling needed was generally more common at the indies, but Pat did report that Dutch Bros. corporate

was very open to suggestions by stores, and that s/he didn't feel needed at the indy, or that s/he could make suggestions there that would be heard. This latter point was related to the fact that the owners of the indy coffee shop also owned a distribution business, which resulted in what Pat considered to be a lot of neglect for the coffee shop.

Morgan's and Lyn's sentiments indicated that they were excited and willing to interact with customers at the indy shop, and that that interaction provided one of the pleasures of working there.

When you have a lot of customers that you get along with and you're excited to see 'em it makes you happy to come to work. And you get a better quality of work out of the person who is working, and you get a better quality product and the customers feel like they want to be there. When there's no interaction, what's the point of you really being there? - Lyn

While at Dutch Bros., Pat reported being very much “into” the fun energy of the place and happy to interact with customers, but, because of a falling out with the owner there, s/he went into the job at the independent shop with a less-than-ideal attitude. S/he also pointed out that, because employees at the indy weren't *required* to be happy and interactive, it allowed Pat to have a poorer attitude toward customers, so s/he did.

Chris felt that there was no difference between indy and corporate coffee shops.

In coffee shops, at least, I think that corporations and independents are very similar, despite popular belief. I really do. - Chris

However, to put this in perspective, we must remember Chris' overall attitude.

Chris was described by Pat as being “not a super nice person,” who was seen by customers as being “mean.” Taking this into account, perhaps it's not surprising that s/he didn't see many differences.

Population (Ability to Interact)– Most of the sentiments around population made it clear that, with higher populations of players in the establishment, it was more difficult to build relationships, especially between employees and patrons.

There's way less patrons at [the indy], so I think the few people I have connected with, I've had a lot of time to spend with, because they come every day and we don't have that many customers. I can always “take a break” with Matt. But at Dutch Bros., it was like there was always business to be done, so your relationships... you'd learn a lot over time, but at [the indy] I learn it all in, like, one session. One long session. - Pat

Higher population was also reported to be why employee relationships tended to be more inclusive of other employees and less so of patrons in busier establishments.

I think when you have more people working together, ... it's easier to just talk to your other employees that you know, and you guys hung out last week or you talk about whatever you talk about that you have in common. Then it's easier to just get back to that conversation than it is to take five minutes to talk to the customer. When you're by yourself all your conversation is coming from everyone who's coming in. - Morgan

This very much confirms the tendencies that were observed during the direct observation, where, as employee number went up, more-likely-to-be-bridging connections to patrons went down.

Employee Turnover (Ability to Interact) – Another component of population is employee turnover, which was reported to have a drastic effect on the ability to build and maintain relationships.

I found that once Morgan was no longer there, I was no longer interested in going there, because I had no connection with anybody. So it appears that ... my going in there was not probably so much for the coffee as for the connection to another adult, even though it was a brief connection, cause we did have some sort of relationship going for the most part. ... [T]he coffee itself never tasted that good. - Patron

Employee turnover is going to be closely related to the work environment.

Mentally, physically, like, this is much more healthier for me because I was totally stressed out [at] Starbucks. ... The turnover rate is so high at Starbucks. Like, basically, I was working there to get health insurance, and I sacrificed my health insurance because it was too stressful. Like so unbelievably stressful 'cause there was so much. - Lyn

You don't have as much of a revolving door effect [here at the indy]. There will be times where you do, but ... , I mean, I've been here for a year. [Lyn's] been here for almost a year. [The other two] have been here for 6-7 months, and ... for a minimum wage job that doesn't offer benefits, it's kind of awesome that you can keep people around like that. - Morgan

Alternatively, Pat and Chris both stated that turnover at the chains they worked at wasn't bad, with Pat stating the indy was actually worse. Pat again credited employer attitude for this, as “Not everyone can work at Dutch Bros. You have to be a high energy person, [or] at least a super nice person who likes music and to party and to goof around.” Because of this, Pat related, employees who made it through the first few days or weeks often stayed a lot longer.

Pace (Ability to Interact) – Pace and population are necessarily related, as, when the population of patrons is higher, the amount of work to do is higher, and, therefore, the number of employees must be higher. In turn, to serve a high target number of patrons, each employee must effectively serve more patrons, which requires a higher pace and greater efficiency, both of which can lower potential interaction – the former through less time to interact with patrons in general and the latter through mechanizations that turn the coffee preparation into something more like factory work. Such systems leave some employees to having mostly contact with a machine, and other employees, such as checkers or clerks, to having only contact with people, at a pace that forces them to see

multiple employees' "worth" of patrons in a very short time. So not only are more employees required to serve more patrons, those patrons' face-to-face interactions are not evenly distributed amongst employees.

Very easy factory work [at Starbucks.] ... It's just repetition. It's just over and over, push the button, push the button, grab this, grab that. ... [At the indy] you just feel like you're a part of the finished product, much more than you are just somebody hittin' the button. Like you do an order from [beginning] to end. You take the order, you ring it up, you make it. At Starbucks, somebody takes the order, somebody makes the drink, and somebody hands the drink off kind of thing. And so if everyone's at their specific stations and there's [a] "Don't move away from the station" kind of thing. - Morgan

Pace was generally reported to be faster at the chains than the indies.

[At Starbucks] I was on for like 6 hours, 7 hours, and you would just, like, go and go and go and go. There's so much going on because it's like customer, customer, customer, customer, customer. - Lyn

Layout and Design (Ability to Interact)– Layout and design were reported to have a significant impact on how people interact in a space, especially for drive-thru establishments.

Pat reported that Dutch Bros. had two lanes, without a menu board or external order speaker/microphone, and each employee worked one lane. S/he reported that this maximized the time that one employee, who made the drink from start to finish, spent with each car. The indy s/he currently worked at had only one lane and a speaker (a design that was already established before the coffee shop was opened), making face-to-face interaction brief.

Drive-thru patrons ordered at the window, without a speaker/microphone, at the indy where Morgan worked.

We get ... most of our business through the drive-thru, but [I] still ... made a lot of friendships with people that just come through the drive-through. - Morgan

A detailed description by Chris best explains the importance of design and layout.

[Layout and design is] just as much as part of talking to the customers as the customers themselves. ... If you have people lining up in the middle and then the tables and condiments and everything are on the other side, y'know, it's more people, they come in, they go in a circle, and they go back out. ... At [another indy I worked at], people walked in the front door, they came right to the register ... and they ordered. Then they moved down [the counter], and the brewers were right there, the espresso machine was right here, the condiment bar was right here. So the progression of the customer down the line – we were always facing each other, and I thought that that was really ingenious. [T]here was a sitting area at the end with barstools, and a lot of people sat there and we'd stand there and talk to them. [T]he tables [there] were also set up in a row, too, and they were all facing. So it was all this facing, and it made it a lot easier to talk. [The owner] had a huge mirror behind on the wall that was like ... seven feet long, and ... everybody could just see each other. ... There was a lot of open, but you weren't so close to people that you were on top of them. ... [It] allows for better business, which allows for intimacy, 'cause people are going to go where they feel comfortable, and they're also going to go where they feel treated like a human being, where you're not a robot, or you're not a dollar tip. - Chris

Quality of Other Objectives

Other objectives are basically any goals/objectives of the business, owners, patrons, or employees that are not about the maximization of community-building, and which could compete with community-building. These other objectives can be related. For example, patron objectives, such as a desire for speed and convenience (whether necessary or not), a specific product, or the status associated with the brand, are often created via advertising to serve corporate objectives, such as maximizing profit. In addition, objectives such as a need for speed, convenience, or predictability by patrons can also be at least partly attributed to greater societal pressures to be a mobile society or a car-dependent culture.

We are a mobile society ... My [spouse's] cousin is a pharmaceutical salesman. He's never at home. So, if you have people like that who are spending the vast majority of their lives in motels, they're going to miss those comforts of home. ... They're good for society in the fact that they offer a sense of security, and when you walk into that Starbucks, or you walk into that Borders, it's the same every time. And for a lot of people, who have hectic lives or who have a lot of stuff going on, that can be a sigh of fresh air. I've been there. - Chris

Employee objectives certainly include being paid for their work, but can also include such things as medical and dental benefits, retirement savings, or other perks. Amongst the coffee shops, Starbucks stands out for providing medical benefits to part-time employees, a practice which is generally unheard of in independent businesses due to the costs involved. Starbucks also provides a pound of coffee a week to employees, as well as a free drink per shift. Morgan's and Lyn's indy, while unable to provide benefits, did provide free meals and drinks to employees.

Other perks are less obvious, however, and could be seen as related to community-building, such as a pleasant work environment that is perceived, at least, to be more healthful on the whole (due to the pace and stress-level, not so much the kind of products sold).

In terms of owner objectives, there is potential for greatly different community repercussions between, for example, someone who lives in the area and sees a community need and opens a coffee-shop to fill that need, versus someone who moves to the area from Oregon, as Pat's Dutch Bros. employer did, to open in an untapped market the required three-at-a-time outlets. In Morgan's and Lyn's independent shop, the owner was a long-time resident of the area, owning both a stake in the future of and an

understanding of the past of the community. The prior owner of that shop bought it and ran it so that she could take care of her children while at work.

In turn, these other objectives will to a great degree influence the other Factors of Community that follow. Corporate desires to maximize profit, for example, are going to require a more efficient system that moves a lot of product, in turn requiring a lot of patrons, and therefore a lot of employees, to make that happen. A mission specifically to build community will result in a very different set of choices.

Business Practices

Flexibility – Generally, interviewee sentiments indicated that the independent restaurants had much more flexibility than the chain stores. Whether this flexibility was well-utilized, however, was another story.

It was reported that the flexibility of independents allowed them to do many things, including be unique; fulfill a specific community-building goal, such as holding events to fund-raise for a cause or encourage neighbors to interact; make it easier for employees to get time off or switch shifts on short notice; give away free coffee at their discretion; take the time to make patrons happy; close early if necessary; stay open for special activities; create an atmosphere that allowed employees to be honest and individual; reject the “customer is always right” philosophy to better retain personal dignity; and hold special promotions like monthly name drawings.

