The Roving Method: Strengths and Potential Uses

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Motivation for the project

- What we know about urban neighborhoods and youth violence
- How we study neighborhood-level youth violence
  These two factors contribute to the elusive nature of effective, neighborhood-level interventions
- A new epistemology: Pockets of Peace
Existing research proves difficult to translate into feasible community-level interventions (R.J. Sampson, 2011; R. B. Taylor, 2002)
Pockets of peace

- Recognize heterogeneity among disadvantaged areas
- Make comparisons within Macro and Exo-system contexts
- Recognize and take empirical advantage of thriving or resilient communities as comparison groups

*Insight: still limited by focus on lack of negative*

THEREBY PRODUCE USABLE KNOWLEDGE FOR INTERVENTIONS AT THE MESOLEVEL
Indianapolis: a Case Study

The setting for the study
Rising rates of homicide and violence in Indianapolis

Although juvenile violence is very slightly declining across the U.S., Indianapolis has seen a rise in violence and there is a lot of policy and public attention on the issue.
Pockets of peace in Indianapolis

- Make comparisons within Macro- and Exosystem contexts

✓ All areas of **Concentrated Disadvantage**
  - Single parent families
  - Unemployment
  - Poverty
  - Non-White
  - Receiving Public Assistance
Shaded areas represent areas of concentrated disadvantage, by 2010 blockgroup.

- Other Areas of Concentrated Disadvantage
- Pockets of Peace

Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, USGS, Intermap, iPC, NRCAN, Esri Japan,\nMEI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), TomTom, 2013
Typical demographic topics that do not distinguish pockets from other areas of CD

- Population dynamics
- Sociodemographic characteristics
- Spatial patterns
- Other juvenile charges and adult charges
- Percentage of population with English as primary language
Typical topics that do distinguish pockets from other areas

- Presence of Prosocial Institutions (churches, libraries, schools)
  - Pockets have a significantly lower likelihood of containing a pro-social institution

  Harkens to Mahoney and Peterson’s work on the positive association between recreation centers and juvenile violent crime

- Renters versus owners
  - Pockets have a larger ratio of renters to owners than other areas
Shaded areas represent areas of concentrated disadvantage, by 2010 block group.

**Acts of Juvenile Violence, 2008-2010**

- 3 or more Acts
- 2 Acts
- 0 - 1 Act

**Pro-social Institutions**
- 0 - 1
- 2 - 4
- 5 - 10
- 11 - 16

Source: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, USGS, Intermap, iPC, NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), TomTom, 2013
Interesting Findings Led to a Crossroads, not a Clear Path

The need for additional, formative research
“New” Methodology: Roving

• Emerged from Asset Based Community Development field
• Part of an asset-mapping approach
• Ideally performed by community members
• Part of my personal process for the past seven years
The Roving Team
Specifics of the Method

1. Train community members in ABCD method
2. Perform propensity score matching to identify areas of focus
3. Rovers spend specified amount of time in public spaces of these geographic regions, gathering stories and observations
4. Team member performs semi-structured interview with rover (30 min to an hour)
5. Transcribe recorded interviews
6. Perform comparative, qualitative analysis in Dedoose (and optionally, mixed methods)
Roving is a Response to

- Mentor’s suggestions to formalize and publish my instinctive approach to **ecological validity**
- Limited practical use of quantitative findings
- Gulf between results and prompts for adolescent mobile phone diaries
- Eventual need to generate testable hypotheses
Issues/Obstacles

• Interviews must occur within 24 hours (or at least before comparison area)
• Seasonality
• IRB
• Finding community members interested in/exposed to/committed to asset-based orientation
It seems that roving has

a) Helped to clarify quantitative “anomalies”

b) Provided info with immediate, practical use

c) Provided new hypotheses focused on assets and positive dynamics within structural realities
Emerging Themes from Roving (a. clarifying quantitative results)

Renters vs Owners

- Intergenerational residency matters
- Apartments and renters dominate these areas, so their practices and characteristics matter

Prosocial Institutions

- Churches with LITERALLY closed doors
- Fast food places and auto shops are the prosocial locales (gas stations are opposite)
Emerging Themes from Roving (b. items of practical use)

Key informants
- Contact information for 26 individuals not associated with institutions
- 32 phone calls, 16 emails expressing interest

Activities of interest
- Fishing
- Gardening
- Auto Repair
Emerging Themes from Roving
(c. new hypotheses)

Intergenerational Residency

“Danny is retired, a security guard. He was on the porch, watching his grandkids play. He was an MP in the Marine corp. He did three tours of duty, was a volunteer fireman, and spent most of his life as a security guard. He loved that type of work. He retired from both of those. He gave me the whole, blizzard of 78. I had to listen to that whole story. He and his daughter and grandkids are renting.”

Business Owner Residency

“Um, three years ago he started fixing up the gas station and painting the curbs.

Does he own it?

Yes, he owns it, and has for years.

You said 52 years?

Yeah, but he lives there too.”
Lessons Learned about the Method

• IRB issues need to be explored, and existing standards won’t provide guidance
• Rovers shouldn’t be trained in a strictly structured form of field note capture method
• Community residents (at least, individuals who have resided in these types of areas) are ideal because they SEE heterogeneity
• The method can be intimidating and challenges academic assumptions
Issues to be Explored Regarding the Methodology

- IRB issues
- Typical obstacles to community engaged research
- Acceptance in scholarly community (quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods)
- The best use of the data (formative, or the primary research)
- Balancing the public attention/call for action with the cadence and rigor of research
Questions and Comments
YEAR 1: descriptive

Indianapolis Block Groups of Concentrated Disadvantage: 127

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