It's easier to produce a quality experience at an independent level, I think, because you don't have the strains of the corporate level telling all the other places down "Do this do this do this," and people [at the corporate level] who have no interaction at all with the customers. Where here [at the indy], the people who own it know the customers too. - Morgan

Pat reported that Dutch Bros. also allowed employees to give a way free coffee, and, in fact, gave away coffee as a promotion for its grand opening.

When we opened, we had a two-day opening party, and you give away free coffee for two days. And, it's like, we gave away 10,000 cups of coffee for free the first two days, ... and they recouped that in two weeks. They sold basically 20,000 cups' worth of coffee in two or three weeks. And it's built into the price of buying the franchise. - Pat

Pat also reported that the owner at the indy s/he worked at wouldn't give anything away for free, showing that the flexibility to do is also the flexibility to not do. This is also another reflection of the effect of owner attitude on community-building.

I think [the] bums just realized that we ain't that generous at the [indy I work at]. And it makes me feel bad, 'cause I'm like, "Dude, I do have coffee to spare. I have like 87 cups right here." - Pat

Reflective of another tension between the required, but potentially insincere, interaction mandated by a corporation and the flexibility to be honest at an indy, Pat had the following to say:

Some days you just weren't on your game [at Dutch Bros.]. And, actually, what would be nice about that is you'd be in a bad mood, and, since you'd been talking to customers every day for the last year, they'd be like "Oh, you in a bad mood? Oh, what's up?" So *they'd* start caring about *you*. And I think that's why you got so many tips at Dutch Bros., because you cared about them whether or not it was like "I care about you deeply enough to leave here and help you" or "Oh, I care about you enough to, like, listen to you and be sympathetic." 'Cause ... you were kind of like ... everyone's therapist in a way. They were coming to get a comfort drink and unload their woes, and by the time they left, their woes were half-gone. At [the indy], "Leave your fuckin' woes at the speaker, 'cause I don't want to hear em." [laughs] That's not totally how it is, but ... we're *allowed* to feel that way. We're allowed as employees to be like, "I really don't care. I really don't." - Pat

Another important manifestation of flexibility is reflected in the freedom to use local products, which, in terms of community-building, offers more opportunity for the business to interact with the community. Again, however, the freedom to do is also the freedom to do not.

[At the indy] we get [locally made] pastries from Eureka, and they're actually really good pastries. ... People come because they know we have good pastries. And we have good bagels. And some people just come every day for a scone. ... and you can see their Dutch Bros. cup in the car. They got that one, drank it on the way to [the indy], and got another to go with their scone that they just got... 'cause they're like "Man, they've got good scones." ... At [the indy] they use Thanksgiving coffee which is from Fort Bragg, and it's one of the very first green coffee companies, and they use local Planet Chai ... But what's funny, in terms of the community, 'cause to me, community is like "How am I helping the community. How am I interacting with the people?" Like, Dutch Bros. actually uses Umpqua dairy, which is just north of the border in Oregon [near where Dutch Bros. originated]. ... It's a corporate dairy but it's not a national dairy. And [the indy] uses Crystal, which is nasty. Good coffee, bad milk. - Pat

Effect on Society

There were many sentiments made that implied a potential negative effect on society by chains and corporate structures, including that Starbucks-style corporate jobs only prepare you to be a corporate worker, the effect of high anonymity, the

“homogenized home” sentiments above, and CEO's playing off people's needs in order to turn a profit.

[If] you see something that's familiar when you're homesick and you're stressed out and you don't know what the hell's going on, you're going to latch on to it, regardless of what it is. It's like a teddy bear. And, unfortunately, what happens is the CEO's of these companies play off of that, and I think that's more of a problem than the corporations themselves. - Chris

One has to question whether, in the case of Dutch Bros., the policy to be fun is a sincere attempt to build community and make people have a good time or a sly marketing strategy that plays off of people's fundamental need for community, interaction, and interconnection – the “teddy bear” they are lacking. Is fulfilling that with “counterfeit community” (Freie, 1988: 5) contributing to a further degradation of real community that further exacerbates the need for that community that corporations are able to further “play off of”?

Another societal repercussion that needs to be looked at is how businesses encourage or do not encourage acceptable behavior or enforce social norms. In establishments where excessive anonymity is allowed or encouraged even for regulars, where “the customer is always right,” or where employees are required to be nice to customers regardless of their behavior, are behaviors being created/allowed that ultimately have a negative effect on society?

I think that [“the customer is always right”] makes people think that they can fling shit. ... A lot of the big corporations are afraid of being sued. [I] could watch a kid steal a CD in front of me at Borders and I had to let them walk out the door, basically. - Chris

I think that people lose their social skills. And then I think you have a whole bunch of lonely [people]. ... [N]obody knows how to communicate with each other anymore. But there's so many things in society today that do that, that's it's not really a coffee shop anymore. If you look at it from that perspective, it's good that there are coffee shops around, regardless whether they're corporate or not because they're still meeting places. They're still places where people are out in public. - Chris

The [customers] who are paying you [at Starbucks], maybe they think they're paying a little extra so they don't have to talk to or acknowledge you. And there's a huge difference as an employee, like, when you have to sit there and you're like, "I know the customer is supposed to be always right, but, at what point is it still ethical for you to treat me like I'm a lower person or that I'm not here." And you'll get that at both, but you get it more in the corporate-dominated areas. - Morgan

I'm really seeing a problem as we get older and older. If this detachment continues at the [younger] levels, then there's going to be a real disenfranchised group ... of older citizens who really don't have any connection to much of anything, and that's really kind of sad, and I think it's potentially very dangerous, because human beings who don't have any contact with other human beings are the ones that are most likely to be sick, have emotional problems, have accidents, and so forth and so on. And as our population starts to age out, then there's going to need to be an awful lot of support. I mean, if you think about this dichotomy, you're going to have a very needy [elderly] group up here [gesturing] and, because of the evolution of this detachment, you're going to have a [young] group down here [gesturing] who doesn't give a damn. It's like, "Not my problem. Not my problem at all." So, I see the little coffee shops, not Starbucks, but these little coffee shops where they did have pretty much the same employees, as being a real boon to the area, to the community. - Kelly

Preference

Which kind of store each interviewee preferred would indicate their feelings in terms of the balance of the Quality of Community and the Quality of Other Objectives. In the end, while Morgan and Lyn clearly preferred the independent shops, Pat and Chris weren't so defined, with Pat leaning towards preferring Dutch Bros., despite reporting that s/he appreciated the *other* benefits of independents, such as how they fit in the local

economy. Chris, whose experience in coffee shops was definitely most expansive, reported preferring both equally.

Morgan summarizes their experiences between the indy and Starbucks as follows:

At Starbucks, when I worked there, we had regulars, and you know some of the regulars, but most of the time you really didn't know a lot of the people, ... but, here, or at most independents I've worked at, it's the same people coming through, at least during your busy hours, which most of the time is the morning. You're having most of these drinks memorized because you see them on a daily basis, months at a time, years at a time, and you get to know them more. Like you actually have dialogue and say "Okay, not only do I know your drink, I know your name, and you have this many kids, and you have a dog named this," or whatever. You just feel like you're more a part of their everyday routine and their life, more so than just a faceless person who is just handing you a cup of coffee. The value of conversation is just held higher in a local place, independently-owned, than it is in the corporate place. And it seemed so not only from the employees and the management, but also from the customer perspective. - Morgan

Other sentiments not reflected on Diagrams 4 and 5

Chains acting like indies - Reports indicated that, while it was easy for an independent to act like a stereotypical chain – poor work environment, profit-oriented, detached, mechanical, etc. - it was generally harder for a chain to act like the stereotypical family-like “mom-and-pop.” Chains trying to act homey or like they were part of the community generally risked either failing or backlash/unintended consequences that were not comfortable.

For Pat, the required interaction at Dutch Bros. created the unintended consequence of people becoming “addicted to interaction.”

You're like "Please don't be like 'Well, you always talk to me, so that means you *have* to talk to me.'" So by the end of my Dutch Bros. career, there were one or two customers that I was like, "I'm going to the bathroom." "What?" "He's coming. Can you please just take care of this?" And [the other employee would] be like "Yes," and I'd literally just go hang out in the bathroom and read a newspaper until that customer left. ... [N]ot that they were that big of a deal, but ... *that's* when the insincerity got to me. 'Cause I didn't want to be like "Oh yeah, prime rib" again. I really wanted to say like "Shut up! I don't care about the damned prime rib the 18th time, bro." So, that is where a little insincerity would come in, is when you had heard the same thing over and over and you're like "Dude, c'mon, dude." - Pat

Chris' responses reflect the tension that exists between the need that s/he mentioned above for a "sense of security" and the "comforts of home" in our modern, mobile society and the recognition of that as being a "false sense of security" of "homogenized home."

It's homogenized home. It's like walking into Martha Stewart's living room. Everybody's wearing the same thing. I mean, yeah, it's cozy and it's comfortable. I've been in Starbucks, and it's warm. It's always warm, or it's always cool, but I think that they work more on a false sense of security. And when I was little – 'cause I grew up in Seattle – I went to the original Starbucks in Pike Place Market. [It was] a lot different before he totally streamlined everything and took out the personality. - Chris

Gale Mosgofian stated that she felt it would be difficult for a chain like Starbucks to do what they had done in their community with Mosgo's (See Appendix E). "Any franchise that is trying to [build community] is going to have to work very hard at not being too corporate at the money level to negate the importance of people."

Multiple different businesses as hidden-chains – Despite their positive feelings about working at their independent coffee shop jobs, a few weeks after interviewing Morgan and Lyn, both were fired. It appears that, for Lyn, things just degraded in general. The situation with Morgan was more interesting, however, as Morgan was

basically put in charge of the coffee shop while the owners worked on acquiring a pizza place. While Morgan was not reinterviewed officially on the topic, in open discussions in the shop prior to her actual termination, s/he expressed greater and greater dissatisfaction with the increasing stress of the extra responsibility. S/he was told by the owners that the only reason they were able to buy the new establishment was because Morgan was running the coffee shop. Allegedly this extra responsibility and stress came without extra compensation, creating increasing dissatisfaction with the owners. Successive meetings increased the tension, and s/he was eventually fired.

They were making [Morgan] a partner without the benefits of being a partner. The responsibilities but no benefits. And [s/he] just finally caved. If they had not taken over [the pizza place], that pressure wouldn't have been there for [Morgan] to take the responsibility. Y'know, [the owner] even told [Morgan] that – that they would never have bought it if they thought [s/he] wasn't going to be there. - Kelly

A similar situation was found at the independent coffee shop that Pat and Chris worked at, which also owned a distribution company.

It kind of seems like from [when they got the distribution company] they stopped caring about the coffee shop and whether or not it made money, because they had their income to pay for their child and for their family and their house and everything. ... I'm sure they could run just [the distribution] and be totally fine. I don't think they need [the coffee shop]. ... I think that there is a conflict between [the coffee shop] and [the distribution business]. - Pat

Pat also reported that this neglect of the coffee shop negatively impacted the work atmosphere, contributing to their lack of commitment and poor attitude about the job.

So, how does owning multiple *different* businesses affect the owner's attitude, and how does that affect the work atmosphere and the employees and patrons who function within that atmosphere? If, as was quoted previously, the “bigger things get the more

impersonal they get and more people fall through the cracks,” how does owning multiple, *different* businesses relate to being a chain of the *same* business? What are the differences in terms of community-building for being local chain, a national chain, or a local hidden-chain of different kinds of businesses?

These cases point to the possibility that it may be better, in a community-building sense, to be a chain of the same kind of business rather than a “chain” of different kinds of businesses, due to the extra or unevenly distributed work involved in running multiple businesses that are not all the same. Community members might be well-served to know what businesses in their area are actually hidden-chains, where one owner owns multiple different businesses.

The Effect of Expansion on Community-Building

Within a couple of years, two local natural food stores, Eureka Natural Foods (ENF) and the Eureka Co-op, significantly expanded their operations, moving into much larger buildings. Eureka Natural Foods expanded from 7,000 ft² to 27,000 ft² of retail space (Doran, 2007), and the Eureka Co-op from 4000 ft² to 17,000 ft² of retail space (interviewee).

As with the section on coffee shops, I've organized these results as much as possible according to Diagrams 4 and 5. If sentiment codes relating to a particular topic were particularly varied, I included a list of those codes.

Confounding Factors

The impetus to look at these two stores – their expansions – right away introduces a confounding factor. That this study was looking at the expansions of specific stores, not just comparing stores of different sizes, makes a difference. In an expansion, there is a holdover of any community that was built prior to the expansion. While this is a great opportunity to assess the results of the choice of expansion, it doesn't let us know as clearly which size is inherently better for community-building. It would be interesting to come back to these stores in a couple years and assess the state of the community; see how effective, long-term, the larger sites are for community-building; and assess whether or not the suppositions by interviewees as to how the community would pan out in the end proved true.

Quality of Other Objectives

In the case of the natural food stores, I will start with this category for two reasons: One, it was a significant theme in the interviews regarding the expansion of the Eureka Co-op and ENF. Two, this mission-based component acts as another confounding factor, as, for the most part, these places attract a certain kind of consumer – one who is interested specifically in natural and organic foods. This is especially so in the case of co-ops, which, although simply a business structure, tend to have a somewhat “hippy-dippy” reputation in general. This is not to mention that there is an actual membership component of more committed individuals who are going to support the concept of the natural food co-op at a higher level.

You make that choice of a better food choice to come in here, because the prices are somewhat higher. You come in here with the confidence that the people who are working here and the people who are managing it know their business ... [and are bringing in food that's] organic and fresh and local, as opposed to shipped-in, sprayed, or old food. - Employee

Ideally, this study would have been able to compare sizes of supermarkets that stated no specific mission other than providing general foods to the populace. Of course, because there would still be natural food stores, we would run into the opposite problem of excluding those people who don't go to mainstream supermarkets.

While we could certainly look at these sites in terms of their effectiveness at building community within the natural food community, solid community-building is really the bringing together of all interests, not just special interests. We all seek out similar interests on our own on a daily basis, tending to exacerbate rifts in communities rather than erase them. The goal of a site of community-building should be to build more bridges.

In that sense, we find two problems: one, there is a push of a specific ideology with the natural food stores, and, two, because of that specific mission, there is a competition between goals or objectives. The highest priority of a natural food store is to provide natural foods to its constituency, as well as grow that constituency.

We were also limited in space [at the small store], meaning our aisles were narrow. We couldn't offer as much. Since moving to this location, of course, our membership has grown some, but it's also what we have to offer. - Employee

This store, being larger, we can do more things. Like this room ...When we're not having a cooking class, it's available for any non-profit for no charge. We couldn't offer that in the old store. We didn't have any room. We couldn't offer the cooking classes in the old store. ... [The larger store] was designed to be as efficient as possible. - Employee

Regardless of whether or not small stores are better sites of community-building, if expanding in place best serves that mission, then that's going to be what happens.

I like seeing new people come in. I like seeing that there are more people warming up to the idea of eating organic foods and trying to be a little healthier. ... And that's one of the positive things I think about making the store bigger and more obvious to the general public. I think the general public probably would prefer, obviously, to go to this newer store than the other old one that was kind of funky-hippie. So that was one of the reasons to build this bigger store, ... so that it didn't only attract natural foodies, but also the general public. - Employee

The fact is that we were outgrowing the small store. The parking lot was packed, it was too small. ... Our sales kept going up. Staying there would have gotten to the point where shopping there would not be a fun experience. Two people [could] barely cross going down an aisle. The lunch rush at the deli, there'd be 2-3 people and you couldn't walk down that aisle. - Employee

Our goal was to try and get five-hundred new members in the first year, and we did that I think in the first three months, and so, to me, that means people like the store, because you don't have to be a member to shop here. - Employee

Another way we could look at this, however, is to try to assess how well the space builds general community *despite* the specific mission of natural foods. If we find that a space is an effective site of community-building across ideologies, despite its own clearly stated ideology, then we can better understand some important factors of community building, such an open atmosphere and convenience.

Just because of what this place is there's inherently a common ground to almost anybody that comes in, except perhaps those who are restricted geographically, like the homeless. - Employee

[The diversity of people was higher at] I think the small Co-op [downtown]. ... People would go to the Co-op because it was closer to their work. ... It was the closest store. It was a welcome enough place that people who would not normally go to "The health food store where all those granola weirdos go" would [still] go to the smaller Co-op. - Patron

Related to the desire by employees to see the natural foods mission progress, there is another confounding factor that shows up in the tendency for folks involved in these places to not want to say anything bad about them. There was often a feeling that the interviewee was trying to frame things so as to ensure they fit an ideology that they wanted to see, i.e., that the larger stores were as good as the smaller ones in terms of community-building.

I think the larger store serves the community better in the view of the Co-op mission, in giving more choices, having more product available, not being continuously out. - Employee

I want to be careful of what I do say, 'cause I don't want it to sound like I'm anti-the [big] store. - Employee

Overall, and in contrast to the patrons interviewed, it was clear that the employees did not see the expansion as a net negative. While those interviewed often expressed missing the “family” feel of the smaller stores, they were much happier with more space to do their jobs. One employee did report, however, that patrons who had been leery with the expansion ultimately liked it for its greater offerings. And, as was quoted above, Co-op membership jumped after the expansion.

Quality of Community

Interconnectedness – Overall interconnectedness was gleaned from sentiments relating to the following codes, which were drawn from the interviews: Customers talking to each other, regulars, potential to develop friendships, line between work and friendship, don't know other employees names, larger store more impersonal, not as intense/intimate in big store, anonymity of customers/employees/in general, distance

between employees and patrons, close friendships/exist outside store, small store a “community,” patrons run into friends, met future spouses in store, knowing each other, patrons building relationships, proportion of relationship, community-building/sense of community, miss older (smaller) store, “family feel” in smaller store, relationships changed with expansion, relationships shift to employees in larger store, employees know employees more than patrons in larger store.

All of those interviewed about their feelings regarding the expansions had similar things to say. With some disagreement, most generally felt that the larger stores were not as intense in their relationships and did not act as effectively as places where social interaction was encouraged and people could build meaningful relationships. Again with some disagreement, many felt that the larger stores were not as effective as sites of community-building, though this did not mean they felt the expansions were bad overall.

The patrons interviewed generally felt negative overall toward the expansions because of the deterioration of the social scene, and there was little or no mention of other factors of the expansions they did like. They stated that they missed and preferred the smaller stores and described the larger spaces as impersonal, distant, and unwelcoming. One patron stated that relationships/sociality in the larger store “downright disappeared ... to the point that I don't see people that I know or have known in the past [from the smaller store].” One employee corroborated these sentiments, pointing out that there had been many expressions of dissatisfaction by patrons with their newer, larger store.

While most of the employees interviewed also stated that their relationships with patrons, even those holdovers from the smaller stores, were less intense, they generally felt good about the expansions. Part of what seemed to help the employees feel that their social structure was maintained was the fact that, to some degree or another, intra-employee relationship potential remained. Where, in the smaller stores, there was reported to be a more even balance of employee-employee and patron-employee relationships, relationships in the larger stores were definitely dominated by employee-employee. In short, as the establishment grew, the employees became more of an isolated “team” than a part of the greater community that included patrons. This tips the scales toward greater bonding interaction between employees with less more-likely-to-be-bridging interaction between employees and patrons – a drop in “cross-counter interaction.”

Speaking to interconnectedness in the smaller stores, there's a story in the history of the Co-op that has become somewhat of an urban legend. It tells of masks that patrons could wear when shopping if they didn't have time to chat, ostensibly because everyone knew each other so well that you couldn't get in and out in a rush without spending time talking to someone. According to a long-time employee, this was at the Arcata Co-op, well prior to its expansion in the late '90s from 9,500 ft² to 14,000 ft². Turns out the “masks” were Groucho Marx glasses and noses, and it was just a joke that the store played in the '80s to make light of the fact that everyone knew each other so well. Also in the '80s, according to this same interviewee, the smaller Arcata Co-op was apparently

voted something along the lines of “Best Place to Get a Date” in a readers' poll. This person did actually know of two people who met their spouses at the smaller Arcata Co-op.

Welcomeness/Openness/Tolerance – Overall welcomeness/openness/tolerance was gleaned from sentiments relating to the following codes, drawn from the interviews: People help strangers, strangers jump in on conversations, big store doesn't feel as welcome, people making introductions, chatting in line, strangers getting to know each other, presence of patience, cross-group interaction.

While it was difficult for employees to report on the relationships between patrons, it did seem that patron-patron relationships also dwindled. Interviewees reported seeing less indicators of an open, welcoming community, such as willingness to chat in line with strangers, strangers jumping in on conversations they weren't already a part of, people helping strangers, or hearing folks introduce themselves to each other.

There was broad agreement to the general sentiment that the smaller stores were better places for strangers to get to know each other, exemplified in the above Co-op story about being the “Best Place to Get a Date.”

One patron felt very strongly that the smaller Eureka Co-op had facilitated their becoming part of the greater local community when they first moved to the area. S/he had also expressed that s/he had been looking forward to the expansion, having lived in San Francisco and having experienced larger organic grocers. Ultimately disappointed with the expansion, and considering it a net loss, s/he simply stated, “Be careful for what

you wish for.” S/he did admit, however, that s/he might feel differently if s/he were better able to participate in the greater offerings at the larger Eureka Co-op, which, due to single parenthood, was not possible.

Factors affecting Quality of Community

Population/pace/turnover (Ability to Interact) – Issues related to population/pace/turnover were gleaned from interview sentiments related to the following codes: More for employees to do in larger store, more employees=negative effect, more customers=negative effect, saw same people repeatedly in small store, employee turnover=negative effect.

This loss of social potential was generally felt to be the result of shorter, less intense, and less frequent interactions with a greater number of people in the expanded establishments, as opposed to the more intense and frequent interactions with a fewer number of people perceived in the smaller establishments.

This change was generally attributed to the increased number of employees, which made it less likely that any one patron would see the same employee all the time; the increased number of patrons, which helped create an atmosphere of anonymity and isolation that required a more efficient, mechanical, and impersonal functioning on the part of the employees; and the larger size, which did not encourage interaction and conversation by literally forcing people to run into each other.

Due to the lack of the tight family feel and mutual respect of the old store (for holdover employees), coupled with the lack of commitment to the natural food mission

(for newer employees), the turnover rate at one of the larger stores was reported to be higher, making it even harder for relationships to build. It was also reported that this turnover rate was also partly due to a misconception by prospective employees that the store, now with an outward appearance more like a Safeway, paid employees as well as one.

The greater turnover was reported as having a negative effect on relationship-building. One employee stated that “[patrons are] never really going to get to know many employees if they're not there for a long amount of time.” One interviewee, holding a Masters degree in Sociology, stated simply that it depends on “people meeting each other face-to-face on a regular basis.”

The other natural food store's turnover rate was reported to still be low in the larger store. One interviewee pointed out that new job applications arrived constantly with prospective employees stating that the reason they wanted to work at the store was because it seemed like a nice place to work.

Diversity (Ability to Interact) – In terms of diversity of patronage and the potential for cross-group interaction and the generation of out-group relationships amongst patrons, a surprising twist was found. As quoted above, the *smaller* Eureka Co-op was reported to be more diverse than the larger one, which was opposite of what was reported for the Eureka Natural Foods (more diversity in the larger store). This was attributed to the fact that the smaller Co-op was located downtown close to the Courthouse, City Hall, and many professional buildings. Its convenient location would

draw in more white-collar professional patrons to mix with the more “natural foodie” or “hippie” types drawn to the Co-op mission.

At the larger Eureka Co-op, while its larger size and sharper appearance draws in a greater number of patrons, they have lost many of their former downtown patrons for whom the old location was a convenience. This indicates that the old store, despite its natural food mission having the potential to create an alienating “hippie” atmosphere, was welcoming to folks of all walks of life. In that sense, the loss of that old, smaller store downtown could indicate a loss of a unique space where generally disparate groups - from folks “dripping with patchouli scent” to white-collar suits - were actually forced, due to space limitations, to interact amicably. Such interaction could have served an important community role in the generation of bridging social capital, greater understanding, and tolerance of different lifestyles and viewpoints.

Cross-group interaction was generally seen to have been more common at the smaller stores, but there was some disagreement, here. One employee pointed out that the natural food mission created a common ground upon which people would interact, and that that common ground was more important than, for example, being stuck in line together.

The larger ENF was reported to have higher diversity than the smaller one because of the greater size and sharper appearance than its old, “broken-in” smaller store, including in terms of diversity of employees.

Layout/Design/Size (Ability to Interact) – Issues related to layout/design/size were gleaned from sentiments related to the following: Can't *not* see people/run into people/interact at smaller stores, hard to notice folks in big store, chance of running into each other, more check-stands=less time/frequent interaction, such thing as too small, threshold of size where community lost, big-box/chain ability to build community, smaller space/slower pace, employee friendships in “pods” in bigger store.

Layout changed significantly with the store expansions. While both smaller stores had a deli that acted as a space where people would interact, the larger stores moved more towards departmentalization. While this was reported to have fractured the core groups of holdover employees from the smaller stores, it provided more opportunity for interaction within particular departments, creating a larger number of smaller employee “pods” rather than one large group. In the larger store, one of the employees interviewed admitted to not even knowing the names of some of the deli employees, a situation unheard of in the smaller store. However, department-mates would be able to get to know each other better, mitigating some of the effect of having a higher number of employees.

This departmentalization acted as a slight mitigating factor in the deterioration of patron-employee relationships, as well, as any patron who, say, frequented the meat department would be more likely to see the same employees and be better able to build relationships.

While, with this departmentalization, the establishment approaches being a group of smaller stores, it does not exactly replicate that kind of social situation, as all purchases are still funneled through the checkout “department.” Because this is where the patrons of all the separate departments must go, a more mechanical and efficient process is necessary, reminiscent of the “factory”-style coffee shop system discussed in the coffee shop section of this thesis. Considering that a large portion of interaction seems to be during the checkout process, a larger patron population will likely adversely affect the ability for patrons and employees to build relationships in the checkout lines, again sacrificing that cross-counter interaction that would likely be bridging interaction. One employee clearly stated that as the population went up, s/he did not have as much time to chat with patrons as s/he would have liked. As well, despite the departmentalization of the larger stores, the social situation was still not reported to be the tight “family” of the smaller stores.

As well, it was made clear that there is such thing as too small, not just in terms of not being able to stock merchandise, as discussed in Quality of Other Objectives above, but, simply put, the old Co-op was so small there was no place for patrons to sit and chat as they ate their deli purchases. The larger store has multiple spaces for people to sit and eat, providing an opportunity for interaction not present in the smaller Co-op. The old ENF already had seating space for its deli/coffee counter, so there was little change, there.

[At the big Co-op] we have the counter where people sit, and there's interactions between people that I would never have thought – y'know, an older person and a younger person who I would have never thought to really [interact], but I just accept it as part of the proximity that they share on a day-to-day basis, perhaps. - Employee

While the employees tended to feel that going any bigger than they had would have begun to drastically deteriorate the community-building potential of the store, the patrons interviewed felt that it had already deteriorated significantly. Employees tended to feel that the current larger size still had a lot of community-building potential. One interviewee exemplified this by emphasizing how Co-op employees were still able to deal on a “human level” with any disruptions by members of the nearby homeless community, unlike a larger, corporate store that would eject such individuals before spending time to work with them in the hopes of modifying or reforming behavior. However, the employees also commented that the larger stores were not running at the capacity they were designed for, at which point there might be a more drastic dissolution of the sense of community.

Work Atmosphere (Willingness to Interact) – One interviewee reported that since the expansion of their natural food store (store name purposely obscured here), things had become somewhat sour between the employees and management, because management “couldn't keep their eyes on us entirely.” In the larger store the issue of trust had become a problem – one that didn't exist in the smaller, “family”-like store. This kind of situation clearly has the potential to affect employee attitudes, as well.

At the other natural food store, the employee interviewees all reported being happy to work there, with one interviewee stating, “I really like working for [this store].”

Other sentiments not reflected in Diagrams 4 and 5

Expanding in number vs. expanding in size - Because of their oft-mentioned specific mission above-and-beyond just providing mainstream groceries, it was reported that changes in the business have to take into consideration more than just profit margins and social implications. Expanding in size better serves their unique constituency's needs, whereas the other expansion possibility of opening more outlets did not, and could have, in fact, splintered the constituency, making each site less profitable and viable, as well as left each store with less space to stock product. Though their larger size and more mainstream appearance does encourage less natural-foods-oriented patrons to shop there, business decisions are done with the natural foods mission and constituency in mind, and the goal is to grow that constituency.

Mitigating the loss of community-building potential - In addition to the mitigations touched on above in terms of departmentalization, the larger stores mitigated some of the loss of community in other ways.

Because of the expansions, the larger stores, to varying degrees, offer services above-and-beyond just their products. ENF now offers free community “conferences” on health supplements/products. The new Co-op has a commercial-grade teaching kitchen with space where they can offer classes and workshops, which any non-profit

organization can use free of charge. The added services present greater opportunity for folks to interact.

Like Chris' point above regarding Borders, there was mention of the tendency of patrons to seek out specific employees with whom to interact, especially at the checkout aisles, which, in both cases, went from about three to about seven. One check-stand employee mentioned having a “personal clientèle,” though another employee mentioned that it was only holdover relationships from the older, smaller store that were seeking out specific employees. This could be seen as a certain level of intentional or unintentional mitigation of the negative affects of a larger, more anonymous space.

One employee interviewed pointed out that the Co-op worked hard to hire friendly employees who would be willing to interact positively with patrons.

DISCUSSION

This pilot study supports the hypothesis through the triangulation of multiple methods. Small, independent businesses are generally better sites of passive community-building than their larger and/or chain counterparts. They also have greater potential to be Third Places due to their generally slower pace and the flexibility that comes with being independent. They have greater potential to encourage geographic community over ideological.

For both the coffee shops and supermarkets, sentiments in the qualitative interviews generally indicated greater community-building potential in the independent shops and smaller markets. For the coffee shops, this was additionally supported by the direct observation data, which showed that, in the independent shops, a smaller number of people appeared to have greater interaction, with more bridging interaction and closure.

The quality of community appeared to be most influenced by the population in the establishment, in terms of the number of patrons and employees; employee turnover; and the pace of the establishment.

As the population increased, employees would generally become more of a team and the patrons the “other,” though even employee-employee relationship intensity decreased when the population increased. Pace increased with population, so that more people were seen with less time per person. Higher turnover meant that bonds were

repeatedly broken, just as “emigration devalues one's social capital, for most of one's social connections must be left behind” (Putnam, 2000: 390).

Design, size, and layout was also a factor in the quality of community. For the coffee shops, designs for increased volume and patronage further negatively impacted the ability to interact, by prioritizing efficiency over community. For the expanded natural food stores, size negatively impacted the ability of people to interact by providing them with more space, which allowed them to either intentionally or unintentionally avoid each other.

At the larger stores, the departmentalization and offering of extra services like workshops and classes appeared to mitigate a portion of this loss in potential for community-building. The tendency of patrons to seek out specific employees seemed to be a personal attempt to mitigate this loss. These points, however, do not appear to make up for the bulk of the loss of community-building potential found at the smaller stores, especially in the small Eureka Co-op, where its convenient location near City Hall, the Courthouse, and their related services saw it acting as a tool to encourage the intermingling of generally disparate groups – white-collar and natural-foodie folks.

This last point illustrates the importance of location, showing it to be closely tied in to the establishments' potential as sites of geographic and/or bridging-inclusive community-building. The small Co-op actually helped build community in a diverse area because it was conveniently located. Key, too, was the open atmosphere, as location in a diverse area will accomplish nothing if not everyone is willing to go in. This situation

adds some support to the concept of mixed-use and the claim that we need more commercial in our residential areas, in order to help facilitate the building of community there.

Looking back at the Orenco Station New Urbanist development, these results support my argument that the presence of neutral commercial spaces might help mitigate the issues between residents and non-residents, especially if the commercial spaces faced the local parks that were at the center of the dispute, à la Jane Jacobs' "eyes on the street" (1961: 35).

As owner and/or corporate attitude influences all decisions surrounding a business, business intention, philosophy, or objectives, it ultimately defines all of the above factors. Results indicate that an intention to maximize profit will come at the expense of community-building, and an intention to maximize community-building will come at the expense of maximizing profit. While there are many who want to believe that businesses can both maximize profit and community/environment benefit, these results might challenge that notion.¹⁰

The fact that the results indicated similar tendencies in all of the cases – direct observation in coffee shops, qualitative interviewing regarding coffee shops, and qualitative interviewing regarding the supermarkets – leads me to believe that the results, while preliminary, are sound.

¹⁰ That maximizing community/environment benefit would also increase profits was the attitude I saw in the work of some local business owners who wanted to advocate for what they called the Triple Bottom Line business practices philosophy – environment, community, and profit. While this is its own debate and beyond the scope of this paper, I would argue that, if doing the right thing really made money, this world would be far different place than it is.

Further supporting this is the fact that these results also align with the other authors cited in this paper who have looked at businesses as sites of community-building in one way or another. They confirm the ideas of Oldenburg (1989), by lending support to his claims as well as giving a clearer understanding of what it takes for an establishment to be a Third Place. They align with Sommer *et al's* (1981) work comparing farmers markets and supermarkets. They shed a little more light on why Goetz and Rupasingha (2006) found what they did – that Wal-Mart's destroy social capital where they are built. While these results do not align with Laurier and Philo's (2005) claim that Starbucks works much like other coffee shops, I feel this may be due to the use of different definitions of community-building, with my emphasis being on geographic, bridging-inclusive community over the ideological, bonding community exemplified in their discussion of 'scenes'.

The results of this study also align with my personal experiences, both in Asia and America. Like the patron quoted above stated, it was the small businesses that helped facilitate our entry into the local community (in Taiwan).

As an American college student prior to my travels to Asia, I always wondered why the local mall was less satisfying than it seemed it should have been. Understanding the experiences of Victor Gruen and his ill-fated shopping center, plus Marshall's comments on the risks of making a place without acknowledging the forces that actually create a place, I believe part of me interpreted the superficial look of the mall as being a place to build community, but deep down I could feel it wasn't happening. In other

words, I was actually experiencing Freie's "counterfeit community." I believe, too, that this is why I felt so at home in the markets and small businesses in Asia, because, in a very real sense, it was the first time I'd experienced something *other* than counterfeit community.

CONCLUSION

If small, independent businesses really are better sites of passive-community building than their larger and/or corporate analogues, then this simple fact has a host of implications.

We're All Agents of Community Development

Adding the results of this thesis to the other studies out there that show the benefits of independent businesses, it makes it clear that we're not just consumers and business owners, but participants in a community-building process where our everyday choices literally shape the future of our communities. This means that, by choosing to shop indy – and small-scale, if possible – we are doing positive work in our communities, just by fulfilling our daily wants and needs.

Anything that Harms Independent Businesses Harms our Communities

Marshall points out that “retail needs an astonishingly large potential customer base, much larger than might be intuitively thought. ... The huge, 200,000 square-foot warehouse-style stores, like a Wal-Mart Supercenter, can require a customer base of a half million households within a twenty-minute drive. But even a small restaurant or pharmacy requires high traffic volumes, whether it be by foot or car” (2000: 12).

Businesses need customers in order to make a living for the owner. Of course, this living is made *after* overhead is paid for. That means that the higher the overhead, the more customers are necessary. While this isn't so much a problem for Wal-Marts or

corporate chains like Starbucks, where the corporate organism can afford to lose money at any one particular branch while the others thrive, concern comes in for the smaller businesses, whose owners do not have the support of a larger corporate organism.

At a basic level, higher overhead means higher prices, which risks excluding people of lower incomes from partaking in sites of passive community-building. Less overtly, higher costs to run a business create a pressure to expand, franchise, move, or shut down, hampering establishments' ability to act as sites of passive community-building or locate where such community-building is most necessary.

While I was in Asia, I saw lots of small, hole-in-the-wall businesses that were able to survive on a very small customer base. While I never asked outright, it was pretty clear that their overhead was very low. This was most likely due to the fact that, often times, these shops were run out of the owners' homes. In fact, this was often the default format in many of the places I traveled – work downstairs or in front and live upstairs or in back. In the village in Nepal where I spent a year, most of the homes were designed in a way that made it possible for the residents to easily open up a small shop downstairs if they so desired. Many did, and it's not surprising, either, that those places became gathering spots.

Based upon my experiences in Asia, it's not a stretch to say that those places likely had few or no rules or regulations to follow. In America, however, informal discussions I've had with business owners reveal that there are extensive amounts of regulation, fees, and rules that business owners must follow. These include purchasing

“certified” equipment, meeting health regulations, rent for an “appropriate” location, and insurances, among other things. Most of these outlays are mandated by law, meaning that, while they don’t force you to pay up, if you want to be certified and legal, you’d better do so, otherwise you can be shut down.

If such rules force a small business to expand to take better advantage of its overhead, the results of this thesis would indicate that such a move harms our communities. If such rules make a prospective entrepreneur decide that it's easier to franchise than go at it on their own, the results of this thesis would indicate that such a move harms our communities. Recognizing the importance of location, if such rules exclude small, independent businesses from certain locations or force them to move to have access to a larger customer base, the results of this thesis would indicate that such a move harms our communities, by excluding businesses from places where they may be needed most for community-building.

Policies need to be analyzed for the balance of benefit, ostensibly from whatever issue the policy is created to address, and cost, in terms of how it affects our community-building potential. Examples of policies that should be looked at in light of information coming out of studies like this thesis include zoning, health regulations, and insurance issues.

Corporate power is another force that puts pressure on independent businesses to either expand or die. Overtly, corporations like Starbucks are able to run outlets that lose money, out-competing through subsidization other independent coffee shops that do not

have the same support system. On a less obvious level, corporations often use their power to create public policy that serves their needs.

Recalling that it was a corporate conspiracy by oil and automobile companies in the 1920's that forced Americans into cars via the shutting down of much of the United States' public transportation, corporations with money can wield considerable power. This includes being able to lobby laws and legislation to their benefit, while marketing it outwardly as if it were to ours. One could argue that the zoning regulations that make it difficult or impossible for small businesses, like coffee shops or pubs, to open up in residential areas are a boon to those who profit from the fact that nothing is within walking distance. For example, in 1887, America's first regulatory agency, the Interstate Commerce Commission for railways, was actually created with the support of the major railway players, in order to effectively regulate out their smaller competition (Morris, 2001).

Vandana Shiva gives another example of regulations being used to shut down competition, this time in India:

Pseudo-hygiene laws are being used to shut down local economies and small-scale processing. In August 1998, small-scale local processing of edible oil was banned in India through a 'packaging order' which made the sale of open oil illegal and required all oil to be packaged in plastic or aluminium. This shut down tiny "ghanis" or cold-pressed mills. It destroyed the market for our diverse oilseeds – mustard, linseed, sesame, groundnut, coconut. And the take-over of the edible oil industry has affected 10 million livelihoods. The take-over of flour or "atta" by packaged, branded flour will cost 100 million livelihoods. And these millions are being pushed into new poverty. (Shiva, 2000: 485)

The implication here is that, by creating an unnecessary regulation that required more infrastructure than the little mills could afford, forcing them to either expand their

customer base or go under, they were effectively shut down in favor of the large corporate mills. Important for our discussion here is, in addition to the livelihoods that were lost, what happened to the relationships, especially if those millers were forced to move to the city to find work? To repeat Putnam's sentiment above, “emigration devalues one's social capital.”

In short, the results of this thesis would indicate that anything that forces an independent business to expand, move to find customers, franchise, or die is harming our communities, and we need to be ready to take on policies that create such pressures, to determine if they are really necessary.

On Consumer Pressure to Specialize and/or Expand

The situation with the natural food stores brought up an interesting conundrum, related to the pressure by consumers for a specialized store – one that sells natural foods – and then increased interest in that specialty. The result of this increased interest in that specialty left two options: expand in size or expand in number.

Expanding in size, as the results of this thesis have shown, negatively impacted the store as a site of passive community-building. Expanding in number, however, would have created more smaller spaces like the old Eureka Co-op for folks to interact, perhaps even closer to their own communities. In the case of the Co-op, expansion in number was considered, but determined to not be as feasible as expansion in size. It is unknown whether this was considered for Eureka Natural Foods.

The problem here is two-fold. First, as was stated in the results, a bigger store actually serves the constituency better, by having a wider selection of goods as well as being regularly stocked with those goods. More stores would have likely kept each store too small to stock that diversity of goods. Second, more stores, as was mentioned in the results, could have splintered the mission-committed constituency. Such a situation would make each shop less economically viable, because, recalling the above discussion on overhead costs, the overhead associated with multiple shops would be increased, without, perhaps, a sufficient customer base to make that worth it.

What this means, then, is that their specific mission, related to their specialty, meant that expansion was the best overall course of action. A constituency that really supports that mission will accept that fact, even if they preferred the smaller stores for social reasons.

This fact presents an interesting conundrum. Specialization puts a pressure on businesses to locate themselves where a sufficient customer base resides or rely on customers to transport themselves to the shop. Increasing the diversity of a particular specialized offering, such as natural foods, also puts a pressure on businesses like ENF and the Co-op to expand, again increasing pressure to locate where a large customer base resides or rely on customers to transport themselves to the shop. Generally, at least in most of America, customer transport means driving.

This issue is actually reflective of a larger American societal fact: In a diverse society, there is no one General Store than can serve the whole population's needs,

thereby necessitating a system that requires larger stores and longer distances of travel, unless each group within the diverse society splits off into its own enclave. Because diversity comes in many forms, from culture to politics to tastes in food, the creation of enclaves is necessarily impossible in many cases, not to mention potentially controversial. This reality, then, encourages the existence of specialty shops, whose customer bases are not big enough to make multiple outlets in every neighborhood economically viable. Someone interested in natural food may not necessarily be interested in locally-made household products or clothes, or may be interested in specialty Asian items that are not necessarily organic.

Recalling Marshall's quote above regarding the diversity you might find if you were to take a pie to your neighbors and that “chances are they’ll like different music than you” (2000: 60), music stores are a perfect example of this issue. There's a pressure for music stores to carry every kind of music, which means they need to be larger and draw in a larger customer base. Couple this with the fact that an endless choice of music is available on-line via shipping or download, and we can see why it's getting harder and harder to find independent music stores.¹¹

Only in certain situations – enclaves such as San Francisco's Chinatown, for example, where there is a critical mass of a particular mostly homogeneous group that generally has the same tastes and philosophies of living – can every neighborhood have a small store that sells similar things. I experienced this first hand as the norm during my

¹¹ The fact that music industry icon Tower Records shut down shows us the pressure such stores are under, even a famous chain.

time in Asia, where, for example, in Taiwan virtually every neighborhood had its own tofu factory (as compared to the one in Arcata that serves all of Humboldt County and beyond). For the rest of American society not contained in a “Chinatown” or similar space, this diversity of tastes and values puts a pressure on establishments to specialize, be larger, carry more, and be more automobile-reliant.

In short, not every neighborhood can support a music or natural foods store – at least, not under the current business atmosphere as discussed above. Therefore, we must drive.

In a sense, these specialty shops risk exacerbating the divisions between diverse groups of people by drawing in only certain kinds of people. For example, while very much welcomed, I'm clearly a less common sight when I visit the specialty Asian stores that cater to the area Hmong, Thai, and Lao population. For a “neutral” space like Safeway, ENF, or the Co-op to carry those specialty products could require them to be even larger than they already are (not to mention that those products may not be organic, in the case of ENF).

This fact, then, exacerbates a situation where neighbors don't have reason to passively interact with each other throughout the course of fulfilling their daily needs. Safeway shoppers may never run into Co-op shoppers, at least not enough to get to know each other or realize they live in the same neighborhood.

In addition, and perhaps ironically, the increase in specialty shops, which increases reliance upon the automobile, supports the car-culture that makes high-volume,

high-paced, but easily recognizable, convenient, and predictable establishments like Starbucks “necessary.” This, in turn, exacerbates our tendency to be drawn toward Freie's “counterfeit community.”

This whole situation exemplifies why we need neutral sites of community-building within neighborhoods to encourage the kind of geographic community that we will, generally, not nurture on our own. We need places that allow us to build community with folks who are, to recall Oldenburg, outside “the narrowness of [our] personal choice.”

Encouraging Greater Passive Community-Building Potential

Clearly, the situation surrounding specialization is just something we have to accept and work with. It is a minor negative in the situation of American diversity, which is generally regarded as a positive in our society. We simply need to be aware of this pressure and make efforts to mitigate its negative effects.

The good news is that, while it can't make a big store small or a chain store independent, it appears that a strong community-building intent on the part of those in power, such as the owners or managers, can accomplish quite a bit (see [Appendix E](#) for an excellent local example of what intention can accomplish). Such intent, as we have seen, could manifest as workshops, classes, or meeting space. It could also manifest as a designs or policies that maximize the duration of repeated interaction between smaller numbers of people. Perhaps most effectively, it could manifest as a welcome and open atmosphere that is willing to cross boundaries.

In the situation of the larger natural food stores, recommendations to encourage greater passive community-building could include ensuring that friendly employees are hired, as the Co-op already does, and that they are scheduled at regular times that do not vary throughout the week, allowing patrons to be able to count on a particular employee being there. In this way, employees have more of a chance of developing that “personal clientèle” that would encourage deeper cross-counter, bridging interaction, allowing employees to be a hub of potential closure, as in the case of the oft-working-alone 3-2-1 Coffee employees. Always keeping a certain number of check-stands open could also ensure that the pace never gets to the point that employees can't chat awhile. Designing check-stands to look less like cattle chutes would also help. While perhaps silly, another possibility would be to give each check-stand a different name, rather than a number, to make it more like its own “place”. I'm sure creative managers and owners could come up with lots of other ideas to help make a large space *be* smaller and more intimate, as opposed to just look that way.

Conceivably, chains should be able to make some of these creative changes, as well, to be better sites of passive community-building. Starbucks could do modified versions of the above suggestions to organize its shops so that they are less like factory work and encourage more community.

Unfortunately, there are two problems that chains face, related to the fact that they generally do not have the flexibility to make choices that emphasize community-building over profit-maximization, if they so desire. First, doing so would likely involve giving

authority to local managers to make changes that they felt fit the community better. This would, then, go against much of the point of having a formula establishment – that they're all the same, predictable, fast, and convenient.

Second, national chains are corporations which are publicly-traded. Because of this, they must, by law, put the value of their stocks first and foremost. In other words, they legally do not have the freedom that independent businesses do to say, “I make a sufficient amount of money. Now what can I do for the community?”

This points out that even chains are put in awkward or difficult positions by public policy, and that there are fundamental policy changes that need to be made in order to allow publicly-traded corporations the freedom to do things that will create benefits that are not solely financial, nor solely reserved for their shareholders. In this sense, publicly-traded corporations can't do the “right thing,” even if their shareholders wanted them to, if that “right thing” would result in shares losing profit. Unfortunately, because there's a lot of things that are perfectly legal, but which might not qualify as the “right thing,” we have a lot of social problems related to corporate behavior that stem from this one requirement to put share value first-and-foremost. Of course, that is a huge discourse in and of itself, which is well beyond the scope of this paper.

The Great Unifier

With specialization, pressures that demand larger customer bases, and burdensome unnecessary regulation, it becomes more and more difficult for small businesses to act as sites of passive community-building at all. That, then, makes it more

difficult for us to use such businesses as tools of community development in our residential neighborhoods, where it's really needed.

This is not to mention that, to be effective as sites of community-building that cross groups, they would need to be something upon which all residents could find common ground. Recalling the discussion on diversity above, this seems like it could be a difficult challenge to overcome.

The good news is that, as my experiences around the world have shown me, there are two things that people *can* agree on, no matter who they are or where they're from:

Hot drinks and baked goods.

From coffee to tea to maté, croissants to bagels to Chinese *you-tiao*, perhaps it is the independent coffee shops, and their associated and often locally-baked goods, that will become the Great Unifier in the neighborhoods of modern American society, allowing us to build geographic community and deepen our local culture with the people we live closest to proximally – our neighbors.

[T]he barista's special job is to recognise those of us who return regularly. In other words, they are amongst the de-anonymisers that make our public lives livable. (Laurier and Philo, 2005: 13)

The final goal, then, and where the work lies, is to see that small, independent businesses are actually *in* our neighborhoods, and that they are able to *survive there*.

“Some of the joys and blessings of being alive ought to be as easily achieved as a stroll down to the place on the corner – but there does have to be a place on the corner!”

(Oldenburg, 1989: 65).

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APPENDIX A: OBSERVATION TALLY SHEET

Research Template (re-name and re-save according to specs below)

Scene upon arrival

1. How were you treated upon arrival? How were you asked for your order? What sort of language did the employee(s) use? [formal, informal, "sir/ma'am/miss," "hon/sweetie," etc.]
2. Check Extra Questions at end to see if there's anything you want to write now.

Observations

Describe who is there and what they are doing and provide total numbers of patrons, employees, etc. Include age, sex, ethnicity, appearance, actions, body language and positioning, etc. Assign groups a number to help you refer to them later. (Example: "Pair1 E30sWMs (Early30sWhiteMales); they are sitting together, on opposite sides, of a two seat table at the back of the establishment; she is bent over a newspaper, positioned to ensure privacy; he is leaning back in his chair and gazing around the room."). Feel free to make fake "names"/mnemonics to easily remember and refer to patrons, if you don't know their real names.

Insert the current time and begin recording ("Alt-I; D; T; Enter" for OpenOffice; "Alt-I; T; (select style); Enter" for Microsoft Word). Insert the current time before and, if necessary, after any observations. Note ongoing actions and insert the time with those:

Start Time: _____

of Employees at beginning: _____

[enter observations here]

End Time: _____

End of session (Answer Extra Questions again, including how you were treated when you left.)

Summary (Write a brief summary of what you experienced, noting anything that stood out to you, general themes, etc.)

Extra Questions (Answer any that are applicable)

1. Did they know your "usual" this time?
2. Did you hear laughter? If so, from whom?
3. Describe any overall group "behaviors" you saw (Example: "All the patrons are sitting aligned such that they only see each other's backs, like in a classroom setting" or "All the patrons are spread out evenly across the establishment" or "Most of the patrons have collected toward the front of the establishment where there is natural light" or "All patrons have piled books around them to create mini-fortresses, behind which they have stockpiled straws and spit-wads").
4. Describe anything else you note about the scene overall, (lots of families, multi-generational, diverse, not diverse, etc.).

Naming and Titling Files

Rename and re-save the template each time with the following details:

Location Code – Weekday or Weekend - Time in - Day – Date

WD= "weekday"; WE="weekend"

For example: MSGS – WD - 1528 - Th - 2007-05-03

APPENDIX B: QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- In which kind did you know more of your customers?
- In which kind did you see more people run into friends?
- At which kind were your shop relationships more likely to exist outside the shop?
- Where did you make any lasting friendships? With whom (patrons or employees)?
 - (Were you more familiar with employees or patrons?)
- Which is more likely to build-community?
 - Build deep relationships/friends?
 - Make acquaintances?
- Which had more employee turnover, chains or independents?
- How do you feel that # of employees affected the social situation?
- In which did you know a greater percentage of the “usuals” of patrons?
- What were the proportions of regulars versus non regulars?
- In which were folks more likely to self-police and/or intervene in conflict?
- In which kind did working in the shop help you become a part of the local community?
- In which kind did customers feel more comfortable jumping in on conversations that they weren't a part of originally?
- Which kind of relationships were more common: patron-patron, patron-employee, or employee-employee and how did that differ between chains and independents?
- What suggestions would you have to foster more interaction?
- What would the difference have been if expansion was in number and not size?
- Did you find that most people knew each other who frequented the coffee shops? (concept of “closure”)
- In which kind did most people who sat together come together (as a group)?
- In which kind did you see more folks introduce themselves (and make friends)?
- Which kind was better as a place for people to get to know each other? Why?
- Which kind was more likely to see diversity of kinds of people?
- Which was more likely to see interaction and relationships build between different groups of people?
- Which kind was a place where strangers get to know each other?
- Did you find that there were “converts”? Which direction?
- Which kind better created a sense of community?
- Did you ever do something for someone you met there that you wouldn't have expected you'd do for a “stranger”, such as help them out in a crisis?
- Was it a different kind of person who patronized chains vs. independents?
- In which kind was it tougher to negotiate lines of friendship and professional?

- For how long did you work at chains? Independents?
- Do you have any stories?
- (for size expansion only) What do you think would have been the difference socially if more outlets had been built rather than expanding one in size? Would extra outlets have helped build community in the areas of the new outlets?

Extra/redundant questions:

- What effect do chains have on society? Independents?
- Were there any inherent characteristics of the chains that made it easier to meet new people and create relationships (like having to write down their name on the cup)? The independents?
- Were there any inherent characteristics of the chains that made it harder to meet new people and create relationships? The independents?
- What, if any, other differences are there between the chains and the independents?
- How many people were you familiar with in each place? How many did you know by name?
- How would you explain the differences in the social atmosphere between chains and independents?

APPENDIX C: QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

For

From the Local Pub to the Corner Store: Social Interaction in Businesses
A Masters Thesis by Scott Menzies

Contact Info:

Principal Investigator - Scott Menzies – 441-1423, scott.menzies@realizingcommunity.org

Faculty Advisor - Dr. Betsy Watson, PhD. – 826-5421, ew1@humboldt.edu

Following is the informed consent form for a research project conducted by Scott Menzies from the Environment and Community Masters program at Humboldt State University, as part of the completion of Scott Menzies’ Masters thesis.

The intent of this research is to be a qualitative analysis of the role businesses play in a community's level of social interaction. Interviews will be used to build a collection of qualitative research that may serve as a resource on the social interaction provided by businesses, with the hope that such research will be of benefit to future decision-making processes regarding businesses in Humboldt County.

Please read the information below, and ask any questions you may have, before deciding to participate.

- This interview is **voluntary**. You have the right to not answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time. The interview should take about **one hour**.
- Risks and benefits: There are **no foreseeable risks** to you through your participation in this study. There is **no compensation** for this interview other than the potential satisfaction associated with being part of a process to help create a more-informed world while reflecting upon your own life experiences and opinions.
- The short introduction you have been asked to provide prior to this interview will be the only **personal identification** attached to this interview.
- We would like to record this interview on audio-cassette to aid in creating accurate and comprehensive transcripts. This interview will not be recorded without your permission. If you do grant permission for this interview to be recorded, you have the right to revoke recording permission at any time.
- Once the interview has been completed, the audio recordings will be transcribed and formatted. . All recordings or other materials will be kept confidential and in private storage for a period of one year before being destroyed. **You have final approval** over any part of this interview and participation essentially **poses no risk** to you.

Please read the following and check the box to verify your agreement:

I, the undersigned, have been given a copy of this form. I understand the information provided above. I am over the age of 18, and capable of giving my informed consent to participate in this interview. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I freely agree to participate in this interview.

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date_____

Signature of Interviewer _____

Date_____

APPENDIX D: SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

From the Local Pub to the Corner Store: Social Interaction in Businesses

A Masters Thesis by Scott Menzies

Principal Investigator - Scott Menzies – 441-1423, scott.menzies@realizingcommunity.org

Faculty Advisor - Dr. Betsy Watson, Ph.D. – 826-5421, ew1@humboldt.edu

The intent of this research is to be a qualitative analysis of the role businesses play in a community's level of social interaction. The goal of this research is to determine how businesses, as sites of social interaction, contribute to community cohesiveness; specifically, what factors in the business environment influence the potential for community-building social interaction. It is the principal investigator's hope that this research will serve the following purposes:

1. Help business owners better understand how their businesses impact the community at a sociological level, allowing them to make more informed decisions regarding their current business atmosphere as well as regarding future business growth, expansion, and organizational change.
2. Help citizens better understand the importance of and impacts of businesses upon their social environment, such that they can make more informed decisions about the communities in which they reside.
3. Help policy-makers make more informed decisions about policy necessary to guide their communities' development in a direction that is beneficial to the local citizenry.

Some realistic questions this research will help inform from a sociological and community-benefit perspective:

1. Business Owners: My business is growing, should I find a larger space or open another outlet? How can my business better help build community?
2. Prospective Business Owner: Should I open an independent shop on my own or franchise a national chain?
3. Community Members: What kind of development do we want in our community? Should we allow large-scale retail? Should we cap or ban franchise/formula retail outlets?
4. Policy Makers: Should our general plan include zoning for large-scale retail? Should we allow/encourage mixed-use/live-work development? Who should we be giving public contracts to? Should we be attracting larger, national corporations? What is the best kind of economic development for our area?

Interviews will be used to build a collection of qualitative research that may serve as a resource on the social interaction provided by businesses. This research has been approved by the Humboldt State Internal Review Board for the protection of human subjects (i.e., interviewees), and it has been determined that there is essentially no risk to individuals who participate in this interview process. There is no compensation to interviewees other than the potential satisfaction associated with their being part of a process to help create a more-informed world while reflecting upon their life experiences and opinions. Interviewees have complete control over the content of their interviews.

Any questions should be directed to the Principal Researcher, Scott Menzies, or his Faculty Advisor, Elizabeth Watson, Ph.D., at the above contact information.

APPENDIX E: THE INDEPENDENT BUSINESS AS A TOOL OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT – MOSGO'S

This section was originally meant to be in the body of the thesis, but, due to logistical problems, wasn't ready before the final draft of the main document. Because I felt it was too important to leave out, epitomizing in many ways what I've been trying to show in this thesis, I chose to insert it here, as an appendix, rather than not at all.

As the saying goes, most studies tell us what we already know. In this case, it's clear that some folks have already figured out how powerful the small business is as a site of community-building. An especially intriguing example of a small, independent business being actively used as a site of community-building is found right here in Humboldt County.

Walk into Mosgo's in the Westwood Market area of Arcata, CA, and you see a vibrant independent coffee shop. The area is large, open, and welcoming. There's a great variety of seating – tall tables, low tables, long tables, couches, a raised area with a few floor-level tables and mats. A couple of nice PA speakers hang at the ceiling flanking the counter area, and a public computer is available in the back for free. Folks are chatting, reading the paper, or working on their laptops using the free wireless internet connection.

It would surprise most folks to learn that this coffee shop, and its attached Common Ground Community Center, is actually the church space for the Arcata Vineyard Christian Community, and that both businesses were created specifically for the

purpose of community development – to rebuild community in an area that had been rundown and socially-lacking for many years.

This is how the people of Arcata Vineyard have chosen to serve their community. The sincerity of that service is exemplified by the notable absence of religious materials in the shop.

Mosgo's is run by Gale and Peter Mosgofian, co-pastors for Arcata Vineyard and the inspiration for the name. The church had been looking for a location and inspiration as to how and where it would serve the community, when they felt called to the Westwood Market area of Arcata.

“We were drawn to this community because there was a vacuum here,” said Gale. “We live [in the area] and really realized that we were driving past something that was dead.”

Having previously run a counseling center during her social work days, Gale understands the needs of people. Being well-read on community issues, she also understands how important community design is for building community.

“I have real concerns about people living so far from where they work,” she said. “As a result they don't develop community where they live. They don't develop relationships where they're really vital.”

Understanding this, everything about Mosgo's, down to the minutia, was considered in its opening. For example, they wanted a diversity in the types and sizes of seating that would allow for a diversity of types of interaction. They also made sure to

include games and family-friendly puzzles to encourage those folks to come to the shop. Free wireless internet attracts students, as well as folks who use their laptops for business.

In addition, taking the concept of the small business as a site of passive community-building to the next level, Arcata Vineyard borrowed a page out of the community development manual and did a needs assessment of the Westwood Market neighborhood prior to opening Mosgo's/CGCC.

The cleverly-planned survey was designed as a door-hanger in order to be as non-intrusive as possible. One day volunteers hung the surveys on the doorknobs of the surrounding community, and the next day they picked them up. All the residents had to do was fill out the survey and hang it back on their doors. An optional check box was provided which, if checked, alerted the volunteer to knock on the resident's door for further information.

Out of approximately 500 that were placed, an impressive almost 80 were returned within 24 hrs. The information they gained from the surveys helped inform Arcata Vineyard as to the needs of the area and the services that they should try to provide. Having the Common Ground Community Center as part of the whole program made it possible for them to offer classes.

The results have been impressive. Mosgo's/CGCC has been responsible for the incubation of at least two fledgling businesses, including a belly dancing school and a yoga studio, both of which eventually found their own dedicated sites. They've held

weddings and community meetings and have regular live performances, made possible by the removable sound wall between Mosgo's and the CGCC.

Mosgo's has brought the nearby residents together and created a community of caring composed of strong relationships between all those who are part of the Mosgo's family – employees, patrons, and others.

Because of their efforts, the Westwood Market area has seen a decline in drug trafficking and graffiti, and good relationships have been made with everyone from the nearby homeless to the local police force. Gale credits Mosgo's with having reduced “cop animosity” in at least their part of a college town that tends to have a lot of such animosity. The patrons and employees have all come to care about the shop and community to the point that they have become stakeholders. Patrons will offer free help, from building necessary furniture to helping with promotion. They help make sure everyone is safe, by self-policing and reporting to employees when there are problems of any kind. The employees really want to be at the shop, and they will often come in on their off hours just to have the opportunity to get to know the patrons and community better. They are happy to take on extra work when a colleague is sick or hurting for any reason, and are willing to do what it takes to make sure Mosgo's runs great and everyone enjoys their time there.

Mosgo's has also helped members of the Arcata Vineyard community grow. Running a coffee shop forced the Vineyard folks to sometimes step out of their comfort

zone and cross bridges. From the art on the walls to the classes offered, all decisions were made with the surrounding community's needs placed above those of Vineyard.

Mosgo's has even taken on specific community development projects, including clearing a nearby piece of property to help make an oft-used trail safer, a project sparked by a discussion with a local mom who saw that the folks at Mosgo's were serious about wanting to help the community. Their hope is to take on many more such projects, especially after the business begins to turn a profit, including providing parenting classes and space for tutoring.

But, like any independent business, they have their challenges, mostly due to the current business atmosphere. Ensuring that their employees have benefits is an ongoing challenge. The price of goods and shipping is always changing. As Gale put it, if running Mosgo's was all about making money, they'd have burned out a long time ago.

It's not always easy, but it's rewarding, and the bridge-building community of caring, respect, and support that has been created is astounding.

Gale sums it all up:

“We have a lot of lonely people in our world – a tremendous amount. There's a lot of isolation because we have segregated our work life from our home life and we don't know our neighbors. We live with a lot of anxiety and a lot of fear and our media is full of reasons to increase that. Anxiety and fear are the two main causes for psychotropic medication like antidepressants. Our world is living on that stuff because somehow we have magnified our reality to be so less than perfect that somebody else *must* have it

together better than we do. If we just knew one another, how much more peace could we have in our lives? To know that I could go to my neighbor and say, 'I really need some help right this minute.' We don't know who we can turn to. I've been there personally. We need to know and build trust within our communities.

“Relationships in and of themselves can't always solve a problem, but they can help get people to answers to the problem. As a social worker, just being here in the shop, I can't tell you how many times somebody has just needed a little guidance to find the right person to talk to to get the help they needed. People know those kinds of things and can help people find those kinds of things. It's not just a social work major that can know that. If you had a broken foot and had a good experience in physical therapy with somebody, you can tell someone who that is by building relationships. So community is a place for gathering information and disseminating information. Education happens on a casual as well as formal basis.

“We've been excited to be able to provide for the community. If you've ever come out, it's like a big living room. I think there needs to be more big living rooms for the community - all over the place. I think there needs to be lots of places like this and they need to represent a large variety of the people in the community.”

What if Mosgo's had been a Starbucks, instead? While Gale sees a place for chains like Starbucks, appreciating them for their consistency and patronizing them when she's out of the area or in a hurry, she feels that it would be harder for a Starbucks to do what Mosgo's has done.

“I don't know if Starbucks would allow the community as much latitude as we do,” she said. “I think it would be hard. Those chains have the external pressure for business and for volume. Any franchise that is trying to [build community] is going to have to work very hard at not being too corporate at the money level to negate the importance of people.”

It's clear what a strong community-building intention can accomplish, and, through such intention, Mosgo's really drives home the points that I've tried to make in this paper. Looking at the changes that have come in the Westwood Market area since Mosgo's came in, what a tragedy it would have been if Arcata Vineyard hadn't been able to open the store for one reason or another?

The harder it is for entrepreneurs of any kind to start small, independent businesses, the more likely they will not start one at all or choose to franchise instead, and the less opportunity we have as residents to build community. Public policy of any kind that puts a greater strain on these independent businesses is really putting a greater strain on our community's capacity to develop.

Arcata Vineyard has been able to mitigate some of these difficulties by the choices it has made – especially the choice to use Mosgo's/CGCC for its church services and thereby spread out the cost of overhead. But, without a real recognition of the importance of small, independent businesses, how much longer will choices like that continue to keep places like Mosgo's viable? As Humboldt County has recently (as of late 2008) seen some long-time, iconic independent businesses, like O-H's Townhouse

(steakhouse) and The Metro CDs and Tapes, shut down, we have to become more vigilant in taking action to protect our communities before more of our rich culture of entrepreneurship suffers, and our community suffers in turn. Be that action simply choosing to “shop indy” or taking the time to work on local policy issues, there's something everybody can do.

Mosgo's is an awesome success story that we should be looking to replicate, and we need public policy support to make that possible. We need to work so we can have more of those Third Place living rooms in all of our communities – so we can reap the benefits that real community provides.

24 MAY 21

This letter is in favor of the Grocery Outlet application which is being discussed at the May 26th Town Hall.

Dear city council members & planners,

I am in support of having a Grocery Outlet at the old social services location in Fort Bragg. I shop at Grocery Outlets outside of our town and having one here wouldn't change my support of other local grocery stores.

I have a place on S. Franklin St. and I am not worried about increased traffic. Something new should go into that location soon because it is falling into disrepair.

I think having more organic & vegetarian food choices locally is a good thing especially for low income folks.

Thanks, Stacey Nickell

From: [Dr Richard Louis Miller](#)
To: [Jaen Treesinger](#); [MCN Announce Lists](#)
Cc: [CDD User](#); [Gurewitz, Heather](#); [E*Trade Securities Llc](#); [O'Neal, Chantell](#)
Subject: Ft. Bragg Planning Commission re Grocery Outlet . 5-26 at 6pm at Town Hall
Date: Wednesday, May 26, 2021 11:04:58 AM

Richard Louis Miller, M.A., Ph.D.
Clinical Psychology
[MindBodyHealthPolitics.org](#)
Alexander Shulgin Research Institute
[Wikipedia: Dr. Richard Louis Miller](#)
[Wikipedia: Wilbur Hot Springs](#)
[PsychedelicMedicineBook.com](#)
[CovidResponseNetwork.net](#)
[Psychedepedia.org](#)

*What you leave behind is not what assets you accumulated,
but what is woven into the lives of others*

Dear Neighbors:

Whether it be our hospital, our food store, our police department, our feed store, our restaurants, or any other service, our coastal community benefits most from local ownership and local management because locals are us.

Distant ownership and distant management turns our community into numbers on a computer on some desk in some city.

When people are related to as numbers their lives are much less safe than when people are related to as people.

It is easier to push a button on a machine, and cancel a number out, than get up close and personal, and deprive a neighbor of food, shelter, health care, education or a reasonable price.

As telecommuting, telemedicine, tele shopping, telepsychotherapy, proliferate, the value of community increases.

*Nothing can replace human interaction.
Sustaining our community is essential for
maintaining our coastal way of life.*

*Sustaining our community locally is, indeed,
the holy grail.*

Your neighbor,

Richard

From: [Peters, Sarah](#)
To: [Peters, Sarah](#)
Subject: Public Comment - GO
Date: Wednesday, June 09, 2021 10:55:32 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

From: [Ingrid Noyes](#)
To: [CDD User](#); [O'Neal, Chantell](#); [Gurewitz, Heather](#); [Miller, Tabatha](#)
Subject: Grocery Outlet
Date: Tuesday, May 25, 2021 10:24:16 PM

To the Planning Commission members, Fort Bragg--

I personally would welcome having a Grocery Outlet in town; it's a great place for people on tight budgets to stock up on some staples at affordable prices. I would still support our local existing grocery stores, but I do like shopping at Grocery Outlet occasionally, and having one here in town would be very convenient.

Also having a working business in a location that is now just an empty building sitting there seems like a good idea--a few more jobs for local people, and presumably more revenue for the city as well.

I mostly prefer small businesses to anything resembling a chain store, but I find Grocery Outlet to be an exception; I like how they operate, by finding discontinued items, overstocks, etc and passing the savings on to their customers.

I know this has become something of a controversial issue, and I'm hearing mostly from people who are opposed to the idea, but I imagine I am one of probably many who would welcome this business but are less vocal about it. So I just wanted to voice my support.

Thank you,

Ingrid
Noyes Fort
Bragg